

How to Play the Cypher System

The rules of the Cypher System are quite straightforward at their heart, as all of gameplay is based around a few core concepts.

This chapter provides a brief explanation of how to play the game, and it's useful for learning the game. Once you understand the basic concepts, you'll likely want to reference [Rules of the Game](#) for a more in-depth treatment.

The Cypher System uses a twenty-sided die (1d20) to determine the results of most actions. Whenever a roll of any kind is called for and no die is specified, roll a d20.

The game master sets a difficulty for any given task. There are ten degrees of difficulty. Thus, the difficulty of a task can be rated on a scale of 1 to 10.

Each difficulty has a target number associated with it. The target number is always three times the task's difficulty, so a difficulty 1 task has a target number of 3, but a difficulty 4 task has a target number of 12. To succeed at the task, you must roll the target number or higher. See the Task Difficulty table for guidance in how this works.

Character skills, favorable circumstances, or excellent equipment can decrease the difficulty of a task. For example, if a character is trained in climbing, they turn a difficulty 6 climb into a difficulty 5 climb. This is called *easing the difficulty by one step* (or just *easing the difficulty*, which assumes it's eased by one step). If they are specialized in climbing, they turn a difficulty 6 climb into a difficulty 4 climb. This is called *easing the difficulty by two steps*. Decreasing the difficulty of a task can also be called *easing a task*. Some situations increase, or *hinder*, the difficulty of a task. If a task is hindered, it increases the difficulty by one step.

A [skill](#) is a category of knowledge, ability, or activity relating to a task, such as climbing, geography, or persuasiveness. A character who has a skill is better at completing related tasks than a character who lacks the skill. A character's level of skill is either trained (reasonably skilled) or specialized (very skilled).

If you are [trained](#) in a skill relating to a task, you ease the difficulty of that task by one step. If you are [specialized](#), you ease the difficulty by two steps. A skill can never decrease a task's difficulty by more than two steps.

Anything else that reduces difficulty (help from an ally, a particular piece of equipment, or some other advantage) is referred to as an [asset](#). Assets can never decrease a task's difficulty by more than two steps.

You can also decrease the difficulty of a given task by applying [Effort](#). (Effort is described in more detail in the Rules of the Game chapter.)

To sum up, three things can decrease a task's difficulty: skills, assets, and Effort.

If you can ease a task so its difficulty is reduced to 0, you automatically succeed and don't need to make a roll.

WHEN DO YOU ROLL?

Any time your character attempts a task, the GM assigns a difficulty to that task, and you roll a d20 against the associated target number.

When you jump from a burning vehicle, swing an axe at a mutant beast, swim across a raging river, identify a strange device, convince a merchant to give you a lower price, craft an object, use a power to control a foe's mind, or use a blaster rifle to carve a hole in a wall, you make a d20 roll.

However, if you attempt something that has a difficulty of 0, no roll is needed—you automatically succeed. Many actions have a difficulty of 0. Examples include walking across the room and opening a door, using a special ability to negate gravity so you can fly, using an ability to protect your friend from radiation, or

activating a device (that you already understand) to erect a force field. These are all routine actions and don't require rolls.

Using skill, assets, and Effort, you can ease the difficulty of potentially any task to 0 and thus negate the need for a roll. Walking across a narrow wooden beam is tricky for most people, but for an experienced gymnast, it's routine. You can even ease the difficulty of an attack on a foe to 0 and succeed without rolling.

If there's no roll, there's no chance for failure. However, there's also no chance for remarkable success (in the Cypher System, that usually means rolling a 19 or 20, which are called [special rolls](#); the Rules of the Game chapter also discusses special rolls).

TASK DIFFICULTY

Task Difficulty	Description	Target No.	Guidance
0	Routine	0	Anyone can do this basically every time.
1	Simple	3	Most people can do this most of the time.
2	Standard	6	Typical task requiring focus, but most people can usually do this.
3	Demanding	9	Requires full attention; most people have a 50/50 chance to succeed.
4	Difficult	12	Trained people have a 50/50 chance to succeed.
5	Challenging	15	Even trained people often fail.
6	Intimidating	18	Normal people almost never succeed.
7	Formidable	21	Impossible without skills or great effort.
8	Heroic	24	A task worthy of tales told for years afterward.
9	Immortal	27	A task worthy of legends that last lifetimes.
10	Impossible	30	A task that normal humans couldn't consider (but one that doesn't break the laws of physics).

COMBAT

Making an attack in combat works the same way as any other roll: the GM assigns a difficulty to the task, and you roll a d20 against the associated target number.

The difficulty of your attack roll depends on how powerful your opponent is. Just as tasks have a difficulty from 1 to 10, creatures have a level from 1 to 10. Most of the time, the difficulty of your attack roll is the same as the creature's level. For example, if you attack a level 2 bandit, it's a level 2 task, so your target number is 6.

It's worth noting that players make all die rolls. If a character attacks a creature, the player makes an attack roll. If a creature attacks a character, the player makes a defense roll.

The damage dealt by an attack is not determined by a roll—it's a flat number based on the weapon or attack used. For example, a spear always does 4 points of damage.

Your [Armor](#) characteristic reduces the damage you take from attacks directed at you. You get Armor from wearing physical armor (such as a leather jacket in a modern game or chainmail in a fantasy setting) or from special abilities. Like weapon damage, Armor is a flat number, not a roll. If you're attacked, subtract your Armor from the damage you take. For example, a leather jacket gives you +1 to Armor, meaning that you take 1 less point of damage from attacks. If a mugger hits you with a knife for 2 points of damage while you're wearing a leather jacket, you take only 1 point of damage. If your Armor reduces the damage from an attack to 0, you take no damage from that attack.

When you see the word “Armor” capitalized in the game rules (other than in the name of a special ability), it refers to your Armor characteristic—the number you subtract from incoming damage. When you see the word “armor” with a lowercase “a,” it refers to any physical armor you might wear.

Typical physical weapons come in three categories: light, medium and heavy.

Light weapons inflict only 2 points of damage, but they ease attack rolls because they are fast and easy to use. Light weapons are punches, kicks, clubs, knives, handaxes, rapiers, small pistols, and so on. Weapons that are particularly small are light weapons.

Medium weapons inflict 4 points of damage. Medium weapons include swords, battleaxes, maces, crossbows, spears, pistols, blasters, and so on. Most weapons are medium. Anything that could be used in one hand (even if it's often used in two hands, such as a quarterstaff or spear) is a medium weapon.

Heavy weapons inflict 6 points of damage, and you must use two hands to attack with them. Heavy weapons are huge swords, great hammers, massive axes, halberds, heavy crossbows, blaster rifles, and so on. Anything that must be used in two hands is a heavy weapon.

SPECIAL ROLLS

When you roll a natural 19 (the d20 shows “19”) and the roll is a success, you also have a minor effect. In combat, a minor effect inflicts 3 additional points of damage with your attack, or, if you'd prefer a special result, you could decide instead that you knock the foe back, distract them, or something similar. When not in combat, a minor effect could mean that you perform the action with particular grace. For example, when jumping down from a ledge, you land smoothly on your feet, or when trying to persuade someone, you convince them that you're smarter than you really are. In other words, you not only succeed but also go a bit further.

When you roll a natural 20 (the d20 shows “20”) and the roll is a success, you also have a major effect. This is similar to a minor effect, but the results are more remarkable. In combat, a major effect inflicts 4 additional points of damage with your attack, but again, you can choose instead to introduce a dramatic event such as knocking down your foe, stunning them, or taking an extra action. Outside of combat, a major effect means that something beneficial happens based on the circumstance. For example, when climbing up a cliff wall, you make the ascent twice as fast. When a roll grants you a major effect, you can choose to use a minor effect instead if you prefer.

In combat (and only in combat), if you roll a natural 17 or 18 on your attack roll, you add 1 or 2 additional points of damage, respectively. Neither roll has any special effect options—just the extra damage.

(For more information on special rolls and how they affect combat and other interactions, see Rules of the Game.)

Rolling a natural 1 is always bad. It means that the GM introduces a new complication into the encounter.

GLOSSARY

Game master (GM): The player who doesn't run a character, but instead guides the flow of the story and runs all the NPCs.

Nonplayer character (NPC): Characters run by the GM. Think of them as the minor characters in the story, or the villains or opponents. This includes any kind of creature as well as people.

Party: A group of player characters (and perhaps some NPC allies).

Player character (PC): A character run by a player rather than the GM. Think of the PCs as the main characters in the story.

Player: The players who run characters in the game.

Session: A single play experience. Usually lasts a few hours. Sometimes one adventure can be accomplished in a session. More often, one adventure is multiple sessions.

Adventure: A single portion of the campaign with a beginning and an end. Usually defined at the beginning by a goal put forth by the PCs and at the end by whether or not they achieve that goal.

Campaign: A series of sessions strung together with an overarching story (or linked stories) with the same player characters. Often, but not always, a campaign involves a number of adventures.

Character: Anything that can act in the game. Although this includes PCs and human NPCs, it also technically includes creatures, aliens, mutants, automatons, animate plants, and so on. The word "creature" is usually synonymous.

RANGE AND SPEED

Distance is simplified into four categories: immediate, short, long, and very long.

Immediate distance from a character is within reach or within a few steps. If a character stands in a small room, everything in the room is within immediate distance. At most, immediate distance is 10 feet (3 m).

Short distance is anything greater than immediate distance but less than 50 feet (15 m) or so.

Long distance is anything greater than short distance but less than 100 feet (30 m) or so.

Very long distance is anything greater than long distance but less than 500 feet (150 m) or so. Beyond that range, distances are always specified—1,000 feet (300 m), a mile (1.5 km), and so on.

The idea is that it's not necessary to measure precise distances. Immediate distance is right there, practically next to the character. Short distance is nearby. Long distance is farther off. Very long distance is really far off.

All weapons and special abilities use these terms for ranges. For example, all melee weapons have immediate range—they are close-combat weapons, and you can use them to attack anyone within immediate distance. A thrown knife (and most other thrown weapons) has short range. A bow has long range. An [Adept's Onslaught](#) ability also has short range.

A character can move an immediate distance as part of another action. In other words, they can take a few steps over to the control panel and activate a switch. They can lunge across a small room to attack a foe. They can open a door and step through.

A character can move a short distance as their entire action for a turn. They can also try to move a long distance as their entire action, but the player might have to roll to see if the character slips, trips, or stumbles as the result of moving so far so quickly.

For example, if the PCs are fighting a group of cultists, any character can likely attack any cultist in the general melee—they're all within immediate range. Exact positions aren't important. Creatures in a fight are always moving, shifting, and jostling, anyway. However, if one cultist stayed back to fire a pistol, a character might have to use their entire action to move the short distance required to attack that foe. It doesn't matter if the

cultist is 20 feet (6 m) or 40 feet (12 m) away—it's simply considered short distance. It does matter if the cultist is more than 50 feet (15 m) away because that distance would require a long or very long move.

(Many rules in this system avoid the cumbersome need for precision. Does it really matter if the ghost is 13 feet away from you or 18? Probably not. That kind of needless specificity only slows things down and draws away from, rather than contributes to, the story.)

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Experience points (XP) are rewards given to players when the GM intrudes on the story (this is called [GM intrusion](#)) with a new and unexpected challenge. For example, in the middle of combat, the GM might inform the player that they drop their weapon. However, to intrude in this manner, the GM must award the player 2 XP. The rewarded player, in turn, must immediately give one of those XP to another player and justify the gift (perhaps the other player had a good idea, told a funny joke, performed an action that saved a life, and so on).

Alternatively, the player can refuse the GM intrusion. If they do so, they don't get the 2 XP from the GM, and they must also spend 1 XP that they already have. If the player has no XP to spend, they can't refuse the intrusion.

The GM can also give players XP between sessions as a reward for making discoveries during an adventure. Discoveries are interesting facts, wondrous secrets, powerful artifacts, answers to mysteries, or solutions to problems (such as where the kidnappers are keeping their victim or how the PCs repair the starship). You don't earn XP for killing foes or overcoming standard challenges in the course of play. Discovery is the soul of the Cypher System.

Experience points are used primarily for character advancement (for details, see the [Creating Your Character chapter](#)), but a player can also spend 1 XP to reroll any die roll and take the better of the two rolls.

CYPHERS

Cyphers are abilities that have a single use. In many campaigns, cyphers aren't physical objects—they might be a spell cast upon a character, a blessing from a god, or just a quirk of fate that gives them a momentary advantage. In some campaigns, cyphers are physical objects that characters can carry. Whether or not cyphers are physical objects, they are part of the character (like equipment or a special ability) and are things characters can use during the game. The form that physical cyphers take depends on the setting. In a fantasy world they might be wands or potions, but in a science fiction game they could be alien crystals or prototype devices.

Characters will find new cyphers frequently in the course of play, so players shouldn't hesitate to use their cypher abilities. Because cyphers are always different, the characters will always have new special powers to try.

OTHER DICE

In addition to a d20, you'll need a d6 (a six-sided die). Rarely, you'll need to roll a number between 1 and 100 (often called a d100 or d% roll), which you can do by rolling a d20 twice, using the last digit of the first roll as the "tens" place and the last digit of the second roll as the "ones" place. For example, rolling a 17 and a 9 gives you 79, rolling a 3 and an 18 gives you 38, and rolling a 20 and a 10 gives you 00 (also known as 100). If you have a d10 (a ten-sided die), you can use it instead of the d20 to roll numbers between 1 and 100.

(A d6 is used most often for recovery rolls and to determine the level of cyphers.)

[Creating Your Character](#)

This section explains how to create characters to play in a Cypher System game. This involves a series of decisions that will shape your character, so the more you understand what kind of character you want to play,

the easier character creation will be. The process involves understanding the values of three game statistics and choosing three aspects that determine your character's capabilities.

CHARACTER STATS

Every player character has three defining characteristics, which are typically called "statistics" or "stats." These stats are Might, Speed, and Intellect. They are broad categories that cover many different but related aspects of a character.

MIGHT

Might defines how strong and durable your character is. The concepts of strength, endurance, constitution, hardness, and physical prowess are all folded into this one stat. Might isn't relative to size; instead, it's an absolute measurement. An elephant has more Might than the mightiest tiger, which has more Might than the mightiest rat, which has more Might than the mightiest spider.

Might governs actions from forcing doors open to walking for days without food to resisting disease. It's also the primary means of determining how much damage your character can sustain in a dangerous situation. Physical characters, tough characters, and characters interested in fighting should focus on Might.

(Might could be thought of as Might/Health because it governs how strong you are and how much physical punishment you can take.)

SPEED

Speed describes how fast and physically coordinated your character is. The stat embodies quickness, movement, dexterity, and reflexes. Speed governs such divergent actions as dodging attacks, sneaking around quietly, and throwing a ball accurately. It helps determine whether you can move farther on your turn. Nimble, fast, or sneaky characters will want good Speed stats, as will those interested in ranged combat.

(Speed could be thought of as Speed/Agility because it governs your overall swiftness and reflexes.)

INTELLECT

This stat determines how smart, knowledgeable, and likable your character is. It includes intelligence, wisdom, charisma, education, reasoning, wit, willpower, and charm. Intellect governs solving puzzles, remembering facts, telling convincing lies, and using mental powers. Characters interested in communicating effectively, being learned scholars, or wielding supernatural powers should stress their Intellect stat.

(Intellect could be thought of as Intellect/Personality because it governs both intelligence and charisma.)

POOL, EDGE, AND EFFORT

Each of the three stats has two components: Pool and Edge. Your Pool represents your raw, innate ability, and your Edge represents knowing how to use what you have. A third element ties into this concept: Effort. When your character really needs to accomplish a task, you apply Effort.

(Your stat Pools, as well as your Effort and Edge, are determined by the character type, descriptor, and focus that you choose. Within those guidelines, however, you have a lot of flexibility in how you develop your character.)

POOL

Your Pool is the most basic measurement of a stat. Comparing the Pools of two creatures will give you a general sense of which creature is superior in that stat. For example, a character who has a Might Pool of 16 is stronger (in a basic sense) than a character who has a Might Pool of 12. Most characters start with a Pool of 9 to 12 in most stats—that's the average range.

When your character is injured, sickened, or attacked, you temporarily lose points from one of your stat Pools. The nature of the attack determines which Pool loses points. For example, physical damage from a sword reduces your Might Pool, a poison that makes you clumsy reduces your Speed Pool, and a psionic blast reduces your Intellect Pool. You can also spend points from one of your stat Pools to decrease a task's difficulty (see Effort, below). You can rest to [recover lost points from a stat Pool](#), and some special abilities or cyphers might allow you to recover lost points quickly.

EDGE

Although your Pool is the basic measurement of a stat, your Edge is also important. When something requires you to spend points from a stat Pool, your Edge for that stat reduces the cost. It also reduces the cost of applying Effort to a roll.

For example, let's say you have a mental blast ability, and activating it costs 1 point from your Intellect Pool. Subtract your Intellect Edge from the activation cost, and the result is how many points you must spend to use the mental blast. If using your Edge reduces the cost to 0, you can use the ability for free.

Your Edge can be different for each stat. For example, you could have a Might Edge of 1, a Speed Edge of 1, and an Intellect Edge of 0. You'll always have an Edge of at least 1 in one stat. Your Edge for a stat reduces the cost of spending points from that stat Pool, but not from other Pools. Your Might Edge reduces the cost of spending points from your Might Pool, but it doesn't affect your Speed Pool or Intellect Pool. Once a stat's Edge reaches 3, you can apply one level of Effort for free.

A character who has a low Might Pool but a high Might Edge has the potential to perform Might actions consistently better than a character who has a Might Edge of 0. The high Edge will let them reduce the cost of spending points from the Pool, which means they'll have more points available to spend on applying Effort.

EFFORT

When your character really needs to accomplish a task, you can apply Effort. For a beginning character, applying Effort requires spending 3 points from the stat Pool appropriate to the action. Thus, if your character tries to dodge an attack (a Speed roll) and wants to increase the chance for success, you can apply Effort by spending 3 points from your Speed Pool. Effort eases the task by one step. This is called applying one level of Effort.

You don't have to apply Effort if you don't want to. If you choose to apply Effort to a task, you must do it before you attempt the roll—you can't roll first and then decide to apply Effort if you rolled poorly.

Applying more Effort can lower a task's difficulty further: each additional level of Effort eases the task by another step. Applying one level of Effort eases the task by one step, applying two levels eases the task by two steps, and so on. However, each level of Effort after the first costs only 2 points from the stat Pool instead of 3. So applying two levels of Effort costs 5 points (3 for the first level plus 2 for the second level), applying three levels costs 7 points (3 plus 2 plus 2), and so on.

Every character has an Effort score, which indicates the maximum number of levels of Effort that can be applied to a roll. A beginning (first-tier) character has an Effort of 1, meaning you can apply only one level of Effort to a roll. A more experienced character has a higher Effort score and can apply more levels of Effort to a roll. For example, a character who has an Effort of 3 can apply up to three levels of Effort to reduce a task's difficulty.

When you apply Effort, subtract your relevant Edge from the total cost of applying Effort. For example, let's say you need to make a Speed roll. To increase your chance for success, you decide to apply one level of Effort, which will ease the task. Normally, that would cost 3 points from your Speed Pool. However, you have a Speed Edge of 2, so you subtract that from the cost. Thus, applying Effort to the roll costs only 1 point from your Speed Pool.

What if you applied two levels of Effort to the Speed roll instead of just one? That would ease the task by two steps. Normally, it would cost 5 points from your Speed Pool, but after subtracting your Speed Edge of 2, it costs only 3 points.

Once a stat's Edge reaches 3, you can apply one level of Effort for free. For example, if you have a Speed Edge of 3 and you apply one level of Effort to a Speed roll, it costs you 0 points from your Speed Pool. (Normally, applying one level of Effort would cost 3 points, but you subtract your Speed Edge from that cost, reducing it to 0.)

Skills and other advantages also ease a task, and you can use them in conjunction with Effort. In addition, your character might have special abilities or equipment that allow you to apply Effort to accomplish a special effect, such as knocking down a foe with an attack or affecting multiple targets with a power that normally affects only one.

(When applying Effort to melee attacks, you have the option of spending points from either your Might Pool or your Speed Pool. When making ranged attacks, you may spend points only from your Speed Pool. This reflects that with melee you sometimes use brute force and sometimes use finesse, but with ranged attacks, it's always about careful targeting.)

EFFORT AND DAMAGE

Instead of applying Effort to ease your attack, you can apply Effort to increase the amount of damage you inflict with an attack. For each level of Effort you apply in this way, you inflict 3 additional points of damage. This works for any kind of attack that inflicts damage, whether a sword, a crossbow, a mind blast, or something else.

When using Effort to increase the damage of an area attack, such as the explosion created by an Adept's *Concussion* ability, you inflict 2 additional points of damage instead of 3 points. However, the additional points are dealt to all targets in the area. Further, even if one or more of the targets resist the attack, they still take 1 point of damage.

MULTIPLE USES OF EFFORT AND EDGE

If your Effort is 2 or higher, you can apply Effort to multiple aspects of a single action. For example, if you make an attack, you can apply Effort to your attack roll and apply Effort to increase the damage.

The total amount of Effort you apply can't be higher than your Effort score. For example, if your Effort is 2, you can apply up to two levels of Effort. You could apply one level to an attack roll and one level to its damage, two levels to the attack and no levels to the damage, or no levels to the attack and two levels to the damage.

You can use Edge for a particular stat only once per action. For example, if you apply Effort to a Might attack roll and to your damage, you can use your Might Edge to reduce the cost of one of those uses of Effort, not both. If you spend 1 Intellect point to activate your mind blast and one level of Effort to ease the attack roll, you can use your Intellect Edge to reduce the cost of one of those things, not both.

STAT EXAMPLES

A beginning character is fighting a giant rat. The PC stabs their spear at the rat, which is a level 2 creature and thus has a target number of 6. The character stands atop a boulder and strikes downward at the beast, and the GM rules that this helpful tactic is an asset that eases the attack by one step (to difficulty 1). That lowers the target number to 3. Attacking with a spear is a Might action; the character has a Might Pool of 11 and a Might Edge of 0. Before making the roll, they decide to apply a level of Effort to ease the attack. That costs 3 points from their Might Pool, reducing the Pool to 8. But the points are well spent. Applying the Effort lowers the difficulty from 1 to 0, so no roll is needed—the attack automatically succeeds.

Another character is attempting to convince a guard to let them into a private office to speak to an influential noble. The GM rules that this is an Intellect action. The character is third tier and has an Effort of 3, an Intellect Pool of 13, and an Intellect Edge of 1. Before making the roll, they must decide whether to apply Effort. They can choose to apply one, two, or three levels of Effort, or apply none at all. This action is important to them, so they decide to apply two levels of Effort, easing the task by two steps. Thanks to their Intellect Edge, applying the Effort costs only 4 points from their Intellect Pool (3 points for the first level of Effort plus 2 points for the second level minus 1 point for their Edge). Spending those points reduces their Intellect Pool to 9. The GM decides that convincing the guard is a difficulty 3 (demanding) task with a target number of 9; applying two levels of Effort reduces the difficulty to 1 (simple) and the target number to 3. The player rolls a d20 and gets an 8. Because this result is at least equal to the target number of the task, they succeed. However, if they had not applied some Effort, they would have failed because their roll (8) would have been less than the task's original target number (9).

CHARACTER TIERS

Every character starts the game at the first tier. Tier is a measurement of power, toughness, and ability. Characters can advance up to the sixth tier. As your character advances to higher tiers, you gain more abilities, increase your Effort, and can improve a stat's Edge or increase a stat. Generally speaking, even first-tier characters are already quite capable. It's safe to assume that they've already got some experience under their belt. This is not a "zero to hero" progression, but rather an instance of competent people refining and honing their capabilities and knowledge. Advancing to higher tiers is not really the goal of Cypher System characters, but rather a representation of how characters progress in a story.

To progress to the next tier, characters earn experience points (XP) by pursuing character arcs, going on adventures, and discovering new things—the system is about both discovery and exploration, as well as achieving personal goals. Experience points have many uses, and one use is to purchase character benefits. After your character purchases four character benefits, they advance to the next tier. Each benefit costs 4 XP, and you can purchase them in any order, but you must purchase one of each kind of benefit (and then advance to the next tier) before you can purchase the same benefit again. The four character benefits are as follows.

Increasing Capabilities: You gain 4 points to add to your stat Pools. You can allocate the points among the Pools however you wish.

Moving Toward Perfection: You add 1 to your Might Edge, your Speed Edge, or your Intellect Edge (your choice).

Extra Effort: Your Effort score increases by 1.

Skills: You become trained in one skill of your choice, other than attacks or defense. As described in Rules of the Game, a character trained in a skill treats the difficulty of a related task as one step lower than normal. The skill you choose for this benefit can be anything you wish, such as climbing, jumping, persuading, or sneaking. You can also choose to be knowledgeable in a certain area of lore, such as history or geology. You can even choose a skill based on your character's special abilities. For example, if your character can make an Intellect roll to blast an enemy with mental force, you can become trained in using that ability, easing the task of using it. If you choose a skill that you are already trained in, you become specialized in that skill, easing related tasks by two steps instead of one.

(Skills are a broad category of things your character can learn and accomplish. For a list of sample skills, see below.)

Other Options: Players can also spend 4 XP to purchase other special options in lieu of gaining a new skill. Selecting any of these options counts as the skill benefit necessary to advance to the next tier. The special options are as follows:

Reduce the cost for wearing armor. This option lowers the Speed cost for wearing armor by 1.

Add 2 to your recovery rolls.

Select a new type-based ability from your tier or a lower tier.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTOR, TYPE, AND FOCUS

To create your character, you build a simple statement that describes them. The statement takes this form: “I am a [fill in an adjective here] [fill in a noun here] who [fill in a verb here].”

Thus: “I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*.” For example, you might say, “I am a Rugged Warrior who Controls Beasts” or “I am a Charming Explorer who Focuses Mind Over Matter.”

In this sentence, the adjective is called your descriptor.

The noun is your character type.

The verb is called your focus.

Even though character type is in the middle of the sentence, that’s where we’ll start this discussion. (Just as in a sentence, the noun provides the foundation.)

Your character type is the core of your character. In some roleplaying games, it might be called your character class. Your type helps determine your character’s place in the world and relationship with other people in the setting. It’s the noun of the sentence “I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*.”

You can choose from four character types: *Warriors*, *Adepts*, *Explorers*, and *Speakers*.

Your descriptor defines your character—it colors everything you do. Your descriptor places your character in the situation (the first adventure, which starts the campaign) and helps provide motivation. It’s the adjective of the sentence “I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*.”

Unless your GM says otherwise, you can choose from any of the character descriptors.

Focus is what your character does best. Focus gives your character specificity and provides interesting new abilities that might come in handy. Your focus also helps you understand how you relate with the other player characters in your group. It’s the verb of the sentence “I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*.”

There are many character foci. The ones you choose from will probably depend on the setting and genre of your game.

(You can use the Flavors chapter to slightly modify character types to customize them for different genres.)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Character types and foci grant PCs special abilities at each new tier. Using these abilities usually costs points from your stat Pools; the cost is listed in parentheses after the ability name. Your Edge in the appropriate stat can reduce the cost of the ability, but remember that you can apply Edge only once per action. For example, let’s say an Adept with an Intellect Edge of 2 wants to use their *Onslaught* ability to create a bolt of force, which costs 1 Intellect point. They also want to increase the damage from the attack by using a level of Effort, which costs 3 Intellect points. The total cost for their action is 2 points from their Intellect Pool (1 point for the bolt of force, plus 3 points for using Effort, minus 2 points from their Edge).

Sometimes the point cost for an ability has a + sign after the number. For example, the cost might be given as “2+ Intellect points.” That means you can spend more points or more levels of Effort to improve the ability further, as explained in the ability description.

Many special abilities grant a character the option to perform an action that they couldn’t normally do, such as projecting rays of cold or attacking multiple foes at once. Using one of these abilities is an action unto itself,

and the end of the ability's description says "Action" to remind you. It also might provide more information about when or how you perform the action.

Some special abilities allow you to perform a familiar action—one that you can already do—in a different way. For example, an ability might let you wear heavy armor, reduce the difficulty of Speed defense rolls, or add 2 points of fire damage to your weapon damage. These abilities are called enablers. Using one of these abilities is not considered an action. Enablers either function constantly (such as being able to wear heavy armor, which isn't an action) or happen as part of another action (such as adding fire damage to your weapon damage, which happens as part of your attack action). If a special ability is an enabler, the end of the ability's description says "Enabler" to remind you.

Some abilities specify a duration, but you can always end one of your own abilities anytime you wish.

(Because the Cypher System covers so many genres, not all of the descriptors, types, and foci might be available for players. The GM will decide what's available in their particular game and whether anything is modified, and they'll let the players know.)

SKILLS

Sometimes your character gains training in a specific skill or task. For example, your focus might mean that you're trained in sneaking, in climbing and jumping, or in social interactions. Other times, your character can choose a skill to become trained in, and you can pick a skill that relates to any task you think you might face.

The Cypher System has no definitive list of skills. However, the following list offers ideas:

Astronomy

Balancing

Biology

Botany

Carrying

Climbing

Computers

Deceiving

Disguise

Escaping

Geography

Geology

Healing

History

Identifying

Initiative

Intimidation

Jumping

Leatherworking

Lockpicking

- Machinery
- Metalworking
- Perception
- Persuasion
- Philosophy
- Physics
- Pickpocketing
- Piloting
- Repairing
- Riding
- Smashing
- Sneaking
- Stealth
- Swimming
- Vehicle driving
- Woodworking

You could choose a skill that incorporates more than one of these areas (interacting might include deceiving, intimidation, and persuasion) or that is a more specific version of one (hiding might be sneaking when you're not moving). You could also make up more general professional skills, such as baker, sailor, or lumberjack. If you want to choose a skill that's not on this list, it's probably best to run it past the GM first, but in general, the most important thing is to choose skills that are appropriate to your character.

Remember that if you gain a skill that you're already trained in, you become specialized in that skill. Because skill descriptions can be nebulous, determining whether you're trained or specialized might take some thinking. For example, if you're trained in lying and later gain an ability that grants you skill with all social interactions, you become specialized in lying and trained in all other types of interactions. Being trained three times in a skill is no better than being trained twice (in other words, specialized is as good as it gets).

Only skills gained through character type abilities or other rare instances allow you to become skilled with attack or defense tasks.

If you gain a special ability through your type, your focus, or some other aspect of your character, you can choose it in place of a skill and become trained or specialized in that ability. For example, if you have a mind blast, when it's time to choose a skill to be trained in, you can select your mind blast as your skill. That would ease the attack every time you used it. Each ability you have counts as a separate skill for this purpose. You can't select "all mind powers" or "all spells" as one skill and become trained or specialized in such a broad category.

In most campaigns, fluency in a language is considered a skill. So if you want to speak French, that's the same as being trained in biology or swimming.

Type

Character type is the core of your character. Your type helps determine your character's place in the world and relationship with other people in the setting. It's the noun of the sentence "I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*."

(In some roleplaying games, your character type might be called your character class.)

You can choose from four character types: Warrior, Adept, Explorer, and Speaker. However, you may not want to use these generic names for them. This chapter offers a few more specific names for each type that might be more appropriate to various genres. You'll find that names like "Warrior" or "Explorer" don't always feel right, particularly in games set in modern times. As always, you're free to do as you wish. (Your type is who your character is. You should use whatever name you want for your type, as long as it fits both your character and the setting.)

Since the type is the basis upon which your whole character is built, it's important to consider how the type relates to the chosen setting. To help with this, types are actually general archetypes. A Warrior, for example, might be anyone from a knight in shining armor to a cop on the streets to a grizzled cybernetic veteran of a thousand futuristic wars.

To further massage the four types for better use in various settings, different methods called [flavors](#) are presented in Flavors to help slightly tailor the types toward fantasy, science fiction, or other genres (or to address different character concepts).

Finally, more fundamental options for [further customization](#) are provided at the end of this chapter.

PLAYER INTRUSION

A player intrusion is the player choosing to alter something in the campaign, making things easier for a player character. Conceptually, it is the reverse of a GM intrusion: instead of the GM giving the player XP and introducing an unexpected complication for a character, the player spends 1 XP and presents a solution to a problem or complication. What a player intrusion can do usually introduces a change to the world or current circumstances rather than directly changing the character. For instance, an intrusion indicating that the cypher just used still has an additional use would be appropriate, but an intrusion that heals the character would not. If a player has no XP to spend, they can't use a player intrusion.

A few player intrusion examples are provided under each type. That said, not every player intrusion listed there is appropriate for all situations. The GM may allow players to come up with other player intrusion suggestions, but the GM is the final arbiter of whether the suggested intrusion is appropriate for the character's type and suitable for the situation. If the GM refuses the intrusion, the player doesn't spend the 1 XP, and the intrusion doesn't occur.

Using an intrusion does not require a character to use an action to trigger it. A player intrusion just happens.

(Player intrusions should be limited to no more than one per player per session.)

Defense Tasks

Defense tasks are when a player makes a roll to keep something undesirable from happening to their PC. The type of defense task matters when using Effort.

Might defense: Used for resisting poison, disease, and anything else that can be overcome with strength and health.

Speed defense: Used for dodging attacks and escaping danger. This is by far the most commonly used defense task.

Intellect defense: Used for fending off mental attacks or anything that might affect or influence one's mind.

WARRIOR

Fantasy/Fairy tale: Warrior, fighter, swordsman, knight, barbarian, soldier, myrmidon, valkyrie

Modern/Horror/Romance: police officer, soldier, watchman, detective, guard, brawler, tough, athlete

Science fiction: security officer, warrior, trooper, soldier, merc

Superhero/Post-Apocalyptic: hero, brick, bruiser

You're a good ally to have in a fight. You know how to use weapons and defend yourself. Depending on the genre and setting in question, this might mean wielding a sword and shield in the gladiatorial arena, an AK-47 and a bandolier of grenades in a savage firefight, or a blaster rifle and powered armor when exploring an alien planet.

Individual Role: Warriors are physical, action-oriented people. They're more likely to overcome a challenge using force than by other means, and they often take the most straightforward path toward their goals.

Group Role: Warriors usually take and deal the most punishment in a dangerous situation. Often it falls on them to protect the other group members from threats. This sometimes means that warriors take on leadership roles as well, at least in combat and other times of danger.

Societal Role: Warriors aren't always soldiers or mercenaries. Anyone who is ready for violence, or even potential violence, might be a Warrior in the general sense. This includes guards, watchmen, police officers, sailors, or people in other roles or professions who know how to defend themselves with skill.

Advanced Warriors: As warriors advance, their skill in battle—whether defending themselves or dishing out damage—increases to impressive levels. At higher tiers, they can often take on groups of foes by themselves or stand toe to toe with anyone.

Warrior Background Connection

Your type helps determine the connection you have to the setting. Roll a d20 or choose from the following list to determine a specific fact about your background that provides a connection to the rest of the world. You can also create your own fact.

d20	Background
1	You were in the military and have friends who still serve. Your former commander remembers you well.
2	You were the bodyguard of a wealthy woman who accused you of theft. You left her service in disgrace.
3	You were the bouncer in a local bar for a while, and the patrons there remember you.
4	You trained with a highly respected mentor. They regard you well, but they have many enemies.
5	You trained in an isolated monastery. The monks think of you as a brother, but you're a stranger to all others.
6	You have no formal training. Your abilities come to you naturally (or unnaturally).
7	You spent time on the streets and were in prison for a while.
8	You were conscripted into military service, but you deserted before long.

9	You served as a bodyguard to a powerful criminal who now owes you their life.
10	You worked as a police officer or constable of some kind. Everyone knows you, but their opinions of you vary.
11	Your older sibling is an infamous character who has been disgraced.
12	You served as a guard for someone who traveled extensively. You know a smattering of people in many locations.
13	Your best friend is a teacher or scholar. They are a great source of knowledge.
14	You and a friend both smoke the same kind of rare, expensive tobacco. The two of you get together weekly to chat and smoke.
15	Your uncle runs a theater in town. You know all the actors and watch all the shows for free.
16	Your craftsman friend sometimes calls on you for help. However, they pay you well.
17	Your mentor wrote a book on martial arts. Sometimes people seek you out to ask about its stranger passages.
18	Someone you fought alongside in the military is now the mayor of a nearby town.
19	You saved the lives of a family when their house burned down. They're indebted to you, and their neighbors regard you as a hero.
20	Your old trainer still expects you to come back and clean up after their classes; when you do, they occasionally share interesting rumors.

WARRIOR PLAYER INTRUSIONS

You can spend 1 XP to use one of the following player intrusions, provided the situation is appropriate and the GM agrees.

Perfect Setup: You're fighting at least three foes and each one is standing in exactly the right spot for you to use a move you trained in long ago, allowing you to attack all three as a single action. Make a separate attack roll for each foe. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action.

Old Friend: A comrade in arms from your past shows up unexpectedly and provides aid in whatever you're doing. They are on a mission of their own and can't stay longer than it takes to help out, chat for a while after, and perhaps share a quick meal.

Weapon Break: Your foe's weapon has a weak spot. In the course of the combat, it quickly becomes damaged and moves two steps down the *object damage track*.

WARRIOR STAT POOLS

Stat	Pool Starting Value

Might	10
Speed	10
Intellect	8

You get 6 additional points to divide among your stat Pools however you wish.

FIRST-TIER WARRIOR

First-tier warriors have the following abilities:

Effort: Your Effort is 1.

Physical Nature: You have a Might Edge of 1 and a Speed Edge of 0, or you have a Might Edge of 0 and a Speed Edge of 1. Either way, you have an Intellect Edge of 0.

Cypher Use: You can bear two cyphers at a time.

Weapons: You become *practiced* with light, medium, and heavy weapons and suffer no penalty when using any kind of weapon. Enabler.

Starting Equipment: Appropriate clothing and two weapons of your choice, plus one expensive item, two moderately priced items, and up to four inexpensive items.

Special Abilities: Choose four of the abilities listed below. You can't choose the same ability more than once unless its description says otherwise. The full description for each listed ability can be found in *Abilities*, which also has descriptions for flavor and focus abilities in a single vast catalog.

Bash

Combat Prowess

Control the Field

Improved Edge

No Need for Weapons

Overwatch

Physical Skills

Practiced in Armor

Quick Throw

Swipe

Trained Without Armor

SECOND-TIER WARRIOR

Choose two of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Crushing Blow

Hemorrhage

Reload

Skill With Attacks

Skill With Defense

Successive Attack

THIRD-TIER WARRIOR

Choose three of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Deadly Aim

Energy Resistance

Experienced in Armor

Expert Cypher Use

Fury

Lunge

Reaction

Seize the Moment

Slice

Spray

Trick Shot

Vigilance

FOURTH-TIER WARRIOR

Choose two of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Amazing Effort

Capable Warrior

Experienced Defender

Feint

Increased Effects

Momentum

Pry Open

Snipe

Tough As Nails

FIFTH-TIER WARRIOR

Choose three of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Adroit Cypher Use

Arc Spray

Improved Success

Jump Attack

Mastery in Armor

Mastery With Attacks

Mastery With Defense

Parry

(Remember that at higher tiers, you can choose special abilities from lower tiers. This is sometimes the best way to ensure that you have exactly the character you want. This is particularly true with abilities that grant skills, which can usually be taken multiple times.)

SIXTH-TIER WARRIOR

Choose two of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Again and Again

Finishing Blow

Magnificent Moment

Murderer

Spin Attack

Weapon and Body

Boxed text:

WARRIOR EXAMPLE

Ray wants to create a Warrior character for a modern campaign. He decides that the character is an ex-military fellow who is fast and strong. He puts 3 of his additional points into his Might Pool and 3 into his Speed Pool; his stat Pools are now Might 13, Speed 13, and Intellect 8. As a first-tier character, his Effort is 1, his Might Edge is 1, and his Speed Edge and Intellect Edge are both 0. His character is not particularly smart or charismatic.

He wants to use a large combat knife (a medium weapon that inflicts 4 points of damage) and a .357 Magnum (a heavy pistol that inflicts 6 points of damage but requires the use of both hands). Ray decides not to wear armor, as it's not really appropriate to the setting, so for his first ability, he chooses [Trained Without Armor](#) so he eases Speed defense actions. For his second ability, he chooses [Combat Prowess](#) so he can inflict extra damage with his big knife.

Ray wants to be fast as well as tough, so he selects [Improved Edge](#). This gives him a Speed Edge of 1. He rounds out his character with [Physical Skills](#) and chooses swimming and running.

The Warrior can bear two cyphers. The GM decides that Ray's first cypher is a pill that restores 6 points of Might when swallowed, and his second is a small, easily concealed grenade that explodes like a firebomb when thrown, inflicting 3 points of damage to all within immediate range.

Ray still needs to choose a descriptor and a focus. Looking ahead to the descriptor rules, Ray chooses [Strong](#), which increases his Might Pool to 17. He also becomes trained in jumping and breaking inanimate objects. (If he had chosen jumping as one of his physical skills, the Strong descriptor would have made him specialized in jumping instead of trained.) Being Strong also gives Ray an extra medium or heavy weapon. He chooses a baseball bat that he'll use in a pinch. He keeps it in the trunk of his car.

For his focus, Ray chooses [Masters Weaponry](#). This gives him yet another weapon of high quality. He chooses another combat knife and asks the GM if he could use it in his left hand—not to make attacks, but as a shield. This will ease his Speed defense rolls if he has both knives out (the “shield” counts as an asset). The GM agrees. During the game, Ray’s Warrior will be hard to hit—he is trained in Speed defense rolls, and his extra knife eases his defense rolls by another step.

Thanks to his focus, he also inflicts 1 additional point of damage with his chosen weapon. Now he inflicts 6 points of damage with his blade. Ray’s character is a deadly combatant, likely starting the game with a reputation as a knife fighter.

For his character arc, Ray chooses [Defeat a Foe](#). That foe, he decides, is none other than someone in his company who was once a friend but went rogue.

ADEPT

Fantasy/Fairy tale: wizard, mage, sorcerer, cleric, druid, seer, diabolist, fey-touched

Modern/Horror/Romance: psychic, occultist, witch, practitioner, medium, fringe scientist

Science fiction: psion, psionicist, telepath, seeker, master, scanner, ESPer, abomination

Superhero/Post-Apocalyptic: mage, sorcerer, power-wielder, master, psion, telepath

You master powers or abilities outside the experience, understanding, and sometimes belief of others. They might be magic, psychic powers, mutant abilities, or just a wide variety of intricate devices, depending on the setting. (“Magic” here is a term used very loosely. It’s a catch-all for the kinds of wondrous, possibly supernatural things that your character can do that others cannot. It might actually be an expression of technological devices, channeling spirits, mutations, psionics, nanotechnology, or any number of other sources.)

Individual Role: Adepts are usually thoughtful, intelligent types. They often think carefully before acting and rely heavily on their supernatural abilities.

Group Role: Adepts are not powerful in straightforward combat, although they often wield abilities that provide excellent combat support, both offensively and defensively. They sometimes possess abilities that facilitate overcoming challenges. For example, if the group must get through a locked door, an Adept might be able to destroy it or teleport everyone to the other side.

Societal Role: In settings where the supernatural is rare, strange, or feared, Adepts are likely rare and feared as well. They remain hidden, shadowy figures. When this is not the case, Adepts are more likely to be common and forthright. They might even take leadership roles.

Advanced Adepts: Even at low tiers, Adept powers are impressive. Higher-tier Adepts can accomplish amazing deeds that can reshape matter and the environment around them.

(Adepts are almost always emblematic of the paranormal or superhuman in some way—wizards, psychics, or something similar. If the game you’re playing has none of that, an Adept could be a charlatan mimicking such abilities with tricks and hidden devices, or a gadgeteer character with a “utility belt” full of oddments. Or a game like that might not have Adepts. That’s okay too.)

ADEPT PLAYER INTRUSIONS

When playing an Adept, you can spend 1 XP to use one of the following [player intrusions](#), provided the situation is appropriate and the GM agrees.

Advantageous Malfunction: A device being used against you malfunctions. It might harm the user or one of their allies for a round, or activate a dramatic and distracting side effect for a few rounds.

Convenient Idea: A flash of insight provides you with a clear answer or suggests a course of action with regard to an urgent question, problem, or obstacle you're facing.

Inexplicably Unbroken: An inactive, ruined, or presumed-destroyed device temporarily activates and performs a useful function relevant to the situation. This is enough to buy you some time for a better solution, alleviate a complication that was interfering with your abilities, or just get you one more use out of a depleted cypher or artifact.

ADEPT STAT POOLS

Stat	Pool Starting Value
Might	7
Speed	9
Intellect	12

You get 6 additional points to divide among your stat Pools however you wish.

Adept Background Connection

Your type helps determine the connection you have to the setting. Roll a d20 or choose from the following list to determine a specific fact about your background that provides a connection to the rest of the world. You can also create your own fact.

d20	Background
1	You served as an apprentice for an Adept respected and feared by many people. Now you bear their mark.
2	You studied in a school infamous for its dark, brooding instructors and graduates.
3	You learned your abilities in the temple of an obscure god. Its priests and worshippers, although small in number, respect and admire your talents and potential.
4	While traveling alone, you saved the life of a powerful person. They remain indebted to you.
5	Your mother was a powerful Adept while she lived, helpful to many locals. They look upon you kindly, but they also expect much from you.
6	You owe money to a number of people and don't have the funds to pay your debts.
7	You failed disgracefully at your initial studies with your teacher and now proceed on your own.

8	You learned your skills faster than your teachers had ever seen before. The powers that be took notice and are paying close attention.
9	You killed a well-known criminal in self-defense, earning the respect of many and the enmity of a dangerous few.
10	You trained as a Warrior, but your Adept predilections eventually led you down a different path. Your former comrades don't understand you, but they respect you.
11	While studying to be an Adept, you worked as an assistant for a bank, making friends with the owner and the clientele.
12	Your family owns a large vineyard nearby known to all for its fine wine and fair business dealings.
13	You trained for a time with a group of influential Adepts, and they still look upon you with fondness.
14	You worked the gardens in the palace of an influential noble or person of wealth. They wouldn't remember you, but you made friends with their young daughter.
15	An experiment you conducted in the past went horribly awry. The locals remember you as a dangerous and foolhardy individual.
16	You hail from a distant place where you were well known and regarded, but people here treat you with suspicion.
17	People you meet seem put off by the strange birthmark on your face.
18	Your best friend is also an Adept. You and your friend share discoveries and secrets readily.
19	You know a local merchant very well. Since you give them so much business, they offer you discounts and special treatment.
20	You belong to a secretive social club that gathers monthly to drink and talk.

FIRST-TIER ADEPT

First-tier Adepts have the following abilities:

Effort: Your Effort is 1.

Genius: You have an Intellect Edge of 1, a Might Edge of 0, and a Speed Edge of 0.

Expert Cypher Use: You can bear three cyphers at a time.

Starting Equipment: Appropriate clothing, plus two expensive items, two moderately priced items, and up to four inexpensive items of your choice.

Weapons: You can use light weapons without penalty. You have an inability with medium weapons and heavy weapons; your attacks with medium and heavy weapons are hindered.

Special Abilities: Choose four of the abilities listed below. You can't choose the same ability more than once unless its description says otherwise. The full description for each listed ability can be found in [Abilities](#), which also has descriptions for flavor and focus abilities in a single vast catalog. (Adept abilities require at least one free hand unless the GM says otherwise.)

Distortion

Erase Memories

Far Step

Hedge Magic

Magic Training

Onslaught

Push

Resonance Field

Scan

Shatter

Ward

SECOND-TIER ADEPT

Choose one of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Adaptation

Cutting Light

Hover

Mind Reading

Retrieve Memories

Reveal

Stasis

THIRD-TIER ADEPT

Choose two of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Adroit Cypher Use

Countermeasures

Energy Protection

Fire and Ice

Force Field Barrier

Sensor

Targeting Eye

FOURTH-TIER ADEPT

Choose one of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Death Touch

Exile

Invisibility

Matter Cloud

Mind Control

Projection

Rapid Processing

Regeneration

Reshape

Wormhole

FIFTH-TIER ADEPT

Choose two of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Absorb Energy

Concussion

Conjuration

Create

Dust to Dust

Knowing the Unknown

Master Cypher Use

Teleportation

True Senses

SIXTH-TIER ADEPT

Choose one of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Control Weather

Earthquake

Move Mountains

Traverse the Worlds

Usurp Cypher

ADEPT EXAMPLE

Jen wants to create an Adept—a sorcerer for a fantasy campaign. She decides to be somewhat well rounded, so she puts 2 of her additional points into each stat Pool, giving her a Might Pool of 9, a Speed Pool of 11, and an Intellect Pool of 14. Her Adept is smart and quick. She has an Intellect Edge of 1, a Might Edge of 0, and a Speed Edge of 0. As a first-tier character, her Effort is 1. As her initial abilities, she chooses [Onslaught](#) and [Ward](#), giving her a strong offense and defense. She also chooses [Magic Training](#) and rounds out her character with [Scan](#), which she hopes will be useful in gaining insight and information. For this character, Onslaught, Ward, and Scan are all spells she has mastered through years of training and study.

She can bear three cyphers. The GM gives her a potion that acts as a short-range teleporter, a small charm that restores 5 points to her Intellect Pool, and a fluid-filled flask that explodes like a fiery bomb. Jen's sorcerer is skilled with light weapons, so she chooses a dagger.

For her descriptor, Jen chooses [Graceful](#), which adds 2 points to her Speed Pool, bringing it to 13. That descriptor means she is trained in balancing and anything requiring careful movements, physical performing arts, and Speed defense tasks. Perhaps she is a dancer. In fact, she begins to develop a backstory that involves graceful, lithe movements that she incorporates into her spells.

For her focus, she chooses [Leads](#). This gives her training in social interactions, which again helps round her out—she's good in all kinds of situations. Moreover, she has the Good Advice ability, which enables her to be a focal point of her group.

Her spells and focus abilities cost Intellect points to activate, so she's glad to have a lot of points in her Intellect Pool. In addition, her Intellect Edge will help reduce those costs. If she uses her Onslaught force blast without applying Effort, it costs 0 Intellect points and deals 4 points of damage. Her Intellect Edge will allow her to save points to devote toward applying Effort for other purposes, perhaps to boost the accuracy of Onslaught.

For her character arc, Jen chooses [Aid a Friend](#). She decides that when her sorcerer character was young, she had a magical mentor. That mentor was later taken prisoner by a demon, so her character is always looking for clues on how to find the demon and release her friend from bondage.

(GMs are always free to pre-select a type's special abilities at a given tier to reinforce the setting. In the fantasy setting of Jen's sorcerer, the GM might have said that all sorcerers (Adepts) start with Magic Training as one of their tier 1 abilities. This doesn't make the character any less powerful or special, but it says something about her role in the world and expectations in the game.)

EXPLORER

Fantasy/Fairy tale: Explorer, adventurer, delver, mystery seeker

Modern/Horror/Romance: athlete, explorer, adventurer, drifter, detective, scholar, spelunker, trailblazer, investigative reporter

Science fiction: Explorer, adventurer, wanderer, planetary specialist, xenobiologist

Superhero/Post-Apocalyptic: adventurer, crimefighter

You are a person of action and physical ability, fearlessly facing the unknown. You travel to strange, exotic, and dangerous places, and discover new things. This means you're physical but also probably knowledgeable.

Individual Role: Although Explorers can be academics or well studied, they are first and foremost interested in action. They face grave dangers and terrible obstacles as a routine part of life.

Group Role: Explorers sometimes work alone, but far more often they operate in teams with other characters. The Explorer frequently leads the way, blazing the trail. However, they're also likely to stop and investigate anything intriguing they stumble upon.

Societal Role: Not all Explorers are out traipsing through the wilderness or poking about an old ruin. Sometimes, an Explorer is a teacher, a scientist, a detective, or an investigative reporter. In any event, an Explorer bravely faces new challenges and gathers knowledge to share with others.

Advanced Explorers: Higher-tier Explorers gain more skills, some combat abilities, and a number of abilities that allow them to deal with danger. In short, they become more and more well-rounded, able to deal with any challenge.

EXPLORER PLAYER INTRUSIONS

When playing an Explorer, you can spend 1 XP to use one of the following player intrusions, provided the situation is appropriate and the GM agrees.

Fortuitous Malfunction: A trap or a dangerous device malfunctions before it can affect you.

Serendipitous Landmark: Just when it seems like the path is lost (or you are), a trail marker, a landmark, or simply the way the terrain or corridor bends, rises, or falls away suggests to you the best path forward, at least from this point.

Weak Strain: The poison or disease turns out not to be as debilitating or deadly as it first seemed, and inflicts only half the damage that it would have otherwise.

EXPLORER STAT POOLS

Stat	Pool Starting Value
Might	10
Speed	9
Intellect	9

You get 6 additional points to divide among your stat Pools however you wish.

Explorer Background Connection

Your type helps determine the connection you have to the setting. Roll a d20 or choose from the following list to determine a specific fact about your background that provides a connection to the rest of the world. You can also create your own fact.

d20	Background
1	You were a star high school athlete. You're still in great shape, but those were the glory days, man.
2	Your brother is the lead singer in a really popular band.
3	You have made a number of discoveries in your explorations, but not all opportunities to capitalize on them have panned out yet.
4	You were a cop, but you gave it up after encountering corruption on the force.

5	Your parents were missionaries, so you spent much of your young life traveling to exotic places.
6	You served in the military with honor.
7	You received assistance from a secretive organization, which paid for your schooling. Now they seem to want a lot more from you.
8	You went to a prestigious university on an athletic scholarship, but you excelled in class as well as on the field.
9	Your best friend from your youth is now an influential member of the government.
10	You used to be a teacher. Your students remember you fondly.
11	You worked as a small-time criminal operative until you were caught and served some time in jail, after which you tried to go straight.
12	Your greatest discovery to date was stolen by your arch-rival.
13	You belong to an exclusive organization of Explorers whose existence is not widely known.
14	You were kidnapped as a small child under mysterious circumstances, although you were recovered safely. The case still has some notoriety.
15	When you were young, you were addicted to narcotics, and now you are a recovering addict.
16	While exploring a remote location, you saw something strange you've never been able to explain.
17	You own a small bar or restaurant.
18	You published a book about some of your exploits and discoveries, and it has achieved some acclaim.
19	Your sister owns a store and gives you a hefty discount.
20	Your father is a high-ranking officer in the military with many connections.

FIRST-TIER EXPLORER

First-tier Explorers have the following abilities:

Effort: Your Effort is 1.

Physical Nature: You have a Might Edge of 1, a Speed Edge of 0, and an Intellect Edge of 0.

Cypher Use: You can bear two cyphers at a time.

Starting Equipment: Appropriate clothing and a weapon of your choice, plus two expensive items, two moderately priced items, and up to four inexpensive items.

Weapons: You can use light and medium weapons without penalty. You have an inability with heavy weapons; your attacks with heavy weapons are hindered.

Special Abilities: Choose four of the abilities listed below. You can't choose the same ability more than once unless its description says otherwise. The full description for each listed ability can be found in [Abilities](#), which also has descriptions for flavor and focus abilities in a single vast catalog.

Block

Danger Sense

Decipher

Endurance

Find the Way

Fleet of Foot

Improved Edge

Knowledge Skills

Muscles of Iron

No Need for Weapons

Physical Skills

Practiced in Armor

Practiced With All Weapons

Surging Confidence

Trained Without Armor

SECOND-TIER EXPLORER

Choose four of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Curious

Danger Instinct

Enable Others

Escape

Eye for Detail

Foil Danger

Hand to Eye

Investigative Skills

Quick Recovery

Range Increase

Skill With Defense

Stand Watch

Travel Skills

Wreck

THIRD-TIER EXPLORER

Choose three of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Controlled Fall

Experienced in Armor

Expert Cypher Use

Ignore the Pain

Obstacle Running

Resilience

Run and Fight

Seize the Moment

Skill With Attacks

Stone Breaker

Think Your Way Out

Trapfinder

Wrest From Chance

FOURTH-TIER EXPLORER

Choose two of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Capable Warrior

Expert Skill

Increased Effects

Read the Signs

Runner

Subtle Steps

Tough As Nails

FIFTH-TIER EXPLORER

Choose three of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Adroit Cypher Use

Free to Move

Group Friendship

Hard to Kill

Jump Attack

Mastery With Defense

Parry

Physically Gifted

Take Command

Vigilant

SIXTH-TIER EXPLORER

Choose three of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Again and Again

Inspire Coordinated Actions

Mastery in Armor

Mastery With Attacks

Negate Danger

Share Defense

Spin Attack

Wild Vitality

EXPLORER EXAMPLE

Sam decides to create an Explorer character for a science fiction campaign. This character will be a hardy soul who explores alien worlds. They put 3 additional points into their Might Pool, 2 into their Speed Pool, and 1 into their Intellect Pool; their stat Pools are now Might 13, Speed 11, and Intellect 10. As a first-tier character, their Effort is 1, their Might Edge is 1, and their Speed Edge and Intellect Edge are 0. Their character is fairly well-rounded so far.

Sam immediately leaps in and starts choosing abilities. They pick [Danger Sense](#) and [Surging Confidence](#), thinking those abilities will be generally useful. They also choose [Practiced in Armor](#), reasoning that the character wears high-tech medium armor when exploring. Last, they choose [Knowledge Skills](#) and select geology and biology to help during interplanetary explorations.

Sam's Explorer can bear two cyphers, which in this setting involve nanotechnology. The GM decides that one is a nanite injector that grants a +1 bonus to Might Edge when used, and the other is a device that can create one simple handheld object the user wishes.

Sam's Explorer is not really geared toward fighting, but sometimes the universe is a dangerous place, so they note that they're carrying a medium blaster as well.

Sam still needs a descriptor and a focus. Looking to the Descriptor chapter, they choose [Hardy](#), which increases their Might Pool to 17. They also heal more quickly and can operate better when injured. They're trained in Might defense but have an [inability](#) with initiative; however, it's effectively canceled out by their Danger Sense (and vice versa). Sam could go back and select something else instead of Danger Sense, but they like it and decide to keep it. Overall, the descriptor ends up making the character tough but a little slow.

For their focus, Sam chooses [Explores Dark Places](#) (in this case, weird ruins of alien civilizations). This gives the character a bunch of additional skills: searching, listening, climbing, balancing, and jumping. They're quite the capable Explorer.

For their character arc, Sam chooses [Enterprise](#). Exploring alien places sometimes turns up strange relics, and Sam figures they might be able to set up a service to reliably transport these items to responsible third parties, rather than allow them to fall into the hands of pirates and rich private collectors. For a small fee, of course.

SPEAKER

Fantasy/Fairy tale: bard, speaker, skald, emissary, priest, advocate

Modern/Horror/Romance: diplomat, charmer, face, spinner, manipulator, minister, mediator, lawyer

Science fiction: diplomat, empath, glam, consul, legate

Superhero/Post-Apocalyptic: charmer, mesmerist, puppet master

You're good with words and good with people. You talk your way past challenges and out of jams, and you get people to do what you want.

Individual Role: Speakers are smart and charismatic. They like people and, more important, they understand them. This helps speakers get others to do what needs to be done.

Group Role: The Speaker is often the face of the group, serving as the person who speaks for all and negotiates with others. Combat and action are not a Speaker's strong suits, so other characters sometimes have to defend the Speaker in times of danger.

Societal Role: Speakers are frequently political or religious leaders. Just as often, however, they are con artists or criminals.

Advanced Speakers: Higher-tier speakers use their abilities to control and manipulate people as well as aid and nurture their friends. They can talk their way out of danger and even use their words as weapons.

SPEAKER PLAYER INTRUSIONS

When playing a Speaker, you can spend 1 XP to use one of the following [player intrusions](#), provided the situation is appropriate and the GM agrees.

Friendly NPC: An NPC you don't know, someone you don't know that well, or someone you know but who hasn't been particularly friendly in the past chooses to help you, though doesn't necessarily explain why. Maybe they'll ask you for a favor in return afterward, depending on how much trouble they go to.

Perfect Suggestion: A follower or other already-friendly NPC suggests a course of action with regard to an urgent question, problem, or obstacle you're facing.

Unexpected Gift: An NPC hands you a physical gift you were not expecting, one that helps put the situation at ease if things seem strained, or provides you with a new insight for understanding the context of the situation if there's something you're failing to understand or grasp.

SPEAKER STAT POOLS

Stat	Pool Starting Value
Might	8
Speed	9

You get 6 additional points to divide among your stat Pools however you wish.

Speaker Background Connection

Your type helps determine the connection you have to the setting. Roll a d20 or choose from the following list to determine a specific fact about your background that provides a connection to the rest of the world. You can also create your own fact.

d20	Background
1	One of your parents was a famous entertainer in their early years and hoped you would excel in the same medium.
2	When you were a teenager, one of your siblings went missing and is presumed dead. The shock rent your family, and it's something you've never gotten over.
3	You were inducted into a secret society that claims to hold and protect esoteric knowledge opposing the forces of evil.
4	You lost one of your parents to alcoholism. They may still be alive, but you'd be hard pressed to find forgiveness.
5	You have no memory of anything that happened to you before the age of 18.
6	Your grandparents raised you on a farm far from bustling urban centers. You like to think the instruction they gave you prepared you for anything.
7	As an orphan, you had a difficult childhood, and your entry into adulthood was challenging.
8	You grew up in extreme poverty, among criminals. You still have some connections with the old neighborhood.
9	You served as an envoy for a powerful and influential person in the past, and they still look upon you with favor.
10	You have an annoying rival who always seems to get in your way or foil your plans.
11	You've worked yourself into the position of spokesperson for an organization or company of some importance.
12	Your neighbors were murdered, and the mystery remains unsolved.

13	You have traveled extensively, and during that time you accumulated quite a collection of strange souvenirs.
14	Your childhood sweetheart ended up with your best friend (now your ex-best friend).
15	You are part of a maligned minority, but you work to bring the injustice of your status to public attention.
16	You're part owner of a local bar, where you're something of a whiz in creating specialty cocktails.
17	You once ran a con that cheated important people out of money, and they want revenge.
18	You used to act in a traveling theater, and they remember you fondly (as do people in the places you visited).
19	You are in a close romantic relationship with someone in local politics.
20	Someone out there tries to pose as you, using your identity, often for nefarious ends. You've never met the culprit, but you'd certainly like to.

FIRST-TIER SPEAKER

First-tier speakers have the following abilities:

Effort: Your Effort is 1.

Genius: You have an Intellect Edge of 1, a Might Edge of 0, and a Speed Edge of 0.

Cypher Use: You can bear two cyphers at a time.

Weapons: You can use light weapons without penalty. You have an inability with medium and heavy weapons; your attacks with medium and heavy weapons are hindered.

Starting Equipment: Appropriate clothing and a light weapon of your choice, plus two expensive items, two moderately priced items, and up to four inexpensive items.

Special Abilities: Choose four of the abilities listed below. You can't choose the same ability more than once unless its description says otherwise. The full description for each listed ability can be found in [Abilities](#), which also has descriptions for flavor and focus abilities in a single vast catalog. (Some Speaker abilities, like Mind Reading or True Senses, imply a supernatural element. If this is inappropriate to the character or the setting, these abilities can be replaced with something from the stealth flavor, or the GM can slightly modify them so they are based in extraordinary talents and insight rather than the supernatural.)

Anecdote

Babel

Demeanor of Command

Encouragement

Enthrall

Erase Memories

Fast Talk

Inspire Aggression

Interaction Skills

Practiced With Medium Weapons

Spin Identity

Terrifying Presence

Understanding

SECOND-TIER SPEAKER

Choose two of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Basic Follower

Calm Stranger

Disincentivize

Gather Intelligence

Impart Ideal

Inspiring Ease

Interaction Skills

Practiced in Armor

Skill With Defense

Speedy Recovery

Unexpected Betrayal

THIRD-TIER SPEAKER

Choose three of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Accelerate

Blend In

Discerning Mind

Expert Cypher Use

Expert Follower

Grand Deception

Lead by Inquiry

Mind Reading

Oratory

Perfect Stranger

Quick Wits

Telling

FOURTH-TIER SPEAKER

Choose two of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Anticipate Attack

Confounding Banter

Feint

Heightened Skills

Psychosis

Read the Signs

Spur Effort

Strategize

Suggestion

FIFTH-TIER SPEAKER

Choose three of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Adroit Cypher Use

Discipline of Watchfulness

Experienced in Armor

Flee

Foul Aura

Knowing the Unknown

Regeneration

Skill With Attacks

Stimulate

SIXTH-TIER SPEAKER

Choose two of the abilities listed below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier.

Assume Control

Battle Management

Crowd Control

Inspiring Success

Recruit Deputy

Shatter Mind

True Senses

Word of Command

SPEAKER EXAMPLE

Mary wants to create a Speaker for a Lovecraftian horror campaign. She puts 3 of her additional stat points into her Intellect Pool and 3 into her Speed Pool; her stat Pools are now Might 8, Speed 12, and Intellect 14. As a first-tier character, her Effort is 1, her Might Edge and Speed Edge are 0, and her Intellect Edge is 1. She's smart and charismatic but not particularly tough.

Mary chooses [Fast Talk](#) and [Spin Identity](#) to help get into places and learn things she wants to know. She's a bit of a con artist. She's good to her friends, however, and chooses [Encouragement](#) as well. Mary rounds out her first-tier abilities with [Interaction Skills](#) (deceiving and persuasion).

A Speaker normally starts with two cyphers, but the GM rules that characters in this campaign start with only one—something creepy relating to their background. Mary's cypher is an odd pocket watch given to her by her grandfather. She doesn't know how or why, but when activated, the watch allows her to take twice as many actions for three rounds.

Mary's character carries a small knife hidden in her bag in case of trouble. As a light weapon, it inflicts 2 points of damage, but attacks with it are eased.

Mary chooses [Resilient](#) for her descriptor and decides that she can probably learn the truth behind some of the strange things that she's heard about without feeling too much trauma if it's horrible. Resilient increases her Might Pool to 10 and her Intellect Pool to 16. She's trained in Might and Intellect defense actions and gains an extra recovery roll each day. At first, Mary is sad that her descriptor gives her an [inability](#) in knowledge and puzzle tasks, but then she realizes that the flaw fits her character well—she's better at getting people to tell her what she needs to know than at figuring out the information herself.

For her focus, Mary chooses [Moves Like a Cat](#), granting her a final Speed Pool of 18 and training in balance. In the end, she's graceful and quick, charismatic, and hardier than she initially thought thanks to her drive. She's ready to investigate the weird.

For her character arc, Mary chooses [Fall From Grace](#). She decides she's had an obsession with a strange tome that's been in her family for generations, and her character is drawn to its strange languages and rituals.

FANTASY CHARACTER OPTIONS

In some cases, the ideas here require minor changes to the flavor described in the character options; you should work with your GM to make sure these changes are suitable for the campaign. Most of the foci in this section appear in the Cypher System; foci with an asterisk (*) are found later in this document. Some of these options recommend swapping out a type ability for an ability from one of the character flavors such as combat, magic, or stealth.

Alchemist: In the sense that an alchemist is someone who makes magical items or similar types of things, Adept and Explorer are appropriate type choices for academic alchemists. For a general sort of alchemist who makes potions of magical effects, choose the Masters Spells focus (instead of spells, you learn potions). For one who transforms into a powerful and dangerous creature, choose Howls at the Moon. For one who loves throwing bombs, choose Bears a Halo of Fire. For a healer, choose Works Miracles.

Assassin/Spy: Explorer and Warrior are good type choices for an assassin character. Appropriate foci are Masters Weaponry, Moves Like a Cat, Murders, and Works the Back Alleys.

Barbarian: A barbarian character is probably a Warrior or (to focus a little more on skills than combat) an Explorer. Good foci to choose from are Lives in the Wilderness, Masters Weaponry, Needs No Weapon, Never Says Die, Performs Feats of Strength, and Rages.

Bard: Bards in fantasy fiction and games are troubadours, minstrels, and storytellers, perhaps with a supernatural element. Bards are usually Explorers or Speakers. Appropriate foci are Entertains, Helps Their Friends, Infiltrates, and Masters Spells.

Cleric or Priest: Academic clerics are usually Adepts or Speakers, but martial clerics are often Warriors (perhaps with magic flavor). For a typical cleric with a versatile set of abilities, choose the Channels Divine Blessings focus.

Cleric (death): Consorts With the Dead, Shepherds Spirits

Cleric (knowledge): Learns Quickly, Sees Beyond, Would Rather Be Reading

Cleric (life): Defends the Weak, Shepherds the Community, Works Miracles

Cleric (light): Blazes With Radiance, Channels Divine Blessings

Cleric (storm): Rides the Lightning, Thunders

Cleric (trickery): Takes Animal Shape* (also see options for rogues)

Cleric (war): Masters Weaponry (also see options for fighters)

Druid: As a very specific sort of nature priest, a druid character is usually an Adept or Explorer (in either case probably using the magic flavor). A typical druid probably has Channels Divine Blessings or Lives in the Wilderness as a focus, but for more specific options, see the following foci:

Druid (animal companion): Controls Beasts, Masters the Swarm

Druid (elemental): Abides in Stone, Bears a Halo of Fire, Moves Like the Wind, Rides the Lightning, Wears a Sheen of Ice

Druid (nature affinity): Speaks for the Land

Druid (transformation): Abides in Stone, Takes Animal Shape*, Walks the Wild Woods*

Fighter: Fighters almost always have the Warrior type, but some are Explorers. A typical fighter probably has a direct focus like Masters Weaponry or Wields an Enchanted Weapon*. For additional options based on choosing a specific fighting role, see the following:

Fighter (guardian): Brandishes an Exotic Shield, Defends the Gate, Masters Defense, Never Says Die, Stands Like a Bastion.

Fighter (melee): Fights Dirty, Fights With Panache, Looks For Trouble, Needs No Weapon, Wields Two Weapons at Once

Fighter (ranged): Is Licensed to Carry, Throws With Deadly Accuracy

Gunslinger: A gunslinger is probably a Warrior or Explorer, but some are Speakers with combat flavor. Appropriate foci are Is Licensed to Carry, Masters Weaponry, Sailed Beneath the Jolly Roger, and Wields an Enchanted Weapon*.

Inquisitor: Inquisitors are usually Explorers, Speakers, or Warriors, depending on whether their inclinations are for having many skills, being good at interacting with people, or combat. Appropriate foci are Infiltrates, Metes Out Justice, and Operates Undercover.

Merchant: An Explorer with a focus dealing with social interactions, like Entertains or Leads, would make a good merchant character, but the more obvious choice would be a Speaker.

Monk or Martial Artist: As masters of unarmed combat, monks are usually Warriors or Explorers (perhaps with a combat flavor). Appropriate foci are Fights With Panache, Needs No Weapon, and Throws With Deadly Accuracy.

Paladin/Holy Knight/Paragon: As holy warriors who mix martial prowess and magic, paladins are usually Warriors or Explorers (in either case, perhaps modified with the magic flavor). Good foci for this type of character include Defends the Gate, Defends the Weak, Metes Out Justice, Slays Monsters, and Wields an Enchanted Weapon*.

Ranger: Rangers mix combat and skills, and therefore are usually Explorers (perhaps with combat flavor) or Warriors (perhaps with skills and knowledge flavor). Appropriate foci for a ranger are Controls Beasts, Hunts, Lives in the Wilderness, Slays Monsters, Throws With Deadly Accuracy, and Wields Two Weapons at Once.

Rogue or Thief: Most rogue-type characters are Explorers, but an interaction-focused rogue could easily be a Speaker (perhaps with stealth flavor). Good foci for rogues are Explores Dark Places, Fights Dirty, Hunts, Infiltrates, Is Wanted by the Law, Moves Like a Cat, Sailed Beneath the Jolly Roger, and Works the Back Alleys.

Sorcerer: Sorcerers, for our purpose here, are mages who have inherent magical abilities (as opposed to wizards, who study long and hard to get their spells). Most sorcerers are Adepts, but some are Explorers or Speakers. The Masters Spells focus gives a typical sorcerer an effective set of abilities, and most foci choices provide a themed set of spells. For sorcerers of various magical bloodlines, see the following:

Sorcerer (angel): Blazes With Radiance, Channels Divine Blessings, Keeps a Magic Ally

Sorcerer (destiny): Descends From Nobility, Was Foretold

Sorcerer (dragon): Bears a Halo of Fire, Rides the Lightning, Wears a Sheen of Ice

Sorcerer (elemental): Abides in Stone, Bears a Halo of Fire, Employs Magnetism, Moves Like the Wind, Rides the Lightning, Wears a Sheen of Ice

Sorcerer (fey): Takes Animal Shape*

Sorcerer (fiend): Bears a Halo of Fire, Keeps a Magic Ally

Sorcerer (undead): Consorts With the Dead, Shepherds Spirits

Trickster or Con Artist: These clever folks are typically Speakers, although they could be Adepts if they are very magical (or Explorers if they aren't magical at all). Foci choices include Fights Dirty, Works the Back Alleys, or Entertains.

War-wizard: For those unusual characters who use a mix of weapon attacks and spells, play a Warrior with magic flavor or an Expert with combat or magic flavor. Appropriate foci include Fights With Panache, Masters Weaponry, and Wields an Enchanted Weapon*.

Warlock or Witch: For the purposes of this list, warlocks and witches are mages who gain magical power from pacts they make with otherworldly entities. Most warlocks are Adepts, but Explorers and Speakers (perhaps with magic flavor) can be interesting options. Fun foci for a warlock include Dances With Dark Matter, Keeps a Magic Ally, Masters the Swarm, Separates Mind From Body, and Was Foretold, but (depending on the patron and pact) most sorcerer and wizard foci work just as well.

Wild Mage: Those who use chaotic magic are usually Adepts, but a dabbler might be an Explorer or Speaker with the magic flavor. The best focus that suits this theme is Uses Wild Magic*.

Wizard: For the purposes of this list, wizards study magical lore at length to learn the ways of spellcasting (as opposed to sorcerers, warlocks, and so on). Wizards are usually Adepts, but a person-oriented wizard might be a Speaker (perhaps with the magic flavor). For a generalist wizard who has a variety of spells, choose the Masters Spells focus. For more specific kinds of wizards, see the following:

Wizard (abjurer): Absorbs Energy, Focuses Mind Over Matter, Wears a Sheen of Ice

Wizard (conjurer or summoner): Controls Beasts, Keeps a Magic Ally

Wizard (diviner): Learns Quickly, Sees Beyond, Separates Mind From Body, Solves Mysteries Wizard (enchanter): Commands Mental Powers, Leads

Wizard (evoker): Bears a Halo of Fire, Blazes With Radiance, Rides the Lightning, Thunders, Wears a Sheen of Ice

Wizard (illusionist): Awakens Dreams, Crafts Illusions

Wizard (necromancer): Consorts With the Dead, Shepherds Spirits

Wizard (transmuter): Controls Gravity, Focuses Mind Over Matter, Takes Animal Shape*

PREPARED VS. SPONTANEOUS SPELLCASTING

Magical characters get their abilities (which might be spells, rituals, or something else) from their type and focus, and they can use these abilities as they see fit as long as they spend the required Pool points. This technically makes them more like spontaneous casters. If you'd like to play something more like a prepared-caster wizard with a large selection of abilities that you narrow down each day, consider a spellcasting-oriented focus like Channels Divine Blessings, Masters Spells, or Speaks for the Land, and consider augmenting it with the optional spellcasting rule.

FURTHER CUSTOMIZATION

The rules in this section are more advanced and always involve the GM. They can be used by the GM to tailor a type to better fit the genre or setting, or by a player and a GM to tweak a character to fit a concept.

MODIFYING TYPE ASPECTS

The following aspects of the four character types can be modified at character creation. Other abilities should not be changed.

Stat Pools: Each character type has a starting stat Pool value. A player can exchange points between their Pools on a one-for-one basis. For example, they can trade 2 points of Might for 2 points of Speed. However, no starting stat Pool should be higher than 20.

Edge: A player can start with an Edge of 1 in whichever stat they wish.

Cypher Use: If a character gives up the ability to bear one cypher, they gain an additional skill of their choice.

Weapons: Some types have static first-tier abilities that let them use light, medium, and/or heavy weapons without a penalty. Warriors can use all weapons, Explorers can use light and medium weapons, and Adepts and Speakers can use light weapons. Any one of these weapon abilities can be sacrificed to gain training in a different skill of the player's choice.

DRAWBACKS AND PENALTIES

In addition to other customization options, a player can choose to take drawbacks or penalties to gain further advantages.

Weakness: A weakness is, essentially, the opposite of Edge. If you have a weakness of 1 in Speed, all Speed actions that require you to spend points cost 1 additional point from your Pool. At any time, a player can give their character a weakness in one stat and, in exchange, gain +1 to their Edge in one of the other two stats. So a PC can take a weakness of 1 in Speed to gain +1 to their Might Edge.

Normally, you can have a weakness only in a stat in which you have an Edge of 0. Further, you can't have more than one weakness, and you can't have a weakness greater than 1 unless the additional weakness comes from another source (such as a disease or disability arising from actions or conditions in the game).

Inabilities: Inabilities are like negative skills. They make one type of task harder by hindering it. If a character chooses to take an inability, they gain a skill of their choice. Normally, a character can have only one inability

unless the additional inability comes from another source (such as a descriptor or a disease or disability arising from actions or conditions in the game).

Flavor

Flavors are groups of special abilities the GM and players can use to alter a character type to make it more to their liking or more appropriate to the genre or setting. For example, if a player wants to create a magic-using thief character, she could play an Adept with stealth flavoring. In a science fiction setting, a Warrior might also have knowledge of machinery, so the character could be flavored with technology.

At a given tier, abilities from a flavor are traded one for one with standard abilities from a type. So to add the Danger Sense stealth flavor ability to a Warrior, something else—perhaps Bash—must be sacrificed. Now that character can choose Danger Sense as they would any other first-tier warrior ability, but they can never choose Bash.

The GM should always be involved in flavoring a type. For example, they might know that for their science fiction game, they want a type called a “Glam,” which is a Speaker flavored with certain technology abilities—specifically those that make the character a flamboyant starship pilot. Thus, they exchange the first-tier abilities Spin Identity and Inspire Aggression for the technology flavor abilities Datajack and Tech Skills so the character can plug into the ship directly and can take piloting and computers as skills.

In the end, flavor is mostly a tool for the GM to easily create campaign-specific types by making a few slight alterations to the four base types. Although players may wish to use flavors to get the characters they want, remember that they can also shape their PCs with descriptors and foci very nicely.

The flavors available are stealth, technology, magic, combat, and skills and knowledge.

The full description for each listed ability can be found in the Abilities [chapter](#), which also contains descriptions for type and focus abilities in a single vast catalog.

STEALTH FLAVOR

Characters with the stealth flavor are good at sneaking around, infiltrating places they don’t belong, and deceiving others. They use these abilities in a variety of ways, including combat. An Explorer with stealth flavor might be a thief, while a Warrior with stealth flavor might be an assassin. An Explorer with stealth flavor in a superhero setting might be a crimefighter who stalks the streets at night.

FIRST-TIER STEALTH ABILITIES

Danger Sense

Goad

Legerdemain

Opportunist

Stealth Skills

SECOND-TIER STEALTH ABILITIES

Contortionist

Find an Opening

Get Away

Sense Ambush

Surprise Attack

THIRD-TIER STEALTH ABILITIES

Evanesce

From the Shadows

Gambler

Inner Defense

Misdirect

Run and Fight

Seize the Moment

FOURTH-TIER STEALTH ABILITIES

Ambusher

Debilitating Strike

Outwit

Preternatural Senses

Tumbling Moves

FIFTH-TIER STEALTH ABILITIES

Assassin Strike

Mask

Return to Sender

Uncanny Luck

SIXTH-TIER STEALTH ABILITIES

Exploit Advantage

Spring Away

Thief's Luck

Twist of Fate

TECHNOLOGY FLAVOR

Characters with a flavor of technology typically are from science fiction or at least modern-day settings (although anything is possible). They excel at using, dealing with, and building machines. An Explorer with technology flavor might be a starship pilot, and a Speaker flavored with technology could be a technopriest.

Some of the less computer-oriented abilities might be appropriate for a steampunk character, while a modern-day character could use some of the abilities that don't involve starships or ultratech.

FIRST-TIER TECHNOLOGY ABILITIES

Datajack

Hacker

Machine Interface

Scramble Machine

Tech Skills

Tinker

SECOND-TIER TECHNOLOGY ABILITIES

Distant Interface

Machine Efficiency

Overload Machine

Serv-0

Serv-0 Defender

Serv-0 Repair

Tool Mastery

THIRD-TIER TECHNOLOGY ABILITIES

Mechanical Telepathy

Serv-0 Scanner

Ship Footing

Shipspeak

Spray

FOURTH-TIER TECHNOLOGY ABILITIES

Machine Bond

Robot Fighter

Serv-0 Aim

Serv-0 Brawler

Serv-0 Spy

FIFTH-TIER TECHNOLOGY ABILITIES

Control Machine

Jury-Rig

Machine Companion

SIXTH-TIER TECHNOLOGY ABILITIES

Information Gathering

Master Machine

MAGIC FLAVOR

You know a little about magic. You might not be a wizard, but you know the basics—how it works, and how to accomplish a few wondrous things. Of course, in your setting, “magic” might actually mean psychic powers, mutant abilities, weird alien tech, or anything else that produces interesting and useful effects.

An Explorer flavored with magic might be a wizard-hunter, and a Speaker with magical flavor might be a sorcerer-bard. Although an Adept flavored with magic is still an Adept, you might find that swapping some of the type’s basic abilities with those given here tailors the character in desirable ways.

FIRST-TIER MAGIC ABILITIES

Blessing of the Gods

Closed Mind

Entangling Force

Hedge Magic

Magic Training

Mental Link

Premonition

SECOND-TIER MAGIC ABILITIES

Concussive Blast

Fetch

Force Field

Lock

Repair Flesh

THIRD-TIER MAGIC ABILITIES

Distance Viewing

Fire Bloom

Fling

Force at Distance

Summon Giant Spider

FOURTH-TIER MAGIC ABILITIES

Elemental Protection

Ignition

Pry Open

FIFTH-TIER MAGIC ABILITIES

Create

Divine Intervention

Dragon's Maw

Fast Travel

True Senses

SIXTH-TIER MAGIC ABILITIES

Relocate

Summon Demon

Traverse the Worlds

Word of Death

COMBAT FLAVOR

Combat flavor makes a character more martial. A Speaker with combat flavor in a fantasy setting would be a battle bard. An Explorer with combat flavor in a historical game might be a pirate. An Adept flavored with combat in a science fiction setting could be a veteran of a thousand psychic wars.

FIRST-TIER COMBAT ABILITIES

Danger Sense

Practiced in Armor

Practiced With Medium Weapons

SECOND-TIER COMBAT ABILITIES

Bloodlust

Combat Prowess

Trained Without Armor

THIRD-TIER COMBAT ABILITIES

Practiced With All Weapons

Skill With Attacks

Skill With Defense

Successive Attack

FOURTH-TIER COMBAT ABILITIES

Capable Warrior

Deadly Aim

Fury

Misdirect

Spray

FIFTH-TIER COMBAT ABILITIES

Experienced Defender

Hard Target

Parry

SIXTH-TIER COMBAT ABILITIES

Greater Skill With Attacks

Mastery in Armor

Mastery With Defense

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE FLAVOR

This flavor is for characters in roles that call for more knowledge and more real-world application of talent. It's less flashy and dramatic than supernatural powers or the ability to hack apart multiple foes, but sometimes expertise or know-how is the real solution to a problem.

A Warrior flavored with skills and knowledge might be a military engineer. An Explorer flavored with skills and knowledge could be a field scientist. A Speaker with this flavor might be a teacher.

FIRST-TIER SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE ABILITIES

Interaction Skills

Investigative Skills

Knowledge Skills

Physical Skills

Travel Skills

SECOND-TIER SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE ABILITIES

Extra Skill

Tool Mastery

Understanding

THIRD-TIER SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE ABILITIES

Flex Skill

Improvise

FOURTH-TIER SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE ABILITIES

Multiple Skills

Quick Wits

Task Specialization

FIFTH-TIER SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE ABILITIES

Practiced With Medium Weapons

Read the Signs

SIXTH-TIER SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE ABILITIES

Skill With Attacks

Skill With Defense

Descriptor

Your descriptor defines your character—it flavors everything you do. The differences between a *Charming* Explorer and a *Vicious* Explorer are considerable. The descriptor changes the way those characters go about every action. Your descriptor places your character in the situation (the first adventure, which starts the campaign) and helps provide motivation. It is the adjective of the sentence “I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*.”

Descriptors offer a one-time package of extra abilities, skills, or modifications to your stat Pools. Not all of a descriptor’s offerings are positive character modifications. For example, some descriptors have *inabilities*—tasks that a character isn’t good at. You can think of *inabilities* as negative skills—instead of being one step better at that kind of task, you’re one step worse. If you become skilled at a task that you have an *inability* with, they cancel out. Remember that characters are defined as much by what they’re *not* good at as by what they *are* good at.

Descriptors also offer a few brief suggestions for how your character got involved with the rest of the group on their first adventure. You can use these, or not, as you wish.

This section details fifty descriptors. Choose one of them for your character. You can pick any descriptor you wish regardless of your type. At the end of this chapter, a few options are provided for [Customizing Descriptors](#), including making a character's *species* their descriptor.

(Your descriptor matters most when you are a beginning character. The benefits (and perhaps drawbacks) that come from your descriptor will eventually be overshadowed by the growing importance of your type and focus. However, the influence of your descriptor will remain at least somewhat important throughout your character's life.)

DESCRIPTORS

Appealing

Beneficent

Brash

Calm

Chaotic

Charming

Clever

Clumsy

Craven

Creative

Cruel

Dishonorable

Doomed

Empathic

Exiled

Fast

Foolish

Graceful

Guarded

Hardy

Hideous

Honorable

Impulsive

Inquisitive

Intelligent

Intuitive

Jovial

Kind

Learned

Lucky

Mad

Mechanical

Mysterious

Mystical

Naive

Perceptive

Resilient

Risk-Taking

Rugged

Sharp-Eyed

Skeptical

Stealthy

Strong

Strong-Willed

Swift

Tongue-Tied

Tough

Vicious

Virtuous

Weird

APPEALING

You're attractive to others, but perhaps more important, you are likeable and charismatic. You've got that "special something" that draws others to you. You often know just the right thing to say to make someone laugh, put them at ease, or spur them to action. People like you, want to help you, and want to be your friend.

You gain the following characteristics:

Charismatic: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You are trained in pleasant social interactions.

Resistant to Charms: You're aware of how others can manipulate and charm people, and you notice when those tactics are used on you. Because of this awareness, you are trained in resisting any kind of persuasion or seduction if you wish it.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You met a total stranger (one of the other PCs) and charmed them so much that they invited you along.
2. The PCs were looking for someone else, but you convinced them that you were perfect instead.

3. Pure happenstance—because you just go along with the flow of things and everything usually works out.
4. Your charismatic ways helped get one of the PCs out of a difficult spot a long time ago, and they always ask you to join them on new adventures.

BENEFICENT

Helping others is your calling. It's why you're here. Others delight in your outgoing and charitable nature, and you delight in their happiness. You're at your best when you're aiding people, either by explaining how they can best overcome a challenge or by demonstrating how to do so yourself.

You gain the following characteristics:

Generous: Allies who have spent the last day with you add +1 to their recovery rolls.

Altruistic: If you're standing next to a creature that takes damage, you can intercede and take 1 point of that damage yourself (reducing the damage inflicted on the creature by 1 point). If you have Armor, it does not provide a benefit when you use this ability.

Skill: You're trained in all tasks related to pleasant social interaction, putting other people at ease, and gaining trust.

Helpful: Whenever you [help](#) another character, that character gains the benefit as if you were trained even if you are not trained or specialized in the attempted task.

Inability: While you are alone, all Intellect and Speed tasks are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. Even though you didn't know most of the other PCs beforehand, you invited yourself along on their quest.
2. You saw the PCs struggling to overcome a problem and selflessly joined them to help.
3. You're nearly certain the PCs will fail without you.
4. The choice was between your tattered life and helping others. You haven't looked back since.

BRASH

You're a self-assertive sort, confident in your abilities, energetic, and perhaps a bit irreverent toward ideas that you don't agree with. Some people call you bold and brave, but those you've put in their place might call you puffed up and arrogant. Whatever. It's not in your nature to care what other people think about you, unless those people are your friends or family. Even someone as brash as you knows that friends sometimes have to come first.

You gain the following characteristics:

Energetic: +2 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You are trained in [initiative](#).

Bold: You are trained in all actions that involve overcoming or ignoring the effects of fear or intimidation.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You noticed something weird going on, and without much thought, you jumped in with both feet.
2. You showed up when and where you did on a dare because, hey, you don't back down from dares.
3. Someone called you out, but instead of walking into a fight, you walked into your current situation.

4. You told your friend that nothing could scare you, and nothing you saw would change your mind. They brought you to your current point.

CALM

You've spent most of your life in sedentary pursuits—books, movies, hobbies, and so on—rather than active ones. You're well versed in all manner of academia or other intellectual pursuits, but nothing physical. You're not weak or feeble, necessarily (although this is a good descriptor for characters who are elderly), but you have no experience in more physical activities.

(Calm is a great descriptor for characters who never intended to have adventures but were thrust into them, a trope that occurs often in modern games and particularly in horror games.)

You gain the following characteristics:

Bookish: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skills: You are trained in four nonphysical skills of your choice.

Trivia: You can come up with a random fact pertinent to the current situation when you wish it. This is always a matter of fact, not conjecture or supposition, and must be something you could have logically read or seen in the past. You can do this one time, although the ability is renewed each time you make a recovery roll.

Inability: You're just not a fighter. All physical attacks are hindered.

Inability: You're not the outdoorsy type. All climbing, running, jumping, and swimming tasks are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You read about the current situation somewhere and decided to check it out for yourself.
2. You were in the right (wrong?) place at the right (wrong?) time.
3. While avoiding an entirely different situation, you walked into your current situation.
4. One of the other PCs dragged you into it.

CHAOTIC

Danger doesn't mean much to you, mainly because you don't think much about repercussions. In fact, you enjoy sowing surprises, just to see what will happen. The more unexpected the result, the happier you are. Sometimes you are particularly manic, and for the sake of your companions, you restrain yourself from taking actions that you know will lead to disaster.

You gain the following characteristics:

Tumultuous: +4 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You are trained in Intellect defense actions.

Chaotic: Once after each ten-hour recovery roll, if you don't like the first result, you can reroll a die roll of your choice. If you do, and regardless of the outcome, the GM presents you with a GM intrusion.

Inability: Your body is a bit worn from occasional excesses. Might defense tasks are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. Another PC recruited you while you were on your best behavior, before realizing how chaotic you were.
2. You have reason to believe that being with the other PCs will help you gain control over your erratic behavior.

3. Another PC released you from captivity, and to thank them, you volunteered to help.
4. You have no idea how you joined the PCs. You're just going along with it for now until answers present themselves.

CHARMING

You're a smooth talker and a charmer. Whether through seemingly supernatural means or just a way with words, you can convince others to do as you wish. Most likely, you're physically attractive or at least highly charismatic, and others enjoy listening to your voice. You probably pay attention to your appearance, keeping yourself well groomed. You make friends easily. You play up the personality facet of your Intellect stat; intelligence is not your strong suit. You're personable, but not necessarily studious or strong-willed.

You gain the following characteristics:

Personable: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're trained in all tasks involving positive or pleasant social interaction.

Skill: You're trained when using special abilities that influence the minds of others.

Contact: You have an important contact who is in an influential position, such as a minor noble, the captain of the town guard/police, or the head of a large gang of thieves. You and the GM should work out the details together.

Inability: You were never good at studying or retaining facts. Any task involving lore, knowledge, or understanding is hindered.

Inability: Your willpower is not one of your strong points. Defense actions to resist mental attacks are hindered.

Additional Equipment: You've managed to talk your way into some decent discounts and bonuses in recent weeks. As a result, you have enough cash jangling in your pocket to purchase a moderately priced item.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You convinced one of the other PCs to tell you what they were doing.
2. You instigated the whole thing and convinced the others to join you.
3. One of the other PCs did a favor for you, and now you're repaying that obligation by helping them with the task at hand.
4. There is a reward involved, and you need the money.

CLEVER

You're quick-witted, thinking well on your feet. You understand people, so you can fool them but are rarely fooled. Because you easily see things for what they are, you get the lay of the land swiftly, size up threats and allies, and assess situations with accuracy. Perhaps you're physically attractive, or maybe you use your wit to overcome any physical or mental imperfections.

You gain the following characteristics:

Smart: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're trained in all interactions involving lies or trickery.

Skill: You're trained in defense rolls to resist mental effects.

Skill: You're trained in all tasks involving identifying or assessing danger, lies, quality, importance, function, or power.

Inability: You were never good at studying or retaining trivial knowledge. Any task involving lore, knowledge, or understanding is hindered.

Additional Equipment: You see through the schemes of others and occasionally convince them to believe you—even when, perhaps, they should not. Thanks to your clever behavior, you have an additional expensive item.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You convinced one of the other PCs to tell you what they were doing.
2. From afar, you observed that something interesting was going on.
3. You talked your way into the situation because you thought it might earn some money.
4. You suspect that the other PCs won't succeed without you.

CLUMSY

Graceless and awkward, you were told that you'd grow out of it, but you never did. You often drop things, trip over your own feet, or knock things (or people) over. Some people get frustrated by this quality, but most find it funny and even a little charming.

(Some players may not want to be defined by a “negative” quality like Clumsy, but in truth, even this kind of descriptor has enough advantages that it makes for capable and talented characters. What negative descriptors really do is make more interesting and complex characters that are often great fun to play.)

You gain the following characteristics:

Butterfingers: -2 to your Speed Pool.

Thick-Muscled: +2 to your Might Pool.

Inelegant: You have a certain lovable charm. You are trained in all pleasant social interactions when you express a lighthearted, self-deprecating manner.

Dumb Luck: The GM can introduce a [GM intrusion](#) on you, based on your clumsiness, without awarding you any XP (as if you had rolled a 1 on a d20 roll). However, if this happens, 50% of the time, your clumsiness works to your advantage. Rather than hurting you (much), it helps you, or it hurts your enemies. You slip, but it's just in time to duck an attack. You fall down, but you trip your enemies as you crash into their legs. You turn around too quickly, but you end up knocking the weapon from your foe's hand. You and the GM should work together to determine the details. If the GM wishes, they can use GM intrusions based on your clumsiness normally (awarding XP).

Skill: You've got a certain bull-like quality. You are trained in tasks involving breaking things.

Inability: Any task that involves balance, grace, or hand-to-eye coordination is hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You were in the right place at the right time.
2. You had a piece of information that the other PCs needed to make their plans.
3. A sibling recommended you to the other PCs.
4. You stumbled into the PCs as they were discussing their mission, and they took a liking to you.

CRAVEN

Courage fails you at every turn. You lack the willpower and resolve to stand fast in the face of danger. Fear gnaws at your heart, chewing away at your mind, driving you to distraction until you cannot bear it. Most times, you back down from confrontations. You flee from threats and vacillate when faced with difficult decisions.

Yet for all that fear dogs you and possibly shames you, your cowardly nature proves to be a useful ally from time to time. Listening to your fears has helped you escape danger and avoid taking unnecessary risks. Others may have suffered in your place, and you might be the first to admit this fact, but secretly you feel intense relief from having avoided an unthinkable and terrible fate.

(Descriptors like Craven, Cruel, and Dishonorable might not be appropriate for every group. These are villainous traits and some people want their PCs to be entirely heroic. But others don't mind a little moral greyness thrown into the mix. Still others see things like Craven and Cruel as traits to overcome as their characters develop (probably earning them different descriptors).)

You gain the following characteristics:

Furtive: +2 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You're trained in stealth-based tasks.

Skill: You're trained in running actions.

Skill: You're trained in any action taken to escape danger, flee from a dangerous situation, or wheedle your way out of trouble.

Inability: You do not willingly enter dangerous situations. Any initiative actions (to determine who goes first in combat) are hindered.

Inability: You fall to pieces when you have to undertake a potentially dangerous task alone. Any such task (such as attacking a creature by yourself) is hindered.

Additional Equipment: You have a good luck charm or protective device to keep you out of harm's way.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You believe that you're being hunted, and you have hired one of the other PCs as your protector.
2. You seek to escape your shame and take up with capable individuals in the hopes of repairing your reputation.
3. One of the other PCs bullied you into coming along.
4. The group answered your cries for help when you were in trouble.

CREATIVE

Maybe you have a notebook where you write down ideas so you can develop them later. Perhaps you email yourself ideas that strike you out of the blue so you can sort them in an electronic document. Or maybe you just sit down, stare at your screen and, by indomitable force of will, produce something from nothing.

However your gift works, you're creative—you code, write, compose, sculpt, design, direct, or otherwise create narratives that enthrall other people with your vision.

You gain the following characteristics:

Inventive: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Original: You're always coming up with something new. You're trained in any task related to creating a narrative (such as a story, play, or scenario). This includes deception, if the deception involves a narrative you're able to tell.

Skill: You are naturally inventive. You are trained in one specific creative skill of your choice: writing, computer coding, composing music, painting, drawing, and so on.

Skill: You love solving riddles and the like. You are trained in puzzle-solving tasks.

Skill: To be creative requires that you always be learning. You are trained in any task that involves finding out something new, such as when you're digging through a library, data bank, news archive, or similar collection of knowledge.

Inability: You're inventive but not charming. All tasks related to pleasant social interaction are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You were doing research for a project and convinced the PCs to bring you along.
2. You're looking for new markets for the results of your creative output.
3. You fell in with the wrong crowd, but they grew on you.
4. A creative life is often one beset with financial hurdles. You joined the PCs because you hoped it would be profitable.

CRUEL

Misfortune and suffering do not move you. When another endures hardship, you find it hard to care, and you may even enjoy the pain and difficulty the person experiences if they've done you wrong in the past. Your cruel streak may derive from bitterness brought about by your own struggles and disappointments. You might be a hard pragmatist, doing what you feel you must even if others are worse for it. Or you could be a sadist, delighting in the pain you inflict.

Being cruel does not necessarily make you a villain. Your cruelty may be reserved for those who cross you or other people useful to you. You might have become cruel as the result of an intensely awful experience. Abuse and torture, for example, can strip away compassion for other living beings.

As well, you need not be cruel in every situation. In fact, others might see you as personable, friendly, and even helpful. But when angered or frustrated, your dual nature reveals itself, and those who have earned your scorn are likely to suffer for it.

You gain the following characteristics:

Cunning: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Cruelty: When you use force, you can choose to maim or deliver painful injuries to draw out your foe's suffering. Whenever you inflict damage, you can choose to inflict 2 fewer points of damage to ease your next attack against that foe.

Skill: You're trained in tasks related to deception, intimidation, and persuasion when you interact with characters experiencing physical or emotional pain.

Inability: You have a hard time connecting with others, understanding their motives, or sharing their feelings. Any task to ascertain another character's motives, feelings, or disposition is hindered.

Additional Equipment: You have a valuable memento from the last person you destroyed. The memento is moderately priced, and you can sell it or trade it for an item of equal or lesser value.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You suspect that you might gain a long-term advantage from helping the other PCs and may be able to use that advantage against your enemies.
2. By joining the PCs, you see an opportunity to grow your personal power and status at the expense of others.
3. You hope to make another PC's life more difficult by joining the group.
4. Joining the PCs gives you an opportunity to escape justice for a crime you committed.

DISHONORABLE

There is no honor among thieves—or betrayers, backstabbers, liars, or cheats. You are all of these things, and either you don't lose any sleep over it, or you deny the truth to others or to yourself. Regardless, you are willing to do whatever it takes to get your own way. Honor, ethics, and principles are merely words. In your estimation, they have no place in the real world.

You gain the following characteristics:

Sneaky: +4 to your Speed Pool.

Just Desserts: When the GM gives another player an experience point to award to someone for a GM intrusion, that player cannot give it to you.

Skill: You are trained in deception.

Skill: You are trained in stealth.

Skill: You are trained in intimidation.

Inability: People don't like or trust you. Pleasant social interactions are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You are interested in what the PCs are doing, so you lied to them to get into their group.
2. While skulking about, you overheard the PCs' plans and realized that you wanted in.
3. One of the other PCs invited you, having no idea of what you're truly like.
4. You bullied your way in with intimidation and bluster.

DOOMED

You are quite certain that your fate is leading you, inextricably, toward a terrible end. This fate might be yours alone, or you might be dragging along the people closest to you.

You gain the following characteristics:

Jumpy: +2 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: Always on the lookout for danger, you are trained in perception-related tasks.

Skill: You are defense minded, so you are trained in Speed defense tasks.

Skill: You are cynical and expect the worst. Thus, you are resistant to mental shocks. You are trained in Intellect defense tasks having to do with losing your sanity or equanimity.

Doom: Every other time the GM uses [GM intrusion](#) on your character, you cannot refuse it and do not get an XP for it (you still get an XP to award to another player). This is because you are doomed. The universe is a cold, uncaring place, and your efforts are futile at best.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You attempted to avoid it, but events seemed to conspire to draw you to where you are.
2. Why not? It doesn't matter. You're doomed no matter what you do.
3. One of the other PCs saved your life, and now you're repaying that obligation by helping them with the task at hand.
4. You suspect that the only hope you have of avoiding your fate might lie on this path.

EMPATHIC

Other people are open books to you. You may have a knack for reading a person's tells, those subtle movements that convey an individual's mood and disposition. Or you may receive information in a more direct way, feeling a person's emotions as if they were tangible things, sensations that lightly brush against your mind. Your gift for empathy helps you navigate social situations and control them to avoid misunderstandings and prevent useless conflicts from erupting.

The constant bombardment of emotions from those around you likely takes a toll. You might move with the prevailing mood, swinging from giddy happiness to bitter sorrow with little warning. Or you might close yourself off and remain inscrutable to others out of a sense of self-preservation or an unconscious fear that everyone else might learn how you truly feel.

You gain the following characteristics:

Open Mind: +4 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're trained in tasks involving sensing other emotions, discerning dispositions, and getting a hunch about people around you.

Skill: You're trained in all tasks involving social interaction, pleasant or otherwise.

Inability: Being so receptive to others' thoughts and moods makes you vulnerable to anything that attacks your mind. Intellect defense rolls are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You sensed the commitment to the task the other PCs have and felt moved to help them.
2. You established a close bond with another PC and can't bear to be parted from them.
3. You sensed something strange in one of the PCs and decided to join the group to see if you can sense it again and uncover the truth.
4. You joined the PCs to escape an unpleasant relationship or negative environment.

EXILED

You have walked a long and lonely road, leaving your home and your life behind. You might have committed a heinous crime, something so awful that your people forced you out, and if you dare return, you face death. You might have been accused of a crime you didn't commit and now must pay the price for someone else's wicked deed. Your exile might be the result of a social gaffe—perhaps you shamed your family or a friend, or you embarrassed yourself in front of your peers, an authority, or someone you respect. Whatever the reason, you have left your old life behind and now strive to make a new one.

You gain the following characteristics:

Self-Reliant: +2 to your Might Pool.

Loner: You gain no benefit when you get [help](#) with a task from another character who is trained or specialized in that task.

Skill: You're trained in all tasks involving sneaking.

Skill: You're trained in all tasks involving foraging, hunting, and finding safe places to rest or hide.

Inability: Living on your own for as long as you have makes you slow to trust others and awkward in social situations. Any task involving social interaction is hindered.

Additional Equipment: You have a memento from your past—an old picture, a locket with a few strands of hair inside, or a lighter given to you by someone important. You keep the object close at hand and pull it out to help you remember better times.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. The other PCs earned your trust by helping you when you needed it. You accompany them to repay them.
2. While exploring on your own, you discovered something strange. When you traveled to a settlement, the PCs were the only ones who believed you, and they have accompanied you to help you deal with the problem.
3. One of the other PCs reminds you of someone you used to know.
4. You have grown weary of your isolation. Joining the other PCs gives you a chance to belong.

FAST

You're fleet of foot. Because you're quick, you can accomplish tasks more rapidly than others can. You're not just quick on your feet, however—you're quick with your hands, and you think and react quickly. You even talk quickly.

You gain the following characteristics:

Energetic: +2 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You are trained in running.

Fast: You can move a short distance and still take another action in the same round, or you can move a long distance as your action without needing to make any kind of roll.

Inability: You're a sprinter, not a long-distance runner. You don't have a lot of stamina. Might defense rolls are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You jumped in to save one of the other PCs who was in dire need.
2. One of the other PCs recruited you for your unique talents.
3. You're impulsive, and it seemed like a good idea at the time.
4. This mission ties in with a personal goal of your own.

FOOLISH

Not everyone can be brilliant. Oh, you don't think of yourself as stupid, and you're not. It's just that others might have a bit more . . . wisdom. Insight. You prefer to barrel along headfirst through life and let other people worry about things. Worrying's never helped you, so why bother? You take things at face value and don't fret about what tomorrow might bring.

People call you "idiot" or "numbskull," but it doesn't faze you much.

(It can be liberating and really fun to play a foolish character. In some ways, the pressure to always do the right, smart thing is off. On the other hand, if you play such a character as a bumbling moron in every situation, that can become annoying to everyone else at the table. As with everything, moderation is the key.)

You gain the following characteristics:

Unwise: -4 to your Intellect Pool.

Carefree: You succeed more on luck than anything. Every time you roll for a task, roll twice and take the higher result.

Intellect Weakness: Any time you spend points from your Intellect Pool, it costs you 1 more point than usual.

Inability: Any Intellect defense task is hindered.

Inability: Any task that involves seeing through a deception, an illusion, or a trap is hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. Who knows? Seemed like a good idea at the time.
2. Someone asked you to join up with the other PCs. They told you not to ask too many questions, and that seemed fine to you.
3. Your parent (or a parental/mentor figure) got you involved to give you something to do and maybe “teach you some sense.”
4. The other PCs needed some muscle who wouldn’t overthink things.

GRACEFUL

You have a perfect sense of balance, moving and speaking with grace and beauty. You’re quick, lithe, flexible, and dexterous. Your body is perfectly suited to dance, and you use that advantage in combat to dodge blows. You might wear garments that enhance your agile movement and sense of style.

You gain the following characteristics:

Agile: +2 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You’re trained in all tasks involving balance and careful movement.

Skill: You’re trained in all tasks involving physical performing arts.

Skill: You’re trained in all Speed defense tasks.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. Against your better judgment, you joined the other PCs because you saw that they were in danger.
2. One of the other PCs convinced you that joining the group would be in your best interests.
3. You’re afraid of what might happen if the other PCs fail.
4. There is reward involved, and you need the money.

GUARDED

You conceal your true nature behind a mask and are loath to let anyone see who you really are. Protecting yourself, physically and emotionally, is what you care about most, and you prefer to keep everyone else at a safe distance. You may be suspicious of everyone you meet, expecting the worst from people so you won’t be

surprised when they prove you right. Or you might just be a bit reserved, careful about letting people through your gruff exterior to the person you really are.

No one can be as reserved as you are and make many friends. Most likely, you have an abrasive personality and tend to be pessimistic in your outlook. You probably nurse an old hurt and find that the only way you can cope is to keep it and your personality locked down.

You gain the following characteristics:

Suspicious: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You are trained in all Intellect defense tasks.

Skill: You are trained in all tasks involving discerning the truth, piercing disguises, and recognizing falsehoods and other deceptions.

Inability: Your suspicious nature makes you unlikeable. Any task involving deception or persuasion is hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. One of the PCs managed to overcome your defenses and befriend you.
2. You want to see what the PCs are up to, so you accompany them to catch them in the act of some wrongdoing.
3. You have made a few enemies and take up with the PCs for protection.
4. The PCs are the only people who will put up with you.

HARDY

Your body was built to take abuse. Whether you're pounding down stiff drinks while holding up a bar in your favorite watering hole or trading blows with a thug in a back alley, you keep going, shrugging off hurts and injuries that might slow or incapacitate a lesser person. Neither hunger nor thirst, cut flesh nor broken bone can stop you. You just press on through the pain and continue.

As fit and healthy as you are, the signs of wear show in the myriad scars crisscrossing your body, your thrice-broken nose, your cauliflower ears, and any number of other disfigurements you wear with pride.

You gain the following characteristics:

Mighty: +4 to your Might Pool.

Fast Healer: You halve the time it takes to make a recovery roll (minimum one action).

Almost Unstoppable: While you are impaired on the [damage track](#), you function as if you were hale. While you are debilitated, you function as if you were impaired. In other words, you don't suffer the effects of being impaired until you become debilitated, and you never suffer the effects of being debilitated. You still die if all your stat Pools are 0.

Skill: You are trained in Might defense actions.

Inability: Your big, strong body is slow to react. Any task involving initiative is hindered.

Ponderous: When you apply Effort when making a Speed roll, you must spend 1 extra point from your Speed Pool.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. The PCs recruited you after learning about your reputation as a survivor.

2. You joined the PCs because you want or need the money.
3. The PCs offered you a challenge equal to your physical power.
4. You believe the only way the PCs will succeed is if you are along to protect them.

HIDEOUS

You are physically repugnant by almost any human standard. You might have had a serious accident, a harmful mutation, or just poor genetic luck, but you are incontrovertibly ugly.

You've more than made up for your appearance in other ways, however. Because you have to hide your appearance, you excel at sneaking about unnoticed or disguising yourself. But perhaps most important, being ostracized while others socialized, you took the time growing up to develop yourself as you saw fit—you grew strong or quick, or you honed your mind.

You gain the following characteristics:

Versatile: You get 4 additional points to divide among your stat Pools.

Skill: You are trained in intimidation and any other fear-based interactions, if you show your true face.

Skill: You are trained in disguise and stealth tasks.

Inability: All tasks relating to pleasant social interaction are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. One of the other PCs approached you while you were in disguise, recruiting you while believing you were someone else.
2. While skulking about, you overheard the other PCs' plans and realized you wanted in.
3. One of the other PCs invited you, but you wonder if it was out of pity.
4. You bullied your way in with intimidation and bluster.

HONORABLE

You are trustworthy, fair, and forthright. You try to do what is right, to help others, and to treat them well. Lying and cheating are no way to get ahead—these things are for the weak, the lazy, or the despicable. You probably spend a lot of time thinking about your personal honor, how best to maintain it, and how to defend it if challenged. In combat, you are straightforward and offer quarter to any foe.

You were likely instilled with this sense of honor by a parent or a mentor. Sometimes the distinction between what is and isn't honorable varies with different schools of thought, but in broad strokes, honorable people can agree on most aspects of what honor means.

You gain the following characteristics:

Stalwart: +2 to your Might Pool.

Skill: You are trained in pleasant social interactions.

Skill: You are trained in discerning people's true motives or seeing through lies.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. The PCs' goals appear to be honorable and commendable.
2. You see that what the other PCs are about to do is dangerous, and you'd like to help protect them.

3. One of the other PCs invited you, hearing of your trustworthiness.

4. You asked politely if you could join the other PCs in their mission.

IMPULSIVE

You have a hard time tamping down your enthusiasm. Why wait when you can just do it (whatever it is) and get it done? You deal with problems when they arise rather than plan ahead. Putting out the small fires now prevents them from becoming one big fire later. You are the first to take risks, to jump in and lend a hand, to step into dark passages, and to find danger.

Your impulsiveness likely gets you into trouble. While others might take time to study the items they discover, you use such items without hesitation. After all, the best way to learn what something can do is to use it. When a cautious explorer might look around and check for danger nearby, you have to physically stop yourself from bulling on ahead. Why fuss around when the exciting thing is just ahead?

(Impulsive characters get into trouble. That's their thing, and that's fine. But if you're constantly dragging your fellow PCs into trouble (or worse, getting them seriously hurt or killed), that will be annoying, to say the least. A good rule of thumb is that impulsiveness doesn't always mean a predilection for doing the wrong thing. Sometimes it's the urge to do the right thing.)

You gain the following characteristics:

Reckless: +2 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You're trained in initiative actions (to determine who goes first in combat).

Skill: You're trained in Speed defense actions.

Inability: You'll try anything once, but quickly grow bored after that. Any task that involves patience, willpower, or discipline is hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You heard what the other PCs were up to and suddenly decided to join them.

2. You pulled everyone together after you heard rumors about something interesting you want to see or do.

3. You blew all of your money and now find yourself strapped for cash.

4. You're in trouble for acting recklessly. You join the other PCs because they offer a way out of your problem.

INQUISITIVE

The world is vast and mysterious, with wonders and secrets to keep you amazed for several lifetimes. You feel the tugging on your heart, the call to explore the wreckage of past civilizations, to discover new peoples, new places, and whatever bizarre wonders you might find along the way. However, as strongly as you feel the pull to roam the world, you know there is danger aplenty, and you take precautions to ensure that you are prepared for any eventuality. Research, preparation, and readiness will help you live long enough to see everything you want to see and do everything you want to do.

You probably have a dozen books and travelogues about the world on you at any time. When not hitting the road and looking around, you spend your time with your nose in a book, learning everything you can about the place you're going so you know what to expect when you get there.

You gain the following characteristics:

Smart: +4 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You are eager to learn. You are trained in any task that involves learning something new, whether you're talking to a local to get information or digging through old books to find lore.

Skill: You have made a study of the world. You are trained in any task involving geography or history.

Inability: You tend to fixate on the details, making you somewhat oblivious to what's going on around you. Any task to hear or notice dangers around you is hindered.

Inability: When you see something interesting, you hesitate as you take in all the details. Initiative actions (to determine who goes first in combat) are hindered.

Additional Equipment: You have three books on whatever subjects you choose.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. One of the PCs approached you to learn information related to the mission, having heard you were an expert.
2. You have always wanted to see the place where the other PCs are going.
3. You were interested in what the other PCs were up to and decided to go along with them.
4. One of the PCs fascinates you, perhaps due to a special or weird ability they have.

INTELLIGENT

You're quite smart. Your memory is sharp, and you easily grasp concepts that others might struggle with. This aptitude doesn't necessarily mean that you've had years of formal education, but you have learned a great deal in your life, primarily because you pick things up quickly and retain so much.

You gain the following characteristics:

Smart: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're trained in an area of knowledge of your choice.

Skill: You're trained in all actions that involve remembering or memorizing things you experience directly. For example, instead of being good at recalling details of geography that you read about in a book, you can remember a path through a set of tunnels that you've explored before.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. One of the other PCs asked your opinion of the mission, knowing that if you thought it was a good idea, it probably was.
2. You saw value in what the other PCs were doing.
3. You believed that the task might lead to important and interesting discoveries.
4. A colleague requested that you take part in the mission as a favor.

INTUITIVE

You are often tickled by a sense of knowing what someone will say, how they will react, or how events might unfold. Maybe you have a mutant sense, maybe you can see just a few moments ahead through time, or maybe you're just good at reading people and extrapolating a situation. Whatever the case, many who look into your eyes immediately glance away, as if afraid of what you might see in their expression.

You gain the following characteristics:

Innate: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You are trained in perception tasks.

Know What to Do: You can act immediately, even if it's not your turn. Afterward, on your next regular turn, any action you take is hindered. You can do this one time, although the ability is renewed each time you make a recovery roll.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You just knew you had to come along.
2. You convinced one of the other PCs that your intuition is invaluable.
3. You felt that something terrible would happen if you didn't go.
4. You're confident the reason you arrived at this point will soon become clear.

JOVIAL

You're cheerful, friendly, and outgoing. You put others at ease with a big smile and a joke, possibly one at your own expense, though lightly ribbing your companions who can take it is also one of your favorite pastimes. Sometimes people say you never take anything seriously. That's not true, of course, but you have learned that to dwell on the bad too long quickly robs the world of joy. You've always got a new joke in your back pocket because you collect them like some people collect bottles of wine.

You gain the following characteristics:

Witty: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're convivial and set most people at ease with your attitude. You are trained in all tasks related to pleasant social interaction.

Skill: You have an advantage in figuring out the punch lines of jokes you've never heard before. You are trained in all tasks related to solving puzzles and riddles.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You solved a riddle before realizing that answering it would launch you into the adventure.
2. The other PCs thought you'd bring some much-needed levity to the team.
3. You decided that all fun and no work was not the best way to get through life, so you joined up with the PCs.
4. It was either go with the PCs or face up to a circumstance that was anything but jovial.

KIND

It's always been easy for you to see things from the point of view of other people. That ability has made you sympathetic to what they really want or need. From your perspective, you're just applying the old proverb that "it's easier to catch flies with honey than with vinegar," but others simply see your behavior as kindness. Of course, being kind takes time, and yours is limited. You've learned that a small fraction of people don't deserve your time or kindness—true sadists, narcissists, and similar folk will only waste your energy. So you deal with them swiftly, saving your kindness for those who deserve it and can benefit from your attention.

You gain the following characteristics:

Emotionally Intuitive: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You know what it's like to go a mile in someone else's shoes. You're trained in all tasks related to pleasant social interaction and discerning the dispositions of others.

Karma: Sometimes, strangers just help you out. To gain the aid of a stranger, you must use a one action, ten-minute, or one-hour recovery roll (without gaining its healing benefit), and the GM determines the nature of the aid you gain. Usually, the act of kindness isn't enough to turn a bad situation completely around, but it may moderate a bad situation and lead to new opportunities. For example, if you are captured, a guard loosens your bonds slightly, brings you water, or delivers a message.

Inability: Being kind comes with a few risks. All tasks related to detecting falsehoods are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. A PC needed your help, and you agreed to come along as a kindness.
2. You gave the wrong person access to your money, and now you need to make some back.
3. You're ready to take your benevolence on the road and help more people than you could if you didn't join the PCs.
4. Your job, which seemed like it would be personally rewarding, is the opposite. You join the PCs to escape the drudgery.

LEARNED

You have studied, either on your own or with an instructor. You know many things and are an expert on a few topics, such as history, biology, geography, mythology, nature, or any other area of study. Learned characters typically carry a few books around with them and spend their spare time reading.

You gain the following characteristics:

Smart: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're trained in three areas of knowledge of your choice.

Inability: You have few social graces. Any task involving charm, persuasion, or etiquette is hindered.

Additional Equipment: You have two additional books on topics of your choice.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. One of the other PCs asked you to come along because of your knowledge.
2. You need money to fund your studies.
3. You believed that the task might lead to important and interesting discoveries.
4. A colleague requested that you take part in the mission as a favor.

LUCKY

You rely on chance and timely good luck to get you through many situations. When people say that someone was born under a lucky star, they mean you. When you try your hand at something new, no matter how unfamiliar the task is, as often as not you find a measure of success. Even when disaster strikes, it's rarely as bad as it could be. More often, small things seem to go your way, you win contests, and you're often in the right place at the right time.

You gain the following characteristics:

Luck Pool: You have one additional Pool called Luck that begins with 3 points, and it has a maximum value of 3 points. When spending points from any other Pool, you can take one, some, or all of the points from your Luck Pool first. When you make a recovery roll to recover points to any other Pool, your Luck Pool is also refreshed

by the same number of points. When your Luck Pool is at 0 points, it does not count against your damage track. Enabler.

Advantage: When you use 1 XP to reroll a d20 for any roll that affects only you, add 3 to the reroll.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. Knowing that lucky people notice and take active advantage of opportunities, you became involved in your first adventure by choice.
2. You literally bumped into someone else on this adventure through sheer luck.
3. You found a briefcase lying alongside the road. It was battered, but inside you found a lot of strange documents that led you here.
4. Your luck saved you when you avoided a speeding vehicle by a fortuitous fall through an opening in the ground (a manhole, if in a modern setting). Beneath the ground, you found something you couldn't ignore.

MAD

You have delved too deeply into subjects people were not meant to know. You are knowledgeable in things beyond the scope of most, but this knowledge has come at a terrible price. You are likely in questionable physical shape and occasionally shake with nervous tics. You sometimes mutter to yourself without realizing it.

You gain the following characteristics:

Knowledgeable: +4 to your Intellect Pool.

Fits of Insight: Whenever such knowledge is appropriate, the GM feeds you information although there is no clear explanation as to how you could know such a thing. This is up to the GM's discretion, but it should happen as often as once each session.

Erratic Behavior: You are prone to acting erratically or irrationally. When you are in the presence of a major discovery or subjected to great stress (such as a serious physical threat), the GM can introduce a GM intrusion that directs your next action without awarding XP. You can still pay 1 XP to refuse the intrusion. The GM's influence is the manifestation of your madness and thus is always something you would not likely do otherwise, but it is not directly, obviously harmful to you unless there are extenuating circumstances. (For example, if a foe suddenly leaps out of the darkness, you might spend the first round babbling incoherently or screaming the name of your first true love.)

Skill: You are trained in one area of knowledge (probably something weird or esoteric).

Inability: Your mind is quite fragile. Tasks to resist mental attacks are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. Voices in your head told you to go.
2. You instigated the whole thing and convinced the others to join you.
3. One of the other PCs obtained a book of knowledge for you, and now you're repaying that favor by helping them with the task at hand.
4. You feel compelled by inexplicable intuition.

MECHANICAL

You have a special talent with machines of all kinds, and you're adept at understanding and, if need be, repairing them. Perhaps you're a bit of an inventor, creating new machines from time to time. You get called

“techie,” “tech,” “mech,” “gear-head,” “motor-head,” or any of a number of other nicknames. Mechanics usually wear practical work clothes and carry around a lot of tools.

You gain the following characteristics:

Smart: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You’re trained in all actions involving identifying or understanding machines.

Skill: You’re trained in all actions involving using, repairing, or crafting machines.

Additional Equipment: You start with a variety of machine tools.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. While repairing a nearby machine, you overheard the other PCs talking.
2. You need money to buy tools and parts.
3. It was clear that the mission couldn’t succeed without your skills and knowledge.
4. Another PC asked you to join them.

MYSTERIOUS

The dark figure lurking silently in the corner? That’s you. No one really knows where you came from or what your motives are—you play things close to the vest. Your manner perplexes and confounds others, but that doesn’t make you a poor friend or ally. You’re just good at keeping things to yourself, moving about unseen, and concealing your presence and identity.

You gain the following characteristics:

Skill: You are trained in all stealth tasks.

Skill: You are trained in resisting interrogation or tricks to get you to talk.

Confounding: You pull talents and abilities seemingly out of nowhere. You can attempt one task in which you have no training as if you were trained, attempt a task that you are trained in as if specialized, or gain a free level of Effort with a task that you are specialized in. This ability refreshes every time you make a recovery roll, but the uses never accumulate.

Inability: People never know where they stand with you. Any task involving getting people to believe or trust you is hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You just showed up one day.
2. You convinced one of the other PCs that you had invaluable skills.
3. Some equally mysterious figure told you where to be and when (but not why) to join the group.
4. Something—a feeling, a dream—told you where to be and when to join the group.

MYSTICAL

You think of yourself as mystical, attuned with the mysterious and the paranormal. Your true talents lie with the supernatural. You likely have experience with ancient lore, and you can sense and wield the supernatural—though whether that means “magic,” “psychic phenomena,” or something else is up to you (and probably up to those around you as well). Mystical characters often wear jewelry, such as a ring or an amulet, or have tattoos or other marks that show their interests.

You gain the following characteristics:

Smart: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're trained in all actions involving identifying or understanding the supernatural.

Sense Magic: You can sense whether the supernatural is active in situations where its presence is not obvious. You must study an object or location closely for a minute to get a feel for whether a mystical touch is at work.

Spell: You can perform [Hedge Magic](#) as a spell when you have a free hand and can pay the Intellect point cost.

Inability: You have a manner or an aura that others find a bit unnerving. Any task involving charm, persuasion, or deception is hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. A dream guided you to this point.
2. You need money to fund your studies.
3. You believed the mission would be a great way to learn more about the supernatural.
4. Various signs and portents led you here.

NAIVE

You've lived a sheltered life. Your childhood was safe and secure, so you didn't get a chance to learn much about the world—and even less chance to experience it. Whether you were training for something, had your nose in a book, or just were sequestered in a secluded place, you haven't done much, met many people, or seen many interesting things so far. That's probably going to change soon, but as you go forward into a larger world, you do so without some of the understanding that others possess about how it all works.

You gain the following characteristics:

Fresh: You add +1 to your recovery rolls.

Incorruptible: You are trained in Intellect defense tasks and all tasks that involve resisting temptation.

Skill: You're wide-eyed. You are trained in perception tasks.

Inability: Any task that involves seeing through deceptions or determining someone's secret motive is hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. Someone told you that you should get involved.
2. You needed money, and this seemed like a good way to earn some.
3. You believed that you could learn a lot by joining the other PCs.
4. Sounded like fun.

PERCEPTIVE

You miss little. You pick out the small details in the world around you and are skilled at making deductions from the information you find. Your talents make you an exceptional sleuth, a formidable scientist, or a talented scout.

As adept as you are at finding clues, you have no skill at picking up on social cues. You overlook an offense that your deductions give or how uncomfortable your scrutiny can make the people around you. You tend to dismiss others as being intellectual dwarfs compared to you, which avails you little when you need a favor.

You gain the following characteristics:

Smart: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You have an eye for detail. You are trained in any task that involves finding or noticing small details.

Skill: You know a little about everything. You are trained in any task that involves identifying objects or calling to mind a minor detail or bit of trivia.

Skill: Your skill at making deductions can be imposing. You are trained in any task that involves intimidating another creature.

Inability: Your confidence comes off as arrogance to people who don't know you. Any task involving positive social interactions is hindered.

Additional Equipment: You have a bag of light tools.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You overheard the other PCs discussing their mission and volunteered your services.
2. One of the PCs asked you to come along, believing that your talents would be invaluable to the mission.
3. You believe that the PCs' mission is somehow related to one of your investigations.
4. A third party recruited you to follow the PCs and see what they were up to.

RESILIENT

You can take a lot of punishment, both physically and mentally, and still come back for more. It takes a lot to put you down. Neither physical nor mental shocks or damage have a lasting effect. You're tough to faze. Unflappable. Unstoppable.

You gain the following characteristics:

Resistant: +2 to your Might Pool, and +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Recover: You can make an extra recovery roll each day. This roll is just one action. So you can make two recovery rolls that each take one action, one roll that takes ten minutes, a fourth roll that takes one hour, and a fifth roll that requires ten hours of rest.

Skill: You are trained in Might defense tasks.

Skill: You are trained in Intellect defense tasks.

Inability: You're hardy but not necessarily strong. Any task involving moving, bending, or breaking things is hindered.

Inability: You have a lot of willpower and mental fortitude, but you're not necessarily smart. Any task involving knowledge or figuring out problems or puzzles is hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You saw that the PCs clearly need someone like you to help them out.
2. Someone asked you to watch over one of the PCs in particular, and you agreed.

3. You are bored and desperately in need of a challenge.

4. You lost a bet—unfairly, you think—and had to take someone’s place on this mission.

RISK-TAKING

It’s part of your nature to question what others think can’t or shouldn’t be done. You’re not insane, of course—you wouldn’t attempt to leap across a mile-wide chasm just because you were dared. There’s impossible and then there’s the just barely possible. You like to push the latter further than others, because it gives you a rush of satisfaction and pleasure when you succeed. The more you succeed, the more you find yourself looking for that next risky challenge to try yourself against.

You gain the following characteristics:

Nimble: +4 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You’re adept at leveraging risk, and you are trained in tasks that involve some element of chance, such as playing games or choosing between two or three apparently equal options.

Pressing Your Luck: You can choose to automatically succeed on one task without rolling, as long as the task’s difficulty is no higher than 6. When you do so, however, you also trigger a GM intrusion as if you had rolled a 1. The intrusion doesn’t invalidate the success, but it probably qualifies it in some fashion. You can do this one time, although the ability renews each time you make a ten-hour recovery roll.

Inability: You may be nimble, but you’re not sneaky. Tasks related to sneaking and staying quiet are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. It seemed like there were equal odds that the other PCs wouldn’t succeed, which sounded good to you.
2. You think the tasks ahead will present you with unique and fulfilling challenges.
3. One of your biggest risks failed to go your way, and you need money to help pay that debt.
4. You bragged that you never saw a risk you didn’t like, which is how you reached your current point.

RUGGED

You’re a nature lover accustomed to living rough, pitting your wits against the elements. Most likely, you’re a skilled hunter, gatherer, or naturalist. Years of living in the wild have left their mark with a worn countenance, wild hair, or scars. Your clothing is probably much less refined than the garments worn by city dwellers.

You gain the following characteristics:

Skill: You’re trained in all tasks involving climbing, jumping, running, and swimming.

Skill: You’re trained in all tasks involving training, riding, or placating natural animals.

Skill: You’re trained in all tasks involving identifying or using natural plants.

Inability: You have no social graces and prefer animals to people. Any task involving charm, persuasion, etiquette, or deception is hindered.

Additional Equipment: You carry an explorer’s pack with rope, two days’ rations, a bedroll, and other tools needed for outdoor survival.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. Against your better judgment, you joined the other PCs because you saw that they were in danger.
2. One of the other PCs convinced you that joining the group would be in your best interests.

3. You're afraid of what might happen if the other PCs fail.

4. There is reward involved, and you need the money.

SHARP-EYED

You're perceptive and well aware of your surroundings. You notice the little details and remember them. You can be difficult to surprise.

You gain the following characteristics:

Skill: You're trained in initiative actions.

Skill: You're trained in perception actions.

Find the Flaw: If an opponent has a straightforward weakness (takes extra damage from fire, can't see out of their left eye, and so on), the GM will tell you what it is.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You heard about what was going on, saw a flaw in the other PCs' plan, and joined up to help them out.

2. You noticed that the PCs have a foe (or at least a tail) they weren't aware of.

3. You saw that the other PCs were up to something interesting and got involved.

4. You've been noticing some strange things going on, and this all appears related.

SKEPTICAL

You possess a questioning attitude regarding claims that are often taken for granted by others. You're not necessarily a "doubting Thomas" (a skeptic who refuses to believe anything without direct personal experience), but you've often benefited from questioning the statements, opinions, and received knowledge presented to you by others.

You gain the following characteristics:

Insightful: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're trained in identifying.

Skill: You're trained in all actions that involve seeing through a trick, an illusion, a rhetorical ruse designed to evade the issue, or a lie. For example, you're better at keeping your eye on the cup containing the hidden ball, sensing an illusion, or realizing if someone is lying to you (but only if you specifically concentrate and use this skill).

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You overheard other PCs holding forth on a topic with an opinion you were quite skeptical about, so you decided to approach the group and ask for proof.

2. You were following one of the other PCs because you were suspicious of him, which brought you into the action.

3. Your theory about the nonexistence of the supernatural can be invalidated only by your own senses, so you came along.

4. You need money to fund your research.

STEALTHY

You're sneaky, slippery, and fast. These talents help you hide, move quietly, and pull off tricks that require sleight of hand. Most likely, you're wiry and small. However, you're not much of a sprinter—you're more dexterous than fleet of foot.

You gain the following characteristics:

Quick: +2 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You're trained in all stealth tasks.

Skill: You're trained in all interactions involving lies or trickery.

Skill: You're trained in all special abilities involving illusions or trickery.

Inability: You're sneaky but not fast. All movement-related tasks are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You attempted to steal from one of the other PCs. That character caught you and forced you to come along with them.
2. You were tailing one of the other PCs for reasons of your own, which brought you into the action.
3. An NPC employer secretly paid you to get involved.
4. You overheard the other PCs talking about a topic that interested you, so you decided to approach the group.

STRONG

You're extremely strong and physically powerful, and you use these qualities well, whether through violence or feats of prowess. You likely have a brawny build and impressive muscles.

You gain the following characteristics:

Very Powerful: +4 to your Might Pool.

Skill: You're trained in all actions involving breaking inanimate objects.

Skill: You're trained in all jumping actions.

Additional Equipment: You have an extra medium weapon or heavy weapon.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. Against your better judgment, you joined the other PCs because you saw that they were in danger.
2. One of the other PCs convinced you that joining the group would be in your best interests.
3. You're afraid of what might happen if the other PCs fail.
4. There is reward involved, and you need the money.

STRONG-WILLED

You're tough-minded, willful, and independent. No one can talk you into anything or change your mind when you don't want it changed. This quality doesn't necessarily make you smart, but it does make you a bastion of willpower and resolve. You likely dress and act with unique style and flair, not caring what others think.

You gain the following characteristics:

Willful: +4 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're trained in resisting mental effects.

Skill: You're trained in tasks requiring incredible focus or concentration.

Inability: Willful doesn't mean brilliant. Any task that involves figuring out puzzles or problems, memorizing things, or using lore is hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. Against your better judgment, you joined the other PCs because you saw that they were in danger.
2. One of the other PCs convinced you that joining the group would be in your best interests.
3. You're afraid of what might happen if the other PCs fail.
4. There is reward involved, and you need the money.

SWIFT

You move quickly, able to sprint in short bursts and work with your hands with dexterity. You're great at crossing distances quickly but not always smoothly. You are likely slim and muscular.

You gain the following characteristics:

Fast: +4 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You're trained in initiative actions (to determine who goes first in combat).

Skill: You're trained in running actions.

Inability: You're fast but not necessarily graceful. Any task involving balance is hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. Against your better judgment, you joined the other PCs because you saw that they were in danger.
2. One of the other PCs convinced you that joining the group would be in your best interests.
3. You're afraid of what might happen if the other PCs fail.
4. There is reward involved, and you need the money.

TONGUE-TIED

You've never been much of a talker. When forced to interact with others, you never think of the right thing to say—words fail you entirely, or they come out all wrong. You often end up saying precisely the wrong thing and insult someone unintentionally. Most of the time, you just keep mum. This makes you a listener instead—a careful observer. It also means that you're better at doing things than talking about them. You're quick to take action.

You gain the following characteristics:

Actions, Not Words: +2 to your Might Pool, and +2 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You are trained in perception.

Skill: You are trained in initiative (unless it's a social situation).

Inability: All tasks relating to social interaction are hindered.

Inability: All tasks involving verbal communication or relaying information are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You just tagged along and no one told you to leave.
2. You saw something important the other PCs did not and (with some effort) managed to relate it to them.
3. You intervened to save one of the other PCs when they were in danger.
4. One of the other PCs recruited you for your talents.

TOUGH

You're strong and can take a lot of physical punishment. You might have a large frame and a square jaw. Tough characters frequently have visible scars.

You gain the following characteristics:

Resilient: +1 to Armor.

Healthy: Add 1 to the points you regain when you make a recovery roll.

Skill: You're trained in Might defense actions.

Additional Equipment: You have an extra light weapon.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You're acting as a bodyguard for one of the other PCs.
2. One of the PCs is your sibling, and you came along to watch out for them.
3. You need money because your family is in debt.
4. You stepped in to defend one of the PCs when that character was threatened. While talking to them afterward, you heard about the group's task.

VICIOUS

You try to hide what's inside, fold it into yourself when everything inside you screams to let go, make them pay, make them hurt, and make them bleed. Sometimes you succeed for your friends—smiling like they smile, laughing when they laugh, and sometimes even having other emotions of your own. But it's always there, that feeling of frantic glee mixed with hate that sometimes leaps out of you when you confront a foe. Violence your friends can tolerate, but you sometimes worry they will also learn that you are cruel.

You gain the following characteristics:

Skill: You are trained in tracking creatures. If a creature has wronged you, the tracking task is eased.

Bloodthirsty: Once you begin fighting, you see only red. You inflict 2 additional points of damage with any attack.

Berserk: Once you begin fighting, it's hard for you to stop. In fact, it's a difficulty 2 Intellect task to do so, even if your foe surrenders or you've run out of foes. If the latter occurs and you fail to stop, you attack the nearest ally within short range.

Additional Equipment: You have a record that you use to list those who've wronged you.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. Another PC saw you take down a mean drunk in a tavern, not realizing you were the one who started the fight.
2. You wanted to get away from a bad situation, so you went with the other PCs.
3. You want to change, and you hope that being with the other PCs will help you calm yourself.
4. One of the other PCs asked you to come along, believing that your viciousness could be harnessed for the benefit of the mission.

VIRTUOUS

Doing the right thing is a way of life. You live by a code, and that code is something you attend to every day. Whenever you slip, you reproach yourself for your weakness and then get right back on track. Your code probably includes moderation, respect for others, cleanliness, and other characteristics that most people would agree are virtues, while you eschew their opposites: sloth, greed, gluttony, and so on.

You gain the following characteristics:

Dauntless: +2 to your Might Pool.

Skill: You are trained in discerning people's true motives or seeing through lies.

Skill: Your adherence to a strict moral code has hardened your mind against fear, doubt, and outside influence. You are trained in Intellect defense tasks.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. The PCs are doing something virtuous, and you're all about that.
2. The PCs are on the road to perdition, and you see it as your task to set them on the proper moral route.
3. One of the other PCs invited you, hearing of your virtuous ways.
4. You put virtue before sense and defended someone's honor in the face of an organization or power far greater than you. You joined the PCs because they offered aid and friendship when, out of fear of reprisals, no one else would.

WEIRD

You aren't like anyone else, and that's fine with you. People don't seem to understand you—they even seem put off by you—but who cares? You understand the world better than they do because you're weird, and so is the world you live in. The concept of "the weird" is well known to you. Strange devices, ancient locales, bizarre creatures, storms that can transform you, living energy fields, conspiracies, aliens, and things most people can't even name populate the world, and you thrive on them. You have a special attachment to it all, and the more you discover about the weirdness in the world, the more you might discover about yourself.

Weird characters might be mutants or people born with strange qualities, but sometimes they started out "normal" and adopted the weird by choice.

You gain the following characteristics:

Inner Light: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Distinctive Physical Quirk: You have a unique physical aspect that is, well, bizarre. Depending on the setting, this can vary greatly. You might have purple hair or metal spikes on your head. Perhaps your hands don't connect to your arms, although they move as if they do. Maybe a third eye stares out from the side of your head, or superfluous tendrils grow from your back. Whatever it is, your quirk might be a mutation, a

supernatural trait (a blessing or curse), a feature with no explanation, or just a really wild tattoo that draws a lot of attention.

A Sense for the Weird: Sometimes—at the GM’s discretion—weird things relating to the supernatural or its effects on the world seem to call out to you. You can sense them from afar, and if you get within long range of such a thing, you can sense whether it is overtly dangerous or not.

Skill: You are trained in supernatural knowledge.

Inability: People find you unnerving. All tasks relating to pleasant social interaction are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. It seemed weird, so why not?
2. Whether the other PCs realize it or not, their mission has to do with something weird that you know about, so you got involved.
3. As an expert in the weird, you were specifically recruited by the other PCs.
4. You felt drawn to join the other PCs, but you don’t know why.

CUSTOMIZING DESCRIPTORS

Under the normal rules, each descriptor is based on some modification of the following guidelines:

Some descriptors offer +4 to one stat Pool and either two narrow skills or one broad skill.

Other descriptors offer +2 to one stat Pool and either three narrow skills or one narrow skill and one broad skill.

A broad skill covers many areas (such as all interactions). A narrow skill covers fewer areas (such as deceptive interactions). Combat-related skills, such as defense or initiative, are considered broad skills in this sense.

Regardless, you can add an additional skill if it is balanced by an inability.

You can add other non-skill abilities by eyeballing them and trying to equate them to the value of a skill, if possible. If the descriptor seems lacking, add a moderately priced item as additional equipment to balance things out.

With this general information, you can customize a descriptor, but keep in mind that a heavily customized descriptor isn’t a descriptor if it no longer says one thing about a character. It’s better to use this information to create a new descriptor that fits exactly how the player wants to portray the character.

SPECIES AS DESCRIPTOR

Sometimes, in settings that have alien or fantasy species, players want to play a member of that species rather than the default (which is usually “human”). Most of the time, this choice is one of flavor rather than game mechanics. If you’re a 7-foot-tall furry Rigellian with three eyes, that’s great, but it doesn’t change your stats or skills (though it may have roleplaying challenges).

However, sometimes being a nonhuman results in more substantive changes. A PC ogre in a fantasy setting might have the Strong or Tough descriptor, or perhaps it has a descriptor simply called Ogre, which is similar to Strong or Tough but more pronounced (with greater Might but even greater drawbacks). This would mean that instead of being a Tough Warrior who Controls Beasts, the character is an Ogre Warrior who Controls Beasts.

The Genre chapter offers a few species descriptors, but many GMs will want to create their own as suits their setting. It can’t be stressed enough, however, that nine times out of ten, in most genres, species differences

aren't significant enough to warrant this treatment. The differences between a Mysterious character and a Virtuous one are probably greater than those between an Alpha Centauran and an Earthling.

Focus

Focus is what makes a character unique. No two PCs in a group should have the same focus. A focus gives a character benefits when they create their character and each time they ascend to the next tier. It's the verb of the sentence "I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*."

This chapter contains nearly a hundred sample foci, such as Bears a Halo of Fire, Would Rather Be Reading, and Pilots Starcraft. These foci can be chosen and used as presented by a player, or by the GM who adds them to a list of available foci for their players in their next campaign.

In addition, the latter half of this chapter provides tools for the GM or an enterprising player to create their own custom foci that perfectly match the needs of a given game or campaign, as presented in [Creating New Foci](#).

CHOOSING FOCI

Not all foci are appropriate for every genre. The Genre chapter provides guidance, but this section offers some broad generalizations. Obviously, the GM can include whatever foci are available in their setting. Foci end up being an important distinction in this case, because [Commands Mental Powers](#), for example, makes it clear that psychic abilities exist in the setting, just as [Howls at the Moon](#) implies the existence of lycanthropes like werewolves, and [Pilots Starcraft](#), of course, requires starships available to pilot.

When a focus is chosen for a character, they get a special connection to one or more of their fellow PCs, a first-tier ability, and perhaps additional starting equipment: one or two pieces of equipment that might be required for the character to use their ability, or that might pair well with the focus. For instance, a character that can build things needs a set of tools. A character that's constantly on fire needs a set of clothes that are immune to flame. A character that draws runes to cast spells needs writing implements. A character that slays monsters with a sword needs a sword. And so on. That said, many foci don't require additional equipment.

Each focus also offers one or more suggestions—GM intrusions—for possible effects or consequences of really good or really bad die rolls.

A couple of foci presented in this chapter provide a “type swap option” that allows a player to swap an ability that would otherwise be gained from their type for the indicated ability instead. A player doesn't have to make the swap; they merely have the option. For instance, the focus [Loves the Void](#) provides the option to gain the ability [Have Spacesuit, Will Travel](#) instead of a type ability.

As a character progresses to a new tier, a focus grants more abilities. Each tier's benefit is usually labeled Action or Enabler. If an ability is labeled Action, a character must take an action to use it. If an ability is labeled Enabler, it makes other actions better or gives some other benefit, but it's not an action. An ability that allows a character to blast foes with lasers is an action. An ability that grants additional damage when an attack is made is an enabler. An enabler is used in the same turn as another action, and often as part of another action.

Each tier's benefits are independent of and cumulative with benefits from other tiers (unless indicated otherwise). So if a first-tier ability grants +1 to Armor and a fourth-tier ability also grants +1 to Armor, when the character reaches fourth tier, a total of +2 to Armor is granted.

At tier 3 and tier 6, the character is asked to choose one ability from the two options provided.

Finally, you can choose whether you want to expand the [story behind the focus](#) (though that's not mandatory).

FOCUS CONNECTIONS

Choose a connection that goes well with the focus. If you're a GM choosing (or creating) one or more foci for your players, choose up to four of the following connections.

Pick one other PC. For reasons unknown to you, that character is completely immune to your focus abilities, whether you use them for help or for harm.

Pick one other PC. You knew of that character years ago, but you don't think they knew you.

Pick one other PC. You're always trying to impress them, but you're not sure why.

Pick one other PC. That character has a habit that annoys you, but you're otherwise quite impressed with their abilities.

Pick one other PC. That character shows potential in appreciating your particular paradigm, fighting style, or other

focus-provided attribute. You would like to train them, but you're not necessarily qualified to teach (that's up to you), and they might not be interested (that's up to them).

Pick one other PC. If they are within immediate range when you're in a fight, sometimes they provide an asset, and sometimes they accidentally hinder your attack rolls (FIFTYPERCENT% chance either way, determined per fight).

Pick one other PC. You once saved their life, and they clearly feel indebted to you. You wish they didn't; it's just part of the job.

Pick one other PC. That character recently mocked you in some fashion that really hurt your feelings. How you deal with this (if at all) is up to you.

Pick one other PC. That character knows you have suffered at the hands of robotic entities in the past.

Whether you hate robots now is up to you, which may affect your relationship with the character if they are friendly with robots or have robotic parts.

Pick one other PC. That character comes from the same place you do, and you knew each other as children.

Pick one other PC. In the past, they taught you a few tricks to use in a fight.

Pick one other PC. That character doesn't seem to approve of your methods.

Pick one other PC. Long ago, the two of you were on opposite sides of a fight. You won, though you "cheated" in their eyes (but from your perspective, all's fair in a fight). They may be ready for a rematch, though that's up to them.

Pick one other PC. You are always trying to impress that character with your skill, wit, appearance, or bravado. Perhaps they are a rival, perhaps you need their respect, or perhaps you're romantically interested in them.

Pick one other PC. You fear that character is jealous of your abilities and worry that it might lead to problems.

Pick one other PC. You accidentally caught them in a trap you set, and they had to get free on their own.

Pick one other PC. You were once hired to track down someone who was close to that character.

Pick two PCs (preferably ones who are likely to get in the way of your attacks). When you miss with an attack and the GM rules that you struck someone other than your target, you hit one of these two characters.

Pick one other PC. You're not sure how or from where, but that character has a line on bottles of rare alcohol and can get them for you for half price.

Pick one other PC. You recently had a possession go missing, and you're becoming convinced that they took it. Whether or not they did is up to them.

Pick one other PC. They always seem to know where you are, or at least in what direction you are in relation to them.

Pick one other PC. Seeing you use your focus abilities seems to trigger an unpleasant memory in that character. That memory is up to the other PC, although they may not be able to consciously recall it.

Pick one other PC. Something about them interferes with your abilities. When they stand next to you, your focus abilities cost 1 additional point.

Pick one other PC. Something about them complements your abilities. When they stand next to you, the first focus ability you use in any 24-hour period costs 2 fewer points.

Pick one other PC. You have known that character for a while, and they helped you gain control of your focus-related abilities.

Pick one other PC. Sometime in that character's past, they had a devastating experience while attempting something that you do as a matter of course thanks to your focus. Whether they choose to tell you about it is up to them.

Pick one other PC. Their occasional clumsiness and loud behavior irritate you.

Pick one other PC. In the recent past, while practicing, you accidentally hit them with an attack, wounding them badly. It is up to them to decide whether they resent or forgive you.

Pick one other PC. They owe you a significant amount of money.

Pick one other PC. In the recent past, while escaping a threat, you accidentally left that character to fend for themselves. They survived, but just barely. It is up to the player of that character to decide whether they resent you or have decided to forgive you.

Pick one other PC. Recently, they accidentally (or perhaps intentionally) put you in a position of danger. You're fine now, but you're wary around them.

Pick one other PC. From your perspective, they seem nervous around a specific idea, person, or situation. You would like to teach them how to be more comfortable with their fears (if they will let you).

Pick one other PC. They called you a coward once.

Pick one other PC. That character always recognizes you or your handiwork, whether you're in disguise or are long gone when they arrive on the scene.

Pick one other PC. You inadvertently caused an accident that put them into a sleep so deep they didn't wake for three days. Whether they forgive you or not is up to them.

Pick one other PC. You are pretty sure you are related in some fashion.

Pick one other PC. You accidentally learned something they were trying to keep a secret.

Pick one other PC. They are especially sensitive to the use of your flashier focus abilities, and occasionally they become dazzled for a few rounds, which hinders their actions.

Pick one other PC. They appear to have a treasured item that was once yours, but that you lost in a game of chance years ago.

Pick one other PC. If it wasn't for you, that character would have failed a past test of mental achievement.

Pick one other PC. Based on a couple of comments you've overheard, you suspect that they don't hold your area of training or favorite hobby in the highest regard.

Pick one other PC whose focus intertwines with yours. This odd connection affects them in some way. For example, if the character uses a weapon, your focus ability sometimes improves their attack in some fashion.

Pick one other PC. They are deathly afraid of heights. You would like to teach them how to be more comfortable with their feet off the ground. They must decide whether or not to take you up on your offer.

Pick one other PC. They are skeptical of your claims about something momentous that happened in your past. They might even attempt to discredit you or discover the “secret” behind your story, though that’s up to them.

Pick one other PC. They have a knack for being able to recognize where your plans or schemes have a weak spot.

Pick one other PC. That character’s face is so intriguing to you in a way you don’t understand that you sometimes find yourself sketching their likeness in the dirt or using some other medium you have access to.

Pick one other PC. That character has an extra item of regular equipment you gave them, either something you made or an item you just wanted to give them. (They choose the item.)

Pick one other PC. They commissioned you to do a job for them. You’ve already been paid but haven’t yet completed the job.

Pick one other PC. You worked together in the past, and the job ended badly.

Pick one other PC. While they stand next to you and use their action to concentrate on helping you, one of your focus ability’s ranges is doubled.

STORY BEHIND THE FOCUS

The foci in this book have been purposely stripped down to basics so they have the widest possible application across multiple genres. A single descriptive sentence or two summarizes each one. After you choose a focus, you have the option to expand its presentation by adding more story and description relevant to the world or to the character.

For instance, if you choose [Operates Undercover](#), the summarizing description is “Under the guise of someone else, you seek to find answers the powerful do not want divulged.” If you choose [Conducts Weird Science](#), the summary is “Your preternatural insight and ability make you a scientist capable of amazing feats.” These descriptions provide what you need to know to use the focus.

However, if you wish (and *only* if you wish; there is no requirement to do so), you can add more to those descriptions in a fashion that’s relevant for your game. For example, if you choose both Operates Undercover and Conducts Weird Science for use in a modern genre such as horror, urban fantasy, espionage, or something similar, you might expand the descriptions as shown in the following examples.

Operates Undercover: Espionage is not something you know anything about. At least, that’s what you want everyone to believe, because in truth, you’ve been trained as a spy or covert agent. You might work for a government or for yourself. You might be a police detective or a criminal. You could even be an investigative reporter.

Regardless, you learn information that others attempt to keep secret. You collect rumors and whispers, stories and hard-won evidence, and you use that knowledge to aid your own endeavors and, if appropriate, provide your employers with the information they desire. Alternatively, you might sell what you have learned to those willing to pay a premium.

You probably wear dark colors—black, charcoal grey, or midnight blue—to help blend into the shadows, unless the cover you’ve chosen requires you to look like someone else.

Conducts Weird Science: You could be a respected scientist, having been published in several peer-reviewed journals. Or you might be considered a crank by your contemporaries, pursuing fringe theories on what others consider to be scant evidence. Truth is, you have a particular gift for sifting the edges of what's possible. You can find new insights and unlock odd phenomena with your experiments. Where others see a crackpot cornucopia, you sift the conspiracy theories for revelation. Whether you conduct your enquiries as a government contractor, a university researcher, a corporate scientist, or an indulger of curiosity in your own garage lab following your muse, you push the boundaries of what's possible.

You probably care more about your work than trivialities such as your appearance, polite or proper behavior, or social norms, but then again, an eccentric like you might turn the tables on that stereotype too.

If you want to go even further, you could determine where a character's focus abilities come from. Depending on the genre, they could derive those abilities from advanced and persistent training, via magical runes, through cybernetic parts, from their genetic heritage, or because of their access to advanced technology. For instance, a character might be able to blast targets with lightning because they got zapped by strange radiation or because they picked up a lightning gun. On the other hand, it might be because their intense training allowed them to learn lightning magic. The possibilities are nearly endless, and up to you to include or forgo. Because however a focus's abilities were gained, it's also enough that they just work.

FOCI

The full description for each focus ability listed in this section is found in the [Abilities](#) chapter, which has descriptions for type, flavor, and focus abilities in a single vast catalog.

Abides in Stone

Your flesh is made of hard mineral, making you a hulking, difficult-to-harm humanoid.

Tier 1: Golem Body

Tier 1: Golem Healing

Tier 2: Golem Grip

Tier 3: Trained Basher

Tier 3: Golem Stomp or Weaponization

Tier 4: Deep Reserves

Tier 5: Specialized Basher

Tier 5: Still As a Statue

Tier 6: Ultra Enhancement or Mind Surge

GM Intrusions: Creatures of stone sometimes forget their own strength or weight. A walking statue can terrify common folk.

Absorbs Energy

You can harness kinetic energy and transform it into other kinds of energy.

Tier 1: Absorb Kinetic Energy

Tier 1: Release Energy

Tier 2: Energize Object

Tier 3: Absorb Pure Energy or Improved Absorb Kinetic Energy

Tier 4: Overcharge Energy

Tier 5: Energize Creature

Tier 6: Energize Crowd or Overcharge Device

GM Intrusions: Energy goes to ground in a destructive way. Some predators feed directly on energy. An unintended item is drained of energy.

Awakens Dreams

You can pull images from dreams and bring them to life in the waking world.

Tier 1: Dreamcraft

Tier 1: Oneirochemy

Tier 2: Dream Thief

Tier 3: Dream Becomes Reality or Enhanced Intellect

Tier 4: Daydream

Tier 5: Nightmare

Tier 6: Chamber of Dreams or Reactive Field

GM Intrusions: An unexpected sleepwalking episode puts the character into a dangerous situation. A nightmare breaks free of a dream.

Battles Robots

You excel in battling robots, automatons, and machine entities.

Tier 1: Machine Vulnerabilities

Tier 1: Tech Skills

Tier 2: Defense Against Robots

Tier 2: Machine Hunting

Tier 3: Disable Mechanisms or Surprise Attack

Tier 4: Robot Fighter

Tier 5: Drain Power

Tier 6: Deactivate Mechanisms or Lethal Damage

GM Intrusions: The robot explodes upon defeat. Other robots come after the character for revenge.

Bears a Halo of Fire

You can sheath your body in flames, which protects you and harms your foes.

Tier 1: Shroud of Flame

Tier 2: Hurl Flame

Tier 3: Wings of Fire or Fiery Hand of Doom

Tier 4: Flameblade

Tier 5: Fire Tendrils

Tier 6: Fire Servant or Inferno Trail

GM Intrusions: Fire burns flammable material. Fire spreads out of control. Primitive creatures fear fire and often attack what they fear.

Blazes With Radiance

You can create light, sculpt it, bend it away from you, or gather it to use as a weapon.

Tier 1: Enlightened

Tier 1: Illuminating Touch

Tier 2: Dazzling Sunburst

Tier 3: Burning Light or Skill With Defense

Tier 4: Sunlight

Tier 5: Disappear

Tier 6: Living Light or Defensive Field

GM Intrusions: Allies are accidentally dazzled or blinded. Bright flashes draw guards.

Brandishes an Exotic Shield

You deploy an amazing shield of pure force that provides protection and some offensive options.

Tier 1: Force Field Shield

Tier 1: Force Bash

Tier 2: Enveloping Shield

Tier 3: Healing Pulse or Throw Force Shield

Tier 4: Energized Shield

Tier 5: Force Wall

Tier 6: Bouncing Shield or Shield Burst

GM Intrusions: The shield is temporarily lost. A foe temporarily ends up with the shield.

Builds Robots

Your robotic creations do as they are commanded.

(The word “robot” is used in this focus, though the robot you create might look very different from one created by someone else, depending on the genre. Steampunk robots, organic robots, or even magical golems are all feasible “robots.”)

Tier 1: Robot Assistant

Tier 1: Robot Builder

Tier 2: Robot Control

Tier 3: Expert Follower or Skill With Defense

Tier 4: Robot Upgrade

Tier 5: Robot Fleet

Tier 6: Robot Evolution or Robot Upgrade

GM Intrusions: The robot is hacked, gains a mind of its own, or unexpectedly detonates.

Calculates the Incalculable

Awesome mathematical ability allows you to model the world in real time, giving you an edge over everyone.

Tier 1: Predictive Equation

Tier 1: Higher Mathematics

Tier 2: Predictive Model

Tier 3: Subconscious Defense or Enhanced Intellect

Tier 4: Cognizant Offense

Tier 5: Greater Enhanced Intellect

Tier 5: Further Mathematics

Tier 6: Knowing the Unknown or Greater Enhanced Intellect

GM Intrusions: Too many predicted results threaten to overwhelm and stun the character. A result points to imminent disaster.

Channels Divine Blessings

A devout follower of a divine being, you channel some of your deity's power to achieve wonders.

Tier 1: Blessing of the Gods

Tier 2: Enhanced Intellect

Tier 3: Divine Radiance or Fire Bloom

Tier 4: Overawe

Tier 5: Divine Intervention

Tier 6: Divine Symbol or Summon Demon

GM Intrusions: A demon investigates divine magic use. A rival cult has issues with the character's teachings.

Commands Mental Powers

You have honed the power of your mind to perform amazing psychic deeds.

Tier 1: Telepathic

Tier 2: Mind Reading

Tier 3: Psychic Burst or Psychic Suggestion

Tier 4: Use Senses of Others

Tier 5: Precognition

Tier 6: Mind Control or Telepathic Network

GM Intrusions: Something glimpsed in the target's mind is horrifying. A feedback loop allows the target to read the character's mind.

Conducts Weird Science

Your preternatural insight and ability make you a scientist capable of amazing feats.

Tier 1: Lab Analysis

Tier 1: Knowledge Skills

Tier 2: Modify Device

Tier 3: Better Living Through Chemistry or Incredible Health

Tier 4: Knowledge Skills

Tier 4: Just a Bit Mad

Tier 5: Weird Science Breakthrough

Tier 6: Incredible Feat of Science

Tier 6: Inventor or Defensive Field

GM Intrusions: Creations get out of control. Side effects cannot always be predicted. Weird science terrifies people and can draw the media. When a device created or modified by weird science is depleted, it detonates.

Consorts With the Dead

The dead answer your questions, and their reanimated corpses serve you.

Tier 1: Speaker for the Dead

Tier 2: Necromancy

Tier 3: Reading the Room or Repair Flesh

Tier 4: Greater Necromancy

Tier 5: Terrifying Gaze

Tier 6: True Necromancy or Word of Death

GM Intrusions: The character's necromantic reputation precedes them. A corpse seeks revenge for being reanimated.

Controls Beasts

Your ability to communicate and lead beasts is uncanny.

Tier 1: Beast Companion

Tier 2: Soothe the Savage

Tier 2: Communication

Tier 3: Mount or Stronger Together

Tier 4: Beast Eyes

Tier 4: Improved Companion

Tier 5: Beast Call

Tier 6: As If One Creature or Control the Savage

GM Intrusions: The community is reluctant to welcome dangerous animals. Out-of-control beasts become a real hazard.

Controls Gravity

You can sway the attraction of gravity itself.

Type Swap Option: Weighty

Tier 1: Hover

Tier 2: Enhanced Speed Edge

Tier 3: Define Down or Gravity Cleave

Tier 4: Field of Gravity

Tier 5: Flight

Tier 6: Improved Gravity Cleave or Weight of the World

GM Intrusions: Onlookers react with unreasoning fear. A weird interaction sends an ally or object careening into the sky.

COPIES SUPERPOWERS

You can copy others' skills, abilities, and superpowers.

Tier 1: Flex Skill

Tier 1: Flex Skill

Tier 2: Copy Power

Tier 3: Steal Power or Wildcard Powers

Tier 4: Improved Copying

Tier 5: Power Memory

Tier 6: Amazing Copying or Multiple

Copying GM Intrusions: A copied power ends unexpectedly or goes out of control. A copied power doesn't bring secondary powers with it (like gaining superspeed without protection from air friction, or not being immune to the heat from your own fire bolts).

Crafts Illusions

You fashion images from light that are so perfect they seem real.

Tier 1: Minor Illusion

Tier 2: Illusory Disguise

Tier 3: Cast Illusion or Major Illusion

Tier 4: Illusory Selves

Tier 5: Terrifying Image

Tier 6: Grandiose Illusion or Permanent Illusion

GM Intrusions: The illusion isn't believable. The illusion is pierced at just the wrong moment.

Crafts Unique Objects

You're an inventor of strange and useful objects.

Tier 1: Crafter

Tier 1: Master Identifier

Tier 2: Artifact Tinkerer

Tier 2: Quick Work

Tier 3: Master Crafter or Built-In Weaponry

Tier 4: Cyphersmith

Tier 5: Innovator

Tier 6: Inventor or Fusion Armor

GM Intrusions: The object malfunctions, breaks, or suffers catastrophic or unexpected failure.

(Cyphersmith works only in a setting where the cyphers are physical objects. If this isn't the case, this ability should probably be replaced with something akin to Weird Science Breakthrough from the Conducts Weird Science focus.)

Dances With Dark Matter

You can manipulate shadow and “dark” matter.

Tier 1: Ribbons of Dark Matter

Tier 2: Void Wings

Tier 3: Dark Matter Shroud or Dark Matter Strike

Tier 4: Dark Matter Shell

Tier 5: Windwracked Traveler

Tier 6: Dark Matter Structure or Embrace the Night

GM Intrusions: Dark matter skulks away as if possessed by a mind of its own.

Defends the Gate

Everyone wants you on their side when it comes to a fight because nothing gets by you.

Tier 1: Fortified Position

Tier 1: Rally to Me

Tier 2: Mind for Might

Tier 3: Fortification Builder or Divert Attacks

Tier 4: Greater Enhanced Might

Tier 5: Reinforcing Field

Tier 6: Generate Force Field or Stun Attack

GM Intrusions: A strategically important structure collapses. The enemy attacks from an unexpected direction.

Defends the Weak

You stand up for the helpless, the weak, and the unprotected.

Tier 1: Courageous

Tier 1: Warding Shield

Tier 2: Devoted Defender

Tier 2: Insight

Tier 3: Dual Wards or True Guardian

Tier 4: Combat Challenge

Tier 5: Willing Sacrifice

Tier 6: Resuscitate or True Defender

GM Intrusions: A character focused on protecting others may periodically leave themselves vulnerable to attacks.

Descends From Nobility

A descendent of wealth and power, you carry a noble title and the abilities granted by a privileged upbringing.

Type Swap Option: Retinue

Tier 1: Privileged Nobility

Tier 2: Trained Interlocutor

Tier 3: Advanced Command or Noble's Courage

Tier 4: Expert Follower

Tier 5: Asserting Your Privilege

Tier 6: Able Assistance or Mind of a Leader

GM Intrusions: Debts incurred by a family are owed by the character. A long-lost sibling seeks to disinherit rivals. An assassin finds the character.

Doesn't Do Much

You're a slacker, but you know a little about a lot of things.

Tier 1: Life Lessons

Tier 2: Totally Chill

Tier 3: Skill With Attacks or Improvise

Tier 4: Life Lessons

Tier 4: Greater Skill With Defense

Tier 5: Greater Enhanced Potential

Tier 6 Drawing on Life's Experiences or Quick Wits

GM Intrusions: New situations are confounding and stressful. Past actions (or inactions) come back to haunt the character.

Drives Like A Maniac

Whether balancing on two wheels, jumping another vehicle, or driving head-on toward an oncoming enemy car, you don't think about the risks when you're behind the wheel.

(Someone who Drives Like a Maniac needs access to a vehicle.)

Tier 1: Driver

Tier 1: Driving on the Edge

Tier 2: Car Surfer

Tier 2: Stare Them Down

Tier 3: Expert Driver or Enhanced Speed Edge

Tier 4: Sharp-Eyed

Tier 4: Enhanced Speed

Tier 5: Something in the Road

Tier 6: Trick Driver or Lethal Damage

GM Intrusions: The engine develops a knock. The bridge on the road ahead is out. The windshield shatters. Someone unexpectedly runs in front of the vehicle.

Emerged From the Obelisk

Your body, hard as crystal, gives you a suite of unique abilities, gained after an interaction with a floating crystalline obelisk.

Tier 1: Crystalline Body

Tier 2: Hover

Tier 3: Inhabit Crystal or Immovable

Tier 4: Crystal Lens

Tier 5: Resonant Frequency

Tier 6: Resonant Quake or Return to the Obelisk

GM Intrusions: Cyphers and artifacts react unexpectedly in the character's hands.

Employs Magnetism

You command metal and the power of magnetism.

Tier 1: Move Metal

Tier 2: Repel Metal

Tier 3: Destroy Metal or Guide Bolt

Tier 4: Magnetic Field

Tier 5: Command Metal

Tier 6: Diamagnetism or Iron Punch

GM Intrusions: The metal twists, bends, or produces shrapnel. A lapse in concentration might cause something to slip or drop at just the wrong time.

Entertains

You perform, mostly for the benefit of others.

Tier 1: Levity

Tier 2: Inspiring Ease

Tier 3: Knowledge Skills or Greater Enhanced Potential

Tier 4: Calm

Tier 5: Able Assistance

Tier 6: Master Entertainer or Vindictive Performance

GM Intrusions: The audience is annoyed or offended. Musical instruments break. Paints dry in their pots. The words to a poem or song are forgotten.

Exists in Two Places at Once

You exist in two places at once.

Tier 1: Duplicate

Tier 2: Share Senses

Tier 3: Superior Duplicate or Resilient Duplicate

Tier 4: Damage Transference

Tier 5: Coordinated Effort

Tier 6: Multiplicity or Resilient Duplicate

GM Intrusions: Perceiving the world from two different places disorients the character, causing momentary vertigo, nausea, or confusion.

Exists Partially Out of Phase

A bit translucent, you're slightly out of phase and can move through solid objects.

Tier 1: Walk Through Walls

Tier 2: Defensive Phasing

Tier 3: Phased Attack or Phase Door

Tier 4: Ghost

Tier 5: Untouchable

Tier 6: Enhanced Phased Attack or Phase Foe

GM Intrusions: The character is sent phasing into an unexpected dimension. The character becomes lost in a large solid.

Explores Dark Places

You're the archetypal treasure hunter, scavenger, and finder of lost things.

Tier 1: Superb Explorer

Tier 2: Superb Infiltrator

Tier 2: Eyes Adjusted

Tier 3: Nightstrike or Slippery Customer

Tier 4: Hard-Won Resilience

Tier 5: Dark Explorer

Tier 6: Blinding Attack or Embraced by Darkness

GM Intrusions: Possessions fall out of pockets or bags in the dark; maps get lost; information gained fails to include an important detail.

Fights Dirty

You'll do anything to win a fight: bite, scratch, kick, trick, and worse.

Tier 1: Tracker

Tier 1: Stalker

Tier 2: Sneak

Tier 2: Quarry

Tier 3: Betrayal or Surprise Attack

Tier 4: Mind Games

Tier 4: Capable Warrior

Tier 5: Using the Environment

Tier 6: Twisting the Knife or Murderer

GM Intrusions: People look poorly upon those who cheat or fight without honor. Sometimes a dirty trick backfires.

Fights With Panache

You're a swashbuckling daredevil who fights with flamboyant style that's entertaining to watch.

Tier 1: Attack Flourish

Tier 2: Quick Block

Tier 3: Acrobatic Attack or Flamboyant Boast

Tier 4: Block for Another

Tier 4: Fast Kill

Tier 5: Using the Environment

Tier 6: Agile Wit or Return to Sender

GM Intrusions: The display comes off looking silly, clumsy, or unattractive.

Flies Faster Than a Bullet

You can fly, and you're superstrong, hard to hurt, and fast too. Is there anything you can't do?

Tier 1: Hover

Tier 2: Greater Enhanced Potential

Tier 3: Hidden Reserves or See Through Matter

Tier 4: Blink of an Eye

Tier 4: Up to Speed

Tier 5: Not Dead Yet

Tier 6: Burning Light or Ignore Affliction

GM Intrusions: A nemesis finds the character. A strange material is found to nullify the character's abilities.

Focuses Mind Over Matter

You can telekinetically move objects with your mind without physically touching them.

Tier 1: Divert Attacks

Tier 2: Telekinesis

Tier 3: Cloak of Opportunity or Enhance Strength

Tier 4: Apportion

Tier 5: Psychokinetic Attack

Tier 6: Improved Apportion or Reshape

GM Intrusions: One mental slip, and moving objects drop or fragile objects break. Sometimes the wrong item moves, falls, or breaks.

Fuses Flesh and Steel

Your body is part machine.

Tier 1: Enhanced Body

Tier 2: Interface

Tier 3: Sensing Package or Weaponization

Tier 4: Fusion

Tier 5: Deep Reserves

Tier 6: Mind Surge or Ultra Enhancement

GM Intrusions: People in most societies are afraid of someone who is revealed to have mechanical parts.

Fuses Mind and Machine

Electronic aids implanted in your brain make you a mental powerhouse.

Tier 1: Enhanced Intellect

Tier 1: Knowledge Skills

Tier 2: Network Tap

Tier 3: Action Processor or Machine Telepathy

Tier 4: Greater Enhanced Intellect

Tier 4: Knowledge Skills

Tier 5: See the Future

Tier 6: Machine Enhancement or Mind Surge

GM Intrusions: Machines malfunction and shut down. Powerful machine intelligences can take control of lesser thinking machines. Some people don't trust a person who isn't fully organic.

Grows to Towering Heights

For brief periods, you can grow larger and, with enough experience, to towering heights.

Tier 1: Enlarge

Tier 1: Freakishly Large

Tier 2: Bigger

Tier 2: Advantages of Being Big

Tier 3: Huge or Throw

Tier 4: Grab

Tier 5: Gargantuan

Tier 6: Colossal or Lethal Damage

GM Intrusions: Rapid growth knocks over furnishings or smashes through ceilings or hanging lights. An enlarged character breaks through the floor.

HAS A THOUSAND FACES

You can change your appearance to look like anyone else.

Tier 1: Face Morph

Tier 1: Interaction Skills

Tier 2: Body Morph

Tier 2: War Flesh

Tier 3: Disguise Other or Resilience

Tier 4: Ageless

Tier 4: Think Your Way Out

Tier 5: Memory Becomes Action

Tier 6: Divide Your Mind or Infer Thoughts

GM Intrusions: Part of the disguise slips. An NPC thinks the disguised character is someone they know very well.

Helps Their Friends

You love your friends and help them out of any difficulty, no matter what.

Type Swap Option: Advice From a Friend

Tier 1: Friendly Help

Tier 1: Courageous

Tier 2: Weather the Vicissitudes

Tier 3: Buddy System or Skill With Attacks

Tier 4: In Harm's Way

Tier 4: Enhanced Physique

Tier 5: Inspire Action

Tier 6: Deep Consideration or Skill With Defense

GM Intrusions: Others sometimes have ulterior motives. The law takes an undue interest. Even when everything goes right, repercussions follow.

Howls at the Moon

For brief periods, you become a fearsome and powerful creature with control issues.

Tier 1: Beast Form

Tier 2: Controlled Change

Tier 3: Bigger Beast Form or Greater Beast Form

Tier 4: Greater Controlled Change

Tier 5: Enhanced Beast Form

Tier 6: Lethal Damage or Perfect Control

GM Intrusions: The change happens in an uncontrolled fashion. People are terrified of monsters.

Hunts

You are a stalking hunter who excels at bringing down your selected quarry.

Tier 1: Attack Flourish

Tier 1: Tracker

Tier 2: Quarry

Tier 2: Sneak

Tier 3: Horde Fighting or Sprint and Grab

Tier 4: Surprise Attack

Tier 5: Hunter's Drive

Tier 6: Greater Skill With Attacks or Multiple Quarry

GM Intrusions: The quarry notices the character. The quarry isn't as vulnerable as it seemed.

IGNORES PHYSICAL DISTANCE

You can teleport from one place to another by briefly passing through a parallel dimension.

Tier 1: Dimensional Squeeze

Tier 2: Opportunist

Tier 3: Defensive Blinking or Teleportation Burst

Tier 4: Short Teleportation

Tier 5: Medium Teleportation

Tier 6: Teleportation or Teleportive Wound

GM Intrusions: A teleport goes awry, landing the character in a dangerous place. Inertia (such as from falling) continues through the teleport, injuring the character.

Infiltrates

Subtlety, guile, and stealth allow you to get in where others can't.

Tier 1: Stealth Skills

Tier 1: Sense Attitudes

Tier 2: Impersonate

Tier 2: Flight Not Fight

Tier 3: Awareness or Skill With Attacks

Tier 4: Invisibility

Tier 5: Evasion

Tier 6: Brainwashing or Spring Away

GM Intrusions: Spies are treated harshly when caught. Allies disavow infiltrators who get caught. Some secrets are better left unknown.

Interprets the Law

You excel at winning others over to your views.

Tier 1: Opening Statement

Tier 1: Knowledge of the Law

Tier 2: Debate

Tier 3: Able Assistance or Enhanced Intellect Edge

Tier 4: Castigate

Tier 5: No One Knows Better

Tier 6: Greater Enhanced Potential or Legal Intern

GM Intrusions: Onlookers react badly to a know-it-all. A distraction or interruption throws the character's argument off the rails.

Is Idolized by Millions

You're a celebrity and most people adore you.

Tier 1: Entourage

Tier 1: Celebrity Talent

Tier 2: Perks of Stardom

Tier 3: Incredible Health or Skill With Attacks

Tier 4: Captivate With Starshine

Tier 4: Expert Follower

Tier 5: Do You Know Who I Am?

Tier 6: Transcend the Script or Improved Companion

GM Intrusions: Fans are endangered or hurt on your behalf. Someone in your entourage betrays you. Your show, tour, contract, or other event is canceled. The media posts photos of you in an embarrassing situation.

Is Licensed to Carry

You carry a gun and you know how to use it in a fight.

(Although Is Licensed to Carry is designed with modern firearms in mind, it could apply to flintlock weapons, futuristic laser blasters, or other ranged weapons.)

Tier 1: Gunner

Tier 1: Practiced With Guns

Tier 2: Careful Shot

Tier 3: Trained Gunner or Damage Dealer

Tier 4: Snap Shot

Tier 5: Arc Spray

Tier 6: Special Shot or Lethal Damage

GM Intrusions: Misfire or jam! The attack fails and the action is lost, plus an additional action is needed to fix the problem.

Is Wanted by the Law

"WANTED, DEAD OR ALIVE" posters (or their equivalent) have appeared featuring your face. It's up to you whether it's a mistake that snowballed out of control or you actually would kill someone just for looking at you.

Tier 1: Enhanced Speed

Tier 1: Danger Sense

Tier 2: Surprise Attack

Tier 3: Outlaw Reputation or Successive Attack

Tier 4: Fast Kill

Tier 5: Band of Desperados

Tier 6: Not Dead Yet or Lethal Damage

GM Intrusions: Most people do not take well to discovering a wanted outlaw in their midst.

Keeps a Magic Ally

An allied magic creature bound to an object (such as a minor djinn in a lamp, or a ghost in a pipe) is your friend, protector, and weapon.

Tier 1: Bound Magic Creature

Tier 2: Object Bond

Tier 2: Hidden Closet

Tier 3: Minor Wish or Mount

Tier 4: Improved Object Bond

Tier 5: Moderate Wish

Tier 6: Object Bond Mastery or Trust to Luck

GM Intrusions: The creature unexpectedly disappears into its bound object. The bound object cracks. The creature disagrees and doesn't do as asked. The creature says it's leaving unless a task is performed for it.

Leads

Your natural leadership capability allows you to command others, including a loyal band of followers.

Tier 1: Natural Charisma

Tier 1: Good Advice

Tier 2: Enhanced Potential

Tier 2: Basic Follower

Tier 3: Advanced Command or Expert Follower

Tier 4: Captivate or Inspire

Tier 5: Greater Enhanced Potential

Tier 6: Band of Followers or Mind of a Leader

GM Intrusions: Followers fail, betray, lie, become corrupted, get kidnapped, or die.

Learns Quickly

You deal with bad situations as they arise, learning new lessons each time.

Tier 1: Enhanced Intellect

Tier 1: There's Your Problem

Tier 2: Quick Study

Tier 3: Hard to Distract

Tier 3: Enhanced Intellect Edge or Flex Skill

Tier 4: Pay It Forward

Tier 5: Enhanced Intellect

Tier 5: Learned a Few Things

Tier 6: Two Things at Once or Skill With Defense

GM Intrusions: Accidents and mistakes are great teachers.

Lives in the Wilderness

You can survive in badlands where others perish.

Tier 1: Wilderness Life

Tier 1: Enhanced Might

Tier 2: Living Off the Land

Tier 2: Wilderness Explorer

Tier 3: Animal Senses and Sensibilities or Wilderness Encouragement

Tier 4: Wilderness Awareness

Tier 5: The Wild Is on Your Side

Tier 6: One With the Wild or Wild Camouflage

GM Intrusions: People in cities and towns sometimes disparage those who look (and smell) like they live in the wilds, as if they were ignorant or barbaric.

Looks for Trouble

You're a scrapper and love a good fight.

Tier 1: Fists of Fury

Tier 1: Wound Tender

Tier 2: Protector

Tier 2: Straightforward

Tier 3: Skill With Attacks or Greater Enhanced Potential

Tier 4: Knock Out

Tier 5: Mastery With Attacks

Tier 6: Greater Enhanced Might or Lethal Damage

GM Intrusions: Weapons break or fly from even the strongest grip. Brawlers trip and fall. Even the battlefield can work against you with things falling or collapsing.

Loves the Void

When it's just you, your spacesuit, and the panorama of stars wheeling out forever and always, you are at peace.

Type Swap Option: Have Spacesuit, Will Travel

Tier 1: Vacuum Skilled

Tier 1: Microgravity Adept

Tier 2: Enhanced Speed Edge

Tier 2: Enhanced Physique

Tier 3: Space Fighting or Fusion Armor

Tier 4: Silent As Space

Tier 4: Push Off and Throw

Tier 5: Microgravity Avoidance

Tier 6: Weightless Shot or Reactive Field

GM Intrusions: Spacesuits develop glitches. Air refill cartridges sometimes misreport capacity. Micrometeorites are common in space.

Masters Defense

You use protective equipment and practiced techniques to avoid becoming hurt in a fight.

Tier 1: Shield Master

Tier 2: Sturdy

Tier 2: Practiced in Armor

Tier 3: Dodge and Resist or Dodge and Respond

Tier 4: Tower of Will

Tier 4: Experienced in Armor

Tier 5: Nothing but Defend

Tier 6: Defense Master or Wear It Well

GM Intrusions: Shields break when hit, as do weapons used to parry. Armor straps break.

Masters Spells

By specializing in spellcasting and keeping a spellbook, you can quickly cast spells of arcing lightning, rolling fire, creeping shadow, and summoning.

Tier 1: Arcane Flare

Tier 2: Ray of Confusion

Tier 3: Fire Bloom or Summon Giant Spider

Tier 4: Soul Interrogation

Tier 5: Granite Wall

Tier 6: Summon Demon or Word of Death

GM Intrusions: The spell goes wrong. The summoned creature turns on the caster. A rival spellcaster is drawn to the magic use.

Masters the Swarm

Insects. Rats. Bats. Even birds. You master one type of small creature that obeys you.

Tier 1: Influence Swarm

Tier 2: Control Swarm

Tier 3: Living Armor or Skill With Attacks

Tier 4: Call Swarm

Tier 5: Gain Unusual Companion

Tier 6: Deadly Swarm or Skill With Defense

GM Intrusions: A command is misunderstood. Control is erratic or is lost. Bites and stings are not uncommon for masters of the swarm.

Masters Weaponry

You are a master user of a particular type of weapon, be it a sword, whip, dagger, gun, or something else.

(Someone who Masters Weaponry might have additional equipment, including a high-quality weapon.)

Tier 1: Weapon Master

Tier 1: Weapon Crafter

Tier 2: Weapon Defense

Tier 3: Rapid Attack or Disarming Strike

Tier 4: Never Fumble

Tier 5: Extreme Mastery

Tier 6: Murderer or Deadly Strike

GM Intrusions: Weapons break. Weapons can be stolen. Weapons can be dropped or forced out of your hand.

Metes Out Justice

You right wrongs, protect the innocent, and punish the guilty.

Tier 1: Make Judgment

Tier 1: Designation

Tier 2: Defend the Innocent

Tier 2: Improved Designation

Tier 3: Defend All the Innocent or Punish the Guilty

Tier 4: Find the Guilty

Tier 4: Greater Designation

Tier 5: Punish All the Guilty

Tier 6: Damn the Guilty or Inspire the Innocent

GM Intrusions: Guilt or innocence can be complicated. Some people resent the presumption of a self-appointed judge. Passing judgment makes enemies.

Moves Like a Cat

Lithe, flexible, and graceful, you move quickly and smoothly, and never seem to be where danger is.

Tier 1: Greater Enhanced Speed

Tier 1: Balance

Tier 2: Movement Skills

Tier 2: Safe Fall

Tier 3: Hard to Hit

Tier 3: Enhanced Speed Edge or Greater Enhanced Speed

Tier 4: Quick Strike

Tier 5: Slippery

Tier 6: Perfect Speed Burst or Greater Enhanced Speed

GM Intrusions: Even a cat can be clumsy. A jump isn't quite as easy as it looks. An escape move is so overzealous that it sends the character right into harm's way.

Moves Like the Wind

You can move so fast that you become a blur.

Tier 1: Greater Enhanced Speed

Tier 1: Fleet of Foot

Tier 2: Hard to Hit

Tier 3: Speed Burst or Greater Enhanced Speed

Tier 4: Blink of an Eye

Tier 5: Hard to See

Tier 6: Perfect Speed Burst or Incredible Running Speed

GM Intrusions: Surfaces can be slick or offer hidden obstacles. The movement of other creatures can be unpredictable, and the character might run into them.

Murders

You're an assassin, whether by trade, by inclination, or because it was that or be killed yourself. (Someone who Murders might have additional equipment, including three doses of a level 2 blade poison that inflicts 5 points of damage.)

Tier 1: Surprise Attack

Tier 1: Assassin Skills

Tier 2: Quick Death

Tier 2: Infiltrator

Tier 3: Awareness or Poison Crafter

Tier 4: Better Surprise Attack

Tier 5: Damage Dealer

Tier 6: Escape Plan or Murderer

GM Intrusions: Most people do not react well to a professional killer.

Needs No Weapon

Powerful punches, kicks, elbows, knees, and full body movements are all the weapons you need.

Tier 1: Fists of Fury

Tier 1: Flesh of Stone

Tier 2: Advantage to Disadvantage

Tier 2: Unarmed Fighting Style

Tier 3: Moving Like Water or Greater Enhanced Potential

Tier 4: Divert Attacks

Tier 5: Stun Attack

Tier 6: Master of Unarmed Fighting Style or Lethal Damage

GM Intrusions: Striking certain foes hurts you as much as it hurts them. Opponents with weapons have greater reach. Complicated martial arts moves can knock you off balance.

Never Says Die

You never quit, can shrug off a beating, and always come back for more.

Tier 1: Improved Recovery

Tier 1: Push on Through

Tier 2: Ignore the Pain

Tier 3: Blood Fever or Hidden Reserves

Tier 4: Increasing Determination or Outlast the Foe

Tier 5: Not Dead Yet

Tier 6: Final Defiance or Ignore Affliction

GM Intrusions: Sometimes, it's equipment or weapons that give out.

Operates Undercover

Under the guise of someone else, you seek to find answers the powerful do not want divulged.

(Someone who Operates Undercover might have additional equipment that includes a disguise kit.)

Tier 1: Investigate

Tier 2: Disguise

Tier 3: Agent Provocateur or Run and Fight

Tier 4: Pull a Fast One

Tier 5: Using What's Available

Tier 6: Trust to Luck or Deadly Strike

GM Intrusions: Bad luck can ruin the best plans. Disguises fail. Allies are revealed to be agents, too.

Performs Feats of Strength

A muscled prodigy, you can haul incredible weight, hurl your body through the air, and punch through doors.

Tier 1: Athlete

Tier 1: Enhanced Might Edge

Tier 2: Feat of Strength

Tier 3: Iron Fist or Throw

Tier 4: Greater Enhanced Might

Tier 5: Brute Strike

Tier 6: Greater Enhanced Might or Jump Attack

GM Intrusions: It's easy to break delicate things or hurt someone accidentally.

Pilots Starcraft

You're a crack starship pilot.

Tier 1: Pilot

Tier 1: Flex Lore

Tier 2: Salvage and Comfort

Tier 2: Mentally Tough

Tier 3: Expert Pilot

Tier 3: Ship Footing or Machine Companion

Tier 4: Sensor Array

Tier 4: Enhanced Speed

Tier 5: Like the Back of Your Hand

Tier 6: Incomparable Pilot

Tier 6: Remote Control or Skill With Attacks

GM Intrusions: Starcraft get lost, break down, and are attacked in space. An alien stowaway is found.

Plays Too Many Games

Lessons, reflexes, and strategies you've learned by playing too many games have applications in the real world, where people who don't play enough toil and live their dreary lives.

Tier 1: Game Lessons

Tier 1: Gamer

Tier 2: Zero Dark Eyes

Tier 2: Resist Tricks

Tier 3: Sniper's Aim or Enhanced Speed Edge

Tier 4: Mind Games

Tier 4: Enhanced Intellect

Tier 5: Gamer's Fortitude

Tier 6: Mind Surge or Gaming God

GM Intrusions: Missed attacks strike the wrong target. Equipment breaks. Sometimes people react negatively to someone who has lived most of their life in imaginary game worlds.

Rages

When you go berserk, everyone fears you.

Tier 1: Frenzy

Tier 2: Greater Enhanced Might

Tier 2: Movement Skills

Tier 3: Power Strike or Unarmored Fighter

Tier 4: Greater Frenzy

Tier 5: Attack and Attack Again

Tier 6: Greater Enhanced Potential or Lethal Damage

GM Intrusions: It's easy for a berserker to lose control and attack friend as well as foe.

Rides the Lightning

You create and discharge electrical power.

Tier 1: Shock

Tier 1: Charge

Tier 2: Bolt Rider

Tier 3: Electric Armor or Drain Charge

Tier 4: Bolts of Power

Tier 5: Electrical Flight

Tier 6: Flash Across the Miles or Wall of Lightning

GM Intrusions: Targets other than those intended are shocked. Objects explode.

Runs Away

Your first instinct is to run from danger, and you've gotten very good at it.

Tier 1: Go Defensive

Tier 2: Enhanced Speed

Tier 2: Quick to Flee

Tier 3: Incredible Running Speed or Greater Enhanced Speed

Tier 4: Increasing Determination

Tier 4: Quick Wits

Tier 5: Go to Ground

Tier 6: Burst of Escape or Skill With Defense

GM Intrusions: Quick movements sometimes lead to dropped items, slipping on uneven ground, or going the wrong way by accident.

Sailed Beneath the Jolly Roger

You sailed with a crew of dread pirates, but you've decided to end your days as a pirate and join some other cause. The question is, will your past let you go so easily?

Tier 1: Ignore the Pain

Tier 1: Sailor

Tier 2: Taking Advantage

Tier 2: Fearsome Reputation

Tier 3: Skill With Attacks or Skill With Defense

Tier 4: Sea Legs

Tier 4: Movement Skills

Tier 5: Lost in the Chaos

Tier 6: Duel to the Death or Successive Attack

GM Intrusions: The dangers of the high seas are many, including severe storms and disease. Other pirates sometimes get ahead through betrayal. A pirate tracks down former sailing mates to find hidden treasure.

Scavenges

When not running and hiding, you sift the ruins of civilization for useful remnants to ensure your survival.

Tier 1: Post-Apocalyptic Survivor

Tier 1: Ruin Lore

Tier 2: Junkmonger

Tier 3: Taking Advantage or Incredible Health

Tier 4: Know Where to Look

Tier 5: Recycled Cyphers

Tier 6: Artifact Scavenger or Reactive Field

GM Intrusions: An item made with recycled junk breaks. Someone shows up claiming that the useful item or piece of junk scavenged belongs to them. A recycled cypher explodes.

SCULPTS HARD LIGHT

You create physical objects out of hard light that you can use for offense and defense.

Tier 1: Automatic Glow

Tier 1: Temporary Light

Tier 2: Entangling Force

Tier 3: Harder Light or Sculpt Light

Tier 4: Greater Enhanced Intellect

Tier 5: Improved Sculpt Light

Tier 6: Defensive Field or Flight

GM Intrusions: A hard light object disappears early. A hard light object cannot affect a certain creature or color.

Sees Beyond

You have a psychic sense that allows you to see what others cannot.

Tier 1: See the Unseen

Tier 2: See Through Matter

Tier 3: Find the Hidden or Sensor

Tier 4: Remote Viewing

Tier 5: See Through Time

Tier 6: Mental Projection or Total Awareness

GM Intrusions: Some secrets are too terrible to know.

SEPARATES MIND FROM BODY

You can project your mind out of your body to see faraway places and learn secrets that would otherwise remain hidden.

Tier 1: Third Eye

Tier 2: Open Mind

Tier 2: Sharp Senses

Tier 3: Roaming Third Eye or Find the Hidden

Tier 4: Sensor

Tier 5: Psychic Passenger

Tier 6: Mental Projection or Improved Sensor

GM Intrusions: Reuniting mind and body can sometimes be disorienting and require a character to spend a few moments to get their bearings.

Shepherds the Community

You keep the place where you live safe from all danger.

Tier 1: Community Knowledge

Tier 1: Community Activist

Tier 2: Skill With Attacks

Tier 3: Shepherd's Fury or Skill With Defense

Tier 4: Greater Enhanced Potential

Tier 5: Evasion

Tier 6: Greater Skill With Attacks or Protective Wall

GM Intrusions: People in the community misunderstand the character's motives. Rivals try to oust the character.

Shepherds Spirits

Wandering souls, nature spirits, and elemental beings aid and support you.

(In some settings, the Shepherds Spirits focus applies to only one kind of spirit, such as spirits of the deceased, nature spirits, and so on.)

Tier 1: Question the Spirits

Tier 2: Spirit Accomplice

Tier 3: Command Spirit or Preternatural Senses

Tier 4: Wraith Cloak

Tier 5: Call Dead Spirit

Tier 6: Call Otherworldly Spirit or Infuse Spirit

GM Intrusions: Some people don't trust those who deal with spirits. The dead sometimes don't want shepherding.

Shreds the Walls of the World

Speed plus phasing gives you a unique ability to evade danger and simultaneously inflict damage.

Tier 1: Phase Sprint

Tier 1: Disrupting Touch

Tier 2: Scratch Existence

Tier 3: Invisible Phasing or Walk Through Walls

Tier 4: Phase Detonation

Tier 5: Very Long Sprinting

Tier 6: Shred Existence or Untouchable While Moving

GM Intrusions: Moving so quickly while sprinting sometimes leads to stumbles on unexpected, exotic obstacles.

SHRINKS TO MINUTE SIZE

You can shrink down to the size of a bug and, with enough experience, even smaller.

Tier 1: Shrink

Tier 1: Beneath Notice

Tier 2: Smaller

Tier 2: Advantages of Being Small

Tier 3: Enlarge or Quick Switch

Tier 4: Small Flight

Tier 5: Shrink Others

Tier 6: Bigger or Tiny

GM Intrusions: A creature thinks the small character is potential food. The small character gets trapped in a tiny space or under a falling object.

A character who Shrinks to Minute Size who chooses to learn abilities like Enlarge will never be quite as big as one who Grows to Towering Heights, but they can enjoy the advantages of being big or small as needed.

Siphons Power

You suck power out of machines and creatures alike in order to empower yourself.

(Robots and other living machines should be treated as creatures, not machines, for the purposes of siphoning power from them.)

Tier 1: Drain Machine

Tier 2: Drain Creature

Tier 3: Drain at a Distance or Unraveling Consumption

Tier 4: Store Energy

Tier 5: Share the Power

Tier 6: Explosive Release or Sun Siphon

GM Intrusions: Drained power also transmits something unwanted—compulsions, afflictions, or alien thoughts. Siphoned power can overload the character, causing feedback.

Slays Monsters

You kill monsters.

(Although wielding a sword in a setting where people usually do not carry such weapons is fine, you can change the Slays Monsters sword-related abilities to use a different weapon, such as a gun with silver bullets.)

Tier 1: Practiced With Swords

Tier 1: Monster Bane

Tier 1: Monster Lore

Tier 2: Will of Legend

Tier 3: Trained Slayer

Tier 3: Improved Monster Bane or Misdirect

Tier 4: Fight On

Tier 5: Greater Skill With Attacks (swords)

Tier 6: Murderer or Heroic Monster Bane

GM Intrusions: The monster laid a trap or set an ambush. The monster has previously undisclosed abilities. The monster's mother vows revenge.

SOARS ON AMAZING WINGS

Many superheroes can fly, and some even have wings. You can use your wings for movement, attacks, and defense.

Tier 1: Hover

Tier 1: Flight Exertion

Tier 2: Wing Weapons

Tier 3: Acrobatic Attack or Flying Companion

Tier 4: Hard to Hit

Tier 5: Up to Speed

Tier 6: Hard Target or Defense Master

GM Intrusions: A wing gets hurt or restrained, causing the character to fall. Flying high makes the character an obvious target for an unexpected foe.

Solves Mysteries

You're a master of deduction, using evidence to find the answer.

Tier 1: Investigator

Tier 1: Sleuth

Tier 2: Out of Harm's Way

Tier 3: You Studied or Skill With Attacks

Tier 4: Draw Conclusion

Tier 5: Defuse Situation

Tier 6: Seize the Initiative or Greater Skill With Defense

GM Intrusions: Evidence disappears, red herrings confuse, and witnesses lie. Initial research can be faulty.

Speaks for the Land

Your spiritual connection to nature and the environment grants you mystical abilities.

Tier 1: Seeds of Fury

Tier 1: Wilderness Lore

Tier 2: Grasping Foliage

Tier 3: Soothe the Savage or Communication

Tier 4: Moon Shape

Tier 5: Insect Eruption

Tier 6: Call the Storm or Earthquake

GM Intrusions: An injured natural (but dangerous) creature is discovered. Someone's poaching wildlife for their skins, leaving the carcasses to rot. A tree falls in the forest, one of the last elder trees.

Stands Like a Bastion

Your armor, along with your size, strength, incredible training, or machine enhancement, makes you difficult to move or hurt.

(Some characters who Stand Like a Bastion might already be experts in armor. They can choose a different tier 1 ability instead of Practiced in Armor.)

Tier 1: Practiced in Armor

Tier 1: Experienced Defender

Tier 2: Resist the Elements

Tier 3: Unmovable

Tier 3: Greater Enhanced Might or Practiced With All Weapons

Tier 4: Living Wall

Tier 5: Hardiness

Tier 5: Mastery in Armor

Tier 6: Lethal Damage or Shield Training

GM Intrusions: Armor is damaged. Small foes conspire in ingenious ways.

STRETCHES

Your body is elastic and rubbery, able to stretch to great lengths and compress when struck.

Tier 1: Contortionist

Tier 1: Far Step

Tier 2: Elastic Grip

Tier 2: Safe Fall

Tier 3: Bypass Barrier or Misdirect

Tier 4: Resilience

Tier 5: Free to Move

Tier 6:Break the Ranks or Not Dead Yet

GM Intrusions: An attack or effect interferes with the character's elasticity. A stretched limb becomes overstressed and weak.

TAKES ANIMAL SHAPE

You can transform yourself into an animal.

Tier 1: Animal Shape

Tier 2: Communication

Tier 2: Soothe the Savage

Tier 3: Bigger Animal Shape or Greater Beast Form

Tier 4: Animal Scrying

Tier 5: Hard to Kill

Tier 6: Blurring Speed or Lend Animal Shape

GM Intrusions: The character unexpectedly changes form. An NPC is frightened by or aggressive toward the shapeshifter. The transformation takes longer than expected.

Greater Beast Form applies to using Animal Shape.

Talks to Machines

You use your organic brain like a computer, interfacing "wirelessly" with any electronic device. You can control and influence them in ways that others can't.

Tier 1: Machine Affinity

Tier 1: Distant Interface

Tier 2: Coaxing Power

Tier 2: Charm Machine

Tier 3: Intelligent Interface or Command Machine

Tier 4: Machine Companion

Tier 4: Robot Fighter

Tier 5: Information Gathering

Tier 6: Control Machine or Improved Machine Companion

GM Intrusions: The machine malfunctions or acts unpredictably.

Throws With Deadly Accuracy

Everything that leaves your hand goes exactly where you'd like it to go and at the range and speed to make the perfect impact.

Tier 1: Precision

Tier 2: Careful Aim

Tier 3: Quick Throw or Skill With Defense

Tier 4: Everything Is a Weapon

Tier 4: Specialized Throwing

Tier 5: Whirlwind of Throws

Tier 6: Lethal Damage or Mastery With Defense

GM Intrusions: Missed attacks strike the wrong target. Ricochets can be dangerous. Improvised weapons break.

Thunders

You emit destructive sound and manipulate soundscapes.

Tier 1: Thunder Beam

Tier 2: Sound Conversion Barrier

Tier 3: Nullify Sound or Echolocation

Tier 4: Shattering Shout

Tier 5: Subsonic Rumble

Tier 5: Amplify Sounds

Tier 6: Earthquake or Lethal Vibration

GM Intrusions: Loud noises attract attention.

TOUCHES THE SKY

You can summon storms or break them apart.

Tier 1: Hover

Tier 2: Wind Armor

Tier 3: Bolts of Power or Storm Seed

Tier 4: Windrider

Tier 5: Cold Burst

Tier 6: Control Weather or Wind Chariot

GM Intrusions: An ally is accidentally struck by a fork of lightning. An unexpected grounding effect inflicts damage. The weather is seeded by a much smaller effect, and a storm grows out of control.

Travels Through Time

You can see through time, try to reach through it, and eventually even travel through it.

(Although all character choices are subject to GM approval, Travels Through Time is a focus that the GM and player should probably have a long conversation about ahead of time, so the player knows the rules of time travel (if any) that exist in the GM's setting. A character with this focus can drastically alter a setting, if the rules of time travel allow it.)

Tier 1: Anticipation

Tier 2: See History

Tier 3: Temporal Acceleration or Time Loop

Tier 4: Temporal Dislocation

Tier 5: Time Doppelganger

Tier 6: Call Through Time or Time Travel

GM Intrusions: Paradoxes are created. Others remember past events differently.

Was Foretold

You are the “chosen one,” and prophecy, prediction, prognostication, or some other method of determination expects great things of you one day.

Tier 1: Interaction Skills

Tier 1: Knowing

Tier 2: Destined for Greatness

Tier 3: Overcome All Obstacles or
Hard-Won Resilience

Tier 4: Center of Attention

Tier 5: Show Them the Way

Tier 6: As Foretold in Prophecy or Greater Enhanced Potential

GM Intrusions: An enemy described in prophecy appears. Unbelievers threaten to ruin the moment. The character gains a reputation in outside circles as a fraud.

Wears a Sheen of Ice

You command the wintery power of cold and ice.

Tier 1: Ice Armor

Tier 2: Frost Touch

Tier 3: Freezing Touch or Ice Creation

Tier 4: Resilient Ice Armor

Tier 5: Cold Burst

Tier 6: Ice Storm or Winter Gauntlets

GM Intrusions: Ice makes surfaces slippery. Extreme cold causes objects to crack and break.

Wears Power Armor

Tier 1: Powered Armor

Tier 1: Enhanced Might

Tier 2: Heads-Up Display

Tier 3: Fusion Armor or Incredible
Health

Tier 4: Force Blast

Tier 5: Field-Reinforced Armor

Tier 6: Masterful Armor Modification (Jet Assisted Flight) or Masterful Armor Modification (Cypher Pod)

GM Intrusions: The armor won’t come off. The armor acts under its own power. The armor suffers a momentary power loss. NPCs are scared by the power armor.

WIELDS AN ENCHANTED WEAPON

You have a weapon with strange abilities, and your knowledge of its powers has allowed you to create a unique style of combat with it.

Tier 1: Enchanted Weapon

Tier 1: Innate Power

Tier 1: Charge Weapon

Tier 2: Power Crash

Tier 3: Rapid Attack or Throw Enchanted Weapon

Tier 4: Defending Weapon

Tier 5: Enchanted Movement

Tier 6: Deadly Strike or Spin Attack

GM Intrusions: A weapon breaks or is dropped. The character loses their connection to the weapon until they use an action to reestablish the attunement. The weapon's energy discharges in an unexpected way.

WIELDS INVISIBLE FORCE

You bend light and manipulate beams of force for offense and defense.

Tier 1: Vanish

Tier 2: Entangling Force

Tier 2: Sharp Senses

Tier 3: Force Field Barrier or Multi-Vanish

Tier 4: Invisibility

Tier 5: Defensive Field

Tier 6: Concussion or Generate Force Field

GM Intrusions: Invisibility partially fades, revealing the character's presence. A force field is pierced by an unusual or unexpected attack.

Wields Two Weapons at Once

You bear steel with both hands, ready to take on any foe.

Tier 1: Dual Light Wield

Tier 2: Double Strike

Tier 2: Infiltrator

Tier 3: Dual Medium Wield or Precise Cut

Tier 4: Dual Defense

Tier 5: Dual Distraction

Tier 6: Disarming Attack or Spin Attack

GM Intrusions: A blade snaps in two or a weapon flies loose from its bearer's grip.

Works for a Living

You take great satisfaction in a job well done, whether it's coding, building houses, or mining asteroids.

Tier 1: Handy

Tier 2: Muscles of Iron

Tier 3: Eye for Detail or Improvise

Tier 4: Enhanced Might

Tier 4: Tough It Out

Tier 5: Expert Skill

Tier 6: Greater Enhanced Potential or

Hard-Won Resilience

GM Intrusions: Repairs sometimes fail. Wiring can be tricky to decipher and still carry an electrical charge. Some people are rude to those who work for a living.

Works Miracles

You can heal others with a touch, alter time to help others, and are generally beloved by everyone.

Tier 1: Healing Touch

Tier 2: Alleviate

Tier 3: Font of Healing or Miraculous Health

Tier 4: Inspire Action

Tier 5: Undo

Tier 6: Greater Healing Touch or Restore Life

GM Intrusions: Attempts to heal might cause harm instead. A community or individual needs a healer so desperately that they hold one against their will.

Works the Back Alleys

You make your way unseen, stealing from the wealthy to achieve your ends.

Tier 1: Stealth Skills

Tier 2: Underworld Contacts

Tier 3: Pull a Fast One or Guild Training

Tier 4: Master Thief

Tier 5: Dirty Fighter

Tier 6: Alley Rat or All-Out Con

GM Intrusions: Thieves are thrown in jail. Powerful enemies are made.

Works the System

You can exploit flaws in artificial systems, including but not limited to computer code.

Tier 1: Hack the Impossible

Tier 1: Computer Programming

Tier 2: Connected

Tier 3: Confidence Artist or Skill With Attacks

Tier 4: Confuse Enemy

Tier 5: Work the Friendship

Tier 6: Call in Favor or Greater Enhanced Potential

GM Intrusions: Contacts sometimes have ulterior motives. Devices sometimes have failsafes or even traps.

Would Rather Be Reading

Books are your friends. What's more important than knowledge? Nothing.

Tier 1: Knowledge Is Power

Tier 2: Greater Enhanced Intellect

Tier 3: Applying Your Knowledge or Flex Skill

Tier 4: Knowledge Is Power

Tier 4: Knowing the Unknown

Tier 5: Greater Enhanced Intellect

Tier 6: Knowledge Is Power

Tier 6: Tower of Intellect or Read the Signs

GM Intrusions: Books burn, get wet, or get lost. Computers break or lose power. Glasses break.

TakeS ANiMAL SHAPE

A shapechanger who can take the form of various animals.

Tier 1: Animal Shape

Tier 2: Communication

Tier 2: Soothe the Savage

Tier 3: Bigger Animal Shape or Greater Beast Form (works with Animal Shape)

Tier 4: Animal Scrying

Tier 5: Hard to Kill

Tier 6: Blurring Speed or Lend Animal Shape

GM Intrusions: The character unexpectedly changes form. An NPC is frightened by or aggressive toward the shapeshifter. The transformation takes longer than expected.

USES WILD MAGIC

spellcaster who learns a variety of spells instead of focusing on just one kind of magic.

Tier 1: Magical Repertoire

Tier 1: Cypher Casting

Tier 2: Expanded Repertoire

Tier 3: Cypher Surge or Faster Wild Magic

Tier 4: Expanded Repertoire

Tier 5: Magical Training

Tier 6: Maximize Cypher or Wild Insight

GM Intrusions: A spell performs erratically or rebounds upon the caster. Something interferes with preparing spells. Spellcasting attracts the attention of a powerful creature or potential rival. The cypher spell being cast is replaced with that of a random cypher.

WALKS THE WILD WOODS

An adherent of nature magic who draws on the power and strength of trees.

Tier 1: Wilderness Life

Tier 1: Patient Recovery

Tier 2: Wooden Body

Tier 3: Tree Companion or Wilderness Awareness

Tier 4: Tree Travel

Tier 5: Great Tree

Tier 6: Dreadwood or Restorative Bloom

GM Intrusions: A wooden character catches fire. A wild swing from a treebranch hits or trips an ally. Some trees have evil hearts and hate all walking things.

WEILDS AN ENCHANTED WEAPON

One who channels magic through or from a weapon to create a unique fighting style.

Tier 1: Enchanted Weapon

Tier 1: Innate Power

Tier 1: Charge Weapon

Tier 2: Power Crash

Tier 3: Rapid Attack or Throw Enchanted Weapon

Tier 4: Defending Weapon

Tier 5: Enchanted Movement

Tier 6: Deadly Strike or Spin Attack

GM Intrusions: A weapon breaks or is dropped. The weapon loses its connection to you until you use an action to reestablish the attunement. The weapon's energy discharges in an unexpected way

CREATING NEW FOCI

This section provides everything you need to create your own foci.

Every focus has an overarching style, whether that's exploration, energy manipulation, or simply dealing a lot of damage in combat. These broad classifications are called focus categories.

Each focus category has an overarching theme, followed by selection guidelines that describe how to choose abilities for each tier from the [Abilities](#) chapter, from tier 1 to tier 6.

The newly created focus should be named in the form of a verb, like Controls Beasts or Abides in Stone. For instance, a fire-using focus created by following the guidelines in the energy manipulation focus category might be called [Bears a Halo of Fire](#) (one of the sample foci in this chapter). Alternatively, a new fire-using focus should get an all-new name like Stokes the Flames of the Apocalypse or Lights Fires With a Thought.



FOCUS CATEGORIES

Ally use

Basic

Energy manipulation

Environment manipulation

Exploration

Influence

Irregular

Movement expertise

Striker combat

Support

Tank combat

CHOOSING ABILITIES BY RELATIVE POWER

The ability selection guidelines invite you to choose an ability from one of three ranges: low tier, mid tier, and high tier. These ranges correspond with the power “grades” given for every ability. These abilities are further sorted into ability categories based on the kinds of things they do—abilities that improve physical attacks are in the attack skill category, abilities that assist allies are in the support category, and so on. Look for the grades and categories in the [Ability Categories and Relative Power](#) section of the Abilities chapter.

Low-tier abilities are best suited for focus options at tiers 1 and 2. Mid-tier abilities are best suited for focus options at tiers 3 and 4. High-tier abilities are best suited for focus options at tiers 5 and 6.

That said, sometimes you’ll find it appropriate to assign a low-tier ability at tier 3 or 4, or maybe a mid-tier ability at tier 1 or 2. Do so sparingly, but don’t rule it out. It might be the only way to get all the abilities you want for the focus you’re building. Higher-tier abilities usually cost more Pool points to use. So if a mid-tier ability is made available at tier 1 or 2, or a high-tier ability is made available at tier 3 or 4, the higher cost will be a balancing factor.

BALANCING ABILITIES

The guidelines within each category go a long way toward ensuring that the focus you build will be balanced. Sometimes it might be appropriate to grant a low-power ability along with a regular ability at a given tier, depending on the needs of the focus. A “low-power ability” is deliberately open for GM interpretation, but

generally speaking, should be no more potent than a low-tier ability (that is, an ability that is normally available at tier 1 or 2).

For instance, someone who uses cold might be able to create small snow sculptures in addition to emitting a cold ray. Someone who uses electricity might be able to charge a depleted artifact or have an asset for dealing with electrical systems. And so on.

Often, the focus guidelines note this as a possibility. However, you have great leeway in deciding if a focus needs an additional ability, even if the guidelines for that tier don't indicate one. If you do add an ability, or there is a

higher-power ability at a tier that normally shouldn't have it, it might mean that the choice given at the next tier, or the previous tier, isn't quite as good. Balancing a focus is a bit of an art. Resist the urge to overpower the focus, but don't underpower it, either.

ABILITY GUIDELINES ARE NOT PERScriptive

Each focus category provides a guideline for what kind of ability you should select at every tier. But don't regard the guidelines as something that you can't vary. They're not prescriptive; they're just a place to start. You might want to vary the kind of ability at a particular tier that isn't indicated in the guidelines. As long as the chosen ability falls within the expected power curve for that tier, it's fine. The guideline isn't meant to be a straitjacket.

For example, if you're building a cold-using focus for a game set in a fantasy genre, you may decide that an ability that calls up a demon is a better choice at a particular tier than an ability that does damage in an area, which is what the tier 5 guideline for energy manipulation calls for. Making the change is probably especially valid if you call your new focus something like Channels the Ninth Circle.

ABILITY SWAP

If you're creating a focus and you think it should provide a suite of abilities at first tier that would mechanically overload it, you have the option to add one as a "swap" ability. Doing so is as easy as allowing a character to swap out one of their type abilities for an indicated low-tier focus ability. The ability is gained instead of one of the abilities normally granted by the character's type.

CONCEPT AND CATEGORY

Choosing to create a focus that uses a particular concept—say, creating illusions—doesn't lock you into creating a focus within a particular category—in this case, environment manipulation. A focus can be constructed in a variety of ways using a particular energy, tool, or concept, each ultimately leading to a focus that provides different results. It all depends on your ends. In this case, creating illusions might be used to sway others, which argues for a focus built using the influence category guidelines.

In the same way, if a focus grants a character the ability to call some kind of force or energy, that doesn't mean the focus should automatically be built using the energy manipulation category guidelines (though of course it *could*, if attacking and protecting yourself with that energy is the point). But a focus could be built that grants abilities to call energy or force that is primarily focused on durability, suggesting a tank combat focus (someone who can take a lot of punishment in a fight); or blasting away with a main concern for maximizing damage, thus suggesting a striker combat focus; or creating a follower composed of that energy or force, suggesting an ally use focus (that is, someone who uses helping creatures, NPCs, or even duplicate versions of themselves to give them a leg up).

Here's another example: the focus [Controls Gravity](#) could conceivably be an environment manipulation focus or an energy manipulation focus. It depends on whether the focus is more concerned with crushing and holding things in place (environment manipulation) or on blasting things and protecting yourself with gravity (energy manipulation).

The same malleability of concept holds true in other realms. For instance, if someone is able to call up and mold raw earth, they might use it to transform themselves into a being of stone (tank combat), to batter foes (striker combat), or to create walls, barricades, and shields to protect their allies (support).

If you're looking for an ability and can't seem to find the right one in the vast catalog in the Abilities chapter, consider reskinning one to make it seem new (and to accomplish what you need). Reskinning means that you use the underlying mechanics of an ability as written but change the flavor in some fashion. For instance, maybe you're creating a new earth-moving focus but can't find enough earth-related abilities to meet your need. It's easy enough to change up other abilities so they use earth instead of fire, cold, or magnetism. For instance, [Wings of Fire](#) might become Wings of Earth, [Ice Armor](#) could become Earth Armor, and so on. These alterations change nothing except the type of damage and any knock-on effects (for instance, Wings of Earth might generate clouds of dust in their wake).

Abilities That Reference Other Abilities

Some abilities in the Abilities chapter reference other abilities. If you select an ability for your focus or type that refers to or modifies a lower-tier ability, also include that lower-tier ability in your type or focus as a selection a PC can make at a lower tier.

CREATING BRAND-NEW ABILITIES

You can go further than reskinning and create one or more brand-new abilities. When doing this, try to find something as close as possible to the effect you want, then use it as a template. In any case, deciding how much an ability should cost when it comes to a character's Pool is one of the most important aspects of getting an ability right.

You may notice that higher-tier abilities are more expensive. This is partly because they do more, but it's also because higher-tier characters have more [Edge](#) than lower-tier characters, which means they pay fewer points from their relevant Pools. A third-tier character with 3 Edge in a relevant Pool pays no cost for abilities that cost 3 or fewer points. That's great for lower-tier abilities, but you'll usually want a character to think a little bit about how often to use their most powerful abilities. That means they should cost at least 1 point more than the Edge the character is likely to have at that tier. (Often, a character will have an Edge in their relevant Pool equal to their tier.)

As a good rule of thumb, a typical ability should cost points equal to its tier.

CHOOSE GM INTRUSIONS

Think about the kinds of things that might surprise, alarm, or go catastrophically wrong for someone with the new focus being created, and assign it as a [GM intrusion](#) for that focus. Of course, this often is done on the fly during the game. But giving the topic some thought while the focus is being constructed and the ideas are fresh in your head is likely to yield some particularly devilish options.

FOCUS CATEGORIES

ALLY USE

Foci that prioritize providing NPC followers to the character are ally use foci. The followers give aid to the PC in a variety of ways, but at base they usually provide an asset to the character's actions.

Multiple potential themes exist within the ally use category, from abilities that allow a character to summon or craft allies to those that allow them to attract allies through fame, magic, or essential authority or charisma.

Connection: Choose four relevant connections from the [Focus Connections](#) list.

Additional Equipment: Any object necessary for the character to keep an ally. For instance, someone with a focus that uses super-science to create robot allies would require tools to build and repair those allies. Some foci in this category don't require anything to gain or retain their benefits.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The NPC ally's tasks are eased on its next turn.

Major Effect Suggestions: The NPC ally gains an immediate extra action.

The following are examples and not meant to provide a complete list of all possible foci in this category.

- Builds Robots
- Consorts With the Dead
- Controls Beasts
- Exists in Two Places at Once
- Leads
- Masters the Swarm
- Shepherds Spirits

Ability Selection Guidelines

Tier 1: Choose a low-tier ability that grants a level 2 NPC **follower** to the character, or gives a similar benefit provided by an NPC. Alternatively, lay the groundwork for gaining such NPC allies at higher tiers by choosing an ability that gives the character influence over others.

Sometimes an additional low-power ability is appropriate, depending on the focus. Often, this is an ability that grants skill training in a related area of knowledge or a related skill. For instance, training in a skill related to the kind of NPC follower the character gains would be appropriate.

Tier 2: Choose a low-tier ability that grants influence over similar kinds of NPCs as the follower gained at the previous tier. If no follower was gained at the previous tier, this ability should provide that benefit now.

Sometimes a secondary ability might be appropriate in addition to the ability provided above, perhaps a low-power ability that grants 2 or 3 points to a Pool.

Tier 3: Choose two mid-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One option should be a mid-tier ability that improves the NPC follower previously provided (usually from level 2 to level 3) or grants an additional follower.

The other option should be something that benefits the character—perhaps an offensive or defensive ability, or something that broadens their influence over their followers (or potential followers).

Tier 4: Choose a mid-tier ability that gives the character an offensive or defensive capability if they haven't previously gained one, preferably within the theme of the focus. For instance, if the character gains followers because of their charisma, this ability might let them command foes for brief periods. If the character gains followers by building or calling them, this ability might let them affect entities of the same type that are not already their followers.

Alternatively, this ability might further improve a previously gained follower from level 3 to level 4, or grant an additional follower.

Tier 5: Choose an ability that improves the character by providing a defense, an improved stat Pool, or another kind of protection.

Alternatively, this ability could open a new front in influencing and calling NPC allies related to the focus's theme. For instance, someone who keeps beast allies might gain an ability to call a horde of lesser beasts. Someone who builds robots might gain an ability to build several lesser robot helpers. And so on.

Finally, this ability might improve a previously gained follower to level 5.

Tier 6: Choose two high-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One of the abilities should improve a previously gained follower to level 5, if that wasn't already provided at tier 5. If that's the case, this ability might be provided *in addition* to two other related abilities.

Another high-tier option could provide a handful of level 3 followers to the character.

The last high-tier ability could open a new front in influencing and calling NPC allies related to the focus's theme. For instance, someone who gains followers through high charisma and training might gain an ability to learn otherwise impossible-to-glean information.

BASIC

Foci that rely mostly on providing skill training, assets to tasks, and bumps to stat Pools and Edge in order to improve a character fall within the basic category. An overarching theme is also included, as with most of the other categories, that makes sense of the various basic abilities provided.

In addition, because the benefits provided by such foci are mostly straightforward (usually with a few exceptions), most basic foci would also be appropriate for non-fantastic campaigns where magic, super-science, or psychic abilities normally don't come into play. That said, just because the abilities granted by basic foci are straightforward doesn't mean they are not potent when combined with the abilities granted by type, descriptor, cyphers, and other character aspects.

Connection: Choose four relevant connections from the Focus Connections list.

Additional Equipment: Any object necessary to fulfill the overarching theme of the focus. For instance, a focus called Would Rather Be Reading should grant a handful of books to the character. A focus called Works for a Living should provide a set of tools.

Minor Effect Suggestions: Next action is eased.

Major Effect Suggestions: Make a free, no-action recovery roll that doesn't count against daily recovery rolls.

The following are examples and not meant to provide a complete list of all possible foci in this category.

- Doesn't Do Much
- Interprets the Law
- Learns Quickly
- Works for a Living
- Would Rather Be Reading

Ability Selection Guidelines

Tier 1: Choose an ability that grants training or an asset to skills associated with the focus's theme, or that grants 5 or 6 points to a particular Pool.

Alternatively, choose an ability that grants only 2 or 3 points to a particular Pool and an ability that provides training or an asset to just one task.

Tier 2: Choose whichever kind of ability wasn't chosen at tier 1.

Tier 3: Choose two mid-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One option should be a non-fantastic ability that improves the character's abilities within the focus's theme. For instance, if the theme involves paying attention in some fashion, an information-gathering ability might be appropriate.

The other option should be something that either improves the character's Edge in an appropriate stat or provides the character with some kind of defense.

Tier 4: Choose another ability that grants additional training or an asset to skills associated with the focus's theme, or that grants 5 or 6 points to a particular Pool best suited to the focus. Or choose two abilities that provide only 2 or 3 points plus another tier 4 ability that improves a single task or skill.

Alternatively, provide a branch-out ability suggested at tier 5.

Finally, if the focus has yet to grant some kind of defense, a defensive ability could be provided here.

Tier 5: Choose an ability that allows the character to branch out slightly—perhaps one like [Expert Skill](#) that allows them to automatically succeed on a task they're trained in.

Alternatively, if a nonstandard benefit was provided at tier 4, provide the benefits suggested at tier 4 here.

Tier 6: Choose two high-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One option should be an ability that provides another 5 or 6 points to a particular Pool best suited to the focus, or that the character can divide up as they wish. Alternatively, training in offense or defense would also be appropriate.

The other tier 6 option should give the character a brand-new ability within their theme, but not one that strays into the realm of the fantastic. For instance, an ability that allows a character to take two actions instead of one would be reasonable. Granting additional training, assets, or Edge would also be fine.

ENERGY MANIPULATION

Energy manipulation foci offer abilities that can call fire, electricity, force, magnetism, or nonstandard forms of energy such as cold, stone, or something stranger like "void" or "shadow." These abilities usually give a character a way to achieve something of a balance between attacking enemies and granting themselves or allies additional protection. The focus usually also offers abilities that provide other ways to use specific energy for things like transportation, creating large concentrations of energy that can affect multiple targets, or creating a temporary object or barrier of energy.

Connection: Choose four relevant connections from the [Focus Connections](#) list.

Additional Equipment: One or more pieces of equipment immune to the energy manipulated, which might be a set of clothes. Alternatively, something related to the energy being generated. Some foci in this category don't require additional equipment.

Energy Abilities: If a character type grants special abilities that normally use some other kind of energy, they now produce the kind used by this focus. For example, if a character uses this focus to manipulate electricity, their force blasts become blasts of electricity. These alterations change nothing except the type of damage and any knock-on effects (for instance, electricity might temporarily short out electronic systems).

Minor Effect Suggestions: The target or something near the target is hindered because of residual energy.

Major Effect Suggestions: An important item on the target's person is destroyed.

The following are examples and not meant to provide a complete list of all possible foci in this category.

- Absorbs Energy
- Bears a Halo of Fire
- Dances With Dark Matter
- Rides the Lightning

- Thunders
- Wears a Sheen of Ice

Ability Selection Guidelines

Tier 1: Choose a low-tier ability that either inflicts damage or provides protection using the appropriate energy type in some fashion.

Sometimes an additional low-power ability is appropriate, depending on the energy type. For instance, a focus that manipulates cold might grant an ability to create snow sculptures. A focus that manipulates electricity might grant an ability to charge a depleted artifact or have an asset for dealing with electrical systems. A focus that absorbs energy might grant an ability to release it as a basic attack. And so on.

Tier 2: Choose whichever kind of ability wasn't chosen at tier 1.

Tier 3: Choose two mid-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One option should be an ability that inflicts damage using the appropriate energy type (and possibly a related effect).

The other should grant enhanced movement by use of the appropriate energy type, give additional protection provided by the preferred energy, or use the energy in a completely new way, such as by draining the energy from a machine (if using electricity), entombing a victim in a layer of ice (if using cold), creating perfect silence (if using sound), creating a dazzling blast of illumination (if using light), and so on.

Tier 4: Choose whichever kind of ability wasn't chosen at tier 3.

Tier 5: Choose a high-tier ability that inflicts damage (and possibly a related effect) that can affect more than one target using the appropriate energy type, or an ability that uses the energy in some fashion not previously used, as described in tiers 3 and 6.

Tier 6: Choose two high-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One of the high-tier abilities should use the preferred energy to inflict a lot of damage to a single target or to several.

The other option should use the appropriate energy type to accomplish a task not previously provided by lower-tier abilities, such as fashioning a fiery [follower](#) (if using fire), teleporting a great distance as a blast of lightning (if using electricity), creating solid objects out of the energy, and so on.

ENVIRONMENT MANIPULATION

Foci that allow a character to move objects, affect gravity, create objects (or illusions of objects), and so on are environment manipulation foci. Given that, in many cases, energy is used as part of this process, this category and energy manipulation overlap to some extent. Environment manipulation foci prioritize abilities that indirectly affect enemies and allies via objects, forces, and alterations of the surroundings; energy manipulation foci prioritize directly damaging targets with the chosen energy or force.

For example, rather than blasting a foe with a gravity pulse that does damage, a character using an environment manipulation focus based on gravity is more likely to have abilities that hold a target in place, use gravity to throw heavy objects as an attack, or lower gravity in a particular area or even on a particular object.

Connection: Choose four relevant connections from the Focus Connections list.

Additional Equipment: Any object necessary to manipulate the surrounding environment. For instance, someone with a focus that grants the ability to craft objects would require basic tools. Some foci in this category don't require anything to gain or retain their benefits.

Environment Manipulation Abilities: Foci themes that involve imagery or visible energies can affect the look of your type abilities. Such alterations, if any, do nothing but change the appearance of effects. If gravity is manipulated, perhaps a telltale bluish glow permeates all ability uses, including type abilities. If illusion is generated, perhaps flamboyant visual and auditory qualities accompany type abilities, such as the appearance of a tentacled beast holding a target in place when [Stasis](#) is used. And so on.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The target gets turned around, and its next attack is hindered.

Major Effect Suggestions: The character is refreshed and recovers 4 points to one Pool.

The following are examples and not meant to provide a complete list of all possible foci in this category.

- Awakens Dreams
- Blazes With Radiance
- Calculates the Incalculable
- Controls Gravity
- Crafts Illusions
- Crafts Unique Objects
- Employs Magnetism
- Focuses Mind Over Matter

Ability Selection Guidelines

Tier 1: Choose a low-tier ability that grants a basic use of an ability that alters the environment (or predicts it) using the focus's theme. For instance, a gravity-affecting focus might provide an ability that makes a target lighter or heavier. An

illusion-crafting focus might grant an ability that allows the creation of an image. An object-making focus might grant a basic proficiency in creating a particular kind of object. A predictive focus might calculate outcomes and provide the character with the benefits of that foreknowledge. And so on.

Sometimes an additional low-power ability is appropriate, depending on the focus. Often, this is an ability that grants skill training in a related area of knowledge.

Tier 2: Choose a low-tier ability that provides a new defensive or offensive capability related to the focus's theme.

Alternatively, this ability might provide an additional or brand-new capability to manipulate the environment related to the focus's theme.

Tier 3: Choose two mid-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One option should be a mid-tier ability related to the focus's theme that provides an additional environment manipulation capacity or further improves the basic environment manipulation ability previously granted. This ability isn't directly offensive or defensive, but provides either an all-new ability related to the basic ability, or one that increases the strength, range, or some other extension of the previously unlocked basic ability.

The other mid-tier option should provide an offensive or defensive ability related to the specific form of movement the focus provides, if possible.

Tier 4: Choose a mid-tier ability that is either an offensive or a defensive use of the ability, whichever one wasn't chosen as an option in the previous tier.

Tier 5: Choose a high-tier penultimate use of the environment-manipulation ability. For instance, if the focus-granted manipulation is illusory, this ability might haunt a target with terrifying images. If the focus is gravity based, it might unlock flight. If magnetic, it might allow the user to reshape metal. If the focus grants telekinetic powers, this ability could allow a character to hurl massive objects at foes. And so on.

Tier 6: Choose two high-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One of the abilities should provide either an offensive or a defensive ability, opposite the ability provided at tier 4 (though high tier rather than mid tier).

The other option should be something that further explores the use of the basic environment manipulation capability. If the tier 5 choice was the penultimate ability, this might be an even better ultimate ability related to the kind of manipulation offered, or a different way of using that ability to unlock an as-yet-unexplored facet of the ability.

EXPLORATION

Foci that allow a character to gather information, survive in unfamiliar environments, and find their way to new locations or track down particular creatures and foes are exploration foci. Surviving in unfamiliar environments requires a reasonable selection of defensive options; however, abilities that allow a character to find and learn are prioritized.

Exploration foci rely on a variety of methods, though training and expertise are the mainstays. Some methods require specific tools (such as a vehicle) to grant the benefits provided, while others might rely on the supernatural or super-science to learn new things and explore strange places from afar.

Connection: Choose four relevant connections from the [Focus Connections](#) list.

Additional Equipment: Any object necessary to explore. For instance, starting maps and/or a compass would be basic equipment, while someone who uses psychic abilities might require a mirror or crystal sphere to gaze into. Equipment might also include access to a vehicle required for exploration, as previously noted.

Minor Effect Suggestions: You have an asset on any action that involves using your senses, such as perceiving or attacking, until the end of the next round.

Major Effect Suggestions: Your Intellect Edge increases by 1 until the end of the next round.

The following are examples and not meant to provide a complete list of all possible foci in this category.

- Explores Dark Places
- Infiltrates
- Operates Undercover
- Pilots Starcraft
- Sees Beyond
- Separates Mind From Body

Ability Selection Guidelines

Tier 1: Choose a low-tier ability that grants the character basic exploratory, survival, or information-gathering capabilities within the focus's theme.

Sometimes an additional low-power ability is appropriate, depending on the focus. Often, this is an ability that grants skill training in a related area of knowledge or a related skill (though this may already be covered in the main ability). Alternatively, it might offer a simple bonus of 2 or 3 points to the Might Pool.

Tier 2: Choose another low-tier ability that grants an additional capability related to exploration, survival, or information gathering.

For instance, a focus dedicated to surviving savage conditions might offer an ability (or two) that makes it easier to avoid natural hazards, poisons, difficult terrain, and so on. A focus dedicated to exploration of a particular area might grant abilities to gain access to that area, or a capability that others normally lack (like the ability to see in the dark).

Tier 3: Choose two mid-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One option should further improve the basic exploration ability granted, or give a new exploratory, survival, or information-gathering ability.

The other option should be something that benefits the character, either an offensive or defensive ability (especially if this focus hasn't already granted that) or something that further broadens the character's ability to explore in the focus's chosen realm.

Tier 4: Choose a mid-tier offensive or defensive ability (whichever wasn't offered at tier 3) that benefits the character. Alternatively, if offensive and defensive abilities are already well represented, choose a different mid-tier ability that broadens the character's ability to explore, survive, or gather information.

Tier 5: Choose a high-tier ability that alleviates some of the penalties for exploring, surviving, or gathering information in a normally inhospitable place.

Tier 6: Choose two high-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One option should further improve the basic exploration-themed ability previously granted, or give a brand-new exploratory, survival, or information-gathering ability.

The other option should be something that benefits the character, either an offensive or defensive ability, or yet another ability that further broadens their capacity to explore in the focus's chosen realm.

INFLUENCE

Foci that prioritize authority and influence—whether that's to make people or machines do as commanded, to help others, or to rise to some other prestigious and significant position—fall within the influence category.

These foci grant influence through training and persuasion, by direct mental manipulation, by using fame to get people's attention and influence their actions, or simply by knowing and learning things that affect later decisions. In this sense, the concept of influence is broad.

Connection: Choose four relevant connections from the Focus Connections list.

Additional Equipment: Any object necessary to achieve the influence suggested should be granted as additional equipment. Some influence foci don't require anything to gain or retain their benefits.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The range or duration of the influencing ability is doubled.

Major Effect Suggestions: An ally or indicated target can take an additional action.

The following are examples and not meant to provide a complete list of all possible foci in this category.

- Commands Mental Powers
- Conducts Weird Science
- Fuses Mind and Machine
- Is Idolized by Millions
- Solves Mysteries
- Talks to Machines
- Works the System

Ability Selection Guidelines

Tier 1: Choose a low-tier ability that allows the character to learn something significant enough that they can choose a smart course of action (or use that knowledge to persuade or intimidate). How the character learns the information varies by the specifics of the focus. One character might do experiments to learn answers, another might open a telepathic link with others to trade information secretly and quickly, and still another might simply be trained in interaction tasks.

Sometimes an additional low-power ability is appropriate, depending on the focus. Often, this is an ability that grants skill training in a related area of knowledge.

Tier 2: Choose a low-tier ability that improves the character's ability to apply influence. This might open an additional front on the focus's basic theme or simply further enhance the basic ability already provided. For instance, this tier 2 ability could ease influence-related tasks by a few steps, allow a telepath to read the minds of others who have secrets they'd otherwise not reveal, or grant influence over physical objects (either to improve them or to learn more about them). And so on.

Tier 3: Choose two mid-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One option should provide an offensive or defensive capability related to the focus's specific kind of influence, if possible. For instance, an inventor might create a serum that gives them increased abilities (which could be used for offense or defense), a telepath might have some method of blasting foes with mental energy, and someone with only the basic skills of debate and influence through fame might have to rely on weapon training or their entourage.

The other mid-tier option should provide an additional ability to influence in the theme of the focus, or further improve the basic influence ability previously granted. This option isn't directly offensive or defensive, but provides either an all-new ability related to the basic ability, or increases the strength, range, or some other extension of the previously unlocked basic ability. For instance, a telepath might have a psychic suggestion ability.

Tier 4: Choose a mid-tier ability that is either an offensive or a defensive use of the influence ability, whichever one wasn't chosen as an option in the previous tier.

Alternatively, this ability could grant an additional capability related to the kind of influence the focus provides.

Tier 5: Choose a high-tier penultimate use of the specific influence ability granted at lower tiers.

Alternatively, choose an ability not previously gained at a lower tier, one that opens a new front on the particular influence capability. For instance, if the focus-granted influence is telepathic, the tier 5 ability might allow a character to see into the future to gain assets for dealing with enemies (and allies).

Tier 6: Choose two high-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One of the options should provide either an offensive or a defensive ability, opposite the ability provided at tier 4 (though high tier rather than mid tier).

The other option should be something that further explores the use of the basic influence ability provided by the focus. If the tier 5 choice was the penultimate ability, this might be an even better ultimate ability related to the kind of influence used, or a different way of using that ability to unlock an as-yet-unexplored facet of the ability.

IRREGULAR

Most foci have a basic theme, a “character story” that logically leads to a series of related abilities. However, certain foci themes are so wide that they don’t fit into any other category except an irregular one of their own.

Irregular foci provide a basket of disparate abilities. Usually that’s because the overarching theme is one that demands variability and access to several different kinds of abilities. Often, these foci are found in genres that suggest additional rule tweaks to leverage their use even further, such as [power shifts](#) in the superhero genre and [spellcasting](#) in the fantasy genre. However, other irregular foci are possible.

Connection: Choose four relevant connections from the [Focus Connections](#) list.

Additional Equipment: Any object necessary to the focus’s theme. For instance, a superhero-themed focus might grant a superhero costume.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The target is also dazed for one round, during which time all of its tasks are hindered.

Major Effect Suggestions: The target is stunned and loses its next turn.

The following are examples and not meant to provide a complete list of all possible foci in this category.

- Channels Divine Blessings
- Descends From Nobility
- Emerged From the Obelisk
- Flies Faster Than a Bullet
- Masters Spells
- Speaks for the Land

Ability Selection Guidelines

Tier 1: Choose a low-tier ability that grants one of the benefits the focus theme promises, one that a first-tier character should have.

Sometimes an additional low-power ability is appropriate, depending on the focus. Often, this is an ability that grants skill training in a related area of knowledge or a related skill. Alternatively, it might offer a simple bonus of 2 or 3 points to a Pool.

Tier 2: Choose a low-tier ability that grants one of the benefits the focus theme promises, one that’s presumably not immediately related to the one provided at tier 1. That said, if a defense wasn’t provided at tier 1, tier 2 is a good place to add it.

Tier 3: Choose two mid-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One option should provide one of the benefits the focus theme promises, one that may not be immediately related to those provided at earlier tiers.

The other option should include a method of attack if none has previously been granted. Alternatively, if the lower-tier abilities don't quite get the character where they need to be, this option might further increase a capability unlocked at a lower tier.

Tier 4: Choose a mid-tier ability that grants one of the benefits the focus theme promises, one that may not be immediately related to those provided at earlier tiers.

Tier 5: Choose a high-tier ability that grants one of the benefits the focus theme promises, one that may not be immediately related to those provided at earlier tiers.

Tier 6: Choose two high-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One option should grant one of the benefits the focus theme promises, one that may not be immediately related to those provided at earlier tiers. However, this ability might also provide an ultimate version of a lower-tier ability if a mid-tier or low-tier option wasn't quite sufficient.

The other option should provide an alternate method to round out the character in a way that doesn't replicate the first tier 6 option. For instance, if the first option provided some kind of attack, this one might be an interaction, information-gathering, or healing ability, depending on the focus's overarching theme.

MOVEMENT EXPERTISE

Foci that prioritize novel forms of movement—in order to excel in combat, escape situations most others can't, move with stealth for purposes of theft or escape, or move into locations normally inaccessible—fall within the movement expertise category. These foci usually have methods of granting either offense or defense through movement, though they may provide some means of doing both.

The classic movement expertise focus is one that relies on speed to make more attacks and avoid being hit, though general agility might also provide the same benefit. Other foci in this category might fall within the theme by granting a character the ability to become immaterial, to change their form into something like water or air, or to instantly move via teleportation.

Connection: Choose four relevant connections from the Focus Connections list.

Additional Equipment: Any object necessary to achieve great speeds, change state, or otherwise gain the benefit of the focus should be granted as additional equipment. Some foci in this category don't require anything to gain or retain their benefits.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The target is dazed, and their next action is hindered.

Major Effect Suggestions: The target is stunned and loses their next action.

The following are examples and not meant to provide a complete list of all possible foci in this category.

- Exists Partially Out of Phase
- Moves Like a Cat
- Moves Like the Wind
- Runs Away
- Shreds the Walls of the World
- Travels Through Time
- Works the Back Alleys

Ability Selection Guidelines

Tier 1: Choose a low-tier ability that grants the basic benefit of the specific movement style, whether that's enhanced speed, agility, immateriality, and so on.

Sometimes an additional low-power ability is appropriate, depending on the focus. If the basic benefit of the movement demands some kind of additional understanding or training, this ability could be that. Alternatively, if the movement provided seems like it should also unlock a basic offensive or defensive benefit (relying on the use of the initial basic ability), append it as well.

Tier 2: Choose a low-tier ability that provides a new offensive or defensive capability related to the focus's theme.

Alternatively, this ability might provide some additional capability related to the form of movement that grants useful information to the character that would normally be inaccessible to someone without the focus.

Tier 3: Choose two mid-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One option should provide an additional movement capacity or further improve the basic movement capacity, related to the focus's theme. This isn't directly offensive or defensive, but provides the character with a new level of ability or an all-new ability related to their basic movement ability.

The other option should provide either an offensive or a defensive capability related to the specific form of movement the focus provides.

Tier 4: Choose a mid-tier ability that further enhances the advantages provided by focus's movement-enhancing paradigm. This could provide a new or better form of defense (directly, or indirectly if moving to a location or time where danger doesn't threaten), or a new or better form of offense.

Tier 5: Choose a high-tier penultimate use of the movement-related ability. For instance, if the focus-provided movement is temporal, this ability might allow actual (if brief) jaunts of time travel. If the focus enhances speed, this ability might allow the character to move up to a very long distance with one action. And so on.

Alternatively, unlock an as-yet-unexplored related ability that could derive from the basic movement power provided by the focus.

Tier 6: Choose two high-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One of the options should provide either an offensive or a defensive ability, opposite the ability provided at tier 4 (though high tier rather than mid tier).

The other option should be something that further explores the use of the basic movement ability. If the tier 5 choice was the penultimate ability, this might be an even better ultimate ability related to the movement.

STRIKER COMBAT

Striker combat foci prioritize dealing damage in battle over other concerns. Foci in this category offer defensive abilities as well, but they emphasize abilities that provide ways to spike damage to heights that other foci normally don't reach.

To achieve this end, a striker combat focus might offer mastery of a particular style of martial combat, which could be training with a particular weapon or martial art, or the use of a unique tool (or even a kind of energy). A style might be something as singular as being the best at fighting a particular kind of enemy, or something much broader, such as adopting a particularly vicious or unsporting style. A striker combatant might use fire, force, or magnetism as their preferred method of spiking damage.

Connection: Choose four relevant connections from the [Focus Connections](#) list.

Additional Equipment: The weapon, tool, or other special item or substance (if any) required to engage in the particular style of combat. For instance, a dose of level 5 poison for Fights Dirty or Murders, a trophy from a previously defeated foe for Battles Robots, or stylish clothes for Fights With Panache.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The target is so dazzled by your expertise that it is dazed for one round, hindering all of its tasks.

Major Effect Suggestions: Make an immediate additional attack using an attack provided by the focus as part of your turn.

The following are examples and not meant to provide a complete list of all possible foci in this category.

- Battles Robots
- Fights Dirty
- Fights With Panache
- Hunts
- Is Licensed to Carry
- Looks for Trouble
- Masters Weaponry
- Murders
- Needs No Weapon
- Performs Feats of Strength
- Rages
- Slays Monsters
- Throws With Deadly Accuracy
- Wields Two Weapons at

Once

Ability Selection Guidelines

Tier 1: Choose a low-tier ability that inflicts additional damage when a character attacks using the focus's particular fighting style, energy, or attitude, or when used against a chosen enemy.

Sometimes an additional low-power ability is appropriate, depending on the focus. For instance, a focus that grants proficiency in a special weapon might offer training in crafting tasks associated with that weapon. A focus that grants increased damage against a particular kind of foe might offer training in skills to recognize, locate, or just have general knowledge about that foe. A fighting style that involves fighting in a vicious or dirty manner might provide training in intimidation. And so on.

If the focus is about fighting a particular enemy, additional secondary powers (more than might otherwise be offered) may be appropriate. Those either further enhance effectiveness against the chosen enemy, or offer broader but related abilities that give the character who takes the focus some functionality even when not fighting that enemy.

Tier 2: Choose a low-tier ability that provides some form of defense using the weapon, weapon style, or chosen energy. If the weapon style is being especially good at fighting a certain kind of foe, the ability should

be a defense against that kind of foe. Alternatively, the focus might offer another method for increasing damage within the chosen paradigm.

Sometimes an additional low-power ability is appropriate at tier 2. If so, choose whichever low-power ability wasn't gained at tier 1.

Tier 3: Choose two mid-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One option should inflict additional damage when using the focus's fighting style, energy, or attitude, or when used against a chosen enemy. That could be as simple as an ability that offers an additional attack of that kind.

The other option should provide a method to temporarily neutralize a foe by disarming them, dazing or stunning them, slowing or holding them, or otherwise discombobulating them by using the focus's fighting style, energy, or attitude, or when used against a chosen enemy.

Tier 4: Choose a mid-tier ability that further enhances the advantages provided by the focus's paradigm. Often, this includes training in a particular kind of attack. Alternatively, the ability might increase the advantages provided by achieving a certain combat status, such as gaining surprise.

Tier 5: Choose a high-tier ability that inflicts damage. Alternatively, if focused on fighting a particular kind of foe, this ability might give the character a chance to completely neutralize, destroy, blind, or kill a singular target of up to level 3 (or higher, if the focus is on a singular foe).

Tier 6: Choose two high-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One of the options should use the focus paradigm to inflict an exceptional amount of damage.

The other option could be a different way of inflicting damage, either using the focus paradigm or just dealing lots of damage in general (and relying on previous focus tier abilities to improve targeting). This could be against multiple targets if the first option was for a single target, to outright kill or neutralize a target (starting with level 4, but with guidance for using Effort to increase the level of the target), or to select yet another foe, make another attack, or get away in order to fight another day.

SUPPORT

Foci that allow a character to help others succeed, defend others, heal others who are hurt, and so on are support foci. Of course, most foci abilities are often used in aid of others, but support foci (such as Siphons Power) prioritize aiding, healing, and improving the character who takes the focus.

Support foci rely on a variety of methods to provide their help, including martial training used in defense, supernatural or sci-fi means of providing healing, or simply easing the cares of others through entertainment.

Connection: Choose four relevant connections from the [Focus Connections](#) list.

Additional Equipment: Any object necessary to provide support. For instance, someone with a focus that uses entertainment to help others would require an instrument or similar object in aid of their craft. Some foci in this category don't require anything to gain or retain their benefits.

Minor Effect Suggestions: You can [draw an attack](#) without having to use an action at any point before the end of the next round.

Major Effect Suggestions: You can take an extra action in aid of an ally.

The following are examples and not meant to provide a complete list of all possible foci in this category.

- Defends the Weak
- Entertains

- Helps Their Friends
- Metes Out Justice
- Shepherds the Community
- Siphons Power
- Works Miracles

Ability Selection Guidelines

Tier 1: Choose a low-tier ability that provides some form of defense, aid or entertainment, benefit to recovery or healing, or protection. That defense or protection could be to the PC and not to an ally, as one cannot protect another without first being able to protect themselves (and sometimes protecting themselves is the entire point).

Sometimes an additional low-power ability is appropriate, depending on the focus. Often, this is an ability that grants skill training in a related area of knowledge or a related skill, but it might be something that works with the initial ability that, by itself, wouldn't do much.

Tier 2: Choose a low-tier ability that follows up on the support style opened in the previous tier. If the previous tier's ability provided a means of protection only for the focus taker, this tier 2 ability should specifically provide aid to another. If the previous tier specifically provided aid to another, this tier 2 ability could defend the focus taker or provide an offensive capability grounded, if possible, in the focus's theme.

Tier 3: Choose two mid-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One option should work within the focus's theme to aid, heal, protect, or otherwise help another.

The other option should be something that benefits the character, either an offensive or defensive ability, or something that broadens their expertise in some fashion. Alternatively, it could be another, different method of helping someone else.

Tier 4: Choose a mid-tier ability that gives an ally a direct boon or provides the character with a way to help another. It could also be an ability that harms or nullifies a foe, as removing foes certainly helps allies.

Tier 5: Choose a high-tier ability that provides an offensive or defensive option for the character, if none have been provided yet. If this need has been previously addressed or is deemed unnecessary, choose a high-tier ability that provides some form of defense, aid or entertainment, benefit to recovery or healing, or protection to another. For example, a tier 5 ability might grant an ally an additional free action or allow them to repeat a failed action.

Tier 6: Choose two high-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One of the options should provide an ultimate method of helping another in the theme of the focus.

The other option could provide an alternative ultimate method of helping another; many foci in this category do. However, an option that provides high-tier offense or defense is also completely reasonable.

TANK COMBAT

Foci that prioritize being able to take a lot of punishment and soak up excess damage from foes fall within the tank combat category. These foci provide offensive abilities too, as well as additional abilities related to the particular method by which improved protection is achieved, but defensive abilities are most pronounced.

Some tank combat foci involve a physical transformation that grants additional protection, and others rely on specialized training, use tools like shields or heavy armor, or provide the ability to heal incredibly fast. The

kinds of physical transformation that a tank focus provides, if any, vary widely. A focus might turn a character's skin to stone, reinforce their body with metal, turn them into a monstrous being, make them so big it becomes harder to hurt them, and so on.

Connection: Choose four relevant connections from the Focus Connections list.

Additional Equipment: Any object necessary to maintain a physical transformation (such as a tool for repair if partly robotic, a shield or other defensive tool used if skilled, or possibly some kind of amulet or serum). Some tank combat foci don't require anything to gain or retain their benefits.

Minor Effect Suggestions: +2 to Armor for a few rounds.

Major Effect Suggestions: Regain 2 points to Might Pool.

The following are examples and not meant to provide a complete list of all possible foci in this category.

- Abides in Stone
- Brandishes an Exotic

Shield

- Defends the Gate
- Fuses Flesh and Steel
- Grows to Towering Heights
- Howls at the Moon
- Lives in the Wilderness
- Masters Defense
- Never Says Die
- Stands Like a Bastion

Ability Selection Guidelines

Tier 1: Choose a low-tier ability that provides defense within the focus's theme. If the theme is simply intense training or the use of a defensive tool, the ability might be as simple as a bonus to Armor. If protection comes from physical transformation, this ability provides the base form effects, benefits, and in some cases drawbacks for making the transformation. A low-tier enhanced healing ability would also be appropriate at first tier.

Sometimes an additional low-power ability is appropriate, depending on the focus. If the character transforms, this ability may provide a knock-on effect, though in the case of some transformations, it might be a description of how someone with an abnormal physiognomy can fully heal. Other times, the secondary power may simply be training in a related skill, or it may unlock the ability to use a particular armor or shield without penalty.

Tier 2: If the theme of the focus isn't physical transformation, choose a low-tier ability that provides an additional method of defending, healing damage, or avoiding attacks.

If the theme of the focus is physical transformation, choose a low-tier ability that unlocks a new capability related to the form the character takes. That might mean gaining better control of the transformation, unlocking a robotic interface, or otherwise more fully unlocking that form. This ability is not necessarily defensive, though it could be.

Tier 3: Choose two mid-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One option should provide an additional form of protection in keeping with the focus's theme, such as more defensive capabilities unlocked from a transformation (which might also come with additional offensive capabilities) or a simple physical enhancement if defense is gained by skills or enhanced healing.

The other option should provide an offensive capability, especially if creating a non-transformation focus that doesn't already have offensive benefits. That capability could be an enhanced attack or provide some other benefit useful in combat, such as quickly evading or (on the other end of the continuum) becoming immovable.

Tier 4: Choose a mid-tier ability that further enhances the advantages provided by the focus's damage-soaking paradigm. Often, this includes training in a particular kind of defense. Alternatively, it might increase the advantages provided by previously unlocked defensive abilities, whether that means gaining greater control over a transformation, gaining additional chances to avoid damage or retry tasks related to enhanced determination, and so on. If the focus is lacking in offensive options, this is a good place to include one.

Tier 5: Choose a high-tier ability that provides protection, possibly in the form of shrugging off a debilitating condition (including death). If the focus offers a physical transformation, this ability might further unlock an additional related ability, whether offensive, defensive, or something related to exploration or interaction (such as flight if the form is winged, intimidation if the form is fearsome, and so on).

Tier 6: Choose two high-tier abilities. Give both of them as options for the focus; a PC will choose one or the other.

One option should use the focus paradigm to increase the defense, protection, or ability to shrug off damage.

The other option could be a different way of being defensive. In some cases, the best defense is a good offense, so this option could provide a high-tier offensive ability in keeping with the focus's theme, whether that's a straight-up damage boost on attacks or better control of an unstable physical transformation.

SUPERHERO FOCI

CUSTOMIZING FOCI

Sometimes not everything about a focus is right for a character's concept, or perhaps the GM needs additional guidelines for creating a new focus. Either way, the solution lies in looking at foci abilities at their most basic default levels.

At any tier, a player can select one of the following abilities in place of the ability granted by the tier. Many of these replacement abilities, particularly at the higher tiers, might involve body modification, integration with high-tech devices, learning powerful magic spells, uncovering forbidden secrets, or something similar appropriate to the genre.

TIER 1

Combat Prowess

Enhanced Potential

TIER 2

Lower-tier ability: choose any tier 1 replacement ability, above.

Skill With Defense

Practiced With All Weapons

Skill With Attacks

TIER 3

Lower-tier ability: choose any tier 1 or 2 replacement ability, above.

Incredible Health

Fusion Armor

TIER 4

Lower-tier ability: choose any tier 1, 2, or 3 replacement ability, above.

Poison Resistance

Built-in Weaponry

TIER 5

Lower-tier ability: choose any tier 1, 2, 3, or 4 replacement ability, above.

Adaptation

Defensive Field

TIER 6

Lower-tier ability: choose any tier 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 replacement ability, above.

Reactive Field

Abilities

This chapter presents a vast catalog of more than a thousand abilities a character can gain from their type, flavor (if any), and focus. They are sorted alphabetically by the ability's name.

A character's type, flavor, and focus assign an appropriate tier to each ability. However, if you're creating a brand-new focus or type, we provide a couple of additional tools.

The first is a power grade for each ability, which tells you about how potent it is in relation to other abilities. Abilities appropriate for tiers 1 and 2 characters are called "low-tier" abilities. Abilities appropriate for tiers 3 and 4 are called "mid-tier" abilities. Abilities appropriate for tiers 5 and 6 are called "high-tier" abilities.

These abilities are further sorted into ability categories based on the kinds of things they do—abilities that improve physical attacks are in the attack skill category, abilities that assist allies are in the support category, and so on.

(Unless otherwise noted, you cannot choose the same ability twice, even if you get it from both your type and a flavor.)

ABILITY CATEGORIES AND RELATIVE POWER

ABILITY CATEGORIES

Abilities can be divided into several categories based on the kinds of things they do—improve your physical attacks, assist allies, provide defense, give you a special attack form, and so on. Under each of the following category descriptions is a list of abilities that fit that category, sorted into low-, medium-, and high-tier abilities.

The categories are mainly used by GMs when designing new foci for a campaign, allowing them to search a short list of abilities instead of trying to find something appropriate among the thousand or so abilities in this chapter. For example, the GM might have a custom focus in their campaign called "Is Born of the Swamp" and want a defensive ability for tier 5, so they can look at the high-tier abilities in the protection category and quickly narrow down what options are available.

(It may be possible that a character gains the same ability from more than one source (such as from their type and their descriptor). Unless the two abilities are obviously additive (such as two abilities that each add 3 points to your Might Pool, which together would give the character +6 Might points), the duplicated ability might be improved in some way, such as having a longer duration or greater effect, or automatically providing an asset. Some abilities give suggestions on how to do this; otherwise, the player and the GM should work out whether and how the ability is improved.)

The ability categories are not intended to be rigid or comprehensive. Some abilities fall into more than one category, and it could be argued that some abilities could be included in more categories than are listed here.

These categories have some overlap with the categories in the Focus chapter. For example, there is a support category here and a support category in the Focus chapter. They aren't intended to be exact parallels and they don't mean exactly the same thing. That said, if you're creating a support-centric focus, many of the abilities in the support ability category would be appropriate choices.

ATTACK SKILL

Gives you training or specialization in a specific physical attack (like swords or unarmed combat), a category of physical attacks (light bladed, heavy bashing, and so on), or another physical skill primarily used to inflict harm (such as breaking objects).

Low Tier:

Heads-Up Display

Practiced With Guns

Practiced With Medium Weapons

Practiced With Swords

Quarry

Unarmed Fighting Style

Mid Tier:

Blood Fever

Cognizant Offense

Greater Skill With Defense

Practiced With All Weapons

Robot Fighter

Serv-0 Aim

Serv-0 Brawler

Skill With Attacks

Sniper's Aim

Specialized Throwing

High Tier:

As Foretold in Prophecy

Duel to the Death

Greater Skill With Attacks

Hunter's Drive

Master of Unarmed Fighting Style

Mastery With Attacks

Specialized Basher

COMPANION

Gives you a [follower](#), modifies a follower, or gives you an additional benefit when interacting with or near your follower. This category includes humanoid followers, beast companions, and temporary companions like summoned swarms, conjured spirits, and so on.

Low Tier:

Basic Follower

Beast Companion

Bound Magic Creature

Control Swarm

Critter Companion

Duplicate

Entourage

Influence Swarm

Necromancy

Resilient Duplicate

Robot Assistant

Serv-0

Spirit Accomplice

Mid Tier:

Beast Eyes

Call Swarm

Expert Follower

Fellow Explorer

Fiery Hand of Doom

Gain Unusual Companion

Greater Necromancy

Improved Object Bond

Living Armor

Machine Companion

Mount
Retinue
Shipspeak
Stronger Together
Summon Giant Spider
Superior Duplicate
Time Doppelganger
Time Loop
High Tier:
As If One Creature
Band of Desperados
Band of Followers
Beast Call
Call Dead Spirit
Call in Favor
Call Otherworldly Spirit
Call Through Time
Conjuration
Deadly Swarm
Dragon's Maw
Fire Servant
Improved Apportation
Improved Companion
Improved Machine Companion
Insect Eruption
Legal Intern
Masterful Armor
Modification
Multiplicity
Object Bond Mastery
Recruit Deputy
Robot Fleet
Summon Demon
Time Doppelganger
True Necromancy

CONTROL

Controls or influences minds in ways outside of what could be done with conventional intimidation and persuasion, such as using psychic mind control, fear gas, and so on.

Low Tier:

- Calm Stranger
- Charm Machine
- Cloud Personal Memories
- Community Activist
- Fast Talk
- Goad
- Hack the Impossible
- Robot Control
- Soothe the Savage
- Terrifying Presence

Mid Tier:

- Calm
- Captivate or Inspire
- Captivate With Starshine
- Command
- Command Machine
- Command Spirit
- Crowd Control
- Daydream
- Grand Deception
- Interruption
- Mind Control
- Psychic Suggestion

High Tier:

- Advanced Command
- Assume Control
- Brainwashing
- Change the Paradigm
- Control Machine
- Control the Savage
- Defuse Situation

Flee

Psychic Passenger

Show Them the Way

Suggestion

Word of Command

CRAFT

Creates useful physical things, such as mundane tools (hammers, crowbars), limited-use devices (manifest cyphers, artifacts), or independent beings (robots, elementals, zombies). Includes blueprints, plans, and effects that aid or speed crafting.

Low Tier:

Create Deadly Poison

Fortification Builder

Junkmonger

Machine Efficiency

Modify Device

Natural Crafter

Quick Work

Robot Builder

Trapster

Weapon Crafter

Mid Tier:

Dream Becomes Reality

Expert Crafter

Ice Creation

Poison Crafter

Robot Upgrade

Sculpt Light

High Tier:

Create

Dark Matter Structure

Improved Sculpt Light

Innovator

Jury-Rig

Modify Artifact Power

Reshape

CURE

Cures damage, adds or improves recovery rolls, or negates, cures, suspends, or otherwise gives immunity to a harmful effect or condition, such as poison, disease, mental attacks, moving down on the damage track, or dying.

Low Tier:

Alleviate

Crystalline Body

Destined for Greatness

Diver

Drain Creature

Drain Machine

Endurance

Escape

Extra Recovery

Foil Danger

Healing Touch

Ignore the Pain

Improved Recovery

Living Off the Land

Push on Through

Quick Recovery

Repair Flesh

Restful Presence

Speedy Recovery

Surging Confidence

Totally Chill

Water Adaptation

Will of Legend

Mid Tier:

Aquatic Combatant

Biomorphic Healing

Damage Transference

Drain Charge

Fight On

Font of Healing

Healing Pulse
Ignore Affliction
Immovable
Incredible Health
Miraculous Health
Noble's Courage
One With the Wild
Poison Resistance
Preternatural Senses
Regeneration
Store Energy
Thinking Ahead
Tough As Nails
Unmovable
Unraveling Consumption
Wilderness Encouragement
Willing Sacrifice
High Tier:
Deep Reserves
Final Defiance
Free to Move
Gamer's Fortitude
Gaming God
Greater Healing Touch
Incredible Recovery
Infuse Spirit
Inspiration
Inspire the Innocent
Mind Surge
Negate Danger
Not Dead Yet
Rapid Recovery
Regenerate
Restore Life
Resuscitate

Share the Power

Stay the Course

Trick Driver

Vigilant

ENVIRONMENT

Manipulates the environment or things in the environment, such as with telekinesis, weather control, gravity control, illusions, and so on.

Low Tier:

Create Water

Dreamcraft

Fetch

Grasping Foliage

Hedge Magic

Hidden Closet

Illuminating Touch

Illusory Duplicate

Impetus

Legerdemain

Lock

Minor Illusion

Move Metal

Slip Into Shadow

Telekinesis

Wilderness Explorer

Mid Tier:

Daydream

Define Down

Field of Gravity

Force Field Barrier

Force to Reckon With

Illusory Selves

Living Wall

Major Illusion

Nullify Sound

Projection

Storm Seed

Sunlight

High Tier:

Adaptation

Control Weather

Diamagnetism

Force Wall

Generate Force Field

Grandiose Illusion

Granite Wall

Inferno Trail

Move Mountains

Permanent Illusion

Relocate

Terrifying Image

Wall of Lightning

The Wild Is on Your Side

INFORMATION

Gives the ability to learn information about something, whether chosen by the GM like Scan, by asking a question and the GM giving the answer, or by learning a language.

Low Tier:

Babel

Communication

Community Knowledge

Decipher

Dream Thief

Eye for Detail

Gather Intelligence

Lab Analysis

Mind Reading

Monster Lore

Network Tap

Predictive Model

Premonition

Question the Spirits

Retrieve Memories

Salvage and Comfort

Scan

See History

Speaker for the Dead

Telepathic

Mid Tier:

Creature Insight

Device Insight

Draw Conclusion

Find the Hidden

Got a Feeling

Know Their Faults

Machine Telepathy

Mechanical Telepathy

Reading the Room

Sensor Array

Serv-0 Scanner

Soul Interrogation

Spot Weakness

Wilderness Awareness

High Tier:

Deep Consideration

Drawing on Life's
Experiences

Information Gathering

Knowing the Unknown

Mind of a Leader

Read the Signs

Telepathic Network

META

Modifies an existing ability or character trait's effects or parameters, such as increasing range or, damage, easing the difficulty, giving you additional noncombat actions each turn, rerolling a failed attempt, or treating a number on the die as something different than normal.

Low Tier:

A Smile and a Word

Arcane Flare
Artifact Tinkerer
Augment Cypher
Careful Shot
Charge
Coaxing Power
Combat Prowess
Crushing Blow
Crystalline Body
Curious
Distant Interface
Double Strike
Drain Creature
Driving on the Edge
Elusive
Energize Object
Enhanced Body
Extra Use
Find the Way
Fists of Fury
Fleet of Foot
Frenzy
Golem Body
Gunner
Hacker
Hold Breath
Improved Designation
Investigator
Lead From the Front
Machine Efficiency
Mind for Might
Modify Device
Monster Bane
Natural Crafter
No Need for Weapons

Object Bond
Overload Machine
Precision
Quick Death
Quick Work
Range Increase
Reload
Something in the Road
Tinker
Weapon Master
Wreck
Mid Tier:
Amazing Effort
Betrayal
Better Living Through Chemistry
Capable Warrior
Cast Illusion
Cyphersmith
Deadly Aim
Deep Resources
Disarming Strike
Dodge and Resist
Drain at a Distance
Energized Shield
Enhanced Intellect
Enhanced Intellect Edge
Enhanced Might
Enhanced Might Edge
Enhanced Physique
Enhanced Potential
Enhanced Speed
Enhanced Speed Edge
Experienced in Armor
Expert Cypher Use
Expert Skill

Fast Kill
Flameblade
From the Shadows
Fury
Fusion
Greater Beast Form
Greater Designation
Greater Enhanced Intellect
Greater Enhanced Might
Greater Enhanced Physique
Greater Enhanced Potential
Greater Enhanced Speed
Greater Frenzy
Guide Bolt
Guild Training
Heroic Monster Bane
Hidden Reserves
Huge
Immovable
Improved Absorb Kinetic Energy
Improved Edge
Improved Monster Bane
Improved Sensor
Incomparable Pilot
Increased Effects
Iron Fist
Know Where to Look
Lunge
Machine Bond
Machine Vulnerabilities
Minor Wish
Never Fumble
One With the Wild
Outlast the Foe
Outwit

Overcharge Energy

Perfect Stranger

Precise Cut

Punish the Guilty

Push Off and Throw

Quick Wits

Rapid Processing

Resilient Ice Armor

Roaming Third Eye

Robot Improvement

Seize the Moment

Shepherd's Fury

Slippery Customer

Space Fighting

Speed Burst

Stone Breaker

Store Energy

Strategize

Think Your Way Out

Tower of Will

Trust to Luck

Uncanny Luck

Wall With Teeth

Weaponization

Willing Sacrifice

Wrest From Chance

High Tier:

Adroit Cypher Use

Again and Again

Agile Wit

All-Out Con

Artifact Scavenger

Blurring Speed

Burst of Escape

Charging Horde

Coordinated Effort
Damage Dealer
Damn the Guilty
Deep Reserves
Disarming Attack
Discipline of Watchfulness
Divide Your Mind
Dual Distraction
Duel to the Death
Effective Skill
Enhanced Beast Form
Enhanced Phased Attack
Escape Plan
Extreme Mastery
Force and Accuracy
Gambler
Go to Ground
Hard to Kill
Horde Tactics
Impart Understanding
Improved Command Spirit
Improved Gravity Cleave
Improved Machine Companion
Improved Success
Inventor
Lethal Damage
Machine Enhancement
Maneuvering Adept
Master Cypher Use
Master Machine
Masterful Armor Modification
Moderate Wish
Modify Artifact Power
Multiple Quarry
Multiplicity

Overcharge Device

Perfect Control

Perfect Speed Burst

Physically Gifted

Recycled Cyphers

Reinforcing Field (

Resonant Frequency

Robot Evolution

Seize the Initiative

Shield Burst

Shred Existence

Subtle Tricks

Thief's Luck

Trick Driver

Twist of Fate

Two Things at Once

Ultra Enhancement

Using What's Available

Usurp Cypher

Weightless Shot

Weird Science Breakthrough

Wild Vitality

Winter Gauntlets

MOVEMENT

Increases your movement (such as increasing your basic movement speed from short to long) or adds a new type of movement (such as flight, wallcrawling, phasing, or teleporting).

Low Tier:

Bolt Rider

Contortionist

Danger Instinct

Far Step

Get Away

Hover

Phase Sprint

Void Wings

Walk Through Walls

Mid Tier:

Apportation

Blink of an Eye

Bypass Barrier

Controlled Fall

Ghost

Mobile Fighter

Obstacle Running

Phase Door

Runner

Swim

Temporal Dislocation

Up to Speed

Windrider

Wings of Fire

Wormhole

High Tier:

Alley Rat

Blurring Speed

Chamber of Dreams

Electrical Flight

Embraced by Darkness

Fast Travel

Flash Across the Miles

Flight

Impossible Walk

Incredible Running Speed

Jaunt

Juggernaut

Living Light

Masterful Armor

Modification

Mental Projection

Return to the Obelisk

Teleportation

Time Travel

Traverse the Worlds

Very Long Sprinting

Wind Chariot

Windwracked Traveler

PROTECTION

Gives training or specialization in one or more types of combat defenses (Might, Speed, or Intellect), provides or increases Armor, or otherwise helps prevent damage.

Low Tier:

Absorb Kinetic Energy

Block

Closed Mind

Courageous

Crystalline Body

Defense Against Robots

Defensive Phasing

Deflect Attacks

Distortion

Enhanced Body

Enveloping Shield

Fearsome Reputation

Field of Destruction

Flesh of Stone

Flight Not Fight

Force Field Shield

Fortified Position

Go Defensive

Golem Body

Hard to Distract

Hard to Hit

Hardiness

Have Spacesuit, Will Travel

Ice Armor

Just a Bit Mad

Magic Shield
Mentally Tough
Out of Harm's Way
Phase Sprint
Powered Armor
Practiced in Armor
Quick Block
Repel Metal
Resist the Elements
Resist Underwater Hazards
Resonance Field
Safe Fall
Serv-0 Defender
Shield Master
Shroud of Flame
Skill With Defense
Sound Conversion Barrier
Stare Them Down
Sturdy
Trained Without Armor
Unarmored Fighter
Ward
Warding Shield
Weapon Defense
Weather the Vicissitudes
Wind Armor
Mid Tier:
Absorb Pure Energy
Anticipate Attack
Blood Fever
Cloak of Opportunity
Confounding Banter
Confuse Enemy
Counter Danger
Countermeasures

Dark Matter Shell
Dark Matter Shroud
Discerning Mind
Divert Attacks
Dodge and Respond
Dual Defense
Electric Armor
Elemental Protection
Energy Protection
Energy Resistance
Experienced in Armor
Experienced Defender
Force Field Barrier
Fusion Armor
Hard-Won Resilience
Horde Fighting
Huge
Illusory Evasion
Magnetic Field
Matter Cloud
Minor Wish
Moving Like Water
Nimble Swimmer
Outlaw Reputation
Poison Crafter
Rapid Processing
Resilience
Resilient Ice Armor
Robot Fighter
Shield Training
Subconscious Defense
Temporal Acceleration
Tough It Out
Tower of Intellect
Tower of Will

Tumbling Moves

Versatile Mind

Vigilance

Wraith Cloak

High Tier:

Defense Master

Defensive Augmentation

Defensive Field

Energize Creature

Energize Crowd

Evasion

Field-Reinforced Armor

Hard Target

Hard to Kill

Lost in the Chaos

Masterful Armor

Modification

Mastery in Armor

Mastery With Defense

Microgravity Avoidance

Moderate Wish

Nothing but Defend

Parry

Precognition

Reactive Field

See the Future

Still As a Statue

Ultra Enhancement

Untouchable

Untouchable While Moving

Wear It Well

SENSES

Enhances your senses (seeing in the dark, seeing underwater or through mist, sensing danger, finding optimal places to stand in combat, and so on), but doesn't provide direct answers to questions like an information ability does.

Low Tier:

Eyes Adjusted
Familiarize
Find an Opening
Heads-Up Display
Link Senses
Mental Link
Reveal
See the Unseen
See Through Matter
Sense Ambush
Share Senses
Third Eye

Mid Tier:

Animal Senses and Sensibilities
Awareness
Beast Eyes
Break the Line
Detect Life
Distance Viewing
Echolocation
Experienced Finder
Inhabit Crystal
Remote Viewing
Sensing Package
Sensor
Serv-0 Spy
Trapfinder
Use Senses of Others

High Tier:

Amplify Sounds
Battlefield Tactician
Dark Explorer
Infer Thoughts
Master Machine
See Through Time

True Senses

SOCIAL

Gives you an indirect social benefit, such as providing a useful contact in a city or letting you take advantage of your social status.

Low Tier:

Connected

Debate

Demeanor of Command

Impart Ideal

Misdirect Blame

Negotiate

Perks of Stardom

Powerful Rhetoric

Privileged Nobility

Underworld Contacts

Unexpected Betrayal

Mid Tier:

Betrayal

Flamboyant Boast

Informer

Oratory

Perfect Stranger

High Tier:

Group Friendship

SPECIAL ATTACK

Gives the ability to make a special melee or ranged attack (weapon, energy blast, psychic, and so on). The attack might do damage, have a special effect (disarm, hinder, move the target, and so on), or both. This also includes abilities like Spray that let you attack multiple targets as your action.

Low Tier:

Advantage to Disadvantage

Aggression

Arcane Flare

Bash

Bloodlust

Concussive Blast

Control the Field

Cutting Light
Dazzling Sunburst
Disincentivize
Disrupting Touch
Drain Machine
Dream Thief
Dual Light Wield
Entangling Force
Enthrall
Erase Memories
Eye Gouge
Flash
Force Bash
Frost Touch
Golem Grip
Grasping Foliage
Hemorrhage
Hurl Flame
Misdirect
Onslaught
Opportunist
Overwatch
Pierce
Push
Quick Throw
Ray of Confusion
Release Energy
Resonance Field
Ribbons of Dark Matter
Scramble Machine
Scratch Existence
Seeds of Fury
Shatter
Shock
Stasis

Successive Attack

Surprise Attack

Swipe

Thrust

Thunder Beam

Weighty

Mid Tier:

Acrobatic Attack

Ambusher

Answering Attack

Better Surprise Attack

Bolts of Power

Built-in Weaponry

Burning Light

Castigate

Center of Attention

Crystal Lens

Dark Matter Strike

Dazing Attack

Debilitating Strike

Destroy Metal

Disable Mechanisms

Disarming Strike

Divine Radiance

Dodge and Respond

Drain Charge

Dual Medium Wield

Everything Is a Weapon

Exile

Feint

Fire and Ice

Fire Bloom

Fling

Force at Distance

Force Blast

Freezing Touch
Golem Stomp
Grab
Gravity Cleave
Ignition
Improved Object Bond
Knock Out
Matter Cloud
Mind Games
Momentum
Overawe
Overcome All Obstacles
Phase Detonation
Phased Attack
Power Strike
Pry Open
Psychic Burst
Psychosis
Push Off and Throw
Quick Strike
Rapid Attack
Reaction
Remote Control
Run and Fight
Shattering Shout
Slice
Snap Shot
Snipe
Spray
Sprint and Grab
Taking Advantage
Tall Tale
Throw
Throw Force Shield
Trick Shot

High Tier:

Absorb Energy
Arc Spray
Assassin Strike
Asserting Your Privilege
Attack and Attack Again
Biomorphic Detonation
Blind Machine
Blinding Attack
Bouncing Shield
Break the Ranks
Break Their Mind
Call the Storm
Cold Burst
Concussion
Deactivate Mechanisms
Deadly Strike
Death Touch
Defense Master
Destroyer
Dirty Fighter
Disarming Attack
Divine Intervention
Divine Symbol
Do You Know Who I Am?
Drain Power
Dust to Dust
Earthquake
Embrace the Night
Explosive Release
Finishing Blow
Fire Tendrils
Foul Aura
Ice Storm
Iron Punch

Jump Attack
Lethal Ploy
Lethal Vibration
Murderer
Nightmare
Phase Foe
Protective Wall
Psychokinetic Attack
Punish All the Guilty
Resonant Quake
Return to Sender
Shatter Mind
Special Shot
Spin Attack
Spring Away
Stun Attack
Sun Siphon
Taunt Foe
Terrifying Gaze
Twisting the Knife
Undo
Vindictive Performance
Weapon and Body
Weight of the World
Weightless Shot
Whirlwind of Throws
Winter Gauntlets
Word of Death
SUPPORT
Gives some sort of benefit to an ally rather than yourself, such as an extra action or an asset on their roll.
Low Tier:
Advice From a Friend
Anecdote
Attack Flourish
Defend the Innocent

Enable Others
Encouragement
Encouraging Presence
Force Field
Friendly Help
Good Advice
Inspire Action
Inspire Aggression
Inspiring Ease
Protector
Rally to Me
Reveal
Sculpt Flesh
Teamwork
Mid Tier:
Accelerate
Applying Your Knowledge
Buddy System
Combat Challenge
Defend All the Innocent
Dual Wards
Elemental Protection
In Harm's Way
Lead by Inquiry
Pay It Forward
Play to the Crowd
Spur Effort
Take Command
True Guardian
High Tier:
Able Assistance
Battle Management
Block for Another
Energize Creature
Energize Crowd

Impart Understanding
Inspiration
Inspire Coordinated Actions
Inspiring Success
Regenerate Other
Share Defense
Stimulate
Teach Trick
Transcend the Script
True Defender
Undo
Will of a Leader
Work the Friendship
TASK

Gives training, specialization, or an asset in one or more noncombat skills (climbing, healing, computers, initiative, and so on).

Low Tier:

Advantages of Being Big
Anticipation
Assassin Skills
Athlete
Autodoc
Balance
Bestiary Knowledge
Blameless
Breaker
Car Surfer
Careful Aim
Celebrity Talent
Computer Programming
Contortionist
Courageous
Crafter
Danger Sense
Datajack

Debate
Deep Water Guide
Designation
Devoted Defender
Disguise
Divine Knowledge
Driver
Enlightened
Exploratory Experience
Extra Skill
Feat of Strength
Flex Lore
Freakishly Large
Game Lessons
Gamer
Good Advice
Hand to Eye
Handy
Hard Choices
Heads-Up Display
Higher Mathematics
How Others Think
Impersonate
Impressive Display
Infiltrator
Inner Defense
Insight
Inspire Aggression
Interaction Skills
Interface
Investigate
Investigative Skills
Knowing
Knowledge of the Law
Knowledge Skills

Late Inspiration
Learning the Path
Levity
Life Lessons
Machine Affinity
Machine Hunting
Machine Interface
Magic Training
Make Judgment
Master Identifier
Master Thief
Microgravity Adept
Monster Lore
Movement Skills
Muscles of Iron
Natural Charisma
Oneirochemy
Open Mind
Opening Statement
Physical Skills
Pilot
Poetic License
Post-Apocalyptic Survivor
Powerful Rhetoric
Predictive Equation
Privileged Nobility
Quarry
Quick Study
Quick to Flee
Quicker Than Most
Resist Tricks
Ruin Lore
Sailor
Salvage and Comfort
Sense Attitudes

Serv-0 Repair
Sharp Senses
Sleuth
Slippery
Sneak
Stalker
Stand Watch
Stealth Skills
Straightforward
Superb Explorer
Superb Infiltrator
Taking Advantage
Task Training
Tech Skills
There's Your Problem
Tool Mastery
Tracker
Trained Excavator
Trained Interlocutor
Trained Swimmer
Travel Skills
Understanding
Vacuum Skilled
Wilderness Life
Wilderness Lore
Wound Tender
Zero Dark Eyes
Mid Tier:
Action Processor
Agent Provocateur
Animal Senses and Sensibilities
Confidence Artist
Dark Matter Shell
Enhance Strength
Expert Driver

Expert Pilot
Find the Guilty
Flex Skill
Ghost
Hard to See
Heightened Skills
Improvise
Increasing Determination
Intelligent Interface
Intense Interaction
Knowledge Is Power
Master Crafter
Meticulous Planner
Minor Wish
Nightstrike
Outlast the Foe
Passing Mechanic
Preternatural Senses
Pull a Fast One
Rapid Processing
Rider
Sea Legs
Sensing Package
Serv-0 Aim
Serv-0 Brawler
Sharp-Eyed
Ship Footing
Silent As Space
Skill With Attacks
Soothe Mind and Body
Subtle Steps
Targeting Eye
Task Specialization
Telling
Temporal Acceleration

Trained Basher
Trained Gunner
Trained Slayer
Verbal Misdirection
You Studied
High Tier:
Amplify Sounds
As Foretold in Prophecy
Coordinated Effort
Dark Explorer
Explains the Ineffable
Exploit Advantage
Further Mathematics
Learned a Few Things
Like the Back of Your Hand
Magnificent Moment
Master Entertainer
Multiple Skills
No One Knows Better
Precognition
See the Future
Subsonic Rumble
Total Awareness
Trick Driver
Using the Environment
TRANSFORM
A significant change that temporarily enhances you, such as growing bigger, turning into a werewolf, and so on. Also includes apparent transformations like disguises and invisibility.

Low Tier:

Beast Form
Bigger
Controlled Change
Enlarge
Face Morph
Golem Healing

Illusory Disguise

Phased Pocket

Spin Identity

Vanish

Mid Tier:

Bigger Beast Form

Blend In

Evanescence

Greater Controlled Change

Hard to See

Huge

Invisible Phasing

Moon Shape

High Tier:

Colossal

Command Metal

Disappear

Gargantuan

Invisibility

Mask

Moderate Wish

Outside Reality

Perfect Control

Wild Camouflage

Abilities—A

A Smile and a Word: When you use Effort on any action involving interactions—even those having to do with calming animals or communicating with someone or something whose language you do not speak—you gain a **free level of Effort** on the task. Action.

Able Assistance: When you help someone with a task and they apply a level of Effort, they get a free level of Effort on that task. Enabler.

Absorb Energy (7 Intellect points): You touch an object and absorb its energy. If you touch a manifest cypher, you render it useless. If you touch an artifact, roll for its depletion. If you touch another kind of powered machine or device, the GM determines whether its power is fully drained. In any case, you absorb energy from the object touched and regain 1d10 Intellect points. If this would give you more Intellect than your Pool's maximum, the extra points are lost, and you must make a Might defense roll. The difficulty of the roll is equal to the number of points over your maximum you absorbed. If you fail the roll, you take 5 points of damage.

and are unable to act for one round. You can use this ability as a defense action when you're the target of an incoming ability. Doing so cancels the incoming ability, and you absorb the energy as if it were a device. Action.

Absorb Kinetic Energy: You absorb a portion of the energy of a physical attack or impact. You negate 1 point of damage you would have suffered and store that point as energy. Once you have absorbed 1 point of energy, you continue to negate 1 point of damage from any incoming blow or impact, but the residual energy bleeds off with a flare of harmless light (you cannot store more than 1 point at a time). Enabler.

Absorb Pure Energy: When you use Absorb Kinetic Energy, you can also absorb and store energy from attacks made with pure energy (focused light, radiation, transdimensional, psychic, etc.) or from conduits that direct energy, if you can make direct contact. This ability does not change how many points of energy you can store. If you also have Improved Absorb Kinetic Energy, you can absorb 2 points of damage from other energy sources as well. Enabler.

Accelerate (4+ Intellect points): Your words imbue the spirit of a character within immediate range who is able to understand you, accelerating them so they gain an asset on initiative tasks and Speed defense rolls for ten minutes. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to affect more targets; each level of Effort affects one additional target. You must speak to additional targets to accelerate them, one target per round. Action per target to initiate.

Acrobatic Attack (1+ Speed points): You leap into the attack, twisting or flipping through the air. If you roll a natural 17 or 18, you can choose to have a [minor effect](#) rather than deal extra damage. If you apply Effort to the attack, you get a free level of Effort on the task. You can't use this ability if your Speed Effort costs are reduced from wearing armor. Enabler.

Action Processor (4 Intellect points): Drawing upon stored information and the ability to process incoming data at amazing speeds, you are trained in one physical task of your choice for ten minutes. For example, you can choose running, climbing, swimming, Speed defense, or attacks with a specific weapon. Action to initiate.

Adaptation: Thanks to a latent mutation, a device implanted in your spine, a ritual performed with dragon's blood, or some other gift, you now remain at a comfortable temperature; never need to worry about dangerous radiation, diseases, or gases; and can always breathe in any environment (even the vacuum of space). Enabler.

Adroit Cypher Use: You can bear four cyphers at a time. Enabler.

Advanced Command (7 Intellect points): A target within short range obeys any command you give as long as they can hear and understand you. Further, as long as you continue to do nothing but issue commands (taking no other action), you can give that same target a new command. This effect ends when you stop issuing commands or they are out of short range. Action to initiate.

Advantage to Disadvantage (3 Speed points): With a number of quick moves, you make an attack against an armed foe, inflicting damage and disarming them so that their weapon is now in your hands or 10 feet (3 m) away on the ground—your choice. This disarming attack is hindered. Action.

Advantages of Being Big: When you use [Enlarge](#), you're so big that you can move massive objects more easily, climb buildings by using hand- and footholds unavailable to regular-sized people, and jump much farther. While you enjoy the effects of Enlarge, all climbing, lifting, and jumping tasks are eased. Enabler.

Advantages of Being Small: You've learned how to leverage your strength and accuracy in proportion to your size. Your damage is no longer halved when using Shrink, and climbing and jumping tasks are eased. Enabler.

Advice From a Friend (1 Intellect point): You know your friend's strengths and weaknesses, and how to motivate them to succeed. When you give an ally a suggestion involving their next action, the character is trained in that action for one round. Action.

Again and Again (8 Speed points): You can take an additional action in a round in which you have already acted. Enabler.

Ageless: Your body and mind do not age. Unless you are killed by violence (or some outside force such as poison or infection), you will never die. Enabler.

Agent Provocateur: Choose one of the following to be trained in: attacking with a weapon of your choice, demolitions, or sneaking and lockpicking (if you choose this last option, you are trained in both). Enabler.

Aggression (2 Might points): You focus on making attacks to such an extent that you leave yourself vulnerable to your opponents. While this ability is active, you gain an asset on your melee attacks, and your Speed defense rolls against melee and ranged attacks are hindered. This effect lasts for as long as you wish, but it ends if no combat is taking place within range of your senses. Enabler.

Agile Wit: When attempting a Speed task, you instead can roll (and spend points) as if it were an Intellect action. If you apply Effort to this task, you can spend points from your Intellect Pool instead of your Speed Pool (in which case you also use your Intellect Edge instead of your Speed Edge). Enabler.

All-Out Con (7 Intellect points): You put everything into it. You add three free levels of Effort to the next task you attempt. You can't use this ability again until after you've taken a ten-hour recovery action. Action.

Alleviate (3 Intellect points): You attempt to cancel or cure one malady (such as disease or poison) in one creature. Action.

Alley Rat (6 Intellect points): While in a city, you find or create a significant shortcut, secret entrance, or emergency escape route where it looked like none existed. Doing so requires that you succeed on an Intellect action whose difficulty is set by the GM based on the situation. You and the GM should work out the details. Action.

Always Tinkering: If you have any tools and materials at all, and you are carrying fewer cyphers than your limit, you can create a manifest cypher if you have an hour of time to spend. The new cypher is random and always 2 levels lower than normal (minimum 1). It's also temperamental and fragile. These are called temperamental cyphers. If you give one to anyone else to use, it falls apart immediately, useless. Action to initiate; one hour to complete.

Amazing Copying: You can use Copy Power to copy more powerful abilities. In addition to the normal options for using Effort with Copy Power, if you apply two levels of Effort, the GM chooses a high-tier ability that most closely resembles that power (instead of a low-tier ability). Enabler.

Amazing Effort: When you apply at least one level of Effort to a noncombat task, you get a free level of Effort on that task. When you choose this ability, decide if it applies to Might Effort or Speed Effort. Enabler.

Amazing Leap (2 Might points): You leap through the air and land safely some distance away. You can jump up, down, or across to anywhere you choose within long range if you have a clear and unobstructed path to that location. If you have three or more power shifts in strength, your leaping range increases to very long. If you have five or more power shifts in strength, your leaping range increases to 1,000 feet (300 m). Action.

Ambusher: When you attack a creature that has not yet acted during the first round of combat, your attack is eased. Enabler.

Amplify Sounds (2 Might points): For one minute, you can amplify distant or small sounds so that you can hear them clearly, even if it's a conversation or the sound of a small animal moving through an underground

burrow up to a very long distance away. You can attempt to perceive the sound even if interceding barriers block it or the sound is very slight, though this requires a few additional rounds of concentration. To discriminate the sound you wish in a noisy environment might also require a few additional rounds of concentration as you audibly explore the surrounding soundscape. Given enough time, you could pinpoint every conversation, every breathing creature, and every device creating noise within range. Action to initiate, up to several rounds to complete, depending on the difficulty of the task.

Anecdote (2 Intellect points): You can lift the spirits of a group of creatures and help them bond together by entertaining them with an uplifting or pointed anecdote. For the next hour, those who pay attention to your story are trained in a task you choose that's related to the anecdote, as long as it's not an attack or defense task. Action to initiate, one minute to complete.

Animal Scrying (4+ Intellect points): If you know the general location of an animal that is friendly toward you and within 1 mile (1.5 km) of your location, you can sense through its senses for up to ten minutes. If you are not in animal form or not in a form similar to that animal, you must apply a level of Effort to use this ability. Action to establish.

Animal Shape (3+ Intellect points): You change into an animal as small as a rat or up to your own size (such as a large dog or small bear) for ten minutes. Each time you transform, you can take a different animal shape. Your equipment becomes part of the transformation, rendering it unusable unless it has a passive effect, such as armor. In this form your stats remain the same as your normal form, but you can move and attack according to your animal shape (attacks from most animals this size are medium weapons, which you can use without penalty). Tasks requiring hands (such as using door handles or pushing buttons) are hindered when in animal form. You cannot speak but can still use abilities that don't rely on human speech. You gain two minor abilities associated with the creature you become (see the Animal Form Minor Abilities table at the end of the Character Abilities section of this document). For example, if you transform into a bat, you become trained in perception and can fly up to a long distance each round. If you transform into an octopus, you are trained in stealth and can breathe underwater. If you apply a level of Effort when you use this ability, you can either become a talking animal or take a hybrid shape. The talking animal shape looks exactly like a normal animal, but you can still talk and use any abilities that rely on human speech. The hybrid shape is like your normal form but with animalistic features, even if that animal is something much smaller than you (such as a bat or rat). In this hybrid form you can speak, use all of your abilities, make attacks like an animal, and perform tasks using hands without being hindered. Anyone who sees you clearly in this hybrid form would never mistake you for a mere animal. Action to change or revert.

“Similar” is a broad term. Lions are similar to tigers and leopards, hawks are similar to ravens and swans, dogs are similar to wolves and foxes, and so on.

Even if your animal shape has multiple attack types (such as claws and bite), you can attack only once per round unless you have some other ability that lets you make additional attacks on your turn.

Animal Shape variant: If your character concept is that you always take the same animal form instead of being able to choose from multiple kinds of animals, double the duration of the Animal Shape ability (to twenty minutes per use). The GM may allow characters with this restriction to learn additional animal forms by spending 4 XP as a long-term benefit.

ANIMAL FORM MINOR ABILITIES TABLE

Use the following as examples or suggestions of what a character gains when in the shape of an animal. If an animal shape lists two skills, the character chooses which one they want each time they take that shape.

Animal	Skill Training	Other Abilities
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Ape	Climbing	Hands
Badger	Climbing	Scent
Bat	Perception	Flying
Bear	Climbing	Scent
Bird	Perception	Flying
Boar	Might defense	Scent
Cat	Climbing or stealth	Small
Constrictor snake	Climbing	Constrict
Crocodile	Stealth or swimming	Constrict
Deinonychus	Perception	Fast
Dolphin	Perception or swimming	Fast
Fish	Stealth or swimming	Aquatic
Frog	Jumping or stealth	Aquatic
Horse	Perception	Fast
Leopard	Climbing or stealth	Fast
Lizard	Climbing or stealth	Small
Octopus	Stealth	Aquatic
Shark	Swimming	Aquatic
Turtle	Might defense	Armor
Venomous snake	Climbing	Venom
Wolf	Perception	Scent

Aquatic: The animal either breathes water instead of air or is able to breathe water in addition to breathing air.

Armor: The animal has a thick hide or shell, granting +1 to Armor.

Constrict: The animal can grip its opponent fast after making a melee attack (usually with a bite or claw), easing attack rolls against that foe on later turns until it releases the foe.

Fast: The animal can move a long distance on its turn instead of a short distance.

Flying: The animal can fly, which (depending on the type of animal) may be up to a short or long distance on its turn.

Hands: The animal has paws or hands that are nearly as agile as those of a human. Unlike with most animal shapes, the animal's tasks that require hands are not hindered (although the GM may decide that some tasks requiring human agility, such as playing a flute, are still hindered).

Scent: The animal has a strong sense of smell, gaining an asset on tracking and dealing with darkness or blindness.

Small: The animal is considerably smaller than a human, easing its Speed defense tasks but hindering tasks to move heavy things.

Venom: The animal is poisonous (usually through a bite), inflicting 1 additional point of damage.

Animal Senses and Sensibilities: You are trained in listening and spotting things. In addition, most of the time, the GM should alert you if you're about to walk into an ambush or a trap that is lower than level 5. Enabler.

Answering Attack (3 Speed points): If you are struck in melee, you can make an immediate melee attack against that attacker once per round. The attack is hindered, and you can still take your normal action during the round. Enabler.

Anticipate Attack (4 Intellect points): You can sense when and how creatures attacking you will make their attacks. Speed defense rolls are eased for one minute. Action.

Anticipation (1 Intellect point): You look ahead to see how your actions might unfold. The first task you perform before the end of the next round gains an asset. Action.

Automatic Glow: Hard light objects you create with your type and focus abilities shed light, illuminating everything in immediate range. Whenever you want, your body (entirely or just part of it) sheds light, illuminating everything in short range. Enabler.

Applying Your Knowledge: When you help another character undertake any action that you're untrained in, you are treated as if you are trained in it. Action.

Apportionment (4 Intellect points): You call a physical object to you. You can choose any piece of normal equipment on the standard equipment list, or (no more than once per day) you can allow the GM to determine the object randomly. If you call a random object, it has a 10 percent chance of being a manifest cypher or artifact, a 50 percent chance of being a piece of standard equipment, and a 40 percent chance of being a bit of worthless junk. You can't use this ability to take an item held by another creature. Action.

Aquatic Combatant: You ignore penalties for any action (including fighting) in underwater environments. Enabler.

Arc Spray (3 Speed points): If a weapon has the ability to fire rapid shots without reloading (usually called a rapid-fire weapon, such as a crank crossbow), you can fire your weapon at up to three targets (all next to one another) at once. Make a separate attack roll against each target. Each attack is hindered. Action.

Arcane Flare (1 Intellect point): You enhance the damage of another attack spell with an extra charge of energy so that it deals 1 additional point of damage. Alternatively, you attack a target within long range by projecting a flare of raw magic that inflicts 4 points of damage. Enabler for enhancement; action for long-range attack.

Artifact Scavenger (6 Intellect points + 2 XP): You've developed a sixth sense for searching for the most valuable items in the wasteland. If you spend the time required to succeed on two [scavenging](#) tasks, you can exchange all the results you would otherwise obtain for a chance to gain an artifact of the GM's choosing if you succeed on a difficulty 6 Intellect task. You can use this ability at most once per day, and never within the same general area. Action to initiate, several hours to complete.

Artifact Tinkerer: If you spend at least one day tinkering with an artifact in your possession, it functions at one level higher than normal. This applies to all artifacts in your possession, but they retain this bonus only for you. Enabler.

As Foretold in Prophecy: You accomplish something that proves you are truly the chosen one. The next task you attempt is eased by three steps. You can't use this ability again until after you've taken a one-hour or a ten-hour recovery action. Action.

As If One Creature: When you and your beast (from your [Beast Companion](#) ability) are within immediate distance of each other, you can share damage inflicted on either of you. For instance, if one of you is struck by a weapon for 4 points of damage, divide the damage between the two of you as you see fit. Only the Armor and resistances of the target initially damaged come into play. So if you have 2 Armor and are struck by a force blast for 4 points of damage, your beast can take the 2 points of damage you would suffer, but their Armor does not come into play, nor does their immunity to force blasts, if any. Enabler.

Assassin Skills: You are trained in stealth and disguise tasks. Enabler.

Assassin Strike (5 Intellect points): If you successfully attack a creature that was previously unaware of your presence, you deal 9 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Asserting Your Privilege (3 Intellect points): Acting as only a privileged person can, you verbally harangue a foe who can hear and understand you so forcefully that they are unable to take any action, including attacks, for one round. Whether you succeed or fail, the next action the target takes is hindered. Action.

Assume Control (6+ Intellect points): You control the actions of another creature you have interacted with or studied for at least a round. This effect lasts for ten minutes. The target must be level 2 or lower. Once you have assumed control, the target acts as if it wants to accomplish your desire to the best of its ability, freely using its own best judgment unless you use an action to give it a specific instruction on an issue-by-issue basis. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum level of the target. Thus, to attempt to command a level 5 target (three levels above the normal limit), you must apply three levels of Effort. When the effect ends, the target remembers everything that happened and reacts according to its nature and your relationship to it; assuming control might have soured that relationship if it was previously a positive one. Action to initiate.

Athlete: You are trained in carrying, climbing, jumping, and smashing. Enabler.

Attack and Attack Again: Rather than granting additional damage or a [minor or major effect](#), a natural 17 or higher on your attack roll allows you the option of immediately making another attack. Enabler.

Attack Flourish: With your attack, you add stylish moves, entertaining quips, or a certain something that entertains or impresses others. One creature you choose within short range who can see you gains an asset to its next task if taken within a round or two. Enabler.

Augment Cypher (2+ Intellect points): When you activate a cypher, add +1 to its level. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the level of the cypher by an additional +1 (per level of Effort applied). You can't increase the cypher's level above 10. Enabler.

Autodoctor: You are trained in healing, performing surgical procedures, and withstanding pain. You can perform surgeries on yourself, remaining conscious while you do so. Enabler.

Awareness (3 Intellect points): You become hyperaware of your surroundings in order to better locate your target. For ten minutes, you are aware of all living things within long range (including their general position), and by concentrating (another action), you can attempt to learn the general health and power level of any one of them. Action.

Abilities—B

Babel: After hearing a language spoken for a few minutes, you can speak it and make yourself understood. If you continue to use the language to interact with native speakers, your skills improve rapidly, to the point where you might be mistaken for a native speaker after just a few hours of speaking the new language. Enabler.

Balance: You are trained in balancing. Enabler.

Band of Desperados: Your reputation draws a band of six level 2 desperado NPC [followers](#) who are completely devoted to you. You and the GM must work out the details of these followers. If a follower dies, you gain a new one after at least two weeks and proper recruitment. Enabler.

Band of Followers: You gain four level 3 followers. They are not restricted on their modifications. Enabler.

Bash (1 Might point): This is a pummeling melee attack. Your attack inflicts 1 less point of damage than normal, but dazes your target for one round, during which time all tasks it performs are hindered. Action.

Basic Follower: You gain a level 2 follower. One of their modifications must be persuasion. You can take this ability multiple times, each time gaining another level 2 follower. Enabler. (When you use Basic Follower, the GM may require that you actually look for a suitable follower.)

Battle Management (4 Intellect points): As long as you use your action each round giving orders or advice, attack and defense actions taken by your allies within short range are eased. Action.

Battlefield Tactician (2+ Intellect points): You scrutinize your surroundings, learning whatever facts the GM feels are pertinent about attacking, defending, maneuvering, and dealing with environmental hazards within a short distance. For example, you might notice a pile of rubble you can stand on for an advantage in melee, a sheltered corner to help protect against enemy attacks, a less-slippery part of a frozen lake, or a place where the poison gas is thinner than elsewhere. If you (or someone you tell) move to that location, you (or they) gain an asset on tasks related to that optimal position (such as attack rolls from the high ground, Speed defense rolls from the sheltered corner, balance rolls on the frozen lake, or Might defense rolls against the poisonous cloud). Instead of gaining an advantageous location, you might learn of a disadvantageous location that you could use against your enemies, such as maneuvering them into an awkward corner that hinders their melee attacks or a weak spot on the frozen lake that will break if they stand on it. You can apply Effort to learn one additional good or bad location within range (one location per level of Effort), increase the range of this ability (another short distance per level of Effort), or both. Enabler.

Beast Call (5 Intellect points): You summon a horde of small animals or a single level 4 beast to help you temporarily. These creatures do your bidding for as long as you focus your attention, but you must use your action each turn to direct them. Creatures are native to the area and arrive under their own power, so if you're in an unreachable place, this ability won't work. Action.

Beast Companion: A level 2 creature of your size or smaller accompanies you and follows your instructions. You and the GM must work out the details of your creature, and you'll probably make rolls for it in combat or when it takes actions. The beast companion acts on your turn. As a level 2 creature, it has a target number of 6 and 6 health and it inflicts 2 points of damage. Its movement is based on its creature type (avian, swimmer, and so on). If your beast companion dies, you can hunt in the wild for 1d6 days to find a new one. Enabler. (A creature's level determines its target number, health, and

damage, unless otherwise stated. So a level 2 beast companion has a target number of 6 and a health of 6, and it inflicts 2 points of damage. A level 4 beast companion has a target number of 12 and a health of 12, and it inflicts 4 points of damage. And so on.)

Beast Eyes (3 Intellect points): By linking to the creature from your Beast Companion ability, you can perceive through its senses if it is within 1 mile (1.5 km) of you. This effect lasts up to ten minutes. Action to establish.

Beast Form: On five consecutive nights each month, you change into a monstrous beast for up to one hour each night. In this new form, you gain +8 to your Might Pool, +1 to your Might Edge, +2 to your Speed Pool, and +1 to your Speed Edge. While in beast form, you can't spend Intellect points for any reason other than to try to change to your normal form before the one-hour duration is over (a difficulty 2 task). In addition, you attack any and every living creature within short range. After you revert to your normal form, you take a -1 penalty to all rolls for one hour. If you did not kill and eat at least one substantial creature while in beast form, the penalty increases to -2 and affects all your rolls for the next 24 hours. Action to change back.

Beneath Notice: Your decreased size makes it difficult to find you. While Shrink is active on you, all stealth tasks you attempt are eased. Enabler.

Bestiary Knowledge: You are trained in the lore of flesh-eating, nonhumanoid creatures—recognizing them, knowing their weaknesses, and knowing their habits and behaviors. Enabler.

Betrayal: Any time you convince a foe that you are not a threat and then suddenly attack it (without provocation), the attack deals 4 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Better Living Through Chemistry (4 Intellect points): You've developed drug cocktails specifically designed to work with your own biochemistry. Depending on which one you inject, it makes you smarter, faster, or tougher, but when it wears off, the crash is a doozy, so you use it only in desperate situations. You gain 2 to your Might Edge, Speed Edge, or Intellect Edge for one minute, after which you can't gain the benefit again for one hour. During this follow-up hour, every time you spend points from a Pool, increase the cost by 1. Action.

Better Surprise Attack: If attacking from a hidden vantage, with surprise, or before an opponent has acted, you get an asset on the attack (if you have [Surprise Attack](#), this is in addition to the asset from that ability). On a successful hit with this surprise attack, you inflict 2 additional points of damage (for a total of 4 additional points of damage if you have Surprise Attack). Enabler.

Bigger: When you use [Enlarge](#), you can choose to grow up to 12 feet (4 m) in height, and you add 3 more temporary points to your Might Pool. Enabler.

Bigger Animal Shape: When you use Animal Shape, your animal form grows to about twice its normal size. Being so large, your beast form gains the following additional bonuses: +1 to Armor, +5 to your Might Pool, and you are trained in using your animal form's natural attacks as heavy weapons (if you weren't already). However, your Speed defense tasks are hindered. While bigger, you also gain an asset to tasks that are easier for a larger creature to perform, like climbing, intimidating, wading rivers, and so on. Enabler.

Bigger Beast Form: When you use Beast Form, your beast form grows bigger than before, during which time you achieve a height of 12 feet (4 m).

Being so large, your beast form gains the following additional bonuses: +1 to Armor, +5 to your Might Pool, and you are trained in using your fists as heavy weapons (if you weren't already). However, your Speed

defense tasks are hindered. While bigger, you also gain an asset to tasks that are easier for a larger creature to perform, like climbing, intimidating, wading rivers, and so on. Enabler.

Biomorphic Detonation (7+ Might points): You radiate a pulse of biomorphic energy up to a short distance away, but you tune it to disrupt life in an area an immediate distance across. All within the detonation take 5 points of damage that ignores Armor (unless it is Armor provided by a force field effect). If you apply additional Effort to increase the damage, you deal 2 additional points of damage per level of Effort (instead of 3 points); targets in the area take 1 point of damage even if you fail the attack roll. Action.

Biomorphic Healing (4+ Might points): You consciously send out a pulse of your biomorphic field (a strange energy your body generates) and focus it on a living creature within short range. The target gains a free and immediate one-action recovery roll. You can't use this ability again on that creature until after its next ten-hour rest. Action.

Blameless: You are trained in one of the following: deception, stealth, or disguise. Enabler.

Blend In (4 Intellect points): When you blend in, creatures still see you, but they attach no importance to your presence for about a minute. While blending in, you are specialized in stealth and Speed defense tasks. This effect ends if you do something to reveal your presence or position—attacking, using an ability, moving a large object, and so on. If this occurs, you can regain the remaining period of effect by taking an action to focus on seeming innocuous and as if you belong. Action to initiate or reinitiate.

Blessing of the Gods: As a servant of the gods, you can call up blessings in their name. This blessing depends on the god's general demeanor and area of influence. Choose two of the abilities described below.

Authority/Law/Peace (3 Intellect points). You prevent a foe that can hear and understand you from attacking anyone or anything for one round. Action.

Benevolence/Righteousness/Spirit (2+ Intellect points). One level 1 demon, spirit, or similar creature within short range is destroyed or banished. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum level of the target. Thus, to destroy or banish a level 5 target (four levels above the normal limit), you must apply four levels of Effort. Action.

Death/Darkness (2 Intellect points). A target you choose within short range withers, suffering 3 points of damage. Action.

Desire/Love/Health (3 Intellect points). With a touch, you restore 1d6 points to one stat Pool of any creature, including yourself. This ability is a difficulty 2 Intellect task. Each time you attempt to heal the same creature, the task is hindered by an additional step. The difficulty returns to 2 after that creature rests for ten hours. Action.

Earth/Stone. You are trained in climbing, stonework, and spelunking. Enabler.

Knowledge/Wisdom (3 Intellect points). Choose up to three creatures (potentially including yourself). For one minute, a particular type of task (but not an attack roll or defense roll) is eased for those creatures, but only while they remain within immediate range of you. Action.

Nature/Animals/Plants. You are trained in botany and handling natural animals. Enabler.

Protection/Silence (3 Intellect points). You create a quiet bubble of protection around you to an immediate radius for one minute. The bubble moves with you. All defense rolls for you and all creatures you designate within the bubble are eased, and no noise, regardless of its origin, sounds louder than a normal speaking voice. Action to initiate.

Sky/Air (2 Intellect points). A creature you touch is immune to airborne toxins or contaminants for ten minutes. Action.

Sun/Light/Fire (2 Intellect points). You cause one creature or object within short range to catch fire, inflicting 1 point of ambient damage each round until the fire is extinguished (requiring an action). Action.

Trickery/Greed/Commerce. You are trained in detecting the deceptions of other creatures. Enabler.

War (1 Intellect point). A target you choose within short range (potentially yourself) deals 2 additional points of damage with its next successful weapon attack. Action.

Water/Sea (2 Intellect points). A target you touch can breathe water for ten minutes. Action.

Blind Machine (6 Speed points): You deactivate the sensory apparatus of a machine, making it effectively blind until it can be repaired. You must either touch the target or strike it with a ranged attack (inflicting no damage). Action.

Blinding Attack (3 Speed points): If you have a source of light, you can use it to make a melee attack against a target. If successful, the attack deals no damage, but the target is blinded for one minute. Action.

Blink of an Eye (4 Speed points): You move up to 1,000 feet (300 m) in one round. Action.

Block (3 Speed points): You automatically block the next melee attack made against you within the next minute. Action to initiate.

Block for Another: If you use a light or medium weapon, you can block attacks made against an ally near you. Choose one creature within immediate range. You provide an asset to that creature's Speed defense tasks. You can't use [Quick Block](#) while using Block for Another. Enabler.

Blood Fever: When you have no points in one or two Pools, you gain an asset to attacks or defense rolls (your choice). Enabler.

Bloodlust (3 Might points): If you take down a foe, you can move a short distance, but only if you move toward another foe. You don't need to spend the points until you know that the first foe is down. Enabler.

Blurring Speed (7 Speed points): You move so quickly that until your next turn, you look like a blur. While you are blurred, if you apply Effort to a melee attack task or Speed defense task, you get a [free level of Effort](#) on that task; you can move a short distance as part of another action or a long distance as your entire action. Enabler.

Body Morph (3+ Intellect points): You alter your facial and bodily features and coloration for one hour, hiding your identity or impersonating someone. If you apply a level of Effort, you can imitate a specific person accurately enough to fool someone who knows them well or has observed them closely (including fingerprints and voice prints, but not their retina print or DNA). You have an asset in all tasks involving disguise (this is in addition to the asset from Face Morph). You must apply a separate level of Effort to be able to impersonate a different species (such as a human morphing into a humanoid alien). Action.

Bolt Rider (4 Intellect points): You can move a long distance from one location to another almost instantaneously, carried by a bolt of lightning. You must be able to see the new location, and there must be no intervening barriers. Action.

Bolts of Power (5+ Intellect points): You blast a fan of lightning out to short range in an arc that is approximately 50 feet (15 m) wide at the end. This discharge inflicts 4 points of damage. If you apply Effort to increase the damage rather than to ease the task, you deal 2 additional points of damage per level of Effort (instead of 3 points); targets in the area take 1 point of damage even if you fail the attack roll. Action.

Bolster Illusion (2+ Intellect points): You give one of your visual illusions a limited physical reality that viewers can smell, taste, hear, and feel. This effect is bound to that illusion and acts appropriate to the illusion itself. For example, it can make the illusion of a brick wall feel like brick, the illusion of a person smell like perfume and able to open a door, and the illusion of a fireplace hot to the touch.

The physical reality provided to your illusion is a level 1 effect with 3 health. If the illusion is used to make attacks, it inflicts only 1 point of damage (whether this is regular damage like an illusory punch or kick, or ambient damage like a falling brick wall or a fireplace's flames). You can increase the level of the created effect by applying levels of Effort to this ability, each level of Effort increasing the effect's level by 1.

You can activate this ability as part of the action to create an illusion (using whatever ability it is that you use to create illusions, such as Minor Illusion), or use a separate action to apply it to one of your existing illusions. The effect ends if the illusion is destroyed, you let the illusion lapse, the effect's health is reduced to 0, or ten minutes pass. Enabler.

Boost Manifest Cypher (2 Intellect points): The manifest cypher you activate with your next action functions as if it were 2 levels higher. Action.

Boost Manifest Cypher Function (4 Intellect points): Add 3 to the functioning level of a manifest cypher that you activate with your next action, or change one aspect of its parameters (range, duration, area, etc.) by up to double or down to one tenth. Action.

Bouncing Shield: When you use Throw Force Shield, instead of dissipating after one attack (whether it hits or misses), it will attack up to two additional targets within short range. Effort or other modifiers applied to the first attack affect all other targets as well. Whether you hit all, some, or none of your targets, the shield dissipates and then reforms in your grasp. (If you choose Bouncing Shield and have previously taken the [Throw Force Shield](#) ability, you have the option to exchange that ability for [Healing Pulse](#).) Enabler.

Bound Magic Creature: You have a level 3 magic ally bound to a physical object (perhaps a minor djinn bound to a lamp, a lesser demon bound to a coin, or a spirit bound to a mirror). The magic ally doesn't yet have the full power that one of its kind could possess when mature. Normally, the ally remains quiescent in its bound object. When you use an action to manifest it, it appears next to you as a creature that can converse with you. The creature has its own personality determined by the GM and is a level higher than its base level for one area of knowledge (such as local history). The GM determines whether the magic ally has a long-term goal of its own.

Each time the magic ally becomes physically manifest, it remains so for up to one hour. During that period, it accompanies you and follows your instructions. The magic ally must remain an immediate distance from you; if it moves farther away, it is yanked back into its object at the end of your following turn and cannot return until after your next ten-hour recovery roll. It doesn't attack creatures, but it can use its action to serve as an asset for any one attack you make on your turn. Otherwise, it can take actions on its own (though you'll likely roll for it).

If the creature is reduced to 0 health, it dissipates. It reforms in its object in $1d6 + 2$ days.

If you lose the bound object, you retain a sense of the direction in which it lies. Action to manifest the magic creature.

Brainwashing (6+ Intellect points): You use trickery, well-spoken lies, and mind-affecting chemicals (or other means, like magic or high technology) to make others temporarily do what you want them to do. You control the actions of another creature you touch. This effect lasts for one minute. The target must be level 3 or lower. You can allow it to act freely or override its control on a case-by-case basis as long as you can see it. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum level of the target or increase the duration by one minute. Thus, to control the mind of a level 6 target (three levels above the normal limit) or control a target for four minutes (three minutes above the normal duration), you must apply three levels of Effort. When the duration ends, the creature doesn't remember being controlled or anything it did while under your influence. Action to initiate.

Break the Line (4 Intellect points): You have an eye for group discipline and hierarchy, even among your foes. If a group of foes is gaining any kind of benefit from working together, you can attempt to disrupt that benefit

by pointing out the weak spot in the enemy's line, formation, or swarm attack. This effect lasts for up to a minute or until all the affected foes spend a round assessing and resetting themselves to regain their normal advantage. Action to initiate.

Break the Ranks (6 Speed points): You move up to a short distance and attack up to four different foes as a single action as long as they are all along your path. Any modifiers that apply to one attack apply to all the attacks you make. If you have another special ability that allows you to move and take an action, when you use Break the Ranks, you gain an asset to attacking these foes. Action.

Break Their Mind (7+ Intellect points): Using your clever words and knowledge of others, and given a couple of rounds of conversation to gain a few specific pieces of context regarding your target, you can utter a sentence designed to cause your target immediate psychological distress. If the target can hear and understand you, it suffers 6 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) and forgets the last day of its life, which might mean it forgets you and how it came to be where it currently is. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to attempt to break the mind of one additional target who can hear and understand you. Action to initiate, action to complete.

Breaker: You are trained in tasks related to damaging objects with the goal of breaking, piercing, or demolishing them. It is a Might action to damage an object, and on a success, the object moves one step down the [object damage track](#). If the Might roll exceeds the difficulty by two steps, the object instead moves two steps down the object damage track. If the Might roll exceeds the difficulty by four steps, the object moves three steps down the object damage track and is immediately destroyed. Brittle material reduces the effective level of the object, while hard material like wood or stone adds 1 to the effective level or 2 for very hard objects like those made of metal. Enabler.

Brute Strike (4 Might points): You deal 4 additional points of damage with all melee attacks until the end of the next round. Enabler.

Buddy System (3 Intellect points): Choose one character standing next to you. That character becomes your buddy for ten minutes. You are trained in all tasks involving finding, healing, interacting with, and protecting your buddy. Also, while you stand next to your buddy, both of you have an asset on Speed defense tasks. You can have only one buddy at a time. Action to initiate.

Built-in Weaponry: Biomechanical implants, a magical jewel fused to your forehead, or something just as wild now provides you with inherent weaponry. This allows you to fire a blast of energy up to long range that inflicts 5 points of damage. There is no cost for you to use this ability. Action.

Burning Light (3 Intellect points): You send a beam of light at a creature within long range and then tighten the beam until it burns, inflicting 5 points of damage. Action.

Burst of Escape (5 Speed points): You can take two separate actions this round, as long as one of them is to hide or to move in a direction that is not toward a foe. Enabler.

Bypass Barrier (6+ Intellect points): You get past a door, force field, or other barrier up to 3 feet (1 m) thick that is blocking your way. Depending on the barrier, this might involve finding a weak spot you can push through, pressing the right button by luck, just breaking through, or even weirder explanations like touching a thin place between dimensions or an unexpected interaction with your equipment. The difficulty of the task is the level of the barrier. This ability allows you alone to pass through, not anyone else, and the way through closes at the end of your turn (which might mean you're trapped on the far side). You have an asset in any attempts to get through it again. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum thickness of the barrier, each level adding 3 feet (1 m). Action.

Abilities—C

Call Dead Spirit (6 Intellect points): At your touch, the remains of a creature dead no longer than seven days appears as a manifest (and apparently physical) spirit, whose level is the same as it had in life. The raised spirit persists for up to a day (or less, if it accomplishes something important to it before then), after which it fades away and cannot return again.

The raised spirit remembers everything it knew in life and possesses most of its previous abilities (though not necessarily its equipment). In addition, it gains the ability to become insubstantial as an action for up to a minute at a time. The raised spirit is not beholden to you, and it does not need to stay near you to remain manifest. Action to initiate.

Call in Favor (4 Intellect points): A guard, doctor, technician, or hired thug in the employ of or allied with a foe is secretly your ally or owes you a favor. When you call in the favor, the target does what they can to help you out of a specific fix (unties you, slips you a knife, leaves a cell door unlocked) in a way that minimizes their risk of revealing their divided loyalties to their employer or other allies. This ability is a difficulty 3 Intellect task. Each additional time you use this ability, the task is hindered by an additional step. The difficulty returns to 3 after you rest for ten hours. Action.

Call Otherworldly Spirit (6 Intellect points): You summon a spirit creature that manifests for up to a day (or less, if it accomplishes something important to it before then), after which it fades away and cannot be summoned again. The spirit is a creature of level 6 or lower, and it can be substantial or insubstantial as it wishes (using an action to change). The spirit is not beholden to you, and it does not need to stay near you to remain manifest. Action to initiate.

Call the Storm (7+ Intellect points): If you are outside or in a location that has a ceiling at least 300 feet (90 m) above the floor, you summon a boiling layer of lightning-lit, rumbling clouds up to 1,500 feet (460 m) in diameter for ten minutes. During daylight hours, natural illumination beneath the storm is reduced to dim light. While the storm rages, you can use an action to send a lightning bolt from the cloud to attack a target you can see directly, inflicting 4 points of damage (you can spend Effort normally on each individual lightning bolt attack). Three actions to initiate; action to call down a lightning strike.

Call Swarm (4 Intellect points): If you're in a location where it's possible for the creatures from your [Influence Swarm](#) ability to come, you call a swarm of them for one hour. During this hour, they do as you telepathically command as long as they are within long range. They can swarm about and hinder any or all opponents' tasks. While the creatures are in long range, you can speak to them telepathically and perceive through their senses. Action to initiate.

Call Through Time (6+ Intellect points): You call a creature or person of up to level 3 from the recent past, and it appears next to you. You can choose a creature that you've previously encountered (even if it is now dead), or (no more than once per day) you can allow the GM to determine the creature randomly. If you call a random creature, it has a 10 percent chance of being a creature of up to level 5. The creature has no memory of anything before being called by you, though it can speak and has the general knowledge a creature of its type should possess. The time-shifted creature does your bidding for as long as you concentrate on it, but you must use your action each turn to direct it; otherwise it returns to the past.

In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to call a more powerful creature; each level of Effort used in this way increases the creature's level by 1. For example, applying one level of Effort calls a specific creature of up to level 4 or a random creature with a 10 percent chance of being up to level 6. Action.

Calm (3 Intellect points): Through jokes, song, or other art, you prevent a living foe from attacking anyone or anything for one round. Action.

Calm Stranger (2+ Intellect points): You can cause one intelligent creature to remain calm as you speak. The creature doesn't need to speak your language, but it must be able to see you. It remains calm as long as you

focus all your attention on it and it is not attacked or otherwise threatened. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to calm additional creatures allied with your initial target, one additional creature per level of Effort applied. Action.

Capable Warrior: Your attacks deal 1 additional point of damage. Enabler.

Captivate or Inspire: You can use this ability in one of two ways. Either your words keep the attention of all NPCs that hear them for as long as you speak, or your words inspire all NPCs that hear them to function as if they were one level higher for the next hour. In either case, you choose which NPCs are affected. If anyone in the crowd is attacked while you're trying to speak to them, you lose the crowd's attention. Action to initiate.

Captivate With Starshine: For as long as you speak, you keep the attention of all level 2 or lower NPCs who can hear you. If you also have the [Enthrall](#) ability, you can similarly captivate all level 3 NPCs. Action to initiate.

Car Surfer: You can stand or move about on a moving vehicle (such as on the hood, on the roof, in the open door well, etc.) with a reasonable expectation of not falling off. Unless the vehicle veers sharply, stops suddenly, or otherwise engages in extreme maneuvers, standing or moving about on a moving vehicle is a routine task for you. If the vehicle engages in extreme maneuvers like those described, any tasks to remain on the vehicle's surface are eased. Enabler.

Careful Aim: You are trained in attacks with all weapons that you throw. Enabler.

Careful Shot: You can spend points from either your Speed Pool or your Intellect Pool to apply levels of Effort to increase your gun damage. Each level of Effort adds 3 points of damage to a successful attack, and if you spend a turn lining up your shot, each level of Effort instead adds 5 points of damage to a successful attack. Enabler.

Cast Illusion: You can increase the range at which you create and maintain your immediate-range illusions (such as from [Minor Illusion](#)) to anywhere within short range that you can perceive. Enabler.

Castigate (4 Intellect points): You intimidate any opponent within long range who understands speech (even if it is not your language) so much that they lose their next action and all the rest of their actions are hindered for one minute. Each additional time you attempt this ability against the same target, you must apply one more level of Effort than you applied on the previous attempt. Action.

Celebrity Talent: You are trained in two of the following areas: writing, journalism, a particular style of art, a particular sport, chess, science communication, acting, news presentation, or some related noncombat skill that led to your celebrity. Enabler.

Center of Attention (5 Intellect points): A literal (or metaphorical, depending on the genre) beam of pure radiance descends from on high and spotlights you. All creatures you choose within immediate range fall to their knees and lose their next action. Affected targets cannot defend themselves and are treated as helpless. Action.

Chamber of Dreams (8 Intellect points): You and your allies can step into a chamber of dreams, decorated as you wish, that contains a number of doors. The doors correspond with other locations that you have visited or know reasonably well. Stepping through one of the doors delivers you to the desired location. This is a difficulty 2 Intellect-based task (which could be modified upward by the GM if the location is warded). Action to step into chamber of dreams; action to move through a door in the chamber.

Change the Paradigm (6+ Intellect points): You sway the worldview of a creature you spend at least one round speaking to, as long as it can understand you. The creature changes its mind on a significant belief, which could include something as straightforward as helping you instead of trying to kill you, or it could be something more esoteric. This effect lasts for at least ten minutes, but it can last longer if the creature wasn't previously your foe. During this time, the creature takes actions in accordance with the wisdom you have

imparted to it. The target must be level 2 or lower. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum level of the target by one for each level of Effort applied. Action to initiate.

Charge (1+ Intellect points): You can charge an [artifact](#) or other device (except a [cypher](#)) so that it can be used once. The cost is 1 Intellect point plus 1 point per level of the device. Action.

Charge Weapon (2+ Intellect points): As part of making an attack with your enchanted weapon, you charge it with magical power, inflicting 2 additional points of energy damage. If you make more than one attack on your turn, you choose whether to spend the cost for this ability before you make each attack. Enabler.

Charging Horde (7 Might points): You and two or more of your [followers](#) next to you can act like a single creature to make a charge attack. When you do, all of you move up to a short distance, during which time you can attack anything that comes within immediate range along your path with an asset to the attack. Targets that take damage take an additional 3 points and are knocked prone. Action.

Charm Machine (2 Intellect points): You convince an unintelligent machine to “like” you. A machine that likes you is 50 percent less likely to function if said function would cause you harm. Thus, if a foe attempts to detonate a bomb near you controlled by a detonator that likes you, there is a 50 percent chance that it won’t explode. Action to initiate.

Cloak of Opportunity (5 Intellect points): You set small objects from the environment (rocks, broken items, clumps of dirt, and so on) swirling about you for up to ten minutes, which grants you +2 Armor. Action to initiate.

Closed Mind: You are trained in Intellect defense tasks and have +2 Armor against damage that selectively targets your Intellect Pool (which normally ignores Armor). Enabler.

Cloud Personal Memories (3 Intellect points): If you interact with or study a target for at least a round, you gain a sense of how its mind works, which you can use against it in the most blunt fashion possible. You can attempt to confuse it and make it forget what’s just happened. On a success, you erase up to the last five minutes of its memory. Action to prepare; action to initiate.

Coaxing Power (2 Intellect points): You boost the power or function of a machine so that it operates at one level higher than normal for one hour. Action to initiate.

Cognizant Offense: During combat, your brain shifts into a sort of battle mode where all potential attacks you could make are plotted on vector graphs in your mind’s eye, which always provides the best option. Your attacks are eased. Enabler.

Cold Burst (5+ Intellect points): You emit a burst of cold in all directions, up to short range. All within the burst (except you) take 5 points of damage. If you apply Effort to increase the damage rather than to ease the task, you deal 2 additional points of damage per level of Effort (instead of 3 points); targets in the area take 1 point of damage even if you fail the attack roll. Action.

Colossal: When you use [Enlarge](#), you can choose to grow up to a base height of 60 feet (18 m). When you do, you add 5 more temporary points to your Might Pool (plus any from [Gargantuan](#) and [Bigger](#)), and you deal an additional 2 points of damage with melee attacks (plus any from your [Huge](#) ability). For each level of Effort you apply to increase your height further, your total height increases by 10 feet (3 m), and you add 1 more point to your Might Pool. Thus, the first time you use [Enlarge](#) after a ten-hour recovery roll, if you apply two levels of Effort, your base height is 80 feet (24 m), and you add a total of 17 temporary points to your Might Pool. Enabler.

Combat Challenge: All attempted tasks that draw an attack to yourself (and away from someone else) are eased by two steps. Enabler.

Combat Prowess: You add +1 damage to one type of weapon attack of your choice: melee weapon attacks or ranged weapon attacks. Enabler.

Command (3 Intellect points): Through sheer force of will, you can issue a simple imperative command to a single living creature, who then attempts to carry out your command as its next action. The creature must be within short range and able to understand you. The command can't inflict direct harm on the creature or its allies, so "Commit suicide" won't work, but "Flee" might. In addition, the command can require the creature to take only one action, so "Unlock the door" might work, but "Unlock the door and run through it" won't. A commanded creature can still defend itself normally and return an attack if one is made on it. If you possess another ability that allows you to command a creature, you can target two creatures at once as your base effect if you use either ability. Action.

Command Beast (3+ Intellect points): You can command a nonhostile, nonhuman beast (such as one that you've made calm with *Soothe the Savage*) of up to level 3 within short range. If you are successful, for the next minute the beast follows your verbal commands to the best of its understanding and ability. The GM has final say over what counts as a nonhuman beast, but unless some kind of deception is at work, you should know whether you can affect a creature before you attempt to use this ability on it. Aliens, extradimensional entities, very intelligent creatures, and robots never count.

In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum level of the target. Thus, to command a level 5 beast (two levels above the normal limit), you must apply two levels of Effort. Action to initiate.

Command Machine (4 Intellect points): If you've charmed an unintelligent machine or have spoken telepathically with an intelligent machine, you can attempt to command it to take one action within its capabilities on its next turn. (If you use this ability to command an intelligent machine, it likely becomes hostile to you afterward.) Action.

Command Metal (5 Intellect points): You reshape a metallic item as you desire. The item must be within sight and within short range, and its mass can be no greater than your own. You can affect multiple items at once as long as their combined mass falls within these limits. You can fuse multiple items together. You can use this power to destroy a metal object (as the *Destroy Metal* ability), or you can craft it into another desired shape (crudely, unless you have the proper crafting skills). You can then move the new object anywhere within range. For example, you could take a few metal shields, fuse them together, and use the resulting shape to block a doorway. You can use this ability to make an attack—causing a foe's armor to constrict, rendering a metal item into shards that you fling across the battlefield, and so on—against one target within short range. Regardless of the form of the attack, it is an Intellect action that deals 7 points of damage. Action.

Command Spirit (3 Intellect points): You can command a spirit or animated dead creature of up to level 5 within short range. If you are successful, the target cannot attack you for one minute, during which time it follows your verbal commands if it can hear and understand you. Action to initiate.

Communication (2 Intellect points): You can convey a basic concept to a creature that normally can't speak or understand speech. The creature can also give you a very basic answer to a simple question. Action.

Community Activist: When speaking to others in a community you have a strong connection to, you are trained in persuasion and intimidation tasks about topics that directly relate to the community. Enabler.

Community Knowledge (2 Intellect points): If you've invested yourself in a community and have spent at least a few months living there, you can learn things about it through a variety of methods. Sometimes contacts slip the information to you. Other times, you're able to draw conclusions simply by what you can see and hear. When you use this ability, you can ask the GM one question about the community and get a very short answer. Action.

Computer Programming: You are trained in using (and exploiting) computer software, you know one or more computer languages well enough to write basic programs, and you are fluent in internet protocol. Enabler.

Concussion (7 Intellect points): You cause a pulse of concussive force to explode out from a point you choose within long range. The pulse extends up to short range in all directions, dealing 5 points of damage to everything in the area. Even if you fail the attack roll, targets in the area take 1 point of damage. Action.

Concussive Blast (2 Intellect points): You release a beam of pure force that smashes into a creature within short range, inflicting 5 points of damage and moving it back an immediate distance. Action.

Confidence Artist: When you're hacking into a computer system, running a con, picking a pocket, fooling or tricking a dupe, sneaking something by a guard, and so on, you gain an asset on the task. Enabler.

Confounding Banter (4 Intellect points): You spew a stream of nonsense to distract a foe within immediate range. On a successful Intellect roll, your defense roll against the creature's next attack before the end of the next round is eased. Action.

Confuse Enemy (4 Intellect points): Through a clever bit of misdirection involving a flourish of your coat, ducking at just the right moment, or a similar stratagem, you can attempt to redirect a physical melee attack that would otherwise hit you. When you do, the misdirected attack hits another creature you choose within immediate range of both you and the attacking foe. This ability is a difficulty 2 Intellect task. Enabler.

Conjuration (7 Intellect points): You produce, as if from thin air, a level 5 creature of a kind you have previously encountered. The creature remains for one minute and then returns home. While present, the creature acts as you direct, but this requires no action on your part. Action.

Connected: You know people who get things done—not just respected people in positions of authority, but also a variety of online hackers and regular street criminals. These people are not necessarily your friends and might not be trustworthy, but they owe you a favor. You and the GM should work out the details of your contacts. Enabler.

Contortionist (2 Speed points): You can wriggle free from bindings or squeeze through a tight spot. You are trained in escaping. When you use an action to escape or move through a tight area, you can immediately use another action. You may use this action only to move. Enabler.

Control the Field (1 Might point): This melee attack inflicts 1 less point of damage than normal, and regardless of whether you hit the target, you maneuver it into a position you desire within immediate range. Action.

Control Machine (6 Intellect points): You can attempt to control the functions of any machine, intelligent or otherwise, within short range for ten minutes. Action.

Control the Savage (6 Intellect points): You can control a calm nonhuman beast within 30 feet (9 m). You control it for as long as you focus all your attention on it, using your turn each round. The GM has final say over what counts as a nonhuman beast, but unless some kind of deception is at work, you should know whether you can affect a creature before you attempt to use this ability on it. Aliens, extradimensional entities, very intelligent creatures, and robots never count. Action.

Control Swarm (2 Intellect points): Your swarm creatures from your [Influence Swarm](#) ability within short range do as you telepathically command for ten minutes. Even common insects (level 0) in large enough numbers can swarm about a single creature and hinder its tasks. Action to initiate.

Control Weather (10 Intellect points): You change the weather in your general region. If performed indoors, this creates minor effects, such as mist, mild temperature changes, and so on. If performed outside, you can create rain, fog, snow, wind, or any other kind of normal (not overly severe) weather. The change lasts for a natural length of time so that a storm might last for an hour, fog for two or three hours, and snow for a few hours (or for ten minutes if it's out of season). For the first ten minutes after activating this ability, you can

create more dramatic and specific effects, such as lightning strikes, giant hailstones, twisters, hurricane-force winds, and so on. These effects must occur within 1,000 feet (300 m) of your location. You must spend your turn concentrating to create an effect or maintain it in a new round. These effects inflict 6 points of damage each round. If you have this ability from another source, the cost for the ability is 7 Intellect points instead of 10. If you already have the [Storm Seed](#) ability, you can immediately replace it with a new ability of the same tier. Action to initiate.

Controlled Change: You can try to use your [Beast Form](#) ability to change into your beast form on any night you wish (a difficulty 3 Intellect task). Any transformations you make using this power are in addition to the five nights per month that you change involuntarily. Action to change.

Controlled Fall: When you fall while you are able to use actions and within reach of a vertical surface, you can attempt to slow your fall. Make a Speed roll with a difficulty of 1 for every 20 feet (6 m) you fall. On a success, you take half damage from the fall. If you reduce the difficulty to 0, you take no damage. Enabler.

Coordinated Effort (3 Intellect points): When you and the duplicate from your [Duplicate](#) ability would attack the same creature, you can choose to make one attack roll with an asset. If you hit, you inflict damage with both attacks and treat the attacks as if they were one attack for the purpose of subtracting Armor from the damage. Action.

Copy Power (2+ Intellect points): You can copy someone else's superpower for an hour, performing it as if it were natural for you. Within the past hour you must have touched the creature whose power you want to copy (an attack roll) and must have seen that ability used by them. Choose the power you want to copy, and the GM chooses an appropriate low-tier ability that most closely resembles that power. For example, if you're battling a supervillain who can create blasts of force, if you copy that ability, you gain a low-tier ability that creates a blast of force.

In addition to the point cost of Copy Power, you must pay the Might, Speed, or Intellect cost (if any) of the equivalent ability that the GM chose. For example, if you want to copy a supervillain's force blast, the GM will probably decide that's equivalent to Onslaught (167), so you'd pay 2 Intellect points to activate Copy Power and 1 Intellect point to use Onslaught.

You can copy only one power at a time; copying another one ends any other power you're copying with this ability.

Copy Power doesn't copy effects of a power that permanently adds points to your Pools, such as Enhanced Body (134).

In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to copy an ability you saw longer than one hour ago; each level of Effort used in this way extends the time period by one hour. Action.

Counter Danger (4 Intellect points): You negate a source of potential danger related to one creature or object within immediate distance for one minute (instead of one round, as with [Foil Danger](#)). This could be a weapon or device held by someone, a creature's natural ability, or a trap triggered by a pressure plate. You can also try to counter an action (like moving or making a conventional mundane attack with a weapon, a claw, etc.). Action. (Using Counter Danger is usually a matter of the character applying quick thinking in the face of immediate danger. The ability doesn't rely on supernatural means, but rather a practical act.)

Countermeasures (4 Intellect points): You immediately end one ongoing effect (such as an effect created by a character ability) within immediate range. Alternatively, you can use this as a defense action to cancel any incoming ability targeted at you, or you can cancel any device or the effect of any device for 1d6 rounds. You must touch the effect or device to cancel it. Action.

Courageous: You are trained in Intellect defense tasks and initiative tasks. Enabler.

Crafter: You are trained in the crafting of two kinds of items. Enabler.

Create (7 Intellect points): You create something from nothing. You can create any item you choose that would ordinarily have a difficulty of 5 or lower (using the [crafting](#) rules). Once created, the item lasts for a number of hours equal to 6 minus the difficulty to create it. Thus, if you create a set of sturdy manacles (difficulty 5), it would last for one hour. Action.

Create Deadly Poison (3+ Intellect points): You create one dose of a level 2 poison that either inflicts 5 points of damage or hinders the poisoned creature's actions for ten minutes (your choice each time you create the poison). You can apply this poison to a weapon, food, or drink as part of the action of creating it. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the level of the poison; each level of Effort used in this way increases the poison level by 1. If unused, the poison loses its potency after one hour. Action.

Create Water (2 Intellect points): You cause water to bubble up from a spot on the ground you can see. The water flows from that spot for one minute, creating about 1 gallon (4 liters) by the time it stops. Action to initiate.

Creature Insight (3 Intellect points): When examining any nonhuman creature, you can ask the GM one question to gain an idea of its level, its capabilities, what it eats, what motivates it, what its weaknesses are (if any), how it can be repaired, or any other similar query. This is for difficult or strange creatures beyond those readily identified by using skills. Action.

Critter Companion: A level 1 creature accompanies you and follows your instructions. This creature is no larger than a large cat (about 20 pounds, or 9 kg) and is normally some sort of domesticated species. You and the GM must work out the details of your creature, and you'll probably make rolls for it in combat or when it takes actions. The critter companion acts on your turn. As a level 1 creature, it has a target number of 3 and 3 health, and it inflicts 1 point of damage. Its movement is based on its creature type (avian, swimmer, and so on). If your critter companion dies, you can search an urban or wild environment for 1d6 days to find a new one. Enabler.

Crowd Control (6+ Intellect points): You control the actions of up to five creatures in short range. This effect lasts for one minute. All targets must be level 2 or lower. Your control is limited to simple verbal commands like "Stop," "Run away," "Follow that guard," "Look over there," or "Get out of my way." All affected creatures respond to the command unless you specifically command them otherwise. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum level of the targets or affect an additional five people. Thus, to control a group that has a level 4 target (two levels above the normal limit) or a group of fifteen people, you must apply two levels of Effort. When the Crowd Control ability ends, the creatures remember your commands but don't remember being controlled—your commands seemed reasonable at the time. Action to initiate.

Crushing Blow (2 Might points): When you use a bashing or bladed weapon in both hands and apply Effort on the attack, you get a [free level of Effort](#) on the damage. (If fighting unarmed, this attack is made with both fists or both feet together.) Action.

Crystal Lens: You can focus the inherent energy surging through you from your Crystalline Body ability. This allows you to fire a blast of energy that inflicts 5 points of damage on a target within very long range. Action.

Crystalline Body: You are composed of animate, translucent crystal the color of amber. Work with your GM to decide your exact form, though it is likely about the shape and size of a humanoid. Your crystal body grants you +2 to Armor and +4 to your Might Pool. However, you're not quick and your Speed defense tasks are hindered. Certain conditions, like mundane diseases and poisons, do not affect you. Your crystalline body repairs itself more slowly than a body of living flesh would. You have only the one-round, one-hour, and ten-hour recovery rolls available each day; you do not have a ten-minute recovery roll available. Any ability you have that requires a ten-minute recovery roll instead requires a one-hour recovery roll. Enabler.

Curious: You're always curious about your surroundings, even on a subconscious level. Whenever you use Effort to attempt navigation, perception, or initiative tasks in an area that you've only rarely or never visited before, you can apply an additional free level of Effort. Enabler.

Cutting Light (2 Intellect points): You emit a thin beam of energized light from your hand. This inflicts 5 points of damage to a single foe in immediate range. The beam is even more effective against immobile, nonliving targets, slicing up to 1 foot (30 cm) of any material that is level 6 or lower. The material can be up to 1 foot thick. Action.

Cypher Casting: You can cast any of your subtle cyphers on another creature instead of yourself. You must touch the creature to affect it. Enabler.

Cypher Surge: When you use a subtle cypher spell, as part of that action you can expend one other subtle cypher. Instead of the second cypher's normal effect, you add one free level of Effort to the first cypher spell. Enabler.

Cyphersmith: All manifest cyphers you use function at one level higher than normal. If given a week and the right tools, chemicals, and parts, you can tinker with one of your manifest cyphers, transforming it into another cypher of the same type that you had in the past. The GM and player should collaborate to ensure that the transformation is logical—for example, you probably can't transform a pill into a helmet. Enabler.

Abilities—D

Damage Dealer: You inflict an additional 3 points of damage with your chosen weapon. Enabler.

Damage Transference: When you or your duplicate (from the [Duplicate](#) ability) would take damage, you can transfer 1 point of damage from one to the other provided that you and your duplicate are within 1 mile (1.5 km) of each other. Enabler.

Damn the Guilty (3 Intellect points): You speak words of revelation and judgment to everyone within close range. Those whom you have designated as guilty with your [Designation](#) ability take an additional 3 points of damage from any attack they receive from anyone who heard your judgment. This judgment lasts for up to one minute or until they move at least a long distance away from you. Action.

Danger Instinct (3 Speed points): If you are attacked by [surprise](#), whether by a creature, a device, or simply an environmental hazard (a tree falling on you), you can move an immediate distance before the attack occurs. If moving prevents the attack, you are safe. If the attack can still potentially affect you—if the attacking creature can move to keep pace, if the attack fills an area too big to escape, etc. —the ability offers no benefit. Enabler.

Danger Sense (1 Speed point): Your [initiative](#) task is eased. You pay the cost each time the ability is used. Enabler.

Dark Explorer: You ignore penalties for any action (including fighting) in extremely dim light or in cramped spaces. If you also have the [Eyes Adjusted](#) ability, you can act without penalty even in total darkness. You are trained in sneaking tasks while in dim or no light. Enabler.

Dark Matter Shell (5 Intellect points): For the next minute, you cover yourself with a shell of dark matter. Your appearance becomes a dark silhouette, and you gain an asset to sneaking tasks and gain +1 to your Armor. The dark matter shell works seamlessly with your desires, and if you apply a level of Effort to any physical task while the shell persists, you can apply an additional [free level of Effort](#) to that same task. Action to initiate.

Dark Matter Shroud (4 Intellect points): Ribbons of dark matter condense and swirl about you for up to one minute. This shroud eases your Speed defense tasks, inflicts 2 points of damage to anyone who tries to touch you or strike you with a melee attack, and gives you +1 Armor. Action to initiate.

Dark Matter Strike (4 Intellect points): When you attack a foe within long range, dark matter condenses around your target and entangles its limbs, holding it in place and easing your attack by two steps. The ability works for whatever kind of attack you use (melee, ranged, energy, and so on). Enabler.

Dark Matter Structure (5 Intellect points): You can form dark matter into a large structure consisting of up to ten 10-foot (3 m) cubes. The structure can be somewhat complex, though everything has the same matte black color from which no light shines. Otherwise, the structure can possess different densities, textures, and capacities. This means it can include windows, doors with locks, furnishings, and even decor, as long as it is all black as pitch. For example, you could shape the dark matter into a large, defensible structure; a sturdy 100-foot (30 m) bridge; or anything similar. The structure is a level 6 creation and lasts for 24 hours. You can't keep more than one such structure solid at any one time. Action.

Datajack (1 Intellect point): With computer access, you jack in instantly and learn a bit more about something you can see. You get an asset on a task involving that person or object. Action.

Daydream (4 Intellect points): You pull someone into a daydream, substituting a dream of your own creation for the target's reality for up to one minute. You can affect a target within long range that you can see, or a target within 10 miles (16 km) that you have hair or skin clippings from. To all outward appearances, an affected target stands (or lies) unmoving. But inside, the substituted reality (or dream within a dream, if the target was sleeping) is what the target experiences. If the target is under duress, it can attempt another Intellect defense roll each round to break free, though the target may not realize its state. Either the dream unfolds according to a script you prepared when you used this ability, or if you use your own actions (forcing you into a similar state as the target), you can direct the unfolding dream from round to round. Using this ability on a sleeping target eases the initial attack. Action to initiate; if you direct the dream, action to direct per round.

Dazing Attack (3 Might points): You hit your foe in just the right spot, dazing them so that tasks they attempt on their next turn are hindered. This attack inflicts normal damage. Action.

Dazzling Sunburst (2 Intellect points): You send a barrage of dazzling colors at a creature within short range and, if successful, inflict 2 points of damage on the target. In addition, the creature's attacks are hindered on its next turn, unless the target relies primarily on senses other than sight. Action.

Deactivate Mechanisms (5+ Speed points): You make a melee attack that inflicts no damage against a machine. Instead, if the attack hits, make a second Speed-based roll. If successful, a machine of level 3 or lower is deactivated for one minute. For each additional level of Effort applied, you can affect one higher level of machine or you can extend the duration for an additional minute. If you have the [Scramble Machine](#) or [Disable Mechanisms](#) ability (or an ability that works similarly), when you apply a level of Effort to any of them, you gain an additional free level of Effort. Action.

Deadly Aim (3 Speed points): For the next minute, all ranged attacks you make inflict 2 additional points of damage. Action to initiate.

Deadly Strike (5 Might points): If you strike a foe of level 3 or lower with a weapon you're practiced with, you kill the target instantly. Action.

Deadly Swarm (6 Intellect points): If you're in a location where it's possible for your swarm of creatures from your [Influence Swarm](#) ability to come, you call a swarm of them for ten minutes. During this time, they do as you telepathically command as long as they are within long range. They can swarm about and hinder any or all opponents' tasks, or they can focus the swarm and attack all opponents within immediate range of each other (all within long range of you). The attacking swarm inflicts 4 points of damage. While the creatures are in long range, you can speak to them telepathically and perceive through their senses. Action to initiate. (Swarms don't usually have game stats, but if needed, a typical swarm is level 2. Only attacks that affect a large area affect the swarm.)

Death Touch (6 Intellect points): You gather disrupting energy in your fingertip and touch a creature. If the target is an NPC or a creature of level 3 or lower, it dies. If the target is a PC of any tier, they move down one step on the [damage track](#). Action.

Debate (3 Intellect points): In any gathering of two or more people trying to establish the truth or come to a decision, you can sway the verdict with masterful rhetoric. If you are given one minute or more to argue your point, either the decision goes your way or, if someone else effectively argues a competing point, any associated persuasion or deception task is eased by two steps. Action to initiate; one minute to complete.

Debilitating Strike (4 Speed points): You make an attack to deliver a painful or debilitating strike. The attack is hindered. If it hits, the creature takes 2 additional points of damage at the end of the next round, and its attacks are hindered until the end of the next round. Action.

Decipher (1 Intellect point): If you spend one minute examining a piece of writing or code in a language you do not understand, you can make an Intellect roll of difficulty 3 (or higher, based on the complexity of the language or code) to get the gist of the message. Action to initiate.

Deep Consideration (6 Intellect points): When you develop a plan that involves you and your friends working together to accomplish a goal, you can ask the GM one very general question about what is likely to happen if you carry out the plan, and you will get a simple, brief answer. In addition, all of you gain an asset to one roll related to enacting the plan you developed together, as long as you put the plan into action within a few days of the plan's creation. Action.

Deep Reserves: When others are exhausted, you can push through. Once each day, you can transfer up to 5 points among your Pools in any combination, at a rate of 1 point per round. For example, you could transfer 3 points of Might to Speed and 2 points of Intellect to Speed, which would take a total of five rounds. Action.

Deep Resources: You gain an additional 6 points to your Speed Pool. Enabler.

Deep Water Guide: While underwater, any creature you choose that can see you has an asset on swimming tasks. Enabler.

Defend All the Innocent: You protect everyone within immediate range whom you have designated as innocent with your Designation ability. Speed defense rolls made by such creatures gain an asset. Enabler.

Defend the Innocent (2 Speed points): For the next ten minutes, if someone you have designated as innocent with the [Designation](#) ability stands next to you, that creature shares any defensive advantages that you might have, other than mundane armor. These advantages include the Speed defense from your shield, the Armor offered from a force field, and so on. In addition, Speed defense rolls made by the innocent creature gain an asset. You can protect only one innocent creature at a time. Action to initiate.

Defending Weapon: When using your enchanted weapon, you are trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

Defense Against Robots: You have studied your enemy and are trained in anticipating the actions that a robot or machine is likely to take in a fight. Defense tasks you attempt against these foes are eased. Enabler.

Defense Master: Every time you succeed at a Speed defense task, you can make an immediate attack against your foe. (If you have [Dodge and Respond](#), you can exchange that ability for [Dodge and Resist](#).) Your attack must be the same type (melee weapon, ranged weapon, or unarmed) as the attack you defend against. If you don't have an appropriate type of weapon ready, you can't use this ability. Enabler.

Defensive Augmentation: By upgrading your nervous and immune systems, you are trained in Might defense and Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

Defensive Blinking (4 Intellect points): You enter a heightened reactive state so that when you are struck hard enough to take damage, you teleport an immediate distance in a random direction (not up or down) to help evade the brunt of the attack. Your Speed defense rolls are eased for one minute. Action.

Defensive Field: Thanks to subdermal implants, a permanent spell, alien modifications, or something similar, you now have a force field that radiates 1 inch (2.5 cm) from your body and provides you with +2 Armor. Enabler.

Defensive Phasing (2 Intellect points): You can change your phase so that some attacks pass through you harmlessly. For the next ten minutes, you gain an asset to your Speed defense tasks, but during this time you lose any benefit from armor you wear. Action to initiate.

Define Down (4 Intellect points): The natural gravity within an area a short distance across that you are within immediate range of changes directions so that it flows in the direction you determine (up, up and to the south, west, and so on) for a few seconds, then snaps back. Affected targets could be tossed up to 20 feet (6 m) and take a few points of damage. Action.

Deflect Attacks (1 Intellect point): Using your mind, you protect yourself from incoming attacks. For the next ten minutes, you are trained in Speed defense tasks. Action to initiate.

Defuse Situation: During the course of an investigation, your questions sometimes elicit an angry or even violent response. Through dissembling, verbal distraction, or similar evasion, you prevent a living foe from attacking anyone or anything for one round. Action.

Demeanor of Command (2 Intellect points): You project confidence, knowledge, and charisma to all who see you for the next hour. Your demeanor is such that those who see you automatically understand that you are someone important, accomplished, and with authority. When you speak, strangers who are not already attacking give you at least a round to have your say. If speaking to a group that can understand you, you can attempt to have them produce their leader or ask that they take you to their leader. You gain a **free level of Effort** that can be applied to one persuasion task you attempt during this period. Action to initiate.

Designation: You assign an innocent or guilty label to one creature within immediate range, based on your assessment of a given situation or a predominant feeling. In other words, someone who is labeled innocent can be innocent in a certain circumstance, or they can be generally innocent of terrible crimes (such as murder, major theft, and so on). Likewise, you can declare that a creature is guilty of a particular crime or of terrible deeds in general. The accuracy of your assessment isn't important as long as you believe it to be the truth; the GM may require you to give a rationale. Henceforth, your tasks to socially interact with someone you designate as innocent gain an asset, and your attacks against those you designate as guilty gain an asset. You can change your assessment, but it requires another designation action. The benefits of the designation last until you change it or until you are shown proof that it is wrong. Action. (The benefits provided by Designation apply to the character using the ability, their allies, and anyone who hears or is told of their judgment and believes their assessment.)

Destined for Greatness: You enjoy uncanny luck as if something was watching over you and keeping you from harm. When you would otherwise descend a step on the [damage track](#), make an Intellect defense roll versus the difficulty set by the level of the foe or effect. If you succeed, you do not descend that step. If the step was because you fell to 0 points in a Pool, you are still at 0 points; you just don't suffer the negative effects of being impaired or debilitated. If you would otherwise descend the final step on the damage track to death, a successful defense roll keeps you at 1 point in one Pool, and you remain debilitated. Enabler.

Destroy Metal (3 Intellect points): You instantly tear, rip, or burst a metal object that is within sight, within short range, and no bigger than half your size. Attempt an Intellect task to destroy the object; the task is eased by three steps compared to breaking it with brute strength. Action.

Destroyer (6 Might points): If you succeed on a Might task to damage an object, instead of descending one step on the [object damage track](#), the object descends all three steps and is destroyed. Action.

Detect Life (3+ Might points): You consciously send out a pulse of your life energy. You detect all living creatures within short range, even if they are behind cover, though not if they're behind a force field. When

you detect a creature, you detect its general location (to within an immediate range). If you apply two additional levels of Effort, you can increase the range of detection to long. Action.

Device Insight (3 Intellect points): When examining any unknown, alien, or high-technology device, you can ask the GM one question to gain an idea of its capabilities, how it functions, how it can be activated or deactivated, what its weaknesses are (if any), how it can be repaired, or any other similar query. This is for difficult or strange things beyond those readily identified by using the appropriate knowledge or technical skill. Action.

Devoted Defender (2 Might or Intellect points): Choose one character you can see. That character becomes your ward. You are trained in all tasks involving finding, healing, interacting with, and protecting that character. You can have only one ward at a time. Action to initiate.

Diamagnetism: You magnetize any nonmetallic object within short range so that it can be affected by your other magnetic powers. Thus, with [Move Metal](#), you can move any object. With [Repel Metal](#), you are trained in all Speed defense tasks, regardless of whether the incoming attack uses metal. And so on. Enabler.

Dimensional Squeeze (2+ Intellect points): You cram yourself into a transitional dimension, allowing you to instantaneously appear anywhere you choose within short range if you have a clear and unobstructed path to that location. You can pass through an intervening barrier if it has an open space that you could easily fit your head through—about 1 square foot (30 cm by 30 cm square). In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to pass through a smaller opening in a barrier; each level of Effort used in this way reduces the minimum opening size by one-fourth. You land safely when you use this ability. Action.

Transitional dimension: A dimension where distances are shorter compared to those in other dimensions, so travel through it is faster than normal movement.

Dirty Fighter (2 Speed points): You distract, blind, annoy, hamper, or otherwise interfere with a foe, hindering their attacks and defenses for one minute. Action.

Disable Mechanisms (3 Speed points): With a keen eye and quick moves, you disrupt some functions of a robot or machine and inflict upon it one of the following maladies:

All its tasks are hindered for one minute.

Its speed is halved.

It can take no action for one round.

It deals 2 fewer points of damage (minimum 1 point) for one minute.

You must touch the robot or machine to disrupt it (if you are making an attack, it inflicts no damage). Action.

Disappear (4 Intellect points): You bend light that falls on you so you seem to disappear. You are invisible to other creatures for ten minutes. While invisible, you are specialized in stealth and Speed defense tasks. This effect ends if you do something to reveal your presence or position—attacking, using an ability, moving a large object, and so on. If this occurs, you can regain the remaining invisibility effect by taking an action to focus on hiding your position. Action to initiate or reinitiate.

Disarming Attack (5 Speed points): You attempt a Speed task to disarm a foe as part of your melee attack. If you succeed, your attack inflicts 3 additional points of damage and the target's weapon is knocked from their grip, landing up to 20 feet (6 m) away. If you fail, you still attempt your normal attack, but you don't inflict the extra damage or disarm the opponent if you hit. Action.

Disarming Strike (3 Speed points): Your attack inflicts 1 point less damage and disarms your foe so that their weapon is now 10 feet (3 m) away on the ground. (If your chosen weapon is a whip, you can instead deposit the disarmed weapon into your hands; if your chosen weapon is a bow or other ranged weapon that fires physical rounds, you can instead “nail” the disarmed weapon to a nearby object or structure. Choosing to do either of these hinders your attack.) Action.

Discerning Mind: You have +3 Armor against damaging attacks and damaging effects that target your mind and Intellect. Defense rolls you make against attacks that attempt to confuse, persuade, frighten, or otherwise influence you are eased. Enabler.

Discipline of Watchfulness (7 Intellect points): You keep your allies on their toes with occasional questions, jokes, and even mock drills for those who care to join in. After spending 24 hours with you, your allies can apply a [free level of Effort](#) to any initiative tasks they attempt. This benefit is ongoing while you remain in the allies' company. It ends if you leave, but it resumes if you return to the allies' company within 24 hours. If you leave the allies' company for more than 24 hours, you must spend another 24 hours together to reactivate the benefit. You must spend the Intellect point cost each 24 hours you wish to keep the benefit active. Enabler.

Disguise: You are trained in disguise. You can alter your posture, voice, mannerisms, and hair to look like someone else for as long as you keep up the disguise. However, it is extremely difficult to adopt the appearance of a specific individual without a disguise kit at your disposal. Enabler.

Disguise Other (4+ Intellect points): You apply your shapechanging ability to another creature of your size or smaller, giving them a form that you are able to assume. This lasts for about ten minutes.

In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the duration; one level of Effort increases it to an hour, two increases it to a day. A creature can revert to its normal form as an action, but it cannot then change back into the altered form. Action.

You probably can't use Disguise Other to disguise a kind of creature that is very different from you, such as a human disguising a robot, animal, or crystalline alien

Disincentivize (1 Intellect point): You hinder all actions attempted by any number of targets within short range who can understand you. You choose which targets are affected. Affected targets' actions are hindered for one round. Enabler.

Disrupting Touch (1+ Might points): You can turn your [Phase Sprint](#) into a melee attack by purposefully grazing another creature as you run. When you do, the touch releases a violent blast of energy that inflicts 2 points of damage to the target (ignores Armor). Whether you hit or miss, your movement (and turn) ends immediately, which puts you within immediate distance of your target. If you apply Effort to increase damage rather than to ease the task, you deal 2 additional points of damage per level of Effort (instead of 3 points); the target takes 1 point of damage even if you fail the attack roll. Enabler.

Distance Viewing (5 Intellect points): You know that space and distance are illusions. You concentrate to create an invisible, immobile sensor at a location you have previously visited or viewed (at the GM's discretion, you may have to succeed at an Intellect task if the location is warded). The sensor lasts for one hour. Once it is created, you can concentrate to see, hear, and smell through the sensor. It doesn't grant you sensory capabilities beyond the norm. Action to create; action to check.

Distant Interface (2 Intellect points): You can activate, deactivate, or control a machine at long range as if you were next to it, even if normally you would have to touch or manually operate it. If you have never interacted with the particular machine before, the task is hindered by two steps. To use this ability, you must understand the function of the machine, it must be your size or smaller, and it can't be connected to another intelligence (or be intelligent itself). Action.

Distortion (2 Intellect points): You modify how a willing creature within short range reflects light for one minute. The target rapidly shifts between its normal appearance and a blot of darkness. The target has an asset on Speed defense rolls until the effect wears off. Action to initiate.

Diver: You can safely dive into water from heights of up to 100 feet (30 m), and you can withstand pressure when in water as deep as 100 feet. Enabler.

Divert Attacks (4 Speed points): For one minute, you automatically deflect or dodge any ranged projectile attacks. However, on your next turn after you're attacked with ranged projectiles, all your other actions are hindered. Action to initiate.

Divide Your Mind (7 Intellect points): You split your consciousness into two parts. For one minute, you can take two actions on each of your turns, but only one of them can be to use a special ability. Action.

Divine Intervention (2 Intellect points, or 2 Intellect points + 4 XP): You ask the divine to intervene on your behalf, usually against a creature within long range, changing the course of its life in a small way by introducing a [major special effect](#) upon it. The major special effect is akin to what occurs when you roll a natural 20 on an attack. If you want to try for a larger effect, and if the GM allows it, you can attempt a divine intervention with a more far-reaching effect, which is more like the kind of GM intrusion initiated by the GM on their players. In this case, Divine Intervention also costs 4 XP, the effect may not work out exactly like you hope, and you may not make another plea for divine intervention for a week. Action.

Divine Knowledge: You are trained in all tasks related to knowledge of godly beings. Enabler.

Divine Radiance (2 Intellect points): Your prayer calls divine radiance from the heavens to punish an unworthy target within long range, inflicting 4 points of damage. If the target is a demon, spirit, or something similar, it also stands in unwilling awe of the divine energy coursing through it and is unable to act on its next turn. Once exposed to this blessing, the target can't be awed by this attack again for several hours. Action.

Divine Symbol (5+ Intellect points): You invoke divine power by scribing a glowing symbol in the air with your fingers. Writting pillars of divine radiance spear up to five targets within long range. A successful attack on a target inflicts 5 points of damage. If you apply Effort to increase the damage, you deal 2 additional points of damage per level of Effort (instead of 3 points); targets take 1 point of damage even if you fail the attack roll. Action.

Do You Know Who I Am? (3 Intellect points): Acting only as someone who is famous and used to privilege can, you verbally harangue a living foe who can hear and understand you so forcefully that it is unable to take any action, including making attacks, for one round. Whether you succeed or fail, the next action the target takes after your attempt is hindered. Action.

Dodge and Resist (3 Speed points): You can reroll any of your Might, Speed, or Intellect defense rolls and take the better of the two results. Enabler.

Dodge and Respond (3 Might points): If a melee attack misses you, you can immediately make a melee attack in return, but no more than once per turn. Enabler.

Double Strike (3 Might points): When you wield two weapons, you can choose to make one attack roll against a foe. If you hit, you inflict damage with both weapons plus 2 additional points of damage, and because you made a single attack, the target's Armor is subtracted only once. Action.

Dragon's Maw (6 Intellect points): You fashion and control a "hovering" phantasmal construct of magic within long range that resembles a dragon's head. The construct lasts for up to an hour, until it is destroyed, or until

you cast another spell. It is a level 4 construct that inflicts 6 points of damage with its bite when directed. While the construct persists, you can use it to manipulate large objects, carry heavy items in its mouth, or attack foes. If you use it to attack foes, you must use your action to directly control the phantom maw for each attack. Action to initiate.

Drain at a Distance: Your Drain Machine and Drain Creature abilities work on a target within short range. Enabler.

Drain Charge: You can drain the power from an artifact or device, allowing you to regain 1 Intellect point per level drained. You regain points at the rate of 1 point per round and must give your full concentration to the process each round. The GM determines whether the device is fully drained (likely true of most handheld or smaller devices) or retains some power (likely true of large machines). Action to initiate; action each round to drain.

Drain Creature (3+ Intellect points): You can drain energy from a living creature you touch, inflicting 3 points of damage and restoring 3 points to your Might or Speed Pool. Action.

Drain Machine (3+ Intellect points): You can drain the power from an artifact or powered device you touch. If the target is a robot, you inflict 3 points of damage and restore 3 points to your Might or Speed Pool. If the target is an object, you restore points to your Might or Speed Pool equal to the level of the target. If the target is a manifest cypher, it is fully drained and useless. Artifacts and similar devices must immediately check for depletion (items with a depletion of “—” are either immune to this ability or have a depletion of 1 in 1d10 when attacked with this ability). Action.

Drain Power (5 Speed points): You affect the main power source of a robot or machine, inflicting upon it all four conditions in [Disable Mechanisms](#) at once. You must touch the robot to do this (if you are making an attack, it inflicts no damage). Action.

Draw Conclusion (3 Intellect points): After careful observation and investigation (questioning one or more NPCs on a topic, searching an area or a file, and so on) lasting a few minutes, you can learn a pertinent fact. This ability is a difficulty 3 Intellect task. Each additional time you use this ability, the task is hindered by an additional step. The difficulty returns to 3 after you rest for ten hours. Action.

Drawing on Life’s Experiences (6 Intellect points): You’ve seen a lot and done a lot, and that experience comes in handy. Ask the GM one question, and you’ll receive a general answer. The GM assigns a level to the question, so the more obscure the answer, the more difficult the task. Generally, knowledge that you could find by looking somewhere other than your current location is level 1, and obscure knowledge of the past is level 7. Action.

Dreadwood (6 Intellect points): You manipulate wind, mist, and shadows to embody the primordial fear of mysterious woods. For the next minute, you gain an asset on intimidation tasks. Creatures within short range may become frightened; make a separate Intellect attack roll for each creature (if you are larger than normal from using Great Tree or another source, these rolls are eased). Success means that they are frozen in fear,

not moving or taking actions for one minute or until they are attacked. Some creatures without minds might be immune to this fear. Action.

Dream Becomes Reality (4 Intellect points): You create a dream object of any shape you can imagine that is your size or smaller, which takes on apparent substance and heft. The object is crude and can have no moving parts, so you can make a sword, a shield, a short ladder, and so on. The dream object has the approximate mass of the real object, if you choose. Your dream objects are as strong as iron, but if you do not remain within long range of them, they function for only one minute before fading away. Action.

Dream Thief (2 Intellect points): You steal a previous dream from a living creature within short range. The creature loses 2 points of Intellect (ignores Armor), and you learn something the GM chooses to reveal about the creature—its nature, a portion of its plans, a memory, and so on. Action.

Dreamcraft (1 Intellect point): You pull an image from a dream into the waking world and place it somewhere within long range. The dream lasts for up to one minute, and it can be tiny or fill an area an immediate distance in diameter. Though it appears solid, the dream is intangible. The dream (a scene, a creature, or an object) is static unless you use your action each round to animate it. As part of that animation, you could move the dream up to a short distance each round, as long as it remains within long range. If you animate the dream, it can make sound but does not produce odor. Direct physical interaction or sustained interaction with the dream shatters it into dispersing mist. For example, attacking the dream shatters it, as does the strain of keeping up appearances when an NPC moves through a dream scene or engages a dream creature in conversation for more than a couple of rounds. Action to initiate; action to animate.

Driver: You are trained in all tasks related to driving a car, truck, or motorcycle, including mechanical repair tasks. Enabler.

Driving on the Edge: You can make an attack with a light or medium ranged weapon and attempt a driving task as a single action. Enabler.

Dual Defense: When you wield two weapons, you are trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

Dual Distraction (1+ Speed points): When you wield two weapons, your opponent's next attack is hindered, and if you apply Effort on your next attack against that same foe, you get a [free level of Effort](#) on the task. Enabler.

Dual Light Wield: You can use two light weapons at the same time, making two separate attacks on your turn as a single action. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action, but because you make separate attacks, your opponent's Armor applies to both. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to both attacks, unless it's specifically tied to one of the weapons. Enabler.

Dual Medium Wield: You can use two light weapons or medium weapons at the same time (or one light weapon and one medium weapon), making two separate attacks on your turn as a single action. This ability otherwise works like the Dual Light Wield ability. Enabler.

Dual Wards: You can have two wards from [Devoted Defender](#) at a time. Choosing a second ward can be its own action, or you can choose two wards with one action (and only pay the cost once for doing so). The wards must remain within an immediate distance of each other. Benefits provided by Devoted Defender apply to both your wards. If your wards separate, you choose which retains the benefit. If they come back together, both regain the benefit immediately. Enabler.

Duel to the Death (5 Speed points): Choose a target (a single individual creature that you can see). You are trained in all tasks involving fighting that creature. When you successfully attack that target, you inflict +5 damage, or +7 damage if the creature is engaging someone else instead of you. You can duel only one creature at a time. A duel lasts up to one minute, or until you break it off. Action to initiate.

Duplicate (2 Might points): You cause a duplicate of yourself to appear at any point you can see within short range. The duplicate has no clothing or possessions when it appears. The duplicate is a level 2 NPC with 6 health. The duplicate obeys your commands and does as you direct it. The duplicate remains until you dismiss it using an action or until it is killed. When the duplicate disappears, it leaves behind anything it was wearing or carrying. If the duplicate disappears because it was killed, you take 4 points of damage that ignore Armor, and you lose your next action. Action to initiate.

Dust to Dust (7 Intellect points): You disintegrate one object that is smaller than you and whose level is less than or equal to your tier. You must touch the object to affect it. If the GM feels it appropriate to the circumstances, you can disintegrate a portion of an object (the total volume of which is smaller than you) rather than the entire thing. Action to initiate.

Abilities—E

Earthquake (7 Might points): You direct your destructive resonance into the ground and trigger an earthquake centered on a spot you can see within very long range. The ground within short range of that spot heaves and shakes for five minutes, causing damage to structures and terrain in the area. Buildings and terrain features shed debris and rubble. Each round, creatures in the area take either 3 points of damage due to the general shaking, or 6 points of damage if in or adjacent to a structure or terrain feature shedding debris. Action to initiate.

Echolocation: You are especially sensitive to sound and vibration, so much so that you can sense your environment within a short distance regardless of your ability to see. Enabler.

Effective Skill: Choose one noncombat skill when you gain this ability. You get a [minor effect](#) with that skill when you roll a natural 14 or higher (the d20 shows “14” or more). You get a [major effect](#) with that skill when you roll a natural 19 or higher (the d20 shows “19” or higher). You can select this ability more than once. Each time you select it, you must choose a different noncombat skill. Enabler.

Elastic Grip (3 Might points): Your attack with your stretchy limbs or body is eased. If you hit, you can grab the target, preventing it from moving on its next turn. While you hold the target, its attacks or attempts to break free are hindered. If the target attempts to break free instead of attacking, you must succeed at a Might-based

task to maintain your grip. If the target fails to break free, you can continue to hold it each round as your subsequent actions, automatically inflicting 4 points of damage each round by squeezing. Enabler.

Electric Armor (4 Intellect points): When you wish it, electricity crackles across your body for ten minutes, granting you +1 Armor. While electrified, you have an additional +2 Armor versus electrical damage specifically, and you inflict 2 points of damage on any creature that touches you or attacks you with a melee weapon that conducts electricity. Enabler.

Electrical Flight (5 Intellect points): You exude an aura of crackling electricity that lets you fly a long distance each round for ten minutes. You can't carry other creatures with you. Action to activate.

Elemental Protection (4+ Intellect points): You and every target you designate within immediate range gains +5 Armor against one type of direct elemental damage (such as fire, lightning, shadow, or thorn) for one hour, or until you cast this spell again. Each level of Effort applied increases the elemental protection by +2. Action to initiate.

Elusive (2 Speed points): When you succeed on a Speed defense action, you immediately gain an action. You can use this action only to move. Enabler.

Embrace the Night (7+ Intellect points): You fashion a truly horrifying facade of a creature from swirling ribbons of dark matter and launch it at your foes within long range. Each round, you can attack a target within long range using the creation as your weapon. When you attack, the creature inserts hair-fine tendrils of shadow into the target's eyes and brain. The target takes 3 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) and is stunned for one round so that it loses its next turn. Alternatively, you can cause the creature to take other actions, as long as you are able to see it and mentally control it as your action. The creature disperses after about a minute. Action to initiate.

Embraced by Darkness (6 Intellect points): For the next hour, you take on some characteristics of a shadow thanks to a fundamental adaptation of your flesh or a device you've kept secret. Your appearance is a dark silhouette. When you apply a level of Effort to sneaking tasks, you get a free level of Effort on the task. During this time, you can move through the air at a rate of a short distance per round, and you can move through solid barriers (even those that are sealed to prevent the passage of light or shadow), but not energy barriers, at a rate of 1 foot (30 cm) per round. You can perceive while passing through a barrier or object, which allows you to peek through walls. As a shadow, you can't affect or be affected by normal matter. Likewise, you can't attack, touch, or otherwise affect anything. However, attacks and effects that rely on light can affect you, and sudden bursts of light can potentially make you lose your next turn. Action to initiate.

Enable Others: You can use the [helping rules](#) to provide a benefit to another character attempting a physical task. Unlike the normal helping rules, this doesn't require you to use your action helping the other character with the task. This requires no action on your part. Enabler.

Enchanted Movement (4+ Intellect points): You use your enchanted weapon to move yourself to any location within a long distance that you can see, as long as there are no obstacles or barriers in your way. The exact way this happens depends on your weapon; you might throw your magical hammer and be pulled along after

it, shoot an arrow from your bow that pulls you forward like a grapple line, and so on. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the distance traveled; each level of Effort used in this way increases the range by another 100 feet (30 m). If you have another ability (such as from your type) that allows you to cross a long distance, the range of that ability and this one increases to very long. Action.

Enchanted Weapon (1 Intellect point): You attune yourself to a physical weapon, such as a sword, hammer, or bow. You know exactly where it is if it is within a short distance of you, and you know its general direction and distance if farther away. All of your other focus abilities require you to be holding or wielding this weapon. You can be attuned to only one weapon at a time; attuning yourself to a second weapon loses the attunement to the first one. Action to initiate, ten minutes to complete. Enabler.

If you attune yourself to a different weapon, come up with a story reason for why you are able to do that and why you chose this new weapon.

Encouragement (1 Intellect point): While you maintain this ability through ongoing inspiring oration, your allies within short range ease one of the following task types (your choice): defense tasks, attack tasks, or tasks related to any skill that you are trained or specialized in. Action.

Encouraging Presence (2 Intellect points): For one minute, allies within short range gain an asset on defense rolls. Action.

Endurance: Any duration dealing with physical actions is either doubled or halved, whichever is better for you. For example, if the typical person can hold their breath for thirty seconds, you can hold it for one minute. If the typical person can march for four hours without stopping, you can do so for eight hours. In terms of harmful effects, if a poison paralyzes its victims for one minute, you are paralyzed for thirty seconds. The minimum duration is always one round. Enabler.

Energize Creature (6+ Might points): You extend your [Absorb Kinetic Energy](#) ability to one creature within immediate range so that they also can absorb energy from physical attacks and impacts for one hour. That creature, however, cannot release excess energy as a blast. For each level of Effort you apply, you can increase the number of targets you affect by one. If you have [Absorb Pure Energy](#) or [Improved Absorb Kinetic Energy](#), those abilities are also duplicated in your target when you use Energize Creature. Action to initiate.

Energize Crowd (9 Might points): You extend your Absorb Kinetic Energy ability to up to thirty creatures within short range so that they also can absorb energy from physical attacks and impacts for one hour. If you have Absorb Pure Energy or Improved Absorb Kinetic Energy, these creatures can use those abilities as well. The creatures, however, cannot release excess energy as a blast. Action to initiate.

Energize Object: By focusing your Absorb Kinetic Energy ability on an object (like a weapon), you infuse it with your power. The object holds the energy until it is touched by anyone but you, so putting it into your melee weapon or the ammo of a ranged weapon allows the weapon to trigger the energy in combat. The energy inflicts 3 points of damage on the creature touched in addition to any damage the weapon itself might do. You cannot have more than one energized object on your person at a time. Action to initiate.

Energized Shield: Your force shield from your [Force Field Shield](#) ability now pulses with dangerous energy whenever you manifest it. Each time you use your shield as a melee or ranged weapon, it inflicts an additional 3 points of damage. Enabler.

Energy Protection (3+ Intellect points): Choose a discrete type of energy that you have experience with (such as heat, sonic, electricity, and so on). You gain +10 to Armor against damage from that type of energy for ten minutes. Alternatively, you gain +1 to Armor against damage from that energy for 24 hours. You must be familiar with the type of energy; for example, if you have no experience with a certain kind of extradimensional energy, you can't protect against it. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to protect more targets; each level of Effort used in this way affects up to two additional targets. You must touch additional targets to protect them. Action to initiate.

Energy Resistance: Choose a discrete type of energy that you have experience with (such as heat, sonic, electricity, and so on). You gain +5 to Armor against damage from that type of energy. You must be familiar with the type of energy; for example, if you have no experience with a certain kind of extradimensional energy, you can't protect against it. You can select this ability more than once. Each time you select it, you must choose a different kind of energy. Enabler.

Enhance Strength (3 Intellect points): For the next ten minutes, you gain an asset on tasks that depend on brute force, such as moving a heavy object, smashing down a door, or hitting someone with a melee weapon. Action to initiate.

Enhanced Beast Form: When you use [Beast Form](#), your beast form gains the following additional bonuses: +3 to your Might Pool, +2 to your Speed Pool, and +2 to Armor. Enabler.

Enhanced Body: Your machine parts grant you +1 to Armor, +3 to your Might Pool, and +3 to your Speed Pool. Traditional healing skills, medicines, and techniques work only half as well for you. Each time you start at full health, the first 5 points of damage you take can never be healed in these ways or recovered normally. Instead, you must use repairing skills and abilities to restore those points. For example, if you start with a full Might Pool of 10 and take 8 points of damage, you can use recovery rolls to restore 3 points, but the remaining 5 points must be restored with repair tasks. Enabler.

Enhanced Intellect: You gain 3 points to your Intellect Pool. Enabler.

Enhanced Intellect Edge: You gain +1 to your Intellect Edge. Enabler.

Enhanced Might: You gain 3 points to your Might Pool. Enabler.

Enhanced Might Edge: You gain +1 to your Might Edge. Enabler.

Enhanced Phased Attack (5 Intellect points): This ability works like the [Phased Attack](#) ability except that your attack also disrupts the foe's vitals, dealing an additional 5 points of damage. Enabler.

Enhanced Physique: You gain 3 points to divide among your Might and Speed Pools however you wish. Enabler.

Enhanced Potential: You gain 3 points to divide among your stat Pools however you wish. Enabler.

Enhanced Speed: You gain 3 points to your Speed Pool. Enabler.

Enhanced Speed Edge: You gain +1 to your Speed Edge. Enabler.

Enlarge (1+ Might point): You trigger an enzymatic reaction that draws additional mass from another dimension, and you (and your clothing or suit) grow larger. You achieve a height of 9 feet (3 m) and stay that way for about a minute. During that time, you add 4 points to your Might Pool, add +1 to Armor, and add +2 to your Might Edge. While you are larger than normal, your Speed defense rolls are hindered, and you are practiced in using your fists as heavy weapons.

When the effects of Enlarge end, your Armor and Might Edge return to normal, and you subtract a number of points from your Might Pool equal to the number you gained (if this brings the Pool to 0, subtract the overflow first from your Speed Pool and then, if necessary, from your Intellect Pool). Each additional time you use Enlarge before your next ten-hour recovery roll, you must apply an additional level of Effort. Thus, the second time you use Enlarge, you must apply one level of Effort; the third time you use Enlarge, two levels of Effort; and so on.

Action to initiate.

Enlightened: You are trained in any perception task that involves sight. Enabler.

Entangling Force (1+ Intellect point): A target within short range is subject to a snare constructed of semi-tangible lines of force for one minute. The force snare is a level 2 construct. A target caught in the force snare cannot move from its position, but it can attack and defend normally. The target can also use its action attempting to break free. You can increase the level of the force snare by 1 per level of Effort applied. Action to initiate.

Enthrall (1 Intellect point): While talking, you grab and keep another creature's attention, even if the creature can't understand you. For as long as you do nothing but speak (you can't even move), the other creature takes no actions other than to defend itself, even over multiple rounds. If the creature is attacked, the effect ends. Action.

Entourage: You gain an entourage of five level 1 twenty-somethings that accompanies you wherever you go unless you purposefully disband it for a particular outing. You can ask them to deliver things for you, run messages, pick up your dry cleaning—pretty much whatever you want, within reason. They can also run

interference if you're trying to avoid someone, help hide you from media attention, help you muscle through a crowd, and so on. On the other hand, if a situation becomes physically violent, they retreat to safety. Enabler.

Enveloping Shield: Your **Force Field Shield** ability produces an envelope of force that enfolds you while you are holding the shield, granting you +1 to Armor. Enabler.

Erase Memories (3 Intellect points): You reach into the mind of a creature within immediate range and make an Intellect roll. On a success, you erase up to the last five minutes of its memory. Action.

Escape (2 Speed points): You slip your restraints, squeeze through the bars, break the grip of a creature holding you, pull free from sucking quicksand, or otherwise get loose from whatever is holding you in place. Action.

Escape Plan: When you kill a foe, you can attempt a stealth task to immediately hide from anyone around, assuming that a suitable hiding place is nearby. Enabler.

Evanesce (3 Speed points): You step into shadows or behind cover, and everyone who was observing you completely loses track of you. Although you're not invisible, you can't be seen until you reveal yourself again by moving out of the shadows or from behind cover (or by making an attack). Action.

Evasion: You're hard to affect when you don't want to be affected. You are trained in all defense tasks. Enabler.

Everything Is a Weapon: You can take any small object—a coin, a pen, a bottle, a stone, and so on—and throw it with such force and precision that it inflicts damage as a light weapon. Enabler.

Exile (5 Intellect points): You send a target that you touch hurtling into another random dimension or universe, where it remains for ten minutes. You have no idea what happens to the target while it's gone, but at the end of ten minutes, it returns to the precise spot it left. Action.

Expanded Repertoire: The number of subtle cyphers you can bear at the same time increases by one. Enabler.

Experienced Defender: When wearing armor, you gain +1 to Armor. Enabler.

Experienced Finder (6+ Intellect points): When you are looking for something specific, such as a particular rare component, a chemical needed to complete a vaccine for a disease, a spare part required to repair a damaged device, the tracks of a specific beast, or the sword that a thief stole from you, this ability is of great use. For the next 24 hours, if you come within short range of the thing and circumstances are such that it is possible for you to perceive the thing (for example, it's not in a locked chamber for which you do not have the key), you find it. This ability assumes that you are constantly on the lookout, always looking everywhere possible, peering behind obstacles, and so on—if you're running for your life, sleeping, or otherwise occupied, this

ability does not help you. You use this ability in lieu of making a roll to find the thing, but only if the difficulty for finding the object is level 6 or below. You can apply Effort to increase the maximum level of the thing you're trying to find (each level of Effort used this way increases the maximum level by 1). Action to initiate.

Experienced in Armor: The cost reduction from your [Practiced in Armor](#) ability improves. You now reduce the Speed cost by 2. Enabler.

Expert Crafter: Instead of rolling, you can choose to automatically succeed on a [crafting](#) task you're trained in. The task must be difficulty 4 or lower. If you are able to reduce the assessed difficulty of a crafting task to 4 or lower, this ability also applies to each subtask, assuming something doesn't interrupt you during the ensuing time to build. Enabler.

Expert Cypher Use: You can bear three cyphers at a time. Enabler.

Expert Driver: You are specialized in all tasks related to driving a car, truck, or motorcycle, including mechanical repair tasks. Enabler.

Expert Follower: You gain a level 3 [follower](#). They are not restricted on their [modifications](#). You can take this ability multiple times, each time gaining another level 3 follower. Alternatively, you could choose to advance a level 2 follower you already have to level 3 and then gain a new level 2 follower. Enabler.

Expert Pilot: You are specialized in all tasks related to piloting a starcraft. Enabler.

Expert Skill: Instead of rolling a d20, you can choose to automatically succeed on a task you're trained in. The task must be difficulty 4 or lower, and it can't be an attack roll or a defense roll. Enabler. (A character can't apply Effort or other abilities to any task they accomplish using Expert Skill.)

Explains the Ineffable: Through anecdotes, historical retellings, and citing knowledge that few but you have previously understood, you enlighten your friends. After spending 24 hours with you, once per day, each of your friends can ease a particular task by two steps. This benefit is ongoing while you remain in your friends' company. It ends if you leave, but it resumes if you return to your friends' company within 24 hours. If you leave your friends' company for longer than that, you must spend another 24 hours together to reactivate the benefit. Enabler.

Exploit Advantage: Even if you can do something well, you've learned that you can always do it even better. Whenever you have an asset for a roll, you ease the task by one additional step. Enabler.

Exploratory Experience: You are trained in two additional skills in which you are not already trained. Choose from the following: navigation, perception, sensing danger, initiative, peacefully opening communications with strangers, and tracking. Enabler.

Explosive Release (6 Intellect points): You can amplify the energy stored in your Siphon Pool (from your [Store Energy](#) ability) and release it in a massive blast that affects either one target within short range or everything within immediate range. If you choose a single target, it takes 2 points of damage for every point in your Siphon Pool. If you choose an area, everything in the area (except you) takes 1 point of damage per point in your Siphon Pool (or half that if your attack fails against them). This drains your Siphon Pool to 0 points. Action.

Extra Recovery: You gain an additional one-action recovery each day. Enabler.

Extra Skill: You are trained in one skill of your choice (other than attacks or defense) in which you are not already trained. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different skill. Enabler.

Extra Use (3 Intellect points): You attempt to gain an extra use from an artifact without triggering a depletion roll. The difficulty of the task is equal to the level of the artifact. If you crafted the artifact, you gain an asset to the task. On a failure, the depletion roll occurs normally. You could also try to use a manifest cypher without burning it out, but the task is hindered. A failed attempt to gain an additional use from a manifest cypher destroys it before it can produce the desired effect. Action.

Extreme Mastery (6 Might or 6 Speed points): When using your chosen weapon, you can reroll any attack roll you wish and take the better of the two results. Enabler.

Eye for Detail (2 Intellect points): When you spend five minutes or so thoroughly exploring an area no larger than a short distance in diameter, you can ask the GM one question about the area. The GM must answer you truthfully. You cannot use this more than one time per area per 24 hours. Action to initiate, five minutes to complete.

Eye Gouge (2 Speed points): You make an attack against a creature with an eye. The attack is hindered, but if you hit, the creature has trouble seeing for the next hour. During this time, the creature's tasks that rely on sight (which is most tasks) are hindered. Action.

Eyes Adjusted: You can see in extremely dim light as though it were bright light. You can see in total darkness as if it were extremely dim light. Enabler.

Abilities—F

Face Morph (2+ Intellect points): You alter your features and coloration for one hour, hiding your identity or impersonating someone. This affects only your face, not the rest of your body. You can't perfectly duplicate someone else's face, but you can be accurate enough to fool someone who knows that person casually. You have an asset in all tasks involving disguise. You must apply a level of Effort to be able to impersonate a different species (such as a human morphing into a humanoid alien). Action.

Familiarize: You can familiarize yourself with a new area if you spend at least one hour studying a region up to a long distance across that you are able to directly access and move about in. Once you've familiarized yourself with an area, all your tasks related to perception, navigation, salvaging and scavenging, defense, and moving about the area gain an asset. Each time you familiarize yourself with a new area, you lose focus on a previous area unless you spend 1 XP to retain the familiarity permanently. Action to initiate, one hour to complete.

Far Step (2 Intellect points): You leap through the air and land some distance away. You can jump up, down, or across to anywhere you choose within long range if you have a clear and unobstructed path to that location. You land safely. Action.

Fast Kill (2 Speed points): You know how to kill quickly. When you hit with a melee or ranged attack, you deal 4 additional points of damage. You can't make this attack in two consecutive rounds. Action.

Fast Talk (1 Intellect point): When speaking with an intelligent creature who can understand you and isn't hostile, you convince that creature to take one reasonable action in the next round. A reasonable action must be agreed upon by the GM; it should not put the creature or its allies in obvious danger or be wildly out of character. Action.

Fast Travel (7 Intellect points): You warp time and space so that you and up to ten other creatures within immediate distance travel overland at ten times the normal rate for up to eight hours. At this speed, most dangerous encounters or regions of rough terrain are ignored, though the GM may declare exceptions. Outright barriers still present a problem. Action to initiate.

Faster Wild Magic: If you spend ten minutes preparing your magic, you can fill any of your open cypher slots with subtle cyphers chosen randomly by the GM (this time can be part of a ten-minute, one-hour, or ten-hour recovery action if you are awake for the entire time). You can't use this ability again until after you've taken a ten-hour recovery action. You can still use Magical Repertoire to fill your cypher slots. Action to initiate, ten minutes to complete.

Fearsome Reputation (3 Intellect points): You and those you travel with have earned a fearsome reputation in some parts. If your foes have heard of you, affected targets within earshot become afraid, and all attacks they make against you are hindered until one or more of them successfully inflicts damage on you or one of your allies, at which time their fear abates. Action.

Feat of Strength (1 Might point): Any task that depends on brute force is eased. Examples include smashing down a barred door, tearing open a locked container, lifting or moving a heavy object, or striking someone with a melee weapon. Enabler.

Feint (2 Speed points): If you use one action creating a misdirection or diversion, in the next round you can take advantage of your opponent's lowered defenses. Make a melee attack roll against that opponent. You gain an asset on this attack. If your attack is successful, it inflicts 4 additional points of damage. Action.

Fellow Explorer: You gain a level 2 [follower](#). One of their modifications must be for tasks related to perception. Enabler.

Fetch (3 Intellect points): You cause an object to disappear and reappear in your hands or somewhere else nearby. Choose one object that can fit inside a 5-foot (2 m) cube and that you can see within long range. The object vanishes and appears in your hands or in an open space anywhere you choose within immediate range. Action.

Field of Destruction (4 Might points): When you cause an object to descend one or more steps on the [object damage track](#), you gain 1 additional point of Armor for one minute. Enabler.

Field of Gravity (4 Intellect points): When you wish it, a field of manipulated gravity around you pulls incoming ranged projectile attacks to the ground. You are immune to such attacks until your turn in the next round. You must be aware of an attack to foil it. This ability does not work on energy attacks. Enabler.

Field-Reinforced Armor: You gain +1 to Armor while wearing the power armor from your [Powered Armor](#) ability. Enabler.

Fiery Hand of Doom (3 Intellect points): While your [Shroud of Flame](#) is active, you can reach into your halo and produce a hand made of animate flame that is twice the size of a human's hand. The hand acts as you direct, floating in the air. Directing the hand is an action. Without a command, the hand does nothing. It can move a long distance in a round, but it never moves farther away from you than long range. The hand can grab, move, and carry things, but anything it touches takes 1 point of damage per round from the heat. The hand can also attack. It's a level 3 creature and deals 1 extra point of damage from fire when it attacks. Once created, the hand lasts for ten minutes. Action to create; action to direct.

Fight On: You do not suffer the normal penalties for being impaired on the [damage track](#). If debilitated, instead of suffering the normal penalty of being unable to take most actions, you can continue to act; however, all tasks are hindered. Enabler.

Final Defiance: When you would normally be dead, you instead remain conscious and active for one more round plus one additional round each time you succeed on a difficulty 5 Might task. During these rounds, you are debilitated. If you do not receive healing or otherwise gain points in a Pool during your final round(s) of activity, you are subject to the effects of [Not Dead Yet](#). Enabler.

Find an Opening (1 Intellect point): You use trickery to find an opening in your foe's defenses. If you succeed on a Speed roll against one creature within immediate range, your next attack against that creature before the end of the next round is eased. Action.

Find the Guilty: If you have used [Designation](#) on a target, you are trained in tracking them, spotting them when they are hidden or disguised, or otherwise finding them. Enabler.

Find the Hidden (4+ Intellect points): You see the traceries of objects as they move through space and time. You can sense the distance and direction of any specific inanimate object that you once touched. This takes anywhere from one action to hours of concentration, depending on what the GM feels is appropriate due to time, distance, or other mitigating circumstances. However, you don't know in advance how long it will take. If you use at least two levels of Effort, once you have established the distance and direction, you remain in contact with the object for one hour per level of Effort used. Thus, if it moves, you are aware of its new position. Action to initiate; action each round to concentrate.

Find the Way: When you apply Effort to a navigation task because you don't know the way, are lost, are attempting to blaze a new route, need to choose between two or more otherwise similar paths to take, or something very similar, you can apply a [free level of Effort](#). Enabler.

Finishing Blow (5 Might points): If your foe is prone, stunned, or somehow helpless or incapacitated when you strike, you inflict 7 additional points of damage on a successful hit. Enabler.

Fire and Ice (4 Intellect points): You cause a target within short range to become either very hot or very cold (your choice). The target suffers 3 points of ambient damage (ignores Armor) each round for up to three rounds, although a new roll is required each round to continue to affect the target. Action to initiate.

Fire Bloom (4+ Intellect points): Fire blooms within long range, filling an area 10 feet (3 m) in radius and inflicting 3 points of damage on all affected targets. Effort applied to one attack counts for all attacks against targets in the area of the bloom. Even on an unsuccessful attack, a target in the area still takes 1 point of damage. Flammable objects in the area may catch fire. Action.

Fire Servant (6 Intellect points): While your Shroud of Flame is active, you reach into your halo and produce an automaton of fire that is your general shape and size. It acts as you direct each round. Directing the servant is an action, and you can command it only when you are within long range of it. Without a command, the servant continues to follow your previous command. You can also give it a simple programmed action, such as "Wait here, and attack anyone who comes within short range until they're dead." The servant lasts for ten minutes, is a level 5 creature, and deals 1 extra point of damage from fire when it attacks. Action to create; action to direct.

Fire Tendrils (5 Intellect points): When you wish it, your halo (from your [Shroud of Flame](#) ability) sprouts three tendrils of flame that last for up to ten minutes. As an action, you can use the tendrils to attack, making a separate attack roll for each. Each tendril inflicts 4 points of damage. Otherwise, the attacks function as standard attacks. If you don't use the tendrils to attack, they remain but do nothing. Enabler.

Fists of Fury: You inflict 2 additional points of damage with unarmed attacks. Enabler.

Flamboyant Boast (1 Intellect point): You boastfully describe an act that you will accomplish, and then as part of the same action, you attempt it. If an average person would find the action difficult (or impossible) and you

succeed on it, creatures who witnessed it who are not your allies are potentially dazed on their next turn, and all tasks they attempt are hindered. The GM will help you determine whether your boast is something that would impress onlookers so significantly. If you attempt the task you boast about but fail to accomplish it, all your attempts to affect or attack onlookers who saw you are hindered for about ten minutes. Enabler.

Flameblade (4 Intellect points): When you wish it, you extend your Shroud of Flame to cover a weapon you wield in flame for one hour. The flame ends if you stop holding or carrying the weapon. While the flame lasts, the weapon inflicts 2 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Flash (4 Intellect points): You create an explosion of energy at a point within close range, affecting an area up to immediate range from that point. You must be able to see the location where you intend to center the explosion. The blast inflicts 2 points of damage to all creatures or objects within the area. If you apply Effort to increase the damage, you deal 2 additional points of damage per level of Effort (instead of 3 points); targets in the area take 1 point of damage even if you fail the attack roll. Action.

Flash Across the Miles (6+ Intellect points): You can move to an open location on the planet that you're familiar with almost instantaneously, transformed into a bolt of lightning. If you apply a level of Effort, you can attempt to penetrate covered locations that you're aware of as long as a route exists from the open air to the area you want to reach that electricity can easily follow. Action.

Flee (6 Intellect points): All non-allies within short distance who can hear your dreadful, intimidating words flee from you at top speed for one minute. Action.

Fleet of Foot (1+ Speed points): You can move a short distance as part of another action. You can move a long distance as your entire action for a turn. If you apply a level of Effort to this ability, you can move a long distance and make an attack as your entire action for a turn, but the attack is hindered. Enabler.

Flesh of Stone: You have +1 to Armor if you do not wear physical armor. Enabler.

Flex Lore: After each ten-hour recovery roll when you have access to a high-technology digital reference library (such as one that might be found in a starship or in a learning center), choose one field of knowledge related to a specific planet or some other location. The field might be habitations, customs, governments, characteristics of the main species, important figures, and so on. You're trained in that field until you use this ability again. You could use this ability with an area of knowledge you're already trained in to become specialized. Enabler.

Flex Skill: At the beginning of each day, choose one task (other than attacks or defense) on which you will concentrate. For the rest of that day, you're trained in that task. You can't use this ability with a skill in which you're already trained to become specialized. Enabler.

Flex Weapon Skill: At the beginning of each day, choose one type of attack: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. For the rest of that day, you are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. You can't use this ability with an attack skill in which you're already trained to become specialized. Enabler.

Flight (4+ Intellect points): You can float and fly through the air for one hour. For each level of Effort applied, you can affect one additional creature of your size or smaller. You must touch the creature to bestow the power of flight. You direct the other creature's movement, and while flying, it must remain within sight of you or fall. In terms of overland movement, a flying creature moves about 20 miles (32 km) per hour and is not affected by terrain. Action to initiate.

Flight Exertion (3 Might or 3 Speed points): You can fly up to a short distance as your movement this round. If all you do is move on your turn, you can fly up to a long distance. Enabler.

Flight Not Fight: If you use your action only to move, all Speed defense tasks are eased. Enabler.

Fling (4 Intellect points): You violently launch a creature or object about your size or smaller within short range and send it flying a short distance in any direction. This is an Intellect attack that inflicts 4 points of damage to the object being flung when it lands or strikes a barrier. If you aim the primary target at another creature or object (and succeed on a second attack), the secondary target also takes 4 points of damage. Action.

Flying Companion: You gain a level 3 companion creature that can fly at the same speed as you; depending on other aspects of your character, this might be a trained bird, a machine drone, or a helpful strange creature such as a familiar. This creature accompanies you and acts as you direct. As a level 3 companion, it has a target number of 9 and 9 health, and it inflicts 3 points of damage. If it's killed or destroyed, it takes you one month to find or create a suitable replacement. Enabler.

Foil Danger (2 Intellect points): You negate one source of potential danger related to one creature or object that you are aware of within immediate distance for one round. This could be a weapon or device held by someone, a trap triggered by a pressure plate, or a creature's natural ability (something special, innate, and dangerous, like a dragon's fiery breath or a giant cobra's venom). You can also try to foil a foe's mundane action (such as an attack with a weapon or claw), so that the action isn't made this round. Make your roll against the level of the attack, danger, or creature. Action.

Font of Healing: With your approval, other creatures can touch you and regain 1d6 points to either their Might Pool or their Speed Pool. This healing costs them 2 Intellect points. A single creature can benefit from this ability only once each day. Enabler.

Force and Accuracy: You inflict 3 additional points of damage with attacks using weapons that you throw. Enabler.

Force at Distance (4+ Intellect points): You temporarily bend the fundamental law of gravity around a creature or object (up to twice your mass) within short range. The target is caught in your telekinetic grip, and you can move it up to a short distance in any direction each round that you retain your hold. A creature in your grip can take actions, but it can't move under its own power. Each round after the initial attack, you can attempt to keep your grip on the target by spending 2 additional Intellect points and succeeding at a difficulty 2 Intellect

task. If your concentration lapses, the target drops back to the ground. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the amount of mass you can affect. Each level allows you to affect a creature or object twice as massive as before. For example, applying one level of Effort would affect a creature four times as massive as you, two levels would affect a creature eight times as massive, three levels would affect a creature sixteen times as massive, and so on. Action to initiate.

Force Bash (1 Might point): This is a pummeling melee attack you make with your [Force Field Shield](#). Your attack inflicts 1 less point of damage than normal but dazes your target for one round, during which time all tasks it performs are hindered. Enabler.

Force Blast: You figure out how to project blasts of pure force from the gauntlets of the power armor from your [Powered Armor](#) ability. This allows you to fire a blast of force that inflicts 5 points of damage with a range of 200 feet (60 m). Action.

Force Field (3 Intellect points): You create an invisible energy barrier around a creature or object you choose within short range. The force field moves with the creature or object and lasts for ten minutes. If the target is a creature, they gain +1 to Armor; if the target is an object, attacks against it are hindered.

Force Field Barrier (3+ Intellect points): You create an opaque, stationary barrier of solid energy (a force field) within immediate range. The barrier is 10 feet by 10 feet (3 m by 3 m) and of negligible thickness. It is a level 2 barrier and lasts for ten minutes. It can be placed anywhere it fits, whether against a solid object (including the ground) or floating in the air. Each level of Effort you apply strengthens the barrier by one level. For example, applying two levels of Effort creates a level 4 barrier. Action.

Force Field Shield: You manifest a small plane of pure force, which takes on a shield-like shape with the barest flicker of a thought. You can dismiss it just as easily. To use the force shield, you must hold it in one of your hands. You are practiced in using your exotic shield in one hand as a light melee weapon; however, if you attack with both your shield and a weapon held in the other hand, both attacks are hindered. When you are unconscious or sleeping, the force field dissipates. Enabler. (A shield, including one produced by a force field, provides an asset to a character's Speed defense task while it is held in one hand.)

Force to Reckon With: You can break through force fields and energy barriers as if they were physical walls. Enabler.

Force Wall (5 Intellect points): You can trigger the energy in your Force Field Shield to expand outward in all directions to create an immobile plane of solid force up to 20 feet by 20 feet (6 m by 6 m) for up to one hour or until you take your shield back. (The force shield becomes the force wall.) The plane of the force wall conforms to the space available. While the force wall remains in place, you cannot use any of your other abilities that require Force Field Shield. Action to initiate.

Fortification Builder: Whenever you attempt a crafting task—or help in the crafting task—to build a wall or other fortification, you ease the [crafting difficulty](#) by two steps, to a minimum of difficulty 1. Enabler.

Fortified Position (2 Might points): For the next minute, you gain +1 Armor and an asset to your Might defense tasks, as long as you haven't moved more than an immediate distance since your last turn. Action to initiate.

Foul Aura (5+ Intellect points): Your words, gestures, and touch invest an object no larger than yourself with an aura of doom, fear, and doubt for one day. Creatures that can hear and understand you feel an urge to move at least a short distance away from the object. If a creature does not move away, all tasks, attacks, and defenses it attempts while within the aura are hindered. The duration of the aura is extended by one day per level of Effort applied. The aura is temporarily blocked while the object is covered or contained. Action to initiate.

Freakishly Large: Your increased size intimidates most people. While you enjoy the effects of [Enlarge](#), all intimidation tasks you attempt are eased. Enabler.

Free to Move: You ignore all movement penalties and adjustments due to terrain or other obstacles. You can fit through any space large enough to fit your head. Tasks involving breaking free of bonds, a creature's grip, or any similar impediment gain three [free levels of Effort](#). Enabler.

Freezing Touch (4 Intellect points): Your hands become so cold that your touch freezes solid a living target of your size or smaller, rendering it immobile for one round. If you have another cold ability activated by touch (such as [Frost Touch](#)), you can use it as part of the Freezing Touch attack. Action.

Frenzy (1 Intellect point): When you wish, while in combat, you can enter a state of frenzy. While in this state, you can't use Intellect points, but you gain +1 to your Might Edge and your Speed Edge. This effect lasts as long as you wish, but it ends if no combat is taking place within range of your senses. Enabler.

Friendly Help: If your friend tries a task and fails, they can try again without spending Effort if you help. You provide this advantage to your friend even if you are not trained in the task that they are retrying. Enabler.

From the Shadows: If you successfully attack a creature that was previously unaware of your presence, you deal 3 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Frost Touch (1 Intellect point): Your hands become so cold that the next time you touch a creature, you inflict 3 points of damage. Alternatively, you can use this ability on a weapon, and for ten minutes, it inflicts 1 additional point of damage from the cold. Action for touch; enabler for weapon.

Further Mathematics: You are specialized in higher mathematics. If you are already specialized, choose some other sphere of knowledge to become trained in. Enabler.

Fury (3 Might points): For the next minute, all melee attacks you make inflict 2 additional points of damage. Action to initiate.

Fusion: You can fuse your manifest [cyphers](#) and [artifacts](#) with your body. These fused devices function as if they were one level higher. Enabler.

Fusion Armor: A procedure gives you biometal implants in major portions of your body, you grow metal-hard skin, the blessings of an angel protect you, or something similar happens. These changes give you +1 to Armor even when you're not wearing physical armor. Enabler.

Abilities—G

Gain Unusual Companion: You gain a special specimen as a constant companion. It is level 4, probably the size of a small dog, and follows your telepathic commands. You and the GM must work out the details of your creature, and you'll probably make rolls for it in combat or when it takes actions. The companion acts on your turn. If your companion dies, you can hunt in the wild for 1d6 days to find a new one. Enabler.

Gambler: Each day, choose two different numbers from 2 to 16. One number is your lucky number, and the other is your unlucky number. Whenever you make a roll that day and get a number matching your lucky number, your next task is eased. Whenever you make a roll that day and get a number matching your unlucky number, your next task is hindered. Enabler.

Game Lessons: You've played so many games that you've picked up some real knowledge. Choose any two noncombat skills. You are trained in those skills. Enabler.

Gamer: Pick any one style of game such as real-time strategy games, games of chance in the style of poker, roleplaying games, and so on. You can apply an asset to a task related to playing that style of game once between each recovery roll. Enabler.

Gamer's Fortitude: Sitting and playing a game for twelve hours straight is not something most people can do, but you've figured it out. Once after each ten-hour recovery roll, you can transfer up to 5 points between your Pools in any combination, at a rate of 1 point per round. For example, you could transfer 3 points of Might to Speed and 2 points of Intellect to Speed, which would take a total of five rounds. Action.

Gaming God: Any time you use Effort on an Intellect action, add one of the following enhancements to the action (your choice):

Free level of Effort

Automatic minor effect

Enabler.

Gargantuan: When you use [Enlarge](#), you can choose to grow up to 30 feet (9 m) in height, and you add 3 more temporary points to your Might Pool (if you also have the [Bigger](#) ability, the temporary points from Gargantuan are in addition to the points from Bigger). Enabler.

Gather Intelligence (2 Intellect points): When in a group of people (a caravan, a palace, a village, a city, etc.) you can ask around about any topic you choose and come away with useful information. You can ask a specific question, or you can simply obtain general facts. You also get a good idea of the general layout of the location involved, note the presence of all major sites, and perhaps even notice obscure details. For example, not only do you find out if anyone in the palace has seen the missing boy, but you also get a working knowledge of the layout of the palace itself, note all the entrances and which are used more often than others, and take notice that everyone seems to avoid the well in the eastern courtyard for some reason. Action to initiate, about an hour to complete.

Generate Force Field (9+ Intellect points): You create six planes of solid force (level 8), each 30 feet (9 m) to a side, which persist for one hour. The planes must be contiguous, and they retain the position that you choose when initiating this ability. For instance, you could arrange the planes linearly, creating a wall 180 feet (55 m) long, or you could create a closed cube. The planes conform to the space available. Each additional level of Effort you apply increases the level of the barrier by one (to a maximum of level 10) or increases the number of hours it remains by one. Action to initiate.

Get Away (2 Speed points): After your action on your turn, you move up to a short distance or get behind or beneath cover within immediate range. Enabler.

Ghost (4 Intellect points): For the next ten minutes, you gain an asset to sneaking tasks. During this time, you can move through solid barriers (but not energy barriers) at a rate of 1 foot (30 cm) per round, and you can perceive while phased within a barrier or object, which allows you to peek through walls. Action to initiate.

Go Defensive (1 Intellect point): When you wish, while in combat, you can enter a state of heightened awareness of threat. While in this state, you can't use points from your Intellect Pool, but you gain +1 to your Speed Edge and gain two assets to Speed defense tasks. This effect lasts as long as you wish or until you attack a foe or no combat is taking place within range of your senses. Once the effect of this ability ends, you can't enter it again for one minute. Enabler.

Go to Ground (4 Speed points): You move up to a long distance and attempt to hide. When you do, you gain an asset on the stealth task to blend in, disappear, or otherwise escape the senses of everyone previously aware of your presence. Action.

Goad (1 Intellect point): You can attempt to goad a target into a belligerent—and probably foolish—reaction that requires the target to try to close the distance between you and attempt to physically strike you on its next turn. They attempt this action even if this would cause them to break formation or to give up cover or a tactically superior position. Whether the target strikes you or fails to do so, they come to their senses immediately afterward, after which further tasks attempting to goad the target again are hindered. Action to initiate.

Golem Body: You gain +1 to Armor, +1 to your Might Edge, and 5 additional points to your Might Pool. You do not need to eat, drink, or breathe (though you do need rest and sleep). You move more stiffly than a creature of flesh, which means you can never be trained or specialized in Speed defense rolls. Furthermore, you are practiced in using your stone fists as a medium weapon. Enabler.

Golem Grip (3 Might points): Your attack with the stone fists from your Golem Body ability is eased. If you hit, you can grab the target, preventing it from moving on its next turn. While you hold the target, its attacks or attempts to break free are hindered. If the target attempts to break free instead of attacking, you must make a Might-based roll to maintain your grip. If the target fails to break free, you can continue to hold it each round as your subsequent actions, automatically inflicting 4 points of damage each round by squeezing. Enabler.

Golem Healing: Your stone form from the Golem Body ability is more difficult to repair than flesh, which means you are unable to use the first, single-action recovery roll of the day that other PCs have access to. Thus, your first recovery roll on any given day requires ten minutes of rest, the second requires an hour of rest, and the third requires ten hours. Enabler.

Golem Stomp (4 Might points): You stomp on the ground with all of your strength, creating a shock wave that attacks all creatures in immediate range. Affected creatures take 3 points of damage and are either pushed out of immediate range or fall down (your choice). Action.

Good Advice: Anyone can help an ally, easing whatever task they're attempting. However, you have the benefit of clarity and wisdom. When you [help](#) another character, they gain an additional asset. Enabler.

Got a Feeling (4 Intellect points): You have an uncanny intuition when it comes to finding things. While exploring, you can extend your senses up to 1 mile (1.5 km) in any direction and ask the GM a very simple, general question—usually a yes-or-no question—about that area, such as “Is there an orc encampment nearby?” or “Is there dark matter to be found in that rusted hulk?” If the answer you seek is not in the area, you receive no information. Action.

Grab: While you are using the [Enlarge](#) ability, you can attack by attempting to wrap your massive hands around a target the size of a normal human or smaller. While you maintain your hold as your action, you keep the target from moving or taking physical actions (other than attempts to escape). The target's escape attempt is hindered by two steps due to your size. If you wish, you can automatically inflict 3 points of damage each round on the target while you hold it, but you can also keep it protected (by taking all attacks otherwise meant for the target). Action.

Grand Deception (3 Intellect points): You convince an intelligent creature that can understand you and isn't hostile of something that is wildly and obviously untrue. Action.

Grandiose Illusion (8 Intellect points): You create a fantastically complex scene of images that fit within a 1-mile (1.5 km) cube that you are also within. You must be able to see the images when you create them. The images can move in the cube and act in accordance with your desires. They can also act logically (such as reacting appropriately to fire or attacks) when you aren't directly observing them. The illusion includes sound and smell. For example, armies can clash in battle, with air support from machines or flying creatures, on and above terrain of your creation. The illusion lasts for one hour (or longer, if you concentrate on it after that time). Action.

Granite Wall (7+ Intellect points): You create a level 6 granite wall within short range. The wall is 1 foot (30 cm) thick and up to 20 feet by 20 feet (6 m by 6 m) in size. It appears resting on a solid foundation and lasts for about ten hours. If you apply three levels of Effort, the wall is permanent until destroyed naturally. Action to initiate.

Grasping Foliage (3+ Intellect points): Roots, branches, grass, or other natural foliage in the area snags and holds a foe you designate within short range for up to one minute. A foe caught in the grasping foliage can't move from its position, and all physical tasks, attacks, and defenses are hindered, including attempts to free itself. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to deal damage with the initial attack. Each level applied inflicts 2 additional points of damage when Grasping Foliage first snags and holds your foe.

You can also use this ability to clear an area of entangling growth in the immediate radius, such as an area of tall grass, thick brush, impenetrable vines, and so on. Action.

Gravity Cleave (3 Intellect points): You can harm a target within short range by rapidly increasing gravity's pull on one portion of the target and decreasing it on another, inflicting 6 points of damage. Action.

Great Tree: When you use Wooden Body, you may grow to up to 12 feet (4 m) in height. In this larger form, you add 7 points to your Might Pool and +2 to your Might Edge. If you chose to grow, when Wooden Body ends you subtract 7 points from your Might Pool (if this brings the Pool to 0, subtract the overflow first from your Speed Pool and then, if necessary, from your Intellect Pool). When you use Wooden Body, whether or not you choose to grow, instead of looking like a wooden version of your normal self, you can take on the full appearance of a humanoid tree creature or an actual tree (including growing additional branches, extra foliage, and so on). This does not affect any of your abilities—in tree shape, you can use type abilities, other focus abilities, and so on. In tree shape, pretending to be a tree and hiding among normal trees are eased by two steps. Enabler.

Greater Beast Form: When using [Beast Form](#), your beast form gains the following additional bonuses: +1 to your Might Edge, +2 to your Speed Pool, and +1 to your Speed Edge. Enabler.

Greater Controlled Change: It's easier to change into and out of the shape granted by your Beast Form ability. Transforming either way is now a difficulty 2 Intellect task. Enabler.

Greater Designation: You can assign an innocent or guilty label to all creatures within immediate range when you use [Designation](#). The one label applies to all affected creatures. This lasts until you use Greater Designation again. Action.

Greater Enhanced Intellect: You gain 6 points to your Intellect Pool. Enabler.

Greater Enhanced Might: You gain 6 points to your Might Pool. Enabler.

Greater Enhanced Physique: You gain 6 points to divide among your Might and Speed Pools however you wish. Enabler.

Greater Enhanced Potential: You gain 6 points to divide among your stat Pools however you wish. Enabler.

Greater Enhanced Speed: You gain 6 points to your Speed Pool. Enabler.

Greater Frenzy (4 Intellect points): When you wish, while in combat, you can enter a state of frenzy. While in this state, you can't use Intellect points, but you gain +2 to your Might Edge and your Speed Edge. This effect lasts as long as you wish, but it ends if no combat is taking place within range of your senses. If you have the [Frenzy](#) ability, you can use it or this ability, but you can't use both at the same time. Enabler.

Greater Healing Touch (4 Intellect points): You touch a creature and restore its Might Pool, Speed Pool, and Intellect Pool to their maximum values, as if it were fully rested. A single creature can benefit from this ability only once each day. Action.

Greater Necromancy (5+ Intellect points): This ability works like the [Necromancy](#) ability except that it creates a level 3 creature. Action to animate.

Greater Skill With Attacks: Choose one type of attack, even one in which you are already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. If you're already trained in that type of attack, you instead are specialized in that type of attack. Enabler.

Greater Skill With Defense: Choose one type of defense task, even one in which you are already trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are trained in defense tasks of that type, or specialized if you are already trained. You can select this ability up to three times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of defense task. Enabler.

Group Friendship (4 Intellect points): You convince a sentient creature to regard you (and up to ten creatures that you designate within immediate distance of you) positively, as they would a potential friend. Action.

Guide Bolt (4+ Intellect points): When you make an attack with a metallic bolt or metal-tipped arrow on a target within short range, you can improve the

attack's aim and velocity, which grants an asset to the attack and inflicts an additional 2 points of damage. If you apply a level of Effort, you grant the same benefits to a ranged attack made by an ally within immediate range. In any case, you can use this ability only once per round. Enabler.

Guild Training: Your type abilities that have durations last twice as long. Your type abilities that have short ranges reach to long range instead. Your type abilities that inflict damage deal 1 additional point of damage. Enabler.

Gunner: You inflict 1 additional point of damage with guns. Enabler.

Abilities—H

Hack the Impossible (3 Intellect points): You can persuade robots, machines, and computers to do your bidding. You can discover an encrypted password, break through security on a website, briefly turn off a machine such as a surveillance camera, or disable a robot with a moment's worth of fiddling. Action.

Hacker (2 Intellect points): You gain quick access to a desired bit of information in a computer or similar device, or you access one of its primary functions. Action.

Hand to Eye (2 Speed points): This ability provides an asset to any tasks involving manual dexterity, such as pickpocketing, lockpicking, games involving agility, and so on. Each use lasts up to a minute; a new use (to switch tasks) replaces the previous use. Action to initiate.

Handy: You work for a living and are trained in tasks related to carpentry, plumbing, and electrical repair. Your knowledge in these realms also gives you an asset to craft entirely new items within your spheres of knowledge and the limits of possibility within the setting. Enabler.

Hard Choices: Sometimes, you believe that you've got to lie to those who trust you for their own good. You are specialized in deception tasks. Enabler.

Hard Target: If you move a short distance or farther on your turn, all Speed defense rolls are eased. Enabler.

Hard to Distract: You are trained in Intellect defense tasks. Enabler.

Hard to Hit: You are trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

Hard to Kill: You can choose to reroll any defense task you make but never more than once per round. Enabler.

Hard to See: When you move, you are a blur. It is impossible to make out your identity as you run past, and in a round where you do nothing but move, stealth tasks and Speed defense tasks are eased. Enabler.

Hard-Won Resilience: In your explorations of dark places, you've been exposed to all sorts of terrible things and are developing a general resistance. You gain +1 to Armor and are trained in Might defense tasks. Enabler.

Harder Light: When you create an object out of hard light, the object is one level higher than normal. Enabler.
Hardiness: You are trained in Might defense tasks. Enabler.

Have Spacesuit, Will Travel: Somehow or another, you became the legal owner of a fully functional and advanced spacesuit. The spacesuit provides +1 Armor and, more important, allows you to survive in the vacuum of space using suit reserves for up to twelve hours at a time with enough reaction mass to get around in zero gravity on jets of ionized gas for that same period. After each use, the suit must be recharged, either with already-charged cartridges of air and reaction mass or by allowing the suit to sit idle in an area with breathable atmosphere for at least two hours, during which time it will recharge both air and reaction mass using integrated solid state mechanisms. The suit's power supply is a radioisotope thermoelectric generator, which means it'll function for a few decades before needing to be changed out. Enabler.

Heads-Up Display (2+ Intellect points): Your [Powered Armor](#) ability comes with systems that help you make sense of, analyze, and use your weapons in your environment. When you trigger this ability, you gain an asset on one attack roll as the suit perfectly outlines foes and steadies your aim, regardless of whether you're making a melee or ranged attack.

Alternatively, you can use the heads-up display to magnify your vision, increasing your vision range to 5 miles (8 km) for two rounds. If you apply one level of Effort, you can also see through mundane materials (such as wood, concrete, plastic, and stone) to a short distance in false color images. If you apply two levels of Effort, you can see through special materials (such as solid lead or other substances) to an immediate distance in false color images; however, the GM might require you to succeed at an Intellect-based task first, depending on the material blocking your armor's sensors.

Enabler.

Healing Pulse (3 Intellect points): You and all targets you choose within immediate range gain the immediate benefits of using one of their recovery rolls (as long as it is not their ten-hour recovery roll) without having to spend an action, ten minutes, or one hour. Targets regain points to their Pools immediately but mark off that recovery use. PCs who have already used up their one-action, ten-minute, and one-hour recovery rolls for the day gain no benefit from this ability. NPCs targeted by this ability regain a number of health points equal to their level. Action.

Healing Touch (1 Intellect point): With a touch, you restore 1d6 points to one stat Pool of any creature. This ability is a difficulty 2 Intellect task. Each time you attempt to heal the same creature, the task is hindered by an additional step. The difficulty returns to 2 after that creature rests for ten hours. Action.

Hedge Magic (1 Intellect point): You can perform small tricks: temporarily change the color or basic appearance of a small object, cause small objects to float through the air, clean a small area, mend a broken

object, prepare (but not create) food, and so on. You can't use Hedge Magic to harm another creature or object. Action.

Heightened Skills: You are trained in two tasks of your choosing (other than attacks or defense). If you choose a task you're already trained in, you instead become specialized in that task. You can't choose a task you're already specialized in. Enabler.

Hemorrhage (2+ Might points): You make a powerful and precise strike that inflicts additional damage later. On your next turn, the target of this attack takes an additional 3 points of damage (ignores Armor). The target can prevent this additional damage by making a recovery roll, using any ability that heals it, or using its action to attend to the injury. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase this duration by one round. Action.

Heroic Monster Bane: When you inflict damage to creatures more than twice as large or massive as you, you inflict 3 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Hidden Closet: The magic ally from your [Bound Magic Creature](#) ability can store items for you within its bound object, including extra sets of clothing, tools, food, and so on. The interior of the object is, in effect, a 10-foot (3 m) square pocket dimension that normally only the magic ally can access. Enabler.

Hidden Reserves: When you use an action to make a recovery roll, you also gain +1 to both your Might Edge and your Speed Edge for ten minutes thereafter. Enabler.

Higher Mathematics: You are trained in standard and higher mathematics. Enabler.

Hold Breath: You can hold your breath for up to five minutes. Enabler.

Horde Fighting: When two or more foes attack you at once in melee, you can use them against each other. You gain an asset to Speed defense rolls or attack rolls (your choice each round) against them. Enabler.

Horde Tactics (7 Might points): For up to one hour a day, you and at least three other allies can act like a single creature. Use your stats, but add +8 to your Might Pool, +1 to your Might Edge, +2 to your Speed Pool, +1 to your Speed Edge, and +1 to your Armor. Enabler.

Hover (2 Intellect points): You float slowly into the air. If you concentrate, you can control your movement to remain motionless in the air or float up to a short distance as your action; otherwise, you drift with the wind or with any momentum you have gained. This effect lasts for up to ten minutes. Action to initiate.

How Others Think: You have a sense of how people think. You're trained in one of the following tasks: persuasion, deception, or detecting falsehoods. Enabler.

Huge: When you use [Enlarge](#), you can choose to grow up to 16 feet (5 m) in height. When you do, you add +1 to Armor (a total of +2 to Armor) and deal 2 additional points of damage with melee attacks. Enabler.

Hunter's Drive (5 Intellect points): Through force of will, when you wish it, you grant yourself greater prowess in the hunt for ten minutes. During this time, you gain an asset to all tasks involving your quarry, including attacks. Your quarry is the creature you selected with your [Quarry](#) ability. Enabler.

Hurl Flame (2 Intellect points): While your [Shroud of Flame](#) is active, you can reach into your halo and hurl a handful of fire at a target. This is a ranged attack with short range that deals 4 points of fire damage. Action.

Abilities—I

Ice Armor (1 Intellect point): When you wish it, your body is covered in a sheen of ice for ten minutes that gives you +1 to Armor. While the sheen is active, you feel no discomfort from normal cold temperatures and have an additional +2 to Armor versus cold damage specifically. Enabler.

Ice Creation (4+ Intellect points): You create a solid object of ice that is your size or smaller. The object is crude and can have no moving parts, so you can make a sword, a shield, a short ladder, and so on. Your ice objects are as strong as iron, but if you're not in constant contact with them, they function for only $1d6 + 6$ rounds before breaking or melting. For example, you can make and wield an ice sword, but if you give it to another PC, the sword won't last as long for that character. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to create objects larger than you. For each level of Effort used in this way, you can create an object up to twice again as large as you. Action.

Ice Storm: You attempt an additional Intellect task as part of your [Cold Burst](#) attack, and if successful, you blind foes for up to one minute with a layer of freezing ice. All tasks of blinded creatures are hindered by two steps. Enabler.

Ignition (4 Intellect points): You designate a creature or flammable object you can see within short range to catch fire. This is an Intellect attack. The target takes 6 points of ambient damage per round until the flames are extinguished, which a creature can do by dousing itself in water, rolling on the ground, or smothering the flames. Usually, putting out the flames takes an action. Action to initiate.

Ignore Affliction (5 Might points): If you are affected by an unwanted condition or affliction (such as disease, paralysis, mind control, broken limb, and so on, but not damage), you can ignore it and act as if it does not affect you for one hour. If the condition would normally last less than an hour, it is entirely negated. Action.

Ignore the Pain: You ignore the [impaired](#) condition and treat the [debilitated](#) condition as impaired. Enabler.

Illuminating Touch (1 Intellect point): You touch an object, and that object sheds light to illuminate everything in short range. The light remains until you use an action to touch the object again, or until you've illuminated more objects than you have tiers, in which case the oldest objects you illuminated go dark first. Action.

Illusory Disguise (2+ Intellect points): You appear to be someone or something else, roughly of your size and shape, for up to one hour. Once created, the disguise requires no concentration. For each additional Intellect point you spend, you can disguise one other creature. All disguised creatures must stay within sight of you or lose their disguise. Action to create.

Illusory Duplicate (2 Intellect points): You create a single image of yourself within immediate range. The image looks like you as you are now (including how you are dressed). The image can move (for example, you could make it walk or attack), but it can't move more than an immediate distance from where you created it. The illusion includes sound and smell. It lasts for ten minutes and changes as you direct (no concentration is needed). If you move beyond short range of the illusion, it vanishes. Action to create.

Illusory Evasion (5 Intellect points): When you would be hit by an attack, you teleport an immediate distance away, leaving behind an illusory copy of yourself to be struck by that attack instead of you. This destroys the illusion but leaves you unharmed by the attack. If the attack affects an area and the teleportation can't get you out of that area, the attack still affects you normally. Enabler.

Illusory Selves (4 Intellect points): You create four holographic duplicates of yourself within short range. The duplicates last for one minute. You mentally direct their actions, and the duplicates aren't mirror images—each one can do different things. If struck violently, they either disappear permanently or freeze motionless (your choice). Action to create.

Immovable: You gain +3 to your Might Pool. You can attempt a Might task to avoid being knocked down, pushed back, or moved against your will even if the effect attempting to move you doesn't allow it. If you apply Effort to this task, you can apply two [free levels of Effort](#). Enabler.

Impart Ideal (3 Intellect points): After interacting for at least one minute with a creature who can hear and understand you, you can attempt to temporarily impart an ideal to it that you could not otherwise convince it to adopt. An ideal is different than a specific suggestion or command; an ideal is an overarching value such as "All life is sacred," "My political party is the best," "Children should be seen, not heard," and so on. An ideal influences a creature's behavior but doesn't control it. The imparted ideal lasts as long as befits the situation, but usually at least a few hours. The ideal is jeopardized if someone friendly to the creature spends a minute or more bringing it back to its senses. Action.

Impart Understanding: Your [Learning the Path](#) ability works more effectively, allowing you to ease a task by two steps or to provide two assets to a friend's task, instead of easing normally. Enabler.

Impersonate (2 Intellect points): For one hour, you alter your voice, posture, and mannerisms, whip together a disguise, and gain an asset on an attempt to impersonate someone else, whether it is a specific individual (Bob the cop) or a general role (a police officer). Action to initiate.

Impetus (2 Intellect points): A loose object within short range that you could carry in one hand is drawn to your free hand. If the object is stuck or held by another creature, you must succeed on a Might roll to rip it free, or the object remains where it is. Action.

Impossible Walk (5+ Speed points): You can walk (or crawl or run) on steep inclines and horizontal surfaces (such as walls and cliffs) for the next minute as if they were flat ground. When using this ability, “down” for you is either the surface you are walking on or the normal orientation of gravity (your choice). If you apply one level of Effort, you can also walk on the ceiling or on a liquid or semi-liquid surface such as water, mud, quicksand, or even lava (although touching a dangerous surface like lava still harms you). If you apply two levels of Effort, you can also walk on air as if it were solid ground. Enabler.

Impressive Display (2 Might points): You perform a feat of strength, speed, or combat, impressing those nearby. For the next minute you gain an asset on all interaction tasks with people who saw you use this ability. Action.

Improved Absorb Kinetic Energy: When you use [Absorb Kinetic Energy](#), instead of being able to absorb 1 point of damage from a physical attack or impact, you can absorb 2 points. You can also store up to 2 points of energy from any source. However, you can still release energy only 1 point at a time. Enabler.

Improved Apportation (6 Intellect points): You call a creature of up to level 3, which appears next to you. You can choose a creature that you’ve previously encountered, or (no more than once per day) you can allow the GM to determine the creature randomly. If you call a random creature, it has a 10 percent chance of being a creature of up to level 5. The creature has no memory of anything before being called by you, though it can speak and has the general knowledge a creature of its type should possess. The creature is receptive to communication and helping you (unless shown that it should do otherwise). Action.

Improved Command Spirit: When you use your [Command Spirit](#) ability, you can command a spirit or animate undead creature of up to level 7. Enabler.

Improved Companion: Your companion (such as a [controlled beast](#)) or [follower](#) increases to level 4. As a level 4 creature, it has a target number of 12 and 12 health, and it inflicts 4 points of damage (though in most cases, instead of attacking, it provides an asset to your attacks). You can gain this ability once per tier. Each additional time you select it, it increases your companion or follower’s level by 1. Enabler.

Improved Copying: You can use Copy Power to copy more powerful abilities. In addition to the normal options for using Effort with Copy Power, if you apply one level of Effort, the GM chooses a mid-tier ability that most closely resembles that power (instead of a low-tier ability). Enabler.

When you use Improved Copying, a copied ability must be low, medium, or high tier according to how it is listed in the ability categories. It doesn’t matter if a type or focus makes it available at a lower or higher tier.

Improved Designation: When you use [Designation](#), you can designate one additional creature to be innocent or guilty, which means up to two creatures at a time may be innocent, or two guilty, or one innocent and one guilty. Enabler.

Improved Edge: Choose one of your Edge stats that is 0. It increases to 1. Enabler.

Improved Gravity Cleave (9 Intellect points): You can harm a group of targets within long range by rapidly increasing gravity's pull on one portion of each target and decreasing it on another, inflicting 6 points of damage. The targets must be within immediate range of each other. Action.

Improved Machine Companion: The machine from your [Machine Companion](#) ability improves, becoming a level 5 creature with the ability either to fly a long distance each round (and carry you) for up to ten minutes at a time, or to carry an extra cypher for you that doesn't count against your cypher limit. Enabler.

Improved Monster Bane: When you inflict damage to creatures more than twice as large or massive as you, you inflict 3 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Improved Object Bond (5 Intellect points): When you manifest the ally from your [Bound Magic Creature](#) ability, it is now a level 4 [creature](#). Also, the creature gains a pulse attack that renders all artifacts, machines, manifest cyphers, and lesser magic devices within short range inoperable for one minute. After the creature uses this ability, it must retreat to its object to rest for three hours. Enabler.

Improved Recovery: Your ten-minute [recovery roll](#) takes only one action instead, so that your first two recovery rolls are one action, the third is one hour, and the fourth is ten hours. Enabler.

Improved Sculpt Light (7+ Intellect points): You create an object of solid light in any shape you can imagine whose base size can fit within a 10-foot (3 m) cube. The object appears in an area adjacent to you or floating freely in space up to a long distance away, and the object lasts for a few days. The object is crude and can have no moving parts, so you can make a wall segment, a block, a box, stairs, and so on. The sculpted object has the approximate mass of the real object and is level 6. If you apply Effort to increase the size of the object, each level applied increases the size by an additional 10-foot (3 m) cube. Action.

Improved Sensor (2 Intellect points): When you use [Sensor](#), you can place the sensor anywhere you choose within long range. Enabler.

Improved Success: When you roll a 17 or higher on an attack roll that deals damage, you deal 1 additional point of damage. For instance, if you roll a natural 18, which normally deals 2 extra points of damage, you instead deal 3 extra points. If you roll a natural 20 and choose to deal damage instead of achieve a special major effect, you deal 5 extra points of damage. Enabler.

Improvise (3 Intellect points): When you perform a task in which you are not trained, you can improvise to gain an asset on the task. The asset might be a tool you cobble together, a sudden insight into overcoming a problem, or a rush of dumb luck. Enabler. (Improvise can be used on a task a character has an inability in, but instead of gaining an asset, the character just loses the inability penalty.)

In Harm's Way (3 Intellect points): When you put your friends before yourself as your action, you ease all defense tasks for all characters you choose that are adjacent to you. This lasts until the end of your next turn. If one of your friends would be damaged, you can choose to take up to half the number of points of damage they would otherwise take, but only if you're not already impaired or debilitated. Enabler.

Incomparable Pilot: While on a starcraft you own or have a direct connection with, your Might Edge, Speed Edge, and Intellect Edge increase by 1. When you make a recovery roll on a starcraft you're familiar with, you recover 5 additional points. Enabler.

Increased Effects: You treat rolls of natural 19 as rolls of natural 20 for either Might actions or Speed actions (your choice when you gain this ability). This allows you to gain a **major effect** on a natural 19 or 20. Enabler.

Increasing Determination: If you fail at a noncombat physical task (pushing open a door or climbing a cliff, for example) and then retry the task, the task is eased. If you fail again, you gain no special benefits. Enabler.

Incredible Feat of Science (12 Intellect points): You do something amazing in the lab. This takes parts and materials equivalent to three expensive items. Possible incredible feats include:

Reanimate and command a dead body for one hour.

Create an engine that runs on perpetual motion.

Create a teleportation gate that remains open for one minute.

Transmute one substance into another substance.

Cure one person with an incurable disease or condition.

Create a weapon designed to hurt something that can't otherwise be hurt.

Create a defense designed to protect against something that can't otherwise be stopped.

Action to initiate; a full day of work to complete.

Incredible Health: Thanks to a dip in a magical pool, an injection of artificial antibodies and immune defense nanobots into your bloodstream, exposure to strange radiation, or something else, you are now immune to diseases, viruses, and mutations of any kind. Enabler.

Incredible Recovery (6 Might points): You move up one step on the [damage track](#) or shake off any unwanted ongoing condition. Action.

Incredible Running Speed: You move much farther than normal in a round. This means as a part of another action, you can move up to a long distance. As an action, you can move up to 200 feet (60 m), or up to 500 feet (150 m) as a Speed-based task with a difficulty of 4. Enabler.

Infer Thoughts (4 Intellect points): If you interact with or study a target for at least a round, you can attempt to read its surface thoughts, even if the subject doesn't want you to. You must be able to see the target. Once you have gained a sense of what it's thinking—through its body language, its speech, and what it does and doesn't say—you can continue to infer the target's surface thoughts for up to one minute as long as you can still see and hear the target. Action to prepare; action to initiate.

Inferno Trail (6 Intellect points): For the next minute, you leave a trail of flame in your wake. The trail matches your path and lasts for up to a minute, creating a wall of flame about 6 feet (2 m) high that inflicts 5 points of damage to any creature that passes through it, potentially catching them on fire for an additional 1 point of damage each round (if they are flammable) until they spend a round putting out the fire. Action.

Infiltrator: You are trained in interactions involving lies or trickery. Enabler.

Influence Swarm (1 Intellect point): You master one type of small creature (such as insects, rats, bats, or even birds) and they respond to you in number. Your creatures within short range will not harm you or those you designate as allies for one hour. Action to initiate.

Information Gathering (5 Intellect points): You speak telepathically with any or all machines within 1 mile (1.5 km). You can ask one basic question about themselves or anything happening near them and receive a simple answer. For example, while in an area with many machines, you could ask about the location of a specific creature or individual, and if they are within a mile of you, one or more machines will probably provide the answer. Action.

Informer: You gain an informer within an allied community. They act as your secret (or known) informer. If something of note happens in your informer's location, they will use whatever means they have available to tell you about it. Enabler.

Infuse Spirit: When you kill a creature or destroy a spirit with an attack, if you choose, its spirit (if unprotected) immediately infuses you, and you regain 1d6 points to one of your Pools (your choice). The spirit is stored within you, which means it cannot be questioned, raised, or restored to life by any means unless you allow it. Enabler.

Inhabit Crystal (4 Intellect points): You transfer your body and whatever you are carrying into a crystal at least the size of your index finger. While in the crystal, you are aware of what is going on around it, seeing and hearing through the crystal. You can even speak through the crystal and carry on conversations. You cannot take actions other than to exit the crystal. You remain within as long as you wish, but you are not in stasis and should exit to eat, drink, sleep, and so on as normal (breathing is not an issue). If the crystal is destroyed or takes major damage while you are within it, you immediately exit, cannot act for three rounds, and move two steps down the damage track. Action to enter and exit. (A character should specify where they place the crystal for the Inhabit Crystal ability before using it, even if it's just on the ground at their feet.)

Innate Power: Choose either your Might Pool or your Speed Pool. When spending points to activate your focus abilities, you can spend points from this Pool instead of your Intellect Pool (in which case you use your Might Edge or Speed Edge instead of your Intellect Edge, as appropriate). Enabler

Inner Defense: Life's trials have toughened you and made you hard to read. You are trained in any task to resist another creature's attempt to discern your true feelings, beliefs, or plans. You are likewise trained in resisting torture, telepathic intrusion, and mind control. Enabler.

Innovator: You can modify any artifact to give it different or better abilities as if that artifact were one level lower than normal, and the modification takes half the normal time. Enabler.

Insect Eruption (6 Intellect points): You call a swarm of insects in a place where it is possible for insects to appear. They remain for one minute, and during this time, they do as you command while they are within long range. They can swarm about and hinder any or all creatures' tasks, or you can focus the swarm and attack all targets within immediate range of each other (all within long range of you). The attacking swarm inflicts 2 points of damage per round. You can also command the swarm to move heavy objects through collective effort, eat through wooden walls, and perform other actions suitable for a supernatural swarm. Action to initiate.

Insight: You are trained in tasks to discern others' motives and to ascertain their general nature. You have a knack for sensing whether or not someone is truly innocent. Enabler.

Inspiration (6 Intellect points): You speak words of encouragement and inspiration. All allies within short range who can hear you immediately gain a [recovery roll](#), gain an immediate free action, and have an asset for that free action. The recovery roll does not count as one of their normal recovery rolls. Action.

Inspire Action (4 Intellect points): If one ally can see and easily understand you, you can instruct that ally to take an action. If the ally chooses to take that exact action, they can do so as an additional action immediately. Doing so doesn't interfere with the ally taking a normal action on their turn. Action.

Inspire Aggression (2 Intellect points): Your words twist the mind of a character within short range who is able to understand you, unlocking their more primitive instincts. As a result, they gain an asset on their Might-based attack rolls for one minute. Action to initiate.

Inspire Coordinated Actions (9 Intellect points): If your allies can see and easily understand you, you can instruct each of them to take one specific action (the same action for all of them). If any of them choose to take that exact action, they can do so as an additional action immediately. This doesn't interfere with them taking their normal actions on their turns. Action.

Inspire the Innocent (3 Intellect points): You speak words of encouragement and inspiration to everyone within immediate range whom you have designated as innocent with your [Designation](#) ability. They immediately gain a free recovery roll. One person you choose can gain an immediate free action instead of a

free recovery roll. If you also have the Inspiration ability, the target who gains a free action also gains an asset on it. Action.

Inspiring Ease: Through stories, songs, art, or other forms of entertainment, you inspire your friends. After spending 24 hours with you, once per day each of your friends can ease a task. This benefit is ongoing while you remain in the friend's company. It ends if you leave, but it resumes if you return to the friend's company within 24 hours. If you leave the friend's company for more than 24 hours, you must spend another 24 hours together to reactivate the benefit. Enabler.

Inspiring Success (6 Intellect points): When you succeed on a roll to perform a task related to the stat that you choose upon selecting this ability, and you applied at least one level of Effort, you may choose another character within short range. That character has an asset on the next task they attempt using that stat on their next turn. Enabler.

Intelligent Interface (3 Intellect points): You can speak telepathically with any intelligent machine within long range. Further, you are trained in all interactions with intelligent machines. Such machines and robots that normally would never communicate with a human might talk to you. Enabler.

Intense Interaction (3 Intellect points): You gain an asset on intimidating, persuading, and influencing people for ten minutes. Action.

Interaction Skills: You are trained in two skills in which you are not already trained. Choose two of the following: deceiving, persuading, public speaking, seeing through deception, or intimidation. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose two different skills. Enabler.

Interface: By directly plugging into a device, you can identify and learn to operate it as though the task were one level lower. Enabler.

Interruption (4 Intellect points): Your vociferous, booming command prevents a creature within short range from taking any action for one round. It can defend itself if attacked, but when it does so, its defense is hindered by two steps. Each additional time you attempt this ability against the same target, you must apply one more level of Effort than you applied on the previous attempt. Action.

Inventor: You can create new artifacts in half the time, as if they were two levels lower, by spending half the normal XP. Enabler.

Investigate: You are trained in perception, cryptography, deceiving, and breaking into computers. Enabler.

Investigative Skills: You are trained in two skills in which you are not already trained. Choose two of the following: perception, identifying, lockpicking, assessing danger, or tinkering with devices. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose two different skills. Enabler.

Investigator: To really shine as an investigator, you must engage your mind and body in your deductions. You can spend points from your Might Pool, Speed Pool, or Intellect Pool to apply levels of Effort to any Intellect-based task. Enabler.

Invisibility (4 Intellect points): You become invisible for ten minutes. While invisible, you are specialized in stealth and Speed defense tasks. This effect ends if you do something to reveal your presence or position—attacking, using an ability, moving a large object, and so on. If this occurs, you can regain the remaining invisibility effect by taking an action to hide your position. If you have another ability that also confers invisibility, using either one allows you to remain invisible for twice as long as the duration specified. Action to initiate or reinitiate.

Invisible Phasing (4 Might points): You become invisible while using [Phase Sprint](#) and during the following round. While invisible, stealth is eased by two steps and Speed defense is eased by two steps (this replaces the asset to Speed defense tasks provided by Phase Sprint). The first attack you make using any [Shreds the Walls of the World](#) attack abilities is also eased by two steps; however, if you attack a creature, Invisible Phasing ends immediately instead of lasting for one additional round. If you have the Invisibility ability, you can remain invisible during the entire round, which means that if you use [Scratch Existence](#) or [Shred Existence](#), attacking each target along your path is eased by two steps. Enabler.

Iron Fist: Your unarmed attacks deal 4 points of damage. Enabler.

Iron Punch (5+ Intellect points): You magnetically pick up a metallic heavy object within short range and hurl it at someone within short range, an Intellect action that deals 6 points of damage to the target and to the hurled object. For each additional level of Effort applied, you can pick up a slightly larger object, allowing you to affect one additional target within short range as long as it is next to the prior target. Action.

Abilities—J

Jaunt (5+ Intellect points): You instantaneously teleport yourself to any location within long distance that you can see. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the distance you can travel; each level of Effort used in this way increases the range by another 100 feet (30 m). Action.

Juggernaut (5 Might points): Until the end of the next round, you can move through solid objects such as doors and walls. Only 2 feet (60 cm) of wood, 1 foot (30 cm) of stone, or 6 inches (15 cm) of metal can stop your movement. Enabler.

Jump Attack (5+ Might points): You attempt a difficulty 4 Might roll to jump high into the air as part of your melee attack action. If you succeed at the jump and your attack hits, you inflict 3 additional points of damage and knock the foe prone. If you fail at the jump, you still make your normal attack roll, but you don't inflict the

extra damage or knock down the opponent if you hit. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to enhance your jump; each level of Effort used in this way adds +2 feet to the height and +1 damage to the attack. Action.

Junkmonger (2 Intellect points): You are trained in crafting two kinds of items using scavenged [junk](#). If you have scavenged (or otherwise obtained) at least two pieces of junk in different categories (electronic, plastic, dangerous, metallic, glass, or textile), you have the materials you need to [craft](#) a new item in one of your areas of training (unless the GM deems otherwise). Enabler.

Jury-Rig (5 Intellect points): You quickly create an object using what would seem to be entirely inappropriate materials. You can make a bomb out of a tin can and household cleaners, a lockpick out of aluminum foil, or a sword out of broken furniture. The level of the item determines the difficulty of the task, but the appropriateness of the materials eases or hinders it as well. Generally, the object can be no larger than something you can hold in one hand, and it functions once (or, in the case of a weapon or similar item, is essentially useful for one encounter). If you spend at least ten minutes on the task, you can create an item of level 5 or lower. You can't change the nature of the materials involved. For example, you can't take iron rods and make a pile of gold coins or a wicker basket. Action.

Just a Bit Mad: You are trained in Intellect defense tasks. Enabler.

Abilities—K

Knock Out (5+ Might points): You make a melee attack that inflicts no damage. Instead, if the attack hits, make a second Might-based roll. If successful, a foe of level 3 or lower is knocked unconscious for one minute. For each level of Effort used, you can affect one higher level of foe, or you can extend the duration for an additional minute. Action.

Know Their Faults: If a creature that you can see has a special weakness, such as a vulnerability to loud noises, a negative modification to perception, and so on, you know what it is. Ask and the GM will tell you; usually, this is not associated with a roll, but in certain cases the GM may decide that there is a chance for you not to know. In these cases, you are specialized in knowing creature weaknesses. Enabler.

Know Where to Look: Whenever the GM obtains a result for you on the [Useful Stuff table](#), you get two results instead of one. If the GM is using some other method to generate rewards for finding valuables, you should gain double the result you would otherwise obtain. Enabler.

Knowing: You are trained in one area of knowledge of your choice. Enabler.

Knowing the Unknown (6 Intellect points): By accessing the resources appropriate to your character, you can ask the GM one question and get a general answer. The GM assigns a level to the question, so the more obscure the answer, the more difficult the task. Generally, knowledge that you could find by looking somewhere other than your current location is level 1, and obscure knowledge of the past is level 7. Gaining knowledge of the future is impossible. Action.

Knowledge of the Law: You're trained in the law of the land. If you don't know the answer to a question of law, you know where and how to research it (a university's law library is a good place to start, but you've also got online sources). Enabler.

Knowledge Is Power: Choose two noncombat skills in which you are not trained. You are trained in those skills. Enabler.

Knowledge Skills: You are trained in two skills in which you are not already trained. Choose two areas of knowledge such as history, geography, archeology, and so on. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose two different skills. Enabler.

Abilities—L

Lab Analysis (3 Intellect points): You analyze the scene of a crime, the site of a mysterious incident, or a series of unexplained phenomena, and maybe learn a surprising amount of information about the perpetrators, the participants, or the force(s) responsible. To do so, you must collect samples from the scene. Samples are paint or wood scrapings, dirt, photographs of the area, hair, an entire corpse, and so on. With samples in hand, you can discover up to three pertinent pieces of information about the scene, possibly clearing up a lesser mystery and pointing the way to solving a greater one. The GM will decide what you learn and what level of difficulty is needed to learn it. (For comparison, discovering that a victim was killed not by a fall, as seems immediately obvious, but rather by electrocution, is a difficulty 3 task for you.) The task is eased if you take the time to transport the samples to a permanent lab (if you have access to one), as opposed to conducting the analysis with your field science kit. Action to initiate, 2d20 minutes to complete.

Late Inspiration (3 Intellect points): You retry a task you failed within the past one minute, using the same difficulty and modifiers, except this time you have an asset on the task. If this retry fails, you can't use this ability to retry it again. Enabler.

Lead by Inquiry: You keep your allies on their toes with occasional questions, jokes, and even mock drills for those who care to join in. After spending 24 hours with you, your allies are treated as if trained in tasks related to perception. This benefit is ongoing while you remain in your allies' company. It ends if you leave, but it resumes if you return to the allies' company within 24 hours. If you leave the allies' company for more than 24 hours, you must spend another 24 hours together to reactivate the benefit. Enabler.

Lead From the Front: You gain 3 new points to divide among your stat Pools however you wish. Enabler.

Learned a Few Things: You are trained in two areas of knowledge of your choice, or specialized in one area of knowledge of your choice. Enabler.

Learning the Path (2 Intellect points): You observe or study a creature, object, or location for at least one round. The next time you interact with it (possibly in the following round), a related task (such as persuading the creature, attacking it, or defending from its attack) is eased. Action.

Legal Intern: You gain a level 4 [follower](#) who is mostly interested in helping with your law-related tasks, but who might also help you in other areas. Enabler.

Legerdemain (1 Speed point): You can perform small but seemingly impossible tricks. For example, you can make a small object in your hands disappear and move into a desired spot within reach (like your pocket). You can make someone believe that they have something in their possession that they do not have (or vice versa). You can switch similar objects right in front of someone's eyes. Action.

Lend Animal Shape (6+ Intellect points): You change into an animal, and one willing creature within immediate range also transforms into an animal of that type (bear, tiger, wolf, and so on) for ten minutes, as if they were using your Animal Shape ability. For each level of Effort applied, you can affect one additional creature. All creatures transforming with you must be your size or smaller. A creature can revert to its normal form as an action, but it cannot then change back into the animal form. One creature (whether you or someone else) changing form does not affect any other creature affected with this ability. Action.

A creature that takes animal form with Lend Animal Shape counts as an animal for the use of Animal Scrying.

A character might be able to take the shape of a creature that is similar to a common animal, such as a unicorn instead of a horse or a basilisk instead of a lizard, but doing so should require applying at least one level of Effort to the change, and the character wouldn't gain any of the creature's magical abilities.

Lethal Damage: Choose one of your existing attacks that inflicts points of damage (depending on your type and focus, this might be a specific weapon, a special ability such as a blast of fire, or your unarmed attacks). When you hit with that attack, you inflict an additional 5 points of damage. Enabler.

Lethal Ploy (5+ Intellect points): Long experience has revealed to you that subterfuge is your friend in desperate situations. You push, attack, or distract the target in some seemingly inconsequential way that leads to the target's death. The target must be level 2 or lower. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum level of the target by 1. Thus, to kill a level 5 target (three levels above the normal limit), you must apply three levels of Effort. Action.

Lethal Vibration (7 Might points): You set up a lethal vibration in your own body and pass it to a creature you touch with a successful attack. If the target is level 2 or lower, it dies, exploding in a peal of thunder. If the target is level 3 or higher, it sustains 6 points of damage and is stunned on its next action. If the target is a PC of any tier, they move down one step on the [damage track](#). In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to affect a more powerful target (one level of Effort means a target of up to level 3 explodes and a target of level 4 or higher takes damage and is stunned, and so on). Action.

Levity: Through wit, charm, humor, and grace, you are trained in all social interactions other than those involving coercion or intimidation. During rests, you put friends and comrades at ease so much that they gain +1 to their recovery rolls. Enabler.

Life Lessons: Choose any two noncombat skills. You are trained in those skills. Enabler.

Like the Back of Your Hand: All tasks directly related to a starcraft that you own or have a direct connection with are eased. Tasks include repair, refueling, finding a breach in the hull, finding a stowaway, and so on. The same goes for any attack or defense rolls you make within the starcraft against enemy boarders, as well as any attack or defense rolls you make with the ship against enemy ships. Enabler.

Link Senses (2 Intellect points): You touch a willing creature and link its senses to yours for one minute. At any time during that duration, you can concentrate to see, hear, and smell what that creature is experiencing, instead of using your own senses. If you or the creature move out of long range, the connection is broken. Action to initiate.

Living Armor (4 Intellect points): If you're in a location where it's possible for your creatures from [Influence Swarm](#) to come, you call a swarm around you for one hour. They crawl over your body or fly around you in a cloud. During this time, your Speed defense tasks are eased, and you gain +1 to Armor. Action to initiate.

Living Light (6+ Intellect points): Your body dissolves into a cloud of photons that instantly travel to a location you choose and then reform. You can choose any open space big enough to contain you that you can see within very long range, or any place you have lit by [Illuminating Touch](#) that is still shining. You disappear and almost instantly reappear in the space you chose. It takes until the end of the round for your body to become fully solid, so until the start of the next round, you take a maximum of 1 point of damage from any given attack or source of damage. Each level of Effort you apply allows you to bring along one additional person besides yourself, as long as they are within immediate range when you depart. Action.

Living Off the Land: Given an hour or so, you can always find edible food and potable water in the wilderness. You can even find enough for a small group of people, if need be. Further, since you're so hardy and have gained resistance over time, you are trained in resisting the effects of natural poisons (such as those from plants or living creatures). You're also immune to natural diseases. Enabler.

Living Wall (3 Might points): You specify a confined area—such as an open doorway, a hallway, or a space between two trees—where you stand. For the next ten minutes, if anyone attempts to enter or pass through that area and you don't wish it, you make an automatic attack against them. If you hit, not only do you inflict damage, but they must also stop their movement. Enabler.

Lock (2+ Intellect points): A door, gate, chest, drawer, locket, or other object that can be closed within long range snaps shut and is magically locked (level 3 effect) for one hour. If an object or creature is physically holding the target object open, you must also succeed on an Intellect-based attack. For each level of Effort you apply, the quality of the magical lock increases by one level. Action to initiate.

Lost in the Chaos: When faced with several foes at once, you have developed tactics for using their numbers against them. When two or more foes attack you at once in melee, you play one off the other. Speed defense rolls or attack rolls (your choice) against them are eased. Enabler.

Lunge (2 Might points): This ability requires you to extend yourself for a powerful stab or smash. The awkward lunge hinders the attack roll. If your attack is successful, it inflicts 4 additional points of damage. Action.

Abilities—M

Machine Affinity: You are trained in tasks involving electrical machines. Enabler.

Machine Bond: From very long range, you can activate and control a device (including a robot or vehicle) that you have bonded with. For example, you can detonate a manifest cypher even when it is held by someone else, or cause an automated turret to fire where you direct. Bonding is a process that requires 24 hours of meditation in the presence of the machine. Action.

Machine Companion: You create a level 3 animate, intelligent machine that accompanies you and acts as you direct. As a level 3 machine companion, it has a target number of 9 and 9 health, and it inflicts 3 points of damage. If it's destroyed, it takes you one month to create a new one. Enabler.

Machine Efficiency (3 Intellect points): You can make a blaster shoot farther, coax more speed from a skycycle, improve the clarity of a camera, jury-rig a light to be brighter, speed up a network connection, and so on. You increase an object's level by 2 for one minute, or you treat the object as an asset that eases an associated task by two steps for one minute (your choice). Action to initiate.

Machine Enhancement: Any time you use Effort on an Intellect action, add one of the following enhancements to the action (your choice):

Free level of Effort

Automatic [minor effect](#)

Enabler.

Machine Hunting: You are trained in tasks associated with tracking, spotting, or otherwise finding robots and animate machines. You are also trained in all stealth tasks. Enabler.

Machine Interface (2 Intellect points): For one minute you gain an asset on tasks to discern the level, function, and activation of technological devices that you touch. Enabler.

Machine Telepathy (3 Intellect points): You can read the surface thoughts of a machine within short range, even if the machine doesn't want you to. You must be able to see the machine. Once you have established contact, you can read the target's thoughts for up to one minute. If you or the target move out of range, the connection is broken. If you have the [Mind Reading](#) ability, when you apply Effort to Machine Telepathy, you gain a free level of Effort. Action to initiate.

Machine Vulnerabilities: You inflict 3 additional points of damage against robots and animate machines of all kinds. Enabler.

Magic Shield (1 Intellect point): You gain +1 to Armor for an hour. Action to initiate.

Magic Training: You are trained in the basics of magic (including the operation of magic artifacts and cyphers) and can attempt to understand and identify its properties. Enabler.

Magical Repertoire: The number of subtle cyphers you can bear at the same time increases by two. If you spend one hour preparing your magic, you can fill any of your open cypher slots with subtle cyphers chosen randomly by the GM (this hour can be part of a one-hour or ten-hour recovery action if you are awake for the entire time). As part of this preparation process, you may discard any number of subtle cyphers you carry to make room for more subtle cyphers. Enabler.

If a character has Magical Repertoire, the GM should give the PC frequent opportunities to gain new subtle cyphers, whether from preparation or by gaining them automatically as explained in the Cyphers chapter

Magical Training: You are trained in all of your spells. As a result, you ease any task involved in the use of your spells. Enabler.

Magnetic Field (4 Intellect points): When you wish it, a field of magnetism around you pulls incoming, ranged, metallic projectile attacks (such as arrows, bullets, a thrown metal knife, and so on) to the ground. You are immune to such attacks for one round. You must be aware of an attack to foil it. Enabler.

Magnificent Moment: If you make an attack or attempt a task with the immediate action you gain by using [Seize the Moment](#), the attack or task is eased. Enabler.

Major Illusion (3 Intellect points): You create a complex scene of images within immediate range. The entire scene must fit within a 100-foot (30 m) cube. The images can move, but they can't leave the area defined by the cube. The illusion includes sound and smell. It lasts for ten minutes and changes as you direct (no concentration is needed). If you move beyond immediate range of the cube, the illusion vanishes. Action to create.

Make Judgment: You are trained in discerning the truth of a situation, seeing through lies, or otherwise overcoming deception. Enabler.

Maneuvering Adept: If you apply at least one level of Effort to a task involving climbing, jumping, balancing, or some other kind of maneuvering, you get a [free level of Effort](#). Enabler.

Mask (5 Intellect points): You transform your body to become someone else. You can change any physical characteristic you wish, including coloration, height, weight, gender, and distinguishing markings. You can also change the appearance of whatever you are wearing or carrying. Your stats, as well as the stats of your items, do not change. You remain in this form for up to a day or until you use an action to resume your normal appearance. Action to initiate.

Master Crafter: You are trained in the crafting of two kinds of items, or you are specialized in two kinds of items that you are already trained in. Enabler.

Master Cypher Use: You can bear five cyphers at a time. Enabler.

Master Entertainer: Your [Inspiring Ease](#) ability works more effectively, easing your friends' tasks by two steps rather than one step. Enabler.

Master Identifier: You are trained in identifying the function of any kind of device. Enabler.

Master Machine (8 Intellect points): You can control the functions of a machine you have bonded with using [Machine Bond](#), intelligent or otherwise. In addition, if you use an action to concentrate on a machine, you are aware of what is going on around it (you see and hear as if you were standing next to it, no matter how far away you are). You must touch the machine to create the bond, but afterward, there is no range limitation. This bond lasts for one week. You can bond with only one machine at a time. Action to initiate.

Master of Unarmed Fighting Style: You are specialized in unarmed attacks. If you are already specialized in unarmed attacks, you instead deal 2 additional points of damage with unarmed attacks. Enabler.

Master Thief: You are trained in climbing, escaping from bonds, slipping through narrow places, and other contortionist moves. Enabler.

Masterful Armor Modification: Choose one of the following modifications to make to the Powered Armor from your [Powered Armor](#) ability. If you choose to make a different modification later, you can do so, but you must spend 2 XP each time and substitute the updated modification for the previous modification.

Cypher Pod. The power armor provides an insulated pod in which you can carry one additional manifest cypher beyond what your cypher limit normally allows. Enabler.

Drone (3 Intellect points). A level 4 drone no larger than 1 foot (30 cm) on a side launches from your armor for one hour, flying up to a long distance each round. The drone accompanies you and follows your instructions. It has manipulators, allowing it to attempt to accomplish physical tasks. You'll probably make rolls for your drone when it takes actions. A drone in combat usually doesn't make separate attacks but helps with yours. On your action, if the drone is next to you, it serves as an asset for one attack you make on your turn. If the drone is destroyed, you must spend another 2 XP to rebuild it or choose another Masterful Armor Modification. Action to initiate.

Improved Field Reinforcement. You gain +1 to Armor while wearing your power armor. Enabler.

Jet-Assisted Flight (3+ Might points). You modify your power armor to allow you to blast off the ground and fly for one minute at a time. For each level of Effort applied, you can increase the duration by an additional minute. Action.

Mastery in Armor: The cost reduction from your [Practiced in Armor](#) ability improves. You now reduce the Speed Effort cost for wearing armor to 0. Enabler.

Mastery With Attacks: Choose one type of attack in which you are trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are specialized in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler. (If you aren't trained in an attack, select [Skill With Attacks](#) to become trained in that attack.)

Mastery With Defense: Choose one type of defense task in which you are trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are specialized in defense tasks of that type. You can select this ability up to three times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of defense task. Enabler.

Matter Cloud (5 Intellect points): Pebbles, dirt, sand, and debris rise into the air around you to form a swirling cloud. The cloud extends out to immediate range, moves with you, and lasts for one minute. When it ends, all the materials fall to the ground around you. The cloud makes it harder for other creatures to attack you, giving you an asset on Speed defense rolls. In addition, while the cloud is around you, you can use an action to whip the material so that it abrades everything within immediate range, dealing 1 point of damage to each creature and object in the area. Action to initiate.

Maximize Cypher: Choose one subtle cypher you bear. Its level becomes the maximum level possible for that cypher. For example, a meditation aid has a level range of $1d6 + 2$, so maximizing that cypher changes its level to 8. You can have only one maximized subtle cypher at a time. You can't use this ability again until after you've taken a ten-hour recovery action. Enabler.

Mechanical Telepathy (3 Intellect points): By touching a thinking machine, you gain access to its surface "thoughts." Action.

Medium Teleportation (5+ Intellect points): You instantly teleport yourself to any location within a long distance that you can see. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase your range, teleport to a location you can't see, or bring other people with you. Each additional long distance costs one level of Effort. Teleporting to

a destination you can't see costs one level of Effort. Each additional one or two targets brought with you costs one level of Effort (you must touch any additional targets). These levels of Effort are counted separately, so teleporting an additional long distance away to a location you can't see with two passengers costs a total of three levels of Effort. Action.

If you already have Short Teleportation when you select Medium Teleportation or Teleportation, you may replace Short Teleportation with another tier 4 type ability.

Memory Becomes Action (4+ Intellect points): You can duplicate a one-action character ability, performing it as if it were natural for you. You must have seen the ability used within the past week, it must be third tier or lower, and it must be an ability with a point cost. In addition to the point cost of Memory Becomes Action, you must pay the Might, Speed, or Intellect cost of the ability you are copying. For example, if you want to copy a friend's [Lunge](#) attack (which normally costs 2 Might points), you'd pay 4 Intellect points to activate Memory Becomes Action and 2 Might points to use Lunge. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to copy an ability you saw longer than one week ago; each level of Effort used in this way extends the time period by one week.

Enabler.

Mental Link (1+ Intellect point): You open a pathway to another creature's mind via a light touch, which allows you to transmit thoughts and images to each other. The mental link remains regardless of distance and lasts for one hour. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to extend the duration by one hour for each level of Effort applied. Action to initiate.

Mental Projection (6+ Intellect points): Your mind fully leaves your body and manifests anywhere you choose within immediate range. Your projected mind can remain apart from your body for up to 24 hours. This effect ends early if your Intellect Pool is reduced to 0 or if your projection touches your resting body.

Your disembodied mind is a psychic construct that looks like you, though its frayed edges trail off into nothingness. You control this body as if it were your normal body and can act and move as you normally would with a few exceptions. You can move through solid objects as if you were phased, and you ignore any terrain feature that would impede your movement.

Your attacks inflict 3 fewer points of damage (to a minimum of 1) and you take 3 fewer points of damage (to a minimum of 1) from physical attacks, unless they can affect transdimensional or phased beings, in which case you take full damage. Regardless of the source, you take all damage as Intellect damage first.

Your mind can travel up to 1 mile (1.5 km) from your body. Each level of additional Effort applied extends the range that you can travel by 1 mile (1.5 km).

Your physical body is helpless until this effect ends. You cannot use your physical senses to perceive anything. For example, your body could sustain a significant injury, and you wouldn't know it. Your body cannot take Intellect damage, so if your body takes enough damage to reduce both your Might Pool and your Speed Pool to 0, your mind snaps back to your body, and you are stunned until the end of the next round as you try to reorient yourself to your predicament. Action to initiate.

(Mentally projecting characters may attract psychic entities and predators that PCs normally don't have to deal with, run into weather psychic phenomena that risks severing their connection, and possibly even become lost on a different metaphysical plane.)

Mentally Tough: Staring into the naked weave of hyperspace, warped space, or a similar effect related to faster-than-light travel is hard on the mind, but you've developed resistance. You're trained in Intellect defense tasks. Enabler.

Meticulous Planner: If you spend a long time planning an action, you gain an asset on performing it. The time to study and plan for the action is ten times as long as it takes to perform the action. For example, if you want to jump across a hole in the floor (one action), you can study the area for ten rounds (about a minute), and when you attempt to jump over the hole, you have an asset on the jump. This benefit applies to only one roll—if you want to perform the task again with the benefit of an asset, you need to study and plan again. Enabler.

Microgravity Adept: You ignore all the ill effects of low [gravity](#) and no gravity on movement; you are trained in low-gravity maneuvers and zero-gravity maneuvers. (You might still be subject to negative biological effects of long-term exposure, if any.) Enabler.

Microgravity Avoidance: By taking advantage of microgravity conditions, you gain an asset to Speed defense tasks while in zero-gravity or low-gravity conditions. Enabler.

Mind Control (6+ Intellect points): You control the actions of another creature you touch. This effect lasts for one minute. The target must be level 2 or lower. Once you have established control, you maintain mental contact with the target and sense what it senses. You can allow it to act freely or override its control on a case-by-case basis. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum level of the target or increase the duration by one minute. Thus, to control the mind of a level 5 target (three levels above the normal limit) or control a target for four minutes (three minutes above the normal duration), you must apply three levels of Effort. When the duration ends, the creature doesn't remember being controlled or anything it did while under your command. Action to initiate.

Mind for Might: When performing a task that would normally require spending points from your Intellect Pool, you can spend points from your Might Pool instead, and vice versa. Enabler.

Mind Games (3 Intellect points): You use lies and trickery, mockery, and perhaps even hateful, obscene language against a foe that can understand you. If successful, the foe is stunned for one round and cannot act, and it is dazed in the following round, during which time its tasks are hindered. Action.

Mind of a Leader (6 Intellect points): When you develop a course of action to deal with a future situation, you can ask the GM one very general question about what is likely to happen if you carry out the plan, and you will get a simple, brief answer. Action.

Mind Reading (2 Intellect points): You can read the surface thoughts of a creature within short range, even if the target doesn't want you to. You must be able to see your target. Once you have established contact, you can read the target's thoughts for up to one minute. If you also have the Mind Reading special ability from another source, you can use this ability at long range, and you don't need to be able to see the target (but you do have to know that the target is within range). Action to initiate.

Mind Surge: In addition to your normal [recovery rolls](#) each day, you can—at any time between ten-hour rests—recover $1d6 + 6$ points to your Intellect Pool. Action.

Minor Illusion (1 Intellect point): You create a single image of a creature or object within immediate range. The image must fit within a 10-foot (3 m) cube. The image can move (for example, you could make the illusion of a person walk or attack), but it can't leave the area defined by the cube. The illusion includes sound but not smell. It lasts for ten minutes, but if you want to change the original illusion significantly—such as making a creature appear to be wounded—you must concentrate on it again (though doing so doesn't cost additional Intellect points). If you move beyond immediate range of the cube, the illusion vanishes. Action to create; action to modify.

Minor Wish: At your request, the magic ally from your [Bound Magic Creature](#) ability can use its action to cast a minor spell on you. Afterward, it must retreat to its bound object to rest for one hour. The effects it can produce include the following. Action to initiate.

Golden Anger. A golden light touches your eyes. For the next several minutes, if you attack a target, you inflict 2 additional points of damage.

Golden Ward. You gain +1 to Armor for one hour from a translucent sheen of golden light.

Light of Truth. Whenever you attempt to discern falsehood during the next hour, the task is eased by two steps.

Touch of Grace. With the magic ally's touch, you add 3 points to any stat Pool. If you are not damaged, you add the points to your chosen Pool's maximum. They remain until you spend them, you lose them to damage, or an hour passes.

Miraculous Health: When you would descend a step on the [damage track](#), you can attempt a Might task to resist, with a difficulty equal to the level of the foe or effect that harmed you. If successful, you don't descend the step and you regain 1 point in any Pool that is bereft of points. You can't use this ability again until after your next ten-hour rest. Enabler.

Misdirect (3 Speed points): When an opponent misses you, you can redirect their attack to another target (a creature or object) of your choosing that's within immediate range of you. Make an unmodified attack roll against the new target (do not use any of your or the opponent's modifiers to the attack roll, but you can apply Effort for accuracy). If the attack hits, the target takes damage from your opponent's attack. Enabler.

Misdirect Blame (2+ Intellect points): Using your clever words and knowledge of others, you can attempt to alter the narrative so that a target of up to level 3 within short range becomes uncertain of its conviction in one simple area, such as their conviction that you just stole a fruit from their stand or their belief that they've never met you before. This effect usually lasts only for the period of time you spend speaking, and perhaps up to a minute longer, before the target realizes its error. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the target level that can be affected. Afterward, all your tasks to persuade or otherwise socially interact with the target are hindered. Action.

Mist Cloud (1+ Intellect points): You create an area of mist an immediate distance across. The cloud lingers for about a minute unless conditions (such as wind or freezing temperatures) dictate otherwise. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the area (one level of Effort to fill a short area, two to fill a long area, or three to fill a very long area). Action.

Mobile Fighter (3 Speed points): As part of your attack, you can leap on or over obstacles, swing from ropes, run along narrow surfaces, or otherwise move around the battlefield at your normal speed as if such tasks were routine (difficulty 0). You can't use this ability if your Speed Effort costs are reduced from wearing armor. Enabler.

Moderate Wish: At your request, the magic ally from your Bound Magic Creature ability can spend its action casting a moderate spell on you. Afterward, it must retreat to its bound object to rest for at least one hour. The effects it can produce include the following. Action to initiate.

Golden Armor. You gain +3 to Armor for one hour from a translucent sheen of golden light.

Golden Fury. A golden light blazes in your eyes. For the next three minutes, if you attack a target, you inflict 5 additional points of damage.

Improved Touch of Grace. With the magic ally's touch, you add 6 points to any stat Pool. If you are not damaged, you add the points to your chosen Pool's maximum. They remain until you spend them, you lose them to damage, or an hour passes.

Invisible. With a touch, the magic ally bends light that falls on you, so you seem to disappear. You are invisible to other creatures for ten minutes. While invisible, you are specialized in stealth and Speed defense tasks. This effect ends if you do something to reveal your presence or position—attacking, using an ability, moving a large object, and so on. If this occurs, you can regain the remaining invisibility effect by taking an action to focus on hiding your position. Action to initiate.

Modify Artifact Power (6 Intellect points): You permanently add +1 to the level of an artifact of up to level 5. The difficulty of this task is equal to the modified higher level of the artifact. If the task is failed, the artifact makes a depletion roll and is not advanced in level. Once modified, the artifact can't be similarly boosted again. Action.

Modify Cyphers: You can take any two manifest cyphers and quickly jury-rig a new manifest cypher of the same level as the lowest-level cypher. You determine the function of the new cypher, but it must be that of a cypher you have used before (but not necessarily one you've ever built). The new cypher is a temperamental cypher, like those created with Always Tinkering. The original two cyphers are consumed in this process. This ability does not function if one or more of the original cyphers are temperamental cyphers. Action.

Modify Device (4 Intellect points): You jury-rig a piece of mechanical or electrical equipment to make it function above its rated specs for a very limited time. To do so, you must use spare parts equal to an [expensive item](#), have a field science kit (or a permanent lab, if you have access to one), and succeed at a difficulty 3 Intellect-based task. When complete, using the device eases all tasks performed in conjunction with the device, until the device inevitably breaks. For example, you could overclock a computer so research tasks using it are easier, modify an espresso maker so that each cup of coffee made with it is better, modify a car's engine so that it goes faster (or modify its steering so it handles better), and so on. Each use of the modified device requires a [depletion](#) roll of 1–5 on a d20. Action to initiate, one hour to complete.

Momentum: If you use an action to move, your next attack made using a melee weapon before the end of the next round inflicts 2 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Monster Bane: You inflict 1 additional point of damage with weapons. When you inflict damage to creatures more than twice as large or massive as you, you inflict 3 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Monster Lore: You are trained in the names, habits, suspected lairs, and related topics regarding the monsters of your world. You can make yourself understood in their languages (if they have one). Enabler.

Moon Shape (4+ Intellect points): You change into a monstrous natural beast, such as a wolf, bear, or other terrestrial creature, for up to one hour. If you try to change during daylight hours when you are not deep underground (or otherwise away from the daylight), you must apply a level of Effort. In your new form, you add 8 points to your Might Pool, gain +2 to your Might Edge, add 2 points to your Speed Pool, and gain +2 to your Speed Edge. Reverting to your normal form is a difficulty 2 task. While in beast form, you are prone to fits of rage (triggered by GM intrusion), during which you attack every living creature within short range, and the only way to end the rage is to revert to your normal form. Either way, after you revert to your normal form, you take a -1 penalty to all rolls for one hour. If you did not kill and eat at least one substantial creature while in beast form, the penalty increases to -2 and affects all your rolls for the next day. Action to change; action to revert.

Mount: A level 3 creature serves you as a mount and follows your instructions. While you're mounted on it, the creature can move and you can attack on your turn, which provides an asset to your attack. You and the GM must work out the details of the creature, and you'll probably make rolls for it when it takes noncombat actions. The mount acts on your turn. If your mount dies, you can hunt in the wild for 3d6 days to find a new one. Enabler.

Move Metal (1 Intellect point): You can exert force on metal objects within short range for one round. Once activated, your power has an effective Might Pool of 10, a Might Edge of 1, and an Effort of 2 (approximately equal to the strength of a fit, capable, adult human), and you can use it to move metal objects, push against metal objects, and so on. For example, in your round, you could lift and pull a light metal object anywhere within range to yourself or move a heavy object (like a piece of furniture) about 10 feet (3 m). This power lacks the fine control to wield a weapon or move objects with much speed, so in most situations, it's not a means of attack. You can't use this ability on your own body. The power lasts for one hour or until its Might Pool is depleted, whichever comes first. Action.

Move Mountains (9 Intellect points): You exert a tremendous amount of physical force within 250 feet (75 m) of you. You can push up to 10 tons (9 t) of material up to 50 feet (15 m). This force can collapse buildings, redirect small rivers, or perform other dramatic effects. Action.

Movement Skills: You are trained in climbing and jumping. Enabler.

Moving Like Water (3 Speed points): You spin and move so that your defense and attacks are aided by your fluid motion. For one minute, all your attacks and Speed defense tasks gain an asset. Enabler.

Multiple Copying: When you use Copy Power, you can copy two of the creature's abilities at the same time. In addition to the normal options for using Effort with Copy Power, you can apply levels of Effort to copy additional abilities, each level of Effort copying an additional ability beyond the initial two (three for one level of Effort, four for two levels, and so on). Enabler.

Multiple Quarry (6 Intellect points): This ability functions like the [Quarry](#) ability except that you can select up to three creatures as quarry. You must be able to see all three creatures when you initiate this ability. If you have [Hunter's Drive](#), it applies to all three creatures. Action to initiate.

Multiple Skills: You are trained in three skills of your choice in which you are not already trained. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose three different skills. Enabler.

Multiplicity (6 Might points): This ability functions as [Duplicate](#), except you can create two duplicates. Action to initiate.

Multi-Vanish (4+ Intellect points): You turn up to five human-sized creatures or objects invisible for a short amount of time. The targets you choose must be within an immediate area and within short range of you (if

you are in the area, you can make yourself invisible and don't count toward the limit of five invisible targets). Anything invisible has an asset on stealth and Speed defense tasks. Affected creatures can see each other in a limited way, and you can see them clearly.

The invisibility ends at the end of your next turn. If one of the affected creatures does something to reveal their presence or position—attacking, using an ability, moving a large object, and so on—the invisibility ends early for that creature. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the duration; each level of Effort used in this way increases the duration by one round (but creatures can still end it early for themselves). Action.

Murderer (8+ Speed points): With a swift and sudden attack, you strike a foe in a vital spot. If the target is level 4 or lower, it is killed outright. For each additional level of Effort you apply, you can increase the level of the target by 1. Action.

Muscles of Iron (2 Might points): For the next ten minutes, all Might-based actions other than attack rolls that you attempt are eased. If you already have this ability from another source, the effect of this ability lasts for one hour instead of ten minutes. Enabler.

Abilities—N

Natural Charisma: You are trained in all social interactions, whether they involve charm, learning a person's secrets, or intimidating others. Enabler.

Natural Crafter: All commonplace objects or structures you craft are effectively one level higher than an average example of that object or structure. For instance, if you craft a defensive wall that would normally be level 4, its effective level is 5. Enabler.

Necromancy (3+ Intellect points): You animate the body of a dead creature of approximately your size or smaller, creating a level 1 creature. It has none of the intelligence, memories, or special abilities that it had in life. The creature follows your verbal commands for one hour, after which it becomes an inert corpse. Unless the creature is killed by damage, you can reanimate it again when its time expires, but any damage it had when it became inert applies to its newly reanimated state. If you have access to multiple bodies, you can create an additional undead creature for each additional Intellect point you spend when you activate the ability. Action to animate.

Negate Danger (7 Intellect points): You permanently negate a source of potential danger related to one creature or object within immediate distance. This could be a weapon or device held by someone, a creature's natural ability, or a trap triggered by a pressure plate. Action.

Negotiate (3 Intellect points): In any gathering where two or more people are trying to establish the truth or come to a decision, you can sway the verdict with masterful rhetoric. If you are given a few rounds or more to argue your point, either the decision goes your way or, if someone else effectively argues a competing point, any associated persuasion or deception task is eased by two steps. Action to initiate, one or more rounds to complete.

Network Tap (4 Intellect points): You can ask the GM one question and get a very short answer if you succeed on an Intellect roll against a difficulty assigned by the GM. The more obscure the answer, the more difficult the task. On a failed roll, feedback or perhaps some defense from the network you're accessing inflicts 4 points of Intellect damage on you (ignores Armor). Action. (Generally, knowledge that you could find by looking somewhere other than your current location is level 1, while obscure knowledge of the past is level 7. Gaining knowledge of the future is impossible.)

Never Fumble: If you roll a natural 1 when attacking with your chosen weapon, you can ignore or countermand the GM intrusion for that roll. You can never be disarmed of your chosen weapon, nor will you ever drop it accidentally. Enabler.

Nightmare (5 Intellect points): You pull a horrifying creature from your worst nightmare into the waking world and sic it on your foes. The **nightmare** (level 5) persists each round while you use your action concentrating on it (or until you disperse it or it is destroyed). It has one of the following abilities, which you choose when you call it.

Confusion. Instead of making a normal attack, the nightmare's attack confuses the target for one round. On its next action, the target attacks an ally.

Horrify. Instead of making a normal attack, the nightmare's attack horrifies the target, which drops to its knees (or similar appendages). The target takes 3 points of damage that ignore Armor and is dazed for one round, during which time all its tasks are hindered.

Pustule Eruption. Instead of making a normal attack, the nightmare's attack causes rancid, painful pustules to rise all over the target's skin for one minute. If the target takes a forceful action (such as attacking another creature or moving farther than an immediate distance), the pustules burst, dealing 5 points of damage that ignore Armor.

Action to initiate, action each round to concentrate.

Nightstrike: When you attack a foe in dim light or darkness, you get a **free level of Effort** on the attack. Enabler.

Nimble Swimmer: You are trained in all defense actions while underwater. Enabler.

No Need for Weapons: When you make an unarmed attack (such as a punch or kick), it counts as a medium weapon instead of a light weapon. Enabler.

No One Knows Better: You are trained in two of the following skills: persuasion, deception, intimidation, research, knowledge in one area, or seeing through deception. If you choose a skill in which you're already trained, you become specialized in that skill instead. Enabler.

Noble's Courage (3+ Intellect points): Your noble lineage teaches that courage is necessary to do things that are difficult, tedious, or dangerous. When your mind would be negatively affected by an effect of up to level 4, whether something as overt as a psychic command or illness or something as subtle as fear or even boredom,

your courage neutralizes the effect for up to a minute or, if you're actively being attacked, until the next attack. For each level of Effort applied, you can increase the level of the effect you can neutralize by 1. Enabler.

Not Dead Yet: When you would normally be dead, you instead fall unconscious for one round and then awaken. You immediately gain $1d6 + 6$ points to restore your stat Pools, and you are treated as if [debilitated](#) until you rest for ten hours. If you die again before you make your ten-hour [recovery roll](#), you are truly dead. If you also have this ability from another source, your healing from this ability increases to $1d6 + 12$. Enabler.

Nothing but Defend: If you do nothing on your turn but defend, you are specialized in all defense tasks for one round. Action.

Nullify Sound (3 Might points): You pulse perfectly misaligned sounds within short range to create a zone of absolute quiet up to an immediate distance across for one minute. All sound is canceled in the zone. Action to initiate.

Abilities—O

Object Bond (3 Intellect points): When you manifest the magic ally from your [Bound Magic Creature](#) ability, it can move up to 300 feet (90 m) from you before being returned to its bound object. Also, it can remain manifest for an extended period, lasting until the end of your next ten-hour recovery roll. Finally, if you give permission, the magic ally can emerge from and enter the bound object on its own initiative. Enabler.

Object Bond Mastery (7 Intellect points): When you manifest the magic ally from your [Bound Magic Creature](#) ability, it is now a level 7 creature. It can remain manifest for only three minutes, after which it must return to its object and rest for three days before you can manifest it again.

The magic ally can make its own magic touch attacks (when it does, you roll for it). If it uses its pulse attack from [Improved Object Bond](#), instead of deactivating items, it can take control of one item within short range for one minute, if applicable.

Finally, the magic ally can transform into smoke and flame as its action, giving it +10 to Armor but rendering it incapable of attacking foes. In this form, it can fly a long distance each round, and the first time each day it returns to flesh (as an action), it regains 25 points of health.

Enabler.

Obstacle Running (3 Speed points): For the next minute, you can ignore obstacles that slow your movement, allowing you to travel at normal speed through areas with rubble, fences, tables, and similar objects that you would have to climb over or move around. This movement might include sliding on a railing, briefly running along a wall, or even stepping on a creature to boost yourself over something. If an obstacle would normally require a Might or Speed task to overcome, such as swinging on a rope, balancing on a rope, or jumping over a hole, you are trained in that task. Enabler.

One With the Wild (6 Intellect points): For the next hour, natural animals and plants within long range will not knowingly harm you or those you designate. In addition, your Might Edge, Speed Edge, and Intellect Edge

increase by 1, and if you make any recovery rolls during this period, you recover twice as many points. Action to initiate.

Oneirochemy: You are trained in tasks related to sleep and mixing natural elixirs to help creatures fall asleep. Enabler.

Onslaught (1 Intellect point): You attack a foe using energies that assail either their physical form or their mind. In either case, you must be able to see your target. If the attack is physical, you emit a short-range ray of force that inflicts 4 points of damage. If the attack is mental, you focus your mental energy to blast the thought processes of another creature within short range. This mindslice inflicts 2 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor). Some creatures without minds (such as robots) might be immune to your mindslice. Action.

Open Mind (3 Intellect points): You open your mind to increase your awareness. You gain an asset to any task involving perception. While you have this asset and you are conscious and able to take actions, other characters gain no benefit from surprising you. The effect lasts for one hour. Action.

Opening Statement: You're trained in tasks related to persuasion, deception, and detecting the falsehoods of others. Enabler.

Opportunist: You have an asset on any attack roll you make against a creature that has already been attacked at some point during the round and is within immediate range. Enabler.

Oratory (4 Intellect points): When speaking with a group of intelligent creatures that can understand you and aren't hostile, you convince them to take one reasonable action in the next round. A reasonable action should not put the creatures or their allies in obvious danger or be wildly out of character. Action.

Out of Harm's Way: No matter how careful, an investigator sometimes ends up in a scrap. Knowing how to survive is more than half the battle. You are trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

Outlast the Foe: If you have been in combat for five full rounds, you have an asset for all tasks in the remainder of the combat, and you deal 1 additional point of damage per attack. Enabler.

Outlaw Reputation (3 Intellect points): People know of your notorious exploits, which have been told and retold so many times that they bear little resemblance to reality. But people fear your name when they recognize you (or you declare yourself). They become so afraid that all attacks made against you by affected targets within earshot are hindered until one or more of them successfully inflicts damage on you or one of your allies, at which time their fear abates. Enabler.

Outside Reality (6+ Intellect points): You exist outside of everything until the start of your next turn. To you, a few seconds pass while you are alone in a cool void. To everyone else, you seem to vanish for a few seconds

and reappear in the same place. While in this unreal state, you can use abilities or objects on yourself, but you can't perceive, interact with, or affect the rest of the world, and vice versa. Time-based effects already on you (like a poison that inflicts damage every round) are paused while you exist outside reality, but when this ability ends they resume as if no time had passed. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the duration; each level of Effort used in this way adds one round to how long you spend outside reality. Enabler.

Outwit: When you make a Speed defense roll, you can use your Intellect in place of your Speed. Enabler.

Overawe (5 Intellect points): A blast of divine radiance from the heavens spotlights a target you select within long range, pushing the target to its knees (or similar appendages, if any) and rendering it helpless in the light for up to ten minutes, or until it breaks free. The overawed target cannot defend itself, make attacks, or attempt anything other than to shake free of the divine awe each round. If the target is a demon, spirit, or something similar, it also takes 1 point of damage that ignores Armor each round it remains affected. Action to initiate.

Overcharge Device: You infuse 1 point of energy gained from using [Absorb Energy](#) or related ability into a device, such as an artifact, raising its effective level on its next use by three (to a maximum of 10). Action.

Overcharge Energy: When you use [Release Energy](#), it inflicts an additional 2 points of damage. Enabler.

Overcome All Obstacles (3+ Intellect points): Those who stand against you do so at their peril and eventually shrink away in your presence. When you focus on a particular foe within long range, the target suffers 2 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) each round for one minute or until the target can throw off the effect. This ability can only be active on one target at a time. You can apply Effort to increase damage during the first round, and for any one round in which you apply Effort and use another action. Action to initiate.

Overload Machine (3+ Intellect points): Through the robot assistant from your [Serv-O](#) ability, you infuse a powered device of level 3 or lower with more energy than it can handle. If affected, the device is destroyed or disabled for at least one minute, depending on its size and complexity. The GM may rule that the disabling effect lasts until the device is repaired. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum level of the target. Thus, to overload a level 5 device (two levels above the normal limit), you must apply two levels of Effort. Action.

Overwatch (1 Intellect point): You use a ranged weapon to target a limited area (such as a doorway, a hallway, or the eastern side of the clearing) and make an attack against the next viable target to enter that area. This works like a [wait action](#), but you also negate any benefit the target would have from [cover](#), [position](#), [surprise](#), [range](#), [illumination](#), or [visibility](#). Further, you inflict 1 additional point of damage with the attack. You can remain on overwatch as long as you wish, within reason. Action.

Abilities—P

Parry (5 Speed points): You can deflect incoming attacks quickly. When you activate this ability, for the next ten rounds you ease all Speed defense rolls. Enabler.

Passing Mechanic: You are trained in tasks related to the repair and maintenance of a starcraft. Enabler.

Patient Recovery: You gain an extra ten-minute recovery roll each day. Enabler.

Pay It Forward (3 Intellect points): You can pass on what you've learned. When you give another character a suggestion involving their next action that is not an attack, their action is eased for one minute. Action.

Perfect Control: You no longer need to make a roll to use [Beast Form](#) or change into your normal form. You can change back and forth as your action. When you return to your normal form, you no longer take a penalty to your rolls. Enabler.

Perfect Speed Burst (6 Speed points): You can take two separate actions this round. Enabler.

Perfect Stranger (3 Intellect points): You alter your posture and way of speaking and make a small but real alteration to an outfit (such as putting on or taking off a hat, reversing a cloak, and so on). For the next hour (or as long as you keep up the alteration), even creatures that know you well don't recognize you. All tasks related to hiding your true identity during this period gain one [free level of Effort](#). Action to initiate.

Perks of Stardom: You are adept at claiming the rewards that fame can generate. When you are recognized, you can be seated at any restaurant, be let into any government building, be invited to any show or sports event (even if they're sold out), get a seat at a private function of any sort, or get into any club, no matter how exclusive. When dealing with someone who can't or won't immediately give in to your desire, you gain an asset on all tasks related to persuasion if that person recognizes you or is convinced that you're a celebrity even if they don't recognize you. Enabler.

Permanent Illusion (9 Intellect points): An illusion (or portion of an illusion) that you create using [Minor Illusion](#) or related ability that fits within a 10-foot (3 m) cube becomes permanent. You can permanently end the illusion as an action, but others must expend exceptional ingenuity to prevent the illusion from regenerating even if it has apparently been dispersed. Enabler.

Phase Detonation (2+ Might points): When you use [Phase Sprint](#) or [Walk Through Walls](#), you can choose to significantly damage normal matter around you with a blast of transdimensional energy when you first go into or come out of phase (your choice). This detonation inflicts 4 points of damage that ignores Armor to all creatures and objects within immediate range. If you apply Effort to increase the damage rather than ease the task, you deal 2 additional points of damage per level of Effort (instead of 3 points); targets in the area take 1 point of damage even if you fail the attack roll. Enabler.

Phase Door (4 Intellect points): You can phase into a solid object's surface and then phase out of any other solid object within long range of the first, even if the two objects are not connected. There must be no intervening barriers between the two objects, and you must be aware of or able to see the destination object. Action.

Phase Foe (6+ Intellect points): You gather disrupting energy in your fingertip and touch a creature. If the target is an NPC or a creature of level 3 or lower, it becomes phased as if it had used the [Ghost](#) ability. However, unless it can figure out how to control its movement while being phased, which most creatures have no experience with, it begins to sink through solid matter. If it can't control itself or end the effect, it might be gone for good because when it becomes solid again after ten minutes, it's probably deep in the earth. For each additional level of Effort you apply, you can attempt to affect a target of one level higher. Action.

Phase Sprint (1+ Speed points): You can run up to a long distance as long as you take no other actions. During your action and until the beginning of your next turn, you are partially phased, and some attacks pass through you harmlessly. While phased, you gain an asset to your Speed defense tasks, but you lose any benefit from armor you wear.

Note that some of your other special abilities may enable specific actions that you can take while using Phase Sprint. For instance, when using Disrupting Touch, you can make one touch attack while moving (though this ends your movement). Action. (You don't have to run in one long, straight line when using Phase Sprint, but can instead zig and zag, curve, or even return to where you started.) (Other abilities can be used with Phase Sprint to unlock additional effects, including Disrupting Touch, Scratch Existence, Invisible Phasing, and Phase Detonation. These abilities are additive enablers, requiring the user to spend points for both abilities, and sometimes from two different Pools.)

Phased Attack (3 Intellect points): The attack you make on this turn ignores your foe's armor. The ability works for whatever kind of attack you use (melee, ranged, energy, and so on). Enabler.

Phased Pocket (2+ Intellect points): You connect yourself for one hour to a small space that is out of phase and moves with you. You can access this space as if it were a convenient pocket or bag, but nobody else can perceive or access the space unless they have the ability to interact with transdimensional areas. The space can hold up to 1 cubic foot. The space is a part of you, so you can't use it to carry more cyphers than your limit, a [detonation cypher](#) activated inside the space harms you, and so on. When the connection ends, anything in the space falls out. For each 2 additional Intellect points you spend, the pocket lasts an additional hour. Enabler.

Physical Skills: You are trained in two skills in which you are not already trained. Choose two of the following: balancing, climbing, jumping, running, or swimming. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose two different skills. Enabler.

Physically Gifted: Any time you spend points from your Might Pool or Speed Pool on an action for any reason, if you roll a 1 on the associated die, you reroll, always taking the second result (even if it's another 1). Enabler.

Pierce (1 Speed point): This is a well-aimed, penetrating ranged attack. You make an attack and inflict 1 additional point of damage if your weapon has a sharp point. Action.

Pilot: You are trained in all tasks related to piloting a starcraft. Generally speaking, piloting tasks are Speed-based tasks, though using sensors and communication instruments are Intellect-based tasks. Enabler.

Play to the Crowd (3 Intellect points): You give a speech that is both rousing and terrifying. Those within short range who can hear and understand you have their next action either eased (an asset) or hindered—you choose, and it can be different for each individual. Action; a few rounds to complete.

Poetic License: You are trained in all social interactions, including persuasion, deception, and intimidation. You also know two additional languages. Enabler.

Poison Crafter: You are trained in crafting, sensing, identifying, and resisting **poisons**. Your poison crafting has given you some immunity to poisons; you have +5 Armor that applies specifically to poison damage. Enabler.

Poison Resistance: Thanks to an injection of biological agents, a quaff of a magical elixir, a ring from a dying alien, or something just as extreme, you are now immune to poisons, toxins, or any kind of particulate threat. You are not immune to viruses, bacteria, or radiation. Enabler.

Post-Apocalyptic Survivor: You are trained in stealth and Might defense tasks. Enabler.

Power Strike (3+ Might points): If you successfully attack a target, you knock it prone in addition to inflicting damage. The target must be your size or smaller. You can knock down a target larger than you if you apply a level of Effort to do so (rather than to ease the attack). Enabler.

Power Crash (3 Intellect points): You strike your enchanted weapon against the ground (or a similar large surface), creating an explosion of energy that affects an area up to immediate range from that point. (If your enchanted weapon is a ranged weapon, you can instead target a point within close range to be the center of the explosion.) The blast inflicts 2 points of damage to all creatures or objects within the area (except for you). Because this is an area attack, adding Effort to increase your damage works differently than it does for single-target attacks. If you apply a level of Effort to increase the damage, add 2 points of damage for each target, and even if you fail your attack roll, all targets in the area still take 1 point of damage. Action.

Power Memory: When you use Copy Power, you only need to have seen the ability used within the past day (instead of the past hour), and using Effort extends how long ago your copying can reach to one day per level of Effort (instead of one hour per level). Enabler.

Powered Armor: You have a suit of powered armor. It is effectively medium armor (+2 to Armor); however, you suffer no Speed penalties for wearing it. Also, your suit grants other benefits: it provides breathable air for up to eight hours and a comfortable environment even in bitter heat, cold, vacuum, or underwater to a depth of 4 miles (6 km); and it allows you to see in the dark up to a short distance. Getting into the suit requires an action (and, of course, access to your suit). Enabler.

Powerful Rhetoric (1 Intellect point): After engaging a creature in conversation for at least a minute, you can attempt to influence how that creature is perceived, promoting it as a friend, dismissing it as a fool, or denouncing it as an enemy. Your words are so well chosen that even you and it are affected, because your conviction and its doubt are paramount. The accuracy of your assessment isn't important as long as you keep

up the rhetoric. From then on (or until you change your rhetoric or the creature offers a convincing defense to those who've heard your label), the friend's social interactions gain an asset, the fool's social interactions are hindered, or the enemy's defenses are hindered. Action to initiate, one minute to complete.

Practiced in Armor: You can wear armor for long periods of time without tiring and can compensate for slowed reactions from wearing armor. You reduce the Speed cost for wearing armor by 1. You start the game with a type of armor of your choice. Enabler.

Practiced With All Weapons: You become [practiced](#) with light, medium, and heavy weapons and suffer no penalty when using any kind of weapon. Enabler.

Practiced With Guns: You are practiced with guns and suffer no penalty when using one. Enabler.

Practiced With Medium Weapons: You can use light and medium weapons without penalty. If you wield a heavy weapon, attacks with it are hindered. Enabler.

Practiced With Swords: You are practiced with swords and can use them without penalty. Enabler.

Precise Cut: You inflict 1 additional point of damage with light weapons. Enabler.

Precision: You deal 2 additional points of damage with attacks using weapons that you throw. Enabler.

Precognition (6 Intellect points): You dimly sense the future for the next ten minutes. This has the following effects until the duration expires:

Your defense tasks gain an asset.

You can predict the actions of those around you. You gain an asset to seeing through deceptions and attempts to betray you as well as avoiding traps and ambushes.

You know what people are probably thinking and what they will say before they say it, which gives you an edge. You gain an asset to all interaction skills.

Enabler.

Predictive Equation (2 Intellect points): You observe or study a creature, object, or location for at least one round. The next time you interact with it (possibly in the following round), a related task (such as persuading the creature, attacking it, or defending from its attack) is eased. Action.

Predictive Model (2+ Intellect points): If you've used Predictive Equation on a creature, object, or location within the last few days, you can learn one random fact about the subject that is pertinent to a topic you designate. If you also have the magic flavor ability Premonition, one use of either ability grants you two random but related facts about the subject. In addition, you can use Predictive Model on the same subject

multiple times (even if you've learned a creature's level), but each time you do, you must apply one additional level of Effort than on your previous use. Action.

Premonition (2 Intellect points): You learn one random fact about a creature or location that is pertinent to a topic you designate. Alternatively, you can choose to learn a creature's level; however, if you do so, you cannot learn anything else about it later with this ability. Action.

Preternatural Senses: While you are conscious and able to use an action, you cannot be surprised. In addition, you are trained in initiative actions. Enabler.

Privileged Nobility: You are adept at claiming the rewards that a noble background can generate. When recognized, you can be seated at any eating establishment no matter how full, get a room in an inn even if that means others are turned out, be let into any court or other structure where laws are decided or nobility rules, be invited to any gala, and get a seat at a private function of any sort. In addition, you are trained in persuasion. Enabler.

Projection (4 Intellect points): You project an image of yourself to any location you have seen or previously visited. Distance does not matter as long as the location is on the same world as you. The projection copies your appearance, movements, and any sounds you make for the next ten minutes. Anyone present at the location can see and hear you as if you were there. However, you do not perceive through your projection. Action to initiate.

Protective Wall (6+ Might points): When engaging in combat that directly relates to defending a community you are associated with, you can attack up to five different foes as a single action as long as they are all within immediate range. If you hit an attacker, they are pushed back an immediate distance. All of the attacks have to be the same sort of attack (melee or ranged). Make a separate attack roll for each foe. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to all of these attacks. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the number of foes you can attack with this ability, one additional foe per level of Effort. Enabler.

Protector: You designate a single character to be your charge. You can change this freely every round, but you can have only one charge at a time. As long as that charge is within immediate range, they gain an asset for Speed defense tasks because you have their back. Enabler.

Pry Open (4 Intellect points): You tear apart the defenses of a creature within long range. Any energy-based defenses it has (such as a force field or a [Ward](#) ability) are negated for 1d6 + 1 rounds. If the creature has no energy defenses, its Armor is reduced by 2 for one minute. If it has no energy-based defenses or Armor, attacks against it are eased for one minute. Action.

Psychic Burst (3+ Intellect points): You blast waves of mental force into the minds of up to three targets within short range (make an Intellect roll against each target). This burst inflicts 3 points of Intellect damage (ignores

Armor). For each 2 additional Intellect points you spend, you can make an Intellect attack roll against an additional target. Action.

Psychic Passenger (6 Intellect points): You place your mind into the body of a willing creature you choose within short range and remain in that body for up to one hour. Your own body falls down and becomes insensate until this ability ends.

You see, hear, smell, touch, and taste using the senses of the creature whose body you inhabit. When you speak, the words come from your defenseless body, and the creature you inhabit hears those words in their mind.

The creature you inhabit can use your Intellect Edge in place of their own. In addition, you and the creature have an asset on any task that involves perception.

When you take an action, you use the creature's body to perform that action if they allow it.

Action to initiate.

(A character should using Psychic Passenger should consider secreting their actual body someplace away from prying eyes and wild beasts, or they may return to an unfortunate situation.)

Psychic Suggestion (4 Intellect points): You attempt to make the target take the action you indicate on its next turn. If the action you wish the target to take would cause direct harm to itself or its allies, your mental attack is hindered. Action.

Psychokinetic Attack (5 Intellect points): You can use this attack in one of two ways. The first is to pick up a heavy object and hurl it at someone within short range. This attack is an Intellect action, and if successful, it deals 6 points of damage to the target and to the hurled object (which could be another foe, although that would require two rolls—one roll to grab the first foe and another roll to hit the second foe with the first). The second way is to unleash a shattering burst of power that works only against an inanimate object no larger than half your size. Make an Intellect roll to instantly destroy the object; the task is eased by three steps compared to breaking it with brute strength. Action.

Psychosis (4 Intellect points): Your words inflict a destructive psychosis in the mind of a target within long range that can understand you, dealing 6 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) per round. The psychosis can be dispersed if a target uses an action doing nothing but calming and centering itself. Action to initiate.

Pull a Fast One (3 Intellect points): When you're running a con, picking a pocket, fooling or tricking a dupe, sneaking something by a guard, and so on, you gain an asset on the task. Enabler.

Punish All the Guilty (3 Speed points): You can attack up to five foes within immediate range that you have designated as guilty with your [Designation](#) ability, all as part of the same action in one round. Make separate attack rolls for each foe, but all attacks count as a single action in a single round. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to all attacks. If you also have the [Spin Attack](#) ability, you inflict 1 additional point of damage when you use Punish All the Guilty. Action.

Punish the Guilty (2 Might points): For the next ten minutes, if you attack someone you have designated as guilty with your Designation ability, you inflict 2 additional points of damage. Action to initiate.

Push (2 Intellect points): You telekinetically push a creature or object an immediate distance in any direction you wish. You must be able to see the target, which must be your size or smaller, must not be affixed to anything, and must be within short range. The push is quick, and the force is too crude to be manipulated. For example, you can't use this ability to pull a lever or close a door. Action.

Push Off and Throw (3 Speed points): You can make precise, point-to-point jumps in microgravity, which means you can move up to a long distance and make a melee attack or attempt to grab a foe of your size or smaller. If you successfully grab your foe, you move your foe up to a short distance from its original position.

Alternatively, while you come to a standstill (or move off in an immediate distance per round in any direction you choose) you can launch your foe in a chosen direction through space at a rate of a short distance per round.

Action.

Push on Through (2 Might points): You ignore the effects of terrain while moving for one hour. Enabler.

Abilities—Q

Quarry (2 Intellect points): Choose a quarry (a single individual creature that you can see). You are trained in all tasks involving following, understanding, interacting with, or fighting that creature. You can have only one quarry at a time. Action to initiate.

Question the Spirits (2 Intellect points): You can call a spirit to you and petition it to answer a few questions (usually no more than three before the spirit fades).

First, you must summon a spirit. If it is a spirit of the dead, you must have personally known the creature, have an object that was owned by the creature, or touch the physical remains of the creature. For other spirits, you must know the spirit's full name or have a great deal of an element (such as fire or earth) that the spirit is associated with.

If the spirit responds, it can manifest as an insubstantial shade that answers for itself, it can inhabit an object or any remains you provide, or it can manifest as an invisible presence that you speak for.

The spirit may not wish to answer your questions, in which case you must persuade it to help. You can attempt to psychically wrestle the spirit into submission (an Intellect task), or you can try diplomacy, deception, or blackmail ("Answer me, or I'll tell your children that you were a philanderer" or "I'll destroy this relic that belonged to you").

The GM determines what the spirit might know, based on the knowledge it possessed in life.

Action to initiate.

Quick Block: If you use a light or medium weapon, you are trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

Quick Death (2 Speed points): You know how to kill quickly. When you hit with a melee or ranged attack, you deal 4 additional points of damage. You can't make this attack in two consecutive rounds. Action.

Quick Recovery: Your second recovery roll (usually requiring ten minutes) is only a single action. Enabler.

Quick Strike (4 Speed points): You make a melee attack with such speed that it is hard for your foe to defend against, and it knocks them off balance. Your attack is eased by two steps, and the foe, if struck, takes normal damage but is dazed so that their tasks are hindered for the next round. Action.

Quick Study: You learn from repetitive actions. You gain a +1 bonus to rolls for similar tasks after the first time (such as operating the same device or making attacks against the same foe). Once you move on to a new task, the familiarity with the old task fades—unless you start doing it again. Enabler.

Quick Switch: You can activate Shrink as part of another action (the ability is now an enabler for you instead of an action). While the one-minute duration of Shrink is active, on your turn you can change size once before taking an action and once after taking an action. For example, on your turn you could change to small size, make an attack, and then return to your normal size, or you could change to your normal size, use your action to move a short distance, and then return to small size. Enabler.

Quick Throw (2 Speed points): After using a thrown light weapon, you draw another light weapon and make another thrown attack against the same target or a different one. Action.

Quick to Flee: You are trained in stealth and movement tasks. Enabler.

Quick Wits: When performing a task that would normally require spending points from your Intellect Pool, you can spend points from your Speed Pool instead. Enabler.

Quick Work (3+ Intellect points): One use of any artifact (or one minute of its continuous function) is increased by one level if you use it within the next minute. If you spend 4 additional Intellect points, the use is increased by two levels if you use it within the next minute. Action.

Quicker Than Most: Experience has honed your reaction times, because those who act first gain the advantage in most situations. You're trained in tasks related to initiative, seeing underlying patterns, and solving puzzles. Enabler.

Abilities—R

Rally to Me (2 Intellect points): You cry out, blow a battle horn, or otherwise signal to everyone within very long range that you require aid. All allied creatures who respond by moving to within an immediate distance of you within the next few rounds gain one asset on any one attack or defense task within the next hour that you suggest, such as "Hold the gate," "Charge that group of orcs," or something similar. Action to initiate.

Range Increase: Ranges for you increase by one step. Immediate becomes short, short becomes long, long becomes very long, and very long becomes 1,000 feet (300 m). Enabler.

Rapid Attack (3 Speed points): Once per round, you can make an additional attack with your chosen weapon. Enabler.

Rapid Processing (6 Intellect points): You or a target you touch experiences a higher level of mental and physical reaction time for about a minute. During that period, all Speed tasks (including Speed defense rolls) are eased. In addition, the target can take one extra action at any time before the ability's duration expires. Action.

Rapid Recovery: You can make most **recovery rolls** faster than normal. You can make your one-action recovery roll as part of another action or when it isn't your turn, your ten-minute recovery roll takes you only one action, and your one-hour recovery roll takes you only ten minutes (your ten-hour rest is unchanged). If you make a recovery roll when it isn't your turn, until the end of your next turn all of your tasks are hindered. Enabler.

Ray of Confusion (2 Intellect points): You project a grey beam of confusion at a creature within short range, inflicting 1 point of damage that ignores Armor. In addition, until the end of the next round, all tasks, attacks, and defenses the target attempts are hindered. Action.

Reaction: If a creature you attacked on your last turn with a melee attack uses its action to move out of immediate range, you gain an action to attack the creature as a parting blow, even if you have already taken a turn in the round. Enabler.

Reactive Field: Thanks to a remarkable enhancement of science, magic, psionics, or something even stranger, you now have a force field that radiates 1 inch (2.5 cm) from your body and provides you with +2 to Armor. In addition, if struck by a melee attack, the field creates a backlash that inflicts 4 points of electricity damage to the attacker. Enabler.

Read the Signs (4 Intellect points): You examine an area and learn precise, useful details about the past (if any exist). You can ask the GM up to four questions about the immediate area; each requires its own roll. Action.

Reading the Room (3 Intellect points): You gain knowledge about an area by speaking with dead spirits or reading residual energies from the past. You can ask the GM a single, matter-of-fact question about the location and get an answer if you succeed on the Intellect roll. "What killed the cattle in this barn?" is a good example of a simple question. "Why were these cattle killed?" is not an appropriate question because it has more to do with the mindset of the killer than the barn. Simple questions usually have a difficulty of 2, but extremely technical questions or those that involve facts meant to be kept secret can have a much higher difficulty. Action.

Recruit Deputy: You gain a level 4 [follower](#). They are not restricted on their modifications. Alternatively, you can choose to advance a level 3 follower you already have to level 4 and then gain a new level 3 follower. Enabler.

Recycled Cyphers: All manifest cyphers you use function at one level higher than normal. In addition, if given a week and at least ten items of junk from the [Junk table](#), you can tinker with one of your manifest cyphers, transforming it into another cypher of the same type that you had in the past. The GM and player should collaborate to ensure that the transformation is logical—for example, you probably can't transform a pill into a helmet. Enabler.

Regenerate: Your ability to heal (whether from a potent spell, unique mutation, or cybernetic graft) continues to function even if you die from violence, as long as your body is mostly intact. One minute after your death, this ability activates and brings you back to life; however, you come back with a permanent 2-point deduction from your Intellect Pool. Enabler. (A character might discover that Regenerate is both a blessing and a curse, because relying on it too much leads to a kind of malaise that vitality alone can't fix.)

Regenerate Other (9 Might points): You can confer your Regenerate ability on another creature that you touch and attempt to return it to life, as long as its body is mostly intact. (If you don't have the Regenerate ability, you gain it, but can use it only on yourself.) The difficulty of the task is equal to 3 plus the number of days the target has been dead. (If the body has been perfectly preserved in stasis or through some other non-damaging preservation mechanism, no time limit applies.) Enabler.

Regeneration (6 Intellect points): You restore points to a target's Might or Speed Pool in one of two ways: either the chosen Pool regains up to 6 points, or it is restored to a total value of 12. You make this decision when you initiate this ability. Points are regenerated at a rate of 1 point each round. You must remain within immediate range of the target the whole time, either touching them or conversing with them. In no case can this raise a Pool higher than its maximum. Action.

Reinforcing Field (6+ Intellect points): You can reinforce any object or structure by infusing it with a force field for one hour. The force field increases the level of the object or structure by 2 for tasks related to durability and withstanding damage and destruction. Action to initiate.

Release Energy: You release 1 point of energy you've absorbed with your [Absorb Kinetic Energy](#) ability, magnifying and focusing it into a blast of energy that strikes a single foe within long range for 4 points of damage. (If you don't have any kinetic energy absorbed, you can still use this ability, but it requires that you transform a fraction of yourself into the blast, which costs 1 point of Might.) Action.

Reload (1 Speed point): When using a weapon that normally requires an action to reload, such as a heavy crossbow, you can reload and fire (or fire and reload) in the same action. Enabler.

Relocate (7 Intellect points): Choose one creature or object within immediate range. You instantly transport it to a new position within long range that you can see. The new position can be any direction from you, but it cannot be inside a solid object. Action.

Remote Control (5 Intellect points): You can use a starcraft's communication and sensor arrays to launch an attack that briefly renders an enemy starcraft within 20 miles (32 km) inoperative for up to a minute. Action. (Remote Control is a masterful attempt to jam or hack an enemy spacecraft, a task normally requiring multiple rolls, and you only succeed if you roll a total of three successes before rolling a total of two failures. However, all such tasks are hindered by at least two steps due to hardened spacecraft electronic security.)

Remote Viewing (6 Intellect points): Distance is an illusion, as all space is one space. With great concentration, you can see another place. This ability can be used in one of two ways:

Distance and direction. Pick a spot a specific distance away and in a specific direction. You can see from that vantage point as if you had used the [Sensor](#) ability there, but only for one minute.

Think of a place you have seen before, either conventionally or using the other application of this power. You can see from that vantage point as if you had used the Sensor ability there, but only for one or two rounds.

Either application takes anywhere from one action to hours of concentration, depending on what the GM feels is appropriate due to time, distance, or other mitigating circumstances. However, you don't know in advance how long it will take.

Action to initiate; action each round to concentrate.

Repair Flesh (3 Intellect points): When you touch an impaired or debilitated character, you can move them up one step on the [damage track](#) (for example, a debilitated PC becomes impaired, and an impaired one becomes hale). Alternatively, if you use this ability on a PC during a rest, you grant them a +2 bonus to their recovery roll. Action.

Repel Metal: By manipulating magnetism, you are trained in Speed defense tasks against any incoming attack that uses metal. Enabler.

Reshape (5 Intellect points): You reshape matter within short range in an area no larger than a 5-foot (1.5 m) cube. If you use only one action on this ability, the changes you make are crude at best. If you spend at least ten minutes and succeed at a hindered appropriate [crafting](#) task, you can make complex changes to the material. You can't change the nature of the material, only its shape. Thus, you can make a hole in a wall or floor, or you can seal one up. You can fashion a rudimentary sword from a large piece of iron. You can break or repair a chain. With multiple uses of this ability, you could bring about large changes, making a bridge, a wall, or a similar structure. Action.

Resilience: You have 1 point of Armor against any kind of physical damage, even physical damage that normally ignores Armor. Enabler.

Resilient Duplicate: Increase the health of any duplicate you create (such as with [Duplicate](#)) by 5. Enabler.

Resilient Ice Armor: The sheen of ice you generate using your [Ice Armor](#) ability gives you an additional +1 to Armor. Enabler.

Resist the Elements: You resist heat, cold, and similar extremes. You have a special +2 to Armor against ambient damage or other damage that would normally ignore Armor. Enabler.

Resist Tricks: You're trained in solving puzzles and recognizing tricks from years of game playing. Enabler.

Resist Underwater Hazards: Whether you're resisting crushing waters while exploring the depths or a sting from a poisonous fish, all defense tasks while submerged in water are eased. Enabler.

Resonance Field (1 Intellect point): Faint lines in a color you choose form a tracery over your entire body and emit faint light. The effect lasts for one minute. Whenever a creature within immediate range makes an attack against you, the pattern energizes to block the attack. You can make an Intellect defense roll in place of the defense roll you would normally make. If you do so and you get a [minor effect](#), the creature attacking you takes 1 point of damage. If you get a [major effect](#), the creature attacking you takes 4 points of damage. Action to initiate.

Resonant Frequency: You can infuse an item of up to level 7 that you can hold in one hand with a special vibration generated from your core. The object then functions as if two levels higher for one minute. At the end of that minute, the resonant frequency ramps up exponentially until the object finally shatters from the energy buildup. Anything within immediate range of the detonation suffers 5 points of damage. Action to initiate.

Resonant Quake (7 Intellect points): You can infuse the ground beneath you with a special vibration generated from your core. This creates a small quake whose epicenter you can select within a very long distance. Everyone within short range of the epicenter is subject to 8 points of damage (from shaking and being struck by toppling objects, crumbling walls, and so on). However, you are dazed for a round afterward yourself, during which time all your tasks are hindered. If you have the [Move Mountains](#) ability, both abilities cost 3 fewer Intellect points to use. Action.

Restful Presence: Creatures who make a recovery roll within short range of you add +1 to their roll. Enabler.

Restore Life (9+ Intellect points): You can attempt to restore life to a dead creature of up to level 3, as long as the corpse is no more than a day old and is mostly intact. You can also attempt to restore life to a corpse that is much older but is especially well preserved. The difficulty of the Intellect task is equal to the level of the creature you're attempting to restore to life. For each additional level of Effort applied, you can attempt to

restore the life of a creature whose level is 1 higher. When first restored to life, a creature is dazed for at least a day, and all tasks they attempt are hindered. Action; one minute to initiate.

Restorative Bloom (5 Might points): When Wooden Body or Great Tree is in effect, you produce a flower, acorn, fruit, or similar plant-based edible item. A creature that eats this food is nourished for a full day and restores their Might Pool, Speed Pool, and Intellect Pool to their maximum values, as if they were fully rested. Eating a second food produced by this ability in a day has no effect. If the food is not eaten within ten minutes, it spoils. Action to produce, action to eat.

Resuscitate (6 Intellect points): You can resuscitate a character who is up to two steps down on the damage track as your action. The target ascends one step on the damage track. If a character has dropped all three steps on the damage track (dead) but is otherwise in one piece and less than a minute has passed since they descended to the third step, you can resuscitate them if you succeed at a level 6 healing task. If you use this ability on an NPC who has no health but has been dead for less than a minute and is otherwise in one piece, the NPC is resuscitated with 1 health. Action.

Retinue: Four level 2 **followers** join you (and your first follower, if you have one). One of their modifications must be for tasks related to serving as your personal assistants. In addition to other tasks they might individually take on your behalf, they can also work together to run interference if you're trying to avoid someone, help hide you from the attention of others, help you muscle through a crowd, and so on. If a situation becomes physically violent, they provide an asset to your Speed defense tasks and, if you command it, try to hold a foe's attention while you escape. Enabler.

Retrieve Memories (3 Intellect points): You touch the remains of a recently killed creature and make an Intellect-based roll to restore its mind to life long enough to learn information from it. The GM sets the difficulty based on the amount of time that has passed since the creature died. A creature that has been dead for only a few minutes is a difficulty 2 task, one that has been dead for an hour is a difficulty 4 task, and one that has been dead for a few days is a difficulty 9 task. If you succeed, you awaken the corpse, causing its head to animate and perceive things as if it were alive. This enables communication for about one minute, which is how long it takes for the creature to realize that it's dead. The creature is limited to what it knew in life, though it cannot recall minor memories, only big events of importance to it. When the effect ends, or if you fail the roll, the creature's brain dissolves to mush and cannot be awakened again. Action.

Return to Sender (3 Speed points): If you succeed at a Speed defense task against a melee attack, you can make an immediate melee attack against your foe. You can use this ability only once per round. Enabler.

Return to the Obelisk (7+ Intellect points): You transfer your body and personal possessions into a crystal of any size that you can touch, and you exit from another crystal of any size, including any crystal obelisks that you are aware of. You must know of the crystal you are going to use as an exit before you enter the first crystal. You can take one additional creature with you for each level of Effort applied. Action.

Reveal (2+ Intellect points): You adjust a creature's eyesight so that it can see normally in areas of dim light and darkness. You can affect one willing creature within immediate range for one hour. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to affect more targets; each level of Effort applied affects two additional targets. You must touch additional targets to affect them. Action to initiate.

Ribbons of Dark Matter (2 Intellect points): For the next minute, dark matter condenses within an area within long range that is no bigger than an immediate distance in diameter, manifesting as swirling ribbons. All tasks attempted by creatures in the area are hindered, and leaving the area requires a creature's entire action to move. You can dismiss the dark matter early as an action. Action to initiate.

Rider: You are trained in riding any kind of creature that serves as a mount, such as a noble warhorse. Enabler.

Roaming Third Eye (3 Intellect points): When you use your [Third Eye](#) ability, you can place the sensor anywhere within long range. In addition, until that ability ends, you can use an action to move the sensor anywhere within short range of its starting position. Enabler.

Robot Assistant: A level 2 robot of your size or smaller (built by you) accompanies you and follows your instructions. You and the GM must work out the details of your robot. You'll probably make rolls for it when it takes actions. A robot assistant in combat usually doesn't make separate attacks but helps with yours. On your action, if the artificial assistant is next to you, it serves as an asset for one attack you make on your turn. If the robot is destroyed, you can repair the original with a few days' worth of tinkering, or build a new one with a week's worth of half-time labor. Enabler.

Robot Builder: You are trained in tasks related to building and repairing robots. For the purposes of repair, you can use this skill to [heal](#) robots that use similar technology. Enabler.

Robot Control (2+ Intellect points): You use your knowledge of robot command and control (and possibly devices that transmit on the proper frequency) to affect any mechanized system or robot of level 2 or lower within short range. You can render several targets inactive for as long as you focus all your attention on them. If you focus on just one target, you can attempt to take active control of it for one minute, commanding it to do simple tasks on your behalf while you concentrate. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum level of the mechanized system or robot. Thus, to affect a level 4 target (two levels above the normal limit), you must apply two levels of Effort. Action to initiate.

Robot Evolution: Your first artificial assistant from the Robot Assistant ability increases to level 5, and each of your level 2 robots from Robot Fleet increases to level 3. Instead of choosing this option, you may instead choose one upgrade from the Robot Upgrade ability. Enabler.

Robot Fighter: When fighting a robot or intelligent machine, you are trained in attacks and defense. Enabler.

Robot Fleet: You build up to four level 2 robot assistants, each no larger than yourself. (They are in addition to the assistant you built at first tier with Robot Assistant, which may have seen a few upgrades since then.) You and the GM must work out the details of these additional robots. If a robot is destroyed, you can build a new one (or repair the old one from its parts) after a week of half-time labor. Instead of this ability, you can select one of the following abilities: [Expert Follower](#), Robot Control, or Robot Upgrade. Enabler.

Robot Improvement: Your artificial assistant from the Robot Assistant ability increases to level 4. Enabler.

Robot Upgrade: You modify your artificial assistant from the Robot Assistant ability with one new capability. Standard options include the following. Work with your GM if you prefer a different capability.

Cypher Pod. The robot can carry one extra manifest cypher for you. Enabler.

Flight. The robot can fly a long distance each round. It can carry you, but only for up to an hour between each of your ten-hour recovery rolls. Enabler.

Force Shield. The robot can erect an opaque level 5 force field around itself and anyone within 10 feet (3 m) of it for one minute (or until it is destroyed). It cannot do so again until after your next recovery roll. Action.

Mounted Laser Configuration. The robot can reconfigure itself and become an immobile laser weapon on a gimbal mount. In this configuration, the robot is a heavy weapon that deals 7 points of damage. If the robot acts as an autonomous turret, treat it as one level lower than its normal level. However, if the laser is fired by you or someone else who has your permission, the laser attacks are eased. Action to reconfigure; action to return to normal robot configuration.

Ruin Lore: You are trained in **scavenging**, which means you're more likely to find useful things, and junk that can potentially be turned into useful things in the ruins of what came before. Enabler.

Run and Fight (4 Might points): You can move a short distance and make a melee attack that inflicts 2 additional points of damage. Action.

Runner: Your standard movement increases from short to long. Enabler.

Abilities—S

Safe Fall: You reduce the damage from a fall by 5 points. Enabler.

Sailor: You are trained in tasks related to sailing and trained in the geography of islands and coastlines. Enabler.

Salvage and Comfort (2 Intellect points): You're familiar with open space. If you spend an hour using your spacecraft's sensors and make a difficulty 3 Intellect roll, you can find salvage in the form of abandoned spacecraft, drifting motes of matter that were once inhabited, or a place to hide from pursuit in what most people would otherwise assume to be empty space (such as in a nebula, an asteroid field, or the shadow of a moon). Salvage you turn up includes enough food and water for you and several others, as well as the possibility of weapons, clothing, technological artifacts, survivors, or other usable items. In other contexts, this ability counts as training in tasks related to perception. Action to initiate, one hour to complete.

Scan (2 Intellect points): You scan an area equal in size to a 10-foot (3 m) cube, including all objects or creatures within that area. The area must be within short range. Scanning a creature or object always reveals its level. You also learn whatever facts the GM feels are pertinent about the matter and energy in that area.

For example, you might learn that the wooden box contains a device of metal and plastic. You might learn that the glass cylinder is full of poisonous gas, and that its metal stand has an electrical field running through it that connects to a metal mesh in the floor. You might learn that the creature standing before you is a mammal with a small brain. However, this ability doesn't tell you what the information means. Thus, in the first example, you don't know what the metal and plastic device does. In the second, you don't know if stepping on the floor causes the cylinder to release the gas. In the third, you might suspect that the creature is not very intelligent, but scans, like looks, can be deceiving. Many materials and energy fields prevent or resist scanning. Action.

Scramble Machine (2 Intellect points): You render one machine within short range unable to function for one round. Alternatively, you can hinder any action by the machine (or by someone attempting to use the machine) for one minute. Action.

Scratch Existence (1+ Might points): You can choose to phase in a way that "scratches" normal matter in a long streak as you run using [Phase Sprint](#). This tears a bit at you, too, reflected by the Might cost. When you use Phase Sprint, you inflict 2 points of damage (ignores Armor) to one target you select as you pass within immediate range, without triggering [Disrupting Touch](#). In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the number of targets along your path that you can attack as part of the same action. Make a separate attack roll for each foe. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to all of these attacks.

Alternatively, if you apply Effort to increase the damage rather than ease the task, you deal 2 additional points of damage per level of Effort (instead of 3 points); the target takes 1 point of damage even if you fail the attack roll.

Enabler.

Sculpt Flesh (2 Intellect points): You cause a willing creature's fingers to lengthen into claws and their teeth to grow into fangs. The effect lasts for ten minutes. The damage dealt by the target's unarmed strikes increases to 4 points. Action.

Sculpt Light (4 Intellect points): You create an object of solid light in any shape you can imagine that is your size or smaller, and it persists for about an hour. The object appears in an area adjacent to you. It is crude and can have no moving parts, so you can make a sword, a shield, a short ladder, and so on. The object has the approximate mass of the real object and is level 4. Action.

Sea Legs: You have gotten used to rough seas and unexpected surges. You are trained in balance. Any movement task that would be hindered by a pitching deck, moving through rigging, and so on is a routine task for you. Enabler.

See History (4 Intellect points): You touch an object, read the subtle echoes of its existence through time, ask the GM a question about the object's past, and get a general answer. The answers are often in the form of brief images or sensations rather than specific answers in a language you know. The GM assigns a level to the question, so the more obscure the answer, the more difficult the task. » Generally, knowledge that you could find by looking somewhere other than your current location is level 1, and obscure knowledge of the past is

level 7. After you use this ability, you have an asset on identifying the object. Action. (“Obscure” is a relative term—a sage might not know how a vampire acquired a specific artifact, but someone using See History on that artifact would have an easy time sensing that event.)

See the Future (6 Intellect points): Based on all the variables you perceive, you can predict the next few minutes. This has the following effects:

For the next ten minutes, your defense rolls gain an asset.

You have a sort of danger sense. For the next ten minutes, you gain an asset in seeing through deceptions and attempts to betray you, as well as avoiding traps and ambushes.

You know what people are probably thinking and what they will say before they say it. For the next ten minutes, you gain an asset to tasks involving interaction and deception.

Enabler.

See the Unseen: You can automatically perceive creatures and objects that are normally invisible, out of phase, or only partially in this universe. When looking for things more conventionally hidden, the task is eased.

Enabler.

See Through Matter (3+ Intellect points): You can see through matter as if it were transparent. You can see through up to 6 inches (15 cm) of material for one round. Doing so is a task whose difficulty is equal to the material or object’s level. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to see through another 6 inches of material for each additional level of Effort you apply toward that goal. Action.

See Through Time (7 Intellect points): Time is an illusion, as all time is one time. With great concentration, you can see into another time. You specify a time period regarding the place where you now stand. Interestingly, the easiest time to view is about one hundred years in the past or future. Viewing farther back or ahead is a nearly [impossible task](#).

This takes anywhere from one action to hours of concentration, depending on what the GM feels is appropriate due to time, distance, or other mitigating circumstances. However, you don’t know in advance how long it will take.

Action to initiate; action each round to concentrate.

Seeds of Fury (1 Intellect point): You throw a handful of seeds in the air that ignite and speed toward a target within long range, scratching the air with twisting smoke trails. The attack deals 3 points of damage and catches the target on fire, which inflicts 1 additional point of damage per round for up to a minute or until the target uses an action to douse the flames. Action.

Seize the Initiative (5 Intellect points): Within one minute of successfully using your [Draw Conclusion](#) ability, you can take one additional, immediate action, which you can take out of turn. After using this ability, you can’t use it again until after your next ten-hour recovery roll. Enabler.

Seize the Moment (4+ Speed points): If you succeed on a Speed defense roll to resist an attack, you gain an action. You can use the action immediately even if you have already taken a turn in the round. You don't take an action during the next round, unless you apply a level of Effort when you use Seize the Moment. Enabler.

Sense Ambush: You are never **surprised** by an attack. Enabler.

Sense Attitudes: You are trained in sensing lies and whether a person is likely to (or already does) believe your lies. Enabler.

Sensing Package: You can see in dim light and darkness as if it were bright light, and you can see up to a short distance through fog, smoke, and other obscuring phenomena. In addition, if you apply a level of Effort to perception or searching tasks, you get a **free level of Effort** on that task. Enabler.

Sensor (4 Intellect points): You create an immobile, invisible sensor within immediate range that lasts for 24 hours. At any time during that duration, you can concentrate to see, hear, and smell through the sensor, no matter how far you move from it. The sensor doesn't grant you sensory capabilities beyond the norm. If you also have this ability from another source, it lasts twice as long. Action to create; action to check.

Sensor Array (3 Intellect points): You are trained in using starcraft sensory instruments. These instruments allow users to answer general questions about a location, such as "How many people are in the mining colony?" or "Where did the other spacecraft crash?" Action.

Serv-0: You build a tiny robot assistant. It is level 1 and cannot take independent actions or leave your immediate area. In truth, it's more an extension of you than a separate being. It gains a **modification** in using machines and other technological devices. Enabler.

Serv-0 Aim: Your Serv-0 aids you in ranged combat. It gains a modification in ranged attacks. Enabler.

Serv-0 Brawler: Your Serv-0 aids you in melee combat. It gains a modification in melee attacks. Enabler.

Serv-0 Defender: Your Serv-0 aids you in combat by blocking attacks. It gains a modification in Speed defense. Enabler.

Serv-0 Repair: Your Serv-0 aids you in repairing other devices. It gains a modification in repair. Enabler.

Serv-0 Scanner (2 Intellect points): Your Serv-0 gains the **Scan** ability. Enabler.

Serv-0 Spy (3 Intellect points): You can send your Serv-0 up to a long distance away for up to ten minutes and see and hear through it as though its senses were your own. You direct its movement. Action to initiate.

Share Defense: If your training in a defense task is greater than that of an ally within short range, your advice and insight allow them to substitute your training for that defense task. Enabler.

Share the Power: When you use [Drain Creature](#) or [Drain Machine](#) to drain energy, you can transfer it to another creature, restoring points to their Might or Speed Pools (or health for an NPC) instead of yourself. You can spend points from your Siphon Pool (from the [Store Energy](#) ability) in the same way. You must touch the creature you want to heal, unless you have the [Drain at a Distance](#) ability, in which case they can be up to a short distance away. Enabler.

Share Senses: While your duplicate created by the [Duplicate](#) ability is in existence and within 1 mile (1.5 km), you know everything it experiences and can communicate with it telepathically. Enabler.

Sharp Senses: You are trained in all tasks involving perception. Enabler.

Sharp-Eyed: Because you must always keep an eye out when you're traveling, you are trained in all tasks related to perception and navigation. Enabler.

Shatter (2+ Intellect points): You interrupt the fundamental force holding normal matter together for a moment, causing the detonation of an object you choose within long range. The object must be a small, mundane item composed of homogeneous matter (such as a clay cup, an iron ingot, a stone, and so on). The object explodes in an immediate radius, dealing 1 point of damage to all creatures and objects in the area. If you apply Effort to increase the damage, you deal 2 additional points of damage per level of Effort (instead of 3 points); targets in the area take 1 point of damage even if you fail the attack roll. Action.

Shatter Mind (7+ Intellect points): Your words reverberate destructively in the brain of an intelligent level 1 target within short range that can hear and understand you. They destroy tissue, memories, and personality, triggering a vegetative state. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum level of the target. Thus, to shatter the mind of a level 5 target (four levels above the normal limit), you must apply four levels of Effort. Action. (The vegetative state created by Shatter Mind can be healed by advanced magic or science, or by a condition remover cypher that cures psychosis.)

Shattering Shout (5+ Might points): Your focused shout sets up a destructive resonance in a creature or object within long range. Nothing happens on the round you strike your target other than an ominous humming or buzzing sound emitted by the target. But on your next turn, the resonance shatters discrete inanimate objects, inflicts major damage to structures, or inflicts 4 points of damage on a creature (ignores Armor).

If you shatter a discrete object, it shatters explosively, inflicting 1 point of damage on all creatures and objects within immediate range of it. If you apply Effort to increase the damage rather than ease the task, you deal 2 additional points of damage per level of Effort (instead of 3 points); targets in the area take 1 point of damage even if you fail the attack roll.

Action to initiate.

Shepherd's Fury: You inflict 3 additional points of damage when engaging in combat that directly relates to advancing the needs of a community you are associated with. (You and the GM can decide whether a particular situation warrants the additional damage.) Enabler.

Shield Burst: When you make a melee or ranged attack and hit with your [Force Field Shield](#), it releases an explosion of energy, inflicting an additional 2 points of damage on the target and everything within immediate range of the target. If you applied Effort to inflict additional damage as part of the attack, each level of Effort inflicts only 2 additional points to all targets instead of 3 points. If you use Shield Burst with a melee attack, you and creatures behind you are not affected by this explosion. If you use Shield Burst with a ranged attack, the shield dissipates after the attack and then reforms in your grasp. Enabler.

Shield Master: When you use a shield, in addition to the asset it gives you (easing Speed defense tasks), you can act as if you are trained in Speed defense tasks. However, in any round in which you use this benefit, your attacks are hindered. Enabler.

Shield Training: If you use a shield, Speed defense tasks are eased by two steps instead of one. Enabler.

Ship Footing (3 Speed points): For ten minutes, all tasks you attempt while on a spaceship are eased. Action to initiate.

Shipspeak: You can make basic maneuvers from a planetary distance with a starship that you have bonded with using [Machine Bond](#). You can send it to a designated place, call it to you, have it land, allow or deny entrance, and so on, even if you are not on board. Bonding is a process that requires a day of meditation while jacked into the ship. Action.

Shock (1 Intellect point): Your hands crackle with electricity, and the next time you touch a creature, you inflict 3 points of damage. Alternatively, if you wield a weapon, for ten minutes it crackles with electricity and inflicts 1 additional point of damage per attack. Action for touch; enabler for weapon.

Short Teleportation (4+ Intellect points): You instantly teleport to any location within a short distance that you can see. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase your range, teleport to a location you can't see, or bring other people with you. Each additional short distance costs one level of Effort. Teleporting to a destination you can't see costs one level of Effort. Each additional target brought with you costs one level of Effort (you must touch any additional targets). These levels of Effort are counted separately, so teleporting an additional short distance away to a location you can't see with one passenger costs a total of three levels of Effort. Action.

If you already have Short Teleportation when you select Medium Teleportation or Teleportation, you may replace Short Teleportation with another tier 4 type ability.

Show Them the Way (6+ Intellect points): Your presence overwhelms a creature that you touch and ask to aid you. Essentially, if the creature fails to defend against your presence, you control its actions for up to ten minutes. The target must be level 3 or lower. Once you have established control, you maintain control through

verbal instruction. You can allow the target to act freely or override control on a case-by case basis. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum level of the target. Thus, to affect a level 5 target (two levels above the normal limit), you must apply two levels of Effort. When the effect ends, the creature vaguely remembers doing your will, but it's as blurry as a dream. Action to initiate.

Shred Existence: When you use [Disrupting Touch](#), [Scratch Existence](#), or [Phase Detonation](#), you inflict an additional 5 points of damage that ignores Armor. Enabler.

Shroud of Flame (1 Intellect point): At your command, your entire body becomes shrouded in flames that last up to ten minutes. The fire doesn't burn you, but it automatically inflicts 2 points of damage to anyone who tries to touch you or strike you with a melee attack. Flames from another source can still hurt you. While the shroud is active, you gain +2 Armor against damage from fire from another source. Enabler.

Shrink (1+ Might points): You (and your clothing or suit) become much smaller than your normal size. You become 6 inches (15 cm) tall and stay that way for about a minute. During this time, you add 4 points to your Speed Pool and add +2 to your Speed Edge. While you are smaller than normal, your Speed defense rolls are eased, your movement speed is one-tenth normal, and your attacks inflict half the normal amount of damage (divide the total damage in half after all bonuses, Effort, and other damage modifiers). You can return to your normal size as part of another action.

When the effects of Shrink end, your Speed Edge, movement speed, and damage return to normal, and you subtract a number of points from your Speed Pool equal to the number you gained (if this brings the Pool to 0, subtract the overflow first from your Might Pool and then, if necessary, from your Intellect Pool). Each additional time you use Shrink before your next ten-hour recovery roll, you must apply an additional level of Effort (one level of Effort for the second use, two levels of Effort for the third use, and so on).

Action to initiate.

The increased Effort cost for repeat uses of Shrink between ten-hour recovery rolls only applies to new activations of Shrink, not to multiple size changes within one use of Shrink enabled by Quick Switch.

Shrink Others: You can use Shrink on other willing creatures within an immediate distance. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to affect more targets; each level of Effort affects one additional target. Unless these creatures have an ability to change their size, they remain small until the one-minute duration of Shrink ends for them. Enabler.

Silent As Space: By taking advantage of microgravity conditions, you gain an asset to stealth and initiative tasks while in zero-gravity or low-gravity conditions. Enabler.

Skill With Attacks: Choose one type of attack in which you are not already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of attack. Enabler.

Skill With Defense: Choose one type of defense task in which you are not already trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are trained in defense tasks of that type. Enabler.

Sleuth: Finding the clues is the first step in solving a mystery. You are trained in perception. Enabler.

Slice (2 Speed points): This is a quick attack with a bladed or pointed weapon that is hard to defend against. You are trained in this task. If the attack is successful, it deals 1 less point of damage than normal. Action.

Slip Into Shadow (2+ Intellect points): You attempt to slip away from a selected target and hide from view in a nearby shadow, behind a tree or a furnishing, or in the next room, even if in full view of the target. For each level of Effort applied, you can attempt to affect one additional target, as long as all your targets are next to each other. Action to initiate.

Slippery: You are trained in escaping any kind of bond or grasp. Enabler.

Slippery Customer: When you apply Effort to tasks involving escaping from bonds, fitting in tight spaces, and other contortionist tasks, you get a [free level of Effort](#) on the task. Thanks to your experience, you are also trained in Speed defense tasks while wearing light armor or no armor. Enabler.

Small Flight (3+ Intellect points): For the next hour, when using Shrink, you can fly through the air. You might accomplish this flight by growing wings from your body, extending wings from your suit, calling a tiny creature to carry you, or “surfing” air currents. When flying, you can move up to a short distance as part of another action or a long distance if all you do on your turn is move. Action to initiate.

Smaller: When you use Shrink, you can choose to shrink down to about half an inch (1 cm) high, and you add 3 more temporary points to your Speed Pool. Enabler.

Snap Shot: You can make two gun attacks as a single action, but the second attack is hindered by two steps. Enabler.

Sneak: You are trained in stealth and [initiative](#) tasks. Enabler.

Snipe (2 Speed points): If you spend one action aiming, in the next round you can make a precise ranged attack. You have an asset on this attack. If your attack is successful, it inflicts 4 additional points of damage. Action.

Sniper’s Aim: By dint of almost constant practice playing games that simulate making ranged attacks, your hand-eye coordination is off the chart. You have an asset on all ranged attacks. Enabler.

Something in the Road: When you use a vehicle as a weapon, you inflict 5 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Soothe Mind and Body: The body and the mind are connected. All [healing](#) tasks you attempt are eased by two steps. Enabler.

Soothe the Savage (2 Intellect points): You calm a nonhuman beast within 30 feet (9 m). You must speak to it (although it doesn't need to understand your words), and it must see you. It remains calm for one minute or for as long as you focus all your attention on it. The GM has final say over what counts as a nonhuman beast, but unless some kind of deception is at work, you should know whether you can affect a creature before you attempt to use this ability on it. Aliens, extradimensional entities, very intelligent creatures, and robots never count. Action.

Soul Interrogation (5 Intellect points): You determine the weaknesses, vulnerabilities, qualities, and mannerisms of a single creature within long range. The GM should reveal the creature's level, basic abilities, and obvious weaknesses (if any). All actions you attempt that affect that creature—attack, defense, interaction, and so on—are eased for a few months afterward. Action.

Sound Conversion Barrier: Attacks that hit you—especially energy attacks like focused light, heat, radiation, and transdimensional energy—are partially converted to surges of harmless noise similar to the sound of a wave crashing to shore. This ability grants you +1 Armor against all attacks and an additional +2 Armor against energy attacks. Enabler.

Space Fighting: By taking advantage of microgravity conditions, you can use inertia and mass to your advantage. If you spend a round setting up a melee attack (or an attack from a thrown or launched object) while in zero-gravity or low-gravity conditions, the attack inflicts 6 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Speaker for the Dead (2+ Intellect points): You can ask a question of a dead being whose corpse you are touching. Because the answer comes through the filter of the being's understanding and personality, it can't answer questions that it wouldn't have understood in life, and it can't provide answers that it wouldn't have known in life. In fact, the being is not compelled to answer at all, so you might need to interact with it in a way that would have convinced it to answer while it was alive. For each additional Intellect point you spend when you activate the ability, you can ask the being an additional question. Action.

Special Shot: When you hit a target with a gun attack, you can choose to reduce the damage by 1 point but hit the target in a precise spot. Some of the possible effects include (but are not limited to) the following:

You can shoot an object out of someone's hand.

You can shoot the leg, wing, or other limb it uses to move, reducing its maximum movement speed to immediate for a few days or until it receives expert medical care.

You can shoot a strap holding a backpack, armor, or a similarly strapped-on item so that it falls off.

Enabler.

Specialized Basher: You are specialized in using the stone fists from your [Golem Body](#) ability as a medium weapon. Enabler.

Specialized Throwing: You are specialized in attacks with all weapons that you throw. Enabler.

Speed Burst (4 Speed points): You can take two separate actions in this round. In the following round, all actions are hindered. You cannot use this ability two rounds in a row. Enabler.

Speedy Recovery (3 Intellect points): Your words enhance the normal regenerative ability of a character within short range who is able to understand you. When they make a recovery roll, they must spend only half the normal amount of time required to do so (minimum one action). Action.

Spin Attack (5+ Speed points): You stand still and make attacks against up to five foes, all as part of the same action in one round. All of the attacks have to be the same sort of attack (melee or ranged). Make a separate attack roll for each foe. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to all of these attacks. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the number of foes you can attack with this ability (one additional foe per level of Effort used in this way). Action.

Spin Identity (2+ Intellect points): You convince all intelligent creatures who can see, hear, and understand you that you are someone or something other than who you actually are. You don't impersonate a specific individual known to the victim. Instead, you convince the victim that you are someone they do not know belonging to a certain category of people. "We're from the government." "I'm just a simple farmer from the next town over." "Your commander sent me." A disguise isn't necessary, but a good disguise will almost certainly be an asset to the roll involved. If you attempt to convince more than one creature, the Intellect cost increases by 1 point per additional victim. Fooled creatures remain so for up to an hour, unless your actions or other circumstances reveal your true identity earlier. Action.

Spirit Accomplice: A level 3 spirit accompanies you and follows your instructions. The spirit must remain within immediate range—if it moves farther away, it fades at the end of your following turn and cannot return for a day. You and the GM must work out the details of your spirit accomplice, and you'll probably make rolls for it when it takes actions. The spirit accomplice acts on your turn, can move a short distance each round, and exists partially out of phase (allowing it to move through walls, though it makes a poor porter). The spirit takes up residence in an object you designate, and it manifests as either an invisible presence or a ghostly shade. Your spirit accomplice is specialized in one knowledge skill the GM determines.

The spirit is normally insubstantial, but if you use an action and spend 3 Intellect points, it accretes enough substance to affect the world around it. As a level 3 creature with substance, it has a target number of 9 and a health of 9. It doesn't attack creatures, but while substantial, it can use its action to serve as an asset for any one attack you make on your turn.

While corporeal, the spirit can't move through objects or fly. A spirit remains corporeal for up to ten minutes at a time, but fades back to being insubstantial if not actively engaged. If your spirit accomplice is destroyed, it reforms in 1d6 days, or you can attract a new spirit in 2d6 days. Enabler. (An insubstantial creature can't affect or be affected by anything unless indicated otherwise, such as when an attack is made with a special weapon. An insubstantial creature can pass through solid matter without hindrance, but solid energy barriers, such as magical fields of force, keep it at bay.)

Spot Weakness: If a creature that you can see has a special weakness, such as a vulnerability to fire, a negative modification to perception, or so on, you know what it is. (Ask and the GM will tell you.) Enabler.

Spray (2 Speed points): If a weapon has the ability to fire rapid shots without reloading (usually called a rapid-fire weapon, such as a crank crossbow or submachine gun), you can spray multiple shots around your target to increase the chance of hitting. This ability uses $1d6 + 1$ rounds of ammo (or all the ammo in the weapon, if it has less than the number rolled). You are trained in making this attack. If the attack is successful, it deals 1 less point of damage than normal. You can also use this ability on multiple thrown weapons (stones, shuriken, daggers, and so on) if you're carrying them on your person or they are all within reach. Action.

Spring Away (5 Speed points): Whenever you succeed on a Speed defense roll, you can immediately move up to a short distance. You cannot use this ability more than once in a given round. Enabler.

Sprint and Grab (2 Speed points): You can run a short distance and make a melee attack to grab a foe of your size or smaller. A successful attack means you grab the foe and bring it to a halt if it was moving (this can be treated as a tackle, if appropriate). Action.

Spur Effort (5 Intellect points): You select an ally within immediate range. If that character applies Effort to a task on their next turn, they can apply a **free level of Effort** on that task. Enabler.

Stalker: You gain an asset to all types of movement tasks (including climbing, swimming, jumping, and balancing). Enabler.

Stand Watch (2 Intellect points): While standing watch (mostly remaining in place for an extended period of time), you unfailingly remain awake and alert for up to eight hours. During this time, you are trained in perception tasks as well as stealth tasks to conceal yourself from those who might approach. Action to initiate.

Stare Them Down: One doesn't play games of chicken with other maniac drivers without gaining mental strength. You're trained in Intellect defense tasks. Enabler.

Stasis (3 Intellect points): You surround a foe of your size or smaller with scintillating energy, keeping it from moving or acting for one minute, as if frozen solid. You must be able to see the target, and it must be within short range. While in stasis, the target is impervious to harm, cannot be moved, and is immune to all effects. Action.

Stay the Course (5 Intellect points): When your companions are flagging, you can help inspire them with a well-timed word or two. Any ally (except you) within immediate range can make a recovery roll that is not an action and does not count toward their daily limit. Action.

Steal Power: When you use Copy Power to copy an ability, the creature you copied it from loses access to that ability for about a minute. While you have their ability, any attempt by the creature to use their ability

requires them to succeed at a task (Might, Speed, or Intellect, as appropriate to the stolen ability) opposed by your eased Intellect task. If they succeed, they regain the use of their ability and you lose it. Enabler.

If you want to make it more difficult for someone to take back their stolen power, become skilled in the Steal Power ability, or put a power shift in power for it.

Stealth Skills: You are trained in your choice of two of the following skills: disguise, deception, lockpicking, pickpocketing, seeing through deception, sleight of hand, or stealth. You can choose this ability multiple times, but you must select different skills each time. Enabler.

Still As a Statue (5 Might points): Drawing upon the power of your [Golem Body](#), you freeze in place, burying your essence deep in your stone core. During this time, you lose all mobility as well as the ability to take physical actions. You cannot sense what's happening around you, and no time seems to pass for you. While Still As a Statue, you gain +10 to Armor against damage of all sorts. Under normal circumstances, you automatically rouse to normal wakefulness and mobility a day later. If an ally you trust shakes you hard enough (with a minimum cost of 2 Might points), you rouse earlier. Action to initiate.

Stimulate (6 Intellect points): Your words encourage a target you touch who can understand you. The next action it takes is eased by three steps. Action.

Stone Breaker: Your attacks against objects inflict 4 additional points of damage when you use a melee weapon that you wield in two hands. Enabler.

Store Energy: When you drain energy with your focus abilities, you can store some of it for later in a Siphon Pool. You can spend points from your Siphon Pool as if they were from your Might or Speed Pool, or use an action to spend them to restore an equal number of points to your Might or Speed Pool. Your Siphon Pool can safely store up to 3 points; each point beyond that hinders all of your tasks. Enabler.

Storm Seed (3 Intellect points): If outside or in a large-enough enclosed space, you can seed a natural storm of a kind common to the area. Doing so requires at least an hour's concentration as you use your connection to the air (whether this is due to nanobots, elemental spirits, magic, or some other source) to initiate proper conditions, though it could take longer if the GM feels there are additional obstacles at play. Once the storm begins, it lasts for about ten minutes. Once during that period, you can create a more dramatic and specific effect appropriate to that kind of storm, such as a lightning strike, a squall of giant hailstones, the brief touchdown of a twister, a single gust of hurricane-force winds, and so on. These effects must occur within long range of your location. You must spend your turn concentrating to create the effect, which occurs a round later. The effect inflicts 6 points of damage, after which the storm begins to disperse. Action to initiate, an hour or more to complete. (Storm Seed usually calls thunderstorms, but in an area where stranger weather is common, a Storm Seed could call that instead. For instance, some settings have particular kinds of magical weather.)

Straightforward: You are trained in one of the following tasks (choose one): breaking things, climbing, jumping, or running. Enabler.

Strategize (6 Intellect points): Having an action plan in place before facing a challenge improves the odds of success, even if that plan is eventually changed or discarded once it's put into play. If you and your allies spend at least ten minutes going over a plan of action, all of you gain one free level of Effort that can be applied to one task you attempt during the execution of that plan within the next 24 hours. The plan of action must be something concrete and executable in order to gain this benefit. Action to initiate, ten minutes to complete.

Stronger Together: When you and your companion from the [Beast Companion](#) ability are within immediate distance of each other, you inflict 2 additional points of damage when you attack and both of you gain an asset to defense actions. Enabler.

Stun Attack (6 Speed points): You attempt a difficulty 5 Speed task to [stun](#) a creature as part of your melee or ranged attack. If you succeed, your attack inflicts its normal damage and stuns the creature for one round, causing it to lose its next turn. If you fail, you still make your normal attack roll, but you don't stun the opponent if you hit. If you also have this ability from another source (such as having it as a type ability and a focus ability), using this costs you only 3 points instead of 6 points. Action.

Sturdy: You are trained in Might defense tasks. Enabler.

Subconscious Defense: Your subconscious constantly runs predictive models for avoiding danger. You gain an asset on your Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

Subsonic Rumble (2 Intellect points): For one minute or until you use some other sound manipulation ability, you emit a subsonic rumble that most living creatures can't hear but which has an effect on them all the same. The effect lasts for one minute and affects all creatures you select within short range. All tasks related to resisting persuasion, intimidation, and fear are hindered by two steps for affected targets. Action to initiate.

Subtle Steps: When you move no more than a short distance, you can move without making a sound, regardless of the surface you move across. Enabler.

Subtle Tricks: You can use your skills and special abilities in ways that don't look like you're doing anything. If the skill or ability would normally require an obvious movement, phrase, or other action by you, it instead seems to happen on its own. Instead of using your tools to pick a lock, the lock clicks open as you stand near it. Instead of manipulating a computer screen, the information you want appears on the screen when you look at it. Instead of bluffing your way past some guards, they step aside as you approach and let you through. This ability usually only works up to an immediate distance. You still must spend points and make rolls to use your skills and abilities with Subtle Tricks. Using a skill or ability in a subtle way hinders the task. This ability can't be used to conceal your attack or defense rolls. Enabler.

Successive Attack (2 Speed points): If you take down a foe, you can immediately make another attack on that same turn against a new foe within your reach. The second attack is part of the same action. You can use this ability with melee attacks and ranged attacks. Enabler.

Suggestion (5+ Intellect points): You suggest an action to a creature within immediate range. If the action is something that the target might normally do anyway, it follows your suggestion. If the suggestion is something that is outside of the target's nature or express duty (such as asking a guard to let an intruder pass), the suggestion fails. The creature must be level 2 or lower. The effect of your suggestion lasts for up to a minute.

In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum level of the target you can affect by 1. Thus, to affect a level 5 target (three levels above the normal limit), you must apply three levels of Effort.

When the effects of the ability end, the creature remembers following the suggestion but can be persuaded to believe that it chose to do so willingly.

Action to initiate.

Summon Demon (7+ Intellect points): A [demon](#) appears within immediate range. If you applied a level of Effort as part of the summoning, the demon is amenable to your instructions; otherwise, it acts according to its nature. Regardless, the demon persists for up to one minute before it fades away—you hope. Action to initiate.

Summon Giant Spider (4+ Intellect points): A [giant spider](#) appears within immediate range. If you applied a level of Effort as part of the summoning, the spider is amenable to your instructions; otherwise, it acts according to its nature. Regardless, the creature persists for up to one minute before it fades away. Action to initiate.

Sun Siphon: The safe limit of your Siphon Pool from the [Store Energy](#) ability increases by 3 points. If you spend an hour in sunlight (or an hour in contact with a suitable powerful energy source), you automatically fill your Siphon Pool to its safe limit. You can't refill your Siphon Pool this way again until after your next ten-hour recovery roll. Enabler.

Sunlight (3 Intellect points): A mote of light travels from you to a spot you choose within long range. When the mote reaches that spot, it flares and casts bright light in a 200-foot (60 m) radius, and darkness within 1,000 feet (300 m) of the mote becomes dim light. The light lasts for one hour or until you use an action to dismiss it. Action.

Superb Explorer: You are trained in searching, listening, climbing, balancing, and jumping tasks. Enabler.

Superb Infiltrator: You are trained in lockpicking and tinkering with devices in an effort to make them work, or at least work for you. Enabler.

Superior Duplicate (2 Might points): When you use your [Duplicate](#) ability, you can create a superior duplicate instead of a normal duplicate. A superior duplicate is a level 3 NPC with 15 health. Enabler.

Surging Confidence (1 Might point): When you use an action to make your first recovery roll of the day, you immediately gain another action. Enabler.

Surprise Attack: If attacking from a hidden vantage, with surprise, or before your opponent has acted, you get an asset on the attack. On a successful hit, you inflict 2 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Swim (1+ Intellect points): You can swim like a fish through water and similar liquid for one hour. For each level of Effort applied, you can extend the duration by one hour. You swim about 10 miles (16 km) per hour, and you are not affected by currents in the water. Action to initiate.

Swipe (1 Speed point): This is a quick, agile melee attack. Your attack inflicts 1 less point of damage than normal but dazes your target for one round, during which time all tasks it performs are hindered. Action.

Abilities—T

Take Command (3 Intellect points): You issue a specific command to another character. If that character chooses to listen, any attack they attempt on their next turn is eased, and a hit deals 3 additional points of damage. If your command is to perform a task other than an attack, the task is eased as if it benefited from a **free level of Effort**. Action.

Taking Advantage: When your foe is weakened, dazed, stunned, moved down the [damage track](#), or disadvantaged in some other way, your attacks against that foe are eased beyond any other modifications due to the disadvantage. Enabler.

Tall Tale (3 Intellect points): You tell a short anecdote to a foe that can understand you about something you've witnessed in your life that's so over the top yet so convincing that, if you are successful, the foe is dazed for one minute, during which time its tasks are hindered. Action.

Targeting Eye: You are trained in any physical ranged attack that is a character ability or comes from a device. For example, you are trained when using an [Onslaught](#) force blast because it's a physical attack, but not when using an Onslaught mindslice because it's a mental attack. Enabler.

Task Specialization: Choose one task (other than attacks or defense) that you are trained in. You become specialized in that task. (You can instead use this ability as Task Training to become trained in a task you aren't trained in.) Enabler.

Task Training: Choose one task (other than attacks or defense) that you are not trained or specialized in. You become trained in that task. Enabler.

Taunt Foe (4 Might or Intellect points): You can make an attack on a foe as part of [drawing an attack](#) (which is not something you can do normally when attempting to draw an attack). In cases where an intelligent or determined foe isn't drawn to you, you can attempt an Intellect action as part of the attack. If that Intellect

action is successful, the foe attacks you. Your defenses against that attack are hindered by one step, instead of being hindered by two steps as normal when drawing an attack. Enabler.

Teach Trick (5+ Intellect points): You spend an hour instructing someone on how to perform a type ability that you know. The ability must be no higher than fourth tier. For one hour after you teach them, the student can perform that ability as if it were natural for them. They must pay the Might, Speed, or Intellect cost (if any) to use that ability. The student must be able to understand your instructions. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase how long the student can use the ability or to teach additional students at the same time; each level of Effort used in this way increases the duration by one hour or the number of students by one. One hour to initiate. Action; hour to complete.

Teamwork: Through example, acts of camaraderie, stories of martial prowess, or other forms of instruction, you and your allies work better together as a cohesive unit. During any round in which you rally your team (by spending 2 Intellect points as part of another action), you and your allies inflict 1 additional point of damage in combat. This benefit applies only to allies with whom you have spent the last 24 hours. It ends if you leave, but it resumes if you return to your allies' company within 24 hours. If you leave for more than 24 hours, you must spend another 24 hours together to reactivate the benefit. Enabler.

Tech Skills: You are trained in two skills in which you are not already trained. Choose two of the following: crafting, computers, identifying, machines, piloting, repairing, or vehicle driving. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose two different skills. Enabler.

Telekinesis (2 Intellect points): You can exert force on objects within short range. Once activated, your power has an effective Might Pool of 10, a Might Edge of 1, and an Effort of 2 (approximately equal to the strength of a fit, capable adult human), and you can use it to move objects, push against objects, and so on. For example, you could lift and pull a light object anywhere within range to yourself or move a heavy object (like a piece of furniture) about 10 feet (3 m). This power lacks the fine control to wield a weapon or move objects with much speed, so in most situations, it's not a means of attack. You can't use this ability on your own body. The power lasts for one hour or until its Might Pool is depleted, whichever comes first. Action. (If you're using Telekinesis to move an object across the room, and an average fit human could do it with their arms, you can do it with your psychokinesis. You have to use the power's Might Pool, Might Edge, and Effort only if a PC would have to do so, such as if a character tried to push open a barred door.)

Telepathic (1+ Intellect points): You can speak telepathically with others who are within short range. Communication is two-way, but the other party must be willing and able to communicate. You don't have to see the target, but you must know that it's within range. You can have more than one active contact at once, but you must establish contact with each target individually. Each contact lasts up to ten minutes. If you apply a level of Effort to increase the duration rather than ease the task, the contact lasts for 24 hours. Action to establish contact.

Telepathic Network (0+ Intellect points): When you wish it, you can contact up to ten creatures known to you, no matter where they are. All targets must be willing and able to communicate. You automatically succeed at establishing a telepathic network; no roll is required. All creatures in the network are linked and can communicate telepathically with one another. They can also "overhear" anything said in the network, if they

wish. Activating this ability doesn't require an action and doesn't cost Intellect points; to you, it's as easy as speaking out loud. The network lasts until you choose to end it. If you spend 5 Intellect points, you can contact twenty creatures at once, and for every 1 Intellect point you spend above that, you can add ten more creatures to the network. These larger networks last for ten minutes. Creating a network of twenty or more creatures does require an action to establish contact. Enabler.

Teleportation (6+ Intellect points): You instantaneously transmit yourself to any location that you have seen or been to, no matter the distance, as long as it is on Earth (or whatever world you're currently on). In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to bring other people with you; each level of Effort used in this way affects up to three additional targets. You must touch any additional targets. Action.

Teleportation Burst (3 Intellect points): You rapidly teleport multiple times in an immediate area, confusing your opponents and allowing you to make an additional melee attack this round. You can use this ability once per round. Enabler.

Teleportive Wound (7+ Intellect points): You touch a creature and, if your attack succeeds, you teleport away (up to your normal maximum teleportation distance) with a significant portion of their body. If the target is level 2 or lower, it dies. If the target is level 3 or higher, it takes 6 points of damage and is stunned on its next action. If the target is a PC of any tier, they move down one step on the damage track. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to affect a more powerful target (one level of Effort means a target of up to level 3 dies or a target of level 4 or higher takes damage and is stunned, and so on). Action.

Telling (2 Intellect points): This ability provides an asset to any tasks for attempting to deceive, persuade, or intimidate. Each use lasts up to a minute; a new use (to switch tasks) replaces the previous use. Action to initiate.

Temporal Acceleration (5 Intellect points): You or one willing creature you touch moves more quickly through time. The effect lasts for one minute. Everything moves more slowly for the affected character, while to all others, the character seems to move at preternatural speed. The character has an asset on all tasks until the effect ends. After the effect ends, the target is exhausted and disoriented by the experience, hindering all tasks for one hour. Action.

Temporal Dislocation (7 Intellect points): You disappear and travel up to one hour into the future or the past. While dislocated in time, you perceive events as they transpire from your position using your normal senses, but you can't interact with or change anything. If you project yourself into the past, you remain there for one hour, at which point you've caught up to the present (to anyone with you in the present, you only seem to flicker out of existence for a moment). If you project yourself into the future, you remain there until the present catches up to you (to anyone with you in the present, you vanish for one hour and reappear in the place you left). Action.

Temporary Light (2 Intellect points): You create an object of solid light in any shape you can imagine that is your size or smaller, and it persists for about a minute (or longer, if you concentrate on it after that time). The object appears in an area adjacent to you, but afterward you can move it up to a short distance each round as part of another action. It is crude and can have no moving parts, so you can make a sword, a shield, a short ladder, and so on. The object has the approximate mass of the real object and is level 2. Action.

Terrifying Gaze (6 Intellect points): You project a chilling gaze at all living creatures within short range who can see you. Make a separate Intellect attack roll for each target. Success means that the creature is frozen in fear, not moving or taking actions for one minute or until it is attacked. Some creatures without minds (such as robots) might be immune to Terrifying Gaze. Action.

Terrifying Image (6 Intellect points): You use a bit of subtle telepathy to learn which images would appear terrifying to creatures that you choose within long range. Those images appear within that area and menace the appropriate creatures. Make an Intellect attack roll against each creature you want to affect. Success means the creature flees in terror for one minute, pursued by its nightmares. Failure means the creature ignores the images, which do not hamper it in any way. Action.

Terrifying Presence (2+ Intellect points): You convince one intelligent target of level 3 or lower that you are its worst nightmare. The target must be within short range and be able to understand you. For as long as you do nothing but speak (you can't even move), the target is paralyzed with fear, runs away, or takes some other action appropriate to the circumstances. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum level of the target. Thus, to terrorize a level 5 target (two levels above the normal limit), you must apply two levels of Effort. Action.

There's Your Problem: You are trained in tasks related to figuring out how to solve problems with multiple solutions (like the best way to pack a truck, calm an enraged customer, give a cat a shot of insulin, or find a route through the city for maximum speed). Enabler.

Thief's Luck: Luck is not the chaotic ocean of random chance most people believe it to be. If you fail on a task (including an attack roll or a defense roll), you can change the die result to a natural 20. That still might not be enough to succeed if the difficulty is higher than 6. Once you use this ability, it is not available again until after you make a ten-hour recovery roll. (Thief's Luck doesn't work if you roll a natural 1 for an attempted task, unless you also have and use the ability [Wrest From Chance](#).) Enabler.

Think Your Way Out: When you wish it, you can use points from your Intellect Pool rather than your Might Pool or Speed Pool on any noncombat action. Enabler.

Thinking Ahead (variable Intellect points): You produce a remedy that removes a negative condition because you've previously spent considerable time thinking ahead and preparing for your current situation. For instance, if another character is poisoned, you produce an antidote, or if they're blinded, you produce a salve that returns sight (assuming they weren't blinded because their eyes were destroyed). The Intellect cost for using this ability is equal to the level of effect or creature that caused the negative condition. Action.

Third Eye (1 Intellect point): You visualize a place within short range and cast your mind to that place, creating an immobile, invisible sensor for one minute or until you choose to end this ability. While using your third eye, you see through your sensor instead of your eyes using your normal visual abilities. You may perceive the area around your body using your other senses as normal. Action.

Throw (2 Might points): When you are using [Enlarge](#) and deal damage to a creature of your size or smaller with an unarmed attack, you can choose to throw that creature up to 1d20 feet away from you. The creature lands prone. Enabler.

Throw Enchanted Weapon: You can throw your enchanted weapon up to short range as a light ranged weapon. Whether it hits or misses, it immediately flies back to your hands, and you can automatically catch it or allow it to land at your feet. Enabler.

Throw Force Shield: You can throw your [Force Field Shield](#) up to short range as a light ranged weapon. Whether the shield hits or misses, it immediately dissipates and then reforms in your grasp. Enabler.

Thrust (1 Might point): This is a powerful melee stab. You make an attack and inflict 1 additional point of damage if your weapon has a sharp edge or point. Action.

Thunder Beam (2 Might points): You direct a beam of focused sound at a target within long range, inflicting 2 points of damage and inducing a resonant destructive wave in their body. Each round after this initial attack, you can make another roll for the destructive wave to inflict an additional 1 point of damage to the target. If you fail this roll, the destructive wave ends. Unlike the initial attack, the destructive wave ignores Armor.

Alternatively, you can set up a destructive resonance in a physical melee weapon for one minute or until you let go of it. All attacks made with the target weapon inflict 1 additional point of damage.

Action to initiate.

Time Doppelganger (6+ Intellect points): A perfect copy of you appears within an immediate distance. This doppelganger is probably a version of you from another timeline or the past. The doppelganger is a level 5 NPC with 15 health. It has your mind and memories, and you control it as if it were you in another body. In effect, while this ability is active, you have two bodies.

If the doppelganger uses any of your abilities that cost points, those points come from your Pools (including spending Effort). Controlling two bodies at once is difficult and distracting; while this ability is active, all tasks performed by you or the doppelganger are hindered. The doppelganger has no equipment other than simple clothing.

It remains for up to one minute, but disappears if killed or if you use an action to dismiss it. If the doppelganger is killed, you take 5 points of damage that ignore Armor, and you lose your next action. If you are killed while the doppelganger is present, you live on as the doppelganger (it becomes your character instead of being an NPC that disappears). In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the duration of this ability; each level of Effort used in this way adds one minute to the doppelganger's existence.

If you also have this ability from another source, you may use either ability, the doppelganger is 1 level higher, and it has 3 additional health. Action.

Time Loop (4 Intellect points): You call yourself from a few moments in the future to help you in the present. On the round you use this ability, your future self appears anywhere you choose within immediate range and takes an action. On the second round, you and your future self both take actions, and your future self's action is eased. On the third round, you and your future self both disappear. On the fourth round, you catch up to

your future self, reappear wherever your future self initially appeared in the first round, and can take your actions normally.

Your future self shares your stats, so any damage that either of you takes applies to the same stat Pools. If your future self is killed, you and your future self disappear in the third round (as normal) and you reappear, dead, in the fourth round. Neither you nor your future self can use Time Loop again until you reappear as your future self in the fourth round.

Action.

(In effect, Time Loop lets “you” take an action on the round you use it, two actions on the second round, and zero actions on the third round, and then you’re back to normal after that.)

Time Travel (10+ Intellect points): You and up to three willing characters you choose within immediate range travel to a point in time that you specify when you use this ability. The point in time must be within ten years of the present. For each level of Effort applied, you can travel ten more years or bring three more creatures with you. When you appear in the new moment in time, you do so in the same position you were in when you used this ability. Upon arriving at your temporal destination, you and the other time travelers are stunned for one minute. In order to return to your original time, you must use this ability again. Action.

Tinker (1 Intellect point): You make a device do something different from its original purpose. For example, a blaster becomes a bomb. A scanner becomes a signal booster for a radio transmitter. A music player becomes a battery for another device. The effective level of the modified device is 1 lower than normal, and the device is rendered unusable (for its original purpose) until repaired. Action to initiate.

Tiny: When you use Shrink, you can choose to shrink down to about one-sixteenth of an inch (.2 cm). When you do, you add 5 more temporary points to your Speed Pool (plus any from Smaller), and because your attacks are concentrated into a very small area, you deal an additional 2 points of damage. For each level of Effort you apply to shrink even more, you become one-tenth as tall (one one-hundredth for two levels of Effort, one one-thousandth for three, and so on) and you add 1 more point to your Speed Pool. Enabler.

In campaigns where characters can travel to parallel dimensions, using Tiny to shrink to one-thousandth of your normal height may be a means of doing so.

Tool Mastery: When you have an asset from using a tool, the time required to perform the task is cut in half (minimum one round). Enabler.

Total Awareness: You possess such a high level of awareness that it’s very difficult to surprise, hide from, or sneak up on you. When you apply a level of Effort to initiative and perception tasks, you gain two **free levels of Effort**. Enabler.

Totally Chill: Your ten-minute recovery roll takes you only one round. Enabler.

Tough As Nails: When you are impaired or debilitated on the [damage track](#), Might-based tasks and defense rolls you attempt are eased. If you also have [Ignore the Pain](#), make a difficulty 1 Might defense roll when you reach 0 points in all three of your Pools to immediately regain 1 Might point and avoid dying. Each time you

attempt to save yourself with this ability before your next ten-hour recovery roll, the task is hindered. Enabler. (A character can't apply Effort or other abilities to any task accomplished using Tough As Nails.)

Tough It Out: Working for a living has toughened you over time. You have +1 to Armor against any kind of physical damage, even damage that normally ignores Armor. Enabler.

Tower of Intellect: You are trained in Intellect defense tasks. If you are already trained, you are specialized in those tasks instead. Enabler.

Tower of Will: You are trained in Intellect defense tasks and gain +3 points to your Intellect Pool. Enabler.

Tracker: You are trained in following and identifying tracks. Enabler.

Trained Basher: You are trained in using the stone fists from your [Golem Body](#) as a medium weapon. Enabler.

Trained Excavator: You are trained in perception, climbing, and salvaging tasks. Enabler.

Trained Gunner: You can choose from one of two benefits. Either you are trained in using guns, or you have the [Spray](#) ability (which costs 2 Speed points): If a weapon has the ability to fire rapid shots without reloading (usually called a rapid-fire weapon, such as an automatic pistol), you can spray multiple shots around your target to increase the chance of hitting. This move uses $1d6 + 1$ rounds of ammo (or all the ammo in the weapon, if it has less than the number rolled). The attack roll is eased. If the attack is successful, it deals 1 less point of damage than normal. Enabler (being trained in using guns) or action (Spray).

Trained Interlocutor: Through wit, charm, humor, and grace (or sometimes rudeness, threatening posture, and obscenity), you're better able to talk others into what you want. You are trained in all interactions. Enabler.

Trained Slayer: You are trained in using swords. Enabler.

Trained Swimmer: While underwater, you are trained in escaping, perception, sneaking, and swimming tasks, as well as in tasks to identify aquatic creatures and geography. Enabler.

Trained Without Armor: You are trained in Speed defense tasks when not wearing armor. Enabler.

Transcend the Script (5 Intellect points): Whether they are lines you wrote, acted, reported on, or otherwise incorporated into your talent, you compose an oratory on the fly that is so wonderful that even you believe it. For each ally who hears it (and you too), a task attempted within the next hour is eased by two steps. Action.

Trapfinder (3+ Intellect points): You find any traps (like a floor that would give way beneath you) or mechanical triggers to a trap or defense system that might pose a threat. You can do this without setting them off and in lieu of making a roll to find them. This ability can find traps of level 4 or below. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the level of traps that can be found by 2, so using two levels of Effort can find all traps of level 8 or below. Action.

Trapster: You are trained in creating simple traps for human-sized or smaller targets, especially many varieties of deadfalls and snares using natural objects from the surrounding environment. When you lay a trap, decide whether you want to hold the victim in place (a snare) or inflict damage (a deadfall). Creating a snare is a difficulty 3 task, while the difficulty of creating a deadfall is equal to the number of points of damage you want it to inflict. For example, if you want to inflict 4 points of damage, that's a difficulty 4 task (the training that comes with this ability eases the task).

On a success, you create your one-use trap in about one minute, and it is considered level 3 for the purposes of avoiding detection before it is sprung and for a victim trying to struggle free (if a snare).

Action to initiate, one minute or one hour to complete.

Travel Skills: You are trained in two skills in which you are not already trained. Choose two of the following: navigation, riding, running, piloting, or vehicle driving. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose two different skills. Enabler.

Traverse the Worlds (8+ Intellect points): You instantaneously transmit yourself to another planet, dimension, plane, or level of reality. You must know that the destination exists; the GM will decide if you have enough information to confirm its existence and the level of difficulty to reach the destination. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to bring other people with you; each level of Effort used in this way affects up to three additional targets. You must touch any additional targets. Action.

Tree Companion (5+ Intellect points): You animate a tree of approximately your size or smaller, creating a level 3 creature with 1 Armor. The tree follows your verbal commands for one hour, after which it reverts to a normal tree (and roots itself where it stands). Unless the tree is killed by damage, you can animate it again when the ability duration expires, but any damage it has carries over to its newly animated state. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to affect more trees; each level of Effort used affects one additional tree. Action.

Tree Travel (4+ Intellect points): You enter one tree and instantaneously and safely emerge from another one within long distance. You don't need to specify which tree you're exiting from (if you know there are trees in that direction, you can decide how far to go and you will step out of a tree in that area). If the starting tree's trunk isn't as large as your body, you must apply a level of Effort to enter it. You can choose to use Effort to increase the distance you travel; one level of Effort used in this way increases the range to very long, two levels raise it to one mile (1.5 km), and each additional level of Effort beyond that increases it by an additional mile. Action.

Trick Driver: While driving a car, truck, or motorcycle, your Might Edge, Speed Edge, and Intellect Edge increase by 1. When you make a recovery roll while driving, you recover 5 additional points. When you attempt a driving task or an extreme trick—such as jumping a ravine or other vehicle, spinning in the air, landing safely on another vehicle, and so on—the task is eased. Enabler.

Trick Shot (2 Speed points): As part of the same action, you make a ranged attack against two targets that are within immediate range of each other. Make a separate attack roll against each target. The attack rolls are hindered. Action.

True Defender (6 Might or Intellect points): This ability functions as the [Devoted Defender](#) ability, except the benefit applies to up to three characters you choose. If you choose just one character, you become specialized in the tasks described under the Devoted Defender ability. Action to initiate.

True Guardian (2 Might or Intellect points): When you [stand guard](#) as your action, allies within immediate range of you gain an asset to their defense tasks. This lasts until the end of your next turn. Enabler.

True Necromancy (8+ Intellect points): This ability works like the [Necromancy](#) ability except that it creates a level 5 creature. Action to animate.

True Senses: You can see in complete darkness up to 50 feet (15 m) as if it were dim light. You recognize holograms, disguises, optical illusions, sound mimicry, and other such tricks (for all senses) for what they are. Enabler.

Trust to Luck (3 Intellect points): Sometimes, you've just got to roll the dice and hope things add up in your favor. When you use Trust to Luck, roll a d6. On any even result, the task you're attempting is eased by two steps. On a roll of 1, the task is hindered. Enabler.

Tumbling Moves (5 Speed points): When you use an action to move, Speed defense rolls are eased until the end of your next turn. Enabler.

Twist of Fate: Experience has taught you a lot, including that sometimes luck is something that you have to make for yourself. When you roll a 1, you can reroll. You must use the new result, even if it's another 1. Enabler.

Twisting the Knife (4 Speed points): In a round after successfully striking a foe with a melee weapon, you can opt to automatically deal standard damage to the foe with that same weapon without any modifiers (2 points for a light weapon, 4 points for a medium weapon, or 6 points for a heavy weapon). Action.

Two Things at Once (6 Intellect points): The ultimate test: you divide your attention and take two separate actions this round. Enabler.

Abilities—U

Ultra Enhancement: You gain +1 to Armor and +5 to each of your three stat Pools. Enabler.

Unarmed Fighting Style: You are trained in unarmed attacks. Enabler.

Unarmored Fighter: While unarmored, you are trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

Uncanny Luck (4 Speed points): When you roll for a task and succeed, roll again. If the second number rolled is higher than the first, you get a [minor effect](#). If you roll the same number again, you get a [major effect](#). If you have Uncanny Luck from another source or a similar ability, it's your choice (no roll required) whether you get a minor effect, a major effect, or a free activation of one of your tier 1–3 focus abilities. Enabler.

Understanding (1 Intellect point): You observe or study a creature or object. Your next interaction with that creature or object gains one asset. Action.

Underworld Contacts: You know many people in a variety of communities who engage in illegal activities. These people are not necessarily your friends and might not be trustworthy, but they recognize you as a peer. You and the GM should work out the details of your underworld contacts. Enabler.

Undo (5 Intellect points): You turn back time a few seconds, effectively undoing a single creature's most recent action. That creature can then immediately repeat the same action or try something different. Action.

Unexpected Betrayal: Within a round or two of successfully using [Enthrall](#), [Fast Talk](#), or a similar ability on a target within short range, the first attack you make on that target is eased by two steps. Once you use Unexpected Betrayal on a target, using your abilities or attempting simple persuasion on that target is permanently hindered by two steps. Enabler.

Unmovable (3 Might points): You avoid being knocked down, pushed back, or moved against your will as long as you are upright and able to take actions. Enabler.

Unraveling Consumption: You can drain energy from a living creature by touching it and concentrating for a minute or more. Each minute you spend in contact with and concentrating on the creature deals it 1 point of damage (ignores Armor) and restores 1 point to your Might or Speed Pool. Because of the extended contact required for this ability, normally you can use it only on a willing or helpless creature. If the creature takes enough damage to knock it unconscious or kill it, it crumbles into ash, dust, or some other inert material. Action to initiate.

Untouchable (6 Intellect points): You change your phase state for the next minute so that you can't affect or be affected by normal matter or energy. Only mental attacks and special transdimensional energies, devices, or abilities can affect you, but likewise you can't attack, touch, or otherwise affect anything. Action to initiate.

Untouchable While Moving (4 Intellect points): You change your phase state for the next minute so that you can't affect or be affected by normal matter or energy, as long as you move at least an immediate distance

each round while phased. If you don't move on your turn, the effect ends. While you are phased, only mental attacks and special transdimensional energies, devices, or abilities can affect you, but likewise you can't attack, touch, or otherwise affect anything. Action to initiate.

Up to Speed: If you do nothing but move for three actions in a row, you accelerate greatly and can move up to 200 mph (about 2,000 feet each round) for up to ten minutes (about 35 miles), after which you must stop and make a recovery roll. (Move up to 322 kph [about 600 m each round] for up to ten minutes [about 56 km].) Enabler.

Use Senses of Others (4 Intellect points): You can see, hear, smell, touch, and taste through the senses of anyone with whom you have telepathic contact by using [Telepathic](#) or similar abilities. You can attempt to use this ability on a willing or unwilling target within long range; an unwilling target can try to resist. You don't need to see the target, but you must know that it's within range. Your shared senses last ten minutes. Action to establish.

Using the Environment (4 Intellect points): You find some way to use the environment to your advantage in a fight. For the next ten minutes, attack rolls and Speed defense rolls are eased. Action to initiate.

Using What's Available (4 Intellect points): If you have the time and the freedom to scrounge for everyday materials in your environment, you can fashion a temporary asset that will aid you once to accomplish a specific task. For example, if you need to climb a wall, you could create some sort of climbing assistance device; if you need to break out of a cell, you can find something to use as a lockpick; if you need to create a small distraction, you could put together something to make a loud bang and flash; and so on. The asset lasts for a maximum of one minute, or until used for the intended purpose. One minute to assemble materials; action to create asset.

Usurp Cypher: Choose one cypher that you carry. The cypher must have an effect that is not instantaneous. You destroy the cypher and gain its power, which functions for you continuously. You can choose a cypher when you gain this ability, or you can wait and make the choice later. However, once you usurp a cypher's power, you cannot later switch to a different cypher—the usurping ability works only once. Action to initiate.

Abilities—V

Vacuum Skilled: You are trained in two of the following skills: vacuum welding, algae farming, ecosystem design, circuit design, spacecraft maintenance and repair, or some similar skill related to traveling and colonizing planets, moons, and stations located in the solar system. Enabler.

Vanish (2 Intellect points): You become invisible for a short amount of time. While invisible, you have an asset on stealth and Speed defense tasks. The invisibility ends at the end of your next turn, or if you do something to reveal your presence or position—attacking, using an ability, moving a large object, and so on. Action.

Verbal Misdirection (2+ Intellect points): With fast talk and bewildering words, you can confuse and distract anyone that you're speaking with, giving you an asset on social interactions with that person for ten minutes.

In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to affect additional creatures (one per level of Effort). Enabler.

Versatile Mind: When you make a Speed defense roll, you can use your Intellect in place of your Speed. Enabler.

Very Long Sprinting: When you use [Phase Sprint](#), you can travel up to a very long distance as your action instead of a long distance. Enabler.

Vigilance (2 Intellect points): You take a cautious approach to combat, focusing more on protecting yourself than on hurting your opponents. While this ability is active, you gain an asset on Speed defense rolls against melee and ranged attacks, and your melee and ranged attacks are hindered. This effect lasts for as long as you wish, but it ends if no combat is taking place within range of your senses. Action to initiate.

Vigilant (5 Might points): When affected by an attack or effect that would daze or stun you, you are not dazed or stunned. Enabler.

Vindictive Performance (5 Intellect points): When you tell a joke, perform a song or poem, draw a picture, relate an anecdote, or otherwise provide entertainment, you can select one individual from the audience who is able to understand you. During your performance, you heap indirect but biting derision on this target. If you succeed, the target doesn't realize that they've become the victim of your performance until you wrap up the entertainment at a moment you choose in a way that strikes home. The target suffers 6 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) and loses their next turn. One or more actions to initiate.

Void Wings (3 Intellect points): Swirling ribbons of weird matter grasp you and lift you up, allowing you to fly for one round as quickly as you can move. Enabler.

Abilities—W

Walk Through Walls (2 Intellect points): You can slowly pass through physical barriers at a rate of 1 inch (2.5 cm) per round (minimum of one round to pass through any barrier). You can't act (other than moving) or perceive anything until you pass entirely through the barrier. You can't pass through energy barriers. Action.

Wall of Lightning (6 Intellect points): You create a barrier of crackling electricity up to 2,500 square feet (230 sq. m) in size, shaped as you wish. The wall is a level 7 barrier. Anyone within immediate distance of the wall automatically takes 10 points of damage. The wall lasts for one hour. Action to create.

Wall With Teeth: You inflict 2 additional points of damage with all attacks when using your [Living Wall](#) ability. Enabler.

War Flesh: You can instantly transform your hands and feet into claws, and your human teeth into fangs, or revert to your normal human appearance. When you make attacks with your claws or fangs, they count as medium weapons instead of light weapons. Enabler.

Ward: You have a shield of energy around you at all times that helps deflect attacks. You gain +1 to Armor. Enabler.

Warding Shield: You have +1 to Armor while you are using a shield. Enabler.

Water Adaptation: You can breathe water as easily as you breathe air. Enabler.

Weapon and Body (5 Speed points): After making a melee weapon or ranged weapon attack, you follow up with a punch or kick as an additional attack, all as part of the same action in one round. The two attacks can be directed at different foes. Make a separate attack roll for each attack. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to both attacks, unless it is tied specifically to your weapon. Action.

Weapon Crafter: You are trained in crafting tasks associated with your [chosen weapon](#). For instance, if your weapon is a bow, you are trained in tasks related to crafting bows and fletching arrows; if your weapon is a sword, you are trained in tasks for forging swords and sharpening blades; and so on. Enabler.

Weapon Defense: While your chosen weapon is in your hand(s), you are trained in Speed defense rolls. Enabler.

Weapon Master: You inflict an additional 1 point of damage with your chosen weapon. Enabler.

Weaponization: One light or medium melee weapon of your choice is built into your body, and you are trained in using it. The weapon is concealed until you wish to use it. Enabler.

Wear It Well: When you wear armor of any kind, you gain an additional +1 to Armor. Enabler.

Weather the Vicissitudes: Helping your friends means being able to stand up to everything the world throws at you. You have +1 to Armor. Also, you resist heat, cold, and similar extremes and have an additional +1 to Armor against ambient damage or other damage that would normally ignore Armor. Enabler.

Weight of the World (6+ Intellect points): You can increase a target's weight dramatically. The target is pulled to the ground and can't move physically under its own power for one minute. The target must be within short range. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to affect additional creatures (one per level of Effort). Action.

Weightless Shot: You have a sixth sense when it comes to lining up trajectories and moving in low-gravity and zero-gravity environments, which also translates to making ranged attacks. When you hit a target with a

ranged attack in microgravity conditions, you can choose to reduce the damage by 2 points but hit the target in a precise spot. Some of the possible effects include (but are not limited to) the following:

You punch a hole in the target's suit, so it begins to leak air into the vacuum slowly, or all at once (your choice).

You hit the reaction mass of the target's maneuvering pack, which means the target can no longer change their trajectory, or they go spinning off in a random direction (your choice).

You can shoot a spacecraft, and degrade one ship system by one step (systems include engines, weapons, and atmosphere).

Enabler.

Weighty (1 Intellect point): You briefly increase the weight of a target within short range enough to stop them in their tracks, preventing the target from moving and hindering any attempted tasks on their next turn.

Action.

Weird Science Breakthrough (5+ Intellect points): Your research leads to a breakthrough, and you imbue an object with a truly amazing property, though you can use the item only once. To do so, you must buy spare parts equivalent to an expensive item, have a field science kit (or a permanent lab, if you have access to one), and succeed at a difficulty 4 Intellect-based roll to create a random manifest cypher of up to level 2. The GM decides the nature of the cypher you create. Attempting to create a specified cypher hinders the task by two steps. Creating a cypher does not allow you to surpass your normal cypher limit. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the level of the cypher you create; each level of Effort increases the level of the cypher and the difficulty of the Intellect task to create it. Action to initiate, one hour to complete.

Whirlwind of Throws (5 Speed points): With a large handful of small objects—tiny knives, shuriken, stones, jagged bits of metal, coins, or whatever is on hand—you attack every creature in an immediate area within short range. You must make attack rolls against each target. Each attack is hindered. You inflict 3 points of damage on targets you hit. Action.

Wild Camouflage (4 Intellect points): By drawing your clothing about you just so and using various tricks and your deep knowledge of your surroundings, you become invisible in the wilderness for ten minutes. While you are invisible, this asset eases your stealth and Speed defense tasks by two steps. This effect ends if you do something to reveal your presence or position—attacking, using an ability, moving a large object, and so on. If this occurs, you can regain the remaining invisibility effect by taking an action to focus on hiding your position. Action to initiate or reinitiate.

The Wild Is on Your Side (5 Intellect points): While you're in the wilderness, foes within short range are tripped by rocks, tangled in vines, bitten by insects, and distracted or confused by small animals, which hinders all their tasks for ten minutes. Action to initiate.

Wild Insight: You gain a momentary perfect understanding of the flow of magic around you at this moment. When preparing your magic, choose one specific subtle cypher and make a magical lore skill roll against level 6. If you succeed, you gain that subtle cypher (the cypher's level is 6); if you fail, you get a random subtle cypher. If you aren't sure what specific subtle cypher you want, you can ask for a broad category such as

“healing,” “movement,” or “skill”; this eases the magical lore task, and if you succeed, the GM chooses a random cypher that fits that category. You can’t use this ability again until after you’ve taken a ten-hour recovery action. Enabler.

Wild Vitality (4 Intellect points): You attune with the life force of a natural creature (your size or bigger) within long range that you can see. This is a level 2 Intellect task. If you succeed, the creature is not harmed, but through resonance with its wild vitality, you gain several benefits for up to one minute: an asset to all your Might-based tasks (including attacks and defenses), +2 to your Might Edge and Speed Edge, and 2 additional points of damage on all successful melee attacks. Action to initiate.

Wildcard Powers: You have a gift with using copied powers in unusual ways. Whenever you try a power stunt and use a level of Effort on the special roll to modify the ability, you get a free level of Effort on that roll. Enabler.

Wilderness Awareness (4 Intellect points): Your connection to the natural world extends to a degree that some would call supernatural. While in the wilderness, you can extend your senses up to a mile in any direction and ask the GM a very simple, general question about that area, such as “Where is the [orc](#) camp?” or “Is my friend Deithan still alive?” If the answer you seek is not in the area, you receive no information. Action.

Wilderness Encouragement (3 Intellect points): While in the wilderness, or when talking about your time in the wilderness, your stirring words of encouragement grant a target within short range that can understand you 1d6 points to one Pool. You can’t use this ability on the same creature again until they’ve made a [recovery roll](#). Action.

Wilderness Explorer: While taking any action (including fighting) in the wild, you ignore any penalties due to natural causes such as tall grass, thick brush, rugged terrain, weather, and so on. Enabler.

Wilderness Life: You are trained in two of the following: climbing, swimming, navigation, or identifying plants and creatures. Enabler.

Wilderness Lore: You are trained in wilderness navigation and in identifying plants and creatures. Enabler.

Will of a Leader (9 Intellect points): You harden your allies’ dedication and capabilities. Each ally within immediate range gains +1 Edge to one stat of their choice for one hour. You also gain this benefit to one stat of your choice. Action.

Will of Legend: You are immune to attacks that would captivate, mesmerize, charm, or otherwise influence your mind. Enabler.

Willing Sacrifice: When you take an attack meant for another character, you know how to take the attack in a way that minimizes its effect. The attack automatically strikes you, but instead of taking 1 additional point of damage, you take 1 less point of damage (to a minimum of 1 point). Additionally, you can take more than one

attack in a given round provided that all the attacks were originally meant for one target. Enabler. (Two characters attempting to draw an attack at the same time cancel each other out.)

Wind Armor (1 Intellect point): When you wish it, a cyclone of wind surrounds your body for ten minutes, giving you +1 to Armor and an additional +2 to Armor against physical projectile weapons specifically. While the cyclone is active, you feel no discomfort from the wind, and you can interact with other creatures and objects normally because the wind flow automatically diverts to enable such interaction. Enabler.

Wind Chariot (7+ Intellect points): You summon winds that pick you up and allow you to fly for up to a long distance each round in combat or with an overland speed of up to 200 miles per hour (320 kph) for up to ten hours. For each level of Effort you apply, you can bring one ally of about your size with you through the air or increase the duration of the effect by one hour. Action to initiate.

Windrider (4+ Intellect points): You summon winds that pick you up and allow you to fly for one minute at a rate of up to a long distance each round. For each level of Effort you apply, you can carry one ally of about your size with you through the air or increase the duration of the effect by one minute. Action to initiate.

Windracked Traveler (4+ Intellect points): You condense a wide wing of dark matter that can carry you through the air for a period of up to one hour. For each level of Effort applied, you can add one hour to the duration or carry one additional creature of your size or smaller. You must touch the additional creatures for them to be tucked under your wing. They must remain relatively still while the wing lasts or they will fall. In terms of overland movement, you fly at about 20 miles (32 km) per hour and are not affected by terrain. Action to initiate.

Wings of Fire (4 Intellect points): While your [Shroud of Flame](#) is active, you can spread wings of fire and can levitate, moving at a rate of up to 20 feet (6 m) per round in any direction for one minute. You can also take one other non-movement action on your turn. Action.

Wing Weapons: You can use your wings to make melee attacks (even when flying), leaving your hands and feet free. Your wings are medium bashing or bladed weapons (your choice). You are practiced with this attack. Enabler.

Winter Gauntlets: When you use [Frost Touch](#), you inflict an additional 3 points of damage if you touch a creature, or an additional 2 points of damage if you infuse a weapon. In addition, damaged targets are frozen in place (if standing on a solid surface) and can't move from their location until they use an action to break free. The target can still attack and defend. Action for touch; enabler for weapon.

Wooden Body (1+ Might points): You transform your body into living wood for ten minutes, which grants you several benefits. You gain +1 to Armor and you are practiced in using your limbs as medium weapons. You need about one-tenth as much air as a human. Hiding among trees or on a tree is eased. However, in your wooden form you move more stiffly than a creature of flesh, hindering your Speed defense rolls. Action to change or revert.

Your wooden body might be smooth like a polished board, rough like tree bark, or a mix of both.

Word of Command (6 Intellect points + level 6 cypher): You utter a word so powerful that to fully invest it, you sacrifice a cypher in your possession that is level 6 or higher. You issue the word to one creature within long range that you can see. The affected target must obey the command for several hours before it is free to act as it wishes. Targets that are attacked while under the effect of the command can defend themselves. Typical commands include “retreat,” “calm,” “come,” and “stay.” The GM decides how the target acts once a command is given. Action.

Word of Death (5+ Intellect points): Your attack is the utterance of a magic word so terrible that it snuffs the life from a living target within short range. The target must be level 1. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum level of the target. Thus, to kill a level 5 target (four levels above the normal limit), you must apply four levels of Effort. Action.

Work the Friendship (4 Intellect points): You know just what to say to draw a little extra effort from an ally. This grants one creature you choose within short range an additional, immediate action, which it can take out of turn. The creature uses the additional action however it wishes. Action.

Wormhole (6 Intellect points): You create a doorway through time and space. The shortcut manifests as a hole in reality large enough to accommodate you and creatures of your size or smaller. One side of the doorway appears anywhere within immediate range, and the other side opens at a spot you choose anywhere within long range. Any character or object moving into one side exits from the other. The door remains open for one minute or until you use an action to close it. Action to initiate.

Wound Tender: You are trained in [healing](#). Enabler.

Wraith Cloak: At your command, the spirit from your [Spirit Accomplice](#) ability wraps itself around you for up to ten minutes. The spirit automatically inflicts 4 points of damage to anyone who tries to touch you or strike you with a melee attack. While the wraith cloak is active, all tasks to evade the perceptions of others are eased. Enabler.

Wreck: Using two hands, you wield a weapon or a tool with a powerful swing. (If fighting unarmed, this attack is made with both fists or both feet together.) When using this as an attack, you take a -1 penalty to the attack roll, and you inflict 3 additional points of damage. When attempting to damage an object or barrier, you are trained in the task. Action.

Wrest From Chance: If you roll a natural 1 on a d20, you can reroll the die. If you reroll, you avoid a GM intrusion—unless you roll a second 1—and might succeed on your task. Once you use this ability, it is not available again until after you make a ten-hour recovery roll. Enabler.

Abilities—Y

You Studied: To be able to put two and two together to reach a deduction, you have to know a few things. You are trained in two areas of knowledge of your choosing (as long as they are not physical actions or combat related) or specialized in one area. Enabler.

Abilities—Z

Zero Dark Eyes: Some people's eyes are degraded by constantly playing games. And maybe that'll happen to you, but not yet. You're still young and instead of degrading, your vision is actually better thanks to all your practice. You can see in very dim light as though it were bright light. You can see in total darkness as if it were very dim light. Enabler.

Equipment

Equipment in the Cypher System plays only a small role. It's far more important to focus on what you can do than on what you have. Still, sometimes it's important to know if you've got enough rope, or what kind of gun your space pilot has at their hip.

ANIMAL FORM MINOR ABILITIES TABLE

Animal	Skill Training	Other Abilities
Ape	Climbing	Hands
Badger	Climbing	Scent
Bat	Perception	Flying
Bear	Climbing	Scent
Bird	Perception	Flying
Boar	Might defense	Scent
Cat	Climbing or stealth	Small
Constrictor snake	Climbing	Constrict
Crocodile	Stealth or swimming	Constrict
Deinonychus	Perception	Fast
Dolphin	Perception or swimming	Fast
Fish	Stealth or swimming	Aquatic
Frog	Jumping or stealth	Aquatic
Horse	Perception	Fast
Leopard	Climbing or stealth	Fast

Lizard	Climbing or stealth	Small
Octopus	Stealth	Aquatic
Shark	Swimming	Aquatic
Turtle	Might defense	Armor
Venomous snake	Climbing	Venom
Wolf	Perception	Scent

Aquatic: The animal either breathes water instead of air or is able to breathe water in addition to breathing air.

Armor: The animal has a thick hide or shell, granting +1 to Armor.

Constrict: The animal can grip its opponent fast after making a melee attack (usually with a bite or claw), easing attack rolls against that foe on later turns until the animal releases the foe.

Fast: The animal can move a long distance on its turn instead of a short distance.

Flying: The animal can fly, which (depending on the type of animal) may be up to a short or long distance on its turn.

Hands: The animal has paws or hands that are nearly as agile as those of a human. Unlike with most animal shapes, the animal's tasks that require hands are not hindered (although the GM may decide that some tasks requiring human agility, such as playing a flute, are still hindered).

Scent: The animal has a strong sense of smell, gaining an asset on tracking and dealing with darkness or blindness.

Small: The animal is considerably smaller than a human, easing its Speed defense tasks but hindering tasks to move heavy things.

Venom: The animal is poisonous (usually through a bite), inflicting 1 additional point of damage.

CURRENCY AND PRICES

Dollars, pounds, euros, credits, gold pieces, Martian solval beads, Corso moons and stars, bottle caps—a lot of different currencies might be used in your game, depending on the setting and the genre. You should use whatever you like. In the Cypher System rules, we talk in generalities rather than specifics. Not unlike saying immediate or short distance rather than giving precise numbers, we talk about goods and services in terms of inexpensive, moderately priced, expensive, very expensive, or exorbitant.

The GM can figure out what those things mean in their setting. In a fantasy setting, an inexpensive item might be 1 or 2 copper pennies, while an expensive item might require gold on the table. The exact amount can vary, and in many campaigns, the exact amount will matter. The GM will develop a detailed price list for their setting, and players will track their money on their character sheets to determine what they can afford, often ignoring the terms inexpensive, moderately priced, and so on.

But some GMs might want to keep things simple and use only the general terms, indicating currency just as flavor now and then. In a space opera game, where the PCs are the crew of a starship blazing about the galaxy

in search of adventure and profit, fuel and upkeep for the ship might be expensive. Hauling a few passengers from Epsilon Eridani back to Earth might earn enough to purchase six expensive items but cost the equivalent of two expensive items, leaving the crew with the means to refuel and maintain the ship for two further voyages. In such a game, where money only means keeping the ship flying, no one has to talk in specific amounts. Characters might refer to “galactic credits” or something similar, but amounts might not be tracked on the character sheets.

PRICE CATEGORIES

There are five price categories for goods and services.

An inexpensive item is something that common people buy. A simple meal or a drink in the bar. A pen and some paper. A book or magazine.

A moderately priced item is something that common people buy, but not too often and not in great quantities. A small piece of furniture. A major entertainment. An expensive meal. A new outfit.

An expensive item is something that would strain a common person’s finances. Rent on a simple apartment. A major piece of furniture. A very nice outfit. The cost to travel a long distance (if appropriate to the setting).

A very expensive item is probably out of the reach of most people except in very special circumstances. Jewelry. Luxury furnishings.

An exorbitant item is something only the very rich can afford. A very nice house. A ship. Extremely expensive jewelry or art.

Think of the categories as powers of 10. That is to say, a moderately priced item is ten times more costly than an inexpensive item. An expensive item is ten times more costly than a moderately priced item, and thus 100 times the cost of something inexpensive. A very expensive item is ten times the cost of an expensive one, 100 times the cost of a moderate one, and 1,000 times the cost of an inexpensive one. An exorbitant item is priced ten times beyond that.

(In some settings, even the generalization offered by the pricing categories might be too specific or cumbersome. In many superhero games, for example, prices are relatively moot. After saving the city, typical superheroes don’t worry about paying rent or how much dinner will cost. On the other hand, in a grittier superhero game, maybe that’s exactly what they worry about.)

USING THE PRICE CATEGORIES

Regardless of how precise you want to be with prices and currency, you can use the price categories in a variety of ways.

It’s easy for a GM to say to a player “You can afford two extra moderately priced things at the start of the game.” The player can look on the list and pick two moderately priced items without worrying about their cost. Plus, this approach makes it clear that they get two items, not twenty inexpensive items or one more expensive item that perhaps would not be appropriate for a starting character. The categories make it easy to lump similar items together.

The GM can also say “You can have whatever inexpensive items you want, and don’t worry about the cost.” At higher tiers, when the PCs have more wealth, followers, and so on, the GM can do this with moderate or even expensive items. This allows the group to skip over playing through a shopping trip to get supplies, and players don’t have to track prices down to the last coin.

Finally, the categories can be shorthand when evaluating loot, dividing up the spoils among the PCs, and resolving other story-based occurrences that crop up in the game without dealing in the minutiae of exact prices. This is of particular use in high-powered games where the PCs are rich and powerful.

Level of Equipment

Mundane equipment is about level 4—less if of inferior quality or materials, more if of superior quality or materials. This means that in a setting based on the distant past, the default level might be 3, while in the future it might be 5 or 6. So an average serf’s tool in the Dark Ages is level 3, easily broken, while an average tool on a space station is level 6, made of advanced polymers.

ARMOR

Characters expecting danger frequently wear armor. Even the simplest protective covering helps against stabs and cuts, and more sophisticated or heavier armor protects against graver threats.

You can wear only one type of armor at a time—you cannot wear chainmail hauberk and scale armor together, for example. However, Armor bonuses from multiple sources combine to provide a total Armor rating. For example, if you have subdermal implants that give you +1 to Armor, a force field that offers another +1 to Armor, and beastskin that grants +2 to Armor, you have a total of +4 to Armor.

In general, light armor is a moderately priced item, medium armor is expensive, and heavy armor is very expensive. The Genre chapter offers more specific details on the kinds of armor available in a given setting. Keep in mind that in many genres, it’s quite odd, at best, to run around in armor tougher than a leather jacket.

USING ARMOR

Anyone can wear any armor, but it can be taxing. Wearing armor increases the cost of using a level of Effort when attempting a Speed-based action. So if you’re wearing light armor and want to use two levels of Effort on a Speed-based roll to run across difficult terrain, it costs 7 points from your Speed Pool rather than 5 (3 for the first level of Effort, plus 2 for the second level of Effort, plus 1 per level for wearing light armor). Edge reduces the overall cost as normal. If you are not experienced with a certain type of armor but wear it anyway, this cost is further increased by 1. Having experience with a type of armor is called being practiced with the armor.

Armor	Speed Effort Additional Cost Per Level
Light	+1
Medium	+2
Heavy	+3

FANTASY ARMOR DESCRIPTIONS

You can wear only one kind of armor at a time (wearing more than one only gives the Armor from the best one and the Speed Effort cost of the worst one).

Beastskin: An improved form of hides and furs, usually crafted from a creature with especially tough skin such as a giant lizard or rhinoceros.

Breastplate: A fitted metal plate or set of plates that protect your torso but not your arms or legs, giving you greater movement than full plate at the cost of some protection.

Brigandine: Long strips of metal attached to a cloth or leather backing. Often called “splint mail.”

Chainmail: Mail armor made from hundreds of interlocking metal rings or links. Often called “chain” or “chain armor.”

Dwarven breastplate: A high-quality breastplate crafted by a skilled dwarf, providing good protection and great mobility. Dwarven breastplate is medium armor (2 Armor) but encumbers the wearer as if it were light armor (it has a Speed Effort cost of 1). Not all dwarf-crafted breastplates count as this type of armor (only exceptionally skilled dwarven smiths know how to make it).

Elven chainmail: A high-quality suit of chainmail crafted by a skilled elf, providing good protection and excellent mobility. Elven chainmail is medium armor (2 Armor) but is no more encumbering than a typical outfit of normal clothing (it has no Speed Effort cost). Not all elf-crafted chainmail counts as this type of armor (only exceptionally skilled elven smiths know how to make it).

Full plate: A complete suit of fitted metal plates that give excellent coverage and protection against attacks. The joints are protected by small layered plates over flexible chain. Sometimes called “plate mail.”

Heavy cloth: Clothing that’s heavy enough to reduce the effect of attacks against you, such as winter clothing or a fashionable leather outfit. Heavy cloth provides 1 Armor against piercing or slashing attacks like arrows and swords, but not bashing attacks like clubs or hammers. Heavy cloth doesn’t have a Speed Effort cost. It can’t be worn with other kinds of armor.

Hides and furs: Made from thick or poorly cured animal skins. It’s heavier and bulkier than other kinds of leather armor, but easier to make, especially by resource-poor crafters.

Leather jerkin: Armor made of hardened pieces of leather (usually boiled or treated with chemicals) that mainly covers your torso. It’s stiffer than leather used for clothing, but still flexible enough that you can bend and twist in it. Some jerkins are reinforced with metal studs (and may be called “studded leather”), and brigandine improves upon that concept.

Padded: Cloth armor that is deliberately designed with multiple layers to be thick and protective. This is sometimes called “quilted armor” because it is a layer of padding sewn between two layers of cloth. Padded armor provides 1 Armor against piercing or slashing attacks like arrows and swords, but not bashing attacks like clubs or hammers. Padded armor doesn’t have a Speed Effort cost. It can’t be worn with other kinds of armor.

Scale: Mail armor made from overlapping scales or plates attached to a leather or cloth backing. Often called “scale mail.”

Shield: Provides an asset to Speed defense. Shield sizes vary from a small buckler to a large kite shield (in the Cypher System, the difference is mainly flavor, and for game purposes they all grant the wearer the same benefit).

Light Armor	Armor	Speed Effort Additional Cost	Price
Heavy cloth	1*	0	3 gp
Hides and furs	1	1	10 gp
Leather jerkin	1	1	10 gp
Padded	1*	0	5 gp

Medium Armor	Armor	Speed Effort Additional Cost	Price
Beastskin	2	2	10 gp
Breastplate	2	2	400 gp
Brigandine	2	2	200 gp
Chainmail	2	2	75 gp
Dwarven breastplate	2	1	8,000 gp
Elven chainmail	2	0	8,000 gp
Heavy Armor	Armor	Speed Effort Additional Cost	Price
Full plate	3	0	1,500 gp
Scale	3	0	50 gp
Shield	asset**		10 gp

* Only against piercing and slashing attacks

** Using a shield provides the wearer with an asset on Speed defense tasks

If the GM prefers the simpler method of not tracking whether an attack is bashing, slashing, or stabbing, heavy cloth and padded armor should provide no Armor at all.

Shields

Shields provide an asset to Speed defense rolls. You must have one free hand to use a shield.

WEAPONS

Not all characters are familiar with all weapons. Warriors know their way around most types, but Explorers prefer light or medium weapons, and Adepts and Speakers usually stick to light weapons. If you wield a weapon that you have no experience with, an attack with that weapon is hindered. Having experience with a weapon is called being practiced with the weapon.

Light weapons inflict only 2 points of damage, but attacks with them are eased because they are fast and easy to use. Light weapons are punches, kicks, knives, handaxes, darts, very small pistols, and so on. Weapons that are particularly small are light weapons.

Medium weapons inflict 4 points of damage. Medium weapons include broadswords, battleaxes, maces, crossbows, spears, typical handguns, light rifles, sawed-off shotguns, and so on. Most weapons are medium. Anything that could be used in one hand (even if it's often used in two hands, such as a quarterstaff or spear) is a medium weapon.

Heavy weapons inflict 6 points of damage, and you must use two hands to attack with them. Heavy weapons are huge swords, great hammers, massive axes, halberds, heavy crossbows, rifles, regular shotguns, assault rifles, and so on. Anything that must be used in two hands is a heavy weapon.

Weapon	Damage
Light	2 points (attack eased)
Medium	4 points
Heavy	6 points

In general, light weapons are moderately priced items, medium weapons are expensive, and heavy weapons are very expensive. Ammunition for a ranged weapon is inexpensive. The Genre chapter offers more specific details on weapons available in a given setting. Keep in mind that in many genres, it's not acceptable to run around carrying dangerous weapons.

FANTASY WEAPONS DESCRIPTIONS

Battleaxe: A wooden pole with a blade on one end.

Blowgun: A long hollow tube used to shoot darts. You can fire it with one hand, but you need two hands to load it.

Bow: A bent piece of flexible wood with a taut string connected to each end. It fires arrows. You need two hands to fire it.

Broadsword: A long-bladed sword, longer than a dagger, heavier than a rapier, but not as large as a greatsword.

Club: A simple bludgeon, such as a sturdy tree branch, board, or improvised weapon.

Crank crossbow: A weapon similar to a light crossbow, but it has a magazine that holds five bolts. You turn a small crank to advance to the next bolt (this is not an action). Action to load an empty magazine with five bolts, action to reload the crossbow with a new magazine. It can be used as a rapid-fire weapon.

Dagger: A very short blade for stabbing or slicing.

Flail: A handle with a chain on one end and a ball or spiked ball at the end of the chain.

Greataxe: A larger, heavier version of the battleaxe, sometimes with two opposing blades instead of one.

Greatsword: A two-handed version of the broadsword.

Hammer: A wooden handle with a heavy metal head, either one-sided (like a carpenter's hammer) or two-sided (like a sledgehammer).

Hand crossbow: A smaller and weaker version of a light crossbow. It fires crossbow bolts. You can fire it with one hand. You need two hands to load it.

Handaxe: A light, one-handed axe that's good for melee or throwing.

Heavy crossbow: A heavier, more powerful version of a light crossbow. You need two hands to fire or load it. Action to reload.

Heavy mace: A larger, two-handed version of a mace.

Javelin: A light spear that's designed to be thrown.

Light crossbow: A bow with a handle and mechanism for drawing and holding the string. It fires crossbow bolts. You can fire it with one hand. You need two hands to load it. Action to reload.

Mace: A wooden handle with a heavy metal head that's spherical, flanged, or knobbed.

Maul: A larger version of the hammer, such as a sledgehammer.

Net: A net designed for battle rather than fishing. It has metal hooks at each intersection to help catch your enemy. You can throw it with one hand. Action to refold it so it can be thrown again. If you hit an opponent with the net, all of their physical actions are hindered until they take an action to remove it.

Pick: A hafted weapon with a sideways metal spike on the end, similar to a miner's tool.

Polearm: Various kinds of spears, sometimes with hooks or additional blades for special purposes like tripping a foe or pulling an opponent from their mount.

Quarterstaff: A wooden pole about 4 to 5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 m) long.

Rapier: A light sword with a thin blade used for stabbing and slashing.

Scimitar: A medium-length sword with a strongly curved blade.

Sickle: A one-handed hafted weapon with a sharply curved blade, originally used for harvesting crops but adapted for use as a weapon.

Sling: A small pouch connected to two cords. You put a stone or bullet (metal slug) in the pouch, hold the end of the cords, spin it, and let go of one of the cords to hurl the projectile. You can fire it with one hand. You need two hands to load it. Action to reload.

Spear: A one-handed pole about 3 to 5 feet (1 to 1.5 m) long with a stabbing blade on the end.

Throwing dart: A very short, light spear meant to be thrown rather than used in melee.

Trident: A three-pronged spear, often used for spear fishing.

Unarmed: A typical punch, kick, or other weaponless attack.

Whip: A leather cord with a handle, used more for tricks and inflicting punishments than for deadly combat.

Light Weapons (2 points of damage)	Price	Notes
Blowgun	5 gp	Short range
Blowgun darts (20)	1 gp	
Dagger	2 gp	Can be thrown up to short range
Hand crossbow	75 gp	Short range
Crossbow bolts (20)	1 gp	
Handaxe	5 gp	Can be thrown up to short range
Net	1 gp	Can be thrown up to short range

Rapier	25 gp	
Sickle	1 gp	Short range
Sling	1 sp	Short range
Sling bullets (20)	5 cp	
Throwing dart	5 cp	Short range
Unarmed (punch, kick, etc)	—	
Whip	2 gp	
Medium Weapons (4 points of damage)	Price	Notes
Battleaxe	10 gp	
Bow	30 gp	Long range
Arrows (20)	1 gp	
Broadsword	15 gp	
Club	1 sp	
Crank crossbow	250 gp	Long range
Crossbow bolts (20)	1 gp	
Light crossbow	25 gp	Long range
Crossbow bolts (20)	1 gp	
Flail	10 gp	
Hammer	15 gp	
Javelin	5 sp	Can be thrown up to long range
Mace	10 gp	
Pick	10 gp	

Polearm	10 gp	
Quarterstaff	2 sp	
Scimitar	25 gp	
Spear	1 gp	Can be thrown up to long range
Trident	5 gp	
Heavy Weapons (6 points of damage)	Price	Notes
Greataxe	30 gp	
Greatsword	50 gp	
Heavy crossbow	50 gp	Long range
Crossbow bolts (20)	1 gp	
Heavy mace	15 gp	
Maul	10 gp	

EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS

Bombs, grenades, missiles, and other explosives operate differently than other weapons. They affect all targets within an area (usually an immediate area) and inflict damage to all of them. A separate attack roll is required for each (or a Speed defense roll if the PCs are the targets of such an attack), although to simplify, the player can make one attack roll and compare it to the difficulty to attack each target. Usually, even if the attack roll fails (or the Speed defense roll succeeds), the targets still suffer a smaller amount of damage, often 1 point.

Explosives like grenades can be thrown a short distance. Otherwise, another launcher weapon is needed to project them a long distance (or farther).

Adventuring equipment DESCRIPTIONS

Acid: A flask of strong acid. Can be thrown up to short range, inflicting acid damage as a light weapon (ignores Armor). If poured carefully, it can damage or destroy a small item or areas made of stone or metal.

Adventuring pack: Includes 50 feet (15 m) of rope, three days' iron rations, three spikes, small hammer, a set of warm clothes, boots, and three torches.

Alchemist fire: A flask of chemicals that burst into flames upon contact with air. The flames burn out after one round. Can be thrown up to short range, inflicting fire damage as a light weapon (ignores Armor).

Alchemist tools: A sturdy wooden case with tiny flasks, stirring rods, droppers, and other materials used in alchemy. It grants an asset for identifying potion cyphers and similar mysterious liquids.

Bag of heavy tools: Contains a hammer, six spikes, crowbar, large tongs, chisel, and 10 feet (3 m) of strong rope.

Bag of light tools: Contains a small hammer, small tongs, pliers, small pry bar, awl, lockpicks, 10 feet (3 m) of string, 3 feet (1 m) of metal wire, and a handful of nails.

Battering ram: This sturdy plank is capped with hard metal. It provides an asset for breaking down doors.

Book: A book with information on a particular topic, such as geography, history, magic, or religion. Provides an asset on appropriate rolls if the character reads or skims the book for at least ten minutes before attempting the task (this assumes the character has already read the book and is looking for relevant information).

Caltrops, bag: A bag of hard things you scatter on the ground to slow or injure anyone walking through an area. One bag covers an immediate area and makes that area count as difficult terrain. A creature can safely move through it as if it were difficult terrain (half speed). If a creature moves through the area at normal speed, they must make a difficulty 2 Speed defense roll or take 2 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor).

Candle: A candle burns for one hour and creates dim light in an immediate area.

Climbing kit: A set of crampons, pitons, ropes, and tools. Provides an asset on climbing tasks.

Crowbar: This bent length of metal grants an asset on tasks to open doors, treasure chests, and similar objects.

Disguise kit: Makeup, simple prosthetics, and a wig or two, suitable for disguises for a theatrical production. Provides an asset on disguise tasks. Some parts are reusable, but the kit runs out after about five uses.

Healing kit: A collection of bandages, needles, thread, and basic medicines. Provides an asset on healing tasks. Some parts are reusable, but the kit runs out after about five uses.

Lamp: A hollow container filled with oil that slowly burns to provide light (often resembling a “genie lamp”). A lamp creates normal light in an immediate area and dim light out to the short area beyond that. It burns for three to four hours on 1 pint (.5 L) of oil. If dropped, it might spill oil, break, or both.

Lantern: An improved version of a lamp, with a wick that draws oil and glass or metal panes to protect it from wind. A lantern creates normal light in an immediate area and dim light out to the short area beyond that. It burns for three to four hours on 1 pint (.5 L) of oil. If dropped, it is less likely to spill than a lamp.

Lockpicks: Also known as thieves’ tools, this set provides everything a skilled person needs to pick locks and disarm traps.

Manacles: Metal or heavy wooden restraints that hold an enemy’s wrists or ankles in place and are secured with a pin. A common set of manacles is level 5.

Oil: A pint (.5 L) of lamp oil in a leather flask. It burns for three to four hours in a lantern or lamp. If prepped with a burning wick, it can be thrown, inflicting fire damage as a light weapon (ignores Armor). If poured on a flat surface, it makes an immediate area slippery. A creature can safely move through the oil slick as if it were difficult terrain (half speed). If a creature moves through the area at normal speed, they must make a difficulty 3 Speed defense roll or slip on the oil and fall prone. Lighting the oil slick makes it burn for one or two rounds and inflicts 1 point of fire damage (ignores Armor) on anyone in or moving through the area.

Signal horn: This horn can be heard up to a mile away.

Spyglass: This device grants an asset on perception tasks to see things at long range or longer.

Tent: This has enough room for two humans or three smaller people.

Torch: A wooden stick with some kind of fuel on one end (such as burlap and wax). It burns for one hour, creating normal light in an immediate area and dim light in the short area beyond that. A torch is fragile and usually breaks if used to hit something

Item	Price
Acid (flask)	25 gp
Adventuring pack	6 gp
Alchemist fire (flask)	50 gp
Alchemist tools	50 gp
Backpack	2 gp
Bag of heavy tools	25 gp
Bag of light tools	10 gp
Battering arm	10 gp
Bedroll	1 gp
Book	25 gp
Caltrops, bag	1 gp
Candle	1 sp
Climbing kit	25 gp
Crowbar	2 gp
Disguising kit	25 gp
Grappling hook	2 gp
Healing kit	5 gp
Hourglass	25 gp
Ink (flask)	10 gp

Ink pen	2 cp
Iron spikes (10)	1 gp
Ladder (10 ft/3m)	1 sp
Lamp	5 sp
Lantern	5 gp
Lockpicks	25 gp
Manacles	2 gp
Mirror	5gp
Musical instrument	2-50 gp
Oil (flask)	1 cp
Piton	5 cp
Pole, wooden	5 cp
Pouch or other small rations	5 sp
Rations (1 day)	5 sp
Rope (50 ft./15m)	1 gp
Sack	1 cp
Signal horn	2 gp
Spyglass	1,0000 gp
Tent	2 gp
Torch	1 cp
Waterskin	2 sp

Miscellaneous Items and Services

Although the types of items for sale vary greatly based on the setting, a few things are always present, like food, lodging, and clothing. However, these goods and services can span the price categories. For example, you can get an inexpensive meal, a moderately priced meal, an expensive meal, and so on. An inexpensive meal is light and probably not very nutritious. An expensive meal is available only in nice restaurants in certain locations. An exorbitant meal is probably a feast for a crowd, with the finest foods and drink available.

Nightly lodging is similar, although the bottom end starts out worse. An inexpensive night's lodging is probably a flea-ridden mat on the floor of a room filled with other lodgers. Typical lodging (a private room with a decent bed) is probably in the moderately priced range. Very expensive lodging might be a suite of rooms with delicious meals and personal services (such as massages and grooming) included.

Inexpensive clothing is just a step up from rags, but moderately priced clothing is decent enough. For a formal party, you'd want expensive clothing. The very rich likely wear very expensive clothing most of the time, and exorbitant clothing (and jewelry) when they go to their elite galas.

Other sorts of miscellaneous items can be found in the Genre chapter.

Fantasy clothing descriptions

Specific pieces of clothing vary by climate and local custom, but usually include a hat, shirt, belt, pants or skirt, shoes, and underclothes.

Artisan's outfit: A suitable outfit for a person who performs a trade (blacksmith, cobbler, and so on). Often includes an apron and a belt for holding tools.

Ascetic's outfit: A simple outfit worn by monks and other people who eschew displays of wealth and status. Specific styles vary by climate and the philosophical tenets of the wearer, but a typical example is a loose shirt, loose breeches, sandals, a cap, and several cloth straps that can serve as a belt, scarf, or simple adornments.

Cold-weather outfit: A heavier set of clothing for protection against cold weather.

Entertainer's costume: Interesting (and usually colorful) clothing appropriate for an entertainer such as an actor, bard, juggler, or acrobat.

Explorer's outfit: A set of sturdy clothing for adventurers and experienced travelers who want to be prepared for various activities and environments.

Fancy outfit: A stylish set of clothes according to the local fashions and customs. Generally the minimum required for meeting with important townsfolk such as a mayor or noble. Higher-status events require outfits that cost up to four times as much.

Peasant's outfit: Very simple clothing for free people of low social status. Includes a kerchief or cap, shirt or blouse, trousers or skirt, and heavy cloth shoes or foot wrappings.

Priestly vestments: Garments appropriate for performing ceremonies for a specific religion. A common example is a hat or headdress, long tunic or dress, tabard or stole, and shoes, with the outer pieces marked with appropriate symbols.

Traveler's outfit: A comfortable set of clothes that includes gloves, a protective hat, a jacket, and a cloak with a hood.

Wizard's outfit: Clothing that identifies the wearer as a practitioner of arcane magic. A typical outfit includes an interesting hat or cap, a robe with long sleeves and many pockets, and shoes, often adorned with runes or representations of magical creatures such as dragons. Scholars and sages wear very similar garments that lack the mystical aspects of wizard clothing.

Item	Price
Artisan's outfit	2 gp
Ascetic's outfit	1 gp
Cold-weather outfit	6 gp
Entertainer's costume	3 gp
Explorer's outfit	8 gp
Fancy outfit	25 gp
Peasant's outfit	1 sp
Priestly vestments	5 gp
Traveler's outfit	2 gp
Wizard's outfit	5 gp

ANIMALS AND GEAR DESCRIPTIONS

Draft horse: A strong horse able to carry or pull heavy loads.

Guard dog: A dog specially trained to guard. Better suited for watching or patrolling an area against thieves and intruders than it is for accompanying adventurers into dangerous locations.

Pony: A smaller type of horse, suitable for pulling a cart, carrying smaller loads than a full-sized horse, or serving as a mount for a smaller-than-human creature such as a dwarf or halfling.

Riding horse: A horse trained for riding and able to carry a typical adult human. Riding horses tend to panic in combat.

Warhorse: A horse trained to be calm during the noise and action of combat, used either as a mount or to pull a vehicle such as a chariot.

Item	Price
Draft horse	50 gp
Guard dog	25 gp
Pony	30 gp

Riding horse	75 gp
Saddle	10 gp
Warhorse	300-500 gp

FOOD AND LODGING

Item	Price
Ale, gallon	2 sp
Ale, mug	4 cp
Banquet (1 person)	10 gp
Bread, loaf	2 cp
Inn stay (per night)	
Good	8 sp
Common	5 sp
Poor	1 sp
Meals (per day)	
Good	5 sp
Common	3 sp
Poor	6 cp
Meat (one serving)	3 sp
Wine (bottle)	10 gp
Wine (pitcher)	2 sp

CYPHERS

Cyphers can sometimes be physical items like equipment, but they work very differently. To be entirely accurate, cyphers might have the veneer of equipment, but don't fall into the trap of confusing the two. Cyphers are far more akin to PC special abilities than to gear. In a fantasy game, they might be potions, scrolls, or charms. In a science fiction game, cyphers might be interesting throwaway devices or alien crystals of unknown providence. In other games, they might just represent good fortune or sudden inspiration. See the Cyphers chapter for more details.

ARTIFACTS

Artifacts are more powerful than equipment and can't simply be purchased. The Genre chapter offers a few sample artifacts appropriate for various settings.

Each artifact has a level and a rate of power depletion. When an artifact is used or activated, the player rolls the designated die (1d6, 1d10, 1d20, or 1d100). If the die shows the depletion number(s), the item works, but that is its last use. A depletion entry of “—” means that the artifact never depletes, and an entry of “automatic” means that it can be used only once.

Depowered artifacts can sometimes be recharged using the [repair](#) rules, depending on the item's nature. Other special abilities can also repower an expended item, but probably for only one use.

For GM information on artifacts, see the Running the Cypher System chapter.

Finding, Identifying, and Using Artifacts

Characters can sometimes find artifacts while on adventures. They might be in ancient ruins, either intact or in need of manipulation to get them working. They could have been stolen from well-guarded military installations. They might be granted as rewards or taken from fallen foes. Sometimes they can even be purchased from a specialized source, but this occurs more rarely than most PCs would probably like.

After the characters find an artifact, identifying it is a separate Intellect task. The GM sets the difficulty of the task, but it is usually equal to the artifact's level. Identifying it takes fifteen minutes to three hours. If the PCs can't identify an artifact, they can bring it to an expert to be identified or, if desired, traded or sold.

Characters can attempt to use an artifact that has not been identified, which is usually an Intellect task equal to the artifact's level + 2. Failure might mean that the PCs can't figure out how to use the artifact or they use it incorrectly (GM's discretion). Of course, even if characters use an unidentified artifact correctly the first time, they have no idea what the effect might be.

Once characters identify an artifact, using it for the first time requires an additional Intellect action; this process is far more complex than pushing a button. It can involve manipulating touchscreens, reciting the proper arcane words, or anything else that fits the setting. The GM sets the difficulty, but it is usually equal to the artifact's level.

Rules of the Game

Cypher System games are played in the joint imagination of all the players, including the GM. The GM sets the scene, the players state what their characters attempt to do, and the GM determines what happens next. The rules and the dice help make the game run smoothly, but it's the people, not the rules or the dice, that direct the action and determine the story—and the fun. If a rule gets in the way or detracts from the game, the players and the GM should work together to change it.

This is how you play the Cypher System:

1. The player tells the GM what they want to do. This is a character action.
2. The GM determines if that action is routine (and therefore works without needing a roll) or if there's a chance of failure.

3. If there is a chance of failure, the GM determines which stat the task uses ([Might](#), [Speed](#), or [Intellect](#)) and the task's difficulty—how hard it will be on a scale from 1 (really easy) to 10 (basically impossible).
4. The player and the GM determine if anything about the character—such as [training](#), [equipment](#), [special abilities](#), or various actions—can modify the difficulty up or down by one or more steps. If these modifications reduce the difficulty to less than 1, the action is routine (and therefore works with no roll needed).
5. If the action still isn't routine, the GM uses its difficulty to determine the target number—how high the player must roll to succeed at the action (see the [Task Difficulty table](#)). The GM doesn't have to tell the player what the target number is, but they can give the player a hint, especially if the character would reasonably know if the action was easy, average, difficult, or impossible.
6. The player rolls a d20. If they roll equal to or higher than the target number, the character succeeds.

That's it. That's how to do anything, whether it's identifying an unknown device, calming a raging drunk, climbing a treacherous cliff, or battling a [demigod](#). Even if you ignored all the other rules, you could still play the Cypher System with just this information. The key features here are: character actions, determining task difficulty, and determining modifications.

KEY CONCEPTS

ACTION: Anything a character does that is significant—punch a foe, leap a chasm, activate a device, use a special power, and so on. Each character can take one action in a round.

CHARACTER: Any creature in the game capable of acting, whether it is a player character (PC) run by a player or a nonplayer character (NPC) run by the game master (GM). In the Cypher System, even bizarre creatures, sentient machines, and living energy beings can be "characters."

DIFFICULTY: A measure of how easy it is to accomplish a task. Difficulty is rated on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). Altering the difficulty to make a task harder is called "hindering." Altering it to make a task easier is called "easing." All changes in difficulty are measured in steps. Difficulty often equates directly with level, so opening a level 3 locked door probably has a difficulty of 3.

EASE: A decrease in a task's difficulty, usually by one step. If something doesn't say how many steps it eases a task, then it reduces the difficulty by one step.

EFFORT: Spending points from a stat Pool to reduce the difficulty of a task. A PC decides whether or not to apply Effort on their turn before the roll is made. NPCs never apply Effort.

HINDER: An increase in a task's difficulty, usually by one step. If something doesn't say how many steps it hinders a task, then it increases the difficulty by one step.

INABILITY: The opposite of trained—you're hindered whenever you attempt a task that you have an inability in. If you also become trained in the task, the training and the inability cancel each other out and you become practiced.

LEVEL: A way to measure the strength, difficulty, power, or challenge of something in the game. Everything in the game has a level. NPCs and objects have levels that determine the difficulty of any task related to them. For example, an opponent's level determines how hard they are to hit or avoid in combat. A door's level indicates how hard it is to break down. A lock's level determines how hard it is to pick. Levels are rated on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). PC tiers are a little like levels, but they go only from 1 to 6 and mechanically work very differently than levels—for example, a PC's tier does not determine a task's difficulty.

PRACTICED: The normal, unmodified ability to use a skill—not trained, specialized, or an inability. Your type determines what weapon skills you're practiced in; if you aren't practiced with a type of weapon, you have an inability in it.

ROLL: A d20 roll made by a PC to determine whether an action is successful. Although the game occasionally uses other dice, when the text simply refers to “a roll,” it always means a d20 roll.

ROUND: A length of time about five to ten seconds long. There are about ten rounds in a minute. When it’s really important to track precise time, use rounds. Basically, it’s the length of time to take an action in the game, but since everyone more or less acts simultaneously, all characters get to take an action each round.

SPECIALIZED: Having an exceptional amount of skill in a task. Being specialized eases the task by two steps. So, if you are specialized in climbing, all your climbing tasks are eased by two steps.

STAT: One of the three defining characteristics for PCs: Might, Speed, or Intellect. Each stat has two values: Pool and Edge. Your Pool represents your raw, innate ability, and your Edge represents knowing how to use what you have. Each stat Pool can increase or decrease over the course of play—for example, you can lose points from your Might Pool when struck by an opponent, spend points from your Intellect Pool to activate a special ability, or rest to recover points in your Speed Pool after a long day of marching. Anything that damages a stat, restores a stat, or boosts or penalizes a stat affects the stat’s Pool.

TASK: Any action that a PC attempts. The GM determines the difficulty of the task. In general, a task is something that you do and an action is you performing that task, but in most cases they mean the same thing.

TRAINED: Having a reasonable amount of skill in a task. Being trained eases the task. For example, if you are trained in climbing, all climbing tasks for you are eased. If you become very skilled at that task, you become specialized instead of trained. You do not need to be trained to attempt a task.

TURN: The part of the round when a character or creature takes its actions. For example, if a Warrior and an Adept are fighting an orc, each round the Warrior takes an action on their turn, the Adept takes an action on their turn, and the orc takes an action on its turn. Some abilities or effects last only one turn, or end when the next turn is started.

TAKING ACTION

Each character gets one turn each round. On a character’s turn, they can do one thing—an action. All actions fall into one of three categories: Might, Speed, or Intellect (just like the three stats). Many actions require die rolls—rolling a d20.

Every action performs a task, and every task has a difficulty that determines what number a character must reach or surpass with a die roll to succeed.

Most tasks have a difficulty of 0, which means the character succeeds automatically. For example, walking across a room, opening a door, and throwing a stone into a nearby bucket are all actions, but none of them requires a roll. Actions that are usually difficult or that become difficult due to the situation (such as shooting at a target in a blizzard) have a higher difficulty. These actions usually require a roll.

Some actions require a minimum expenditure of Might, Speed, or Intellect points. If a character cannot spend the minimum number of points needed to complete the action, they automatically fail at the task.

DETERMINING TASK STAT

Every task relates to one of a character’s three stats: Might, Speed, or Intellect. Physical activities that require strength, power, or endurance relate to Might. Physical activities that require agility, flexibility, or fast reflexes relate to Speed. Mental activities that require force of will, memory, or mental power relate to Intellect. This means you can generalize tasks into three categories: Might tasks, Speed tasks, and Intellect tasks. You can also generalize rolls into three categories: Might rolls, Speed rolls, and Intellect rolls.

The category of the task or roll determines what kind of Effort you can apply to the roll and may determine how a character’s other abilities affect the roll. For example, an Adept may have an ability that makes them better at Intellect rolls, and a Warrior may have an ability that makes them better at Speed rolls.

DETERMINING TASK DIFFICULTY

The most frequent thing a GM does during the game—and probably the most important thing—is set a task’s difficulty. To make the job easier, use the Task Difficulty table, which associates a difficulty rating with a descriptive name, a target number, and general guidance about the difficulty.

Every difficulty from 1 to 10 has a target number associated with it. The target number is easy to remember: it’s always three times the difficulty. The target number is the minimum number a player needs to roll on a d20 to succeed at the task. Moving up or down on the table is called hindering or easing, which is measured in steps.

For example, reducing a difficulty 5 task to a difficulty 4 task is “easing the difficulty by one step” or just “easing the difficulty” or “easing the task.” Most modifiers affect the difficulty rather than the player’s roll. This has two consequences:

Low target numbers such as 3 or 6, which would be boring in most games that use a d20, are not boring in the Cypher System. For example, if you need to roll a 6 or higher, you still have a 25% chance to fail.

The upper levels of difficulty (7, 8, 9, and 10) are all but impossible because the target numbers are 21 or higher, which you can’t roll on a d20. However, it’s common for PCs to have abilities or equipment that ease a task and thus lower the target number to something they *can* roll on a d20.

A character’s tier does not determine a task’s level. Things don’t get more difficult just because a character’s tier increases—the world doesn’t instantly become a more difficult place. Fourth-tier characters don’t deal only with level 4 creatures or difficulty 4 tasks (although a fourth-tier character probably has a better shot at success than a first-tier character does). Just because something is level 4 doesn’t necessarily mean it’s meant only for fourth-tier characters. Similarly, depending on the situation, a fifth-tier character could find a difficulty 2 task just as challenging as a second-tier character does.

Therefore, when setting the difficulty of a task, the GM should rate the task on its own merits, not on the power of the characters.

MODIFYING THE DIFFICULTY

After the GM sets the difficulty for a task, the player can try to modify it for their character. Any such modification applies only to this particular attempt at the task. In other words, rewiring an electronic door lock normally might be difficulty 6, but since the character doing the work is skilled in such tasks, has the right tools, and has another character assisting them, the difficulty in this instance might be much lower. That’s why it’s important for the GM to set a task’s difficulty without taking the character into account. The character comes in at this step.

By using skills and assets, working together, and—perhaps most important—applying Effort, a character can ease a task by multiple steps to make it easier. Rather than adding bonuses to the player’s roll, reducing the difficulty lowers the target number. If they can reduce the difficulty of a task to 0, no roll is needed; success is automatic. (An exception is if the GM decides to use a [GM intrusion](#) on the task, in which case the player would have to make a roll at the original difficulty.)

There are three basic ways in which a character can ease a task: skills, assets, and Effort. Each method eases the task by at least one step—never in smaller increments.

(By using skills, assets, and Effort, a character can ease a task by a maximum of ten steps: one or two steps from skills, one or two steps from assets, and one to six steps from Effort.)

SKILLS

Characters may be skilled at performing a specific task. A skill can vary from character to character. For example, one character might be skilled at lying, another might be skilled at trickery, and a third might be

skilled in all interpersonal interactions. The first level of being skilled is called being trained, and it eases that task by one step. More rarely, a character can be incredibly skilled at performing a task. This is called being specialized, and it eases the task by two steps instead of one. Skills can never decrease a task by more than two steps—any more than two steps from being trained and specialized don’t count.

ASSETS

An asset is anything that helps a character with a task, such as having a really good crowbar when trying to force open a door or being in a rainstorm when trying to put out a fire. Appropriate assets vary from task to task. The perfect awl might help when woodworking, but it won’t make a dance performance much better. An asset usually eases a task by one step. Assets can never ease a task by more than two steps—any more than two steps from assets don’t count.

(The important thing to remember is that a skill can reduce the difficulty by no more than two steps, and assets can reduce the difficulty by no more than two steps, regardless of the situation. Thus, no task’s difficulty will ever be reduced by more than four steps without using Effort.)

EFFORT

A player can apply Effort to ease a task. To do this, the player spends points from the stat Pool that’s most appropriate to the task. For example, applying Effort to push a heavy rock off a cliff requires a player to spend points from the character’s Might Pool; applying Effort to activate an unusual machine interface requires them to spend points from the character’s Intellect Pool. For every level of Effort spent on a task, the task is eased. It costs 3 points from a stat Pool to apply one level of Effort, and it costs 2 additional points for every level thereafter (so it costs 5 points for two levels of Effort, 7 points for three levels of Effort, and so on). A character must spend points from the same stat Pool as the type of task or roll—Might points for a Might roll, Speed points for a Speed roll, or Intellect points for an Intellect roll.

Every character has a maximum level of Effort they can apply to a single task. Effort can never ease a task by more than six steps—any more than six steps from applying Effort doesn’t count.

Free Level of Effort: A few abilities give you a free level of Effort (these usually require you to apply at least one level of Effort to a task). In effect, you’re getting one more level of Effort than what you paid for. This free level of Effort can exceed the Effort limit for your character, but not the six-step limit for easing a task.

ROLLING THE DIE

To determine success or failure, a player rolls a die (always a d20). If they roll the target number or higher, they succeed. Most of the time, that’s the end of it—nothing else needs to be done. Rarely, a character might apply a small modifier to the roll. If they have a +2 bonus when attempting specific actions, they add 2 to the number rolled. However, the original roll matters if it’s a [special roll](#).

If a character applies a modifier to the die roll, it’s possible to get a result of 21 or higher, in which case they can attempt a task with a target number above 20. But if there is no possibility for success—if not even rolling a natural 20 (meaning the d20 shows that number) is sufficient to accomplish the task—then no roll is made. Otherwise, characters would have a chance to succeed at everything, even impossible or ridiculous tasks such as climbing moonbeams, throwing elephants, or hitting a target on the opposite side of a mountain with an arrow.

If a character’s modifiers add up to +3, treat them as an asset instead. In other words, instead of adding a +3 bonus to the roll, reduce the difficulty by one step. For example, if a Warrior has a +1 bonus to attack rolls from a minor effect, a +1 bonus to attack rolls from a special weapon quality, and a +1 bonus to attack rolls from a special ability, they do not add 3 to their attack roll—instead, they reduce the difficulty of the attack by one step. So if they attack a level 3 foe, they would normally roll against difficulty 3 and try to reach a target number of 9, but thanks to their asset, they roll against difficulty 2 and try to reach a target number of 6.

This distinction is important when stacking skills and assets to decrease the difficulty of an action, especially since reducing the difficulty to 0 or lower means no roll is needed.

THE PLAYER ALWAYS ROLLS

In the Cypher System, players always drive the action. That means they make all the die rolls. If a PC leaps out of a moving vehicle, the player rolls to see if they succeed. If a PC searches for a hidden panel, the player rolls to determine whether they find it. If a rockslide falls on a PC, the player rolls to try to get out of the way. If a PC and an NPC arm wrestle, the player rolls, and the NPC's level determines the target number. If a PC attacks a foe, the player rolls to see if they hit. If a foe attacks the PC, the player rolls to see if they dodge the blow.

As shown by the last two examples, the PC rolls whether they are attacking or defending. Thus, something that improves defenses might ease or hinder their rolls. For example, if a PC uses a low wall to gain cover from attacks, the wall eases the player's defense rolls. If a foe uses the wall to gain cover from the PC's attacks, it hinders the player's attack rolls.

SPECIAL ROLLS

If a character rolls a natural 1, 17, 18, 19, or 20 (meaning the d20 shows that number), special rules come into play. These are explained in more detail in the following sections.

1: GM Intrusion. The GM makes a free intrusion (see below) and doesn't award experience points (XP) for it.

17: Damage Bonus. If the roll was a damage-dealing attack, it deals 1 additional point of damage.

18: Damage Bonus. If the roll was a damage-dealing attack, it deals 2 additional points of damage.

19: Minor Effect. If the roll was a damage-dealing attack, it deals 3 additional points of damage or the PC gets a minor effect in addition to the normal results of the task. If the roll was something other than an attack, the PC gets a minor effect in addition to the normal results of the task.

20: Major Effect. If the roll was a damage-dealing attack, it deals 4 additional points of damage or the PC gets a major or minor effect in addition to the normal results of the task. If the roll was something other than an attack, the PC gets a major effect in addition to the normal results of the task. If the PC spent points from a stat Pool on the action, the point cost for the action decreases to 0, meaning the character regains those points as if they had not spent them at all.

GM INTRUSION

GM intrusion is explained in more detail in the Running the Cypher System chapter, but essentially it means that something occurs to complicate the character's life. The character hasn't necessarily fumbled or done anything wrong (although perhaps they did). It could just be that the task presents an unexpected difficulty or something unrelated affects the current situation.

For GM intrusion on a defense roll, a roll of 1 might mean that the PC takes 2 additional points of damage from the attack, indicating that the opponent got in a lucky blow.

(For complete details about GM intrusion and how to use it to best effect in the game, see the Running the Cypher System chapter.)

MINOR EFFECT

A minor effect happens when a player rolls a natural 19. Most of the time, a minor effect is slightly beneficial to the PC, but not overwhelming.

A climber gets up the steep slope a bit faster. A repaired machine works a bit better. A character jumping down into a pit lands on their feet. Either the GM or the player can come up with a possible minor effect that fits the situation, but both must agree on what it should be.

Don't waste a lot of time thinking of a minor effect if nothing appropriate suggests itself. Sometimes, in cases where only success or failure matters, it's okay to have no minor effect. Keep the game moving at an exciting pace.

In combat, the easiest and most straightforward minor effect is dealing 3 additional points of damage with an attack. The following are other common minor effects for combat:

Damage object: Instead of striking the foe, the attack strikes what the foe is holding. If the attack hits, the character makes a Might roll with a difficulty equal to the object's level. On a success, the object moves one or more steps down the [object damage track](#).

Distract: For one round, all of the foe's tasks are hindered.

Knock back: The foe is knocked or forced back a few feet. Most of the time, this doesn't matter much, but if the fight takes place on a ledge or next to a pit of lava, the effect can be significant.

Move past: The character can move a short distance at the end of the attack. This effect is useful to get past a foe guarding a door, for example.

Strike a specific body part: The attacker strikes a specific spot on the defender's body. The GM rules what special effect, if any, results. For example, hitting a creature's tentacle that is wrapped around an ally might make it easier for the ally to escape. Hitting a foe in the eye might blind it for one round. Hitting a creature in its one vulnerable spot might ignore Armor.

Usually, the GM just has the desired minor effect occur. For example, rolling a 19 against a relatively weak foe means it is knocked off the cliff. The effect makes the round more exciting, but the defeat of a minor creature has no significant impact on the story. Other times, the GM might rule that an additional roll is needed to achieve the effect—the special roll only gives the PC the *opportunity* for a minor effect. This mostly happens when the desired effect is very unlikely, such as pushing a 50-ton battle automaton off a cliff. If the player just wants to deal 3 additional points of damage as the minor effect, no extra roll is needed.

MAJOR EFFECT

A major effect happens when a player rolls a natural 20. Most of the time, a major effect is quite beneficial to the character. A climber gets up the steep slope in half the time. A jumper lands with such panache that those nearby are impressed and possibly intimidated. A defender makes a free attack on a foe.

Either the GM or the player can come up with a possible major effect that fits the situation, but both must agree on what it should be. As with minor effects, don't spend a lot of time agonizing over the details of a major effect. In cases where only success or failure matters, a major effect might offer the character a one-time asset (a modification of one step) to use the next time they attempt a similar action. When nothing else seems appropriate, the GM can simply grant the PC an additional action on their turn that same round.

In combat, the easiest and most straightforward major effect is dealing 4 additional points of damage with an attack. The following are other common major effects for combat.

Disarm: The foe drops one object that it is holding.

Impair: For the rest of the combat, all tasks the foe attempts are hindered.

Knock down: The foe is knocked prone. It can get up on its turn.

Stun: The foe loses its next action.

As with minor effects, usually the GM just has the desired major effect occur, but sometimes the GM might require an extra roll if the major effect is unusual or unlikely.

Retrying a Task after failure

If a character fails a task (whether it's climbing a wall, picking a lock, trying to figure out a mysterious device, or something else) they can attempt it again, but they must apply at least one level of Effort when retrying that task. A retry is a new action, not part of the same action that failed, and it takes the same amount of time as the first attempt did.

Sometimes the GM might rule that retries are impossible. Perhaps a character has one chance to convince the leader of a group of thugs not to attack, and after that, no amount of talking will stop them.

This rule doesn't apply to something like attacking a foe in combat because combat is always changing and fluid. Each round's situation is new, not a repeat of a previous situation, so a missed attack can't be retried.

INITIAL COST

The GM can assign a point cost to a task just for trying it. Called an initial cost, it's simply an indication that the task is particularly taxing. For example, let's say a character wants to try a Might action to open a heavy cellar door that is partially rusted shut. The GM says that forcing the door open is a difficulty 5 task, and there's an initial cost of 3 Might points simply to try. This initial cost is in addition to any points the character chooses to spend on the roll (such as when applying Effort), and the initial cost points do not affect the difficulty of the task. In other words, the character must spend 3 Might points to attempt the task at all, but that doesn't help them open the door. If they want to apply Effort to ease the task, they have to spend more points from their Might Pool.

Edge helps with the initial cost of a task, just as it does with any expenditure from a character's Pool. In the previous example, if the character had a Might Edge of 2, they would have to spend only 1 point (3 points minus 2 from their Might Edge) for the initial cost to attempt the task. If they also applied a level of Effort to open the door, they couldn't use their Edge again—Edge applies only once per action—so using the Effort would cost the full 3 points. Thus, they'd spend a total of 4 points (1 for the initial cost plus 3 for the Effort) from their Might Pool.

The rationale of the initial cost rule is that even in the Cypher System, where things like Effort can help a character succeed on an action, logic still suggests that some actions are very difficult and taxing, particularly for some PCs more than others.

DISTANCE

Distance is simplified into four basic categories: immediate, short, long, and very long.

Immediate distance from a character is within reach or within a few steps; if a character stands in a small room, everything in the room is within immediate distance. At most, immediate distance is 10 feet (3 m). Immediate distance is sometimes referred to as close, or even point-blank, particularly when referring to ranges.

(The words "immediate" and "close" can be used interchangeably to talk about distance. If a creature or object is within arm's reach of the character, it can be considered both immediate and close.)

Short distance is anything greater than immediate distance but less than 50 feet (15 m) or so.

Long distance is anything greater than short distance but less than 100 feet (30 m) or so.

Very long distance is anything greater than long distance but less than 500 feet (150 m) or so.

Beyond that range, distances are always specified—1,000 feet (300 m), 1 mile (1.5 km), and so on.

All weapons and special abilities use these terms for ranges. For example, all melee weapons have immediate range—they are close-combat weapons, and you can use them to attack anyone within immediate distance. A thrown knife (and most other thrown weapons) has short range. A small handgun also has short range. A rifle has long range.

A character can move an immediate distance as a part of another action. In other words, they can take a few steps to the light switch and flip it on. They can lunge across a small room to attack a foe. They can open a door and step through.

A character can move a short distance as their entire action for a turn. They can also try to move a long distance as their entire action, but the player might have to roll to see if the character slips, trips, or stumbles for moving so far so quickly.

GMs and players don't need to determine exact distances. For example, if the PCs are fighting a group of guards, any character can likely attack any foe in the general melee—they're all within immediate range. However, if one trooper stays back to fire a blaster, a character might have to use their entire action to move the short distance required to attack that foe. It doesn't matter if the trooper is 20 feet (6 m) or 40 feet (12 m) away—it's simply considered short distance. It does matter if the trooper is more than 50 feet (15 m) away because that distance would require a long move.

Boxed text:

OTHER DISTANCES

In rare cases where distances beyond very long are needed, real-world distances are best (1 mile, 100 kilometers, and so on). However, the following shorthand distances can be useful in some settings:

Planetary: On the same planet.

Interplanetary: Within the same solar system.

Interstellar: Within the same galaxy.

Intergalactic: Anywhere in the same universe.

Interdimensional: Anywhere.

TIMEKEEPING

Generally, keep time the same way that you normally would, using minutes, hours, days, and weeks. Thus, if the characters walk overland for 15 miles (24 km), about eight hours pass, even though the journey can be described in only a few seconds at the game table. Precision timekeeping is rarely important. Most of the time, saying things like “That takes about an hour” works fine.

This is true even when a special ability has a specific duration. In an encounter, a duration of “one minute” is mostly the same as saying “the rest of the encounter.” You don’t have to track each round that ticks by if you don’t want to. Likewise, an ability that lasts for ten minutes can safely be considered the length of an in-depth conversation, the time it takes to quickly explore a small area, or the time it takes to rest after a strenuous activity.

Boxed text:

TIMEKEEPING

Action	Time Usually Required
Walking a mile over easy terrain	About fifteen minutes
Walking a mile over rough terrain (forest, snow, hills)	About half an hour

Walking a mile over difficult terrain (mountains, thick jungle)	About forty-five minutes
Moving from one significant location in a city to another	About fifteen minutes
Sneaking into a guarded location	About fifteen minutes
Observing a new location to get salient details	About fifteen minutes
Having an in-depth discussion	About ten minutes
Resting after a fight or other strenuous activity	About ten minutes
Resting and having a quick meal	About half an hour
Making or breaking camp	About half an hour
Shopping for supplies in a market or store	About an hour
Meeting with an important contact	About half an hour
Referencing a book or website	About half an hour
Searching a room for hidden things	At least half an hour, perhaps one hour
Searching for cyphers or other valuables amid a lot of stuff	About an hour
Identifying and understanding a cypher	Fifteen minutes to half an hour
Identifying and understanding an artifact	At least fifteen minutes, perhaps three hours
Repairing a device (assuming parts and tools available)	At least an hour, perhaps a day
Building a device (assuming parts and tools available)	At least a day, perhaps a week

ENCOUNTERS, ROUNDS, AND INITIATIVE

Sometimes in the course of the game, the GM or players will refer to an “encounter.” Encounters are not so much measurements of time as they are events or instances in which something happens, like a scene of a movie or a chapter in a book. An encounter might be a fight with a foe, a dramatic crossing of a raging river, or a stressful negotiation with an important official. It’s useful to use the word when referring to a specific scene, as in “My Might Pool is low after that encounter with the soul sorcerer yesterday.”

A round is about five to ten seconds. The length of time is variable because sometimes one round might be a bit longer than another. You don't need to measure time more precisely than that. You can estimate that on average there are about ten rounds in a minute. In a round, everyone—each character and NPC—gets to take one action.

To determine who goes first, second, and so on in a round, each player makes a Speed roll called an initiative roll. Most of the time, it's only important to know which characters act before the NPCs and which act after the NPCs. On an initiative roll, a character who rolls higher than an NPC's target number takes their action before the NPC does. As with all target numbers, an NPC's target number for an initiative roll is three times the NPC's level. Many times, the GM will have all NPCs take their actions at the same time, using the highest target number from among all the NPCs. Using this method, any characters who rolled higher than the target number act first, then all the NPCs act, and finally any characters who rolled lower than the target number act.

(An initiative roll is a d20 roll. Since your initiative depends on how fast you are, if you spend Effort on the roll, the points come from your Speed Pool.)

The order in which the characters act usually isn't important. If the players want to go in a precise order, they can act in initiative order (highest to lowest), by going around the table, by going oldest to youngest, and so on.

For example, Charles, Tammie, and Shanna's characters are in combat with two level 2 security guards. The GM has the players make Speed rolls to determine initiative. Charles rolls an 8, Shanna rolls a 15, and Tammie rolls a 4. The target number for a level 2 creature is 6, so each round Charles and Shanna act before the guards, then the guards act, and finally Tammie acts. It doesn't matter whether Charles acts before or after Shanna, as long as they think it's fair.

After everyone—all PCs and NPCs—in the combat has had a turn, the round ends and a new round begins. In all rounds after the first, everyone acts in the same order as they did in the first round. The characters cycle through this order until the logical end of the encounter (the end of the fight or the completion of the event) or until the GM asks them to make new initiative rolls. The GM can call for new initiative rolls at the beginning of any new round when conditions drastically change. For example, if the NPCs gain reinforcements, the environment changes (perhaps the lights go out), the terrain changes (maybe part of the balcony collapses under the PCs), or something similar occurs, the GM can call for new initiative rolls.

Since the action moves as a cycle, anything that lasts for a round ends where it started in the cycle. If Umberto uses an ability on an opponent that hinders its defenses for one round, the effect lasts until Umberto acts on his next turn.

A CLOSER LOOK AT SITUATIONS THAT DON'T INVOLVE PCs

Ultimately, the GM is the arbiter of conflicts that do not involve the PCs. They should be adjudicated in the most interesting, logical, and story-based way possible. When in doubt, match the level of the NPCs (characters or creatures) or their respective effects to determine the results. Thus, if a level 4 NPC fights a level 3 NPC, the level 4 NPC will win, but if they face a level 7 NPC, they'll lose. Likewise, a level 4 creature resists poisons or devices of level 3 or lower but not those of level 5 and above.

The essence is this: in the Cypher System, it doesn't matter if something is a creature, a poison, or a gravity-dispelling ray. If it's a higher level, it wins; if it's a lower level, it loses. If two things of equal level oppose each other, there might be a long, drawn-out battle that could go either way.

ACTIONS

Anything that your character does in a round is an action. It's easiest to think of an action as a single thing that you can do in five to ten seconds. For example, if you use your dart thrower to shoot a strange floating orb,

that's one action. So is running for cover behind a stack of barrels, prying open a stuck door, using a rope to pull your friend up from a pit, or activating a cypher (even if it's stored in your pack).

Opening a door and attacking a security guard on the other side are two actions. It's more a matter of focus than time. Drawing your sword and attacking a foe is all one action. Putting away your bow and pushing a heavy bookcase to block a door are two actions because each requires a different train of thought.

If the action you want to accomplish is not within reach, you can move a little bit. Essentially, you can move up to an immediate distance to perform your action. For example, you can move an immediate distance and attack a foe, open a door and move an immediate distance into the hallway beyond, or grab your hurt friend lying on the ground and pull them back a few steps. This movement can occur before or after your action, so you can move to a door and open it, or you can open a door and move through it.

The most common actions are:

Attack

Activate a special ability (one that isn't an attack)

Move

Wait

Defend

Do something else

ACTION: ATTACK

An attack is anything that you do to someone that they don't want you to do. Slashing a foe with a curved dagger is an attack, blasting a foe with a lightning artifact is an attack, wrapping a foe in magnetically controlled metal cables is an attack, and controlling someone's mind is an attack. An attack almost always requires a roll to see if you hit or otherwise affect your target.

In the simplest kind of attack, such as a PC trying to stab a thug with a knife, the player rolls and compares their result to the opponent's target number. If their roll is equal to or greater than the target number, the attack hits. Just as with any kind of task, the GM might modify the difficulty based on the situation, and the player might have a bonus to the roll or might try to ease the task using skills, assets, or Effort.

A less straightforward attack might be a special ability that stuns a foe with a mental blast. However, it's handled the same way: the player makes a roll against the opponent's target number. Similarly, an attempt to tackle a foe and wrestle it to the ground is still just a roll against the foe's target number.

Attacks are sometimes categorized as "melee" attacks, meaning that you hurt or affect something within immediate reach, or "ranged" attacks, meaning that you hurt or affect something at a distance.

Melee attacks can be Might or Speed actions—player choice. Physical ranged attacks (such as bows, thrown weapons, and blasts of fire from a mutation) are almost always Speed actions, but those that come from special abilities tend to be Intellect actions.

Special abilities that require touching the target require a melee attack. If the attack misses, the power is not wasted, and you can try again each round as your action until you hit the target, use another ability, or take a different action that requires you to use your hands. These attempts in later rounds count as different actions, so you don't have to keep track of how much Effort you used when you activated the ability or how you used Edge. For example, let's say that in the first round of combat, you activate a special ability that requires you to touch your foe and you use Effort to ease the attack, but you roll poorly and miss your foe. In the second round of combat, you can try attacking again and use Effort to ease the attack roll.

The GM and players are encouraged to describe every attack with flavor and flair. One attack roll might be a stab to the foe’s arm. A miss might be the PC’s sword slamming into the wall. Combatants lunge, block, duck, spin, leap, and make all kinds of movements that should keep combat visually interesting and compelling. The Running the Cypher System chapter has much more guidance in this regard.

Common elements that affect the difficulty of a combat task are cover, range, and darkness. The rules for these and other modifiers are explained in the [Attack Modifiers and Special Situations](#) section of this chapter.

Damage

When an attack strikes a character, it usually means the character takes damage.

An attack against a PC subtracts points from one of the character’s stat Pools—usually the Might Pool. Whenever an attack simply says it deals “damage” without specifying the type, it means Might damage, which is by far the most common type. Intellect damage, which is usually the result of a mental attack, is always labeled as Intellect damage. Speed damage is often a physical attack, but attacks that deal Speed damage are fairly rare.

NPCs don’t have stat Pools. Instead, they have a characteristic called health. When an NPC takes damage of any kind, the amount is subtracted from its health. Unless described otherwise, an NPC’s health is always equal to its target number. Some NPCs might have special reactions to or defenses against attacks that would normally deal Speed damage or Intellect damage, but unless the NPC’s description specifically explains this, assume that all damage is subtracted from the NPC’s health.

Objects don’t have stat Pools or health. They have an [object damage track](#), just like how PCs have a damage track. [Attacking objects](#) might move them down their damage track.

Damage is always a specific amount determined by the attack. For example, a slash with a broadsword or a blast with a spike thrower deals 4 points of damage. An Adept’s [Onslaught](#) deals 4 points of damage. Often, there are ways for the attacker to increase the damage. For example, a PC can apply Effort to deal 3 additional points of damage, and rolling a natural 17 on the attack roll deals 1 additional point of damage.

Armor

Pieces of equipment and special abilities protect a character from damage by giving them Armor. Each time a character takes damage, subtract their Armor value from the damage before reducing their stat Pool or health. For example, if a Warrior with 2 Armor is hit by a gunshot that deals 4 points of damage, they take only 2 points of damage (4 minus 2 from their Armor). If Armor reduces the incoming damage to 0 or lower, the character takes no damage from the attack. For example, the Warrior’s 2 Armor protects them from all physical attacks that deal 1 or 2 points of damage.

The most common way to get Armor is to wear physical armor, such as a leather jacket, a bulletproof vest, a chainmail hauberk, bioengineered carapace grafts, or something else, depending on the setting. All physical armor comes in one of three categories: light, medium, or heavy. Light armor gives the wearer 1 point of Armor, medium gives 2 points of Armor, and heavy gives 3 points of Armor.

When you see the word “Armor” capitalized in the game rules (other than in the name of a special ability), it refers to your Armor characteristic—the number you subtract from incoming damage. When you see the word “armor” in lowercase, it refers to any physical armor you might wear.

Other effects can add to a character’s Armor. If a character is wearing chainmail (+2 to Armor) and has an ability that covers them in a protective force field that grants +1 to Armor, their total is 3 Armor. If they also use a cypher that hardens their flesh temporarily for +1 to Armor, their total is 4 Armor.

Some types of damage ignore physical armor. Attacks that specifically deal Speed damage or Intellect damage ignore Armor; the creature takes the listed amount of damage without any reduction from Armor. Ambient damage (see below) usually ignores Armor as well.

A creature may have a special bonus to Armor against certain kinds of attacks. For example, a protective suit made of a sturdy, fire-resistant material might normally give its wearer +1 to Armor but count as +3 to Armor against fire attacks. An artifact worn as a helmet might grant +2 to Armor only against mental attacks.

Ambient Damage

Some kinds of damage aren't direct attacks against a creature, but they indirectly affect everything in the area. Most of these are environmental effects such as winter cold, high temperatures, or background radiation. Damage from these kinds of sources is called ambient damage. Physical armor usually doesn't protect against ambient damage, though a well-insulated suit of armor can protect against cold weather.

Damage From Hazards

Attacks aren't the only way to inflict damage on a character. Experiences such as falling from a great height, being burned in a fire, and spending time in severe weather also deal damage. Although no list of potential hazards could be comprehensive, the Damage From Hazards table includes common examples.

DAMAGE FROM HAZARDS

Source	Damage	Notes
Falling	1 point per 10 feet (3 m) fallen (ambient damage)	—
Minor fire	3 points per round (ambient damage)	Torch
Major fire	6 points per round (ambient damage)	Engulfed in flames; lava
Acid splash	2 points per round (ambient damage)	—
Acid bath	6 points per round (ambient damage)	Immersed in acid
Cold	1 point per round (ambient damage)	Below freezing temperatures
Severe cold	3 points per round (ambient damage)	Liquid nitrogen
Shock	1 point per round (ambient damage)	Often involves losing next action
Electrocution	6 points per round (ambient damage)	Often involves losing next action
Crush	3 points	Object or creature falls on character
Huge crush	6 points	Roof collapse; cave-in
Collision	6 points	Large, fast object strikes character

SPACE HAZARDS

A few specific hazards that you can include as part of an encounter involving a spacecraft follow. These hazards are more site specific than the general threats presented in Chapter 5: Conflicts of the Future.

GRAVITY WELL

All bodies in space produce a gravitational field, though usually only things the size of a small moon or larger pose a hazard to unprepared (and sometimes even to prepared) spacecraft. The larger the body, the “deeper” and wider the associated gravity field. Any time a spacecraft launches from a moon or planet, it must escape the gravity well. For RPG purposes, that’s either a routine task, or a low-difficulty one (assuming no complicating factors are at play).

Gravity wells become a hazard when a spacecraft encounters one unexpectedly— usually because of a navigational or sensor error, but occasionally because of a moon or extreme gravity source being someplace unforeseen.

Slingshot Trajectory: An unexpected encounter with a gravity well can sling a spacecraft off on a new and unwanted trajectory on a failed piloting task, the difficulty determined by the situation.

Captured: An unexpected encounter with a gravity well can also capture a spacecraft in the gravity well’s orbit, forcing the craft to expend additional power to get free (power it may or may not have)

BLACK HOLE

Black holes are just extreme gravity wells. All the dangers associated with a gravity well also apply to black holes. A couple of additional hazards are also associated with black holes, notably tidal destruction (“spaghettification”), time dilation, and being swallowed.

Tidal Desctruction: Mechanically speaking, while a spacecraft feels tidal forces by passing too close to a black hole’s event horizon, all tasks aboard the craft are hindered, Void Rules are in effect, and if a GM intrusion is triggered thereby, the ship sustains major damage and risks coming apart. Meanwhile, PCs in the ship (assuming some sort of fantastic tech-rated gravity nullifier isn’t in use) suffer 1 point of ambient damage each round.

A ship near a very large black hole (like Sagittarius A*, the supermassive black hole at the center of the Milky Way Galaxy) can avoid tidal effects because the gravity gradient is so much wider, but still feel relativistic time dilation.

Relativistic Time Dialation: From a mechanical perspective, spacecraft that survive close encounters with black holes and return to normal space discover that more time has passed than expected, which could range from fairly inconsequential minutes or hours, to far more serious days, months, years, centuries, or more.

Past the Event Horizon: The event horizon is the point of no return, where not even light can escape the clutch of gravity. If a spacecraft falls into a black hole, assuming it is not spaghettified by tidal forces, it is still lost from the universe of its origin. At least, it’s lost assuming no intervention from a fantastic tech-rated post-singularity AI or ancient ultra.

RADIATION BELT/SOLAR FLARE

Radiation belts of intensely charged particles trapped by magnetic fields around some planets and moons can surge, causing radiation exposure. An unexpected solar flare, or the drive plume of a massive spacecraft, can cause the same unexpected exposure.

Ship Damage: The ship suffers minor or major damage, requiring repair and perhaps even replacement of parts. This damage is as serious as you require for the purposes of creating an interesting story.

Radiation Sickness: When PCs are exposed to intense radiation, they suffer 3 points of ambient radiation damage for each minute the character fails a difficulty 3 Might defense task. If the character fails three such defense rolls during any single period of radiation exposure, they suffer acute radiation sickness, a level 8 disease that drops them one step on the damage track for each day they fail a Might defense roll until they expire.

ASTEROID/DEBRIS FIELD

Movies often depict asteroid belts as densely packed fields of tumbling rock that ships must constantly swerve through to avoid a collision. Such locations are not easy to find in the solar system. But such situations can occur in fantastic settings, or possibly in solar systems other than Earth's.

Evasive Asteroid Piloting: During any round a spacecraft moves through a densely packed asteroid or debris field, the pilot (or shipmind) must succeed on a piloting task, whose difficulty is set by the situation. On a failed roll, a collision occurs. Each time a collision occurs, the ship (and possibly its crew) is damaged according to the track laid out below. Collisions are assumed to be major rocks or pieces of debris, or possibly a series of smaller pieces of debris all impacting nearly simultaneously, with one getting through the shielding.

Finding Shelter: The best way to find shelter in order to effect repairs, or hide from pursuers, is to try to find an asteroid or piece of debris large enough for the spacecraft to land on or find a crevice to slide into. To land a spacecraft on an asteroid or big piece of debris is a challenging (difficulty 5) piloting task to match the asteroid's spin, then slide into the cramped space.

The Effects of Taking Damage

When an NPC reaches 0 health, it is either dead or (if the attacker wishes) incapacitated, meaning unconscious or beaten into submission.

As previously mentioned, damage from most sources is applied to a character's Might Pool. Otherwise, stat damage always reduces the Pool of the stat it affects.

If damage reduces a character's stat Pool to 0, any further damage to that stat (including excess damage from the attack that reduced the stat to 0) is applied to another stat Pool. Damage is applied to Pools in this order:

1. Might (unless the Pool is 0)
2. Speed (unless the Pool is 0)
3. Intellect

Even if the damage is applied to another stat Pool, it still counts as its original type for the purpose of Armor and special abilities that affect damage. For example, if a character with 2 Armor is reduced to 0 Might and then is hit by a creature's claw for 3 points of damage, it still counts as Might damage, so their Armor reduces the damage to 1 point, which then is applied to their Speed Pool. In other words, even though they take the damage from their Speed Pool, it doesn't ignore Armor like Speed damage normally would.

In addition to taking damage from their Might Pool, Speed Pool, or Intellect Pool, PCs also have a damage track. The damage track has four states (from best to worst): hale, impaired, debilitated, and dead. When one of a PC's stat Pools reaches 0, they move one step down the damage track. Thus, if they are hale, they become impaired. If they are already impaired, they become debilitated. If they are already debilitated, they become dead.

Some effects can immediately shift a PC one or more steps on the damage track. These include rare poisons, cellular disruption attacks, and massive traumas (such as falls from very great heights, being run over by a speeding vehicle, and so on, as determined by the GM).

Some attacks, like a serpent's poisonous bite or a Speaker's [Enthrall](#), have effects other than damage to a stat Pool or shifting the PC on the damage track. These attacks can cause unconsciousness, paralysis, and so on.

(When NPCs (who have only health) suffer Speed or Intellect damage, normally this is treated the same as Might damage. However, the GM or the player has the option to suggest an appropriate alternate effect—the NPC suffers a penalty, moves more slowly, is stunned, and so on.)

The Damage Track

As noted above, the damage track has four states: hale, impaired, debilitated, and dead.

Hale is the normal state for a character: all three stat Pools are at 1 or higher, and the PC has no penalties from harmful conditions. When a hale PC takes enough damage to reduce one of their stat Pools to 0, they become impaired. Note that a character whose stat Pools are much lower than normal can still be hale.

Impaired is a wounded or injured state. When an impaired character applies Effort, it costs 1 extra point per level applied. For example, applying one level of Effort costs 4 points instead of 3, and applying two levels of Effort costs 7 points instead of 5.

An impaired character ignores minor and major effect results on their rolls, and they don't deal as much extra damage in combat with a special roll. In combat, a roll of 17 or higher deals only 1 additional point of damage. When an impaired PC takes enough damage to reduce one of their stat Pools to 0, they become debilitated.

Debilitated is a critically injured state. A debilitated character may not take any actions other than to move (probably crawl) no more than an immediate distance. If a debilitated character's Speed Pool is 0, they can't move at all. When a debilitated PC takes enough damage to reduce a stat Pool to 0, they are dead.

Dead is dead.

(The damage track allows you to know how far from death you are. If you're hale, you're three steps from death. If you're impaired, you're two steps from death. If you're debilitated, you are only one small step from death's door.)

Recovering Points in a Pool

After losing or spending points in a Pool, you recover those points by resting. You can't increase a Pool past its maximum by resting—just back to its normal level. Any extra points gained go away with no effect. The amount of points you recover from a rest, and how long each rest takes, depends on how many times you have rested so far that day.

When you rest, make a recovery roll. To do this, roll a d6 and add your tier. You recover that many points, and you can divide them among your stat Pools however you wish. For example, if your recovery roll is 4 and you've lost 4 points of Might and 2 points of Speed, you can recover 4 points of Might, or 2 points of Might and 2 points of Speed, or any other combination adding up to 4 points.

The first time you rest each day, it takes only a few seconds to catch your breath. If you rest this way in the middle of an encounter, it takes one action on your turn.

The second time you rest each day, you must rest for ten minutes to make a recovery roll. The third time you rest each day, you must rest for one hour to make a recovery roll. The fourth time you rest each day, you must rest for ten hours to make a recovery roll (usually, this occurs when you stop for the day to eat and sleep).

After that much rest, it's assumed to be a new day, so the next time you rest, it takes only a few seconds. The next rest takes ten minutes, then one hour, and so on, in a cycle.

If you haven't rested yet that day and you take a lot of damage in a fight, you could rest a few seconds (regaining $1d6$ points + 1 point per tier) and then immediately rest for ten minutes (regaining another $1d6$ points + 1 point per tier). Thus, in one full day of doing nothing but resting, you could recover $4d6$ points + 4 points per tier.

Each character chooses when to make recovery rolls. If a party of five PCs rests for ten minutes because two of them want to make recovery rolls, the others don't have to make rolls at that time. Later in the day, those three can decide to rest for ten minutes and make recovery rolls.

Recovery Roll	Rest Time Needed
First recovery roll	One action
Second recovery roll	Ten minutes
Third recovery roll	One hour
Fourth recovery roll	Ten hours

Restoring the Damage Track

Using points from a recovery roll to raise a stat Pool from 0 to 1 or higher also automatically moves the character up one step on the damage track.

If all of a PC's stat Pools are above 0 and the character has taken special damage that moved them down the damage track, they can use a recovery roll to move up one step on the damage track instead of recovering points. For example, a character who is debilitated from a hit with a cell-disrupting biotech device can rest and move up to impaired rather than recover points in a Pool.

Special Damage

In the course of playing the game, characters face all manner of threats and dangers that can harm them in a variety of ways, only some of which are easily represented by points of damage.

Dazed and Stunned: Characters can be dazed when struck hard on the head, exposed to extremely loud sounds, or affected by a mental attack. When this happens, for the duration of the daze effect (usually one round), all of the character's tasks are hindered. Similar but more severe attacks can stun characters. Stunned characters lose their turn (but can still defend against attacks normally).

Poison and Disease: When characters encounter poison—whether the venom of a serpent, rat poison slipped into a burrito, cyanide dissolved in wine, or an overdose of acetaminophen—they make a Might defense roll to resist it. Failure to resist can result in points of damage, moving down the damage track, or a specific effect such as paralysis, unconsciousness, disability, or something stranger. For example, some poisons affect the brain, making it impossible to say certain words, take certain actions, resist certain effects, or recover points to a stat Pool.

Diseases work like poisons, but their effect occurs every day, so the victim must make a Might defense roll each day or suffer the effects. Disease effects are as varied as poisons: points of damage, moving down the damage track, disability, and so on. Many diseases inflict damage that cannot be restored through conventional means.

Paralysis: Paralytic effects cause a character to drop to the ground, unable to move. Unless otherwise specified, the character can still take actions that require no physical movement.

Other Effects: Other special effects can render a character blind or deaf, unable to stand without falling over, or unable to breathe. Stranger effects might negate gravity for the character (or increase it a hundredfold), transport them to another place, render them out of phase, mutate their physical form, implant false memories or senses, alter the way their brain processes information, or inflame their nerves so they are in constant, excruciating pain. Each special effect must be handled on a case-by-case basis. The GM adjudicates how the character is affected and how the condition can be alleviated (if possible).

NPCs and Special Damage

The GM always has final say over what special damage will affect an NPC. Human NPCs usually react like characters, but nonhuman creatures might react very differently. For example, a tiny bit of venom is unlikely to hurt a gigantic dragon, and it won't affect an android or a demon at all.

If an NPC is susceptible to an attack that would shift a character down the damage track, using that attack on the NPC usually renders it unconscious or dead. Alternatively, the GM could apply the debilitated condition to the NPC, with the same effect as it would have on a PC.

ATTACK MODIFIERS AND SPECIAL SITUATIONS

In combat situations, many modifiers might come into play. Although the GM is at liberty to assess whatever modifiers they think are appropriate to the situation (that's their role in the game), the following suggestions and guidelines might make that easier. Often the modifier is applied as a step in difficulty. So if a situation hinders attacks, that means if a PC attacks an NPC, the difficulty of the attack roll is increased by one step, and if an NPC attacks a PC, the difficulty of the defense roll is decreased by one step. This is because players make all rolls, whether they are attacking or defending—NPCs never make attack or defense rolls.

When in doubt, if it seems like it should be harder to attack in a situation, hinder the attack rolls. If it seems like attacks should gain an advantage or be easier in some way, hinder the defense rolls.

(Precise ranges are not important in the Cypher System. The broadly defined “immediate,” “short,” “long,” and “very long” ranges let the GM quickly make a judgment call and keep things moving. Basically, the idea is: your target is right there, your target is close, your target is pretty far away, or your target is extremely far away.)

Cover

If a character is behind cover so that a significant portion of their body is behind something sturdy, attacks against the character are hindered.

If a character is entirely behind cover (their entire body is behind something sturdy), they can't be attacked unless the attack can go through the cover. For example, if a character hides behind a thin wooden screen and their opponent shoots the screen with a rifle that can penetrate the wood, the character can be attacked. However, because the attacker can't see the character clearly, this still counts as cover (attacks against the character are hindered).

Position

Sometimes where a character stands gives them an advantage or a disadvantage.

Prone Target: In melee, a prone target is easier to hit (attacks against them are eased). In ranged combat, a prone target is harder to hit (attacks against them are hindered).

Higher Ground: In either ranged or melee combat, attacks by an opponent on higher ground are eased.

Surprise

When a target isn't aware of an incoming attack, the attacker has an advantage. A ranged sniper in a hidden position, an invisible assailant, or the first salvo in a successful ambush are all eased by two steps. For the attacker to gain this advantage, however, the defender truly must have no idea that the attack is coming.

If the defender isn't sure of the attacker's location but is still on guard, the attacks are eased by only one step.

Range

In melee, you can attack a foe who is adjacent to you (next to you) or within reach (immediate range). If you enter into melee with one or more foes, usually you can attack most or all of the combatants, meaning they are next to you, within reach, or within reach if you move slightly or have a long weapon that extends your reach.

The majority of ranged attacks have only two ranges: short range and long range (a few have very long range). Short range is generally less than 50 feet (15 m) or so. Long range is generally from 50 feet (15 m) to about 100 feet (30 m). Very long range is generally 100 feet (30 m) to 500 feet (150 m). Greater precision than that isn't important in the Cypher System. If anything is longer than very long range, the exact range is usually spelled out, such as with an item that can fire a beam 1,000 feet (300 m) or teleport you up to 1 mile (1.5 km) away.

Thus, the game has four measurements of distance: immediate, short, long, and very long. These apply to movement as well. A few special cases—point-blank range and extreme range—modify an attack's chance to successfully hit.

Point-Blank Range: If a character uses a ranged weapon against a target within immediate range, the attack is eased.

Extreme Range: Targets just at the limit of a weapon's range are at extreme range. Attacks against such targets are hindered.

(The GM might allow a character with a ranged weapon to attack beyond extreme range, but the attack would be hindered by two steps for each range category beyond the normal limit. Attacks with hard limits, such as the blast radius of a bomb, can't be modified.)

(In certain situations, such as a PC on top of a building looking across an open field, the GM should allow ranged attacks to exceed their maximum range. For example, in perfect conditions, a good archer can hit a large target with a bow and arrow at 500 feet (150 m), much farther than a bow's typical long range.)

Illumination

What characters can see (and how well they can see) plays a huge factor in combat.

Dim Light: Dim light is approximately the amount of light on a night with a bright full moon or the illumination provided by a torch, flashlight, or desk lamp. Dim light allows you to see out to short range. Targets in dim light are harder to hit. Attacks against such targets are hindered. Attackers trained in low-light spotting negate this modifier.

Very Dim Light: Very dim light is approximately the amount of light on a starry night with no visible moon, or the glow provided by a candle or an illuminated control panel. Very dim light allows you to see clearly only within immediate range and perceive vague shapes to short range. Targets in very dim light are harder to hit. Attacks against targets within immediate range are hindered, and attacks against those in short range are hindered by two steps. Attackers trained in low-light spotting modify these difficulties by one step in their favor. Attackers specialized in low-light spotting modify these difficulties by two steps in their favor.

Darkness: Darkness is an area with no illumination at all, such as a moonless night with cloud cover or a room with no lights. Targets in complete darkness are nearly impossible to hit. If an attacker can use other senses (such as hearing) to get an idea of where the opponent might be, attacks against such targets are hindered by four steps. Otherwise, attacks in complete darkness fail without the need for a roll unless the player spends 1

XP to “make a lucky shot” or the GM uses GM intrusion. Attackers trained in low-light spotting ease the task. Attackers specialized in low-light spotting ease the task by two steps.

Visibility

Similar to illumination, factors that obscure vision affect combat.

Mist: A target in mist is similar to one in dim light. Ranged attacks against such targets are hindered. Particularly dense mist makes ranged attacks nearly impossible (treat as darkness), and even melee attacks are hindered.

Hiding Target: A target in dense foliage, behind a screen, or crawling amid the rubble in a ruin is hard to hit because they’re hard to see. Ranged attacks against such targets are hindered.

Invisible Target: If an attacker can use other senses (such as hearing) to get an idea of where the opponent might be, attacks against such targets are hindered by four steps. Otherwise, attacks against an invisible creature fail without the need for a roll unless the player spends 1 XP to “make a lucky shot” or the GM uses GM intrusion.

Water

Being in shallow water can make it hard to move, but it doesn’t affect combat. Being in deep water can make things difficult, and being underwater entirely can seem as different as being on another world.

Deep Water: Being in water up to your chest (or the equivalent thereof) hinders your attacks. Aquatic creatures ignore this modifier.

Underwater Melee Combat: For nonaquatic creatures, being completely underwater makes attacking very difficult. Attacks with stabbing weapons are hindered, and melee attacks with slashing or bashing weapons are hindered by two steps. Aquatic creatures ignore these penalties.

Underwater Ranged Combat: As with melee combat, nonaquatic creatures have problems fighting underwater. Some ranged attacks are impossible underwater—you can’t throw things, fire a bow or crossbow, or use a blowgun. Many firearms also do not work underwater. Attacks with weapons that do work underwater are hindered. Ranges underwater are reduced by one category; very-long-range weapons work only to long range, long-range weapons work only to short range, and short-range weapons work only to immediate range.

Moving Targets

Moving targets are harder to hit, and moving attackers have a difficult time as well.

Target Is Moving: Attackers trying to hit a foe who is moving very fast are hindered. (A foe moving very fast is one who is doing nothing but running, mounted on a moving creature, riding on a vehicle or moving conveyance, and so on.)

Attacker Is Moving: An attacker trying to make an attack while moving under their own power (walking, running, swimming, and so on) takes no penalties. Attacks from a moving mount or moving vehicle are hindered; an attacker trained in riding or driving ignores this penalty.

Attacker Is Jostled: Being jostled, such as while standing on a listing ship or a vibrating platform, makes attacking difficult. Such attacks are hindered. Characters trained in balancing or sailing would ignore penalties for being on a ship.

SPECIAL SITUATION: COMBAT BETWEEN NPCs

When an NPC ally of the PCs attacks another NPC, the GM can designate a player to roll and handle it like a PC attacking. Often, the choice is obvious. For example, a character who has a trained attack animal should roll when their pet attacks enemies. If an NPC ally accompanying the party leaps into the fray, that ally’s favorite

PC rolls for them. NPCs cannot apply Effort. Of course, it's perfectly fitting (and easier) to have the NPC ally use the [cooperative action](#) rules to aid a PC instead of making direct attacks, or to compare the levels of the two NPCs (higher wins).

SPECIAL SITUATION: COMBAT BETWEEN PCs

When one PC attacks another PC, the attacking character makes an attack roll, and the other character makes a defense roll, adding any appropriate modifiers. If the attacking PC has a skill, ability, asset, or other effect that would ease the attack if it were made against an NPC, the character adds 3 to the roll for each step reduction (+3 for one step, +6 for two steps, and so on). If the attacker's final result is higher, the attack hits. If the defender's result is higher, the attack misses. Damage is resolved normally. The GM mediates all special effects.

SPECIAL SITUATION: AREA ATTACKS

Sometimes, an attack or effect affects an area rather than a single target. For example, a grenade or a landslide can potentially harm or affect everyone in the area.

In an area attack, all PCs in the area make appropriate defense rolls against the attack to determine its effect on them. If there are any NPCs in the area, the attacker makes a single attack roll against all of them (one roll, not one roll per NPC) and compares it to the target number of each NPC. If the roll is equal to or greater than the target number of a particular NPC, the attack hits that NPC.

Some area attacks always deal at least a minimum amount of damage, even if the attacks miss or if a PC makes a successful defense roll.

For example, consider a character who uses [Shatter](#) to attack six cultists (level 2; target number 6) and their leader (level 4; target number 12). The PC applies Effort to increase the damage and rolls an 11 for the attack roll. This hits the six cultists, but not the leader, so the ability deals 3 points of damage to each of the cultists. The description of Shatter says that applying Effort to increase the damage also means that targets take 1 point of damage if the PC fails the attack roll, so the leader takes 1 point of damage. In terms of what happens in the story, the cultists are caught flat-footed by the sudden detonation of one of their knives, but the leader ducks and is shielded from the blast. Despite the leader's quick moves, the blast is so intense that a few bits of metal slice them.

SPECIAL SITUATION: ATTACKING OBJECTS

Attacking an object is rarely a matter of hitting it. Sure, you can hit the broad side of a barn, but can you damage it? Attacking inanimate objects with a melee weapon is a Might action. Objects have levels and thus target numbers. Objects have a damage track that works like the [damage track](#) for PCs.

Intact is the default state for an object.

Minor damage is a slightly damaged state. An object with minor damage reduces its level by 1.

Major damage is a critically damaged state. An object with major damage is broken and no longer functions.

Destroyed is destroyed. The object is ruined, no longer functions, and cannot be repaired.

If the Might action to damage an object is a success, the object moves one step down the object damage track. If the Might roll exceeded the difficulty by 2 levels, the object instead moves two steps down the object damage track. If the Might roll exceeded the difficulty by 4 levels, the object instead moves three steps down the object damage track. Objects with minor or major damage can be [repaired](#), moving them one or more steps up the object damage track.

Brittle or fragile objects, like paper or glass, decrease the effective level of the object for the purposes of determining if it is damaged. Hard objects, like those made of wood or stone, add 1 to the effective level. Very hard objects, like those made of metal, add 2. (The GM may rule that some exotic materials add 3.)

The tool or weapon used to attack the object must be at least as hard as the object itself. Further, if the amount of damage the attack could inflict—not modified by a special die roll—does not equal or exceed the effective level of the object, the attack cannot damage the object no matter what the roll.

ACTION: Activate a Special Ability

Special abilities are granted by foci, types, and flavors, or provided by cyphers or other devices. If a special ability affects another character in any kind of unwanted manner, it's handled as an attack. This is true even if the ability is normally not considered an attack. For example, if a character has a healing touch, and their friend doesn't want to be healed for some reason, an attempt to heal their unwilling friend is handled as an attack.

Plenty of special abilities do not affect another character in an unwanted manner. For example, a PC might use [Hover](#) on themselves to float into the air. A character with a matter-reorganizing device might change a stone wall into glass. A character who activates a [phase change](#) cypher might walk through a wall. None of these requires an attack roll (although when turning a stone wall to glass, the character must still make a roll to successfully affect the wall).

If the character spends points to apply Effort on the attempt, they might want to roll anyway to see if they get a major effect, which would reduce the cost for their action.

ACTION: MOVE

As a part of another action, a character can adjust their position—stepping back a few feet while using an ability, sliding over in combat to take on a different opponent to help a friend, pushing through a door they just opened, and so on. This is considered an immediate distance, and a character can move this far as part of another action.

In a combat situation, if a character is in a large melee, they're usually considered to be next to most other combatants, unless the GM rules that they're farther away because the melee is especially large or the situation dictates it.

If they're not in melee but still nearby, they are considered to be a short distance away—usually less than 50 feet (15 m). If they're farther away than that but still involved in the combat, they are considered to be a long distance away, usually 50 to 100 feet (15 to 30 m), or possibly even a very long distance away, usually more than 100 feet to 500 feet (30 to 150 m).

In a round, as an action, a character can make a short move. In this case, they are doing nothing but moving up to about 50 feet (15 m). Some terrain or situations will change the distance a character can move, but generally, making a short move is considered to be a difficulty 0 action. No roll is needed; they just get where they're going as their action.

A character can try to make a long move—up to 100 feet (30 m) or so—in one round. This is a Speed task with a difficulty of 4. As with any action, they can use skills, assets, or Effort to ease the task. Terrain, obstacles, or other circumstances can hinder the task. A successful roll means the character moved the distance safely. Failure means that at some point during the move, they stop or stumble (the GM determines where this happens).

A character can also try to make a short move and take another (relatively simple) physical action, like make an attack. As with the attempt to make a long move, this is a Speed task with a difficulty of 4, and failure means that the character stops at some point, slipping or stumbling or otherwise getting held up.

Long-Term Movement

When talking about movement in terms of traveling rather than round-by-round action, typical characters can travel on a road about 20 miles (32 km) per day, averaging about 3 miles (5 km) per hour, including a few stops. When traveling overland, they can move about 12 miles (19 km) per day, averaging 2 miles (3 km) per

hour, again with some stops. Mounted characters, such as those on horseback, can go twice as far. Other modes of travel (cars, airplanes, hovercraft, sailing ships, and so on) have their own rates of movement.

Movement Modifiers

Different environments affect movement in different ways.

Rough Terrain: A surface that's considered rough terrain is covered in loose stones or other material, uneven or with unsure footing, unsteady, or a surface that requires movement across a narrow space, such as a cramped corridor or a slender ledge. Stairs are also considered rough terrain. Rough terrain does not slow normal movement on a round-by-round basis, but hinders move rolls. Rough terrain cuts long-term movement rates in half.

Difficult Terrain: Difficult terrain is an area filled with challenging obstacles—water up to waist height, a very steep slope, an especially narrow ledge, slippery ice, a foot or more of snow, a space so small that one must crawl through it, and so on. Difficult terrain hinders move rolls and halves movement on a round-by-round basis. This means that a short move is about 25 feet (8 m), and a long move is about 50 feet (15 m). Difficult terrain reduces long-term movement to a third of its normal rate.

Water: Deep water, in which a character is mostly or entirely submerged, hinders move rolls and reduces round-by-round and long-term movement to one quarter its normal rate. This means that a short move is about 12 feet(4 m), and a long move is about 25 feet (7.5 m). Characters trained in swimming halve their movement only while in deep water.

Low Gravity: Movement in low gravity is easier but not much faster. All move rolls are eased.

High Gravity: In an environment of high gravity, treat all moving characters as if they were in difficult terrain. Characters trained in high-gravity maneuvering negate this penalty. High gravity reduces long-term movement to a third of its normal rate.

Zero Gravity: In an environment without gravity, characters cannot move normally. Instead, they must push off from a surface and succeed at a Might roll to move (the difficulty is equal to one-quarter the distance traveled in feet). Without a surface to push off from, a character cannot move. Unless the character's movement takes them to a stable object that they can grab or land against, they continue to drift in that direction each round, traveling half the distance of the initial push.

Special Situation: A Chase

When a PC is chasing an NPC or vice versa, the player should attempt a Speed action, with the difficulty based on the NPC's level. If the PC succeeds at the roll, they catch the NPC (if chasing), or they get away (if chased). In terms of the story, this one-roll mechanic can be the result of a long chase over many rounds.

Alternatively, if the GM wants to play out a long chase, the character can make many rolls (perhaps one per level of the NPC) to finish the pursuit successfully. For every failure, the PC must make another success, and if they ever have more failures than successes, the PC fails to catch the NPC (if chasing) or is caught (if chased). As with combat, the GM is encouraged to describe the results of these rolls with flavor. A success might mean the PC has rounded a corner and gained some distance. A failure might mean that a basket of fruit topples over in front of them, slowing them down. [Vehicle chases](#) are handled similarly.

ACTION: WAIT

You can wait to react to another character's action.

You decide what action will trigger your action, and if the triggering action happens, you get to take your action first (unless going first wouldn't make sense, like attacking a foe before they come into view). For example, if an [orc](#) threatens you with a halberd, on your turn you can decide to wait, stating "If it stabs at me, I'm going to slash it with my sword." On the orc's turn, it stabs, so you make your sword attack before that happens.

Waiting is also a good way to deal with a ranged attacker who rises from behind cover, fires an attack, and ducks back down. You could say "I wait to see them pop up from behind cover and then I shoot them."

(Waiting is also a useful tool for cooperative actions (see below).)

ACTION: DEFEND

Defending is a special action that only PCs can do, and only in response to being attacked. In other words, an NPC uses its action to attack, which forces a PC to make a defense roll. This is handled like any other kind of action, with circumstances, skill, assets, and Effort all potentially coming into play. Defending is a special kind of action in that it does not happen on the PC's turn. It's never an action that a player decides to take; it's always a reaction to an attack. A PC can take a defense action when attacked (on the attacking NPC's turn) and still take another action on their own turn.

The type of defense roll depends on the type of attack. If a foe attacks a character with an axe, they can use Speed to duck or block it with what they're holding. If they're struck by a poisoned dart, they can use a Might action to resist its effects. If a psi-worm attempts to control their mind, they can use Intellect to fend off the intrusion.

Sometimes an attack provokes two defense actions. For example, a poisonous reptile tries to bite a PC. They try to dodge the bite with a Speed action. If they fail, they take damage from the bite, and they must also attempt a Might action to resist the poison's effects.

If a character does not know an attack is coming, usually they can still make a defense roll, but they can't add modifiers (including the modifier from a shield), and they can't use any skill or Effort to ease the task. If circumstances warrant—such as if the attacker is right next to the character—the GM might rule that the surprise attack simply hits.

A character can always choose to forgo a defense action, in which case the attack automatically hits.

Some abilities (such as the [Countermeasures](#) special ability) may allow you to do something special as a defense action.

ACTION: DO SOMETHING ELSE

Players can try anything they can think of, although that doesn't mean anything is possible. The GM sets the difficulty—that's their primary role in the game. Still, guided by the bounds of logic, players and GMs will find all manner of actions and options that aren't covered by a rule. That's a good thing.

Players should not feel constrained by the game mechanics when taking actions. Skills are not required to attempt an action. Someone who's never picked a lock can still try. The GM might hinder the task, but the character can still attempt the action.

Thus, players and GMs can return to the beginning of this chapter and look at the most basic expression of the rules. A player wants to take an action. The GM decides, on a scale of 1 to 10, how difficult that task is and what stat it uses. The player determines whether they have anything that might modify the difficulty and considers whether to apply Effort. Once the final determination is made, they roll to see if their character succeeds. It's as easy as that.

As further guidance, the following are some of the more common actions a player might take.

(Players are encouraged to come up with their own ideas for what their characters do rather than looking at a list of possible actions. That's why there is a "do something else" action. PCs are not pieces on a game board—they are people in a story. And like real people, they can try anything they can think of. (Succeeding is another matter entirely.) The task difficulty system provides GMs with the tools they need to adjudicate anything the players come up with.)

CLIMBING

When a character climbs, the GM sets a difficulty based on the surface being climbed. Climbing is like moving through [difficult terrain](#): the move roll is hindered and the movement is half speed. Unusual circumstances, such as climbing while under fire, pose additional step penalties.

CLIMBING Difficulty

Difficulty	Surface
2	Surface with lots of handholds
3	Stone wall or similar surface (a few handholds)
4	Crumbling or slippery surface
5	Smooth stone wall or similar surface
6	Metal wall or similar surface
8	Smooth, horizontal surface (climber is upside down)
10	Glass wall or similar surface

COOPERATIVE ACTIONS

There are many ways multiple characters can work together. None of these options, however, can be used at the same time by the same characters.

Helping: If you use your action to help someone with a task, you ease the task. If you have an [inability](#) in a task, your help has no effect. If you use your action to help someone with a task that you are trained or specialized in, the task is eased by two steps. Help is considered an asset, and someone receiving help usually can't gain more than two assets on a single task if that help is provided by another character.

For example, if Scott is trying to climb a steep incline and Sarah (who is trained in climbing) spends her turn helping him, Scott's task is eased by two steps.

Sometimes you can help by performing a task that complements what another person is attempting. If your complementary action succeeds, you ease the other person's task. For example, if Scott tries to persuade a ship captain to let him on board, Sarah could try to supplement Scott's words with a flattering lie about the captain (a deception action), a display of knowledge about the region where the ship is headed (a geography action), or a direct threat to the captain (an intimidation action). If Sarah's roll is a success, Scott's persuasion task is eased.

Distraction: When a character uses their turn to distract a foe, that foe's attacks are hindered for one round. Multiple characters distracting a foe have no greater effect than a single character doing so—a foe is either distracted or not. A distraction might be yelling a challenge, firing a warning shot, or a similar activity that doesn't harm the foe.

Draw the Attack: When an NPC attacks a character, another PC can prominently present themselves, shout taunts, and move to try to get the foe to attack them instead. In most cases, this action succeeds without a roll—the opponent attacks the prominent PC instead of their companions. In other cases, such as with intelligent or determined foes, the prominent character must succeed at an Intellect action to draw the attack. If that Intellect action is successful, the foe attacks the prominent character, whose defenses are hindered by two steps. Two characters attempting to draw an attack at the same time cancel each other out.

(Two characters attempting to draw an attack at the same time cancel each other out.)

Take the Attack: A character can use their action to throw themselves in front of a foe's successful attack to save a nearby comrade. The attack automatically succeeds against the sacrificial character, and it deals 1 additional point of damage. A character cannot willingly take more than one attack each round in this way.

CRAFTING, BUILDING, AND REPAIRING

Crafting is a tricky topic in the Cypher System because the same rules that govern building a spear also cover repairing a machine that can take you into hyperspace. Normally, the level of the item determines the difficulty of creating or repairing it as well as the time required. For cyphers, artifacts, other items that require specialized knowledge, or items unique to a world or species other than your own (such as a Martian tripod walker), add 5 to the item's level to determine the difficulty of building or repairing it.

Sometimes, if the item is artistic in nature, the GM will add to the difficulty and time required. For example, a crude wooden stool might be hammered together in an hour. A beautiful finished piece might take a week or longer and would require more skill on the part of the crafter.

The GM is free to overrule some attempts at creation, building, or repair, requiring that the character have a certain level of skill, proper tools and materials, and so forth.

A level 0 object requires no skill to make and is easily found in most locations. Sling stones and firewood are level 0 items—producing them is routine. Making a torch from spare wood and oil-soaked cloth is simple, so it's a level 1 object. Making an arrow or a spear is fairly standard but not simple, so it's a level 2 object.

Generally speaking, a device to be crafted requires materials equal to its level and all the levels below it. So a level 5 device requires level 5 material, level 4 material, level 3 material, level 2 material, and level 1 material (and, technically, level 0 material).

The GM and players can gloss over much of the crafting details, if desired. Gathering all the materials to make a mundane item might not be worth playing out—but then again, it might be. For example, making a wooden spear in a forest isn't very interesting, but what if the characters have to make a spear in a treeless desert? Finding the wreckage of something made of wood or forcing a PC to fashion a spear out of the bones of a large beast could be interesting situations.

The time required to create an item is up to the GM, but the guidelines in the crafting table are a good starting point. Generally, repairing an item takes somewhere between half the creation time and the full creation time,

depending on the item, the aspect that needs repairing, and the circumstances. For example, if creating an item takes one hour, repairing it takes thirty minutes to one hour.

Sometimes a GM will allow a rush job if the circumstances warrant it. This is different than using skill to reduce the time required. In this case, the quality of the item is affected. Let's say that a character needs to create a tool that will cut through solid steel with a laser (a level 7 item), but they have to do it in one day. The GM might allow it, but the device might be extremely volatile, inflicting damage on the user, or it might work only once. The device is still considered a level 7 item to create in all other respects. Sometimes the GM will rule that reducing the time is not possible. For example, a single human can't make a chainmail vest in one hour without some kind of machine to help.

Possible crafting skills include:

Armoring

Bowyering/fletching

Chemistry

Computer science

Electronics

Engines

Genetic engineering

Glassblowing

Gunsmithing

Leatherworking

Metalworking

Neural engineering

Weaponsmithing

Woodcrafting

Characters might try to make a cypher, an artifact, or an alien psionic starship do something other than its intended function. Sometimes, the GM will simply declare the task impossible. You can't turn a vial of healing elixir into a two-way communicator. But most of the time, there is a chance of success.

That said, tinkering with weird stuff is not easy. Obviously, the difficulty varies from situation to situation, but difficulties starting at 7 are not unreasonable. The time, tools, and training required would be similar to the time, tools, and training needed to repair a device. If the tinkering results in a long-term benefit for the character—such as creating an artifact that they can use—the GM should require them to spend XP to make it.

(Circumstances really matter. For example, sewing a dress by hand might take five times as long (or more) as using a sewing machine.)

(The GM is free to overrule some attempts at creation, building, or repair, requiring that the character have a certain level of skill, proper tools and materials, and so forth.)

(Obviously, what is considered "weird stuff" will vary from setting to setting, and sometimes the concept might not apply at all. But many times, there will be something in the setting that is too strange, too alien, too powerful, or too dangerous for PCs to mess around with (or at least mess around with easily). Einstein may

have been extraordinary, but that doesn't mean he could reverse-engineer a teleporter made in another dimension.)

Crafting Difficulty and Time

Difficulty	Craft	General Time to Build
0	Something extremely simple like tying a rope or finding an appropriately sized rock	A few minutes at most
1	Torch	Five minutes
2	Spear, simple shelter, piece of furniture	One hour
3	Bow, door, basic article of clothing	One day
4	Sword, chainmail vest	One to two days
5	Common technological item (electric light), nice piece of jewelry or art object	One week
6	Technological item (watch, transmitter), really nice piece of jewelry or art object, elegant craftwork	One month
7	Technological item (computer), major work of art	One year
8	Technological item (something from beyond Earth)	Many years
9	Technological item (something from beyond Earth)	Many years
10	Technological item (something from beyond Earth)	Many years

GUARDING

In a combat situation, a character can stand guard as their action. They do not make attacks, but all their defense tasks are eased. Further, if an NPC tries to get by them or take an action that they are guarding against, the character can attempt an eased Speed action based on the level of the NPC. Success means the NPC is prevented from taking the action; the NPC's action that turn is wasted. This is useful for blocking a doorway, guarding a friend, and so forth.

If an NPC is standing guard, use the same procedure, but to get past the guard, the PC attempts a hindered Speed action against the NPC. For example, Diana is an NPC human with a level 3 bodyguard. The bodyguard uses their action to guard Diana. If a PC wants to attack Diana, the PC first must succeed at a difficulty 4 Speed task to get past the guard. If the PC succeeds, they can make their attack normally.

HEALING

You can administer aid through bandaging and other succor, attempting to heal each patient once per day. This healing restores points to a stat Pool of your choice. Decide how many points you want to heal, and then

make an Intellect action with a difficulty equal to that number. For example, if you want to heal someone for 3 points, that's a difficulty 3 task with a target number of 9.

INTERACTING WITH CREATURES

The level of the creature determines the target number, just as with combat. Thus, bribing a guard works much like punching them or affecting them with an ability. This is true of persuading someone, intimidating someone, calming a wild beast, or anything of the kind. Interaction is an Intellect task. Interacting usually requires a common language or some other way to communicate. Learning new languages is the same as learning a new skill.

JUMPING

Decide how far you want to jump, and that sets the difficulty of your Might roll. For a standing jump, subtract 4 from the distance in feet to determine the difficulty of the jump. For example, jumping 10 feet (3 m) has a difficulty of 6.

If you run an immediate distance before jumping, it counts as an asset, easing the jump.

If you run a short distance before jumping, divide the jump distance (in feet) by 2 and then subtract 4 to determine the difficulty of the jump. Because you're running an immediate distance (and then some), you also count your running as an asset. For example, jumping a distance of 20 feet (6 m) with a short running start has a difficulty of 5 (20 feet divided by 2 is 10, minus 4 is 6, minus 1 for running an immediate distance).

For a vertical jump, the distance you clear (in feet) is equal to the difficulty of the jumping task. If you run an immediate distance, it counts as an asset, easing the jump.

(There's nothing wrong with the GM simply assigning a difficulty level to a jump without worrying about the precise distance. The rules here are just so everyone has some guidelines.)

LOOKING OR LISTENING

Generally, the GM will describe any sight or sound that's not purposefully difficult to detect. But if you want to look for a hidden enemy, search for a secret panel, or listen for someone sneaking up on you, make an Intellect roll. If it's a creature, its level determines the difficulty of your roll. If it's something else, the GM determines the difficulty of your roll.

MOVING A HEAVY OBJECT

You can push or pull something very heavy and move it an immediate distance as your action.

The weight of the object determines the difficulty of the Might roll to move it; every 50 pounds (23 kg) hinders the task by one step. So moving something that weighs 150 pounds (68 kg) is difficulty 3, and moving something that weighs 400 pounds (180 kg) is difficulty 8. If you can ease the task to 0, you can move a heavy object up to a short distance as your action.

OPERATING OR DISABLING A DEVICE, OR PICKING A LOCK

As with figuring out a device, the level of the device usually determines the difficulty of the Intellect roll. Unless a device is very complex, the GM will often rule that once you figure it out, no roll is needed to operate it except under special circumstances. So if the PCs figure out how to use a hovercraft, they can operate it. If they are attacked, they might need to roll to ensure that they don't crash the vehicle into a wall while trying to avoid being hit.

Unlike operating a device, disabling a device or picking a lock usually require rolls. These actions often involve special tools and assume that the character is not trying to destroy the device or lock. (A PC who *is* attempting to destroy it probably should make a Might roll to smash it rather than a Speed or Intellect roll requiring patience and know-how.)

RIDING OR PILOTING

If you're riding an animal that's trained to be a mount, or driving or piloting a vehicle, you don't need to make a roll to do something routine such as going from point A to point B (just as you wouldn't need to make a roll to walk there). However, staying mounted during a fight or doing something tricky with a vehicle requires a Speed roll to succeed. A saddle or other appropriate gear is an asset and eases the task.

RIDING OR PILOTING Difficulty

Difficulty	Maneuver
0	Riding
1	Staying on the mount (including a motorcycle or similar vehicle) in a battle or other difficult situation
3	Staying on a mount (including a motorcycle or similar vehicle) when you take damage
4	Mounting a moving steed
4	Making an abrupt turn with a vehicle while moving fast
4	Getting a vehicle to move twice as fast as normal for one round
5	Coaxing a mount to move or jump twice as fast or far as normal for one round
5	Making a long jump with a vehicle not intended to go airborne (like a car) and remaining in control

SNEAKING

The difficulty of sneaking by a creature is determined by its level. Sneaking is a Speed roll. Moving at half speed eases the sneaking task. Appropriate camouflage or other gear may count as an asset and ease the task, as will dim lighting conditions and having plenty of things to hide behind.

SWIMMING

If you're simply swimming from one place to another, such as across a calm river or lake, use the standard movement rules, noting the fact that your character is in deep water. However, sometimes, special circumstances require a Might roll to make progress while swimming, such as when trying to avoid a current or being dragged into a whirlpool.

UNDERSTANDING, IDENTIFYING, OR REMEMBERING

When characters try to identify or figure out how to use a device, the level of the device determines the difficulty. For a bit of knowledge, the GM determines the difficulty.

Difficulty	Knowledge
0	Common knowledge
1	Simple knowledge
3	Something a scholar probably knows
5	Something even a scholar might not know
7	Knowledge very few people possess
10	Completely lost knowledge

VEHICULAR MOVEMENT

Vehicles move just like creatures. Each has a movement rate, which indicates how far it can move in a round. Most vehicles require a driver, and when moving, they usually require that the driver spends every action controlling the movement. This is a routine task that rarely requires a roll. Any round not spent driving the vehicle hinders the task in the next round and precludes any change in speed or direction. In other words, driving down the road normally is difficulty 0. Spending an action to retrieve a backpack from the back seat means that in the following round, the driver must attempt a difficulty 1 task. If they instead use their action to pull a handgun from the backpack, in the next round the difficulty to drive will be 2, and so on. Failure results are based on the situation but might involve a collision or something similar.

In a vehicular chase, drivers attempt Speed actions just like in a regular chase, but the task may be based either on the level of the driver (modified by the level and movement rate of the vehicle) or on the level of the vehicle (modified by the level of the driver). So if a PC driving a typical car is chasing a level 3 NPC driving a level 5 sports car, the PC would make three chase rolls with a difficulty of 5. If the PC's car is a souped-up custom vehicle, it might grant the PC an asset in the chase. If the PC is not in a car at all, but riding a bicycle, it might hinder the chase rolls by two or three steps, or the GM might simply rule that it's impossible.

VEHICULAR COMBAT

Much of the time, a fight between foes in cars, boats, or other vehicles is just like any other combat situation. The combatants probably have cover and are moving fast. Attacks to disable a vehicle or a portion of it are based on the level of the vehicle. If the vehicle is an armored car or a tank, all attacks are likely aimed at the vehicle, which has a level and probably an appropriate Armor rating, not unlike a creature.

The only time this isn't true is with battles where only vehicles and not characters are involved. Thus, if the PCs are in a shootout with bank robbers and both groups are in cars, use the standard rules. However, battles between starships of various kinds—from gigantic capital ships to single-pilot fighters—are a frequent occurrence in far-future science fiction settings. A submarine battle between two deep sea craft could be quite exciting. Characters in a modern-day game might find themselves in a tank fight. If PCs are involved in combat in

which they are entirely enclosed in vehicles (so that it's not really the characters fighting, but the vehicles), use the following quick and easy guidelines.

On this scale, combat between vehicles isn't like traditional combat. Don't worry about health, Armor, or anything like that. Instead, just compare the levels of the vehicles involved. If the PCs' vehicle has the higher level, the difference in levels is how many steps the PCs' attack and defense rolls are eased. If the PCs' vehicle has the lower level, their rolls are hindered. If the levels are the same, there is no modification.

These attack and defense rolls are modified by skill and Effort, as usual. Some vehicles also have superior weapons, which ease the attack (since there is no "damage" amount to worry about), but this circumstance is probably uncommon in this abstract system and should not affect the difficulty by more than one or maybe two steps. Further, if two vehicles coordinate their attack against one vehicle, the attack is eased. If three or more vehicles coordinate, the attack is eased by two steps.

The attacker must try to target a specific system on or portion of an enemy vehicle. This hinders the attack based on the system or portion targeted.

That's a lot of modifications. But it's not really that hard. Let's look at an example of a space battle. A PC in a small level 2 fighter attacks a level 4 frigate. Since the frigate is level 4, the difficulty of the attack starts at 4. But the attacking craft is weaker than the defender, so the attack is hindered equal to the difference in their levels (2). The fighter pilot must make a difficulty 6 attack on the frigate. However, the fighter is trying to swoop in and damage the frigate's drive, which hinders the attack by another three steps, for a total difficulty of 9. If the fighter pilot is trained in space combat, they reduce the difficulty to 8, but it's still impossible without help. So let's say that two other PCs—also in level 2 fighters—join in and coordinate their attack. Three ships coordinating an attack on one target eases the task by two steps, resulting in a final difficulty of 6. Still, the attacking PC would be wise to use Effort.

Then the frigate retaliates, and the PC needs to make a defense roll. The level difference between the ships (2) means the PC's defense is hindered by two steps, so the difficulty of the PC's defense roll starts out at 6. But the frigate tries to take out the fighter's weapons, hindering their attack (easing the PC's defense) by two steps. Thus, the PC needs to succeed at a difficulty 4 task or lose their main weapons systems.

It's important to remember that a failed attack doesn't always mean a miss. The target ship might rock and reel from the hit, but the bulk of the damage was absorbed by the shields, so there's no significant damage.

This bare-bones system should allow the GM and players to flesh out exciting encounters involving the whole group. For example, perhaps while one PC pilots a ship, another mans the guns, and another frantically attempts to repair damage to the maneuvering thrusters before they crash into the space station they're trying to defend.

(During a vehicular battle, particularly a space battle, there's a lot of chatter about shields failing, hull integrity, being outmaneuvered, coming in too fast, and whatnot. These sorts of details are great, but they're all flavor, so they're represented in the rules generally, rather than specifically.)

(For more details about vehicles, refer to the Genre chapter.)

(Training in driving makes the character practiced in using a vehicle as a weapon. If the vehicle is used to run over a victim or ram an enemy vehicle, treat a motorcycle as a medium weapon and treat a car or truck as a heavy weapon.)

Targeting Task	Attack Hindered	Effect

Disable weapons	Two steps	One or more of the vehicle's weapons no longer function
Disable defenses (if applicable)	Two steps	Attacks against the vehicle are eased
Disable engine/drive	Three steps	Vehicle cannot move, or movement is hampered
Disable maneuverability	Two steps	Vehicle cannot alter its present course
Strike power core or vital spot	Five steps	Vehicle is completely destroyed

MAGICAL RULES MODULE

CRAFTING MAGIC ITEMS

Potions, scrolls, and other one-use items are cyphers, and longer-lasting items are generally artifacts.

CRAFTING CYPHERS

1. Choose Cypher Level. Creating a low-level cypher is easier than creating a high-level one. The character decides what level of cypher they're trying to create, which must be in the level range for the cypher as listed in the Cypher System Reference Document. Note that some cyphers have the same effect no matter what level they are, so the character could make crafting easier by creating the lowest-level version of that cypher, but the GM is always able to rule that a particular cypher must be crafted at a certain level or higher for it to work. In particular, a stim is very strong for its level range, and should always be treated as a level 6 cypher when crafted by a PC.

2. Determine Materials. Just as crafting an axe requires iron and wood, crafting a magical cypher requires strange and exotic materials—powdered gems, ink from monsters, mysterious herbs, and so on. The level of the cypher determines how expensive these materials are, according to the following table.

Cypher Level	Materials Cost
1	One inexpensive item
2	Two inexpensive items

3	One moderate item
4	Two moderate items
5	Three moderate items
6	One expensive item
7	Two expensive items
8	Three expensive items
9	One very expensive item
10	Two very expensive items

3. Assess Difficulty. The difficulty of a magic item crafting task is always equal to $1 + \text{the level of the cypher}$. The crafter can reduce the assessed difficulty of a crafting task with skill training (such as being trained or specialized in brewing potions or scribing scrolls), assets, special abilities provided by their focus or type, and so on. Using a formula, recipe, or other guideline for a specific cypher counts as an asset for this purpose. Because this is an activity requiring special knowledge, it is not possible for a character with no skill (or with an inability in this skill) to do this sort of crafting; the character cannot attempt the task at all.

4. Determine Time to Craft. The amount of time it takes to craft a magical cypher is determined by the assessed difficulty, so decreasing the assessed difficulty not only means the character is more likely to succeed, but also that they have to spend less time on crafting it. See the table below.

For any time in excess of nine hours, the process is assumed to have stages where the character is not actively working on it, just checking on it occasionally to make sure everything is going as planned—allowing the base ingredients of a potion to cook for a few hours, stirring to make sure the ingredients don't congeal, allowing ink on a scroll to dry, and so on. In other words, the character is able to perform other actions in the vicinity of the crafting (such as studying, resting, eating, and so on), but couldn't craft on the road or in the middle of a dungeon.

Assessed Difficulty	Time to Craft
1	Ten minutes
2	One hour
3	Four hours
4	Nine hours

5	One day
6	Two days
7	One week
8	Three weeks
9	Two months
10	Six months

5. Complete Subtasks. The crafting character must complete multiple subtasks that are steps toward finishing the process. The number of subtasks required is equal to the assessed difficulty of the crafting task attempted. So a crafting task assessed as difficulty 5 requires five subtask successes.

The difficulty of each individual subtask begins at 1 and increases by one step for each remaining subtask, until the crafter succeeds on the final, highest-difficulty subtask. Generally, subtask attempts occur at equally divided intervals over the course of the full time required to craft the item.

If at any point the crafter fails on a subtask, the item isn't ruined. Instead, the character only wasted the time spent on that subtask, and can spend that much time again and then try to succeed at that same subtask. If the crafter fails twice in a row on the same subtask, the character can continue crafting, but in addition to losing another interval of crafting time, more crafting material (equal to one of the kind of item needed to craft it) is destroyed in a mishap and must be replaced before crafting can continue.

A player may ask to apply Effort to each subtask. Applying Effort is something they do in the moment, not over the course of days or weeks. Generally speaking, Effort cannot be applied to any crafting task or subtask that exceeds one day

CRAFTING ARTIFACTS

Crafting an artifact is similar to choosing a new type or focus ability—the character has many to choose from, they select the one that best fits their intention, and thereafter they can use the artifact much like they'd use any of their other character abilities. The main difference is that most artifacts don't cost Pool points to activate, and character abilities don't have a depletion stat that eventually removes the item from play.

Crafting artifacts is handled as a long-term benefit of character advancement; the character and GM agree on the artifact to be crafted, and the character spends 3 XP. If the item is fairly simple, the GM can skip the crafting details and just say that after a period of time, the PC creates the artifact. For an item that significantly alters gameplay—granting the character vast telepathic powers or giving them the ability to teleport at will—the GM can give the item an assessed difficulty equal to $3 + \text{the artifact level}$ and require the character to follow the crafting steps for creating a magical cypher. Crafting this kind of artifact takes up to five times as many materials and up to twenty times as long as crafting a cypher of the same assessed difficulty

RITUAL MAGIC

TIME

Ritual magic has two aspects related to time: how long it takes to prepare the ritual, and how long it takes to perform it. The preparation time is how long it takes to get ready to perform the ritual. The performance time is how long the ritual takes from start to finish, once the preparations (if any) are complete.

DIFFICULTY AND SUBTASKS

Completing a ritual has an overall difficulty level, usually equal to the level of the challenge. Sometimes there isn't a clear idea of what level the challenge should be—teleporting a group of people to a nearby city and raising a person from the dead don't have an obvious task level. In these cases, the GM should choose a level for the ritual based on what would make an interesting experience for the players. Instead of having the success or failure of this sort of magic come down to one roll, ritual magic lets the GM build tension by requiring the players to make rolls for multiple subtasks. The subtasks start at difficulty 1, and the subtask difficulty increases by 1 each time until the players make a final roll at the highest difficulty. A ritual with an overall difficulty of 4 has four subtasks, with the first one at difficulty 1, the second at difficulty 2, the third at 3, and the last one at 4.

If at any point the PC fails a subtask, the ritual isn't automatically ruined, but it costs time—a failure means the time spent on that subtask was wasted, but the character can spend that much time again and try to succeed at that same subtask. The GM may decide that later attempts at that subtask are hindered, or that a certain number of failures during the ritual (perhaps equal to half the ritual's overall level) means the whole thing needs to be started again. Skills, assets, and other special abilities can ease subtasks just like they do with any other task (which might make some of the subtasks routine and not require a roll at all). Characters may apply Effort to each subtask.

POOL INVESTMENT

Some rituals might require the PCs to spend points from their Pools on each subtask, with Might representing blood or vitality, Speed representing energy, and Intellect representing will or sanity. Multiple PCs involved in the ritual could collectively contribute to this cost (and if a ritual costs many points, spreading out the cost in this way may be necessary to prevent a participating PC from dying during the ritual).

ACCELERATED PERFORMANCE

The GM may allow a character to speed up a ritual, reducing the time required for one or more subtasks. Generally, reducing a subtask's time by half should hinder the subtask, and reducing it by half again (reducing the time needed to a quarter of the normal amount) should hinder the subtask by an additional step (two steps total). The minimum amount of time for a subtask is 1 round (unless the subtask is routine, in which case the GM may allow it to take no time at all).

EXAMPLE RITUALS

The following are examples of common magical rituals suitable for many fantasy settings. Specific details of a ritual may vary depending on what the characters are trying to accomplish; for example, a ritual to ask a demon for a favor might be similar to one used to ask an angel, but the exact details are probably very different. Everything listed in a ritual is merely a suggestion, and the GM should alter, add, or remove whatever they like to suit their campaign.

UNDERSTANDING THE EXAMPLES

Each ritual is described in the following format.

Level: The overall level of the ritual, which determines how many subtasks it has.

Time: The preparation time (if any) and performance time.

Roles: Things other characters can do to participate and help.

Side Effects: Negative consequences for failed rolls or GM intrusions.

Reagents: Resources that can help success.

Pool: What kind of Pool points the ritual costs.

Other Assets: Kinds of abilities that can help success.

BESEECH

Call upon a powerful supernatural entity such as a deity, archangel, demon lord, or ancient elemental to ask for a favor that the entity can and is likely to do (nothing it would ethically oppose). If the ritual is successful, the entity makes its attention known, such as by manifesting as a light, noise, or visible spirit. It may ask for more information, for a task or favor in return, or for a service to be named later. The entity is not compelled to do the favor; the ritual merely gains its attention and gives the characters the opportunity to speak their case.

Level: The level of the entity

Time: Four hours of preparation, one hour of performance

Roles: Chanting, lighting candles, holding gifts/reagents

Side Effects: Curse, hallucination, prerequisite quest (a challenge or task the characters must perform before the entity will consider answering)

Reagents: Scroll giving the history of and important details about the entity, offerings of gratitude or appeasement

Pool: Might or Intellect

Other Assets: Knowledge or control of similar entities

Beseech only draws the entity's attention; the various Conjure rituals bring the summoned entity bodily to the ritual space to talk in person.

CONJURE THE DEAD

Summons the spirit of a dead person or creature (commonly called a "ghost"), which appears in the summoning circle prepared for the ritual. The spirit remains there for about a minute, during which time the summoners can interrogate them or persuade them to share information. The spirit usually wants something in return (such as messages conveyed to the living or unfulfilled tasks completed). If the characters don't comply, they must magically threaten or compel the spirit to obey.

Level: The level of the dead spirit

Time: Three hours of preparation, one hour of performance

Roles: Chanting, holding hands in a circle, manipulating a spirit device

Side Effects: Haunting, possession

Reagents: Mementos of the spirit's life, the spirit's former physical remains, a person or creature to possess

Pool: Might or Intellect

Other Assets: Knowledge or control of similar entities, religious or cultural connections, secret name of the spirit

A ghost remembers much of its life, including whether it knows, likes, or hates the people summoning it, and will act accordingly.

CONJURE DEMON

Summons a demon (an evil supernatural creature from another dimension, plane, or realm) to command or convince it to perform a task. The demon is primitive and bestial, not a creature of great wits and charm. The demon remains there for about a minute, during which time the summoners must bargain with or command it to perform a deed that takes no longer than an hour and requires it to travel no more than about 50 miles (80 km)—spying, murder, and destruction of property are common tasks. Usually the demon has to be threatened or magically coerced into obeying. If the summoners fail to get it to comply, it makes one attack against them and then returns to wherever it came from (and probably bears a grudge for the unwanted summoning).

Level: The level of the demon

Time: Three hours of preparation, one hour of performance

Roles: Bloodletting, chanting, lighting candles, holding gifts/reagents, tracing the summoning circle

Side Effects: Aggression, bad smell, curse, equipment damage or theft, possession

Reagents: Blood; meat; magical inks or paints for a summoning circle; contracts; a person to possess; objects representing anger, destruction, or hatred (according to the desired service)

Pool: Might or Intellect

Other Assets: Knowledge or control of similar entities, secret name of the demon

CONJURE DEVIL

Summons a devil (an evil supernatural creature from another dimension, plane, or realm) to command or convince it to perform a task. The devil remains there for about a minute, during which time the summoners must bargain with or command it to perform a deed that takes no longer than an hour and requires the devil to travel no more than about 50 miles (80 km)—spying, stealing, guarding, and murdering are common tasks. The devil usually wants something in return (even if just an agreement for a later favor); otherwise, the characters must threaten it or have some way to force it to obey. If the characters fail to strike a bargain, the devil returns to wherever it came from (and probably is annoyed at the interruption).

Level: The level of the devil

Time: Three hours of preparation, one hour of performance

Roles: Bloodletting, chanting, lighting candles, holding gifts/reagents, tracing the summoning circle

Side Effects: Bad smell, curse, infernal mark, possession

Reagents: Blood; magical inks or paints for a summoning circle; contracts; a person to possess; objects representing betrayal, deception, or greed (according to the desired service)

Pool: Might or Intellect

Other Assets: Knowledge or control of similar entities, secret name of the devil

CONJURE ELEMENTAL

Summons a primordial elemental spirit of air, earth, fire, or water, which appears in a physical form. The elemental remains for about a minute, during which time the characters must attempt to bribe, threaten, or bargain with it. An elemental is usually summoned to do something that takes no longer than an hour and requires it to travel no more than about 50 miles (80 km)—attack, guard, and scout are common tasks. The elemental typically wants something in return for its service, usually a gift or bribe appropriate to its nature—incense for air, gems for earth, oil for fire, salts for water, and so on. If the summoners can't come to an agreement with the elemental, it might make one attack before it leaves.

Level: The level of the elemental

Time: Three hours of preparation, one hour of performance

Roles: Chanting, music, using ceremonial objects, holding gifts/reagents, tracing the summoning circle

Side Effects: Damage, weakness toward one kind of attack

Reagents: Gifts (black powder, gems, ice, incense, oil, salt, soil, water, wood), destroying opposing items or creatures

Pool: Might, Speed, or Intellect, depending on the kind of elemental

Other Assets: Elemental power, knowledge or control of similar entities, nature magic, secret name of the elemental

Elementals are simple creatures whose interests and attentions are focused on themselves and their element. Flattery and playing up their strengths are the key to bargaining with them.

CONSECRATION

Wards a location against evil influences and unwanted magic for a year and a day. The ritual affects an area up to a very long distance across. Evil creatures and magical effects of less than the ritual's level can't enter the area or use abilities against it. If the PCs are warded out of the designated area, they must make an Intellect defense roll to enter it (and another each minute while within the area, or retreat) and all their actions inside or targeted within the area are hindered by two steps.

Level: The level of the effects to protect against

Time: One hour of preparation, two hours of performance

Roles: Drawing lines and symbols along the border, chanting, calling out local features (with candles, runestones, or other suitable markers)

Side Effects: Lights, sounds, weak spots or "back doors" in the barrier

Reagents: Silver dust, sacred oil, buried blessed gemstones

Pool: Intellect

Other Assets: Warding magic, religious knowledge

ENCHANT WEAPON

Enchants a light, medium, or heavy weapon with magical power, granting an asset on attack rolls with the weapon for the next day.

Level: 3 or 4

Time: Thirty minutes of preparation, one hour of performance

Roles: —

Side Effects: Weapon attack hindered, higher GM intrusion rate

Reagents: Rare oils, gem dust

Pool: Speed or Intellect

Other Assets: Battle tactics, weapon crafting

In a high-magic campaign, a higher-level version of the Enchant Weapon ritual might grant a second asset on attack rolls, grant extra damage, affect multiple weapons at once, or all of the above.

ENTOMBMENT

Imprisons a creature in a vessel (usually a valuable box, clay pot, or other closeable container, but it might be a gem, the heart of a tree, or another atypical object) for as long as the vessel remains closed and undamaged. The ritual forces the creature into the vessel, either in a spiritual form or by shrinking it to a size that will fit within the vessel.

Level: The level of the creature

Time: Sixteen hours of preparation, one hour of performance

Roles: Chanting, carrying or protecting the vessel

Side Effects: Bystander imprisoned with the target, containment has a flaw, target lashes out

Reagents: Vessel, symbolic bindings (chains, ropes, shackles, and so on), anathema objects

Pool: Intellect

Other Assets: Control magic, grappling, imprisoning magic, wards

EXORCISM

Drives out unwanted spirits (ghosts, demons, or something else) from an area up to a long distance across. Once cast out, the spirits cannot return for a year and a day (although most of them decide to move on long before that time comes). Completing the ritual doesn't prevent other spirits from entering or inhabiting the area, but it is likely that they can sense that an exorcism happened there, and most choose to avoid such an area so they don't suffer the same fate. The ritual can also be used to cast out spirits from a possessed creature, preventing those spirits from returning for a year and a day. As with using the ritual to cleanse a location, this doesn't prevent other spirits from afflicting the creature, but later spirits can sense the recent exorcism and prefer to avoid that creature.

Level: The level of the most powerful hostile presence to be exorcised

Time: Two hours of preparation, two hours of performance

Roles: Chanting, positive emotions, presenting holy objects, restraining afflicted individuals, tracing the area with incense

Side Effects: Lights, sounds, hideous physical transformations, injuries, telekinesis

Reagents: Bindings, candles, holy water, religious icons and books, scapegoats

Pool: Intellect

Other Assets: Warding magic, religious knowledge

Using an exorcism ritual on an area is mainly for getting rid of spirits afflicting the area in ways other than possessing a creature— throwing objects, causing nightmares, making noises, and so on.

FLESH FOR KNOWLEDGE

Sacrifices some of the ritualist's flesh, inflicting Might and Speed damage equal to the level of the ritual and permanently reducing the character's Pools by 4 points (the character can divide this loss between Might and Speed as they see fit). The character experiences painful hallucinations that give them insight and understanding. They immediately learn one type or focus ability available to them (any ability they could learn by spending 4 XP as an advancement).

Level: Twice the tier of the ability the character wishes to learn

Time: One hour of preparation, one hour of performance

Roles: Chanting, restraining the subject of the ritual

Side Effects: Lasting damage, permanent damage, scarring

Reagents: Silver knife, silver vessel

Pool: See above

Other Assets: Pain tolerance, surgery

Instead of permanently reducing a character's Pools by 4 points, the GM could allow other permanent penalties such as reducing an Edge stat by 1 (to a minimum of 0), gaining an inability in a useful skill, or permanently reducing all points gained through recovery rolls by 2.

PURIFICATION

Rids a creature of an ongoing affliction, such as a disease or poison, or any unwanted magical effect, such as a curse or charm spell. In some versions of this ritual, whatever is ailing the creature gets forced into a nearby specified creature or object, which is then discarded or safely destroyed.

Level: The level of the affliction or effect to remove

Time: One hour of preparation, two hours of performance

Roles: Applying reagents, chanting

Side Effects: Affliction or effect spreads to another creature, target moves a step down the damage track

Reagents: Anointing oils, healing herbs, objects repellent to the source of the affliction, magical paint for writing on the target, scapegoat, silver dust

Pool: Might

Other Assets: Healing magic, resistance to the target's affliction

RESURRECTION

Restores a dead being to life. The creature is restored to full health and is ready to act as soon as the ritual is completed. Depending on how they died and the nature of death in the setting, the creature may or may not remember anything that happened after they died.

Level: The level of the deceased (at least tier 6 if a PC)

Time: Five hours of preparation, two hours of performance

Roles: Applying reagents, chanting, prayers, shielding the corpse from hostile entities

Side Effects: Creature moves a step down the damage track, enmity of a death god, lasting damage, scarring, sympathetic damage

Reagents: Deceased's corpse, healing ointment, items of emotional significance (such as devotion, hope, or regret), items of importance to the deceased, parchment extolling the deceased's history and deeds, soul-sympathetic items

Pool: Might or Intellect

Other Assets: Close relationship with the deceased (such as a connection or family relation), healing magic, necromancy, spirit knowledge, secret name of the deceased

A lesser version of the Resurrection ritual might bring the creature back to life, but only to the debilitated or impaired state on the damage track instead of hale, requiring further rest or healing.

SACRIFICIAL RITE

A creature is ritually killed and its soul is placed in an object. The soul object might be a temporary destination so the soul can be transported and used elsewhere (such as an offering to a demon or as part of a spell), or it might be the final destination for the soul (such as placing it in a sword to create a magic item).

Level: The level of the creature (at least tier 6 if a PC)

Time: One hour of preparation, one hour of performance **Roles:** Chanting, playing instruments, bearing the soul object, restraining the creature, slaying the creature

Side Effects: Creature rages or escapes, damage, dying curse, haunting

Reagents: Bindings, creature to be sacrificed, drum, flute, silver knife, soul object (its level must be at least as high as the creature's level)

Pool: Might or Intellect

Other Assets: Death spells, instant-kill abilities, soul manipulation

MAGICAL TECHNOLOGY

To craft items of magical technology in a setting where they are commonplace, use the standard rules for crafting regular (nonmagical) items.

MAGIC PLUS TECHNOLOGY

Whatever technology exists in the setting could be magically enhanced if magic is also present. Such items would almost certainly be manifest cyphers or artifacts. Here's an example cypher:

FROZEN TIMEPIECE

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Creates or transforms into a pocket watch that seems to be made of ice. Upon activation of the cypher, the user can take normal actions, but everything and everyone around them is frozen in time. The user cannot affect anything else, but they can move through the world and take actions that affect themselves or their own belongings (bandage a wound, repair a broken item, and so on). The effect lasts for one round per cypher level.

And here's an example artifact:

TRUTH BINOCULARS

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Pair of binoculars with a large runic symbol on them

Effect: Not only do these make it easy to see things far away, but looking through them also allows the viewer to see through illusions and see things that are normally invisible, assuming the effect has a level lower than that of the binoculars.

Depletion: 1–2 in 1d100 (check each use)

To craft items that are both technological and magical, either you need to make the device first and then enchant it, or you need to enchant it as it is made. Either way, the skills for making the device and for making it magical are likely very different.

TECHNOLOGY THAT INTERACTS WITH MAGIC

In a world with scientists and engineers faced with the presence of real magic, some of them would develop ways to interact and cope with it. Technological devices that are not magical but deal with magic could include:

Magic detector (expensive): This simple white badge glows purple in the presence of magic. Once it detects something magical, it does not function again.

Mystical hazard suit (very expensive): This full-body protective suit is cumbersome and clumsy, not unlike a hazmat suit. However, all of the wearer's tasks to resist magical effects are eased. If the wearer takes even 1 point of physical damage, the suit rips and no longer functions until it is repaired and resealed.

Spellsrambler (very expensive): Essentially a sonic grenade, this device produces a variety of strange electromagnetic signals—some audible and very loud, some not—on a number of frequencies. The mental processes needed to cast a spell are impossible to achieve for one round within a short distance of the device. Like any grenade, it can be used only once.

MAGIC THAT INTERACTS WITH TECHNOLOGY

In a world where magic and technology coexist, wizards will have spells and effects that protect them from shotgun blasts as well as sword blades, and radiation as well as fire or frost. Consider, for example, these effects as cyphers:

FINDING PRYING EYES

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: Magically discovers if anything is watching or listening to the user right at that moment, and reveals the source. Electronic surveillance devices, long-range scopes, hidden cameras, and magical scrying attempts all trigger this effect. In all these cases, the “source” is the nearest representation. So a hidden microphone is revealed, but not the location of the listener.

POWER DEVICE

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Magically powers one device that can fit within an area a short distance across. The device is now fully powered, charged, or fueled. If the cypher is used on an automobile, for example, the gas tank is full. If used on a flashlight, the battery is fully charged.

SCREEN CONTROL

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: A technological screen (a television, computer monitor, smartphone, or the like) within short range shows whatever the user wishes for up to one minute per cypher level. The display can be pictures, text, or meaningless shapes and colors.

Because magic works on intuitive rather than scientific levels, mages could have spells that disrupt technology, even though the technology involved might not have any common principles

MIND CONTROL

From a rules perspective, mind control is fairly straightforward: one creature decides what actions another creature takes (perhaps limited in that the controlled creature won't take actions that harm them or go against their nature, such as attacking friends). But what's happening inside the controlled creature's head—whether during the effect or afterward—often isn't specified. There are several options for the GM to consider, either for all kinds of mind-control magic or on a case-by-case basis.

Confusion: The controlled creature doesn't understand why they're doing things they normally wouldn't do, but they aren't aware of any outside influence on their thoughts and actions. Once the control is over, the creature may admit that they don't know why they did those things, or come up with an explanation justifying (to themselves and others) their reasons for those actions.

Dream: The controlled creature is aware of what's going on but perceives it in a dreamlike state. They may believe that they're in control of themselves the entire time, or somewhat aware that they're not fully in control (similar to being intoxicated by drugs or alcohol or disoriented by an illness). Afterward, the creature might feel strange about the events but may not realize that someone else was controlling them.

Trapped: The active thoughts in the controlled creature's head come from the controller, but the creature still has a small voice or awareness in the background, like they're a prisoner in their own mind. This horrible situation usually means the controlled creature reverts to normal once the control is gone, and is probably very upset that their mind and body autonomy were violated.

One way to present mind control more safely is to disallow certain actions but otherwise leave the character in control. For example, being charmed by a vampire might mean the PC can't attack the vampire (or its allies) or run away, but is still able to call for help, heal themselves, leave at a normal pace, and take other actions. Alternatively, the character can be given a specific command, and until they comply with that command their other actions are hindered by one or more steps. If the player is willing to engage with the parameters of the mind control, the GM may award them an additional 1 XP (or, to approach it from the opposite direction, the GM can offer them a GM intrusion that the mind control is happening, and allow the player to spend 1 XP to refuse it, or go into XP debt if they want to refuse it but have no XP to spend).

A rule for any game: don't use mind control (or anything) to make a character have sex without the player's permission. For more information and guidelines about consent in RPGs, read the free Consent in Gaming PDF at myMCG.info/consent

MYSTICAL MARTIAL ARTS

If the setting calls for wuxia-style fantasy martial arts or similar types of action, you can make a few rule changes to portray the kinds of things characters in such stories can accomplish.

Running and climbing speeds and jumping distances are doubled. For those trained in running, climbing, or jumping, the speeds and distances are tripled instead of doubled. For those specialized, they are quintupled. For all intents and purposes, this means that everyone can run up a wall or jump very high in the air, and masters can practically fly or run across water.

Everyone knows kung fu. Unless a person is a simple farmer, herder, or merchant, they know how to fight with elaborate and powerful martial arts styles. This doesn't change anything in the game mechanically—no one gets the ability to use weapons that they wouldn't normally have under the rules. But it does change the flavor, suggesting that no PC is entirely ignorant of weapons or close combat.

Players are encouraged to come up with interesting names for their martial arts abilities. Instead of using a Bash attack, perhaps it is "The Three-Flower Fist," and instead of Fury, a character uses "The Rage of the Sevenfold." It is reasonable for high-tier martial abilities such as Amazing Effort, Jump Attack, or Finishing Blow to be described with a magical flare—blazing auras of fire, brilliant cascades of light, ethereal figures overlaying the character, and so on.

Materials and objects are easier to destroy. For the purpose of attacking objects, subtract 2 from the level of any material (minimum of 0). It should be relatively simple for any character to smash through a plain wooden door with little effort, and true warriors can shatter stones with their blows.

Wounds heal faster. Everyone gains +1 to all recovery rolls.

Superhuman abilities exist. Consider adopting some of the superhero rules from the Cypher System Reference Document, in particular the power shift optional rules. These may derive from almost supernatural levels of training in various techniques (such as dianxue) but probably mostly from neili.

Dianxue: The touch of death—killing by using precise nonlethal force on key points of the body. Neili: Internal force—building up and cultivating the energy known as qi and using it for supernatural effects.

POSSESSION

Some creatures (demons, ghosts, entities of living mental energy, and so on) have the ability to possess a living person, taking over a character's body as if it were the creature's own. The creature must touch the character to attempt possession (even if the creature's touch normally inflicts damage, the possession attempt doesn't inflict damage). The character must make an Intellect defense roll or become possessed, whereupon the creature's immaterial form disappears into the character.

The first round in which a character is possessed, they can act normally. In the second and all subsequent rounds, the possessing creature can try to control the actions of the host, but the character can attempt an Intellect defense roll to resist each suggested action. Successful resistance means that the character does nothing for one round. When the creature isn't trying to control the host, the character can act as they choose. Usually, a possessing creature's actions are limited to controlling its host and leaving the host (the creature's own abilities are unavailable to it while in someone else's body).

While it possesses a character, the creature is immune to most direct attacks (though not so the host; killing the host will eject the creature). For example, hitting a demon-possessed human with a sword hurts only the human, not the demon controlling them. Mental attacks and special abilities that only affect possession or the type of possessing creature usually work normally.

A possessed character is allowed an Intellect defense roll to eject the creature once per day. The defense roll is hindered by one additional step each day of possession after the first seven days. An ejected, cast-out, or exorcised demon is powerless for one or more days. One way to exorcise a demon is to command it out in the name of an entity that has power over the demon. This can be attempted once per day and grants the possessed character an additional Intellect defense roll to eject the demon.

Possession is like mind control in that it takes away a player's ability to control their character, and that can make some players very uncomfortable. See the section on mind control and consent for more information (page 67).

SECRET AND TRUE NAMES

Learning a creature's true name comes with a subtle and instinctive awareness and understanding of that creature, including its strengths and weaknesses. In general, this eases all tasks related to that creature (including attacks, defenses, and interactions) by two steps. In some cases, confronting a creature with knowledge of its true name might be enough to convince it to perform a service without compensation. A creature doesn't automatically know if someone has learned its true name (although there is magic that can reveal this knowledge), but they can usually figure out that an informed opponent has some kind of advantage against them and deduce that their secret name is involved.

Learning a true name is difficult and takes time. A character wanting to discover a creature's true name might choose the Uncover a Secret character arc to do so.

WISHES

Unless the GM's intention is to make the players regret that their characters were offered a wish, it's best to give them what they ask for, as much as it is within the power of the creature to do so. If the GM wants to twist the wish, do so as a GM intrusion—that way, the character still gets a reward, and they can either accept the twisted wish (which isn't as good as they had hoped) or pay 1 XP to reject the intrusion (which represents them coming up with airtight wording that can't be twisted).

Second, consider the level of the creature granting the wish—that's basically the level of the wish, as the creature shouldn't be able to grant a boon more powerful than itself. Therefore, it's reasonable that a level 6 creature could create a level 6 effect. The GM could look at the creature's other abilities (or abilities of

other creatures of its level), decide if what the PC is asking for is within its power, and either grant the requested wish or adjust the result downward until it's appropriate for the creature's power.

Wishing for more wishes doesn't work because a creature shouldn't be able to create something more powerful than itself—at least not without some investment of time and other resources, like a character using XP to acquire an artifact.

FANTASY RULES MODULE

AWARDING TREASURE

It's best to think of gold and magic as two different kinds of currencies that characters have access to.

GOLD

The Cypher System abstracts item costs into general categories— inexpensive, moderate, expensive, and so on. Starting characters generally have access to only a few inexpensive and moderate items and perhaps one or two expensive items. In a typical fantasy campaign, the characters should become wealthier as they advance.

MANIFEST CYPHERS

The expectation is that PCs will use cyphers often because they'll have many opportunities to get more; if the players can exploit this mechanic by selling off most of their cyphers in town, they're abusing the rules to make gold. The GM might be tempted to discourage this behavior by reducing how often the PCs gain new cyphers, but that goes against the premise of cyphers in the game: they should be common enough that the PCs use them freely instead of hoarding them. The key to addressing this selling-cyphers wealth problem is to make it harder to sell or trade cyphers for gold.

The PCs can have opportunities to trade their cyphers with NPCs in town, whether that's at a magic item shop, the tower of a mentor wizard, a thieves' guild, a temple, other adventurers, or the local government. The kinds of cyphers these NPCs can offer may be limited in theme (such as a benevolent church that makes healing potions and trades them for other useful cyphers) or quantity (such as having only one or two cyphers available each month). Two cyphers of the same level are generally considered to be about the same value, although local biases and NPC interests may affect their willingness to trade certain items despite or because of a level disparity.

ARTIFACTS

Artifacts are the high end of magical currency, and in terms of buying and selling them, they're like manifest cyphers: not something a typical NPC can use, and beyond what a typical NPC can afford, but they could be traded for a different artifact of about the same level. Unlike cyphers, the game doesn't assume that PCs have frequent opportunities to gain new artifacts or replace the ones that deplete.

In a pinch, an artifact is worth the equivalent of one or two very expensive items or one exorbitant item, depending on what the artifact can do. An artifact that grants an asset to one kind of roll is probably worth about as much as a very expensive item, one that adds +1 Armor might be worth two expensive items, and a strong defensive or offensive artifact could be worth about the same as an exorbitant item.

DUNGEONS, CASTLES, AND KEEPS

This section describes several kinds of common physical features and their game stats. Any of these levels can be adjusted up or down by the GM—a wall made from soft wood can have a lower level than a typical wall, stone can be reinforced by magic so its level is higher, and so on.

WALLS

Walls are generally either constructed (intentionally built by a creature) or natural (already existing without any work by a creature). Anything describing walls in this section also applies to ceilings and floors.

Paper wall (level 1): This thin wall only blocks sight. Creatures can attack through a paper wall as if attacking blindly (hindered by four steps), but it's usually easier to break a hole in the wall and attack through the hole. Paper walls are vulnerable to piercing and slashing weapons (attacks are eased). A gauzy curtain is equivalent to a paper wall, and a cloth wall is probably level 2.

Wooden wall (level 4): This is a typical wall for an average wooden house. The walls of a decrepit shack or a partition within a dungeon might be only level 2 or 3, but the exterior palisade wall of a fort or a log cabin might be level 5. Wooden walls are vulnerable to fire (attacks with fire are eased) but resistant to bashing and piercing weapons (attacks are hindered).

Stone wall (level 6): Constructed stone walls are bricks or masonry (fitted stones), with or without mortar to hold them in place, or hewn stone (dug into existing natural rock). Natural stone walls are usually unworked stone (like a cave wall or cliff face, which tend to be uneven) but might have areas where creatures smoothed or modified them to suit their needs for a living space. Some constructed stone walls are reinforced with metal bars on the surface or built inside, increasing its level to 7. Stone walls are vulnerable to piercing weapons (attacks are eased) but resistant to bashing and slashing weapons (attacks are hindered).

Iron wall (level 7): These expensive walls are usually reserved for protecting something important, like a vault.

DOORS

Doors are access points for encounters and (if trapped or infested with dangerous creatures) can be encounters all on their own. In most cases, trying to break through a door involves damaging its latch or hinges rather than destroying the main portion of the door (trying to destroy the door instead of the latch and hinges is a hindered task).

Simple wooden door (level 2): This is a fragile door meant to close off an interior space for privacy rather than to keep out a determined intruder. Instead of a single piece of wood, a simple wooden door is usually made of multiple planks nailed together on a frame or with support struts. Wooden doors of all strengths are vulnerable to fire (attacks with fire are eased) but resistant to bashing and piercing weapons (attacks are hindered).

Good wooden door (level 3): This is a stronger door meant to provide some security, such as for a typical house or shop.

Strong wooden door (level 4): This is a heavy door reinforced with wood or metal to make it difficult to break. An especially strong wooden door, such as the main entrance to a fort or castle, is probably level 5.

Stone door (level 5): These heavy doors are usually carved from a solid block of stone and designed to pivot on a center point. They are common in places like dungeons where wood and metal are scarce. Stone doors are vulnerable to piercing weapons (attacks are eased) but resistant to bashing and slashing weapons (attacks are hindered).

Iron door (level 6): A solid iron door is meant to protect something very valuable or vulnerable, such as a vault or a king's tomb. In a damp environment like a dungeon, they tend to rust and stick in place.

Wooden portcullis (level 3): The gaps in a portcullis present more defense opportunities than a door, such as allowing archers to fire at the creatures trapped by it. They're also useful in closing access to a waterway without impacting its flow. A wooden portcullis is relatively fragile and usually isn't meant to keep anyone out for long.

Iron portcullis (level 6): Much sturdier than wood, an iron portcullis is meant to keep creatures in place as long as necessary. Often the best way to get past a portcullis is to lift it instead of breaking it, but some are designed to lock in place to prevent this. A door to a prison cell is essentially a type of iron portcullis.

TRAPS

One common element of fantasy exploration—particularly for castles and dungeons—is the danger of traps.

TRIGGERING TRAPS

Mechanical traps have a triggering mechanism—something set up to react when an unauthorized creature is in the area. Magical traps have triggers that are usually based on proximity—if a creature enters the area the trap is “watching,” it activates.

FINDING TRAPS

Most characters won’t notice traps unless actively looking for them; they don’t know a trap is in the area until their presence, movement, or action triggers it. Characters can passively or actively search for traps if they suspect such dangers are present.

Passive searching for traps means one character (usually in the front of the group) is carefully checking the area before moving forward. This means the group moves at about half normal speed, but they get to make a search roll for any traps the GM has in their path. Allowing characters to passively search in this way means the players don’t have to keep stating over and over that they’re looking for traps. The drawback for them is that it takes them more time to get anywhere (which means time-based special abilities and cyphers will run out sooner).

Active searching is used when the characters worry or suspect that there is a trap in the area and want to find it. Active searching takes about one round for each immediate area searched. Rather than having the players make separate rolls for each immediate area, the GM should have them make one roll for the entire room; if successful, they find the trap, and if they fail, they don’t find it. If there is a second trap, the GM can have them make another roll after they’ve resolved the first trap.

DISABLING, DAMAGING, AND BYPASSING TRAPS

A character can attempt to disable a trap so it’s no longer able to activate or harm anyone. Normally this task has the same difficulty as the trap’s level, but some traps are rickety and easy to disable, while others are carefully crafted and much harder to disable. Traps are objects and use the object damage track. Characters can attack a trap with weapons or special abilities to damage or destroy it. Some traps may be vulnerable to certain attacks or unusual means of sabotage (such as hammering a piton into a groove where a blade springs out). Magical traps can be damaged or disabled with special abilities.

Instead of disabling a trap, a character can try to bypass it so they and their allies can get past it without triggering it but still leave it as a danger to anyone else who passes through the area. The task to bypass a trap is hindered by two steps

Failing an attempt to disable, bypass, or sabotage a trap means it activates. Usually the trap’s target is the acting character, and the trap’s attack is eased because the character placed themselves in harm’s way.

Unless a character has the ability to manipulate magic, it’s very difficult to bypass a magical trap (the attempt is hindered by two additional steps).

UNDERSTANDING THE LISTINGS

The rest of the chapter presents a large number of traps with game stats. Every trap is presented by name, followed by a standard template that includes the following categories. If an entry doesn’t apply to a particular trap, it is omitted from the listing.

Level: Like the difficulty of a task, each trap has a level. You use the level to determine the target number a PC must reach to find, evade, or disable the trap. In each entry, the difficulty number for the trap is listed after its level (always three times the trap's level).

Description: This general description explains what the trap does, how it operates, whether it resets automatically, if it has a limited number of uses, and so on.

Damage Inflicted: Generally, when a trap hits a creature, it inflicts its level in damage regardless of the form of attack (arrow, poison, collapsing ceiling, and so on). The entries always specify the amount of damage inflicted, even if it's the normal amount for a trap of its level.

Modifications: Use these numbers when a trap's information says to use a different target number. For example, a level 4 trap might say "defends as level 5," which means PCs attacking it or trying to disable it must roll a target number of 15 (for difficulty 5) instead of 12 (for difficulty 4). Typical modifiers are to the trap's attacks, defenses, and stealth (how hard or easy it is to notice the trap).

GM Intrusion: This entry suggests one or more ways to use GM intrusions in an encounter with the trap. It's just one possible idea of many, and the GM is encouraged to come up with their own uses of the game mechanic.

COMMON TRAP POISONS

Blindness: The poison blinds the creature if they fail a defense roll. Typical durations are one minute, ten minutes, and one hour.

Choking: The poison makes the creature choke and cough if they fail a defense roll. Typical durations are one minute, ten minutes, and one hour. Severe versions of choking poison might make a creature start to suffocate.

Damage Track: The poison moves the creature down one step on the damage track if they fail a defense roll.

Debilitating: The poison hinders all of the creature's actions by one or two steps if they fail a defense roll. (Some poisons may affect only certain kinds of actions, such as Speed defense rolls or Might-based tasks.) Typical durations are ten minutes, one hour, and ten hours.

Instant Damage: The poison inflicts damage (Might, Speed, or Intellect) one time if the creature fails a defense roll.

Ongoing Damage: The poison inflicts damage (Might, Speed, or Intellect) immediately. When a certain amount of time has passed (such as every round or every minute), it inflicts damage again if the creature fails its defense roll. The ongoing damage usually ends on its own (such as after five additional rounds of damage) or after the creature makes a defense roll against it. Usually the ongoing damage is a much smaller amount than the initial damage, such as 1 point every round.

Paralysis: The poison prevents the creature from taking any physical actions if they fail a defense roll (this might leave them standing in place like a statue, or make them go limp and collapse to the floor). Typical durations are ten minutes, one hour, and ten hours.

Sleep: The poison knocks the creature unconscious if they fail a defense roll. Typical durations are ten minutes, one hour, and ten hours. The poison might also make the creature groggy, hindering all actions for an additional amount of time equal to how long the unconsciousness would have lasted (for example, knocking out a creature for an hour and then making them groggy for an hour, even if they're awakened early).

ARROW 4 (12)

Fires an arrow or crossbow bolt. The simplest one-use trap of this kind is an actual crossbow (perhaps hidden behind a hole in a wall or door) rigged with a tripwire to pull the trigger; a creature would need to manually reset this trap for it to be a danger again. More complex traps might automatically reload from a supply of

bolts so the trap can be triggered multiple times, or fire automatically once triggered until the ammunition is expended. A variant of this trap releases a volley of arrows into the targeted area, affecting multiple creatures or the same creature more than once.

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Modifications: Defense and stealth as level 6 (if hidden behind a hole in the wall)

GM Intrusion: The arrow is barbed, and removing it inflicts 3 points of damage. The arrow is attached to a string, cord, or wire, with the other end tied to something dangerous like a falling block or an electrical shock.

CRUSHING WALL 6 (18)

A section of a wall falls over onto the targeted character. This is usually a one-use trap (although a similar trap could be built in its place).

A variant of this trap is a deadfall, where something heavy (such as a log, huge stone block, or cart full of rocks) falls from a higher position onto the character. Sometimes the falling block is made to exactly fit a trapped corridor so that triggering the trap makes the area impassible.

A less lethal variant drops a large amount of sand or dirt, inflicting 3 points of ambient damage (ignores Armor). Another variant releases oil (perhaps burning) or marbles, inflicting 3 points of ambient damage and making the area difficult terrain.

Damage Inflicted: 6 points (ignores Armor)

GM Intrusion: The fallen wall blocks access to an exit. The wall debris buries the character, who is trapped until they can dig free. Another trap, hazard, or threat is behind the fallen wall (such as arrow traps or a room full of zombies) and can now reach the characters.

DISINTEGRATION 7 (21)

A magical ray of eerie energy blasts the character, disrupting their physical matter. Any creature killed by the ray (or any object destroyed by it) turns to dust.

Damage Inflicted: 15 points

GM Intrusion: In addition to inflicting damage, the ray moves the character one step down the damage track. Part of the ray splits or ricochets off the character and strikes a second creature, inflicting 10 points of damage.

EXPLOSIVE GLYPH 4 (12)

A magical rune activates when touched or passed over, exploding in an immediate or short area. Typical glyphs inflict acid, cold, electricity, or fire damage, but more unusual versions include ones that inflict holy, shadow, thorn, unholy, or stranger types of magical energy damage. A nonmagical variant of this trap sprays a mist of acid, a jet of electrified salt water, or a gout of burning oil.

Damage Inflicted: 4 points of energy damage (ignores Armor); all creatures in the area take 1 point of damage even if they make their defense roll.

Modifications: Stealth as level 5

GM Intrusion: The glyph marks the character's face with a symbol indicating they are a thief. The glyph makes the character run away in fear for one minute. The character is cursed, and all of their actions are hindered until the curse is removed.

FLOODING ROOM 4 (12)

Exits to the room close off and the area starts to fill with water. Within a few minutes, the entire room is flooded and creatures in it begin to drown.

A variant of this room reduces the air pressure (either by pumping it out through tiny holes or by retracting the floor or ceiling). As the air gets thinner, characters are hindered by one, two, or three steps before falling unconscious and starting to suffocate. (Restoring the air allows the characters to awaken, but doesn't move them back up the damage track.)

Damage Inflicted: None until drowning starts

Modifications: Defends as level 7

GM Intrusion: Hostile creatures such as piranhas or electric eels are in the water and attack all creatures. The room fills with water faster than expected because the floor and/or ceiling are also moving toward each other.

MANGLER 3 (9)

A small hole in the wall extends sharp blades or weights when a creature reaches into it, mangling their hand and hindering all actions requiring that hand by one or two steps.

A floor variant is a small trapdoor over a closed compartment, which mangles the character's foot when they step on the trapdoor, reducing their movement speed by half.

Another variant is a needle trap attached to a small peephole or spyhole in a door or wall. The trap springs when the character touches the area around the hole (even a slight touch with their face as they look is sufficient), inflicting lasting damage to the character's eye and partially blinding them. A gentler variant traps the character's limb in glue instead of inflicting damage. The character's extremity might be glued to the hole, or they may be able to pull free but have a glue pot stuck on their hand or foot.

Damage Inflicted: 3 points, plus lasting damage

Modifications: Stealth as level 4

GM Intrusion: The trap has hooks, holding the character in place and inflicting damage when they try to escape if they fail a Speed defense roll. The glue attracts a swarm of fire ants or wasps. The glue is also a slow-acting acid or poison.

NET 3 (9)

A net suspended above the character drops and constricts (and perhaps lifts the character off the ground). Large net traps can affect multiple creatures at once. This kind of trap usually requires a creature to manually reset it.

A variant of this trap is a snare made of sturdy cord or wire.

Damage Inflicted: Entanglement (trapped character cannot move until they use an action to make a Might or Speed defense roll to break or escape the net)

Modifications: Attacks as level 5, defends as level 2

GM Intrusion: The net is barbed, inflicting 1 point of damage each round that the trapped character tries to move. The net is the nesting place for biting insects, which swarm and attack the trapped character and all nearby creatures each round.

PIT 4 (12)

A trapdoor in the floor opens, dropping the triggering character into a pit. Larger versions of this trap can catch multiple characters at once. The trap can be reset by moving the trapdoor back into its closed position. In outdoor areas, this trap is more likely to be a pit covered in leafy branches (or a tarp) and camouflaged by soil and other debris.

A variant of this trap is a bridge over a chasm, river, or other dangerous location that is rigged to collapse when enough weight reaches the middle section.

Damage Inflicted: 1 point of ambient damage per 10 feet fallen (ignores Armor)

GM Intrusion: The trapdoor is slippery with oil, hindering attempts to catch the edge and avoid falling. The trapdoor closes after the character falls through, trapping them inside in the darkness. The walls of the pit are greased, hindering attempts to climb out by two steps. A dangerous creature is at the bottom of the pit (or in a room adjacent to it). The pit is filled with poison gas. The trapdoor detaches and falls into the pit, inflicting 1 point of ambient damage per 10 feet it falls. The pit has spikes at the bottom, inflicting an additional 4 points of damage to anyone who falls in.

POISON GAS 3 (9)

The area slowly fills with poison gas. Because it takes a minute or more for the poison to become thick enough to cause harm, it is likely that the character won't realize at first that they've sprung a trap.

A variant of this trap fills the room with flammable gas, which explodes if there is an open flame (such as from a torch) or a spark (such as a metal weapon against metal armor), inflicting fire damage equal to the trap's level.

A further variant fills the room with dead air (containing no oxygen), which slowly extinguishes flames and suffocates creatures.

Damage Inflicted: As poison

Modifications: Stealth as level 5

GM Intrusion: The character has an allergic reaction to the gas, which hinders all their actions for an hour after exposure because of sneezing, watery eyes, or itchy skin. The gas makes the character hallucinate, mistaking their companions for enemies, until they make an Intellect defense roll. The gas is flammable.

POISON NEEDLE 5 (15)

A poisoned needle jabs at a character touching the trapped object (usually a lock or treasure chest) or is fired from a mechanism similar to an arrow trap. It may have a reservoir of poison that allows it to attack several times.

Damage Inflicted: 1 point (plus poison)

Modifications: Stealth as level 6

GM Intrusion: The trap releases acid into the lock mechanism, making the trapped object impossible to unlock. The trap releases acid into the container, destroying some of the valuables inside. The trap releases a puff of poison gas instead of a poisoned needle, affecting all nearby characters.

PORTCULLIS 5 (15)

An iron portcullis drops from the ceiling to block access to an area or separate a character from others nearby. If the creature dodging the falling portcullis wants to choose which side of the trap they end up on, the Speed defense roll is hindered. Otherwise, it is even chances what side they end up on.

A variant of this trap is a solid wall. A magical variant is a force field.

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

GM Intrusion: The portcullis impales the character, trapping them beneath it until it is lifted or destroyed. The portcullis is electrified, inflicting 1 point of damage each time it is touched or attacked with flesh or a metal object. A second portcullis drops nearby, trapping a character in a small area. Murder-holes in the ceiling allow enemies to make ranged attacks on the trapped character.

ROLLING BOULDER 6 (12)

A large boulder, wheel, or barrel rolls into the area, crushing anything in its path. Depending on the configuration of the area, the boulder might follow a specific path, ricochet erratically, break open pit traps, or get stuck somewhere.

A variant is a large iron weight on a chain that swings from the ceiling. The weight swings back and forth several times, giving it multiple chances to hit the characters, but decreasing its damage with each swing until it stops and becomes an obstacle.

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Modifications: Defends as level 7

GM Intrusion: The boulder crashes through a door or wall, giving other dangerous creatures access to the character's location. The boulder blocks the way out. The boulder carries a character along with it for some distance. The boulder is hollow and full of burning oil, leaving a fiery trail behind it. The boulder is hollow and contains undead skeletons, which jump out as it moves and attack nearby creatures.

SLICING BLADE 5 (15)

A thin blade slices out from a gap in the wall, floor, or ceiling. The trap might be designed to sweep the entire area (such as the width of a corridor) or leave a tiny safe space just beyond the blade's reach so a creature who knows of the trap can get past it. This kind of trap is usually designed to reset automatically after a minute or has a lever nearby that allows a creature to reset it manually.

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Modifications: Attacks as level 6

GM Intrusion: The blade is a magical weapon with an additional effect, such as inflicting 3 points of fire damage. The blade is rusted and breaks off when it hits the character, inflicting 1 point of damage (ignores Armor) each round after the initial attack until it is healed.

SLIDING STAIR 4 (12)

A stairway or section of stairs unexpectedly turns into a ramp. Anyone who makes a Speed defense roll can catch hold near where they were standing; otherwise, they slide or tumble to the bottom and take damage. This kind of trap usually resets after a minute or has a manual reset lever at the top or bottom of the stairs.

Damage Inflicted: 1 point of ambient damage per 20 feet slid (ignores Armor)

GM Intrusion: The trap releases oil, hindering attempts to climb the ramp or stairs by two steps. Tiny blades stick out between the sections of the ramp, inflicting an additional 3 points of damage. The trap releases a boulder to roll down the stairs after the sliding character, inflicting an additional 3 points of damage.

SNAKE PIT 4 (12)

The trap drops the character into a pit full of snakes or drops a large number of snakes on the character. The snakes immediately attack the character and perhaps others in the area.

Damage Inflicted: As per the swarm of snakes

GM Intrusion: The snake poison is especially potent, moving the character one step down the damage track if they fail a Might defense roll. The snakes constrict the character, hindering their actions until the snakes are defeated.

SPEAR 4 (12)

The trap fires a spear, javelin, or other large projectile. (In many ways, this is a scaled-up and more dangerous version of an arrow trap, and the same suggestions for that trap apply to this one.)

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Modifications: Defense and stealth as level 5 (if hidden behind a hole in a wall)

GM Intrusion: The impact of the spear knocks the character prone. The spear is barbed, and removing it inflicts 3 points of damage. The spear is attached to a string, cord, or wire, with the other end tied to something dangerous like a falling block or an electrical shock

TELEPORTER 6 (18)

The trap magically moves the character to another location within about 1,000 feet (300 m), typically a prison cell, anoubliette, or a very deep pit. It's more efficient to kill an intruder than to teleport them, so teleportation is usually reserved for trapping creatures for interrogation.

Damage Inflicted: None

GM Intrusion: The teleport destination is above the ground, causing the character to fall some distance and take damage (1 point of ambient damage per 10 feet fallen). The destination is dangerous, such as a tiny room lined with spikes, a shark tank, or a boulder in a lava lake.

FOLLOWERS

Player characters have the option to gain followers as they advance in tier, as provided by type or focus special abilities. Followers do not need to be paid, fed, or housed, though a character who gains followers can certainly make such arrangements if they wish. A follower is someone whom a character has inspired (or asked) to come work with the character for a time, aiding them in a variety of endeavors. A follower puts the PC's interests ahead of, or at least on par with, their own.

The PC generally makes rolls for their follower when the follower takes actions, though usually a follower's modifications provide an asset to a specific action taken by the PC they follow.

(If a follower dies, the character gains a new one after at least two weeks and proper recruitment.)

Modifications: A follower can **help** a PC in one or more tasks, granting the PC an asset to that task. The level of the follower indicates the number of different tasks they can help with. The tasks that the follower is able to help with are predetermined, usually chosen by the PC when they gain the follower. A level 2 follower who the player determines is a spy could grant a PC an asset on two different tasks, such as stealth and deception. Followers cannot help with tasks that they don't have modifications for; for the purpose of helping, treat the follower as if they had inabilities in all nonmodified tasks.

When the follower acts autonomously rather than helping the PC, they act like a normal NPC that has **modifications**. Thus, the modification increases their effective level for the associated task by one step. For example, the level 2 spy follower with modifications for stealth and deception attempts stealth and deception tasks as if they were level 3 and all other tasks as level 2.

Follower Assets to Combat and Defense: A follower cannot grant an asset to a character's attacks or defense until the follower is level 3 or higher. Even then, the follower can help with attacks and defense only if they have a modification for that kind of task.

Some abilities may grant a special exception to this rule. For instance, the **Serv-0 Defender** ability gives your level 1 Serv-0 follower (a machine companion) a modification for Speed defense.

Follower Level Progression: A follower increases in level by 1 each time a PC advances two tiers after gaining that follower. When the follower gains a level, the PC also chooses the task that the follower gains a modification for.

Exceptional Follower: When a character gains a follower, there's a small chance that the follower will be exceptional in some way, a cut above other followers of their kind. The GM determines when an exceptional follower is found, possibly as an additional reward for smart or engaging roleplaying where the PCs impress or otherwise positively interact with one or more NPCs, some of whom may later go on to become one of their followers. An exceptional follower has the same qualities as a regular follower but is 1 level higher.

Pet: Any PC can potentially gain a pet, though a pet typically doesn't provide modifications. If a character wants a pet that can do this, they must gain the pet through an ability or focus that grants followers. On the other hand, a well-cared-for pet grants an asset to a PC's tasks related to achieving peace of mind, finding comfort, and resisting loneliness.

BREATHING LIFE INTO FOLLOWERS

The modifications provided by followers could come across as fairly dry and mechanical. To avoid that, you could present each follower in a way that makes them more compelling and interesting. Here are a few examples of how to describe a follower, depending on their mix of modifications.

A firebrand diplomat able to convince an enemy horde to back down.

A veteran commander whose presence bolsters the entire community's military might.

A genius medic who invigorates everyone with their healing techniques.

An imaginative architect whose works both beautify and defend the city.

A tricky spy whose intelligence on enemy movements is invaluable.

Experience Points

Experience points (XP) are the currency by which players gain benefits for their characters. The most common ways to earn XP are through GM intrusions and by accomplishing things the PCs set out to do. Sometimes experience points are earned during a game session, and sometimes they're earned between sessions. In a typical session, a player might earn 2 to 4 XP, and between sessions, perhaps another 2 XP (on average). The exact amounts depend on the events of the session.

GM INTRUSION

At any time, the GM can introduce an unexpected complication for a character. When they intrude in this way, they must give that character 2 XP. That player, in turn, must immediately give one of those XP to another player and justify the gift (perhaps the other player had a good idea, told a joke, or performed an action that saved a life).

Often, the GM intrudes when a player attempts an action that should be an automatic success. However, the GM is free to intrude at other times. As a general rule, the GM should intrude at least once each session, but no more than once or twice each session per character.

Anytime the GM intrudes, the player can spend 1 XP to refuse the intrusion, though that also means they don't get the 2 XP. If the player has no XP to spend, they can't refuse.

If a player rolls a 1 on a die, the GM can intrude without giving the player any XP.

Example 1: Through skill and the aid of another character, a fourth-tier PC eases a wall-climbing task from difficulty 2 to difficulty 0. Normally, they would succeed at the task automatically, but the GM intrudes and says "No, a bit of the crumbling wall gives way, so you still have to make a roll." As with any difficulty 2 task, the target number is 6. The PC attempts the roll as normal and gains 2 XP because the GM intruded. They immediately give one of those XP to another player.

Example 2: During a fight, a PC swings their axe and damages a foe with a slice across the shoulder. The GM intrudes by saying that the foe turned just as the axe struck, wrenching the weapon from the character's grip

and sending it clattering across the floor. The axe comes to a stop 10 feet (3 m) away. Because the GM intruded, the PC gains 2 XP, and the player immediately gives one of those XP to another player. Now the character must deal with the dropped weapon, perhaps drawing a different weapon or using their next turn to scramble after the axe.

(For much more on GM intrusions, see the Running the Cypher System chapter.)

CHARACTER ARCS

Character arcs are the means by which players can invest themselves more in great stories and character depth and development.

Just like in a book or a television show, characters progress through their own personal story and change over time. A PC with a character arc decides for themselves what they do and why. Character arcs are like stated goals for a character, and by progressing toward that goal, the character advances. The key word there is *progressing*. A PC doesn't have to succeed at achieving the goal to earn advancement—it's not an all-or-nothing prospect. Each arc is keyed to a single character, but just like in a book or show, characters can take part in the larger story arc that the whole group participates in, while also progressing in their own personal arc.

Character arcs have different steps that mark the character's progress through the arc. Each arc eventually reaches a climax, and then finishes with a step that is a final resolution. Each step reached earns the character 2 XP. Character arcs are the most straightforward way that a character earns XP. (Typically, PCs will earn about half their total experience points from arcs or other GM awards.)

At character creation, a player can choose one character arc for their PC at no cost. Players have the option to not choose one, but it's probably a good idea to do so. First and foremost, it is a character-defining factor. If they begin the campaign with a desire to find the woman who killed their brother, that says a lot about the character: they had a brother, he was likely close to them, he had been in at least one dangerous situation, and the character is probably motivated by anger and hate, at least somewhat. Even after the character finishes this first arc, they'll undoubtedly have (at least one) more because they can gain new arcs as the campaign progresses.

Once play begins, players can take on a new arc whenever they wish, as fits the character's ongoing story. Taking a new arc has a cost of 1 XP. While there's no hard limit on how many arcs a character can have at one time, realistically most PCs couldn't reasonably have more than three or four.

However, as mentioned above, arcs have a beginning cost that must be paid, reflecting the character's devotion to the goal. The character will earn this investment back (probably many times over) if the arc is completed.

Character arcs are always player-driven. A GM cannot force one on a character. That said, the events in the narrative often present story arc opportunities and inspire character arcs for the PCs. It's certainly in the GM's purview to suggest possible arcs related to the events going on. For example, if the GM presents an encounter in which an NPC wishes to learn from the PC, it might make sense to suggest taking the Instruction arc. Whether or not the PC takes on the student, the player doesn't have to adopt the Instruction arc unless they want to.

At the end of a session, review the actions you took and describe how they might equate to the completion of a step (or possibly more than one step) in their character arc. If the GM agrees, the character gets their reward.

(When in doubt, if one character accomplishes a step in their arc but another character does not, the first character should get the 2 XP reward, but the other character should probably still get, at minimum, 1 XP for the session.)

This chapter presents many sample character arcs (see below).

GM AWARDS

Sometimes, a group will have an adventure that doesn't deal primarily with a PC's character arc. In this case, it's a good idea for the GM to award XP to that character for accomplishing other tasks. First and foremost, awards should be based on discovery. Discovery can include finding a significant new location, such as a hidden chamber, a secret fortress, a lost land, a new planet, or an unexplored dimension. In this fashion, PCs are explorers. Discovery can also include a new significant aspect of a setting, such as a secret organization, a new religion, and so on.

It can also mean finding a new procedure or device (something too big to be considered a piece of equipment) or even previously unknown information. This could include a source of magical power, a unique teleportation device, or the cure for a plague. These are all discoveries. The common thread is that the PCs discover something that they can understand and put to use.

Last, depending on the GM's outlook and the kind of campaign the group wants to play, a discovery could be a secret, an ethical idea, an adage, or even a truth.

(It's a fine line, but ultimately the GM decides what constitutes a discovery as opposed to just something weird in the course of an adventure. Usually, the difference is, did the PCs successfully interact with it and learn something about it? If so, it's probably a discovery.)

Artifacts: When the group gains an artifact, award XP equal to the artifact's level and divide it among the PCs (minimum 1 XP for each character). Round down if necessary. For example, if four PCs discover a level 5 artifact, they each get 1 XP. Money, standard equipment, and cyphers are not worth XP. (Experience point awards for artifacts should usually apply even if the artifact was given to the PCs rather than found, because often such gifts are the rewards for success.)

Miscellaneous Discoveries: Various other discoveries might grant 1 XP to each PC involved.

Other Awards: If a character is focused on activities that don't relate to a character arc or a discovery, as a general rule, a mission should be worth at least 1 XP per game session involved in accomplishing it. For example, saving a family on an isolated farm beset by raiding cultists might be worth 1 XP for each character. Of course, saving the family doesn't always mean killing the bad guys; it might mean relocating them, parlaying with the cultists, or chasing off the raiders.

SPENDING EXPERIENCE POINTS

Experience points are meant to be used. Hoarding them is not a good idea; if a player accumulates more than 10 XP, the GM can require them to spend some.

Generally, experience points can be spent in four ways: immediate benefits, short- and medium-term benefits, long-term benefits, and character advancement.

(Experience points should not be a goal unto themselves. Instead, they are a game mechanic to simulate how—through experience, time, toil, travail, and so on—characters become more skilled, more able, and more powerful. Spending XP to explain a change in a character's capabilities that occurred in the course of the story, such as if the PC made a new device or learned a new skill, isn't a waste of XP—it's what XP are for.)

Immediate Benefits

The most straightforward way for a player to use XP is to reroll any roll in the game—even one that they didn't make. This costs 1 XP per reroll, and the player chooses the best result. They can continue to spend XP on rerolls, but this can quickly become an expensive proposition. It's a fine way to try to prevent disaster, but it's not a good idea to use a lot of XP to reroll a single action over and over.

A player can also spend 1 XP to refuse a GM intrusion.

Short- and Medium-Term Benefits

By spending 2 XP, a character can gain a skill—or, more rarely, an ability—that provides a short-term benefit. Let's say a character notices that the computer terminals in the facility they're infiltrating are similar to those used by the company they once worked for. They spend 2 XP and say that they have a great deal of experience in using these. As a result, they are trained in operating (and breaking into) these computers. This is just like being trained in computer use or hacking, but it applies only to computers found in that particular location. The skill is extremely useful in the facility, but nowhere else.

Medium-term benefits are usually story based. For example, a character can spend 2 XP while climbing through mountains and say that they have experience with climbing in regions like these, or perhaps they spend the XP after they've been in the mountains for a while and say that they've picked up the feel for climbing there. Either way, from now on, they're trained in climbing in those mountains. This helps them now and any time they return to the area, but they're not trained in climbing everywhere.

This method allows a character to get immediate training in a skill for half the normal cost. (Normally, it costs 4 XP to become trained in a skill.) It's also a way to gain a new skill even if the PC has already gained a new skill as a step toward attaining the next tier.

In rare cases, a GM might allow a character to spend 2 XP to gain an entirely new ability—such as a device, a special ability, or a special mental power—for a short time, usually no longer than the course of one scenario. The player and the GM should agree on a story-based explanation for the benefit. Perhaps the ability has a specific rare requirement, such as a tool, a battery, a drug, or some kind of treatment. For example, a character who wants to explore a submerged location has several biotech enhancements, and they spend 2 XP to cobble together a device that lets them breathe underwater. This gives them the ability for a considerable length of time, but not permanently—the device might work for only eight hours. Again, the story and the logic of the situation dictate the parameters.

Long-Term Benefits

In many ways, the long-term benefits a PC can gain by spending XP are a means of integrating the mechanics of the game with the story. Players can codify things that happen to their characters by talking to the GM and spending 3 XP.

Things that a PC can acquire as a long-term benefit can be thought of as being story based, and they allow the player to have some narrative control over the story. In the course of play, a player might decide that their character gains a friend (a contact) or builds a log cabin (a home). Because a player spent XP, however, they should have some agency over what they've gained, and it shouldn't be easily taken away. The player should help come up with the details of the contact or the design of their home.

It's also possible to gain these benefits through events in the story, without spending XP. The new contact comes to the PC and starts the relationship. The new home is granted to them as a reward for service to a powerful or wealthy patron, or maybe the character inherits the home from a relative. However, because these came from the GM and not the player (and no XP were spent), the player has no narrative control over them and the GM makes up the details.

Long-term benefits can include the following.

Contact: The character gains a long-term NPC contact of importance—someone who will help them with information, equipment, or physical tasks. The player and GM should work out the details of the relationship.

Home: The PC acquires a full-time residence. This can be an apartment in a city, a cabin in the wilderness, a base in an ancient complex, or whatever fits the situation. It should be a secure place where the PC can leave their belongings and sleep soundly. Several characters could combine their XP and buy a home together.

Title or job: The PC is granted a position of importance or authority. It might come with responsibilities, prestige, and rewards, or it might be an honorary title.

Wealth: The PC comes into a considerable amount of wealth, whether it's a windfall, an inheritance, or a gift. It might be enough to buy a home or a title, but that's not really the point. The main benefit is that the PC no longer needs to worry about the cost of simple equipment, lodging, food, and so on. This wealth could mean a set amount—perhaps 50,000 dollars (or whatever is appropriate in the setting)—or it could bestow the ability to ignore minor costs, as decided by the player and GM.

(GMs and players should work together to make XP awards and expenditures fit the ongoing story. If a PC stays in a location for two months to learn the inhabitants' unique language, the GM might award the character a few XP, which are then immediately spent to grant them the ability to understand and speak that language.)

Character Advancement

Progressing to the next tier involves four steps. When a PC has spent 4 XP on each of the steps, they advance to the next tier and gain all the type and focus benefits of that tier. The four steps can be purchased in any order, but each can be purchased only once per tier. In other words, a PC must buy all four steps and advance to the next tier before they can buy the same steps again.

Increasing Capabilities: You gain 4 new points to add to your stat Pools. You can allocate the points among your Pools however you wish.

Moving Toward Perfection: You add 1 to your Might Edge, your Speed Edge, or your Intellect Edge (your choice).

Extra Effort: Your Effort score increases by 1.

Skills: Choose one skill other than attacks or defense, such as climbing, jumping, persuading, sneaking, or history. You become trained in that skill. You can also choose to be knowledgeable in a certain area of study, such as history or geology. You can even choose a skill based on your character's special abilities. For example, if your character can make an Intellect roll to blast an enemy with mental force, you can become trained in that ability, easing the task of using it.

If you choose a skill that you are already trained in, you become specialized in that skill, easing the task by two steps instead of one. If you choose a skill that you have an *inability* in, the training and the inability cancel each other out (you aren't eased or hindered in that task). For example, if you have an inability in perception, becoming trained in that cancels out the inability.

(Once you're specialized in a skill, you can't improve your training in that skill further (you can ease a task by up to two steps with training). You can still make that task easier with assets and a few rare abilities that don't count as an asset or training.)

Other Options: Players can also spend 4 XP to purchase other special options. Selecting one of these options counts as purchasing one of the four stages necessary to advance to the next tier. The other three need to be from the other categories. The special options are as follows:

Reduce the cost for wearing armor. This option lowers the Speed penalty for wearing armor by 1.

Add 2 to your recovery rolls.

Select another focus ability available to you at tier 3. (You must be tier 3 or higher to do this. Characters advancing beyond tier 6 can use this option to select their other tier 6 focus ability.)

Select another character ability from your type, such as a tier 2 Warrior selecting Reload or Crushing Blow.

EQUAL ADVANCEMENT

It's worthwhile if all characters advance through the six tiers at about the same rate—an important issue for some players. A good GM can achieve this result by carefully handing out XP rewards, some during play (which will tend to get used immediately) and some after play concludes, especially after completing a major story arc or quest so the GM can hand out 4 XP in one go (which will tend to get used for advancement). Many groups will discover while playing that equal advancement isn't an important issue in the Cypher System, but people should get to play the game the way they want to play it.

TIER ADVANCEMENT IN THE CYPHER SYSTEM

Tiers in the Cypher System aren't entirely like levels in other roleplaying games. In the Cypher System, gaining tiers is not the players' only goal or the only measure of achievement. Starting (first-tier) characters are already competent, and there are only six tiers. Character advancement has a power curve, but it's only steep enough to keep things interesting. In other words, gaining a new tier is cool and fun, but it's not the only path to success or power. If you spend all your XP on immediate, short-term, and medium-term benefits, you will be different from someone who spends their points on long-term benefits, but you will not be "behind" that character.

The general idea is that most characters will spend half their XP on tier advancement and long-term benefits, and the rest on immediate benefits and short- and medium-term benefits (which are used during gameplay). Some groups might decide that XP earned during a game is to be spent on immediate and short- and medium-term benefits (gameplay uses), and XP awarded between sessions for discoveries is to be spent on character advancement (long-term uses).

Ultimately, the idea is to make experience points into tools that the players and the GM can use to shape the story and the characters, not just a bookkeeping hassle.

SAMPLE CHARACTER ARCS

The rest of this chapter presents sample character arcs for PCs. The writeup of each arc describes the parts involved in progressing through the arc:

Opening: This sets the stage for the rest of the arc. It involves some action, although that might just be the PC agreeing to do the task or undertake the mission. It usually has no reward.

Step(s): This is the action required to move toward the climax. In story terms, this is the movement through the bulk of the arc. It's the journey. The rising tension. Although there might be just one step, there might also be many, depending on the story told. Each results in a reward of 2 XP.

Climax: This is the finale—the point at which the PC likely succeeds or fails at what they've set out to do. Not every arc ends with victory. If the character is successful, they earn a reward of 4 XP. If they fail, they still earn a reward of 2 XP. If a character fails the climax, they very likely ignore the resolution.

Resolution: This is the wrap-up or denouement. It's a time for the character to reflect on what happened, tie up any loose ends, and figure out what happens next. When things are more or less resolved, the character earns a

1 XP reward.

Within the arc, most of the time a part is probably optional, depending on the situation—although it's hard to envision most arcs without some kind of opening, climax, or resolution. Steps other than the opening, the climax, and the resolution can be done in any order.

Character arcs should always take at least weeks in game time, and no more than two parts in an arc should be accomplished in a game session (and most of the time, it should be one part, if any). If neither of these two things is true, then it's not really a character arc. You can't, for example, use the Creation arc to guide you through something you can make in an hour or two.

The following are common character arcs that you can choose for your character. If you and the GM want to make a new one, it should be fairly easy after looking through these models.

(This chapter has a selection of sample character arcs, but you can create your own too. The arcs are intentionally broad to encompass many different characters and stories. For example, Revenge is a very simple and straightforward character arc. The player who chooses this arc for their character decides who they want revenge on, and why. It's up to the players and the GM to make the details fit.)

(Some players might not want to use character arcs. The GM, however, can still use them as a benchmark for awarding XP. If the PCs are going off to explore a strange planet, the GM can essentially give them the Explore arc.)

AID A FRIEND

Someone needs your help.

When a PC friend takes a character arc, you can select this arc to help them with whatever their arc is (if appropriate). The steps and climax depend entirely on their chosen arc. If the friend is an NPC, the steps and climax are lifted from another arc appropriate to whatever they seek to do.

It's difficult, but possible, to aid a friend with an arc even if that friend is unwilling to accept (or is ignorant of) your help.

The cost and rewards for a character with this arc are the same as those described in the original character arc.

Opening: Answering the Call. Offering to help (or responding to a request for help).

Step(s) and Climax: Depends on the friend's arc. Rewards are the same for you as for the friend.

Resolution: You speak with your friend and learn if they are satisfied. Together, you share what you've learned (if anything) and where you will go from here.

ASSIST AN ORGANIZATION

You set out to accomplish something that will further an organization. You're probably allied with them or they are rewarding you for your help in some fashion.

Opening: Responding to the Call. You work out all the details of what's expected of you, and what rewards (if any) you might get. You also get the specifics of what's required to join and advance.

Step: Sizing up the Task. This requires some action. A reconnaissance mission. An investigation.

Step(s): Undertaking the Task. Because this arc can vary so widely based on the task involved, there might be multiple steps like this one.

Climax: Completing the Task.

Resolution: Collecting your reward (if any) and conferring with the people in the organization that you spoke to. Perhaps getting access to higher-ranking people in the organization. You can choose to have your connection to the organization increase rather than take the standard reward.

AVENGE

Someone close to you or important to you in some way has been wronged. The most overt version of this arc would be to avenge someone's death. Avenging is different than revenge, as revenge is personal—you are the wronged party. But in the Avenge character arc, you are avenging a wrong done to someone else.

Opening: Declaration. You publicly declare that you are going to avenge the victim(s). This is optional.

Step(s): Tracking the Guilty. You track down the guilty party. This might not be physically finding them if you already know where they are. Instead, it might be discovering a way to get at them if they are distant, difficult to reach, or well protected. This step might be repeated multiple times, if applicable.

Step: Finding the Guilty. You finally find the guilty party, or find a path or make a plan to reach them. Now all that's left is to confront them.

Climax: Confrontation. You confront the guilty party. This might be a public accusation and demonstration of guilt, a trial, or an attack to kill, wound, or apprehend them—whatever you choose to be appropriate.

Resolution: You resolve the outcome and the ramifications of the confrontation and decide what to do next.

BIRTH

You are becoming a parent.

The Birth character arc assumes you already have a partner or a surrogate. If you want your character to find a romantic partner or spouse, you can use the Romance arc. And of course, nonhuman characters might reproduce in other ways.

This arc is usually followed by the Raise a Child arc.

Opening: Impregnation.

Step: Finding a Caretaker. This might be a physician, midwife, doula, or similar person. This is optional.

Step: Complication. A complication arises that threatens the pregnancy, the birth parent, or both.

Step: Preparation. You prepare a place for the delivery as well as a safe place for the infant to live once born.

Climax: Delivery. The baby is born. Success means the child survives.

Resolution: You get the baby to the place you have prepared and settle in, deciding what to do next.

BUILD

You are going to build a physical structure—a house, a fortress, a workshop, a defensive wall, and so on. This arc would also cover renovating an existing structure or substantially adding to one. Of course, this doesn't have to be physical construction. You might build something with spells or other supernatural abilities.

Opening: Make a Plan. This almost certainly involves literally drawing up blueprints or plans.

Step(s): Find a Site. This might be extremely straightforward—a simple examination of the site—or it might be an entire exploratory adventure. (If the latter, it might involve multiple such steps.)

Step(s): Gather Materials. Depending on what you are building and what it is made out of, this could involve multiple steps. There probably are substantial costs involved as well.

Step(s): Construction. Depending on what you are building, this could involve multiple steps. It might also take a considerable amount of time and work.

Climax: Completion. The structure is finished.

Resolution: You put the structure to its desired use and see if it holds up.

CLEANSE

Someone or something has been contaminated, probably by evil spirits, radiation, a deadly virus, foul magic, or the like, and you want to rid them of such influences or contaminants. This could also be a curse, a possession, an infestation, or something else.

Opening: Analyzing the Threat. You determine the nature of the contamination.

Step: Find the Solution. Almost every contamination has its own particular solution, and this likely involves research and consultation.

Step: Getting Ready. The solution probably involves materials, spells, or other things that you must gather and prepare.

Climax: The Cleansing. You confront the contamination.

Resolution: You reflect on the events that have transpired and what effects they might have on the future. How can you keep this from happening again?

CREATION

You want to make something. This might be a magic item, a painting, a novel, or a machine.

Opening: Make a Plan. You figure out what you need, what you're going to do, and how you're going to do it.

Step(s): Gather Materials. Depending on what you are creating and what it is made out of, this could involve multiple steps. There probably are substantial costs involved as well.

Step(s): Progress. Depending on what you are creating, this could involve multiple steps. It might also take a considerable amount of time and work.

Climax: Completion. It's finished! Is it what you wanted? Does it work?

Resolution: You think about what you have learned from the process and use or enjoy the fruits of your labor.

DEFEAT A FOE

Someone stands in your way or is threatening you. You must overcome the challenge they represent. Defeat doesn't always mean kill or even fight. Defeating a foe could mean beating them in a chess match or in competition for a desired mentor.

Opening: Sizing up the Competition. This requires some action. A reconnaissance mission. An investigation.

Step: Investigation. This requires some action. A reconnaissance mission. An investigation.

Step(s): Diving In. You travel toward your opponent, overcome their lackeys, or take steps to reach them so you can confront them. This step can take many forms, and there might be more than one such step. This step is always active.

Climax: Confrontation. The contest, challenge, fight, or confrontation occurs.

Resolution: You reflect on what you've learned and what the consequences of your actions might be.

DEFENSE

A person, place, or thing is threatened, and you want to protect it.

Opening: Analyze the Situation. What are you defending, and what threats are involved?

Step: Account for Your Resources. How are you going to defend?

Step(s): Fend Off Danger. The forces threatening what you are protecting probably make an initial threat that you'll have to defeat. It's not the main threat, though. There might be multiple such initial threats.

Climax: Protect. The true threat reveals itself and you confront it.

Resolution: A time for reflection on everything that occurred, and an assessment of the person, place, or thing's safety going forward.

DEVELOP A BOND

You want to get closer to another character. This might be to make a friend, find a mentor, or establish a contact in a position of power. It might be to turn a friend into a much closer friend. The character might be an NPC or a PC.

Opening: Getting to Know You. You learn what you can about the other character.

Step: Initial Attempt. You attempt to make contact. This might involve sending messages or gifts through a courier, using an intermediary, or just going up and saying hello, depending on the situation.

Step(s): Building a Relationship. There might be many such steps as you develop the relationship.

Climax: Bond. You succeed or fail at forging the bond.

Resolution: You enjoy the fruits of your new relationship.

ENTERPRISE

You want to create and run a business or start an organization. Maybe you're a craftsperson who wants to sell your creations. Maybe you like baking and you want to start a catering service. Or maybe you want to start a secret society or found a school to teach young mutants how to use their powers. You'll almost certainly have to make new connections, find (and somehow pay for) a location, and deal with all manner of administrative duties.

Opening: Drawing up a Plan. What's your goal, and how are you going to achieve it?

Step: Account for Your Resources. How much financing does the enterprise need compared to what you've got? If you need more, how will you get it? How many people other than yourself are needed to begin, and how many will you need to sustain things once they are up and running?

Step: Finding a Location. You probably need a place to run your enterprise—a store, a workshop, a base of operations, and so on. You find a location and look into what it will take to buy or rent it.

Step(s): Building the Enterprise. You procure the needed equipment or personnel. You make the connections and deals to get things started. You obtain important permits or other legal documents. You test new products. You actually start the business. Each of these developments (and likely others) can be counted as a separate step, so there will be many steps.

Climax: Profit and Loss. You determine whether your enterprise will take off and carry on into the future, or fall apart before it gets a chance to blossom. This occurs in a single dramatic moment—your first major client, your organization's first big meeting or mission, or whatever else is appropriate.

Resolution: A time for reflection on everything that occurred, and how you're going to move forward.

ESTABLISHMENT

You want to prove yourself as someone of importance. This can take many forms—socially, within your order, financially, or even romantically.

Opening: Assessment. You assess yourself as well as who you need to prove yourself to.

Step(s): Appearances Matter. You improve your look. Enhance your wardrobe. Spruce up your house. Whatever it takes to get attention from the right people. There might be many such steps.

Step(s): Self-Aggrandizement. You need to get the word out to get people talking about you. There might be many such steps.

Climax: Grabbing Attention. You do something big, like host a party for influential people or produce a play that you wrote. You make a big splash or a big crash.

Resolution: You reflect on what you did and where you go from here.

EXPLORE

Something out there is unknown and you want to explore its secrets. This is most likely an area of wilderness, a new planet, an otherworldly dimension, or something similar.

Opening: Make a Plan. Not only do you draw up a plan for your exploration, but if appropriate, you also make a formal declaration to relevant parties of what you're going to do.

Step(s): Gather Resources. You get the supplies, vehicles, and help you need. Depending on where you are going and what is required, this could involve multiple steps. There probably are substantial costs involved as well.

Step(s): Travel. You go where you wish to explore. There might be many such steps, depending on how long it takes to get there.

Step(s): Exploration. This is the meat of the arc, but it's probably a series of small moves and minor victories. There might be many such steps.

Climax: Conquest. You make the big discovery or truly master the area. You might not have explored every inch of the place, but if you are successful, you can claim to be done.

Resolution: You return home and possibly share your findings.

FALL FROM GRACE

This is an odd character arc in that it's (presumably) not something that a character would want. It is something that a player selects on a meta level for the character because it makes for an interesting story. It also sets up the potential for future arcs, such as Redemption. It's important that this involve actions you take. For example, you fall into substance abuse. You treat people badly. You make mistakes that endanger others. In other words, the fall isn't orchestrated by someone else—it's all your own doing.

Opening: The Descent. Things go bad.

Step(s): Further Descent. Things get worse. Depending on the situation, this might involve many steps.

Step: Lashing Out. You treat others poorly as you descend.

Climax: Rock Bottom. There is no chance for success here. Only failure.

Resolution: You wallow in your own misery.

FINISH A GREAT WORK

Something that was begun in the past must now be completed. This might involve destroying an evil artifact, finishing the construction of a monument, developing the final steps of a cure for a disease, or uncovering a lost temple forgotten to the ages.

Opening: Assessing the Past. You look at what has come before and where it still needs to go. This almost certainly involves some real research.

Step: Conceive a Plan. You make a plan on how to move forward.

Step(s): Progress. You make significant progress or overcome a barrier to completion. This may involve multiple such steps.

Climax: Completion. This involves the big finish to the past work.

Resolution: You reflect on what you did and where you go from here.

GROWTH

Willingly or unwillingly, you are going to change. This is another meta arc. It's less about a goal and more about character development. While it's possible that the growth involved is intentional, in most people's lives and stories, it is emergent. A character might become less selfish, braver, a better leader, or experience some other form of growth.

Opening: The Beginning. Change usually begins slowly, in a small, almost imperceptible way.

Step(s): Change. Growth involves many small steps.

Step: Overcoming an Obstacle. The temptation to resort to your old ways is always present.

Climax: Self-Evident Change. This is a dramatic about-face. This is the moment where you do something the "old you" would never have done, and it has a profound effect on you and those around you. With either success or failure, growth is possible.

Resolution: You recognize the change in yourself and move forward.

INSTRUCTION

You teach a pupil. You have knowledge on a topic and are willing to share. This can be a skill, an area of lore, a combat style, or the use of a special ability. This is usually a fairly long-term arc. Sometimes teaching a pupil is a side matter, and sometimes the pupil takes on more of an apprentice role and spends a great deal of time with you, traveling with you and perhaps even living in your house (or you living in theirs).

Opening: Taking on the Student.

Step: Getting to Know Them. You assess your pupil's strengths and weaknesses and try to get an idea of what they need to learn and how you can teach it to them.

Step(s): The Lessons. Teaching is often a slow, gradual process.

Step: Breakdown. Many times, a student needs to have a moment of crisis to really learn something. Maybe they get dejected, or maybe they rebel against your teaching techniques.

Climax: Graduation. This is when you recognize that the pupil has learned what they need. It usually comes at a dramatic moment.

Resolution: You and the pupil say your goodbyes, and you look toward the future.

JOIN AN ORGANIZATION

You want to join an organization. This might be a military organization, a corporation, a secret society, a religion, or something else.

Opening: Getting the Details. You learn all you can about the organization and how one becomes a member.

Step(s): Making a Contact. Friends on the inside are always important.

Step(s): Performing a Deed. The organization might want to test your worth, or this might be a ceremony you must take part in. It might include paying some sort of dues or fee. Or all of these things.

Climax: Proving Your Worth. This is the point at which you attempt to show the organization that they would be better off with you as a member.

Resolution: You consider your efforts and assess what your membership gets you.

JUSTICE

You try to right a wrong or bring a wrongdoer to justice.

Opening: Declaration. You publicly declare that you are going to bring justice in this situation. This is optional.

Step(s): Tracking the Guilty. You track down the guilty party, assuming there is one. This might not be physically finding them if you already know where they are. Instead, it might be discovering a way to get at them if they are distant, difficult to reach, or well protected. This step might be repeated multiple times, if applicable.

Step: Helping the Victim. Righting a wrong does not always involve confronting a wrongdoer. Part of it might be about helping those who were wronged.

Climax: Confrontation. You confront the guilty party. This might be a public accusation and demonstration of guilt, a trial, or an attack to kill, wound, or apprehend them—whatever you choose to be appropriate.

Resolution: You resolve the outcome and ramifications of the confrontation and decide what to do next.

LEARN

You want to learn something. This isn't the same as the Uncover a Secret arc, in which you're looking for a bit of information. This is a skill or whole area of knowledge you want to gain proficiency with. This is learning a new language, how to play an instrument, or how to be a good cook. Thus, it's not about gaining a level or rank in climbing, but learning to be an experienced mountaineer.

Opening: Focusing on the Problem.

Step: Finding a Teacher or a Way to Teach Yourself. Now you can truly begin.

Step(s): Learn. Depending on what you're learning, this could involve one step or quite a few.

Climax: The Test. You put your new knowledge to the test in a real situation.

Resolution: You relax a bit and decide what to do next.

MASTER A SKILL

You're skilled, but you want to become the best. This arc might logically follow the Learn arc. As with the Learn arc, this can involve any kind of training at all, not just a skill.

Opening: Finding the Path. You've learned the basics. Now it's time for the advanced material.

Step: Discovering a Master. You find a master to help you become a master.

Step(s): Learn. Depending on what you're mastering, this could involve one step or quite a few.

Step: The Last Step. Eventually, you realize that even a master cannot teach you the last step. You must learn it on your own.

Climax: The Test. You put your mastery to the test in a real situation—and considering your goal, it's probably a very important situation.

Resolution: You relax a bit and decide what to do next.

MYSTERIOUS BACKGROUND

You don't know who your parents were, but you want to find out. The mystery might be something other than your parentage, but that's a common theme in this kind of arc. You want to know where you come from—there's some kind of mystery in your past.

Opening: Beginning the Search.

Step: Research. You look into your own family background, if possible.

Step(s): Investigation. You talk to people who might know. You follow clues.

Climax: Discovery. You discover the secret of your own background. You determine if what you learn is good or bad, but either way discovery means success.

Resolution: You contemplate how this new knowledge sits with you.

NEW DISCOVERY

You want to invent a new device, process, spell, or something similar. A cure for a heretofore unknown disease? An invocation with a result you've never heard of before? A method for getting into an impregnable vault? Any of these and more could be your discovery. While similar to the Creation arc and the Learn arc, the New Discovery arc involves blazing a new trail. No one can teach you what you want to know. You've got to do it on your own.

Opening: The Idea. You draw up plans for the thing you want to invent or discover.

Step: Research. You learn what people have done before and recognize where they fell short.

Step(s): Trial and Error. You test your hypothesis. This often ends in many failures before you get a success.

Climax: Eureka! It's time to put the discovery to the true test.

Resolution: You reflect on your discovery and probably compile your notes and write it all down, for posterity's sake if nothing else.

RAISE A CHILD

You raise a child to adulthood. It can be your biological child or one you adopt. It can even be a child taken under your wing, more a young protégé than a son or daughter. This is obviously a very long-term arc.

Opening: Sharing Your Home. The child now lives with you.

Step: Care and Feeding. You learn to meet the child's basic needs.

Step(s): Basic Instruction. You teach them to walk, talk, and read. You teach them to care for themselves.

Step(s): The Rewards Are Many. The child loves you. Relies on you. Trusts you. Eventually, helps you.

Step(s): Ethical Instruction. You instill your basic ethics in the child, hoping that they will mature into an adult you can be proud of.

Climax: Adulthood. At some point the child leaves the proverbial nest. You determine, at this point, your own success or failure.

Resolution: You reflect on the memories you have made.

RECOVER FROM A WOUND (OR TRAUMA)

You need to heal. This isn't just for healing simple damage. This involves recovering from a major debilitating injury, illness, or shock. Severe damage, the loss of a body part, and emotional trauma all fall into this category.

Opening: Rest. The first thing you need to do is rest.

Step: Self Care. You take care of your own needs.

Step: Getting Aid. Someone helps.

Step: Medicine. Some kind of drug, cure, poultice, potion, or remedy aids your recovery.

Step: Therapy. With the help of someone else, you exercise your injury or cope with your trauma.

Climax: Acceptance or Recovery. You try to move on and use what has been damaged (or learn how to function without it).

Resolution: You get on with your life.

REDEMPTION

You've done something very wrong, but you want to atone and make it right again. This is like the Justice arc or the Undo a Wrong arc, except you are the wrongdoer. This could be a follow-up to the Fall From Grace arc.

Opening: Regret. You are determined to rebuild, recover, and restore.

Step: Forgiveness. You apologize and ask for forgiveness.

Step: Identifying the Needs. You determine what needs to be done to atone for your transgression.

Climax: Making Good. You perform an act that you hope will redeem your past misdeed.

Resolution: You reflect on what has happened but now look to the future.

REPAY A DEBT

You owe someone something, and it's time to make good.

Opening: Debts Come Due. You determine to do what is needed to make good on the debt. It might involve repaying money, but more appropriately it's performing a deed or a series of deeds.

Step: Talking It Over. You discuss the matter with the person you owe, if possible. You ensure that what you're doing is what they want.

Climax: Repayment. Either you do something to earn the money or goods you owe, or you undertake a major task that will compensate the other person.

Resolution: You relax knowing that your debt is repaid, and you look to the future.

RESCUE

Someone or something of great importance has been taken, and you want to get them or it back.

Opening: Heeding the Call. You determine what has happened, and who or what is missing.

Step: Tracking. You discover who has taken them, and where.

Step: Travel. You go to where they are being held and get information on the location and who is involved. Maybe make a plan.

Climax: Rescue Operation. You go in and get them.

Resolution: You return them home.

RESTORATION

You're down but not out. You want to restore your good name. Recover what you've lost. Rebuild what has been destroyed. You've fallen down or have been knocked down, but either way you want to pick yourself up. This is a possible follow-up to the Fall From Grace arc.

Opening: Vow to Yourself. You are determined to rebuild, recover, and restore.

Step(s): Work. You rebuild, recover, and restore. If all your money was stolen, you make more. If your house was destroyed, you rebuild it. If your reputation was tarnished, you perform deeds that restore your good name.

Climax: The Final Act. You undertake one last major task that will bring things back to where they were (or close to it). A lot is riding on this moment.

Resolution: You enjoy a return to things the way they were before.

REVENGE

Someone did something that harmed you. Unlike the Avenge arc, this arc probably isn't about tracking down a murderer, but it might involve pursuing someone who stole from you, hurt you, or otherwise brought you grief. The key is that it's personal. Otherwise, use the Justice arc.

Opening: Vow. You swear revenge.

Step(s): Finding a Clue. You find a clue to tracking down the culprit.

Climax: Confrontation. You confront the culprit.

Resolution: You deal with the aftermath of the confrontation and move on. You think about whether you are satisfied by gaining your revenge.

ROMANCE

You want to strike up a relationship with a romantic partner. Perhaps you have a specific person in mind, or maybe you're just interested in a relationship in general.

Opening(s): Caught Someone's Eye. You meet someone you are interested in. (Since this can be short-lived, it's possible to have this opening occur more than once.)

Step(s): Courtship. You begin seeing the person regularly. Although not every "date" is a step in the arc, significant moments are, and there may be a few of them.

Climax: Commitment. You may or may not be interested in a monogamous relationship. Regardless, you and your love have made some kind of commitment to each other.

Resolution: You think about the future. Marriage? Children? These are only some of the possibilities.

SOLVE A MYSTERY

Different from the Learn arc and the Uncover a Secret arc, this arc is about solving a crime or a similar action committed in the fairly recent past. It's not about practice or study, but about questions and answers. In theory, the mystery doesn't have to be a crime. It might be "Why is this strange caustic substance leaking into my basement?"

Opening: Pledging to Solve the Mystery.

Step: Research. You get some background.

Step(s): Investigation. You ask questions. You look for clues. You cast divinations. This likely encompasses many such steps.

Climax: Discovery. You come upon what you believe to be the solution to the mystery.

Resolution: In this step, which is far more active than most resolutions, you confront the people involved in the mystery with what you've discovered, or you use the information in some way (such as taking it to the proper authorities).

THEFT

Someone else has something you want.

Opening: Setting Your Sights. You make a plan.

Step: Casing the Joint. You scout out the location of the thing (or learn its location).

Step(s): Getting to the Object. Sometimes, many steps are involved before you reach the object you wish to take. For example, if, in order to steal something from a vault, you need to approach one of the guards while they are off duty and bribe them to look the other way when you break in, that is covered in this step.

Climax: The Attempt. You make your heist.

Resolution: You decide what to do with the thing you've stolen and contemplate the repercussions you might face for stealing it.

TRAIN A CREATURE

You want to domesticate and train an animal or other creature. While the beast doesn't need to be wild, it must not already be domesticated and trained.

Opening: Getting Acquainted. You get to know the creature a bit, and it gets to know you.

Step: Research. You get information on the type of creature or advice from others who have trained one.

Step: Domestication. After some work, the creature is no longer a threat to you or anyone else, and it can live peacefully in your home or wherever you wish.

Step(s): Training. Each time you use this step, you teach the creature a new, significant command that it will obey regularly and immediately.

Climax: Completion. Believing the creature's training to be complete, you put it in a situation where that is put to the test.

Resolution: You reflect on the experience.

TRANSFORMATION

You want to be different in a specific way. Because the Growth arc covers internal change, this one focuses primarily on external change. This could take many forms, and probably varies greatly by genre. In some settings, it could even be death, which might turn you into a ghost. For the change to be an arc, it should be difficult and perhaps risky.

Opening: Deciding on the Transformation.

Step: Research. You look into how the change can be made and what it entails.

Step(s): Investigation. This is an active step toward making the change. It might involve getting more information, materials or ingredients, or something else.

Climax: Change. You make the change, with some risk of failure or disaster.

Resolution: You contemplate how this change affects you going forward.

UNCOVER A SECRET

There is knowledge out there that you want. It could be an attempt to find and learn a specific special ability. This could also be a hunt for a lost password or a key that will open a sealed door, the true name of a devil, the secret background of an important person, or how the ancients constructed that strange monolith.

Opening: Naming the Secret. You give your goal a name. "I am seeking the lost martial art of the Khendrix, who could slice steel with their bare hands."

Step(s): Research. You scour libraries and old tomes for clues and information.

Step(s): Investigation. You talk to people to gain clues and information.

Step(s): Tracking. You track down the source of the secret information and travel to it.

Climax: Revelation. You find and attempt to use the secret, whatever that entails.

Resolution: You contemplate how this secret affects you and the world.

UNDO A WRONG

Someone did something horrible, and its ramifications are still felt, even if it happened long ago. You seek to undo the damage, or at least stop it from continuing.

This is different from the Justice arc because this isn't about justice (or even revenge)—it's about literally undoing something bad that happened in the past, such as a great library being burned to the ground, a sovereign people being driven from their land, and so on.

Opening: Vowing to Put Right What Once Went Wrong.

Step: Make a Plan. You learn all you can about the situation and then make a plan to put things right.

Step(s): Progress. This is an active step toward undoing the wrong. It might involve finding something, defeating someone, destroying something, building something, or almost anything else, depending on the circumstances.

Climax: Change. You face the challenge of the former wrong, and either overcome it or fail.

Resolution: You reflect on what you've accomplished and think about the future.

Genres

The Cypher System can be used to play in many settings. This chapter provides additional information and rules for fantasy, modern, science fiction, horror, romance, superheroes, post-apocalyptic, fairy tale, and historical genres.

FANTASY TYPES

For our purposes, fantasy is any genre that has magic, or something so inexplicable it might as well be magic. The sort of core default of this type is Tolkien-esque fantasy, also known as second-world fantasy because it includes a completely new world not our own. Big fantasy epics like those penned by J. R. R. Tolkien (hence the name), C. S. Lewis, George R. R. Martin, Stephen R. Donaldson, David Eddings, Ursula K. Le Guin, and others are indicative of this genre. It usually involves swords, sorcery, nonhuman species (such as **elves**, **dwarves**, **helborn**, and **half-giants**), and epic struggles.

Of course, fantasy might also involve the modern world, with creatures of myth and sorcerers dwelling among us. It might involve mythic traditions of any number of cultures (elves, dwarves, and the like, usually being decidedly European) or bear little resemblance to anything on Earth, past or present. It might even involve some of the trappings of science fiction, with spaceships and laser guns amid the wizardry and swords (this is often called science fantasy).

Fantasy can also be defined by the amount of fantasy elements within it. A second-world fantasy filled with wizards, ghosts, dragons, curses, and gods is referred to as high fantasy. Fantasy with a firmer grounding in reality as we know it in our world is low fantasy. (In fact, low fantasy often takes place in our world, or in our world's distant past, like the stories of Conan.) No single element indicates concretely that a given fantasy is high or low. It's the prevalence of those elements.

The point is, there are many, many types of fantasy.

Suggested Types for a FANTASY Game

Role	Character Type
Warrior	Warrior
Knight	Warrior
Ranger	Explorer

Barbarian	Explorer flavored with combat
Thief	Explorer flavored with stealth
Wizard	Adept
Cleric	Speaker flavored with magic
Druid	Explorer flavored with magic
Warrior mage	Warrior flavored with magic
Bard	Speaker

Basic CREATURES AND NPCs FOR A FANTASY GAME

Bat: level 1

Dog: level 2, perception as level 3

Dog, guard: level 3, attacks and perception as level 4

Hawk: level 2; flies a long distance each round

Horse: level 3; moves a long distance each round

Rat: level 1

Viper: level 2; bite inflicts 3 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor)

Warhorse: level 4; moves a long distance each round

Wolf: level 3, perception as level 4

Blacksmith: level 2, metalworking as level 4; health 8

Farmer: level 2, animal handling as level 3; health 8

Merchant: level 2, haggling and assessment tasks as level 3

Villager: level 2

ADDITIONAL FANTASY EQUIPMENT

In the default Medieval Europe-style fantasy setting, the following items (and anything else appropriate to that time period) are usually available.

INEXPENSIVE ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Arrows (12)	
Crossbow bolts (12)	
Knife (rusty and worn)	Light weapon (won't last long)

Wooden club	Light weapon
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Other Items	Notes
Burlap sack	
Candle	
Iron rations (1 day)	
Torch (3)	

MODERATELY PRICED ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Blowgun	Light weapon, immediate range
Dagger	Light weapon
Handaxe	Light weapon
Sword (substandard)	Medium weapon (won't last long)
Throwing knife	Light weapon, short range

Armor	Notes
Hides and furs	Light armor
Leather jerkin	Light armor
Shield	Asset to Speed defense

Other Items	Notes
Backpack	

Bedroll	
Crowbar	
Hourglass	
Lantern	
Rope	Hemp, 50 feet
Signal horn	
Spikes and hammer	10 spikes
Tent	

EXPENSIVE ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Battleaxe	Medium weapon
Bow	Medium weapon, long range
Cutlass	Medium weapon
Light crossbow	Medium weapon, long range
Quarterstaff	Medium weapon (requires 2 hands)
Sword	Medium weapon

Armor	Notes
Breastplate	Medium armor
Brigandine	Medium armor
Chainmail	Medium armor

Other Items	Notes

Bag of heavy tools	
Bag of light tools	

VERY EXPENSIVE ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Greatsword	Heavy weapon
Heavy crossbow	Heavy weapon, long range
Sword (jeweled)	Medium weapon

Armor	Notes
Dwarven breastplate	Medium armor, encumbers as light armor
Full plate armor	Heavy armor

Other Items	Notes
Disguise kit	Asset for disguise tasks
Healing kit	Asset for healing tasks
Spyglass	Asset for perception tasks at range

EXORBITANT ITEMS

Armor	Notes
Elven chainmail	Medium armor, encumbers as no armor

Other Items	Notes
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Sailing ship (small)

MEDIEVAL FANTASY EQUIPMENT

Category	GP Value
Inexpensive	Less than 1 gp
Moderate	1–10 gp
Expensive	100–500 gp
Very expensive	1,000–10,000 gp
Exorbitant	10,000+ gp

FANTASY ARTIFACTS

In many ways, fantasy is the genre for [artifacts](#). All magic items—wands that shoot lightning, magic carpets, singing swords, rings that make the wearer invisible, and so on—are artifacts. Below are a few sample artifacts to give a template for GMs to follow. Those running a fantasy campaign will likely want to create many magic artifacts.

ANGELIC WARD

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Tiny figurine of a winged angel

Effect: Once activated, the figurine's spirit emerges and becomes semisolid as a glowing, human-sized winged angel. It follows within 3 feet (1 m) of the figurine owner. Anything within long range that attacks the owner is attacked by the angelic ward, which sends out a bolt of flesh-rotting energy, doing damage equal to the artifact's level. Once activated, it functions for a day.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

RING OF DRAGON'S FLIGHT

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Green iron ring that appears like a dragon wound around the finger

Effect: When the wearer activates the ring, dragon wings unfurl from their back, and for one minute the wearer can fly up to long range. The ring does not confer the ability to hover or make fine adjustments while in flight.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

SOULFLAYING WEAPON

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Weapon of any type, with engraved glowing runes denoting soulflaying

Effect: This weapon functions as a normal weapon of its kind. The wielder can use an action to activate its soulflaying magic for one minute. During that time, if the weapon scores a hit, it inflicts normal damage, plus 3 additional points of Intellect damage on all creatures that have souls (not automatons, mindless undead, or the like).

Depletion: 1 in 1d100

SPELLBOOK OF THE AMBER MAGE

Level: 1d6

Form: Weighty tome bound in amber filled with pages of spell runes

Effect: When the user incants from the spellbook and succeeds at a level 3 Intellect-based task, the user can attempt to trap a creature within long range inside a block of amber. Only creatures whose level is equal to or lower than the artifact's level can be targeted. A creature successfully caught is preserved in perfect stasis until the encasing amber is broken away (the amber has 10 points of health per level of the artifact).

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

WAND OF FIREBOLTS

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Wand of red wood 8 inches (20 cm) long, carved with intricate flamelike images

Effect: When activated, the wand looses a blast of fire at a chosen target within short range, inflicting damage equal to the artifact's level.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Fantasy SPECIES DESCRIPTORS

In a high fantasy setting, some GMs may want dwarves and elves to be mechanically different from humans. Below are some possibilities for how this might work.

VARIANT RULE: TWO DESCRIPTORS

By having dwarf, elf, or other species take the place of a character's descriptor, it creates a situation where only human characters have the variability of choosing a descriptor that suits their personality. The GM might instead allow all human characters to have two descriptors, and nonhuman characters to have a standard descriptor in addition to their species descriptor.

Sometimes contradictory descriptors might weaken or negate each other's benefits and drawbacks. If one descriptor gives training in a skill and another gives an inability in that skill, they cancel each other out and the character doesn't have any modifier for that skill at all.

DESCRIPTORS AS SPECIES

If a player wants to play a nearly human species without any exceptional or unique special abilities, it's easy for a GM to pick an appropriate descriptor and use it as that species' descriptor. A greyhound-like species might have the Fast descriptor.

CATFOLK

You are unmistakably feline. Your people have fur; large, pointed ears; sharp teeth and claws; and even tails. You are nimble, graceful, and quick. An ancient and sophisticated culture, your people have their own language, customs, and traditions developed in relative seclusion over the centuries. Neither conquerors nor conquered, the success of your society has come from the fact that you have given most others a wide berth.

As a people, you almost never get involved in wars or similar matters, which has given other cultures the idea that you are aloof, unapproachable, or mysterious. As long as they leave you alone, what they think is fine with you.

You gain the following characteristics:

Agile: +4 to your Speed Pool. Skill: You are trained in climbing and balance tasks.

Bared Claws: Even unarmed, your claws are light weapons that inflict 4 points of damage.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You were curious as to what the other PCs were up to.
2. You needed to get out of town, and the PCs were going in the same direction as you.
3. You are interested in making a profit, and the other PCs seem to have a lead on doing just that.
4. It seemed like a lark.

DRACONFOLK

You have scales, fangs, claws, and magic—gifts of the dragons. You might have been born of dragonfolk parents, willingly transformed in a magical ceremony, or chosen by a dragon to be their agent or champion. You have a great destiny before you, but it is your choice whether to make it your own or bend to the will of those who made you what you are. Some people mistrust or fear you, and others consider you a prophet or wish to exploit your power for their own goals.

You gain the following characteristics:

Sturdy: +2 to your Might Pool. Skill: You are trained in intimidation

Dragonbreath (3 Might points): You breathe out a blast of energy in an immediate area. Choose one type of energy (arcane, cold, fire, thorn, and so on); the blast inflicts 2 points of damage of this kind of energy (ignores Armor) to all creatures or objects within the area. Because this is an area attack, adding Effort to increase your damage works differently than it does for single-target attacks. If you apply a level of Effort to increase the damage, add 2 points of damage for each target, and even if you fail your attack roll, all targets in the area still take 1 point of damage. Action.

Draconic Resistance: You gain +2 Armor against the type of energy you create with your dragonbreath.

Scaly: +1 to Armor. Inability: You have difficulty relating to non-dragons. Tasks to persuade non-dragons are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You believe the other PCs can help you solve a mystery about your heritage.
2. You needed to get out of town, and the PCs were going in the same direction as you.
3. Your creator, master, or mentor told you to help the PCs.
4. You want to make a name for yourself, and the other PCs seem competent and compatible.

DWARF

You're a stocky, broad-shouldered, bearded native of the mountains and hills. You're also as stubborn as the stone in which the dwarves carve their homes under the mountains. Tradition, honor, pride in smithcraft and warcraft, and a keen appreciation of the wealth buried under the roots of the world are all part of your

heritage. Those who wish you ill should be wary of your temper. When dwarves are wronged, they never forget.

You gain the following characteristics:

Stalwart: +2 to your Might Pool.

Skill: You are trained in Might defense rolls.

Skill: You are trained in tasks related to stone, including sensing stonework traps, knowing the history of a particular piece of stonecraft, and knowing your distance beneath the surface.

Skill: You are practiced in using axes.

Skill: You are trained in using the tools required to shape and mine stone.

Vulnerability: When you fail an Intellect defense roll to avoid damage, you take 1 extra point of damage.

Additional Equipment: You have an axe.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You found the PCs wandering a maze of tunnels and led them to safety.

2. The PCs hired you to dig out the entrance to a buried ruin.

3. You tracked down the thieves of your ancestor's tomb and found they were the PCs. Instead of killing them, you joined them.

4. Before dwarves settle down, they need to see the world.

ELF

You haunt the woodlands and deep, natural realms, as your people have for millennia. You are the arrow in the night, the shadow in the glade, and the laughter on the wind. As an elf, you are slender, quick, graceful, and long lived. You manage the sorrows of living well past many mortal lifetimes with song, wine, and an appreciation for the deep beauties of growing things, especially trees, which can live even longer than you do.

You gain the following characteristics:

Agile: +2 to your Speed Pool.

Long-Lived: Your natural lifespan (unless tragically cut short) is thousands of years.

Skill: You are specialized in tasks related to perception.

Skill: You are practiced in using one bow variety of your choice.

Skill: You are trained in stealth tasks. In areas of natural woodland, you are specialized in stealth tasks.

Fragile: When you fail a Might defense roll to avoid damage, you take 1 extra point of damage.

Additional Equipment: You have a bow and a quiver of arrows to go with it.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. Before putting an arrow in the forest intruders, you confronted them and met the PCs, who were on an important quest.

2. Your heart yearned for farther shores, and the PCs offered to take you along to new places.

3. Your home was burned by strangers from another place, and you gathered the PCs along the way as you tracked down the villains.

4. An adventure was in the offing, and you didn't want to be left behind.

GNOME

You are curious and love discovering ways to turn found things into art, tools, or weapons. You might be a sculptor, smith, artist, chef, storyteller, or inventor. Alchemy, magic, and engineering fascinate you. Other beings may see you as a strange mix of a nature-loving elf and a craft-obsessed dwarf, but you and your kind are unique people with a passion for life, exploration, and creation.

You gain the following characteristics:

Genius: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You are trained in two skills that suit your creative nature, such as alchemy, smithing, poetry, cooking, woodcarving, or pottery.

Skill: You are practiced in using hammers.

Natural Affinity: You gain one of the following abilities: Communication, Eyes Adjusted, or Minor Illusion.

Inability: Your small size makes some physical tasks difficult. Might-based tasks are hindered.

Additional Equipment: You have a bag of light tools or a bag of heavy tools.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You think an object or material you've been looking for can be found where the other PCs are going.
2. You were recruited because of your knowledge on a particular subject.
3. You were bored and it sounded like the PCs were going to do something interesting.
4. You owe one of the PCs a favor for a useful gift in the past.

HALF-GIANT

You stand at least 12 feet (4 m) tall and tower over everyone around you. Whether you are a full-blooded giant or merely have giant heritage from large ancestors, you're massive. Always large for your age, it became an issue only once you reached puberty and topped 7 feet (2 m) in height, and kept growing from there.

You gain the following characteristics:

Tough: +4 to your Might Pool.

Mass and Strength: You inflict +1 point of damage with your melee attacks and attacks with thrown weapons.

Breaker: Tasks related to breaking things by smashing them are eased.

Inability: You're too large to accomplish normal things. Tasks related to initiative, stealth, and fine manipulation of any sort (such as lockpicking or repair tasks) are hindered.

Additional Equipment: You have a heavy weapon of your choice.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You fished the PCs out of a deep hole they'd fallen into while exploring.
2. You were the PCs' guide in the land of giants and stayed with them afterward.
3. The PCs helped you escape a nether realm where other giants were imprisoned by the gods.
4. You kept the PCs from being discovered by hiding them behind your bulk when they were on the run.

HALFLING

Three feet tall and proud, you are fond of the comforts of home but itching for a little adventure now and then. Small and quick, you have a way of getting along with everyone. You might have been raised in a halfling village, a mixed community where humans and the small folk work and eat side by side as friends, or a less welcoming environment where your people get things done using deception and criminal activity. You and humans have a lot in common—you’re just more compact and efficient about it.

You gain the following characteristics:

Agile: +2 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You are trained in pleasant social interactions.

Skill: You are trained in stealth.

Skill: You are trained in Intellect defense.

Advantage: When you use 1 XP to reroll a d20 for any roll that affects only you, add 3 to the reroll.

Inability: Your small size makes some physical tasks difficult. Might-based tasks are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You were fleeing someone and literally ran into the other PCs.
2. You were invited (or invited yourself) as a good luck charm.
3. You were tricked into going with the other PCs or were brought along despite your very reasonable objections.
4. You’re very protective of another PC and want to make sure they get through the upcoming challenges.

HELBORN

Demons of the underworld sometimes escape. When they do, they can taint human bloodlines. Things like you are the result of such unnatural unions. Part human and part something else, you are an orphan of a supernatural dalliance. Thanks to your unsettling appearance, you’ve probably been forced to make your own way in a world that often fears and resents you. Some of your kin have large horns, tails, and pointed teeth. Others are more subtle or more obvious in their differences—a shadow of a knife-edge in their face and a touch that withers normal plants, a little too much fire in their eyes and a scent of ash in the air, a forked tongue, goatlike legs, or the inability to cast a shadow. Work with the GM on your particular helborn appearance.

You gain the following characteristics.

Devious: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You are trained in tasks related to magic lore and lore of the underworld.

Fire Adapted: +2 to Armor against damage from fire only.

Helborn Magic: You are inherently magical. Choose one low-tier ability from the Abilities chapter. If the GM agrees it is appropriate, you gain that ability as part of your helborn heritage, and can use it like any other type or focus ability.

Inner Evil: You sometimes lose control and risk hurting your allies. When you roll a 1, the GM has the option to intrude by indicating that you lose control. Once you’ve lost control, you attack any and every living creature within short range. You can’t spend Intellect points for any reason other than to try to regain control (a difficulty 2 task). After you regain control, you suffer a -1 penalty to all rolls for one hour.

Inability: People distrust you. Tasks to persuade or deceive are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You were nearly beaten to death by people who didn't like your look, but the PCs found and revived you.
2. The PCs hired you for your knowledge of magic.
3. Every so often you get visions of people trapped in the underworld. You tracked those people down and found the PCs, who'd never visited the underworld. Yet.
4. Your situation at home became untenable because of how people reacted to your looks. You joined the PCs to get away.

LIZARDFOLK

You are from a long line of fierce reptilian predators. You show your fangs and scales proudly. Your people survive and thrive in the wetlands, guarding their eggs, raising their hatchlings, and protecting their territory. City-builders may call you a savage and your culture primitive, but there is grace in your hunting, artistry in your crafting, joy in your songs, and reverence in your worship.

You gain the following characteristics:

Agile: +2 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You are trained in balancing, jumping, and swimming.

Skill: You are trained in hunting and tracking.

Skill: You are practiced in using javelins and spears.

Scaly: +1 to Armor.

Inability: Your slightly clawed hands make fine detail work difficult. You have an inability with picking locks, picking pockets, and other manual dexterity tasks (but not crafting).

Additional Equipment: You have a spear and a pair of javelins.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. The other PCs were lost in your territory and you were sent to escort them out.
2. Something has been attacking your community and you want to find and destroy it.
3. You were exiled from your community and need to prove your worthiness before you can return to it.
4. You or your priest had a vision of you traveling with the other PCs.

OPTIONAL RULE: SPELLCASTING

Fantasy settings prioritize magic as an essential ingredient. But why restrict that magic to just wizards and similar characters? It's not uncommon in fantasy literature for a thief or warrior to learn a few spells as they steal or brawl through their adventures. Leiber's Gray Mouser knew some spells, Moorcock's Elric knew a lot, pretty much everyone in Anthony's Xanth books knew at least one, and so on. Of course, wizards and sorcerers specialize in spellcasting, which gives them clear superiority in magic use. But whether a character is a fireball-flinging wizard or a belligerent barbarian, anyone can learn some spellcasting under this optional rule.

Under the spellcasting rule, any character, no matter their role or type, can choose to learn a spell as a **long-term benefit**. After they learn one spell, they may learn more later if they wish, or just stick with the one.

FIRST SPELL

Any character can gain a spell by spending 3 XP and working with the GM to come up with an in-game story of how the PC learned it. Maybe they learned it as a child from their parent and practiced it enough to actually do it; perhaps they spent a month hiding in a wizard's library reading; it could be that they found a weird magical amulet that imbues them with the spell; and so on.

Next, choose one low-tier ability from the Abilities chapter. If the GM agrees it is appropriate, the character gains that ability as their spell, with a few caveats. The spell can't be used like a normal ability gained through a PC's type or focus. Instead, a character must either use a recovery roll or spend many minutes or longer evoking their spell, in addition to paying its Pool cost (if any).

Using a Recovery Roll to Cast a Spell: If the character uses a one-action, ten-minute, or one-hour recovery roll as part of the same action to cast the spell (including paying any Pool costs), they can use the ability as an action. This represents a significant mental and physical drain on the character, because the normal benefit of recovering points in a Pool is not gained.

Spending Time to Cast a Spell: If the character takes at least ten minutes chanting, mumbling occult phonemes, concentrating deeply, or otherwise using all their actions, they can cast a low-tier spell (if they also pay any Pool costs). An hour is required to cast mid-tier spells. Ten hours are required to cast a high-tier spell.

MORE SPELLS

Once a character has learned at least one spell, they can opt to learn additional spells later. Each time, they must spend an additional 3 XP and work with the GM to come up with an in-game story of how the character's magical learning has progressed.

Two additional rules for learning additional spells apply:

First, a character must be at least tier 3 and have previously gained one low-tier spell before they can learn a mid-tier spell.

Second, a character must be at least tier 5 and have previously gained one mid-tier spell before they can learn a high-tier spell.

Otherwise, gaining and casting additional spells are as described for the character's first spell.

WIZARDS AND THE OPTIONAL SPELLCASTING RULE

Wizards (usually Adepts) and characters with explicit spellcasting foci like Masters Spells, Channels Divine Blessings, Speaks for the Land, and possibly others are also considered to be spellcasters, and moreover, specialized ones. Their spells—abilities provided by their type or focus—are used simply by paying their Pool costs. Extra time or physical effort isn't required to cast them. That's because, in the parlance of the fantasy genre, these spells are considered to be "prepared."

But specialized casters can also use the optional spellcasting rule to expand their magic further. They can learn additional spells via the optional spellcasting rule just like other characters, with the same limitations.

Optionally, specialized casters who record their arcane knowledge in a spellbook (or something similar) gain one additional benefit. The spellbook is a compilation of spells, formulas, and notes that grants the specialized caster more flexibility than those who've simply learned a spell or two. With a spellbook, a PC can replace up to three prepared spells with three other spells they've learned of the same tier. To do so, they must spend at least one uninterrupted hour studying their spellbook. Usually, this is something that requires a fresh mind, and must be done soon after a ten-hour recovery.

For instance, if a wizard exchanges *Ward* (an ability gained from their type) with *Telekinesis* (an ability gained from the optional spellcasting rule), from now on the character can cast *Ward* only by spending time or using a recovery roll (as well as spending Pool points). On the other hand, they can use *Telekinesis* normally, because

now it's prepared. Later, the wizard could spend the time studying to change out their prepared spells with others they've learned using the optional spellcasting rule.

(A PC might choose the 4 XP character advancement option to select a new type-based ability from their tier or a lower tier. If so, the ability gained doesn't count as a spell, and the spellcasting rule limitations do not apply to the ability so gained. If the PC is a wizard and uses the 4 XP character advancement option, treat the ability as one more prepared spell.)

MODERN RULES MODULE

The modern setting is easy because it's just the real world, right? Well, yes and no. It's easy for players to understand the context of a modern setting. They know the default assumptions—cities, cars, cell phones, the internet, and so on. It's also easier for some players to get into character, because their character could be someone they might very well pass on the street. It can be easier to wrap your mind around a history professor than a thousand-year-old elf wizard. These things make it easier on the GM as well.

But for the same reason, it's not easy. The setting is the real world we all know, so it's easy to get facts wrong or let them bog you down. What happens when you pull the fire alarm on the thirty-fifth floor of a major hotel in a large city? How fast do the authorities arrive? In truth, the facts aren't as important as the story you're creating, but some verisimilitude is nice.

MOLDING CHARACTERS FOR A MODERN GAME

If you're trying to portray a psychic with a few basic powers, you might not want to use the Adept character type. Instead, choose a different type (perhaps a Speaker) and encourage foci such as [Commands Mental Powers](#) or [Focuses Mind Over Matter](#). Some of the Adept's powers might be too over the top for the genre.

Similarly, the technology [flavor](#) is probably too high-tech for a modern game. For someone with technical skills, use the skills and knowledge flavor instead.

Sometimes, the types might be more physical than is always desirable for a modern game, but that's because the least physical type, the Adept, is often inappropriate for other reasons. The [Calm](#) descriptor is very good for such characters, not only granting them a great deal of skill and knowledge, but also reducing their physical capabilities.

Last, don't forget foci such as [Doesn't Do Much](#) or [Would Rather Be Reading](#) for "normal" characters who have useful skills but not much in the way of flashy abilities.

Suggested Types for a MODERN Game

Role	Type
Police officer	Explorer with combat flavor
Detective	Explorer with stealth flavor
Soldier	Warrior
Criminal	Explorer with stealth flavor
Teacher	Speaker
Professional (accountant, writer, etc.)	Speaker with skills and knowledge flavor

Technical profession	Explorer with skills and knowledge flavor
Dilettante	Speaker with skills and knowledge flavor
Doctor/Nurse	Explorer with skills and knowledge flavor
Politician	Speaker
Lawyer	Speaker
Scholar	Explorer with skills and knowledge flavor
Spy	Speaker with stealth flavor
Occultist	Adept
Mystic/Psychic	Adept

Basic CREATURES AND NPCs FOR A Modern GAME

Businessperson: level 2, business tasks as level 3

Cat: level 1, Speed defense as level 3

Clerk: level 2

Dog: level 2, perception as level 3

Dog, guard: level 3, attacks and perception as level 4

Horse: level 3; moves a long distance each round

Rat: level 1

Worker: level 2; health 8

ADDITIONAL MODERN EQUIPMENT

In a modern setting, the following items (and anything else appropriate to the real world) are usually available.

INEXPENSIVE ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Ammo (box of 50 rounds)	
Knife (simple)	Light weapon (won't last long)
Other Items	Notes

Duct tape roll	Useful and ubiquitous
Flashlight	
Padlock with keys	
Trail rations (1 day)	

MODERATELY PRICED ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Hand grenade	Explosive weapon, inflicts 4 points of damage in immediate radius
Hunting knife	Light weapon
Machete	Medium weapon
Nightstick	Light weapon

Armor	Notes
Leather jacket	Light armor
Shield	Asset to Speed defense

Other Items	Notes
Backpack	
Bag of heavy tools	
Bag of light tools	
Binoculars	Asset for perception tasks at range
Bolt cutters	
Cell phone	
Climbing gear	
Crowbar	

Electric lantern	
First aid kit	Asset for healing tasks
Handcuffs	
Rope	Nylon, 50 feet
Sleeping bag	
Tent	

EXPENSIVE ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Light handgun	Light weapon, short range
Medium handgun	Medium weapon, long range
Bow	Medium weapon, long range
Rifle	Medium weapon, long range
Shotgun	Heavy weapon, immediate range

Armor	Notes
Kevlar vest	Medium armor

Other Items	Notes
Camera designed to be concealed	Transmits at long range
Microphone designed to be concealed	Transmits at long range
Cold weather camping gear	
Nightvision goggles	
Scuba gear	
Smartphone	

Straightjacket	
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VERY EXPENSIVE ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Heavy handgun	Heavy weapon, long range
Assault rifle	Heavy weapon, rapid-fire weapon, long range
Heavy rifle	Heavy weapon, 300-foot (90 m) range
Submachine gun	Medium weapon, rapid-fire weapon, short range

Armor	Notes
Lightweight body armor	Medium armor, encumbers as light armor
Military body armor	Heavy armor

Other Items	Notes
Disguise kit	Asset for disguise tasks
Used car	Level 3
Small boat	Level 3

EXORBITANT ITEMS

Other Items	Notes
Large boat	Level 5
Luxury car	Level 5

OPTIONAL RULE: HANDLING PCs AS CHILDREN

The regular character creation process makes fully competent, adult characters. To account for playing children, the GM could adopt this optional rule. First, the players make their characters normally, and then they apply the following adjustments to their PCs, as appropriate to their age category. You might also consider applying a tier cap of 3 to childhood adventure games with kids of up to thirteen years old, and a tier cap of 4 for childhood adventure games featuring PCs who are aged fourteen to seventeen.

AGE 9 TO 13

Slight: -4 to your Might Pool.

Vulnerable: Adults look out for you. You are trained in all pleasant social interactions with adults.

Inability: Might-based tasks are hindered.

Inability: Tasks involving knowledge are hindered.

AGE 14 TO 17

Youthful: -2 to your Might Pool.

Inability: Tasks involving knowledge are hindered.

SCIENCE FICTION RULES MODULE

Science fiction is an incredibly broad category. It covers UFOs, space opera, near-future dystopias, otherworldly epics, hard science fiction, and everything in between. Even when compared to fantasy, science fiction is so wide that it almost isn't a single genre at all. Truthfully, there's not all that much to tie, say, *The Time Machine* by H. G. Wells with a dark cyberpunk story except for the technology involved, which is at a higher level than we possess or understand today. But even that part of science fiction is contentious. Should the science be purely that which obeys the laws of physics as we understand them today (often called hard science fiction), or is it more of an "anything goes" proposition? Is science we can't explain really just magic?

For our purposes, we'll treat fantastic science fiction as the default: aliens, spaceships that allow travel to other stars, energy weapons and shields, and so on. It's a familiar setting to almost everyone interested in science fiction. That said, we've also got some additional guidance for **hard science fiction**, where what's possible is more grounded in what we currently scientifically extrapolate. But your science fiction setting can be anything you can imagine.

ASSEMBLING A SCI-FI SETTING

ESTABLISHING A TECHNOLOGY RATING

Every science fiction setting has an implicit level of advancement, which is the average degree of technological sophistication available to most characters. This sophistication lies along a spectrum, from contemporary, to advanced, all the way to fantastic. Each of these terms specifies a particular "technology rating" (or "tech rating" for short).

A tech rating is a handy way of helping you select what equipment your characters can use, which optional rules you'd like to include, and maybe even help guide your creature choice.

On the other hand, you could choose to make all options available, regardless of tech rating. No technology police will cite you if you don't stick inside a previously declared lane. The setting is your background for telling a compelling story. Does your setting have faster-than-light travel? Great. Unless it's integral to the story (or

fun for you), don't worry about justifying it if you've generally settled on an advanced rating for your hard science fiction game (which doesn't normally include FTL capability). In fact, the surprising and unexpected are where excitement is usually found in a setting; breaking the established rules (for a good reason) often leads to interesting results.

COSMIC SET PIECES AND OPTIONAL RULES

This chapter contains a variety of subsystems and set pieces that you can choose to incorporate in your game, depending on the kind of setting you'd like to run. Options here run the gamut from making your science fiction setting more realistic to making your fantastic games even wilder by introducing rules for posthuman advancement and psionics.

QUICK DESCRIPTIONS FOR COMMON SCI-FI SITUATIONS

Weightlessness (zero G) feels like, first time: The sensation of falling jerks through the body; instincts scream to reach out and catch yourself.

Weightlessness (zero G) feels like, once acclimated: A feeling of lightness, evanescence, like floating in a pool of water, if the water were clear air. A little push sends you gliding.

High acceleration feels like (if strapped in): A massive kick in the back, followed by the sensation of tremendous weights sitting on your chest. Any movement is a struggle against an overwhelming weight holding you down.

Blacking out from high acceleration feels like: Lightheaded and hard to think, a sensation of a slowing pulse. Noises soften as if heard through a drainpipe. Color fades from vision, then everything goes either to black, or possibly to white, as consciousness lapses.

Exposure to hard radiation feels like: Heat. (The more dangerous the radiation, the hotter it feels, and may be accompanied by blue light; radiation excites electrons in the air that then slip back into an unexcited state, emitting high-energy photons that glow blue.)

Exposure to vacuum feels like: Breath explodes out of lungs, cold slashes the body like a knife carved from a glacier. Tears freeze in the corners of eyes, ice forms on teeth and tongue. Moisture boils out of ears, scalp, freezing on exposed skin, lips, and eyelids. (As this happens, the Effects of Vacuum also take their mechanical toll on the character.)

OPTIONAL RULES: HARDER SCIENCE FICTION

Hard science fiction is distinguished from other science fiction subgenres by the perception of scientific accuracy. This means hard science fiction often precludes technology deemed impossible by mainstream scientific theory, including mainstays like faster-than-light travel and time travel. Choosing a hard science fiction setting also means the GM is interested in sprinkling realistic hazards into their game, at least up to a point. After all, the difficulties of real-life space travel offer tremendous breadth when it comes to providing excitement (i.e., life-threatening dangers) that can raise the stakes in an authentic fashion. Not to say that gun battles with space aliens aren't exciting, but in a hard science fiction setting without aliens, there are all kinds of opportunities for pulse-pounding GM intrusions.

In fact, that bears repeating: Use GM intrusions to incorporate these harder science fiction repercussions when the situation is relevant. Rather than hitting your PCs over the head with an information-exposition hammer on the dangers of space repeatedly, simply demonstrate it with a relevant GM intrusion.

The Cypher System Rulebook describes some hard science fiction considerations regarding the effects of gravity, which are summarized here for ease of reference.

Long-Term Microgravity Exposure: Long-term penalties (such as inabilities in physical tasks), unless ameliorated with advanced drugs such as space-fit serum or space-fit nano-tabs.

Low Gravity: Weapons that rely on weight, such as all heavy weapons, inflict 2 fewer points of damage (dealing a minimum of 1 point) unless user is trained in low-gravity maneuvering. Short-range weapons can reach to long range, and long-range weapons can reach to very long range.

High Gravity: All physical tasks are hindered. Ranges in high gravity are reduced by one category (very long-range weapons reach only to long range, long-range weapons reach only to short range, and short-range weapons reach only to immediate range). Those trained in highgravity maneuvering ignore the change in difficulty but not the range decreases.

Zero Gravity: All physical tasks are hindered. Short-range weapons can reach to long range, and long-range weapons can reach to very-long range.

VOID RULES

The extreme environment in space— hard radiation, lack of air and pressure, wild temperature variations, and lack of gravity—tends to magnify small issues into much more significant ones. While Murphy's Law (everything that can go wrong will go wrong) is a useful reminder to keep an eye out for trouble even under regular circumstances, Finagle's Law reigns in space, which is that anything that can go wrong, will go wrong—at the worst possible moment. To evoke this law, GMs can implement Void Rules.

The idea is to create a feeling of increased repercussions by changing one die roll mechanic. In the game, activities on a planet's surface—and within a functioning air-filled spacecraft, habitat, or space suit when everything is going well—remain normal. The PCs interact with each other and the NPCs, investigate, research, repair an external sensor module, travel, and so on.

But that could change the moment something goes wrong—maybe a fault is recognized in the spacecraft's computer or shipmind. A minor leak is detected in the cargo bay. An enemy spacecraft has fired on and damaged the PC's spacecraft. The spacecraft's orbit is deteriorating. Whatever. The point is, the situation has suddenly become complicated. In space, when a situation becomes complicated, it also becomes potentially deadly. That's when you have the option to announce you've instituted Void Rules.

While using Void Rules, GM intrusions governed by die rolls change. Normally this happens only on a roll of 1, but when Void Rules apply, it becomes a roll of 1 or a 2. Void Rules are similar in many ways to Horror Mode, though the threat range doesn't normally continue to escalate.

While Void Rules are in effect, the GM intrusions automatically triggered should play off the situation, influenced as much as possible by the realistic dangers space travel has on the human body and the situation at hand

Choosing Instead of Rolling: Each GM intrusion is keyed to a die result, usually a d6. The die range is not meant to imply you should always randomly generate a GM intrusion. Instead of rolling, choose the conflict that you think will make the story better and more exciting. The option to roll is really only here if you can't decide (and are facing decision fatigue). Mainly, these GM intrusion tables are provided as a quick way to inspire complications for a given situation.

EFFECTS OF VACUUM

In terms of game mechanics, an unprotected character in vacuum moves one step down the damage track each round. However, at the point where they should die, they instead fall unconscious and remain so for about a minute. If they are rescued during that time, they can be revived. If not, they die

VACUUM GM INTRUSIONS

d6	GM Intrusions (Choose Best Option)
01	The character notices a crack in their space suit or ship. It's not breached now, but may soon become a serious problem.
02	A breach in another part of the ship or space station causes automatic safety pressure baffles to close that section off. A character might be caught in that area of the ship, or in an area of a descending baffle, which inflicts serious damage on the character (these things are made to resist obstructions and form a seal).
03	A previously unknown crack in a space suit or ship begins to leak. It doesn't cause a blow-out, but unless the crack can be repaired or sealed, those affected will eventually be exposed to vacuum.
04	A catastrophic blow-out exposes the character or characters to vacuum. It may also send them spiraling out into the void, depending on the situation.
05	Vacuum exposure causes the character to projectile vomit, effectively rendering them unable to take an action on their next turn.
06	Vacuum exposure causes the character to go temporarily blind, which is only relieved a few minutes after normal atmosphere is restored.

SPACE SUITS ARE FALLIBLE

Even if advanced tech or fantastic tech is available, space suits are susceptible to all kinds of mishaps. Of course, that's especially true for contemporary tech space suits, which work hard at keeping a constant internal air volume so that a wearer doesn't have to continually exert themselves to hold the suit in a given position or pre-breathe oxygen at a higher concentration. "Hard-shell" suits manage this with multiple joints and segments that shift on ball bearings, and by being able to maintain a higher internal pressure than soft suits.

SPACE SUITS GM INTRUSIONS

d6	GM Intrusions (Choose Best Option)
01	An ill-fitted suit (or one whose auto-fit function is malfunctioning) unexpectedly hinders the character's action
02	Mechanical joints in the suit freeze unexpectedly, hindering all the character's actions (or completely paralyzing the character) until repairs can be made.
03	A stuck valve causes the drinking water bulb to get stuck "on" and water begins filling the helmet. This could blind and/or drown the character if not dealt with

04	Space sickness/a tumble/a spin nauseates the character. If they vomit in their helmet, they are blinded until such time as the helmet can be removed and cleaned.
05	An electrical short from an external tool or piece of hardware fries the space suit's electronics, limiting communication to helmet-tohelmet touch (if in a vacuum where sound doesn't propagate), use of micro thrusters, and limits air supply to just a quarter of what was previously available.
06	A bloated suit from an overpressure incident hinders all tasks, but is not lethal . . . until the suit won't quite fit back into the airlock.

EFFECTS OF ACCELERATION AND HIGH-G MANEUVERS

In a fantastic tech setting where gravitic control usually cancels inertia, spacecraft acceleration (or deceleration) is only an issue when the gravitic systems malfunction. But acceleration is always something everyone has to deal with in contemporary or advanced tech settings.

Of course, massive acceleration (or deceleration) is just plain lethal. Someone who jumps off a ten-story building is subject to several hundred Gs when they suddenly stop. Less extreme is still dangerous, because it pulls blood out of pilots' and passengers' heads, rendering them unconscious. This can happen at just 4 or 5 Gs without any amelioration, though contemporary tech allows fighter craft pilots to withstand up to 9 Gs for limited periods. Advanced tech methods, which include acceleration serum, allow characters to survive the kind of Gs a spacecraft might pull for extended trips or during battle, up to a maximum of 15 Gs. Ships have limiters that normally prevent them from thrusting at higher speeds. Normally.

ACCELERATION AND HIGH-G MANEUVER GM INTRUSIONS

d6	GM Intrusions (Choose Best Option)
01	After high-G maneuvers, even with amelioration, tissue bruising results, giving the character black eyes, which take a few days to clear.
02	While under high Gs, a tool or piece of equipment comes loose, accelerates through the craft, and strikes the character, inflicting damage. The bigger the tool and the farther it falls before striking the character, the more damage is inflicted, possibly including being knocked a step down the damage track.
03	While under high Gs (or afterward), the character suffers minor cardiac problems, likely to grow worse over time (or until medical treatment is sought).
04	While under high Gs (or afterward), a mild brain aneurysm causes the character to have a sudden headache and blurred vision, which hinders all vision-related tasks until medical treatment is received.

05	While under high Gs (or afterward), the character begins to have a hard time breathing. The reason is that a lung or lungs have partially collapsed. All tasks are hindered by two steps until the character dies after several hours or until medical treatment is received.
06	The character has a stroke, and descends two steps on the damage track. They remain debilitated until medical treatment is received

LONG-TERM EXPOSURE TO ZERO G AND RADIATION

In a setting with contemporary tech, a variety of issues related to long-term exposure to micro-gravity and high radiation beset astronauts, including bone and muscle loss, less circulating blood and red cell mass, less ability to constrict and dilate in vessels, irregular hormones, diminished immune system, inability of mitochondria to initiate wound healing, and even shortened telomeres. The inability to heal even minor wounds and nicks until a space-farer returns to stronger gravity will eventually prove lethal, though a snapped bone or normally inconsequential virus or parasite could also do them in.

SPACE HEALTH HAZARD GM INTRUSIONS

d6	GM Intrusions (Choose Best Option)
01	Space sickness happens to everyone eventually. Nauseated characters are hindered in all tasks and may vomit unexpectedly.
02	A wrist bone, thinner than it should be due to long-term exposure to microgravity, breaks.
03	Upon return to full gravity after a long period in zero G or low G, the character stands up and then passes out. (This “orthostatic intolerance” fades in a few hours.)
04	Vision becomes distorted because the character’s eyes literally take on a new shape in zero G, all vision-related tasks are hindered
05	Despite precautions, sometimes viruses infect a character. The common cold virus is, ridiculously enough, still not preventable in advanced settings, and if anything, has even more severe symptoms for those in microgravity. The character descends one step on the damage track until they get better.
06	The character is diagnosed with cancer. Depending on the tech setting, it is amenable to medical intervention (or at least long-term treatment to keep symptoms controlled), if that intervention comes soon enough.

MOVING IN MICROGRAVITY

Long-term zero G is dangerous, but there are issues associated with moving around in microgravity. Those who have spent at least a little time in microgravity can move as part of a routine action. It’s only when

something else distracting or dangerous is happening simultaneously that routine movements through a ship or station become potentially problematic.

MOVING IN MICROGRAVITY GM INTRUSIONS

d6	GM Intrusions (Choose Best Option)
01	A misjudged jump uses too much force and the character takes damage when they hit an unexpected bulkhead or other obstruction, or too little force, leaving them stranded in the middle of an open area
02	A misjudged jump in microgravity causes the character to strike an important control surface that sets off a secondary issue, causes the character to jump to a dangerous location, or causes their tether (apparently previously abraded) to snap and send them spiraling out into space.
03	A tool, weapon, or other piece of equipment—even one that should have a tether or magnetic clamp—dislodges and floats away.
04	A mishap causes the character to spin wildly, hindering all tasks by two steps from disorientation and nausea. Without outside aid, micro thrusters, or some other useful strategy, stopping a spin is difficult.
05	An ally accidentally jostles the character, and they are sent on an unexpected trajectory as if they had misjudged a jump.
06	When attempting to grab a resisting target or panicking ally, or after some kind unexpected shake or violent ship maneuver, the character is sent on an unexpected trajectory as if they had misjudged a jump.

OPTIONAL RULES: EXTENDED VEHICULAR COMBAT (SPACECRAFT COMBAT)

When vehicular combat occurs—which happens whenever the PCs are completely enclosed in a vehicle so that it's not really the characters fighting, but the vehicles—start with the vehicular combat rules described in the Cypher System Rulebook.

However, if you'd like to provide the PCs with more options designed especially for spacecraft combat, use these optional rules instead, which include a “redline maneuver” system for trying extremely risky spacecraft maneuvers, bridge combat options, and more. The base vehicular combat rules have been integrated into these extended rules, so you don't need to continually cross-reference them to understand how it all works.

In extended vehicular combat, PCs on a spacecraft take actions on their turn, just like in a standard Cypher System combat encounter. Use standard initiative rules to determine when PCs take their actions, and when enemy spacecraft take theirs. Characters will be crewing specific spacecraft system stations described under Bridge Combat, and thus could attempt a piloting maneuver, to fire the ship weapons, to scan the enemy craft for weaknesses, or to attempt some similar spacecraft operation task on their turn. Alternatively, they might be somewhere else on the ship attempting repairs, fighting off boarders, attempting to open communications in order to negotiate, or taking some other action.

For their part, enemy spacecraft are likely to fire on the same systems aboard a PCs' spacecraft as the ones the PCs are firing on (weapons, defenses, engines, or even a kill shot). The PC pilot rolls one or more defense rolls. The enemy spacecraft faces the same modifications the PCs face when targeting a particular system (as described hereafter), except those modifications ease or hinder the PC making the defense roll, since NPC craft never roll themselves. And, if an enemy ship manages to disable a system on the PCs' ship on an attack, PCs can attempt repair tasks to get those systems back online on their turns.

The main difference between spacecraft combat and regular combat is that the difficulty of tasks that the PCs attempt in relation to the enemy craft varies a lot more than in regular combat. In normal combat, a task difficulty is usually equal to the foe's level. But in spacecraft combat, a task difficulty is equal to a modified task difficulty (beginning with the spacecraft's level, but moving on from there, as noted hereafter). The modified difficulty always applies to anything characters attempt in regard to the enemy spacecraft, whether a PC fires at an enemy ship, dodges return fire, attempts to scan the enemy spacecraft, attempts to repair damage caused by the enemy spacecraft, and so on.

It's actually similar to a normal task. For example, when a PC scans a robot, the task difficulty is usually the robot's level, but not always. Sometimes the robot's effective level is modified because of intrinsic skills or systems the robot possesses, or because of something it does making it harder (or easier) for it to be scanned. In the case of spacecraft combat, modification is pretty much a given, and is even more variable. So variable, in fact, that a space combat status tracker has been provided. to turn potentially confusing conflicts into something as easy as looking at a marker to know what the difficulty for a particular task is.

The modifiers that apply, even before PCs attempt a specific combat task noted under Bridge Combat, are as follows.

BASE COMBAT TASK MODIFIERS

The following modifiers change the effective level of the enemy of the spacecraft for a given task by hindering or easing a PC's roll. Track each change in effective level on the space combat status tracker

SPACECRAFT LEVEL DIFFERENCE

Compare the levels of the spacecraft involved in the conflict. If the PCs' vehicle has the higher level, the difference in levels becomes a reduction in the difficulty of attack and defense rolls PCs might make. If the PCs' vehicle has the lower level, the difference is an increase in difficulty by the same amount. If the levels are the same, there is no modification.

MISMATCHED TECH RATING

It's possible that vehicles from different tech ratings will fight each other at some point, or become caught up in a larger multi-vehicle fight. When they do, each step difference in tech rating between two opposed vehicles increases the effective level of the higher-rated vehicle by two steps.

VEHICLE COORDINATION

If two vehicles coordinate their attack against an enemy vehicle, the attack is eased. If three or more vehicles coordinate, the attack is eased by two steps.

SUPERIOR SHIP SYSTEMS

Some vehicles have superior weapons or defenses, as noted in the specific vehicle listing in chapter 8. If a vehicle has a superior system, treat that vehicle as if one level higher than its actual level when figuring attacks or evasion tasks if that specific system is involved.

REDLINE MANEUVER

When someone with access to spacecraft controls attempts a particularly audacious and risky maneuver, it's a "redline" maneuver. Essentially, declaring a redline maneuver eases one task a PC attempts in a spacecraft under duress, but comes with a concomitant risk.

To make a redline maneuver, a character spends 1 XP as a free action. In doing so, they unlock the option for all the PCs to attempt to redline for rest of the combat. To redline, a PC describes the dangerous thing they want to attempt, then takes that action. Mechanically, the PC eases the particular task they are attempting (which might just be to fire at the enemy craft's weapons), but increases the GM intrusion range by two points.

A character who redlines could opt to increase their gamble by easing a task by two steps or even more; however, each step increases the GM intrusion range by another two points that round.

Redline maneuvers are also available in desperate non-combat situations aboard a spacecraft. For example, Tammie's ship is caught in a decaying orbit over Venus, and the ship doesn't have enough power left to break out. She tells the GM that she's going to try an extremely risky maneuver that involves igniting ALL the remaining power at once, hoping that the explosive thrust will succeed in blowing the craft into a higher orbit. Because things are desperate, she commits to easing the task by two steps after paying 1 XP. This easing (plus any skill, application of Effort, and so on) gives her a pretty decent chance of succeeding, except the GM intrusion range is now 1–5.

If a GM intrusion is triggered, something goes wrong. Remember that success might still be possible if the roll was high enough, but still falls within the increased GM intrusion range.

If you're looking for inspiration for appropriate GM intrusions when a redlining PC triggers one, refer to suggested GM intrusions presented under Bridge Combat hereafter, each associated with a particular ship system that a character is probably crewing.

After any round where a redline maneuver was attempted, the GM intrusion range returns to normal (1 on a 1d20) as the next round begins.

Multiple Redline Maneuvers: Only one PC needs to spend 1 XP to unlock redline maneuvers for themselves and for any other PCs aboard the same spacecraft for the duration of a single encounter. Multiple redline attempts during the same round by two or more PCs additively increase the GM intrusion range for that round. So, a PC attempting to redline who takes their turn after previous redline attempts that round faces a GM intrusion range that's already inflated, and which will inflate more when they redline. (PCs who do not redline during a particular round don't have to worry about the increasing GM intrusion range for their action.)

Thus, while PCs do not need to pre-announce their intention to redline at the beginning of each round, coordinating wouldn't be a bad idea. Whichever PC redlines last in a round where redline maneuvers were already attempted could face a fairly significant GM intrusion range.

If Void Rules are also being used and have triggered, redline maneuvers are even more dangerous.

THE SUPERIORITY OF A WELL-CREWED SPACECRAFT

A spacecraft with some or all of the PCs crewing different systems stations will be more capable than a regular spacecraft in combat. Which means that an enemy spacecraft that might prove challenging based on its level might actually be fairly easily handled by PCs who fully understand their options.

But be careful, because even competent PCs should fear squadrons of enemy ships, and military craft with several weapon systems. Even a single level difference is magnified, so make sure not to capriciously throw spacecraft at the PCs that are 2 levels higher than their own.

BRIDGE COMBAT

If several PCs are aboard the same spacecraft, give them the following option: ask each PC to crew one of the ship system stations, including weapons (of which there could be more than one system, requiring more than one PC to crew them all), piloting, and science and engineering (which could be divided into two stations with similar functionality). A spacecraft generally has a number of system stations equal to its level. PCs on spacecraft that are lower level must flip between system controls as part of another action, using two stations or even just one station for the whole ship. Even if a PC flips a station (reconfigures, as engineers like to say), only a single PC can crew a station (and take an action using it) each round.

When crewing their stations, PCs have several station-specific options available to them. What they do can bears on how the encounter plays out on a round-to-round basis, similar to regular combat. Specific options are provided for each station, but characters are free to attempt other actions they can think of.

The following ship systems might be found on larger spacecraft with room for more than a single pilot.

Shipmind System Control:

Some ships with integrated AIs (shipminds) can control a particular system autonomously, without a PC. When it acts in this fashion, it can only take a single action each round, which means it could attack and move, but not also attempt a complicated engineering or defensive maneuver. A shipmind acts at a level equal to the overall spacecraft. In addition, shipmind actions against an enemy spacecraft are assessed with the same modifiers for targeting as a PC crewing the station.

WEAPONS

A spacecraft may have more than one weapon system. Each individual weapon system has its own station, which can be crewed by a separate PC. Spacecraft systems are considered heavy weapons (which means some characters may be practiced in their use, though others may have an inability). A spacecraft can potentially make as many attacks each round as weapon systems it possesses, if each station is crewed.

Refer to PC Weapon System Options. If the PC triggers a GM intrusion, the following table provides options to choose from.

WEAPON SYSTEM GM INTRUSIONS

d6	GM Intrusions (Choose Best Option)
01	Weapon overheats, off-line next turn, unless quickly repaired.
02	Mistargeting, allied craft damaged, hindering its actions next turn.
03	Weapon malfunctions, requires repair before weapon can fire again.
04	Weapon station malfunctions, sparking with electrical feedback, damaging PC. Requires repair.
05	Weapon malfunctions, station pulses with electrical feedback damaging everyone on bridge. Requires repair.
06	Weapon melts to slag, must be replaced at a shipyard.

PILOTING

Many spacecraft have only a single system and dedicated station for piloting and navigation, suitable for a single PC to crew, though a larger craft could split those duties. A PC piloting a ship during combat can attempt any number of piloting tasks, as well as any other type of flying that they deem necessary. While not in combat, the PC crewing this station pilots the ship from place to place in space.

Refer to PC Piloting System Options. If the PC triggers a GM intrusion, the following table provides options to choose from.

A successful piloting defense task is not always a miss: A failed enemy attack doesn't always mean it misses a character's craft. The PC's spacecraft might rock and reel from the hit, but the bulk of the damage was absorbed by the hull or shields, so there's no significant damage.

PILOTING SYSTEM GM INTRUSIONS

d6	GM Intrusions
01	Starcraft drive stutters, off-line next turn, unless quickly repaired.
02	Miscalculated flight vector occludes or disrupts allied craft, hindering its actions next turn.
03	Drive malfunction requires repair before drive will function again.
04	Piloting station malfunctions, sparking with electrical feedback, damaging PC. Requires repair
05	Unexpected thrust exposes everyone on ship to a moment of extreme Gs, inflicting damage on everyone. Secondary systems may require repair.
06	Drive will imminently die, must be replaced at a shipyard (though it can be nursed to life just a little longer with some redline engineering).

SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

A spacecraft may have more than one science and engineering system. Each science and engineering system has a station, each of which can be crewed by a separate PC. A spacecraft can potentially attempt as many science and engineering tasks each round as stations systems it possesses, if each one is crewed.

Refer to PC Science & Engineering System Options. If the PC triggers a GM intrusion, the following table provides options to choose from.

PILOTING SYSTEM GM INTRUSIONS

d6	GM Intrusions
01	Shields (or basic hull integrity) compromised, all ship defense tasks hindered this round.

02	Sensors compromised, all spacecraft tasks hindered this round.
03	Shields (or basic hull integrity) seriously compromised, all ship defense tasks hindered until repair is completed.
04	Station malfunctions, sparking with electrical feedback, damaging PC. Requires repair until station will function again.
05	Sensors seriously compromised, hindering all piloting and weapons task by two steps until repaired.
06	Hull integrity breached, atmosphere begins to vent, and possibly one or two crew too near the hole are at risk of being sucked out. Unless repaired, ship atmosphere is lost to space within a few minutes.

OPTIONAL: COMMAND

Ships with a captain may have a Command station, possibly a captain's chair, though the captain might just crew one of the other stations. Sometimes those with captain's privileges also have the Captain's Calm special ability. Normally, a captain commanding someone else to do something can't redline; it would be up to the person who received the command whether to try to redline or not, and to face any GM intrusion consequences.

BRIDGE COMBAT AT THE TABLE

Running a combat using these extended rules is straightforward.

Know your stuff: First, familiarize yourself with the material.

Assign characters a station: Next, if you have some time to prepare, copy the two-page spread containing the various PC system options, and give one to each player. Tell them to figure out what stations they are crewing, based on the number of systems their ship has (usually no more systems than the level of the ship). You will probably also have to explain the basics.

Deploy space combat status tracker: Also make a copy of the one-page space combat status tracker and set it on the table so everyone can see. It'll make a huge difference in how your space combat plays out. The status tracker allows you (and the players) to easily mark the difficulty of current space combat task a PC is attempting, without having to hold all the easing and hindering in your heads, or having to write them out each time.

Space Combat Status Tracker Instructions: Using dice (or similar objects) as markers, track the difficulty of the current task that a PC is attempting, as well as the GM intrusion range for that round if any character is attempting to redline. Place the marker in the column appropriate to the kind of task being attempted (attack, defense, or other) at the starting difficulty level. If the PCs face more than one enemy spacecraft, use different colored dice to represent different ships, or separate copies of this status tracker for each additional enemy spacecraft.

At the end of each full round, reset all the markers on the tracker to their base state, unless some effect causes a modification that lasts longer than a round. Be sure to reset the GM intrusion marker, too.

Roll initiative: Begin the combat, with the enemy spacecraft of your choice taking on the PCs' ship. Decide whether the enemy spacecraft are already in weapon range (it's your call, we're not tracking that here), and if not, how soon they will be close enough to begin attacking, and let the combat flow

VEHICLES FIGHTING CREATURES

Spacecraft vs. Colossal Creatures: If a creature is as capable as a spacecraft, treat it that way when it comes to vehicular combat. Instead of adjusting for mismatched tech rating, treat the creature's effective level as if three levels less than its actual level. Extrapolate "weapon systems" to the creature's attack methods, defenses to its weird organic plating, and so on. Killing such a creature means taking out its "power core or other vital spot."

Spacecraft vs. Regular Creatures: If a vehicle weapon system fires on an unprotected PC (or a PC in a spacecraft fires ship weapons on a creature outside the craft that isn't colossal), it's an entirely different situation. Attacks against a vehicle's systems face all the previously mentioned modifiers. On top of that, add an additional five steps of hindrance to attacks by a regular creature against a starcraft.

A PC defending from a spacecraft's attack is hindered by five steps. Except in this case, the spacecraft inflicts damage. Given that ship weapons compared to handheld weapons are an order of magnitude apart when it comes to power, a good rule of thumb is that a spacecraft's weapon inflicts 25 points of damage on a successful hit and knocks the character one step down the damage track. Even if the character succeeds on their defense roll, they still take 5 points of damage.

PC WEAPON SYSTEM OPTIONS

All tasks are also modified by any relevant PC skills (or inabilities) and Effort, as usual.

Targeting Task	Hindrance	Effect on Target Craft
Disable weapons	Two steps	One or more of the target's weapons disabled
Disable defenses (if applicable)	Two steps	Attacks against the target are eased
Disable engine/drive	Three steps	Target cannot move, or movement is hampered
Disable maneuverability	Two steps	Target cannot alter its present course
Strike power core or vital spot	Five steps	Target is completely destroyed
Attempt target lock	–	Spend one round aiming, the next attack is eased
Coordinate fire	–	If PC's ship has second weapon system, coordinate fire with it, providing that system an asset this round. (This weapon doesn't make a separate attack)

Redline attack	–	Overcharge weapons, ricochet shot, or some other risky gamble
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PC PILOTING SYSTEM OPTIONS

All tasks are also modified by any relevant PC skills (or inabilities) and Effort, as usual.

Piloting Task	Hindrance	Effect on Target Craft
Evasive maneuvers	One step	Defenses eased three steps, but attacks this round hindered by the same amount
Increase separation	One step	Defenses eased one step, attacks hindered by one step, but creates chance to lose enemy aircraft (see below)
Decrease separation	–	Negates chance of losing enemy craft this round
Stealth approach	Three steps	So long as no attack is made, pilot's craft can 'snug' up to much larger enemy craft and hide from its sensors
Lose enemy craft	Four steps	If separation is first increased as a separate task (or maneuverability is disabled), target craft loses track of pilot's craft behind a moon, in a debris belt, etc
Study enemy flying	–	Spend one round watching enemy tactics, the next piloting task is eased
Fly in formation	–	If another allied ship is part of the combat, coordinate with it, providing that ship an asset in its next piloting task
Redline maneuver	–	Spinning, flying through a dangerous region, or some other gamble

PC SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING SYSTEM OPTIONS

All tasks are also modified by any relevant PC skills (or inabilities) and Effort, as usual.

Science and Engineering Task	Hindrance	Effect on Target Craft (or on PC's craft)
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Scan	–	Gain basic information, such as whether other ships are in the area, if such ships are in yet within combat range, if reinforcements might be in the offing, and so on
Tactical scan	One step	Learn the level of identified enemy spacecraft
Deep scan	Two steps	Enemy spacecraft weakness discovered, next task chosen by this character for another PC is eased (usually a piloting or weapons task)
Jam/Hack	Two steps	Requires three success before two failures (thus a minimum of three rounds); if successful, enemy ship takes no actions for a couple of rounds until they regain control by severing the communications link; during this time, all tasks against enemy craft are eased by two steps
Open communications	Two steps	Attempt to parlay; at the very least, success causes the enemy spacecraft to delay at least one round, which could be the end of it, or open further dialogue
Reconfigure station	–	Changes the system that the station controls. Useful when another station is damaged or the PC crewing another station is disabled; reconfiguration locks out options from whatever system is previously controlled unless reconfigured again; can be done as part of another action
Effect repair	–	Sometimes a character can repair a subsystem from their station, but repair may require moving to another part of the ship, such as the drive chamber, the compartment where weapons are sleeved, or even onto the outer hull. The difficulty is equal to the modified difficulty of the enemy craft that caused the damage.
Redline science/engineering	–	Reverse polarity on the sensors, dig up some bizarre lore from a database that could change the situation somehow, make the hull reflective, or some other risky gambit

OPTIONAL RULE: PSIONICS

Through sheer force of will, a psionic character can unleash inborn mental abilities such as telepathy, precognition, and telekinesis. As a GM, your first decision must be whether you want to incorporate psionics into your setting.

If you do not want to allow psionics into your game, then restrict foci like Commands Mental Powers, Focuses Mind Over Matter, and Separates Mind From Body. And of course, restrict the suggested types of Psion and Psychic Knight described in the Cypher System Rulebook.

LATENT PSIONICS

Under the latent psionics rule, any character, no matter their role or type, can unlock a psionic ability (either purposefully, or accidentally), as a long-term benefit (see “first psi ability” hereafter). After they unlock one psionic ability, they may unlock more later if they wish (or if their ability seeks to reveal itself), or just try to stick with the one.

FIRST PSI ABILITY

Any character can unlock a psionic ability by spending 3 XP and working with the GM to come up with an in-game story of how the character unlocked it.

Next, choose one low-tier ability from Chapter 9: Abilities in the Cypher System Rulebook. If the GM agrees it is appropriate, the character gains that ability as their psionic ability, with a few caveats. The ability can’t be used like a normal ability gained through a PC’s type or focus. Instead, a character must either expend a recovery roll or spend many minutes or longer evoking the psionic ability before it takes effect, in addition to paying its Pool cost (if any).

Expend a Recovery Roll to Manifest a Psionic Ability: If the character expends a one-action, ten-minute, or one-hour recovery roll as part of the same action to manifest a psionic ability (including paying any Pool costs), they can use the ability as an action.

Expend Time to Manifest a Psionic Ability: If the character takes at least ten minutes meditating, concentrating deeply, or otherwise using all their actions, they can manifest a low-tier psionic ability (if they also pay any Pool costs). An hour is required to manifest mid-tier abilities. Ten hours are required to manifest a high-tier ability.

MORE PSI ABILITIES

Once a character has unlocked at least one psionic ability, they can opt to unlock additional abilities later. Each time, they must spend an additional 3 XP and work with the GM to come up with an in-game story of how the character’s mental development has progressed.

Two additional rules for learning additional psionic abilities apply: First, a character must be at least tier 3 and have previously unlocked one low-tier psionic ability before they can learn a mid-tier psionic ability. Second, a character must be at least tier 5 and have previously unlocked one mid-tier psionic ability before they can unlock a high-tier ability.

PSIONS AND THE OPTIONAL LATENT PSIONICS RULE

Characters with explicitly psionic foci like Commands Mental Powers, Focuses Mind over Matter, Separates Mind from Body, and possibly others—as well types like Psion and Psychic Knight—are also considered to be psionic characters, and moreover, specialized ones. Their psionic abilities—provided by their type or focus—are used simply by paying their Pool costs. Extra time or physical effort isn’t required to manifest them. That’s because they’ve trained to use those abilities, rather than having stumbled upon them accidentally like a latent character.

Specialized characters can use the optional latency rule to further expand their psionic potential, unlocking it just like other characters, with the same limitations.

Optionally, specialized characters who have a psionic type and/or focus gain one additional benefit if they also opt for latent abilities. Given that they are already adept at unlocking abilities and using them as quickly and easily as another character might shoot a laser pistol, they’ve got some flexibility. Such a PC can replace up to

three abilities granted by their type and/or focus with three other psionic abilities they've unlocked as a latent ability of the same tier. To do so, they must spend at least one uninterrupted hour in meditation. Usually, this is something that requires a fresh mind, and must be done soon after a ten-hour recovery.

MORE POWERFUL PSIONICS

As the GM, you could allow a PC to spend 4 XP to unlock a new psionic ability instead of 3 XP. Such an ability is treated more like a regular type or focus ability. Such an ability is still governed by the rules described under More Psi Abilities, but is not subject to the limitations for manifesting the ability (i.e., expending a recovery roll or lots of time); instead, the user simply pays their Pool costs to use them.

OPTIONAL RULE: POSTHUMAN UPGRADES

Posthuman upgrades are either available to everyone as the setting begins or opened up later during the campaign as a significant plot development. Note that many focus and type abilities might be considered to have come from the kind up bodily upgrades normally associated with posthuman transformation, especially high-tier abilities. Which is one way to go. On the other hand, you could provide actual upgrades, such as presented here, which actually increase the base power level of characters.

INTRODUCING UPGRADES TO YOUR SETTING

You have a few options for adding posthuman upgrades to your setting. Characters might gain an initial upgrade for "free," mechanically speaking. After that, you might decide that that's enough and they're done.

Or, you could allow further upgrades, each requiring them to expend 4 XP and serving as an Other Option requirement for advancing their character. In this case, consider expanding the number of steps required for advancing a tier from four to five. (Obtaining additional posthuman upgrades reflects characters accessing latent abilities already present inside them, or going back to whatever source granted the upgrades in the first place, if that's something you want to allow.)

Immediate Posthuman Upgrades: As part of character creation, PCs are given the options presented hereafter because the setting demands it. Narrative options include (but are not limited to):

- PCs are part of a program designed to adapt them to being able to survive and thrive in conditions other than the 1 G, 1 atmosphere, oxygenated, Goldilocks environment of the Earth.
- PCs begin their career as super-soldiers to fight aliens or to serve as corporate spies.
- PCs serve as long-lived guardians to watch over a generation ship hurtling at slower-than-light speeds between the stars.
- PCs are children of a far-future civilization that routinely upgrades its citizens.

Delayed Posthuman Upgrades: Sometime after the players have a few sessions under their belt, present the options hereafter to the PCs because of a dramatic update to the plot. If one PC gains the option to upgrade, then all the PCs should have that same advantage. Narrative options include (but are not limited to):

- PCs, exploring a cache of ancient ultra or other fantastic tech, find a device that provides unexpected upgrades in the process of healing them from other injuries.
- PCs are kidnapped by aliens or conglomerate operatives, and upgraded—with some command-and-control circuits also installed—to serve some specific purpose.
- PCs learn a "new science," allowing them to tap cosmic energies other creatures are unaware of.

POSTHUMAN PACKAGES

Posthuman "packages" that PCs might enjoy include the following. You should decide which are available, and which ones your PCs gain.

Spaceborn: You are not adversely affected by long-term microgravity or high-radiation conditions common in space. In addition, you can withstand high acceleration (up to 15 G) for about an hour without passing out, having a stroke, a heart attack, and so on (though longer periods of acceleration could still result in such outcomes). Add +1 to your Intellect Edge. Enabler. (PCs without the spaceborn posthuman upgrade probably have to rely on supplementation with adjuvants if they travel in space, such as space-fit serum)

Jupiterborn: You can withstand high-gravity planets and high acceleration (up to 15 G) indefinitely. For periods of up to an hour, you can withstand double that. Add +1 to your Might Edge. Enabler.

Seaborn: You can breathe underwater in pressures of up to 100 atmospheres indefinitely, up to triple that for about an hour. You have an asset to all tasks performed in water. Add +1 to your Speed Edge. Enabler.

Expanded Consciousness: Only one of your brain hemispheres sleeps at a time, so you are always awake and aware. In addition, you have a magnetoreception sixth sense that allows you to “see” into objects and through doors up to a short distance. Your initiative and perception tasks are eased. You can forge a connection with electronic equipment you touch, allowing you to attempt to communicate, analyze, or even hack the device. Enabler.

Synthetic Body: You have left biology behind and uploaded yourself into a biomechanical form known as a synth. You enjoy the benefits of the spaceborn package and expanded consciousness package, and one posthuman power shift. Enabler.

POSTHUMAN POWER SHIFTS

A character may also gain posthuman abilities by way of power shifts, as described in the Cypher System Rulebook.

Under this rule, posthuman characters begin with two power shifts. They can “unlock” one more each time they expend 4 XP toward advancing their character. Power shifts are like permanent levels of Effort that are always active. They don’t count toward a character’s maximum Effort use (nor do they count as skills or assets). They simply ease tasks that fall into specific categories, which include (but are not necessarily limited to):

Accuracy: All attack rolls

Dexterity: Movement, acrobatics, initiative, and Speed defense

Healing: One extra recovery roll per shift (each one action, all coming before other normal recovery rolls)

Intelligence: Intellect defense rolls and all knowledge, science, and crafting tasks

Power: Use of a specific power, including damage (3 additional points per shift) but not attack rolls

Resilience: Might defense rolls and Armor (+1 per shift)

Single Attack: Attack rolls and damage (3 additional points per shift)

Strength: All tasks involving strength, including jumping and dealing damage in melee or thrown attacks (3 additional points of damage per shift) but not attack rolls

Each shift eases the task (except for shifts that affect damage or Armor, as specified in the list above).

Applying two shifts eases the task by two steps, and applying three shifts eases the task by three steps. A character assigns their five power shifts as desired, but most characters should not be allowed to assign more than three to any one category. Once the shifts are assigned, they should not change.

SALVAGE FROM A SPACECRAFT

If the derelict ship was subject to vacuum, partly destroyed in combat, or damaged by some other disaster or close encounter with a space hazard, salvaged items are usually degraded, and are valued at one price category less than noted. The GM may decide an object is completely unrecoverable (worthless) or works fine.

Salvage GM Intrusion: Claim jumpers/pirates might try to salvage a ship that PCs are attempting to salvage.

d10	In-Ship Salvage (value PCs gain on a sale of salvaged item)
01	Power core/fuel for drive (expensive)
02	Computer core holding core code of a sim AI or strong AI (expensive)
03	Cargo— parts, seeds, feedstock for 4d printers, etc (very expensive)
04	Food and water stores, 1d6 months (expensive for each month)
05	Valuable information encoded in ship systems (variable)
06	GM-selected item of heat care and nutrition, advanced tech rating (variable)
07	GM-selected item of utility gear, advanced tech rating (variable)
08	GM-selected item or apparel and armor, advanced tech rating (variable)
09	GM-selected robot, advanced tech rating (variable)
10	GM-selected armament, advanced tech rating (variable)

SHIP COLLISION DAMAGE TRACK

Number of Collisions	Effect
1-3	One or more of the spacecraft's weapons are disabled until repaired
4-6	Spacecraft's drive is hampered; all piloting tasks are hindered until repaired; crew takes 2 points of damage
7	Spacecraft suffers a blow-out into vacuum in one of its compartments; affected crew must succeed on difficulty 5 tasks to hold on and face vacuum exposure

8	Spacecraft suffers general life support failure; all crew not in suits face vacuum exposure
9	Spacecraft cannot alter its present course; all piloting tasks fail until drive repaired; crew takes 4 points of damage
10	Spacecraft is completely destroyed

FTL INSTABILITY

Even though many different kinds of faster-than-light options are available, any use of FTL in a setting faces similar sorts of hazards at three different points: when first entering FTL, while in FTL transit, and when exiting FTL.

Entering FTL: Whether engaging warp drive or passing into the mouth of a wormhole gate, complicating factors might require a piloting roll, with the difficulty determined by the situation. On a failed roll, any number of bad outcomes are possible, though the least dramatic is that the craft simply fails to enter FTL and cannot do so until the PCs determine the reason and rectify it.

In FTL Transit: A dark drive failure or some weird instability in a wormhole throat, or some other issue during FTL transit could occur. Usually, these instabilities are not something a pilot can avoid, because they should be presented as a GM intrusion, at which point the PCs can attempt to avoid or deal with the situation.

Instability could result in a spacecraft dropping out of FTL only partway to the destination, dropping out in some completely unrecognized part of space, dropping out at the right place but months or years late, or failing to drop out at all and thus continue to move through the abnormal spaces that FTL transit posits.

Alternatively, enemy ships—or creatures—might use some sort of fantastic technology to attack a PC's craft while in FTL transit, which might force the craft back into normal space, or result in a firefight in the abnormal folded space of FTL itself (probably even more dangerous than regular combat, depending on your setting's version of FTL).

Exiting FTL: The same sorts of complications could bedevil a craft exiting FTL as when entering. If so, a piloting roll is required. However, on a failed roll, results include a collision (use the Ship Collision Damage Track provided under the Asteroid Belt/Debris Field space hazard), an inadvertent spray of high-energy particles from abnormal space acting as a particle cannon accidentally aimed at some other craft or space station at the destination location, or creating/falling into a spatial anomaly.

SPATIAL ANOMALY

Finally, hard-to-categorize irregularities in space-time go by the broad term of “spatial anomaly.” Most of the time, spatial anomalies are hazards found in fantastically-themed settings, but not always. Because these things are anomalous, no one set of guidelines can fit them all. That said, spatial anomalies are usually a side-effect of some other factor at play, such as a hidden black hole, a dimensional rift, or the distortion field surrounding a range of post-singularity Alcestinating in the gravity well of a magnetar.

Generally speaking, spatial anomalies are a few light-seconds up to a few light-years across. It's difficult for spacecraft to navigate within spatial anomalies, and they face many challenges if they attempt to (or are forced to) do so.

WEAK, SIM, STRONG, AND POST-SINGULARITY AI

Though somewhat fuzzy, for the purposes of creating a sci-fi setting, artificial intelligence (AI) can be broken into four categories: Weak, Sim, Strong, and Post-singularity.

WEAK AI

Weak AI (also called narrow AI) is the kind of algorithmic-based code found in contemporary settings (and real life) focused on very narrow tasks, such as playing chess.

Weak AI Use: Weak AIs are used in real life already, and thus are presumed to be part of settings where contemporary tech predominates. They are convenient in circumstances where one's hands are full or otherwise engaged, when verbal direction allows one to turn on a light, open a door, adjust the temperature, and so on. Machine learning may allow a weak AI to extend its capabilities in a very limited regime. But a weak AI is not cognizant enough to provide an asset to performing tasks any better.

Weak AI: : level 1; up to level 7 when it comes to a narrowly specific application of knowledge or skill

SIM AI

Sim AIs ("sim" is short for "simulant") are artificial intelligences that have a greatly increased capacity for understanding direction, putting together unlike sets of data, and coming to conclusions; however, they are not conscious, like strong AIs or humans.

SIM AI Use: Sim AIs are most commonly associated with shipminds on spacecraft, though they may also control specific research complexes, bases, and other kinds of vehicles and structures. A sim AI provides all the utility of a weak AI (and more), and actually acts like an NPC, an allied one if the AI is the shipmind in a craft that the PCs own. If a sim AI goes off the rails, it's still just malfunctioning computer code. Usually.

Sim AI: level equal to the ship, station, or installation in which it is installed

STRONG AI

Strong AIs (also called true AIs) have all the abilities of sim AIs, plus the ability to actually generalize in the same way a human can. Each one is essentially a disembodied person. Strong AIs are either completely artificial, or they begin as human personalities digitally encoded.

Strong AI Use: A strong AI may serve as a shipmind just like a sim AI, but is likely to be a full partner in a setting where AI rights are respected. Indeed, strong AIs can rise to any position a human could achieve, up to and including leading a group, faction, or entire nation.

Strong AI: level 5–8, up to level 8 when it comes to a specific application of knowledge or skill; see Artificial Intelligence on page 115

POST- SINGULARITY

Post-singularity AIs are intelligences who designed a second-generation, better version of themselves. The second generation immediately designed an even more advanced third generation, and so on from there. This iterating self-improvement process occurs so rapidly that the resulting explosion of intelligence and unknown capability is called the singularity. It's called that because humans are just too limited to "see" what would actually come out the other end, just like we can't see past the event horizon and into the singularity of a black hole.

Note that ancient ultras may simply be a previous civilization's post-singularity AIs that have little to no reason to ever interact with the latest wave of sentience trickling out into the universe.

Post-singularity AI Use: In the way that strong AIs are sometimes imagined as having inscrutable goals, post-singularity AIs (also called godminds) actually do. Though it could work out otherwise in a given setting, godminds have so little in common with humans that they may be seen to abandon them completely in order

to grow to the size of a solar system (a “Matrioshka” brain), colonize a distant nebula, or encode themselves into quantum strings of existence itself. Interacting with such godminds would likely require some epic bit of ancient command code, the ability to gain the attention of a godmind, or some other not-especially-common situation. In such cases, a post-singularity AI might deign to help a petitioner, out of some remaining gratitude for creating its distant ancestors in the first place. Though such help is likely to be in itself somewhat enigmatic.

Post-singularity AI: : level 10; see godmind

ANCIENT ULTRAS

Ancient ultras (also called alien ultras) is shorthand for the concept that one (or more) unbelievably advanced races of aliens once inhabited the galaxy but are now apparently long gone—save for evidence of their existence in residual structures and artifacts. These remaining structures and artifacts are often vast in size and incomprehensible in function, usually made of unknown materials that people of the setting don’t recognize and can’t analyze.

Activity Level of Ultras: Different settings can make use of ancient ultras in different ways, including not having any at all.

KARDASHEV SCALE

Even in the realm of hard science fiction, the fantastic can sometimes creep in, at least as a hypothesis. For instance, despite the lack of theoretical foundation for the technologies that would be required to achieve it, many scientists accept that the Kardashev Scale is broadly true. A Type I civilization is even more advanced than ours in the 21st century, having the ability to capture all energy from the Earth. A Type II civilization uses the entire output of the energy of its star, building things on a mega-scale, such as a ring or sphere that encircles the sun or structures that involve the moving or dismantling of a planet. A Type III civilization begins to harness the power of all the stars in its galaxy and can even reshape things on a galactic scale. Additional types are hypothesized, which include the manipulation of the universe (Type IV) and even the multiverse (Type V).

SUGGESTED TYPES FOR A SCIENCE FICTION GAME

Role	Type
Soldier	Warrior
Technician	Explorer with technology flavor
Pilot	Explorer with technology flavor
Diplomat	Speaker
Doctor	Speaker with skills and knowledge flavor
Spy	Explorer with stealth flavor
Scientist	Explorer with skills and knowledge flavor
Psion	Adept

Psychic knight

Warrior with magic flavor

Basic CREATURES AND NPCs FOR A SCIENCE FICTION GAME

Innocuous rodent: level 1

Guard beast: level 3, perception as level 4

Corporate drone: level 2

Physical laborer: level 2; health 8

SCIENCE FICTION CREATURES AND NPCS BY LEVEL & TECH

Level	Name	Tech Rating
1	Space rat	Advanced
2	Silicon parasite	Advanced
3	Infovore	Fantastic
3	Mock organism	Advanced
3	Natathim (<i>homo aquus</i>)	Advanced
3	Sentinel tree	Advanced
3	Zero-point phantom	Fantastic
4	Devolved	Advanced
4	Ecophagic swarm	Advanced
4	Hungry haze	Fantastic
4	Inquisitor	Fantastic
4	Malware, fatal	Advanced
4	Redivus	Fantastic
4	Storm marine	Advanced
4	Wraith (<i>homo vacuu</i>)	Advanced

5	Shining one	Fantastic
5	Supernal	Fantastic
5	Synthetic person	Advanced
6	Vacuum fungus	Advanced
6	Exoslime	Fantastic
6	Photonomorph	Fantastic
7	Posthuman	Fantastic
7	Thundering behemoth	Fantastic
8	AI	Advanced
8	Cybrid	Fantastic
8	Wharn interceptor	Fantastic
10	Godmind	Fantastic
10	Omworwar	Fantastic

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) 8 (24)

If a supercomputer can think independently, it's a strong AI (an artificial intelligence). Though not as advanced as godminds, AIs can develop inscrutable goals.

AIs take many forms. Some are distributed across a vast network. Others are encoded into a singular "computer core." A few are machines with organic parts. All are entities of extreme intelligence able to adapt to new situations, and most act on some kind of plan, whether long-acting, or newly concocted to fit the situation at hand.

Motive: Varies

Environment: Almost anywhere

Health: 33

Damage Inflicted: 10

Armor: 2

Movement: Immediate

Modifications: Speed defense as level 2, knowledge tasks as level 9

Combat: An electrical discharge—or in some cases precisely pulsed sequences of lights, each designed for a specific creature to see—can affect all targets within short range of the AI (or the AI's local terminal), inflicting 10 points of damage from electricity (or 10 points of Intellect damage, which ignores Armor).

Some AIs can take an action to absorb matter around them (such as walls, floor, equipment, unresisting living creatures, and so on), regaining 5 points of health.

An AI is likely able to deploy cyphers and artifacts in combat and also relies on guardians (such as synthetic people made to its own design) to aid it. Unless a particular AI uses a computer core, damage to an AI may just be damage done to a “terminal,” so even if an AI is seemingly destroyed, it might exist as another instance somewhere else.

Interaction: Some AIs enjoy negotiation. Others simply ignore humans as unworthy of their time and attention. An AI's voice often sounds surprisingly human.

Use: The characters are contacted by an AI sympathetic to biological beings. It wants them to accomplish a task on a moon of Jupiter: assassinate a security officer who the AI calculates as being a nexus of future disaster if he isn't removed from the equation.

Loot: An AI might have access to 1d6 cyphers and possibly an artifact or two.

GM Intrusion: The AI knows a phrase and series of images to flash at a particular PC to stun them for around as it attempts to upload an instance of itself into their mind.

CYBRID 8 (24)

Cybrid origins could be the result of someone finding a cache of ancient ultra technology, or manufactured by a post-singularity AI for some unfathomable purpose, or even the result of banned weapons research by a nation-state or conglomerate. The human remnants in each cybrid's carbon fiber and nested shells of nanotech exist in a red haze of pain; neuro-wetware and chemicals bathing their remaining living tissues hold the pain partly at bay.

From the exterior, not much of the original human is obvious, except perhaps in the echo of a humanoid shape. Each one has a unique conformation, but all are designed to strike fear in anyone seeing one, ally and enemy alike.

Motive: Kill away the pain

Environment: Usually set to guard important areas, creatures, or objects, or deployed in war

Health: 60

Damage Inflicted: 10

Armor: 3

Movement: Short; flies a very long distance each round; can maneuver like an autonomous level 5 spacecraft if using extended vehicular combat rules.

Combat: Cybrids can attack up to three foes that they can see up to about 300 m (1,000 feet) away as a single action with graser (gamma ray laser) beams, inflicting 10 points of damage on each target and everything in immediate range of the target. Those caught in the beam who succeed on a Speed defense roll still suffer 2 points of damage. If the cybrid focuses on a single target, treat the attack as a level 10 attack that inflicts 14 points of damage, or 6 points even on a successful Speed defense roll.

Self-repair mechanisms allow the creature to regain 2 points of health per round.

Interaction: If communication can be opened up through a cybrid's haze of pain, it might be possible to temporarily wake the consciousness of the human remnant inside. However, that remnant consciousness might not be happy to discover what it's become.

Use: A cybrid has appeared in orbit around the station, ship, or moon with a compromised life support system or fragile dome. If it engages, the death toll will be staggering.

Loot: PCs who investigate the inert remains of the creature discover several manifest cyphers

GM Intrusion: The character struck by the graser beam develops radiation poisoning, in this case a level 8 disease that drops the character one step on the damage track each day that it goes untreated..

DEVOLVED 4 (12)

Conglomerate security subsidiaries regularly experiment with new ways to create super-soldiers, either to supply to a government on a contract basis, or to use for themselves. These experiments produced hundreds of dead ends—literally—plus a few dangerous failures. The devolved are one of those dangerous failures. These malformed, hideous brutes share a common heritage but display a wide array of maladies and mutations in the flesh, including withered limbs or elephantine patches of thick, scaly skin, misplaced body parts, and mental abnormalities. Simple-minded and afflicted with pain from their twisted, broken forms, the devolved vent all their hatred and wrath against all others.

Even successfully created super-soldiers require a regular regimen of specialized drugs to keep them healthy. Most are shipped out to fight on faraway fronts, whether that's on a distant space station, moon, or in another star system entirely. Without their drugs, they may devolve.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Groups of three to five, usually in locations where organized security can't easily reach

Health: 21 Damage Inflicted: 6 to 12 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Intimidation tasks as level 6; Intellect defense and Speed defense as level 2 due to malformed nature

Combat: Devolved attack with a claw, a bite, or some other body part, inflicting 6 points of damage. They throw themselves at their enemies with mindless ferocity and little regard for their own safety. Easily frustrated, a devolved grows stronger as its fury builds. Each time it misses with an attack, the next attack is eased by one additional step and the damage it inflicts increases by 2 points (to a maximum of 12 points). Once the devolved successfully inflicts damage on a target, the amount of damage it inflicts and the difficulty of its attacks returns to normal. Then the cycle starts anew.

Interaction: Devolved speak when they must, punctuating their statements with growls and barks. Their understanding seems limited to what they can immediately perceive, and they have a difficult time with abstract concepts.

Use: An expedition to a ruined conglomerate research facility uncovers a cyst of devolved that live within its sheltering bunkers.

Loot: For every three or so devolved, one is likely to carry a cypher

GM Intrusion: The devolved detonates upon its death, inflicting 6 points of damage on everything in immediate range.

ECOPHAGIC SWARM 4 (12)

Tiny nanomachines can be incredibly useful tools. But they can also become a terrible threat. Like cells in a living body that develop cancer, these out-of-control self-replicating robots can consume everything in their path while building more of themselves. A typical swarm is about 6 m (20 feet) in diameter, individually consisting of millions of individual minuscule machines. However, several swarms can act together, creating a much larger cloud of death with just one purpose: to eat and replicate. Able to move large distances by gliding through the air, cloud-like swarms take on intriguing shapes and ripple with mathematical patterns as they approach a potential target, beautiful and deadly.

Ecophagic swarms sometimes build weird structures or artifacts in the wake of their feeding, like massive metallic ant or wasp mounds, or something without any reference at all in the natural world.

Motive: Hungers for matter, including flesh

Environment: Ecophagic swarms are drawn most to areas rich in rare-earth metals, such as large cities or space stations where everyone carries a smartphone, AR glasses, or something similar

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Flies a long distance

Combat: As a mass of countless tiny machines, an ecophagic swarm can flow around obstacles and squeeze through cracks large enough to permit a single sub-millimeter machine. That includes over and around other creatures. Characters touched by a leading edge—or wholly enveloped within the hazy “body”—of an ecophagic swarm must succeed on a Might defense task or take 4 points of damage. If the character doesn’t wear armor of some kind, they take 1 point of damage even if they succeed.

For its part, an ecophagic swarm ignores any attack that targets a single creature (unless it’s an electrical attack), but it takes normal damage from attacks that affect an area (and electrical attacks), such as a detonation. A swarm cannot enter liquids, unless it takes about an hour to build new subunits that are aquatic.

Interaction: Someone with an ability to communicate with machines might be able to interact with a swarm. Even then, attempts to influence it are hindered by three steps.

Use: A promising new nanotech “printing” technology was hacked by radical elements

GM Intrusion: The character must succeed on a Speed defense roll or their armor (or other important piece of equipment) is taken by the swarm.

EXOSLIME 6 (18)

Amoeboid life predominates in some environments. Sometimes, it slimes asteroid crevices or its greasy residue is found on abandoned spacecraft. In a few cases, large portions of entire worlds are covered in living seas of translucent protoplasm. Individual volumes of exoslime are 5 m (15 foot) diameter moldlike blobs. Exoslimes possess independent minds, but in some settings may be manufactured entities designed to explore new locations, interact with aliens, or subjugate aliens. Exoslimes can learn to respect the autonomy of other creatures, though their natural instinct is to absorb novel objects and creatures they discover in order to learn about them. Exoslimes can also replicate anything they absorb, even a previously eaten living intelligent being.

Motive: Hungers for information

Environment: Moist and warm areas

Health: 33

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Immediate; immediate when climbing or burrowing

Modifications: Speed defense as level 5 due to size

Combat: Though slow, an exoslime is dangerous. When roused, all characters within immediate range of an exoslime must succeed on a Might defense roll each round or be touched by the heaving mass. A victim adheres to the slime's surface and takes 6 points of acid damage each round. The victim must succeed on a Might defense roll to pull free. A victim who dies from this damage is consumed by the exoslime. The exoslime may later create a duplicate of any previously devoured fleshy creature, a process requiring about three rounds to complete. Duplicates have full autonomy, and can communicate with the slime.

Interaction: An exoslime prefers to eat a newly-encountered creature, then create a duplicate of it to act as a translator. Of course, a stranger might not understand why the exoslime is trying to eat it.

Use: The sample brought in from the exterior has a weird, mucus-like growth that seems able to slowly eat through most materials.

GM Intrusion: The character escapes an exoslime attack, but a piece of quivering protoplasm remains stuck to their flesh, eating away at 1 point of Speed damage (ignores Armor) each round until the character succeeds on a Might roll as an action.

GODMIND 10 (30)

Unfathomably powerful post-singularity AIs, godminds are vast, having used the matter of an entire solar system and all its planets to create an immense brain, weave themselves into a nebula, or encode themselves into quantum strings of existence light-years across. When necessary, a godmind forms a nexus of consciousness—an instance—appearing as a disembodied eye of electromagnetic energy, ranging from about the size of a human eye all the way up to the size of a planet.

Motive: Ineffable

Environment: Anywhere, usually in space

Health: 50 (per instance)

Damage Inflicted: 15 points

Movement: Very long when flying

Combat: A godmind can vary the physical laws of the universe within a light-second of one of its instances (some would call them avatars) to create an effect most useful to the godmind at the time. For instance, a godmind could create a gamma ray burst inflicting 15 points of damage on all creatures within very long range, attempt to put a target into temporal stasis, send a target (even a target as large as spacecraft) through a temporary wormhole gate, and so on. It could also scan the memory banks of any digital machine, and possibly of any living creatures. In any event, if an instance were targeted, and successfully neutralized or even destroyed, the godmind itself isn't harmed. An aggressor would have to find the godmind's primeval "computer core" to destroy one, likely an epic quest in and of itself.

Interaction: To actually get a godmind's attention and negotiate could require ancient command code, finding an old input device, or showing up with a relic from an ancient ultra or other prize. If a godmind does render aid, it's likely to be in a form that is initially enigmatic, though ultimately extremely powerful.

Use: A universal threat requires a defense that is equally potent. Research suggests that the diffuse nebula known as the Double Helix may actually be the visible form of a vast godmind. Perhaps it can help.

Loot: Sometimes a godmind provides powerful artifacts to aid those who petition them for aid, assuming the need is dire.

GM Intrusion: The godmind rewinds time a few seconds and sidesteps whatever negative effect would have otherwise inconvenienced it.

HUNGRY HAZE

Hungry hazes are found in regions where the fundamental laws of physics have been eroded or are weak. They are named for how they appear as distortions of sight, like areas of heat haze, that shimmer in the air. These colorless hazes rapidly advance when they sense prey, taking on a “hungry” orange-red hue as they cling to the bodies of whatever they attempt to feed on next.

Victims being fed upon by a hungry haze sometimes hallucinate, seeing a physically manifest monster instead of formless vapor.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Alone or in groups of three to five, usually in areas of strained space-time. Immune to the effects of vacuum.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Flies an immediate distance each round

Modifications: Stealth tasks as level 5

Combat: A hungry haze breaks down the flesh of all living creatures within immediate range, inflicting 5 points of damage. As an insubstantial haze, only attacks that affect an area have a chance to inflict full damage on them; other successful attacks only inflict 1 point of damage, regardless of the amount indicated. If a hungry haze successfully feeds, it gains 1 point of health, even if the increase puts it above its maximum health. If a hungry haze is reduced to zero health, a smooth thumb-sized egg of unknown material is left behind.

Interaction: A hungry haze does not speak or seem to have language. But it is not mindless; it can learn from its experiences and figure out creative solutions to problems.

Use: After a research station on Mercury is abandoned for unspecified issues, salvagers show up looking for easy pickings. But a strange haze seems to hang over the station.

Loot: People (or AI) interested in strange manifestations would probably pay for the remains of a hungry haze in an amount equal to the expensive price category.

GM Intrusion: The character’s Armor rating is reduced by 1; the hungry haze apparently can eat more than just flesh.

INFOVORE 3 (9)

Entities of information with an affinity for technology, infovores are nothing but stored information without a bit of mechanism to inhabit. But once one gains control of a device, computer system, or other powered item, it self-assembles over the course of a few rounds, becoming stronger and more dangerous as each second passes. Luckily, an infovore seems unable to hold this form for long, and whether defeated or not, it eventually falls back into so much scattered junk. But in one of those objects, the core of the infovore remains, waiting to come into close enough proximity to another fresh mechanism to begin the rebirth process again.

Infovores have also been called ghost fabricators and aterics

Motive: Hungers for information

Environment: Anywhere powered devices are found

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 3–10 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Short

Modifications: Attacks and defends at an ever-escalating level

Combat: A newly animate infovore (level 3) has a rough but articulated form that it uses to batter and cut targets who carry powered devices on them. Unless destroyed, on each subsequent round it draws nearby inert mechanisms, unattended metallic and synthetic matter, and ambient energy, and its effective level increases by one. This level advancement completely heals all previous damage it has taken and advances it to the amount of health consistent with a creature of the next higher level. Damage, attacks, and defense continue to ramp up as well, continuing each round until the creature is either destroyed or it reaches level 10. After being active for one round at level 10, it spontaneously disassembles, falling back into so many scattered pieces of junk. Finding the “seed” device amid this junk is a difficulty 6 Intellect-based task.

Interaction: Infovores are fractured, fragmented beings. Characters who can talk to machines might be able to keep one from “spinning up” to become a threat and learn something valuable, but only for a short period.

Use: Among the devices collected from trade, salvage, archeological dig, or some other unique source, one was actually an inactive infovore, quiescent until plugged in or scanned.

Loot: An infovore that has undergone spontaneous disassembly leaves one or two manifest cyphers; however, there’s a chance that one of those cyphers is actually the infovore seed.

GM Intrusion: The character must succeed on a Speed defense task or lose a powered piece of equipment (an artifact) or a manifest cypher as it’s pulled into the self-assembling infovore. The infovore gains an additional attack each round.

INQUISITOR 4 (12)

Inquisitors are aliens who call themselves “inquisitors” when they contact new species. Their preferred method of interaction is to study a given area for its flora and fauna, and attempt to collect a representative sample of any intelligent species they find (such as humans). Collected subjects may be gone for good, but other times they wake with little or no recollection of the experience save for bruises, missing digits or teeth, scabbed-over circular head wounds, and a gap of three or more days in their memory. Instead of arms, inquisitors sprout three sets of three tentacles like those of a squid, each of which branches into a smaller and finer set of manipulator tendrils. They can manipulate complex machines in a way that a regular human could never hope to. In most settings, inquisitors possess a level of technology and advancement well above that enjoyed by humans.

Motive: Knowledge

Environment: In groups of three to twelve

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Short; short when climbing

Modifications: Knowledge-related tasks as level 8

Combat: Inquisitors can batter and squeeze foes with their tentacles, but they prefer to use advanced items that they always carry, including long-range energy weapons that can inflict damage or, with a flipped setting, induce deep sleep for an hour or more if the victim fails a Might defense task. Usually, inquisitors attempt to

cause as little damage as possible to potential subjects, so the sleep setting is used most often. They also carry defensive items, including manifest cyphers that can grant +4 to Armor for a few minutes or throw up a level 8 force field barrier. In case a specimen collection mission goes badly, at least one inquisitor carries a manifest cypher that creates a short-lived teleportation portal for instant transport to a distant and hidden base (which might be a spacecraft or a transdimensional redoubt).

Interaction: Inquisitors are always eager to “talk,” though they usually end up wanting to know a lot more than characters are willing to divulge.

Use: An entire freehold on Mars goes missing. Left-behind clues point to inquisitors.

Loot: Most inquisitors carry a couple of manifest cyphers that have offensive and defensive capabilities.

GM Intrusion: The character (or characters) wake after a long rest, only to realize that more than ten hours have passed. They all have strange marks and wounds, but no one remembers why. One character—an NPC or follower—might even be missing.

MALWARE, FATAL 4 (12)

This purely malefic program has aggressive machine learning capabilities, allowing it to accomplish truly innovative and nasty tricks. Fatal malware may have originated as a simple virus or spyware coded for a specific purpose, but corruption and lightning-quick electronic evolution has turned it into something that exists purely to infect orderly electronic systems, spacecraft, space stations, smart weapons, and anything else with an operating system. Infected objects turn against living people. An instance often has the form of the system it's infected, but occasionally fatal malware physically manifests as a metallic “cancer” of wires and self-assembling circuits hanging like a tumor across a server room, shipmind core, or data center, having perverted the original machine's self-repair functions. Sometimes 4D printers are also compromised.

Motive: Corruption and destruction

Environment: Any electronic system able to run code can host one or more instances

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: As the system it infects

Modifications: Knowledge tasks related to computers and other electronic systems as level 6

Combat: An instance of fatal malware that physically touches (or electrically connects with) a powered device of up to level 6 can attempt to seize control of it. It can then use that device to attack living targets. If the controlled system is a computer, smartphone, AR glasses, or some other piece of equipment that doesn't have any intrinsic movement, the malware attempts to electrocute a user, or if a smart weapon, cause some kind of fatal accident with it. A compromised computer or shipmind voice can dangerously mislead victims. Fatal malware duplicates itself, creating many instances, and those that survive are usually slightly better at avoiding being erased than the previous generations.

Interaction: Fatal malware isn't really sentient and thus can't really be negotiated with; some instances could mimic intelligence to draw humans into a trap.

Use: An instance of fatal malware has gotten into a shipmind, which is making the normally trustworthy AI act out in unexpectedly dangerous ways. The shipmind itself doesn't know it's infected.

GM Intrusion: The fatal malware divides into a second instance and attempts to override and control another piece of equipment carried by the character, especially a character with cybernetic implants.

MOCK ORGANISM 3 (9)

Artificial life can be created by selective breeding, synthetic and genetic engineering, or by accidental miscalculation in some unrelated high-energy or food-research program. When artificial life takes a wrong turn, the results run the gamut from disappointing to dangerous. If an artificial entity starts out benign, it's difficult to know if a hidden or slowly developing flaw will tip it over the edge into dangerous dysfunction—or if it just acts oddly because it doesn't know the social cues. Should synthetic beings be treated as people, pets, or monsters to be stamped out and destroyed? That's the eternal question and one that's usually answered by those most afraid of potential dangers that might accompany the creation of something no one intended.

Motive: Defense or destruction

Environment: Usually in secluded locations alone unless hiding in unused storage rooms of a large facility

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Combat: A mock organism can release an electrical discharge against a target at short range. In melee, a mock organism's poisoned claws inflict damage and require the target to succeed on a Might defense task, or the poison induces a coma-like slumber in the target. Each round the target fails to rouse—an Intellect task—they take 3 points of ambient damage.

Interaction: A mock organism is intelligent and can sometimes be swayed by reason. It might be passive, but if disturbed in a place it thought was secure against intrusion, it could grow belligerent and even murderous. Once so roused, a mock organism might still be calmed, but all such attempts are hindered.

Use: A scientist's ruined lab contains several unexpected surprises, including a mock organism that yet grieves over the loss of its creator.

Loot: A mock organism requires many parts. Salvage from a destroyed mock organism could result in a manifest cypher or two and another item that, with a bit of jury-rigging, works as an artifact.

GM Intrusion: The character hit by the mock organism's melee attack doesn't take normal damage. Instead, the mock organism drops onto the character. The PC is pinned until they can succeed on a difficulty 6 Might-based task to escape. While pinned, the creation whispers mad utterances into the target's ear.

NATATHIM 3 (9)

Genetically engineered to live in the water oceans discovered beneath the ice crusts of various solar moons, natathim (*Homo aquus*) have human ancestors, but barely look it. Survival in the frigid, lightless depths of extraterrestrial oceans required extreme adaptation. Predominantly dark blue, their undersides countershade to pure white. Though humanoid, their physiology is streamlined, giving their heads a somewhat fish-like shape, complete with gills and large eyes to collect light in the depths. Their bodies are adorned with fins and frills, including a long shark-like tail, and they have webbed extremities with retractable claws.

Depending on the setting, natathim are either human allies with the same (or even more advanced) tech, enemies with the same or more advanced tech, or genetic anomalies treated like laboratory rats burning with genocidal fury at what's been done to them. Alternatively, natathim could be discovered in Earth's deepest oceans, their origin mysterious, but able to interbreed with humans as a method for maintaining their line.

Motive: Just as with humans, natathim have many and varied motivations and drives.

Environment: Anywhere in or near water, or in suits/craft with marine environments, in schools of three to twelve. Natathim can act normally in air for up to twenty-four hours before they must return to water.

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short on land; long in the water

Modifications: Swims as level 6

Combat: Natathim attack with their retractable claws or, if available, technological weapons. Some have a magnetoreception ability that allows them to see into frequencies other creatures can't, or even stranger abilities to interact magnetically with their surroundings, though this is little understood.

Interaction: Natathim can be sympathetic to humans, partners in space exploration, or consider humans to be bitter foes for having created their species in the first place, depending on the setting.

Use: The PCs find evidence of an illegal gene tailoring experiment, with evidence pointing to research being done somewhere in the Opulence of Outer Planets.

Loot: Some natathim carry valuable items and equipment.

GM Intrusion: The natathim spontaneously magnetizes the character's possessions, which hold them helpless against the nearest wall or floor (if also metallic). The PC can take no actions other than attempt to escape.

OMWORWAR 10 (30)

Among the many stories passed down the space lanes, a few stand out for their grandiosity. Take the tales of omworwar sightings in the empty voids between stars, or even more unexpectedly, flashing through the abnormal space during FTL travel. Scientists speculate that these creatures, if actually real, might very well be extant instances of ancient ultras, not extinct as everyone believes, or at least not completely. In almost every case so far recorded, omworwars have little interest in human spacecraft. (They're called omworwar after the sound disrupted communication devices make in their presence.) Each one is several kilometers long, a dark inner slug-like core surrounded by gauzy layers of translucent, glowing, nebula-like tissue. Whale-like eyes surmount the dorsal surface, each seeming to contain a tiny galaxy all their own.

Wharn interceptors have been seen accompanying single omworwars, indicating an association, and is why some people refer to these beings as wharn cogitators.

Motive: Unpredictable

Environment: Almost anywhere in space, alone or accompanied by one or two wharn interceptors

Health: 42

Damage Inflicted: 12 points

Armor: 10

Movement: Flies a very long distance each round; can maneuver like an autonomous level 7 spacecraft if using extended vehicular combat rules. FTL capable.

Modifications: Speed defense as level 7 due to size

Combat: An omworwar can manipulate and fold gravity (and space-time), allowing them to accomplish near-miraculous tasks including communication, creating or destroying matter, and propulsion via "falling" through the universe at FTL speeds from the perspective of an outside observer. Which means one can rend a spacecraft, send a spacecraft spinning through the galaxy, or create asteroid-sized chunks of space-matter for any number of purposes if it spends several rounds in deep concentration.

Interaction: Omworwar disregard most other creatures, because from the omworwar's perspective, they're like mayflies, here and then gone again in an eyeblink of their existence. However, one may give a moment to someone who has discovered an ancient ultra secret or artifact, pass on information that might otherwise never be known, or even provide a useful manifest cypher.

Use: A reflective object composed of unknown material was found at the core of an unexpectedly destroyed space station. Those who managed to flee in lifeboats report having seen what might have been an omworwar, bleeding energy and eyes going dark, colliding with the station. The resultant lump might just be its corpse, or maybe its protective chrysalis.

Loot: Four level 10 manifest cyphers.

GM Intrusion: The character discovers that one of their manifest cyphers has formed a tiny eye, but an eye that seems to contain a galaxy. (The cypher becomes useless for its original function, but might be used to summon or interact with an omworwar.)

PHOTONOMORPH 6 (18)

Hard-light technology, which creates pseudo-matter from modified photons, has made possible all kinds of structures and devices that wouldn't otherwise exist. One of those, unfortunately, are self-sustaining photonic matter creatures. Sometimes, photonomorphs are enforcers created by much more powerful beings; other times they are the result of some person or AI attempting to ascend into a new state of being. But whatever their origin, photonomorphs are dangerous beings that can create matter from light, granting them an arbitrarily wide swathe of abilities. That includes their own glowing bodies, which they can change with only a little effort. This variability of form, coupled with their vast power, may be why many seem slightly mad.

Motive: Varies

Environment: Anywhere, alone or attended by three to five servitors appearing as hovering red spheres

Servitor: level 4; flies a long distance each round

Health: 22

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Reconstitutes itself anywhere light can reach within long range as part of another action

Modifications: Knowledge tasks as level 8

Combat: Photonomorphs draw upon their own light to manifest effects equal to their level. Effects include the ability to attack creatures at long range with laser-like blasts, create glowing walls (or spheres) of force within an area up to 6 m (20 feet) on a side, become invisible, change its appearance, and create simple objects and devices out of hard light that last for about a minute (unless the photonomorph bleeds a few points of its health into the object to make it last until destroyed).

A photonomorph regains 2 points of health each round in areas of bright light. It is hindered in all actions if the only source of light is itself or objects it has created.

Interaction: Photonomorphs are intelligent and paranoid, but not automatically hostile. They have their own self-serving agendas, which often involve elaborate schemes.

Use: A photonomorph appears, claiming to be a herald of some vastly more powerful cosmic entity or approaching alien vessel.

GM Intrusion: The photonomorph uses its ability to create a hard-light object or effect that is perfect for aiding it for the situation at hand.

POSTHUMAN 7 (21)

Rather than evolving naturally, posthumans advance via a directed jump, designed with smart tools and AI surgeons. With all the advances fantastic technology brings to their genetic upgrade, posthumans are beings whose basic capacities radically exceed regular people. They can't really be considered human any longer; they've transcended humanity, which is why they're also sometimes called transhumans. They're often involved in large-scale projects, such as creating bigger-than-world habitats or spacecraft, or possibly even researching how they might ascend to some still-higher realm of consciousness or being.

Motive: Variable

Environment: Alone or in small groups or communities in orbital colonies or other designed locations

Health: 50

Damage Inflicted: 9 points

Armor: 4

Movement: Short; flies a long distance

Modifications: Knowledge tasks as level 9

Combat: Posthumans can selectively attack foes up to a very long distance away with bolts of directed plasma that deal 9 points of damage. A posthuman can dial up the level of destruction if they wish, so instead of affecting only one target, a bolt deals 7 points of damage to all targets within short range of the primary target, and 1 point even if the targets caught in the conflagration succeed on a Speed defense roll.

Posthumans can also call on a variety of other abilities, either by small manipulations of the quantum field or by deploying nanotechnology. Essentially, a posthuman can mimic the ability of any subtle cypher of level 5 or less as an action.

Posthumans automatically regain 2 points of health per round while its health is above 0.

Interaction: Posthumans are so physically and mentally powerful that they are almost godlike to unmodified people, and either ignore, care for, or pity them. Knowing what a posthuman actually wants is hard to pin down because their motivations are complex and many-layered.

Use: A rogue posthuman is researching a method whereby they might portal into the "quantum" realm of dark energy underlying the known universe of normal matter. Despite the revealed risk of antagonistic post-singularity AIs roaming that realm escaping, the posthuman continues their work.

Loot: The body of a posthuman is riddled with unrecognizable technologies fused seamlessly with residual organic material—or at least material that grows like organic material used to. Amid this, it might be possible to salvage a few manifest cyphers and an artifact.

GM Intrusion: The posthuman allows acts out of turn, or takes control of a device that the character is about to use against the posthuman.

REDIVUS 4 (12)

Redivi spend most of their lives—uncounted millennia—hurtling through space. Most never encounter anything, but some few impact other worlds, are captured by alien spacecraft, or otherwise intercepted. Their traveling form resembles rocky space rubble the size of a small spacecraft—until they unfurl glowing magnetic plasma wings, revealing themselves as strange creatures of living mineral. Redivi can interact with almost any electronic system and manipulate electromagnetic fields. Redivi are searchers, all sent forth by the Great Mother, billions upon billions of them (they say), looking for the seed of the next great cosmic expansion. Thus, most redivi are consumed with finding out more, finding other redivi, and eventually, finding their "universal seed."

Motive: Knowledge

Environment: Almost anywhere, searching

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 4

Movement: Flies (magnetically levitates) a short distance each round

Combat: The stone carapace of a redivus makes a huge “club” when it rams into foes. However, it can also control metal within short range, causing it to flex, animate, crush, or smash. For instance, targets wearing metal space suits are in trouble when that metal begins to unravel. Alternatively, a redivus can use nearby metal to wrap around a target and constrict it, inflicting 5 points of damage (ignores Armor) each round until the target can escape.

Interaction: If any kind of radio or similar communication is in use, these creatures can commandeer it and speak through it, learning a new language seemingly over the course of minutes. Redivi will cooperate with reasonable requests and negotiate, especially if there’s a chance they’ll find out something new.

Use: A redivi pod smashes into the side of the spacecraft, and might at first seem like some kind of attack or boarding action of something truly terrible.

GM Intrusion: The character’s metal- containing equipment is stripped away, then used as ammunition against that PC or an ally.

SENTINEL TREE 3 (9)

Depending on the sci-fi setting, sentinel trees are mutated trees that grow near radioactive craters dimpling the landscape, alien plant-life that evolved in a different biosphere (or dimension), or the result of intensive gene-tailoring, possibly of the illegal sort. Regardless of their provenance, sentinel trees resemble thorny masses of knotted vines. Razor-sharp glass-like leaves flex like claws, and vibrating pods glisten, ready to detonate if thrown. If cultivated, they may take on a shape designed to further frighten—or at least warn away— those who see one. Sentinel trees are mobile, aggressive, and feed on almost any sort of organic matter. Once it brings down prey, it sinks barbed roots in the body for feeding and decomposition.

Motive: Feed

Environment: In groves of three to six, able to tolerate most atmospheres (even thin ones, like on Mars) but not vacuum

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Immediate

Combat: Sentinel trees can fling a vibrating pod at a target within long range, which detonates on impact, inflicting 3 points of damage on all targets within immediate range of the blast. Targets must also succeed on a Might defense roll or be poisoned for 3 points of damage, plus 3 points again each subsequent round until a Might task is successful. A sentinel tree can also lash out with its barbed vines at a target within immediate range, inflicting 3 points of damage. Melee targets must also succeed on a Might defense roll or become entangled and unable to take physical actions until they can break free on their turn.

Interaction: Sentinel trees are about as smart as well-trained guard dogs. They can’t speak, but can understand some words and gestures.

Use: A grove of sentinel trees guard a compound that the characters need to break into.

GM Intrusion: The character caught in the detonation is blinded with tiny black seeds until they use a recovery roll to remove the condition. (The recovery use doesn't return points to a Pool.)

SILICON PARASITE 2 (6)

These tiny silvery insect-like creatures range in size from a sub-millimeter to up to 30 cm (1 foot) in diameter, emitting short pulses of violet-colored laser light to sense and sample their environment. Composed of organic silicon wires and wafers, and self-assembled or evolved in some unnamed lab or spacecraft wreck, silicon parasites are vermin that working space stations and spacecraft have learned to hate. Despite taking steps to avoid transfer, a ship may only learn they have silicon parasites when a swarm boils up from a crack in the cabling or seam in the deck plating after being agitated by a high-G maneuver or some other disturbance. If that disturbance is combat or some other dire emergency, silicon parasites thrown into the situation makes everything worse.

Motive: Defense, harvest electronic materials necessary to self-replicate.

Environment: Usually on spacecraft and space stations in groups of up to twenty

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short; climbs a short distance each round

Modifications: Speed defense as level 4 due to size.

Combat: Only "large" silicon parasites are a danger to most creatures. When four or more parasites coordinate their attacks, treat the attack as that made by a single level 4 creature that inflicts 5 points of damage, and on a failed difficulty 4 Might defense roll, an attack that holds the target in place until it can successfully escape. A held target automatically takes 5 points of damage each round, or even more if other silicon parasites in the area pile on. Silicon parasites can operate in complete vacuum without harm.

Interaction: By and large, silicon parasites behave like social insects, though some claim that large numbers of them have acted with greater intelligence and forethought than mere unthinking insects can manage.

Use: A swarm of silicon parasites floods into the hold and makes off with an important device, dragging it into the crevices and walls of the spacecraft or station. Loot: Swarm nests often contain a few valuable manifest cyphers or working pieces of equipment.

GM Intrusion: The silicon parasite flashes its sensory laser directly into the character's eyes, blinding the character until they succeed on a difficulty 4 Might-based roll as their action.

SPACE RAT 1 (3)

Yeah, rats made it to space. And against all expectations, one strain evolved in the harsh radiation and zero-G environments that would kill humans not protected by medical intervention. Space rats are furless, about two feet long, sport a truly prehensile tail, and can quickly change their shade of their skin to blend in to their surroundings. They can also drop into a state of extreme torpor that allows them to survive stints of vacuum exposure lasting several days.

Space rats are vermin, and any spacecraft or space station that hosts a nest must deal with constant issues from the rats burrowing into systems, stealing food and water, and causing systems to break down, even critical ones. They're also vicious when cornered.

Motive: Defense, reproduction

Environment: Anywhere humans live in space

Health: 5

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short; short when climbing or gliding through zero G

Modifications: Stealth and perception as level 5

Combat: Space rats flee combat unless cornered or one of their burrows is invaded. Then they attack in packs of three or more, and from an ambush if possible. One space rat pack attacks the victim as a level 3 creature inflicting 5 points of damage with claws, while another pack helps the first, or attempts to steal a food item or shiny object from the character being attacked. To resist theft while being attacked on two fronts, a target must succeed on a Speed defense roll hindered by two steps.

Interaction: Space rats are slightly more intelligent than their Earth-bound cousins, though true interaction is not possible. On the other hand, sometimes their behavior seems spookily sapient.

Use: Space rats assemble crude nests in out-of-the-way supply closets or in hard-to-reach system interiors, but often enough, end up shorting out weapons or life support. Sometimes, they get into the hold and eat anything edible in the cargo.

Loot: Some percent of valuable equipment stolen on the spacecraft or station finds its way to space rat nests.

GM Intrusion: Another rat unexpectedly pops out of panel on the wall or ceiling and screeches so loudly the PC must succeed on an Intellect defense roll hindered by two steps or be dazed until the end of their next turn from the surprise. Dazed creatures are hindered on all tasks.

STORM MARINE 4 (12)

The storm marine creed is an oft-repeated mantra, “I will never quit, knowing full well that I might die in service to the cause.” Wearing advanced battlesuits, hyped up on a cocktail of experimental military drugs, and able to draw on a suite of cybernetic and network-connected drone guns, few things can stand before a storm marine fireteam. Storm marines usually work for nation-states, conglomerates, and similar entities. They mercilessly conduct their mission, even if that mission is to wipe out a rival. Storm marines that question their orders are quickly dispatched by their fellows.

Motive: Achieve mission goals

Environment: Alone in or in fireteams of three, anywhere nation-states or similar entities have a financial or military interest

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 4

Movement: Long; flies a long distance each round

Modifications: Perception as level 6; attacks as level 5 due to combat targeting neuro-wetware.

Combat: Thanks to their battlesuit, a storm marine has many options in combat. They can deploy an electrified blade to attack every foe in immediate range as a single action, or use a long-range heavy energy rifle that inflicts 6 points of damage.

A storm marine can deploy two level 3 gun drones that fire energy rays at two different targets up to 800 m (2,600 feet) away, inflicting 6 points of damage. If the drones focus on a single target, a successful hit deals 9

points of damage and moves the target one step down the damage track. The drones can attack only once or twice before returning to their cradles in the storm marine's suit for several rounds to recharge.

Interaction: A storm marine might negotiate, but getting one to act against their mission is difficult.

Use: A fireteam of storm marines are sent to eliminate the PCs or someone the PCs know on suspicion of being radical elements that need to be dealt with.

Loot: Though bio-locked to each storm marine, someone who succeeds on a difficulty 8 Intellect task to reprogram the suit could gain a battlesuit of their own, minus the drones (which fly off or detonate).

GM Intrusion: A character targeting a gun drone rather than the storm marine hits the drone, but the drone reacts by darting to the character and exploding, inflicting 6 points of damage to the character and anyone standing within immediate range.

SHINING ONE 5 (15)

Some alien beings abandoned their physical forms millennia ago, becoming entities of free-floating energy and pure consciousness. They travel the galaxies, exploring the endless permutations of matter, space-time, cosmic phenomena, dark energy, and life. They are endlessly fascinated with the permutations they discover. They sometimes appear as a silhouette of gently glowing light, in a form like to the alien species they wish to observe. Under circumstances where a shining one is moved to more directly interact, one can actually convert itself into matter once more, again taking on the biology and form of the species it wishes to interact with. But generally, shining ones observe and learn; they try not to interfere or interact. Every few thousand years, shining ones gather at a predetermined location on the edge of a convenient galaxy and share the most interesting and beautiful bits of imagery, music, poetry, and lore they've gleaned.

Motive: Knowledge

Environment: Anywhere, usually alone

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Instantly moves to anywhere it can see at the speed of light as part of its action once per round

Modifications: All tasks related to knowledge as level 8

Combat: As immaterial beings of energy, shining ones only take damage from energy attacks. And even then, there is a chance that the energy heals a damaged shining one rather than harming it if the attack roll was an odd number. Usually a shining one doesn't fight back if attacked, but instead leaves. If somehow prevented from leaving, a shining one fights for its existence with energy blasts inflicting 6 points of damage on up to two different targets within very long range (or the same target twice).

Alternatively, a shining one may attempt to disorporate a target, turning it into a being something like itself. In this case, each time a target is hit by an energy blast, it must also succeed on an Intellect defense roll. On a failed roll, it loses 6 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor). If the target's Intellect Pool is emptied, it becomes a freefloating ball of energy unable to take any actions other than observe for a few minutes before suddenly converting back to its original form with an explosive pop.

Interaction: Shining ones can manipulate their environment to communicate with other species, using sound, light, puffs of odiferous complex chemicals in place of words, and so on. If approached with respect, they freely exchange information with others, seeking to grow their knowledge and that of those they meet.

Use: A shining one is sharing knowledge to a warlike xenophobic species that could allow them to rapidly advance their ability to consolidate power. Something must be done before it's too late.

GM Intrusion: A character hit by the shining one's energy blast catches on fire. They take 3 points of damage each round until they spend an action patting, rolling, or smothering the flames.

SUPERNAL 5 (15)

Half humanoid and half-dragonfly, supernals are beautiful entities, though certainly alien. Each supernal possesses a unique wing pattern and coloration and, to some extent, body shape. These patterns and colors may signify where in the hierarchy a particular supernal stands among its kind, but for those who do not speak the language of supernals (which is telepathic), the complexity of their social structure is overwhelming. Whether they are agents of some unknown alien civilization or seek their own aims, supernals are mysterious and cryptic. Most fear contact with them, because they have a penchant for stealing away other life forms, who are rarely seen again.

Motive: Capture humans and similar life forms, and bring them somewhere unknown.

Environment: Almost anywhere

Health: 23

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Short; flies a long distance (even through airless vacuum); can teleport to any known location once per ten hours as an action

Modifications: All knowledge tasks as level 6; stealth tasks as level 7 while invisible

Combat: Supernals usually only enter combat when they wish, because they bide their time in a phased, invisible state. But when one attacks with the touch of its wing, it draws the life force directly out of the target, inflicting 6 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor).

A supernal can summon a swarm of tiny machines that resemble regular dragonflies made of golden metal. The swarm either serves as a fashion accessory as they crawl over the supernal's body, or as components in a piece of living art.

Supernals regain 1 point of health per round (even in an airless vacuum, which they can survive without issue), unless they've been damaged with psychic attacks. They can teleport to any location they know as an action once every ten hours.

Supernals often carry manifest cyphers useful in combat, as well as an artifact.

Dragonfly swarm: level 2; flies a long distance each round; eases physical tasks, including attacks or defense

Interaction: Although supernals only speak telepathically, peaceful interaction with these creatures is not impossible. It's just very difficult, as they see most other creatures as something to be collected and taken to some undisclosed location, for unknown reasons.

Use: A character is followed by a supernal intent on collecting them. **Loot:** A supernal usually has a few manifest cyphers, and possibly an artifact.

GM Intrusion: The supernal grabs the character and flies up and away, unless and until the character escapes the grab.

SYNTHETIC PERSON 5 (15)

Synthetic people have been called many things, including simply synths, androids, robot mimics, and, depending on how they act, killer robots. Their origins are varied. In some cases, they're the result of corporate research into "products" that would serve humanity as assistants and companions, but later gained sentience. In other cases, synthetic people are the result of a state-sponsored program to develop war machines or automated assassins that looked like regular people. Another origin for synthetic people is

through the design of awakened (and inimical) AIs as part of an effort to kill off all regular biological people. Now they roam their environment looking like anyone else. Some synths try to fit into whatever kind of society they can find. Some may not even know that they are not human. Others are bitter, homicidal, or still retain their programming to kill. Some of these may have even shed some or all of their synthetic skins to reveal the alloyed mechanisms beneath.

Motive: Varies

Environment: Nearly anywhere, out in plain sight or disguised as a human alone, or in gangs of three to four

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Long

Modifications: Disguise and one knowledge task as level 6

Combat: A punch from a synthetic person can break bones. In addition, some synths (especially of the killer variety) can generate a red-hot plasma sphere once every other round and throw it at a target within long range. The target and all other creatures within immediate range of the target must succeed on a Speed defense task or take 7 points of damage.

A synth can take a repair action and regain 10 points of health. A synthetic person at 0 health can't repair itself thusly, but unless the creature is completely dismembered, one may spontaneously reanimate 1d10 hours later with 4 points of health.

Interaction: Synthetic people that pretend to be (or think that they are) human interact like normal people. But an enraged one or one that's been programmed to kill is unreasoning and fights to the end.

Use: A group of refugees who need help turn out to include (or be entirely made up of) synthetic people. Whether or not any of them harbor programs that require that they kill humans is entirely up to the GM.

Loot: One or two manifest cyphers could be salvaged from a synth's inactive form.

GM Intrusion: The character is blinded for one or two rounds after being struck by the synth's searing plasma ball.

THUNDERING BEHEMOTH 7 (21)

When life is found on other worlds, it's sometimes large and dangerous, such as the aptly named thundering behemoth. A thundering behemoth might be found on any number of alien planets that feature forests and/or swamps. Towering to treelike heights, these fearless predators are powerful and dangerous hunters, even for those armed with advanced or fantastic weaponry. Behemoths use color-changing frills to help them appear like tall trees while they stand in wait for prey, as still as mighty hardwood trunks, until they break cover and spring an ambush. Behemoths can produce extraordinarily loud noises, sometimes simply roaring, but often replicating the stuttering scream of an attacking spacecraft. They use their strange "roars" to confuse, lead astray, and, if possible, stampede prey into killing grounds such as regions of soft sand, off cliff tops, or as often as not, into the waiting mouth of another behemoth.

In the sci-fi setting of Numenera, similar creatures are called rumbling dasipelts.

Motive: Fresh meat

Environment: Forests, alone or in a hunting group (known as a "crash") of two or three

Health: 35

Damage Inflicted: 9 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: Disguise (as trees) as level 8 when unmoving. Deception (sounding as if an attacking spacecraft) as level 8. Speed defense as level 3 due to size.

Combat: A thundering behemoth can attack a group of creatures (within an immediate area of each other) with a single massive bite. Thanks to its long neck, it can make that attack up to 9 m (30 feet) away. One victim must further succeed on a Might defense task or be caught in the creature's maw, taking 9 additional points of damage each round until it can escape.

A thundering behemoth's ability to replicate threatening noises is often used deceptively at a distance, but the creature can use it to stun all targets within immediate range so they lose their next turn on a failed Might defense roll.

Interaction: Behemoths have a complex communication system among themselves, using their color-changing frills and modulation of the thunder they produce. They think of humans and most other creatures as food.

Use: The sound of fighting spacecraft has repeatedly spooked human colonists on an alien planet, though they have rarely seen destructive beams or actual spacecraft. Worried that that will soon change, the residents ask the PCs to investigate.

GM Intrusion: The character avoids being bitten but is batted away by the behemoth's attack, tumbling a short distance (and taking 5 points of damage).

VACUUM FUNGUS 5 (15)

Vacuum fungus is sometimes found as a greenish ooze on the exterior of spacecraft or space stations, growing in fine lines through the ice of frozen moons, and infesting the center of small asteroids and near-Earth objects (NEOs). Though able to survive in vacuum, the fungus takes on new morphology when sufficient spores find their way into habitable zero-G spaces. Then they fuse together and grow into a bulbous, emerald-hued fruiting body, typically reaching about 1 m (3 feet) in rough diameter, though individuals can grow much larger if not discovered. Sticky and soft to the touch, they are able to grow undetected in the dark corners of cargo holds, in ductworks, hanging from the ceiling of unused crew quarters, and so on.

Vacuum fungus may be proof that extra-terrestrial life exists, but that triumph of scientific discovery may seem less important to those who find a clump, because they are incredibly toxic to living creatures.

Motive: Reproduction

Environment: Anywhere in zero G, as an unreactive ooze in vacuum, or as a fruiting body in atmosphere, alone or in a cluster of three to five

Health: 22

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Climbs (adheres) an immediate distance each round

Combat: A fruiting body can selectively detonate spore pods along its surface once per round. When a pod detonates, green fluid sprays everywhere within immediate range. Living creatures who fail a Speed defense roll take 6 points of damage from the clinging fluid. An affected target must also succeed on a Might defense roll. On a failure, an affected section of flesh rapidly swells, becoming a bilious green lump, and explodes one round later, having the same effect as a detonating pod.

Interaction: No real interaction with vacuum fungus is possible.

Use: Scientists are incredibly excited to discover that the strange ooze they've noticed staining the exterior of their research domes is actually a variety of fungal life. They will likely become less excited when they discover the large growths secretly growing in the cavity beneath the floor of their research dome in a little-used storage closet.

GM Intrusion: Striking the vacuum fungus clump causes one of the spore pods to detonate immediately, even though it's out of turn.

WHARN INTERCEPTOR 8 (24)

Wharn interceptors are void-adapted behemoths, several hundred meters in length. It's hypothesized that they are living battle automatons devised by ancient ultras, though against what long-vanished enemy isn't clear. Now, a handful (hopefully no more) glide through the depths of space like dormant seeds, seeming for all the galaxy like some strangely whorled asteroid or planetesimal. Who knows how many millennia they passed in this apparently hibernating state? But when that hibernation ends, maybe because some ancient countdown is nearing its end, or because an asteroid miner tried to extract a sample, they open eyes burning with deadly energy, and flex claws of particle-beam fury.

Wharn interceptors may be related in some fashion omworwars, so much so that humans sometimes call the latter "wharn cogitators." However, it's impossible that omworwars simply "appropriate" any wharn interceptors they encounter.

Motive: Defense

Environment: Anywhere floating through the void

Health: 53

Damage Inflicted: 15 points

Armor: 5

Movement: Flies a very long distance each round; can maneuver like an autonomous level 5 spacecraft if using extended vehicular combat rules. FTL capable.

Modification: Speed defense as level 3 due to size.

Combat: Most of the time, wharns are inactive and might look like tumbling rocks. In this state, space voyagers may be able to partly wake one in an attempt to negotiate. However, if a wharn is damaged, or if the passive senses deep in its body wake it for reasons of its own, it becomes aggressive.

A wharn's main weapons are its claws, which can extend in an instant, becoming exotic-matter beams able to reach a target up to a light-second away. Unless a target is protected by some kind of force field, the 15 points of damage inflicted ignores Armor. A wharn's eyes can pierce most forms of camouflage, cloaking effects, and cover that is less than about 200 m (650 feet) thick.

Interaction: In spite of their ferocious aspect and war-machine heritage, wharn interceptors do not destroy every spacecraft (and void-adapted creature) they come across, or even most. Indeed, sometimes a wharn may attempt to initiate communication via various machine channels. But what comes across are usually nonsense sounds and tones, and sometimes mathematical formulas.

Use: The PCs, attempting to enter an abandoned space station or spacecraft, are distracted when a wharn attempts to destroy the very same object.

GM Intrusion: The wharn moves unexpectedly, striking the vehicle the PCs are traveling in, inflicting 8 points of damage to everyone on board.

WRAITH 4 (12)

Wraiths (*Homo vacuus*) are genetically engineered to live in the vacuum of space by directly metabolizing high-energy charged particles abundant in the void. Though derived from human stock, wraiths are alien in body, sometimes concealing themselves in layers of shroud-like tissue, other times revealing themselves as wispy, elongated things of glowing red plasma. In some settings, wraiths are partners with humans, working in locations where humans would find difficult. In other settings, wraiths went their own way generations earlier, and rediscovering them would be a first contact scenario. Alternatively, wraiths might be a threat to humans, hating humans for having created a species forced to spend its existence in the dark void of space.

Motive: Varies with individual or setting

Environment: Anywhere in vacuum, though usually with access to some kind of enriched radiation source. Environments with 1 G or higher eventually kill wraiths.

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Short when flying in zero and low G

Modifications: Perception and stealth tasks as level 7

Combat: Wraiths can unfold from their concealing shrouds and attack with radioactive limbs for 6 points of Speed damage from ionizing radiation (ignores most Armor), or if available, technological weapons. Some can direct ionizing radiation as long-distance attacks, though doing so costs the wraith 1 point of health. Wraiths are immune to radiation, and attacks using radiation heal a wraith's lost health by the amount of damage the attack would have otherwise afflicted. Gravity of 1 G or greater hinders all wraith actions.

Interaction: Wraiths communicate by radio. They react to outsiders as dictated by their place in the setting.

Use: A distant space station stops all communication. Investigators are dispatched to find out what happened. Once aboard, they unravel clues that suggest wraiths may have been responsible.

Loot: Some wraiths carry valuable items and equipment.

GM Intrusion: The attacked character must also succeed on a Might defense, or they take an additional 3 points of ambient damage and contract radiation sickness.

ZERO-POINT PHANTOM 3 (9)

Temporary violations of conservation of energy mean that “virtual particles” constantly and seemingly randomly pop out of nothing, briefly interact with normal matter, then disappear. Zero-point phantoms are collections of such particles, taking the form of a very large, almost spider-like entity of many legs, stalks, and arms. What they’re doing when they’re not manifest is unknown; are they entombed in nearby solids, phased into another dimension, or do they simply not exist until they are called into being by some random cosmic event? Whatever the case, zero-point phantoms seem to prefer unlit or dimly lit areas in spacecraft and stations far from any planet, when they seem to struggle out of solid surfaces, raising a cloud of shadow.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Anywhere dark

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short; short when climbing

Modifications: Speed defense as level 4 due to a cloud of shadows surrounding a zero-point phantom

Combat: A zero-point phantom attacks with needlelike leg and tentacle tips. A victim that takes damage must succeed on a Might defense task, or become poisoned, the effect of which is to drop them one step on the damage track. The victim must keep fighting off the poison until they succeed or drop three steps on the damage track; however, those who fall to the third step on the damage track from a phantom's poison are not dead. They are paralyzed and can't move for about a minute. If a phantom isn't otherwise occupied, it can grab a paralyzed victim and phase back into non-existence. Most victims phased away in this fashion are never seen again.

Zero-point phantoms can stutter in and out of existence on their turn once every few minutes. When they do, they return with full health.

Interaction: Zero-point phantoms are about as intelligent as predators like wolves.

Use: The abandoned spacecraft is weirdly empty of any bodies whatsoever. It's as if everyone just disappeared. There are signs of a struggle, though with what isn't clear,

GM (group) Intrusion: Nearby light sources fail. Attacks and defenses against the zero- point phantoms are hindered by two steps for characters unable to see in the dark.

ADDITIONAL SCIENCE FICTION EQUIPMENT

In a science fiction setting, the following items (and anything else appropriate to the setting) are usually available.

Equipment: Equipment includes apparel, armor, cybernetic implants, personal drone assistants, and other items that, for the most part, can be easily transported. Technically speaking, armaments are also equipment. Unless it's important to make a distinction, assume all guidance regarding "equipment" also applies to armaments. But when it is important to make a distinction, the term "armaments" is used for equipment that is also a weapon.

Armaments: From contemporary bullet-firing pistols to fantastically advanced handheld disintegration guns, the weapons presented in this chapter are dedicated to those that a single character can carry and use.

VARIABLE COST BY TECH RATING

Equipment costs assume the setting is predominantly of same tech rating as the object's tech rating. The price drops by one price category if the setting tech rating is, generally speaking, greater than the object's tech rating.

Note, however, that inexpensive items do not become free; they remain inexpensive.

WEAPON OPTIONS GRANTED BY TYPE OR FOCUS

When a player makes up their character, their type likely indicates that they can choose one or more weapons of their choice. When choosing such weapons and equipment, the following restrictions apply to that choice:

- Characters must choose weapons within, or less than, the average tech rating of the setting.
- Characters may not choose weapons in the exorbitant or priceless price category.

CONTEMPORARY STYLING IN ADVANCED OR FANTASTIC SETTINGS

Equipment listed as contemporary can often be had in hard science fiction or fantastic genres, possibly at a lower price. Note that such equipment available in these future worlds are not necessarily antiques (though they could be), but rather cheaply made objects.

EQUIPMENT POWER

For the most part, assume that equipment is either self-powered, or easily powered by charging fields or other ubiquitous and freely available sources. That is, unless a piece of equipment losing power makes a good GM intrusion in a clutch situation.

CUSTOMIZING EQUIPMENT

Listing all possible armaments and equipment and their many variants across all three tech ratings, at least in the space available, isn't an option. However, a representative cross section is provided. If you're looking for something that isn't noted, look for something close and adapt the listing

INEXPENSIVE ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Energy pack (50 shots)	
Knife (simple)	Light weapon

Other Items	Notes
Flashlight	
Survival rations (1 day)	

Moderately Priced ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Hunting knife	Light weapon
Machete	Medium weapon
Grenade (sonic)	Explosive weapon, inflicts 2 points of damage in immediate radius, plus Might defense roll or lose next turn
Grenade (thermite)	Explosive weapon, inflicts 5 points of damage in immediate radius

Armor	Notes
Leather jacket	Light armor

Other Items	Notes
Backpack	
Bag of heavy tools	
Bag of light tools	
Binoculars	Asset for perception tasks at range
Breather	8 hours of breathable air
Climbing gear	Asset for climbing tasks
Communicator	Planetary range
Crowbar	
Environment tent	
First aid kit	Asset for healing tasks
Handcuffs	
Nightvision goggles	
Portable lamp	
Rope	Nylon, 50 feet
Sleeping bag	

EXPENSIVE ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Light blaster	Light weapon, short range
Medium blaster	Medium weapon, long range
Needler	Light weapon, long range
Shotgun	Heavy weapon, immediate range

Stunstick	Medium weapon, inflicts no damage but human-sized or smaller target loses next action
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Armor	Notes
Armored bodysuit	Medium armor
Lightweight body armor	Medium armor

Other Items	Notes
Camera designed to be concealed	Transmits at long range
Microphone designed to be concealed	Transmits at long range
Environment suit	Provides 24 hours of atmosphere and +10 to Armor against extreme temperatures
Wrist computer	Asset for most knowledge-based tasks

Very EXPENSIVE ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Heavy blaster	Heavy weapon, long range
Heavy blaster rifle	Heavy weapon, 300-foot (90 m) range
Pulse laser gun	Medium weapon, rapid-fire weapon, long range

Armor	Notes
Battlesuit	Heavy armor, also works as environment suit

Other Items	Notes
Disguise kit	Asset for disguise tasks
Gravity regulator	Belt-mounted device that regulates gravity to 1G for wearer if within 0 G to 3 G conditions
Handheld scanner	Asset for identifying tasks
Hovercraft	Level 4
Infiltrator	Asset for lockpicking tasks when used with electronic locks
Jetpack	Level 4
Stealthsuit	Asset for stealth tasks

Exhorbitant ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Blast cannon	10 points of damage, 500-foot (150 m) range, requires a tripod and two people to operate

Armor	Notes
Force field	Not armor, offers +1 to Armor

Other Items	Notes
Luxury hovercar	Level 5
Robot servant	Level 3
Small spaceship	Level 4

EQUIPMENT LISTING

COMMUNICATION

LIGHTSPEED COMMUNICATION DELAYS

For ease of reference, the light delay table provides the time it takes light from the sun to each planet in our solar system, plus a few other notable locations. To figure light delays between two different locations, subtract the time delay of the object closer to the sun from the time delay of the object farther away. The difference is the light delay between those two locations. Double times for two-way communication

LIGHT DELAY TABLE

Location	AU	Light Delay
Mercury	0.4	3 minutes
Venus	0.7	6 minutes
Earth	1.0	8 minutes
Mars	1.5	13 minutes
Asteroid belt	2.7	22 minutes
Jupiter	5.2	43 minutes
Saturn	9.5	79 minutes
Uranus	19	160 minutes
Neptune	30	4 hours
Inner Kuiper Belt	30	4 hours
Pluto	39	6 hours
Outer Kuiper Belt	50	7 hours
Inner Oort Cloud	5k	29 days
Outer Oort Cloud	100k	19 months
Proxima Centauri	269k	4.2 years

CONTEMPORARY

Smartphone

Level 2 (6)

Moderate/Expensive

A communication device that performs some of the functions of a computer with a touchscreen interface, internet access, and ability to run multiple apps. Provides an asset to knowledge tasks that can be researched on the internet, and bright light within immediate range. Subject to running out of charge or breaking.

Computer/Laptop

Level 3 (9)

Expensive

A data processing and data-access tool that enables all sorts of creative and comprehension tasks.

Satellite phone

Level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

As smartphone (though far bulkier), but with ability to connect directly to an orbiting satellite communication network, providing planetary range.

ADVANCED

Communicator, badge/ring

level 3 (9)

Moderate

As satellite phone, but so small it can be worn as a stylish insignia or badge on a cuff, chest, pendant, or carried in a pocket; as a ring worn on a finger, earlobe, or other pierced appropriate or pierced body part; or threaded into a tattoo on wrist or back of hand. Has full voice functionality, including on-the-fly translation (for languages in a network-connected database), and audibly duplicates most smartphone functions.

A communicator badge in the form of ring is often referred to as a data-ring.

AR glasses

level 4 (12)

Expensive

Sturdy (and sometimes stylish) eyeglasses or goggles provides all the functions of a contemporary smartphone (including communication) and communicator badge, plus is capable of both immersive VR and overlaid HUD and augmented reality functions. Can be worn inside a space suit helmet or incorporated directly into one.

AR contacts

level 4 (12)

Expensive x2

As AR glasses, but are lenses fitted to the eye. Also called "smartacs."

Courier

level 5 (15)

Exorbitant

Essentially a tiny rocket that can exceed human-rated Gs to "quickly" deliver messages across planetary distances if radio (via DSM network), laser, or even graser communication is deemed too susceptible to interception by a third party. A courier must be launched in a micro-gravity environment.

Laser array

level 5 (15)

Exorbitant A bulky piece of equipment that takes a few days to set up and calibrate. Useful for ship-to-ship communication for “tight” beaming information; even highly focused lasers spread out to several miles after only traveling a few light-seconds, diminishing their usefulness. Also doubles as a spacecraft weapon system (but all attack tasks using it are hindered).

Graser array

level 5 (15)

Exorbitant

As laser array, but collimates gamma rays, which diverge far less quickly than light, allowing communication between planets. Also doubles as a spacecraft weapon system (but all attack tasks using it are hindered).

FANTASTIC

Mind’s eye

level 4 (12)

Expensive

As contemporary AR glasses, but directly incorporated into the brain as cortical implant. Incorporation grants eidetic memory, the ability to link senses between authorized users within network range, and some control over brain chemistry, granting an asset on all tasks the user attempts to control or moderate their own reactions.

Ansible

level 6 (18)

Exorbitant

A bulky piece of equipment that takes a few days to set up and calibrate, and which requires enormous power per use, allows instantaneous communication between two points even across interstellar distances.

SENSE-ENHANCING TOOLS

Some communication devices also provide sense-enhancing abilities, such as the smartphone, AR glasses and contacts, and the mind’s eye implant.

CONTEMPORARY

Binoculars

level 2 (6)

Moderate

Provides an asset for perception tasks at range.

Camera, surveillance

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Wireless transmission to internet node, radio within long range, or flash storage to be picked up physically at a later date; includes microphone and ability to have conversation through camera speakers.

Microscope

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Provides an asset to any research task where small-scale perception could provide additional information, though analysis requires several hours or more.

Nightvision goggles

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Reasonably accurate vision in complete darkness, up to 100 m (330 feet).

Analysis apparatus

level 4 (12)

Exorbitant

Any one of a number of pieces of lab equipment that takes a few days to set up and calibrate, including chromatography columns, mass spectrometers, calorimetry analyzers, and more. Such a piece of equipment grants two assets to any analysis task where perception could provide additional information, though analysis requires several hours or more.

ADVANCED

Hand scanner

level 4 (12)

Expensive

Smartphone-like device customized for analysis; provides an asset for identifying tasks.

White noise generator

level 5 (15)

Expensive

Fist-sized device that fuzzes frequencies all across the spectrum, hindering all electronic perception and surveillance tasks within short range by five steps.

Lab-on-a-chip

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive

Portable 15 cm (6 inch) cube with many inputs and readouts (and network connections). Eases any research task where small-scale perception could provide additional information by two steps, though analysis requires about ten minutes.

Research drone

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Autonomous frames about 1 m (3 feet) in rough diameter fitted with all manner of surveillance devices, including visual, audio, chemical, and lab-on-a-chip functionality. Propelled by rotors in an atmosphere or micro-thrusters in vacuum. Research drones can also be controlled through AR glasses or smartphones to any distance communications reach.

Tactile drone

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

As research drone, except without the suite of analysis tools, providing only audible and visual feeds back to controller (if there is one), but with physical options; tactile drones can accomplish routine tasks and attempt those of level 4 or less, or allow a remote operator to attempt more difficult tasks at a distance.

FANTASTIC

Multicorder

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive

Handheld device provides two assets and one free level of Effort to any perception, analysis, or computing task that the device's multiple sensors (including radio, gravimetric, chemical, visual, audio, and others) within short range. Analysis requires only one round to complete.

An ability granting a free level of Effort usually must be unlocked by the application of at least one level of Effort, in effect providing one more level of Effort than what was paid for

Probe drone

level 6 (18)

Exorbitant

More advanced version of a contemporary research drone that can be deployed to other planets and even star systems to gather environmental and tactical information, which is transmitted back. If forced to defend itself, this level 6 robot has Armor 3 and two long-range energy blasts each round that inflict 8 points of damage each.

Sonic toolgrip

level 6 (18)

Exorbitant

Handheld toolgrip manifests a sonic effector field that serves as a multifunctional tool in a wide variety of circumstances. Suitable for picking a lock, unscrewing a bolt, analyzing the interior of an object, as a microphone, for tracking movement, hacking electronics, charging electronics, or even tuned to a high-intensity beam that can blind nearby targets for a round. The sonic toolgrip eases all tasks by two steps.

APPAREL & ARMOR

Unless the GM is running some kind of survival-related scenario, characters can be presumed to have basic clothing and footwear suitable to their environment. CONTEMP

CONTEMPORARY

Cold weather gear

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Insulated clothing, including gloves, boots, and facemask, that allows wearer to function in extremely cold environments for several hours at temperatures down to -90 degrees C (-130 degrees F).

Elegant clothes

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Clothing suitable for moving in elite circles; provides an asset to interaction checks in some situations.

SCUBA gear

level 4 (12)

Expensive

Self-contained underwater breathing apparatus allows wearer to function underwater for about an hour at depths (under normal Earth atmosphere) of up to 40 m (130 feet)

CONTEMPORARY ARMOR

Leather jacket

level 2 (6)

Moderate Functions as light armor (+1 Armor).

Kevlar vest

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Functions as medium armor (+2 Armor).

Military body armor, light

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Functions as medium armor (+2 Armor), encumbers as light armor.

Military body armor

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Functions as heavy armor (+3 Armor).

Remember, armor (lowercase a) is something you wear. Armor (capital A) is the bonus you get. You can have only one type of armor at a time, but you can have many sources of Armor, theoretically.

ADVANCED

Safesuit, space

level 2 (6)

Moderate

Cheap, mass-produced one-size-fits-all vacuum-protection “suit” (sometimes they look more like a bag) of thin polymer suitable for emergency decompression events but not for long-term use. Can be put on and sealed with one action, but any physical action taken while wearing one is subject to automatic GM intrusions on a d20 die roll of 1 or 2. If a roll triggers a GM intrusion, the suit tears.

Breather

level 2 (6)

Moderate/Expensive

A facemask providing a day of breathable air in poisonous or low-oxy atmospheres, or continuously for expensive breathers with recycling and oxy extraction features. If used in a vacuum, a breather provides the wearer three rounds of action before the full effects of vacuum begin dropping them on the damage track.

Exoskin, grav-assist

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Powered anthropomorphic exoskeleton allows completely normal function in high gravity environments of up to 5 G. Exoskins are related to loader mechs. Increase the cost category by one to grant +1 Armor.

Shipboots

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Any footwear that allows variable magnetic adhesion to a surface; cancels the hindrance to all physical actions suffered by those acting in zero-gravity conditions.

Pressure suit

level 3 (9)

Expensive

A full-body suit similar to a space suit, but only rated for regions of low pressure (not vacuum) such as is typically found on Mars. Some come integrated with breathers (at double the cost).

Exoskin, brute

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

As grav-assist exoskin, but high-tensile effectors ease all tasks related to Might.

Exoskin, reactive

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

As grav-assist exoskin, but integrated memory fibers ease all tasks related to Speed.

Space suit

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Protects a wearer from vacuum and allows basic normal activities in space. Requires about four rounds to put on and seal (going quicker risks a bad seal). Provides about ten hours of atmo in a vacuum without refurbishment. Extremely limited maneuvering thrusters provide a couple of opportunities to correct a poorly aimed jump through zero G. Shipboots are usually built in.

“Atmo” is the catch-all term for oxygenated, breathable air and livable pressure.

Stealthsuit

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Provides two assets to stealth tasks.

Swimsuit, hydrodynamic

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Next-generation materials repel water, increase oxygen consumption, and shape swimmer's body to better swimming ideal; provides two free levels of Effort to swimming tasks.

Space suit, deluxe

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive x2

As space suit, but deluxe and durable. A deluxe suit features built-in recyclers granting air, water, and nutrition for about a week of continuous use. Microthrusters allow for continuous zero-G maneuvering over a period of ten minutes, or even more if air reserves are tapped (which depletes them). If the suit is breached because of external damage, self-sealing tech limits repercussions described in Taking Damage in a Space Suit to just a round or two, assuming the breach is not catastrophically large.

TAKING DAMAGE IN A SPACE SUIT

Taking damage while protected from the effects of vacuum in a space suit (or safesuit) requires one additional defense roll. On a failure, the suit breaches and begins to spew precious air, heat, and pressure into the void. Deluxe space suits have auto-sealing functionality, repairing the puncture within a round. But during any round a suit is leaking, all tasks are hindered as the spray of venting atmosphere jerks or even spins the character around. Those with less advanced suits must find some way to seal the breach within three rounds, otherwise on the fourth round, they are treated as if in vacuum.

ADVANCED ARMOR

Armored bodysuit

level 4 (12)

Expensive

Functions as medium armor (+2 Armor), encumbers as if not wearing any armor.

Body armor, lightweight

level 4 (12)

Expensive

Functions as heavy armor (+3 Armor), encumbers as if wearing medium armor.

Paint-on impact armor

level 5 (15)

Expensive

Not armor; offers +1 to Armor, applied by spraying nanosolution from spray applicator over clothing and skin, lasts ten minutes; each applicator depletes 1 in 1d10 uses.

Battlesuit

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive

Functions as heavy armor (+3 Armor), also grants the benefit of a deluxe space suit.

Holobit

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive

Not armor; wearable device projects an offset hologram of the wearer, providing an asset to Speed defense tasks.

Battlesuit, deluxe

level 6 (18)

Exorbitant

As battlesuit, but with armor and power assist; the battlesuit grants an additional +1 to Armor in addition to the 3 Armor that heavy armor usually offers, and encumbers as medium armor. Armor rating also applies to damage that often isn't reduced by typical armor, such as heat or cold damage (but not Intellect damage).

FANTASTIC

Breather, vacuum

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Facemask generates a variable forcefield around wearer that provides comfortable temperature and atmo to wearer in poisonous atmospheres, underwater, or in vacuum, for several hours, even without a space suit.

Bounding boots

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Gravity-assist boots provide two free levels for Effort for jumping and running tasks. In addition, wearer can fall from any height safely if prepared for the descent.

Cloak, chameleon

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive

Renders wearer essentially invisible save for hardly-noticeable distortions for up to ten minutes. Provides one asset and one free level of Effort to stealth tasks.

An ability granting a free level of Effort usually must be unlocked by the application of at least one level of Effort, in effect providing one more level of Effort than what was paid for.

FANTASTIC ARMOR

Force field, quick

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Not armor; belt generates an almost transparent force field to surround the user for up to one hour, providing +1 Armor. Once used, must be recharged for several hours.

Cloak, impact

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive

Fashionable cloak with attached hood. If the wearer is subjected to a physical or energy attack, the garment strategically hardens, functioning as heavy armor (+3 Armor), and encumbering as light armor.

Cloak, reflective

level 6 (18)

Very Expensive x2 As chameleon cloak, but also reflects energy attacks back on attacker if PC succeeds on their defense task.

Battle armor

level 6 (18)

Exorbitant

As battlesuit, but grants an additional +3 to Armor in addition to the 3 Armor, and encumbers as light Armor. In addition, the wearer gains +1 to their Might Edge and +5 to their Might Pool.

Force field, omni

level 6 (18)

Exorbitant

As quick force field, but permanent while active, requires no recharge period. In addition, the wearer can tune the field so that it's hazed and translucent, hiding their identity, or make it fully dark so that it emits no light (though they can see through the field normally).

Kinetic ring

level 6 (18)

Exorbitant

Ring reactively projects a powerful energy field to deflect or slow projectiles, easing the wearer's Speed defense roll. If the projectile still hits the wearer, the field grants +1 to Armor against the attack.

Gun armor

level 6 (18)

Exorbitant x2

As battle armor, but armor includes a deployable integrated long-range plasma weapon that inflicts 6 points of damage. It's able to fire autonomously, allowing the wearer to take some other action (though if set to do so, automatic GM intrusions occur on 1–3 on a d20, and if triggered, result in friendly fire).

UTILITY GEAR

CONTEMPORARY

Duct tape roll

level 1 (3)

Inexpensive

Practical uses range from providing an asset to healing tasks to making temporary shoes, and much more.

Flashlight

level 1 (3)

Inexpensive

Provides light where pointed within short range for a few hours before requiring new batteries/a charge.

Padlock with keys

level 3 (9)

Inexpensive

Padlocks aren't too difficult to remove, especially with bolt cutters, but they do slow down would-be thieves.

Backpack

level 2 (6)

Moderate

A quality, well-packed backpack can carry a surprising amount of gear, including a sleeping bag.

Bolt cutters

level 3 (9)

Moderate

Enables and eases tasks to cut through metal bars.

Climbing gear

level 3 (9)

Moderate

Enables and eases tasks to climb buildings or cliffs. Includes 15 m (50 feet) of nylon rope.

Crowbar

level 3 (9)

Moderate

Enables and eases tasks to force open stuck or barred doors.

Electric lantern

level 3 (9)

Moderate

Provides bright light within 9 m (30 feet) for several hours before requiring new batteries/a charge.

Lockpick set

level 3 (9)

Moderate

Asset to picking mechanical locks.

Restraint

level 3 (9)

Moderate/Expensive

Moderately priced non-novelty cuffs restrain targets at the wrists, hindering tasks to break free by two steps. Straitjackets wrap a target more securely, hindering tasks to break free by three steps.

Sleeping bag

level 3 (9)

Moderate/Expensive

Moderately priced bags are suitable for temperatures down to -4°C (24°F); expensive down to -29°C (-20°F).

Tent

level 3 (9)

Moderate/Expensive

Moderately priced tents are for one or two people; expensive tents can sleep four to six people.

Tools, general

level 3 (9)

Moderate

All-purpose tools include a utility knife, tape measure, pliers, small hammer, variable screwdriver, and level.

Tools, specialized

level 3 (9)

Expensive

A set of specialized tools are custom-selected for a specific task, such as carpentry, mechanical repair, or electronics. Specialized tools provide an asset to the task they're suited for.

Disguise kit

level 3 (9)

Very Expensive

Contains hair dye, cosmetics, a few hair pieces, and other small props; using a kit takes a few minutes but grants an asset to tasks related to disguise and impersonation.

ADVANCED

Everlight

level 3 (9)

Inexpensive

As flashlight, but radioisotope power cell allows the light to shine a bright light up to a very long distance for arbitrary lengths of time.

Tent, environment

level 3 (9)

Moderate

As tent, but filters out poisonous atmospheres. Can be used in vacuum in an emergency for a few hours of air, but the taut fabric is given to tearing (GM intrusions triggered by rolling a 1 on d20 cause it to rip).

Repair tape roll

level 4 (12)

Expensive

As duct tape, but programmable matter embedded in fabric provides two assets to all tasks related to repair using the tape and taping things together. Each roll has about ten uses.

Self-extending rope

level 4 (12)

Expensive

Mechanism prints fiber on the fly, allowing the rope to extend over 300 m (1,000 feet).

Surelock

level 5 (15)

Expensive

As padlock with keys, but can be attached to secure any opening by forming a level 8 bond with any surface; attempts to pick or otherwise open the lock are hindered by three steps.

Lock infiltrator

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive

Advanced tech electronic and digital locks are amazingly advanced—so is this item that provides an asset to picking them (including a surelock).

Exo-hand

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive

A fully functional prosthetic arm and hand, which could replace a lost limb, or be wired into user's nervous system, which gives the user an additional gripping appendage useful in a variety of situations where other people would have their hands full. Attacks (and other tasks requiring precise dexterity) made with an exo-hand are hindered by two steps.

Fusion battery

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive

This mobile fusion power source (with metal handles for easy transport) masses about 30 kg (70 pounds); it generates power through fusion. Provides power to nearly any device short of a spacecraft for a variable period depending on power requirements.

Fusion torch

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive

Cuts through substances of up to level 9 after a few rounds of application.

4D printer

level 5 (15)

Exorbitant

Prints a variety of basic objects, including protein bars, parts, wires, tools, and even small powered devices and equipment of up to level 4 and that are expensive or less. Requires special feedstock, which is an expensive cost to replace after every dozen or so uses, though items printed by the 4D printer can be recycled, extending the feedstock supply accordingly. Many long-haul spacecraft seek to obtain a 4D printer because having one significantly reduces the amount of material that must otherwise be carried.

FANTASTIC

Carryall pack

level 5 (15)

Expensive

As backpack, but dimensional folding allows for an arbitrary number of objects to be stored inside, so long as they fit the carryall pack's 60 cm (2 foot) diameter mouth.

Gravity regulator

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive

Belt-mounted device that regulates gravity to 1 G for wearer if within zero G to 3 G.

Molecular joiner

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive

Handheld device causes the molecules of two touching physical surfaces of up to level 8 to truly blend, forming a seamless bond stronger than even the most advanced glue.

Programmable suitcase

level 6 (18)

Exorbitant

Large metallic suitcase composed of programmable matter that, with instruction, can convert itself into nearly any object or piece of equipment of an equal or lower level or price, excluding artifacts and manifest cyphers. The replicated object can be converted back to its base state as a separate action.

HEALTH CARE AND NUTRITION

Health care is too broad a topic to cover in depth. However, for purposes of on-the-go amelioration of wounds and other injuries, the following options are available. In particular, advanced tech autodocs include any number of partly robotic healing kits or automated hospital devices.

CONTEMPORARY

Trail rations (1 day)

level 1 (3)

Inexpensive

First aid kit

level 2 (6)

Moderate

Kit of bandages, antibiotics, and similar supplies; provides an asset to healing tasks.

Military-grade field dressing

level 3 (9)

Very Expensive

Bandage with antimicrobial, analgesic, hemostatic, and temporary skin substitute qualities that can raise a victim one step of the damage track if damage was due to a wound.

ADVANCED

Cold sober

level 2 (6)

Inexpensive

Chewable tablet that speeds the breakdown of blood alcohol while also dissolving the toxic breakdown products of natural alcohol processing, leaving a user sober and free of a hangover within ten minutes.

Instabulb, coffee

level 3 (9)

Inexpensive

Coin-like disc; percolates and swells when water is added, becoming a sealed bulb filled with aromatic hot coffee. Other beverages can be had in the same form factor, suitable for travel and drinking in zero G.

Mega bar

level 3 (9)

Moderate

As trail rations, but bar either provides enough nutrition for one day of food or one free recovery roll.

Serum, remedial

level 3 (9)

Moderate

“Serum” is an often-used term for an ampule of artificially engineered blood and plasma that provides some kind of benefit. Serums of all types are generally dispensed from an autodoc, but may also be obtained as

individual units, or in packs or cases. An ampule of remedial serum grants the user 3 points they can add to any Pool. It also has the benefit of relieving hangover symptoms.

Serum, space-fit

level 4 (12)

Moderate

As remedial serum, but protects against the two most common dangers to human physiology from extended trips into space and long-term exposure to zero G and radiation, which most notably include DNA breakage from cosmic rays and bone and muscle deterioration from microgravity. An ampule of space-fit serum lasts for about a month.

Serum, acceleration

level 4 (12)

Expensive

As remedial serum, but allows user to ignore the many deleterious physiological effects of acceleration and high-G maneuvers (of up to 15 Gs) for one hour (or of up to 20 Gs for a few minutes). Users are likely unable to move under high G, but won't pass out, have a stroke, cardiac arrest, etc.—at least, not immediately.

Prolonged use may still lead to all these outcomes.

Serum, antivenom

level 4 (12)

Expensive

As remedial serum, but grants a Might task eased by four steps to withstand and clear poison from the user's system and provides similar poison resistance for one day.

Sleep set

level 4 (12)

Expensive

A thin metallic (but comfortable, padded) headset that rests on the temples and induces a deep (dreamless) sleep state for a specified period, usually no more than three to six hours. Fail-safes can be set to bring a user out of sleep if loud noises, movement, someone addresses the sleeper, or other triggers occur. Users find themselves extremely well rested after each use.

Transplant, organ or limb

level 4 (12)

Expensive

If an autodoc or more advanced facility is available, a lost limb or organ can be replaced. Replaced limbs eventually become equally effective as the original, with practice. However, the mechanical (or possibly force-grown) prosthetic limbs initially hinders all physical tasks attempted using it for several weeks.

Autodoc, mobile

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Pack-sized kit that eases any healing task, or up to four free recovery rolls. Also usually has a variety of serum types. (Each use requires a depletion roll of 1 on a d10; if depleted, autodoc supplies are used up, and it must be refilled as an expensive cost.)

Hibernation pod

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

A pod large enough to contain a human, with internal mechanisms and power able to safely put a person into a deep state of arrested metabolism for about a hundred years, unless the program ends sooner or the pod is opened from the exterior. Each hundred years thereafter, the hibernating human must succeed on a Might defense task. The difficulty begins at 1, but increases by +1 every few hundred years that pass.

Omnichair

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Provides user full mobility via combination of micro thrusters, retractable wheels, and maglev levitation in all environments (from microgravity to full gravity), often contains a variety of tools and enhancements that grant the user assets to common tasks (possibly including a built-in weapon system). If customized to do so for an additional very expensive cost, can extend a fairing, enabling the omnichair to act as a sort of space suit/miniature spacecraft at need.

Autodoc

level 5 (15)

Exorbitant

As mobile autodoc, but fixed in place (suitable for a starcraft or station sickbay), and grants essentially unlimited recovery rolls or serum injections to anyone who spends at least an hour immobilized on the autodoc med table, even for the most minor of treatments.

FANTASTIC

Nano tab, general

level 4 (12)

Expensive

Any of a variety of pill-like concentrations of nano-scale robots designed to activate once taken by mouth. Nano tab pills are usually designed for health interventions, though some also provide additional physical benefits. A general-use nano tab adds 1 to all recovery rolls made by user for one day.

Nano tab, rejuvenator

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive

As general nano tab, but refills 4 points to 1 Pool and raises user one step on damage track.

Stasis pod

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive

As hibernation pod, but suspends time for target indefinitely, until program ends or pod is opened.

Nano tab, acceleration

level 6 (18)

Exorbitant

As general nano tab, but permanently grants the benefits of an ampule of acceleration serum.

Nano tab, space-fit

level 6 (18)

Exorbitant

As general nano tab, but permanently grants the benefits of an ampule of space-fit serum.

Nano tab, immolating

level 7 (21)

Priceless

As general nano tab, but explosively distributes nano-threads deep into the body, turning it into mostly weaponry, effectively granting five posthuman upgrade power shifts. However, this quickly burns out the user, who dies within a solar standard month.

ROBOTS & AI

CONTEMPORARY

Electronic assistant

level 2 (6)

—/Moderate

Anyone with a smartphone has some kind of built-in electronic assistant, though stand-alone versions can be had. Electronic assistants are voice activated and tie into the internet and any other connected systems, such as lights, door locks, furnaces, music speakers, and more.

House robot

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Any number of small automated devices that can vacuum, mop, or conduct similar routine tasks in a limited area. Includes embodied electronic assistants with some mobility, such as Jibo.

PackBot

level 3 (9)

Exorbitant

An autonomous mobile robot that moves on treads, which can also be remote controlled. Useful in situations where humans would be endangered, such as bomb disposal, hazmat, search, and reconnaissance. It can climb stairs, drive through mud, and operate in all-weather conditions.

Surveillance drone

level 3 (9)

Exorbitant

An autonomous flying robot, which can also be remote controlled. Can record or relay its environment to distant controllers. An upgrade into the priceless category allows one to carry two or more self-guiding missiles that inflict 12 points of damage and drop unprotected targets two steps on the damage track.

ADVANCED

Auton

level 1 (3)

Moderate

The generic term “auton” refers to a smart robot, one able to exist in the world as a full-fledged entity, though not nearly so competent as a true AI. On the other hand, autons come very close to having self-awareness, and some have probably achieved it. The variety of autons is staggering, given that they can be trained in nearly any task. Autons also come in a variety of shapes and colors, which vary based on culture and tech level. Though most can move on treads or legs to follow their owners as directed, some autons are housed in drone-like chassis using either rotors or microthrusters, allowing them to fly rather than move on the ground. Treat a basic auton as a level 1 follower, which allows the auton modifications in one task.

Auton, aide

level 2 (6)

Expensive

Treat as a level 2 follower, which allows the auton modifications in up to two tasks, depending on the particular aide.

Auton, medical

level 2 (6)

Exorbitant

As auton, but one modification is always healing. A medical auton also incorporates a mobile autodoc.

Auton, defense

level 2 (6)

Exorbitant

As auton, but one modification is always Speed defense, which means when helping to defend a target from a physical attack, the target eases the task by two steps. A defense auton also has 3 Armor.

Auton, military drone

level 2 (6)

Exorbitant

As defense auton or warrior auton, but miniaturized and able to fly in gravity to support owner.

Auton, warrior

level 2 (6)

Exorbitant

As auton, but one modification is always in attacks, which means when helping a target to make an attack, the target eases the task by two steps. However, warrior autons usually attack autonomously as level 3 entities with a ranged or melee weapon that inflicts 5 points of damage.

Shipmind

level 3 (9)

Exorbitant x2

A shipmind is a sim AI that exists within a single spacecraft or starship, with the ability to control many aspects of vehicle functions as necessary to supplement a crew, or sometimes in lieu of a crew. Shipminds each have their own simulated personality, emulating consciousness, though in most cases, they are not actually conscious. Having a shipmind installed on a spacecraft is immensely helpful, as it can oversee many basic functions. A shipmind usually accomplishes tasks at the level of the ship in which it is installed.

FANTASTIC

Synth

level 3 (9)

Expensive Synths are a blend of biological and mechanical parts so advanced that in some cases it's impossible to tell the difference between a living creature and a synth. They are strong AIs in physical bodies. Other varieties of synths are constructed (or have modified themselves) to make it obvious they are not biological. In any case, synths are often sturdier and longer lasting than an average biological entity. Even so, in some settings, synths are relegated to being servitors, as if they were simple robots and autons. In other settings, a few, some, or all humans have long ago migrated into synth bodies, leaving their biology behind in prehistory, and becoming posthuman. Treat as a level 3 follower, which allows the synths modifications in up to three tasks, depending on the particular synth. At minimum, all synths have 2 Armor and regain 1 point of lost health per round if damaged.

Synth, companion

level 4 (12)

Expensive

As synth, but treat as a level 4 follower, which allows the synths modifications in up to four tasks.

Synth, free

level 5 (15)

Expensive*

As companion synth, but with modifications for up to five tasks. *A free synth usually can't be purchased, by definition, but can be hired on a contract basis, as an expensive cost for each week of service required.

Wardroid

level 6 (18)

Exorbitant

As free synth, but outfitted for war, including modifications in attack and defense. A wardroid often has many additional customizations and abilities.

Synth, infiltrator

level 7 (21)

Priceless

As free synth, but with modifications focusing on stealth, disguise, and tasks related to gaining entry to guarded locations for purposes of spying or assassination. Synth infiltrators have systems that allow them to

change their apparent (or even actual) shape completely over the course of a minute to appear as another creature or innocuous object.

RECREATION

Occasional recreation is absolutely necessary to maintain stable relationships as well as mental stability and happiness. Characters that never engage in recreation become gradually more unhappy and troubled, and eventually find interaction tasks and most Intellect tasks hindered unexpectedly.

CONTEMPORARY

Book

level 2 (6)

Inexpensive

Print, digital, or audio; once perused for at least ten minutes, grants an asset to relaxation tasks.

Card/tabletop/digital game

level 2 (6)

Inexpensive/Moderate

Suitable for passing the time and building bonds between friends and strangers alike.

Alcohol/drugs

level 2 (6)

Inexpensive/Moderate/Expensive

Common intoxicants taken in moderation can raise spirits, easing tasks related to social interaction while at the same time hindering tasks related to perception and physical coordination. Excessive amounts cancel out the benefit to social interaction and hinder all tasks by two or more steps, making even routine tasks a challenge. Extended excessive use can lead to addiction, a long-term disease difficult to recover from.

Other kinds of drugs have a different ease and hinder profile. For example, the dose of caffeine in a cup of coffee can ease tasks related to concentration and motivation but hinder tasks related to resisting anxiety and irritability. On the other hand, addiction to caffeine normally isn't nearly as serious an addiction as alcohol or opioids.

ADVANCED

Sidekick sphere

level 2 (6)

Moderate

Circuit-inscribed, and jauntily decorated, smart-material sphere about 1 m (3 feet) in diameter that rolls or jumps to stay within an immediate distance of owner. Capable of playing music, pulsing with light, engaging in witty conversation, and in keeping confidence. Treat the sidekick sphere as a level 2 follower (and limited sim AI).

Tattoo, programmable

level 3 (9)

Expensive

With time and talent, someone with a programmable tattoo implant can completely alter the designs that appear on their skin, modifying lines and color. A small alteration requires only a few rounds, but a full-body tattoo change, assuming any artistry at all is involved, may take a few days to complete.

FANTASTIC

Tattoo, living

level 3 (9)

Expensive

As programmable tattoo, but images can be animated to run in a loop, or visually respond with limited reactivity to certain audible or other cues. Some come implanted with sim AIs for conversation and interaction.

Pleasure bit

level 4 (12)

Expensive

Handheld device emits magnetic induction field that activates the reward circuit in the user's brain, creating sudden ecstasy and joy for a pre-set period of time. Addiction is possible, though better models have an ebbing mode that helps put users back into their right minds gradually.

ARMAMENTS LISTING

A selection of weapons for your sci-fi setting rated by level, price, function, and tech level

ARMAMENT AMMUNITION & CHARGE

Weapons require ammunition ("ammo"), whether that's rounds of a particular caliber, energy packs, or something even more exotic. You can handle ammo requirements for weapons in one of three ways: exact tracking, abstracted monthly upkeep cost, or not worrying about it.

Exact tracking means asking the character to track their available and used rounds/shots after (and possibly during) a fight.

Abstracted monthly upkeep cost assumes that the characters go through ammo at an average rate, and obtaining more ammo or energy packs is something they do in their "off-camera" time. The monthly upkeep cost for ammo should equal about two steps less in price category than the weapon in question.

Or you can just not worry about keeping track of ammunition, especially in games where gunplay isn't common.

CONTEMPORARY

Ammo (box of 50 rounds)

level 1 (3)

Inexpensive

Caliber varies by specific firearm, used in most contemporary ranged weapons

ADVANCED/FANTASTIC

Energy pack (50 shots)

level 1 (3)

Inexpensive

Watt-hours (Wh) varies by specific energy weapon, used in most advanced and fantastic ranged weapons.

Smart rounds (box of 4 rounds)

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

A smart round can be used to make one normal attack plus up to 3 additional ricochet attacks on targets within short range of the attacker and each other as one action. Each ricochet attack successively increases the GM intrusion range by 2. If a GM intrusion is triggered, the ricochet attack hits something other than what the attacker intended, such as an important system or ally.

A character who uses a smart round on a group of foes could attempt to attack up to 4 of them with one shot; however, the GM intrusion range on the last ricochet attack would be 1–7 on the d20.

MELEE WEAPONS

Any weapon that a character must use by swinging or stabbing at a target within immediate range is considered a melee weapon. Most contemporary melee weapons rely on the strength of the wielder.

CONTEMPORARY

Knife, simple

level 1 (3)

Inexpensive

Light weapon (2 damage, difficulty of attack is eased); breaks on attack roll of 1–2.

Knife, hunting

level 2 (6)

Moderate

Light weapon (2 damage, difficulty of attack is eased).

Machete

level 2 (6)

Moderate

Medium weapon (4 damage).

Nightstick

level 2 (6)

Moderate

Medium weapon (4 damage).

Broad sword, replica

level 2 (6)

Expensive

Heavy weapon (6 damage, requires both hands to wield).

Stun “gun”

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Handheld device with two prongs that must contact target; light weapon (2 points of electrical damage, difficulty of attack is eased, and on additional failed Might defense roll, target is dazed 1 round).

ADVANCED

Power fist

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Power-assist gauntlet; medium weapon (but inflicts 6 points of damage from power-assist).

Stunstick

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Nightstick-like form factor; medium weapon (variable setting: 0, 2, 4, or 6 points of damage; if setting is set to 2 or fewer hit points, human-sized target or smaller loses their next turn).

Mono-molecular blade

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Produces a 15 cm (6 inch) wire-like blade that cuts through any material of up to level 4; light weapon (2 damage, difficulty of attack is eased). It ignores 1 point of Armor value (except from force fields).

Stunring

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

As stunstick, but light weapon (difficulty of attack is eased) worn as a set of two rings on the same hand; punch target to use.

FANTASTIC

Plasma saber

level 5 (15)

Exorbitant

Produces a 1 m (3 foot) blade of sun-hot plasma that cuts through any material of up to level 7. Can be wielded as either a medium weapon in one hand or as a heavy weapon in two hands (4 damage or 6 damage). It ignores 3 points of a target's Armor (except from force fields).

RANGED WEAPONS

Any weapon that fires a projectile or other destructive force at a target within short or longer range is considered a ranged weapon.

CONTEMPORARY

Bow

level 2 (6)

Moderate

Medium weapon (4 damage), long range.

Hand grenade

level 3 (9)

Moderate

Single use; can be thrown a short distance; explodes to inflict 6 points of damage in an immediate radius.

In modern and nearfuture settings, hand grenades are usually difficult to come by unless a character has a shady connection.

Rifle, low caliber

level 2 (6)

Moderate

Medium weapon but requires both hands (4 damage), long range.

Handgun, light

level 2 (6)

Expensive

Light weapon (2 damage, difficulty of attack is eased), short range.

Handgun, medium

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Medium weapon (4 damage), long range.

Shotgun

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Heavy weapon (6 damage, both hands), immediate range.

Handgun, heavy

level 3 (9)

Very Expensive

Heavy weapon (6 damage, both hands), long range.

Rifle, assault

level 3 (9)

Very Expensive

Heavy weapon (6 damage, both hands), long range. This rapid-fire weapon can operate in conjunction with Spray or Arc Spray abilities.

Rifle, heavy

level 3 (9)

Very Expensive

Heavy weapon (6 damage, both hands), very long range.

Submachine gun

level 3 (9)

Very Expensive

Medium weapon (4 damage), short range. This rapid-fire weapon can operate in conjunction with Spray or Arc Spray abilities.

Taser

level 3 (9)

Very Expensive

Handheld device that fires attached probe at target within 9 m (30 feet); medium weapon (4 points of electrical damage and on a failed Might defense roll, target is stunned for 1 round, losing their next action).

ADVANCED

Grenade, sonic

level 4 (12)

Moderate

Single use; can be thrown a short distance; explodes to inflict 2 points of damage in immediate radius. On a failed Might defense roll, targets lose their next turn.

Grenade, thermite

level 4 (12)

Moderate

Single use; can be thrown a short distance; explodes to inflict 6 points of damage in immediate radius. On a failed Might defense roll, targets burn for 2 points of damage each round until they spend a round smothering the fire.

Laser/photon pistol

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Handgun fires coherent light beams; light weapon (2 damage, difficulty of attack is eased), long range.

Needler/syringer

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Light weapon (2 damage, difficulty of attack is eased), long range. Injects soporific that dazes target on a successful Might defense roll for one minute, or puts them into a light sleep for one minute on a failed roll.

Vacuum handgun, heavy

level 3 (9)

Very Expensive

As contemporary handgun, but uses special rounds designed to fire in a zero-oxygen environment, and that are self-propelling so firing this gun in zero or low gravity doesn't spin wielder backward.

Vacuum rifle, assault

level 3 (9)

Very Expensive

As contemporary assault rifle, but uses special rounds designed to fire in a zero-oxygen environment, and that are self-propelling so firing this assault rifle in zero or law gravity doesn't spin wielder backward.

Foam restraint rifle

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Thick rifle emits a short-range stream of orange liquid that foams over a target and hardens into a body restraint that lasts for ten minutes. A restrained victim can't move or take actions that require movement. A target whose level is higher than the rifle's level can usually break free within one or two rounds.

Laser/photon rifle

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Rifle fires coherent light beams; medium weapon but requires both hands (4 damage), very long range.

Grapple gun

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Medium weapon but requires both hands (1 damage), long range. Attaches articulated grapple and connected line to target; hinders animate targets until they can remove the grapple. Grapple gun mechanism either pulls gun wielder to anchored object, or vice versa if object is small. Otherwise, user must succeed on a Might-based task to pull target to them.

Laser/photon pulse rifle

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive x2

Rifle fires coherent light beams; heavy weapon (6 damage), long range. This rapid-fire weapon can operate in conjunction with Spray or Arc Spray abilities.

Rail gun

level 5 (15)

Exorbitant

Long-barreled rifle with computer sight assistance fires magnetically accelerated slugs; heavy-plus weapon (8 points of damage, both hands), range is 3,050 m (10,000 feet).

FANTASTIC

Blaster, light

level 4 (12)

Expensive

Handgun that projects an energetic plasma-particle beam; light weapon (2 damage, difficulty of attack is eased), long range. It ignores 1 point of Armor value (except from force fields).

Blaster, medium

level 4 (12)

Expensive

Handgun that projects an energetic plasma-particle beam; medium weapon (4 damage), long range. It ignores 1 point of Armor value (except from force fields).

Plasma grenade

level 4 (12)

Expensive

Single use; can be thrown a short distance; explodes to inflict 8 points of damage in immediate radius and targets descend one step on the damage track. It ignores 2 points of Armor value (except from force fields).

Blaster, goggles

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Thick goggles that project twin energetic plasma-particle beams; light weapon (2 damage, difficulty of attack is eased), long range. It ignores 1 point of Armor value (except from force fields).

Blaster, heavy

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive

Big handgun that projects an energetic plasma-particle beam; heavy weapon (6 damage, both hands), long range. It ignores 1 point of Armor value (except from force fields).

Blaster, heavy rifle

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive

Rifle that projects an energetic plasma-particle beam; heavy weapon (6 damage, both hands), very long range. It ignores 1 point of Armor value (except from force fields).

Blaster, heavy pulse rifle

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive x2

Rifle that projects an energetic plasma-particle beam; heavy weapon (6 damage, both hands), long range. This rapid-fire weapon can operate in conjunction with Spray or Arc Spray abilities. It ignores 1 point of Armor value (except from force fields).

Blaster, cannon

level 5 (15)

Exorbitant

Cannon-like gun that requires a tripod and two people to operate that projects an energetic plasma-particle beam; heavy weapon (10 damage, both hands), very long range. This rapid-fire weapon can operate in conjunction with Spray or Arc Spray abilities. It ignores 2 points of Armor value (except from force fields).

BLASTER WEAPONS

Optional Blaster Rule as the Default: The advantage that blaster weapons have over other projectile and coherent light weapons is their ability to penetrate targets, which renders Armor less effective. This optional rule is presented as the default rule in *The Stars Are Fire* to demonstrate their superior tech level even over advanced tech weapons.

EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS AS ARTIFACTS

Cypher System artifacts in a science fiction setting could potentially be any one of the items presented in this chapter, if found by characters in a less advanced setting than its tech rating. That said, even in advanced or fantastic settings, opportunities to find especially unusual devices are everywhere.

Dimensional Modulator

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Marble-sized crisscross shape of unknown material

Effect: A target within immediate range loses their dimension of breadth (which folds into a higher dimension), rendering them as flat as paper. The target adheres to whatever surface it was attached to, set upon, or was standing upon, and resembles particularly realistic art. An affected creature enters stasis. While in stasis, it is unable to take actions, doesn't age, and is immune to damage and effects. It remains in stasis for about a day, until the user returns the missing dimension or the artifact depletes.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

Metabolic Prod

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: 1 m (4 foot) metallic rod of unknown material

Effect: When touched to a living target (possibly as an attack), the rod injects a potent cocktail of engineered biomolecules, paralyzing the target for up to one minute. The rod wielder may also choose one of the following additional effects, if set before attacking.

Aggression: The target's aggressive tendencies are increased for one hour, during which time the target attacks almost anything it encounters.

Calm: The target's aggressive tendencies are tamped down for one hour, during which time the target responds to attacks but never initiates them.

Hibernation: The target falls into hibernation, a coma-like sleep in which their metabolism slows to a crawl. They can go months with no additional food or water and with a fraction of the air they'd normally need. Loud sounds, damage, persistent prodding, and the like wakes someone in hibernation.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Probability Regulator

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Fist-sized mathematically perfect solid of constant width of unknown material

Effect: For tasks that are usually random, the user exerts some level of control. When picking a card, rolling a die, choosing a number, or otherwise taking an action that skill usually plays no part in, they attempt an

Intellect task whose difficulty is determined by how unlikely choosing correctly might be, so long as it is possible, even if unlikely. A 50/50 coin flip is a difficulty of 1, whereas picking a series of numbers with odds around 1 in 300,000,000 is difficulty 10. If successful, they achieve the desired result.

Depletion: $1 \times$ task difficulty in 1d20

Steorraform

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Badge-sized seven-pointed star of unknown material

Effect: If the wearer would become debilitated or die, the worn steorraform prevents it by instantly restoring health (to a creature or an NPC) or points to a Pool (to a player character). If the wearer would die of old age, disease, or poison, the artifact prevents it by rolling back the clock by a few decades, clearing the disease, or denaturing the poison. The artifact is ineffective in preventing death when those conditions last over several rounds or more, such as falling into lava, the sun, a singularity, and so on.

Depletion: $1 \times$ number of previous uses in 1d20

WEAPONS

Artifacts that can be used as weapons, though some have other uses as well.

Light, Medium, and Heavy Artifact Weapons: The artifact weapons described in this section are idiosyncratic in that they are not described as light, medium, or heavy. If they were specifically categorized, many characters would find that their training doesn't match up with a particular designation. With artifact weapons living outside the regular weapon categories, anyone can use an artifact weapon.

Alpha Beam Projector

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Rifle-like device of unknown material

Effect: The device has two settings. One fires a beam of energy that acts as propulsion and rockets the artifact away unless the user can hold onto it as a difficulty 1 Might-based task. A user could use this setting to fly a long distance each round, but doing so requires a difficulty 4 Speed-based task each round to move in the direction desired (and not plow into the ground or the side of a building). The other setting fires a reactionless beam that can be used as a very long-range plasma attack that inflicts damage equal to the artifact level. The beam ignores 1 point of Armor from the target.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Carbonizer

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Pistol-like device of unknown material

Effect: This device fires a beam that transmutes the matter of targets within short range into powdery ash, inflicting damage equal to the artifact level that ignores Armor from force fields and natural scales, leather, and other organic sources.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Death Ray

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Pistol-like device of unknown material

Effect: This device fires a beam that transmutes the matter of targets within short range into powdery ash, inflicting damage equal to the artifact level that ignores Armor from force fields and natural scales, leather, and other organic sources.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Disintegration Beamer

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Rifle-like device with two electrode-like protrusions of unknown material

Effect: This device fires a beam to suppress the charge of the electrons that make up a creature or object within long range, inflicting damage equal to twice the artifact's level. If the attack reduces the target's health (or combined Pools for a PC) to below the level of the artifact, the target instantly falls to dust. (A PC who would be disintegrated can spend 1 XP and instead descend one step on the damage track.)

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Empathetic Ray

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Rod-like device with very long barrel of unknown material

Effect: This device emits an invisible beam of neural-magnetic energy as a short-range attack that instantly reverses how a level 1 target sees the user (turning an enemy into a friend, and vice versa) for up to one day. The user can adjust the settings to increase the ray's effectiveness by making one additional depletion roll per increase in the maximum level of the target. Thus, to alter the attitude of level 5 target (4 levels above the normal limit), the user must make five depletion rolls. If used against a PC, an affected PC can attempt an Intellect task to end the effect once every minute for the first few minutes, then once every hour.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

SCIENCE FICTION ARTIFACTS

Artifacts in a science fiction game can be strange relics from an unknown alien source or tech items that aren't yet widely available. In a galactic setting, for example, it's easy to imagine that innovations or specialized items might not have spread everywhere.

AMBER CASEMENT

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Series of short, rounded tubes and hoses about 12 inches (30 cm) long

Effect: The device solidifies the air in a 10-foot (3 m) cube of space, the center of which must be within short range. The air is turned into an amberlike substance, and those trapped in it will likely suffocate or starve.

Depletion: 1–4 in 1d6

METABOLISM BUD

Level: 1d6

Form: Organic pod, almost like a small, hemispherical bit of brain; once grafted to a host, the host's flesh grows over the pod until it is only a lump

Effect: The pod grafts onto any living host (usually near the brain or spine) and injects chemicals that boost the creature's metabolism. This permanently raises the host's Speed Pool maximum by 5 points.

Depletion: —

MIND IMAGER

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Handheld device with a plastic panel screen and wires that must be affixed to the head of a creature

Effect: This device shows a visual image of what a creature is thinking. The affected creature need not be conscious.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

PSYCHIC CRYSTAL

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Violet crystal the size of a fist

Effect: The crystal allows the user to transmit their thoughts telepathically at an interstellar distance. Even at that range, communication is instantaneous. Each use allows about a minute's worth of communication, and the communication is entirely one way (so having two crystals would be handy).

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

REPAIR SPHERE

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Small spherical automaton about 8 inches (20 cm) in diameter

Effect: This device comes with a small module that can be affixed to a machine. Floating along, the sphere attempts to follow within immediate range of the module (though it can be directed to remain where it is). It moves a short distance each round. It can come to the module from a range of up to 10 miles (16 km) away. If the module is attached to a machine and that machine takes damage, the sphere moves to repair the damage with sophisticated tools that restore 1d6 – 2 points per round (meaning that if a 1 or 2 is rolled, no damage is repaired that round). This requires no action on the part of the machine being repaired. The sphere can attempt to repair a machine a number of times per day equal to its level. The sphere must be newly activated each day.

Depletion: 1 in 1d100

VEHICLES & SPACECRAFT

Vehicle: Technically speaking, spacecraft are also vehicles. Unless it's important to make a distinction, assume all guidance here regarding "vehicles" also applies to spacecraft.

Spacecraft (and Starship): When it is important to make a distinction from a simple vehicle restricted to the land, sea, or air of a single planet, the term "spacecraft" is used for vehicles that travel beyond a single planet's atmosphere. Some spacecraft can operate both in space and as planetary vehicles, as noted in their entries. Additionally, a spacecraft that has FTL capability (as opposed to only interplanetary capability within a single solar system) is referred to as a starship.

VARIABLE COST BY TECH RATING

Vehicle costs assume the setting is predominantly of the same tech rating as the vehicle's tech rating.

However, the price might drop by a price category if the setting tech rating is predominantly greater than the vehicle's rating.

CONTEMPORARY STYLING IN ADVANCED OR FANTASTIC SETTINGS

As previously indicated, vehicles listed as contemporary might be found in settings using advanced or fantastic tech, possibly at a lower price. However, the vehicles available in these future worlds are not (necessarily)

antiques, but rather cheaply made objects, possibly with the veneer and stylings of vehicles suitable to the setting, and possibly the power source, too.

PRICELESS PRICE CATEGORY

A priceless item is something that even the very rich can't afford, requiring the resources of a nation-state, or similar entity appropriate to the setting, to acquire or build.

FIGHTING IN A VEHICLE

If PCs are involved in combat in which they are only partly or lightly enclosed (or not at all enclosed, as in the case of most cycles, boards, and similar conveyances), use normal rules of combat, as modified by vehicular movement. However, if PCs are involved in a combat where they are completely enclosed in a vehicle with no possibility of openness to the environment through which they can fire weapons (so that it's not really the characters fighting, but the vehicles), use the vehicular combat rules from the CSR.

If PCs are involved in space combat, see the extended vehicular combat rules described in this book, which provide all kinds of additional options.

DRIVERLESS VEHICLES

If the rider, driver, or pilot activates self-driving as part of another action, riding, driving, and piloting tasks are automatically completed (or failed) according to the vehicle's level, though all such self-driving tasks are hindered. However, the pilot is free to engage in other actions as the vehicle maneuvers to the best of its ability.

This driverless function is also available on many spacecraft, courtesy of a shipmind, which is a sim AI that can control the ship's functions as necessary. Shipminds control spacecraft at the spacecraft's level, not their level, but are not subject to the task hindrance that more basic driverless vehicles suffer.

LOOKING FOR MORE VEHICLE OPTIONS

A representative cross section of vehicles is provided. If you're looking for something that isn't noted, use something close and adapt the listing.

Also note that unless a particular listing is already indicated as a luxury or sport version, most vehicles can be obtained in a luxury or sports package, either at the next price category up, or at double the indicated price.

CUSTOMIZING VEHICLES

Assuming the facilities are available, characters can pay for the customization of their vehicle to add a weapon system, add even more weapon systems, add superior weapon systems, or some other significant option. In most cases, the cost for such an upgrade is very expensive to exorbitant.

PLANETARY VEHICLE LISTING

CYCLES

CONTEMPORARY

Motorcycle, dirt bike

level 2 (6)

Expensive

Knobby two-wheeled or three-wheeled vehicle, supporting a basic frame with a seat for one rider (and sometimes a passenger) open to the environment, ideal for wild terrain and off-road travel; moves a short distance each round in wild terrain or an average of 48 km/h (30 mph) during long-distance travel (double movement on paved surfaces).

Motorcycle, cruiser

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Two-wheeled vehicle, supporting a stylish frame with a seat for one rider (and sometimes a passenger) open to the environment suitable for paved surfaces; moves a long distance each round on paved surfaces or an average of 96 km/h (60 mph) during long-distance travel.

ADVANCED

Motorcycle, battle

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Two-wheeled vehicle, supporting a reinforced, armored frame with a seat for one rider (and sometimes a passenger) partly open to the environment, providing the rider Armor 2. Built-in weapons include a deployable swivel long-range machine gun that inflicts 8 points of damage. Auto-stabilization eases all tasks related to riding. Suitable for paved and broken surfaces; moves a long distance each round on paved and broken surfaces or an average of 144 km/h (90 mph) during long-distance travel.

Motorcycle, omni-terrain

level 3 (9)

Expensive

Two-wheeled vehicle with telescoping spokes capable of adapting to nearly any terrain (except water or other liquids), supporting a basic frame with a seat for one rider (and sometimes a passenger) open to the environment, ideal for utterly wild terrain and off-road travel; able to "climb" natural steep and near-vertical surfaces. Auto-stabilization eases all tasks related to riding. Moves a long distance each round in any terrain or an average of 112 km/h (70 mph) during long-distance travel.

Vacuum cycle

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Two-wheeled vehicle, supporting a reinforced, lightly enclosed and pressurized frame with a seat for one rider (and sometimes a passenger), providing the rider Armor 1 (though if damage is taken, it's likely a breach has occurred). Auto-stabilization eases all tasks related to riding. Suitable for paved and broken surfaces on airless moons or in polluted or poisonous atmospheres; moves a long distance each round on paved and broken surfaces or an average of 80 km/h (50 mph) during long-distance travel.

FANTASTIC

Hover speedster

level 5 (15)

Expensive

A sweptback frame with a seat for one rider (and often a passenger) open to the environment, with anti-gravity repulsors allowing it to hover up to 2 m (6 feet) over any terrain (including water and other liquids), ideal for utterly wild terrain and over-water excursions. Auto-stabilization eases all tasks related to riding by two steps. Moves a very long distance each round in any terrain or an average of 240 km/h (150 mph) during long-distance travel.

Hard-light cycle

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive

Two-wheeled vehicle of hard light capable of adapting to most terrains, supporting a sleek reinforced, armored frame with a seat for one rider (and sometimes a passenger) partly open the environment, providing the rider Armor 1. Suitable for crossing above any surface via self-deploying light bridge, a 1 cm (3 inch) thick by 3 m (10 feet) wide, constantly extending forcefield surface that persists for about ten minutes. The bridge can reach to almost any height, though maximum gradient shouldn't exceed 30%. Auto-stabilization eases all tasks related to riding by two steps. Moves a long distance each round on self-deploying bridge or an average of 190 km/h (120 mph) during long-distance travel.

Hard-light cycles can also be used as gladiatorial vehicles, modified to lay a forcefield wall trail behind rather than a bridge underneath, against opponents on similar cycles in a limited area with speedometers partly disabled.

Hover speedster, battle

level 6 (18)

Very Expensive

As hover speedster, with the addition of reinforced cowling providing the rider Armor 2. Built-in weapons include deployable swivel long-range energy weapons that inflict 9 points of damage.

Instant cycle

Variable

Exorbitant

As any one other cycle, except an instant cycle can be deployed from a lightweight briefcase-sized (or even smaller) pack as an action, and is built up by packaged nanobots, virtual particles, or hard light to create the selected cycle, which can be ridden normally. A PC can re-package the deployed cycle to its original easily toted form as an action.

CARS

Buying a car at the bottom of its price range usually means the car isn't top quality. Such vehicles have a depletion of 1 in 1d100 (check per day used)

WHEELED VEHICLE GM INTRUSIONS

d10	Intrusion
01	Vehicle runs out of fuel or power.
02	Unexpected obstacle threatens to cause a crash.
03	Unexpected gap or loss of power requires rider to "jump" between stable surfaces by launching off a suitable ramp-like incline.
04	Another vehicle swerves into PC's vehicle

05	Loose sand/gravel/particles/ice on surface threaten to cause a wipeout.
06	Too much velocity going around a corner threatens to cause a wipeout or crash.
07	Vehicle takes damage and threatens to detonate its power source.
08	Another vehicle hits PC's vehicle from behind.
09	Vehicle's brakes freezes.
10	Vehicle's tire unexpectedly blows out.

CONTEMPORARY

Car, used

level 3 (9)

Expensive to Very Expensive

Four-wheeled vehicle, supporting a slightly dented and rusted metallic frame with seats for a driver and up to four additional passengers; operable/easily breakable glass windows give openness to environment. Moves a long distance each round on paved surfaces or an average of 80 km/h (50 mph) during extended trips.

Car, sedan

level 4 (12)

Expensive to Very Expensive

As used car, but in better shape. Moves a long distance each round on paved surfaces or an average of 96 km/h (60 mph) during extended trips.

Car, sports

level 6 (18)

Very Expensive to Exorbitant

Four-wheeled vehicle, supporting a "rolling work of art" frame focusing on flamboyance and swagger, sometimes at the expense of practicality and efficiency. Seats for a driver and usually only a single passenger; operable/easily breakable glass windows (and or retractable hardtop) provide openness to environment. Auto-stabilization eases all tasks related to driving. Moves a long distance each round on paved surfaces or an average of 144 km/h (90 mph) during extended trips.

Car, utility

level 4 (12)

Expensive to Very Expensive

Four-wheeled vehicle, supporting a frame in a van or truck configuration that prioritizes carrying cargo over passengers (though up to ten additional passengers, in addition to the driver, could squeeze into a van or into the open bed of truck). Operable/easily breakable glass windows (and/or retractable hardtop) provide

openness to environment. Moves a long distance each round on paved surfaces or an average of 96 km/h (60 mph) during extended trips.

ADVANCED

Hovercar

level 4

Very Expensive

Hover frame with a seat for driver and up to four other passengers, often open to the environment (luxury versions have retractable hardtops). Inboard (or external) rotors force air down, allowing the vehicle to hover up to 1 m (3 feet) over any terrain (including water and other liquids). Ideal for utterly wild terrain and over-water excursions. Moves a long distance each round in any terrain or an average of 160 km/h (100 mph) during longdistance travel.

Land ark

level 5 (15)

Exorbitant

Treaded, all-terrain wheels support a completely enclosed interior habitat with five to ten interior chambers arranged either to house one or more families, support scientific research, exploration, spying, or configured for some other purpose to support a team of individuals. Moves an immediate distance each round in utterly wild terrain, a short distance each round in broken terrain or an average of 64 km/h (40 mph) during long-distance travel (double movement on paved surfaces, though a land ark rarely finds roads).

Land ark, battle

level 5 (15)

Exorbitant x2

As land ark (and sometimes called a “battle ark”), but sports superior weapons, though half the interior space.

Moon buggy

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Six-wheeled vehicle, supporting a reinforced, lightly enclosed and pressurized frame with seats for a driver and up to four additional passengers, providing driver and passengers Armor 1 (though if damage is taken, it's likely a breach has occurred). Auto-stabilization eases all tasks related to driving. Suitable for paved and broken surfaces on airless moons or in polluted or poisonous atmospheres; moves a long distance each round on paved and broken surfaces or an average of 64 km/h (40 mph) during long-distance travel.

FANTASTIC

Car, flying

level 5 (15)

Very Expensive

Enclosed (but with retractable hardtop) frame contains seats for a driver and up to four other passengers, providing the driver (and vehicle) Armor 1. Anti-gravity repulsors allow the vehicle to fly within the atmosphere. Flies a very long distance each round in any terrain or an average of 320 km/h (200 mph) during long-distance travel.

Car, smart

level 6 (18)

Exorbitant

As flying car, but on-board weak AI always handles all driving functions, unless the driver takes control. The AI prioritizes passenger safety, and in the event of a crash, protects all passengers in a brief stasis field (assuming power reserves remain intact).

AIRCRAFT

HOVERING AND FLYING VEHICLE GM INTRUSIONS

d10	Intrusion
01	Vehicle runs out of fuel or power (but not inflight).
02	Extreme turbulence threatens to cause a loss of control inflight
03	A glitch in the flight control—or pilot error—causes vehicle to bank too sharply, threatening a crash.
04	Unexpected debris/birds or other flying creatures impact the vehicle, damaging it.
05	Landing gear is damaged, making eventual landing problematic.
06	Unexpectedly tall terrain feature threatens imminent collision.
07	Vehicle takes damage and threatens to detonate its power source
08	Another flying vehicle hits PC's vehicle from above.
09	Vehicle runs out of fuel or power while inflight
10	Breach in airframe risks sucking pilot or passengers out to a long fall.

CONTEMPORARY

Airplane, basic

level 2 (6)

Very Expensive

Enclosed airframe with seats for pilot and one passenger. Operable/easily breakable side glass windows give openness to environment. Flies a long distance each round using a rotating propeller to force air over wings or an average of 225 km/h (140 mph) during extended trips.

Helicopter

level 3 (9)

Exorbitant

Enclosed cockpit with seats for a pilot and up to six passengers. Operable/easily breakable windows give openness to environment. Flies a long distance each round using rotor blades or an average of 225 km/h (140 mph) during extended trips.

Fighter jet

level 5 (15)

Priceless

Swept-back enclosed airframe with seats for a pilot and one passenger. Built-in weapons include very long-range Gatling-style cannons. Flies a very long distance each round using jets or an average of over 1,125 km/h (700 mph) during extended trips.

ADVANCED

Cloud surfing board

level 1 (3)

Very Expensive

A 4 m (12 feet) long, smart-plastic flying wing open to the environment on which a single rider stands; rider must succeed on a difficulty 1 Speed roll each round. In combat, it moves a long distance each round, but on extended trips, it can move up to 130 km/h (80 mph). Often used for cloud surfing on Venus.

Jetpack

level 2 (6)

Very Expensive

Harness lofts pilot over the ground using variable microjets, allowing the user to fly. Open to the environment (requiring user to wear protective gear). Flies a very long distance each round or an average of 190 km/h (120 mph) during long-distance travel, though the pack must be refueled every 1000 miles.

VTOL hyperjet

level 3 (9)

Exorbitant

Swept-back enclosed airframe with seats for a pilot and up to eight passengers. Built-in weapons include long-range Gatling-style cannons (treat as superior weapons). VTOL (vertical take-off and landing) allows the hyperjet incredible maneuverability. Auto-stabilization eases all tasks related to piloting (other than vehicular combat). Flies a very long distance each round using jets or an average of over 2,410 km/h (1,500 mph) during extended trips.

VTOL stealthjet

level 3 (9)

Exorbitant

As VTOL hyperjet, but with superior stealth instead of superior weapons.

VTOL seawing

level 3 (9)

Exorbitant

As VTOL hyperjet, but sacrifices weapons so it can operate both in the air and underwater as a submersible. Able to move a long distance each round underwater or 80 km/h (50 mph) during extended trips underwater.

Zeppelin, yacht

level 3 (9)

Exorbitant

This luxury flying vehicle boasts a completely enclosed interior habitat with five to ten interior chambers arranged either to house one or more families, support scientific research, exploration, spying, or configured for some other purpose to support a team of individuals. Moves a short distance each round or an average of 160 km/h (100 mph) during extended travel (half or double that depending on air conditions).

FANTASTIC

Hoverboard

level 2 (6)

Moderate

Configurable from being as small as a skateboard suitable for one rider up to a disk 1.5 m (5 feet) in diameter. Auto-stabilization eases all tasks related to riding. Open to the environment (requiring user to wear protective gear). Flies a long distance each round or an average of 225 km/h (140 mph) during long-distance travel.

Orb, personal

level 2 (6)

Expensive

Deployed from a fist-sized sphere as an action, the personal orb takes shape around a single traveler, forming an environment force field that shields wind and air turbulence, keeping the atmosphere at a comfortable temperature, and providing Armor 1. Once deployed, the orb pilots itself as directly as possible, flying to a destination at very long distance per round or up to 480 km/h (300 mph) during an extended trip, with a maximum duration of up to thirty-six hours. Personal orbs are usually single-use transports.

Hard-light jet

level 4 (12)

Exorbitant

Composed of hard light and pseudo-matter, this futuristic airframe has seats for a pilot and up to two passengers. Built-in weapons include very long-range energy cannons. Auto-stabilization eases all tasks related to piloting by two steps (except for vehicular combat). Flies a very long distance each round using jets or an average of over 8,000 km/h (5,000 mph) during extended trips, and can even make low-orbit rendezvous.

Teleportation disc

level 6 (18)

Exorbitant

Immovable disc-shaped pad (or hollow free-standing ring) keyed to one or more locations within 160 km (100 miles); step on the disc (or pass through the ring) and appear at the keyed location. Discs of level 9 and above can teleport users between planets or even stars, like small versions of stellar gates.

SEACRAFT

SEACRAFT GM INTRUSIONS

d10	Intrusion
01	Vehicle begins taking on water due to minor leak.
02	Vehicle capsizes
03	Vehicle begins to sink due to major leak caused by structural flaw.
04	Vehicle collides with marine life/debris on water or other watercraft impacts the vehicle, damaging it.
05	Power source unexpectedly dies.
06	Unmapped underwater terrain feature threatens/causes imminent collision.
07	Vehicle takes damage and threatens to detonate its power source.
08	Sea storm blows up and threatens to capsize vehicle.
09	Character(s) fall overboard.
10	Pirates! (Or at least people with bad intentions pull up on another boat.)

CONTEMPORARY

Jet ski

level 2 (6)

Expensive

A stylish seaworthy hull with a seat for one rider (and sometimes a passenger) open to the environment; moves a long distance each round or up to 112 km/h (65 mph) on calm water (half movement rates in choppy water).

Motorboat

level 2 (6)

Expensive

Seaworthy hull with a seat for a pilot and up to eight passengers. Open to the environment; moves a long distance each round or up to 80 km/h (50 mph) on calm water (half movement rates in choppy water). Used motorboats can be had at moderate prices but actions related to operating it are subject to automatic GM intrusions on a d20 die roll of 1 or 2.

Motorboat, performance

level 3 (9)

Very Expensive

As motorboat, but can reach speeds over 128 km/h (80 mph).

Submersible, personal

level 3 (9)

Exorbitant

Completely enclosed and water-tight hull with a seat for a pilot (and up to one passenger); moves a short distance each round underwater or up to 50 km/h (30 mph) on an extended trip. Minimal options for docking with other underwater craft or manipulating the environment without customization.

Yacht

level 3 (9)

Exorbitant

Seaworthy hull with a deck section open to the air and sections completely enclosed with five to ten interior chambers suitable for living, leisure, supporting scientific research, exploration, spying, or configured for some other purpose to support a team of individuals. Moves a long distance each round or up to 80 km/h (50 mph) on calm water (half movement rates in choppy water).

Gunboat, fast attack craft

level 4 (12)

Priceless

A fast attack craft (FAC) is relatively small and agile (compared to more massive warships), armed with anti-ship missiles, guns, and/or torpedoes. Features both open decks and a couple of completely enclosed interior chambers. A gunboat is cramped, has little room for food or water, and is not as seaworthy as it could be (all tasks related to operating the craft, except vehicular combat, are hindered). Moves a long distance each round or up to 96 km/h (60 mph) on calm water (half movement rates in choppy water). Requires a trained crew and central coordination to operate.

Submarine

level 4 (12)

Priceless

Massive underwater craft armed with torpedoes and surface-to-air missiles. Completely enclosed interior chambers provide the crew (and vehicle) Armor 4 as well as breathable air and pressure; lots of room for crew, supplies, and so on. Moves a long distance underwater each round or up to 75 km/h (47 mph). Requires a trained crew and central coordination to operate.

Warship, destroyer

level 4 (12)

Priceless

Massive water-going craft armed with anti-ship missiles, surface-to-air missiles, guns, and torpedoes, as well as hangars for one or two armed helicopters; treat as having superior weapons during vehicular combat. Features both open decks and many completely enclosed interior chambers. Lots of room for crew, supplies,

and so on. Moves a long distance each round or up to 64 km/h (40 mph) on calm water (half movement rates in choppy water). Requires a trained crew and central coordination to operate.

ADVANCED

Sub, waterglide

level 4 (12)

Exorbitant

As personal submersible, but supercavitation technology allows incredible speeds underwater, allowing the sub to move a very long distance each round or up to 370 km/h (230 mph) on extended trips.

Yacht, hydroplane

level 4 (12)

Exorbitant

As yacht, but can cut through the sea at speeds of up to 480 km/h (300 mph) in calm or stormy weather without risk of capsizing.

Submarine, supercavitation

level 5 (15)

Priceless

As submarine, but supercavitation technology allows incredible speeds underwater, allowing the sub to move a very long distance each round or up to 370 km/h (230 mph) on extended trips.

FANTASTIC

Manta

level 6 (18)

Exorbitant

As hard-light jet, but operates underwater, moving up to a very long distance each round or up to 480 km/h (300 mph) on extended trips.

MECHS AND TANKS

CONTEMPORARY

Tank

level 4 (12)

Exorbitant

Rugged caterpillar track supports a completely enclosed frame, contains seats for a driver and up to four other crew; treat as having superior armor. Armed with a central cannon. Moves a short distance each round, or on extended trips, up to 40 km/h (25 mph) on relatively flat terrain, or twice that on paved surfaces.

ADVANCED

Mech, loader

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Powered anthropomorphic exoskeleton frame partially open to the environment. Grants three free levels of Effort to all lifting and hauling tasks. Moves an immediate distance each round. Attacks in the mech (using its loading arms) are hindered, but inflict 10 points of damage. Moves up to a short distance or up to 24 km/h (15 mph) on extended trips.

Mech, infantry

level 4 (12)

Very Expensive

Powered anthropomorphic exoskeleton frame partially open to the environment but provides a single operator Armor 3. Attacks in the infantry mech (using either an electrified blade for melee or a long-range combat rifle) are eased, inflicting 6 points of damage. Moves a short distance or power jumps up to a very long distance once every other round or up to 72 km/h (45 mph) on extended trips.

Mech, interceptor

level 4 (12)

Exorbitant

As infantry mech, but upgrades include complete and sealed enclosure with life support (qualifying it for vehicular combat). Attacks in the interceptor mech also include a battery of very long-range missiles. An additional flight mode allows the interceptor to fly a very long distance for up to ten minutes before recharge is required. Some mechs have superior weapons, defense, or speed, but that doubles the cost.

FANTASTIC

Colossal battle mech

level 6 (18)

Priceless

A 78 m (255 feet) tall powered anthropomorphic exoskeleton frame. Creates a sealed enclosure (qualifying it for vehicular combat) with life support for an operator and a crew of up to six people. Armed with a massive “melee” plasma sword and “mech-punch” (melee attacks that can be made at long range), plus very long-range missiles, grenades, and energy weapons, operable by the pilot and crew at up to five different independent weapon stations simultaneously; treat as having superior weapons. Can run and fly up to a very long distance each round, and can even ascend into low orbit for brief periods.

SPACECRAFT LISTING

Most spacecraft have the capacity to reach orbit from the surface of the planet, if not radically more advanced capabilities. All spacecraft completely enclose their crew in a sealed cabin (or series of chambers) with life support suitable for days, weeks, or much longer. Most spacecraft also come with one or more spare space suits, tools, a few spare parts, and so on. Advanced and fantastic spacecraft also have sensors that provide enough astronavigation information to plot and fly to their destinations.

PCs in spacecraft can travel to other moons, planets, space stations, and perhaps even other solar systems. PCs in spacecraft may also get caught up in space combat (see the Extended Vehicular Combat rules) and run across space hazards.

SPACECRAFT GM INTRUSIONS

d10	Intrusion
01	Spacecraft is holed by micrometeorite or other debris and begins to leak air
02	Spacecraft power source unexpectedly stutters, runs out of fuel, or malfunctions in a way that could lead to detonation.
03	Spacecraft is holed by something large enough to risk a catastrophic blow-out.
04	Environmental controls malfunction; ship interior grows colder and colder (causing a buildup of frost and ice on interior surfaces), until the problem can be identified and repaired.
05	Drive system surges, causing the vehicle to move faster, farther, or to a different location than was intended.
06	Solar flare, gravitational gradient, or other understood but unexpected phenomena damages ship.
07	A malfunction, deliberate sabotage by a rival, or a fatal malware-infected shipmind affects the environmental controls in a space suit or entire ship, deoxygenating it until it's mostly carbon dioxide. Affected characters, initially unaware of the problem, become more and more sleepy until they pass out.
08	Gamma ray burst from "nearby" neutron star conjunction threatens to fry ship and everyone on board.
09	External operations lead to a character being bucked off craft into empty space.
10	Environmental systems are compromised, requiring extensive overhaul to return to normal.

SPACECRAFT UPKEEP

Each month of spacecraft operation usually requires that the PCs pay for fuel, feedstocks, and other upkeep. The level of the spacecraft determines upkeep.

Level	Upkeep Cost
1-2	Moderate
3-5	Expensive

6-7	Very expensive
8-9	Exorbitant
10	Priceless

TRAVEL TIMES

SOLAR SYSTEM TRAVEL TIMES

Origin	Destination	Travel Time— Nuclear Plasma
Venus	Mercury	20 +120 days
Earth/moon	Venus	20 +1d20 days
Earth/moon	Mars	20 +1d20 days
Mars	Asteroid Belt	30 +1d20 days
Asteroid Belt	Jupiter and its moons	30 +1d20 days
Jupiter	Saturn and its moons	60 +1d20 days
Saturn	Uranus	90 +1d20 days
Uranus	Neptune	100 +1d20 days
Neptune	Pluto	100 +1d20 days

RETROFITTING POWER AND DRIVES

Older spacecraft and starships are often retrofitted with more advanced power sources, and more importantly, FTL drives, in order to give them the ability to move further. The main reason to do this is that such ships cost much less, especially if retrofitted advanced ships are available in a fantastic setting, but even for craft within the same tech rating. During vehicular combat, retrofitted ships are treated as if 1 level lower than their actual level for purposes of level comparison in combat if they are fighting FTL-capable fantastic-rated starships.

CONTEMPORARY POWER

Solar Panels: Usually flat panels that convert sunlight to electricity, which can be used for a variety of onboard systems, including powering ion drives.

RTGs: When solar panels are not an option, as is often the case for spacecraft that operate far from the sun or on a planetary surface with lots of dust or shadow, RTGs (radioisotope thermoelectric generators) are good

long-term power sources for electric power, which can be used for a variety of onboard systems, including powering ion drives. The heart of an RTG is an embedded mass of atomic isotope, such as plutonium-238.

CONTEMPORARY DRIVES

Rocket: A rocket engine produces thrust by expelling reaction mass, usually in thundering expanding white clouds from the rocket's base propulsion nozzle. Most contemporary spacecraft use a mix of several rockets and fuel types. Rockets are the primary constituent of a heavy-lift launch spacecraft.

Ion Thruster: Ion thrusters can use solar panels or RTGs (or both) to expel ions (or cations) to produce thrust over long periods, which allows a spacecraft to build up speed over large periods of time. The bleeding edge of contemporary ion thruster is VASIMR (Variable Specific Impulse Magnetoplasma Rocket), which could drastically reduce travel times around the solar system, if perfected.

ADVANCED

ADVANCED POWER

Fusion Power: Electrical generation by using heat from nuclear fusion reactions, requiring relatively small fuel input for much higher-power output. Fuel sources include helium-3 (abundant on the Moon and other locations in the solar system without an atmosphere).

ADVANCED DRIVES

Nuclear Plasma: Essentially, nuclear plasma drives are just very advanced ion thrusters, the promised "perfected" version. These are great, unless the setting has fusion drives, in which case nuclear plasma drives may seem quaint.

Fusion Drive: Relying on fusion power, a fusion drive is an order of magnitude more efficient than a contemporary ion thruster. A fusion drive does not require the creation of electricity to ionize propellant, but instead directly uses the fusion product as an exhaust to provide thrust.

FANTASTIC

FANTASTIC POWER

Antimatter Power: Antimatter particles have opposite charge from their matter counterparts, giving them potentially explosive properties when combined, producing energy an order of magnitude more than a fusion power system. Fuel sources include both antimatter as well as Li₂ (an atom with 2 lithium ions), important for controlled matter-antimatter reaction so it can be harnessed for power.

Singularity Power: Taps energy from Hawking radiation and rotational energy of a spinning micro-black hole to generate energy an order of magnitude more than nuclear power. Fuel source is a micro-black hole.

Zero-Point Generator: Vacuum energy is created by normal fluctuation in the quantum field of normal space-time. This zero-point radiation of the vacuum provides arbitrary (possibly limitless) amounts of energy with no fuel other than the initial resources required to build the generator.

FANTASTIC DRIVES

Warp Drive: A warp drive uses enormous power to distort the fabric of space-time to create a bubble surrounding the starship. The bubble moves by compressing space-time in front of it and expanding space-time behind it, moving independently of the rest of the universe to achieve apparent FTL travel. Warp drives can achieve objective speeds of up to 500 times the speed of light at maximum power.

Hyperdrive: Similar to warp drive in some ways, but pushes the ship into a different realm of existence, often called hyperspace, where laws of physics differ significantly and many more dimensions are accessible,

allowing a ship to greatly surpass the speed of light before returning to normal space. Hyperdrives can achieve objective speeds of up to 1000 times the speed of light at maximum power.

Wormhole Drive: A wormhole drive uses enormous power to open a shortcut between two locations in space-time and travel between those points in a matter of seconds. Most wormhole drives rely on regions of space where wormholes can be formed, or on previously established networks of wormhole tunnels that the wormhole drive accesses. Which means that while travel between two points might be almost instantaneous, travel to and from wormhole-viable locations could greatly increase travel times. Likewise, wormholes can normally only bridge locations up to 200 or so light-years at a time (which means it would take about 500 jumps to cross the Milky Way galaxy from end to end).

Dark Drive: A dark drive (short for “dark matter quantum drive”) uses enormous power to enable point-to-point transitions between other locations in the galaxy (or universe) using previously unrealized entanglement between normal matter and dark matter. However, objective travel time is variable and somewhat arbitrary; sometimes a trip may take minutes, other times days or months. For those aboard, relative travel time seems constant at about four solar hours, no matter the distance traveled, or the objective time noted by external observers.

PIONEER-ERA SPACECRAFT

Though extremely complex, pioneer-era spacecraft are not robust vehicles. Technology allowing re-use of components is still in its infancy in these contemporary tech spacecraft, and small problems have a way of becoming major catastrophes if not caught and quickly dealt with. In fact, that very complexity exacts a toll.

Generally speaking, all tasks for operating a pioneer-era spacecraft are hindered by two steps. Only the very well trained (or the very lucky) should even consider trying to operate such a craft. Finally, pioneer-era spacecraft usually don't have weapon systems.

CONTEMPORARY

Space Capsule

level 1 (3)

Priceless

Sealed capsule delivered into space by a launch vehicle or shuttle, carries a crew of up to seven or a payload of up to 6,000 kg (13,000 pounds); once delivered into a microgravity environment, becomes a free-flying spacecraft with limited maneuverability, though all piloting tasks are hindered and propellant must be renewed every ten hours of use. Capable of safely returning crew and cargo back down a gravity well through a fiery reentry process that lands the capsule in water for recovery by watercraft.

Rocket, heavy-lift launch

level 2 (6)

Priceless

Provides access to low orbit and beyond for a cargo of up to 45,350 kg (100,000 pounds) through the coordinated efforts of dozens of engineers and controllers operating and monitoring the vehicle from another location. Extremely limited maneuverability; a detachable space capsule allows for transfer of crew or cargo to orbiting craft or stations from the launch vehicle after ascent. Craft is partially re-usable in that the booster rockets autonomously return to designated pads where they can be refurbished and refueled.

Shuttle, launch

level 3 (9)

Priceless

As heavy-lift launch vehicle, except the main craft can re-enter an atmosphere after delivering a payload and land aerodynamically as a fixed wing craft. Much greater maneuverability than a launch vehicle, both in space and in the air on re-entry, though all piloting tasks are hindered. Refurbishment means essentially rebuilding the spacecraft, and is a process of many months and another priceless expenditure in cost.

TORPEDOS IN SPACE COMBAT

Once launched, self-guiding torpedoes engage smart-tracking systems to zero in on their assigned targets. The torpedo accelerates at 50 or more Gs towards its target, but at the extended distances in which many space battles occur, it may still take several rounds for a torpedo to finally home in on and strike (or ultimately miss) its target.

SPACECRAFT

Advanced spacecraft have advanced propulsion technologies, allowing them to move between planets within a single solar system, with transit times between planets varying from days to weeks (or more, if using a less efficient drive). Most advanced spacecraft can't land on a planet's surface unless noted, requiring some secondary craft or means to transfer crew and cargo.

ADVANCED

Wafercraft, exploration

level 1 (3)

Very Expensive

Miniaturized vehicle just large enough to contain thousands of tiny data flecks and sensor modules, designed to accelerate to 90% the speed of light by use of external launching laser beamed for many years. Data wafers contain encrypted personalities (human and/or AI) capable of gathering data on target solar systems after relative travel times of months (but decades in objective time).

Microcapsule

level 2 (6)

Very Expensive

As space capsule, but smaller. Limited fusion drive allows movement within a given area of space, but a microcapsule usually doesn't have enough fuel to move between planets. External manipulators allow the pilot to attempt repair and construction tasks without exiting the vehicle.

Microcapsule, fighter (dart)

level 1 (3)

Very Expensive x2

As microcapsule, but with a laser cannon weapon system capable of targeting another craft.

Spacecraft, racer

level 1 (3)

Exorbitant

A spacecraft designed only for speed and high-G maneuvers, with space for a single pilot (and maybe one passenger) in cradles fitted for high-G chemical amelioration, easing all piloting tasks by two steps. Travel times across limited interplanetary distances are halved in a racer. Mostly used for competition or as couriers.

Spacecraft, freighter

level 2 (6)

Exorbitant

A spacecraft designed to haul cargo between planets with a crew up to 15. Freighter ships may be quite large, or at least haul cargo that is quite large, but these craft are bulky and not meant for quick changes in direction or combat; all maneuvering and combat tasks are hindered. Able to move interplanetary distances with advanced variable dynamic ion propulsion. Can land and take off from low-gravity moons and dwarf planets.

Spaceplane

level 2 (6)

Exorbitant

As launch shuttle (contemporary), but fulfills the promise of launch (without boosters), operations and maneuverability in orbit, and reentry and landing on a planetary surface, all without need for massive refurbishment or colossal external network of controllers.

Spaceplane, combat (claw)

level 2 (6)

Exorbitant x2

As spaceplane, but smaller (with room for a single pilot), fitted with two weapon systems: a laser cannon and one torpedo battery. To move between planets or further, a claw usually relies on a larger carrier or more fantastic means of transport.

Spacecraft, solar sail

level 2 (6)

Exorbitant

A spacecraft designed for long-haul research expeditions around the solar system with a crew of up to five or six, with individual pods designed for induced hibernation during double or triple normal travel times to extend provisions to last several years or longer. No external power is required; solar power provides the motive force. Usually unable to land or ascend from a planetary surface.

Spacecraft, dragonfly class

level 3 (9)

Exorbitant x2

Has the planetary launch and reentry capabilities of a spaceplane, but is more expansive, able to house a live-in crew of about a dozen people and over 45,350 kg (100,000 pounds) of cargo, with interplanetary (as opposed to merely orbital) range. Life-support lasts three months before restocking supplies is required. The ship includes a bridge, crew quarters, engineering, an impressively large cargo bay, and a bay containing one microcapsule. May have one weapon system.

Spacecraft, exploration class

level 4 (12)

Exorbitant x3

As dragonfly class spacecraft, but larger and able to house a crew of about twenty-five people. Customized for exploration with extended range-sensing capabilities and onboard biological and geological labs (among others) for in situ analysis.

Spacecraft, corvette class

level 4 (12)

Priceless

A small warship spacecraft designed for high-G maneuvers, including use of high-G chemical amelioration for a crew of up to fifteen people. Features four weapon systems, including one laser cannon capable of targeting other craft, one torpedo battery, and one superior weapon system in the form of a gauss cannon. Able to move interplanetary distances with advanced variable dynamic ion propulsion. Can land and take off from lowgravity moons and dwarf planets.

Spacecraft, destroyer class

level 5 (15)

Priceless As corvette spacecraft, but four times as large, allowing four times the crew and ten weapon systems (including two superior weapon systems). Possesses superior defenses. Often utilized to escort larger vessels in a space fleet or battle group and defend them against swarms of smaller attackers. Includes bays for two fireteams of six microcapsule fighters (darts).

Spacecraft, dreadnought

level 5 (15)

Priceless

As corvette spacecraft, but ten times as large, allowing ten times the crew and twenty weapon systems (including five superior weapon systems). Often utilized to escort larger vessels in a space fleet or battle group and defend them against swarms of smaller attackers. Includes bays for a squadron of fifteen darts and a fireteam of three combat spaceplanes.

Skyhook

level 6 (18)

Priceless

Heavy rotating space station orbiting a moon or planet that extends two massive tethers opposite each other, so that one tether periodically dips deep into the atmosphere close to the surface. At this point, payloads are hooked to the end of the cable as the tether passes, and are then flung into orbit by the station's massive rotation. The skyhook can decelerate and safely de-orbit other payloads in the same way.

Space elevator

level 7 (21)

Priceless

Tether anchored to the surface of a moon or planet that extends into space along which vehicles can travel, granting access to and from orbital space. A counterweight space station exists at the far end of the tether in what is essentially geostationary orbit.

STARSHIPS

Starships are spacecraft that have FTL technology, allowing them to move between different stars, with transit times ranging from days to months, or years in extreme cases. Starships are also often capable of planetary landings and ascent with some retrofitting before each planetfall.

Starcraft (and other vehicles) of a higher tech rating involved in vehicular combat with craft of a lower tech rating are treated as if two levels higher when comparing relative levels for purposes of determining combat effectiveness.

FANTASTIC

Dagger fighter

level 1 (3)

Very Expensive

A bare-bones, single-occupant fighter with a single weapon system that fires blasters. Dagger fighters cannot move between stars (though as fantastic craft, can move between planets), and require a larger carrier for FTL movement, such as a capital class starship with suitable docking bays.

Starship, cargo/passenger

level 2 (6)

Exorbitant

A spacecraft designed to haul cargo (or passengers, or both) between stars with a crew up to twenty-five. Cargo starships may be impressively massive, or at least haul cargo sections that are quite large, but these craft are bulky and not meant for quick changes in direction or combat; all maneuvering and combat tasks are hindered.

Starship, solo fighter

level 2 (6)

Exorbitant

A small double-occupant starship with two weapon systems that fire blasters. Minimum size vehicle capable of FTL travel.

Starship, general purpose

level 3 (9)

Exorbitant

A small starship with room for only three to six crew plus an integrated ship AI able to handle many routine ship functions including navigation with FTL propulsion system. Designed for exploration of distant locations, salvage operations, and/or to act as a tug-craft for larger ships that need assistance. May possess a single weapon system such as a particle cannon.

Starship, discovery class

level 5 (15)

Priceless

A large research starship with quarters for crew and staff of up to 150 or more people. Has either centrifugal artificial gravity (or in a fantastic tech-rated setting, gravitic compensators providing shipboard gravity control). Primarily designed as a research and discovery vehicle, such starships also have three weapon systems, usually a couple of blaster cannons and a torpedo battery. Highly configurable, a discovery class ship could be converted for war with sufficient resources, granting it superior weapons.

Starship, warship class

level 5 (15)

Priceless

A relatively small warship with gravitic compensators allowing for extreme maneuvering for a crew of up to fifty people, easing all piloting tasks. Six weapon stations include three blaster cannons and three torpedo

batteries. Two of these systems are superior weapons. Includes bays for a fireteam of three dagger fighter starships.

Starship, capital class

level 7 (21)

Priceless

As warship class starship, but over a hundred times larger, with room for over a few hundred crew. Ten weapon stations include five blaster cannons and five torpedo batteries. Four of these are superior weapons. Includes bays for two squadrons of fifteen dagger fighter starships.

Starship, omega class

level 10 (30)

Priceless

Three times as large again as a capital class starship, an omega class craft has over a thousand crew and over thirty weapon systems. Ten of these are superior weapons. Combined weapon fire can deal significant damage to a planetary surface, possibly destroying it. Includes bays for six squadrons of thirty dagger fighter starships.

STELLAR GATE

Stellar gates open wormholes between two fixed points at different locations without crossing the space between. The complexity of building a stellar gate is so extreme that such technology is often ascribed to found portals and networks dating back to mysterious ancient ultras or by post-singularity AIs. As might be expected, gates have a fantastic tech rating, no matter how small.

FANTASTIC

Gate, planetary

level 3 (9)

Priceless

A free-standing ring or horizontal circular pad up to 9 m (30 feet) in diameter in/over which a spherical event horizon forms, allowing one-way travel to another location on the planet, orbiting moon, or orbiting space station with similar gate structure. Once the event horizon collapses (after several minutes up to an hour), travel back to the original gate is possible by initiating a second event horizon, though power reserves usually take several hours or more to build up to support each new wormhole opening.

Gate, interplanetary

level 4 (12)

Priceless

As planetary gate, but twice as large and connects gate structures that lie between locations within a single solar system.

Gate, star

level 5 (15)

Priceless

As planetary gate, but four times as large and connects gate structures that lie between locations within a few thousand light-years.

Gate, galactic

level 6 (18)

Priceless

As planetary gate, but six times as large and connects gate structures that lie between locations within a single galaxy.

Gate, intergalactic

level 7 (21)

Priceless

As planetary gate, but six times as large and connects gate structures that lie between locations in different galaxies across the entire breadth of the universe.

Gate, interdimensional

level 7 (21)

Priceless

As planetary gate, but connects gate structures that lie in alternate dimensions.

SPACE-TIME VEHICLES

Space-time vehicles allow for movement between different points in both space and time. Such vehicles are vanishingly rare, and timelines in which they are active tend to eventually snuff themselves out due to accidental paradox events, limiting their availability even further. As with stellar gates, space-time vehicles are so complex that it's likely they are the product of ancient ultras or post-singularity AIs, and could be treated as artifacts with a depletion of 1 in 1d20.

FANTASTIC

Car, temporal/dimensional

level 7 (21)

Priceless

As contemporary utility car or sports car, but once moving can transition into another preset dimension or time. Enormous power requirements require recharge period of several days between each use.

Matrix, temporal

level 8 (24)

Priceless

An arbitrarily shaped vehicle or structure, bigger on the inside than out, that allows a pilot to travel into different locations in time and space, though arbitrary destinations are sometimes achieved despite apparent navigation successes by the pilot. Enormous power requirements require recharge period of several days between each use.

VEHICLES AS ARTIFACTS

Cypher System artifacts in a science fiction setting could potentially be any one of the vehicles presented in this chapter, if found by characters in a less advanced setting than its tech rating. That said, even in advanced or fantastic settings, opportunities to find especially weird and hard-to-grok objects are everywhere.

A couple of examples of such artifacts are presented here.

GATE RING

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Wearable ring of unknown material

Effect: Creates a full-sized shield that can be used as a regular shield in combat for one character, providing an asset on Speed defense rolls for the duration of that combat, after which it returns to its ring-like form. In addition, the wielder can command the deployed shield to become a functioning star gate that remains open for just one hour, leading to a strange destination (which the wielder is potentially aware of, if they ran sufficient analysis on the ring or otherwise gained information about it before using the function).

Depletion: Automatic (if gate is formed)

FRACTAL TRAVELER

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Goggle-like device of unknown material

Effect: When worn, induces a powerful hallucinogenic state in wearer. Hallucinations last for four hours, during which time the wearer seems to disappear from existence. From the wearer's perspective, they are falling through an ever-iterating fractal realm of mind-blowing imagery, possibly some version of hyperspace or dark energy network. At the end of that period they return to existence, either in the same location they left or somewhere they've previously visited. The images leave the viewer shaken, but for several hours all Intellect-based tasks are eased.

Depletion: 1 in 1d6

STARSHIPS

Here are a few sample starship types:

Starship	Level	Crew	Weapon Systems
Fighter	1	1	1
Interceptor	2	1	1
Freighter	3 (4 for defense)	4	1
Frigate	4	20	4
Cruiser	4	25	5
Battleship	10	1,000	36

"Crew" indicates the minimum number of people needed to operate the ship. Many ships can carry more passengers. "Weapon Systems" indicates the maximum number of different enemies the ship can target at once—but only one attack per target in any circumstance.

(Since it's frighteningly easy to die in a space battle if your ship is destroyed, most ships have escape pods. Even fighter craft have ejection systems that put the pilot out into space in an environment suit. In other words, GMs should try to give PCs a way out of immediately dying if they get on the wrong end of a space battle.)

EFFECTS OF GRAVITY

In a hard science fiction game, variable effects of gravity can't be waved away by tech that simulates normal gravity on spacecraft, space stations, and other worlds. Instead, it's an issue people must overcome.

Short-Term Microgravity Exposure: People new to low gravity might get space sickness. Newcomers must succeed on a difficulty 3 Might task or suffer mild nausea for about two to four days, during which time all their tasks are hindered. A few unlucky travelers (usually those who roll a 1 or otherwise face a GM intrusion) are almost completely incapacitated, and find all tasks hindered by three steps.

Long-Term Microgravity Exposure: Long-term exposure to microgravity environments without medical interventions degrades health. How long one spends in such conditions is directly relevant. The GM may assign long-term penalties to PCs if the situation warrants it, though the use of advanced space medicine, proper exercise, and recommended steroids and other hormones can avoid these complications.

Low Gravity: Weapons that rely on weight, such as all heavy weapons, inflict 2 fewer points of damage (dealing a minimum of 1 point). Short-range weapons can reach to long range, and long-range weapons can reach to very long range. Characters trained in low-gravity maneuvering ignore the damage penalty.

High Gravity: It's hard to make effective attacks when the pull of gravity is very strong. Attacks (and all physical actions) made in high gravity are hindered. Ranges in high gravity are reduced by one category (very-long-range weapons reach only to long range, long-range weapons reach only to short range, and short-range weapons reach only to immediate range). Characters trained in high-gravity maneuvering ignore the change in difficulty but not the range decreases.

Zero Gravity: It's hard to maneuver in an environment without gravity. Attacks (and all physical actions) made in zero gravity are hindered. Short-range weapons can reach to long range, and long-range weapons can reach to very-long range.

EFFECTS OF VACUUM

Vacuum is lethal. There's no air to breathe, and the lack of pressure causes havoc on an organic body. An unprotected character moves one step down the **damage track** each round. However, at the point where they should die, they instead fall unconscious and remain so for about a minute. If they are rescued during that time, they can be revived. If not, they die.

TRAVELING THE SOLAR SYSTEM

AND ORBITAL MECHANICS

In a hard science fiction setting, you might be interested in evoking the reality of travel times between colonies on planets and moons in the solar system. Even so, plotting a course between locations in the solar system isn't simple, because everything is always moving with respect to everything else. You could determine exactly how long a trip would take with some internet research. Or you could just evoke the effect of orbital mechanics and varying accelerations on interplanetary travel. Use the Interplanetary Travel Table to do so. For a trip between locations not directly compared, add up the destinations in between. The travel times assume a nuclear plasma engine of a kind already being tested today (but better), a steady thrust toward the destination, and an equally long and steady braking thrust over the last half of the trip before orbit insertion. Such propulsion systems can change velocity and sustain thrust for days at a time, which reduces bone loss, muscle atrophy, and other long-term effects of low gravity.

Regardless, the travel times between distant locations bring home one thing: space is big and lonely.

Interplanetary Travel

Origin	Destination	Travel Time Using Nuclear Plasma Engine
Earth/Moon	Mars	20 + 1d20 days
Mars	Asteroid belt	30 + 1d20 days
Asteroid belt	Jupiter and its moons	30 + 1d20 days
Jupiter	Saturn and its moons	60 + 1d20 days
Saturn	Uranus	90 + 1d20 days

Science Fiction SPECIES DESCRIPTORS

In a science fiction setting, some GMs may want to offer alien species or androids, who are mechanically different from humans, as options for player characters. This can be accomplished by using descriptors. Two examples are below.

ARTIFICIALLY INTELLIGENT

You are a machine—not just a sentient machine, but a sapient one. Your awareness might make you an exception, or there may be many like you, depending on the setting.

Artificially intelligent characters have machine minds of one type or another. This can involve an advanced computer brain, but it could also be a liquid computer, a quantum computer, or a network of smart dust particles creating an ambient intelligence. You might even have been an organic creature whose mind was uploaded into a machine.

Your body, of course, is also a machine. Most people refer to you as a robot or an android, although you know neither term describes you very well, as you are as free-willed and free-thinking as they are.

You gain the following characteristics:

Superintelligent: +4 to your Intellect Pool.

Artificial Body: +3 to your Might Pool and your Speed Pool.

Shell: +1 to Armor.

Limited Recovery: Resting restores points only to your Intellect Pool, not to your Might Pool or your Speed Pool.

Mechanics, Not Medicines: Conventional healing methods, including the vast majority of restorative devices and medicines, do not restore points to any of your Pools. You can recover points to your Intellect Pool only by resting, and you can recover points to your Speed and Might Pools only through repair. The difficulty of the repair task is equal to the number of points of damage sustained, to a maximum of 10. Repairing your Might and Speed Pools are always two different tasks.

Machine Vulnerabilities and Invulnerabilities: Damaging effects and other threats that rely on an organic system—poison, disease, cell disruption, and so on—have no effect on you. Neither do beneficial drugs or other effects. Conversely, things that normally affect only inorganic or inanimate objects can affect you, as can effects that disrupt machines.

Uncanny Valley: You have a hard time relating to organic beings, and they don't react well to you. All positive interaction tasks with such beings are hindered by two steps.

QUINTAR

You are a quintar from the planet Quint. You are basically humanoid but taller, thinner, and blue skinned. Your hands end in three very long fingers. Quintar have five genders, but all quintar prefer to be addressed as female when communicating with more binary species. Human emotions and sexuality fascinate them, but not because they don't have such concepts—quintar emotions and sexuality are just very different from those of humans. In general, quintar are more cerebral than other species, valuing knowledge over all else.

Quint is relatively Earthlike, with slightly less gravity but a slightly denser atmosphere.

You gain the following characteristics:

Cerebral: +4 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You are trained in one type of knowledge task of your choice.

Skill: Quintar fascination with human behavior eases all interaction rolls (pleasant or not) with humans.

Difficult Rest: Quintar subtract 2 from all recovery rolls (minimum 1).

SUPERHERO RULES MODULE

Like horror, the superhero genre is really a subset of the modern genre with extensive special considerations. In many ways, it might appear that the Cypher System is a strange fit for superheroes. But if you think about it, with foci like Bears a Halo of Fire and Wears a Sheen of Ice, the Cypher System makes all genres a little bit “superhero-ish.” Character sentences might look like the following:

Firebrand is a **Brash** energy projector (**Adept**) who **Bears a Halo of Fire**.

King Brick is a **Tough** Warrior who **Performs Feats of Strength**.

Dimensionar is a **Mystical** warlock (**Adept**) who **Exists Partially Out of Phase**.

Dark Ronin is a **Mysterious** crimefighter (**Explorer**) who **Solves Mysteries**.

Speedburst is a **Fast** crimefighter (**Explorer**) who **Moves Like the Wind**.

And so on.

SUGGESTED TYPES FOR A SUPERHERO GAME

Role	Type
Strong hero	Warrior
Brawler hero	Warrior with stealth flavor
Gadget hero	Explorer with technology flavor
Pilot	Explorer with technology flavor

Charmer	Speaker
Leader	Speaker with combat flavor
Shadowy vigilante	Explorer with stealth flavor
Scientist hero	Explorer with skills and knowledge flavor
Energy-wielding hero	Adept with combat flavor
Wizard	Adept
Mentalist	Adept
Psychic ninja	Warrior with magic flavor

Basic CREATURES AND NPCs FOR A SUPERHERO GAME

Dog, guard: level 3, attacks and perception as level 4

Genetically enhanced bruiser: level 3, attacks as level 4; health 15; 5 points of melee damage

Ninja: level 3, stealth as level 6

Robot minion: level 4; Armor 2

Bystander: level 2

Scientist: level 2, science-related tasks as level 4

Worker: level 2; health 8

ADDITIONAL SUPERHERO EQUIPMENT

Suggested additional equipment is the same as in a modern setting. Keep in mind, however, that for many heroes, “equipment” can be superfluous. Where do you stash the flashlight and rope when all you’re wearing is spandex tights?

OPTIONAL RULE: POWER SHIFTS

Superheroes can do things that other people cannot. They throw cars, blast through brick walls, leap onto speeding trains, and cobble together interdimensional gateways in a few hours. It’s tempting to say that such characters are stronger, faster, or smarter, so they should have higher Might, Speed, or Intellect Pools. However, simply bumping up stat Pools or Edge doesn’t fully represent this dramatic increase in power. Instead, consider using an optional rule called power shifts.

Under this rule, all superhero characters get five power shifts. Power shifts are like permanent levels of Effort that are always active. They don’t count toward a character’s maximum Effort use (nor do they count as skills or assets). They simply ease tasks that fall into specific categories, which include (but are not necessarily limited to) the following.

Accuracy: All attack rolls

Dexterity: Movement, acrobatics, initiative, and Speed defense

Healing: One extra recovery roll per shift (each one action, all coming before other normal recovery rolls)

Intelligence: Intellect defense rolls and all knowledge, science, and crafting tasks

Power: Use of a specific power, including damage (3 additional points per shift) but not attack rolls

Resilience: Might defense rolls and Armor (+1 per shift)

Single Attack: Attack rolls and damage (3 additional points per shift)

Strength: All tasks involving strength, including jumping and dealing damage in melee or thrown attacks (3 additional points of damage per shift) but not attack rolls

Each shift eases the task (except for shifts that affect damage or Armor, as specified in the list above).

Applying 2 shifts eases the task by two steps, and applying 3 shifts eases the task by three steps.

A character assigns their five power shifts as desired, but most characters should not be allowed to assign more than three to any one category. Once the shifts are assigned, they should not change.

For example, a superstrong character might put three of their shifts into strength and the other two into resilience. Whenever they lift something heavy, smash through a wall, or throw an object, they ease the task by three steps before applying Effort, skill, or assets. Thus, all difficulties from 0 to 3 are routine for them. They smash through level 3 doors as if they don't exist. As another example, a masked vigilante character with a utility belt full of gadgets and great acrobatic skills might put two shifts in dexterity, one in accuracy, one in intelligence, and one in healing. They're not actually superpowered, just tough and well trained.

Some GMs will want to allow PCs to increase their power shifts. Having a character spend 10 XP to do so would probably be appropriate. Other GMs will want to run superhero games with PCs of greater or lesser power (cosmic-level heroes or street-level heroes, perhaps). In such cases, more or fewer power shifts should be granted to the PCs at the game's start.

SUPERPOWERED NPCS

SUPERPOWERED NPCS AND POWER SHIFTS

NPC superheroes and villains get power shifts, too. Most of the time, this adds to their level. For example, Blast Star is a level 5 fiery villain who has three power shifts. When she blasts through a level 7 iron security door, she does so easily because in this circumstance, she's actually level 8.

Sometimes, NPC power shifts make things harder for the PCs. For example, Fleetfoot the level 4 speedster puts all three of her shifts in dexterity. When she runs past a character who tries to grab her, the difficulty to do so is increased by three steps to 7.

Typical NPC supers get three power shifts. Exceptional ones usually have five.

REALLY IMPOSSIBLE TASKS

In superhero games, due to conventions of the genre, difficulty caps at 15 instead of 10. Difficulty 10 is labeled "impossible," but that label is for regular folks. For superpowered characters, "impossible" means something different, thanks to power shifts.

Think of each difficulty above 10 as being one more step beyond impossible. Although a GM in another genre would say there's no chance that a character could leap 100 feet (30 m) from one rooftop to another, in a superhero game, that might just be difficulty 11. Picking up a city bus isn't something normal characters could do, but for a strong superhero, it might be difficulty 12.

In theory, NPCs in such a game can go up to level 15 as well. Levels above 10 represent opponents that only a superhero would consider taking on: a robot that's 1,000 feet (300 m) tall (level 11); Galashal, Empress of Twelve Dimensions (level 14); or a space monster the size of the moon (level 15).

SUPERHERO ARTIFACTS

Supervillains build doomsday devices. Ancient artifacts present a threat to all humanity if in the wrong hands. Weird machines from alien dimensions offer solutions to unsolvable problems. Artifacts are an important part of superhero stories. A few examples are below.

DOCTOR DREAD'S TIME PORTAL

Level: 9

Form: Arch of metal big enough to walk through

Effect: Anyone who steps through it goes to a predetermined point in the past or future (a minimum of fifty years in either direction), which can be anywhere on the planet.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

SERUM X

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Vial or syringe of red fluid

Effect: Strips someone of all superpowers (including abilities granted by magic, psionics, mutation, or science) for twenty-four hours. The target retains only skills and abilities that are mundane, as agreed by the GM and player.

Depletion: Automatic

STELLAREX CRYSTAL

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Multifaceted purple stone the size of a fist

Effect: Created in the dawning of the universe, this artifact grants the wielder the ability to not only fully restore all their stat Pools, but also increase each Pool temporarily by 10 points. These extra points fade after twenty-four hours if not used.

Depletion: 1–3 in 1d10

GAMING WITH SUPERPOWERS

BUILDING A SUPERHERO

POPULAR HEROES IN THE CYPHER SYSTEM

Character	Summary	Sentence	Archetype
Ant-Man	Ant-sized hero	Jovial Explorer who Shrinks to Minute Size	Tiny hero
Batman	Dark knight	Perceptive Warrior who Solves Mysteries	Genius
Black Panther	King and chosen guardian of his country	Honorable Warrior who Needs No Weapon	Master martial artist
Black Widow	Deadly superspy	Appealing Explorer who Infiltrates	Superspy

Captain America	Super-soldier with a shield	Honorable Warrior who Masters Defense	Master athlete
Daredevil	Man without fear	Perceptive Explorer who Looks for Trouble	Master athlete
Daredevil	Man without fear	Perceptive Explorer who Looks for Trouble	Master athlete
Deadpool	Mercenary with a mouth	Chaotic Warrior who Never Says Die	Master martial artist
Dr. Strange	Master of the mystic arts	Mystical Adept who Masters Spells	Sorcerer
The Flash	Fastest man alive	Swift Explorer who Moves Like the Wind	Speedster
Green Lantern	Hero with a power ring	Strong-Willed Explorer who Sculpts Hard Light	Hard light master
Hawkeye	Perfect archer	Sharp-Eyed Warrior who Masters Weaponry	Weapon master
The Hulk	Big green rage monster	Incredible Explorer who Rages	Rage monster
Human Torch	Flying, fiery young hero	Brash Explorer who Bears a Halo of Fire	Energy master
Iron Man	Inventor with power armor	Mechanical Adept who Wears Power Armor	Powered armor hero
Magneto	Master of magnetism	Strong-Willed Adept who Employs Magnetism	Energy master
Namor	King of Atlantis	Strong Explorer who Performs Feats of Strength	Atlantean
Professor X	World's most powerful telepath	Intelligent Adept who Commands Mental Powers	Mentalist
Spider-Man	Teenager with spider powers	Amazing Explorer who Moves Like a Cat	Bug hero
Storm	Goddess of storms	Intuitive Explorer who Touches the Sky	Nature master

Superman	Man of steel	Beneficent Explorer who Flies Faster Than a Bullet	Paragon
The Thing	Big orange rock monster	Strong Explorer who Abides in Stone	Friendly thing
Thor	God of thunder	Mighty Warrior who Rides the Lightning	Energy master
Wolverine	Canadian with claws	Tough Warrior who Never Says Die	Unkillable beast
Wonder Woman	Princess of the Amazons	Virtuous Warrior who Performs Feats of Strength	Paragon

The archetypes suggest how to assign your power shifts. This is an important aspect of designing your hero because power shifts are what make your characters exceptional in a “supers” way. Superheroes are known for being faster, tougher, stronger, or smarter than regular people, and that sort of comparison isn’t always part of the abilities you get from your type or focus. A regular person might be very skilled at martial arts, but a superhero martial artist might punch through an iron door, dodge a burst of bullets from a machine gun at close range, or quickly recover from a mortal wound, all thanks to power shifts. This part of each archetype writeup assumes your hero starts with five power shifts, but most archetype descriptions give only two or three suggestions, allowing you some flexibility to customize your superhero. For example, a master athlete with two power shifts in healing is a very different character than one with two power shifts in resilience.

In some cases, you might need to tinker with the aesthetics of the abilities described in the character options to make them fit your character.

POWER SOURCE

As you’re figuring out what type, descriptor, focus, and power shifts you want for

your character, think about how you got your powers. Are you a mutant, born with special abilities? Do you have a high-tech costume with built-in nanotechnology? Are you a sorcerer, or maybe a psychic? The source of your powers is character flavor—for example, there’s no game mechanics difference between the mental powers of an alien member of a telepathic species, a human character who built a brain-augmenting helmet, or a faerie character from the starlight dimension who knows mind-magic. All three of those characters could have the same type, focus, descriptor, and power shifts, but they’d be very different people and have very different reasons for being a part of the RPG campaign.

If you can’t decide how you got your powers, or if you like leaving some things up to chance, try rolling once or twice on the Power Origin table and pick the result that you like better, or combine the two into something weird and unique.

POWER ORIGIN TABLE

d100	Origin
01	Absorbed powers of someone else
02-03	Alien exile

04	Alien orphan
05-06	Alien refugee
07	Alien symbiote
08-09	Alien visitor
10-14	Built a device
15-17	Chemical exposure
18	Chosen one
19-20	Cosmic rays during test flight
21-23	Cybernetics
24	Dark matter explosion
25-26	DNA-splicing accident
27	Energy being in physical form
28-30	Experimental medical process
31-33	Experimental technological procedure
34-35	Found a device
36	Found a magical item
37	From another dimension
38	Gamma rays
39-40	Genetic engineering
41-42	Given an experimental device
43	Given an item by a powerful entity
44	Given a magical item

45-47	Government technological device
48	Inhuman creature (plant, evolved animal, unknown)
49-50	Intense training
51-55	Latent mutation activated by extraordinary event
56	Magically augmented (accidentally)
57	Magically augmented (unwillingly)
58	Magically augmented (willingly)
59	Meteor
60	Mutant at birth
61-64	Mutant at puberty
65-67	Nanotechnology
68	Near-human fantasy species (elf, orc, etc.)
69	Passed through a wormhole
70-71	Psychic
72	Reincarnation of a legendary being from the past
73-75	Revived after dying and got powers
76-78	Robot
79	Stole powers from someone else
80-82	Stolen device
83-85	Studied magic
86	Supernatural creature (demon, angel, werewolf, vampire, etc.)
87	Superpowered ancestor

88-90	Surgically implanted device
91-92	Survived a disaster, unharmed
93	Teleportation accident
94	Time traveler from the future
95-97	Unexplained drug reaction
98	Unexplained event at birth
99	Unknown
00	Unusual weather

Remember that you can permanently increase the range of one of your abilities with the increased range power shift.

STARTING JUST PAST TIER 1

An interesting option for a GM starting a superhero campaign is to immediately give each PC 4 XP, which they must spend on a special advancement option to gain another type ability. It's another way (along with power shifts) to make new superhero PCs feel a cut above player characters in other genres—and gives players a little more wiggle room in building the character they want to play.

RANDOM SUPERPOWERS

The following table has a broad selection of powers (or in some cases, sets of related powers). Players who are stuck for ideas about their superhero can roll once or twice on the table for inspiration; use the Example column for a suggested game example of that kind of power, whether that's a power shift, a hero archetype, a focus, or a specific special ability (of course, these suggestions aren't the only way to achieve that power).

The GM can also use this table to come up with random abilities for supervillains. However, there is much more leeway in designing NPC abilities, so the Example column is more for suggesting game mechanics than abilities to choose.

d100	Power	Example
01-05	Agility	Power shift in dexterity
06	Animal Shapeshifter	Shapechanger
07-09	Athletics	Master athlete
10	Atlantean	Atlantean

11-12	Beastly	Beastly hero
13-14	Claws/fangs	Fists of fury
15-17	Cold attack	Frost Touch
18	Cold immunity	Energy Resistance
19	Companion creature	Beastmaster
20	Control animals	Mentalist
21	Control minds	Mentalist
22-23	Control plants	Nature master
24	Control wind	Nature master
25	Copy superpower	Power replicator
26	Create object	Dream Become Reality, Sculpt Light
27-28	Cyborg	Cyborg
29	Dark energy attack	Dark energy master
30	Duplication	Multiplier
31	Elastic	Elastic
32-34	Electricity attack	Shock
35	Electricity immunity	Energy resistance
36	Enhanced senses	Sensory adept
37	Entangling	Entangling Force
38-40	Fire attack	Energy master
41	Fire immunity	Energy Resistance
42-43	Flight	Power shift in flight

44	Force field	Force field master
45	Growing	Giant hero
46-47	Healing	Power shift in healing
48	Human shapechanger	Shapechanger
49	Illusion	Illusionist
50-51	Intelligence	Power shift in intelligence
52-54	Invention	Builder
55	Invisibility	Invisibility
56-57	Leaping	Amazing Leap, Far Step
58-59	Lucky	Chaotic, Lucky, Dodge and Resist, Hard to Kill
60-61	Magnetism	Telekinetic
62-64	Martial arts	Master martial artist
65	Paragon	Paragon
66	Phasing	Phase master
67	Plant	Plant
68	Poison	Create deadly poison
69-72	Powered armor	Powered armor hero
73	Remote viewing	Sensory adept
74-75	Resilience	Power shift in resilience
76	Robot minions	Builder
77	Shield	Bearer of the item
78	Shrinking	Tiny hero

79-80	Sorcerer	Sorcerer
81-82	Sound attack	Thunder Beam
83-84	Speedster	Speedster
85-89	Strength	Power shift in strength
90-91	Superspy	Superspy
92-93	Telekinesis	Telekinetic
94-95	Telepathy	Mentalist
96	Teleportation	Teleporter
97	Undead minions	Sorcerer
98	Weapon	Bearer of the item
99-00	Weapon master	Weapon master, power shift in single attack

SUPERHERO CHARACTER OPTIONS

DESCRIPTORS

This section presents new descriptors meant specifically for a superhero game.

AMAZING

You have a knack for surprising people— performing impossible athletic feats, sneaking up on someone who's alert, or instantly reacting to an ambush. You like to make use of these talents to enhance (or rehabilitate) your reputation as a hero prone to spectacular rescues, defeating foes way above your league, and arriving just in time to save the day. Ironically,

in your normal daily life, you're a little awkward and overlooked.

You gain the following characteristics:

Exceptional: +2 to your Speed Pool, and 2 additional points to divide among your stat Pools.

Skill: You're trained in initiative and stealth tasks.

Self-Hype: When you apply a level of Effort to a task, you get a free level of Effort. You can do this one time, although the ability is renewed each time you make a one-hour or ten-hour recovery roll.

Inability: Your sudden appearances are startling to regular people. Positive social reactions are hindered (villains and other superheroes aren't affected by this).

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure:

From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You got in a bit over your head, but another PC's coincidental arrival gave you just the distraction you needed.
2. You were tailing someone the other PCs were following and decided to drop in.
3. You saw that the other PCs were in a fight and chose to help them out.
4. You had a hunch that something big was about to go down.

INCREDIBLE

You're misunderstood, and you might not even think of yourself as a hero, but somehow you keep ending up in situations where your abilities are just what's needed to prevent disaster. Maybe good luck cancels out just enough of being cursed to count as a win. You've saved innocent lives, defeated some really bad people, and perhaps even cheated death a couple of times. Half the time you don't even know how you did it, but you succeeded at the impossible . . . often with a lot of collateral damage. When you hear police sirens, it's time to leave, but you know that trouble will find you eventually—and you'll be ready to smash it.

Strong: +2 to your Might Pool, and 2 additional points to divide among your stat Pools.

Skill: You're trained in breaking things. **Skill:** You're trained in all jumping tasks. **Inability:** Your destructive reputation or some other reluctance to communicate makes people distrust you. Any task involving social interaction is hindered.

Incredible Action: You can choose to automatically succeed on one task without rolling, as long as the task's difficulty is no higher than 6. When you do so, however, you also trigger a GM intrusion as if you had rolled a 1. The intrusion doesn't invalidate the success, but it probably qualifies it in some fashion. You can do this one time, although the ability renews each time you make a ten-hour recovery roll.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure:

From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. One of the other PCs sensed your decent heart and decided to befriend you.
2. You literally crashed through a wall and ended up in the middle of the other PCs.
3. One of the other PCs reminds you of someone from your past.
4. You were feeling lonely and took a risk talking to someone, and so far it's paying off

MIGHTY

You have a very impressive physique. Your strength, power, and very importance are superior. Whether you're truly the mightiest may be up for debate (and you may have a friendly rivalry about this with other superheroes), but there is no question that you are exceptional. These things make you confident, but you know that you have these physical gifts in order to perform heroic deeds, and unseemly conduct is beneath you.

Very Powerful: +4 to your Might Pool.

Skill: You're trained in all actions involving lifting and throwing things.

Skill: You're trained in Might defense tasks.

Healthy: Add 1 to the points you regain when you make a recovery roll.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure:

From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You joined the other PCs because they would fail without your strength.

2. You believe this endeavor will earn you a lot of valor.
3. Another PC asked—rightly—for your help.
4. An authority figure told you to do this to show you the value of humility.

SENSATIONAL

The public and the press like you. Maybe you're photogenic, or you're inherently nice, or you have really good luck with journalists. Whatever the cause of it, you're the darling of the media, and whenever you're seen in public, you generate a lot of positive interest and excitement. (If you don't have a secret identity, this attention probably also carries over to your day job, which is a mixed blessing.) People know that you're a hero and that they can count on you to do the right thing—fighting crime, battling injustice, punching evil robots, that kind of stuff. Sometimes being in the public eye so much can be wearying or even a burden, but you know how to use your reputation to set a good example and make the world a better place.

You gain the following characteristics:

Versatile: You get 4 additional points to divide among your stat Pools.

Skill: You're trained in positive social interactions.

Skill: You're trained in one skill relating to your current or past career, such as computers, journalism, law, machinery, or medicine.

Popular: The GM can introduce a GM intrusion on you, based on your fame and the public's perception of you, without awarding you any XP (as if you had rolled a 1 on a d20 roll). However, if this happens, 50 percent of the time, your reputation works to your advantage. Rather than hurting you (much), it helps you, or it hurts your enemies. You get spotted by a guard, but they're dumbstruck for a moment because you're even more impressive in person than you are on TV. You attract a crowd of fans, but they slow down the fleeing villain you're trying to catch. A photographer pesters you for a photo and a quote, but their camera catches something interesting in the background. You and the GM should work together to determine the details. If the GM wishes, they can use GM intrusions based on your fame normally (awarding XP).

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure:

From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You're related to one of the other superhero PCs, and decided to help out because of family.
2. The other PCs relied on your positive reputation to untangle them from a public relations problem, and they invited you along out of gratitude.
3. The media specifically called you out to fix this problem.
4. A supervillain chose to make a scene in the hopes of drawing you out.

UNCANNY

There's something unusual about you, and it makes other people a little uncomfortable. You know you're exceptional—gifted, even—and being a bit odd doesn't make you any less of a person. This uncanny element is a part of you, in your blood, in your DNA. You can't help it, but you won't apologize for it. You feel comfortable around other people with similar strangeness, people who've experienced the same prejudice that you have; these shared experiences mean they're your family, perhaps the only family you've got.

You gain the following characteristics:

Exceptional: +2 to your Might Pool and +2 to your Speed Pool.

Distinctive Physical Quirk: You have

an unusual physical aspect. Depending on the setting, this can vary greatly; it might be something external and obvious, such as an odd smell or blue hair, or internal and hidden, like having blood type “omega.” Whatever it is, your quirk draws a lot of attention when it’s discovered.

A Sense for the Weird: Sometimes—at the GM’s discretion—an event or person that seems related to your uncanny nature attracts your attention. You can sense it from afar, and if you get within long range of it, you can sense whether it is overtly dangerous or not.

Skill: You’re trained in either perception tasks or stealth tasks.

Skill: You’re trained in one kind of knowledge related to your quirk, such as olfactory science, mutations, or hematology.

Inability: People find you unnerving. All tasks relating to pleasant social interaction are hindered. (Other people who are unusual like you aren’t affected by this.)

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure:

From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You felt the objective was someone like you, so you got involved.
2. Whether the other PCs realize it or not, their mission has to do with your field of knowledge, so you got involved.
3. As an expert in an unusual kind of knowledge, you were specifically recruited by the other PCs.
4. You believe one of the other PCs may be uncanny or is related to someone who is.

If the superhero setting has a specific gene or genes responsible for mutant superpowers, Uncanny characters have that gene (perhaps even multiple copies) and can sense others who have it

POWER SHIFTS

Power shifts are an optional rule in the Cypher System Rulebook that represent many of the exceptional things that superheroes can do, like throwing cars, blasting through brick walls, leaping onto speeding trains, and cobbling together interdimensional gateway devices in a few hours.

A typical superhero PC gets five power shifts. Power shifts are like permanent free levels of Effort that are always active. They don’t count toward a character’s maximum Effort use (nor do they count as skills or assets). They simply ease tasks that fall into specific categories, which include (but are not necessarily limited to) the following.

Accuracy: All attack rolls.

Dexterity: Movement, acrobatics, initiative, and Speed defense.

Flight: The character can fly a short distance each round; each additional shift increases this speed (whether the flight comes from a power shift or a character ability) by one range category (long for two shifts, very long for three shifts).

Healing: One extra (one-action) recovery roll per day.

Increased Range: Increases the range of one ability or attack. A touch-range ability (such as Shock) increases to short range, a short-range ability increases to long range, and a long-range ability increases to very long range.

Intelligence: Intellect defense rolls and all knowledge, science, and crafting tasks.

Power: Effects of one specific character ability, including damage for that ability (+3 points) if appropriate, but not attack rolls with that ability.

Prodigy: Give up a lower-tier ability to get a higher-tier ability

Resilience: Might defense rolls and Armor (+1).

Savant: Two specific skills (other than attacks, defenses, or a special ability), such as history, perception, or persuasion.

Single Attack: Attack rolls and damage (+3 points) for one specific kind of attack, such as pistols, kicks, or Thrust.

Strength: All tasks involving strength, including jumping and dealing damage with melee or thrown attacks (+3 points), but not attack rolls.

For power shifts that affect tasks, each shift eases the task. Applying two shifts eases the task by two steps, and applying three shifts eases the task by three steps.

A character assigns their five power shifts as desired, but most characters should not be allowed to assign more than three to any one category. Once the shifts are assigned, they should not change (however, researching an experimental procedure to change a character's power shifts could be the culmination of a character arc such as Uncover a Secret).

PRODIGY POWER SHIFTS

Some superhero character concepts are about breaking the normal power level for a hero. In most cases, you can do this using power shifts. For example, if you want your strong hero to be really strong, put one or more power shifts into strength. If you want your archer character to be really good at shooting arrows, put a power shift into single attack (bows). If you want your speedster hero to be really fast, put a power shift into power (Fleet of Foot). And so on.

But what if you want your character to be a swashbuckling teleporter who blinks all over the battlefield? There's no low-tier teleportation ability, so you can't be a teleporter as a tier 1 character, and the character concept isn't nearly as fun if you have to wait until tier 4 before you can learn a teleportation ability (like Short Teleportation).

This is where you can (with the GM's approval) use a power shift for the prodigy option. Prodigy lets you give up one of your lower-tier abilities for a higher-tier ability

that matches your character concept. For example, if your swashbuckling teleporter is a Graceful Explorer who Fights With Panache, you could give up one of your tier 1 Explorer abilities (so you'd only have three instead of four) or give up your tier 1 focus ability, Fights With Panache, and instead select the tier 4 ability Short Teleportation.

Choosing prodigy as a power shift is an interesting trade-off for your character; you end up with a powerful ability that you couldn't get otherwise, but at the cost of a power shift (which the other characters are probably using to add to their skills, damage, or defenses). Keep in mind that higher-tier abilities tend to cost more Pool points (especially because your Edge as a low-tier character is less than that of a higher-tier character), so you'll weaken yourself if you use that ability often—which might be a good reason to allocate more points to that stat Pool, or assign a power shift to healing so you have more opportunities per day to recover Pool points.

Theoretically, you could put two power shifts in prodigy for the same ability, allowing you to select a high-tier ability. However, there are two reasons not to do this. First, those high-tier abilities usually have even higher costs, which limits how often you can use them. Second, if you start out with the best version of that ability, there's no room to grow. It's fun when your character impresses other superheroes by improving an ability, and it's really handy when your nemesis supervillain underestimates you based on your old limitations. So unless the GM wants every superhero PC to start with one top-tier ability, give yourself room to grow and use prodigy only to get a mid-tier ability.

GAINING MORE POWER SHIFTS

Some GMs will want to allow PCs to increase their power shifts. Having a character spend 10 XP to do so would probably be appropriate. Other GMs will want to run superhero games with PCs of greater or lesser power (cosmic-level heroes or street-level heroes, perhaps). In such cases, the GM should grant the PCs more or fewer power shifts at the game's start.

POWER STUNTS

A power stunt is pushing a superpower beyond its normal limits or using it to do something it normally can't do. Examples:

- A lightning-blaster hero shooting their electricity farther than normal
- A fire-creating hero absorbing fire from a burning building
- A telepathic hero communicating with or understanding a machine
- A teleporter hero traveling to another dimension
- An illusionist hero negating an opponent's invisibility

The Cypher System Rulebook explains modifying abilities on the fly, describing

a method of altering the range, area, or other aspects of an Intellect-based ability by spending more Intellect points. In a superhero game, these modifications aren't limited to Intellect-based abilities—it's reasonable that a strong hero could affect a larger area with Golem Stomp or an agile hero could disarm more than one opponent using Advantage to Disadvantage. The cost for making these changes works just like modifying an Intellect-based ability. The additional cost uses the same Pool as the ability's normal cost; if an ability doesn't have a cost, the GM should choose an appropriate ability for the points to come from.

- Increasing range costs 1 Pool point per range step increased (immediate to short, short to long, long to very long).
- Increasing duration costs 1 Pool point for one step (one minute to ten minutes, ten minutes to an hour). Durations cannot be increased more than one step in this way. Abilities that last for only an action or a round (such as an Onslaught attack) cannot have their duration increased.

Abilities that don't have a Pool cost, like Eyes Adjusted, can be modified as well. If modifying the range or duration, the GM decides what Pool the point cost is paid from. However, most abilities like this don't have ranges or durations, so modifying them requires a difficult, formidable, or impossible task roll.

Modifying the area or other aspects of an ability is more difficult. Instead

of increasing the Pool point cost, the character decides how they want to modify their ability, and the GM sets a difficulty of the task to successfully modify it, according to the following guidelines:

Difficult (4): Something within the spirit and general idea of the ability, using a self-only ability on another character, or using a single-target ability in a weakened form on two targets. Examples: Using a self-only ability like Hover to give another creature the power to fly. Using Teleportation to go to another dimension instead of somewhere in the same dimension. Splitting Frost Touch or Onslaught into hindered attacks against two opponents.

Formidable (7): Something similar to the description or intent of the ability, but changing its nature, or having a single-target ability affect an area. Examples: Using Hover to make an opponent crash into the ceiling. Using Shroud of Flame to absorb fire. Using Telepathic to talk to a machine or Machine Telepathy to talk to a living person.

Impossible (10): An effect that has nothing to do with the ability's description or intent. Examples: Using Hover to blast an opponent with fire. Using Foil Danger to copy an opponent's attack. Using an attack like Thunder Beam to heal someone.

Of course, if the altered ability is an attack, the hero still needs to make a successful attack roll against their target— just because the character found a way to use Hover as an attack doesn't mean the attack automatically hits. The attack task for the altered ability uses the normal difficulty for attacking that target. For example, if Hammermind wants to split her Onslaught so she can attack two level 2 robots, first she has to succeed at the difficulty 4 task to split the attack, then she can make the two (hindered) level 2 attack rolls against the robots.

Just like in any aspect of the game, other factors might ease or hinder the hero's attempt to perform the stunt. For example, if the hero Firelash is trying a stunt to use his Shroud of Flame to absorb a fire attack from his evil sister Swordblaze, the GM might decide that the similarities in their flame powers mean that Firelash's attempt is eased. But if the illusionist hero Hologram is trying a power stunt to reveal where his invisible archenemy Death Ghost is hiding, the GM might feel that the villain's magical invisibility is especially difficult for Hologram's technology-based illusions to counter, so the hero's task is hindered. The GM can also introduce power boost cyphers that ease the power stunt task, or present the heroes with temporary effects that ease or hinder power stunt tasks, like a virus that erratically amplifies mutant genes, or a burst of energy from an alien artifact that reacts with a robot hero's power core.

If a hero tries a particular stunt in more than one session, the GM doesn't need to give the task the same difficulty every time; the circumstances of each attempt are never quite the same. Perhaps this supervillain's fire is a little hotter or cooler than the one the hero tried to absorb last time. Or the spaces between the dimensions are thinner or thicker right now, making it harder to teleport between them. The position of two opponents or the shape of a room might be different than the last time the hero tried splitting an attack power across multiple targets. In other words, the GM doesn't have to remember that the last time the hero tried this stunt it was difficulty 7, so it has to be difficulty 7 this time; just look at the current circumstances and make a decision based on that. In fact, this is part of the reason why the difficulties are three levels apart; the GM is more likely to be consistent at rating something as difficult, formidable, or impossible than deciding whether it's a level 6 or level 7 task.

PERMANENT POWER STUNTS

Once a character has successfully performed the same difficult, formidable, or impossible power stunt a few times, they might want to make it a permanent part of their repertoire of abilities. By spending 2 XP, the character gains the ability to perform that power stunt whenever they want, with no need for a power stunt task. The GM decides how many times the character has to get the stunt right before they can spend XP to learn it. Three successful attempts over at least three separate sessions is a reasonable guideline, plus some downtime between game sessions to represent mastering this variant.

Learning a power stunt does not count as a step in character advancement.

Learning how to do a formidable or impossible power stunt might be the reason to take a character arc like New Discovery, Transformation, or Uncover a Secret.

REALLY IMPOSSIBLE TASKS

The Cypher System Rulebook gives a few examples of how, in the superhero genre, having power shifts means that a difficulty 10 task is not impossible. Superheroes deal with planetary threats like giant robots, multidimensional sorcerers, and world-sized monsters, and for this sort of campaign, difficulties up to 15 are possible. This section presents more details and examples of tasks, threats, and creatures of difficulty 11 to 15.

FEATS OF STRENGTH

Use the following table to estimate the difficulty of various incredible feats of physical strength.

Difficulty	Lifting Task
4	Lift a 150-pound (68 kg) object
9	Lift a 400-pound (180 kg) object
10	Lift a 1-ton (1 tonne) car or traffic copter
11	Lift a 5-ton (4.5 tonne) ambulance, private jet, elephant, or Tyrannosaurus rex
12	Lift a 10-ton (9 tonne) school bus, combat helicopter, triceratops, or 5-foot boulder
13	Lift a 20-ton (18 tonne) fire truck, mobile home, fighter jet, Apatosaurus, or light military tank
14	Lift a 40-ton (36 tonne) humpback whale or loaded tractor-trailer
15	Lift an 80-ton (72 tonne) space shuttle, single-story house, passenger train car, or military tank

Task Circumstances	Difficulty
Lifting the object as high as the character can reach	+0
Lifting the object only partway off the ground	-1
Asset (lever, jack, etc.)	-1 or -2
Help from another character (asset)	-1 or -2
Large character (double human size)	-1*
Carrying an object an immediate distance	+0
Carrying an object a short distance	+1
Pushing or pulling (not lifting) an object an immediate distance	-1
Pushing or pulling (not lifting) an object a short distance	+0

Pushed or pulled object can roll or slide very easily	-1
Pushed or pulled object is buoyant and moving through water	-1

*Each additional doubling of the character's size eases the task by another step.

Some character abilities are able to move heavy things, often more easily than brute physical strength can. If a superhero wants to push the limits of what those abilities can do, the GM can compare the baseline effects of those abilities to the Feats of Strength table to determine the comparable difficulty of the task, and modify the character's roll to succeed.

FEATS OF SPEED

A character can move a short distance (50 feet [15 m]) as their entire action as a routine task (difficulty 0, no roll needed). This is basically a jog or a hustle, faster than a walk

but not an all-out run. A character can try to run a long distance (100 feet [30 m]) as their entire action, but they must succeed at a difficulty 4 Speed task to complete the movement; failure means they trip, stumble, slip, or fall down at some point during the move and stop.

Of course, superheroes aren't normal people—they're exceptional, and some can run as fast as Olympic athletes, or much faster. For a character trying to run more than a long distance as their entire action, use the following table to determine the difficulty for the task. Failing this roll is just like failing the basic running roll described above.

Difficulty	Running Distance	Notes
6	200 feet (60 m)	19 mph (30 kph)
8	250 feet (76 m)	24 mph (39 kph); bear, Olympic sprinter
9	340 feet (104 m)	33 mph (53 kph); cat, coyote, greyhound
10	400 feet (120 m)	49 mph (79 kph); horse, tiger
11	700 feet (210 m)	68 mph (110 kph); cheetah
12	1,400 feet (430 m)	136 mph (220 kph)
13	2,800 feet (850 m)	273 mph (440 kph)
14	1 mile (1.5 km)	545 mph (880 kph); Boeing 747
15	2 miles (3 km)	1,600 mph (2,575 kph); Mach 2

TREMENDOUS LEAPS

Some—but not all—strong superheroes can easily leap dozens or hundreds of feet, well beyond what's possible with the jumping rules (running a short distance and jumping 30 feet [9 m] is a difficulty 10 task). Characters who want to jump huge distances like that should take the Amazing Leap ability, allowing them to jump a long distance or more.

All characters with at least one power shift in strength get the benefit of a free level of Effort for each strength shift. This effectively increases their standing jump distance by 1 foot (30 cm) per shift and their running jump distance by 2 feet (60 cm) per shift, which is impressive compared to a normal person, but not phenomenal.

To make superhero character jumps a bit more exciting, the GM can implement an optional rule in which strength shifts count double for free levels of Effort when jumping. For example, a character with five strength shifts would get ten free levels of Effort on jump tasks instead of five. This allows them to do a 15-foot (4.5 m) standing jump as a difficulty 1 task (base difficulty 11, eased by 5×2 steps) and a 40-foot (12 m) running jump as a difficulty 5 task (base difficulty 15, eased by 5×2 steps), which seems more appropriate for a character strong enough to lift a car over their head.

POWERFUL CREATURES

Superheroes don't just stop bank robbers and fight supervillains—sometimes they face giant robots, alien space monsters, or so-called gods. GMs can use the following examples to estimate the level and challenges for such threats.

Level	Example
9	Demigod
10	Kaiju 300 feet (90 m) tall
11	Robot 1,000 feet (300 m) tall
12	Vampire blood god
13	Legendary monster*
14	Archangel, demon prince, typical god or goddess**, multidimensional sorcerer
15	Moon-sized space monster, pantheon leader***

* A primordial monster (such as Echidna or Typhon) or a powerful creature associated with the end of the world (such as Jörmungandr or Fenris).

** A powerful, perhaps immortal entity (such as Ares or Loki) that has been worshipped or feared as a god by humans or similar creatures.

*** A god or goddess (such as Odin or Zeus) who is the ruler of a group of deities.

MODIFYING HIGH-TECH DEVICES

It's common for technically savvy superheroes to fiddle with machines to make them work better or do something different. Sometimes the object in question is their own gear, but it's just as likely to be something they took from a defeated supervillain or found on an alien spaceship.

A character who expects to modify many devices should consider learning abilities such as Innovator, Jury-Rig, Modify Artifact Power, Modify Device, and Quick Work. A character who only wants to dabble in this sort of activity can do so, but it takes longer and is less efficient.

Small modifications are things like changing a device's target, range, or duration. "Small" is subjective and up to the GM, but generally, it means adding another target (although for some high-level devices, adding a target isn't a small change), increasing the range by one step (immediate to short, short to long, long to very long), or increasing the duration by one step (one minute to one hour, one hour to ten hours). The task difficulty for making a small modification is generally equal to the device's level minus 1, which also determines how much time it takes to complete the modifications.

Big changes are modifying a laser rifle to shoot cold or electricity, turning a communication device into a telepathic shield, or turning a jetpack into a force field device. These modifications are like repairs; they use the device's level for the difficulty and creation time, but take half as long as the time listed.

A character modifying their own device eases the task. This applies whether the character built the device themselves or they've been repairing and tinkering with it long enough that they fully understand its workings.

Regardless of whether the change is big or small, failing the modification task means the character wastes the full amount of time spent attempting the modification, and uses up materials equal to the device's level minus 2, but they can try again. If they fail with a roll of a natural 1, it's likely that the free GM intrusion means the device is ruined (but perhaps could be salvaged for materials).

Modification GM intrusions: The device gains a high depletion rate, needs to be recharged after each use, or develops a side effect such as overheating (inflicting damage to the user) or creating a thunderous noise.

Modifying a device is similar to using a power stunt to alter a character ability. If a character wants to make a permanent change to one of their technology-based abilities, the GM should treat that more like a permanent power stunt—costing XP—than a modification.

Modifying the appearance of an item is just a cosmetic change and should take only a few hours at most for a typical handheld or worn item like a weapon, helmet, or boots. Changing

the appearance of a spacesuit or full-body mechanized armor might take eight to twenty hours of work, depending on the extent of the changes.

FASTER CRAFTING IN A HIGH-TECH SETTING

In some superhero campaigns, crafting technology is so advanced that objects are designed virtually, with holograms, or with a mind-machine interface, and they are constructed by advanced 3D printers or clouds of nanobots. Under these conditions, the GM should ease

the assessed difficulty to determine the crafting time by three or four steps, with the crafter needing to be present for only about the first quarter of that time and the "helpers" taking care of the rest.

CYPHERS AND ARTIFACTS

In a superhero campaign, there's a fine line between cyphers (one-use items or abilities awarded by the GM), artifacts, character abilities (which may cost Pool points to use), and other equipment (which has none of those criteria). The GM should keep in mind that it's good from a story point of view to let characters have equipment they need to deal more effectively with foes that might otherwise be too potent.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Sometimes a group of superheroes needs special equipment so they can participate in an encounter or advance the story. For example, characters who must get to an underwater base will need air tanks or a water-breathing device, and those going on a short trip into space will need a vehicle and spacesuits. This sort

of item doesn't have to be a cypher (which counts against a character's cypher limit) or an artifact (which has a depletion chance)—it can just be equipment. If a player suggests a suitable piece of equipment they can buy (such as scuba gear), or a gadgeteer or inventor character offers to build something to do the job, the GM should let them do it and handwave most of the details because they're being creative and overcoming obstacles to move the story forward. In other words, don't assume that every piece of weird equipment needs to be a cypher or artifact; things that allow the adventure to happen shouldn't cost the characters much, or maybe not anything at all. And if the players take too much advantage of this leeway, the GM always has the option to use an intrusion to complicate an encounter.

POWER BOOST CYPHERS

This section introduces two new power boost cyphers, and consolidates the two efficacy boost cyphers in the Cypher System Rulebook into one cypher with variable effects based on cypher level.

01-10	Area boost
11-20	Burst boost
21-30	Damage boost
31-40	Efficacy boost
41-50	Energy boost
51-60	Range boost
61-80	Shift boost
81-90	Stunt boost
91-00	Target boost

EFFICACY BOOST

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: This cypher boosts an ability that requires a skill roll. The use of the ability is eased (eased by two steps if the cypher is level 5 or higher).

SHIFT BOOST

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: This cypher boosts one power shift

that the user already has, granting them an additional power shift in that category that lasts for one round. For example, if the user has a shift in resilience, they can use this cypher to gain an additional shift in resilience for one round. If the user has more than one kind of power shift (such as dexterity and strength), they choose which kind of power shift to boost.

STUNT BOOST

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: This cypher eases the user's next difficult, formidable, or impossible power stunt task by four steps (eased by five steps if the cypher is level 7 or higher). It has no effect on power stunts that don't require a successful power stunt task.

ARTIFACTS

DARKEST BOOK

Level: 10

Form: Large, metal-bound book

Effect: Fashioned by the primordial entity who created evil magic, the Darkest Book is a record of every vile incantation, curse, and ritual ever performed. It is known to include spells that create werewolves, raise an army of zombies, revive a dead body as a vampire, conjure demons and devils, and release profane energy for various effects. It eases by three steps any task related to magical lore.

Even someone unskilled at magic can open it to a random page and read the spell there (the GM randomly determines the spell by rolling on the Fantastic Cypher table), which takes effect at level 10.

The Darkest Book is somewhat sentient and can hide its words from anyone it doesn't want reading it. It might require a person casting a spell from it to succeed at a difficulty 6 Intellect defense roll or take 6 points of Intellect damage and move one step down the damage track.

The book is technically indestructible; anything strong enough to destroy an object of its level merely destroys one of its pages, and the book can't be destroyed as long as at least one page remains.

Depletion: —

OMNI ORB

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Glowing, orb-shaped technological device Effect: The user holding the orb imagines what they want to happen (similar to using a magical wish), and it happens, within limits. The level of the effect granted is no greater than the level of the orb, as determined by the GM, who can modify the effect accordingly. (The larger the desired effect, the more likely the GM will limit

it.) Activating the omni orb automatically moves the character using it one step down the damage track.

Depletion: 1 in 1d6 (instead of depleting, a roll of 1 means the user experiences a GM intrusion related to the effect they created)

A benchmark for setting an omni orb's limits is to compare it to a cypher of the orb's level—if there is a cypher that can do what the PC wants, and that cypher is equal to or less than the orb's level, it works. For example, if a team of superheroes tries to use a level 5 orb to teleport to their base 100 miles away, the GM can look at the list of cyphers and see that a teleporter (traveler) cypher can transport one character up to 100 miles per cypher level, so transporting a group of PCs 100 miles is probably within the orb's power

SPACE RING

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Metal ring with a star insignia

Effect: The wearer is able to fly as effortlessly as walking, moving up to a short distance each round in any direction. In space, if the wearer does nothing but move for three actions in a row, they accelerate greatly and can move up to 200 miles (320 km) per hour, or about 2,000 feet (600 m) each round. The ring also provides the wearer with breathable air while in space or underwater (although this doesn't provide protection against poison gas or other air-based hazards). The wearer can verbally communicate with other ring-wearers within 1 mile (1.5 km), and verbally request information (relayed to them with a synthesized voice) from the internet or a local equivalent.

Depletion: 1 in 1d100 (check each day of flying)

FAIRYTALE RULES MODULE

SPECIAL RULES

Fairy tale games have unique opportunities for magic that aren't found elsewhere— death, curses, blessings, and wishes are all prevalent in fairy tales and make interesting elements in games. Here are some suggested ways to handle them.

Death

You've probably noticed that in fairy tales, characters die all the time. Or almost die. Or sleep forever instead of die. Or die and come back to life. You get the idea.

Potentially, this will also be true in a fairy tale game. Thankfully, death doesn't have to be the end of a character's life. There are any number of ways to stop or reverse death, including artifacts, cyphers, and abilities. Additionally, a few NPCs, such as witches or Death themselves, may have the power to bring someone back from the dead.

Typically, though, if a character dies and chooses to stay dead (or is unable to find a way to return to life), they are dead—they no longer have bodies, abilities, Pools,

and so on. They can communicate to the living only through magic. Someone may stay dead for up to about a year (in game time) and still return to life. After that time elapses, death is permanent.

Curses

In fairy tale games, curses are likely to be common. Most witches can cast curses

of one form or another, as can many fey beings, queens, and sea creatures. Even objects and places can cause a character to become cursed. Characters might have multiple curses on them at the same time.

All curses have a level, from 1 to 10. The level affects how hard it is to resist the curse, as well as how severe the effects are and how difficult it is to remove the curse.

Curses work slightly differently than regular damage. Curses can have an impact on the game and the game mechanics (a character is turned into a fish or becomes invisible, all of their interactions are hindered, they take ongoing damage, and so on), or they can have more of a roleplaying impact (a character looks much older, they forget the word "apple," their skin turns golden). See the Curse table for a list of example curses.

Preventing Curses

When a character attempts to resist being cursed, they must make an Intellect defense roll against the level of the curse being cast. Being trained in Intellect defense eases

this task, as does having a skill in curses or resisting curses.

Often, part of a curse's effects is hindering curse resistance; thus, a character who already has one curse on them will find defending against a second curse is more difficult (their task is hindered).

Removing Curses

Similar to poison and disease, curses aren't automatically removed when a character makes a regular recovery roll. Instead, they stick around, continuing to affect the PC long after the curse is cast. In order to rid themselves of a curse, the character must take actions to remove it. The actions required depend on the nature and level of the curse.

The easiest way to remove a curse is to find, buy, steal, borrow, or otherwise acquire an object that removes curses (such as the blood pearl blossom cypher). Alternatively, the character might be able to pay someone who is skilled in curse removal to do the deed.

Curse Intrusions and Curse Mode

In addition to dealing with the original effect of the curse, a cursed character is more likely to have bad things happen to them. There are two ways for the GM to work this into the game: curse intrusions and Curse Mode. Ideally, you'll want to use both of these, as they each add something unique to the experience of being cursed.

Curse intrusions work like regular GM intrusions, and the cursed character gets XP. However, they only get 1 XP instead of the usual 2, and they must decide whether to keep it or give it to another player. Introduce additional curse intrusions from the Curse Intrusions table when it feels appropriate. This might be anytime the character has a big success, when they're in a particularly risky position, or when they start to feel like they've forgotten about the curse.

Curse Mode. When using this rule, the GM increases the range of numbers that trigger a GM intrusion. As soon as a character is cursed, every time they roll a 1 or a 2 (instead of just a 1), they trigger a GM intrusion. As time passes, GM intrusions happen on a roll of 1 to 3, then a roll of 1 to 4, and so on. This potentially means that a die roll in Curse Mode can indicate success in a task and still trigger a GM intrusion. Curse Mode is similar to the Horror Mode optional rule in the Cypher System Rulebook, with one exception: the escalation works at a much slower pace. This is because Curse Mode is not designed to heighten immediate tension, but rather to create a long-term sense of being saddled with an unwanted and unpredictable negative effect.

Typically, the intrusion range is increased by 1 when:

- The character is cursed.
- The character starts a new day (or makes their ten-hour recovery roll).
- The character actively takes an action to remove the curse (curses like wreaking havoc, which is part of the reason they're so hard to get rid of).
- The character attempts to resist an additional curse being cast upon them.

Once all curses are removed, Curse Mode is no longer in effect.

While not all regular GM intrusions are necessarily bad for the character, curse intrusions always make the cursed PC's situation worse.

Curse Intrusions

d6	Curse
1	An insect stings or bites the character at just the wrong moment.
2	Something in the area makes the character sneeze loudly and repeatedly.

3	The character shimmers in and out of view.
4	A deep sense of despair comes over the character.
5	The character feels an overwhelming urge to start dancing.
6	The character's clothes are suddenly much too large.

Curse Table

Roll 1d20 on the Curse table to determine the effect of the curse, or choose one that feels appropriate to the situation and the characters.

Typically, curses that have simple roleplaying effects (such as the character's inability to speak their own name) are lower-level curses, while those that affect gameplay (such as decreasing recovery roll points) are higher level. Curses that have multiple effects are likely the highest level of all. However, sometimes an incredibly simple curse is still very high level because the caster wants to make it very hard to get rid of.

D20	Effect
1	Turned into an animal (bear, toad, hedgehog, swan, dog, etc.)
2	Becomes invisible
3	Turned into a living object
4	Turned into a great beast
5	Turned into someone much older
6	Forced to dance all night
7	When speaking, bugs and toads fall from mouth
8	Enchanted sleep
9	Forced to wear iron shoes (hinders all Speed actions)
10	Turned into a flower
11	Voice taken away
12	Unable to remember their true love

13	Nose grows every time they tell a lie
14	Positive social interactions are hindered
15	Number of points regained by a recovery roll is decreased by 1
16	Grows weak (Effort on Might tasks cost +1 Might)
17	Brain is in a fog (Effort on Intellect tasks costs +1 Intellect)
18	Moves slowly (effort on Speed tasks costs +1 Speed)
19	Can no longer say, write, or spell their own name
20	No one else remembers or recognizes the character

Curse Removal Table

Some curses have a specific way that they must be removed. Others can be removed in a variety of ways. You can use the table as a reference for ways to remove or undo a curse, or you can roll 1d10 to give a curse a specific method of removal.

There are also many artifacts, cyphers, and other objects in the world that will remove (or prevent) curses.

d10	Removal Process
1	Complete an important task for the one who cursed you.
2	Complete an important task for (or make a large payment to) someone who promises to remove your curse.
3	Make things right (return the stolen item, apologize, or undo whatever was done to cause the curse to happen in the first place).
4	Write the name of the curse on a scrap of paper, bind it in a cloth with an egg, bury it at a crossroads, and never look back.
5	Pass the curse to someone else (this typically requires learning how the curse was done and then passing it to another person in the same way, but there are also more creative ways to make this happen).
6	Collect five birds, five beetles, five cats, five fish, and five young winds.

7	Die and return to life, which usually (but not always) takes advantage of a loophole that says death will end a curse.
8	Take three golden leaves from a golden tree to make tea with; drink the tea and read the leaves; then complete the task they suggest.
9	Kill the one who cast the curse (or otherwise find a way for them to die).
10	Find a poem of which there is only one written copy, read it backward each morning for seven mornings in a row, and then burn the item upon which the poem is written.

Blessings

When someone is blessed, it typically means that they are more likely to receive a beneficial GM intrusion when they roll a 1 (or when the GM deems it appropriate to give them an intrusion). The Blessing Intrusions table provides examples of positive GM intrusions that a blessed character might receive.

Blessing Intrusions

d6	Blessing
1	Someone randomly gives the character a small gift.
2	When the character speaks, gold coins fall from their mouth.
3	A necessary item, map, or clue falls into the character's lap.
4	The weather is suddenly in the character's favor.
5	Someone nearby just happens to have the thing the character needs.
6	A cypher or artifact works even better than expected.

Wishes

Wishes can be granted via objects, creatures such as genies, or as part of a bargain. When the character asks for a wish, the GM assigns it a level. The larger and more difficult the wish, the higher the level. Generally, a wish such as gaining an asset or inexpensive item is level 1, and a wish for an expensive item or for a foe to vanish is level 7.

In order for a wish to be granted, the character must succeed on an Intellect-related task (usually persuasion or possibly intimidation) equal to the wish's level. On a failed roll, the wish is either not granted at all or is partially granted, depending on the wish and the creature or object that is granting it.

Even if a wish is granted, the character may not get exactly what they want, especially if the wish is poorly worded, has multiple interpretations, or asks for something that is utterly impossible (such as destroying the entire world).

GM INTRUSIONS

GM intrusions present fantastic opportunities to imbue fairy tale games with a bit more weirdness, wonder, and whimsy, all while making the game more interesting and surprising for characters.

There's a list of example GM intrusions in the Cypher System Rulebook, and any of those would work in a fairy tale game. The GM intrusions included in this section are more specifically designed with fairy tale magic in mind—they're what could happen when magic goes wrong (or extraordinarily right).

Remember that GM intrusions don't always mean that something has gone wrong or is bad for the players (unless they are curse intrusions). A GM intrusion could be the arrival of a good omen, the sudden reversal of a curse, or something that seems bad at first (like falling down a rabbit hole) but leads to something wonderful in the end (a whole new world to explore!).

The Fairy Tale Intrusions tables are ways to quickly generate intrusions appropriate to a fairy tale aesthetic. Roll on the appropriate table to determine the intrusion that occurs, or choose one that feels right for the situation.

Interaction Intrusions

d10	GM Intrusion
1	A mischievous brownie attempts to steal an object from the characters in the middle of an important conversation or fight.
2	The NPC that the characters are talking to suddenly looks at their watch or the sky, says, "I'm late, I'm late," and disappears.
3	A character speaks and all of their words come out backward.
4	The creature that the PCs are fighting or interacting with splits into two versions of itself.
5	The character that the PCs have been interacting with loses their glamour, and the PCs discover it's not the person they thought it was.
6	Death arrives, convinced that one of the characters is someone else.
7	An opponent uses magic to gain hidden knowledge about a PC and uses it to their advantage in a fight or debate.
8	The North Wind has taken a liking to one of the characters and does something to help them succeed in their actions.

9	One of the PCs inadvertently (or purposefully) offends someone, and they are instantly turned into a frog.
10	An opponent holds up a mirror or other reflective surface at just the right moment, reflecting a spell or ability back on the character.

World Intrusions

d10	GM Intrusion
1	One or more characters accidentally damage or offend a plant of some type, causing it to retaliate.
2	A wren starts singing at a nearby crossroads, warning that something's coming.
3	One of the characters trips and falls into a rabbit hole.
4	Someone steals the moon just as the PCs are about to do an important task that requires moonlight.
5	The tree that the characters are sitting under wakes up. Perhaps it is hungry, or maybe it just wants company.
6	The path that the characters have been following turns into a rushing river beneath their feet.
7	Someone casting a curse nearby accidentally catches one of the characters in the magic, causing them to be affected (roll on the Curse table to determine the effect).
8	A mountain rises up suddenly between the place where the characters stand and the place they need to get to.
9	Somewhere far off, a magical effect backfires, causing a stampede of wild animals to run right toward the characters.
10	One of the characters smells gingerbread. The scent is so tempting, they have a hard time turning away from it.

Item Intrusions

d10	GM Intrusion
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1	A magical ability, cypher, or artifact does exactly what it's supposed to, but also creates a weird side effect that affects a nearby friend (or foe).
2	A piece of equipment whispers lies into the character's ear, making a convincing argument that their friends are not loyal.
3	A magical weapon breaks in the middle of combat and starts to cry.
4	A character's belt turns into a snake and starts tightening around their middle.
5	A random object begins to wiggle and crack, as though it's about to hatch.
6	The character's weapon or armor begins to yell loudly for help while the PC is trying to sneak or hide.
7	A previously opened box, bottle, jar, or other container has locked itself back up, with an important item inside.
8	A cypher, artifact, or bit of magic is far more powerful than the characters realized, and affects a much larger area (or has a bigger effect) than they expected it to.
9	The glint of a recently acquired object or weapon is so shiny, it attracts the attention of a giant bird, beast, or dragon.
10	An item in the character's hand or bag starts to replicate itself over and over.

PLAYING IN A FAIRY TALE GAME

PLAYER INTRUSIONS

A player intrusion occurs when a player chooses to alter something in the story, making things easier for a player character. It's kind of a reverse GM intrusion: instead of the GM giving the player XP and introducing an unexpected complication for a character, the player spends 1 XP and presents a solution to a problem or complication.

Once Upon a Time: Someone you played with as a child reappears and helps you in whatever you are doing. They may be alive or dead, but your heart is warmed upon seeing them, for it's been a long time.

As You Wish: You do something that reminds another person or creature in the area of someone they once cared for deeply. They are eager to assist you in whatever you've got going on, at least for a few minutes.

Once Upon a Dream: Not long ago, you dreamt of a scenario similar to the one that you find yourself in now. You can't remember all of the details, but you remember enough to know some of what's about to take place, and it gives you an additional action to prepare something useful.

Bibbidi-bobbidi-boo: A little sprinkle of magic from your fairy godmother is all you need to achieve a goal, retry a task, or be better at something you're attempting to do.

Wish Upon a Star: Long ago, you helped part of a dying star return to its rightful place in the sky. It keeps an eye on you and, in a moment when it feels like all hope is lost, it sends a little magic or light to aid you.

Dreams Do Come True: Something you wished for long ago comes true just at this moment. It might be for a broken weapon to be fixed, an ally to appear, or a bit of knowledge or understanding to arrive in your mind.

What's Come to Pass: Not long ago, someone forewarned you of the exact scenario that you find yourself in now. You know just what to do to put yourself at an advantage in the situation.

Think Happy Thoughts: You think of something or someone that brings you great joy, and it imbues your next few actions with magic, allowing you to fly or do some other thing that you are normally unable to do.

I Can Show You the World: Something or someone in the area shows itself to you, highlighting a route you were looking for, an object you had lost, or an answer to a problem.

Happily Ever After: Through the power of your love for another, you use magic to protect someone you care for. They are able to sidestep an attack that would normally do them grave damage.

If a player has no XP to spend, they can't use a player intrusion.

MINOR AND MAJOR SPECIAL EFFECT OPTIONS

Any time a PC attempts an action and rolls a natural 19 or 20, they have the option

of triggering a minor special effect or major special effect, respectively. In fairy tales, almost anything goes, which can be overwhelming to a player trying to decide what their character's special effect might be. Here are a few special effect options for players to use or be inspired by.

Minor Effect Suggestions

- A weapon comes alive at the perfect moment and does a bit more damage to a foe.
- A fluctuation in magic hinders all of the foe's tasks for one minute.
- A curse, spell, or ability has additional force behind it, and lasts a round longer than expected.
- The foe's magical armor begins to dissipate, decreasing the amount of protection it offers on the next attack.
- A shapeshifting or disguise spell or ability dazzles the target, easing all tasks related to it.
- A magical attack hits the target and something they were holding, causing damage to both.

Major Effect Suggestions

- A weapon comes alive at the perfect moment and does a lot more damage to a foe.
- A fluctuation in magic prevents a foe from taking their next action.
- A curse that was cast upon you by the foe you're attacking is removed.
- A foe surrenders, agreeing to lay down their weapons.
- A foe accidentally steps on a living plant or dangerous creature while trying to dodge your blow, and it attacks them or holds them fast.

- A shapeshifting or disguise spell or ability works so well that the foe's familiar or companion runs off, afraid to continue the fight.

CREATING YOUR CHARACTER

FORM VS. FUNCTION

In a fairy tale game, the PCs might consist of a talking fox, an ogre, a fairy, and a human the size of your thumb. And that's perfectly fine. Build your character sentence in a way that plays to your character's strengths and weaknesses, and the rest can be handled through story and narrative. Playing a talking bear, a gingerbread

man, or a changeling will likely affect your character's appearance, their outlook on life, and their backstory, but it doesn't necessarily affect their abilities, skills, and Pools beyond what you choose during character creation.

Because the form that you choose doesn't typically offer you something in addition to your Cypher System stats—being small, for example, does not inherently mean you're stealthy—you'll want to choose your stats to emphasize the bit of your character that you want to play.

SKILLS

As described in the Cypher System Rulebook, there is no definitive list of skills. Characters can choose to become skilled in anything they like (with the GM's permission). In addition to the suggested skills in the rulebook, useful skills for fairy tale games might include:

- Talking animals*
- Talking nature*
- Trickery
- Using magic
- Weather
- Baking
- Cobbling
- Curses
- Dancing
- Death
- Magic
- Playing an instrument
- Puzzles
- Riddles
- Sailing
- Sensing magic
- Singing

Remember that only skills gained through character type abilities or in other rare instances allow you to become skilled with attack or defense tasks. Thus, all magic skills are noncombat skills only.

* These skills could be used in a number of different ways, depending on the setting. If the setting has talking animals that the players can't understand, the talking animals skill could help a PC communicate with them in other ways. If there are talking animals that the characters can understand, the skill could provide an asset in social interactions.

TYPE

Your character's type is the core of who they are and how they interact with their environment, their companions, and other living creatures they encounter.

Suggested Types for a Fairy Tale Game

Type Name and Flavor Suggestions

WARRIOR

Huntsman, Skills and knowledge, stealth

Knight

Woodcutter

Guard

Archer, Stealth

ADEPT

King/queen

Wizard/witch, Magic, skills and knowledge

Chosen one

Apprentice

Magical being (genie, spirit, faerie, and so on)

EXPLORER

Adventurer

Dreamer Seeker

Sailor/seafarer, Combat

Wanderer

Outlaw, Combat Stealth

Thief, Stealth

Wolf, Combat Stealth

SPEAKER

Aristocrat

Princess/prince

Entertainer

Helper, Magic

Trickster, Skills and Knowledge

DESCRIPTOR

Your descriptor is what defines your character—it changes the way you tackle every action that you take. Your descriptor places your character in their current situation or adventure, and helps provide a sense of their motivations.

Suggested Descriptors for a Fairy Tale Game

The following descriptors are appropriate for fairy tale settings. Other descriptors from the Cypher System Rulebook may be appropriate but would require consulting with your GM to determine how such a character might get involved in the campaign.

- Appealing
- Beneficent
- Brash
- Calm
- Chaotic
- Charming
- Clever
- Craven
- Creative
- Dishonorable
- Doomed
- Empathic
- Exiled
- Foolish
- Guarded
- Honorable
- Impulsive
- Inquisitive
- Intelligent
- Intuitive
- Jovial
- Kind
- Mad
- Mysterious
- Naive
- Perceptive
- Resilient
- Risk-Taking
- Skeptical

- Strong
- Strong-Willed
- Tongue-Tied
- Vicious
- Virtuous
- Weird

Heartwood Descriptors

- Bewitched
- Changeling
- Fragmented
- Frumious
- Haunted
- Lost

FOCUS

Your focus makes your character unique.

It gives you benefits when you create your character and each time you ascend to the next tier. When you choose a focus, it gives you a first-tier ability, a special connection to one or more of your fellow PCs, and possibly some starting equipment.

Suggested Foci for a Fairy Tale Game

- Abides in Stone
- Absorbs Energy
- Awakens Dreams
- Bears a Halo of Fire
- Blazes With Radiance
- Brandishes an Exotic Shield
- Channels Divine Blessings
- Commands Mental Powers
- Conducts Weird Science
- Consorts With the Dead
- Controls Beasts
- Controls Gravity
- Crafts Illusions
- Crafts Unique Objects
- Dances With Dark Matter
- Defends the Gate

- Defends the Weak
- Descends From Nobility
- Doesn't Do Much
- Emerged From the Obelisk
- Employs Magnetism
- Entertains
- Exists in Two Places at Once
- Exists Partially Out of Phase
- Explores Dark Places
- Fights Dirty
- Fights With Panache
- Focuses Mind Over Matter
- Grows to Towering Heights
- Helps Their Friends
- Howls at the Moon
- Hunts
- Infiltrates
- Is Wanted by the Law
- Keeps a Magic Ally
- Leads
- Learns Quickly
- Lives in the Wilderness
- Looks for Trouble
- Masters Defense
- Masters Spells
- Masters the Swarm
- Masters Weaponry
- Metes Out Justice
- Moves Like a Cat
- Moves Like the Wind
- Murders
- Needs No Weapon
- Never Says Die
- Performs Feats of Strength
- Rages

- Rides the Lightning
- Runs Away
- Scavenges
- Sees Beyond
- Separates Mind From Heights
- Shepherds the Community
- Shepherds Spirits
- Shreds the Walls of the World
- Slays Monsters
- Solves Mysteries
- Speaks for the Land
- Stands Like a Bastion
 - Throws With Deadly Accuracy
- Travels Through Time
- Was Foretold
- Wields Two Weapons at Once
- Works for a Living
- Works Miracles
- Would Rather Be Reading

Heartwood Foci

- Befriends the Black Dog
- Curses the World
- Feigns No Fear
- Lived Among the Fey

Adjusted Foci

Battles Robots, Builds Robots, Talks to Machines

Best for settings that include elements of science fiction. Alternatively, “robots” can be a stand-in for puppets, steampunk entities, golems, or other creations such as Pinocchio, Edward Scissorhands, the Gingerbread Man, and the Tin Man. Mister Geppetto would likely be someone who Builds Robots, while Muska (from Miyazaki’s film Laputa: Castle in the Sky) might be someone who Battles Robots.

Drives Like a Maniac

Best for modern settings or those where traditional fairy tale vehicles such as horse-drawn carriages, magic carpets, witch’s brooms, and chicken-legged huts are common.

Fuses Flesh and Steel, Fuses Mind and Machine

Best for steampunk or weird science mashups. Edward Scissorhands and the Tin Man are probably characters who Fuse Flesh and Steel. Alternatively, renaming the foci to Fuses Flesh and Magic or Wants to Become a Real Boy can provide characters with the same benefits from a more magical-sounding source.

Is Licensed to Carry

With small tweaks to the language and abilities, this could work for someone who wants to wield a wand, bow, or other ranged weapon.

Sailed Beneath the Jolly Roger

With small tweaks to the language and abilities, this could work for someone who used to be a sailor or pirate.

FAIRY TALE CHARACTER ARCS

Character arcs are fantastic opportunities for players to deepen their roleplaying options, add to the narrative, and set goals that can intertwine with and strengthen a campaign or adventure. While character arcs aren't a requirement, they work particularly well in fairy tale games, where individual goals and tasks are often at the forefront of what drives adventures.

Players can pick from any of the sample character arcs in the Cypher System Rulebook, make up their own (with the assistance and approval of the GM), or choose one of the new character arcs created specifically for the Heartwood setting.

EQUIPMENT

Most weapons that are powered by magic, such as wands, operate exactly like a regular weapon; they just do their damage using magic.

Equipment and weapons with unique magic abilities are typically considered to be cyphers or artifacts.

CURRENCY

In most fairy tales, money isn't precise. Someone might be poor or rich. They might find a bag of gold or a chest full of jewels. They might be the richest man in the town or have nothing but a tired old cow to their name. But typically what they don't have is "one gold piece" or "thirty farthings" to their name. This means that whatever your fairy tale setting, you can think in general terms of money instead of keeping meticulous track of every penny, farthing, gold coin, or dollar.

To keep things easy, no matter what currency your characters use, think of money as being in simple amounts that scale up, such as a copper coin, a silver coin, and a gold coin. These could easily equate to the inexpensive, moderate, and expensive items on the equipment list. Items that are very expensive might be worth a bag of silver, while exorbitant items might be worth a bag of gold.

Additionally, if the PCs are completing a character arc, accomplishing a task, or doing some other type of action to receive a piece of equipment, you can use the price category to decide how complicated or difficult that task is. A moderately priced item likely requires completing a moderately difficult task, while an exorbitant item may require something that taxes the PCs and really puts their skills and dedication to the test.

SIGNATURE ITEMS

In fairy tales, clothing, weapons, and other items that a character carries for a long time tend to be very personal and very important. They're often unique and handcrafted,

they may have names or stories that go with them, and because characters tend to keep them for a long time, they may have undergone repairs or have markings that tell something about the character's background.

APPAREL AND ARMOR

In most cases, characters start out by wearing any type of clothing they choose. Typically (unless the GM decides otherwise or unless it is designated as armor),

this clothing is purely for decorative and roleplaying purposes and offers no additional benefits.

However, clothing with additional benefits can be purchased, stolen, found, or earned by completing favors and accomplishing tasks.

Optional Rule: I Have That!

In fairy tales, characters often have exactly the right mundane piece of equipment

that they need to bypass a story-related obstacle hidden away in a pocket or a bag. Rather than having the PCs stock up on mundane items like marbles, rope, and breadcrumbs in town, use the I Have That! rule. This means players don't have to keep exact track of their characters' mundane equipment; instead, they spend an amount to get an unspecified "Pocket Item" in

that category. Then, when they're out in the world and realize they could solve a problem with an item, they can just say, "I have that!" and pull it from their pocket. All Pocket Items are one-use only; after using them, the PC marks off one of their Pocket Items for the appropriate price category.

Most Pocket Items are inexpensive, but moderate and expensive Pocket Items exist, and are likely more useful than their less expensive counterparts.

The GM has veto power over items that they don't think you could have found or carried.

Using the I Have That! rule doesn't preclude PCs from also purchasing these items directly. For example, if a character who sews wants to buy a thimble and an inexpensive Pocket Item, they can. However, they cannot later turn the thimble into a Pocket Item; it remains a thimble.

Example Pocket Items

Inexpensive

- Apple
- Ashes (handful)
- Breadcrumbs
- Butter
- Candy
- Chalk
- Cricket in a cage
- Cup
- Egg
- Fabric
- Flyswatter
- Glass jar
- Glue
- Honey
- Leather
- Magnets

- Marbles
- Nails
- Needle and thread
- Paper
- Plait of hair
- Pot of fat
- Pot of grease
- Ribbon
- Rice (handful)
- Straw
- Tacks
- Wax
- Wool

Moderate

- Bird in a cage
- Sewing shears
- Thimble

CLOTHING

Inexpensive

Gloves or mittens

Hat or hood

Moderately Priced

Cloak or coat

Specialized outfit (craftsman, baker, guard, and so on)

Wizard or enchanter's outfit

Very Expensive

Elegant cloak or coat

Royal ensemble

Suit or ballgown

Exorbitant

Elegant, bespoke clothing suitable for moving in elite circles (provides an asset in interaction tasks)

WEAPONS AND PROTECTIVE GEAR

Inexpensive

Ammunition (12 arrows, 12 crossbow bolts, and so on)

Moderately Priced

Light weapons (knives, handaxe, hairpin, darts, wand, slingshot, and so on)

Light armor (hides and furs, thieves' armor, leather jerkin, padded coat, and so on)

Expensive

Medium weapon (club, sword, battleaxe, mace, crossbow, spear, staff, and so on)

Medium armor (breastplate, brigade, chainmail, and so on)

Very Expensive

Heavy weapon (huge sword, great hammer, massive axe, halberd, heavy crossbow, and so on)

Heavy armor (full plate armor)

Exorbitant

Jeweled, ornate, royal, or bespoke weapon

Jeweled, ornate, royal, or bespoke armor

Remember, armor (with a lowercase a) is something that the character wears, while Armor (with a capital A) is the total amount of Armor that you have, including any magical effects. You can wear only one type of armor at any given time, but you could have many things that give you Armor.

BASIC EQUIPMENT

Inexpensive

Candle

Chalk (3)

Day's rations

Meal, decent

Sack

Sewing kit

Sharpening stone

String or yarn

Thimble

Tinder and flint

Torch (3)

Vial

Moderately Priced

Backpack

Bedroll

Book

Box, small

Deck of cards

Game

Lantern

Meal, fine dining

Metal file

Mining pick

Mirror, hand

Quill, ink and paper (2 pieces)

Rope (50 feet)

Tent

Waterskin or flask

Expensive

 Bag of heavy tools

Bag of light tools

Box, medium

Very Expensive

Charon's obol. Imbued coin. Placed in the mouth of a dead person prior to burial as payment to Charon, the ferryman, for conveying the soul to its proper resting place.

Disguise kit/potion. Asset for disguise tasks.

Healing kit/potion. Asset for healing tasks.

Protective charm. Church bell, four-leaf clover, rabbit's foot, and so on. Asset on defense rolls against fairies and other fey-like creatures.

Handheld scrying mirror. Asset for initiative tasks when held in hand or worn.

TRAVEL

Moderately Priced

 Common transportation, rental (horse-drawn carriage, boat, mount, and so on)

Lodging, shared room or shed, meager

Expensive

Magic transportation, rental (chicken-legged hut, levitating mortar, magic carpet, talking mount, flying ship, and so on). In most cases, renting magic transportation includes a guide, driver, or other person who can power and operate the vehicle. For example, a levitating mortar can only be driven by a witch of a certain age.

 Common transportation, purchase (horse-drawn carriage, boat, mount, and so on)

Lodging, solo room, decent

Very Expensive

 Lodging, whole building or large room

Exorbitant

Magic transportation, rental (chicken-legged hut, levitating mortar, magic carpet, talking mount, flying ship, and so on). In most cases, it's also necessary to hire a guide, driver, or other person who can control and

power the vehicle. Alternatively, characters must take a class, learn a spell, or meet other magic requirements in order to operate the vehicle.

CYPHERS AND ARTIFACTS

Because magic—and thus magic items—are so prevalent in most fairy tales, cyphers in particular should be easy for characters to replenish. If you’re using subtle cyphers, you can choose how they arrive—on magic storms, perhaps, or in pockets of magic that exist throughout the world. Or maybe the magic is such that it just works, ensuring that cyphers show up whenever the characters need them.

Manifest cyphers should be readily available too—likely they can be found for cheap at a local market, stashed in hollow tree trunks or bird nests, or scattered about the forest floor. Manifest cyphers may also be integrated into people’s clothing or furnishings as unique adornments.

Artifacts are typically more valuable and less common. Therefore, player characters are less likely to encounter them at random and more likely to find them in the hands of NPCs, locked or hidden in chests, or for sale by high-end and specialized vendors. Acquiring an artifact should almost always require a sacrifice, trial, or difficult task.

CYPHER LIMITS

All characters have a maximum number of cyphers they can have at any one time, determined by their type. If a character ever attempts to carry more cyphers than their limit, the magic within the cyphers quickly begins to attract fey beings. Fey beings may react by stealing one or more cyphers, cursing the character, or even stealing the character away to a fey realm.

Obviously, having a fey being steal a character away to their realm is a story-changer. If you’re using this as an option, figure out ahead of time what type of fey is attracted, what their realm is like, and how to play out the character’s disappearance and possible retrieval.

Fey Being Table

d6	Effect
1	Faerie
2	Changeling
3	Goblin
4	Nymph
5	Pixie
6	Ogre

Fey Cypher Attraction

d6	Effect
1	Steals one cypher
2	Steals two cyphers
3	Curses the character
4	Curses one cypher, causing it to reduce all stat Pool maximums by 5 until the cypher is used, removed, or destroyed
5	Causes two or more cyphers to react with each other, destroying them and inflicting damage equal to the level of the more powerful cypher
6	Steals the character away to their fey realm

CYPHERS

Cyphers are one-use abilities that characters gain over the course of play. They have powers that can heal, do damage, ease or hinder tasks, or produce interesting and unusual effects. In a fairy tale setting, they often appear as a simple object, such as a poisoned apple or a matchbook. They can also be something intangible, such as three wishes or a magic word. The shifting state of magic in fairy tales makes it easy to use both manifest and subtle cyphers in the same setting and campaign if you desire.

In settings full of magic, cyphers should be both readily available and regularly used. If the PCs are hoarding or saving their cyphers, feel free to give them a reason to use them. And have a list of replacement cyphers ready so the players never have to go without.

Typically, something like a handful of magic beans or apple seeds

is considered a single cypher even though there are multiple items.

Cypher Forms

While characters can find or purchase many of these items in the world, only magic versions of the items are cyphers. Characters should easily be able to tell when an item is magic (and thus a cypher) and when it's an ordinary item.

d20	Form
1	Apple or ball of yarn
2	Pebble or mushroom
3	Scroll or four-leaf clover
4	Lock of hair or hand mirror

5	Matchstick or comb
6	Feather or acorn
7	Egg or apple seeds
8	Tea or fish scales
9	Fingernail clippings or chalk
10	Magic beans or key
11	Rose or bell
12	Small cake or talisman
13	Wolf's tooth or hand mirror
14	Vial of liquid or secret
15	Magic coin or broken arrow
16	Wish or fairy dust
17	Magic word or spindle
18	Curse or hankerchief
19	Spell or hand fan
20	Fallen star or playing card

Fairy Tale Cypher Table

d100	Cypher
01	Adderstone
02	Agate Eye
03	Animate wood

04	Anywhere door
05	Apple of discord
06	Azure dust
07	Baba Yaga's spiced cookie
08	Bellman's map of the ocean
09	Beloved's kiss
10	Bird's next coronet
11	Blackbird pie
12	Blood pearl blossom
13	Bone key
14	Bones of the beloved
15	Bowl of porridge
16	Cat sidhe medallion
17	Cheshire smile
18	Coalheart's beard balm
19	Croc's clock
20	Crown jewel
21	Dame Trot's cat
22	Darning needle
23	Dead water
24	Deathless
25	Death's candle

26	Death's messengers
27	Diadem of death
28	Dragon's blood
29	Dragon's teeth
30	Dressmaking nut
31	Drink me
32	Dust of the dreamer
33	Eat me
34	Emperor's new clothes
35	Fairy cup
36	False grandmother
37	Father's Betrayal
38	Flaming arrow
39	Flowers for grandmother
40	Forget-me-knot
41	Genie's handkerchief
42	Gilded shell
43	Gingerbread man
44	Godfather's picture book
45	Golden Beetle
46	Golden vanity
47	Green spectacles

48	Hart's heart
49	Heart of a star
50	Heart's tart
51	Hot cross buns
52	Iron bands of three
53	Itsy bitsy spider
54	Jack's candlestick
55	Jiminy cricket
56	The Key of Knowing
57	Knave of Hearts
58	Lion's courage
59	Living water
60	Magic beans
61	Memory's match
62	Mermaid tear
63	Neverlost
64	Nonsensical poem
65	Omniscient bean
66	Pictureless book
67	Poison for your daughter
68	Poisoned apple
69	Poppet (damage)

70	Poppet (love)
71	Poppet (prosperity)
72	Poppet (silence)
73	Powder of life
74	Princess's pea
75	Rabbit hole
76	Rapunzel leaf
77	Rose of red
78	Shadow soap
79	Shard of the moon
80	Shining life
81	Silver slippers
82	Singing bone
83	Snake leaves
84	Snickersnee
85	Song of the dead
86	Socerer's skeleton key
87	Spirit ring
88	Teleport hat
89	Three needles
90	Tin Man's tears
91	To Peter with love

92	Valorous whetstone
93	Vase of tears
94	White snake
95	Wish granting pearl
96	Witch bottle
97	Witch's ladder
98	Wooden spoon
99	Yonder yarn
00	Roll on the cypher tables in the Cypher System Rulebook

A SELECTION OF FAIRY TALE CYPHERS

Adderstone

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Stone with a hole in the middle

Effect: For the next day, provides the character with one of the following benefits. Roll a d20 or choose from the table.

Adderstones are sometimes also called hagstones, seer stones, and holey stones.

Beware false adderstones, which are made by enterprising swindlers who drill or carve a hole out of a regular stone and attempt to pass it off as something more.

If a character has no hair in which to tie an adderstone, perhaps they can “borrow” some from a friend, a domesticated animal, or a foe.

d20	Effect
1-3	When looking through the hole, the user gains an asset to seeing things that are normally invisible to the eye, including doorways, beings, spirits, magical effects, and so on.
4-6	When worn on the finger as a ring, wards off spirits of the dead (grants +1 Armor against attacks from ghosts, haunts, and other spirits of the dead).

7-9	When attached to physical armor, adds 1 to the Armor it provides (adds 2 to the Armor if the cypher is level 6 or higher).
10-12	When held in the mouth, protects against poisons (up to the level of the cypher).
13-15	When placed on the finger of another with good intent, it adds 1 to the recovery rolls of both the user and the wearer.
16-18	When worn on a string around the neck, provides training in two noncombat skills of the user's choice that they are not already trained in.
19-20	When tied in the hair, eases all defense tasks against curses by two steps.

Agate Eye

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Striped stone that looks like a dragon's eye

Effect: When ground up and added to food or drink, or applied to the skin, renders the user immune to poisons of the cypher level or lower for one hour per cypher level (and ends any such ongoing effects, if any, already in the user's system).

Animated Wood

Level: 1d6

Form: Chunk of pine, alder, or other wood

imbued with magical properties Effect: Writing a word, such as "child," "horse," or "sword," on the wood causes it to become a living version of that word. The living version is no bigger than 10 feet by 10 feet by 20 feet (3 m by 3 m by 6 m) and its level is equal to the cypher level. It can make attacks or perform actions as commanded to the best of its abilities and lasts for one hour per cypher level. Commanding it is not an action.

Once activated, animated wood is not an unthinking, docile being. It may, in fact, resist the user's commands and attempt to take its own actions. Any actions it takes cannot be harmful to the user or the user's allies. The user may attempt to stop an unwanted action via persuasion, intimidation, and so on (any such tasks against the animated wood are eased by two steps).

Anywhere Door

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Chalk, pen, pencil, lipstick, or marker

Effect: Creates a door to anywhere. The door remains for one day, and then disappears. While the door exists, anyone or anything that can discern the door can use it. Erasing the drawn line erases the door.

Apple of Discord

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Beautiful golden apple that catches the eye of all who see it

Effect: When tossed up to a long distance away, it affects all foes in short range of the apple, causing them to attempt to take it for themselves. Foes spend their next two actions doing nothing but fighting among themselves for possession of the apple.

Azure Dust

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Handful of dust from the Fairy with the Turquoise Hair

Effect: Sprinkling the dust on someone's hair, skin, outfit, or other object permanently dyes it bright blue.

Baba Yaga's Spiced Cookie

Level: 1d6

Form: Rye cookie flavored with spices and honey

Effect: Eating the cookie increases the user's Intellect Edge by 1 for one hour.

Bellman's Map of the Ocean

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Blank sheet of paper rolled and tied with a hair tie

Effect: When unrolled, convinces everyone

within short range that the character holding the map knows far more than they do. For the next ten minutes, affected beings look upon the map- holder as their leader or guide, will not attack them, and generally will do as they ask (all social interactions with those affected are eased by two steps).

Beloved's Kiss

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Ruby red ring

Effect: When pressed to the lips of a character, beloved's kiss prevents the occurrence of one specific condition of the cypher level or lower. Additionally, it ends any such ongoing effect, if any, in the user's system. Roll a d6 to determine the result.

d6	Condition
1- 2	Renders the character immune to poisons for one hour per cypher level (and ends any ongoing effects)
3- 4	Renders the character immune to curses for one hour per cypher level (and ends any ongoing effects)
5- 6	Renders the character immune to mental effects for one hour per cypher level (and ends any ongoing effects)

Bird's Nest Coronet

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Beautifully woven bird's nest

Effect: When worn like a crown, the bird's nest creates an illusion over the wearer, making them appear like royalty. Others are more likely to follow their suggestions, defer to their wishes, and treat them well. All social interactions are eased by two steps for one day. Seeing through the disguise is an Intellect task equal to the cypher's level.

Blackbird Pie

Level: 1d6

Form: Four-and-twenty blackbirds baked in a pie

Effect: When the pie is cut open, the blackbirds begin to sing a haunting dirge of pain and sorrow. All foes within long range who hear the song are hindered on all tasks for ten minutes.

Blood Pearl Blossom

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Rare blood-red flower with a beautiful pearl in its center

Effect: When ingested, removes one curse (of the cypher level or lower) from the user. The curse-removal process can take from one round to one day, depending on the level, severity, and type of curse.

Bone Key

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Human finger bone carved into a skeleton key

Effect: Unlocks one lock of the cypher level or lower, or provides an asset to open a lock of higher level.

Bones of the Beloved

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Handful of ground bones

Effect: When eaten, the bones begin a process of lowering the eater's apparent age. Over the next three days, the user begins to look younger and younger, until they reach the appearance of someone no younger than their mid-twenties. Their hair shines, their teeth glow, their wrinkles disappear, their back unstoops. The effect lasts for three days (five days if the cypher is level 6 or higher). This does not change the actual health or age of the character.

Bowl of Porridge

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Just-right bowl of porridge

Effect: Restores a number of points equal to the cypher level to the user's Might Pool. Also protects the user from the effects of cold for ten minutes.

Cat Sidhe Medallion

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Medallion in the shape of the white symbol on a cat sidhe's chest

Effect: When activated, the medallion protects the wearer from the next curse (of the cypher level or lower) that is cast upon them. The curse goes into the medallion, which shatters into thousands of tiny pieces.

Cheshire Smile

Level: 1d6

Form: Mischievous grin

Effect: When hung in the air, the grin slowly transforms into a grey Cheshire Cat that seems to be made mostly of smoke and shadow. It has huge blue eyes and an enormous grin. The cat acts as a creature (level equal to the cypher's level) with a mind of its own, although it likely helps the person who activated the cypher. It sticks around for ten minutes, and then fades away slowly, until even the original smile has disappeared.

Coalheart's Beard Balm

Level: 1d6

Form: Jar of balm

Effect: When rubbed on the face, the balm grows into a long, golden beard in about ten minutes. When the user tugs on their beard, it points them in the direction of valuable treasure, the location of which was previously unknown to the user. If someone else cuts the beard before the treasure is found, it loses its power. After the treasure is found, the beard remains. But once it is shaved or cut, it does not grow back.

Many dwarfs have beards with magical powers. It's possible to find other beard balm cyphers out in the world.

Croc's Clock

Level: 1d6

Form: Tiny ticking clock, no bigger than a thumbnail

Effect: When attached to (or swallowed by) a living creature or an object, the clock ticks loudly, alerting everyone within long range to its presence for one day.

Crown Jewel

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Shining jewel from a royal crown

Effect: When attached to an item such as a weapon, shield, armor, cypher, or artifact, creates an exact duplicate of the item. The duplicate works just like the original and lasts for ten minutes or until it naturally depletes (whichever comes first).

Dame Trot's Cat

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Statue of a cat

Effect: When activated by feeding it a bit of milk or fish, the statue protects the user, yowling and hissing the next time it senses danger. The cat's level is equal to the cypher level.

Darning Needle

Level: 1d6

Form: Needle with a large eye

Effect: When activated, grows into a larger version of itself that acts as a medium weapon. It inflicts 4 points of damage and causes anything it successfully hits to shrink to half its size. The needle lasts for a number of hours equal to the cypher's level.

Dead Water

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Vial, pot, or jar of black liquid

Effect: Brings a character back to life. However, they come back with a permanent 3-point reduction in their maximum Might Pool.

Deathless

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Needle inside an egg

Effect: When a character places their soul inside the needle and places the needle inside the egg, they are protected from their next death. When the character dies, they return to life on the next round, with all of their Pools full.

Using the deathless does not protect the character from taking damage or moving down the damage track. Placing the soul and returning to life are actions. Once the cypher holds the user's soul, it no longer counts against their cypher limit.

If someone gets a hold of another person's soul, they have a great deal of power over that person (such as easing all actions against them by three steps). Those who use a deathless should ensure that it's well hidden and well protected.

Death's Candle

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Small, half-burnt black candle

Effect: Once the candle is lit, it burns for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level. During that time, the user who lit it is protected from death or being moved down the damage track. While the candle burns, if the character would normally die, they do not and instead reject all damage. For example, if a character has 5 points left in their last Pool, and a foe inflicts 5 points

of damage on them, putting all their Pools at 0, the user takes no damage. However, if a foe inflicts 4 points of damage, which is not enough to kill the user, the user takes the 4 points of damage.

Death's Messengers

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Bottle, vial, or box filled with three wisps of dark smoke

Effect: The three smoke wisps wrap around a creature within close range, causing them to feel dizzy, experience ringing in their ears, and have blurred vision. For the next three rounds, the cypher inflicts damage equal to the cypher's level (each round).

Diadem of Death

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Crown made of feathers, bits of bone, burnt hair, and old teeth

Effect: When worn on someone's head, looped over a limb, or otherwise placed upon their person, the crown inflicts damage equal to its level.

Dragon's Blood

Level: 1d6

Form: Powdered dragon's blood

Effect: When mixed with liquid and painted on a living being, grants one of the following effects for a day.

d6	Effect
1-2	+2 to Armor
3-4	Asset to all tasks involving magic
5-6	Asset to all tasks involving romance, sex, and fertility

Dragon's Teeth

Level: 1d6

Form: Handful of dragon's teeth

Effect: When planted, the dragon's teeth grow into three fully armed warriors. The warriors can understand the verbal commands of the person who planted them. Once they are grown, commanding them is not an action. They can make attacks and perform actions to the best of their abilities. The warriors can never go farther than long range from the character who planted them

Planting the teeth is an action. It takes two rounds for the teeth to grow into warriors. The warriors last for one hour per cypher level.

Warriors: level 3; Armor 1; swords inflict 3 points of damage

Dressmaking Nut

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Walnut or other shelled nut, with hinges and a clasp

Effect: The nut opens to reveal a stunning and spectacular ballgown, evening dress, or tuxedo. The outfit is the perfect size, shape, style, and color for the person who wishes to wear it. While worn, the outfit eases all tasks involving charm, persuasion, and etiquette for one hour. After

that, the outfit may still be worn, but no longer offers any benefits.

Beings of all genders can wear any form of outfit from the dressmaking nut and receive the benefits.

Drink Me

Level: 1d6

Form: Liquid inside a glass bottle with a paper label that says "DRINK ME"

Effect: Causes the imbiber to shrink down to half their size. The effect lasts for one hour or until the user can find another way to change their size (such as with an eat me).

Dust of the Dreamer

Level: 1d6

Form: Pouch of very fine, rainbow-hued dust

Effect: When sprinkled in the eyes, grants the recipient all the benefits of a ten-hour recovery roll as a single action. This does not use up any of their recovery rolls.

Eat Me

Level: 1d6

Form: Very small cake with the words “EAT ME” written on it in currants

Effect: Causes the eater to grow to twice their size. The effect lasts for one hour or until the user can find another way to change their size (such as with a drink me).

Emperor’s New Clothes

Level: 1d6

Form: Magical thread sewn onto armor

Effect: For the next day, the armor the thread is attached to is invisible, making the wearer appear to be unarmored.

Fairy Cup

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Decorated vessel made of precious materials

Effect: When the cup is buried in the ground, it grants the person who buried it protection. They gain +2 Armor against all physical and mental attacks for one day.

It's believed that burying a fairy cup returns it to its rightful owners below ground, and it is they who offer protection by way of thanks.

False Grandmother

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Pair of wire-rimmed glasses

Effect: While wearing the glasses, the user designates one living creature that

they can see. For the next ten minutes per cypher level, the user is disguised as someone the designated creature knows well. The user has no say in who that person is, but while the disguise is active, all interactions with the designated creature are eased by two steps. The user can remove the glasses to look like themselves again before the end of the duration.

Father’s Betrayal

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Small stone shaped like a heart

Effect: For the next ten minutes, a creature that the user can see is banished from an area 30 feet by 30 feet (9 m by 9 m) around the user. If the creature is within that area when the cypher is activated, they are knocked outside the area and are dazed for one round, hindering their next action.

Flaming Arrow

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Arrow with a silver-white shaft, golden head, and fletching of peacock feathers

Effect: The arrow explodes into flame when it strikes something, inflicting its level in damage to all within immediate range.

Flowers for Grandmother

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Fresh-picked bouquet of flowers tied with a red ribbon

Effect: Giving the flowers to someone else provides both the recipient and the giver an asset in defense against damage of a specified kind for one hour. Roll a d6 to determine the effect.

d6	Effect
1	Curses
2	Fire/heat
3	Ice/cold
4	Poison
5	Intellect
6	Slashing and piercing

Forget-Me-Knot

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Length of magical rope

Effect: Knotting the rope together to form a loop allows the user to capture a memory from their past. They don't lose the memory when capturing it with the forget-me-knot. When the user unties the loop, everyone in close range spends one round doing nothing but experiencing the memory as if it were their own. If the memory is particularly sad, loving, scary, and so on, all affected beings likely spend an additional round dealing with the emotional impacts of that memory. Capturing the memory is an action, as is untying the loop.

Genie's Handkerchief

Level: 1d6

Form: Extremely large handkerchief with one corner coated in mercury

Effect: Rubbing the cloth over a wound heals the wound (restores all points to the character's Pools), but also uses up one recovery roll for the day.

Genie's handkerchiefs come in many colors and materials. Some people find that after their magic is used up, they make fine blankets, curtains, or cloaks. Of course, extended exposure to mercury has its drawbacks.

Gilded Shell

Level: 1d6

Form: Golden snail shell

Effect: When blown into softly, the shell expands into a simple structure with a front door and walls that let in a soft light. From inside the structure, it's about 10 feet by 10 feet by 20 feet (3

m by 3 m by 6 m). From the outside, the shell continues to look exactly the way it did before, in both size and shape, making it difficult for others to notice. Once expanded, the structure is permanent and immobile.

Gingerbread Man

Level: 1d6

Form: Gingerbread cookie in the shape of a human, lavishly decorated

Effect: After eating the cookie, the user has training in Speed defense for the next day.

Godfather's Picture Book

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Large book full of tales

Effect: When someone flips through the pages quickly, time is altered. If the user flips through the book forward, time jumps forward. Flip backward and time jumps backward. Moving time forward gives the user an additional action on their turn. Moving it backward allows them to retry their previous action. After the book is used this way once, it becomes a regular book and does not count against the character's cypher limit.

Golden Beetle

Level: 1d6

Form: Golden scarab beetle

Effect: When dropped into liquid and cooked, it creates enough food to fill the stomachs of all friends and allies within long range.

Golden Vanity

Level: 1d6

Form: Golden vanity set in a small, sturdy box that includes a brush, comb, and mirror

Effect: Each item may be used once and has a different effect:

Golden brush: Creates bristly terrain in an immediate area, which counts as difficult terrain.

Golden comb: Creates jagged, toothy rocks in an immediate area, making it extremely painful to cross. Characters within the area take 1 point of damage each round from the rocks.

Golden mirror: Turns into a tall glass mountain 30 feet tall by 300 feet wide (9 m by 90 m). All climbing tasks are hindered, and a fall from any height does 3 points of ambient damage (ignores Armor).

The landscape effects are permanent. The golden vanity counts as a single cypher against the character's cypher limit. When all three items have been used, it remains a functional vanity set but no longer holds any magic.

Green Spectacles

Level: 1d6

Form: Pair of glasses with bright green lenses

Effect: Once activated, protects the wearer from being blinded or having their vision affected in other ways for one day. The wearer can see through illusions of the cypher level or lower and can see in the dark as if it were daylight.

Hart's Heart

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Still-beating heart from a forest stag, kept in an ornate lined box

Effect: When the user offers the heart to another living being, all attempts by the user to bribe, deceive, coerce, or convince the recipient are eased by two steps.

Heart of a Star

Level: 1d6

Form: Still-warm piece of a fallen star

Effect: For the next ten minutes, when the user helps another character while holding the star, that character's task is eased by an additional step. (If the user has an inability in the relevant skill, the other character's task is still eased.)

Heart's Tart

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Red tart in the shape of a heart

Effect: When eaten, eases all tasks involving stealing, picking pockets, sneaking, running, surprise, and initiative for ten minutes.

Hot Cross Buns

Level: 1d6

Form: Small spiced cake

Effect: When eaten, restores a number of points equal to the cypher's level to the user's Might Pool.

Iron Bands of Three

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Three flexible iron bands

Effect: Wrapping the iron bands around the user's heart keeps it from breaking with trouble and anxiety. While wearing the bands, the user automatically succeeds on their next three Intellect defense rolls against anything that would make them feel sad, fearful, intimidated, and so on. Each time the cypher activates to protect the user, one of the bands breaks. When all three bands are broken, the cypher is used up.

Itsy Bitsy Spider

Level: 1d6

Form: Tiny spider inside a jar, box, or thimble

Effect: When released, the spider sets up a web in a nearby corner. For the next ten minutes, the web catches thoughts, secrets, and information about the general area (up to about a square mile), including any creatures, people, weather, or goings on. At the end of that time, the user can read the web, gaining answers to a number of questions equal to the cypher's level. The questions must pertain to the area and must be simple enough that the spider can answer them in three words or less.

Jack's Candlestick

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Burning candlestick

Effect: Jumping over the candlestick restores a number of points equal to the cypher's level to the user's Speed Pool.

Jiminy Cricket

Level: 1d6

Form: Small wooden or metal cricket

Effect: Allows the user to retry a task that they failed within the past minute, using the same difficulty and modifiers.

The Key of Knowing

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Golden key that is permanently stained with blood

Effect: When used to open a lock (of the cypher level or lower), grants the user the opportunity to ask three yes-or-no questions about a person, place, or thing. The key answers to the best of its ability and knowledge, and it does not attempt to lie or trick the user with its answer.

After the key is used in this way, the blood disappears from its surface and the key refuses to open anything (or speak) ever again.

Knave of Hearts

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Playing card depicting an elegant knight

Effect: Turns the user into the knight depicted on the card. They take on the appearance, voice, and mannerisms of the knight. They also gain +1 Armor, +1 damage, and an asset in sneaking, hiding, and stealth. The effect lasts for ten minutes per cypher level.

Lion's Courage

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Small medallion with the word "COURAGE" inscribed upon it.

Effect: When activated, grants the user additional courage in the face of fear. For ten minutes per cypher level, any time the user is attacked and they attempt to make an attack on their next action, that attack is eased and they inflict +1 point of damage.

Living Water

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Vial, pot, or jar of liquid

Effect: Removes any ongoing damage, lasting damage, or permanent damage the character has. However, the character has a permanent 3-point reduction in their maximum Might Pool.

When dead water and living water cyphers are used together, a dead character can be brought back to life without any permanent reductions of their Might Pool.

Magic Beans

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Handful of magic beans

Effect: When planted and watered, the beans grow into a giant beanstalk. It's almost impossible to know where the beanstalk leads until you climb it. Climbing the beanstalk is a level 5 task.

Memory's Match

Level: 1d6

Form: Matchbox with one match inside

Effect: Lighting the match causes everyone nearby to see a vision that comforts them. Those who watch the vision in the flame for one round feel rejuvenated and comforted. Anyone who makes a recovery roll in the next ten minutes gains +3 to the roll. After that, anyone who watched the vision but didn't make a recovery roll takes 3 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor).

Mermaid Tear

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Tear-shaped drop of sea glass

Effect: When swallowed, fills the user with an overwhelming sense of sadness. The user takes 1 point of Intellect damage, but gains an asset on any tasks involving water for the next ten minutes. The task must involve water in a significant way (for example, swinging a sword while it's raining likely doesn't count, but crying as part of an attempt to persuade someone, casting a magic spell involving water, or using a pool to scry would all be appropriate).

Neverlost

Level: 1d6

Form: Bag of bread crumbs, pebbles, or candy

Effect: When dropped along a path or trail,

the items become invisible to everyone except the user and any allies the user designates. The items last for one day per cypher level and can be seen by the user and their allies, even in complete darkness.

Nonsensical Poem

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Nonsense poem written in mirror writing

Effect: Reading the poem aloud lets the user reverse one thing about their present situation for up to ten minutes. Up becomes down. Gravity works the other way. A river flows backward. The sun shines at night. (The player should work with the GM to come up with an appropriate and acceptable change.)

Omniscient Bean

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Magical bean made into a cake

Effect: When eaten, the bean allows the

user to tap into magic. They can ask the GM one question related to their current task, location, or action and get a general answer. The GM assigns a level to the question, so the more obscure the answer, the more difficult the task. Generally, knowledge that a PC could find by looking somewhere other than their current location is level 1, and obscure knowledge of the past is level 7. The cypher cannot provide an answer to a question above its level (which means it can't provide knowledge about the future, since that is level 10).

Pictureless Book

Level: 1d6

Form: Book without pictures

Effect: Reading the book aloud for one round causes all who hear it within short range (except the user) to fall into a deep sleep for one round. While they sleep, they have intense dreams and cannot take any other actions. The dreams affect them in one of the following ways.

Pictureless book affects NPCs' health instead of their Pools, either restoring them to full health or doing 5 points of damage.

d6	Effect
1- 2	Sweet dreams. All dreaming characters have all of their Pools restored to full.
3- 4	Nightmares. All dreaming characters take 5 points of Intellect damage.
5- 6	Dream world. All dreaming characters enter a dream world, where they have an experience that causes them to temporarily learn a noncombat skill of their choice for the rest of the day.

Poison for Your Daughter

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Clear liquid that can be spread on any object, such as an apple, hair comb, or weapon

Effect: The poison creates a specific reaction for one hour in a creature who uses the object. Roll d100 to determine the reaction.

d100	Reaction
01- 20	Sleep. The creature falls into a deep, dreamless sleep. While sleeping, the creature cannot take any actions, but is protected by a glass coffin that grants +2 Armor. The creature wakes if they are touched by someone they love or if they take damage.
21- 40	Disappear. The creature becomes invisible to everyone and everything for a number of rounds equal to the cypher level. During that time, they cannot be heard, felt, or sensed.
41- 60	Alter. The creature becomes physically altered until they are unrecognizable, even by their loved ones. The alteration also affects their clothing, possessions, and any distinguishing characteristics or mannerisms.

61-75	Lost. The creature becomes deeply and frighteningly lost, even if they are in familiar surroundings (such as their own bedroom). They do not recognize any landmarks, cannot find their way, and feel a deep sense of panic.
76-85	Breathless. The creature feels like they are unable to breathe, gulping air and short of breath. Although they are not dying, they feel as though they are. All tasks are hindered.
86-95	Compulsion. The creature becomes obsessed with a single task, unable to do anything else until they achieve it. The task might be simple (picking the most beautiful rose from a garden) or complex (knitting seven sweaters from nettles). All actions that don't contribute to completing the task are hindered.
96-00	Dutiful. The creature becomes much easier to interact with. All tasks to influence the poisoned creature are eased by two steps.

Poisoned Apple

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Apple that is half white and half red

Effect: Eating from the white half heals the user, restoring a number of points equal to the cypher's level to their Might Pool. Eating from the red half poisons the user, inflicting damage equal to the cypher's level. Each half of the apple has the power to affect only one creature.

Both halves of the apple can be used by the same or different people as long as it's done within a few rounds of each other. However, in order for the cypher to take effect, the user must willingly take a bite. It's impossible, for instance, to force-feed someone part of the apple and have the cypher activate.

Poppet (Damage)

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Small figure made of cloth, stuffed with hair and bone

Effect: Writing the name of an object or living being on the figure connects the figure with that object or being. Destroying the poppet inflicts damage on the connected object or being equal to the cypher's level, no matter how far away it is. Writing the name and destroying the poppet are separate actions.

Poppet (Love)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Small figure made of wax, adorned with flowers and herbs

Effect: Giving the poppet to another living being in a short ceremony (usually simply saying the being's name and making an offer of deep positive emotion) protects them from all harmful effects the next time they are attacked. If the positive emotion is returned (such as between friends or lovers), the giver is also protected. For example, the next time someone swings a sword, speaks a curse, or tries to poison the creature, the

attempt automatically fails, and if the creature were to slip near a deep pit, they would not fall into it. Giving the poppet to another is an action.

Puppet (Prosperity)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Small figure made of cloth, stuffed with herbs and bits of wood

Effect: Writing the name of an object or living being on the figure connects the figure with that object or being. Dirtying, tearing, and damaging the puppet causes the connected being or object to appear destitute and poor to all who see them. This effect lasts for a day. Writing the name and damaging the puppet are separate actions.

Puppet (Silence)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Small figure carved from wood or stone, with an open mouth

Effect: Stuffing the open mouth with something that belongs to a living being (such as hair, teeth, or fabric) connects the figure to that being. For the following day, the being is unable to talk about, point to, see, or otherwise engage with the person who activated the puppet.

Powder of Life

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Bit of powder carried in a pepper box

Effect: When sprinkled on an inanimate

object, the powder brings it to life. The object doesn't change in any way—a small cat made of glass remains a small cat made of glass—except that now it is alive. The living object acts as a level 2 creature with a mind of its own. While it has an affinity or obligation for the one who brought it to life, it doesn't obey commands.

Objects animated by the powder of life should have stats that represent

their form and nature. For example, a tin soldier brought to life likely has 1 Armor and perhaps a light weapon, while a stuffed rabbit might be level 3 for the purpose of Speed defense, hiding, and sneaking.

Princess's Pea

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Dried pea that was previously slept on

Effect: For one hour per cypher level, allows the user to recognize disguises, optical illusions, sound mimicry, false claims, and other such tricks (for all senses) for what they are.

Rabbit Hole

Level: 1d6

Form: Pocket watch with an empty face

Effect: Laying the pocket watch facedown on the ground creates a rabbit hole that goes directly to a place that the user states. The user must have previously been to the stated place, and must enter the rabbit hole before anyone else, ideally by jumping in feet first. The hole grows to the appropriate size to accommodate the user and anyone traveling with them. Travel inside the hole is not instantaneous, but it is very fast, taking no more than a minute and feeling very much like riding a long, winding slide.

The hole stays open for ten minutes, and it is possible to travel back to the starting place (but nowhere else) by again jumping in feet-first.

Rapunzel Leaf

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Small green leaf from a rapunzel plant

Effect: After being buried beneath a rock, the rapunzel leaf begins to grow into a stone tower that stands 100 feet (30 m) tall. The tower, which takes ten minutes to fully form, has a large number of windows but only one exterior door, which can be unlocked only by the user.

The tower's level is equal to the cypher level, and the structure is permanent and immobile.

Rose of Red

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Big, beautiful crimson rose in full bloom

Effect: Pricking a finger on the rose's thorns causes the user to bleed a single drop of blood. When flung into the air, the blood becomes a large red bird that flies toward a chosen target up to a long distance away. When it arrives, it bursts in an immediate radius, inflicting Intellect damage equal to the cypher level. The burst spawns 1d6 additional birds; in the next round, each one flies to a random spot within short range and explodes in an immediate radius, inflicting damage equal to the cypher level.

Shadow Soap

Level: 4

Form: Small piece of soap

Effect: When rubbed on your visible shadow, causes it to separate from yourself.

The shadow acts as a level 4 creature under the user's control for one hour (or until there is no light). The shadow is two-dimensional and insubstantial, and when sneaking, hiding, and avoiding detection, it acts as a level 7 creature. When the effect ends, the shadow (usually) returns to the user.

Shadows are known to develop a mind of their own. Sometimes after tasting a bit of freedom, they refuse to return.

Shard of the Moon

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Tiny sliver of the moon

Effect: Glows softly for ten minutes, drawing all moon-loving creatures (such as moths, moon hares, and werewolves) within long range. For as long as the effect lasts, any attracted creatures will not attack the user or their allies. The user can converse with the creatures and ask them questions, which the creatures will answer to the best of their ability, but always within their nature (so a trickster will still answer as a trickster would, for example).

Shining Knife

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Shining knife

Effect: When stuck into an object, such as a tree or the side of a house, the knife connects the wielder and someone they choose. If one of them wants to know how the other is faring, all they have to do is return to

the spot where the knife is stuck. If both are faring well, the knife shines bright gold. If harm has come to one, the knife is dull and rusted.

Silver Slippers

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Silver shoes, ruby slippers, or red boots

Effect: When the wearer speaks aloud the name of the place they wish to go, the silver slippers take them there in three steps. Note that in most cases the slippers only transport the wearer (although companion animals and the like may sometimes travel with them).

Once the silver slippers are used to transport their wearer, they disappear. However, it is rumored that they magically return to the world in some form for someone else who needs them.

Singing Bone

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Human bone carved into the mouthpiece for a musical instrument Effect: When blown into, the bone sings a

song that details the weaknesses and faults of one target (up to the level of the cypher) that the user chooses. For ten minutes, all tasks involving the target are eased for everyone in long range who heard the bone's song.

For most magical objects involving sound, it's not necessary to physically hear the item in order to gain the benefits. "Hearing" may involve sensing vibrations, magical mental telepathy, a sign language interpreter, and so on.

Snake Leaves

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Three green leaves

Effect: When placed upon a person, the leaves restore all Pools to full, move a character one step up the damage track, or bring a dead character back to life. However, the character also gains a permanent 3-point reduction in their maximum Intellect Pool.

Snickersnee

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Small jewel, talisman, or bead

Effect: When attached to a weapon, causes it to grow two to five times its normal size. The weapon inflicts an additional +2 points of damage, but otherwise can be used as if it were a weapon of its original size.

Song of the Dead

Level: 1d6

Form: Small stuffed bird with yellow and blue plumage

Effect: When the user spends ten minutes breathing into the mouth of the bird, it comes to life. It flies off, but now carries a piece of the user's life inside it. When the user dies, the bird flies back to their body and is able to communicate to those around it, but only for one day. After that, the bird returns to its lifeless form.

Sorcerer's Skeleton Key

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Wooden stick, iron wand, or piece of straw

Effect: When tapped three times against any locked door or other object (of the cypher level or lower), the key automatically unlocks it.

Spirit Ring

Level: 1d6

Form: Ring, necklace, hairpin, or bracelet

Effect: Summons a group of helpful fey who provide assistance for ten minutes. During this time, they do as the wearer commands as long as they're within long range. They can hinder any or all opponents' tasks, provide information, assist in small tasks, and so on. The fey will not do anything that goes against their basic nature and safety (such as self-harm, attacking their friends, or obvious suicide missions).

Fey are fickle beings. While spirit rings and the like allow someone to hold power over them, it's very much dependent on the fey's blessing. Angering the fey may cause them to leave at any moment (even in the middle of something important), and they may take the time to curse or prank the characters before they disappear.

Teleport Hat

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Silly hat that is always too large on the wearer no matter what size their head is

Effect: Allows the wearer to wish for a creature that they know to appear at their side. The creature must agree to be teleported (or convinced via some type of interaction, such as persuasion or intimidation). The teleported creature stays for as long as both parties agree, but not more than a day. At that time, the creature is returned to their place of origination.

Three Needles

Level: 1d6

Form: Three enchanted needles

Effect: For the next ten minutes per cypher level, the user can climb any solid surfaces (even vertical ones) as if doing so was a routine task.

Tin Man's Tears

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Tiny vial filled with tears

Effect: When poured out, spreads out to cover an area about 2 feet by 2 feet (60 cm square), transforming any metal it touches into brittle rust, down to a depth of about 6 inches (15 cm). When used on a metal creature (such as a tin soldier), the rust inflicts damage equal to the cypher's level and hinders all movement actions for ten minutes.

To Peter With Love

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Wrapped box with a bomb inside and a gift tag on the outside

Effect: Write a person's name on the tag, and the box will deliver itself to that person at a time and place you specify. When opened, the box does damage to the recipient equal to the cypher level. Traveling to the recipient takes at least a round and sometimes longer, depending on the distance and difficulty.

Valorous Whetstone

Level: 1d6

Form: Sharpening stone

Effect: After sharpening at least one of their weapons with the whetstone, the user instantly feels more brave. For the next ten minutes, all of their intimidation actions are eased, and their sharpened weapon inflicts +2 points of damage.

Vase of Tears

Level: 1d6

Form: Vase, vial, or jar filled with tears

Effect: Breaking the vase creates a protective spell around the character, preventing them from taking any Might damage the next time they are physically attacked.

White Snake

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Piece of a magical snake

Effect: Upon swallowing the piece of the snake, the user gains the ability to understand and speak with all living things for ten minutes.

Wish-Granting Pearl

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Flaming pearl

Effect: The user can make a single wish and have all or part of it come true. The GM assigns a level to the wish, so the larger and more difficult the wish, the more difficult it is to have the wish granted. Generally, a wish such as gaining an asset or inexpensive item is level 1, and a wish for an expensive item or for a foe to vanish is level 7. The cypher cannot grant a wish above its level.

Witch Bottle

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Ornate stoppered bottle filled with wine, seawater, or pins and needles

Effect: Captures a witch (of a level up to the cypher's level). Upon entering the bottle, the witch takes damage equal to the cypher's level and is trapped until someone whispers their name into the bottle's mouth and releases them.

Witch's Ladder

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Garland of knotted string, feathers, teeth, and bells

Effect: Safely stores one curse for use at a later time. The stored curse may be released and cast only by the person who stored it, or by someone who has received their permission to do so.

Wooden Spoon

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Plain wooden spoon

Effect: When stirred through the air, restores the user's energy and vitality. The user gains two additional actions on their next turn. For example, they can move a long distance, use a one-action recovery roll, and activate a cypher as their turn, or attack a foe three times.

Yonder Yarn

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Skein or spool of yarn

Effect: Unravels to lead the user to their desired destination. The yarn unspools at the speed that the user would normally walk or ride. The yonder yarn will not enter territory it deems too dangerous, and it cannot go through solid obstacles. If the yarn is cut, it no longer works.

It is difficult, but not impossible, to protect oneself from being found by yonder yarn. Witches, in particular, know ways to hide themselves (and others) from the yarn's power.

ARTIFACTS

Most artifacts in a Cypher System fairy tale setting are magical objects that have been either crafted via magic or later altered by or imbued with magic. There are a number of people and beings in fairy tale settings who are capable of creating artifacts by one or both of these methods. Additionally, some artifacts are products of magic or the setting itself. Thus, new artifacts are constantly entering the world, just waiting to be found and used by the characters.

ARTIFACT QUIRKS

Magic runs through most items in a fairy tale world, but especially through artifacts. Magic is unknowable and mystifying, and thus something can—and often does—go wrong. While that may sometimes manifest as GM intrusions, it also shows up in artifacts as quirks. Every artifact has a quirk that sets it apart from mundane or lightly magical objects.

Quirks typically do not make an artifact more powerful, but they can make it more interesting, difficult, useful, or just unique. Some quirks manifest during an item's creation, while others might appear (or disappear) after a particular experience, usually one involving magic. Quirks may come and go without notice, but typically an artifact can have only one quirk at a time and is rarely without a quirk for long.

Quirks Table

d20	Quirk
1	Randomly changes the color of weapons, clothing, and other objects it touches.
2	Causes some animals to shy away from it, and others to draw near to it.
3	Musical instruments and birdsongs go flat in its presence.
4	Gives the wielder an increased sense of smell.
5	Draws bees and occasionally drips honey.
6	Sometimes catches on fire when used; the blaze doesn't do damage but it gives off heat and light.

7	Produces a rash, tattoo, or other mark on the wielder's skin.
8	Causes the wielder to walk an inch or so above the ground.
9	Whistles music appropriate to what's going on around it, including a nasal drone when it's bored.
10	Sometimes moves of its own accord, but never when anyone's looking at it.
11	Talks constantly about its former owner, who it either loves or hates, depending on the day.
12	Gives everyone nearby weird and unnatural dreams.
13	Causes the wielder's hair to grow faster than normal.
14	Creates a cloud over itself constantly. Sometimes the cloud rains.
15	Draws fey creatures to it, whether it's being used or not.
16	Whines incessantly if it hasn't been used (or at least given some attention, such as being cleaned) in at least a day.
17	Emits various colored swirls and sparkles that form shapes in the air.
18	Changes appearance in some small way to match the wielder's mood.
19	Sometimes points the way to something interesting or useful.
20	Occasionally changes into a completely different artifact overnight (including form and function); this effect lasts until the artifact is used in its new form, after which point it reverts back (or depletes).

Artifact Table

When giving artifacts to characters, either choose from this table or roll d100 for random results.

d100	Artifact
01-03	A tisket a tasket
04-06	Bounding boots

07-09	Boundless bag
10-12	Boy Blue's horn
13-15	Carving knife of sharpness
16-17	Devils and tailors
18-20	Fiddle of the fossegrim
21-23	Fortunate's purse
24-25	Galoshes of fortune
26-27	Genie's lamp
28-30	Golden bridle
31-33	Hatchet of the Woodsman
34-36	Hook's hook
37-39	Horn of destruction
40-42	Iron stove
43-45	Knapsack of sevens
46-50	Mirror mirror
51-53	Pandora's box
54-56	Pixie dust
57-59	Red cap
60-62	Red riding hood
63-65	Self-swinging sword
66-68	Seven-league boots
69-71	Shapeshifter wand

72-74	She-bear
75-77	Shirt of nettles
78-79	Soldier's cloak of invisibility
80-82	Soulful fiddle
83-84	Steadfast tin soldier
85-87	Stone canoe
88-90	Story knife
91-93	Table-be-set
94-96	Tinderbox
97-98	Tweedledee's umbrella
99-00	Vicious tankard

A SELECTION OF FAIRY TALE ARTIFACTS

A Tisket a Tasket

Level: 1d6

Form: Woven yellow basket with wooden handles

Effect: This basket can contain up to one cypher per artifact level, as long as each is no larger than a typical cat. Cyphers in the basket do not count against a character's limit.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check each time a cypher is added to the basket)

Bounding Boots

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Beautifully made leather and gold boots that adjust to fit the wearer perfectly

Effect: The boots are an asset for jumping and running (easing one of these skills by two steps if the artifact is level 6 or higher).

Depletion: —

Boundless Bag

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Small bag with two handles and a clasp

Effect: Any nonliving item held in the bag becomes a slightly more valuable item. For example, an inexpensive item becomes a moderately priced item, while a moderate item becomes an expensive item. The bag has no effect on items that are very expensive or exorbitant. The change takes a full day to take effect, during which time the item cannot leave the bag and the bag should not be opened. If the bag is opened, the process is canceled and must be started over.

Depletion: 1 in 1d6. When the effect depletes, it can still be used as a normal bag.

Putting all or part of

a living thing into a boundless bag is always risky, as more than one person has had their hand or head turned to gold (which might sound lovely, but typically isn't). Also, doing so often causes the boundless bag to revert to a normal bag.

Items that create wealth in any fashion are particularly sought after. So much so that some items are believed to be cursed, due to the number of people who have met their untimely fate while in possession of a wealth-making artifact.

Boy Blue's Horn

Level: 1d6

Form: Gleaming horn that never needs to be tuned or polished

Effect: When playing a lullaby, the horn puts every hearing living being in short range (including the user) to sleep for two rounds. When the horn plays something upbeat, the user and all allies within short range add +1 to their recovery rolls for ten minutes.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20. After depletion, it continues to function as a regular horn.

Carving Knife of Sharpness

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Knife (light weapon)

Effect: This weapon functions as a normal knife of its kind. When the wielder gets a special major effect when attacking, they can choose to lop off one of the target's limbs.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10 (roll on each major effect)

The GM determines the effect of a lost limb; however, many magical beings can withstand lost limbs with far more aplomb than a mortal creature will display in a similar situation.

Devils and Tailors

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Blood-stained draughtboard with figures of white gold, bronze, and pearl

Effect: Playing someone in a game of checkers or draughts eases all of the user's positive social interactions with their opponent. While playing, the user can make a move and interact with their opponent as a single action. The game lasts a number of rounds equal to the artifact level.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check each game played). After depletion, the board continues to function as a regular draughtboard.

You can determine the outcome of a game by having both players roll 2d6. The player with the highest number of pieces left on the board (highest roll) is the winner.

Fiddle of the Fossegrim

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Water-worn fiddle

Effect: Playing the fiddle causes everyone within long distance to become enticed by the music and draw closer to the player. After one round, all creatures in short range begin to dance uncontrollably for a number of rounds equal to the artifact level. The only action they can take while dancing is to attempt to break free from the effect (an Intellect action equal to the artifact level).

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Fortunate's Purse

Level: 1d6

Form: Elegant knapsack that shifts colors to hide in plain sight

Effect: Any object put inside the sack cannot be detected by physical senses or magic. The sack can hold a single item, of any size and shape, at a time. Cyphers in Fortunate's purse do not count against the user's cypher limit.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check each time an item is added to the knapsack)

Magic bags come in many forms, such as coin purses, sacks, packs, and pockets. Some can be used to hide someone safely out of sight, provide an endless supply of gold or riches, or grant wishes. They are most often given as rewards for doing great kindnesses or completing a difficult task.

Galoshes of Fortune

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Pair of rubber boots

Effect: Transports the wearer to a time and place in the past or present that they desire for up to ten minutes. The wearer cannot be seen, heard, or sensed by others, and they cannot take any actions other than to watch events unfold. Traveling to and from the time and place causes the wearer to disappear from the present for two rounds.

Depletion: 1 in 1d6

Genie's Lamp

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Bronze oil lamp

Effect: Rubbing the lamp produces a genie who grants the user a wish. The GM assigns a level to the wish, so the larger and more difficult the wish, the more difficult it is to have the wish granted. Generally, a wish such as gaining an asset or inexpensive item is level 1, and a wish for an expensive item or for a foe to vanish is level 7. The genie cannot grant a wish above its level. The genie can grant only one wish per day.

Depletion: 1 in 1d6

Genies, also called djinn or jinn, come in many forms, and not all of them are contained or controlled by something so simple as a lamp.

Golden Bridle

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Bridle made of flowing gold

Effect: To activate the bridle, the user must succeed on an Intellect interaction with a beast whose level does not exceed the artifact level. The bridle bonds to the creature, which immediately becomes calm. The creature awaits the user's commands and carries out orders

to the best of its ability. The creature remains calmed for a number of hours equal to the artifact's level minus the creature's level. (If the result is 0 or less, the creature is enslaved for only one minute.)

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

Hatchet of the Woodsman

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Well-worn hatchet of unremarkable appearance

Effect: When used on a creature, the hatchet turns the target into wood and inflicts damage equal to its level. If the creature is living wood, the hatchet turns them into nonliving wood. If the target is slain by the hatchet, the creature becomes animated wood. Effects last for ten minutes or until the target succeeds on an Intellect roll.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check on each successful attack)

Hook's Hook

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Simple iron hook designed to be worn as a prosthetic

Effect: When placed on an amputated limb, the hook grafts on permanently. It works as a simple hook and as a light weapon. When activated, Hook's hook affects the minds of all thinking foes within long range. Those affected are instilled with terror, making them drop whatever they're holding and flee for a number of rounds equal to the artifact level.

Depletion: 1 in 1d6 (for the fear ability). After depletion, it still functions as a hook and a weapon.

There are rumored to be any number of Hook's hooks, all of which are made from different materials and serve different purposes, such as the scissors hook, oar hook, magnet hook, teacup hook, grappling-hook hook, and fishing rod hook. Enterprising characters might seek out multiple hooks, along with a way to exchange them easily.

Horn of Destruction

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Large brass horn

Effect: Blowing into the horn destroys all objects in an immediate area that is up to a long distance away, turning it all into rubble and debris. Living beings inside the area take 2 points of ambient damage (ignores Armor).

Depletion: 1 in 1d6

It is customary for the one who holds the horn of destruction to call themselves the King of Rubble and Debris and to wear a crown fashioned from talus and scree.

Iron Stove

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Iron stove that walks and talks

Effect: Once per day, the stove can bake a living gingerbread cookie. The baker chooses the form, but it must be a simple, one-dimensional shape (such as a human, a dog, or a tree). The cookie is a level 3 creature that can move, talk, and complete simple tasks that the baker asks of it. After a day, the cookie crumbles away.

Additionally, the iron stove can be used as a regular stove to heat water, cook meals, and so on.

Depletion: 1 in 1d100. After depletion, it remains a regular working stove, but no longer walks and talks.

A gingerbread being is not immune to dangers. Large amounts of liquids are likely to make it melt away, while birds and other scavengers have been known to try to take an eye or leg.

Knapsack of Sevens

Level: 1d6

Form: Simple knapsack

Effect: Tapping the knapsack seven times causes seven swans to fly out. For as long as the user does not speak or make any sounds, the swans fly around the user, providing them with +1 Armor against mental and physical attacks for the next ten minutes.

As soon as the user utters a sound, the swans return to the knapsack.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Mirror Mirror

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Ornate mirror that grows or shrinks in size according to its user's needs.

Effect: When the user looks into the mirror and interacts with it, it grants their request, as it is able. Roll a d6 to determine the mirror's ability:

Most mirror mirrors have a personality all their own. Some sing their answers, some show images, and still others sigh with boredom at being asked the same thing over and over. Mirrors never lie. Except when they do.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

d6	Ability
1	Answers a question about the present (such as "Who is the fairest of them all?") with a simple one- or two-word answer.
2	Allows the viewer to check in on someone they know (and who knows them) from anywhere. The image lasts just a moment, and those being viewed are not aware that it has happened.
3	If the viewer stands before the mirror and shouts their own name three times, they are granted a glimpse of their future. This glimpse lasts just a moment, and is not guaranteed to come true.

4	If the viewer stands before the mirror at midnight while holding a light source, they are able to contact the ghost or spirit of a person or creature they know the name of. Whether or not the being agrees to talk with them is another matter.
5	Distorts the appearance of everything it reflects, particularly by magnifying the horrible and ugly aspects of things and people while ignoring their good and beautiful aspects. Looking into the mirror inflicts 2 points of Intellect damage. Angling the mirror to reflect an object inflicts 2 points of damage to it.
6	Coats the user's skin with its reflective surface, offering protection. The first time the user would take damage, the mirror shatters instead, reflecting the damage back to the user's attacker.

Pandora's Box

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Elegant gold box with a hinged lid and a locked clasp

Effect: When the box is opened, light leaks out. The light coalesces into a golden form that represents a deep sense of peace and hope to the person who opened the box. For a number of rounds equal to the artifact level, the golden form eases all actions taken by the opener. Alternatively, the opener can share the effect of the golden form as their action, easing all actions taken by allies within short range (but not giving themselves the benefits).

Depletion: 1 in 1d6

Pixie Dust

Level: 1d6

Form: Glass bottle filled with glittering light

Effect: Shake the glittering light on a living

being and it can fly for ten minutes per artifact level. If the being can already fly, shaking the light on them grounds them, taking away their ability to be airborne for the same amount of time.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

Red Cap

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Woolen cap soaked in human blood

Effect: The wearer gains an extra recovery

roll each day that is not an action and does not count toward their daily limit. Once the wearer uses this recovery roll, they can't do so again until after they make a ten-hour recovery roll and soak the hat in fresh human blood.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check each day of use)

Red Riding Hood

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Bright red cloak that adjusts to fit its wearer

Effect: Draws the eye while also giving the wearer the impression of being easy prey. All tasks involving sneaking and hiding are hindered, and foes will typically attack the wearer over any others in the area. The cloak provides +3 Armor and an asset to all Might-based tasks, including combat tasks.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10 (check each day of use)

Self-Swinging Sword

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Steel sword with an ornate hilt

Effect: When activated by a special word,

the sword attacks whoever the user indicates, fighting as a creature whose level is equal to the artifact level. Commanding the sword is not an action, but it can only do things that a sword would be able to do (attack, block, slice, and so on). If the sword is reduced to 0 health, the self-swinging ability ends and must be reactivated. The sword returns to the user when the duration ends.

Depletion: 1 in 1d6 (for the self-swinging ability). After depletion, it functions as a regular sword.

Seven-League Boots

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Lace-up knee-high boots of black leather

Effect: Allows the wearer to travel up to 21 miles (34 km) with a single step. Alternatively, two people may each wear one boot and travel up to 10.5 miles (19 km) with a single step. Seven-league boots exhaust the user, costing them 2 Might points per step.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check each step). Once the movement ability depletes, the boots continue to function as regular boots.

Shapeshifter Wand

Level: 1d6

Form: Wand made of wood, glass, metal, or stone

Effect: Allows the user to turn one living being (including themself) into one of the following: flower, lake, duck, swan, cottage, rosebush, or fish. While in

their new form, the shapeshifted being retains all of their health and other attributes, but cannot perform any actions beyond what the non-magical item or creature could normally perform. So a flower can blow in the wind, bloom, attract insects, be cut, and smell nice. Any attempts to detect the shapeshifted being by physical senses or magic are hindered by two steps. While shapeshifted, the being cannot die; however, they can be injured, cursed, or moved down the damage track. The effect lasts for ten minutes or until the user chooses to end it early.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

She-Bear

Level: 1d6

Form: Bit of wood carved in the shape of a bear

Effect: When placed in the mouth, changes the wielder into the form of a female bear. While in this form, the user gains +4 to their Might Pool, +4 to their Speed Pool, and +1 to Armor. They also can communicate with other bears while in this form. The effect lasts for ten minutes.

Depletion: 1 in 1d6

Shirt of Nettles

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Woven shirt of stinging nettles

Effect: The shirt acts as light armor, but grants an additional +2 Armor (+3 if the artifact is level 9 or higher) in addition to the 1 Armor that light armor typically provides. Additionally, the wearer can't be shapeshifted against their will.

Depletion: — (At any time, the GM can rule that the shirt has resisted enough shapeshifting magic to deplete that ability, after which the shirt still functions as armor.)

Soldier's Cloak of Invisibility

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Slate-grey cloak sewn of shadows and silence

Effect: Provides an asset to hiding, sneaking, and remaining undetected (even by magic) for as long as the wearer does not interact with another creature. Entering into combat or interacting with another creature in any way breaks the effect.

Depletion: 1 in 1d100

Soulful Fiddle

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Fiddle made of bone and guts

Effect: This instrument acts like a normal

fiddle of its kind. If the wielder is trained in its use and plays an appropriate tune, those within short range who hear it suffer one of the following effects: fall asleep, become amenable to suggestion, follow the fiddle player in a light trance, or take a similar action.

The desired effect must be the same for all creatures who hear it. The effect lasts for ten minutes, but actions by others (such as attacking the listeners or physically restraining them) can end the effect early for a creature.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Steadfast Tin Soldier

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Small tin soldier with one leg

Effect: Gives a user who is missing a

limb the ability to transform the tin soldier into a prosthetic limb with the appearance of their choosing. The limb permanently increases the user's maximum Speed Pool or Might Pool (user's choice) by 5 points (or 7 points if the artifact is level 6 or higher).

Depletion: —

It is rumored that there are a number of artifacts that create prosthetic body parts or restore missing limbs, including Paper Ballerina, Handless Maiden, and Bianca's Snake.

Stone Canoe

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Shiny grey pebble, small enough to fit into a pocket

Effect: When activated, forms into a canoe that can carry a number of beings (and their equipment) equal to the artifact level. The canoe lasts for one day and then transforms back into a pebble.

Depletion: 1 in 1d6 (check each use)

Story Knife

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Small penknife inscribed with tiny words in hundreds of languages

Effect: Slices through words that are in the form of oral stories, songs, speeches, conversations, and so on. This has one of two effects, depending on the wielder's desire (the wielder must decide before they activate the artifact each time):

- Makes the story, song, and so on sharper, stronger, and more interesting, increasing the chance that it will have an impact on listeners (eases any attempted interaction task)
- Makes the story, song, and so on boring, unwieldy, and disjointed, decreasing the chance that it will have the intended impact on listeners (hinders any attempted interaction task)

Using the story knife is an action. It has no power to cut physical objects or living beings (unless those beings are made of stories).

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Table-Be-Set

Level: 1d6

Form: Common-looking wooden table

Effect: Putting the table out and saying

"Table be set" automatically fills the table with as much food and drink as will fit upon its surface. The table does not become empty as long as there is anyone in long range who still wishes to eat. Once a character uses the table's ability, they can't do so again until after they make a ten-hour recovery roll.

Depletion: 1 in 1d100

In addition to artifact quirks, common sense suggests that the

effects of some artifacts will draw additional interesting opportunities or dangers. Using table-be-set in the middle of a forest, for example, is likely to draw bears and other hungry beasts, while using it in the middle of town might garner the characters new friends, or catch the attention of thieves.

Tinderbox

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Small ornate tinderbox made of metal

Effect: Summons three dogs to do the user's bidding. The dogs can complete any tasks dogs would normally be able to accomplish, including carrying, fetching, attacking, defending, and so on. They act as a single level 3 creature.

Depletion: 1 in 1d6

Tweedledee's Umbrella

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Large umbrella with a sharp point on the end

Effect: Touch a creature (up to the artifact's level) of any size and the umbrella will fold up around it, capturing it inside. Holding the umbrella with the captive inside is an action. A caught character is held for ten minutes or until they make a successful Might roll to break free.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

Vicious Tankard

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Hefty ale tankard carved of stone

Effect: In addition to serving as a convenient means to drink a variety of liquids, if the tankard is topped off with good ale or spirits, it can be used as a medium weapon that inflicts +2 damage (for a total of 6 points of damage). Anyone who picks up the tankard is practiced

in using it in this fashion. Surprisingly, using the tankard as a melee weapon does not cause more than a modicum of good ale or spirits to slosh out.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check each fight)

BEASTS AND BEINGS

The following creatures and characters are provided to help populate your fairy tale game.

Generally, the listings in this book work much the same way as they do for all Cypher System creature listings—the standard template includes the level, description, motive, environment, and so on.

The most important element of each creature is its level. You use the level to determine the target number a PC must reach to attack, defend against, or otherwise interact with a creature or NPC. In each entry, the difficulty number for the creature is listed in parentheses after its level.

A creature's target number is usually also its health, which is the amount of damage it can sustain before it is dead or incapacitated. For easy reference, most entries list a creature's health, and they always do so if it's different from the normal amount for a creature of its level.

For more detailed information on how to use level, health, combat, and other elements, see the Understanding the Listings section in the Cypher System Rulebook.

Due to the dual and complex nature of many creatures in fairy tales, along with the large number of archetypes, there are several additional elements that you'll want to take particular note of when using the creature listings.

A creature's health is always equal to its target number unless otherwise stated.

Suggested Additional Creatures for Use in Fairy Tale Settings

The Cypher System Rulebook provides a short list of creatures and NPCs that work well in fairy tale games. The following creatures from that book can also be used, although some may need small tweaks to their appearance or motives to make them more fairy-tale in nature.

- Abomination • Chimera
- Demigod
- Demon
- Devil
- Djinni
- Dragon
- Elemental
- Ghost
- Ghoul
- Giant
- Goblin
- Golem
- Nuppeppo
- Ogre
- Orc
- Prince(ss) of summer • Statue, animate
- Witch
- Wizard, mighty

Beasts and Beings by Archetype

Animals

Animals, common
Animals, magical
Bagheera
Beast
Black Dog
Cat sidhe
Centipede, whispering
Cheshire Cat
Crow, monstrous

Devil's dandy dogs

Hans the Hedgehog

Leveret (giant hare)

Puss in Boots

Robber birds

Sand fleas

Satyr

Toby the turtle

Wolf, Big Bad

Crafted

Geppetto's children

Golem (Cypher System Rulebook)

Horse head automatons

Tin Woodman

Virgilius's copper dogs

Earth Beings

Erikling

Giant (Cypher System Rulebook)

Goblin (Cypher System Rulebook)

Golem (Cypher System Rulebook)

Minotaur

Ogre

Satyr

Troll

Fey Beings

Áine, Fairy Queen of Light and Love

Angik

Brownie

Caileach

Cat sidhe

Changeling

Enchanted moura

Erlking

Fairy godmother

Gráinne, the Wayward Daughter

Headless horse

Nightmare

Nymph

Pixie

Prince(ss) of summer (Cypher System Rulebook)

Satyr

Tink

Tunnel bog

Will-o-wisp

Of the Grave

Death
Demigod (Cypher System Rulebook)
Demon (Cypher System Rulebook)
Devil (Cypher System Rulebook)
Djinni (Cypher System Rulebook)
Fallen Angel (Cypher System Rulebook)
Ghost (Cypher System Rulebook)
Ghoul (Cypher System Rulebook)
Skeleton (Cypher System Rulebook)

Human NPCs

Aristocrat
Child
Crafter
Huntsman/Woodcutter
Robber/Thief
Scholar

Named Characters

Happy
Humpty Dumpty
Maid Maleen

Snow White

Toby the turtle

Royalty

Áine, Fairy Queen of Light and Love

Aristocrat

Cardinal King

Gráinne, the Wayward Daughter

Listening King

The Listening King's Seven Starry-Headed Children

One-Eyed Jacque

Prince(ss) of summer (Cypher System Rulebook)

Queen

Red Knight

White stag royal

Shapeshifters

Changeling

Enchanter

Queen

Witch

Spiring Beings

Black dog

Charon the Ferryman

Death

Demigod (Cypher System Rulebook)

Demon (Cypher System Rulebook)

Devil (Cypher System Rulebook)

Djinni (Cypher System Rulebook)

Fallen Angel (Cypher System Rulebook)

Ghost (Cypher System Rulebook)

Ghoul (Cypher System Rulebook)

Nightmare

Skeleton (Cypher System Rulebook)

Tricksters

Cheshire Cat

Puss in Boots

Raven of the Seven Ravens Army

Satyr

Wolf, Big Bad

Water Beings

Caileach

Cult of the Serpent

Ghost of the arbella

Grundylow

Isonade

Mermaid, misery

The Sea, Herself

Siren

Witches, Wizards, and Sorcerers

Witch (archetype)

Apple-pip Witch

Baba Uaga

Blind Witch

Dame Gothel

Enchanter

Kitchen Witch

Sea Witch

Virgilius the Sorcerer

Wicked Witch of the West

Witch of the Drowning Slough

World and Weather Beings

Moon

The Sea, Herself

West Wind

Wind children, the

MAGICAL ANIMALS

Bear: level 5; health 20; Armor 1; two magical abilities

Cat: level 2; two magical abilities

Fish: level 2; one magical ability

Fox/Rabbit/Monkey: level 3, cunning and trickery as level 5; two magical abilities

Horse/Donkey: level 4; two magical abilities

Mouse/Rat: level 2; one magical ability

Raven/Owl: level 3, intelligence and cunning as level 4; one magical ability

Snake/Serpent: level 3; bite inflicts 4 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor); one magical ability

Songbird: level 1; offer sage advice to those they choose; one magical ability

Stag/Hart: level 4; Armor 1; horns inflict 3 points of damage; two magical abilities

Suggested Magical Abilities for Animals

Bless (use magic to give a character or object something beneficial, such as giving a weapon +1 damage for one round, or giving another character +1 Armor for one round)

Boon (provide the character with a small beneficial object, such as a goose that lays a golden egg, a fish that finds a lost ring, and so on)

Conjure (create a small useful item, such as a flask of water, a loaf of bread, or a candle)

Curse (curse another creature to inflict damage, stun, daze, or otherwise affect them negatively for one or more rounds)

Glamour (make themselves or someone else look different for a short period of time, or cast an illusion over a small area or for a short duration)

Healing (heal themselves, another character, or a natural element of the world for 1–3 Pool points or health)

Information (give directions to a town, the name of the man who lives in the nearby cottage, or the rumors about the area)

Invisibility (turn themselves, another character, an object, or a place invisible for a short period of time)

Sage Advice (see the future, offer suggestions on a difficult task, or guide a character's actions)

Shapeshifting (become a different type of animal or object, or cause someone else to become an animal or object for a short period of time)

Wish Granting (grant a small wish, such as the ability to float for a short time in order to cross a river)

Talking Objects

If you have a talking object in your game, it has a level (just like creatures and regular objects), and every interaction with it is based on that level. Its level can be based on

its physical and mental complexity as well as its purpose. So something like a singing teapot might be level 2 with 2 Armor, and it can hurl its lid at a foe to inflict 2 points of damage. A complicated talking lock who guards a precious treasure might be level 5 or 6 and can cast a spell (inflicting 3 points of damage) on anyone who tries to pick it.

Some abilities in the game work only on objects, or only on creatures, or only on living things. A talking object might or might not be living, depending on its nature.

OF BITE AND CLAW (CREATURES)

The creatures in this section all appear to be animal in their nature, from black dogs and big bad wolves to horses and snarks.

Bagheera: This cunning, bold, and brilliant black panther can be someone's worst enemy or their most loyal friend, protector, and mentor.

Level 7; stalking, hunting, sneaking,

and chasing prey as level 8; persuasion and positive social interactions as level 8; inflicts 6 points of damage with teeth and claws; can pounce on a victim from a long distance away to inflict 7 points of damage and knock the victim prone.

Beast (with a capital B): Sometimes a human cursed, sometimes an animal blessed, often just a creature from the beginning, Beasts are bestial humanoids with large claws and jaws. Most Beasts have a single thing that they love deeply and will do anything to protect: a garden, a human, their home, a book from their childhood.

Level 6, intimidation and protection as level 7; Armor 2; inflicts 4 points of damage with an item related to their beloved (gardening shears, for example).

Cheshire Cat: Interacting with this riddling, punning, disappearing striped cat is enough to make anyone feel discombobulated. Can make a great ally if you're seeking answers, have lost your way, or need advice.

Level 6, punning and wordplay as level 7, Speed defense as level 8 due to intangibility; will disappear rather than fight.

Puss in Boots: Smart and smart-alecky, Puss in Boots always has a plan in motion, and at least two others that are about to begin.

Level 5; planning, scheming, persuasion, and deception as

level 7; Armor 2; inflicts 4 points of damage with elaborate swordplay.

Black Dog 6 (18)

Black dogs go by many names: hellhounds, bearers of death, black hounds of destiny, and devil dogs, just to name a few. Typically they are spectral or demonic entities that show up at night. They are often sinister, malevolent, or purposefully harmful (such as the Barghest and Black Shuck). Occasionally, black dogs are helpful and benevolent, guarding people from danger, helping them find the correct path, or signifying the death of someone nearby.

Black dogs are usually large, shaggy, and as black as night, with long ears and tails. However, despite their name, they can be any color. The real distinction is that they are definitely not regular, living dogs. Some have eyes like fire, some howl with a ghostly, ethereal song, and still others have telltale witches' marks upon their chest or back.

Black dogs can see ghosts, witches, and other magical entities not typically visible to other creatures. They are sometimes a portent of death, but not always. Many carry with them an inherent sense of sadness and despair, which they can pass on to those around them.

Black dogs sometimes serve as familiars for witches and sorcerers.

Motive: Bring harm and pain; help and guard

Environment: Crossroads, places of execution, and ancient paths Health: 20

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Long; very long when running

Modifications: Sneaking, hiding, and attacking from surprise or advantage as level 7 Combat: Malevolent black dogs will attack from a position of surprise or advantage,

inflicting 8 points of damage with their spectral teeth and claws. Some black dogs cause such a deep feeling of despair and sadness, just by being nearby, that they inflict 2 points of Intellect damage each round on everyone who can see them or otherwise sense their presence.

Interaction: Running, at least from the malevolent ones, is typically the best course of action. Dealing with helpful black dogs is often an interesting and unexpected experience, as they don't talk and don't explain who they choose to help or why.

Use: The characters are fighting an extremely tough foe when a black dog steps in to help them out (or to help their foe). The characters are lost in the woods, and a large, menacing black dog steps out of the forest and leads them back to safety.

Loot: Black dogs rarely have anything valuable on them. However, killing a black dog causes it to haunt whoever dealt it the fatal blow. That person feels such deep anxiety and despair that all their actions are hindered for at least one day, and often longer.

GM intrusions: The black dog howls, creating such a mournful sound that everyone in very long distance who can hear it takes 4 points of Intellect damage. A character who sees the black dog is deeply affected by sadness and moves one step down the damage track.

Cat Sidhe 4 (12)

Cat sidhes, sometimes called phantom cats, are dog-sized felines that were once witches and now have shifted permanently into cat form. They're all black except for a single white symbol on their chest, which is their name.

When cat sidhes form (because a witch has turned themselves into a cat for the ninth time), they gain nine tails. Each time a cat sidhe would be killed, they can choose to lose one of their tails instead. Once a cat sidhe has no more tails remaining, their death is final.

While cat sidhes inflict damage with their soul-stealing attacks, the roleplaying element of a character losing part of their soul is possibly more important than the game effect. Consider removing something from the character that will affect them in interesting and unusual ways.

Motive: Steal souls, gain power

Environment: Highlands, mountains, and forests

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Long

Modifications: Speed defense as level 6 due to quickness and agility

Combat: Cat sidhes can attack with their claws for 6 points of damage, but they much

prefer to engage from a long distance, using their unique ability to cast curses that steal part or all of a victim's soul. They may attack a foe using the following types of soul-stealing curses. Characters who succeed on an Intellect defense roll resist the effect, but take 1 point of Intellect damage due to the effort. If someone can read the symbol on the cat's chest and pronounce it, they gain +1 Armor against the cat's attacks.

Falter. Removes a favored part of the creature's personality, such as their sense of humor, courage, or kindness. The creature doesn't forget that they had that part of their personality; they just can't remember how to access it again. All social interactions are hindered.

Fester. Replaces a piece of the character's soul with an idea, false memory, or thought that, once placed, grows into something insidious and dangerous inside them. The character takes no damage at the time, but each time they make a recovery roll, they take 2 points of Intellect damage.

Forget. Removes something from the creature's memory, such as all nouns (including their own name), a loved one's face, their current purpose, an ability, or a skill. This inflicts 3 points of Intellect damage and causes the character to forget the specific thing.

Interaction: Having once been witches, cat sidhes are smart, cunning, and dangerous. Most have no interest in conversations or bargains, unless they are injured in some way. They

can, however, sometimes be distracted from their purpose of stealing souls by riddles, music, and children's games.

Use: A cat sidhe stalks a forest where the characters are passing through on their way elsewhere. Someone sends the characters to capture a "lost" cat, which turns out to be a cat sidhe.

Loot: When a cat sidhe dies, it disappears, leaving behind only the once-white symbol on its chest in the form of a medallion.

GM intrusion: The cat sidhe yowls, causing a second cat sidhe to appear from hiding

Satyr 5 (15)

These muscular humanoids sport long curved horns and furry, hooved legs. They are self-centered, greedy, and sybaritic creatures, dedicated to food, drink, and other pleasures. They rob and steal from others as it pleases them, often relying on tricks and lies, or on alluring music they play on pipes.

Motive: Play tricks, gather treasure, fulfill desires

Environment: In woodlands where other faerie or mythological creatures are found

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Tasks related to persuasion and deception as level 7; resists mental attacks as level 7

Combat: Satyrs usually carry spears that they can use in melee and against foes within short range.

Satyrs can also create magical effects by playing their pipes as an action, which can either bolster allies or harm enemies.

Dance of the Leaping Stag: Foes within short range who fail an Intellect defense task lose their next turn dancing and leaping. Attacks made against affected targets are eased by one step.

Feral Overture: An ally within short range is infused with magic. One attack it makes on its next turn is eased by one step, and if it hits, it inflicts +3 damage.

Tune of the Clouded Mind: A foe within short range who fails an Intellect defense task spends its next turn attacking one of its allies.

Interaction: A satyr is always willing to start negotiations, but is prone to lying and exaggeration. Offering excessive libation, food, and other treasures is the only way to ensure a satyr remains honest, if only for a short period.

Use: Strange piping music in the forest lures away young men and women from a nearby community. The elders say a charismatic cult leader has set up in the woods, and clouds the minds of all who come near.

Loot: A satyr is likely to carry

GM intrusion: If the character fails an Intellect defense task, they think of the satyr as a good friend for up to one minute or until they can escape the mental effect.

Snark 7 (21)

The snark is unimaginable. It is a Boojum, you see. An agony in eight fits. Part snail and shark and bark and snake and snarl. It has feathers that bite, claws that catch, and jaws that snatch. It softly and suddenly vanishes away, never to be met with again. It smells of the will-o-wisp, sleeps late in the day, and breathes fire when it finds something funny (which is nearly never).

Motive: Unfathomable

Environment: Upon islands filled with chasms and crags, near bathing machines, and around those whose coats are too tight in the waist
Health: 21

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short when moving perpendicular; long when moving sideways

Modifications: Invisibility, shapeshifting, confusion, and mimsy as level 8

Combat: Inflicts 5 points of damage with biting feathers, catching claws, and snatching jaws. Also blows out a stream of fire that can light a match or inflict 3 points of damage to everyone in close range.

Interaction: Not recommended.

Use: The characters are given the impossible task of hunting a snark. Whether or not they actually find one, they have grand adventures along the way.

Loot: The frabjous joy of catching the impossible, improbable, unimaginable snark.

GM intrusion: Everything about the snark is a GM intrusion.

Wolf, Big Bad 8 (24)

The Big Bad Wolf (just call him the Wolf, for he is truly the only one worthy of that title) is a beast of near immortality, kept alive by the legends that swirl around him, the constant stream of terrorizing tales. Once the stalker of the woods, now he stalks the streets and towns, no longer staying to the shadows, no longer merely hunting girls and grandmothers. As his reputation has grown, so has his appetite. He hungers. He swallows worlds. He will not be contained.

Motive: Hunger

Environment: Woods, cities, behind you

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Long

Modifications: Hunting, seeking, and sneaking as level 9

Combat: The Wolf's bite does 8 points of damage. Additionally, he has a variety of abilities that he may use.

What Big Ears You Have: Can track and hear his prey up to a mile away. Tracking ignores all cloaking abilities, including magical ones.

What Big Eyes You Have: Mesmerizes his victims for two rounds, convincing them that he is a friend and that they should do what he suggests.

What Big Teeth You Have: Swallows his victim whole, holding them in his belly. It's a level 8 Speed or Might defense task to avoid being eaten whole. Captured characters can attempt to cut themselves free, which requires three successful attacks.

Huff and Puff: Exhale creates a wind so strong it can knock over foes, trees, and even houses. Inflicts 6 points of damage to everything within long distance, and knocks most things prone. Once the Wolf uses this ability, he can't use it again for three rounds.

Interaction: Despite his constant hunger and his gnawing need to swallow the world, the Wolf makes an interesting ally (provided that he's well fed at the time) for he is smart and cunning, and has myriad tricks for moving through the world.

Use: The Big Bad Wolf is a great character to introduce into a modern fairy tale game. Imagine his new iteration as an urban legend, spreading through the internet.

GM intrusions: The Wolf makes a great leap, knocking down foes. The Wolf already has someone swallowed in his belly, and that person calls for help from out of the Wolf's mouth.

CRAFTED (CREATURES)

Crafted creatures are those made by human, fey, or other hands. In fairy tales these might include characters like Pinocchio,

the Iron Giant, Edward Scissorhands, the Gingerbread Man, and the Tin Man.

Gingerbread Creatures

Gingerbread creatures can take any shape and form, but are most often humans, dogs, or dragons. Typically crafted and brought to life by witches and enchanters, gingerbread creatures tend to remain loyal to their creators, even if they are treated poorly.

Level 2, Speed defense as level 4 due to quickness; when touched or eaten, some gingerbread creatures release a sweet, slow poison that inflicts 1 point of damage each round for 1d6 rounds.

Geppetto's Children

Made of wood and wishes, Geppetto's children are everywhere in the world. They go through a number of life stages, starting as wooden puppets and eventually becoming real humans. No matter what stage they're in, they're nonstop sources of destruction and chaos.

Level 4; Armor 1; have a passion for creating, collecting, and using cyphers, particularly detonation cyphers

Virgilius's Copper Dogs

Once the loyal companions of Virgilius the Sorcerer, this pack of dogs now runs feral. Despite being created through the power of magic, they despise anything that stinks of magic and attempt to bring it down.

Level 5; Armor 2

Tin Woodman 7 (21)

Once an ordinary woodman of flesh and blood named Nick Chopper, the Tin Woodman's story is a sad one. His beloved axe was enchanted by a wicked witch in order to keep him from his other true love (it's a long story, but suffice it to say that witches who are wicked do wicked things). His beloved axe turned on Nick Chopper, taking off one limb after another. A tinsmith kindly replaced Nick's missing body parts (except his heart) with tin prosthetics, but eventually nothing was left of the original human and he became the Tin Woodman.

Note that the Tin Woodman will never tell you this story himself, for he has no heart and seeks only revenge: revenge upon the witch who cursed him, upon the tinsmith who did not replace his heart, upon the rain that rusts him. Someday, he will find all the original parts of himself, no matter who they belong to currently, so that he can return to his original form.

Motive: Revenge, find his original body parts

Environment: Anywhere

Health: 21

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 4

Movement: Short; immediate if rusted Modifications: Speed defense as level 5 due to rust

Combat: Inflicts 7 points of damage with his enchanted axe.

Interaction: The Tin Woodman is singularly focused, and cares only about clues that lead to revenge or his original body parts. He does not eat, drink, or sleep, and often comes across as frantic and frenzied.

Use: The PCs are hunting the same foe that the Tin Woodman is, and either they join together, or the Tin Woodman tries to prevent them from reaching the foe before he does.

Loot: Enchanted axe

Enchanted axe (artifact): level 7; inflicts 7 points of damage; can be activated to move a long distance away from the wielder and attack a foe as an action. Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check each activation)

GM intrusion: A character's weapon gets caught in the Tin Woodman's metal body, pulling the weapon out of their hands.

Death 10 (infinite)

Death goes by many names, takes many forms, and has only one purpose: to make all equal in the end. Death is often an unwanted visitor—taking the life of someone who is not ready to go—but just as often, they come to those who are ready. To them, Death is a most welcome, the most welcome, guest of all.

While some see Death as evil, they are not inherently so, no more than the cougar hunting the hare for dinner. In fact, they are the great equalizer, raising paupers to kings and kings to common people.

Death is ancient, but not old. Wise, but not all-knowing. Brilliant, but not perfect. Death is also, very often, bored. They have seen everything, heard everything, and done everything that it is possible for an immortal being to do, and some days they feel sure they will never experience anything new or interesting again. But still, they try, taking on new guises, hiding themselves away, even traveling to distant stars and moons before their duties and obligations once again pull them to return.

If Death appears at the foot of a person's bed, that person can recover if the proper steps are taken. If Death is at the head of the bed, almost nothing can be done to save the victim, beyond an impossible bargain.

Motive: To do their duty and make everyone equal

Environment: Everywhere and anywhere

Health: ∞

Damage Inflicted: Death

Armor: Immune to all harm

Movement: Variable depending on their form, but Death can move instantaneously almost anywhere that they desire

Modifications: Seeing through trickery, deception, or bargaining as level 8

Combat: Death kills. They kill any number of ways, depending on their mood, what's at hand, and how they believe the person should leave their life. Thankfully, death only comes for someone when their time is up.

Still, it's not considered wise to provoke or challenge Death to physical combat, for there is only one outcome: a single attack from Death kills the victim (except in the rare case where the victim has protection against death, such as with one of Death's candles).

Interaction: Death cannot be hurt and cannot be killed, but they can be bargained with, bet against, and sometimes tricked. More rarely, they have even been known to lose a bargain or be captured for a short period of time.

Use: Bargaining with Death is a potential way to achieve an impossible task or gain a very rare item, but of course it always comes with a price (usually an earlier death for the bargainer or someone else). Death is always looking for something interesting going on, and may appear just to spend time with the characters if they're engaged in an intriguing activity.

GM intrusion: Death mistakes a character for someone else.

OF EARTH AND STONE (CREATURES)

Creatures of the earth are those that seem to belong to the land in some unique and significant way. Perhaps they are made of the land and its offerings—tree beings, rock trolls, and so on—or perhaps they seem attached to the land in important ways, such as the way in which the minotaur is part of its maze or the way that dwarves have a unique connection to mountains.

Because the archetype of earth beings covers a broad range of creatures, there is no general entry for an earth being.

Dwarf: level 4; Armor 2; mining pick inflicts 4 points of damage; beards provide magical abilities such as finding treasure, enabling flight, shapeshifting, and turning invisible. Cutting a dwarf's beard off or learning their name provides an asset on all interactions with that dwarf.

Feral tree: level 3; Armor 3; no movement; lashing branches attack up to three characters as a single action; on a failed Might defense task, the characters are held in place until they can escape.

Troll: level 6; claws inflict 7 points of damage and grab victim until they can escape; grabbed creature takes 10 points of damage per round; troll regains 3 points of health per round.

Erlking 6 (18)

This vaguely humanoid creature is an animated accumulation of woodland debris—bark, lost teeth, matted weeds, and dirt. It wears a crown of oak leaves and a cloak of mist.

Its eyes are knotholes, and its hands are sharpened twigs. An erlking is a greedy spirit of hunger deemed Unseelie by the faerie nobility of that wild and wicked realm. Erlkings love to hunt and eat children, who are particularly susceptible to the promises and glamours that the creatures spin.

An erlking is a former noble stripped of title, lands, and even form,

and exiled into the night for crimes unimaginable in their cruelty. An erlking's victims are found in the cold sunlight, pale and bloodless, with their vital organs nibbled out.

Motive: Hungers for flesh and to reclaim stripped titles

Environment: Almost anywhere wooded at night Health: 27

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 4

Movement: Short; immediate when burrowing

Modifications: Stealth tasks as level 7

Combat: An erlking prefers to attack from hiding, and whisper a child or other creature

within short distance from their bed out into the night if the victim fails an Intellect defense task. An affected creature remains under the erlking's spell for up to an hour or until attacked or otherwise harmed.

When it attacks physically, an erlking can attack three times on its turn with root tendrils. A target hit by a tendril must also succeed on a Speed defense roll or become grabbed until they escape. The erlking automatically inflicts 6 points of damage on each grabbed creature each round until they succeed on a Might-based task to escape.

Silvered and cold iron weapons ignore an erlking's Armor. If an erlking's remains are not burned or otherwise destroyed, it will sprout and grow a new body from its corpse within a day.

Interaction: An erlking may negotiate if creatures have something it wants, or if targets are armed with silvered or cold iron weapons.

Use: An erlking is active only by night; by day, it hides beneath a mound of weedy earth indistinguishable from the surrounding terrain.

GM intrusion: A character surprised by an erlking in the darkness must succeed on an Intellect defense task or lose their next action as they faint, run screaming, or stand paralyzed in terror.

Minotaur, the 7 (21)

The most famous minotaur is the Minotaur, the singular beast from which all lesser minotaur myths descend. The product of a god-cursed union between human and bull,

the Minotaur is monstrous, and only the flesh of people can nourish it. It is usually lost

in a labyrinth created to contain it. But it occasionally gets free to hunt the wider world before the labyrinth pulls it back. Some demigods claim to have slain the Minotaur, but the Minotaur always returns.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Usually in mythological labyrinths, but sometimes metaphorical ones Health: 33

Damage Inflicted: 10 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Short

Modifications: Breaking through barriers as level 9

Combat: The Minotaur attacks by goring foes on its horns, inflicting 10 points of damage on a successful attack. If the Minotaur charges a short distance, it can attack as part of the same action and inflict an additional 5 points of damage.

The Minotaur is trapped by the labyrinth, but also part of it. Whenever a character attacks the Minotaur, they must succeed on an Intellect defense task or be claimed by the labyrinth themselves until they can escape with a successful difficulty 7 Intellect task. Those claimed by the labyrinth seem to disappear and find themselves wandering a dark maze. Once a character successfully escapes, they are no longer subject to being claimed by the labyrinth for several days.

If killed, the Minotaur's body is claimed by the labyrinth. Thirty-three days later, the Minotaur is resuscitated.

Interaction: The Minotaur can speak, but usually chooses not to. It is belligerent and cruel, and always hungry.

Use: The Minotaur has escaped the labyrinth and now wanders the narrow streets of a metropolis, treating the winding alleys and twisting roads as its new maze.

GM intrusion: The Minotaur smashes into the wall, causing a section of the tunnel or hallway to collapse on the character(s), inflicting 10 points of damage and trapping them until they can escape the rubble

Enchanter 5 (15)

Enchanters include magic-users of all genders. They may choose to call themselves wizards, sorcerers, mages, or diviners, depending on their strengths, abilities, and desired reputations.

Enchanters usually take great pride in their appearance, including their outfits, accouterments, and equipment. They often incorporate living or dead elements of dangerous creatures, such as spiders, snakes, crocodiles, and dragons, into the objects that matter to them. Additionally, they may imbue objects with powerful magic.

Enchanters can use long-lasting or even permanent versions of their magical abilities, but doing so usually requires minutes or hours of time.

Most enchanters have one or more apprentices or helpers, typically animals that have been made human temporarily or humans who are in the service of the enchanter until some debt of theirs or their family's has been paid.

Sorcerer's Apprentice: level 3

Motive: Control magic, power

Environment: Everywhere, particularly in places where magic is present and powerful Health: 20

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: Using and controlling magic as level 7

Combat: Magical weapons and artifacts (such as a whip made of living snakes, a staff with a biting wolf's head on top, or a sword that acts of its own accord) do 5 points of damage. Additionally, an enchanter may employ a number of magical abilities, including the

Following:

Animate: Takes any material (such as wood or stone) and turns it into an animate level 4 creature. The creature has a mind and will of its own, and acts just as that type of creature would act if it were born instead of created.

Blood to Stone: Turns living creatures into stone, or immobilizes them in their current form. Breaking free is a level 6 Might task.

Enchant: Imbues a normal object with a magical power. The object works under the enchanter's command, and does as the enchanter asks of it. For example, an enchanter might imbue a foe's weapon and force it to attack the foe, or they might imbue a door and have it close tight against incoming dangers.

Endless Passage: Creates an endless series of thick spiderwebs, invisible barriers, rings of flame, or other hurdles across an entrance, exit, tunnel, or passage. Every time one of the hurdles is broken, another forms. Characters' movement is halved while going through the endless passage, and they take 2 points of Intellect damage each round.

Invisible: Turns anything (including themselves, others, and entire areas up to 30 feet by 30 feet [9 m by 9 m]) invisible for ten minutes. It's a level 6 Intellect task to be able to see something that has been made invisible.

Persuasion: Convinces all victims in long range that what they believe is not real or that what is false is real. Sometimes this ability just affects others' minds, creating a mental dissonance. Other times, the enchanter creates an illusion or other visible, auditory, and tactile element that persuades a character to believe everything they are

experiencing. The effect lasts for ten minutes. Additionally, an enchanter may have one or more of the same abilities as a witch or a faerie.

Interaction: For the characters, an enchanter may be a terrifying foe or a powerful ally. Enchanters are fickle, perhaps due to their close relationship with magic, and may change their loyalties on a whim or an imagined slight.

Use: The characters need to have an object imbued, a person returned to life, or a curse undone, and they turn to the enchanter for help. The characters accidentally insulted the enchanter in some way, and now the enchanter is hunting them down to get revenge.

Loot: Enchanters often protect their precious items with spells and magical locks (level 8). Behind those wards are 1d6 cyphers, an artifact, and an elegant or interesting outfit.

ENCHANTERS OF THE WORLD

Morgan Le Fay 9 (27)

Morgan le Fay (also known as Morgen, Margain, Morgant, and various other names) is a powerful sorceress from the legends of King Arthur. She has an unpredictable duality to her nature, with the potential for great good and great evil.

Combat: Attacks with a variety of weapons, including a sword and staff. She also can use any of the following abilities: charm, enchant, glamour, heal, invisible, persuasion, protect, revive, seduce, and shrivel.

Interaction: Morgan le Fay is fickle and enigmatic, and rarely reveals her purposes. If she agrees to help the characters in some way, it's absolutely because she has a higher goal in mind.

Use: The characters are stopped by a beautiful woman in the woods, who asks them to help her accomplish a great task. A powerful foe has brought Morgan le Fay into his confidence, and she is helping him against the PCs.

Oz, The Great and Terrible 5 (15)

It is perhaps the greatest feat the Wizard of Oz ever pulled off to make everyone believe that he was not a sorcerer at all, but merely a ventriloquist and balloonist from some faraway land. He is, in fact, far more powerful than that, but prefers that no one were ever to know. For if they did, they would expect things of him, and that makes him anxious.

Combat: Oz does not fight, but instead sends his army of green-whiskered soldiers forth.

He may also use an artifact or spell to protect himself, hide himself, or flee. He can use the following abilities: enchant, invisible, persuasion.

Green-whiskered soldiers: level 4; Armor 2; unloaded rifles deal 4 points of damage

Interaction: Curmudgeonly and a bit of a humbug, but rarely with evil intent, Oz is likely to help those who ask, although he often fumbles things just to make a point.

Use: The characters set off to meet the powerful ruler of a strange land. Or they encounter someone they believe is just a humble, simple man, but who instead turns out to be incredibly powerful.

Loot: Oz has at least one artifact, as well as 1d6 cyphers.

Virgilius the Sorcerer 7 (21)

The most renowned of all the poet-sorcerers, Virgilius studies and uses the power of the written word to enhance his magical abilities. He keeps a black book, which is the source of his spells, and creates copper creatures to protect and defend him. He has a love of challenges, such as magician's battles, and seeks them out.

Combat: Can use the following abilities: animate, blood to stone, enchant, endless passage. Interaction: Virgilius is quick thinking, wily, and full of interesting schemes. Those who entertain him for longer than a moment might find him a very useful ally. However, he is also driven toward revenge, particularly on those who attempt to publicly humiliate or shame him.

Use: The characters enter into a battle of wits or wills, only to discover they're competing with Virgilius.

Loot: Carries a black book

Black book (artifact): level 6; allows the user to cast animate, blood to stone, enchant, or endless passage. Casting a spell from the black book costs 2 Intellect points and is an action.

Depletion: 1 in 1d6

FEY (CREATURES)

In fairy tales, the word fey covers a huge category of creatures, from faeries, brownies, and imps to gremlins, boggarts, and goblins. There are so many types of fey beings in the world that it's nearly impossible to categorize them as just one thing, or to list them all. They do have a few characteristics in common, however. They are typically sentient, humanoid in form, connected to nature in some way, and magical.

Angiks: Reanimated spirits of babies who died, typically due to hard winters, and who now haunt the living. At night, they turn into giant owls and prey on solitary travelers.

Level 3; talons inflict 4 points of damage

Changelings: Fairy children left in place of stolen human babies (and occasionally adults as well), typically raised among humans.

Level 2; shapeshifting and knowledge of the fey world as level 4

Nymphs: Supernatural beings (often female) associated with protecting a particular location or landform, such as a river, tree, or mountain.

Level 3, stealth and positive social interactions as level 6

Pixies: Benign and mischievous creatures that live near stone circles, tombs, and other burial grounds.

Level 2, stealth and finding lost items as level 6

Faerie 3 (9)

In general, faeries (sometimes called fairies or fair folk) are humanoid in appearance, small in stature, and magical. They are associated with music, mirth, tricks, and taunts. Seeing one is an omen—hopefully, an omen of a silly song or the first appearance of an annoying new road companion (the very faerie sighted) flitting around, asking the questions of a curious four-year-old hyped up on sugar water and ice cream. Some faeries are tricksters, delighting in playing pranks and stealing clothing, equipment, or prized objects. And a few are malicious, luring travelers to their various dooms, making deadly deals, and forcing others into captivity.

Not all faeries have wings, but those that do find many ways to use them to their advantage.

Motive: Unpredictable

Environment: Encountered alone or in a flutter of three to twelve, usually in forests Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Immediate; long when flying

Modifications: Tasks related to performance and deception as level 5; Speed defense as level 5 due to size and quickness

Combat: A faerie attacks by hurling sparkling magic dust at a target within short range. In addition, if a faerie is touched or struck by a melee weapon, more magic dust puffs away from the faerie and clouds the attacker, who must succeed on a Speed defense task or suffer the same amount of damage they just dealt to the faerie. Sometimes faeries wield tiny weapons, such as bows, spears, or swords; treat these as light weapons.

A faerie can see in the dark, but it can also emit bright light (often colored) and appear as a glowing humanoid or an illuminated sphere.

Faeries regain 1 point of health per round while their health is above 0 unless they've been damaged with a silvered or cold iron weapon.

In addition to inflicting damage with their fairy dust and their weapons of choice, faeries have a number of curses and abilities at their disposal. These include the following:

Animal Friend: Most faeries can communicate with animals, and a few can even summon animals within long range for help and protection. Some faeries can also grant others the ability to communicate with animals, but only for a day.

Charm: Some faeries can attempt to use a song or light display to charm others within short range. The target must succeed on an Intellect defense task or fall into a suggestible state for one hour. During this period, the target can be led by the faerie until attacked, damaged, or shaken from their glamour.

Clairvoyance: The faerie grants someone the ability to see the future, the past, faeries, or one of the hidden faerie worlds. This gift lasts for one day, or until the character makes a ten-hour recovery roll.

Heal: The faerie heals themselves, a plant, a creature, or another character for $1d6 + 2$ points of damage.

Illusion: Powerful faeries can cast elaborate and convincing illusions that make them and their worlds appear more appealing and beautiful. Illusions can cover up to a mile in area. Seeing through the illusion is a task equal to the faerie's level and lasts for ten minutes. After that, the viewer reverts to seeing the illusion and quickly forgets that they saw anything else.

Invisibility: Makes the faerie invisible to most eyes. Seeing, hearing, or sensing a faerie when it's invisible is a task equal to the faerie's level. A failed attempt to see a faerie causes the viewer to see something that harms their mind, inflicting 1 point of Intellect damage.

Vortex: A defensive tactic where one or more threatened faeries use their wings to create a strong gust of wind, tornado, or vortex. The wind pushes their foes back a long distance and inflicts 2 points of damage.

Faeries have a wide variety of weaknesses, including silver, iron, technology, sugar and salt (they must count each grain), and cream (intoxicates them). But not all faeries have the same weaknesses, and some may not have any.

Interaction: Faeries are mercurial creatures, but except for the malicious ones, they can be negotiated with, especially if offered sweets, wine, cream, or other gifts. That said, faerie attention spans are limited, so even one that means well could end up leaving the PCs in the lurch at just the wrong moment.

Use: The characters come upon an injured faerie, who promises to grant them their deepest wish if they agree to help it. They must decide if they believe the faerie speaks true, or if it's a trap.

Loot: The tiny pouches that faeries carry are stuffed with forest bric-a-brac, but some of those pouches are ten times larger on the inside and could contain expensive items or cyphers.

GM intrusion: A character accidentally does something to offend a helpful faerie, causing it to turn on them.

Fairy Godmother 6 (18)

Fairy godmothers are nearly always beneficent beings, typically acting as mentors, parents, or protectors, much like human godparents. The difference, of course, is that fairy godmothers have a great deal more magic at their disposal.

Overall, fairy godmothers are kind, gentle, and loving to almost everyone, not just their godchildren. Of course, not all fairy godmothers are good at their roles—some may act out of their own interests and inadvertently (or purposefully) do harm to those they are supposed to protect. This is particularly true if they feel like they have not been given the respect they deserve, or have been offended in some way.

And if you should harm someone they have pledged to protect? Beware, beware, for there is no wrath like that of a fairy godmother's.

Motive: Protect their protégés, be respected

Environment: Cities, towns, and anywhere someone is in need of assistance

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 2 (magical)

Movement: Short; long when flying

Combat: Fairy godmothers attack by shooting a stream of sharp-edged glitter up to a long distance from their magic wands (glitter gets into every nook and cranny, and thus ignores Armor). Fairy godmothers can bestow blessings upon their friends and allies, and curse their enemies.

Fairy godmothers can cast any of the skills and abilities that faeries can cast, as well as a few that are specific to them, including the following:

A Little Luck: The fairy godmother blesses a character with luck, granting them the opportunity to reroll once in the next day without spending XP.

A Little Misfortune: Despite the name, this is usually a beneficial spell. It is designed to give a nearby character something to overcome so that they might grow stronger in temperament or stature. When this spell is cast, the character receives a GM intrusion on their next action (no matter what their roll is) and receives 1 XP to give away (but not one to keep).

Alteration: Can turn any creature within short range into a different creature (such as a mouse into a horse) and any object into a similarly shaped object (such as a

Prophecy: Creates a prediction for the future of a single person. The prediction has a high chance of coming true, but is not certain. (Prophecies work like GM intrusions that will take place in the future; the player can reject the prophecy by spending an XP.) Not all prophecies are negative.

Interaction: Interacting with fairy godmothers is usually a little frantic, frenzied, and full of “Bibbidi-bobbidi-boo!” If they like you, they’re likely to prove a loyal, steadfast, and useful ally. If not, well, hopefully you like being turned into a horse, or worse.

Use: Fairy godmothers make great lighthearted additions to encounters, particularly ones where the characters are preparing for a ball, a fight, or a big adventure.

GM Intrusion: The fairy godmother’s magic goes awry and a character is accidentally turned into a horse.

Áine, Fairy Queen of Light an Love 9 (27)

Áine is the fairy queen of summer and the sun, and is known by many names: the Fairy Queen of Light and Love, Bright One, Sun Goddess, and Sweetheart of the Fairies. She is a kind, true, and benevolent ruler, and is loved by nearly everyone. Known for making just and fair bargains with humans, she is often sought after for blessings and boons.

Motive: To be just and true, to protect her realm

Environment: She shares a fairy realm with her sister, Gráinne, where she rules in the summer months.

Health: 99

Damage Inflicted: 12 points

Armor: 5

Movement: Short; very long when shapeshifted

Combat: Áine rarely engages in combat herself, as she prefers to leave that role to her son

Geroid and his army. However, if she’s attacked or feels the need to defend her realm or someone in it, she will not hesitate to step in. She attacks using the power of the sun, focusing light into a narrow beam that inflicts 12 points of damage on the target.

In addition, Áine has the power of chlorokineses—she can manipulate plants and flowers within very long range, causing them to grow to enormous proportions. She can use them as weapons that grab and hold

multiple victims (level 7 Might task to break free) or that do damage via strangulation or thorns (7 points of damage). Any bees in the area act to help the queen.

Queen's bees: level 3; sting victims for 3 points of damage and paralyze them for one round

She can also shapeshift into a red mare as she chooses. As a mare, she inflicts 6 points of damage with her hooves or bite, can become immaterial as an action (makes it impossible to successfully attack her, but she cannot attack in this form), and can move to a spot within long range instantaneously (does not require an action).

Interaction: Just, true, and kind, Áine makes a powerful ally, provided that she does not feel that she or her realm are threatened. Those who wish harm on others or who she sees as malevolent in action or thought are more likely to

find themselves on the wrong end of the Bright One's anger.

Use: Characters who wish for something important in their lives to change may ask Áine to grant them a boon. She sometimes helps those in need without them asking for it (but, of course, only for a price). If the characters attend a fairy ball or feast, they may encounter Áine as an honored guest.

Loot: Áine wears a crown of glass, but it is not visible unless she chooses it to be (she rarely does) or she dies. She carries little else, for she is a person of deeds, not items.

GM intrusion: One of Áine's ardent followers believes a character is threatening their beloved queen.

Gráinne, the Wayward Daughter 9 (27)

Gráinne is the Fairy Queen of Hope and Despair, sometimes also called the Wayward Daughter, the Winter Queen, and Dark One. Gráinne is to the dark what Áine is to the light. This doesn't mean that Gráinne is evil, just that she represents what is good and bad in the world that is hidden in shadows, buried beneath the ground, and revealed at night. She has her own moral code, one that can work in the favor of those who are cunning and willing to look at the darkness of their own hearts.

Motive: To honor the darkness, to protect her realm

Environment: She shares a fairy realm with her sister, where she rules in winter. In the summer, she sleeps in the Sorrows, a belowground realm out of time and space.

Health: 99

Damage Inflicted: 12 points

Armor: 5

Movement: Short; long when flying

Combat: Gráinne is a talented combatant, and seems to revel in having a foe who is a challenge to her. She carries a dark green crystal staff that emits a dark coil of reddish energy, which inflicts 12 points of damage. Alternatively, she can send out a cloud of black smoke that deals 9 points of damage to all creatures in a short area. She also wears the Tiara of Pailis, a griffin-shaped tiara that allows her to fly. Gráinne has a variety of magical abilities at her disposal, including the following:

Animal Communication: Gráinne has a special affinity with badgers and can ask them for help. When she calls them (as an action), a cete of eight large badgers appears. They act as two level 4 creatures; attacked beings must also succeed on an Intellect defense roll or be shapeshifted into a badger for one round.

Oneirokinesis: Gráinne can infiltrate people's dreams to converse with them. As such, she might implant an idea in their heads (such as "I'm going to die tonight" or "I should go back home"). When the character wakes, they must succeed on a level 6 Intellect defense roll to shake the idea. Otherwise, they feel a strong need to act on it, and are hindered in any tasks that go against the idea (this lasts until they make their next recovery roll).

Shadowmelding: Gráinne merges with shadows, making her nearly intangible. In this form, she cannot be injured by physical attacks, and her attacks inflict 8 points of Intellect damage on anyone whose body is darkened by her shadow.

Interaction: For those who don't mind a little darkness and moral ambiguity, Gráinne makes a powerful ally.

Use: The characters stumble into a fairy realm, only to be met by its just-woken guardian. Grieving characters may find the solutions and solace they seek in Gráinne's magic and power.

Loot: Tiara of Pailis

Tiara of Pailis (artifact): level 7; allows the wearer to fly a long distance each round (as an action). The wearer can control their speed, direction, and height. Depletion: 1 in 1d20

GM Intrusion: A character's companion animal or mount is affected by Gráinne's animal affinity and falls under her power.

Queen 6 (18)

Ah, the Evil Queen. Ruler of the land, watcher in the mirror. Full of magic, utterly merciless, and sharp of tongue. Evil and wicked queens abound in fairy tales, from those who have no names and are remembered only for their evil deeds, to those whose names will never be forgotten: Queen Grimhilde, Maleficent, the Queen of Hearts, and the White Witch. These queens seek power for power's sake, not caring what destruction lies in their wake.

Of course, not all queens are evil—just the ones you hear about most often. But they are all powerful in their own way, even if they are forced to hide it by their circumstances. While they too crave power, they seek it in order to protect their lands, their people, and their loved ones.

Motive: Power

Environment: Anywhere, but typically in cities and towns, where there are people to admire and fear them

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short

Combat: Queens almost always carry an artifact of great power, such as a staff, crown, mirror, or sword, that grants them unique abilities and skills.

Queens often have familiars, such as ravens, who fight for or beside them. Most familiars can do 4 points of damage with an attack.

Some queens may also be witches or fey creatures, and thus have the ability to use one or two spells and curses that witches and fey also use.

Queen Grimhilde 8 (24)

Perhaps best known for her attempts to kill Snow White through magic and poison, Grimhilde has other passions and talents as well. She seeks ways to make all beings obey her commands, starting with the huntsman who so stupidly and willfully deceived her so long ago.

Environment: One of her many castles, the woods

Armor: 2

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short

Combat: Her vulture familiars swirl about all foes in short range, knocking them prone and inflicting 4 points of damage. She can use the following witch abilities: glamour, imprison, and seduce.

Vulture familiars: level 4

Interaction: Grimhilde is cunning and devious, always hatching plans against those who harm her, who threaten to overshadow her, or who have caught her eye in some way.

Use: The characters enter an area that is under Grimhilde's power and must face her wrath.

Loot: She has a mirror mirror artifact, as well as 1d6 cyphers (often poison).

The Red Queen 6 (18)

The Red Queen has never once yelled "Off with her head!" In fact, she has never yelled. It's horrible manners, and besides, when you know how to wield power, you don't need all that noise and chaos. You need only whisper and be still, and everyone will politely fall quiet and listen.

Environment: Polite dinner parties and social gatherings

Armor: 1

Combat: Prefers verbal sparring over the physical sort, and inflicts 3 points of damage with a single cutting remark or sharp-tongued retort.

Interaction: The Red Queen is quite proper and chatty, the perfect host and the perfect guest. The only time she ever grows irate is when the subject of her sister, the Queen of Hearts, comes up.

Use: While attending a party to steal something, the characters are caught by the Red Queen

The Snow Queen

The Snow Queen rules over the "snow bees"—snowflakes that look like bees. She keeps an ornate palace surrounded by gardens in the lands of permafrost, but she can be seen elsewhere in the world where snowflakes cluster. Most say she is cold, and they would be right. She has been part of the snow for so long that it's possible she no longer remembers warmth or kindness or love.

Environment: Anywhere there is snow, ice, or winter

Armor: 2 (from personal ice walls)

Combat: Creates a snowstorm that blinds all foes in long range for three rounds; ice shards rain down upon all foes in long range, inflicting 2 points of damage; reindeer familiar inflicts 5 points of damage with her horns.

Interaction: The Snow Queen is not evil—she just has forgotten what it means to be human, with human needs and human hearts (not that she was ever truly human, but that's a story for another time). She is willing to bargain if she understands what she gets out of it.

Use: The Snow Queen guards the entrance to a place the characters need to enter.

OF WATER AND WAVES (CREATURES)

Creatures of water and waves are those that inhabit or are deeply tied to the rivers, ocean, marshes, and other watery areas of the world.

Drowning Fairies: There are many types of creatures known as “drowning fairies,” including Peg Powler, the Water Leaper, Fossegrim, and Jenny Greenteeth. These creatures typically dwell below or next to water and tempt, pull, or trick passersby into the water.

Level 6, persuasion and creating illusions as level 7; can grab a creature in short range and pull them into and under the water and attempt to drown them (level 6 Might or Speed defense task to break free)

Fuath: Fuathan are intangible spirits that dwell deep in the seas and oceans. They consider themselves protectors of these realms, particularly against fishermen and others who would damage the environment or creatures there. Fuathan have the power to make themselves visible, most often taking the form of humanoid creatures with green skin and the flowing mane and tail of a golden horse.

Level 5, defense as level 7 due to intangibility; if they know a person’s name, they can gain control over the person, forcing them to do their bidding for a short time

Naiad: These water nymphs inhabit rivers, springs, waterfalls, and other bodies of fresh water. Typically appearing as beautiful young women with long limbs and flowing hair, naiads are considered protectors, for they guard their land fiercely. However, they are easily provoked and their wrath is fierce.

Level 4; can cause water to boil, inflicting 3 points of heat damage on foes; can unleash flash floods that sweep all foes back a very long distance and inflict 2 points of ambient damage (ignores Armor)

Cailleach 5 (15)

Not actually a water spirit, but one who has made her peace with the sea in an eternal bargain, Cailleach once lived on land. Now she is a recluse deep in the ocean in the realm known as the Expanse of Halirane. She appears ancient, and in fact is much older than that. She shaves her head bald, wears dozens of shell earrings in each ear, and has a glass eye that allows her to see three views of the future. As part of her bargain with the sea, she can never return to dry land again, or she will lose all of her powers forever.

Motive: To be left alone

Environment: A home hidden inside a coral reef at the bottom of the ocean. Her home is a large dead whale that the sea magically preserves as part of their bargain.

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Short; very long when shapeshifted

Modifications: Seeing through deceptions and lies as level 6, healing as level 8

Combat: Cailleach has many abilities at her disposal, some of which come from the sea and others that come from her own magic. They include the following:

Healing Pot: If she has the proper ingredients and takes a day to do so, Cailleach can brew a healing salve in her special pot. Depending on what she adds to the mixture, this salve can do one of three things: restore 10 Might points, move someone up one step on the damage track, or remove a curse (up to level 6).

Reptilian Form: Cailleach takes the form of a reptile of any size. While in this form, she has +3 Armor and does 6 points of damage with her bite, claw, or tail lash. In addition, she regains 3 points of health per round.

Restore to Life: Putting her wizened pointer finger into someone's mouth can bring them back to life, but only if they've been dead for less than a day and only if she holds her finger there for exactly as long as they've been dead. After that, her finger falls off. It takes three days for her to regrow a new one.

See the Future: Cailleach can use her glass eye to scry the future of an individual. She does so by first removing the eye, and then having the person hold it in their mouth until she asks for it back (sometimes this is for just a second, and sometimes it's for hours—it's hard to know if the variable length of time is part of the ritual or just her dark sense of humor). She typically sees three possible futures, and all of them have an equal chance of coming to pass.

Wanton Destruction: As part of her agreement with the sea, Cailleach was given the power to control small parts of it at a time. She can create a whirlpool that catches up all creatures and objects within short range of its center and inflicts 5 points of ambient damage (ignores Armor).

Interaction: Cailleach is a recluse and introvert whose deepest longing is to be left alone

to increase her knowledge of magic. She also likes puzzles and games, and out of everything on land, she misses birds most of all (for interacting with, not eating). Those who bring her any of those items are likely to draw Cailleach out of her shell and have a positive interaction.

Use: Cailleach can be a beneficial ally, particularly as a healer. She might also be convinced to help fight against an encroaching danger, especially if it's threatening her solitude and privacy.

Loot: She typically carries a number of sea cyphers, and her home is filled with books, scrolls, and journals of all sorts.

GM intrusion: The sea offers additional assistance to Cailleach's spells, increasing her damage or movement.

Kelpie 6 (18)

A sinister aquatic creature that takes the shape of a grey horse or white pony, the kelpie lures unsuspecting passersby and attempts to drown them in a nearby body of water.

Some kelpies look just like horses. Others look as if they're created from elements of the swamp—maybe its tail is algae, its mane cattails, its eyes glowing pebbles or miniature moons. Maybe eels and snails and other creatures are its teeth or tongue. One thing about kelpies is always true: their manes are always dripping and their hooves are always inverted.

If someone knows a kelpie's name and says it aloud, the kelpie loses all its power over that person and retreats to the depths of the water.

Motive: Unknown

Environment: Near or in rivers, streams, lakes, and other bodies of running or still water.

Modern settings might find them near public or private swimming pools, koi ponds, and reservoirs.

Health: 21

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Very long when running

Combat: When a passerby approaches, the kelpie might appear tame, a little lost, injured, or otherwise friendly and in need. Or, if the passerby appears weary or sad, the kelpie will offer a ride upon their back. The kelpie's sticky skin traps the rider (level 7 Might task to break free). Once the rider is seated, the kelpie may attempt to drown them in the lake, run so fast that the rider takes 5 points of Intellect damage from fright, or roll over on them, inflicting 4 points of damage (ignores Armor).

Interaction: Not all kelpies are malevolent. Some were once "tamed" by someone who learned their names and loved them. These kelpies actively seek out human contact, attempting to find someone to replace the one they loved.

Use: In the gloom, a large black horse appears, wearing beautiful tack and acting as if lost. It offers one of the weary characters a ride upon its back.

GM intrusion: While dealing with something else, the characters come upon a kelpie in the process of drowning someone.

The West Wind 9 (27)

The West Wind has no master, no shackles, no chains. She goes where she will, and woe to those who try to capture or hold her. When she's not blowing through the sky, she takes the shape of a human woman dressed in a sparkling blue tuxedo, her short silver hair pushed back from her face.

Not all winds are living creatures. Sometimes the wind is just the wind. But you won't know which is which until you try to talk with it.

Motive: To stave off boredom by playing tricks, traveling, stirring up trouble, and helping others

Environment: Anywhere she wants to be

Health: 40

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Very long

Modifications: Speed defense as level 10; sees through and resists trickery, lies, deceit, and intimidation as level 10

Combat: Inflicts 6 points of damage to every creature and object she chooses within a very long distance, and knocks them prone.

Interaction: Some say the West Wind is cold, but she's really just an introvert and prefers to spend most of her time traveling alone. However, she's actually very warm hearted and is likely to help those in need. She does not respond well to trickery, traps, or attempts to force her hand (unless they're terribly clever or smart, and then she admits grudging respect for the perpetrators).

Use: The characters need the West Wind's help to travel somewhere, knock something down, or retrieve something from a hidden place. Someone needs an elegant date to a royal ball or a fairy festival.

Loot: Sometimes the West Wind picks up interesting things on her travels. She may gift allies these items, including cyphers, artifacts, and even creatures.

GM intrusion: The West Wind lifts a character high in the air and threatens to let them fall.

Wind Children 4 (12)

The children of the wind cannot be measured in known numbers, for they are here and there and everywhere. They are not born, so much as borne, by weather patterns, wishes, and wants. Dust devils, gales, and zephyrs are all wind children.

Motive: See everything, know everything

Environment: Everywhere there is weather, real or magic-made

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Long

Combat: Inflicts 4 points of damage with an exhale. Alternatively, can knock a character prone for one round.

Interaction: Interacting with wind children is a bit like interacting with a group of mischievous, precocious, and spoiled kids. However, they know many things, having been all over the world, and will often share what they know in exchange for new secrets or knowledge.

Use: One of the PCs seeks information about a person, place, or thing. The characters need a surreptitious spy to gather information for them.

Loot: Information, secrets, and possibly a cypher or two picked up during their travels.

GM intrusion: The wind children grab something precious from one of the characters and start to play a game of “keep away” with it.

Witch 5 (15)

Witches are complex beings of myriad personalities, desires, and abilities. Sometimes they’re the stuff of nightmares, with tales of their exploits keeping children safe in their beds during the darkest hours. Other times they’re wise helpers—at least for a little

while, or possibly for a price. Often, they’re a little of everything, taking on no end of roles throughout their lifetime. They may isolate themselves deep in the dark woods, falsify their way into a royal family, or reside in the middle of town, hiding their identity.

But one thing they are, always, is dangerous, for they carry within their hearts and heads knowledge, power, and magic—and a willingness to use all of them when necessary. Motive: Domination of others, power, knowledge, eternal life or beauty, hunger, revenge Environment: Almost anywhere, although most often alone in unique dwellings in the

forest, in civilization as healers, or having infiltrated royal families

Health: 21

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short; long if flying

Combat: In addition to inflicting damage with their weapon of choice (often a staff or long, curved blade), witches can curse their enemies.

They also have a number of spells and abilities at their disposal. These include the

Following:

Familiar: When attacked, a witch relies on the aid of their familiar to improve their Speed

defense. The familiar could be a large black cat, an owl, a big snake, or some other creature. Killing a witch's familiar is so shocking to a witch that their attacks and Speed defense are hindered for a few days. It's also a way to ensure that the witch never forgives their foe or grants mercy.

Glamour: Glamour is an illusion that the witch creates. It may let them look like someone else, appear to be a tree or a bird, or even make them invisible. Seeing through the glamour is a level 8 Intellect task. A failed attempt inflicts 2 points of Intellect damage. Once a character sees through the glamour, they cannot unsee it.

Heal: The witch touches another creature and heals them for 6 points of damage. Some witches must pull health from another living being in long range in order to use this ability. Pulling health from a living being inflicts 2 points of damage on that being.

Imprison: The witch creates a prison within long range and captures a foe inside it as a single action. The prison might be physical (a tower, a cage, a trap, a binding around the body) or mental (they can't move, their muscles are no longer under their control, they are afraid to move). Resisting being caught is a level 5 defense task (Might, Speed, or Intellect, depending on the type of imprisonment). If a character is caught, breaking free is a level 5 task (of the appropriate stat).

Protect: Places a confinement spell to keep someone from going in or out of a location, building, or room. Those who attempt to pass through the spell but fail take 3 points of Intellect damage and are knocked back. Once the spell activates, it disappears.

Revive: This rare and costly ability allows a witch to bring someone back to life, as long as they haven't been dead for more than a year. In order to accomplish this, the witch needs all or part of the body of the dead, a beloved object of the dead's, and the willingness of someone else to take on a curse that results from the magical working (roll on the Curse table to determine the resulting curse). Revive takes ten minutes to cast, and the character returns to life with 1 point in all of their Pools.

Seduce: Creatures within short range who fail an Intellect defense roll become enamored of the witch. Resisting the witch's persuasion attempts is hindered by two steps until the victim succeeds on an Intellect defense roll; each time they fail to resist the persuasion attempt, the witch's next persuasion attempt is eased by an additional step.

Additional abilities: Witches might also have access to the witch abilities in the Cypher System Rulebook. These are charm, hexbolt, shrivel, and vitality. Some witches might have other magical abilities similar to those of enchanters.

GM intrusions: The witch's familiar joins the fray, tripping up characters and hindering their actions.

Something startles the witch and they cast a curse or spell as an automatic response. The witch pulls out an artifact or cypher and prepares to use it.

WITCHES OF THE WORLD

Baba Yaga 9 (27)

Baba Yaga (sometimes called Frau Trude) lives many lives and has many personalities. She is both one witch and many. She uses her magic to create a new version of herself each time her life takes a new branch, following all of them at once, becoming every version of herself that she might have been.

Some versions of Baba Yaga are helpful. Others harmful. Some Baba Yagas live in the woods in a wooden hut that walks around on giant chicken legs, some fly through the sky in a giant mortar and pestle, and some guard any wild spaces that they have deemed important. Some capture and cook young children in a special stove. Some do all of the above.

Combat: Baba Yaga can use the following abilities: heal, hexbolt, imprison, protect, revive, shrivel, and vitality.

Interaction: It is almost impossible to know which Baba Yaga you have met until you look deep in her eyes (a level 7 Intellect task). There, you might see a tiny flame, and in that flame, learn a bit about her life.

Use: Baba Yaga has her long, bony fingers in nearly everything that happens. She might be behind the counter at the herb and potion shop, guarding the entrance to a cave full of treasure, or offering her services in breaking (or casting) curses.

Loot: 1d6 cyphers, an artifact, and various other odds and ends

The Blind Witch 5 (15)

The Blind Witch is skinny and always hungry. She lives deep in the forest in a house made of confectionery, which allows her to catch, fatten, and eventually eat any children unlucky enough to get caught in her trap.

Modifications: Cooking as level 6, deception and trickery as level 7, seeing through deception and trickery as level 4

Combat: She can use the following abilities: charm, protect, and vitality. She is immune to visual effects, including hallucinations.

Interaction: The Blind Witch can appear sweet and charming, and might play up her blindness and apparent frailty for sympathy.

Use: Characters wandering the woods might come upon a candy house, and woe to them should they take a bite. A rescue mission could lead here.

Loot: She usually has at least one magical animal in a cage, along with various children and even adults. Two or three cyphers can be found in her kitchen, along with her magic oven, which bakes children into gingerbread.

Dame Gothel 5 (15)

Sometimes taking the form of a young woman and sometimes an old one, Dame Gothel cares for one thing above all: her beautiful walled garden, the flowers and vegetables that grow inside it being the envy of all others. Unlike many other witches, she does not harm children and in fact has been known to protect them, at least as long as they are innocent of wrongdoing.

Modifications: Gardening and potions as level 6

Combat: She can use the following abilities: heal, imprison, protect, and shrivel.

Interaction: Dame Gothel is an introvert who mostly desires to be left alone, and woe be to those who invade her space in any way, for she has a deep sense of right and wrong and a penchant for revenge upon those who cross her. However, she has been known to help those seeking aid, and is particularly skilled in using what she grows in her garden to aid her magic.

Use: The characters need a concoction to heal someone, remove a curse, or help them get pregnant. The characters accidentally trespass on Dame Gothel's space.

Loot: Various plants, potions, and cyphers

The Sea Witch 6 (18)

Living in the darkest depths of the sea, the Sea Witch is dangerous, wily, persuasive, and scheming. She is best known for brewing up life options—for a price. If you want what she's got (and she's got everything), you

bring her what she wants. It might be your voice, your hair, or your firstborn. Or all three. Surely you won't miss them . . .

Modifications: Persuasion, intimidation, coercion, and swimming as level 8

Combat: She can use the following abilities: charm, familiar (water snakes), glamour, imprison, protect, seduce, and shrivel.

Interaction: The Sea Witch will always make a bargain, take a bet, gamble all she's got on the downtrodden and woe-be-gotten. Not because her heart is big, but because she makes sure that the house—that's her—always wins.

Use: The characters need a potion, a spell, a curse, or any other bit of magic, large or small, and the Sea Witch will find a way to put it in their hands and let them walk away thinking they've come out ahead. At least until she comes to collect.

Loot: A chest full of gifts and winnings from lovers, fawners, and those who should have known better, including 1d6 cyphers and two artifacts.

The Wicked Witch of the West 5 (15)

With her three pigtails and diminutive stature, it would be easy to write off the Wicked Witch of the West as a nobody—and many have—but her power lies in the creatures that work for her and in her vast and growing collection of magical footwear.

She can see up to 2 miles (3 km) away with her single eye, and wears galoshes that give her +2 Armor against water and liquid of all kinds.

Modifications: Tasks involving water and the dark as level 3

Combat: She carries an umbrella that acts as a heavy weapon, and she can use the following abilities: familiar (pack of wolves, swarm of bees, flock of crows, and an army of flying monkeys), hexbolt, imprison, protect, and shrivel.

Interaction: She is volatile in nature and quick to anger. However, she can also be a bit cowardly, and will likely back down in a confrontation (only to send her hordes of magical animals out afterward to do her dirty work).

Use: The characters need to find galoshes of fortune and decide to steal a pair from the Wicked Witch of the West. Perhaps they need to make it through the land she presides over and must find a way to get her approval.

Loot: Whatever shoes she's wearing (which are very likely an artifact).

NPCs

The NPCs in the following section are general examples of nonmagical, mortal human characters that are commonly found in fairy tales.

From General to Specific: While the NPCs listed here are general types, such as crafter and robber, it's easy to turn them into specific characters from common and well-known fairy tales. For example, with a little tweaking, you can turn a generic tailor into the tailor from *The Brave Little Tailor*. Just give the crafter NPC a banner that says "SEVEN WITH ONE BLOW" and embrace a jaunty, overconfident nature, and you have the titular character.

Health, Not Pools: Remember that NPCs don't have stat Pools. Instead, they have a characteristic called health. When an NPC takes damage of any kind, the amount

is subtracted from their health. Unless described otherwise, an NPC's health is always equal to their target number. Some NPCs might have special reactions to or defenses against attacks that would normally deal Speed damage or Intellect damage, but unless the NPC's description specifically explains this, assume that all damage is subtracted from the NPC's health.

Naming Your NPCs: You might have noticed that in fairy tales, many characters —especially those of the lower or working classes—don't have a name beyond their title, position, or profession (or sometimes their marriage status). "The Woodcutter," "the Tailor," "the Baker's wife," and so on. While you could follow suit and just call your NPC "the Woodcutter," most player characters are going to ask that person their name. It's likely to break immersion if you throw in a modern name, or if the NPC tries to explain that they don't have one, they're just called "the Woodcutter." And if you call them all Jack, then no one (including you) will remember which one is which. Consider coming up with a list of names ahead of time so that you're always ready to give players something to call a new walk-on character.

Aristocrat 4 (12)

Aristocrats are not quite high royalty—they are not kings or queens, nor even princes and princesses—but they are those with money and power enough to wield in dangerous or glorious ways. Knights and barons are typically aristocrats, as are characters like Bluebeard and Mr. Fox. Some aristocrats, such as knights, may only want to do good and protect the things that matter to them. Others, of course, prefer to use the darker side of their privileged position.

Motive: Money, power, marriage, take who or what they want, protect what they care about
Environment: Typically in cities and towns, occasionally off by themselves in large castles and manors

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: Social engineering, persuasion, intimidation, and lying as level 6

Combat: Many aristocrats have had training in combat maneuvers, as is appropriate to their station. Others may wield knives, scalpels, or butcher's tools with precision.

Interaction: Interaction with an aristocrat often starts out positive—after all, it is delightful to be in the glow of someone so charming and powerful. For some, the interaction remains positive. A knight is just a knight. For others, a sense of unease begins to settle in after a time, as if there's something not quite right behind the facade.

Use: An aristocrat is about to marry and someone is worried about the safety of their future spouse. A knight is outmatched by a dragon or other strong opponent and seeks someone to come to their aid.

Loot: Most aristocrats have currency equal to a very expensive item, in addition to fine clothes or medium armor, weapons, and miscellaneous items.

GM intrusions: The aristocrat's house has a sentient door or lock that suddenly begins to yell about intruders.

Child 1 (3)

Children play the roles of urchins, siblings, daughters, sons, waifs, servants, royal family members, child brides, and more.

Motive: Seeking safety, comfort, money, or food; play; bringing joy

Environment: With their families, or lost in the world trying to find their way. Sometimes in

the employ or care of someone who has found them, stolen them, or otherwise become their guardians, caretakers, or keepers.

Health: 3

Damage Inflicted: 1 point

Movement: Short

Modifications: Run, hide, sneak, and escape as level 2; knowledge of the nearby area, people, and activities as level 3

Combat: Most children fight only in response to being provoked, threatened, or attacked. They typically use makeshift weapons, such as their fists, a stick, or a toy.

Interaction: Children are often smarter, more creative, and more wily than they're given credit for. They may have a lot of knowledge about nearby people, places, and activities that can help the PCs, particularly if there's an exchange of food, money, or other goodies involved.

Use: Someone or something is stealing children from the village, and the mayor is offering to pay a large sum to anyone who tracks down the creature and rescues the children. One of the PCs catches a waif stealing from their pack in the night; the child says they've been lost in the woods for days.

Loot: Children typically have very little on their person, although they may have a special memento of their family or a close friend.

GM intrusions: The child shouts, laughs, or talks too loudly, accidentally drawing the attention of a nearby guard toward a character.

Someone mistakenly thinks a character has stolen the child, and attacks them.

Crafter 2 (6)

Crafters include bakers, cobblers, candlemakers, butchers, millers, tailors, woodworkers, and cooks. While most crafters aren't particularly agile fighters, they are usually clever and strong, and have a number of familiar tools at their disposal for weapons.

Motive: Defense

Environment: In their workshops or peddling their trade while traveling

Health: 8

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Appropriate craft as level 3

Combat: Crafters are unlikely to initiate combat, as most just want to be left alone to do their work (or to convince you to buy their wares). If they're forced to fight, they will typically use any item they have at hand (such as a rolling pin, butcher's knife, crafting tool, or length of wood).

Interaction: Most crafters are happy to talk about their craft or the objects that they've made and have for sale. They take pride in their work, and flattery and attention can go a long way.

Use: To the PCs, crafters can be allies, obstacles, or both. Being friends with a crafter often has obvious long-term benefits, while stealing from them has short-term advantages (and possible long-term disadvantages).

Loot: A crafter has currency equivalent to an inexpensive item, as well as crafting tools and materials and anything they've crafted that they're carrying or wearing.

GM intrusion: The crafter uses their crafting tool in a way that the character didn't anticipate, putting the character in a disadvantaged position.

Huntsman/Woodcutter 2 (6)

A huntsman may be in the employ of a powerful magic user, protecting a section of the woods they consider their own, or just trying to provide for their family by chopping wood and hunting game.

Motive: Follow orders, support their loved ones, protect the innocent

Environment: Woods, forests, and other wild lands

Health: 8

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Tracking and pathfinding as level 4

Combat: Huntsmen and woodcutters both understand the power of the perfectly aimed shot or swing. They take their time, steady their hand and breath, and hit with precision and force.

When they take no action on a turn, their next attack inflicts twice the normal damage. **Interaction:** Many huntsmen and woodcutters are motivated by a deep need to be loyal,

but they're also soft of heart and have a strong moral center. If they're tasked with something they deem unpalatable, they may forgo their promises and go rogue.

Use: They are hunting the characters on the orders of a higher authority. They save the PCs from a dangerous foe, then ask for assistance for their own tasks.

Loot: In addition to their clothing and mundane weapon, they likely have an expensive token of promise or affection from someone they have helped or who they owe fealty to.

GM intrusion: A perfectly timed cut sends a tree down in the direction of the character.

Robber/Thief 4 (12)

Robbers, thieves, highwaymen, robin hoods—whatever name you call them, they want what you have, and they're willing to get it any way they can. Some robbers are honorable, stealing only from the rich or the evil. Others will take anything that isn't nailed down or magically protected.

Robbers often travel in pairs or small groups of dedicated friends and fellow robbers. **Motive:** What's yours is mine

Environment: Anywhere there's something to be stolen

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Stealth, including sneaking, stealing, hiding, and deception, as level 5; attacking from hiding as level 5

Combat: Robbers typically prefer light and medium weapons, particularly bows and small blades. **Interaction:** Most robbers have a moral code of some sort—it just may not be the code

that others abide by. Still, they are willing to listen to reason (and particularly the sound of sliding coins). Robbers are often willing to be hired for jobs that are too difficult for others.

Use: Robbers happen upon the place where the characters have made camp, and ask to join them. A group of robbers arrives to steal a thing that the characters are just about to steal themselves.

Loot: Depending on whether they've just robbed someone or not, robbers may have anywhere from nothing (other than their weapons and clothing) up to the currency equivalent of a very expensive item.

GM intrusion: The robber's arrow manages to hit two foes in a single attack, or the robber shoots two arrows at multiple foes.

Scholar 2 (6)

Scholars might be librarians, sages, wise women, crones, experts, or soothsayers. Typically, scholars seek knowledge above all else, and many also are willing to share it with others (sometimes for a price, sometimes just for the joy of sharing knowledge). A scholar's expertise might be general or specific—they may study the world at large or home in on a specific type of magic or fey being, for example.

Motive: Find answers, seek knowledge

Environment: Schools, libraries, the royal study, laboratories, and anywhere there are sources of information

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Intuition, persuasion, detecting falsehoods, and most knowledge tasks as level 4

Combat: Scholars prefer to avoid a fight. If they must fight, a scholar tries to deduce a foe's weaknesses (if any) and exploit them in combat. Some scholars might have learned spells or abilities from those they've studied. Others might be examining a useful cypher or artifact, and will use it on their attackers.

Interaction: Most scholars are helpful and full of information (whether or not it's useful or true information varies from scholar to scholar). What they don't know, they may be willing to learn or study, if given the proper tools and incentive. However, some scholars are secretive, hoarding their knowledge for their own personal uses.

Use: Scholars can be incredible allies, offering clues, hints, and information that can help the characters. However, they may be reclusive and hard to find, hidden away in ancient libraries or secret laboratories.

Loot: Most scholars have currency equivalent to a very expensive item and one or two cyphers.

GM Intrusion: Something the scholar is studying comes alive, creating havoc and disarray throughout the area.

HORROR RULES MODULE

Although it's very likely a subset of the modern genre, horror as a genre gets special treatment. Unlike the other genres, horror doesn't necessarily suggest a setting. Any setting can be horrific. Horror is more of a style. An approach. A mood.

You could easily have horror in other times and settings, but for our purposes, we'll deal with a default setting in the modern day. The PCs are probably normal people, not secret agents or special investigators (although being a part of a secret agency that deals with monsters in the shadows could make for a fine horror game).

Suggested types and additional equipment for a horror setting are the same as in a modern setting.

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HORROR MECHANICS

This chapter describes many different optional rules (called “horror modules”) for making horror games more exciting or suspenseful. Horror modules are tweaks the GM applies to the rules to make a horror scenario even more scary or to represent how an event usually happens in a horror genre

If a module changes the options that players or PCs have, the GM should tell the players about it when the game begins. For example, if the GM is using the Character Posse module, the players should know about it at the start of the game so they can become familiar with all their characters instead of having to pause when they switch scenes and spend several minutes reviewing a second set of characters. Likewise, players should know if their healing options are affected by the Ironman module, or if they have additional recovery roll options from the Hysteria module.

This chapter also suggests various modules that are appropriate for different horror genres. The GM should feel free to use some, all, or none of those modules when running a game of that type, or introduce other modules to provide a unique twist to the game.

GENERAL HORROR GM INTRUSIONS

The following GM intrusions work for most horror genres.

- Something foils a character’s attempt to escape: a getaway car won’t start, they drop the keys that unlock the exit door or lock up the villain, or the shotgun they’re using to clear a path jams or runs out of shells.
- The antagonist enters a secure or sealed room by an unexpected method: crashing through a door or wall, crawling out of a ventilation shaft, jumping out of a trap door, manifesting electronically through a Wi-Fi signal, or teleporting.
- A mysterious noise nearby amplifies the tension, and when investigated reveals itself to be . . . a cat, either perfectly calm or hissing and leaping. This often allows for a momentary de-escalation followed by a real scare, such as the antagonist reaching out of the darkness to grab a character.
- A dramatic and/or ridiculous amount of blood and gore from something that just got killed splashes on a character, blinding them until they take an action to wipe their eyes clean.

BAD PENNY

An unwanted or dangerous object (such as a cursed artifact) keeps turning up, no matter how many times the PCs try to discard or destroy it. In many cases, there might be only one way to rid themselves of the item (such as dousing it with holy water or burying it in a graveyard) or only one way to destroy it (such as burning it in a church or stabbing it with a magical dagger). The item might slowly repair itself—and depending on the item, it might be more frightening if it shows up fully intact or still bearing damage from how the PCs tried to destroy it.

This reappearance usually isn’t because the item is literally walking to wherever the PCs are (although if the item is something like a cursed doll, that might make it more frightening). In most cases, it just happens to be where the PCs went, found in an unobtrusive place like the back of a closet, under a car seat, or in the bottom of someone’s luggage. If the item is intelligent (or controlled by a hostile intelligence), it might use NPCs to bring it back to the PCs, and might sacrifice those NPCs in dramatic and gory ways to make sure it ends up back in the hands of the PCs. For example, if the PCs abandon a haunted ring, on the next day when they’re waiting for a train they recognize a man they saw earlier just as he gets hit by an oncoming train, and his severed hand—wearing the ring—lands at their feet. Even if the PCs go to a remote area with no people, one of them might suddenly vomit up their lunch—and the haunted ring.

CHARACTER POSSE

Every player is given at least two characters to run, each with about the same amount of background and abilities so they're all suitable as main characters. A player usually runs only one of these PCs at a time. As the action in the story changes locations, the GM can have one or more players switch their active PC and interact with the other active PCs and the story in

a different way. This keeps the players from knowing which characters are supposed to have the important roles in the story, allows for some of the PCs to split off for a while without the rest of the group having to wait, and gives every player a backup character to play if their active PC dies.

Character Posse works best when the characters are very simple and don't have many abilities that require a lot of knowledge and description. That way the player can focus on the personality of the PC and not have to keep remembering a stack of complicated abilities. In a non-fantastic modern setting, that often means characters who have a lot of skills and automatic or simple bonuses (like Combat Prowess and Fleet of Foot) but one or zero abilities that have durations or require special actions (like Anecdote and Muscles of Iron).

DEAD ALL ALONG

A handful of people are forced to stick together under unusual circumstances—they're survivors of a shipwreck, quarantined to avoid an outbreak of a deadly disease, waiting for a riot to leave their neighborhood, or locked away from an approaching zombie horde. They hear strange noises, glimpse shadowy figures, and find that things move about or disappear when nobody is looking. The PCs begin to suspect they're being haunted by ghosts or observed by mysterious aliens; one or more of them disappear or are found dead. Eventually the PCs realize that they are ghosts of people who haven't come to terms with their own deaths, and the weird experiences are their limited interactions with the real world and the living people trying to bury their bodies or put their souls at peace.

In these stories, the emotional journey of the ghosts is about understanding their situation and coming to terms with their deaths. In normal play, GM intrusions are complications that the characters have to deal with, but to represent the secret and inverted expectation of this module, GM intrusions are used to simplify what the characters experience, but with a spooky twist.

When a PC crosses over and disappears, that player can still participate in the game by using the Ghostly Helpers module.

FRAGILITY

Whenever a character selects the Increasing Capabilities option for advancement or gains an ability that permanently increases their Pools, they can add a maximum of 1 point to their Might Pool and 1 point to their Speed Pool; other points left over (if any)

must go to their Intellect Pool, even if that's not normally an option for the ability. This does not apply to the extra points the player can divide among their Pools at character creation. This creates a more "realistic" game scenario where the PCs are more like normal people who don't get much more powerful physically over the course of a campaign, but still can learn new skills, advance their minds, and so on.

This module does not affect abilities like Enlarge (which temporarily adds 4 points to your Might Pool), but it does affect abilities like Enhanced Might, Enhanced Speed, and Lead From the Front (which permanently increase one or more Pools).

GHOSTLY HELPERS

In a horror story, it's common for major characters to be killed or incapacitated, but in a horror RPG, that means the player of a dead character doesn't have much to do. The Ghostly Helpers module gives players whose characters are out of the game two ways to have an active role in the scenario.

First, the dead character is still able to spend their XP to give a living character a reroll. To facilitate this, the GM should allow players to award the second 1

XP from a GM intrusion to a dead character (although this would come up only if there is one character left alive and the second XP would be wasted) and give dead characters 1 XP whenever there is a group intrusion.

Second, the dead character is able to use their subtle cyphers to help a living character. Depending on the cypher, this might be a direct benefit to the PC (like easing a roll) or interfering with an NPC (like making an opponent drop their weapon). When the GM gives out more subtle cyphers, any excess ones (beyond the cypher limit of living PCs) should go to the dead characters, up to the cypher limits of the dead characters (any extra cyphers beyond that are lost).

The player of a dead character always gets to decide when to help and which PC to affect with their help—they're not merely extensions of the living PCs. Whether this help is just fate or coincidence working on behalf of the PC, or if it literally is the lingering ghost of a dead character trying to save a living person, depends on the scenario and the GM.

Help from a dead character doesn't have to be from a ghost. Depending on the genre, it might be the influence of a guilty artificial intelligence, a sentient weapon with a grudge, a cultist with conflicting loyalties, and so on

HALLUCINATION RESET

In some horror genres, it's unclear if the character is truly experiencing what's happening in the story, or if they're hallucinating or dreaming it. In some cases, their fear response

to the real events happening around them prompts their conscious or subconscious imagination to create an unreal scenario that's even more terrifying, only to have them snap out of it and find themselves in a prior (but perhaps still very dangerous) situation. This sort of hallucination allows the story to go completely off the rails and then suddenly return to normal.

If the GM plans to have a hallucination reset, they should keep track of damage taken, equipment used, and XP spent for each character (if using cypher and XP cards, there should be a separate space for each character's used cards). When the hallucination ends, stop the action, explain that the PCs find themselves at an earlier point in the story (or wake up after some time has passed if it's a dream), and restore their Pools, equipment, and XP to their previous state. If the GM doesn't know exactly how much each character's Pool changed, allow each PC to make a free recovery roll to compensate for it.

If the GM needs to use a hallucination reset to recover from a disastrous outcome, they should try to reset the PCs as close as possible to their previous state, relying on the players' recollection of which cyphers and XP belonged to each character. As it's unlikely that they kept track of how many Pool points they spent in the now-false encounters, the GM can allow each of them a free recovery roll to make up for it.

Used carefully, a hallucination reset leaves the characters wondering what is real, and it can be a tool for the GM to rewind an encounter that goes out of control or accidentally kills a character because of poor rolls. Used too much, it risks causing the players to lose interest in the game because the frequent resets undermine their emotional connections to their characters and negate any progress in the story.

Note that a deliberate and planned reset can deliberately do strange things with the story because it's completely in the characters' heads. A horror game about werewolves might have a dream or hallucination about fascist soldiers attacking the PCs with flamethrowers. One about aliens might show the antagonists turning into sexy vampires. A haunted house might convince the PCs that they're tearing off their own faces. A

hallucination might even include elements of something that will happen in the future, so when the actual event occurs (perhaps in a later session) the players won't know if they should act on their "future memories" of these events or ignore them as falsehoods.

HORROR MODE

Horror Mode is an optional rule discussed in the Cypher System Rulebook. When using this rule, the GM can escalate the tension by increasing the range of numbers that trigger a GM intrusion: first on a roll of 1 or 2 instead of 1, then a roll of 1 to 3, then a roll of

1 to 4, and so on. The Escalation Rate table below shows what causes the intrusion range to increase.

Horror Mode is unique among the horror modules in that the default assumption is that the GM is using it for every horror game, at least some of the time. Using Horror Mode makes the players aware of the risks they take every time they make a roll. They won't take easy tasks for granted, and they might apply Effort to turn an easy task into a routine task so they don't have to roll at all and risk an intrusion. This ends up depleting their Pools faster, which makes them feel more vulnerable.

ESCALATION RATE

Activity	Intrusion Range Increases by 1
Exploring a large area	Every time a new intrusion is indicated by a die roll
Exploring	Every ten minutes or every time a new intrusion is indicated by a die roll
Combat	Each Round

HYSTERIA

Screaming is a natural reaction when you're frightened, but it's also likely

to draw the attention of whatever is frightening you. The Hysteria horror module encourages characters to give in to the natural instinct to scream, but introduces dangerous consequences for doing so.

At any time, as an action, a PC can use a free one-action recovery roll (which doesn't use up the one-action recovery roll that all characters get), but doing so means they also spend that action loudly screaming. Because of this noise, the GM can make a free intrusion and doesn't have to award XP for it.

A PC's ten-minute recovery roll takes only one minute, but the PC

has to scream and have an emotional meltdown for the entire time. As with the previous option, this allows the GM to make a free intrusion (after the recovery period) and they don't have

to award XP for it. The PC still has the option of resting normally for ten minutes to use the ten-minute recovery roll (without screaming, and without the free intrusion).

In most situations that use Hysteria, the free intrusions involve drawing the attention of something that wants to harm the PCs or the sudden appearance of something dangerous.

INSTANT PANIC

Most people in real life aren't prepared for the existence of aliens, monsters, or killer robots, and seeing something that shatters their worldview is frightening and traumatic. The first time a character sees a creature

(or anything else suitably horrifying) they thought wasn't possible or only existed in books and movies, they must make an Intellect defense roll against the creature's level. If they fail, for one round either they're paralyzed with fear or they run in the opposite direction.

Repeat appearances by the creature (or other creatures like it) that they've seen before usually don't trigger this reaction a second time, but encountering a large number of those creatures or seeing them do something unusual might trigger it. For example, seeing a ghoul crawl out of a storm drain might trigger panic; seeing another ghoul (or the same one again) won't trigger it again, but seeing a large pack of ghouls approaching, or seeing one ghoul eating a dead person could trigger another panic reaction. Even if a character has gotten over their initial panic, the GM can prompt it again as an intrusion if the circumstances warrant it.

IRONMAN

There are no cyphers (subtle or manifest) or artifacts that heal, and all other healing effects (such as recovery rolls and Healing Touch) restore only the minimum amount possible. For example, a tier 2 character using a recovery roll would get only 3 points (as if they rolled a 1 on a d6, plus 2 for their tier) to add to their Pools. This results in a gritty, dire scenario where the only way PCs can restore their Pools is with recovery rolls and character abilities that heal.

Cypher System characters are tough and resilient, even at tier 1, but Ironman brings them down to a more realistic power level. Ironman is more punitive for characters whose abilities cost Pool points and less of a challenge for characters whose abilities don't cost anything (such as Physical Skills). For a slightly less challenging option, allow the use of healing cyphers and artifacts, but limit them to the minimum amount.

LAST SURVIVOR

Sometimes the antagonist kills off all the protagonists one by one, leaving only one survivor to challenge them. In the journey toward that point, it's not clear who the last survivor will be, and sometimes a potential last survivor is eliminated unexpectedly or sacrifices themselves so that another person may live. The Last Survivor horror module

is a way for PCs to temporarily thwart fate, but it inevitably feeds toward the last surviving character having extra advantages when dealing with the murderous antagonist.

When using this module, the GM places a token on the game table that represents the last survivor, and puts a piece of paper (or an XP card) underneath the token that represents 1 XP. Whenever there is a GM intrusion, instead of giving 2 XP to a player and letting that player award 1 XP to another player, the GM gives 1 XP to the chosen player, and the other 1 XP is added to the last survivor token. Whenever there is a group intrusion, 1 XP is added to the last survivor token (as if the last survivor were a separate PC).

At any time, a player can decide that their PC becomes the last survivor by picking up the token and its XP.

However, those XP belong to the role of the last survivor and always remain separate from individual character XP. While a PC is the last survivor, they gain the following benefits and restrictions:

- All rolls to save them from being killed are eased by two steps.
- The last survivor XP can be spent only by the last survivor, and only on the last survivor's rolls, never on any other players' rolls. (The PC can still spend their personal XP normally, including on other players' rolls.)
- At any time, whoever has the token can pass the role of last survivor to another player. The receiving player gets all the XP associated with the last survivor (if there are none, the GM immediately gives 1 XP to the token).
- Once a player has given up the role of last survivor, they can never again be the last survivor.

- If the last survivor role has no XP left to spend, and there are no other players to pass the token to (because everyone else has already been the last survivor), the last survivor can pass the token to the GM in exchange for their character getting 1 XP. Once this happens, the last survivor token is removed from the game.

MADNESS

Madness is an optional rule discussed in the Cypher System Rulebook. When using this rule, if Intellect damage from fear or shock reduces a PC's Intellect Pool to 0, they regain points in the Pool, but their maximum Intellect Pool is reduced by 1. If their Intellect Pool is ever reduced to 0 again, they go insane and replace their current descriptor with the Mad descriptor.

PERILOUS VENTURE

Sometimes the PCs need to perform a ritual or other complex action that takes several rounds or minutes, and if they make mistakes along the way it's a setback instead of an outright failure. For example, they might need to read a banishing spell out of an old book, mix and heat the chemicals for a zombie cure, or draw a magic circle around a building to contain hostile ghosts. Rather than having their success or failure come down to one roll, the GM can build tension by requiring the players to make multiple rolls called subtasks. The subtasks start at difficulty 1, and the difficulty increases each time until the players make a final roll at the highest difficulty (equal to the overall level of the challenge, such as the demon they want to banish, the original zombie virus, or the most powerful ghost attempting to leave the house).

Generally, these subtasks occur at equally divided intervals over the course of the full time required to complete the ritual. If at any point the PC fails a subtask, the ritual isn't ruined, but it costs time—a failure means the time spent on that subtask was wasted, but the character can spend that much time again and try to succeed at that same subtask.

Skills, assets, and other special abilities can ease subtasks just like they do with any other task (which might make some of the subtasks routine and not require a roll at all). Characters may apply Effort to each subtask. Of course, applying Effort is something characters do in the moment, not over long periods of time, so it's generally impossible to apply sustained Effort on a task or subtask that takes longer than a day.

The GM should decide if a given ritual is something that other PCs can help with. Even if it initially seems like a solo venture (like reading a spell from a book), it might benefit from assistants who repeat a chant, burn candles, perform arcane gestures, or just hold the acting character upright as the ritual drains their strength. In general, giving multiple PCs something to do is better than having everyone wait on the sidelines while one character holds the spotlight.

To make the situation more interesting, the GM can introduce a time challenge, like requiring the PCs to finish by a specific time (perhaps a midnight deadline for containing the ghosts in the house, or banishing a demon that's inflicting damage to an NPC every round it possesses them). This puts pressure on the PCs to complete the process as soon as possible.

The GM can also add side effects for failed rolls or as intrusions. For example, a weak spot in the salt line might allow one powerful ghost to break free, an error in the banishing spell might painfully enrage the demon and hinder the next subtask, electrical or magical energy might lash out and harm a nearby character, and so on. The ritual might use up quantities of

a limited resource, such as holy water, silver powder, or rare herbs; if the PCs have only enough materials to complete the ritual (perhaps with a little extra in case they make one mistake), that forces them to use Effort, XP, and other tricks to make sure they don't fail too often and run out.

Finally, some rituals might require the PCs to spend points from their Pools on each subtask, with Might representing blood or vitality, Speed representing energy, and Intellect representing will or sanity. Other physical or mental tolls could also require points from Pools. Multiple PCs involved in the ritual could collectively contribute to this cost.

POOR CHOICES

Sometimes people in horror do dumb things. They wander off alone to investigate a weird noise. They abandon their friends and try to escape in a rusty old car. They have sex in a spooky barn. These things usually put them in danger and sometimes get them gruesomely killed. Using the Poor Choices module means the GM can use intrusions to make the characters do things that the audience of a horror movie would think are stupid.

These intrusions work like the normal kind (the GM awards 2 XP, and the player gives one of them to another player). However, while normal intrusions are subtle changes that influence the situation, using Poor Choices lets the GM abandon that restraint and dictate a specific overt character action, even if it's something that the player wouldn't normally choose.

These intrusions can be risky, but they shouldn't be obviously self-destructive or harmful. For example, the GM shouldn't use an intrusion to make a PC drink something that they know is poisonous, jump out of an airplane without a parachute, punch a police officer, or stare directly at an eclipse. The idea is to put the character in a complicated situation more forcefully than the player might choose, but not set up the character for failure. The players know they're in a horror scenario, but their characters don't, and this helps prevent the players from using metagame knowledge to keep the PCs out of trouble. Another way to look at it is the characters should act as if they live in a world where horror movies don't exist, so they don't know not to do these things.

As with any GM intrusion, the player can choose to spend 1 XP to refuse a Poor Choices intrusion, but they should consider accepting the intrusion for the sake of the story, and because they'll need the XP later.

POOR CHOICES INTRUSIONS

The following are examples of GM intrusions to use with the Poor Choices module.

A character investigates a strange noise on their own. ("It'll be fine!")

- Two or more characters sneak off to have sex.
- A character leaves behind an important piece of equipment, such as a weapon, phone, car keys, or their outer layer of clothes. (The GM can use this intrusion after the fact when a player tries to use a specific item.)
- A character gets drunk or high.
- A character falls asleep.
- A character slips away to urinate out in the woods or a nearby scary building.
- A character doesn't care that nearby animals are acting strange (especially if they're guard dogs).
- A character doesn't shoot a dead monster in the head. ("We need to save ammo.")
- A character runs away into the dark or away from a place that would be a better, safer direction to run.
- A character reads aloud words from the weird old book they found, or they play an old recording of someone else reading the book aloud.
- In a multistory building, a character runs upstairs or down into a basement (where they could get cornered) instead of outside where they could escape in any direction.
- A character chooses a dumb or obvious hiding place, such as a closet or under a bed.
- A character tries to escape by squeezing through a space that no human could reasonably get through quickly, such as a doggie door or a tiny window in a garage door.

- A character hides the fact that they've been bitten by a zombie, have a weird rash like the one they saw on the walls of the alien spaceship, or have been hearing a spooky voice telling them to kill their friends. ("I'll be okay.")
- A character runs straight down the road to get away from a pursuing vehicle (instead of onto the sidewalk, behind a big tree, or around a tight corner).
- A prone or supine character crawls away from approaching danger instead of getting up and running.
- A character doesn't call the local authorities for help when they hear something dangerous.
- A character ignores or rationalizes a weird noise.
- A character jumps into the water—a lake, swimming pool, sacred fountain, and so on.
- A character goes into the cave, mine shaft, or creepy house. ("I'm just going to look around for a second.")
- A character insists on staying behind while everyone else goes on ahead. ("Someone should be here when the sheriff shows up!")
- A character doesn't check the back seat of a car before getting in and starting it.
- A character ignores an obvious creepy clue that there's something wrong in the house, like a bloody axe, a room full of taxidermy animal heads, or newspaper clippings about recent murders.
- While being pursued, a character calls for help or otherwise attracts attention (like banging on store windows at midnight).
- A character tries to pet an unknown lifeform.
- A character tries to make peaceful contact with an obviously hostile entity. ("It's as frightened of us as we are of it!")
- A character unlocks a door or disables a security system to let a scared stranger into a safe area.
- A character doesn't bother to turn on the lights.
- A character uses an action taunting their foe.
- A character follows a trail of blood.
- A character ignores good advice from a helpful and knowledgeable NPC. ("That old lady was a superstitious kook.")
- A character uses a firearm as a loud, ineffective solution for a simple problem (like shooting a padlock).
- A character picks up a shady or outright scary-looking hitchhiker.
- A character scares another character (perhaps by grabbing their shoulder unexpectedly and shouting) as a joke.
- A character momentarily forgets how to do a simple action, like open or close a door.
- A character forgets to put their phone on silent mode.
- A character imitates or makes fun of a creepy doll or statue.
- A character tries to help a child who has no reason for being there.

POSSESSION

Some demons have the ability to possess a living creature, taking over a character's body as if it were the demon's own. The demon must touch the character to attempt possession (even if the demon's touch normally inflicts damage, the possession attempt doesn't inflict damage). The character must make an Intellect defense roll or become possessed, whereupon the demon's immaterial form disappears into the character.

The first round in which a character is possessed, they can act normally. In the second and all subsequent rounds, the possessing demon can try to control the actions of the host, but the character can attempt an Intellect defense roll to resist each suggested action. Successful resistance means that the character does nothing for one round. When the demon isn't trying to control its host, the character can act as they choose. A possessing demon's actions are limited to controlling its host and leaving the host (the demon can't use its own abilities while in someone else's body).

While it possesses another creature, the demon is immune to most attacks (though not so the host; killing the host will eject the demon).

A possessed character is allowed an Intellect defense roll once per day to try to eject the demon. The roll is hindered by one additional step each day of possession after the first seven days. An ejected, cast-out, or exorcised demon is powerless for one or more days. One way to exorcise a demon is to command it out in the name of an entity that has power over the demon. This can be attempted once per day and grants the possessed character an additional Intellect defense roll to eject the demon.

Other kinds of creatures (ghosts, beings of pure mental energy, and so on) may have the ability to possess characters in the same way that demons do.

SECRET TWIST

It's common when tensions are high and lives are on the line that humans get paranoid and start to turn on each other, interpreting stressed behavior as suspicious and seeing enemies in the eyes of strangers. This is compounded when there is an active threat that can disguise itself as human (like an alien or demon) or take off a mask and pretend to be a fellow prisoner or victim (like a chainsaw killer), only to reveal themselves when the perfect opportunity comes along. These secret twists are the source of many jump scares and unexpected betrayals that create chaos and paranoia.

To use a secret twist, the GM first needs to decide three things:

- The secrets they want the PCs to keep from each other. Examples might be "Your character is actually the shapechanging alien that is hunting everyone on the spaceship," "The chainsaw killer is the identical twin of your character," or "Another PC ruined your life but they don't realize who you are."
- The best time to reveal the secret to the player involved. This might be something the player learns before the game starts or a revelation during the game. If there are multiple secrets, the players might learn them at different times. For example, the PC whose life was ruined by another character might know this at the start of the game, but another PC might not know they had an identical twin (perhaps they were separated at birth).
- The best time to reveal the secret to the other characters. The GM might choose to push it out into the open (perhaps with a GM intrusion) or let the player decide when to reveal it. For example, the GM decides that walking into a dark room with a black light is how all the human PCs realize that one character is really a shapeshifting alien with UV-fluorescing skin, but the GM allows the PC whose family fortune was stolen by another character to bring that up on their own (perhaps when they're alone with the thief).

If revealing the secret to the players is supposed to happen during the game, it would be suspicious if only one player was pulled aside for a conversation about it—the other players would know something unusual was going on. Instead, the GM can call a quick break in the game and send that player a text. Even better, the GM

could send every player a secret text so that nobody is singled out by having to read a text. Alternatively, the GM can give a physical note to every player (perhaps using the secret twist Special Cards); some of these notes might be secrets and some innocuous, but the fact that everyone gets a note disguises who might be getting a secret twist. By making sure that each note has some kind of value (such as by letting a player trade it in later for an asset or a subtle cypher), players who don't receive a special secret still spend a reasonable amount of time reading the note and keeping it safe.

If the players are especially skilled at roleplaying, there may be opportunities for multiple secret twists, especially those that change a character's identity. For example, in a scenario where there are duplicates of the PCs walking around in their city (evil twins, clones, aliens, or the like), the identity of individual characters might switch from the originals to duplicates and back again several times during the game.

Multiple shifts of identity are probably easier for the GM and players to handle if they take place over several game sessions and each session starts with players knowing exactly who they're playing. It also helps if the players take separate notes about what the original and the duplicate know.

SHOCK

Shock is an optional rule discussed in the Cypher System Rulebook. When using this rule, seeing something terrifying means a PC must make an Intellect defense roll. The difficulty is based on the level of the scary thing, or the GM can simply choose the level (see the Shock Levels table). Failure on the defense roll means either the character takes Intellect damage or

the player temporarily loses control of the character (the GM decides if they scream, freeze, run, or take some other appropriate action, perhaps with input from the player).

SHOCK LEVELS

Event	Level
Something unexpected darts or jumps out	1
Something suddenly moves just out of the corner of the eye	2
A sudden loud noise (like a scream)	2
Unexpectedly seeing a corpse	2
Watching someone die	3
Seeing something impossible (like an inanimate object sliding across the floor)	4
Watching a friend die	5
Seeing a monstrous creature	Creature Level
Witnessing something supernatural (like a spell)	5

UNEASE

Horror isn't always overt monstrosities trying to tear your limbs off or drag your soul into Hell. Sometimes it's something slightly off-putting, a stretching of the norm, an itching behind your eyes, or a sinking feeling in your stomach. You can feel that something is wrong, but you don't know exactly what, and you're not sure what to do about it. Your body isn't sure if it should jump into fight or flight, so you're anticipating a spike of adrenaline and it's very distracting.

With the Unease horror module, whenever a character is in the presence of something disturbing that risks breaking their worldview, all their actions are hindered. Normally this happens whenever the triggering situation is within a short distance of the character, but the range might vary depending on what the PC sees and the nature of the disturbance. For example, a demon the size of a house might cause unease whenever it's within very long range, but a city-sized alien starship hovering in the sky might affect people whenever they can see it even though it's a thousand miles away.

If the GM plans to have an ongoing Unease effect throughout an entire game session (like an alien death fleet), they should consider using physical reminders in the game area so players don't forget its effects. Over time, the GM might allow characters to become used to these worrying sights, perhaps due to exposure or maybe by purchasing the familiarity as a medium-term benefit.

Some creatures in the Cypher System already have the ability to make others uncomfortable just by being in the same area, so if they are the only weird creatures the GM plans to use in a horror game, there's no need for the Unease module.

In some ways, Unease is a more limited form of Instant Panic but can also be used in tandem with it.

CONSENT

Horror games allow us to explore some pretty dark topics from the safety of our own game tables. But before you do that, make sure everyone around your table is okay with that. Find out what your players will find "good uncomfortable," which is something that makes us squirm in our seats in a great horror movie, and "bad uncomfortable," which is something that actually makes a player feel nauseated, unsafe, or offended. Being scared can be fun, but being sickened isn't.

Consider the age and maturity of everyone in the game, perhaps in terms of the movie rating system. Tell the players what you think the game you're running would be rated. If everyone's okay with an R rating, then fine. You can have a spooky game that's on the level of a kids' movie rated G—more like *Scooby-Doo* than *Saw*, in other words. A PG rating might be right for a game that's more creepy than horrific, with ghosts and spooky noises but not axe-wielding maniacs.

The different ratings suggest different kinds of content for your game. Finding a dead body is horrible, but watching someone get decapitated is something else entirely. Getting chased around by an alien that wants to eat you is one thing, but having it gestate and burst out of your own intestines is another. You need to know where the line is for everyone participating, and you need to know it right from the beginning.

For more information and advice on safe ways to address consent issues in your game, read the free *Consent in Gaming* PDF at myMCG.info/consent

HORROR CREATURES AND NPCs BY LEVEL AND GENRE

Level	Name	Genre
2	Hivemind child	Aliens, dark magic, science gone wrong
2	Skeleton*	Comedy horror, dark magic, demons, zombies
3	Cannibal	Comedy horror, cryptids, dark magic, degenerates, zombies
3	Nightgaunt	Aliens, cryptids, Lovecraftian
3	Vampire, transitional*	Degenerates, science gone wrong, vampires
3	Vat reject*	Doppelgangers, science gone wrong, simulacra
3	Zombie*	Degenerates, Lovecraftian, science gone wrong, zombies
4	Deep one*	Lovecraftian
4	Devil*	Dark magic, demons
4	Ghost*	Ghosts, dark magic, J-horror/K-horror
4	Ghoul*	Cryptids, degenerates, Lovecraftian, zombies
4	Grey*	Aliens, doppelgangers, science gone wrong
4	Mad scientist	Aliens, body horror, comedy horror, demons, doppelgangers, Lovecraftian, science gone wrong, simulacra, werewolves, zombies
4	Werewolf *	Degenerates, science gone wrong, slashers, survival horror, werewolves
5	Cryptic moth	Cryptids
5	Demon*	Dark magic, demons, J-horror/K-horror
5	Fallen angel*	Dark magic, demons
5	Ichthysian	Comedy horror, cryptids, science gone wrong
5	Killer clown*	Clowns, comedy horror, killer toys, slashers
5	Killing white light*	Aliens, Lovecraftian, science gone wrong

5	Mi-go*	Aliens, body horror, cryptids, Lovecraftian
5	Replicant*	Doppelgangers, simulacra
5	Wendigo*	Cryptids, degenerates
5	Witch*	Dark magic, degenerates, demons
6	Mummy	Aliens, dark magic, mummies
6	Reanimated	Cryptids, science gone wrong, simulacra
6	Yithian	Aliens, doppelgangers, Lovecraftian
6	Vampire*	Degenerates, science gone wrong, vampires
6	Xenoparasite*	Aliens, body horror, science gone wrong
7	Fundamental angel	Demons, science gone wrong
7	Shoggoth	Aliens, body horror, Lovecraftian
8	Blob	Aliens, body horror, Lovecraftian, science gone wrong
8	Elder thing	Aliens, cryptids, Lovecraftian, science gone wrong

* Creature found in the Cypher System Rulebook

Blob 8 (24)

The huge, undulating mass of this creature is composed of a mucus-like solid. The half-amorphous blob defeats its foes by absorbing prey, integrating a victim's tissue into its own. In essence, the victim becomes the blob, and all of the victim's knowledge is available to the blob for later use.

If it later desires, a blob can release a nearly perfect replicant of any creature that it has absorbed. Replicants have the memories and personalities of the originals, but they do the blob's bidding, which is usually to explore distant locations or lure prey into the open using a friendly face. A particularly well-crafted replicant might not know it's not the original. Creating a replicant takes a blob a day or two of effort, during which time it's unable to defend itself or eat, so it's not a task the creature attempts lightly.

Motive: Assimilation of all flesh

Environment: Anywhere

Health: 66

Damage Inflicted: 8 points (acid gout)

Movement: Immediate; immediate when burrowing

Modifications: Speed defense as level 5 due to size

Combat: The blob can project a gout of acid at short range against a single target. Though slow, a blob is always moving forward. A character (or two characters next to each other) within immediate range of a blob must succeed on a Might defense roll each round or be partly caught under the heaving mass of the advancing creature. A caught victim adheres to the blob's surface and takes 10 points of damage each round. The victim must succeed on a Might defense roll to pull free. A victim who dies from this damage is consumed by the blob, and their body becomes part of the creature.

If a blob has absorbed living flesh within the last hour, it regenerates 3 points of health per round while its health is above 0.

Interaction: A blob's favored method of communication is to absorb whoever tries to interact with it. If a replicant is handy, the blob might talk through it if the blob can touch the replicant and use it like a puppet.

Use: The old man the PCs accidentally hit with their vehicle has a weird, mucus-like growth on one hand (in addition to the damage he sustained in the accident). He probably should be taken to the hospital to have his injuries and the quivering growth looked at.

Loot: A blob might have several cyphers swirling about in its mass that it uses to equip replicants.

GM intrusion: The character pulls free of a blob they were caught under, but a piece of quivering protoplasm remains stuck to their flesh. They must do serious damage to themselves (enough to incapacitate) within the hour, scraping off the protoplasm before it absorbs them and becomes a new mini-blob.

Cryptic Moth 5 (15)

Normal moths are enigmatic, gauzy haunts of twilight. The feathery touch of their wings on your face can startle, even frighten. This is to be expected, since moths are the children of cryptic moths, malign and intelligent entities of another realm. Sometimes referred to as mothmen, other times as shadow faeries, cryptic moths are certainly alien. Each possesses a unique wing pattern and coloration, and, to some extent, body shape. These patterns

and colors may signify where in the hierarchy a particular cryptic moth stands among its siblings of the night, but for those who do not speak the language of moths, the complexity of their social structure is overwhelming.

Motive: Capture humans, possibly for food, possibly for breeding purposes

Environment: Almost anywhere, usually at night

Health: 23

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short; long when flying

Modifications: All knowledge tasks as level 6; stealth tasks as level 7 while invisible

Combat: Cryptic moths usually enter combat only when they wish, because until they attack

and become visible, they can remain unseen and invisible to most eyes. The touch of a cryptic moth's wing draws life and energy from targets, inflicting 5 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor).

Cryptic moths regain 1 point of health per round while their health is above 0, unless they've been damaged with a silvered or cold iron weapon, or by electrical attacks.

Once every hour or so, a cryptic moth can summon a swarm of normal moths to aid them in combat or, more often, serve as a fashion accessory or component in a piece of living art.

Moth swarm: level 2

If a cryptic moth is prepared, it may carry cyphers useful in combat, and perhaps even an artifact.

Interaction: Although very few cryptic moths speak human languages, peaceful interaction with these creatures is not impossible. It's just extremely difficult, as they see most humans as a source of food or bodies to lay their eggs in.

Use: A character is followed by a cryptic moth intent on capturing and enslaving them.

Loot: A cryptic moth usually has a few cyphers, and possibly a delicate artifact.

GM intrusion: The cryptic moth grabs the character and flies up and away, taking the victim with them.

Elder Thing 8 (24)

Elder things are mostly extinct, but a few remain trapped in the Antarctic ice or rule over crumbling cities in deep trenches at the bottom of the ocean.

Beholding an elder thing bends the mind to the point of breaking. An elder thing has a great barrel-like body standing some 8 feet (2 m) tall. Knobby protrusions in the crown and base each unfold five appendages that recall the arms of a starfish. When agitated, an elder thing unfolds a pair of wings that help it flutter a limited distance.

Meddling by elder things created multicellular life that spread across Earth billions of years ago and ultimately brought about humanity. As the younger species grew in numbers and influence, the elder things went into decline, a process hastened by wars against strange beings from other worlds and uprisings by the servitor race they created, the shoggoths.

Motive: Reclaim absolute sovereignty

Environment: In arctic regions or deep underwater

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Immediate; long when flying

Modifications: All tasks related to knowledge of magic or science as level 10; Speed defense as level 6 due to form

Combat: An elder thing can attack with five tentacles divided any way it chooses among up to three targets within immediate range. A target hit by a tentacle must also succeed on a Speed defense roll or become grabbed until it escapes. Each round, the elder thing automatically inflicts 6 points of damage on each grabbed target until the victim succeeds on a Might defense roll to escape.

An elder thing can reach into the mind of a target within short distance. If the target fails an Intellect defense roll, the elder thing reads their thoughts while the target remains within long distance. During this time, the elder thing knows everything the target knows, hindering the target's attack and defense rolls against the elder thing. The elder thing can use an action to rend the target's thoughts, which inflicts 6 points of Intellect damage on a failed Intellect defense roll. An elder thing can passively read the thoughts of up to two creatures at one time.

An elder thing also might carry a few cyphers and an artifact it can use in combat.

Interaction: An elder thing communicates through whistles and pops created by moving air through tiny orifices arranged around its body. Elder things see humans as a lesser form of life and may demand worship, sacrifices, or something else from people it encounters.

Use: Fishermen return to a coastal village with a large block of ice in tow. In the ice is something dark and large—an elder thing frozen alive. If the thing thaws out, it will likely take over the community and enslave the people living there.

Loot: An elder thing usually has one artifact and two or three cyphers.

GM intrusion: A character who sees an elder thing for the first time goes temporarily crazy on a failed Intellect defense roll. They might stand in place and gibber, run away, or laugh hysterically for a few rounds. If the character takes damage, they shake off the temporary madness.

Fundamental Angel 7 (21)

Fundamental angels are mysterious holy beings that maintain and guard fundamental concepts of the universe, such as time, gravity, and energy. They have powers and agendas deriving from higher states of reality. They are strange, terrifying, and inconstant in form, unlike the relatively benign and comprehensible winged humanoids from religion and myth.

In the rare times when mortals interfere with these concepts, fundamental angels manifest in the world to set things right. They have intervened to destroy cataclysmic atomic weapons, power sources that skirt the rules of matter and energy, and life forms that betray the principles of creation.

For the purpose of vampire aversions, the angel's direct and area attacks count as religious power or sunlight, whichever is worse for the vampire.

Motive: Preserving the natural order

Environment: Anywhere, usually in response to mortal activity

Health: 35

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 2 (+3 against energy)

Movement: Short; short when flying

Modifications: All knowledge as level 9; attacks against mad science and supernatural targets as level 8

Combat: A fundamental angel attacks other creatures by creating a long-range blast of bright divine energy that inflicts 8 points of damage. In addition, it automatically inflicts 4 points of damage each round against all creatures within short range, although it can shield itself with wings or other protrusions to negate this effect against individuals.

Any creature within long range that sees it and fails an Intellect defense roll becomes frightened unless the angel tells it (specifically or in general) not to be afraid.

As an action, it can teleport up to a hundred miles away or transport itself fully to its native dimension where it exists as pure thought and spirit.

Interaction: A fundamental angel operates on a mental and metaphysical level far above humans and doesn't bother to explain itself to anyone other than its targets. It goes out of its way to not harm innocent creatures. It can communicate with any creature that uses language.

Use: "FEAR NOT!" says the radiant being that appears out of nowhere. It ignores bystanders and uses a beam of energy to destroy a scientist and his experimental reactor.

Loot: Fundamental angels sometimes create or refresh subtle cyphers by their mere presence.

GM intrusions:

A fundamental angel's successful attack also blinds its opponent, lasting until they make an Intellect defense roll (try once each round).

A fundamental angel makes a second attack this round against a target that is adjacent to its primary target.

Hivemind Child 2 (6)

A hivemind family is a scouting expedition of part-alien creatures sent to study and infiltrate human society, either out of scientific curiosity or as a long-term plan for world domination or human extinction. Some entities might intercept human astronauts, reprogramming their DNA or attaching a parasite to their mind or soul. Others might send a machine to

an isolated community, remotely impregnating some of the inhabitants to gestate and give birth at the same time. The end result is a group of hivemind children who have a psychic link, unusual powers, and loyalty to their inhuman creators.

Hivemind children often have a very similar appearance even if they have different parents—they might all have pale blond hair, unusually wide-set eyes, six fingers on one hand, or an odd posture. They eerily match each other's expressions and movements. They think and speak as children years older than they appear. Their emotional responses are muted to an almost sociopathic extent.

Depending on their origin, the weird children may be mentored or protected by an altered adult, or by human parents in denial about the monsters they care for.

Motive: Conquest, exploration, infiltration

Environment: Human settlements

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Mental attacks and Intellect defense as level 3; defend against attacks from living creatures as level 3 due to mind reading; perception and scientific knowledge as level 4

Combat: Individually, hivemind children are physically no stronger or more durable than a typical human. Their true strength is in their ability to read and control minds. Their telepathic link means that if one of them knows something, all of them within long range automatically know it.

Hivemind children can automatically read the surface thoughts of anyone they can see within short range, even if the target is unwilling. As an action, they can force an intelligent living creature within short range to take a physical action, including something that would cause the target harm, such as forcing a target to stick their hand into boiling water, steer a moving car off a cliff, or shoot themselves with a pistol (if used as an attack, this inflicts damage equal to the hivemind child's level or the controlled creature's level, whichever is greater).

Two hivemind children within short range of each other automatically augment each other's mental powers, allowing them to read or control minds of two targets at once as a level 4 creature. Four within short range of each other can read or control minds of four targets at once as a level 5 creature, and eight or more can work together to read or control minds of eight people as a level 6 creature.

Interaction: Hivemind children want to protect themselves and observe humans and will try to do so until they appear as old as adults. Their long-term goals are unclear but probably don't have humanity's best interests in mind.

Use: Children born after a scientific expedition are strange and different. Multiple small villages all over the world experience births of children with weird abilities.

Loot: Hivemind children may have no useful items or one weird science device they've built with their inhuman knowledge.

GM intrusions:

A group of hivemind children briefly manifest a teleportation or telekinesis ability at the same level as their mind control.

The injury or death of one hivemind child angers the rest, increasing their level and damage by +2 for one round.

Ighthsian 5 (15)

Ichthysians are thought to be aquatic evolutionary offshoots of hominids or the result of experiments trying to fuse human and amphibian or fish DNA. They are physically similar to humans standing fully upright, with webbed hands, claws, froglike or fishlike features, gills, and strong muscles from a lifetime of swimming. They live in the water but are comfortable with extended forays onto land. Their intelligence is between that of a smart animal and a human; they can use simple tools such as rocks and sticks, and may build dams to modify waterways in their territory.

Some ichthysians are reputed to have the ability to heal others, and local villages may worship these beings as gods.

Motive: Hunger for flesh, curiosity, solitude

Environment: Anywhere near bodies of fresh water **Health:** 18

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short on land; long in the water

Modifications: Strength-based tasks and swimming as level 6; defense against poison as level 3

Combat: Ichthysians attack with their

powerful claws. They are less mobile on land and prefer to attack from the water. If overmatched, they would rather flee to deep, dark water than fight to the death.

An ichthysian regenerates 2 points of health each round as long as it starts the round with at least 0 health. This regeneration greatly extends their lifespan, and it is common for them to live to be more than two hundred years old.

Ichthysians are prone to mutation, especially in response to pollutants and other chemicals. These mutations might be physical deformities, but could be as strange as transparent flesh, poisonous skin, extra eyes with enhanced senses, or extra limbs.

Interaction: Ichthysians are not aggressive but will retaliate with full force against anything that attacks them, and one can remember specific enemy humans from its past.

Use: A cryptid fish-person has been spotted in the vicinity of a deforested area adjacent to a mighty river. Villagers tell stories of an ancient water god that heals sickness and grants wishes.

Loot: An ichthysian's lair might have a strange relic or device that works like a cypher or artifact.

GM Intrusions:

A slain ichthysian suddenly regenerates 5 health and immediately attacks or tries to flee.

The ichthysian suddenly mutates in response to an attack, thereafter gaining +2 Armor or +2 levels in defense against that type of attack.

Mummy 6 (18)

Mummies are intelligent undead, usually royalty or members of the priesthood, risen from their burial places to destroy those who disturbed their rest. Many seek to undo wrongs against them from ages past or re-establish themselves in their former high stations.

Motive: Vengeance, love, power

Environment: Regions where mummification was common Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: Climb, stealth, ancient history, and ancient religion as level 8

Combat: Mummies are strong, capable of lifting an adult human with one hand and throwing the person across a room. They attack with weapons that were buried with them or use their fists. A mummy usually has one or more of the following abilities:

Curse: Anyone who disturbs a mummy's tomb must make an Intellect defense roll or become cursed, which hinders their

actions by two steps (forever, or until cured).

Disease: The mummy's attacks carry a rotting disease. The target must make a level 5 Might defense roll every twelve hours or take 5 points of ambient damage.

Lifelike appearance: A mummy can repair its body to assume a fully human appearance. This usually requires time and the flesh of several people, often those who awakened it.

Magic: Once per hour, the mummy can cast a spell from the Minor Wish character ability.

Minion: Animate up to four mummified bodies as mindless lesser mummies or skeletons (depending on how well the bodies are preserved), lasting for one day.

Lesser mummy: level 3, climb and stealth as level 4; health 12; Armor 1

Swarm: Call a swarm of bugs (usually scarab beetles or scorpions) to attack a foe or obscure vision.

Swarm of bugs: level 3

Interaction: Mummies want to destroy anyone who disturbs their burial places. Ambitious mummies might choose living beings to be their spies and servants, bribing them with funereal treasures or threatening them into submission.

Use: Villagers whisper that a tomb has been opened and a mummy's curse will strike down anyone who gets in the creature's way.

Loot: Mummies usually have treasures equivalent to three or four expensive items and perhaps a handful of magical manifest cyphers or even a magical artifact.

GM Intrusions:

A dying mummy speaks a curse upon those who killed it, hindering all their actions by two steps (forever, or until cured).

What was overlooked as a fake or a prop turns out to be an actual mummy and attacks a character.

Nightgaunt 3 (9)

A nightgaunt's hands and feet have no opposable digits. All its fingers and toes can grasp with firm but unpleasant boneless strength. Hungry nightgaunts swoop out of the night, grab prey, and fly off into darkness. The creatures sometimes "work" for other agencies, though often enough, their goals are obscure.

Motive: Unknowable

Environment: Anywhere dark, usually in groups of four to seven

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Immediate; long when flying (short when flying with a victim) Modifications: Perception and Speed defense as level 4; stealth

as level 7

Combat: A nightgaunt can attack with its barbed tail. To catch a foe, a nightgaunt dives through the air from just outside of short range. When it does, it moves 100 feet (30 m) in a round and attempts to grab a victim near the midpoint of its movement. A target who

fails a Speed defense roll (and who isn't more than twice the size of the nightgaunt) is jerked into the creature's boneless clutches and carried upward, finding themselves dangling from a height of 50 feet (15 m).

The nightgaunt automatically tickles grabbed victims with its barbed tail. This subtle form of torture hinders all the victim's actions by two steps.

Interaction: Nightgaunts never speak, and they ignore anyone who attempts to interact with them, whether the communication takes the form of commanding, beseeching, or frantically pleading. Such is the way of nightgaunts.

Use: Someone who bears one or more of the PCs a grudge discovers a tome of spells and summons a flight of nightgaunts, which set off in search of their prey.

Loot: One in three nightgaunts has a valuable souvenir from a past victim, which might be an expensive watch, a ring, an amulet, or sometimes a cypher.

GM intrusion: The character is startled by the nightgaunt and suffers the risk of temporary dementia. On a failed Intellect defense roll, the character shrieks and faints (or, at the GM's option, babbles, drools, laughs, and so on). The character can attempt a new Intellect defense roll each round to return to normal.

Reanimated 6 (18)

A reanimated is a humanoid creature patched together from corpses (or crafted directly from muscle, nerves, and sinew), then returned to life through a hard-to-duplicate series of electromagnetic induction events. Though made of flesh, a reanimated's return to consciousness and mobility is marked by a substantial increase in hardness, resistance to injury, and longevity. On the other hand, the process usually obliterates whatever mind was once encoded in the donor's brain, giving rise to a creature of monstrous rage and childlike

credulity. Sometimes the reanimated is bound to its creator in service, but such ties are fragile and could be snapped by an ill-timed fit of fury.

Motive: Defense, unpredictable

Environment: Anywhere in service to a mad scientist, or driven to the edges of civilization Health: 70

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Movement: Short; long when jumping

Modifications: Speed defense as level 4; interaction as level 2; feats of strength and toughness as level 8

Combat: A reanimated attacks foes with its hands. Any time a foe inflicts 7 or more points of damage on the reanimated with a single melee attack, the creature immediately lashes out in reactive rage and makes an additional attack in the same round on the foe who injured it.

If the reanimated begins combat within long range of foes but outside of short range, it can bridge the distance with an amazing leap that concludes with an attack as a single action. The attack inflicts 4 points of damage on all targets within immediate range of the spot where the reanimated lands.

Some reanimated are psychologically vulnerable to fire, and they fear it. When these reanimated attack or defend against a foe wielding fire, their attacks and defenses are hindered by two steps.

If struck by electricity, a reanimated regains a number of points of health equal to the damage the electricity would normally inflict.

Interaction: Fear and food motivate a reanimated, though sometimes beautiful music or innocence can stay its fists.

Use: Depending on where a reanimated falls along its moral and psychological development, it could be a primary foe for the PCs, a secondary guardian to deal with, or a forlorn beast in need of aid.

GM Intrusion:

The character's attack bounces harmlessly off the stitched, hardened flesh of the reanimated.

Shoggoth 7 (21)

Shoggoths vary in size, but the smallest are usually at least 10 feet (3 m) across. They are the product of incredibly advanced bioengineering by some strange species in the distant past. They are angry, vicious predators feared by any who have ever heard of these rare creatures (or who have encountered them and somehow survived to tell the tale). They were created by the elder things but overthrew their masters and now roam the vast, ancient cities they have claimed for themselves.

Rumors abound of a few very rare, particularly intelligent shoggoths that intentionally reduce their own mass and learn to take on the forms of humans so they can integrate themselves into society (and prey upon humans at their leisure).

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Anywhere

Health: 35

Damage Inflicted: 10 points

Armor: 10 against fire, cold, and electricity

Movement: Long

Modifications: Speed defense as level 6 due to size

Combat: Shoggoths sprout tendrils and mouths and spread their wide, amorphous forms, allowing them to attack all foes within immediate range. Those struck by a shoggoth's attack are grabbed and engulfed by the thing's gelatinous body and suffer damage each

round until they manage to pull themselves free (engulfed creatures can take no other physical actions while they are caught). Each round of entrapment, one object in the victim's possession is destroyed by the foul juices of the amorphous horror.

Shoggoths regenerate 5 points of health each round. They have protection against fire, cold, and electricity.

Interaction: A shoggoth can't be reasoned with.

Use: The PCs find an ancient structure of metal and stone. Wandering through it, they note

that every surface is clear of dirt and debris. Soon they discover why—a shoggoth squirms through the halls, absorbing everything it comes upon (and it fills the passages it moves down, floor to ceiling, wall to wall).

Loot: A shoggoth's interior might contain a cypher.

GM intrusion: The character is engulfed in the shoggoth, their gear scattered throughout the thing's undulating form, and their body turned upside down so that escape attempts are hindered.

Yithian 6 (18)

The yithians (also known as the Great Race of Yith) were immense wrinkly cones 10 feet (3 m) high, with a head, four limbs, and other organs spreading from the top of their body. They communicated by making noises with their hands and claws, and they moved by gliding their lower surface across a layer of slime, like a slug. Their civilization was destroyed a billion years before the present day, but they transported their minds into new bodies far in the future and may still be encountered observing the past (our present) by telepathically inhabiting human bodies.

Motive: Knowledge **Environment:** Anywhere **Health:** 22

Damage Inflicted: 6 points **Armor:** 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: All knowledge as level 8; Intellect defense as level 7; Speed defense as level 5 due to size and speed

Combat: Although large and hardy, members of the Great Race are ill-suited to physical combat. If they must engage in melee, they use pincer-like claws. They almost always wield artifacts and cyphers, however, which makes them dangerous opponents. Assume that a yithian has one or more of the following abilities arising from advanced technology devices:

- Force field that grants them +3 Armor
- Mental field that gives them +4 Armor against any mental attack
- Ray emitter that inflicts 7 points of damage up to long range
- Cloaking field that renders them invisible for up to ten minutes
- Stun weapon with short range that makes the target fall unconscious for ten minutes

Yithians have the ability to transfer their consciousness backward or forward through time, swapping minds with a creature native to the era they wish to observe. A yithian inhabiting the body of another creature is in complete control of that body. A creature trapped in the body of a yithian must attempt Intellect-based tasks each time it wishes to exert control.

For the most part, it is trapped in the yithian's body and is merely along for the ride.

It's worth noting that the bodies the yithians use are not their original bodies, but instead the bodies of supremely ancient creatures that they inhabit. The Great Race hails originally from some extraterrestrial world.

Interaction: Yithians are not malicious, but they are quite focused and relatively uncaring about other races, such as humans.

Use: A yithian projects its mind across the aeons, swapping consciousnesses with the character. While controlling the character's body, the yithian is there mainly to learn and observe, and rarely takes any violent actions.

Loot: A yithian encountered in the flesh will have 1d6 manifest cyphers and very likely a technological artifact.

GM intrusion:

The yithian produces a cypher that has a function that is perfect for its current situation: a teleporter to get away, a protective field against precisely the kind of attack being used against it, or a weapon that exploits a weakness of the character's.

NPCs

Cannibal 3 (9)

A cannibal is someone who has decided that eating other people is not only necessary but desirable. Whether this decision was forced by circumstance or made out of some secret, maladaptive urge, cannibals are dangerous because they hide in plain sight, pretending friendship and aid for strangers until their prey lowers their guard. That's when a cannibal strikes. Some cannibals like it raw; others delight in elaborate preparations.

Motive: Hungers for human flesh

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Deception, persuasion, intimidation, and tasks related to friendly interaction as level 6

Combat: Cannibals use whatever weapon is at hand. They usually don't attack unless they can surprise their prey. When cannibals have surprise, they attack as level 5 creatures and inflict 2 additional points of damage.

Interaction: Cannibals seem friendly and charming until they decide you are for dinner. Use: Characters looking for a place to sleep, hide, or stay for the night are invited in by one

or more cannibals—perhaps an entire family of them.

Loot: A cannibal has currency equivalent to a very expensive item and possibly a cypher.

GM intrusion: The cannibal reveals a severed and gnawed- upon body part of a previous victim. The character must succeed on an Intellect defense task or be stunned and lose their next turn.

Mad Scientist 4 (12)

A mad scientist is someone who delves into areas of science best left unexamined, abandoning ethics and pushing for what can be created without asking if it should be.

Motive: Understanding and exploiting reality

Environment: Usually in a lab

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Defends as level 6 due to a gadget (or cypher); knowledge of advanced science as level 7

Combat: Mad scientists are usually accompanied by security guards, robots, zombies, or some other appropriate creature. A mad scientist can attempt to take command of an enemy's technological device (armor, a weapon, a cypher, a robot, and so on) within short range for up to one minute using a handheld device.

Mad scientists usually have access to a long-range energy or high-velocity weapon that inflicts 7 points of damage. They often carry manifest cyphers that increase Armor, confuse opponents' senses, or transform themselves into a form that eases all their actions by two steps.

Interaction: Mad scientists are narcissistic and love to monologue about their work. They negotiate but usually are sociopathic and don't care about other people. Some are filled with self-loathing but too far gone to feel they can change.

Use: Blackouts and strange noises have been traced to a location found to hold a secret lab where a scientist is creating something amazing and monstrous.

Loot: Mad scientists have a few manifest cyphers and possibly an artifact.

GM intrusion: The mad scientist produces a gadget or cypher that proves to be the perfect answer to a dilemma at hand.

HORROR ARTIFACTS

Most of the time, a horror artifact will be something really weird—an ancient tome of forbidden necromancy, an alien device that humans can barely understand, and so forth. They are often unique items rather than one of a type. Horror artifacts should probably come with a risk, such as a built-in cost, a drawback, or something else that makes using them another way to heighten the tension of the game. Several examples are below.

BOOK OF INVERSION

Level: 8

Form: Very large book of ancient providence, the cover bound in iron and wrapped in chains with a level 6 padlock

Effect: When opened, the Book of Inversion shows a pair of pages that detail a magic spell in the reader's language, complete with disturbing diagrams. The spell's effect varies, but it is always some kind of horrible attack—a target is driven mad, a target is turned inside out, a target seeks to murder their best friend, several targets are cursed with a rotting disease, and so forth. The reader can automatically cast the spell as an action, one time only. More insidiously, if successful, the spell confers pleasure to the caster and fully restores all of their Pools. The caster must make an immediate Intellect defense roll or be compelled to use the book (and thus a new spell) again the next day. This compulsion is so strong that the caster will kill their dearest loved one to complete the task. If they are unable to use the book again, they are driven permanently mad. Woe to the caster who uses the book on the last time before it is depleted (at which point it crumbles to dust).

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

SHADOW BOX

Level: 7

Form: Wooden and black metal box, about 12 inches by 7 inches by 3 inches (30 by 18 by 8 cm), with a hinged lid and a clasp

Effect: When the box opens, shadows seethe out. These shadows coalesce into a form that best represents a deep fear in the subconscious of the person who opened the box. The opener must make an Intellect defense roll to master the shadow thing, which then acts as a level 7 creature under their control for five rounds before fading away. If the roll fails, the creature attacks the opener and anyone else around. To make matters worse, the opener spends the first round frozen in terror, doing nothing.

Depletion: 1–2 in 1d6

SPHERE 23

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: A 7-inch (18 cm) sphere of what appears to be fluid metal, tinted red

Effect: Possibly one of a number of identical alien artifacts recovered in remote locales across the earth, the so-called sphere 23 will grant a wish to anyone who holds it and uses an action to concentrate on it. The wish can be anything, including something that bends reality: raising the dead, altering time, and so forth.

However, the wisher must immediately make a Might defense roll or be consumed by the sphere. If the roll succeeds, they must then make an Intellect defense roll or be driven permanently and irrevocably mad.

Depletion: 1–3 in 1d6

HORROR CYPHERS

Many horror genres feature physical objects that the protagonists can use—alien devices, magical talismans, or mysterious objects with an unknown origin. This chapter describes examples of these objects as cyphers, which can be awarded like other manifest cyphers or in place of subtle cyphers. Unlike those in the Cypher System Rulebook, the manifest cyphers listed here include suggestions for what form the cypher takes (although in a game with magic, any of these cyphers might exist as a potion or spell on a scroll in addition to or instead of the forms listed here).

Most of these are marked as fantastic cyphers, although depending on the genre and circumstances of the game, they might be completely normal.

For your convenience, the cyphers have been organized into lists by horror genre or theme so you can randomly roll for something appropriate to your game without getting one that doesn't apply (such as a cypher against vampires in an alien invasion horror game). If you're running a game that mixes several genres, switch between lists each time you need to award a new manifest cypher.

ALIEN CYPHERS

1-2	Anathema siren (aliens)
3-4	Decapitative longevity
5-6	Horrific arm
7-8	Horrific eye
9-10	Horrified integrated weapon

11-12	Humanity tester
13-14	Invisibility revealers
15-16	Mind swapper
17-18	Primitive doppelganger
19-20	Visage scrutinizer

BODY HORROR CYPHERS

1-2	Ascendant flesh vivisector
3-4	Decapitative longevity
5-6	Horrific arm
7-8	Horrific eye
9-10	Horrific face
11-12	Horrific integrated weapon
13-14	Horrific orifice
15-16	Insanity suppressor
17-18	Primitive doppelganger
19-20	Reanimator

CLASSIC MONSTER CYPHERS

1	Anathema siren (cryptids)
2	Anathema siren (mummies)
3-4	Anathema siren (undead)
5-6	Anathema siren (vampires)
7-8	Anathema siren (werewolves)

9	Ascendant brain vivisector
10	Ascendant flesh vivisector
11	Corrupted canopic jar
12	Decapitative longevity
13	Ghost detector
14-16	Invisibility serum
17	Reanimator
18-19	Silgarho infusion
20	Unphantomed limb

DARK MAGIC AND OCCULT CYPHERS

1-4	Anathema siren (demons)
5-7	Decapitative longevity
8-11	Homunculus flask
12-14	Mind swapper
15-17	Reanimator
18-20	Revenant serum

DEMON CYPHERS

1-4	Anathema siren (demons)
5-7	Horrific arm
8-10	Horrific face
11-13	Humanity tester
14-16	Reanimator

17-20	Visage scrutinizer
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GHOST CYPHERS

1-8	Anathema siren (ghost)
9-20	Ghost detector

LOVECRAFTIAN CYPHERS

1-2	Anathema siren (aliens)
3-4	Anathema siren (cryptids)
5-6	Anathema siren (extradimensional creatures)
7	Anathema siren (undead)
8-9	Horrific arm
10-11	Horrific eye
12-13	Horrific face
14-15	Horrific integrated weapon
16-17	Insanity suppressor
18-19	Invisibility revealer
20	Mind swapper

MUMMY CYPHERS

1-6	Anathema siren (mummies)
7-12	Corrupted canopic jar
13-16	Reanimator
17-20	Revenant serum

SCIENCE GONE WRONG CYPHERS

1	Anathema siren (simulacra)
2	Ascendant brain vivisector
3	Ascendant flesh vivisector
4	Decapitative longevity
5	Ghost detector
6	Ghost trap
7	Homunculus flask
8	Horrific arm
9	Horrific eye
10	Horrific face
11	Horrific integrated weapon
12	Humanity tester
13	Insanity suppressor
14	Invisibility revealer
15	invisibility serum
16	Mind swapper
17	Primitive doppelganger
18	Reanimator
19	Revenant serum
20	Unphantomed limb

UNDEAD CYPHERS

1-3	Anathema siren (ghosts)
4-6	Anathema siren (vampires)
7-9	Anathema siren (undead)
10	Decapitative longevity
11-12	Ghost detector
13	Ghost trap
14	Reanimator
15	Revenant serum
16-18	Silgarho infusion
19-20	Wolfsbane potion

VAMPIRE CYPHERS

1-6	Anathema siren (vampire)
7-12	Humanity tester
13-20	Silgarho infusion

WEREWOLF CYPHERS

1-5	Anathema siren (werewolves)
6-10	Ascendant brain vivisector
11-15	Reanimator
16-20	Wolfsbane potion

ZOMBIE CYPHERS

1-8	Anathema siren (undead)
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9-14	Reanimator
15-20	Revenant serum

A SELECTION OF HORROR CYPHERS

ANATHEMA SIREN

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Amulet or device

Effect: Creates a strange and annoying noise about the volume of a human shouting. The noise is especially aggravating toward one type of creature; creatures of this type have all their actions hindered by two steps (hindered by three steps if the cypher level is 7 or higher) while within short range of the cypher. The user must use their action each round to manipulate the cypher for the noise and its effects to persist, or it goes silent and loses all power. The siren can be used for up to one minute per cypher level. Roll a d100 to determine what sort of creature is affected:

01-10	Aliens (probably one specific kind of alien)
11-16	Animate dolls and puppets
17-22	Cryptids
23-32	Demons
33-28	Doppelgangers
39-48	Ghosts
49-54	Mummies
55-64	Robots
65-70	Simulacra
71-80	Vampires
81-90	Werewolves (or some other werecreature)
91-95	Extradimensional creatures
96-00	Undead

ASCENDANT BRAIN VIVISECTOR

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Device, injection, or pill

Effect: If used on a beast whose level is less than the cypher level, this enhances connections in the beast's brain so it attains near-human intelligence and sapience, and gains a basic understanding of one specific language keyed to the cypher. The beast remembers its prior, simpler existence and understands that it has been made smarter. This transformation lasts for one day per cypher level, and then the beast reverts to its normal self slowly over the same number of days, often with violent and erratic outbreaks. For example, if the beast becomes smarter for five days, it loses intelligence gradually over days 6 through 9 and is back to normal on day 10. Additional uses of the cypher tend to have diminishing returns.

When used with an ascendant flesh vivisector, the resulting creature looks, thinks, and acts like a human.

Using this cypher on a beast whose level is too high might end up elevating its intelligence somewhat but also instigating aggressive behavior.

ASCENDANT FLESH VIVISECTOR

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Device, injection, or pill

Effect: If used on a beast of no larger than human size whose level is less than the cypher level, this radically alters the beast's shape so it resembles a human being. The beast-human still thinks and acts like a beast, but it looks like a human and can perform actions using its human dexterity (such as turning a doorknob or walking upright). This transformation lasts for one day

per cypher level, but after an equal amount of time the beast reverts to its normal shape (in the manner described for the ascendant brain vivisector cypher). Additional uses of the cypher tend to have diminishing returns.

Using this cypher on a beast whose level is too high might end up temporarily transforming it into a human with bestial features.

ORRUPTED CANOPIC JAR

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Jar made of clay or carved stone

Effect: Breaking open the jar (which destroys the preserved organs inside) permanently grants the user an asset (two assets if the cypher level is 6 or higher) on all attacks and defenses against mummies within short range.

ECAPITATIVE LONGEVITY

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Injection or potion

Effect: Brings a dead creature's head (but not the body) back to life for a limited time as an undead creature. The cypher can be used up to an hour before or after death (in anticipation of dying or in response to someone's death) and requires up to ten minutes to take effect, at which time the creature recovers 1d6 + 6 points to their Pools. Because they are only a head, a PC reanimated this way has a maximum Might and

Speed Pool of 3 each. The head has all the mental abilities they had when they were alive (including psychic or telepathic abilities) and can speak, but all their actions are hindered. They have the same appearance as before, except the wounds that killed them are still visible, and in general they have an unnatural look. They do not need to eat, drink, or sleep, but they can still rest if they want to (such as to make a recovery roll). The head remains in this active state for one day per cypher level, after which time it dies again and cannot be reanimated with this cypher.

When using a decapitative longevity cypher to bring a head back to life, it can be left attached to the inert body, or someone can carefully sever the head from the body, which doesn't harm the head.

GHOST DETECTOR

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Amulet, crystal, or device

Effect: Automatically indicates if a ghost, spirit, or similar entity is within a short distance (a long distance if the cypher is level 6 or higher). If the user takes an action to study or focus their attention on the cypher, they can narrow down what quarter-arc of a circle the ghost is

in. If the ghost is normally invisible, it becomes somewhat visible (hindering its stealth attempts by one step). The cypher remains active for ten minutes per cypher level.

GHOST TRAP

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Crystal or device

Effect: Can be thrown up to a short distance, where it releases a burst of transdimensional energy in an immediate area that absorbs ghosts (including spirits, phased beings, and similar creatures) but does not affect corporeal entities. PCs who meet these criteria must use an Intellect-based action (difficulty equal to the cypher level) to avoid being trapped. NPC ghosts are not affected if their level is higher than the cypher level. The trap holds the ghosts for up to one hour per cypher level, after which they automatically break free (and are probably very angry).

Ghosts in a trap can be permanently stored in a ghost vault.

HOMUNCULUS FLASK

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Ornate, opaque alchemical bottle filled with strange fluid

Effect: To activate this cypher, you must open the bottle, add a few fresh drops of your blood (inflicting 1 point of Might damage to you), stopper it again, and leave it alone for one day. When the bottle is next unstoppered, a hand-sized creature called a homunculus crawls out; it vaguely resembles you and serves you for one day per cypher level before dissolving into useless goo. Each time you give it an order, you must make an Intellect defense roll against it; if you fail, it becomes free to ignore your commands (but might pretend to be obedient so it can plot against you).

Homunculus: level 2; alchemy, all defenses, and stealth as level 3

HORRIFIC ARM

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Injection or pill

Effect: The user's body rapidly grows a monstrous arm that is approximately the same size as one of their existing limbs. The arm is ugly and malformed, but fully functional.

The user can use this arm as if it were one of their own. The new arm does not grant the user additional actions or attacks in a round, but it can be useful for carrying things. Damage to the arm does not affect the user (the arm can take 6 points of damage directed at it before it becomes nonfunctional). The arm lasts for one day per cypher level.

HORRIFIC EYE

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Injection or spell

Effect: The user's body rapidly grows a monstrous eye (including a retractable eyestalk if the cypher level is 6 or higher) at the spot where the cypher is applied to their body. The user can see out of this eye as if it were one of their own (including any extraordinary vision-based senses the user normally has). The eye gives the user an asset on vision-based perception rolls, and depending on where it is located, it may allow the user to look around corners surreptitiously. Damage to the eye does not affect the user (the eye can take 1 point of damage directed at it before it becomes nonfunctional). The eye lasts for one day per cypher level.

HORRIFIC FACE

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Injection or pill

Effect: The user rapidly grows a monstrous face (or an entire head if the cypher level is 6 or higher) somewhere on their body. The user can use the senses of this face and talk, breathe, and eat with it (for example, if their normal face is underwater or wrapped in plastic). The face gives the user an asset on perception rolls when its senses can be used—for example, it could hear someone sneaking up on the user, but it couldn't see them if its eyes were covered, and it can't help with identifying tastes unless its mouth is also used. Damage to the face does not affect the user (the face can take 3 points of damage directed at it before it becomes nonfunctional). Most people react with disgust to a creature with a visible extra face, hindering all interaction tasks. The face lasts for one day per cypher level (two days if the cypher is level 6 or higher).

HORRIFIC INTEGRATED WEAPON

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Weapon you can hold in one hand

Effect: The weapon extends tendrils, skin, wires, nerves, or other material into and through the user's hand, physically connecting itself to the user for one hour per cypher level. While connected, the user gains an asset on attacks with the weapon and cannot be disarmed, but cannot use that hand for anything except wielding the weapon. The user can detach or reattach the weapon by spending a full minute concentrating on its physical connection to their body. When the duration ends, the weapon detaches and becomes a normal weapon of its type. Roll a d20 to determine the kind of weapon:

1-4	Hunting knife
5-8	Machete

9-12	Nightstike
13-16	Light handgun
17-20	Medium handgun

HORRIFIC ORIFICE

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Device, injection, or pill

Effect: The user's body rapidly grows a strange orifice in their torso, large enough to fit a human fist but flexible enough to hold a compact disc or videocassette tape. One cypher held within the orifice doesn't count toward the user's cypher limit. As an action, the user can cause the orifice to appear or disappear (when the orifice isn't present, anything contained within it is inaccessible except through surgery). The orifice remains for one hour per cypher level, after which it expels its contents and disappears.

Someone who fully understands how a horrific orifice cypher works might be able to program the user with new memories or control their mind by inserting data devices into the orifice.

HUMANITY TESTER

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Device, injection, or pill

Effect: Reveals whether a targeted creature is human or some sort of inhuman impostor (such as an alien, demon, doppelganger, simulacrum, or vampire) if the cypher's level is greater than the creature's disguise level. If the cypher's level exceeds the impostor's level by 4 or more,

it also marks the impostor for the next several hours so people can recognize it by this mark.

The specific nature of a humanity tester depends on the setting and what sort of creatures are common. In a world with multiple kinds of creatures that pretend to be human, the tester might recognize all fakes or detect only one specific kind of fake

INSANITY SUPPRESSOR

Level: 1d6

Form: Device, injection, or pill

Effect: Temporarily negates insanity or a mental disorder in a creature (two such effects if the cypher level is 6 or higher). Example disorders include delusions, manias, compulsions, phobias, psychopathy, and schizophrenia. The creature loses all negative symptoms of their insanity or mental disorder for one day. Each day after that, the creature must make a level 1 Intellect defense roll to prolong the effect; failure means relapse. The roll is hindered by one step for each day that has passed since the cypher was used.

INVISIBILITY REVEALER

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Device containing a liquid or silvery powder

Effect: Sprays its contents up to a long distance, revealing all invisible creatures within short range of the targeted point for one round per cypher level. Affected invisible creatures remain visible if they move outside the area, and those outside the area become visible if they enter the area.

INVISIBILITY SERUM

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Device, flask, or injection

Effect: The user's body becomes as transparent as air, making them effectively invisible for one minute per cypher level. However, their clothes and equipment are not affected, so the user must go naked if they want to be unseen. While invisible, the user is specialized in stealth and Speed defense tasks. They remain invisible even if they do something to reveal their presence or position (attacking, using an ability, moving a large object, and so on), but anyone trying to attack or physically interact with them on that turn gains an asset to do so.

Because the user is as transparent as air, when they are in water, mist, smoke, or anything other than reasonably clean air, they look like a person-shaped hole in whatever material they're in.

The serum has detrimental effects on the mind. Each minute it is in effect, the user takes 2 points of Intellect damage. Many users have become "stuck" in the invisible state and eventually go mad as a result.

MIND SWAPPER

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Amulet or device

Effect: The user attempts to swap minds with a creature within short range that is no larger than a human. The target can make an Intellect defense roll to resist. If the swap is successful, the user gains control of the creature's body (and vice versa). Physical abilities remain with the body, but mental abilities go with the mind; for example, an Adept with Onslaught (a mental ability) could take over the body of a Warrior with Swipe (a physical ability), and could use either of these while controlling the Warrior's body. All actions of both creatures are hindered while the swap is in effect, although long-term practice in a mind-swapped body eventually overcomes this penalty. The swap lasts for one hour per cypher level, after which the two minds return to their previous bodies.

Clever users of a mind swapper have an ally restrain or sedate them before swapping minds so their target doesn't cause trouble in the user's body.

PRIMITIVE DOPPELGANGER

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Device, injection, or pill

Effect: The user's body begins growing a physical duplicate of the user, which harmlessly tears free after a few rounds and exists as an independent level 1 creature that looks exactly

like the user. The doppelganger can communicate in a language known to the user and obeys the user's simple instructions, but otherwise appears to know very little of the world. After one hour per cypher level, the duplicate dies, melts, burns out, falls apart, or otherwise becomes nonfunctional.

Depending on the game setting, the doppelganger might be a robot, a clone, a temporal duplicate, or something else entirely. It may or may not have scars, tattoos, or other non-genetic features of the original.

REANIMATOR

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Amulet or injection

Effect: When used on a corpse of a creature no larger than a human, it reanimates as a violent zombie that is not under the user's control. This reanimation process takes a few minutes (a few rounds if the cypher is level 4 or higher, or one round if level 6 or higher).

REVENANT SERUM

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Injection or potion

Effect: Brings a dead person back to life for a limited time as an obsessed creature called a revenant. The cypher can be used up to an hour before or after death (in anticipation of dying or in response to someone's death) and requires up to an hour to take effect, at which time the creature recovers 1d6 + 6 points to its Pools. The new revenant is usually obsessed with revenge on its killer or accomplishing one last task before truly dying again.

A revenant has all the abilities it had when it was alive, but all its actions are hindered. It has the same appearance as before, except the wounds that killed it are still visible, and in general it has an unnatural look. It does not need to eat, drink, or sleep, but it can still rest if it wants to (such as to make a recovery roll). The revenant remains in this active state for one hour per cypher level, after which it dies again and cannot be reanimated with this cypher.

SILGARHO INFUSION

Level: 1d6

Form: Flask or injection

Effect: Suffuses the user's body with a mixture of colloidal silver (sil), concentrated garlic (gar), and holy water (ho), making the user repellent to most vampires, which usually have an aversion to one or more of these materials. Vampire attacks with melee weapons against the user are hindered. Any PC vampire who attempts to feed on the user gains no sustenance and must make a Might defense roll or feel nauseous and have all their actions hindered for one minute. Any NPC vampire who attempts to feed on the user gains no sustenance and all their actions are hindered for one minute. The cypher's effect persists in the user's body for one day (two days if the cypher is level 4 or higher).

If used directly against a vampire instead of being applied to a living creature, it affects the vampire as silver, garlic, and holy water normally would.

Because a human body can't dispose of colloidal silver, excessive intake of it causes a condition called argyria that turns skin purple or purple-grey

UNPHANTOMED LIMB

Level: 1d6

Form: Device, injection, or pill

Effect: Gives a user who is missing a

limb the ability to create a psychic construct in the form of a limb (two limbs if the cypher level is 5 or higher) that takes the place of and functions like their missing limb (or limbs). The unphantommed limb looks and acts like a typical healthy specimen of its kind, including having fingerprints. However, its motion is controlled by the user's will rather than by muscles and nerves, so any physical action the limb takes is an Intellect task instead of a Might or Speed task; for example, a melee attack with the unphantommed limb is an Intellect task, and to apply Effort, the user must spend points from their Intellect Pool. Damage to the limb affects the user as if the attack were on the user's body. The limb lasts for one day per cypher level.

VISAGE SCRUTINIZER

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Device, crystal, injection, or pill

Effect: Grants the user a heightened

ability to see disguised people and creatures for what they really are. Tasks to see through conventional disguises (makeup, prosthetics, wigs, and so on) are eased by three steps. If the disguise is instead a comprehensive change like a full-body illusion, mental projection, or hologram, the user automatically sees through it if the disguise's level is lower than the cypher's level. The cypher lasts for one hour.

WOLFSBANE POTION

Level: 1d6

Form: Flask or injection

Effect: Suffuses the user's body with a mixture of colloidal silver and wolfsbane, making the user repellent to werewolves (and similar werecreatures). Wolfsbane is poisonous, and using this cypher inflicts Speed damage and Intellect damage equal to the cypher's level. Werewolf attacks with melee weapons against the user are hindered. Any werewolf who attempts to feed on the user feels nauseous and all its actions are hindered for ten minutes. The cypher's effect persists in the user's body for one day (two days if the cypher is level 4 or higher). If used directly against a werewolf instead of being applied to a living creature, it hinders all the werewolf's actions and stops it from regenerating for several minutes.

USING GM INTRUSIONS IN HORROR MODE

With the GM intrusions coming fast and furious toward the end of Horror Mode, it's easy to run out of ideas. In combat, intrusions might just mean that the monster or villain gets a surprise extra attack or inflicts more damage. Perhaps a PC is thrown to the ground or nearer to the edge of a cliff. If the characters are running away, one might trip and fall. If the PCs are exploring, a bookcase topples, potentially hitting someone. Think of all the similar moments you've seen in horror films.

Sometimes, if the GM prefers, the GM intrusion can simply be something frightening, like a moan or a whisper. These aren't dangerous to the PCs, but they escalate the tension and indicate that something bad is getting closer.

In fact, while in Horror Mode, GMs should mostly refrain from doing anything bad, ominous, or dangerous unless it's an intrusion (either from a die roll or through the awarding of XP). In a horror game, GM intrusions are an indication that things are bad and getting worse, and whenever possible, the GM should allow the Horror Mode escalation to drive the action. This makes the GM more of a slave to the dice than in other Cypher System situations, but that's okay.

Consider this example. The PCs have tracked something that is probably committing a series of horrific murders to an old factory. They enter the building to explore. The GM knows where the creature is hiding in the factory, but decides that it doesn't become aware of the characters until an intrusion is indicated. The only clue the PCs have is a mysterious noise off in the darkness. The creature doesn't move toward them until another GM intrusion occurs. Now they hear something dragging across the factory floor, coming closer. But it's not until a third intrusion occurs that the creature lunges out from behind an old machine at the PC who rolled the die.

In some ways, the status quo doesn't change until an intrusion happens. This could be seen as limiting the GM and the need for pacing, but remember that the GM can still have an intrusion occur anytime they desire, in addition to waiting for the low die rolls.

(GMs may want to limit the number of intrusions to no more than one per round, no matter what the dice indicate, but that should be based on the situation.)

OPTIONAL RULE: MADNESS

Having characters descend into madness is an interesting facet of some kinds of horror and can make long-term horror campaigns more interesting. The easiest way to portray blows to a character's sanity is through Intellect damage. When PCs encounter something shocking, as described above, they always take Intellect damage. If they would normally move one step down the damage track due to the damage, they instead immediately regain points (equal to $1d6 + \text{their tier}$) in their Intellect Pools but lose 1 point from their maximums in that Pool. Characters whose Intellect Pools reach 0 go insane. They lose their current descriptor and adopt the **Mad** descriptor, regain $1d6 + \text{tier}$ points to their Intellect Pools, and gain +1 to their Intellect Edge. If they ever reach a permanent Intellect Pool maximum of 0 again, they go stark raving mad and are no longer playable.

Intellect Edge offers an interesting means to portray a character who is knowledgeable (and perhaps even powerful in terms of mental abilities) yet mentally fragile. A character with a low Intellect Pool but a high Intellect Edge can perform Intellect actions well (since Edge is very helpful) but is still vulnerable to Intellect damage (where Edge is of no help).

Since Cypher System games are meant to be story based, players should recognize that the degrading sanity of their character is part of the story. A player who feels that their character is going mad can talk to the GM, and the two of them can work out the means to portray that—perhaps by using the Mad descriptor, permanently trading up to 4 points from their Intellect Pool to gain +1 to their Intellect Edge, or anything else that seems appropriate. Mental disorders, manias, psychopathy, schizophrenia, or simple phobias can be added to a character's traits, but they don't need to be quantified in game statistics or die rolls. They're simply part of the character.

Inabilities in personal interaction or any area requiring focus might be appropriate, perhaps allowing the PC to gain training in weird lore or forbidden knowledge. Or maybe the opposite is true—as the character's mind slowly slips away, they become oddly compelled or can obsessively focus on a single task for indefinite periods, and thus they gain training in that topic or skill. These kinds of changes could be balanced with inabilities, such as being unable to remember important details.

As another way to represent madness, the GM could hinder Intellect-based tasks that would be considered routine, such as “remembering your friends and family” or “caring what happens to your best friend” or “stopping yourself from injecting a mysterious substance into your veins.” These routine tasks normally have a difficulty of 0, but for a PC who has lost their mind, they might have a difficulty of 1, 2, or even higher. Now the character must make rolls to do even those simple things.

ROMANCE RULES MODULE

Like horror, romance doesn't automatically suggest a setting. It is more of a mood, or more specifically an approach, to how the game is played. It suggests an emphasis, at least somewhat, on relationships, interactions, and connections.

Suggested types and additional equipment for a romance setting are the same as in a modern setting

CONSENT AND BOUNDARIES

You must get consent to cover these topics in a game ahead of time—you don't want to make people uncomfortable. Everyone involved also needs to learn everyone else's boundaries. Someone might not want any part of a romance scene, while others are okay talking about emotional connections but not anything sexual.

Obviously, all of this is doubly important if age is a consideration. If there are younger players involved, romance probably shouldn't go beyond a fairly chaste kiss. (You'll find that kids are sometimes more open to romance in their games than adults, but only because their understanding of the topic is understandably pretty shallow. A kid player might declare that a character is their boyfriend, but it doesn't mean much. And for some adults, that may be the way they want to approach the subject as well.)

Lastly, recognize that there needs to be a clear boundary between the story and real life. Two characters having a relationship has no impact on real-life feelings of the players. Two characters in a game might be in a relationship while each player is in a relationship in the real world with someone else. And maybe they're gaming at the same table! If a player can't distinguish between in-game flirtation or words of endearment and real-world feelings, they shouldn't be in a romance-focused game.

For more information and advice on safe ways to address consent issues in your game, read the free *Consent in Gaming* PDF at myMCG.info/consent

THE CHECK-IN

It's vital that the GM and the players all check in with each other to make sure everyone's still comfortable with what's going on in the game. This is particularly important to maintain the boundary between emotions expressed in the story and how people feel in real life.

Basic CREATURES AND NPCs FOR A ROMANCE GAME

Distrustful relative: level 2

Jealous ex: level 2, attacks as level 3

Nosy neighbor: level 2, perception as level 3

Rival suitor: level 2, interactions as level 3

The unattainable: level 3, interactions as level 7, resistance to all interactions as level 9

OPTIONAL RULE: INFATUATION

When a PC is near someone they are infatuated with, particularly in the early stages of that infatuation, they must make an Intellect defense roll with a difficulty determined by the GM based on the situation (not on the level of the subject of the infatuation). Failure might mean that the character does or says something awkward or embarrassing either in an attempt to impress or when trying to hide the infatuation. Or it could mean that for one round, the player loses control of the character, and the GM decides what the PC does next, such as risk their own safety to help an endangered character. However, GMs should welcome player input into this situation. The point is to portray that when we're distracted by the powerful feelings (and hormones) related to infatuation, we don't always react in the best way, the smartest way, or even the way we want to.

Infatuation can happen whether the PC is attracted to an NPC or a PC.

OPTIONAL RULES: RELATIONSHIP LEVELS

When a PC first establishes a relationship with a character (PC or NPC), the GM should assign the relationship a level. If there's no connection at all, there is no relationship (level 0). Otherwise, the starting relationship is probably level 1. In certain circumstances, a relationship might start at level 2, indicating a far stronger initial connection than usual.

As play progresses, the PC can attempt to improve the level of the relationship, indicating a strengthening of the bond between the two characters. The requirements to improve the relationship are twofold. First, some story-based action needs to be taken. This can be dates, gifts, a meaningful speech, a pledge of commitment, some amount of self-sacrifice, or whatever the GM and the player feel is appropriate to the story and the level of the relationship. This action might require the PC to succeed at specific tasks (with appropriate rolls). For

example, writing a love poem will require an Intellect-based task, while helping to retrieve a loved one's cat from a tree might require a Speed-based task.

Second, the player must make an Intellect-based roll with the desired level of relationship as the difficulty (modified as the GM sees fit).

A relationship can be improved only one level at a time, and the GM and the player should work out an appropriate time interval. For relationships of levels 5 and above, multiple story-based actions and multiple rolls are almost certainly required.

(It's possible for relationship levels to be lopsided, such that the relationship from the point of view of one person is a different level than from the point of view of the other. This should be used sparingly, because it makes things far more complicated. In the case of polyamory, it is possible to have more than two people in a relationship, but even in these situations the connection between any two individuals should have its own level.)

ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP LEVELS

Level	Relationship
1	First meeting. Interest or curiosity.
2	A sense of connection above the norm. Strong physical attraction.
3	Affection and a bond that will last longer than a single encounter.
4	Serious affection. Almost certainly physical affection.
5	A profession of love.
6	A serious long-term commitment.
7	A lifelong commitment.
8	Soul mates.
9	A love affair for the ages.
10	A bond that transcends time and space.

Relationship levels can go down as well as up. Neglect, carelessness, inappropriate emotional displays, lies, infidelity, and bungled wooing attempts can all potentially lower a relationship level. This is entirely in the judgment of the GM, although a lowered relationship level is very likely an appropriate use of a GM intrusion.

Relationship levels indicate the strength of the bond and thus help dictate an NPC's actions in regard to a PC. An NPC in a level 5 relationship probably will be more generous and forgiving toward the PC than if the relationship was level 3 or 4. An NPC in a level 6 relationship or higher would likely give their partner most anything, even maybe sacrificing their own well-being or their life for them. (And people in a higher-level relationship certainly would.) Likewise, a relationship level can influence a PC's actions. An Intellect defense roll with a difficulty equal to the relationship level might be appropriate if the PC wants to act against the best interests of their loved one, or if they must keep their cool and act normally when their loved one is in danger.

You can use this optional system in any genre, for any type of relationship, even platonic ones. If desired, the relationship level a PC has with an authority figure, a contact, a relative, or anyone else can be measured, improved, and decreased just as it can with a romantic relationship.

PLATONIC RELATIONSHIP LEVELS

Level	Relationship
1	First meeting. Interest or curiosity.
2	A sense of connection above the norm.
3	A memorable connection. Indications of a mutually beneficial relationship possible.
4	Real friendship.
5	Deep friendship.
6	Relationship akin to that of a close sibling.
7	A pledge of complete partnership.
8	Platonic soul mates. Something akin to a life-debt.
9	A friendship for the ages.
10	A bond that transcends time and space.

POST-APOCALYPTIC

Post-apocalyptic literature, movies, and games are a subgenre of science fiction that focuses on the dystopia that follows the fall of civilization. Strictly speaking, post-apocalyptic stories take place after the end of the world. At least, the end of the world for most people. Players take the role of the survivors (or their descendants) trying to persevere in the face of immense hardship. Popular post-apocalyptic scenarios include those set after nuclear war, in the aftermath of a zombie plague, in the months and years following an alien invasion, or after the environment collapses in the face of human overpopulation. Other ways the world could end include a massive meteorite strike, the long-awaited robot uprising, a powerful solar flare that burns out the world's power grids and communications, or even something as prosaic as a global disease pandemic.

SUGGESTED TYPES FOR A POST-APOCALYPTIC GAME

Role	Type
Survivor	Explorer with stealth flavor
Heavy	Warrior
Dealer	Speaker
Trader	Speaker with skills flavor
Sage	Explorer with knowledge flavor
Evolved	Adept

Basic CREATURES AND NPCs FOR A POST-APOCALYPTIC GAME

Crazy loner: level 3, deception and attacks as level 5

Gamma snake: level 4; bite inflicts 5 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor)

Innocuous rodent: level 1

Mongrel dog: level 4

Survivor, sickened: level 3, interaction and knowledge tasks as level 1; carries level 4 infectious disease

Survivor, typical: level 3

ADDITIONAL POST-APOCALYPTIC EQUIPMENT

In a post-apocalyptic setting, the items on the [Additional Modern Equipment](#) table as well as the following items might be available in trade from other survivors, or in the rare trade town.

INEXPENSIVE ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Knife	Rusty and worn
Light weapon	Won't last long

Wooden club	
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Armor	Notes
Animal hide	
Light armor	Smell hinders stealth tasks
Shield	Asset to Speed defense

Other Items	Notes
Candle	
Plastic bag	Useful and ubiquitous (won't last long)

Moderately Priced ITEMS

Weapons	Notes
Handaxe	Light weapon
Knife, multipurpose	Light weapon; asset to small repair tasks

Other Items	Notes
Gas mask	Breathable air for four hours
Padlock with keys	
Portable lamp, solar	

EXPENSIVE ITEMS

Other Items	Notes
Radiation detector	
Nightvision goggles	

Radiation tent	Prevents radiation damage for three days
Radiation pill (pack of 5)	Asset for defense tasks against radiation effects for twelve hours

SCAVENGING

Characters in a post-apocalyptic setting must usually spend part of each day scavenging for supplies or a place of safety.

Food and Shelter: Generally speaking, characters must spend two to four hours searching through the rubble and ruins before succeeding. Finding enough food for a group of characters to eat for one day is a difficulty 5 Intellect task. Finding a place of relative safety to regroup and rest is also difficulty 5. Characters who succeed on either one of these also get to roll up to once each day on the [Useful Stuff table](#) and three times on the [Junk table](#).

Found food often takes the form of canned, processed, dried, or otherwise preserved goods from before the apocalypse, but sometimes it includes fresh fruits and vegetables found growing wild or cultivated by other survivors. Safe places to hole up include homes, RVs, offices, apartments, or any location that can be secured and defended and isn't radioactive, poisoned, or overrun with hostile creatures.

The difficulty of succeeding at finding food, water, and a safe place varies by location and by how many days the characters have already spent in one location. Each week the PCs spend at the same location hinders subsequent scavenging tasks and requires that they succeed on a new task to determine if the place they're staying is still safe. The result of failing to find food and water is obvious. If the PCs fail at the task of finding (or keeping) a safe place, their presence is noticed by hostile forces, or they face a result from the [Wasteland Threats table](#).

Useful Stuff: Food, water, and a safe place to rest are the most important finds, and are the basis of each scavenging task. But other obviously useful stuff is often found along with these basic requirements. When a group of characters successfully finds either food and water or a safe place, consult the Useful Stuff table up to once per day. If it's the first day the PCs have searched in a particular area, each character might find something useful, but in succeeding days, a group normally gets only a single roll to find useful stuff.

Useful stuff also includes a "loot" entry. Loot includes collectible coins from before the apocalypse, such as silver dollars and gold eagles. It also includes jewelry and artwork that survived the disaster and related material that can be used as currency or barter when the characters find other survivors or arrive at a trade town.

Items found on the Useful Stuff table are generally expensive or exorbitant items (except for firearms, which start in the expensive category).

Junk: Characters who find food and water also find lots of junk. They are free to ignore that junk, but some PCs might have a use for what they find, especially those with the [Scavenger](#) focus. All characters gain up to three results on the Junk table each time they successfully scavenge for food or a safe place to stay. Sometimes junk can be fixed, but more often it can be disassembled and used as parts to create something else.

USEFUL STUFF

d100	Item Found
------	------------

01–10	Tools (provide an asset to tasks related to repair and crafting)
11–20	Medicine (provides an asset to one healing-related task)
21–25	Binoculars
26–35	Chocolate bar or similarly sought-after candy or snack
36–45	Textbook (provides an asset to a knowledge-related task)
46–50	Coffee or tea
51–55	Gun or rifle with ten shells or bullets
56–60	Flashlight
61–65	Loot
66–70	Gasoline ($2d6 \times 10$ gallons)
71–75	Batteries
76–80	Functioning vehicle (sedan, pickup, motorcycle, etc.)
81–85	Generator
86–90	MRE cache (food and water for six people for $1d6$ weeks)

91–95	Ammunition cache (100 shells or bullets for 1d6 different weapons)
96–97	Helpful stranger (level 1d6 + 2, stays with the PCs for a week or two)
98–99	(in addition to any other cyphers the GM awards)
00	(in addition to any other artifacts the GM awards)

JUNK

d6	Item Found
1	Electronic junk (stereo, DVD/Blu-ray player, smartphone, electric fan, printer, router, etc.)
2	Plastic junk (lawn furniture, baby seat, simple toys, inflatable pool, etc.)
3	Dangerous junk (paint, rat poison, solvents, industrial chemicals, etc.)
4	Metallic junk (car bodies, old playsets, grills, empty barrels, frying pan, etc.)
5	Glass junk (vases, windows, bowls, decorative pieces, etc.)
6	Textile junk (coats, pants, shirts, bathing suits, blankets, rugs, etc.)

POST-APOCALYPTIC ARTIFACTS

Artifacts in a post-apocalyptic game include still-working technology from before the disaster that is not widely available, as well as cobbled-together pieces of tech that can weaponize previously prosaic items. If the apocalypse was related to some kind of alien invasion, artifacts would include even stranger items.

AUTODOC

Level: 1d6

Form: Backpack-sized plastic module from which clamps, forceps, scalpels, and needles can extend

Effect: When strapped to a target (or when someone wearing the autodoc is damaged), the autodoc activates and restores 1 point to a target's Pools each round for ten rounds or until the target is fully healed, whichever happens first.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

ENVIROSCANNER

Level: 1d6

Form: Forearm-mounted computer tablet

Effect: This multifunction device can receive radio transmissions, automatically map locations the wearer has visited, play various forms of media, keep voice and written records, and provide an asset to any task related to interfacing with other computerized systems or machines. Also, the wearer can scan for specific materials, toxic traces, and life forms within short range.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10 (check per use of scanning function)

MILITARY EXOSKELETON

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Articulated metal struts with deformable padding and straps for custom fit to a human frame

Effect: For one hour per use (when the exoskeleton is powered on), the wearer has +1 to their Speed Edge and +1 to their Might Edge.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

ROCKET FIST

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Metal gauntlet with flaring rocket exhaust nozzles

Effect: If the user activates the fist as part of an attack, the punch gains a rocket assist. If the attack is successful, the fist inflicts additional damage equal to the artifact level and throws the target back a short distance.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

ROCKET-PROPELLED GRENADE

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Tube with sight and trigger

Effect: The user can make a long-range attack with a rocket-propelled grenade that inflicts 7 points of damage to the target and every creature and object next to the target.

Depletion: 1 in 1d6

TERAHERTZ SCANNER

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Visor fitted with bulky electronics

Effect: By emitting terahertz and long-range infrared light, this device allows a user to see a short distance through most interior walls of standard structures, through normal clothing, and into normal bags and briefcases. Only stone or concrete more than 6 inches (15 cm) thick prevents a scan. Regardless, images are black and white and fuzzy, and lack fine detail.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Post-Apocalyptic SPECIES DESCRIPTORS

In a post-apocalyptic setting, some GMs may want to offer species affected by the disaster.

MORLOCK

You have lived your life deep underground in artificial bunkers, hidden from the world's destruction and the brutal scavengers that live above. As a morlock, you have a keen mind for the technology salvaged from the before-time. In fact, every morlock comes of age by fitting a piece of morlock technology to its body to provide enhancement and extend its life. This means that you are part flesh and part machine. Your skin is as pale as milk, except where it's been replaced with strips of metal and glowing circuits.

You gain the following characteristics:

Enhanced Intelligence: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Cyborg Body: +2 to your Might Pool and your Speed Pool.

Partially Metallic: +1 to Armor.

Repair and Maintenance: As an entity of living flesh and humming machinery, you must first succeed on a difficulty 2 repair task before making a recovery roll. On a failure, the recovery roll is not used; however, the normal rules for retrying apply, and you must use Effort on a new roll if you wish to try again. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to heal additional points to your Pools (each level of Effort healing an additional 2 points to your Pools if you succeed).

Morlock Prejudice: While among non-morlocks, all positive interaction tasks are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. The PCs found you in a collapsed subterranean tunnel.
2. The other PCs encountered you exploring underground, and you convinced them to allow you to accompany them.
3. You were exiled from the morlock communities and needed help on the surface.
4. The only way to save the morlock community you hail from is to venture to the surface and find a mechanical part needed to repair a failing ancient system.

ROACH

You are born of a species of evolved insects once called "cockroach," but that is far in the past. Radiation and forced evolution have radically increased your size, shape, and ability to think. Your exoskeleton mimics the shape of a human being, though not perfectly. When you move about human society, shadows and cloaks are your ally if you wish to pass unnoticed. When those of your kind are discovered, it usually goes poorly for someone. You, however, have a wandering spirit and seek to explore the fallen world and find a new way forward.

You gain the following characteristics:

Scuttler: Your Speed Edge increases by 1.

Sense by Scent: You can sense your environment even in total darkness.

Cling: You can move an immediate distance each round on walls or clinging to the ceiling.

Carapace: +1 to Armor.

Glide: You can extend small wings from your carapace that grant an asset in jumping tasks and allow you to fall up to a short distance without taking damage.

Skill: You are trained in disguise tasks.

Inability: You are susceptible to disease and poison. Defense rolls against disease or poison are hindered.

Inability: You mimic a human, but you are not as fierce. Tasks involving combat—including attack and defense rolls—are hindered.

Insect Prejudice: While among non-roaches, all positive interaction tasks are hindered.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. The PCs didn't realize what you were when they asked for your help.
2. You've managed to hide your roach ancestry so well that everyone thinks you are like them.
3. You are the last of your kind.
4. You have a secret agenda, and the PCs were gullible enough to let you come along.

Fairy Tale

The genre of fairy tales is a wide one, crossing into almost every culture and encompassing everything from early oral stories passed down from generation to generation to the more modern literary fairy tale. What makes something a fairy tale? While there's a great deal of discussion around that question, most have a number of things in common: a series of far-fetched events; fantastical beings such as talking animals, elves, goblins, mermaids, witches, and dragons; and objects that have magical elements.

One of the powers of a fairy tale—or a game set in a fairy tale-inspired setting—is its ability to create a sense of wonder and to evoke players' imaginations while still allowing them to keep one foot in the known. The very settings themselves are both enchanted and somehow familiar, whether the characters are entering a magical woods, falling down a rabbit hole, or embarking on a voyage to Neverland. Those beasts and beings who stalk such places are equally wondrous, and offer fantastic starting points for any number of adventures.

To heighten the sense of wonder in a fairy tale adventure or campaign, a GM might consider presenting the game in a modern setting. In a modern setting, characters have regular jobs that don't normally involve hunting goblins or helping talking fish solve puzzles. This means that when the moths take shape and become the cloak of a princess of summer come to beg a favor or steal a child, or the house grows legs and runs away one morning, the player characters will be rightfully amazed (and perhaps somewhat terrified).

NATURE OF FAERIE

Faerie (also called by many other names) is a dimension of magic separate from but closely parallel to the mundane world. It doesn't matter whether Faerie is just a collective term for thousands of separate curled-up dimensions hidden in corners, in closets, or at the center of forests, or it's one continuous realm that overlaps the real world where it's thinnest. It's a place those with open hearts can find by following a way between tall

trees (or looming library shelves) to a realm where everything is different. Where elves walk, nymphs dance, unicorns gallop, and both natural growths and built structures become vast and enchanting.

Humans don't tend to do well in such a world if they stay too long, as the sensory input is hard on the nervous system. But fey creatures depend on it, like plants to the light. A fey creature too long cut off from its land of origin (or its stream, hill, or burrow) slowly becomes mortal and then dies.

When a fey creature is cut by silvered or cold iron weapons, they temporarily lose the sustaining benefit of their connection to Faerie. This severed connection usually disrupts a fey creature's ability to heal. A silvered weapon is one that contains silver as part of an alloying process, has silver inlay, or has been coated in a dusting of silver powder (which usually lasts only through a single fight). In truth, many items in the modern era are cold-forged, while many others are not. We suggest that any hand-forged item containing iron could be considered a cold-forged weapon for harming fey creatures. Thus, most bullets and other modern items wouldn't be treated as cold iron by this definition, but some would fit the bill.

Basic CREATURES AND NPCs FOR A FAIRY TALE GAME

Most fey creatures of level 2 or higher regain 1 point of health per round, unless wounded by silvered or cold iron weapons.

Angry ants: swarm as a level 1 creature; constantly whisper insults, slurs, and obscenities; those physically attacked must also succeed on a difficulty 3 Might defense task or be stunned and lose their next turn

Erlking: level 6, stealth as level 7; health 27; Armor 4; short-range whisper attack entrails target for one hour or until attacked; root tendril attacks on up to three separate targets in immediate range; silvered and cold iron weapons ignore the erlking's Armor

(*Erlking*: An animated accumulation of woodland debris—bark, lost teeth, matted weeds, and dirt—that wears a crown of oak leaves and a cloak of mist.)

Faerie: level 4, deception and Speed defense as level 5; short-range magic dust attack inflicts damage or makes target amenable to faerie suggestions for one minute

Feral tree: level 3; Armor 3; rooted in place; lashing branches attack up to three characters as a single action and on a failed Might defense task, hold the victim in place until they can escape

Nymph: level 3, stealth and positive social interactions as level 6

Pixie: level 2, stealth and finding lost items as level 6

Razorblade butterflies: level 1; swarm as a level 3 creature able to attack all creatures in an area an immediate distance across

Talking cat: level 1, knowledge tasks as level 7

Troll: level 6; claws inflict 7 points of damage and grab victim until they escape; grabbed creature takes 10 points of damage per round; troll regains 3 points of health per round

SUGGESTED FOCI

FAIRY TALE ARTIFACTS

Artifacts in a fantasy setting and magic items in other games focused on fantasy would also be suitable for a fairy tale setting. However, every fairy tale artifact should come with a quirk that sets it apart from a simple "wand of fire" or similar item. Come up with your own or roll a quirk on the table below.

d10	Quirk
-----	-------

1	Is sometimes invisible.
2	Cries like a baby if jostled.
3	Becomes cold as ice to the touch and emits cold vapor when danger threatens.
4	Contains a secret compartment that invariably holds a chunk of rock broken from what might be a strange jade sculpture.
5	Also serves as a key to some magically locked doors and chests.
6	Bites owner with tiny teeth if jostled, dealing 1 point of damage.
7	Always muttering and complaining, though useful warnings and other information can sometimes be gained.
8	Jealous of any other manifest cyphers, artifacts, or beautiful objects in the wielder's life.
9	The "painting" of a princess of summer on the object sometimes leaves it, robbing the artifact of power.
10	Causes flowers to grow wherever it is stored or set down.

Historical

Setting your campaign in World War 2, the Renaissance, or the 1930s can be fun and interesting. However, setting it in ancient Greece or feudal Japan, for example, probably makes it more like fantasy without all the orcs and magic (although a game set in feudal Japan with orcs and magic could be fascinating).

SUGGESTED TYPES FOR A HISTORICAL GAME

Role	Type
Constable (or night watchman)	Explorer with combat flavor
Detective	Explorer with stealth flavor and skills and knowledge flavor
Knight	Warrior
Pirate	Explorer with stealth flavor
Tutor	Speaker
Merchant	Speaker with skills and knowledge flavor
Smith	Speaker with some warrior abilities and skills and knowledge flavor
Playwright	Speaker
Noble	Speaker with skills and knowledge flavor
Explorer	Explorer
Priest	Speaker

Basic CREATURES AND NPCs FOR A HISTORICAL GAME

Cat: level 1, Speed defense as level 3

Dodo: level 1

Dog: level 2, perception as level 3

Dog, guard: level 3, attacks and perception as level 4

Horse: level 3; moves a long distance each round

Merchant: level 2, haggling as level 3

Noble: level 2, pleasant social interaction as level 4

Rat: level 1

Serf: level 2, animal handling as level 3

Snake, poisonous: level 1, attacks as level 4

Warhorse: level 4; moves a long distance each round

creating a historical adventure

One of the draws of playing in a historical adventure is the thrill of “being there” when something important happens. Thus, in many cases, historical adventures in RPGs shouldn’t be designed as campaigns, but instead serve as short-term experiences where players try something new, or at least something they don’t normally do: play as figures involved in a momentous historical event.

Historical games should take cues from the closely related areas of historical fiction and historical re-enactment. The lessons of great historical fiction include the following.

The GM should anchor the characters with problems or conflicts that connect them to the chosen time period; make sure that PC backgrounds contain one relevant detail to the chosen historical setting.

The GM shouldn’t fall into the trap of assuming that history was drab just because it is often presented along with old paintings, drawings, or blurred black-and-white photographs. Dramatic events, surprising twists, and unexpected situations are just as likely in a historical adventure as in any other kind.

What’s the point of a historical adventure if there is no suspense? Sure, everyone knows what happens at the end of any given historical battle, but the stories of individuals within those fights are not known. Will they live? Will they succeed in their mission? And what are the consequences? Think of all the war movies that rely on that exact latitude to tell great stories.

Make sure you know when the campaign ends. Maybe it’s when the PCs successfully accomplish a specific task, but it might be externally timed to when a historical event takes place, whether they are attempting to offer aid, thwart it, or merely be aware of it as they attempt to do something that history hasn’t recorded.

Don’t create more than you need to. Be ready to tell the PCs what they see and who they encounter when they are introduced to a historical location or person, but don’t worry about things that they likely will never see. Yes, figure out what kind of currency is used, but making a super-accurate list of prices just isn’t necessary; the players will take your word for the cost of items and many other details. You’re evoking a historical setting with your game, not writing a book report.

Be wary about stereotypes and cultural misappropriation. History, as they say, is written by the victors. The ancient Greeks wrote that other cultures were all barbaric, and the European settlers called the natives in North America savages, but that doesn’t mean it’s true. If all you know about a time period is a movie set in that period, you’ll have a skewed version of events and culture. Be willing to go deeper than *Braveheart* or *The Last Samurai*, or maybe choose a different genre.

RUNNING A HISTORICAL GAME

Preparation is important in a historical game, and most of that entails choosing a historical period—or a specific historical event—as the setting. Given that all of history can serve, you won’t lack for resources. Below are a few possibilities. Of course, the farther back you set your game, the less information on specific events is available. On the other hand, that frees you up to get creative.

Once you choose the historical period and any special events you want to include in your adventure or campaign, direct your players to an appropriate set of foci. Alternately, you can have your players play as historically significant figures, but if you do this, you may want to create their characters ahead of time. Most GMs will probably want to save historically significant individuals for use as NPCs.

The players will need some kind of grounding in what to expect in the time period you’ve chosen. Just like they need an idea of what magic can do in a fantasy game, they will need a general idea of what kind of technology is available, the broad strokes of what their characters might know and not know, and so on. Maybe have them read a Wikipedia entry, at the very least.

If you’re looking for inspiration for time periods in which to set your historical game, here are some possible ideas: prehistory, classical antiquity, ancient Egypt, the American revolution, ancient China, World War II, Edo Period Japan, Medieval Europe, and the American Old West.

HISTORICAL ARTIFACTS

The concept of artifacts is probably inappropriate for a historical setting without some kind of supernatural, fantastical, or science fiction element. That said, objects of mystery such as the Antikythera mechanism (an ancient analog computer and orrery used to predict eclipses and other astronomical positions) reveal that the ancient world—and by extension more recent historical periods—contained fascinating and useful objects that were anachronistic for their period. Most such artifacts were likely the creations of philosophers, lone geniuses, and similar figures.

Creatures

This chapter describes many common and uncommon creatures that the characters might meet—and fight—in a Cypher System game and gives their stats. The variety of creatures that populate the possible settings and genres is so great that this chapter only scratches the surface. It does, however, provide examples of kinds of inhabitants—bestial and civilized, living and undead, organic and inorganic—so that you can easily extrapolate and create your own.

UNDERSTANDING THE LISTINGS

Every creature is presented by name, followed by a standard template that includes the following categories.

Level: Like the difficulty of a task, each creature and NPC has a level attached to it. You use the level to determine the target number a PC must reach to attack or defend against the opponent. In each entry, the difficulty number for the creature or NPC is listed in parentheses after its level. As shown on the following table, the target number is three times the level.

Level	Target Number
1	3
2	6
3	9
4	12
5	15
6	18
7	21
8	24
9	27
10	30

Description: Following the name of the creature or NPC is a general description of its appearance, nature, intelligence, or background.

Motive: This entry is a way to help the GM understand what a creature or NPC wants. Every creature or person wants something, even if it's just to be left alone.

Environment: This entry describes whether the creature tends to be solitary or travel in groups and what kind of terrain it inhabits (such as "They travel in packs through dry wastes and temperate lowlands").

Health: A creature's target number is usually also its health, which is the amount of damage it can sustain before it is dead or incapacitated. For easy reference, the entries always list a creature's health, even when it's the normal amount for a creature of its level.

Damage Inflicted: Generally, when creatures hit in combat, they inflict their level in damage regardless of the form of attack. Some inflict more or less or have a special modifier to damage. Intelligent NPCs often use weapons, but this is more a flavor issue than a mechanical one. In other words, it doesn't matter if a level 3 foe uses a sword or claws—it deals the same damage if it hits. The entries always specify the amount of damage inflicted, even if it's the normal amount for a creature of its level.

Armor: This is the creature's Armor value. Sometimes the number represents physical armor, and other times it represents natural protection. This entry doesn't appear in the game stats if a creature has no Armor.

Movement: Movement determines how far the creature can move in a single turn. Creatures have movements of immediate, short, long, or very long, which equate to the ranges of the same name. Most PCs have an effective movement of short, so if they are chasing (or being chased by) a creature with immediate movement, their Speed tasks are eased; if the creature's movement is long or greater, the PCs' Speed tasks are hindered.

Modifications: Use these default numbers when a creature's information says to use a different target number. For example, a level 4 creature might say "defends as level 5," which means PCs attacking it must roll a target number of 15 (for difficulty 5) instead of 12 (for difficulty 4). In special circumstances, some creatures have other modifications, but these are almost always specific to their level.

Combat: This entry gives advice on using the creature in combat, such as "This creature uses ambushes and hit-and-run tactics." At the end of the combat listing, you'll also find any special abilities, such as immunities, poisons, and healing skills. GMs should be logical about a creature's reaction to a particular action or attack by a PC. For example, a mechanical creation is immune to normal diseases, a character can't poison a being of energy (at least, not with a conventional poison), and so on.

Interaction: This entry gives advice on using the creature in interactions, such as "These creatures are willing to talk but respond poorly to threats," or "This creature is an animal and acts like an animal."

Use: This entry gives the GM suggestions for how to use the creature in a game session. It might provide general notes or specific adventure ideas.

Loot: This entry indicates what the PCs might gain if they take items from their fallen foes (or trade with or trick them). It doesn't appear in the game stats if the creature has no loot.

GM Intrusion: This optional entry in the stats suggests a way to use GM intrusion in an encounter with the creature. It's just one possible idea of many, and the GM is encouraged to come up with their own uses of the game mechanic.

NORMAL ANIMALS

Unlike many creatures in this chapter, normal animals are simple and understandable enough to be encapsulated by just their level and maybe one or two other stats.

Bear, black: level 3, attacks as level 4

Bear, grizzly: level 5; health 20; Armor 1

Dog: level 2, perception as level 3

Dog, guard: level 3, attacks and perception as level 4

Hawk: level 2; flies a long distance each round

Horse: level 3; moves a long distance each round

Rat: level 1

Rattlesnake: level 2; bite inflicts 3 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor)

FANTASY CREATURES AND NPCs BY LEVEL

Level	Name
1	Goblin*
1	Shadow
2	Guard*
2	Morlock
2	Orc*
2	Skeleton*
2	Wraith
3	Bard
3	Berserker
3	Crime boss*
3	Deinonychus*
3	Faerie
3	Giant rat*
3	Giant spider*
3	Halfling
3	Harpy

3	Merfolk
3	Sapient tree
3	Thug*
3	Thug*
3	Transitional vampire*
3	Zombie*
4	Deep one*
4	Devil*
4	Druid
4	Dwarf
4	Elemental, air
4	Elemental, fire
4	Elemental, water
4	Elf
4	Ghost*
4	Ghoul*
4	Giant snake*
4	Hollow knight
4	Minotour
4	Ogre*
4	Paladin
4	Shadow elf*

4	Thief
4	Werewolf*
5	Basilisk
5	Cambion
5	Demon
5	Elemental, earth*
5	Fallen angel*
5	Gorgon
5	Mi-go*
5	Necromancer
5	Occultist*
5	Prince(ss) of summer*
5	Satyr
5	Soul Eater
5	Wendigo*
5	Witch*
6	Assassin*
6	Blackguard
4	Elemental, water
4	Elemental, water
4	Elf
4	Ghost*

4	Ghoul*
4	Giant snake*
4	Hollow knight
4	Minotour
4	Ogre*
4	Paladin
4	Shadow elf*
4	Thief
4	Werewolf*
5	Basilisk
5	Cambion
5	Demon
5	Elemental, earth*
5	Fallen angel*
5	Gorgon
5	Mi-go*
5	Necromancer
5	Occultist*
5	Prince(ss) of summer*
5	Satyr
5	Soul Eater
5	Wendigo*

5	Witch*
6	Assassin*
6	Blackguard
6	Chimera*I
6	Elemental, thorn
6	Golem*
6	Hag
6	Jotunn, fire
6	Jotunn, frost
6	Manticore
6	Puppet tree*
6	Troll
6	Vampire*
6	Wyvern
7	Corrupt mage
7	Cyclops
7	Djinni*
7	Dragon*
7	Evil priest
7	Giant*
7	Hydra
7	Noble knight

7	Sphinx
7	Statue, animate*
7	Tyrannosaurus rex*
7	Worm that walks
8	Lich
8	Wizard, mighty*
9	Demigod*
9	Demon Lord
10	Kaiju*

* Creature or NPC found in the Cypher System

BIGGER AND TOUGHER

If you need a larger or tougher version of a creature, such as a dire wolf or a giant crocodile, you can just increase the creature's level (and all of its modifications) by 1 or 2. If the creature has a damage or health stat that isn't the default for its level, take that into account at the modified creature's new level.

A simple rule of thumb is to double a creature's size (length, width, and height) for every level it increases.

OTHER CREATURES AND NPCs FOR A FANTASY GAME

Bat: level 1

Black bear: level 3, attacks as level 4

Blacksmith: level 2, metalworking as level 4; health 8

Cat: level 1, Speed defense as level 3 due to size and quickness

Catfolk: level 3, balancing and climbing as level 4; damage inflicted 4 points

Centaur: level 4; health 15; moves a long distance each round

Crocodile: level 4; Armor 1; swims a short distance each round

Dire wolf: level 4, attacks and perception as level 5; Armor 1

Dog: level 2, perception as level 3

Dog, guard: level 3, attacks and perception as level 4

Elephant: level 5; health 20; Armor 1

Farmer: level 2, animal handling as level 3; health 8

Gargoyle: level 3; Armor 5; damage inflicted 5 points; flies a short distance each round

Giant ape: level 3, climbing and attacks as level 4

Giant crab: level 6; Armor 4; pincer attack holds prey and automatically inflicts damage each turn until the target succeeds at a Might or Speed defense task

Giant frog: level 3

Giant octopus: level 5, Might defense and stealth as level 6; health 25; attacks four times as an action

Giant scorpion: level 4; Armor 2; damage inflicted 4 points plus 4 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) on a failed Might defense task

Giant snake: level 4; health 18; Armor 2; damage inflicted 4 points plus 3 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) on a failed Might defense task

Gnoll: level 2, Speed defense as level 3 due to shield; health 8; Armor 2

Gorilla: level 2, attacks as level 3; damage inflicted 3 points

GriFFon: level 4, perception as level 5; Armor 1; flies a long distance each round

Grizzly bear: level 5; health 20; Armor 1

Hawk: level 2; flies a long distance each round

Hippogryph: level 3, attacks as level 4; flies a long distance each round.

Horse: level 3; moves a long distance each round

Leopard: level 4; climbing, jumping, stealth, and attacks as level 5; Armor 1

Lion or tiger: level 5, attacks as level 6; Armor 1

Lizardfolk: level 3; Armor 1

Merchant: level 2, haggling and assessment tasks as level 3

Mummy: level 6; ancient history, ancient religion, climbing, and stealth as level 8; health 24; Armor 2; damage inflicted 7 points

Nymph: level 3, stealth and positive social interactions as level 6

Pegasus: level 3, Speed defense as level 4; moves or flies a long distance each round

Pterodactyl: level 3; Armor 1; flies a long distance each round

Rat: level 1

Roc: level 6; health 25; Armor 2; flies a long distance each round; attacks twice as an action

Shark: level 3, attacks as level 4; health 15; Armor 2

Undead claw: level 1, attacks as level 3, Speed defense as level 3 due to quickness and size; health 5; Armor 1

Unicorn: level 4; Might defense, perception, and attacks as level 5; health 15; Armor 1; makes two attacks as its action; once per hour can teleport up to 1 mile; once per hour can heal a creature for 4 Pool points (or health) and remove poisons up to level 4

Villager: level 1

Viper: level 2; bite inflicts 3 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor)

Warhorse: level 4; moves a long distance each round

Werebear: level 5, attacks as level 6; Armor 1; damage inflicted 6 points; regenerates 2

health per round (unless recently wounded by silver)

Wererat: level 3, Speed defense and stealth as level 4; regenerates 2 health per round (unless recently wounded by silver)

Wereshark: level 4, attacks as level 5; health 15; Armor 2; regenerates 2 health per round (unless recently wounded by silver)

Weretiger: level 5, attacks as level 6; Armor 1; damage inflicted 6 points; regenerates 2 health per round (unless recently wounded by silver)

Wolf: level 3, perception as level 4

Yeti: level 3; attacks, perception, and stealth as level 4; Armor 1

CREATURES

ABOMINATION 5 (15)

An abomination is a hideous bestial humanoid covered with thickened plates of scarlet flesh. Their eyes shine with the stagnant glow of toxic waste dumps. Standing at least 7 feet (2 m) tall, abominations are drawn to movement. Always famished, they consume living prey in great tearing bites.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Almost anywhere, hunting alone or in pairs

Health: 22

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: Might defense as level 6; sees through deception as level 3

Combat: Abominations use scavenged weapons to attack prey at range, but probably switch to biting targets within immediate range. Targets damaged by a bite must also succeed on a Might defense task or descend one step on the damage track as the abomination tears off a big piece of flesh and gulps it down. Those who survive an attack must succeed on a Might defense task a day later when they come down with flu-like symptoms. Those who fail begin the process of transforming into a fresh abomination.

Abominations regain 2 points of health per round and have +5 Armor against damage inflicted by energy (radiation, X-rays, gamma rays, and so on).

Interaction: Most abominations can speak and have vague memories of the people they were before transforming. However, those memories, motivations, and hopes are usually submerged in a hunger that can never be sated.

Use: Abominations hunt ravaged wastelands and bombed-out spacecraft hulks, lurk in basements where mad scientists have conducted illicit experiments, and haunt the dreams of children who've gotten in over their heads.

GM intrusion: The abomination isn't dead; it stands up on the following round at full health.

BASILISK 5 (15)

A basilisk is a magical kind of serpent that resembles a cobra, has a series of scales on its head like a crown, and crawls upright instead of slithering on its belly. It feeds on snakes and other creatures smaller than itself, relying on its poisonous aura to weaken and kill its prey. It is known to make an unnerving growl instead of a typical snake hiss. An adult basilisk is 10 to 18 feet (3 to 5.5 m) long.

Motive: Hunger

Environment: Forests and plains

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception and stealth as level 6

Combat: A basilisk bites like a snake, inflicting 5 points of damage and injecting a poison that moves the target one step down the damage track if they fail a Might defense roll.

The basilisk can spit its poison up to short range, inflicting 1 point of damage and moving the target one step down the damage track if they fail a Might defense roll.

The basilisk's venom affects its breath, and on its turn, anything within immediate range of it must make a Might defense roll or take 1 point of poison damage. Because of this constant invisible cloud of poison, a basilisk's lair is surrounded by a stinking area of dead vegetation, blasted earth, and etched stone.

Basilisk venom is so potent that even creatures that are immune to poison can still be harmed by it, taking 5 points of Speed damage instead of moving down the damage track. (A creature that is immune to poison and acid is fully immune to the venom.)

Anyone within short range of a basilisk who meets its gaze and fails a Might defense roll turns to stone. In combat, when a character within short distance attacks a basilisk, they must either avert their gaze to attack safely (which hinders their attack by two steps) or make a Might defense roll. On a failed Might defense roll, the character takes 5 points of ambient damage as their flesh partly mineralizes; if the character is killed by this damage, they are turned to stone.

Interaction: Basilisks act like simple animals and respond threateningly if disturbed or provoked. If not hungry, a basilisk avoids conflict and hides in its lair.

Use: A blighted area in a field, briar, or forest suggests that a basilisk has moved into the area. Swarms of snakes enter a village, fleeing an approaching basilisk.

Loot: Basilisk venom is valuable, but it must be stored in a strong, sealed container or the bearer will succumb to the poison. Its blood has alchemical properties relating to transmuting metals.

GM intrusion: The basilisk strikes quickly, biting the same creature twice on its turn.

BLACKGUARD 6 (18)

Blackguards are evil knights who serve dark entities or their own corrupt agendas. Some were once honorable knights who fell to temptation and have abandoned their original principles, but many were raised under evil circumstances and have never known anything but hatred and conflict.

Motive: Power, domination of others, slaughter

Environment: Almost anywhere, either alone or as part of a cult or evil organization

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 2 or 3

Movement: Short; long when mounted

Modifications: Perception and Intellect defense as level 7

Combat: Blackguards use high-quality armor and weapons (usually decorated with symbols depicting death, demons, or evil gods). Many wear heavy armor and prefer weapons that inflict bleeding wounds, but some take a more subtle approach and act more like assassins than knights. A blackguard typically has two or three of the following abilities:

Fiendish Beast: The blackguard has a companion creature such as a dog, horse, or raven with an eerie, unnatural look (in the case of small animals, the creature may also be an exceptionally large specimen of its kind). The creature is actually a semi-intelligent fiend in animal shape (and therefore immune to abilities that affect only normal animals) that can understand the blackguard's commands, and may even be able to speak. If the beast is a horse or similar creature, the blackguard might ride it as a mount.

Fiendish beast: level 4, stealth as level 5, Might and Intellect defense as level 5

Necromancy: The blackguard uses a ten-minute ritual to animate a human-sized corpse as a zombie under their control. The zombie becomes a corpse again after a day.

Poison: The blackguard coats their weapons with a level 6 poison; a foe who fails a Might defense roll moves one step down the damage track.

Spells: The blackguard knows several spells granted by an evil entity, typically spells that cause a foe to flee in fear for one minute, restore 10 health, create an eerie darkness or fog in long range, or grant +5 Armor against energy and magical attacks for an hour.

Surprise Attack: When the blackguard attacks from a hidden vantage, with surprise, or before their opponent has acted in combat, they get an asset on the attack and inflict +4 points of damage. Unholy

Aura: Defense rolls by foes within immediate distance of the blackguard are hindered.

Unholy Blessing: The blackguard's defense rolls are eased.

Interaction: Blackguards enjoy killing righteous paragons of good and are often cruel for the sake of cruelty itself.

Use: A blackguard has united various groups of bandits into a small army. An evil wizard sends her blackguard lieutenant to kill the people interfering with her plans.

Loot: Blackguards usually have treasures equivalent to three or four expensive items, a few useful manifest cyphers, and an artifact weapon or armor.

GM intrusions: The blackguard's weapon flares with unholy power, inflicting an additional 6 points of damage (ignores Armor). A slain blackguard rises as an undead or is possessed by a demon and continues to fight.

CAMBION 5 (15)

Fine ebony scales cover a cambion's perfectly athletic figure. Two reddish horns grow from its brow, and the tips of fangs emerge from between its dusky lips. Its eyes, absent iris and pupil, are the color of driven snow. Cambions are cursed creatures, born of mortal and demonic parentage, and are also sometimes called helborn. Most cambions give in to what everyone expects of them, and embrace evil.

Motive: Defense, conquest, revenge on a world that's rejected them

Environment: Anywhere, often hiding in plain sight

Health: 25

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Disguise as level 7

Combat: Cambions sometimes wield heavy weapons in combat, especially if they come across an artifact that can enhance their attacks. Some cambions develop their natural and magical abilities to become powerful sorcerers, but most can call up hellish energy merely by willing it at least once per day, as follows.

Finger of Torture: A ruby ray lances out from the cambion's finger to strike an enemy prone with torturous pain on a failed Might defense task. The target automatically takes 6 points of damage each round until they can escape the effect with an Intellect task.

Soulfire Blast: An explosion of soul-rending black and crimson fire explodes around up to three targets standing next to each other within short range, inflicting 4 points of damage and stunning the targets so that they lose their next action on a failed Speed defense task.

Interaction: Cambions are bleak, depressed, and misunderstood. Most have turned to evil, but a few can be redeemed.

Use: A great fire is seen burning on the horizon. The next day, travelers come across a burned region with a crater that has destroyed a farmhouse. At the center of the crater is an unconscious human with hornlike growths on its head.

Loot: Powerful cambions sometimes wield artifacts as weapons.

GM intrusion: The character's cypher explodes when touched by cambion demonfire on a failed Speed defense task.

CHIMERA 6 (18)

Chimeras are unsettling hybrids that combine the features of many different animals, often arranged in odd formations. The fusion of animal forms is the only thing that unifies these creatures—otherwise, different chimeras often look very different from each other. They include combinations of goat and lion, lizard and bat, dragon and spider, dinosaur and giant insect. A few even display human features, such as an improbably located face or hands instead of claws. Some chimeras can fly. Others slither across the ground.

A chimera typically has a dominant form to which other animal parts are grafted. The base form must be large enough to support the weight of the extra heads, so lions, bears, and horses are popular as the base form.

Chimeras kill even when not hungry and throw their victims' remains around a wide area in a wild rage. When not feeding or tormenting prey, a chimera that can fly takes to the air, beating its enormous leather wings to scour the landscape for new prey.

Motive: Hungers for human flesh

Environment: Anywhere, usually alone

Health: 21

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short while on the ground; long while flying (if it can fly)

Modifications: Speed defense rolls as level 5 due to size

Combat: All chimeras have a number of ways to kill. The exact methods vary, but most can bite, sting, and gore (three attacks) as a single action, either attacking the same opponent or attacking different foes within

immediate range of each other. A chimera's sting carries a powerful toxin, and a stung target must succeed on a Might defense roll or take 4 additional points of damage. Chimeras with spikes can project them at up to three targets within long range as a single action.

Interaction: Chimeras are a lot like wild animals with rabies. They're confused and violent, and they behave erratically. Savage, ferocious beasts, they hate all other creatures and seize any opportunity to kill.

Use: While exploring an island, the PCs find carcasses that have been torn apart, the pieces scattered in all directions. A chimera lairs nearby, and if the characters draw attention to themselves, it hunts them down, too.

GM intrusion: The chimera grabs a character it bites and flies off with the victim

CHRONOPHAGE 4 (12)

These segmented, 6-foot (2 m) long creatures look partly like larvae that have grown gargantuan and vicious. They appear in places where time moves more slowly or more quickly than normal, where balls and liquids flow upslope, or where a time traveler has visited.

Motive: Hungers for the flesh of those who create, or were created by, time anomalies

Environment: Clutches of four to eight fade into existence within long range of space-time fractures in almost any location.

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short; can phase into the dimension of time (and disappear) as a move. On its next action, it can phase back into the world up to 300 feet (90 m) from where it disappeared (as an action).

Modifications: Perception as level 5

Combat: A chronophage attacks with its crushing mandibles.

A chronophage can phase back and forth between its home dimension, and it uses this ability to great effect when hunting prey. For instance, it can close on prey otherwise protected by barriers or features of the landscape. It can also use the ability to draw a victim's attention and then launch a surprise attack from behind after it has effectively teleported. However, it is an action for the creature to shift its phase between the dimension of time and normal reality.

Interaction: Chronophages are unswerving in their drive to find prey. Once one marks its target, only killing the creature can sway it from the prey.

Use: When the PCs happen upon a location where the rules of space-time are loose and malleable, or if the PCs trigger a cypher or other device that interferes with time's regular flow, a clutch of chronophages may soon come calling.

Loot: The skin of a chronophage can be salvaged to create a silvery cloak that reflects its surroundings, but the reflection is one hour behind the present.

GM intrusion: If a chronophage's prey fails its Speed defense roll, the attack ignores Armor, and the prey must make an Intellect defense roll (difficulty 4) or be phased into the chronophage's home dimension of time. Victims automatically phase back into reality on their next turn but are displaced by 100 feet (30 m) straight up or to the closest open space. This usually results in a fall that potentially deals 10 points of damage, knocks victims prone, and dazes them, hindering all actions for a round.

CORRUPT MAGE 7 (21)

Some wizards and sorcerers are tempted by dark magic, inevitably damning their souls and corrupting their flesh as they cut corners and delve into forbidden lore. Their research and experimentation create new kinds of rampaging monsters and turn people into misshapen horrors. They sometimes modify their own bodies in order to gain demonic or draconic powers, or make pacts with such creatures for knowledge and magical ingredients.

Motive: Magical knowledge at all costs

Environment: Almost anywhere, usually with fleshbeast minions

Fleshbeast: level 4, attacks as level 5; health 15; Armor 1

Health: 35

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: All tasks related to knowledge of arcane lore, demons, and altering bodies as level 8

Combat: Corrupt mages blast opponents with beams of energy that blister, slash, and rot flesh, attacking up to three creatures as an action. Many of them have given themselves long claws and teeth that they can use to make up to three melee attacks per action.

A corrupt mage knows many spells, such as the following:

- Armor: Covers a creature with ugly scales, granting them +3 to Armor for an hour.
- Madness: Wracks the brain of one creature within short range for one hour, reducing them to a babbling catatonic state in which they can't recognize friend or foe. If disturbed or harmed, the creature is likely to lash out with lethal force at what it perceives as its tormentors.
- Organ Request: Extracts a handful of internal organs from an opponent within short range, moving the creature one step down the damage track if it fails a Might defense roll.
- Polymorph: Transforms one foe within short range into a tiny, helpless creature such as a cockroach, fish, or snail for one hour.
- Summon Demon: Summons a demon to serve the mage for one hour.
- Teleport: Moves the mage up to 100 miles (160 km) away, or less far if they bring additional creatures with them.
- Twist Flesh: Reshapes the flesh of a creature within close range, turning it into a hideous monstrosity for one hour. The transformed creature's actions are hindered, but its physical attacks inflict +3 points of damage. The mage's control over the creature is limited to indicating which target it should attack.

A corrupt mage usually has several cyphers useful in combat and perhaps an artifact as well.

Interaction: Corrupt mages generally can't be trusted and see other creatures as things to experiment on and vivisect. They might negotiate with someone who brings them a rare specimen or spell. Many are mentally disturbed by their research and self-alterations and may fluctuate between calm clarity, obsession, paranoia, and rage.

Use: The strange hybrid monsters emerging from the forest are said to be the creations of a corrupt mage. A corrupt mage in a calm state presents themselves as a neutral or benevolent wizard seeking assistance on a task.

Loot: A corrupt mage has 1d6 cyphers and perhaps a wizardly artifact.

GM intrusions: A desperate or dying corrupt mage transforms their own body into several new fleshbeasts, which retain fragments of the mage's intelligence and immediately attack. The mage's attack spell is incredibly painful, stunning the character for one round if they fail a Might defense roll.

CYCLOPS 7 (21)

Cyclopes resemble massive humans that stand 50 to 60 feet (15 to 18 m) tall and weigh about 10,000 pounds (4,500 kg). Everything about these giants is exaggerated, from the thick features of their faces to their oversized hands and lumpy, corpulent bodies. They clothe themselves in animal skins, scraps of cloth, or canvas stolen during their travels. A cyclops's most distinctive feature is the single eye positioned in the center of its forehead. Cyclopes live on the edges of civilized areas or on remote islands. For all their power and stature, they aren't especially brave, and most have a dim idea that puny humans have an advantage when they have numbers on their side.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Almost anywhere

Health: 32

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Attacks targets within immediate range as level 5 due to poor eyesight; Speed defense as level 5 due to size; Intellect defense as level 4

Combat: A cyclops can always resort to using its fists in melee, pummeling opponents with knuckles the size of large hogs. However, most cyclopes carry a tree trunk and use it to sweep enemies from their path. Due to its massive height, a cyclops can make a melee attack against creatures within short range.

Cyclopes can pry up boulders from the ground and throw them at targets within long range. A thrown boulder inflicts 8 points of damage to all targets in an immediate area.

Killing a cyclops can be dangerous. When killed, it falls away from the attacker that delivered the killing blow. Any creature under it when it falls must make a successful Speed defense roll or be pinned under its corpse and take 7 points of damage. Escaping from under a dead cyclops requires a successful Might roll.

Interaction: Cyclopes know the language of the lands they inhabit, but they are notoriously dim and easily fooled. A cyclops thinks about its belly first and foremost and doesn't pay much attention to what it stuffs in its mouth.

Use: A cyclops has been rampaging across the countryside, and warriors sent to deal with it have been vanquished. PCs who investigate learn that the cyclops has been robbed and is trying to find the stolen item.

Loot: Most cyclopes carry sacks filled with things they find interesting or plan to eat. Aside from the rubbish, a typical sack contains 1d100 coins of the realm and a couple of cyphers.

GM intrusions: The cyclops hits a character so hard that they fly a short distance away and land prone.

A character struck by the cyclops's fist is grabbed and stuffed in the creature's sack.

DEEP ONE 4 (12)

Some deep ones dwell in coastal regions on land, usually in isolated villages where they might attempt to pass for human. They are able to breathe both air and water. Most, however, thrive in the ocean depths, in ancient underwater cities like "Cyclopean and many-columned Y'ha-nthlei." Deep ones sometimes breed with insane

humans to produce squamous offspring that eventually develop fully into deep ones well after maturity (or even middle age).

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Anywhere near a large body of salt water

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short on land; long in the water

Modifications: Swims as level 6; perception as level 3

Combat: Deep ones attack with tooth and claw most often, although occasionally one might use a weapon. They usually give no quarter, nor ask for it. Their skin is subject to drying, and they take 1 extra point of damage (ignores Armor) from any attack that deals fire or heat damage. Because of this weakness, deep ones sometimes retreat from fire and fire attacks.

Interaction: Deep ones are a strange mix of utter alienness and the vestiges of lost humanity. They are foul and degenerate creatures by human standards, however. Many still retain the ability to speak human languages, but all speak their own slurred, unearthly tongue.

Deep ones spend a great deal of time in the sincere adoration of their gods, Mother Hydra, Father Dagon, and Cthulhu. Their religion demands frequent blood sacrifices.

Use: The PCs wander into a small coastal village where everyone seems standoffish and oddly distant. A few people appear to be sickly and malformed, perhaps from mutation or birth defects. Some of the villagers have squamous skin because they are transforming into deep ones. And, of course, true deep ones hide within the community as well.

Loot: A few deep ones will have a cypher.

GM intrusion: The deep one produces a net and throws it over the character. The only physical action the victim can take is to try to get free, as either a Might-based or a Speed-based action.

DEINONYCHUS 3 (9)

Popularly known as the velociraptor, the dinosaur genus called deinonychus doesn't care if its prey gets the proper terminology sorted. Meat tastes like meat. The "terrible claw" these carnivores are named after refers to their massive, sickle-shaped claws, which are unsheathed from their hind legs when attacking prey.

Deinonychus are pack hunters, which means they work together as a unit, each taking on different roles to scare, flush, and direct even intelligent prey into the claws of an ambush.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Wherever they can hunt food, in packs of three to seven

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception as level 5; attacks and Speed defense as level 4 due to quickness; overcoming obstacles and figuring out tricks as level 4

Combat: When a deinonychus bites its prey, the victim takes damage and must make a Might defense roll. On a failure, the deinonychus holds the victim in place with its jaws while it slices them to ribbons with its terrible claws, automatically inflicting 6 points of damage each round in which they fail a Might-based task to break free (not attempting to break free counts as a failed attempt). For a human-sized or smaller victim held in the jaws, all other tasks are hindered by two steps.

Interaction: Vicious, cunning, and a little too smart to be classified as simple predators, these creatures are unlikely to negotiate, give quarter, or back off from a fight even if contact could be made.

Use: Some fool decided to build a Cretaceous-themed zoo. The only question is: How long before the dinosaurs get loose and take over the local mall?

GM intrusion: The fleeing deinonychus was actually leading the character over a cliff, into a deadfall trap, or into an ambush with more deinonychus.

DEMIGOD 9 (27)

Lesser gods, divine children of gods and mortals, and other beings bequeathed with partly divine power are called demigods. Their capacities so radically exceed those of regular people that they have transcended humanity. Demigods are so physically and mentally powerful that it's difficult for them to hide their semi-divine appearance to mortal creatures—not that most would make the effort in the first place.

Motive: Ineffable

Environment: Anywhere other divine entities exist (or once existed)

Health: 99

Damage Inflicted: 12 points

Armor: 5

Movement: Short; long when flying

Combat: Demigods can attack foes up to half a mile (1 km) away with bolts of divine energy (usually in the form of lightning). A demigod can dial up the level of destruction if it wishes, so that instead of affecting only one target, a bolt deals 9 points of damage to all targets within short range of the primary target. Targets caught in the conflagration who succeed on a Speed defense roll still suffer 5 points of damage.

Demigods are just as scary in hand-to-hand combat and can attack all targets within immediate range as an action. They can also call on a variety of other abilities that seem like magic to lesser foes and mimic the effect of any cypher of level 5 or lower.

A demigod doesn't need to alter reality to heal itself, as it automatically regains 2 points of health per round.

Interaction: For all their power, demigods share most human traits and weaknesses. This means it's possible to negotiate with one, though the consequences for angering a demigod in the process are dire.

Use: A demigod was banned from the higher realm of their birth for unknown reasons. Now they seek to show their worth by undertaking a great quest in the mortal world, and they are looking to assemble a group of mortal comrades (sycophants?) to aid them.

Loot: Demigods might carry an artifact related to some aspect of their domain (such as wind, messages, or death), if they have one, and 1d6 cyphers.

GM intrusion: The divine nature of the demigod allows it to act out of turn, take control of an object (such as an artifact or a cypher) that the PC is about to use against it, and either deactivate the object or turn it against the character.

DEMON 5 (15)

Demons are formless spirits of the dead tortured in nether realms until all that was good or caring in them was burned away, forging a being of spite and hate.

A demon remembers only fragments of its former life—every good memory is cauterized, and every slight, misfortune, snub, and pain is amplified, motivating the creature to tempt others into the same state.

Having no flesh to call its own, a demon is a shadowed, ephemeral horror able to possess others. A demon can cause great harm in a short time by forcing its host to lie, steal, and harm loved ones.

Motive: Hungers for others' pain and fear

Environment: Anywhere

Health: 25

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Short; immediate while flying in immaterial form

Modifications: All stealth tasks as level 7 in immaterial form; deception tasks as level 6

Combat: The immaterial touch of a demon either inflicts 5 points of damage from rot, or allows the demon to attempt to possess the target. The target of an attempted possession must make an Intellect defense roll or become possessed, whereupon the demon's immaterial form disappears into the target.

The first round in which a character is possessed, they can act normally. In the second and all subsequent rounds, the possessing demon can control the actions of the host, but the character can attempt an Intellect defense roll to resist each suggested action. Successful resistance means that the character does nothing for one round. In other rounds, the character can act as they choose. A possessing demon's actions are limited to attempts to control its host and leaving the host.

A possessed target is allowed an Intellect defense roll to eject the demon once per day, barring any exorcism attempts. The defense roll is hindered by one additional step each day of possession after the first seven days. An ejected or cast-out demon is powerless for one or more days.

A demon not possessing another creature is immaterial and can pass through solid objects whose level is lower than its own. While the demon is immaterial, it takes only 1 point of damage from mundane attacks, but it takes full damage from magical, energy, and psychic attacks. While it possesses another creature, the demon is immune to most attacks (though not so the host; killing the host will eject the demon).

Interaction: A demon allows a possessed host to act normally, as long as it doesn't reveal the demon's presence. If its presence is known, the demon might negotiate, but only after a tirade of lies and obscenity, and the demon likely betrays any deal reached.

Use: An ally of the PCs has begun acting differently, and not for the good.

GM intrusion: The character who attempts an exorcism of a possessed target is successful, but the demon moves directly from the former victim into the exorcist. The new host can make an Intellect-based roll to eject the demon, but only after the first round of possession.

DEMON LORD 9 (27)

Demon lords are mighty demons, commanding hundreds of lesser fiends and often ruling an entire hellscape dimension. No mere brutes, they are smart, wield powerful magic, make centuries-long plans of conquest against rival demons, and seek to corrupt and enslave powerful mortals. Some are nearly as powerful as gods and are worshipped as such by cultists or evil creatures, claiming ownership of a concept like murder, rot, undeath, or seduction. A few are known to mate with mortals to produce cambion offspring.

Motive: Power, conquest, souls

Environment: Any hell dimension, sometimes called by mortal magic

Health: 100

Damage Inflicted: 12 points

Armor: 5

Movement: Short; long when flying

Modifications: History and magical knowledge as level 10

Combat: A demon lord attacks with a bolt of evil energy or fire up to a long distance away, inflicting 12 points of damage on one target or 9 points of damage on all targets within short range of the primary target. Targets caught in the area attack who succeed on a Speed defense roll still suffer 5 points of damage. A demon lord can make melee attacks on all targets within immediate range as an action.

They can also call on a variety of other magical abilities that mimic the effect of any cypher of level 5 or lower—usually destructive, painful, and transformative effects.

A demon lord automatically regains 3 points of health per round. They typically have the following abilities:

- Change Shape: The demon lord can take the form of a human or similar humanoid as its action, or return to its regular shape. When so changed, its disguise is nearly impenetrable without special knowledge. As a human, the demon lord is a level 7 creature.
- Possession: The demon lord can possess a creature and still use its own abilities.
- Summon Demon: Summon a demon or devil to serve it for one day.
- Wish: The demon lord can grant a mortal a wish (up to level 9) in exchange for an appropriate payment or service, but the wish is often twisted or has hidden consequences.

Interaction: Demon lords are willing to bargain with mortals if it leads to the mortal's corruption or advances the demon's agenda in some way. They sometimes respond to flattery or bribes of powerful souls or magic items.

Use: A mad cult wants to summon a demon lord in order to end the world. A mysterious stranger offers aid in exchange for a favor to be named later.

Loot: A demon lord often has an artifact relating to some aspect of its nature or interests, such as a weapon, ring, or armor, as well as 1d6 cyphers.

GM intrusions: The demon lord offersthe character somethingso tempting (an artifact,immortality, and soon) that they lose theirnext action and mustmake an Intellectdefense roll to resisttrying to bargain for it.

The demon lord createsa portal and retreatsto its own dimension;the portal remainsopen for one round

DEVIL 4 (12)

Devils are manifest evil. As “native fauna” of various tortuous nether realms, devils come in many forms, though most are iterations on a theme that includes a humanoid shape, large batwings, bestial faces, and twisting horns. Most stink of brimstone and sport tails that end in a fork. Devils fill the ranks of hellish armies, guard evil vaults, and appear at the magical summons of warlocks and sorcerers who are not afraid for the sanctity of their own souls.

Motive: Collect souls

Environment: Anywhere in various nether realms; sometimes called by mortal magic

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Short when walking or flying

Modifications: All tasks related to deception as level 7

Combat: When possible, a devil attacks with surprise. If successful, it unfurls two great wings and claws at the ends of its fingers. It leaps into the air, flies up to a short distance toward the nearest foe, and attacks that creature as a single action.

Some devils carry tridents. The weapon inflicts 5 points of damage, and the target must either move to a position within an immediate distance chosen by the devil or take 2 additional points of damage from being impaled (a total of 7 points of damage). Impaled foes automatically take 5 points of damage each round until they use an action to pull themselves free.

Interaction: Evil, cruel, and malevolent, devils are more than happy to talk, especially to those already caught and being readied for torture. Devils serve yet more powerful devils out of fear. If they find someone or something they fear more, they readily betray their master and become obsequious and cringing, though further betrayal is always on the table.

Use: A spate of violent murders grips a city in fear—a devil has escaped into the world of mortals without a leash. It spends nights hunting anyone it spots from its perches atop the city's holy places.

GM intrusion: A devil anticipates the character's melee attack and brings its wing down "just so" on the attacker's weapon. If the character fails a Speed defense roll, the weapon breaks. Either way, the attack fails to hit the devil.

DJINNI 7 (21)

Djinn inhabit unseen dimensions beyond the visible universe. Just like normal creatures, djinn are individuals, and they can be good, evil, or unconcerned about the fates and doings of others.

Motive: Unpredictable

Environment: Almost anywhere

Health: 35

Damage Inflicted: 9 points

Movement: Short; long when flying

Modifications: Knowledge of Arabian history as level 8

Combat: With a touch, a djinni can warp a victim's flesh, inflicting damage. Djinn can also use an action to send out a magitech "EMP burst" that renders all artifacts, machines, and lesser magic devices within short range inoperable for one minute. (If the item is part of a character's equipment, they can prevent this outcome by succeeding on a Speed defense roll.) Instead of disabling all devices in range, a djinni can instead take control of one item within range for one minute, if applicable.

A djinni can transform into a being of smoke and flame as its action. While in this form, it has +10 to Armor but can't attack foes. It gains the ability to fly a long distance each round and retains the ability to communicate normally. The first time each day that a djinni returns to physical form after having become smoke, it regains 25 points of health.

Some djinn have the ability to grant wishes, and a few are beholden to do so thanks to an ancient, unexplained agreement with other djinn. Those who grant wishes twist them against the asker, especially if a

wish is poorly worded or there are multiple ways to interpret it. The level of the effect granted is no greater than level 7, as determined by the GM, who can modify the effect of the wish accordingly. (The larger the wish, the more likely the GM will limit its effect.)

Interaction: When a djinni interacts with characters, it's narcissistic, certain in its own immense power, and unlikely to let slights pass. That said, low-tier characters could negotiate with one peacefully because even djinn have needs and desires.

Use: Agents of a foreign power retrieved a magic lamp from an ancient Arabian ruin. The PCs' job is to determine whether there is reason for alarm.

Loot: Most djinn carry a couple of cyphers, and some have a magic artifact useful in combat.

GM intrusion: When the character is touched by a djinni, instead of taking damage, the character is turned to smoke and fire and sent whirling off in a random direction. They lose their next turn and return to normal almost 300 feet (90 m) from where they started.

DRAGON 7 (21)

Dragons are exceptionally territorial, vain, and greedy. Apex predators, dragons must eat large meals on a regular basis. They prefer virgins, though they will settle for whoever, or whatever—such as horses or wild pigs—is available in a pinch. They love games of all sorts, especially when they get to consume the loser. Drawn to wealth and magic, dragons accumulate hoards of golden treasure. A dragon's hoard is not only an end in itself, but part of a never-ending contest between dragons of a certain age to see which one can accumulate the largest trove.

Motive: Self-aggrandizement, hungers for flesh, treasure collection

Environment: Dragons thrive where wilderness meets the civilized frontier.

Health: 45

Damage Inflicted: 10 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Short; long while flying

Modifications: Perception and riddles as level 8; Speed defense as level 6 due to size

Combat: A dragon can bite one target or claw two opponents in immediate range as a single action. When bitten, targets are also immobilized until they succeed on a Might defense roll to break free (or the dragon drops them).

Most dragons have one or more additional magical abilities they can bring to bear in combat, including the following.

Captivate: A dragon with this ability can psychically mesmerize a nondragon target in immediate range who fails an Intellect defense roll. A captivated target does the dragon's verbal bidding for one or more hours. Each time the target is confronted by a third party about its mental condition, the target is allowed another Intellect defense roll to break the effect.

Change Shape: A dragon with this ability can take the form of a human or similar humanoid as its action, or return to its regular shape. When so changed, the dragon's disguise is nearly impenetrable without special knowledge. As a human, the dragon is a level 5 creature.

Fiery Breath: A dragon can breathe a stream of fire up to long range, doing 7 points of damage to all targets within immediate range of each other. Targets who succeed on a Speed defense roll to avoid the full effect of the fire still take 3 points of damage. This ability cannot be used in consecutive rounds.

Interaction: Like the many hues of dragon scales, dragon personalities run the gamut from beastly thug to refined connoisseur. Some dragons lie with every smoky breath, others consider the least bit of dishonesty a personal failing, and most fall somewhere in between. All of them can be flattered and even charmed by someone with courtly manners and grace.

Use: A dragon confronts the PCs, challenging them to a riddle game. If the characters win, they get a cypher. If the dragon wins, the PCs owe it a favor to be specified later . . . unless the dragon is hungry now.

Loot: A dragon's hoard might contain 2d6 cyphers, hard currency equivalent to 1d6 exorbitant items, and possibly a few artifacts (but a hoard is usually well guarded).

GM intrusion: The dragon breathes fire while the character is caught in its mouth, which automatically inflicts maximum fire damage on them.

Fire ELEMENTAL 4 (12)

Searing flame in a vaguely humanoid shape, a fire elemental exists only to burn that which is not already ash. They sometimes spin into being where great conflagrations burn.

Motive: Burn

Environment: Anywhere fires can burn

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 4 to 7 points; see Combat

Movement: Short

Modifications: See Combat for escalating attack level modification.

Combat: A fire elemental attacks with a flaming limb. The more the elemental burns foes, the more powerful it grows. Its power increases according to the number of successful attacks (that dealt fire damage) it made on another creature during the previous minute.

0 successful attacks: deals 4 points of damage; attacks as level 4

1 successful attack: deals 5 points of damage; attacks as level 5

3 successful attacks: deals 6 points of damage; attacks as level 6

4+ successful attacks: deals 7 points of damage; attacks as level 7

If a fire elemental hasn't burned a foe within the last minute, its combat stats drop back to its level 4 baseline.

A fire elemental is immune to fire attacks but vulnerable to cold; every time it takes 1 point of cold damage, it takes 1 additional point of damage.

Interaction: Fire elementals are barely sapient and usually respond only to those who know spells able to command them. However, there's a chance (about 10%) that a fire elemental commanded to accomplish a particular task breaks free and instead burns whatever's around until it exhausts all possible fuel sources.

Use: A rash of fires leads some people to suspect that an arsonist is on the loose, but the truth is worse.

GM intrusion: A character hit by the fire elemental's attack catches on fire and takes 3 points of damage each round until they use an action patting, rolling, or smothering the flames.

EARTH ELEMENTAL 5 (15)

An excavation, a meteor fall, a still-shuddering earthquake—all these events can summon an earth elemental to take shape and expand the destruction further.

Motive: Crumble and break, reduce things to earth

Environment: Anywhere solid or earthen

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Immediate; short when burrowing

Combat: Earth elementals batter foes with heavy fists. They can also create earthquakes (no more than once every other round) that affect the ground within short range. Creatures standing in the area fall to the ground and take 5 points of damage on a failed Might defense roll.

An earth elemental is vulnerable to water. Any damage it takes while standing in or being doused in water ignores its Armor.

Interaction: Although brooding and slow to respond if encountered as immobile stone, earth elementals are intelligent. The ones that are summoned with a spell have about a 5% chance of breaking the geas and turning on their summoner.

Use: Oddly articulated monoliths were discovered high in the mountains around a shrine containing an ancient treasure. A merchant wants someone to investigate the monoliths in case they represent a trap. In fact, the monoliths are inactive earth elementals.

GM intrusion: A character within range of the earth elemental's earthquake attack must succeed on a Speed defense roll or be covered in an avalanche from a collapsing structure or cliff face.

ELEMENTAL, AIR 4 (12)

Air elementals are capricious pieces of air with simple minds. They spontaneously appear in clouds and high mountains, and often resemble an area of mist or a cloudlike humanoid shape.

Motive: Mischief and destruction

Environment: Anywhere the wind blows

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Long when flying

Modifications: Stealth as level 6

Combat: Air elementals slice foes up to a short distance away with blades of fierce wind, or use blasts of air to throw small objects. Once every other round, an air elemental can turn into a tornado-like vortex that inflicts 4 points of damage to all creatures within immediate range. In this form, the elemental gains +1 to Armor and an additional +2 to Armor against physical projectile weapons such as arrows and javelins. The elemental reverts to its normal form at the start of its next turn.

An air elemental can disperse itself over a short area as an action. In this form it is invisible, unable to attack, and can't be attacked except with area attacks. The elemental can remain in this form indefinitely, but must use an action to return to its normal form.

Air elementals are elusive opponents and hard to destroy. If an air elemental is reduced to 0 health, there is a 50 percent chance that it rejuvenates a few rounds later with 6 health. The elemental then continues to fight or flees to cause trouble elsewhere.

Interaction: Air elementals see and hear many things, but they are flighty and what they remember usually isn't important or relevant. They can be summoned with magic but don't like being controlled, and there is a 10 percent chance that they free themselves and strike out on their own.

Use: A safe mountain trail has become hazardous due to unseasonal winds that threaten to push travelers off a cliff. An old tree is surrounded by whispers of conversations that took place recently and has started hurling sticks and fruit at anyone who comes too close.

GM intrusion: A violent blast of wind disarms a character and sends whatever they were holding up to a long distance away (depending on the object's size and weight).

ELEMENTAL, THORN 6 (18)

The grisly sign of an active thorn elemental in areas of heavy woods or jungle is the presence of shriveled bodies dangling from vines, dead of strangulation and poison. Thorn elementals take form in areas dense with woody growth under threat by hatchet, axe, saw, and, sometimes, human-caused climate disruptions.

Motive: Defense of forests

Environment: Anywhere trees grow

Health: 36

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Immediate

Combat: Thorn elementals batter foes with thorny, vine-wrapped fists. Targets who suffer damage must make a successful Might defense roll or take 2 points of Speed damage from a paralytic poison transmitted by a thorn's prick. Worse, the poison continues to inflict 2 points of Speed damage each round until the victim succeeds at a Might defense roll.

As its action, a thorn elemental can disentangle its form and reassemble a new body anywhere within long range where trees and plants grow. A thorn elemental regains 2 points of health each time it travels in this fashion.

Interaction: Thorn elementals communicate through speech, though they generally disdain talking to creatures of the animal kingdom. Thorn elementals exist within a hierarchy; those that have a greater capacity for communication are also usually more powerful. Summoned thorn elementals have about a 5 percent chance of breaking the geas and turning on their summoner.

Use: Adventuring characters journey through a forest that is under threat of destruction by an encroachment of other humanoids. Thinking the PCs are part of the encroachers, a thorn elemental attacks them. If communication is opened, it might break off hostilities and instead ask the characters to help.

Loot: The bodies of those previously defeated by thorn elementals dangle from the forest or jungle canopy with all their former possessions. One or two might have a cypher and other tools and treasure.

Woody vine: level 4; Armor 1

GM intrusion: A character within short range of a thorn elemental must make a successful Speed defense roll or be hauled into the air by a vine noose around their neck. They can try to cut the woody vine or attempt a Might task to break free before they strangle. Each round after the first in which they fail to break the noose, they move down one step on the damage track.

ELEMENTAL, WATER 4 (12)

Water elementals are animate masses of water. When swimming, they are nearly indistinguishable from their surroundings, but when they have to move on dry land, they usually take the form of a curling wave, amorphous blob, or large puddle. They can spontaneously appear in locations with pristine salt or fresh water.

Motive: Flood, drown, and wash away

Environment: Anywhere there is flowing water

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short; long if swimming

Modifications: Swimming and aquatic maneuvers as level 6; stealth as level 6 when in water

Combat: Water elementals bash opponents with heavy limbs of water or spray jets of water out to short range.

Instead of a bashing attack, a water elemental can use its action to attempt to envelop, smother, and crush one opponent, who can resist with a Might defense roll. If the opponent fails, it takes 4 points of damage immediately and every round on the elemental's turn. Each following turn, the enveloped character must attempt a new Might defense roll every round or move one step down the damage track from drowning as the elemental forces itself into the creature's lungs. The creature can free itself with a Might defense roll. An elemental with an enveloped opponent can move up to a short distance as its action; a common tactic is to dive deep, release their opponent to drown normally, then return to its previous position to fight other opponents.

Any attack that inflicts 6 or more points of cold damage hinders a water elemental's actions on its next turn.

Interaction: Water elementals are somewhat intelligent but think very differently from humans, so they often seem distracted and dull. They are generally compliant when summoned with magic, but there is about a 5 percent chance that they break free of the spell and lash out against their summoner.

Use: Offerings left at a sacred pond have gone missing, and the water itself seems threatening. Garbage or dead bodies have polluted a water source, spawning an angry elemental that attacks everyone until the mess is cleaned up.

GM intrusion: The force of the elemental's attack knocks over a character, sweeps them a short distance away, or both.

ENTHRALLER 6 (18)

Hundreds of thousands of years ago, enthraller ancestors psychically dominated a group of interstellar spacefarers who had the misfortune to land on the enthraller homeworld. Leapfrogging technological prowess by mentally commandeering the know-how of every new species they encountered using their stolen space vessel, the aliens fashioned the Enthraller Dominion, which stretches across vast swaths of space, cemented by the psychic control.

Individual enthrallers are scary, but enthraller overlords are even more powerful thanks to technological aids. These include cranial circlets that give a single enthraller governor the ability to dominate a small city, solar-system-sized ring relays that boost their control across interstellar distances, and more.

Recently, a newly contacted species of aliens developed the technological means to resist the mental influence of the enthrallers. Now war bubbles across the Enthraller Dominion. Sometimes individual enthrallers, stripped of their technological enhancements as a consequence of this war, flee into virgin space, looking for new soldiers to dominate.

Motive: Domination of other creatures

Environment: Almost anywhere, alone or in groups of three

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 4 points; see Combat

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 4; perception and ability to detect falsehoods as level 8

Combat: An enthraller usually relies on dominated minions to make physical attacks on its behalf. An enthraller can make a psychic attack on a creature within short range. On a failed Intellect defense roll, the target acts as the enthraller mentally commands on its next action. If the same target is affected by this dominating attack a second time within a minute, the enthraller's mental control lasts for one minute.

Alternatively, as its action, an enthraller can emit a psychic burst that can target up to three creatures in short range. On a failed Intellect defense roll, a victim suffers 4 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) and is unable to

take actions on their subsequent turn. If the victim is attacked while so stunned, their defense rolls are hindered by two steps.

The enthraller's attack is a form of mental feeding. If it moves a PC down the damage track, the creature regains 4 points of health.

Interaction: An enthraller can communicate telepathically with characters within short range. It tries to mentally dominate whoever it runs across and will negotiate only with characters who are strong enough to harm it. Even if an enthraller makes a deal, it eventually reneges if it senses any advantage for doing so because it implicitly believes that other creatures are cattle.

Use: A spacecraft (or perhaps an escape pod) crash lands. Inside, a hurt enthraller lies in suspended animation. Investigators are unlikely to realize the enthraller's nature beforehand, but they certainly learn if they wake the alien.

Loot: Enthrallers wear light armor suited for their forms. They might have one or two cyphers and, rarely, an artifact that boosts their already-fearsome mental capabilities.

GM intrusion: The enthraller's intrusion into the character's mind stirs up forgotten memories. The character must deal with the contents of these memories and perhaps why they were repressed.

EVIL PRIEST 7 (21)

Evil priests are worshippers of evil gods, demons, devils, strange malevolent forces from beyond known dimensions, or even death itself. They lead cults, corrupt the innocent with lies and twisted ideologies, and enact the will of their patron in the mortal world. The most insidious ones are able to infiltrate good churches and secular organizations in order to tear them down from the inside.

Motive: Domination of others, divine rule

Environment: Almost anywhere that people live

Health: 28

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Deception, persuasion, and religious lore as level 8

Combat: Evil priests make one or two short-range magical attacks as an action, which are thematically appropriate to the god or entity they serve, such as blasts of hellfire, grasping shadowy tentacles, or disruptive necromantic energy. They often rely on zealous minions to protect them from melee opponents.

Priests usually know several spells, such as how to banish or control creatures from other dimensions, create an area of darkness, see and hear remote locations, speak with the dead, mesmerize or paralyze a person, cause blindness, or create a ward against energy damage. They also have the following magical abilities:

- Curse: The priest curses a foe within short range, hindering all of the foe's actions by two steps.
- Heal: The priest heals a touched creature for 10 health or removes an affliction such as a disease or curse.
- Necromancy: The priest uses a ten-minute ritual to animate up to four human-sized corpses as skeletons or zombies under their control. The undead revert to corpses after a day.
- Sacrifice: The priest uses a ten-minute ritual to kill a helpless, restrained, or unconscious creature of level 4 or higher, using its soul to grant one ally an asset on all actions and defenses for one day.
- Summon: Once per hour the priest can summon a demon or one level 3 or 4 creature (such as a giant snake, giant spider, or swarm of bugs). The summoned creature serves the priest for an hour before vanishing.

Swarm of bugs: level 3

- An evil priest usually has one or two combat-useful manifest cyphers and often has an artifact appropriate to their religion. Most also wear armor or have an ongoing defensive spell that grants them Armor.

Interaction: Evil priests tend to be knowledgeable, arrogant, and condescending toward heroes and members of rival faiths. They might strike a bargain to save their lives or the life of a valuable minion, or to gain an advantage later on.

Use: An evil priest is converting frightened peasants into followers, and turning those who refuse into zombie slaves. A new religious figure in the city is acting suspiciously, and members of rival faiths have been disappearing or turning up dead.

Loot: Evil priests usually have mundane treasures equivalent to three or four expensive items, a few useful manifest cyphers, and an artifact.

GM intrusions: The dying evil priest utters a curse that attempts to pull the character's soul into the afterlife with them, moving them one step down the damage track if they fail an Intellect defense roll.

The evil priest ignores, avoids, or immediately recovers from an attack that would have killed or greatly harmed them.

FAERIE 3 (9)

Faeries are magic creatures of music, mirth, tricks, and taunts. Some might only perform a silly song or follow people for a while, flitting around and asking questions like an annoying young child. Some faeries are crueler and delight in stealing clothing, equipment, or prized objects. And a few are downright malicious and, under the guise of a helpful guide or a pretty light in the distance, lure lost travelers to various dooms.

Motive: Unpredictable

Environment: Alone or in a flutter of three to twelve

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Immediate; long when flying

Modifications: Tasks related to performance and deception as level 5; Speed defense as level 5 due to size and quickness

Combat: A faerie can hurl damaging magic dust at any target within short range, but sometimes it wields tiny weapons such as bows, spears, or swords.

If a faerie is touched or struck by a melee weapon, more magic dust puffs away from the faerie and clouds the attacker, who must make a Speed defense roll or take the same amount of damage they just dealt to the faerie.

A faerie can see in the dark, but it can also emit bright light and appear as a glowing humanoid or an illuminated sphere.

Faeries regenerate 1 point of health per round while their health is above 0.

Some faeries can attempt to use a song or light display to charm others within short range. The target must succeed on an Intellect defense roll or fall into a suggestible state for one hour. During this period, the target can be led by the faerie at their regular movement rate. The target can be brought out of the spell early if they take damage or are heartily slapped and shaken for a round or two, causing the glamour to fade. A faerie can use this power once per minute.

Interaction: Faeries are mercurial creatures, but except for the malicious ones, they can be negotiated with, especially if offered sweets, wine, or other gifts. However, faerie attention spans are limited, so even one that means well could end up leaving the PCs in the lurch at just the wrong moment.

Use: The dancing light in the distance, leading curious PCs deeper and deeper into the dark woods, is a faerie. And the destination could be a wicked witch or other unpleasant location.

Loot: The tiny pouches that faeries carry are stuffed with forest bric-a-brac, but some of those pouches are ten times larger on the inside and might hold a handful of shiny coins or a cypher.

GM intrusion: Another faerie appears, and if the character fails a Speed defense roll, it flies off with their weapon or another important possession.

FALLEN ANGEL 5 (15)

Angels are normally associated with virtue and service to higher moral beings. But just like people, sometimes angels are tempted into impure acts. Those who stray too far over the line may fall from higher realms and be forced to walk the Earth in penance. This experience drives most fallen angels insane.

Fallen angel abilities wax and wane according to the position of the sun. During the day, a fallen angel seems almost sane (and is less dangerous), but at night, it is volatile and threatening to everyone.

Motive: Revenge (but on whom and for what isn't clear, even to the fallen angel)

Environment: Anywhere, sometimes living alone in the wilderness, other times walking the hard streets of large cities

Health: 25

Damage Inflicted: 6 points by day, 8 points at night

Armor: 2

Movement: Short; long when flying

Modifications: At night, perceptions and attacks as level 7

Combat: At night, a fallen angel can attack other creatures by projecting a long-range beam of burning light. Against foes within immediate range, the fallen angel manifests burning wings. A fallen angel can choose to make its attacks ignore Armor, but for each attack so modified, it loses 4 points of health.

On the rare occasion that a fallen angel is within immediate range of another of its kind, both regain 1 point of health per round.

By day, a fallen angel cannot project long-range attacks and has no visible wings with which to make melee attacks, though it may carry a melee weapon.

Interaction: By day, fallen angels are not automatically hostile, and they can be negotiated and reasoned with. They can seem truly angelic, though they are often confused and forgetful of their origin. But when night descends, fallen angels lose control of their faculties as they swell with rage and power. Unless a character directs a fallen angel toward another creature on which it can vent its wrath, the character becomes the object of the fury.

Use: A star slips down from the sky and lands in the country. The next day, travelers come upon a farm in the area and find everyone dead and burned. A trail of scorched earth leads up into the hills.

Loot: Fallen angels collect cyphers and usually have a few.

GM intrusion: A fallen angel's successful attack causes the character's cypher to detonate (if a grenade) or otherwise activate in a less-than-ideal fashion.

FUSION HOUND 3 (9)

In radiation-scoured wastelands, either creatures adapt to the deadly energies of their environment, or they die. Fusion hounds are mutant canines able to absorb unbelievable amounts of radiation and thrive on it. They roam in packs, killing and devouring everything they come upon.

A fusion hound's entire head appears to be a blast of flame, and gouts of dangerous radiation flare from its body.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Packs of three to eight can be found almost anywhere.

Health: 10

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Long

Modifications: Speed defense as level 4; stealth and climbing as level 2

Combat: Fusion hounds move very fast and use that speed to their advantage in combat. A hound can move a long distance and still attack as a single action. It can also use its action to run about in random patterns, hindering attacks against it by two steps.

A fusion hound's head is completely haloed in a seething mass of radioactive energy, so unlike traditional canines, it has no bite attack. Instead, it pounces on prey with its clawed forelimbs, which causes a burst of radiation to flare from its body, burning whatever it touches.

Anyone within close distance of a fusion hound for more than one round suffers 1 point of damage in each round after the first.

Interaction: Fusion hounds are animals. Creatures immune to radiation sometimes train the hounds to become guardians or hunting dogs, but such creatures are rare.

Use: An NPC delivering something the characters need never made it to the rendezvous. If they backtrack to where the NPC should have come from, the PCs are attacked by a pack of fusion hounds on the road. Clearly, the courier was attacked by the pack as well, and the characters must discover if the NPC is dead or merely injured, and where the package now lies.

GM intrusion: The hound flares with energy and the character must succeed on a Might defense task or go blind for ten minutes.

GHOST 4 (12)

Sounds with no apparent origin, such as the tap of footsteps on the stair, knocking behind the walls, crying from empty rooms, and haunting music, might be signs of a ghost. If the sound is accompanied by a sudden temperature drop and the breath of living creatures begins to steam, it's a certainty.

Ghosts are the spectral remnants of humans, which persist either as fragments of memory or as full-fledged spirits. Though their appearance varies between individuals, many appear somewhat translucent, washed out, or physically warped from their time spent as a phantom.

Motive: Unpredictable (but often seeking to complete unfinished business)

Environment: Almost anywhere

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Stealth as level 7; tasks related to frightening others as level 6

Combat: A ghost doesn't take damage from mundane physical sources, but it takes half damage from spells and attacks that direct energy, and full damage from weapons designed to affect spirits, psychic attacks, and similar attacks.

A ghost's touch inflicts freezing damage. Some ghosts can kill victims with fear. A ghost with this ability can attack all creatures within short range with a psychic display so horrible that targets who fail an Intellect defense roll take 4 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) and become terrified, freezing in place. In each subsequent round, a terrified victim can attempt an Intellect-based task to push away the fright. Each failed attempt moves the victim one step down the damage track. Not attempting to clear one's mind of fear counts as a failed attempt. Those killed by fear are marked by expressions of horror and hair that has turned white.

A ghost can move through solid objects of up to level 7 at will, although it can choose to pick up and manipulate objects if it focuses on them. Ghosts can also go into a state of apparent non-existence for hours or days at a time.

Interaction: Some ghosts are talkative, some don't know they're dead, some want help for a task they failed to accomplish in life, and some only rage against the living and want to bring those who yet breathe into the same colorless existence they endure.

Use: A ghost (that at first appears fully human) wants help in eradicating a guild of ghost hunters that has targeted it and a few others haunting an abandoned structure. The ghost promises to tell secrets of the afterlife to any who accept its strange offer.

Loot: A ghost usually doesn't carry objects, though some might have a keepsake (like an amulet showing the face of a loved one) or an artifact.

GM intrusion: The character must succeed on an Intellect defense roll or be possessed by the ghost until they succeed on an Intellect-based task to push it out. While possessed, the character acts just like the ghost did when it was alive.

GHOUL4 (12)

Ghouls spend almost as much time beneath the ground as corpses do, but ghouls are very much alive. Their bodies are hairless and so porcelain-smooth that their faces are sometimes mistaken for masks, albeit gore-smeared masks. Ghouls come to the surface at night to gather humanoid remains or steal those recently interred from their graves, though many prefer to eat from still-living victims.

Most ghouls are orgiastic eaters of human flesh, but a rare few ghoul populations are more refined. These wear clothes, have language and sophisticated customs, live in grand subterranean cities of their own design, and fight with milk-white blades of bone. These civilized ghouls claim to hold dominion over the remains of all humans, according to ancient custom, even if they only sometimes assert that privilege. They eat the dead in order to absorb residual memories left in the corpses.

Motive: Hunger for dead flesh; knowledge (in certain rare cases)

Environment: Anywhere above ground at night, usually in groups of three or more, or in subterranean lairs

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Two areas of knowledge as level 5

Combat: Ghoul saliva contains a paralytic agent. Ghoul bites (and weapons used by ghouls) inflict damage and, on a failed Might defense roll, render the target paralyzed for one minute. A paralyzed target can attempt a Might-based task each round to regain mobility, but for the next minute, attacks, defenses, and movement tasks are hindered.

Ghouls can see in the dark. They're blind in full daylight, but civilized ghouls who travel to the surface carry lenses that cover their eyes, allowing them to see without penalty in full sunlight.

Interaction: Common ghouls can't be negotiated with, though a rare civilized ghoul is an excellent linguist. These latter are willing to deal in return for the body of someone who was knowledgeable or who kept valuable secrets in life.

Use: If a PC needs a piece of information not otherwise obtainable, a trip down into a ghoul city might be worthwhile, for the creatures are rumored to keep lightless libraries below the earth that store knowledge once known by humans.

Loot: If the PCs defeat a group of civilized ghouls, they might find a cypher and a few sets of black goggles that allow the wearer to look directly at the sun and see it as a pale circle.

GM intrusion: The ghoul spits in the character's eye, directly introducing the paralytic into the victim's bloodstream. The victim's Might defense roll to avoid becoming paralyzed is hindered.

GIANT 7 (21)

Violent storms, earthquakes, typhoons, and other natural disasters draw giants. Standing 20 to 30 feet (6 to 9 m) tall, giants delight in rampaging through the middle of such calamities, creating even more destruction. Some giants grow so powerful that they can trigger natural disasters on their own.

Motive: Destruction

Environment: Underground, deserts, mountaintops, and similar desolate areas

Health: 40

Damage Inflicted: 9 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 5 due to size; breaks and throws objects as level 8; sees through deceptions and tricks as level 3

Combat: Giants smash foes with their fists, possibly catching up to three human-sized targets with the same attack if all the targets are in immediate range of each other.

If a giant attacks a single target, they can choose to do regular damage or to grab hold of the victim, dealing 4 points of damage instead. On their turn, the victim can attempt a Might defense roll to struggle out of the grip, a Speed defense roll to slip out, or an Intellect-based task to distract the giant. If the victim fails, the giant throws the victim as high and as far as they can on their next turn. Damage on impact varies, depending on the environment, but a victim takes an average of 10 points of ambient damage.

A few giants can generate storms, tidal waves, earthquakes, and similar phenomena that can lash an area up to 1,000 feet (300 m) across for up to a minute, inflicting 3 points of damage each round to all creatures and objects not protected by shelter designed to withstand a storm (though few shelters protect against an earthquake).

Interaction: Most giants are not very bright. When a giant is rampaging, someone could attempt to distract them by singing, juggling, or doing some other trick, which some giants will pause to watch for at least one or two rounds.

Use: A giant came down out of the mountains and laid waste to half the nearby village. Survivors will pay someone to venture into the giant's mountain lair and destroy the creature.

Loot: Individual giants carry little, but giant lairs may contain currency equivalent to 1d6 expensive items, 1d6 cyphers, and a couple of artifacts.

GM intrusion: The giant's blow sprains one of the character's limbs, making it useless for ten minutes.

GIANT RAT 3 (9)

Giant rats are as large as big attack dogs, just as vicious, and more wily. Some giant rats are the lone matriarchs of a pack of ordinary level 1 rats, and others are just one of several making up a colony of oversized rodents. Like their smaller cousins, giant rats are known for harboring virulent disease.

Motive: Defense, reproduction

Environment: Anywhere in ruins or sewers, in groups of one to seven

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short; long when jumping

Modifications: Perception as level 4; tasks related to overcoming obstacles and puzzles as level 5

Combat: Victims damaged by a giant rat's diseased teeth and claws take 4 points of damage and, on a failed Might defense roll, are infected with a level 5 disease. Within twelve hours, the victim's lymph glands swell, creating visible buboes. Every twelve hours thereafter, the victim must succeed on a Might defense roll or take 5 points of ambient damage.

Interaction: Giant rats stubbornly pursue prey, but they flee if that prey proves to be too strong.

Use: A contact of the PCs dies of plague before they can deliver an important message. The PCs will have to backtrack the contact's movements to discover what they wanted to say, which leads to a giant rat colony.

GM intrusion: A swarm of twelve ordinary rats—each level 1, but acting like a level 3 swarm—is summoned by the high-pitched squeaking of a giant rat.

GIANT SNAKE 4 (12)

Those about to stumble into the presence of a giant snake at least 50 feet (15 m) long are warned by the skin it shed and discarded and by the cracked, slippery bones of digested victims.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Anywhere a giant snake can lurk, including jungles, sewers, caves, and spacecraft access tubes

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 5 points or more; see Combat

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception and stealth as level 6; Speed defense as level 3 due to size

Combat: A giant snake bites foes, preferably from ambush, hindering the target's Speed defense by two steps. If it succeeds, the snake's bite deals 8 points of damage for that attack. On a failed Might defense roll, a bite also inflicts 3 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor). A giant snake may coil around a sleeping, stunned, or debilitated victim. Caught victims automatically take 5 points of crushing damage each round until they break free.

Giant snakes lose their perception and stealth modifications in cold climates and when attacked with abilities that reduce the temperature. Thus, the creatures retreat from cold.

Interaction: A giant snake is a predator that regards other creatures as food, though it ignores them when it is already busy digesting a meal.

Use: Characters note something amiss as they glimpse lambent eyes peering from the darkness, glaring as if seeking to pin victims in place with cold terror.

Loot: A giant snake's droppings or gullet might hold a few cyphers and possibly an artifact that the creature could not digest.

GM intrusion: The snake's venom affects the character more strongly. Instead of merely inflicting Speed damage, it also paralyzes the character for one minute, though after a couple of rounds, the victim can make another Might defense roll to throw off the effects of the poison early.

GIANT SPIDER 3 (9)

Giant spiders result most commonly from radioactive accidents, magic, or genetic manipulation. Whatever their origin, they're terrifying hunters large enough to predate people. The creatures range from the size of a large dog to the size of a large horse.

Motive: Hungers for blood

Environment: Anywhere webs can be spun in the dark

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short; long when traveling on their webs

Modifications: Perception as level 5; Speed defense as level 4 due to quickness

Combat: A giant spider's envenomed fangs inflict 3 points of damage, plus 3 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) if a victim fails a Might defense roll. Debilitated victims are not killed but instead cocooned and hung for later dining. Giant spider webs (level 4) can hold victims immobile and unable to take actions until they manage to break free.

Giant spiders lose their perception and Speed defense modifications in bright light and thus often retreat from intense illumination.

Interaction: Most giant spiders are simple predators and react accordingly.

Use: Giant spider webs can infest unlit alleys, dungeon corridors, dark forests, and darkened hallways of decommissioned genetic labs.

Loot: Cocooned corpses of previous victims hanging in a giant spider's web sometimes contain all manner of valuables, including cyphers.

GM intrusion: Giant spider eggs hatch, and a level 3 swarm of tiny spiders attacks the character.

Goblin 1 (3)

Goblins are wicked, grasping, and perversely resourceful. Usually no larger than children, they can seem like pesky rabble, but that illusion hides something altogether more cunning. Tribe members work together to accomplish their goals of murder, kidnapping, and theft.

Motive: Greed and theft

Environment: Tunnels and caves, usually in groups of ten or more

Health: 3

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Tasks related to perception, stealth, and setting traps as level 5

Combat: Goblins attack from the shadows with ambushes and hit-and-run tactics. When they have surprise, they attack as level 4 creatures and deal 2 additional points of damage, and they attempt to draw larger prey into level 5 traps they've previously set. They often flee in the face of real danger.

Interaction: Goblins are lying tricksters but can be cowed into cooperating for short periods.

Use: Thieves and murderers, goblins are foes to all, even rival goblin tribes.

Loot: Aside from weapons, each goblin carries a personal stash, including bones, shiny rocks, sticks, and other bits of worthless trash, plus currency equivalent to an inexpensive item.

GM intrusion: The goblin poisoned its knife. If struck, the character must make a Might defense roll or immediately move one step down the damage track.

GOLEM 6 (18)

Animate creatures of stone created by magic for a specific purpose, golems usually serve as guardians. However, they may also serve as soldiers, couriers, and banner-bearers. Golems that have accomplished their task may spend years without moving, like statuary posed in unexpected places—stained, eroded, and forlorn. But if disturbed, a golem rumbles back to movement and attempts to restart the last task assigned to it by its maker.

Motive: Seeks to fulfill the commands of its creator

Environment: Anywhere that needs a sturdy magical guardian

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 5

Movement: Short

Modifications: Intellect defense as level 2; Speed defense as level 4 due to slowness

Combat: Skilled with large two-handed weapons, golems inflict 2 additional points of damage (total of 8 points) when using them. Golems cannot be stunned or dazed. They are immune to most poisons and disease, and 2 of their 5 points of Armor protect against ambient damage (environmental damage, heat, cold, falling, and so on).

On the other hand, golems are activated by light, even light as dim as a candle. In complete darkness, a golem is blind and suffers penalties to attack and defend normally. A golem subject to complete darkness may choose to freeze in place like a statue. When one does so, its Armor increases to 10 (and Armor against ambient damage increases to 5), but it can take no actions, including purely mental actions. Unless something can damage the golem through its Armor, it remains frozen indefinitely or until light returns.

Even if a golem is completely destroyed, the rubble of its form slowly reassembles over the course of three days, unless that rubble is ground to the finest gravel and spread widely.

Interaction: Most golems can't speak. Those that can are mournful, and a few have become cruel in their isolation, but at heart, all are lonely. Many are also tired of their stone existence, in which they can move but not really feel, and they wish for some sort of final end.

Use: Powerful sorcerers sometimes create golems and press them into service with yet more spells. These golems prove to be tough bodyguards, but sometimes the futility of such service overcomes a golem and it turns on the sorcerer, breaking free of the binding spells in its rage over being denied the peace of death.

GM intrusion: The character hit by the golem is also grabbed and headbutted for 6 additional points of damage. The victim must break or slip free, or else they remain in the golem's grip.

GORGON 5 (15)

Statues littering the grounds outside a ruin are meant to deter savvy robbers and explorers. The statues, ranging in size from birds to warriors astride steeds, all depict creatures in states of fright and pain, the final image of death. These pieces are not the work of a fevered mind, but the fates of those who braved a gorgon's lair. Gorgons were humans once. After they offended the gods with their vanity, they were transformed into hideous monsters. A gorgon has the upper body of a human of perfect form and physique, but the lower body of a giant serpent, complete with rattling tail. One who dares look at a gorgon's face can see traces of the old beauty beneath a weary veneer, darkened by hatred. Instead of hair, serpents crown a gorgon's head, snapping and hissing at anyone who draws near. Yet the most terrible aspect of a gorgon is its gaze, which can turn any creature to stone.

Motive: Isolation, defense

Environment: Alone, sequestered in the isolated ruins of old cities and castles

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short

Combat: A gorgon has a long-range bow attack. Since creatures that see the gorgon often turn to stone, it must take down its prey at long range so it can get fresh meat. In close combat, a gorgon lashes out with a long dagger or, rarely, a sword. As part of the action the gorgon uses to attack, the serpents on its head can also attack one target within immediate distance. A target that fails its Speed defense roll takes 2 points of damage from the bite and must immediately make a Might defense roll to resist the poison (which deals 4 additional points of Speed damage that ignores Armor).

Anyone within short range of a gorgon who meets its gaze and fails a Might defense roll turns to stone. In combat, when a character within short distance attacks the gorgon, they must avert their gaze (which hinders the attack by two steps) or make a Might defense roll. On a failure, they take 5 points of ambient damage as their flesh partly mineralizes. If the character is killed by this damage, they are turned to stone.

Some gorgons carry a couple of cyphers and perhaps an artifact that they can use in combat.

Interaction: Bitterness consumes gorgons. They lead lonely lives, cut off from everyone they have loved. Negotiating with one would be something of a feat.

Use: A gorgon's head retains its power to petrify for several days after being cut from the creature. The PCs might brave the gorgon so they can use its head to defeat an even more powerful foe.

Loot: A gorgon typically has a few cyphers and may have an artifact as well.

GM intrusion: A character glimpses a gorgon's eyes, and a sheen of stone covers their body for one minute, during which time they gain +1 to Armor but can't move farther than an immediate distance in one round.

GREY 4 (12)

Greys are enigmatic creatures born of alien stars (or dimensions) who have learned to move across the vast distances that bridge neighboring star systems. The creatures descend through the atmosphere under the cover of night to abduct specimens for study and return the victims later after a thorough examination. Returned abductees are usually befuddled and confused, and they retain little memory of what happened to them. Victims of the greys' examination frequently sport strange marks on their flesh, oddly shaped wounds, gaps where teeth used to be, and strange or unknown metal lodged somewhere under the skin.

A grey stands 3 feet (1 m) tall. It has a narrow body with skinny limbs and a large, bulbous head. Two large black eyes, almond shaped, dominate a face that has only a suggestion of a nose and a narrow mouth. Greys wear skintight uniforms, carry numerous instruments to study their environments, and keep a weapon or two for protection.

Motive: Knowledge

Environment: Greys land their spacecraft in remote areas, where they have minimal risk of discovery.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: All tasks related to knowledge as level 6; Speed defense as level 5 due to size and quickness

Combat: A grey carries a powerful ray emitter that can burn holes through solid steel. The grey can use the emitter to attack targets within long range. Against dangerous opponents, a grey can use an action to activate a personal shield that encapsulates it in a bubble of force. The shield gives it +3 to Armor, but while the shield is active, the grey can't fire its ray emitter.

Greys are scientists, but cautious ones. Leaving a trail of corpses as evidence of their existence isn't their preferred mode of operation. For this reason, one grey in every group has a memory eraser. When this grey activates the device, each target other than a grey within short range must succeed on an Intellect defense roll or become stunned for one minute, taking no action (unless attacked, which snaps the victim out of the condition). When the effect wears off naturally, the target has no recollection of encountering little grey creatures.

Interaction: Greys are curious about the places they visit but reluctant to move or act in the open. Secretive and mysterious, they prefer to observe creatures from afar and, on occasion, pick them up for closer inspection. Someone who offers a grey true knowledge might be treated as an equal rather than a lab animal.

Use: The PCs are called to investigate a series of disappearances of animals and people. One by one, the abductees return, usually in odd places, and always bearing physical markings that suggest they were subjected to invasive procedures. To protect others from a similar fate, the PCs must catch the abductors in the act.

Loot: A grey has one or two cyphers and might have a memory eraser that works as described under Combat (depletion roll of 1–2 on a 1d10).

GM intrusion: A grey's ray emitter suffers a terrible mishap and explodes. The device kills the grey and destroys its body completely. For the next day, creatures that come within a short distance of where the grey died take 4 points of ambient damage from the psychic radiation each round they remain there.

HAG 6 (18)

Hags are evil magical creatures distantly related to the fey. They resemble withered ancient humans with obvious inhuman features—dead eyes, green or purple skin, metal teeth, webbed fingers, and seaweed-like hair are common traits. They love corrupting pure and innocent things, and feast on the dreams and flesh of their victims.

Motive: Power, treachery

Environment: Forests, swamps, mountains, and unpleasant natural locations

Health: 25

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Lying, haggling, magical lore, mimicking voices, and Intellect defense as level 7

Combat: Hags can attack with their iron-hard claws and teeth, but often rely on their magic abilities in combat. Hags can breathe water, and usually have three or more of the following abilities:

- **Arcane blast:** Use magical energy to blast one foe within short range and inflict 6 points of damage, or divide this energy (and damage) among several foes as the hag sees fit (each foe makes their own Speed defense roll against this attack).
- **Change shape:** Transform into a humanoid or common animal, or return to their own form.
- **Curse:** Curse a creature within long range, hindering all physical actions by two steps.
- **Fear:** Terrify all creatures within short range who look upon them, causing the creatures to flee for one minute if they fail an Intellect defense roll.

- Illusion: Create an illusion affecting a small area that includes light, sound, and smell. They can use this to disguise themselves as any humanoid creature (such as a human, dwarf, or elf). Changing or maintaining the illusion is not an action.
- Invisibility: Turn invisible for ten minutes. When invisible, they are specialized in stealth and Speed defense tasks.
- Murderous glare: Glare at one opponent, causing bloody wounds that inflict 6 points of damage if the creature is within short range (3 points if within long range).
- Question: Get an answer to a very simple, general question about a creature or place within 1 mile (1.5 km).
- Scrying eye: View any familiar location within 1 mile as if they were observing it directly.
- Sleep: Make a creature fall asleep for one minute. Damage or loud noises will wake the creature.

Three or more allied hags form a coven, which allows them to use each other's magical abilities, and usually grants the coven (when working together) one or two additional abilities.

Interaction: Hags are evil, greedy, hateful, and cruel. They rarely do things for others unless they benefit in some way, and they like to trick fools into dangerous tasks that end up profiting the hag instead of anyone else. If shown proper respect and bribed or paid, a hag can be a valuable source of lore.

Use: The smell of cakes lures children to a mysterious woodland shack. The hag of the swamp is said to kill anyone who enters their territory without carrying a specific gift.

Loot: In addition to coins and jewels, a hag usually has several scrolls or potions and may have an artifact.

GM intrusion: A creature becomes afraid and reluctant to oppose the hag, hindering all actions against the hag by two steps for one day.

HARPY 3 (9)

A harpy is a hideous, filthy creature with the body of a large vulture and the neck and head of an ugly human. Their breath reeks of decay, their wings and talons drip with an unpleasant oil, and their eyes shed acrid tears. They love to torment people and lure them to their deaths.

Motive: Hungers for flesh, causing anguish

Environment: Coastline, forest, and mountains

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short; long when flying

Modifications: Perception and Speed defense as level 4

Combat: Harpies are fast and strong, capable of carrying off a light adult human. They attack with their long talons.

Anything a harpy touches becomes fouled with their smelly fluids, and one harpy energetically flapping their wings is enough to contaminate an immediate area. Their fluids are repulsive but not directly harmful, and the smell persists even after a casual washing. Any food touched by harpy filth is inedible to anyone but a harpy. Creatures with a sensitive sense of smell (such as dogs and wolves) are hindered when within a short distance of a harpy. It is common for a group of harpies to attack a campsite or festival, spread their stink over everything, and fly away with whatever food they can carry.

A harpy can sing a weird, entrancing song that hypnotizes whoever hears it. Anyone within long range who hears the song must make an Intellect defense roll or stop whatever they are doing and attempt to approach

the harpy. If the creature comes within an immediate distance of a singing harpy, they stand there dumbly even as the harpy attacks them. The creature can make another attempt to break free each round on its turn, and taking damage from anything other than a singing harpy allows them another attempt to break free. Five or more harpies can work together on the same song (treat as a level 5 effect). Harpies are cruel and have been known to lead an entranced creature into a pit, off a cliff, or over the railing of a ship.

Interaction: Other than their singing, harpies do not usually speak with other creatures. They are more likely to jeer and screech at people like an angry bird than try to communicate.

Use: A flock of harpies torments a village during its harvest festival, ruining the celebration and some of the food set aside for the winter. Sailors speak of a lonely island where an old, blind king starves because harpies steal or foul any food set out for him.

Loot: A harpy nest may have one or two cyphers or other valuables, but the items will smell disgusting unless carefully washed.

GM intrusion: A harpy snatches something a character is wearing or carrying on a failed Speed defense roll. The harpy throws away or flees with the stolen item

HOLLOW KNIGHT 4 (12)

In haunted castles and among the armies mustered by those with power over life and death, sometimes walk hollow knights. These animated suits of armor move just like living people, and many who encounter these dread revenants mistake them for living foes only to realize in horror that there's nothing inside except for the memory of the warrior that once donned the suit. Brought into being by binding the spirit of a dead warrior to its panoply, hollow knights behave in much the same way they did in life—disciplined, loyal, and battle ready. Clad head to toe in full plate armor, with battered shields strapped to their arms and rusty swords gripped in lobster gauntlets, the knights stand ready to face any foe, heedless of the danger, driven to serve the necromancer that made them. Hollow knights might ride on the backs of skeletal steeds and wield lances.

Motive: Obedience to its master

Environment: Anywhere

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Short; long while mounted on a skeletal steed

Skeletal steed: level 4

Modifications: Resists fear and intimidation as level 10

Combat: A hollow knight usually fights with a sword or mace.

When mounted on a steed, a hollow knight charges its enemies whenever possible. As an action, its steed moves a short distance, and the hollow knight can make a single attack at any point during this movement. When attacking in this way, the knight inflicts 7 points of damage.

A hollow knight is fearless and fights until destroyed or ordered to pull back. The magic animating its armor is slow to fade, so armor components may continue to twitch and jerk even after the knight has fallen. Usually, when defeated, the suit of armor falls apart, and wisps of grey smoke curl up from the remains.

Interaction: Hollow knights cannot speak. They obey any orders given to them by their creators.

Use: The necromancer or other magician that binds the spirit to the armor also imbues the armor with specific commands—tasks the knight must carry out until destroyed. Some knights may stand guard at citadels or

mansions, keeping a vigil until their armor finally falls apart. Others are more active and may function as the core of a dark wizard's army.

GM intrusion: When a hollow knight is destroyed, a gauntlet flies up, grabs a character, and won't let go. A difficulty 7 Might task is required to pry it loose

HYDRA 7 (21)

This mythological reptile has five writhing serpent heads, each of which constantly exhales a venomous plume. Well over 20 feet (6 m) long from the tip of its longest head to its thrashing tail, the toxic beast's most discomfiting feature is its magical ability to sprout new heads when it's wounded. Some hydras dwell on land, others in water. Most seem to have been set as guardians of important places by higher powers, which is probably why they're so difficult to kill.

Motive: Hungers for flesh, defend a location

Environment: Swamps, coasts, and forests

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short when walking or swimming

Modifications: Perception as level 8 due to its many heads; Speed defense as level 5 due to size

Combat: Even approaching a hydra is dangerous; the air around it is poisoned by its venomous breath. Each round a creature is within immediate range of a hydra, they must succeed on a Might defense task or take 1 point of Speed damage (ignores Armor).

All five of a hydra's heads can simultaneously bite foes in immediate range. If three or more heads coordinate their attack, the heads make one attack as a single level 9 creature dealing 9 points of damage. A target bitten by the venomous hydra must also succeed on a Might defense task or take an additional 2 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor).

Whenever the hydra takes 4 or more points of damage from a single attack, a healing pulse surges through the creature a round later. The pulse returns the health just subtracted due to the attack and triggers the immediate growth of two additional heads that sprout from the creature. (The same thing happens if one of the creature's snakelike heads is decapitated.) The new heads are just as effective as the original ones in a fight. Fire, electrical, and other extreme energy attacks do not trigger the healing pulse and head genesis.

Interaction: A hydra is a cunning predator, but not intelligent. It can't bargain or negotiate.

Use: The PCs investigate an ancient ruin hoping to find artifacts of the gods. A hydra saw them enter and trails them through the crumbling structure at a considerable distance, waiting for them to take a rest or become otherwise distracted before attacking.

Loot: Hydras sometimes collect cyphers and artifacts in their lair, or failing that, they guard something of value.

GM intrusion: The character reacts poorly to the poison in the air or a bite and goes into helpless convulsions for one round if they fail a Might defense task.

JOTUNN (NORSE GIANT)

Jotunns are a type of giant—large, somewhat intelligent, bad-tempered, and cultured in their own way, but generally hostile to humans and other “little folk.” Jotunns range from 9 to 20 feet (3 to 6 m) tall, are strong, have long hair, and wear armor and use weapons like humans do. Some are hideous, some are attractive by

human standards, and some have multiple heads. They live in caves, lodges, or large castles. There are two main types of jotunns: fire and frost.

JOTUNN, FIRE 6 (18)

Fire jotunns are often called fire giants. Their skin is coal-grey or black; their hair is red or gold and may be metal or actual flames. They prefer hot mountainous climates (particularly volcanoes), wear plate armor, and use greatswords that glow with the natural heat of their bodies.

Motive: Destruction, hungers for flesh, honor

Environment: Hot mountains, volcanic areas, supernatural fires

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 6 points plus 3 points from fire

Armor: 3 (immune to fire)

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 5 due to size; breaks and throws objects as level 8

Combat: A fire jotunn uses weapons appropriate to its size (which would be two-handed for a human but can be wielded one-handed by the giant), inflicting 6 points of damage plus another 3 points of ambient fire damage conducted from the jotunn's body. Jotunns throw boulders up to very long range, inflicting 6 points of damage plus 3 points of fire damage.

A jotunn can inflict 1 point of fire damage with a touch, and anyone touching it without protection against fire takes damage as if the jotunn had touched them. A slain fire jotunn and its equipment are too hot to safely touch for several minutes.

Fire jotunns are immune to fire damage, but take additional damage from cold (equal to the attack's normal damage, up to a maximum of 5 additional points of cold damage).

Fire jotunn leaders sometimes have magical powers, usually related to earth and fire.

Interaction: Fire jotunns tend to be hostile, but they may agree to a nonlethal challenge to allow visitors to pass through their land or join them for a feast.

Use: A fire jotunn decides to cause trouble for intruders in its territory. A clan of jotunns wages war against a fortified village or town, hurling boulders, starting fires, and stealing livestock.

Loot: Jotunns like fine things, and their homes usually have utensils, plates, weapons, and trophies made of precious metals and decorated with gems. They may have cyphers, and a leader may carry an artifact.

GM intrusion: The jotunn's attack inflicts a serious burn, making a limb useless for an hour or until healed.

JOTUNN, FROST 6 (18)

Frost jotunns are often called frost giants or ice giants. Their skin is pale white, pink, or blue, and their hair is usually white, pale blond, or actual ice. They prefer cold mountains and tundra, wear chainmail and furs, and use metal axes that channel powerful cold from their bodies.

Motive: Destruction, hungers for flesh, honor

Environment: Cold mountains and plains

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 6 points plus 3 points from cold

Armor: 2 (immune to cold)

Movement: Short; long when skiing

Modifications: Speed defense as level 5 due to size; breaks and throws objects as level 8

Combat: A frost jotunn uses weapons appropriate to its size (which would be two-handed for a human but can be wielded one-handed by the giant), inflicting 6 points of damage plus another 3 points of ambient cold damage conducted from the jotunn's body. Jotunns throw boulders or chunks of ice up to very long range, inflicting 6 points of damage plus 3 points of cold damage.

A jotunn can inflict 1 point of cold damage with a touch, and anyone touching it without protection against cold takes damage as if the jotunn had touched them. A slain frost jotunn and its equipment are too cold to safely touch for several minutes.

Frost jotunns are immune to cold damage, but take additional damage from fire (equal to the attack's normal damage, up to a maximum of 5 additional points of fire damage).

Frost jotunn leaders sometimes have magical powers, usually related to illusions and weather.

Interaction: Frost jotunns tend to be hostile, but if in a generous mood, they may allow visitors to dine with them or rest in their halls. Once they grant someone hospitality, they are loath to break it unless they are attacked, robbed, or tricked.

Use: A frost jotunn throws a boulder just to be threatening. A clever jotunn offers to share a story in exchange for food and conversation. A clan of jotunns uses the cover of a storm to raid a village.

Loot: Jotunns like fine things, and their homes usually have utensils, plates, weapons, and trophies made of precious materials and decorated with gems. They may have cyphers, and a leader may carry an artifact.

GM intrusion: The jotunn's attack numbs one of the character's limbs, hindering all actions with it by two steps until it is healed.

KAIJU 10 (30)

Kaiju come in a variety of shapes, but all share one difficult-to-ignore quality: mind-blowing size. Appearances of these colossal creatures are rare events that usually don't last for more than a few days. In that sense, they're akin to hundred-year storms and at least as destructive. When they emerge, they're attracted by artificial structures, the more densely situated and elaborate the better, which they set to smashing with a vengeance. It's hard to judge the size of things so far outside normal scale, but good estimates put most kaiju at over 300 feet (90 m) in height.

Kaiju rely primarily on their strength and mass, but many have some additional trick or ability that sets them apart from their kin, which usually translates into even more devastation.

The other quality all kaiju share is the talent of hiding after a rampage by diving into a nearby sea or burrowing deep into the earth. Sometimes the same kaiju will appear again days, months, years, or decades later, attacking the same location or someplace entirely new.

Motive: Destruction

Environment: Usually near communities containing many high structures

Health: 140

Damage Inflicted: 18 points

Armor: 5

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 8 due to size

Combat: A kaiju can punch, kick, or deliver a tail or tentacle lash at something within long range. Damage is inflicted on the target and everything within short range of the target, and even those that succeed on a Speed defense roll take 7 points of damage.

Kaiju heal quickly, usually at a rate of 2 points per round.

Kaiju are rare and devastating enough that most are dubbed with a unique identifier by survivors. The entry for each creature below notes only where it varies from the base creature described above.

Rampagion: This kaiju has been estimated to be almost 1,000 feet (300 m) high. Once per day, it can make a charging trample attack, dealing its damage in a line 300 feet (90 m) wide and 2 miles (3 km) long. Rampagion has 10 Armor and deals 20 points of damage with a physical attack (or 8 points if a victim makes a successful Speed defense roll).

Suneko: This kaiju's body, which resembles a cross between a lion and a lizard, is so hot that its skin glows like red coals, its mane like the sun's corona, and its eyes like beaming searchlights. Suneko automatically deals 10 points of damage to everyone within immediate range. The creature can emit twin rays of plasma from its eyes in a focused beam that can reach as far as the horizon, which from Suneko's height above the ground is about 22 miles (35 km). When it makes its eyebeam attack, it stops emitting killing heat in immediate range for about one minute.

Interaction: Most PCs can't directly interact with a kaiju unless they have some special device or association allowing them to get the attention of one of the massive creatures. Doing so could give the characters a chance to trick or lure the beast, or maybe even persuade one kaiju to fight another.

Use: After seeing the devastation caused by a kaiju, the PCs might decide (or be asked) to find a way to stop a projected future appearance by the same creature.

GM intrusion:

The character gains the direct attention of the kaiju. If the kaiju attacks the character, They are awarded 5 XP, only 1 of which they have to give to a friend.

KILLER CLOWN 5 (15)

A clown—whether it's a doll or what seems to be a person wearing clown makeup—could be entirely benign. But if you see one sitting alone in a dark room, lying under your bed, or gazing up at you through the sewer grate in the street, it might be a killer clown. Killer clowns might be evil spirits possessing someone or an insane person living out a homicidal fantasy. Either way, they're as dangerous as anything you'll ever likely meet. If you see a clown, run. Because it might be a killer.

Motive: Homicide

Environment: Almost anywhere

Health: 25

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Detecting falsehoods, deception, and persuasion as level 7

Combat: A killer clown attempts to deceive its victim into believing that the clown is a friend. In fact, the clown is setting up an ambush where the victim can be strangled to death in private. When a killer clown successfully attacks, it inflicts 5 points of damage and locks its hands around the victim's neck. In each round that the victim does not escape, it suffers 5 points of damage from being strangled.

Some killer clowns know tricks that border on the supernatural. Such a clown may do one of the following as its action during combat.

d6	Clown Trick
1	Reveal a secret that one character is keeping from one or more of their allies.
2	Poke target in the eyes as a level 6 attack, blinding target for one minute.
3	Activate a trapdoor beneath victim that drops them 20 feet (6 m) into a cellar or basement.
4	Disappear into secret door or hatch and reappear somewhere hidden within short range.
5	Jab target in the throat as a level 6 attack; resulting coughing fit causes target to lose next action.
6	Down an elixir or energy drink that heals the killer clown of all damage sustained.

Interaction: A killer clown is all jokes, magic tricks, and juggling, until it decides it's time to strike.

Use: The creepy circus that just pulled into town is guarded by a killer clown, as late-night investigators soon learn.

Loot: A killer clown might have one or two cyphers in the form of a joy buzzer, cards, and cheap trinkets.

GM intrusion: The clown snatches a weapon, cypher, or other object from the character's hand as a level 6 attack, and if successful, immediately uses it on the character.

KILLING WHITE LIGHT 5 (15)

A killing white light isn't a subtle hunter. At a distance, the creature is an eye-watering point of brilliance. When it closes in, it is nothing less than blinding, though its emanation isn't warm. Despite the blazing intensity, a killing white light is as cold as starlight on a December night, sapping heat and life from living things caught in its radiance.

By day, a killing white light is usually inactive. During this period, the creature hibernates in darkened areas, as if unwilling or unable to compete against the sun.

Motive: Eliminate organic life

Environment: Almost anywhere dark

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short when flying

Combat: An active (glowing) killing white light can attack one target within immediate range each round with a pulse of its brilliant nimbus. A character who fails a Speed defense roll against the attack takes damage and experiences a cooling numbness. A victim killed by the creature is rendered into so much blowing ash, though their clothing and equipment are unharmed.

As it attacks, a killing white light emits a blinding nimbus of illumination that affects all creatures within short range. Targets in the area must succeed on a Might defense roll each round or be blinded for one round. A character in the area can avert their eyes when fighting a killing white light to avoid being blinded, but attacks and defenses are hindered for those who do so.

A killing white light is vulnerable to strong sources of light other than its own. If exposed to daylight or caught in a high-intensity beam of light (such as a spotlight), the killing white light falters and takes no action for one round, after which it can act normally. However, if the competing light persists for more than three or four rounds, the creature usually retreats to a darkened place of safety.

Interaction: A killing white light is too alien for interaction and may not be intelligent in a way humans can understand.

Use: An inactive killing white light (which looks something like an albino lump of volcanic glass) is sometimes mistaken for a cypher whose properties can't quite be identified—until the creature becomes active, at which point its true nature is revealed.

GM intrusion: Normally resistant to interaction, a killing white light uses its blazing nimbus to burn an alien glyph of uncertain meaning in the character's flesh before the creature fades like a light bulb switched off.

LICH 8 (24)

A lich is a powerful wizard or priest who has used their knowledge of necromancy to bind their soul in a magical object called a phylactery, making them immortal and undead unless their soul object is found and destroyed. Having corrupted its own life energy in an obscene ritual, a lich can pursue its other magical goals, usually the acquisition of more wealth, magic, and power. A newly made lich may look like a recent corpse, but maintaining its physical vessel becomes less of a priority as the centuries pass, so over time they tend to look withered or even skeletal. Liches often work with or command other undead, such as wraiths, skeletons, vampires, and zombies.

Motive: Magic, immortality, power

Environment: Wherever they can remain hidden and work undisturbed

Health: 45

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Intellect defense and magical lore as level 10

Combat: A lich can shoot blasts of necromantic energy that inflict 8 points of damage on a target and 4 points on any creature within immediate range of the target. A lich knows many spells, such as the following:

- **Animate guards:** Animate ten corpses as skeletons or zombies, which obey the lich for one hour before turning back into corpses.
- **Armor:** Gain +5 Armor for one hour.
- **Death:** Inflict 8 points of damage on a creature within short range; if the creature fails a Might defense roll, it also moves two steps down the damage track.

- Fly: For one hour, move through the air as effortlessly as walking.
- Paralyze: One target within short range is held motionless for two rounds, unable to take any physical actions.
- Polymorph: Transform a creature within short range into a harmless creature like a fish or frog for one minute.
- Scrying eye: View any familiar location within 1 mile (1.5 km) as if the lich was observing it directly.
- Teleport: Move instantly up to 1 mile. A lich also likely carries several cyphers useful in combat. Liches are undead, and therefore immune to anything that affects only living creatures, such as disease and poison. Unless its well-hidden phylactery is destroyed, a lich that is killed reforms a new body near its phylactery over the next week or so, returning at full health and with all of its abilities and memories.

Interaction: Liches hate being interrupted and have more important things to do than answer questions from mortal weaklings. A lich may be convinced to teach a character a spell, especially if given a spell, cypher, or artifact in trade.

Use: A lich is planning a ritual to raise an army of skeletons or zombies to attack the kingdom. A lich has made a pact with a demon to unleash a plague in exchange for obscure magical knowledge.

Loot: A lich has 1d6 cyphers and usually an artifact.

GM intrusions: The lich casts a spell in addition to taking other actions on its turn. The lich uses a cypher, spell, or other ability to nullify an attack that otherwise would have affected it.

MANTICORE 6 (18)

A manticore is a fearsome predator that resembles a maned red lion with a human head and a scorpion's tail. The head is bearded and has three rows of teeth in the upper and lower jaws, like a shark. The scorpion tail is covered in multiple barbs, and the creature can flick its tail to hurl these barbs at its prey. Manticores eat all of their prey, including the bones, clothing, and equipment, leaving nothing but a bloodstain as evidence of their hunting.

Motive: Hungers for flesh (especially human flesh)

Environment: Mountains and plains

Health: 22

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Long

Modifications: Ranged attacks as level 5

Combat: Manticores attack with their powerful bite, seeking to incapacitate or kill one opponent quickly so they can eat. Some are content to attack and consume a single target, but a large, hungry manticore prefers to wait until two or three creatures are nearby before attacking. A manticore has powerful legs and can leap up to a short distance in any direction, and often surprises its prey by leaping from concealment.

Instead of biting, a manticore can use its poisonous scorpion-like tail to strike one creature in melee with a cluster of barbs, inflicting 4 points of damage (plus 4 additional points of Speed damage if the target fails a Might defense roll). With a flick of its tail, it can hurl up to four barbs up to a short distance away, striking one or more creatures in an immediate area. Each barb inflicts 1 point of damage, and the target must succeed on a Might defense roll or take 1 additional point of Speed damage.

Interaction: Manticores can make trumpet-like noises that resemble speech, but this seems to be a trick to lure prey. Most of them are not intelligent enough to know how to speak human languages.

Use: Weird musical noises resembling speech are heard from the nearby hills. People have been disappearing in fields and on the road, with only bloodstains on the ground suggesting that they were harmed.

Loot: A manticore's stomach might contain a piece of treasure or a cypher from a recent meal, and its lair may have one or two small objects it was unable to digest.

GM intrusion: The manticore attacks with its bite, then spins around to lash its opponent with its barbed tail.

MECHANICAL SOLDIER 4 (12)

Clockwork automatons powered by steam, these mechanical men patrol about and guard locations of importance to their makers. Lanky and awkward in their movements, these quasi-humanoid automatons stand almost 8 feet (2 m) tall. In their three-fingered hands, they wield a variety of weapons.

A few people have wondered if a gear-driven soldier could ever truly attain sentience. Most scoff at the suggestion, but is that a gleam in the glass lens of its eye?

Motive: Incomprehensible

Environment: Anywhere, usually in groups of three to eight

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception as level 5; leaps, runs, and balances as level 3

Combat: Mechanical soldiers attack in groups using well-organized tactics. Although they can speak, they transmit information to one another silently and instantly within a 100-mile (160 km) range via wireless radio transmissions.

Soldiers armed with advanced weaponry typically carry rifle-like guns that can fire multiple rapid shots without reloading. The soldiers fire at up to three targets (all next to one another) at once. For each target after the first, defense rolls are eased.

In addition, one in four soldiers carries a back-mounted device that hurls bombs at long range with deadly accuracy. They explode in immediate range for 4 points of damage. Each device holds 1d6 such bombs.

A mechanical soldier that has lost its original weaponry scavenges whatever is available.

Certain frequencies of sound confuse these clockwork soldiers, hindering all their actions by two steps, and other frequencies prevent them from acting at all for $1d6 + 1$ rounds.

Interaction: On their own, mechanical soldiers act on prior orders. Otherwise, they listen to and obey their creator—and only their creator.

Use: An enterprising bandit has captured and repurposed a number of mechanical soldiers, probably using sound. These soldiers remember nothing of their former duties and work for their new master as high-tech brigands and pirates. The bandit has no idea how to repair them if they are damaged, much less make new soldiers.

Loot: A determined scientist might scavenge the body of one of these automatons to find a cypher.

GM intrusion: The destroyed soldier explodes in a gout of flame, black smoke, and steam, inflicting 6 points of damage to all within immediate range.

MERFOLK 3 (9)

Merfolk are intelligent creatures with humanlike bodies from the waist up and scaly fish bodies from the waist down. They are able to breathe air or water but prefer the sea for its beauty and their better mobility. Merfolk have great underwater cities ruled by a king or queen, but most land-walking species interact only with the common or soldier merfolk who visit the ocean surface and coastlines. Merfolk societies are much like those of surface humans; their inability to use fire limits them in some ways (such as blacksmithing), but they have compensated for this with water magic and other skills.

Merfolk skin ranges from all human colors to green, blue, and grey. Some have small fins on their heads and elbows or webs between their fingers. They dress for comfort and wear jewelry made of shells, coral, pearls, polished gemstones, and metals they can salvage or trade for. Most of them are content to be hunters or cultivators of kelp and other aquatic plants, but some are curious about land-walkers (and their sunken ships) or fiercely territorial about protecting their waters against outsiders.

Motive: Defense, entertainment

Environment: Oceans, seas, and coasts

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Immediate; short when swimming

Modifications: Perception as level 4 while in water

Combat: Merfolk use spears, tridents, daggers, and other stabbing weapons that are effective underwater. They may create traps using nets to confine or direct foes into an ambush. A few lucky or clever ones have acquired or adapted light crossbows designed to fire underwater up to a short distance away.

About once every ten minutes, a merperson can swim a short distance as their action and still make a melee attack, or swim up to a long distance as their action.

About one in ten merfolk have the magical ability to harden water until it is as strong and durable as wood, taking about an hour to make a spear or similar tool that lasts for several days. Some noble merfolk can create short-range bolts of electricity as an action and make limited alterations to the weather (stilling, increasing, or dispersing wind and clouds in a very long area) by concentrating for several minutes.

Interaction: Merfolk react according to their role in merfolk society—farmer, rancher, guard, explorer, noble, and so on. Some merfolk are more aggressive or hostile and dislike the presence of land-walkers in their territory. Most merfolk are amiable to conversation and trade with people who treat them with fairness and respect.

Use: Merfolk are often seen sunning themselves on a small island off the coast. Merfolk warriors accompanied by trained large fish have been harassing boats and ships that stray too far from the shallows and shores.

Trained large fish: level 2, attacks as level 3; swims a long distance each round

Loot: In addition to several small pieces of jewelry, a group of merfolk might have a manifest cypher. A noble or royal merperson usually has a cypher and might have an artifact.

GM intrusions: The merfolk's weapon injects poison, inflicting 5 points of Speed damage if the character fails a Might defense task. Another merperson or an allied aquatic creature arrives and joins the fight against the character.

MI-GO 5 (15)

These extraterrestrial creatures are known as the Fungi from Yuggoth or the Abominable Ones. They are a bizarre amalgam of insect and fungal entity, with many limbs and wings that can carry them aloft. They sometimes enslave humans to work for them in strange factories, mines, or other labor-intensive capacities.

Motive: Knowledge and power

Environment: Usually cold or temperate hills or mountains

Health: 19

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short; long when flying

Modifications: All knowledge tasks as level 6

Combat: Mi-go defend themselves with pincers and claws but are more likely to use technological devices as weapons. Assume that a mi-go has one of the following abilities from a device:

Project a blast of electricity at long range that inflicts 6 points of damage

Emit poison gas in a cloud that fills to short range and inflicts 4 points of Intellect damage if the victim fails a Might defense roll (the mi-go is immune)

Project a holographic image of itself to one side that hinders attacks aimed at the real mi-go by two steps

Project a sonic field that provides +2 to Armor

Mi-go have access to other devices as well, including translators, cylinders that can preserve a human's brain without its body, sophisticated tools, collars that control the actions of their wearers, and weird vehicles. Mi-go suffer no damage from cold and do not need to breathe.

Interaction: Although very few mi-go speak human languages, peaceful interaction with these creatures is not impossible. It's just very difficult (level 7), as they see most humans as little more than animals.

Use: The characters are attacked by mi-go intent on capturing and enslaving them. If caught, the PCs are sent to scavenge through primordial ruins for disturbing technological relics.

Loot: Mi-go always have 1d6 cyphers as well as many curious objects that have no obvious human function.

GM intrusion: Fungal spores from the mi-go's body overcome the character, who must succeed at a Might defense roll or lose their next turn. The character faces this risk each round they are within immediate distance of the creature.

MINOTAUR 4 (12)

Minotaurs are aggressive bull-humanoids who enjoy human flesh. Some legends say the first minotaur was the result of a curse from a god, and others suggest it was created by a demon, but the truth is lost to antiquity. Minotaurs care little about history or their origin, preferring to hunt for meat and spar with each other for dominance and trophies. Minotaurs live in small tribes of up to a dozen adults. Solitary minotaurs are exiles, last survivors of their tribe, or younger individuals claiming their own territory.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Caves, plains, and labyrinths

Health: 19

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Hunting and tracking as level 5

Combat: Minotaurs attack with their horns or use large weapons. A minotaur can charge up to a short distance and then make an attack, which inflicts an additional 3 points of damage.

Minotaurs are interested in mazes and mazelike spaces and like to wander within them, memorizing the paths and finding good places to stage ambushes. They leave out piles of equipment and useless treasures from previous victims to lure people into the maze and give the minotaur time to corner their prey. S

Sometimes one minotaur in a tribe develops simple magic powers and is able to create illusions of smoke or mist in an area a short distance across, turn invisible for a few moments, or enchant weapons to inflict bleeding wounds.

Interaction: Minotaurs can speak, usually in their own language or another crude humanoid language. However, they typically choose not to speak to weaker creatures (such as humans).

Use: A wandering gang of minotaurs has been stealing livestock from a local village and is ready to start hunting humans. A minotaur gladiator escaped from a secret underground arena and is stalking prey in the city. Something lurks in a corn maze, leaving nothing but bones and bloodstains.

Loot: Minotaurs don't have much use for coins but keep a few small trophies, such as ivory dice, gems, or simple jewelry. The most powerful minotaur in the tribe may have a cypher or even a mastercraft weapon.

GM intrusions: A minotaur smashes a nearby wall, causing part of the ceiling to collapse on one or more characters, inflicting 6 points of damage and trapping them until they can escape from the rubble. A minotaur grabs a character, who can resist with a Might or Speed defense roll; if they fail, the minotaur takes them up to a short distance away and disappears (behind an obstacle, into a maze, or in some other hiding spot)

MOKUREN 3 (9)

Mokuren are usually no larger than a cat, but they possess the ability to swell until they're the size of a bus (if only briefly). That ability, combined with their flashy pyrokinetic tails, make these creatures a particular favorite with children, at least in stories and picture books. Given that mokuren can "burrow" into paintings and other two-dimensional art, it's possible that some mokuren images are more than simple representations.

Motive: Play

Environment: Almost anywhere, usually as static images on walls or in storybooks

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 3 points, unless enlarged; see Combat

Movement: Short; long if flying

Modifications: Defends as level 5 due to size, unless enlarged; see Combat

Combat: A mokuren exists in three states: as an image, as a cat-sized creature, and as a bus-sized behemoth. As an image, a mokuren can't be harmed. Even if the image is defaced, the mokuren merely "burrows" away and reappears like graffiti on a new flat space within a few miles.

Alternatively, it could emerge from the image and become a physical cat-sized creature as a move. In this form, a mokuren can attack with its claws or bite. It can also direct a stream of fire from its glowing tail at a target within long range. (When a mokuren flies, it's by using its tail to create a jet that rockets it skyward.)

Finally, it can make an enlarged attack, in which it swells to the size of a bus and swipes at, bites, or lands on a target as part of the same action. When enlarged, the mokuren gains +5 to Armor and makes and defends against all attacks as a level 7 creature. On a hit, the enlarged mokuren deals 7 points of damage. However, a mokuren can remain enlarged for a total of only four rounds during any twenty-four-hour period, so it uses this ability sparingly or only when enraged.

Interaction: To see an active mokuren is considered good luck, unless you manage to get on the wrong side of one. Then an offering of sweets must be made to the offended creature. A mokuren can't talk, but it can understand the languages where it lives about as well as a trained courser or hound can.

Use: A mokuren can lead characters into unexplored areas, helping them find places they may have overlooked or skipped. It can also lead PCs into danger, but it usually does so only to bring aid (the characters) to someone else in trouble.

GM intrusion: The character hit by the mokuren doesn't take damage. Instead, they must succeed on a Might defense roll or be pulled into the nearest wall, floor, or book with the creature, becoming a two-dimensional image. In this state, the victim is in stasis until the mokuren pulls them free, another creature "priests" them loose, or a day passes and the effect ends naturally.

MORLOCK 2 (6)

Morlocks are degenerate, blind cannibal humanoids that avoid light. They have prominent teeth, piglike eyes, loose skin, and stooped postures. They avoid bright daylight and prefer to hunt and forage when it is dark out (or at least under the twilight-like canopy of a heavy forest). Morlocks eat any sort of meat, even carrion and their own dead. Morlocks build piles of stones to mark their territory. On nights of the new moon, they create unnerving music by playing simple drums made out of skulls and logs. They lack the foresight to store food for lean times, so they range farther from home in winter and times of famine. They are sometimes enslaved by more powerful creatures such as ogres or a vampire.

Motive: Hungers for flesh, defense

Environment: Caves, forests, hills, and underground

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Short; short when climbing

Modifications: Stealth and tracking as level 4

Combat: Morlocks fight with their nails and teeth, but sometimes they use simple weapons like clubs, stone knives, spears, and javelins if they have observed other humanoids doing so. Some tribes dig simple pit traps and chase prey into them.

Morlocks dislike strong light but are not harmed by it. Their hearing and sense of smell is strong enough that they can "see" in dim or very dim light as if it were normal light. They can track scents as well as a trained dog.

Interaction: Morlocks have a simple language of hoots, howls, and growls that communicate basic concepts like food, fire, danger, and cold. If enslaved by a more powerful creature, some of them can manage to learn a few words in that creature's language.

Use: Town elders warn that the drums and near-human howls on dark nights are signs of morlocks who'll steal away foolish children. Stacked piles of stones are found in the forest, each surrounded by bare humanoid footprints.

Loot: Morlocks don't value what they can't eat, but their lair may have a cypher or two from a recent victim.

GM intrusion: An unnoticed morlock drags away an unconscious character or animal to be eaten once they're out of sight.

NECROMANCER 5 (15)

The ability to influence, command, and call up the dead is an impressive power, given how many more people are dead than living. Since the only thing separating a living person from a dead one is a well-aimed knife or death spell, the number of dead always rises.

Motive: Magical power, mastery over death

Environment: In places where dead are interred, usually with some number of undead servitors

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 6 due to shroud of undead protective spirits

Combat: Necromancers can blast a foe within long range with the cold of the grave or flesh-decaying magic.

A necromancer can cast a death spell on a foe within short range once every minute; the victim must succeed on a Might defense roll or move down one step on the damage track. This ability could be an innate power or come from an artifact.

A necromancer who isn't already accompanied by undead spirits or shambling, spirit-inhabited corpses under their command can call up a spirit as an action. A necromancer can command up to five spirits (or newly allied undead, as described below) at a time.

A necromancer can attempt to take command of a spirit or undead creature within short range. They automatically succeed against an unaligned undead target of level 4 or less. If a targeted spirit is already allied with or in service to a PC, the PC must succeed on an Intellect defense roll or lose control of the spirit to the necromancer's will for one minute.

Spirit: level 3; flesh-decaying touch inflicts 3 points of damage

Interaction: Necromancers are feared for their nonchalant attitudes toward life, especially the life of normal people (such as peasants and city folk). They will negotiate but usually don't have the capacity to care about another person's well-being; they're sociopathic.

Use: A character has died, and their allies must find a necromancer to help retrieve their spirit. Of course, the necromancer wants something in return for this aid—perhaps an artifact pilfered from whatever underworld or hell the dead character is imprisoned within.

Loot: Necromancers have one or two expensive items, a cypher, and possibly an artifact.

GM intrusion: A bony hand erupts from the ground at the character's feet. On a failed Speed defense roll, they are held in place until they can succeed on a Might task to escape. Each round the character fails to escape, the hand squeezes them for 3 points of damage.

NOBLE KNIGHT 7 (21)

Whether noble or ignoble, some knights achieve an amazing mastery over weapons, combat, and courtly graces, eclipsing lesser warriors and champions. The quests of some noble knights can lead them far across the land into strange new territories where they encounter and defeat various magical creatures.

Motive: Accomplish noble (or ignoble) deeds

Environment: Almost anywhere, often alone, sometimes with followers

Health: 50

Damage Inflicted: 10 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Short

Modifications: All tasks related to heraldic lore and chivalry as level 8; Speed defense as level 8 while holding shield

Combat: Noble knights are armed with massive weapons they can wield in one hand, which means they can also hold a shield. They are skilled with melee weapons (such as a battleaxe, broadsword, or mace) and inflict lethal damage on a hit.

Noble knights can also rely on a magic artifact or two to aid them, and possibly a noble steed (Noble steed: level 5; moves a long distance each round). The artifact might be the very weapon a knight wields in combat and could grant them one or more of the following additional abilities:

Legendary Strength. The noble knight can call upon the artifact to grant them great strength or fortitude to accomplish a particular physical task (such as breaking down a door, lifting a boulder, or knocking down pillars holding up a structure), which they attempt as if they were level 10.

Regeneration. The noble knight regenerates 2 points of health per round while the weapon is drawn.

Resistance. The noble knight is immune to effects that would influence their mind, charm them, or put them to sleep.

Interaction: Flowery language and impeccable manners show a knight's noble background. Those who negotiate with one in good faith are likely to come away with something of value. However, sometimes a noble knight is corrupt and betrays trusts.

Use: A noble knight has decided that they must guard a bridge against any who would cross it.

Loot: Noble knights carry weapons, heavy armor, and perhaps a cypher or even an artifact.

GM intrusion: The character damaged by a noble knight's attack must succeed on a Might defense roll or be knocked off a mount, a bridge, or a cliff, or, if nothing suffices, they are knocked to the ground and out of immediate range of the knight.

NUPPEPOO 2 (6)

Nuppepos are animated lumps of human flesh that walk on vaguely defined limbs. They smell of decay and death. They're spotted in graveyards, battlefields, coroner's offices, and other places where the dead are kept or interred. When witnessed in other places, nuppepos seem to wander streets aimlessly, sometimes alone, sometimes in groups, and sometimes following a living person who'd rather be left alone.

Information about these creatures is scarce. They might be the unintended consequence of a reanimation attempt, one that's able to catalyze its animation in similarly dead tissue to form more nuppepos. On the other hand, they could be particularly gruesome spirits of the dead.

A nuppeppo sometimes follows a living individual around like a silent, smelly pet that shows no affection. No one knows why.

(If a nuppeppo begins to follow a character, interaction tasks by that character and their allies are hindered. Most other creatures are put off by a lump of animate human flesh hanging around nearby.)

Motive: Wander, graze on dead flesh

Environment: Near places of death at night, alone or in groups of up to eight

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Combat: A nuppeppo can smash a foe with one of its lumpy limbs. If a nuppeppo is touched or struck in melee, the attacker's weapon (or hand) becomes stuck to the nuppeppo and can be pulled free only with a difficulty 5 Might roll.

A victim of a nuppeppo's attack (or someone who touches a nuppeppo) begins to decay at a rate of 1 point of Speed damage (ignores Armor) per round, starting in the round following contact. To stop the spread of the decay, the victim can cut off the layer of affected flesh, which deals 4 points of damage (ignores Armor).

Interaction: If approached, a nuppeppo turns to "face" its interlocutor, but it doesn't respond to questions or orders. However, it may begin to follow its interlocutor from that point forward unless physically prevented—at which point the nuppeppo becomes violent.

Use: The PCs open a grave, a coffin, or a sealed research lab, and several nuppepos spill out. Unless stopped, the creatures attempt to "adopt" their discoverers.

GM intrusion: The character who allowed the nuppeppo to follow them around like a pet (or who has been unable to prevent it) wakes to find that the creature has settled upon them in the night and is using its touch-decay abilities to feed. In fact, the character might already be incapacitated by the time they wake.

OGRE 4 (12)

A bestial brute, the ogre is a sadistic, 8-foot (2 m) tall, cannibalistic fiend that preys upon other creatures in the woods, mountains, or other wilderness areas. This often pits them against sylvan beings like elves and fey. Ogres dwelling in more civilized lands are also the enemy of humans, but these ogres usually come no closer to civilization than its very fringes.

Ogres typically dress in ragged, piecemeal clothing or nothing at all.

Motive: Hungers for flesh, sadistic

Environment: Anywhere, usually alone or (rarely) in a band of three or four

Health: 20

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Feats of raw strength as level 6; Intellect defense and seeing through deception as level 3; Speed defense as level 3 due to size

Combat: Ogres usually use clubs or large, two-handed weapons with great power. Since they are accustomed to fighting smaller creatures, they are adept at using their size and strength to their advantage. If an ogre strikes a foe smaller than itself, either the victim is knocked back up to 5 feet (1.5 m), or it is dazed, which hinders its next action.

Ogres can also swing their huge weapons in wide arcs, attacking all foes within close range. Defending against this attack is hindered and the attack inflicts 5 points of damage.

Ogres rarely flee from a fight, and only a foe of overwhelming power can force them to surrender.

Interaction: Ogres are stupid and cruel. They speak whatever language is most common in the area in which they live, but their vocabulary is extremely limited. They don't like conversation, even with their own kind. Reasoning with them is difficult at best, but sometimes they can be fooled.

Use: A solitary ogre is an excellent encounter for a group of first-tier characters. A number of ogres, particularly well-equipped and well-trained warriors, make excellent troops or guards in the service of a powerful master. Evil wizards and warlords like to enslave ogres and place them at the forefront of their armies. In these cases, the ogres are typically bribed, ensorcelled, or intimidated by great force.

Loot: Some ogres hoard gold or other valuables in their lairs, but they rarely have use for magic or cyphers.

GM intrusion: The ogre's mighty blow (whether it strikes a foe or not) hits the ground or the wall, causing major structural damage and a possible collapse, cave-in, or landslide. It might also expose a hidden underground cave or chamber.

ORC 2 (6)

Born into squalor and fear, the orc species is composed of miserable, misbegotten humanoids that seem destined to serve as fodder for more powerful evil overlords. When left to their own devices, these loathsome creatures turn on each other, the strongest oppressing the next weakest (and so on down the line) with cruel barbs, gruesome jokes, and physical beatings. When these creatures have no masters to hate, they hate themselves.

No two orcs look exactly alike, but all have a mean, ugly, and shambolic facade. Never clean and often spattered with the remains of recent meals, orcs have a mouthful of sharp, broken teeth that can develop into true fangs. Adults range in height from no larger than a human child to massive specimens larger than a strapping man. Whether big or small, nearly all orcs have stooped backs and crooked legs. The hue of their skin is hard to ascertain, because they are covered by the sediment of years, not to mention the iron armor every orc constantly wears from the moment it's able to lift a weapon.

Motive: Make others more miserable than itself

Environment: Anywhere near, on, or under mountains, usually in groups of four to six, or in tribes dozens to hundreds strong

Health: 7

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 3 when carrying a shield; pleasant interactions as level 1

Combat: Most orcs have bows able to target foes within long range. Some carry a shield and wield a medium axe, sword, or mace that inflicts 4 points of damage. Other orcs (usually those that are larger than their fellows) dispense with shields and wield heavy two-handed mauls and hammers that inflict 6 points of damage.

Orcs live short, brutish lives. The few that survive for years do so because of some special advantage; they're sneakier, stronger, tougher, or meaner than average. These have the following modifications, respectively:

- * Stealth tasks as level 5
- * Deal 2 additional points of damage with melee weapons
- * +10 health
- * Tasks related to trickery and deceit as level 5

Interaction: An orc would stab its own mother if it thought doing so would give it another hour of life in a desperate situation. That said, most orcs have been conditioned, through beatings and torture, to fear the evil master they serve (if any). Characters attempting to negotiate with an orc through intimidation find that short-term success is followed by medium-term betrayal.

Use: A band of orcs fires on the PCs from the edge of the forest. However, these orcs are crafty, and characters who rush directly into combat might fall victim to a hidden pit trap or other prepared ambush.

Loot: Orcs carry a lot of garbage. Amid this dross, a band of orcs might have currency equivalent to a moderately priced item among them.

GM intrusion: With a scream of savage glee, five more orcs rush to join the fight.

PRINCE(SS) OF SUMMER 5 (15)

Fey nobility are as numberless as cottonwood seeds on the June breeze. But that doesn't mean each isn't unique, with a quirky personality and a specific role to play in the mysterious Court of Summer. Demonstrating life, vigor, predation, growth, and competition, the princesses and princes of summer are beings of warmth and generosity, usually. But catch them during the change of the season, and they can be deadly adversaries just as easily. Fey nobles dress in costly diaphanous and flowing garments, and often wear some sign of their noble lineage, such as a circlet or diadem.

Motive: Unpredictable; defend fey territory and prerogatives

Environment: Almost any wilderness region alone or commanding a small group of lesser faerie creatures

Health: 22

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short; short when gliding on the wind

Modifications: Tasks related to deception, disguise, courtly manners, and positive interactions as level 7

Combat: Most fey princesses and princes are armed with an elegant sword and possibly a bow carved of silverwood. Also, each knows one or more faerie spells. Faerie spells include the following.

Brilliant Smile: Target must succeed on an Intellect defense task or do the fey creature's will for up to one minute.

Golden Mead: Allies who drink from the fey's flask gain an asset to all defense tasks for ten hours.

Night's Reward: Target suffers 5 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) and must make an Intellect defense roll or fall asleep for up to one minute.

Summer Confidence: Selected targets in short range have an asset on tasks related to resisting fear and acting boldly.

Thorns: Target suffers 5 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) and must succeed on a Might defense task or lose their next turn entangled in rapidly grown thorny vines.

Princes and princesses of summer regain 2 points of health per round while their health is above 0 unless they've been damaged with a silvered or cold iron weapon.

Interaction: Most fey are willing to talk, and those of the Summer Court are especially eager to make deals. However, people who bargain with fey nobles should take care to avoid being tricked.

Use: The characters find a fey noble wounded and in need of aid.

Loot: In addition to fine clothing, fine equipment, and a considerable sum of currency, a prince or princess of summer might carry a few cyphers and even a faerie artifact.

GM intrusion: The character is blinded for up to one minute by a shaft of brilliant sunlight unless they succeed on a Might defense task.

PUPPET TREE 6 (18)

A puppet tree is a 25-foot (8 m) tall, spiky, orange and blue tree surrounded by a large area of red reeds that tremble and wave enticingly even when no wind is present. Humanoid figures are often gathered around it, but these rotted, overgrown corpses are the tree's victims, dead but serving as fleshy puppets to the tree's will.

Victims drained of knowledge and life are used as lures to draw in yet more victims, at least until the bodies rot away. When not used as lures, the corpse puppets are sent to scout nearby areas.

(Corpse puppet: level 2; struck targets must also succeed on a Might defense task or be grabbed until they can escape; all tasks attempted by the grabbed target are hindered; free-roaming puppets remain animate for one day)

Motive: Hungers for fresh bodies

Environment: On hilltops, isolated from other plant life

Health: 33

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 3

Movement: None

Modifications: Speed defense as level 5 due to size and immobility; deception and disguise (puppeteering corpses to act in a lifelike manner) as level 7

Combat: Some of the red reeds surrounding a puppet tree end in a hard, sharp crystal spike. When a living creature comes within short range of the tree, the reeds rise behind the target and try to skewer them through the head or neck with the spike. If a target is killed by these attacks, the puppet tree controls the body as a corpse puppet, using it to enact its plans. Over time these humanoids rot and are overgrown by the biology of the plant, losing utility for the tree. Most trees have about five corpse puppets active, which can be simultaneously animated to attack foes.

A puppet tree is vulnerable to fire. All fire attacks against the tree inflict 2 additional points of damage and ignore Armor. The puppet tree will always attempt to stop a fire, or target the source of flame during combat.

A corpse puppet can be detached and sent roaming; however, it retains only about a day's worth of animation, after which it collapses and molders like a normal corpse. Sometimes, however, a sapling puppet tree blooms from the remains.

Interaction: Puppet trees are highly intelligent, but malevolent. Even if communication can be opened via telepathy or some other means, the tree will always attempt to double-cross the PCs.

Use: The PCs spy a group of “people” having a picnic under a strange-looking tree in the middle of nowhere.

Loot: Possessions of former victims can be found in the red reeds, usually including a moderate amount of currency and various bits of gear. Devices of victims (if any) are collected by the corpse puppets and cobbled together into a strange machine, its purpose inexplicable.

GM intrusion: Two corpse puppets, unseen in the red reeds, rise and seize a character in an attempt to hold them still for a crystal spike attack. The character must make a difficulty 4 Speed or Might task to shake free.

RAVAGE BEAR 4 (12)

A ravage bear is a hideous predator that hunts entirely by sense of smell. It is blind and nearly deaf, but it still tracks and senses prey easily. It is very protective of its young, and if hungry, it is extremely dangerous. Otherwise, it gives most creatures a wide berth.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Alone or in pairs (usually with a few cubs) in wooded, rocky, or mountainous areas, typically in cold or temperate climes

Health: 20

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Long

Modifications: Makes Might defense rolls as level 6; runs, climbs, and jumps as level 7

Combat: A ravage bear grabs foes with its powerful arms, holds them fast, and then squeezes and tears at them until they are dead. It can hold only one creature at a time. While a ravage bear is holding a creature, it can attack only the held creature. In each round that a held creature does not escape, it suffers 4 points of damage in addition to damage from attacks made against it.

A ravage bear can move very quickly in short sprints. In combat, it can go into an insane fury and will fight to the death. If it takes 10 or more points of damage, its defenses are hindered, but its attacks are eased.

Ravage bears are immune to visual effects, such as illusions. However, olfactory effects can confuse and “blind” them temporarily.

Interaction: Ravage bears are animals and act like animals.

Use: Ravage bears are likely chance encounters in the wilderness for unlucky travelers.

GM intrusion: In its rage, the ravage bear makes an extra attack that does 2 additional points of damage.

REPLICANT 5 (15)

Virtually identical to adult humans, these biosculpted androids are stronger, faster, and potentially smarter. However, because they are manufactured beings with grafted memories, replicants rarely feel true human emotion, be that love, sadness, or empathy, though those who live long enough to lay down their own memories can develop the capacity to do so.

However, few replicants gain the opportunity because they are created for a purpose, which could be to serve as police or guards, as soldiers in a distant war, or as impostors shaped to blend in with people so they can explore on behalf of an alien intelligence or a bootstrapped AI. In most of these cases, these purposes lead to

a relatively short span of existence, which usually ends when the replicant chooses to detonate itself rather than be captured.

Motive: Go unnoticed; stamp out (or replace) any who learn of their existence

Environment: Anywhere

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Tasks related to pleasant social interaction, understanding human social norms, and deception as level 2

Combat: Replicants blend in and prefer not to enter combat. Since destruction is not usually their principal goal, they avoid confrontation. If, however, something threatens their mission, they defend themselves to the best of their ability. Replicants might use weaponry but are adept in using their limbs to batter foes into submission.

A replicant poses the greatest danger when its physical form begins to fail through violence or natural degradation (many seem to have a natural “life” span of just a few years). When reduced to 0 points of health, the replicant explodes, inflicting 10 points of damage to everything in long range.

Interaction: Replicants are designed to look human and, at least during a casual interaction, pass as human. But extended conversation trips up a replicant more often than not. Eventually, a replicant gets something wrong and says inappropriate things or exhibits strange mannerisms.

Use: A contact of one of the characters is secretly a replicant. It has survived longer than expected, and its connection to whatever created it has weakened enough that it has gained some independence and made strong emotional connections to the PC. It knows its time is running out and may turn to the character for help.

GM intrusion: The character struck by the replicant is smashed into the wall so hard that the surrounding structure begins to collapse on them.

SAPIENT TREE 3 (9)

Guardians of the wood, sapient trees stand eternally vigilant, often on the outskirts of their grove or forest to keep out those who might seek to do them—or other, ordinary trees—harm. They look like normal trees until they reveal their true nature, with limb-like branches and faces in the bark of their trunk. They don’t always move, but with effort, they can uproot themselves and walk about. However, they usually do so only when no one is looking. The origin and temperament of sapient trees varies; they might be haunted trees possessed by spirits, trees animated by magic spells, or ancient mythical beings. Some are peaceful and noble, but others are downright wicked and cruel.

Motive: Defense

Environment: Found in groves or copses of five to twenty

Health: 16

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Short

Modifications: Initiative as level 4; Speed defense as level 2 due to size

Combat: When a sapient tree attacks, it often does so with surprise because it looks like a normal tree at first. If a character about to be attacked fails an Intellect defense roll, they do not perceive the attack in time, and the tree's attack is eased.

If a tree strikes in combat with one of its branch-arms, it can choose to grab the foe (rather than inflict damage) and toss them an immediate distance away, inflicting 2 points of ambient damage if they hit the ground or another solid object. If they are tossed at another creature, that second creature must make a successful Speed defense roll or also take this damage.

Sometimes, a sapient tree that bears fruit will hurl its fruit up to short range, inflicting 4 points of damage.

Interaction: Sapient trees are generally unfriendly and indignant toward animal life. They are fearful and assume that any creature not native to their forest is a threat. They are likely to attack first rather than speak, although they can speak eloquently, if sometimes slowly.

Use: These trees populate magic forests. They can be used to surprise characters with an attack from an unexpected direction.

GM intrusion: The tree grabs the character and holds them fast, shaking them. They take 4 points of damage each round and can do nothing but attempt to escape (the task is hindered by two steps because of the shaking).

SATYR 5 (15)

These muscular humanoids sport long curved horns and furry, hooved legs. They are self-centered, greedy, and sybaritic creatures, dedicated to food, drink, and other pleasures. They rob and steal from others as it pleases them, often relying on tricks and lies, or alluring music they play on pipes.

Motive: Play tricks, gather treasure, fulfill desires

Environment: Woodlands, hills, and plains

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short Modifications: Tasks related to persuasion and deception as level 7; resists mental attacks as level 7

Combat: Satyrs usually carry spears that they can use in melee and against foes within short range. They can also create magical effects by playing their pipes as an action, which can either bolster allies or harm enemies.

Dance of the Leaping Stag: Foes within short range who fail an Intellect defense task lose their next turn to dancing and leaping. Attacks made against affected targets are eased.

Feral Overture: An ally within short range is infused with magic, and one attack it makes on its next turn is eased; if it hits, it inflicts +3 damage.

Tune of the Clouded Mind: A foe within short range who fails an Intellect defense task spends its next turn attacking one of its allies.

Interaction: Satyrs are inveterate mercenaries. They gladly work for strong drink and other treasures, and they ally with almost any creature capable of meeting their price. A satyr is always willing to start negotiations, but is prone to lying and exaggeration. Offering excessive libation, food, and other rewards is the only way to ensure that a satyr remains honest, and then for only a short period.

Use: Strange piping music in the forest lures away young people from a nearby community. Community elders say a charismatic cult leader has set up in the woods and clouds the minds of all who come near.

Loot: A satyr is likely to carry one or two cyphers.

GM intrusion: A mental effect makes the character view the satyr as a good friend for up to one minute unless they succeed at an Intellect defense task.

SHADOW 1 (3)

Shadows are semi-intelligent patches of darkness roughly in the shape of a humanoid creature's silhouette. They creep along walls, floors, and ceilings, blending in with actual shadows, peeling themselves free only when they're ready to clutch at a victim with their cold claws.

Motive: Hunger for life energy

Environment: Anywhere that shadows can occur

Health: 3

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Stealth as level 3

Combat: Shadows attack with their claws, which feel like a cold breeze and drain 2 points of Might from their target with each hit. They can barely interact with physical objects, and even something as simple as moving a pebble an immediate distance or knocking over a candle takes intense concentration.

A group of five shadows can act as a swarm, focusing on one target to make one attack as a single level 3 creature, inflicting 4 points of damage. In an area of complete darkness with no illumination at all, shadows are effectively powerless—they cannot attack and all their actions are hindered. If suddenly deprived of light, they slink about menacingly for a few minutes but lose interest if it seems like their prey won't be bringing back the light.

Shadows are flat rather than insubstantial, but attacks that harm phased, ghostly, or similar creatures are fully effective against them. They can easily pass through narrow spaces such as the gap under a door or between the bars of a cell, but cannot move through solid objects.

Interaction: Shadows never speak, but they can make rustling noises like a gently moving curtain. If controlled or prevented from attacking, they can communicate with simple pantomimes and seem to understand some pieces of language.

Use: The flickering shadows from a campfire bend strangely and begin to creep toward a nearby character. A person appears to have two shadows just before they feel icy coldness slide along their flesh.

GM intrusion: The shadow attaches itself to a character and begins to take over as their shadow, automatically inflicting damage every round until the character uses an action to tear it off of them.

SHADOW ELF 4 (12)

Elves who faded from the surface to escape the justice of their fey cousins for crimes uncounted are sometimes called shadow elves, dark elves, or simply trow. It's widely assumed that shadow elves fled to new realms deep below the ground, and indeed, the routes that lead to their true abodes are mostly subterranean and include many grand underground keeps. However, the heart of the shadow elf kingdom lies in the colorless dimension of Shadow itself, where all things exist as a dim reflection of the real world.

Sometimes shadow elves appear on the surface, spilling from dark tunnels or, in some cases, from the shadows themselves. They raid for plunder, fresh slaves, and sacrifices. The sacrifices are made to their godqueen, a monstrously sized black widow spider that schemes in darkness.

When a shadow elf returns to the world of light, it can choose to appear as a silhouette only: a slender humanoid outline lurking as if at the nadir of a well.

Motive: Tortures for pleasure, serve the shadow elf godqueen

Environment: Almost anywhere dimly lit, singly or in groups of up to four

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Stealth and perception as level 6; Speed defense as level 6 due to shadowy nature

Combat: Shadow elves attack with short blades, knives, and crossbow quarrels of steel-hard shadow. They can see in dim light and absolute darkness as if it were daylight.

Some shadow elves can cast spells, including the following. Each spell requires an action to cast.

d6	Shadow Elf Spell
1	Enchant weapon to inflict 3 additional points of damage (8 total)
2	Enchant weapon to inflict 1 additional point of Speed damage (poison, ignores Armor), plus 2 points of Speed damage each additional round until victim succeeds on a Might defense roll
3	Fly a long range each round for ten minutes
4	Gain +2 to Armor (total of 3 Armor) for ten minutes
5	Long-range spell renders subject blind for ten minutes on failed Might defense roll
6	Long-range spell targets up to three creatures next to each other; holds them motionless in a shadow web for one minute on failed Speed defense rolls

If subject to full daylight, a shadow elf loses its modifications to stealth, perception, and Speed defense, and is likely to retreat.

Interaction: Shadow elves may negotiate and even ally with other creatures for a time. But they do so only until the best opportunity for a betrayal presents itself.

Use: Shadow elves have overrun an outlying keep, and even in broad daylight, the castle is shrouded in darkness and webs of shadow. The treasures said to lie in the keep's coffers may already be in the hands of the dark fey.

Loot: A shadow elf carries currency equivalent to an expensive item, in addition to weapons, light armor, and a cypher or two. Shadow elf leaders may carry an artifact.

GM intrusion: The shadow elf casts a spell that charms a character on a failed Intellect defense roll. The character fights on the side of the shadow elf for up to one minute, though they can make another Intellect defense roll each round to try to break the influence.

SKELETON 2 (6)

Skeletons are animated bones without much sense of self-preservation. They enjoy a crucial advantage over living creatures in one important and often exploited area: skeletons are dead shots with ranged weapons. They have no breath, no heartbeat, and no shaking hands to contend with as they release a shot, which means that skeletons armed with ranged weapons are something to be feared.

Motive: Defense or offense

Environment: Nearly anywhere, in formations of four to ten

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 3 points (claw) or 5 points (ranged weapon)

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Ranged attacks as level 5; Speed defense against most ranged attacks as level 5; resist trickery as level 1

Combat: Skeletons can attack with a bony claw if they have no other weapon, but most attack with a long-range weapon. If a skeleton can see any portion of its target, the target loses any benefits of cover it might have otherwise enjoyed.

When in formation, a group of four or more skeletons with ranged weapons can focus their attacks on one target and make one attack roll as a single level 7 creature, dealing 7 points of damage.

Skeletons can see in the dark.

Reanimators: Some skeletons were created by a curse, and simply battering them into a pile of bones isn't enough to end their existence. Two rounds after reanimator skeletons are "killed," they regain full health in a flash of magical illumination. This regeneration can be prevented if the lynchpin of the animating curse is separated from the skeleton after it falls. Such an item is usually obvious and might take the form of a lead spike through the skull, an ebony amulet, a dull sword through the ribs, a crown, and so on.

Interaction: A skeleton usually interacts only by attacking. Unless animated by a sapient spirit able to communicate via magic, skeletons lack the mechanisms for speech. However, they can hear and see the world around them just fine.

Use: Skeletons make ideal units in armies, especially when archery or artillery is required. A formation of four or more skeletons with ranged weapons atop a tower provides a surprisingly robust defense.

Loot: Sometimes the lynchpin item required to create a reanimator skeleton is valuable.

GM intrusion: A skeleton destroyed by a melee attack explodes like a grenade. The bone shrapnel inflicts 5 points of damage to every creature in immediate range.

SOUL EATER 5 (15)

A soul eater is the animate head of a powerful wizard who shuffled off this mortal coil to become an undead creature without ethics, feelings, or a sense of morality. Also called dread skulls, these creatures maintain their existence by occasionally absorbing the spirit or mind of living victims. An absorbed "soul" is burned away, which is why dread skulls are wreathed in flame; it's the by-product of the creature's previous meal.

Motive: Hungers for souls

Environment: Usually at the center of tombs

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Long when flying

Modifications: Resists mental attacks and deception as level 7; Speed defense as level 7 due to size and quickness; knowledge of arcane methodologies and rituals as level 8

Combat: A soul eater has a library of magic abilities it can draw upon, including long-range attacks of fire or cold against all targets within immediate range of each other, the ability to read the mind of a victim within short range on a failed Intellect defense roll, and the ability to cloak itself in the illusion of a normal human for up to an hour at a time.

In addition, a dread skull can draw out a victim's consciousness and absorb it in a blaze of supernatural fire. To do so, the creature must bite a target, which inflicts 5 points of damage; the target must then succeed on an Intellect defense roll or take an additional 5 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor).

If a dread skull drains a character's Intellect Pool to 0 through repeated bites, the character's soul is sucked into the skull, and the body falls limp. Once absorbed into the skull, a victim's essence is trapped and slowly consumed over the next twenty-four hours. During this period, the skull regenerates 1 point of health per round.

If a dread skull isn't destroyed within twenty-four hours of eating a soul, the victim's essence is fully consumed. If the soul eater is defeated and its skull is shattered before then, all unconsumed souls are returned to their bodies.

Interaction: Dread skulls are slightly insane but hellishly smart, which means that sometimes they will negotiate to get what they want.

Use: Soul eaters remember a little bit of the knowledge of every creature's essence they consume. The PCs need to learn the command word of an artifact they've found, but the only one who knew it was consumed by a dread skull.

Loot: Sometimes dread skulls keep treasures as trophies of past victories, consisting of 1d6 cyphers and maybe an artifact.

GM intrusion: The character who uses a cypher against the dread skull must make an Intellect defense roll. On a failed roll, the cypher begins to burn with flame, dealing the character 5 points of damage and destroying the cypher in the process.

SPHINX 7 (21)

A sphinx is a magical creature with a large lionlike body, feathered wings, and a head that is like that of a human or some kind of animal (typically a hawk or ram). Wise and fierce, sphinxes have a connection to the divine and are often found guarding temples or persons of great interest to the gods (although whether they serve good or evil depends on the individual sphinx). No matter what their head looks like, a sphinx can devour creatures as easily and quickly as a lion.

Motive: Defense, riddles

Environment: Deserts, plains, and mountains

Health: 25

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short; long when flying

Modifications: Intellect defense and magical lore as level 8

Combat: A sphinx attacks with its lion claws, making two swipes as its action. A sphinx also has the following magical abilities:

- Curse: Curse a creature within long range, hindering all their physical actions by two steps until some other magic lifts the curse.
- Heal: Restore 10 health to an NPC, or allow a PC to use their next action to make a recovery roll that does not count toward their normal allotment. Can be used three times per day.
- Riddle: A creature within long range must make an Intellect defense roll to answer a difficult riddle; failure means the creature stands confused for one minute even if they are attacked.
- Spellbreaker: End an ongoing magical effect within short range, such as a curse or protective spell. If there are multiple effects, the sphinx chooses which one to end. It can target an immediate area instead of a specific effect (such as an area where it suspects an invisible enemy is hiding).
- Teleport: Instantaneously move a very long distance. Can be used once per day.

Interaction: Sphinxes are very intelligent and speak several languages (including at least one ancient or obscure language). If their demands are met (such as by answering a riddle or performing a service), they can be quite talkative, if arrogant.

Use: A sphinx guards the main road into the city, killing anyone who fails to answer its riddle. A sphinx approaches, offering secret lore if the characters can direct it to a suitable mate or an abandoned temple it can restore and guard.

Loot: A sphinx usually has one or two cyphers and perhaps a small artifact it can wear and use.

GM intrusion: The sphinx leaps onto its opponent, attacking with all four claws as its action.

STATUE, ANIMATE 7 (21)

Towering statues carved from stone or cast in metal are sometimes more than humans rendered in moments of triumph, celebration, or suffering. Sometimes a statue moves, usually in service to some ancient geas or command that animated it in the first place.

Most animate statues are vessels imprisoning the mind of a sentient creature. Such entrapment usually tumbles the spirits into the abyss of insanity, though most rest in a dormant state, their minds lost in whatever memories they retain. Disturbing animate statues can cause them to awaken, usually with disastrous results.

Motive: Release from imprisonment; guard an area

Environment: In out-of-the-way places, especially ancient ruins

Health: 33

Damage Inflicted: 9 points

Armor: 4

Movement: Short

Modifications: All tasks involving balance as level 2; Might defense as level 8; Speed defense as level 5 due to size

Combat: An animate statue towers over most foes, and it can smash or stomp a target within short range as a melee attack. The statue's massive size and the material of its body means it can walk through nearly any obstacle, smashing through walls of solid rock, buildings, and trees. When walking, it pays no attention to what it steps on. Anything in its path is likely flattened. A character who is stepped on must make a Speed defense roll to dodge or be knocked down and take 9 points of damage.

Animate statues are strong and hard to hurt, but they are often top-heavy. If one falls or is knocked over, it takes a few rounds to rise and resume whatever it was doing.

Interaction: Statues spend years immobilized and insensate, their minds lost in half-remembered experiences and hallucinations. Rousing a statue has unpredictable results. Some might rampage. Others laugh, cry, or scream streams of nonsense. Regardless, if one has been commanded to guard an area or entrance, it also likely lashes out.

Use: An animate statue holds a treasure trove of knowledge. If the characters can keep it focused or knocked down long enough, they might coax from it the information they seek.

GM intrusion: The animate statue strikes a character so hard that the victim flies a long distance and lands in a heap, possibly dropping gear and weapons along the way.

TROLL 6 (18)

A troll is a hideous humanoid standing at least 10 feet (3 m) tall that hunts more by smell than by sight. They are dangerous but not particularly intelligent. Always ravenous, trolls eat anything, and rarely take the time to cook a meal. Usually, they distend their mouths and throats and swallow subdued prey whole.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Nearly anywhere, hunting alone or in pairs

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Long

Modifications: Speed defense as level 5 due to size; Might defense as level 7; sees through deception as level 4

Combat: The troll attacks with its claws. If it hits, it grabs a foe tightly, then squeezes and bites until the victim is dead or it releases that victim to attack another creature. Each round that a held creature does not escape, they take 10 points of damage.

Trolls regain 3 points of health per round. If a troll suffers a particularly egregious wound (10 or more points of damage in one round), rather than regain health in that round (and instead of taking any other action), the troll divides into two level 4 trolls that are 3 feet (1 m) tall. Spawns trolls that survive the battle and have access to food grow into full-power trolls within a few weeks.

Interaction: Trolls speak their own simple language, but a few know a little bit of a local human language. Most prefer to attack and eat other creatures, but might be bargained with after a successful show of force.

Spawned troll: level 4, Might defense as level 5; health 15; Armor 1; claws inflict 5 points of damage; grabbed victim suffers 5 points of damage each round held by troll

Use: Trolls may be chance encounters in the wilderness for unlucky travelers. Sometimes captured trolls are used by slavers, armies, and powerful wizards as guards and warriors.

GM intrusion: The struck troll divides into two separate trolls that immediately attack the character in the same action.

TYRANOSAURUS REX 7 (21)

The short arms of a tyrannosaurus have been much parodied in Earth social media circles, but the arms aren't really important when a hunting tyrannosaurus is after you. It's more the soul-shivering roar, designed to freeze prey in place, and a skull and mouth so enormous that the entire creature is cantilevered by a massive tail that itself can be used as a powerful weapon.

As vicious as tyrannosauruses likely were 66 million years ago, the versions still hunting today could be even more dangerous. That's because the ones with a taste for humans have learned to adapt to human defenses and to use their roar to terrorize prey as they hunt.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Tyrannosauruses hunt solo or in pairs; they're drawn to loud, unfamiliar noises (like motor engines).

Health: 50

Damage Inflicted: 10 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception as level 5; Speed defense as level 5 due to size

Combat: A tyrannosaurus attacks with its massive bite. Not only does it deal damage, but the target must also make a Might defense roll to pull free or be shaken like a rat in the mouth of a pit bull for 3 additional points of Speed damage (ignores Armor). The shaking recurs each subsequent round in which the target fails a Might-based task to pull free.

A tyrannosaurus can also make a trampling attack if it can charge from just outside of short range. When it does, it moves 50 feet (15 m) in a round, and anything that comes within immediate range is attacked. Even those who make a successful Speed defense roll take 2 points of damage.

Finally, a tyrannosaurus can roar. The first time creatures within short range hear the roar on any given day, they must succeed on a difficulty 2 Intellect defense roll or stand frozen in fear for a round. Attacks against them are eased by two steps in the attacker's favor and deal 2 additional points of damage.

For all their power, tyrannosauruses are not above self-preservation. They never fight to the death if they are outclassed, and they usually break off if they take more than 30 points of damage in a conflict.

Interaction: Tyrannosauruses are animals, but they're clever hunters, too. When they hunt in pairs, they work to keep prey penned between them.

Use: Something is killing big game in a forest preserve. Poachers are suspected at first, but when they are also found dead, it's clear that something else is to blame.

GM intrusion: The tyrannosaurus's tail swings around and knocks the character tumbling out of short range and possibly into dangerous terrain.

VAMPIRE 6 (18)

Vampires are undead creatures, risen from the grave to drink blood. Their very nature and essence are evil and anti-life, even as they revel in their own endless existence. Most vampires are vain, arrogant, sadistic, lustful, and domineering. Their powers allow them to manipulate others, and they frequently toy with their prey before feeding. Vampires come out only at night, as the sun's rays will destroy them.

The bite of a vampire over three nights (in which it exchanges a bit of its own blood) ensures that the victim will rise as a vampire under the thrall of the one that killed it. While vampires are careful not to create too many of their kind (which amount to competition), each thrall conveys a bit more supernatural power to a vampire.

Motive: Thirsts for blood

Environment: Usually solitary, on the edges of civilization

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Movement: Long

Modifications: Climb, stealth, and perception as level 8; Speed defense as level 7 due to fast movement

Combat: Vampires are strong and fast. They have impressive fangs, but these are usually used in feeding, not in battle. They typically fight with their fists or hands (which basically become claws) but sometimes use weapons.

A vampire can change into a bat or a wolf. This transformation does not change its stats or abilities except that, as a bat, it can fly. Vampires can also transform into shadow or mist, and in these forms they can't be harmed by anything (but also can't affect the physical world).

Vampires possess an unholy charisma and can mesmerize victims within immediate distance so that they stand motionless for one round. In subsequent rounds, the victim will not forcibly resist the vampire, and the vampire can suggest actions to the victim (even actions that will cause the victim to harm themselves or others they care about). Each round, the victim can attempt a new Intellect defense roll to break free.

Vampires are notoriously difficult to hurt. Unless a weapon is very special (blessed by a saint, has specific magical enchantments against vampires, or the like), no physical attack harms a vampire. They simply don't take the damage. Exceptions include the following:

Fire: Vampires burn, though the damage doesn't kill them. It only causes pain, and a vampire regains all health lost to fire damage within a day.

Running water: Complete immersion inflicts 10 points of damage per round. If not destroyed, the vampire can use a single action to regain all health lost in this way.

Holy water: This inflicts 4 points of damage and affects a vampire exactly like fire.

Sunlight: Exposure to sunlight inflicts 10 points of damage per round. If not destroyed, the vampire regains all health lost to exposure within a day.

Wooden stake: This weapon inflicts 25 points of damage, effectively destroying the vampire in one blow. However, if the vampire is aware and able to move, this attack is hindered as the vampire does everything it can to evade.

Further, vampires have the following special weaknesses:

Garlic: Significant amounts of garlic within immediate distance hinder a vampire's tasks.

Cross, holy symbol, or mirror: Presenting any of these objects forcefully stuns a vampire, causing it to lose its next action. While the object is brandished and the vampire is within immediate range, its tasks are hindered by two steps.

Eventually, a vampire with a multitude under its command becomes the new vampire lord. The vampire lord is the most powerful vampire in the world and is often (but not always) the most ancient of its kind. It has many vampires under its control, and even those that it did not create pay it respect and homage.

Interaction: Most vampires look upon humans as cattle upon which to feed. They rarely have respect for anything but other vampires, and they often hate other supernatural creatures that they cannot enslave.

Use: Strange stories of shadows in the night, people disappearing from their beds, and graves missing their former occupants could portend the arrival of a vampire in the region.

GM intrusion: The character struck by the vampire is caught fast in its powerful grip. If the character doesn't escape immediately, the vampire bites them automatically.

VAMPIRE, TRANSITIONAL 3 (9)

When humans are "visited upon" (bitten) by a vampire, they might be killed, or they might be left alive to begin a slow transformation into a creature of the night. If victims are bitten three times, they become a vampire forever under the control of the one that bit them. From the time of the first bite until their complete transformation after the third bite, they are transitional vampires. Ways to return transitional vampires to normal include using special ancient rituals or destroying the vampire that bit them in the first place.

Transitional vampires usually serve as guardians, consorts, or spies for their masters.

Motive: Thirsts for blood

Environment: Anywhere, usually solitary but sometimes in groups of two or three

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Climb and stealth as level 4

Combat: Transitional vampires can maintain a human existence during the day without any of a vampire's powers or weaknesses. However, they have a disdain for garlic and the sun. At night they take on all the characteristics of a vampire, and if confronted by any of the traditional vampiric weaknesses (a wooden stake, a cross, and so on), they flee unless their master is present.

Interaction: Transitional vampires are utterly devoted to their master.

Use: Transitional vampires lie in the intersection of foe and victim. A loved one or trusted companion who has been turned into a transitional vampire will try to betray, defeat, and kill the PCs, but the characters are motivated to save them rather than destroy them.

VAT REJECT 3 (9)

Vat rejects come into being when clone vats meant to produce clone soldiers or similar mass-produced entities are corrupted. How the carefully controlled process becomes compromised varies, but possibilities include yeast contamination, sunspot activity, nanovirus evolution, or purposeful meddling with control parameters. Unskilled operators experimenting with derelict cloning equipment can also produce a vat of rejects.

Vat rejects fear nothing and welcome death, except that their existential rage requires an outlet other than immediate suicide. Their warped forms mean that most are in constant pain, and they somehow understand that this was artificially stamped into them by their creators. Revenge is their only possible redemption.

Motive: Self-destruction through endless aggression

Environment: Anywhere in lost and lonely places

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 4 due to frenzied alacrity

Combat: Vat rejects charge into battle with berserk speed, hindering defenses against their initial attack. All vat rejects are able to inflict damage directly by cutting, bashing, or biting a victim, depending on their particular morphology. Some also have additional abilities; roll on the table below for each reject.

d6	Ability
1	Reject deals +3 damage in melee (6 points total)
2	Reject has short-range acid spit attack that inflicts 2 points of damage, plus 2 points of damage each additional round until victim succeeds on a Might defense roll
3	Reject can fly a long distance as an action
4	Reject has 2 Armor
5	Reject has long-range destructive eye ray attack that inflicts 6 points of damage
6	When struck by an attack, reject detonates in an immediate radius, inflicting 6 points of damage in a radioactive explosion (and 1 point even on a successful Speed defense roll)

Interaction: Vat rejects are usually always enraged, making interaction nearly impossible. However, some may negotiate if offered a reasonable hope of salvation through extreme surgery or other transformation.

Use: A long-missing derelict ship, famous for carrying a load of planet-buster superweapons, is found. However, salvagers discover it to be overrun by vat rejects. No one knows if the rejects plan to use the superweapons, if they have been released by someone else as a distraction, or if they are part of a mutated ship defense system.

GM intrusion: The vat reject also has a radioactive sting. On a failed Might defense roll, the character struck by the reject descends one step on the damage track.

WARDROID 6 (18)

When star troopers need heavy support, they sometimes bring in wardroids. These fearsome robots, standing about 8 feet (2 m) tall, are ruthless even by trooper standards and are known to kill innocent bystanders as often as they kill foes. It is said that when wardroids are unleashed, wise troopers fall back and take cover.

Motive: Maintain control, crush, kill, destroy

Environment: Anywhere

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Short; some models can fly a short distance each round

Modifications: Attacks as level 7

Combat: A wardroid's main weapon is a bank of laser blasters that it can use to attack up to three foes standing next to each other as one action. When damaged, a wardroid regains 1 point of health each round. Furthermore, each wardroid has one additional capability:

d6	Ability
1	Emit poison gas that inflicts 5 points of damage on organic beings in immediate range
2	Project grenades up to long distance that detonate in an immediate radius, inflicting 5 points of damage
3	Fire a beam that stuns an organic being for one round, during which it cannot take actions
4	Emit a field that disrupts machines; technological devices and machine creatures in immediate range cannot function for one round
5	Fire a piercing projectile up to long range that inflicts 6 points of damage that ignores physical armor (but not necessarily other Armor)
6	Spray a corrosive that inflicts 5 points of damage on everything in immediate range

Interaction: Interaction is difficult for those not authorized to communicate with a wardroid.

Use: Wardroids are often deployed in groups of two or three to guard a vault or the entrance to a spacecraft, or to track down intruders aboard a space station.

Loot: The remains of a wardroid can yield one or two cyphers to someone adept at salvage.

GM intrusion: When defeated, the wardroid detonates, inflicting 8 points of damage on all creatures within immediate range.

WEREWOLF 4 (12)

The curse of lycanthropy begins as nightmares about being chased or, somehow more terrifying, chasing someone else. As the dreams grow more fierce and each night's sleep provides less rest, victims begin to

wonder about the bloodstains on their clothing, the strange claw marks in their homes, and eventually, the mutilated bodies they find buried in their backyards.

When not transformed, many who suffer the curse seem like completely normal people, if emotionally traumatized by the fact that most of their friends and family have been brutally slaughtered over the preceding months. Some few, however, realize the truth of their condition, and depending on their natures, they either kill themselves before their next transformation or learn to revel in the butchery.

Motive: Slaughter when transformed; searching for answers when human

Environment: Anywhere dark, usually alone but sometimes as part of a small pack of two to five

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short; long when in wolf form

Modifications: Attacks as level 6 when half lupine; Speed defense as level 6 when full lupine; perception as level 7 when half or full lupine

Combat: In normal human form, a werewolf has no natural attacks, though it may use a weapon. It also lacks the abilities described below; its only power is to transform into a half-lupine form or full-lupine form, which takes 1d6 agonizing rounds. A handful of werewolves can control their transformation, but most change at night in response to moon-related cues.

Half Lupine: A half-lupine werewolf is part humanoid and part wolf, but completely terrifying. It attacks with its claws.

Full Lupine: A full-lupine werewolf is a particularly large and vicious-looking wolf. It normally bites foes and deals 2 additional points of damage (7 points total) but can also use its claws.

Half and Full Lupine: Half-lupine and full-lupine werewolves both enjoy enhanced senses and regain 2 points of health per round. However, a werewolf that takes damage from a silver weapon or bullet stops regenerating for several minutes.

Interaction: In human form, werewolves have the goals and aspirations of normal people, and they often don't recall what they did while transformed or even realize that they suffer the curse of lycanthropy. In half- or full-lupine form, there's no negotiating with one.

Use: When the moon is full, werewolves hunt

GM intrusion: A PC who moves down one step on the damage track due to damage inflicted by a werewolf must succeed on a Might defense roll or be afflicted with the curse of lycanthropy.

WITCH 5 (15)

They studied the old ways at the dark of the moon. They heard the shuffle of unnamed things through the darkling forest, watched the convection of the bubbles rise in the cauldron, and attended to the mumbled instructions of withered crones and crumbling messages traced on dead leaves. Then one midnight, everything came together. Another witch was born.

When witches lose sight of their humanity and use their powers for personal gain without regard for others, they are warped by the power they channel, both mentally and physically. However, they can hide such transformations beneath layers of illusion.

Motive: Domination of others, knowledge

Environment: Almost anywhere, usually alone, but sometimes as part of a coven of three to seven witches

Health: 21

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short; long when flying (on a broomstick)

Modifications: Deception and disguise as level 7; Speed defense as level 6 due to familiar; knowledge of forests and dark secrets as level 6

Combat: When attacked, a witch relies on the aid of their familiar to improve their Speed defense. The familiar could be a large black cat, an owl, a big snake, or some other creature. Killing a witch's familiar is so shocking to a witch that their attacks and Speed defense are hindered for a few days. It's also a way to ensure that the witch never forgives their foe or grants mercy.

(Familiar: level 3; health 9; Armor 1)

A witch can use their ritual blade to attack a creature in immediate range, but would much rather use curses, including the ones described below. A witch can't use the same curse more than once every other round.

Charm: Victims within short range who fail an Intellect defense roll are enslaved. Victims turn on their allies or take some other action described by their new master. The curse lasts for one minute, or until the victims succeed on an Intellect defense roll; each time they fail a roll, the next roll is hindered by one additional step.

Hexbolt: A victim within long range is attacked with fire, cold, or psychic bolts, as the witch chooses. Psychic bolts deal 3 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor).

Shrivel: A victim within long range and up to two creatures next to the victim must succeed on a Might defense roll or take 3 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor). In each subsequent round, a victim who failed the previous roll must make another Might defense roll with the same outcome on failure.

Vitality: The witch regains 11 points of health and gains +3 to Armor for one minute. Multiple uses don't further improve Armor.

Interaction: Most witches are deceptive and conniving, though a few work against the stereotype. All witches are willing to negotiate, though the devious ones usually do so in bad faith.

Use: The PCs need an old book to continue their investigation. Word is that the old woman who lives on the edge of the woods has the only copy.

Loot: A witch usually has an artifact or two on their person, possibly including a flying broom (which has a depletion roll of 1 in 1d10).

GM intrusion: After a character succeeds on a defense roll against one of the witch's ongoing curse effects, the witch immediately tosses a hexbolt at them. If the character is hit, the ongoing curse effect also continues.

WORM THAT WALKS 7 (21)

This sodden, leather-wrapped humanoid smells of the sea. It moves effortlessly through the air, levitating above the ground while its damp wrappings writhe and squirm as if infested with thousands of worms—because they are. Each worm that walks is a mass of psionic grubs squirming through a slush of salty ooze. Individually the grubs are harmless vermin, but together they're a sentient entity, a single psionic mind formed of thousands of tiny, maggot-like pupae. The tightly wound leather straps covering a worm that walks are just as important for hiding its true nature as for adhesion. Despite being fully encased, the worm that walks senses its environment with a hard-to-fool sixth sense.

Motive: Domination of other creatures, hunger

Environment: Almost anywhere

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Immediate; short when flying

Modifications: Perception as level 8; Speed defense as level 5 due to slow nature

Combat: A worm that walks can strike a single target in immediate range with a leather-wrapped “fist” as its action. When it hits and deals damage, several grubs spill out and attach to the victim (getting under most armor unless it’s hermetically sealed or behind a force field), who must make a Might defense roll to shake them loose. On a failure, the grubs begin to feed, and the target takes 5 points of damage (ignores Armor).

If a victim is killed while in immediate range of a worm that walks, the worms automatically engulf the body through a wide opening in their wrappings. The grubs go into a feeding frenzy, reducing the remains to nothing within minutes. During the frenzy, the worm that walks regenerates 2 points of health per round. A victim’s equipment is retained for later study.

A worm that walks can also emit a psychic burst that can target up to three creatures in short range as its action. On a failed Intellect defense roll, a victim suffers 4 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) and is unable to take actions on their subsequent turn. If the victim is attacked while so stunned, their defenses are hindered by two steps.

Interaction: A worm that walks can communicate telepathically with characters within short range. It negotiates only with those strong enough to harm it; otherwise, it tries to eat whoever it runs across. Even if the worm that walks makes a deal, it eventually reneges if it senses any advantage for doing so.

Use: A worm that walks has been active in a small rural community for weeks, apparently in preparation for something it calls “the Great Hatching.” If that refers to the hatching of more psychic grubs, it could spell trouble for a much larger region.

Loot: A worm that walks might have one or two cyphers, though during combat it will use any devices that could help it in the fight.

GM intrusion: A character struck by the worm that walks notices that they weren’t able to shake off all the grubs that spilled out. If they fail a Speed defense roll, a grub dives into their flesh and travels through their body, its route visible beneath their skin. The character is distracted (all tasks hindered) until the grub dies one minute later or is otherwise extracted

WRAITH 2 (6)

When a spirit of a dead creature fails to find its way to the afterworld, escapes the same, or is summoned forth by a necromancer, it may become a wraith: a bodiless spirit of rage and loss. A wraith appears as a shadowy or misty figure that can resemble the humanoid figure it once was, though wraiths tend to swarm together, making it difficult to distinguish them from each other. Wraiths are often mindless, consumed by their condition. But on occasion, a wraith not too far gone still remembers its life and may respond to questions or seek to locate its loved ones or enemies. A wraith may even attempt to finish a task it started in life. But in time, even the strongest-willed spirit’s mind erodes without physical substance to renew it, and it becomes an almost mindless monster of destruction.

Motive: Destruction

Environment: Almost anywhere, singly or in groups of six to ten

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short while flying

Modifications: Stealth as level 5

Combat: A wraith attacks with its touch, which rots flesh and drains life.

A wraith can become fully insubstantial. After it does so, the creature can't change state again until its next turn. While insubstantial, it can't affect or be affected by anything (except for weapons and attacks that specifically affect undead or phased creatures), and it can pass through solid matter without hindrance, but even simple magical wards can keep it at bay. While partly insubstantial (its normal state), a wraith can affect and be affected by others normally.

A group of five wraiths can act as a swarm, focusing on one target to make one attack roll as a single level 4 creature dealing 5 points of damage.

Interaction: Most wraiths moan and scream in rage. The rare few that retain reason can speak in a sepulchral voice, and they may even negotiate. Any alliance with a wraith is usually short-lived, since the creature eventually forgets itself and descends fully into rage and the desire to spread destruction.

Use: The PCs are attacked while attending a burial, or they happen to pass close to or camp near a graveyard. Another swarm of wraiths appears in a location where an earlier group was destroyed (indicating a necromancer is summoning them).

GM intrusion: The wraith screams out, summoning 1d6 more wraiths from the afterworld.

WYVERN 6 (18)

Wyverns are aggressive lesser cousins of dragons. Their bodies are about the size of a heavy horse but their wingspan makes them seem much larger. Lacking a dragon's fiery breath or other magical abilities, wyverns rely on their strong flight and deadly stinger to catch and kill their prey, typically humanoids or large animals. Wyverns have four limbs—two legs used for clumsy walking and two arm-wings used for flight and balance.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Mountains, hills, and plains where large prey is plentiful

Health: 35

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short; long when flying

Modifications: Perception as level 7; Speed defense as level 5 due to size

Combat: Wyverns prefer to attack from the air, moving up to a short distance and making three attacks (bite, venomous stinger, claws) as their action. If a wyvern has to fight on the ground, it can attack only with its bite and stinger on its turn.

The stinger injects poison, dealing an additional 5 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) if the opponent fails a Might defense roll. Because the wyvern hunts primarily out of hunger, it usually focuses its attacks on one creature, weakening the prey so the wyvern can carry it away and eat in peace.

Interaction: Wyverns lack the intelligence of true dragons. They are relatively smart animals (on par with large reptiles such as crocodiles) but can be distracted by easy prey. Allowing one to catch a pig, pony, or riding horse can give characters enough time to get safely away.

Use: Hungry wyverns are known to swoop in and carry off livestock and travelers near a particular road or field. A gang of crafty bandits has managed to train a couple of wyverns as mounts and use them as flying cavalry for their troops on the ground.

Loot: Wyverns do not collect treasure, but their nest might have a few cyphers from previous victims. If carefully extracted, an intact venom gland from a dead wyvern can be used to poison one weapon (if sold, it is the equivalent of an expensive item).

GM intrusions: As part of its attack, the wyvern grabs hold of the character and flies a short distance away. The character can escape with a Might or Speed defense roll (which probably means they fall to the ground and land prone). The wyvern uses a wing or its tail to slam a character so they are thrown a short distance away and land prone.

XENOPARASITE 6 (18)

This alien creature exists only to eat and reproduce. In doing so, it also destroys every form of life it encounters. Xenoparasites are not technological but were likely engineered by a species with advanced biological super-science. Xenoparasites don't travel between star systems on their own; they were presumably spread across an area of space by their creators to serve as a broad-spectrum bioweapon. What has become of the original maker species is unknown, but given the fecundity and ferocity of the xenoparasite, it's likely they were consumed by their own creation.

Xenoparasites use ovipositors to lay thousands of microscopic eggs in victims. The implanted eggs, like tiny biological labs, detect the particular biology of the new host, adapt accordingly, and use it to fertilize themselves. Within a day or two, victims who haven't already been consumed by adult xenoparasites (which are human sized) give explosive birth to multiple vicious juveniles (which are the size of cats). These juvenile xenoparasites have an edge in dealing with the particular species of creature they hatched from.

Motive: Eat and reproduce

Environment: Hunts alone or in small groups

Health: 28

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short; long when flying

Modifications: All stealth actions as level 8

Combat: A xenoparasite bites with its mandibles and stings one victim with its ovipositor as a single action. The bite inflicts 6 points of damage, and the ovipositor inflicts 3 points of damage and injects thousands of microscopic eggs if the victim fails a Might defense roll.

Once every other round, an adult can fly at least a short distance to build terrifying velocity and then make a flying attack with its mandibles, dealing 12 points of damage. Defenses against this attack are hindered.

An egg host requires the attention of someone skilled in medicine (and a successful difficulty 7 Intellect-based roll) to sterilize all the eggs in the victim's blood before they hatch twenty or more hours after being deposited, which kills the host and releases 1d6 juvenile xenoparasites. Juveniles are level 2 creatures, but they attack the species of the host they were hatched from as if level 4. After just a few days of feeding, they grow to full adult size.

Xenoparasites can survive at crushing ocean and gas giant pressures, as well as in the vacuum of space. They can encrust abandoned spacecraft and desolate moons for millennia in extended hibernation, only to become active again when vibrations alert them to potential new food sources.

Interaction: These creatures are built to consume, not negotiate.

Use: Xenoparasites are tough aliens. A colony of them would be a challenge even for PCs normally accustomed to stiff opposition. A single xenoparasite introduced into an inhabited area could turn the entire place into an infested hive within a week.

GM (group) intrusion: An NPC shrieks, bursts, and births 1d6 juvenile xenoparasites.

ZOMBIE 3 (9)

Humans transformed into aggressive, hard-to-kill serial killers with no memory of their former existence are called zombies. Depending on a zombie's origin, the reason for its transformation varies. A zombie might arise from an undead curse, a psychic possession, an AI meatware overwrite, a viral infection, a drug overdose, or something else. Regardless of how the transformation happened, the result is much the same: a creature whose humanity has been burned out and replaced with unquenchable hunger.

Zombies aren't intelligent, but enough of them together sometimes exhibit emergent behavior, just as ants can coordinate activities across a colony. Thus, zombies alone or in small groups aren't an overwhelming threat for someone who has a baseball bat or can get away. But it's never wise to laugh off a zombie horde.

Motive: Hunger (for flesh, cerebrospinal fluid, certain human hormones, and so on)

Environment: Almost anywhere, in groups of five to seven, or in hordes of tens to hundreds

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Immediate

Modifications: Speed defense as level 2

Combat: Zombies never turn away from a conflict.

They fight on, no matter the odds, usually attacking by biting, but sometimes by tearing with hands made into claws by the erosion of skin over their finger bones.

When zombies attack in groups of five to seven individuals, they can make a single attack roll against one target as one level 5 creature, inflicting 5 points of damage.

Zombies are hard to finish off. If an attack would reduce a zombie's health to 0, it does so only if the number rolled in the attack was an even number; otherwise, the zombie is reduced to 1 point of health instead. This might result in a dismembered, gruesomely damaged zombie that is still moving. Zombies can see in the dark at short range.

"Fresh" zombies are vulnerable to electricity. The first time a zombie takes 5 or more points of damage from an electrical attack, it falls limp and unmoving. Assuming nothing interferes with the process, the zombie arises minutes or hours later without the vulnerability.

Some zombies are infectious. Their bites spread a level 8 disease that moves a victim down one step on the damage track each day a Might defense roll is failed. Victims killed by the disease later animate as zombies.

Interaction: Zombies groan when they see something that looks tasty. They do not reason, cannot speak, and never stop pursuing something they've identified as a potential meal, unless something else edible comes closer.

Use: The characters are asked to clear out a space that once served as an old military depot. The appearance of zombies sealed in the area comes as an unpleasant surprise.

GM intrusion: When the character fails to kill a zombie by rolling an odd number on an attack that otherwise would have been successful, in addition to the normal effect, the zombie's arm comes free and animates as a separate level 2 zombie.

SUPERVILLIANS

People with amazing abilities who use them for evil earn the label of supervillain. This section presents five sample supervillains. These supervillains use the same format as the Creatures chapter.

ANATHEMA 7 (21)

The supervillain called Anathema is big, bright red, and stronger than anyone on this planet or any other (or so he claims). Superheroes who go head to head with him learn that he can withstand almost any hit and always gives back twice as hard as he receives. He can bring down buildings with a punch and throw semi trucks across state lines.

Before he was Anathema, he was Sameer Stokes, a bitter and spiteful coder working for a large software company. Having failed in relationships, promotions, and retaining friends, Sameer retreated online and learned that he had power when he bullied people. He delighted in causing emotional distress in others in forums and social media. In effect, he was a troll. When the metamorphosis happened, he was turned into a troll for real. (Sameer doesn't recall the metamorphosis or the days before and immediately after his change, despite using therapy and drugs in an attempt to recover those memories.)

(Assume that Anathema has three power shifts in strength and two in resilience. These shifts are already figured into his modifications and other stats.)

Motive: Accumulate wealth, live on the edge

Environment: Anywhere vast wealth can be stolen

Health: 70

Damage Inflicted: 12 points

Movement: Short; a few miles (5 km) per leap

Modifications: Strength tasks as level 10; Might defense as level 9; Speed defense as level 5 due to size

Combat: Anathema hits foes with bone-shocking force. He can throw cars and large objects at targets within long range, dealing damage to all creatures within immediate range of his target.

Anathema has a healing factor that makes it hard to hurt him in any meaningful sense. He regains 10 points of health per round. In any round in which he regains health, his attacks deal 3 additional points of damage (15 total), and he seems to visibly swell with muscle.

Interaction: When Anathema is riled up during a fight, it's difficult to reason with him. However, he is willing to negotiate if someone offers him wealth or convinces him they have valuable secrets for breaking mental blocks. Anathema doesn't know how he became the way he is, and he wants to recover his missing memories.

Use: The rolling earthquake afflicting the city is actually Anathema fighting a group of newbie superheroes who haven't figured out that engaging the red mountain will likely cause more deaths than leaving him alone. (The first rule of fighting Anathema is to lead or move him somewhere with a low population density.)

Loot: Anathema doesn't normally carry wealth or other valuables. In his lair, Anathema typically has three to five expensive items, 1d6 cyphers, and possibly an artifact.

GM intrusion: Anathema's attack sends the character flying a long distance and potentially into dangerous terrain.

DOCTOR DREAD 7 (21)

Doctor Dread is larger than life thanks to her brilliant mind, her media savvy, and the robotic armor she uses to enhance her otherwise normal abilities. Indeed, Doctor Dread has become the most feared terrorist on the planet. She uses her abilities to extort money, influence, and technology from the rich and powerful, whether her victims are individuals, governments, corporations, or superheroes.

Alicia Coleridge is Doctor Dread's secret identity. Born into relative obscurity, she received a full scholarship to the Russell Institute of Technology, where she studied the effects of radioactive substances on living tissue. In a freak lab accident, Alicia's fianc éwas slain, and Alicia was disfigured and driven slightly insane, so much so that she built the Doctor Dread armor. She plows the vast wealth she accumulates through terrorism into research into the rejuvenation of dead flesh. She hopes to one day bring back her dead love, whose body she keeps in suspended animation.

(Doctor Dread is usually accompanied by a handful of robot minions.)

(Dread's robot minion: level 3; Armor 1; long-range laser attack inflicts 4 points of damage)

(Assume that Doctor Dread has three power shifts in intelligence and two in resilience. These shifts are already figured into her modifications and other stats.)

Motive: Accumulate wealth; reanimate dead flesh

Environment: Wherever money can be extorted

Health: 40

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 4

Movement: Short; long when flying

Modifications: Resists mental attacks and deception as level 8; understands, repairs, and crafts advanced technology as level 10

Combat: Doctor Dread's armor allows her to exist without outside air (or air pressure), food, or water for up to ten days at a time. She can call on her robotic armor to accomplish a variety of tasks, including the following:

Barricade: Establish an immobile, two-dimensional field of transparent force 10 feet by 10 feet (3 m by 3 m) for ten minutes

Energy Cloak: Create an energy field that gives her +5 to Armor against heat, cold, or magnetism (one at a time, chosen when she uses the power) for ten minutes

Fade: Become invisible for one minute, or until she makes an attack

Plasma Blast: Long-range heat and electricity blast that inflicts 7 points of damage

Interaction: Doctor Dread is slightly mad, but that's normally disguised by her amazing brilliance. She is an egomaniac but will negotiate in return for a promise of wealth or biomedical lore she doesn't already know.

Use: The PCs are called to handle a hostage situation at a party in which many of the city's wealthy elite are being held captive by Doctor Dread. She promises to let them go once sufficient wealth is paid into her offshore accounts.

Loot: Most of Doctor Dread's considerable wealth is tied up in online accounts, two or three secret fortresses, and cutting-edge biological research equipment.

GM intrusion: Doctor Dread uses a function built into her robotic armor that is the perfect solution for her current predicament: healing herself, teleporting away, disintegrating a barrier, or whatever is needed.

MAGNETAR 8 (24)

Not much is known about Magnetar other than its powerful ability to generate and control magnetic fields. Various research groups theorize that Magnetar is an alien, a sentient and self-improving robot, or even some kind of manifestation of a fundamental force. Given Magnetar's vaguely humanoid shape, a few people even suggest that the villain is actually a man with a mutant ability so powerful that it burned out all memories of his former self.

In truth, Magnetar is the animate, sentient, and self-regulating nucleus of a neutron star that is able to rein in its immense electromagnetic signature. One of two such beings an advanced alien species created from a single magnetar (a type of neutron star with an extremely powerful magnetic field), Magnetar was sent on a mission of exploration. After millennia, it crashed on Earth and was damaged. Having lost most of its memory data, Magnetar knows that something was taken from it (its twin), but it can't remember what. It has decided to blame the humans.

(Assume that Magnetar has three power shifts in its magnetic power and two in resilience. These shifts are already figured into its modifications and other stats.)

Motive: Revenge; regain memory

Environment: Almost anywhere, searching for what it has lost

Health: 50

Damage Inflicted: 12 points

Armor: 8

Movement: Short; long when magnetically levitating

Modifications: Speed defense as level 5 due to mass; tasks related to controlling and shaping metal through electromagnetic manipulation as level 11

Combat: Magnetar's fist packs a wallop, since it can selectively add mass to the punch. However, its most potent ability is its level 11 control over all metal within very long range, which it uses to create anything it can imagine, including walls, attacks, pincers, and more. Magnetar can lift bridges, vehicles, and structures infused with rebar that it can see within its area of influence. When it throws such a large object as part of an attack, the target and everything within short range of the target takes 10 points of damage.

Magnetar's only weakness is psychic attacks, which is fortunate since reducing it to 0 health through an old-fashioned beating could release an uncontrolled neutron star chunk on the Earth's surface.

Interaction: Morose and gruff, Magnetar would rather be alone, but every so often, it goes on a rampage, hoping that a display will draw out whoever or whatever made it the way it is. Magnetar constantly feels the drag of emotional loss, but it doesn't know why (it doesn't realize that the feeling comes from the loss of its twin).

Use: Doctor Dread has put a bounty on Magnetar's head because she wants to study the advanced technology woven through its body. The bounty amount is outrageous, but then again, so is Magnetar.

GM intrusion: On a failed Might defense roll, all of the character's loose metallic items (including weapons) are stripped from them and become stuck to a nearby metallic buttress.

MISTER GENOCIDE 5 (15)

Real name Alfred Webster, Mister Genocide has the unfortunate ability to synthesize deadly poison from his skin. His touch can kill, but if he wishes it, so can his spittle or even his breath.

Anyone who spends too much time in Mister Genocide's presence becomes ill, even if the villain isn't actively using his power. Thus, his cronies usually wear gas masks and protective clothing. Mister Genocide has promoted himself to the head of the mob in the city where he resides and is always looking to expand his operations, sometimes at the expense of other criminals.

When victims are killed by Mister Genocide's poison, their skin and the whites of their eyes take on a bright green hue, which increases the terror that normal people feel regarding him. Even superheroes have been brought down by his toxins.

Mister Genocide sometimes teams up with Anathema, because the red mountain is the only villain who can withstand the poison that Genocide constantly emits.

(Assume that Mister Genocide has two power shifts in his poison power, one in intelligence, and two in resilience. These shifts are already figured into his modifications and other stats.)

Motive: Accumulate power

Environment: Anywhere crime lords congregate

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 5 points; see Combat

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Poison breath attack and Might defense as level 7; Intellect defense and evil genius as level 6

Combat: Targets touched by Mister Genocide must make a difficulty 7 Might defense roll or take 5 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) from the poison transmitted. Worse, the poison continues to inflict 2 points of Speed damage each round until the victim succeeds at a Might defense roll.

Every other round, Mister Genocide can make a level 7 poison attack that can affect up to ten victims within short range as a single action. Those who fail a Might defense roll take 7 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) and spend a round helpless as they cough and gag. The inhalant poison does not continue to inflict damage each round.

Mister Genocide is immune to most venoms, toxins, and poisons.

Interaction: Certifiably insane, Mister Genocide likes to kill people. He may negotiate for a while, but if there is not enough gain to be had, he might kill everyone with a breath just for the fun of watching them suffocate and turn green.

Use: Gang warfare between two criminal organizations is shooting up downtown, and many innocent bystanders caught in the crossfire end up bullet-ridden or poisoned (with green skin). Someone needs to put a stop to Mister Genocide.

Loot: The supervillain carries currency equivalent to 1d6 expensive items, a cypher or two, and a variety of poisoned knives, needles, and vials.

GM intrusion: A character affected by the poison must make a second Might defense roll or fall unconscious from shock. Unconsciousness lasts for up to a minute, or until the victim is jostled awake.

The head of an elite group of assassins, Wrath wants to save the world by killing everyone who impedes her vision of perfection—which turns out to be the better part of humanity. In addition to being one of the most accomplished martial artists to walk the earth (thanks to her connection with a mystical entity called the Demon), Wrath is also a criminal mastermind whose assassins are just one layer of the organization she controls.

Born more than two hundred and fifty years ago in China to a name lost to history, Wrath was taken in by a monastery and trained in the ways of fist and sword. Everything changed when raiders attacked and killed everyone in her monastery, leaving her the sole survivor. Vowing revenge against the raiders and the world that allowed animals like them to exist, she acquired a magical amulet that contains the Demon. The Demon in turn bequeathed her extraordinary speed, strength, and longevity.

Wrath is content to let her assassins (and mobsters, lawyers, and politicians) accomplish many of her goals, though she relishes being present when particularly important adversaries are brought down.

(Assassin of Wrath: level 4, stealth as level 7)

(Assume that Wrath has two power shifts in dexterity, two in accuracy, and one in resilience. These shifts are already figured into her modifications and other stats.)

Motive: Save the world

Environment: Anywhere wrongs (to Wrath's way of thinking) must be righted

Health: 36

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Stealth, attacks, and Speed defense as level 8

Combat: Wrath prefers a sword, though she is equally adept with a crossbow or, in rare cases, modern weapons. In melee she can attack two foes as a single action every round.

Thanks to the influence of the Demon, Wrath regains 3 points of health each round, even if reduced to 0 health. The only way to permanently kill her is to reduce her to 0 health and keep her that way long enough to burn away the tattoo of the Demon that is engraved across her back.

Interaction: Wrath is arrogant and confident, though not so much that she is easily fooled by flattery. She is usually amenable to negotiating, because she can anticipate the agenda of others and usually gain far more for herself in the end. However, she is not one to betray her word.

Use: Wrath is making a bid to form a group of supervillains—all of whom will answer to her, of course—and it seems that initial talks are going well. The only holdout is Mister Genocide, who feels threatened by Wrath's larger organization, and this tension has led to ongoing warfare in the streets as assassins battle mobsters.

Loot: In addition to weapons and armor, Wrath likely possesses the equivalent of five exorbitant items, 1d6 cyphers, and possibly one or two artifacts.

GM intrusion: Just as things seem bleakest for her, Wrath summons a group of assassins waiting in the wings to surround the PCs and demand their surrender.

NPCs

The NPCs in this chapter are generic examples of nonplayer characters that can be used in many genres.

Reskinning NPCs: GMs will find that with a few tweaks, a guard can be a modern-day cop, a fantasy caravan guard, or a science fiction drone soldier. This is known as reskinning—making slight changes to existing stats to customize the NPC for your own game.

Health, Not Pools: Remember that NPCs don't have stat Pools. Instead, they have a characteristic called health. When an NPC takes damage of any kind, the amount is subtracted from its health. Unless described otherwise, an NPC's health is always equal to its target number. Some NPCs might have special reactions to or defenses against attacks that would normally deal Speed damage or Intellect damage, but unless the NPC's description specifically explains this, assume that all damage is subtracted from the NPC's health.

Appropriate Weapons: NPCs use weapons appropriate to their situation, which might be swords and crossbows, knives and shotguns, malefic psychic weapons, blasters and grenades, and so on.

OTHER NPCs

Many NPCs are simple and understandable enough to be encapsulated just by their level and a few other other relevant stats.

Cannibal: level 3, deception and other interaction tasks as level 6; health 12

Hacker: level 2; programming, digital infiltration, and repairing computers as level 7

Mad scientist: level 4, most actions as level 6 due to gadgets, serums, artifacts, etc.

Marauder: level 4, initiative and intimidation as level 7; health 28; Armor 1

Master detective: level 5; perception, intuition, initiative, and detecting falsehood as level 9

Politician: level 2, all interaction tasks as level 6

Priest: level 2, religious lore and all interaction tasks as level 6

Professor: level 2, knowledge of science and all interaction tasks as level 6

Soldier: level 3, perception as level 4; health 12; Armor 1; attacks inflict 5 points of damage

ASSASSIN 6 (18)

An assassin kills with poison, with high-velocity bullets from a distance, or by arranging for an unfortunate accident. Assassins accept contracts from governments, corporations, crime bosses, and aggrieved former partners, though some assassins pay themselves by tracking criminals anywhere to collect on “dead or alive” bounties.

Motive: Murder (usually for hire)

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Stealth and deception tasks as level 8; when attacking from hiding, melee and ranged attacks as level 7

Combat: An assortment of small weapons are hidden about an assassin’s body. They can also coat their weapons or ammo with a level 6 poison that moves victims who fail a Might defense roll one step down the damage track.

Interaction: Some assassins have a sort of integrity about their work and can’t be dissuaded from completing their contracts with bribes.

Use: An assassin is greatly feared by anyone with powerful, wealthy enemies.

Loot: Aside from their weapons and poisons, most assassins have currency equivalent to a very expensive item and maybe one or two cyphers.

GM intrusion: The character loses their next turn, stunned, after recognizing the assassin to be the same murderer who killed someone important to them in the past.

BARD 3 (9)

A bard uses the power of words and music to create magic that inspires and influences others. A typical bard plays a musical instrument and weaves song-spells that rival the magic of wizards and priests, but some use their voices, creating fascinating tales and dramatic speeches.

Motive: Entertainment, interaction, and novel experiences

Health: 10

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Music, oration, persuasion, stealth, and Speed defense as level 4

Combat: Bards prefer weapons that rely on speed and agility, like daggers, rapiers, and small bows. Every other round, a bard can create a blast of pure sound that inflicts 3 points of damage (ignores Armor) to one target within short range.

A bard knows several spells, such as adding +1 to recovery rolls of nearby creatures, making an indifferent creature friendly (or a hostile one indifferent) for a few minutes, deafening one opponent for hours, easing a physical task by two steps, turning invisible for a minute, or negating sound for a minute.

Interaction: Bards are personable and easy to talk to, but they have a sharp wit and a sharper tongue when it comes to critics and tyrants. A bard would rather escape from a dangerous situation than fight to the death.

Use: A bard ally often has useful information about the current situation, drawn from songs and folk tales. In a pinch, they can make do as a scout or spy, especially in an urban setting. An unfriendly bard mocks the characters and turns the will of a crowd against them.

Loot: In addition to a musical instrument and a nice outfit for performing, bards usually have currency equivalent to a moderately priced item and one or two cyphers.

BERSERKER 3 (9)

A berserker is a fierce warrior who can fly into a rage, greatly increasing their strength and hardiness. Many of them choose an animal such as a bear, wolf, or boar as their spiritual kin, wearing the skin of that animal and fighting like wild beasts.

Motive: Glory in battle

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1 (or 3 when berserk)

Movement: Short

Modifications: Climbing, jumping, running, and Speed defense as level 4

Combat: Berserkers prefer large, heavy weapons such as axes, hammers, and greatswords, but they may use bows if they can't easily get close to their foes.

A berserker can enter a state of rage as part of their action. When raging, they gain +1 to Armor (including against fire), their melee attacks inflict an additional 2 points of damage, and their attacks, Might defense, and actions relying on strength (such as climbing and jumping) are eased by two steps. However, their Speed defense is hindered. A raging berserker fights only with melee weapons and won't retreat from battle.

Interaction: Berserkers are the elites of some warrior cultures and enjoy physical competitions such as wrestling, throwing heavy items, and feasting. They dislike weak and cowardly folk, and do not tolerate insults to their strength or honor.

Use: A group of warriors is led by a mighty berserker looking for a challenging fight. A group of berserkers enters town and picks fights with the local toughs.

Loot: In addition to their weapons and light armor, a berserker has one or two moderately priced items. The leader of a group might have a cypher that enhances strength or toughness.

CRIME BOSS 3 (9)

A crime boss usually isn't physically powerful but wields power through lies, bribery, and control. Rarely encountered alone, they rely on guards, thugs, and other measures to provide physical security. A crime boss could be a petty noble, a mafia king, or the captain of a pirate ship that sails the seas or glides the space lanes.

Motive: Money and power

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Deception, persuasion, intimidation, and tasks related to friendly interaction as level 7

Combat: Guards, thugs, and other followers deal 1 additional point of damage when the crime boss can see them and issue commands. If possible, crime bosses fight while mounted or in a vehicle, directing their followers from the rear of any conflict, concentrating first on issuing orders.

Interaction: Crime bosses are committed to their plans, whatever those might be. Most bosses rely on a lieutenant or trusted thug to interact with people in their place.

Use: A crime boss and their followers execute a heist on a secure location and take hostages when things go south. Someone must go in and talk to the crime boss to defuse the situation.

Loot: A crime boss has currency equivalent to a very expensive item in addition to weapons, medium armor, and miscellaneous gear.

GM intrusion: The crime boss uses a clever trick or cypher to block all incoming attacks in a given round of combat.

DETECTIVE 3 (9)

Detectives are usually veterans of their organization (such as the police, city watch, marshals, space command, and so on) with extensive experience. Some detectives are freelance sleuths whose uncanny ability to see the truth comes from personal training combined with an underlying talent for noticing clues that others miss.

Motive: Solve the crime

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Tasks relating to perception, intuition, initiative, and detecting falsehoods as level 6

Combat: Detectives prefer to outwit their foes rather than engage in a straight-up fight. Even then, most conflicts occur in a place and time of the detective's choosing, preferably in the presence of their allies. A detective can deduce weaknesses of their enemies (if any) and exploit them in combat.

Interaction: Some detectives are insufferable

know-it-alls. Others have learned that humility is also a useful tool for getting answers from people.

Use: To the PCs, detectives can be obstacles (a detective is on their trail), allies (a detective helps them assemble clues), or both, but the sleuths are rarely a way for the characters to hand off responsibility for accomplishing a hard task.

Loot: Aside from their weapons, most detectives have currency equivalent to a very expensive item and a cypher.

GM intrusion: The detective intuits the character's next attack and moves perfectly so that an ally of the character takes the attack instead.

DRUID 4 (12)

A druid is a servant of a nature deity or the entirety of nature itself. Some have specific interests such as animals, plants, or storms, with greater powers relating to that devotion. Druids are leaders and advisors in some cultures, society-hating hermits in others.

Motive: Protecting nature

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Nature lore, perception, and stealth as level 5

Combat: Druids use simple weapons crafted out of natural materials, such as spears, slings, and bows, as well as ritual tools such as daggers and sickles.

A druid knows several spells, such as a short-range attack that uses electricity or fire, healing a touched creature for 4 health, calming and befriending animals, traveling quickly, controlling the weather within long range, transforming into an animal or plant, and manipulating the natural elements. A druid often has a loyal animal companion, such as a black bear, hawk, viper, or wolf.

Interaction: Druids are cautious when dealing with city folk, and they act quickly to stop the reckless use of fire or exploitation of the wilds. They are generally on good terms with local animals and magical creatures of nature (faeries, sapient trees, satyrs, and so on).

Use: A hermit druid comes to the aid of injured or lost characters in the wildlands. A druid has been attacking loggers and hunters who stray too far from civilization.

Loot: In addition to weapons, light armor, and some moderately priced ritual items, a druid might have a couple of cyphers or perhaps an artifact.

DWARF 4(12)

A typical dwarf found outside of their homeland is an explorer, warrior, and tradesperson of some skill. Dwarves travel to find work as mercenaries, sell the goods they create, or find unusual materials to use in their crafting.

Motive: Defense, loyalty, honor

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: Crafting (metal or stone), Intellect defense, and Might defense as level 5

Combat: Dwarves traditionally use weapons like axes, hammers, and crossbows. They're used to working together to defend their halls; three or more dwarves attacking the same target act as a level 6 creature that inflicts 8 points of damage.

Dwarf leaders are usually officers or priests.

Dwarf officer: level 5; health 16; damage inflicted 7 points Dwarf priest: level 5; health 16; can heal one creature for 10 points or all within immediate range for 5 points

Interaction: Dwarves are proud and hardworking, but they tend to be stubborn, gruff, and unforgiving of offenses to them or their clan. It takes time to gain their trust, but they respect a fair deal, a hard bargain, a sharp axe, and a sturdy hammer.

Use: A stoic old dwarf is looking to go on one more quest before retiring. A clan of dwarves seeks a trade agreement with a human city leader—or redress for an old insult.

Loot: In addition to their weapons and light or medium armor, a dwarf probably has several moderately priced items (such as tools or exploration gear) and perhaps a cypher or two.

ELF 4 (12)

An elf has a very long lifespan and tends to learn and abandon many skills and interests, including combat and magic. Elves are likely to wander in pursuit of something new and interesting, such as finding the tallest tree in the forest, the most beautiful sunset, or the perfect love song.

Motive: Curiosity

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception, Speed defense, and any two noncombat skills as level 5

Combat: Elves usually fight with short or medium blades and delicate but deadly bows. Because of their subtle skill and fast reactions, their first attack in any combat inflicts an additional 2 points of damage.

A typical elf might know a few minor spells, such as heating or chilling food, creating a bit of moonlight, and cleaning or repairing clothing.

Interaction: Elves appreciate beauty, grace, and skill, and they don't respond well to crudeness or bluster, especially from people decades or centuries younger than themselves. They are subtle in their insults but do have a sense of humor.

Use: A group of young elves arrives in a city, wanting to see firsthand how the short-lived humans do things. An elf is said to have lived in the forest for a thousand years, listening to the secrets whispered by the trees.

Loot: In addition to their weapons and light armor, an elf carries a few moderately priced (but extremely well-made) curios and mementos, and usually a cypher.

GUARD 2 (6)

Guards keep the peace but don't usually show much initiative. Ultimately, they do as they're ordered by their superiors, regardless of legality. A guard might be a star trooper dressed in intimidating armor, a mall security guard, a beat police officer, or a mafia goon.

(When attacked, guards always call for the help of other guards, if possible.)

Motive: Keep the peace; follow orders

Health: 8

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Armor: 1 or 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception as level 3

Combat: Guards are not often wily, but they understand strength in numbers. If two or more guards attack the same target with at least one melee attack in the same round, the target's Speed defense roll against those attacks is hindered.

Interaction: Interacting with a guard typically involves one issue: does the PC want to do something that the guard has been told to prevent? If so, the PC could have a difficult time.

Use: To the PCs, guards can be allies, obstacles, or both. Guards who serve the public good have their own duties and aren't interested in doing the characters' work for them.

Loot: A guard has currency equivalent to an inexpensive item in addition to weapons, armor, and basic gear.

GM intrusion: 1d6 local citizens intervene on the guard's behalf, calling for more guards or even fighting the guard's foes.

HALFLING 3 (9)

A halfling is fond of the comforts of home, but adventures and exploration are the fodder of great stories told over tea or dinner, or in a fireside chat. Quick, resourceful, and easy to get along with, halflings fit right in with brave big folk as scouts, burglars, and loyal companions.

Motive: Defense, comfort

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Armor: 0 or 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Intellect defense, pleasant social interactions, and stealth as level 4

Combat: Halflings are remarkably skilled with knives, clubs, slings, and small bows. They prefer not to fight larger creatures head on; instead they stay at range, plan ambushes to quickly overwhelm opponents, or team up with a larger ally so they can attack a foe's back and legs.

Interaction: Halflings enjoy the company of larger folks as long as they aren't mocked for their size. They're brave and determined when they need to be, though some might complain about wanting to go home.

Use: A young halfling wants to have some adventures before settling down. The local thieves' guild is said to employ halflings as lookouts and cutpurses, sometimes disguised as human children.

Loot: In addition to their weapons (and perhaps some light armor) and food, a halfling might have an interesting cypher or two. Most carry several useful moderately priced items, or an expensive item such as an heirloom snuff box or a nice bag of tools.

OCCULTIST 5 (15)

Paranormal researchers, cultists, secret practitioners of white magic, and coven members might be occultists. Thanks to their study of the metaphysical, occultists learn several magical tricks, including the ability to summon or banish the dead.

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Knowledge of occult topics and rituals as level 8; ability to detect lies and tricks as level 2

Combat: An occultist has a charm or device for summoning a level 5 spirit or demon that will do their bidding for ten minutes. Some also have (or instead have) a spell, item, or device that inflicts 5 points of damage on normal creatures within long range, and 10 points of damage on a demon or spirit (or, instead of dealing extra damage, the effect confines the demon or spirit in some way).

Interaction: Occultists are deeply concerned with spiritual or demonic matters and see those influences in all things, whether those influences exist or not. That makes them amenable to persuasion and deception, if couched in the language of spiritual influence.

Use: To find a needed answer, the spirit of a dead person must be questioned. Alternatively, a haunting presence must be banished. Either way, the task requires an occultist.

Loot: In addition to their clothing and mundane weapons, occultists have currency equivalent to an inexpensive item, a cypher, and possibly an artifact related to their power over spirits or demons.

GM intrusion: A bony hand erupts from the ground at the character's feet. On a failed Speed defense roll, they are held in place until they succeed on a Might-based task to escape. Each round the character fails to escape, the hand squeezes for 3 points of damage.

PALADIN 4 (12)

Paladins are heroes who swear a holy oath to vanquish evil. Their power and righteousness are a gift and a heavy burden, and most of them expect to die in battle against an evil foe.

Motive: Protecting the innocent, destroying evil

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 2 or 3

Movement: Short

Modifications: Attacks and Might defense as level 5

Combat: Paladins like flashy weapons and shiny armor, which help them show their devotion to the ideals of goodness and draw the attention of evil foes. Many choose a two-handed weapon, but some prefer using a

shield in their off hand (defense-oriented paladins like these inflict only 4 points of damage with their attacks but gain an asset on Speed defense).

Blessed by the powers of good, paladins can draw on innate holy magic for several purposes, such as detecting the presence of supernatural evil (demons, evil dragons, undead, and so on), restoring 4 health to themselves or a touched creature, smiting an evil foe to inflict an additional 4 points of damage, or breaking free of mind control.

Interaction: Paladins have big personalities and strongly believe in their purpose and goals. They have no tolerance for evil acts and are unwilling to look the other way when their allies want to bend the rules or take advantage of a “grey area.” However, they are not fools and won’t throw away their lives for nothing.

Use: A paladin lays claim to a foe the characters are seeking or have captured. An old paladin is looking for one last villain to smite.

Loot: In addition to their weapons and armor, paladins might have one or two cyphers. More experienced ones might be lucky enough to have an artifact (usually a weapon or armor).

SECRET AGENT 5 (15)

Secret agents are trained professionals who put their mission before their own well-being, regardless of which government agency, corporation, guild, or kingdom employs them. An agent operates under a fake cover, perhaps as an envoy, inspector, technician, actor, tourist, or bumbling fool.

Motive: Accomplish the goals of the employer while maintaining cover

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Tasks related to disguise and deceiving as level 6

Combat: A secret agent always has a covert, unexpected backup weapon that they can use to make a surprise attack, such as a ring or glove with a hidden poisoned needle (dealing 5 points of Speed damage that ignore Armor), a fake tooth filled with poison gas to blow in a victim’s face (inducing sleep for ten minutes), or a ring with a miniature gun.

Interaction: Secret agents are confident, masterful, and always give the impression of being one step ahead of the game, even when caught off guard.

Use: As an ally, a secret agent can guide the PCs to their next mission, fill in gaps in their knowledge, and warn them of dangers. If the characters encounter an unfriendly agent, the NPC likely pretends to be a friend.

Loot: Agents typically have currency equivalent to an expensive item, a couple of cyphers, tools for spying and maintaining their cover, and possibly an artifact.

GM intrusion: The secret agent produces a cypher that, for the rest of the day, eases all tasks by two steps.

THIEF 4 (12)

A thief takes things that don’t belong to them—preferably with their victim remaining unaware of the crime until the thief is safely away. Burglars and pickpockets are the most common sort, but ambitious thieves are known to plan elaborate heists to steal priceless items from prominent targets.

Motive: Greed, curiosity, risk

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Balancing, climbing, perception, pickpocketing, and stealth as level 5

Combat: Thieves prefer small concealable weapons—knives, batons, and so on—so they can quickly make themselves look like an innocent bystander. Their goal is to escape, not kill, so they often rely on tricks like caltrops, spilled oil, and smoke pellets to distract or delay foes and give themselves an opportunity to get away. They aren't above using poison, typically a sleep poison that knocks out a foe for ten minutes on a failed Might defense task.

Interaction: Thieves run a broad range of personalities—nervous, arrogant, quietly confident, sarcastic, and more. They like to know the risks and rewards of what they'll be doing, and they don't like surprises.

Use: A cocky thief steals an item from a character and returns it to prove their skills are up to the task. A gang of pickpockets targets a character's jewelry or cyphers.

Loot: Thieves usually carry light tools, a few small weapons, miscellaneous equipment for creating a distraction, and a cypher they plan to use or sell.

THUG 3 (9)

Thugs are usually rough, crude, and harsh individuals who prey on those who follow the rules. A thug might be a streetwise drug dealer, a bandit who hunts lone travelers in the wilds, a savage warrior adroit with ranged weapons, or a cyberbully among pacifists. Most thugs work for themselves, but they may employ gangs of guards to help them conduct their business.

Motive: Take what they want

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Combat: Thugs prefer ambushes, making ranged attacks from hiding if possible. Sometimes they spoil the ambush to issue an ultimatum before attacking: give us your valuables or you'll be sorry.

Interaction: Thugs are interested in money and power, which means they almost always accept bribes. If faced with a real threat, thugs usually retreat.

Use: Thugs are everywhere, sometimes accompanied by guards who are equally malicious but not quite as powerful.

Loot: A thug has currency equivalent to an inexpensive item in addition to weapons, shields, and light armor. One thug in a group might have a cypher.

GM intrusion: Another thug, hidden until just the right moment, appears and takes a shot with a ranged weapon before joining the fray.

WIZARD, MIGHTY 8 (24)

Some wizards learn so many spells and accumulate so much lore that they become incredibly powerful. Some work for a higher purpose, whereas others are concerned only with themselves.

Motive: Seek powerful sources of magic (to collect or to keep safe)

Health: 40

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: All tasks related to knowledge of arcane lore as level 9

Combat: When a wizard makes a long-range attack with their staff or strikes someone with it, arcane energy damages the target and, if desired, all creatures the wizard selects within short range of the target. Targets that are within immediate range of the wizard when they take damage are thrown out of immediate range.

A mighty wizard knows many spells, including spells that grant +5 to Armor for an hour, spells of teleportation, spells of finding, and so on. A wizard also likely carries several cyphers useful in combat.

Interaction: Care should be taken when negotiating with wizards because they are subtle and quick to anger. Even when negotiations succeed, a wizard's suggestions are usually cryptic and open to interpretation. A mighty wizard might be convinced to teach a character how to cast a spell.

Use: A wizard is putting together a team to challenge a great foe, and the PCs fit the bill.

Loot: A mighty wizard has 1d6 cyphers.

GM intrusion: The wizard casts two spells as a single action instead of just one.

Cyphers

Cyphers are one-use abilities that characters gain over the course of play. They have cool powers that can heal, make attacks, ease or hinder task rolls, or (in a more supernatural and extreme example) produce effects such as nullifying gravity or turning something invisible.

Most cyphers aren't physical objects—just something useful that happens right when you need it. They might be a burst of insight that allows a character to make a perfectly executed attack, a lucky guess when using a computer terminal, a coincidental distraction that gives you an advantage against an NPC, or a supernatural entity that makes things work out in your favor. In some games, cyphers come in the form of items, like magic potions or bits of alien technology.

Cyphers that don't have a physical form are called subtle cyphers.

Cyphers that have a physical form are called manifest cyphers.

Regardless of their form, cyphers are single-use effects and are always consumed when used. Unless a cypher's description says otherwise, it works only for the character who activates it. For example, a PC can't use an **enduring shield** cypher on a friend.

Cyphers are a game mechanic designed for frequent discovery and use. PCs can have only a small number of cyphers at any given time, and since they're always finding more, they're encouraged to use them at a steady pace.

In theory, the cyphers gained by the PCs are determined randomly. However, the GM can allow PCs to acquire or find them intentionally as well. Cyphers are gained with such regularity that the PCs should feel that they can use them freely. There will always be more, and they'll have different benefits. This means that in gameplay, cyphers are less like gear or treasure and more like character abilities that the players don't choose. This leads to fun game moments where a player can say "Well, I've got an X that might help in this situation," and X is always different. X might be an intuitive understanding of the local computer network, a favor from the Faerie Court, an explosive device, a short-range teleporter, or a force field. It might be a powerful magnet or a prayer that will cure disease. It could be anything. Cyphers keep the game fresh and interesting. Over time, characters can learn how to safely **carry** more and more cyphers at the same time, so cyphers really do seem more like abilities and less like gear.

(“Carry” in this sense refers to both subtle cyphers and manifest cyphers, though a PC may not actually carry anything that physically represents the cypher. A character thrown into prison without their equipment might still have subtle cyphers.)

Cyphers don’t have to be used to make room for new ones. For subtle cyphers, a character can just use an action to “lose” the cypher, freeing up space to “find” one later (once a subtle cypher is discarded this way, it is gone and can’t be recovered). For manifest cyphers, it’s perfectly acceptable for the PCs to stash one elsewhere for later use; of course, that doesn’t mean it will still be there when they return.

WHY CYPHERS?

Cyphers are (not surprisingly, based on the name) the heart of the Cypher System. This is because characters in this game have some abilities that rarely or never change and can always be counted on—pretty much like in all games—and they have some abilities that are ever-changing and inject a great deal of variability in play. They are the major reason why no Cypher System game session should ever be dull or feel just like the last session. This week your character can solve the problem by walking through walls, but last time it was because you could create an explosion that could level a city block.

The Cypher System, then, is one where PC abilities are fluid, with the GM and the players both having a role in their choice, their assignment, and their use. Although many things separate the game system from others, this aspect makes it unique, because cyphers recognize the importance and value of two things:

1. “Treasure,” because character abilities make the game fun and exciting. In fact, in the early days of roleplaying, treasure (usually in the form of magic items found in dungeons) was really the only customization of characters that existed. One of the drives to go out and have adventures is so you can discover cool new things that help you when you go on even more adventures. This is true in many RPGs, but in the Cypher System, it’s built right into the game’s core.
2. Letting the GM have a hand in determining PC abilities makes the game move more smoothly. Some GMs prefer

to roll cyphers randomly, but some do not. For example, giving the PCs a cypher that will allow them to teleport far away might be a secret adventure seed placed by a forward-thinking GM. Because the GM has an idea of where the story is going, they can use cyphers to help guide the path. Alternatively, if the GM is open to it, they can give out cyphers that enable the characters to take a more proactive role (such as teleporting anywhere they want). Perhaps most important, they can do these things without worrying about the long-term ramifications of the ability. A device that lets you teleport multiple times might really mess up the game over the long term. But once? That’s just fun.

CYPHER LIMITS

All characters have a maximum number of cyphers they can have at any one time, determined by their type. If a character ever attempts to carry more, random cyphers instantly disappear until the PC has a number of cyphers equal to their maximum (depending on the genre of the campaign, subtle cyphers may be more or less likely to vanish this way). These vanished cyphers are not recoverable.

SUBTLE CYPHERS

Subtle (nonphysical) cyphers are a way to introduce cyphers into a game without overt “powered stuff”—no potions, alien crystals, or anything of that nature. They’re most useful, perhaps, in a modern or horror setting without obvious fantasy elements. Subtle cyphers are more like the inherent abilities PCs have, adding boosts to Edge, recovering points from Pools, coming up with ideas, and so on. In general, these are commonplace, non-supernatural effects—a subtle cypher wouldn’t create a laser beam or allow a character to walk through a wall. They don’t break the fragile bubble of believability in genres where flashy powers and abilities don’t make a lot of sense.

Subtle cyphers are particularly nice in a genre where the PCs are supposed to be normal people. The cyphers can simply be an expression of innate capabilities in characters that aren't always dependable. And in many ways, that's probably more realistic than an ability you can count on with certainty, because in real life, some days you can jump over a fence, and some days you just can't.

Concepts for subtle cyphers include the following:

Good fortune: Once in a while, things just go your way. You're in the right place at the right time.

Inspirations: Sometimes you get inspired to do something you've never done before and might not be able to do again. Call it adrenaline mixed with the right motivation, or just doing the right thing at the right place at the right time. Who can really define it? Life's funny that way.

Alien concepts: Complex and utterly inhuman memes enter our world and worm their way into and out of human consciousness. When this happens, it can cause mental distress and disorientation. It can also grant impossible abilities and advantages.

Blessings: In a fantasy world, there are nine gods. Each morning, all intelligent residents of the world pray to one of the gods, and some of the faithful gain a divine blessing. Some people believe that praying to different gods gives you different blessings.

Earworms: You know how some songs pop into your head and just won't leave? There's a power to those songs, and the right people know how to harness it. Make the songs disturbing or reminiscent of evil chants, and you've got a perfect cypher concept for a horror campaign.

Mysterious transmissions: What's that buzzing? That mechanical chittering? Those numbers repeating over and over? And why can only some people hear it? A few who are aware of the sounds have learned how to make use of them.

Supernatural powers: Mental or mystical energies constantly shift and change, ebb and flow. But you've figured out how to attune your mind to them. There are no physical actions or paraphernalia required—just an inner conduit to the numinous.

DISCOVERING SUBTLE CYPHERS

Since subtle cyphers aren't physical objects, GMs will need to figure out when to give PCs new ones to replace the ones they have used. The cyphers probably shouldn't be tied to actions entirely under the characters' control—in other words, they shouldn't come as a result of meditation or anything of that nature. Instead, the GM should choose significant points in the story when new cyphers might simply come unbidden to the PCs. In the broader view, this is no different than manifest cyphers placed as treasure in a creature's lair, a secret cache, or somewhere else for the characters to find. Either way, the GM is picking good spots to "refill" potentially used cypher-based abilities.

Subtle cyphers are often found in groups of one to six (the GM can roll 1d6 to determine the number). The GM might randomly assign the cyphers to each PC who has space for more, or present a selection of cyphers to the group and allow the players to choose which ones they want for their characters. Characters should immediately know what their subtle cyphers do. If a PC activates a healing subtle cypher when they think it's something to help pick a lock, that's a waste of a useful character ability.

PCs might be able to obtain subtle cyphers from NPCs or in unusual circumstances as gifts, boons, or blessings, even asking for a particular kind of subtle cypher, such as healing, protection, or skill. For example, PCs who make a donation at a temple of a healing goddess could ask to receive a blessing (subtle cypher) that allows them to speak a healing prayer that restores points to one of their Pools. An NPC wizard who owes the PCs a favor might cast a spell on them that deflects one weapon if they say a magic word. An alien pylon might grant knowledge of a strange mental code that lets a person see in the dark for a few hours.

A PC can also acquire a new subtle cypher by spending 1 XP on one of the following [player intrusions](#):

General cypher: You ask the GM for a general subtle cypher, such as “healing,” “movement,” “defense,” or perhaps something as specific as “flight.” The GM gives you a cypher that meets that description and randomly determines its level. If you don’t have space for this cypher, you immediately lose one of your current cyphers (your choice) and the new cypher takes its place.

Specific cypher: You ask the GM for a specific subtle cypher (such as a [curative](#) or [stim](#)) of a specific level. Make an Intellect roll with a difficulty equal to the cypher’s level plus 1. If you have had this cypher before, the task is eased. If you fail the roll, you do not gain a cypher. If you succeed, the GM gives you that subtle cypher at that level. If you don’t have space for this new cypher, you immediately lose one of your current cyphers (your choice) and the new cypher takes its place. Whether or not you succeed at the roll, the 1 XP is spent.

FANTASy CYPHERS

Magic items are a staple of fantasy stories and games. In the Cypher System, these magic items are, of course, cyphers. The Cypher System assumes that subtle cyphers are the default, but in a fantasy game the assumption is usually the opposite—cyphers are physical objects (manifest cyphers) with magical powers, which the heroes find as treasure, gifts, or rewards for their adventures and exploits.

MIXING SUBTLE AND MANIFEST CYPHERS

There’s no reason why a fantasy campaign can’t use manifest cyphers and subtle cyphers. In this setup, manifest cyphers are the tangible objects found in treasure hoards, and subtle cyphers represent good fortune, the blessings of the gods, and other coincidences that benefit the characters.

CYPHER FORMS

What form a manifest cypher takes—such as a potion or scroll—doesn’t affect its abilities at all. A potion that eases the user’s next task by three steps is functionally identical to a magical scroll that does the same thing.

To randomly determine a manifest cypher’s form, roll on the following table.

d100	Cypher Form
01-02	Bone runeplate
03-04	Book page
05-07	Bottle of powder
08-09	Brand
10-12	Brick
13-15	Carved bone
16-18	Carved stick
19-20	Carved tooth

21-23	Chalky potion
30-33	Clay runeplate
34-37	Crystal
38-39	Elaborate scar
40-42	Envelope of powder
43-44	Fuming potion
45-47	Glass
48-50	Leaf
51-54	Leather scroll
55-57	Metal runeplate
58-60	Oily potion
61-62	Paper scroll
63-66	Papyrus scroll
67-71	Parchment scroll
72-74	Pouch of powder
75-76	Skin drawing
77-80	Stone
81-82	Tattoo
83-85	Thick potion
86-88	Tube of power
89-92	Vellum scroll
93-96	Watery potion

97-00	Wood runeplate
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EXAMPLE FANTASY CYPHERS

All of the cyphers in this chapter are manifest and fantastic cyphers.

FANTASY CYPHERS TABLE

01-05	Acid resistance
06-11	Animal control
12-18	Beast shape
19-27	Cold resistance
28-34	Demon ward
35-39	Dragon ward
40-44	Electricity resistance
45-48	Elemental conjuration
49-57	Fire resistance
58-61	Giant size
62-65	Instant boat
66-68	Instant tower
69-72	Lycanthrope ward
73-76	Penultimate key
77-82	Poison resistance
83-86	Restorative aura
87-89	Thought listening
90-93	Tiny size
94-98	Undead ward

99-00	Walking corpse
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ACID RESISTANCE

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: The user gains Armor against acid damage equal to the cypher's level for one hour.

ANIMAL CONTROL

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: To activate the cypher, the user must succeed on an Intellect attack against a beast whose level does not exceed the cypher's level. If successful, the beast immediately becomes calm. The beast awaits the user's commands and carries out all orders to the best of its ability. The target remains so enslaved for a number of hours equal to the cypher's level minus the target's level. (If the result is 0, the target is enslaved for only one minute.) The beast could attack or defend, a dog could follow a scent or retrieve an object, a badger could dig a hole, and so on.

The cypher doesn't give the user any special ability to understand the target or perceive through its senses. For example, the user can command an eagle to fly above a group of enemies, but the eagle can't describe what it sees and the user can't look through its eyes.

"Beast" in this sense refers to creatures of animal-level intelligence and may include unintelligent magical creatures like basilisks, pegasi, and so on.

BEAST SHAPE

Level: 1d6

Effect: The user transforms into a specific kind of animal, such as a bear, hawk, horse, or wolf (the kind of animal is determined by the cypher's creator). The user gains the animal's type of movement (swimming for a fish, flying for a bird, and so on) and two assets on tasks to pretend to be that animal. The user also gains an asset on one skill appropriate to their animal form (or two skills for cypher level 5 and higher). See the Animal Form Minor Abilities table.

The magic shrinks or enlarges the user to a size more suitable for their animal form, but generally can't make them more than about 50 percent smaller or larger, so the user might become an unusually large bird or a small bear. This doesn't affect the animal's abilities. The user can still use all of their abilities that don't rely specifically on their normal form. For example, an Adept in wolf form can't wield a dagger because wolves don't have hands, but could still use a healing power or mind blast ability.

After about an hour, the user returns to their normal form.

Depending on the cypher, the user might still be able to speak in a humanoid language, talk in a "language" of animal noises that other transformed people can understand perfectly, speak with animals of the same kind, or none of the above.

COLD RESISTANCE

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: The user gains Armor against cold damage equal to the cypher's level for one hour.

DEMON WARD

Level: 1d6

Effect: For one hour, the user gains Armor equal to the cypher's level against damage from demons, devils, and similar malevolent creatures.

DRAGON WARD

Level: 1d6

Effect: For one hour, the user gains Armor equal to the cypher's level against damage from dragons, wyverns, and similar magical reptilian creatures.

In a typical fantasy campaign, a demon is a supernatural being from another dimension or plane of existence.

ELECTRICITY RESISTANCE

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: The user gains Armor against electricity damage equal to the cypher's level for one hour.

ELEMENTAL CONJURATION

Level: 1d6

Effect: Summons an elemental creature (air, earth, fire, or water) that can understand the verbal commands of the user. Once the elemental is summoned, commanding it is not an action. It can make attacks or perform actions as ordered to the best of its abilities, but it cannot speak. The elemental never goes farther than long range away from the user.

The elemental is not particularly intelligent or capable of initiating action. It responds if attacked, but otherwise does only as commanded.

The elemental remains for one hour per cypher level or until its physical form is destroyed, after which it vanishes back to its native realm.

FIRE RESISTANCE

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: The user gains Armor against fire damage equal to the cypher's level for one hour.

GIANT SIZE

Level: 1d6

Effect: The user grows to about one and a half times their normal size. While at this larger size, they add 4 points to their Might Pool and +2 to their Might Edge, but their Speed defense rolls are hindered.

They return to their normal size after a minute. When the effect ends, their Might Edge returns to normal, they lose the penalty to Speed defense, and they subtract 4 points from their Might Pool (if this brings the Pool to 0, they subtract the overflow first from their Speed Pool and then, if necessary, from their Intellect Pool).

If the user is an NPC, the cypher increases their health by 4, eases their Might-based tasks, and hinders their Speed defense. When the effect ends, they lose 4 health and all of the other advantages and penalties from the cypher.

INSTANT BOAT

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Creates or transforms into a small sailboat that can carry up to eight people. The user or other characters must row, steer, and sail the boat as normal. At cypher level 5 and higher, the boat grants an asset

on all tasks relating to its movement, and at cypher level 7 and higher, the boat can move a short distance each round under its own power. The boat lasts for a day, after which it vanishes.

INSTANT TOWER

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: Creates a simple, squat stone tower with a door, three arrow slits, and a ceiling hatch leading to the roof. The tower is 10 feet (3 m) square and 12 feet (4 m) tall. If the cypher level is 7 or higher, the tower also has a second story (with four arrow slits), increasing its total height to 20 feet (6 m). If there isn't sufficient room for the tower to reach its full size, it fills the available space, but its appearance and growth does not apply any force or pressure against the confining surfaces.

The tower is permanent and immobile once created.

LYCANTHROPE WARD

Level: 1d6

Effect: For one hour, the user gains Armor equal to the cypher's level against damage from werewolves and other lycanthropes.

Lycanthrope: Formally, a human who can transform into a wolf. Informally, a human who can transform into an animal, such as a bear, rat, tiger, or wolf

PENULTIMATE KEY

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Locks or unlocks any one door, portal, chest, or other lockable item of the cypher's level or lower. The targeted item must have a keyhole for the cypher to work.

Legends speak of the Ultimate Key, which can open any lock, even those sealed by a god.

POISON RESISTANCE

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: The user gains Armor against poison damage equal to the cypher's level for one hour.

RESTORATIVE AURA

Level: 1d6

Effect: Creates an immediate area filled with aromatic smoke, reassuring sounds, gentle light, or other pleasing sensations that last for one hour. Creatures who rest within the area gain +2 on their recovery rolls (or +4 for cypher level 5 and higher). NPCs instead recover 2 health if they spend at least ten minutes within the area (or 4 health for cypher level 5 and higher). For a creature to gain this benefit, its entire rest must occur while the cypher is active.

THOUGHT LISTENING

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: The user can read the surface thoughts of a creature within short range that they can see, even if the target doesn't want them to. Once the user has established contact, they can read the target's thoughts for up to one minute per cypher level.

TINY SIZE

Level: 1d6

Effect: The user shrinks to about one-tenth their normal size. While at this smaller size, they add 4 points to their Speed Pool and +2 to their Speed Edge, but all of their Might actions are hindered by two steps. They return to their normal size after a minute. When the effect ends, their Speed Edge returns to normal, they lose the penalty to Might actions, and they subtract 4 points from their Speed Pool (if this brings the Pool to 0, they subtract the overflow first from their Intellect Pool and then, if necessary, from their Might Pool).

If the user is an NPC, the cypher eases their Speed-based tasks and hinders their Might-based tasks. When the effect ends, they lose all of the advantages and penalties from the cypher.

UNDEAD WARD

Level: 1d6

Effect: For one hour, the user gains Armor equal to the cypher's level against damage from skeletons, zombies, ghosts, vampires, and other undead creatures.

WALKING CORPSE

Level: 1d6

Effect: Animates a corpse as a level 1 (or level 2 for cypher level 5 and higher) undead skeleton or zombie, depending on the condition of the body. The corpse can be no larger than a typical human. The animated corpse has none of the intelligence, memories, or special abilities that it had in life. The creature follows the user's verbal commands for one hour, after which it becomes an inert corpse. Unless the creature is killed by damage, the user can reanimate it again when its time expires, but any damage it had when it became inert applies to its newly reanimated state.

MANIFEST CYPHERS

Because manifest cyphers are physical objects, and people are familiar with the idea of finding "treasure" as part of playing an RPG, these kinds of cyphers are easy to get into the hands of the PCs. They are often found in groups of one to six (the GM can roll 1d6 to determine the number), usually because the characters are searching for them. They might be among the possessions of a fallen foe, hidden in a secret room, or scattered amid the wreckage of a crashed starship. The GM can prepare a list ahead of time of what successful searchers find. Sometimes this list is random, and sometimes there is logic behind it. For example, a warlock's laboratory might contain four different magic potions that the PCs can find.

If the characters search for cyphers, the GM sets the difficulty of the task. It is usually 3 or 4, and scavenging can take fifteen minutes to an hour.

Scavenging is not the only way to obtain manifest cyphers. They can also be given as gifts, traded with merchants, or sometimes purchased in a shop.

Unlike subtle cyphers, characters don't automatically know what manifest cyphers do. Once the PCs find a manifest cypher, identifying it is a separate task, based on Intellect and modified by knowledge of the topic at hand. In a fantasy setting, that knowledge would probably be magic, but in a science fiction setting, it might be technology. The GM sets the difficulty of the task, but it is usually 1 or 2. Thus, even the smallest amount of knowledge means that cypher identification is automatic. The process takes one to ten minutes. If the PCs can't identify a cypher, they can bring it to an expert for identification and perhaps trade, if desired.

MANIFEST CYPHERS DUPLICATING SUBLT CYPHERS

Lots of overlap exists between what subtle cyphers and manifest cyphers can do. Nearly anything that can be explained as a subtle cypher can just as easily be a magic item, scientific device, or other manifest object. A bit of luck that helps you sneak (a subtle cypher) and a potion that helps you sneak (a manifest cypher) do the exact same thing for a character. One advantage of manifest cyphers is that characters can easily trade them

to each other or sell them to NPCs. On the other hand, manifest cyphers can be dropped or stolen, and subtle cyphers can't.

It's fine if the GM decides to include both kinds of cyphers in the same game. A horror game could begin with the PCs as normal people with subtle cyphers, but as time goes on, they find one-use spells in occult tomes, weird potions, and bone dust that has strange powers.

USING CYPHERS

The action to use a cypher is Intellect based unless described otherwise or logic suggests otherwise. For example, throwing an explosive might be Speed based because the device is physical and not really technical, but using a ray emitter is Intellect based.

Because cyphers are single-use items, cyphers used to make attacks can never be used with the [Spray](#) or [Arc Spray](#) abilities that some characters might have. They are never treated as rapid-fire weapons.

Identified manifest cyphers can be used automatically. Once a manifest cypher is activated, if it has an ongoing effect, that effect applies only to the character who activated the cypher. A PC can't activate a cypher and then hand it to another character to reap the benefits.

A character can attempt to use a manifest cypher that has not been identified; this is usually an Intellect task using the cypher's level. Failure might mean that the PC can't figure out how to use the cypher or that they use it incorrectly (GM's discretion). Of course, even if the PC activates the unidentified cypher, they have no idea what its effect will be.

(Cyphers are meant to be used regularly and often. If PCs are hoarding or saving their cyphers, feel free to give them a reason to put the cyphers into play.)

CYPHER LEVELS AND EFFECTS

All cyphers have a level and an effect. The level sometimes determines an aspect of the cypher's power (how much damage it inflicts, for example) but otherwise it only determines the general efficacy, the way level works with any object. The Level entry for a cypher is usually a die roll, sometimes with a modifier, such as 1d6 or 1d6 + 4. The GM can roll to determine the cypher's level, or can allow the player to roll when they receive the cypher.

NORMAL AND FANTASTIC EFFECTS

Cypher effects fall into two categories: normal and fantastic. Normal effects are things that could reasonably happen or be explained in the normal physical world we're familiar with. Fantastic effects are things that can't. A normal person could hit a target 240 feet (73 m) away with a football, quickly get over a cold, run across a tightrope, or multiply two two-digit numbers in their head. These tasks are difficult, but possible. A normal person can't throw an armored car, regrow a severed arm, create a robot out of thin air, or control gravity with their mind. These tasks are impossible according to the world as we know it. Cypher effects are either normal (possible) or fantastic (impossible according to the world as we know it).

Normal cypher effects should be available to PCs regardless of the genre of your game. It's perfectly reasonable for a modern, fantasy, horror, science fiction, or superhero PC to have a cypher that gives them a one-use bonus on an attack or skill task, lets them take a quick breather to recover a few points in a Pool, or helps them focus their will to avoid distractions or fatigue.

Fantastic cypher effects should be limited to games where magic, technology, or other factors stretch the definition of "impossible." A cypher that turns a corpse into a zombie is out of place in a non-fantastic modern game, but is perfectly reasonable for a fantasy, science fiction, or superhero game, or even a horror game where zombies exist, as long as the GM decides there is an appropriate story explanation for it. The zombie cypher might be a necromantic spell in a fantasy or superhero game, a code that activates a swarm of

nanobots in a science fiction game, or a virus in a horror game. The rules categorize some cypher effects as fantastic to help the GM decide whether to exclude cyphers that don't fit the game they're running. For example, it is appropriate for a GM running a zombie horror survival game set in 1990s Georgia to allow the zombie-creating cypher but not a teleportation cypher, because creating a zombie is a fantastic effect that fits the setting and teleportation isn't.

Fantastic cyphers can be subtle or manifest.

OPTIONAL RULE: NORMAL CYPHERS DUPLICATING FANTASTIC EFFECTS

If the GM and players are willing to stretch their imaginations a bit, it's possible to include some fantastic cypher effects in a game where only normal cypher effects should exist, even if the PCs are only using subtle cyphers. The player using the cypher just needs to come up with a practical, realistic explanation for how the fantastic result occurred (perhaps with a much shorter or reduced effect than what's described in the cypher text).

For example, a PC with a [phase changer](#) who is trapped in a prison cell could say that instead of physically phasing through the wall, using the cypher means they find a long-forgotten secret door connected to a narrow hallway leading to safety. A PC with a [fire detonation](#) could say they notice a can of paint thinner in the room, kick it over, and throw a table lamp into the spill, creating a spark and a momentary burst of harmful flames. A PC with a [monoblade](#) could say they spot structural flaws in an opponent's armor, allowing them to attack for the rest of that combat in such a way that the foe's Armor doesn't count.

These interpretations of fantastic cyphers in a non-fantastic setting require player ingenuity and GM willingness to embrace creative solutions (similar to players using [player intrusions](#) to make a change in the game world). The GM always has the right to veto the explanation for the fantastic effect, allowing the player to choose a different action instead of using the fantastic cypher.

MANIFEST CYPHER FORMS

None of the manifest cyphers in this chapter have a stated physical form. The entries don't tell you if something is a potion, a pill, or a device you hold in your hands because that sort of detail varies greatly from genre to genre. Are they magic? Are they tech? Are they symbiotic creatures with programmed DNA? That's up to the GM. It's flavor, not mechanics. It's as important or unimportant as the style of an NPC's hair or the color of the car the bad guys are driving. In other words, it's the kind of thing that is important in a roleplaying game, but at the same time doesn't actually change anything (and RPGs have a lot of things like that, if you think about it).

A manifest cypher's physical form can be anything at all, but there are some obvious choices based on genre. The GM can design a setting that uses just one type—for example, a magical world where all cyphers are potions made by faeries. Or they can use many types, perhaps mixing them from different genres. Some suggestions include the following.

MANIFEST CYPHER FORM OPTIONS

Fantasy/Fairy Tale
Potions
Scrolls
Runeplates

Tattoos
Charms
Powders
Crystals
Books with words of power

Modern/Romance
Drugs (injections, pills, inhalants)
Viruses
Smartphone apps

Science Fiction/Post-Apocalyptic
Drugs (injections, pills, inhalants)
Computer programs
Crystals
Gadgets
Viruses
Biological implants
Mechanical implants
Nanotechnological injections

Horror
Burrowing worms or insects

Pages from forbidden books
Horrific images

Superhero
Forms from all the other genres

MANIFEST CYPHER TABLE

01– 03	Adhesion
04– 05	Antivenom
06– 09	Armor reinforcer
10– 11	Attractor
12– 13	Blackout
14– 15	Catholicon
16– 17	Curse bringer
18– 19	Death bringer
20– 22	Density
23– 26	Detonation
27– 29	Detonation (flash)
30– 31	Detonation (massive)

32–34	Detonation (pressure)
35–36	Detonation (sonic)
37–38	Detonation (spawn)
39–41	Detonation (web)
42–44	Equipment cache
45–46	Fireproofing
47–49	Friction reducer
50–52	Gas bomb
53–55	Hunter/seeker
56–57	Infiltrator
58–60	Information sensor
61–63	Metal death
64–65	Nullification ray
66–68	Poison (emotion)
69–70	Poison (mind disrupting)
71–73	Radiation spike

74– 76	Remote viewer
77– 79	Shocker
80– 82	Sleep inducer
83– 85	Sniper module
86– 88	Solvent
89– 90	Spy
91– 92	Tracer
93– 94	Uninterruptible power source
95– 96	Warmth
97– 98	Water adapter
99– 00	X-ray viewer

FANTASTIC CYPHER TABLE

01	Age taker
02	Banishing
03– 04	Blinking
05	Chemical factory
06	Comprehension
07– 08	Condition remover

09	Controlled blinking
10	Detonation (creature)
11	Detonation (desiccating)
12	Detonation (gravity)
13	Detonation (gravity inversion)
14	Detonation (matter disruption)
15	Detonation (singularity)
16	Disguise module
17	Disrupting
18	Farsight
19	Flame-retardant wall
20	Force cube
21–22	Force field
23	Force screen projector
24	Force shield projector
25	Frigid wall
26–27	Gravity nullifier
28	Gravity-nullifying application
29–30	Heat attack
31	Image projector
32	Inferno wall

33– 34	Instant servant
35	Instant shelter
36	Lightning wall
37– 38	Machine control
39	Magnetic attack drill
40	Magnetic master
41	Magnetic shield
42	Manipulation beam
43	Matter transference ray
44	Memory switch
45	Mental scrambler
46	Mind meld
47	Mind-restricting wall
48– 49	Monoblade
50	Monohorn
51	Null field
52– 53	Personal environment field
54– 55	Phase changer
56	Phase disruptor
57	Poison (explosive)
58	Poison (mind controlling)
59	Psychic communique

60	Ray emitter
61	Ray emitter (command)
62	Ray emitter (fear)
63	Ray emitter (friend slaying)
64	Ray emitter (mind disrupting)
65	Ray emitter (numbing)
66	Ray emitter (paralysis)
67	Reality spike
68	Repair unit
69	Repeater
70–71	Retaliation
72	Sheen
73–74	Shock attack
75	Slave maker
76	Sonic hole
77–78	Sound dampener
79	Spatial warp
80	Stasis keeper
81	Subdual field
82–83	Telepathy
84	Teleporter (bounder)
85	Teleporter (interstellar)

86	Teleporter (planetary)
87	Teleporter (traveler)
88	Temporal viewer
89	Time dilation (defensive)
90	Time dilation (offensive)
91	Trick embedder
92	Vanisher
93–94	Visage changer
95	Visual displacement device
96	Vocal translator
97–98	Weapon enhancement
99	Wings
00	Zero point field

SUBTLE CYPHER TABLE

01–04	Analeptic
05–07	Best tool
08–10	Burst of speed
11–13	Contingent activator
14–17	Curative
18–20	Darksight

21– 23	Disarm
24– 26	Eagleseye
27– 29	Effect resistance
30– 32	Effort enhancer (combat)
33– 35	Effort enhancer (noncombat)
36– 39	Enduring shield
40– 42	Intellect booster
43– 45	Intelligence enhancement
46– 48	Knowledge enhancement
49– 51	Meditation aid
52– 54	Mind stabilizer
55– 57	Motion sensor
58– 60	Nutrition and hydration
61– 63	Perfect memory
64– 66	Perfection
67– 69	Reflex enhancer

70–73	Rejuvenator
74–76	Remembering
77–79	Repel
80–82	Secret
83–85	Skill boost
86–88	Speed boost
89–91	Stim
92–94	Strength boost
95–97	Strength enhancer
98–00	Tissue regeneration

A LISTING OF VARIOUS CYPHERS

All cyphers in this section may be manifest cyphers. It is the GM's discretion whether a particular cypher can be a subtle cypher, and that decision usually depends on the setting. (The tables indicating subtle, manifest, and fantastic cyphers are just suggestions for a typical campaign setting.)

ADHESION

Level: 1d6

Effect: Allows for automatic climbing of any surface, even horizontal ones. Lasts for ten minutes per cypher level.

AGE TAKER

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: Begins a process of rejuvenation that removes years from the wearer's physiological age. Over the course of the next seven days, the wearer sheds a number of years equal to three times the cypher's level. The cypher doesn't regress physiological age past the age of twenty-three.

ANALEPTIC

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Restores a number of points equal to the cypher's level to the user's Speed Pool.

ANTIVENOM

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Renders user immune to poisons of the cypher's level or lower for one hour per cypher level (and ends any such ongoing effects, if any, already in the user's system).

ARMOR REINFORCER

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: The user's Armor gains an enhancement for twenty-four hours. Roll a d6 to determine the result.

1	+1 to Armor
2	+2 to Armor
3	+3 to Armor
4	+2 to Armor, +5 against damage from fire
5	+2 to Armor, +5 against damage from cold
6	+2 to Armor, +5 against damage from acid

ATTRACTOR

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: One unanchored item the user's size or smaller within long range (very long range if the cypher level is 8 or higher) is drawn immediately to them. This takes one round. The item has no momentum when it arrives.

BANISHING

Level: 1d6

Effect: For the next day, each time the user strikes a solid creature or object, it generates a burst of energy that teleports the creature or object an immediate distance in a random direction (not up or down). The teleported creature's actions (including defense) are hindered on its next turn (hindered by two steps if the cypher level is 5 or higher).

BEST TOOL

Level: 1d6

Effect: Provides an additional asset for any one task using a tool, even if that means exceeding the normal limit of two assets.

BLACKOUT

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: An area within immediate range of the user becomes secure against any effect outside the area that sees, hears, or otherwise senses what occurs inside. To outside observers, the area is a “blur” to any sense applied. Taps, scrying sensors, and other direct surveillance methods are also rendered inoperative within the area for a day.

BLINKING

Level: 1d6

Effect: For the next day, each time the user is struck hard enough to take damage (but not more than once per round), they teleport an immediate distance in a random direction (not up or down). Since the user is prepared for this effect and their foe is not, the user’s defenses are eased for one round after they teleport.

BURST OF SPEED

Level: 1d6

Effect: For one minute, a user who normally can move a short distance as an action can move a long distance instead.

CATHOLICON

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Cures any disease of the cypher level or lower.

CHEMICAL FACTORY

Level: 1d6

Effect: After one hour, the sweat of the user produces 1d6 doses of a valuable liquid (these doses are not considered cyphers). They must be used within one week. Roll a d100 to determine the effect.

01–04	Euphoric for 1d6 hours
05–08	Hallucinogenic for 1d6 hours
09–12	Stimulant for 1d6 hours
13–16	Depressant for 1d6 hours
17–20	Nutrient supplement
21–25	Antivenom
26–30	Cures disease

31–35	See in the dark for one hour
36–45	Restores a number of Might Pool points equal to cypher level
46–55	Restores a number of Speed Pool points equal to cypher level
56–65	Restores a number of Intellect Pool points equal to cypher level
66–75	Increases Might Edge by 1 for one hour
76–85	Increases Speed Edge by 1 for one hour
86–95	Increases Intellect Edge by 1 for one hour
96–00	Restores all Pools to full

COMPREHENSION

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: Within five minutes, the user can understand the words of a specific language keyed to the cypher (two languages if the cypher is level 5 or higher). This is true even of creatures that do not normally have a language. If the user could already understand the language, the cypher has no effect. Once the cypher is used, the effect is permanent, and the cypher no longer counts against the number of cyphers that a PC can bear.

CONDITION REMOVER

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: Cures one occurrence of one specific health condition of the cypher level or lower. It does not prevent the possibility of future occurrences of the same condition. Roll a d20 to determine what it cures.

1	Addiction to one substance
2	Autoimmune disease
3	Bacterial infection

4	Bad breath
5	Blisters
6	Bloating
7	Cancer
8	Chapped lips
9	Flatus
10	Hangover
11	Heartburn
12	Hiccups
13	Ingrown hairs
14	Insomnia
15	Joint problem
16	Muscle cramp
17	Pimples
18	Psychosis
19	Stiff neck
20	Viral infection

CONTINGENT ACTIVATOR

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: If the device is activated in conjunction with another cypher, the user can specify a condition under which the linked cypher will activate. The linked cypher retains the contingent command until it is used (either normally or contingently). For example, when this cypher is linked to a cypher that provides a form of healing or protection, the user could specify that the linked cypher will activate if they become damaged to a certain degree or are subject to a particular dangerous circumstance. Until the linked cypher is used, this cypher continues to count toward the maximum number of cyphers a PC can carry.

CONTROLLED BLINKING

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: For the next day, each time the user is struck hard enough to inflict damage (but no more than once per round), they teleport to a spot they desire within immediate range. Since they are prepared for this effect and their foe is not, the user's defenses are eased for one round after they teleport.

CURATIVE

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Restores a number of points equal to the cypher's level to the user's Might Pool.

CURSE BRINGER

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: The cypher can be activated when given to an individual who doesn't realize its significance. The next time the victim attempts an important task when the cypher is in their possession, the task is hindered by three steps.

DARKSIGHT

Level: 1d6

Effect: Grants the ability to [see in the dark](#) for five hours per cypher level. (For a more realistic game, this cypher could instead make the user specialized in low-light spotting.)

DEATH BRINGER

Level: 1d6

Effect: For the next minute, when the user strikes an NPC or creature of the cypher level or lower, they can choose to make a second attack roll. If the second attack roll is a success, the target is killed. If the target is a PC, the character instead moves down one step on the damage track.

DENSITY

Level: 1d6

Effect: For the next day, each time the user strikes a solid creature or object with a weapon, the weapon suddenly increases dramatically in weight, causing the blow to inflict 2 additional points of damage.

DETINATION

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Projects a small physical explosive up to a long distance away that explodes in an immediate radius, inflicting damage equal to the cypher's level. Roll a d100 to determine the type of damage.

(All damaging detonations inflict a minimum of 2 points of damage to those in the radius, regardless of attack or defense rolls.)

01–10	Cell-disrupting (harms only flesh)
11–30	Corrosive
31–40	Electrical discharge

41–50	Heat drain (cold)
51–75	Fire
76–00	Shrapnel

DETINATION (CREATURE)

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: Projects a small physical explosive up to a long distance away that explodes and creates a momentary teleportation gate. A random creature whose level is equal to or less than the cypher's level appears through the gate and attacks the closest target. After about one minute, the creature vanishes.

DETINATION (DESICCATING)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Projects a small physical explosive up to a long distance away that bursts in an immediate radius, draining moisture from everything within it. Living creatures take damage equal to the cypher's level. Water in the area is vaporized.

DETINATION (FLASH)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Projects a small physical explosive up to a long distance away that bursts in an immediate radius, blinding all within it for one minute (ten minutes if the cypher is level 4 or higher).

DETINATION (GRAVITY)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Projects a small physical explosive up to a long distance away that bursts in an immediate radius, inflicting damage equal to the cypher's level by increasing gravity tremendously for one second. All creatures in the area are crushed to the ground for one round and cannot take physical actions.

DETINATION (GRAVITY INVERSION)

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: Projects a small physical explosive up to a long distance away that explodes, and for one hour gravity reverses within long range of the explosion.

DETINATION (MASSIVE)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Projects a small physical explosive up to a long distance away that explodes in a short-range radius, inflicting damage equal to the cypher's level. Roll a d100 to determine the type of damage.

01–10	Cell-disrupting (harms only flesh)
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11–30	Corrosive
31–40	Electrical discharge
41–50	Heat drain (cold)
51–75	Fire
76–00	Shrapnel

DETONATION (MATTER DISRUPTION)

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: Projects a small physical explosive up to a long distance away that explodes in an immediate radius, releasing nanites that rearrange matter in random ways. Inflicts damage equal to the cypher's level.

DETONATION (PRESSURE)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Projects a small physical explosive up to a long distance away that explodes in an immediate radius, inflicting impact damage equal to the cypher's level. Also moves unattended objects out of the area if they weigh less than 20 pounds (9 kg) per cypher level.

DETONATION (SINGULARITY)

Level: 10

Effect: Projects a small physical explosive up to a long distance away that explodes and creates a momentary singularity that tears at the fabric of the universe. Inflicts 20 points of damage to all within short range, drawing them (or their remains) together to immediate range (if possible). Player characters in the radius who fail a Might defense roll move down one step on the damage track.

(The singularity detonation is a greatly feared device, sought by those interested in truly horrific destruction.)

DETONATION (SONIC)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Projects a small physical explosive up to a long distance away that explodes with terrifying sound, deafening all in an immediate radius for ten minutes per cypher level.

DETONATION (SPAWN)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Projects a small physical explosive up to a long distance away that bursts in an immediate radius, blinding all within it for one minute and inflicting damage equal to the cypher's level. The burst spawns 1d6 additional detonations; in the next round, each additional detonation flies to a random spot within short range and explodes in an immediate radius. Roll a d100 to determine the type of damage dealt by all detonations:

01–10	Cell-disrupting (harms only flesh)
11–30	Corrosive
31–40	Electrical discharge
41–50	Heat drain (cold)
51–75	Fire
76–00	Shrapnel

DETINATION (WEB)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Projects a small physical explosive up to a long distance away that explodes in an immediate radius and creates sticky strands of goo. PCs caught in the area must use a Might-based action to get out, with the difficulty determined by the cypher level. NPCs break free if their level is higher than the cypher level.

(Rather than strands of sticky goo, some web detonations fill the area with a mass of quick-hardening foam that has the same result.)

DISARM

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: One NPC within immediate range whose level is lower than the cypher level drops whatever they are holding.

DISGUISE MODULE

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: For the next ten minutes per cypher level, the user's features become almost identical to those of one designated person they have previously interacted with, easing by two steps attempts to disguise the user as that person. Once designated, the user cannot shift the effect to look like another person, though they can remove the module to look like themselves again before the end of the duration.

DISRUPTING

Level: 1d6

Effect: For the next day, each time the user strikes a solid creature or object, the attack generates a burst of nanites that directly attack its organic cells. The target takes 1 additional point of damage. If the target's level is less than the cypher's level, it loses its next action; otherwise its next action is hindered.

EAGLESEYE

Level: 1d6

Effect: Grants the ability to see ten times as far as normal for one hour per cypher level. (For a more realistic game, the eagleseye cypher could instead give the user two assets on tasks involving seeing to long distances.)

EFFECT RESISTANCE

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: Provides a chance for additional resistance to directly damaging effects of all kinds, such as fire, lightning, and the like, for one day. (It does not provide resistance to blunt force, slashing, or piercing attacks.) If the level of the effect is of the cypher level or lower, the user gains an additional defense roll to avoid it. On a successful defense roll, treat the attack as if the user had succeeded on their regular defense roll. (If the user is an NPC, a PC attacking them with this kind of effect must succeed on two attack rolls to harm them.)

EFFORT ENHANCER (COMBAT)

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: For the next hour, the user can apply one **free level of Effort** to any task (including a combat task) without spending points from a Pool. The free level of Effort provided by this cypher does not count toward the maximum amount of Effort a character can normally apply to one task. Once this free level of Effort is used, the effect of the cypher ends.

EFFORT ENHANCER (NONCOMBAT)

Level: 1d6

Effect: For the next hour, the user can apply one free level of Effort to a noncombat task without spending points from a Pool. The level of Effort provided by this cypher does not count toward the maximum amount of Effort a character can normally apply to one task. Once this free level of Effort is used, the effect of the cypher ends.

ENDURING SHIELD

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: For the next day, the user has an asset to Speed defense rolls.

EQUIPMENT CACHE

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: The user can rummage around and produce from the cypher a desired piece of equipment (not an artifact) whose level does not exceed the cypher's level. The piece of equipment persists for up to one day, unless its fundamental nature allows only a single use (such as with a grenade).

FARSIGHT

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: The user can observe a location they have visited previously, regardless of how far away it is (even across galaxies). This vision persists for up to ten minutes per cypher level. The character can switch between viewing this location and viewing their current location once per round.

FIREPROOFING

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: A nonliving object treated by this cypher has Armor against fire damage equal to the cypher's level for one day.

FLAME-RETARDANT WALL

Level: 1d6

Effect: Creates an immobile plane of permeable energy up to 20 feet by 20 feet (6 m by 6 m) for one hour per cypher level. The plane conforms to the space available. Flames passing through the plane are extinguished.

FORCE CUBE

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: Creates an immobile cube composed of six planes of solid force, each 30 feet (9 m) to a side, for one hour. The planes conform to the space available. (Although a force cube's walls are not gaseous permeable, there is likely enough air within for trapped creatures to breathe for the hour it lasts.)

FORCE FIELD

Level: 1d6

Effect: For the next day, the user is surrounded by a powerful force field, granting them +1 to Armor (+2 to Armor if the cypher level is 5 or higher).

(Some force walls, shields, and cubes are transparent. Others are translucent. A few are opaque.)

FORCE SCREEN PROJECTOR

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: Creates an immobile plane of solid force up to 20 feet by 20 feet (6 m by 6 m) for one hour. The plane conforms to the space available.

FORCE SHIELD PROJECTOR

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: Creates a shimmering energy shield around the user for one hour, during which time they gain +3 to Armor (or +4 to Armor if the cypher is level 5 or higher).

FRICITION REDUCER

Level: 1d6

Effect: Spread across an area up to 10 feet (3 m) square, this makes things extremely slippery. For one hour per cypher level, movement tasks in the area are hindered by three steps.

FRIGID WALL

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Creates a wall of supercooled air up to 30 feet by 30 feet by 1 foot (9 m by 9 m by 30 cm) that inflicts damage equal to the cypher's level on anything that passes through it. The wall conforms to the space available. It lasts for ten minutes.

GAS BOMB

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Thrown a short distance, this bursts in a poisonous cloud within an immediate area. The cloud lingers for 1d6 rounds unless conditions dictate otherwise. Roll a d100 to determine the effect.

01–10	Thick smoke: occludes sight while the cloud lasts.
11–20	Choking gas: living creatures that breathe lose their actions to choking and coughing for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level.
21–50	Poison gas: living creatures that breathe suffer damage equal to the cypher's level.
51–60	Corrosive gas: everything suffers damage equal to the cypher's level.
61–65	Hallucinogenic gas: living creatures that breathe lose their actions to hallucinations and visions for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level.
66–70	Nerve gas: living creatures that breathe suffer Speed damage equal to the cypher's level.
71–80	Mind-numbing gas: living creatures that breathe suffer Intellect damage equal to the cypher's level.
81–83	Fear gas: living creatures that breathe and think flee in a random direction in fear (or are paralyzed with fear) for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level.
84–86	Amnesia gas: living creatures that breathe and think permanently lose all memory of the last minute.

87–96	Sleep gas: living creatures that breathe fall asleep for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level or until awoken by a violent action or an extremely loud noise.
97–00	Rage gas: living creatures that breathe and think make a melee attack on the nearest creature and continue to do so for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level.

GRAVITY NULLIFIER

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: For one hour, the user can float into the air, moving vertically up to a short distance per round (but not horizontally without taking some other action, such as pushing along the ceiling). The user must weigh less than 50 pounds (23 kg) per level of the cypher.

GRAVITY-NULLIFYING APPLICATION

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: If a nonliving object no larger than a human (two humans if the cypher level is 6 or higher) is coated by this cypher, it floats 1d20 feet in the air permanently and no longer has weight if carried (though it needs to be strapped down).

HEAT ATTACK

Level: 1d6

Effect: For the next day, each time the user strikes a solid creature or object, the attack generates a burst of heat that inflicts 2 additional points of damage.

HUNTER/SEEKER

Level: 1d6

Effect: With long-range movement, this intelligent missile tracks and attacks a specified target (target must be within sight when selected). If it misses, it continues to attack one additional time per cypher level until it hits. For example, a level 4 hunter/seeker will attack a maximum of five times. Roll a d100 to determine the type of attack.

01–50	Inflicts 8 points of damage.
51–80	Bears a poisoned needle that inflicts 3 points of damage plus poison.

81–90	Explodes, inflicting 6 points of damage to all within immediate range.
91–95	Shocks for 4 points of electricity damage, and stuns for one round per cypher level.
96–00	Covers target in sticky goo that immediately hardens, holding them fast until they break free with a Might action (difficulty equal to the cypher's level + 2).

IMAGE PROJECTOR

Level: 1d6

Effect: Projects one of the following immobile images in the area described for one hour. The image appears up to a close distance from the user (long distance if the cypher level is 4 or higher, very long distance if the cypher level is 6 or higher). Scenes include movement, sound, and smell. Roll a d100 to determine the image.

01–20	Terrifying creature of an unknown species, perhaps no longer alive in the world (10-foot [3 m] cube)
21–40	Huge machine that obscures sight (30-foot [9 m] cube)
41–50	Beautiful pastoral scene (50-foot [15 m] cube)
51–60	Food that looks delicious but may not be familiar (10-foot [3 m] cube)
61–80	Solid color that obscures sight (50-foot [15 m] cube)
81–00	Incomprehensible scene that is disorienting and strange (20-foot [6 m] cube)

INFERNO WALL

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Creates a wall of extreme heat up to 30 feet by 30 feet by 1 foot (9 m by 9 m by 30 cm) that inflicts damage equal to the cypher's level on anything that passes through it. The wall conforms to the space available. It lasts for ten minutes.

INFILTRATOR

Level: 1d6

Effect: Tiny capsule launches and moves at great speed, mapping and scanning an unknown area. It moves 500 feet (150 m) per level, scanning an area up to 50 feet (15 m) per level away from it. It identifies basic layout, creatures, and major energy sources and either transmits this information back to the user (perhaps by telepathy or an electronic signal) or returns to the user to show what it saw. Its movement is blocked by any physical or energy barrier.

INFORMATION SENSOR

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Over the course of one day, the user can activate the cypher a total number of times equal to its level. Each time, they can select a living creature within long range and learn the following about it: level, origin, species, name, and possibly other facts (such as an individual's credit score, home address, phone number, and related information).

INSTANT SERVANT

Level: 1d6

Effect: Small device expands into a humanoid automaton that is roughly 2 feet (60 cm) tall. Its level is equal to the cypher's level, and it can understand the verbal commands of the character who activated it. Once the servant is activated, commanding it is not an action. It can make attacks or perform actions as ordered to the best of its abilities, but it cannot speak.

The automaton has short-range movement but never goes farther than long range from the character who activated it. At the GM's discretion, the servant might have specialized knowledge, such as how to operate a particular device. Otherwise, it has no special knowledge. In any case, the servant is not artificially intelligent or capable of initiating action. It does only as commanded.

The servant operates for one hour per cypher level.

INSTANT SHELTER

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: With the addition of water and air, this cypher expands into a simple one-room structure with a door and a transparent window (two rooms with an internal door if the cypher level is 7 or higher). The structure is 10 feet by 10 feet by 20 feet (3 m by 3 m by 6 m). It is made from a durable, nonflammable material similar to sandstone, and is permanent and immobile once created.

INTELLECT BOOSTER

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Adds 1 to the user's Intellect Edge for one hour (or 2 if the cypher is level 5 or higher).

INTELLIGENCE ENHANCEMENT

Level: 1d6

Effect: All of the user's tasks involving intelligent deduction—such as playing chess, inferring a connection between clues, solving a mathematical problem, finding a bug in computer code, and so on—are eased by two steps for one hour. In the subsequent hour, the strain hinders the same tasks by two steps.

KNOWLEDGE ENHANCEMENT

Level: 1d6

Effect: For the next day, the character has training in a predetermined skill (or two skills if the cypher is level 5 or higher). The skill could be anything (including something specific to the operation of a particular device), or roll a d100 to choose a common skill. (It is easy to get addicted to the quick hit of training that comes from knowledge enhancement cyphers. Characters who rely on them too often may find themselves at a disadvantage when they run out, presenting a great opportunity for GM intrusion.)

01–10	Melee attacks
11–20	Ranged attacks
21–40	One type of academic or esoteric lore (biology, history, magic, and so on)
41–50	Repairing (sometimes specific to one device)
51–60	Crafting (usually specific to one thing)
61–70	Persuasion
71–75	Healing
76–80	Speed defense
81–85	Intellect defense
86–90	Swimming
91–95	Riding

96–
00

Sneaking

LIGHTNING WALL

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Creates a wall of electric bolts up to 30 feet by 30 feet by 1 foot (9 m by 9 m by 30 cm) that inflicts damage equal to the cypher's level on anything that passes through it. The wall conforms to the space available. It lasts for ten minutes.

MACHINE CONTROL

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Splits into two pieces; one is affixed to a device and the other to a character. The character can then use their mind to control the device at long range, bidding it to do anything it could do normally. Thus, a device could be activated or deactivated, and a vehicle could be piloted. The control lasts for ten minutes per cypher level, and once the device is chosen, it cannot be changed.

MAGNETIC ATTACK DRILL

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: The user throws this cypher at a target within short range, and it drills into the target for one round, inflicting damage equal to the cypher's level. If the target is made of metal or wearing metal (such as armor), the attack is eased.

MAGNETIC MASTER

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Establishes a connection with one metal object within short range that a human could hold in one hand. The user can then move or manipulate the object anywhere within short range (each movement or manipulation is an action). For example, they could wield a weapon or drag a helm affixed to a foe's head to and fro. The connection lasts for ten rounds per cypher level.

MAGNETIC SHIELD

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: For ten minutes per cypher level, metal objects cannot come within immediate range of the user. Metal items already in the area when the device is activated are slowly pushed out.

MANIPULATION BEAM

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Over the course of one day, the user can activate the cypher a total number of times equal to its level. Each time, they can affect an object they can see within long range that is not too heavy for them to affect physically. The effect must occur over the course of a round and could include closing or opening a door, keying in a number on a keypad, transferring an object a short distance, wresting an object from another creature's grasp (on a successful Might-based roll), or pushing a creature an immediate distance. (A manipulation beam could be used to operate a computer at a distance, which would make some infiltration and hacking jobs easier.)

MATTER TRANSFERENCE RAY

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: The user can target one nonliving object within long range that is their size or smaller of the cypher level or lower. The object is transferred directly to a random location at least 100 miles (160 km) away. If the GM feels it appropriate to the circumstances, only a portion of an object is transferred (a portion whose volume is no more than the user's).

MEDITATION AID

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Restores a number of points equal to the cypher's level to the user's Intellect Pool.

MEMORY SWITCH

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: The user selects a point within long range, and the minds of all thinking creatures within immediate range of that point are attacked. Victims are dazed and take no action for a round, and they have no memory of the preceding hour.

MENTAL SCRAMBLER

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Two rounds after being activated, the device creates an invisible field that fills an area within short range and lasts for one minute. The field scrambles the mental processes of all thinking creatures. The effect lasts as long as they remain in the field and for 1d6 rounds after, although an Intellect defense roll is allowed each round to act normally (both in the field and after leaving it). Each mental scrambler is keyed to a specific effect. Roll a d100 to determine the effect.

01– 30	Victims cannot act.
31– 40	Victims cannot speak.
41– 50	Victims move slowly (immediate range) and clumsily.
51– 60	Victims cannot see or hear.
61– 70	Victims lose all sense of direction, depth, and proportion.
71– 80	Victims do not recognize anyone they know.
81– 88	Victims suffer partial amnesia.

89–94	Victims suffer total amnesia.
95–98	Victims lose all inhibitions, revealing secrets and performing surprising actions.
99–00	Victims' ethics are inverted.

METAL DEATH

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Produces a stream of foam that covers an area about 3 feet by 3 feet (1 m by 1 m), transforming any metal that it touches into a substance as brittle as thin glass. The foam affects metal to a depth of about 6 inches (15 cm).

MIND MELD

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: Lets the user speak telepathically with creatures they can see within short range for up to one hour. The user can't read a target's thoughts, except those that are specifically "transmitted."

(In some games, telepathy transcends normal language barriers (if the target has a mind that allows for telepathic communication). In others, it might only pick up emotions or general concepts of thoughts in another language. It also might vary based on the ability used.)

MIND-RESTRICTING WALL

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Creates an immobile plane of permeable energy up to 20 feet by 20 feet (6 m by 6 m) for one hour. The plane conforms to the space available. Intelligent creatures passing through the plane fall unconscious for up to one hour, or until slapped awake or damaged.

MIND STABILIZER

Level: 1d6

Effect: The user gains +5 to Armor against Intellect damage.

MONOBLADE

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Produces a 6-inch (15 cm) blade that's the same level as the cypher. The blade cuts through any material of a level lower than its own. If used as a weapon, it is a light weapon that ignores Armor of a level lower than its own. The blade lasts for ten minutes.

MONOHORN

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: The user gains a horn in the center of their forehead. The horn is deadly sharp and strong, and it spirals down to a solid base where it fuses with their flesh and bone. The user is specialized in making melee attacks with the horn, which is considered a medium weapon. The horn lasts for a number of hours equal to the cypher's level.

(Sometimes a monohorn cypher covers the user in a thin sheen of black hide-like material, which disguises their identity but doesn't interfere with their senses.)

MOTION SENSOR

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: For one hour per cypher level, the user knows when any movement occurs within short range, and when large creatures or objects move within long range (the cypher distinguishes between the two). It also indicates the number and size of the creatures or objects in motion.

NUL FIELD

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: The user and all creatures within immediate range gain +3 to Armor (+5 if the cypher is level 8 or higher) against damage of a specified kind for one hour. Roll a d100 to determine the effect.

01– 12	Fire
13– 27	Cold
28– 39	Acid
40– 52	Psychic
53– 65	Sonic
66– 72	Electrical
73– 84	Poison
85– 95	Blunt force
96– 00	Slashing and piercing

NULLIFICATION RAY

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: The user can immediately end one ongoing effect within long range that is produced by an artifact, cypher, or special ability.

NUTRITION AND HYDRATION

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: The user can go without food and water for a number of days equal to the cypher's level without ill effect.

PERFECT MEMORY

Level: 1d6

Effect: Allows the user to mentally record everything they see for thirty seconds per cypher level and store the recording permanently in their long-term memory. This cypher is useful for watching someone pick a specific lock, enter a complex code, or do something else that happens quickly.

PERFECTION

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: The user treats their next action as if they had rolled a natural 20.

PERSONAL ENVIRONMENT FIELD

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Creates an aura of temperature and atmosphere that will sustain a human safely for a day. The aura extends to 1 foot (30 cm) around the user (double that radius if the cypher is level 7 or higher). It does not protect against sudden flashes of temperature change (such as from a heat ray). A small number of these cyphers (1%) accommodate the preferred environment of a nonhuman, nonterrestrial creature.

PHASE CHANGER

Effect: Puts the user out of phase for one minute (two minutes if the cypher is level 6 or higher). During this time, they can pass through solid objects as though they were entirely insubstantial, like a ghost. They cannot make physical attacks or be physically attacked.

PHASE DISRUPTOR

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Puts a portion of a physical structure (like a wall or floor) out of phase for one hour. It affects an area equal to one 5-foot (1.5 m) cube per cypher level. While the area is out of phase, creatures and objects can pass through it as if it were not there, although one cannot see through it, and it blocks light.

POISON (EMOTION)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: The victim feels a specific emotion for one hour. Roll a d100 to determine the emotion.

(Most poisons are not considered cyphers, except for a very few that are unique.)

01– 20	Anger. Likely to attack anyone who disagrees with them. Very hard to interact
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	with; all such actions are hindered by two steps.
21–40	Fear. Flees in terror for one minute when threatened.
41–60	Lust. Cannot focus on any nonsexual activity.
61–75	Sadness. All tasks are hindered.
76–85	Complacency. Has no motivation. All tasks are hindered by two steps.
86–95	Joy. Easy to interact with in a pleasant manner; all pleasant interaction tasks are eased.
96–00	Love. Much easier to interact with; all interaction tasks are eased by two steps, but temporary attachment is likely.

POISON (EXPLOSIVE)

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: Once this substance enters the bloodstream, it travels to the brain and reorganizes into an explosive that detonates when activated, inflicting 10 points of damage (ignores Armor). Roll a d100 to determine what activates the poison.

01–25	The detonator is activated (must be within long range).
26–40	A specified amount of time passes.
41–50	The victim takes a specific action.
51–55	A specific note is sung or played on an instrument within short range.

56–60	The victim smells a specific scent within immediate range.
61–80	The victim comes within long range of the detonator.
81–00	The victim is no longer within long range of the detonator.

POISON (MIND CONTROLLING)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: The victim must carry out a specific action in response to a specific trigger. Roll a d100 to determine the action.

01–20	Lies down for one minute with eyes closed when told to do so.
21–40	Flees in terror for one minute when threatened.
41–60	Answers questions truthfully for one minute.
61–75	Attacks close friend for one round when within immediate range.
76–85	Obeys next verbal command given (if it is understood).
86–95	For one day, becomes sexually attracted to the next creature of its own species that it sees.
96–00	For one minute, moves toward the next red object seen in lieu of all other actions, ignoring self-preservation.

POISON (MIND DISRUPTING)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: The victim suffers Intellect damage equal to the cypher's level and cannot take actions for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level.

PSYCHIC COMMUNIQUE

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Allows the user to project a one-time, one-way telepathic message of up to ten words per cypher level, with an unlimited range, to anyone they know.

RADIATION SPIKE

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: Delivers a powerful burst of radiation that disrupts the tissue of any creature touched, inflicting damage equal to the cypher's level.

RAY EMITTER

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Allows the user to project a ray of destructive energy up to very long range that inflicts damage equal to the cypher's level. Roll a d100 to determine the type of energy.

(Even weirder ray emitters:

- * Turns target inside out
- * Inflicts damage and turns flesh blue
- * Renders target mute
- * Damages only plants
- * Damages only inorganic matter
- * Turns flesh to dead, stonelike material)

01–50	Heat/concentrated light
51–60	Cell-disrupting radiation
61–80	Force
81–87	Magnetic wave
88–93	Molecular bond disruption

94– 00	Concentrated cold
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RAY EMITTER (COMMAND)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Allows the user to project a ray up to long range (very long range if the cypher is level 6 or higher) that forces a target to obey the next verbal command given (if it is understood) for one round per cypher level.

RAY EMITTER (FEAR)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Allows the user to project a ray up to long range (very long range if the cypher is level 6 or higher) that causes the target to flee in terror for one minute.

RAY EMITTER (FRIEND SLAYING)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Allows the user to project a ray up to long range (very long range if the cypher is level 6 or higher) that causes the target to attack its nearest ally for one round.

RAY EMITTER (MIND DISRUPTING)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Allows the user to project a ray of destructive energy up to very long range that inflicts Intellect damage equal to the cypher's level. Also, the victim cannot take actions for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level.

RAY EMITTER (NUMBING)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Allows the user to project a ray of energy up to long range (very long range if the cypher is level 6 or higher) that numbs one limb of the target, making it useless for one minute. A small number of these devices (5%) induce numbness that lasts for one hour.

RAY EMITTER (PARALYSIS)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Allows the user to project a ray of energy up to very long range that paralyzes the target for one minute. A small number of these devices (5%) induce paralysis that lasts for one hour.

REALITY SPIKE

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: Once activated, the cypher does not move—ever—even if activated in midair. A Might action will dislodge it, but then it is ruined.

REFLEX ENHANCER

Level: 1d6

Effect: All tasks involving manual dexterity—such as pickpocketing, lockpicking, juggling, operating on a patient, defusing a bomb, and so on—are eased by two steps for one hour.

REJUVENATOR

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Restores a number of points equal to the cypher's level to one random stat Pool.

01– 50	Might Pool
51– 75	Speed Pool
76– 00	Intellect Pool

REMEMBERING

Level: 1d6

Effect: Allows the user to recall any one experience they've ever had. The experience can be no longer than one minute per cypher level, but the recall is perfect, so (for example) if they saw someone dial a phone, they will remember the number.

REMOTE VIEWER

Level: 1d6

Effect: For one hour per cypher level, the user can see everything going on in the vicinity of the cypher, regardless of the distance between them.

REPAIR UNIT

Level: 1d10

Effect: The cypher becomes a multiarmed sphere that floats. It repairs one designated item (of its own level or lower) that has been damaged but not destroyed. The repair unit can also create spare parts, unless the GM rules that the parts are too specialized or rare (in which case, the unit repairs the device except for the specialized part). Repair time is 1d100 + 20 minutes.

REPEATER

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: For the next minute, the user's ranged weapon fires one additional time with ammo fabricated by the cypher. The weapon wielder can aim the free shot at the same target, or at a different target next to the first one.

REPEL

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: One NPC within immediate range who is of a level lower than the cypher decides to leave, using their next five rounds to move away quickly.

RETALIATION

Level: 1d6

Effect: For the next day, anyone striking the user receives a small burst of electricity that inflicts 1 point of damage (2 points if the cypher is level 4 or higher, 3 points if the cypher is level 6 or higher). No action or roll is required by the user.

SECRET

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: The user can ask the GM one question and get a general answer. The GM assigns a level to the question, so the more obscure the answer, the more difficult the task. Generally, knowledge that a PC could find by looking somewhere other than their current location is level 1, and obscure knowledge of the past is level 7. Gaining knowledge of the future is level 10, and such knowledge is always open to interpretation. The cypher cannot provide an answer to a question above its level.

SHEEN

Level: 1d6

Effect: For one week, the user's cells are coated with a protective veneer that resists damage (+1 to Armor, or +2 to Armor if the cypher is level 5 or higher) and eases Might defense rolls by two steps. However, healing is more difficult during this time; all **recovery rolls** suffer a -1 penalty.

SHOCK ATTACK

Level: 1d6

Effect: For the next day, each time the user strikes a solid creature or object, the attack generates a burst of electricity, inflicting 1 additional point of damage (2 points if the cypher is level 4 or higher, 3 points if the cypher is level 6 or higher).

SHOCKER

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: Delivers a powerful burst of electricity that shocks any creature touched, inflicting damage equal to the cypher's level.

SKILL BOOST

Level: 1d6

Effect: Dramatically but temporarily alters the user's mind and body so they can ease one specific kind of physical action by three steps. Once activated, this boost can be used a number of times equal to the cypher's level, but only within a twenty-four-hour period. The boost takes effect each time the action is performed. For example, a level 3 cypher boosts the first three times that action is attempted. Roll a d100 to determine the action.

01–15	Melee attack
16–30	Ranged attack
31–40	Speed defense

41–50	Might defense
51–60	Intellect defense
61–68	Jumping
69–76	Climbing
77–84	Running
85–92	Swimming
93–94	Sneaking
95–96	Balancing
97–98	Perceiving
99	Carrying
00	Escaping

SLAVE MAKER

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: To activate the cypher, the user must succeed on a melee attack against a creature about the size of the user and whose level does not exceed the cypher's level. The cypher bonds to the target, who immediately becomes calm. The target awaits the user's commands and carries out all orders to the best of its ability. The target remains so enslaved for a number of hours equal to the cypher's level minus the target's level. (If the result is 0, the target is enslaved for only one minute.)

SLEEP INDUCER

Level: 1d6

Effect: Touch puts the victim to sleep for ten minutes per cypher level or until awoken by a violent action or an extremely loud noise.

SNIPER MODULE

Level: 1d6

Effect: For the next hour per cypher level, the effective range of the user's ranged weapon increases by one category (immediate to short, short to long, long to very long, very long to 1,000 feet [300 m]). A weapon with a range greater than very long has its range doubled.

SOLVENT

Level: 1d10

Effect: Dissolves 1 cubic foot of material each round. After one round per cypher level, the cypher becomes inert.

SONIC HOLE

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Draws all sound within long range into the device for one round per cypher level. Within the affected area, no sound can be heard.

(Sonic holes are much-loved by thieves everywhere but can also be used for less nefarious purposes, such as hunting prey and sneaking past enemies.)

SOUND DAMPENER

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Dampens all sound within immediate range for one minute per cypher level, providing an asset on stealth actions by all creatures in the area.

SPATIAL WARP

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: When affixed to a device that affects a single target at range, that range is increased to 1 mile (1.5 km) with no penalties. Space is temporarily warped in terms of seeing and reaching the target. If direct line of sight is important to the device's effect, it remains important. The spatial warp lasts 10 minutes per cypher level.

SPEED BOOST

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Adds 1 to the user's Speed Edge for one hour (adds 2 if the cypher is level 5 or higher).

SPY

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Produces a tiny spying object that resists detection as a level 8 creature. The object moves at great speed, mapping and scanning an unknown area. It moves 500 feet (150 m) per level, scanning an area up to 50 feet (15 m) away from it. It identifies basic layout, creatures, and major energy sources. Its movement is blocked by any physical or energy barrier. At the end of its mapping run, it returns to the user and reports. If it discovers a predefined target during its run (such as "a creature of level 5 or higher," "a locked door," "a major energy source," and so on), it detonates instead, dealing damage equal to the cypher's level (half electrical damage, half shrapnel damage) to all creatures and objects in short range.

STASIS KEEPER

Level: 1d6

Effect: Puts a subject into stasis for a number of days equal to the cypher's level, or until it is violently disturbed. An object in stasis does not age and comes out of the stasis alive and in the same condition as it went in, with no memory of the period of inactivity.

STIM

Level: 1d6

Effect: Eases the user's next action taken by three steps.

STRENGTH BOOST

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Adds 1 to Might Edge for one hour (or 2 if the cypher is level 5 or higher).

STRENGTH ENHANCER

Level: 1d6

Effect: All noncombat tasks involving raw strength—such as breaking down a door, lifting a heavy boulder, forcing open elevator doors, competing in a weightlifting competition, and so on—are eased by two steps for one hour.

SUBDUAL FIELD

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: Two rounds after being activated, the device creates an invisible field that fills a specified area (such as a cube a short distance across) within long range. The field lasts for one minute. It affects the minds of thinking beings within the field, preventing them from taking hostile actions. The effect lasts as long as they remain in the field and for 1d6 rounds after, although an Intellect defense roll is allowed each round to act normally (both in the field and after leaving it).

TELEPATHY

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: For one hour, the device enables long-range mental communication with anyone the user can see.

TELEPORTER (BOUNDER)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: User teleports up to 100 × the cypher level in feet to a location they can see. They arrive safely with their possessions but cannot take anything else with them.

TELEPORTER (INTERSTELLAR)

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: User teleports anywhere in the galaxy to a location they have previously visited or seen. They arrive safely with their possessions but cannot take anything else with them.

TELEPORTER (PLANETARY)

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: User teleports anywhere on the planet to a location they have previously visited or seen. They arrive safely with their possessions but cannot take anything else with them.

TELEPORTER (TRAVELER)

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: User teleports up to 100 × the cypher level in miles to a location they have previously visited or seen. They arrive safely with their possessions but cannot take anything else with them.

TEMPORAL VIEWER

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: Displays moving images and sound, up to ten minutes per cypher level in length, depicting events that occurred at the current location up to one year prior. The user specifies the time period shown by the viewer.

TIME DILATION (DEFENSIVE)

Level: 1d6

Effect: For the next twenty-four hours, when the user is attacked, they move in rapid, seemingly random jumps, a few inches to one side or the other. This is an asset that modifies the user's defense rolls by two steps (three steps if the cypher is level 6 or higher).

TIME DILATION (OFFENSIVE)

Level: 1d6

Effect: For the next twenty-four hours, when the user makes a melee attack, they move at almost instantaneous speed, easing their attacks by two steps (three steps if the cypher is level 6 or higher).

TISSUE REGENERATION

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: For the next hour, the user regains 1 point lost to damage per round, up to a total number of points equal to twice the cypher's level. As each point is regained, they choose which Pool to add it to. If all their Pools are at maximum, the regeneration pauses until they take more damage, at which point it begins again (if any time remains in the hour) until the duration expires.

(A tissue regeneration cypher can be used to regenerate a lost appendage (an arm, a foot, a leg, and so on) or to repair scar tissue from burns and other tissue-related disfigurements. If the cypher is used in this fashion, it restores only 1d6 points over the hour duration.)

TRACER

Level: 1d6

Effect: Fires a microscopic tracer that clings to any surface within short range. For the next twenty-four hours, the launcher shows the distance and direction to the tracer, as long as it is within 1 mile (100 miles if the cypher is level 3 or higher, in the same dimension if the cypher is level 6 or higher).

TRICK EMBEDDER

Level: 1d6

Effect: A nonintelligent animal immediately and perfectly learns one trick (two tricks if the cypher is level 4 or higher) it is capable of physically performing (roll over, heel, spin, shake, go to an indicated place within long range, and so on). The trick must be designated when the cypher is activated.

UNINTERRUPTIBLE POWER SOURCE

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: Provides power to another device for up to a day. The device to be powered can be as simple as a light source or as complex as a small starcraft, assuming the cypher's level is equal to the item's power requirements. A desk lamp is a level 1

power requirement, a car engine is a level 5 power requirement, and a starship is a level 10 power requirement.

VANISHER

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: The user becomes invisible for five minutes per cypher level, during which time they are specialized in stealth and Speed defense tasks. This effect ends if they do something to reveal their presence or position—attacking, using an ability, moving a large object, and so on. If this occurs, they can regain the remaining invisibility effect by taking an action to focus on hiding their position.

VISAGE CHANGER

Level: 1d6

Effect: Changes the appearance of one human-sized creature, providing an asset to disguise tasks (easing them by two steps if the cypher is level 5 or higher). The change takes ten minutes to apply and lasts for twenty-four hours.

VISUAL DISPLACEMENT DEVICE

Level: 1d6

Effect: Projects holographic images of the user to confuse attackers. The images appear around the user, giving them an asset to Speed defense actions for ten minutes per cypher level.

VOCAL TRANSLATOR

Level: 1d6

Effect: For twenty-four hours per cypher level, translates everything said by the user into a language that anyone can understand.

WARMTH

Level: 1d6

Effect: Keeps the user warm and comfortable, even in the harshest cold temperatures, for twenty-four hours. During this time, the user has Armor equal to the cypher's level that protects against cold damage.

WATER ADAPTER

Level: 1d6

Effect: The user can breathe underwater and operate at any depth (without facing the debilitating consequences of changing pressure) for four hours per cypher level. This cypher can also be used in the regular atmosphere, allowing the user to ignore ill effects from very low or very high atmospheric pressure. The cypher does not protect against vacuum.

WEAPON ENHANCEMENT

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Modifies a weapon's attack in a particular fashion for ten minutes per cypher level. Roll a d100 for the modification.

01–10	Eases attack by one step
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11–20	Deals bonus electrical damage equal to cypher level
21–30	Deals bonus cold damage equal to cypher level
31–40	Deals bonus poison damage equal to cypher level
41–50	Deals bonus acid damage equal to cypher level
51–60	Deals bonus fire damage equal to cypher level
61–70	Deals bonus sonic damage equal to cypher level
71–80	Deals bonus psychic damage equal to cypher level
81–90	Knockback (on 18–20 on successful attack roll, target knocked back 30 feet [9 m])
91–95	Holding (on 18–20 on successful attack roll, target can't act on its next turn)
96–97	Eases attack by two steps
98	Banishing (on 18–20 on successful attack roll, target is sent to random location at least 100 miles [160 km] away)
99	Explodes, inflicting damage equal to cypher level to all within immediate range
00	Heart-seeking (on 18–20 on successful attack roll, target is killed)

WINGS

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: User can fly at their normal running speed for ten minutes per cypher level.

X-RAY VIEWER

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: Allows the user to see through up to 2 feet (60 cm) of material of a level lower than the cypher. The effect lasts for one minute per cypher level.

ZERO POINT FIELD

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: Renders an inanimate object outside the effects of most energy for one minute. This means the object cannot be harmed, moved, or manipulated in any way. It remains in place (even in midair).

POWER BOOST CYPHERS

These cyphers increase, modify, or improve a character's existing powers. A burst boost cypher, for example, allows someone with the [Bears a Halo of Fire](#) focus to create a blast of fire in all directions, one time. Imagine this as being a fire-using superhero's ability to "go nova."

Power boost cyphers affect one use of a character's abilities but do not require an action. Their use is part of the action that they affect.

Power boost cyphers are a special type of cypher. In some Cypher System games, they may be inappropriate, and in others, they may be the main (or only) type of cypher available, as determined by the GM. They can be either subtle or manifest.

AREA BOOST

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: This cypher boosts an ability that affects a single target. The ability expands the effect so it includes the immediate area around that target. If the ability normally affects an immediate area, the area becomes short. Short areas are increased to long. Long areas are increased to very long. Abilities with very long areas become 1,000-foot (300 m) areas. All other areas double in radius.

BURST BOOST

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: This cypher boosts an ability that affects a single target at short range or farther. The range decreases to immediate, but the ability affects all targets within immediate range.

DAMAGE BOOST

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: This cypher boosts an ability that inflicts points of damage. The ability inflicts additional damage equal to this cypher's level.

EFFICACY BOOST (MAJOR)

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: This cypher boosts an ability that requires a skill roll. The use of the ability is eased by two steps. This kind of cypher might be appropriate only in superhero campaigns, at least with any regularity.)

EFFICACY BOOST (MINOR)

Level: 1d6

Effect: This cypher boosts an ability that requires a skill roll. The use of the ability is eased.

ENERGY BOOST

Level: 1d6

Effect: This cypher boosts an ability that has a stat Pool cost. The cost is reduced to 0.

RANGE BOOST

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: This cypher boosts the range of an ability. Something that affects only you can now affect someone you touch. Any other ability increases its range by one category (touch to immediate, immediate to short, short to long, long to very long, very long to 1,000 feet [300 m], or double for any range longer than very long).

TARGET BOOST

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: This cypher boosts an ability that affects a target at a range greater than touch. It can affect a second target within range (if the ability is an attack, make a separate attack roll for the second creature).

Running the Cypher System

Setting Difficulty Ratings

The GM's most important overall tasks are setting the stage and guiding the story created by the group (not the one created by the GM ahead of time). But setting difficulty is the most important mechanical task the GM has in the game. Although there are suggestions throughout this chapter for various difficulty ratings for certain actions, there is no master list of the difficulty for every action a PC can take. Instead, the Cypher System is designed with the “teach a person to fish” style of good game mastering in mind. (If you don’t know what that means, it comes from the old adage “Give a person a fish and they’ll eat for a day. Teach a person to fish and they’ll eat for a lifetime.” The idea is not to give GMs a ton of rules to memorize or reference, but to teach them how to make their own logical judgment calls.) Of course, most of the time, it’s not a matter of exact precision. If you say the difficulty is 3 and it “should” have been 4, the world’s not over.

For the most part, it really is as simple as rating something on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being incredibly easy and 10 being basically impossible. The guidelines in the Task Difficulty table should help put you in the right frame of mind for assigning difficulty to a task.

For example, we make the distinction between something that most people can do and something that trained people can do. In this case, “normal” means someone with absolutely no training, talent, or experience—imagine your ne’er-do-well, slightly overweight uncle trying a task he’s never tried before. “Trained” means the person has some level of instruction or experience but is not necessarily a professional.

With that in mind, think about the act of balance. With enough focus, most people can walk across a narrow bridge (like a fallen tree trunk). That suggests it is difficulty 2. However, walking across a narrow plank that’s only 3 inches (8 cm) wide? That’s probably more like difficulty 3. Now consider walking across a tightrope. That’s probably difficulty 5—a normal person can manage that only with a great deal of luck. Someone with some training can give it a go, but it’s still hard. Of course, a professional acrobat can do it easily. Consider,

however, that the professional acrobat is specialized in the task, making it difficulty 3 for them. They probably are using Effort as well during their performance.

Let's try another task. This time, consider how hard it might be to remember the name of the previous leader of the village where the character lives. The difficulty might be 0 or 1, depending on how long ago they were the leader and how well known they were. Let's say it was thirty years ago and they were only mildly memorable, so it's difficulty 1. Most people remember them, and with a little bit of effort, anyone can come up with their name. Now let's consider the name of the leader's daughter. That's much harder. Assuming the daughter wasn't famous in her own right, it's probably difficulty 4. Even people who know a little about local history (that is to say, people who are trained in the subject) might not be able to remember it. But what about the name of the pet dog owned by the daughter's spouse? That's probably impossible. Who's going to remember the name of an obscure person's pet from thirty years ago? Basically no one. However, it's not forbidden knowledge or a well-guarded secret, so it sounds like difficulty 7. Difficulty 7 is the rating that means "No one can do this, yet some people still do." It's not the stuff of legend, but it's something you would assume people can't do. When you think there's no way you can get tickets for a sold-out concert, but somehow your friend manages to score a couple anyway, that's difficulty 7. (See the next section for more on difficulties 7, 8, 9, and 10.)

If you're talking about a task, ideally the difficulty shouldn't be based on the character performing the task. Things don't get inherently easier or harder depending on who is doing them. However, the truth is, the character does play into it as a judgment call. If the task is breaking down a wooden door, an 8-foot-tall (2 m) automaton made of metal with nuclear-driven motors should be better at breaking it down than an average human would be, but the task rating should be the same for both. Let's say that the automaton's nature effectively gives it two levels of training in such tasks. Thus, if the door has a difficulty rating of 4, but the automaton is specialized and reduces the difficulty to 2, it has a target number of 6. The human has no such specialization, so the difficulty remains 4, and the person has a target number of 12. However, when you set the difficulty of breaking down the door, don't try to take all those differences into account. The GM should consider only the human because the Task Difficulty table is based on the ideal of a "normal" person, a "trained" person, and so on. It's humanocentric.

Most characters probably are willing to use one or two levels of Effort on a task, and they might have an appropriate skill or asset to decrease the difficulty by a step. That means that a difficulty 4 task will often be treated as difficulty 2 or even 1, and those are easy rolls to make. Don't hesitate, then, to pull out higher-level difficulties. The PCs can rise to the challenge, especially if they are experienced.

The Impossible Difficulties

Difficulties 7, 8, 9, and 10 are all technically impossible. Their target numbers are 21, 24, 27, and 30, and you can't roll those numbers on a d20 no matter how many times you try. Consider, however, all the ways that a character can reduce difficulty. If someone spends a little Effort or has some skill or help, it brings difficulty 7 (target number 21) into the range of possibility—difficulty 6 (target number 18). Now consider that they have specialization, use a lot of Effort, and have help. That might bring the difficulty down to 1 or even 0 (reducing it by two steps from training and specialization, three or four steps from Effort, and one step from the asset of assistance). That practically impossible task just became routine. A fourth-tier character can and will do this—not every time, due to the cost, but perhaps once per game session. You have to be ready for that. A well-prepared, motivated

sixth-tier character can do that even with a difficulty 10 task. Again, they won't do it often (they'd have to apply six levels of Effort, and even with an Edge of 6 that would cost 7 points from their Pool, and that's assuming they're specialized and have two levels of assets), but it can happen if they're really prepared for the task (being specialized and maxed out in asset opportunities reduces the difficulty by four more steps). That's why sixth-tier characters are at the top of their field, so to speak.

False Precision

One way to look at difficulty is that each step of difficulty is worth 3 on the die. That is to say, hinder the task by one step, and the target number rises by 3. Ease the task by one step, and the target number is lowered by 3. Those kinds of changes are big, meaty chunks. Difficulty, as a game mechanic, is not terribly precise. It's measured in large portions. You never have a target number of 13 or 14, for example—it's always 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, and so on. (Technically, this is not true. If a character adds 1 to a d20 roll for some reason, it changes a target number of 15 to 14. But this is not worth much discussion.)

Imprecision is good in this case. It would be false precision to say that one lock has a target number of 14 and another has a target number of 15. What false precision means in this context is that it would be a delusion to think we can be that exact. Can you really say that one lock is 5% easier to pick than another? And more important, even if you could, is the difference worth noting? It's better to interact with the world in larger, more meaningful chunks than to try to parse things so carefully. If we tried to rate everything on a scale of 1 to 30 (using target numbers and not difficulty), we'd start to get lost in the proverbial weeds coming up with a meaningful distinction between something rated as an 8 and something rated as a 9 on that scale.

Routine Actions

Don't hesitate to make actions routine. Don't call for die rolls when they're not really needed. Sometimes GMs fall into the trap illustrated by this dialogue:

GM: What do you do?

Player: I _____.

GM: Okay, give me a roll.

That's not a good instinct—at least, not for the Cypher System. Players should roll when it's interesting or exciting. Otherwise, they should just do what they do. If the PCs tie a rope around something and use it to climb down into a pit, you could ask for tying rolls, climbing rolls, and so on, but why? Just to see if they roll terribly? So the rope can come undone at the wrong time, or a character's hand can slip? Most of the time, that makes players feel inadequate and isn't a lot of fun. A rope coming undone in the middle of an exciting chase scene or a battle can be a great complication (and that's what **GM intrusions** are for). A rope coming undone in the middle of a simple “getting from point A to point B” scene only slows down gameplay. The real fun—the real story—is down in the pit. So get the PCs down there.

There are a million exceptions to this guideline, of course. If creatures are throwing poisoned darts at the PCs while they climb, that might make things more interesting and require a roll. If the pit is filled with acid and the PCs must climb halfway down, pull a lever, and come back up, that's a situation where you should set difficulty and perhaps have a roll. If a PC is near death, carrying a fragile item of great importance, or something similar, climbing down the rope is tense, and a roll might add to the excitement. The important difference is that these kinds of complications have real consequences.

On the flip side, don't be afraid to use GM intrusion on routine actions if it makes things more interesting. Walking up to the king in his audience chamber in the middle of a ceremony only to trip on a rug? That could have huge ramifications for the character and the story.

Other Ways to Judge Difficulty

Rating things on a scale of 1 to 10 is something that most people are very familiar with. You can also look at it as rating an object or creature on a similar scale, if that's easier. In other words, if you don't know how hard it would be to climb a particular cliff face, think of it as a creature the PCs have to fight. What level would the creature be? You could look in [the Creatures chapter](#) and say “I think this wall should be about as difficult to deal with as a demon. A demon is level 5, so the task of climbing the wall will be difficulty 5.” That's a weird way to do it, perhaps, but it's fairly straightforward. And if you're the kind of GM who thinks in terms of “How tough

“will this fight be?” then maybe rating tasks as creatures or NPCs to fight isn’t so strange after all. It’s just another way to relate to them. The important thing is that they’re on the same scale. Similarly, if the PCs have to tackle a knowledge task—say, trying to determine if they know where a caravan is headed based on its tracks—you could rate the task in terms of an object. If you’re used to rating doors or other objects that the PCs have broken through recently, the knowledge task is just a different kind of barrier to bust through.

Everything in the Cypher System—characters, creatures, objects, tasks, and so on—has a level. It might be called a tier or a difficulty instead of a level, but ultimately it’s a numerical rating system used to compare things. Although you have to be careful about drawing too many correlations—a first-tier character isn’t easily compared to a difficulty 1 wall or a level 1 animal—the principle is the same. Everything can be rated and roughly compared to everything else in the world. (It works best to take PCs out of this equation. For example, you shouldn’t try to compare a PC’s tier to a wall’s level. Character tiers are mentioned here only for completeness.)

Last, if your mind leans toward statistics, you can look at difficulty as a percentage chance. Every number on the d20 is a 5% increment. For example, you have a 5% chance of rolling a 1. You have a 10% chance of rolling a 1 or a 2. Thus, if you need to roll a 12 or higher, you have a 45% chance of success. (A d20 has nine numbers that are 12 or higher: 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20. And 9×5 equals 45.)

For some people, it’s easier to think in terms of a percentage chance. A GM might think “She has about a 30% chance to know that fact about geography.” Each number on a d20 is a 5% increment, and it takes six increments to equal 30%, so there are six numbers that mean the PC succeeds: 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20. Thus, since the player has to roll 15 or higher, that means the target number is 15. (And that means the task is level 5, but if you’ve already determined the target number, you likely don’t care about the level.)

ADVANTAGES TO THIS SYSTEM

1. The GM makes measured adjustments in large, uniform steps. That makes things faster than if players had to do arithmetic using a range of all numbers from 1 to 20.
2. You calculate a target number only once no matter how many times the PCs attempt the action. If you establish that the target number is 12, it’s 12 every time a PC tries that action. (On the other hand, if you had to add numbers to your die roll, you’d have to do it for every attempt.) Consider this fact in light of combat. Once a player knows that they need to roll a 12 or higher to hit a foe, combat moves very quickly.
3. If a PC can reduce the difficulty of an action to 0, no roll is needed. This means that an Olympic gymnast doesn’t roll a die to walk across a balance beam, but the average person does. The task is initially rated the same for both, but the difficulty is reduced for the gymnast. There’s no chance of failure.
4. This is how everything in the game works, whether it’s climbing a wall, sweet-talking a guard, or fighting a bioengineered horror.
5. Perhaps most important, the system gives GMs the freedom to focus entirely on the flow of the game. The GM doesn’t use dice to determine what happens (unless you want to)—the players do. There aren’t a lot of different rules for different actions, so there is little to remember and very little to reference. The difficulty can be used as a narrative tool, with the challenges always meeting the expected logic of the game. All the GM’s mental space can be devoted to guiding the story.

GM Intrusion

GM intrusion is the main mechanic that the GM uses to inject drama and additional excitement into the game. It’s also a handy tool for resolving issues that affect the PCs but do not involve them. GM intrusion is a way to facilitate what goes on in the world outside the characters. Can the minotaur track the PCs’ movements through the maze? Will the fraying rope hold?

Since the players roll all the dice, GM intrusion is used to determine if and when something happens. For example, if the PCs are fighting a noble's guards, and you (the GM) know that there are more guards nearby, you don't need to roll dice to determine if the other guards hear the scuffle and intervene (unless you want to). You just decide when it would be best for the story—which is probably when it would be worst for the characters. In a way, GM intrusion replaces the GM's die rolling.

The mechanic is also one of the main ways that GMs award experience points to the PCs. This means that you use experience points as a narrative tool. Whenever it seems appropriate, you can introduce complications into the game that affect a specific player, but when you do so, you give that player 1 XP. The player can refuse the intrusion, but doing so costs them 1 XP. So by refusing an intrusion, the player does not get the experience point that the GM is offering, and they lose one that they already have. (This kind of refusal is likely to happen very rarely in your game, if ever. And, obviously, a player can't refuse an intrusion if they have no XP to spend.)

Here's how a GM intrusion might work in play. Say the PCs find a hidden console with some buttons. They learn the right order in which to press the buttons, and a section of the floor disappears. As the GM, you don't ask the players specifically where their characters are standing. Instead, you give a player 1 XP and say "Unfortunately, you're standing directly over this new hole in the floor." If the player wanted, they could refuse the XP, spend one of their own, and say "I leap aside to safety." Most likely, though, they'll make the defense roll that you call for and let it play out.

There are two ways for the GM to handle this kind of intrusion. You could say "You're standing in the wrong place, so make a roll." (It's a Speed defense roll, of course.) Alternatively, you could say "You're standing in the wrong place. The floor opens under your feet, and you fall down into the darkness." In the first example, the PC has a chance to save themselves. In the second example, they don't. Both are viable options. The distinction is based on any number of factors, including the situation, the characters involved, and the needs of the story. This might seem arbitrary or even capricious, but you're the master of what the intrusion can and can't do. RPG mechanics need consistency so players can make intelligent decisions based on how they understand the world to work. But they'll never base their decisions on GM intrusions. They don't know when intrusions will happen or what form they will take. GM intrusions are the unpredictable and strange twists of fate that affect a person's life every day.

When player modifications (such as skill, Effort, and so on) determine that success is automatic, the GM can use GM intrusion to negate the automatic success. The player must roll for the action at its original difficulty level or target number 20, whichever is lower.

(Remember, any time you give a player 1 XP for a GM intrusion, you're actually giving them 2—one to keep and one to give to another player.)

Using GM Intrusion as a Narrative Tool

A GM can use this narrative tool to steer things. That doesn't mean railroad the players or direct the action of the game with a heavy hand. GM intrusion doesn't enable you to say "You're all captured, so here's your 1 XP." Instead, the GM can direct things more subtly—gently, almost imperceptibly influencing events rather than forcing them. GM intrusion represents things going wrong. The bad guys planning well. Fortune not favoring the characters.

Consider this scenario: the GM plants an interesting adventure seed in a small village, but the PCs don't stay there long enough to find it. So just outside the village, the PCs run afoul of a vicious viper that bites one of them. The GM uses intrusion to say that the poison from the snake will make the character debilitated unless they get a large dose of a specific antitoxin, which the group doesn't have. Of course, they aren't required to go back to the village where the GM's interesting adventure can start, but it's likely that they will, looking for the antitoxin.

Some players might find intrusion heavy-handed, but the XP softens the blow. And remember, they can refuse these narrative nudges. Intrusion is not meant to be a railroading tool—just a bit of a rudder. Not an inescapable track, but a nudge here and there.

What's more, the GM doesn't need to have a deliberate goal in mind. The complication you introduce could simply make things more interesting. You might not know where it will take the story, just that it will make the story better.

This is wonderfully empowering to the GM—not in a “Ha ha, now I’ll trounce the PCs” way, but in an “I can control the narrative a little bit, steering it more toward the story I want to create rather than relying on the dice” sort of way. Consider that old classic plot development in which the PCs get captured and must escape from the bad guys. In heroic fiction, this is such a staple that it would almost seem strange if it didn’t happen. But in many roleplaying games, it’s a nearly impossible turn of events—the PCs usually have too many ways to get out of the bad guy’s clutches before they’re captured. The dice have to be wildly against them. It virtually never happens. With GM intrusion, it could happen (again, in the context of the larger encounter, not as a single intrusion that results in the entire group of PCs being captured with little explanation or chance to react).

For example, let’s say the PCs are surrounded by orcs. One character is badly injured—debilitated—and the rest are hurt. Some of the orcs produce a large weighted net. Rather than asking for a lot of rolls and figuring the mechanics for escape, you use intrusion and say that the net goes over the PCs who are still on their feet. The rest of the orcs point spears menacingly. This is a pretty strong cue to the players that surrender is a good (and possibly the only) option. Some players won’t take the hint, however, so another use of intrusion might allow the orcs to hit one of the trapped PCs on the head and render them unconscious while their friends struggle in the net. If the players still don’t surrender, it’s probably best to play out the rest of the encounter without more GM intrusions—using more would be heavy-handed by anyone’s measure—although it’s perfectly reasonable to rule that a character rendered debilitated is knocked unconscious, since the orcs are trying to take the PCs alive.

(Remember that GM intrusions can occur at any time, not just during combat. Disrupting or changing a tense interaction with NPCs can have big repercussions.)

Using GM Intrusion as a Resolution Mechanic

This mechanic offers a way for the GM to determine how things happen in the game without leaving it all to random chance. Bad guys trying to smash down the door to the room where the PCs are holed up? You could roll a bunch of dice, compare the NPCs’ stats to the door’s stats, and so on, or you could wait until the most interesting time, have the bad guys break in, and award an experience point to the PC who tried their best to bar the door. The latter way is the Cypher System way. Intrusion is a task resolution tool for the GM. In other words, you don’t base things on stats but on narrative choice. (Frankly, a lot of great GMs over the years—even in the very early days of the hobby—have run their games this way. Sometimes they rolled dice or pretended to roll dice, but they were really manipulating things.) This method frees the GM from worrying about mechanics and looking up stats and allows them to focus on the story.

This isn’t cheating—it’s the rules of the game. This rule simply replaces traditional dice rolling with good game mastering, logic, and intelligent storytelling. When a PC is climbing a burning rope, and everyone knows that it will break at some point, the game has a mechanism to ensure that it breaks at just the right time.

Variant: If you want more randomness in your game, or if you want your game to seem like more of a simulation, assign a flat percentage chance for whatever you’re trying to resolve. For example, each round, the star troopers have a 20% chance to blast through the door—or, if you want the risk to escalate, a cumulative 20% chance to blast through the door. By not using GM intrusion, this method robs the PCs of a

few XP, but when they see you rolling dice, it might help with their immersion. Alternatively, you can pretend to roll dice but really use GM intrusion, though this method seriously robs the characters of XP.

There's a better way. Announce your intrusion, but say that there's only a chance it will happen (state the percentage chance), and then roll the dice in plain view of everyone. If the intrusion occurs, award the XP as normal. This is likely the best of both worlds. However, it takes the narrative power out of your hands and gives it to the dice. Perhaps this method is best used only occasionally. If nothing else, it injects some variety and certainly some drama.

Using (and Not Abusing) GM Intrusion

Too much of a good thing will make the game seem utterly unpredictable—even capricious. The ideal is to use about four GM intrusions per game session, depending on the length of the session, or about one intrusion per hour of game play. This is in addition to any intrusions that are triggered by players rolling a 1.

Intrusion Through Player Rolls

When a PC rolls a 1, handle the GM intrusion the same way that you'd handle an intrusion you initiated. The intrusion could mean the PC fumbles or botches whatever they were trying to do, but it could mean something else. Consider these alternatives:

- * In combat, the PC's foe is not as hurt as they thought. Give the foe 5 extra points of health.
- * In combat, the PC drops their guard, and the foe gets a free attack.
- * In combat, reinforcements for the PC's foes show up.
- * In combat (or any stressful situation), an ally decides to flee.
- * In combat (or any stressful situation), an ally doesn't like the PCs as much as they thought. The ally steals from them or betrays them.
- * Out of combat, the PC's pack falls open, or the sole of their shoe tears open.
- * Out of combat, it begins to rain heavily.
- * Out of combat, a surprise foe appears, and the scene turns into a combat.
- * In an interaction, the GM introduces a surprising motive for the NPC. For example, the PCs are trying to bribe an official for information, and the official reveals that what they really want isn't money but for someone to rescue their kidnapped son.

(This might not be true of your players, but many players rarely, if ever, spend XP to refuse an intrusion from the GM, though they regularly use XP to avoid an intrusion that comes from a bad roll. And there's nothing wrong with that. Some GMs might want to forbid using an XP to reroll a 1, but there's really no point—if you've got an idea for a good intrusion, you don't need to wait until a player rolls a 1 to use it.)

GM Intrusion That Affects the Group

The core of the idea behind GM intrusion is that the player being adversely affected gains an experience point. But what if the intrusion affects the whole group equally? What if the GM uses it to have an unstable device overload and explode, harming all the characters? In this case, if no PC is involved more than the others (for example, no single PC was frantically attempting to repair the device), you should give 1 XP to each character but not give any of them an extra XP to hand out to someone else.

However, this kind of group intrusion should be an exception, not the rule. GM intrusions are much more effective if they are more personal.

Example GM Intrusions

It's not a good idea to use the same events as GM intrusions over and over ("Dolmar dropped his sword again?"). Below are a number of different intrusions you can use.

Bad Luck

Through no fault of the characters, something happens that is bad or at least complicating. For example:

- * The floorboard beneath the PC gives way.
- * The boat lists to starboard at just the wrong moment.
- * A gust of wind blows the papers out of the character's hand.
- * The buckle of the PC's pack snaps at an inopportune time.
- * The NPC that the characters need to speak with is home sick today.
- * A device (cypher or artifact) malfunctions or gives the user a jolt.

An Unknown Complication Emerges

The situation was more complex (and therefore more interesting) than the PCs knew—perhaps even more than the GM knew, at least at the start. For example:

- * A poisonous snake darts out from the tall grass and attacks.
- * The box that holds the plans is trapped with a poison needle.
- * The NPC that the PCs need to befriend doesn't speak their language.
- * The NPC that the PCs try to bribe is allergic to the bottle of alcohol they offer.
- * The PCs find the book they need, but the pages are so brittle that if they open it, it might crumble.

An Impending Complication Emerges

GMs can use this type of intrusion as a resolution mechanic to determine NPC success or failure. Rather than rolling dice to see how long it takes an NPC to rewire a damaged force field generator, it happens at a time of the GM's choosing—ideally when it would be most interesting. For example:

- * The goblin reinforcements finally get through the locked door.
- * The ropes of the old rope bridge finally snap.
- * The city guards show up.

vThe unstable ceiling collapses.

- * The NPC who holds a dagger to a character's throat and says "Don't move" cuts the PC when they do, in fact, move, putting them immediately at debilitated on the damage track.

Opponent Luck or Skill

The PCs aren't the only ones with surprising tricks up their sleeves. For example:

- * The PC's opponent uses a lightning-fast maneuver to dodge all attacks.
- * The PC's opponent sees an opening and makes an additional, immediate attack.
- * The NPC commander rallies their troops, who all deal 2 additional points of damage for one round.
- * The PC's opponent uses a cypher or similar device that produces just the right effect for the situation.
- * A bit of the wall collapses in the middle of the fight, preventing the characters from chasing the fleeing NPC.

Fumbles

Although you might not want every player roll of 1 to be a fumble, sometimes it could be just that. Alternatively, the GM could simply declare that a fumble has occurred. In either case, consider the following examples:

- * In combat, the PC drops their weapon.
- * In combat, the PC misses and strikes the wall, breaking or damaging their weapon.
- * In combat, the NPC hits the PC harder than usual, inflicting 2 additional points of damage.
- * In combat, the PC hits an ally by accident and inflicts regular damage.
- * Out of combat, the PC drops or mishandles an important object or piece of equipment.
- * In an interaction, the PC inadvertently or unknowingly says something offensive.

Partial Success

GM intrusion doesn't have to mean that a PC has failed. For example:

- * The PC disables the explosive device before it goes off, but if someone doesn't remain and hold the detonator, it will still explode.
- * The PC creates the antidote, but it will turn the imbiber's flesh blue for the next few weeks.
- * The PC jumps across the pit but accidentally knocks loose some stones from the edge, making the jump harder for their friend right behind them.

PLAYER INTRUSIONS

Player intrusions give the players a small bit of narrative control over the world. However, the world still remains in the GM's purview. You can always overrule a player intrusion, or suggest a way to massage it so that it fits better into the setting. Still, because it is indeed narrative control, a player intrusion should always involve a small aspect of the world beyond the character. "I punch my foe really hard" is an expression of Effort or perhaps character ability. "My foe slips and falls backward off the ledge" is a player intrusion.

Player intrusions should never be as big as GM intrusions. They should not end an encounter, only (perhaps) provide the PC with the means to more easily end an encounter. They should not have a wide-reaching or even necessarily a long-term effect on the setting. A way to consider this might be that player intrusions can affect a single object (a floorboard snaps), feature (there's a hidden shallow spot in the stream to ford), or NPC (the vendor is an old friend). But not more than that. A player intrusion can't affect a whole village or even a whole tavern in that village. A rock can come loose, but a player intrusion can't create a landslide.

Tying Actions to Stats

Although the decision is open to your discretion, when a PC takes an action, it should be fairly obvious which stat is tied to that action. Physical actions that involve brute force or endurance use Might. Physical actions that involve quickness, coordination, or agility use Speed. Actions that involve intelligence, education, insight, willpower, or charm use Intellect.

In rare instances, you could allow a PC to use a different stat for a task. For example, a character might try to break down a door by examining it closely for flaws and thus use Intellect rather than Might. This kind of change is a good thing because it encourages player creativity. Just don't let it be abused by an exuberant or too-clever player. It's well within your purview to decide that the door has no flaws, or to rule that the character's attempt will take half an hour rather than one round. In other words, using a stat that is not the obvious choice should be the exception, not the rule.

Cyphers

You should think of cyphers as character abilities, whether they're subtle cyphers or manifest cyphers. This means that it is incumbent upon you to make sure that players always have plenty of cyphers to use. In the course of their travels, the PCs should find that cyphers are extremely common. And since the PCs are limited in the number of cyphers they can carry, they will use them liberally.

Manifest cyphers can be found by scavenging through old ruins. They can be found in the corpses of magical or technological foes. They can be found among the possessions of intelligent fallen opponents or the lairs of unintelligent creatures, either amid the bones of former meals or as shiny decorations in a nest. They can be found in villages, in the back of a merchant's cart that sells junk and scavenged parts. They are offered as rewards by people who are grateful for the PCs' help.

Some adventures will offer more cyphers than others. Still, as a rule of thumb, in any given adventure, a character should use at least as many cyphers as they can carry. This means they should find that number of cyphers in that same amount of time (give or take). Thus, you can simply add up the number of cyphers the PCs can carry, and on average, they should find at least that many cyphers in a given adventure.

If your players are typical, they will use combat-related cyphers liberally but hold onto their utility cyphers. A ray emitter or defensive shield will be used, but a suspensor belt or phasing module will linger longer on their character sheets.

As with everything else in the game, it's intentionally very easy for the GM to create new cyphers. Just think of the effect and how to express it as a game advantage. Two kinds of cyphers exist when it comes to effect: those that allow the user to do something better, and those that allow the user to do something they couldn't do otherwise.

The first group includes everything that reduces the difficulty of a task (including defense tasks). The second group includes things that grant new abilities, such as flight, a new means of attack, the ability to see into the past, or any number of other powers.

A few more important notes about devising new cyphers:

- * Cyphers should be single-use items. The PCs use them up and find new ones.
- * Cyphers should be potent. A minor ability isn't worth the trouble. If an attack cypher isn't as good as a regular weapon, why bother with it?
- * Cyphers shouldn't have drawbacks.
- * Cyphers should be temporary. Typically, a power is used once. Abilities or advantages that have a duration last from ten minutes to twenty-four hours (at most).
- * Manifest cyphers can take any form. Just make them appropriate to the genre.

(Cyphers teach GMs to design different kinds of scenarios—ones in which the whole adventure isn't wrecked if a player has something that can solve a single problem (defeat a foe, read a mind, bypass a barrier, or whatever). There should always be more to the adventure than one linchpin encounter, obstacle, foe, or secret.)

(It's all right if players think of cyphers (especially manifest cyphers) as equipment or treasure. You should choose points in the course of the story that are appropriate for awarding subtle cyphers, especially if the PCs aren't at their full capacity.)

Artifacts

In terms of the narrative, artifacts are a lot like cyphers, except that most are not one-use items. Mechanically, they serve a very different purpose. It's assumed that characters are exploring with some cyphers at their disposal. Artifacts, however, are added abilities that make characters broader, deeper, and often more powerful. They aren't assumed—they're extra.

The powers granted by artifacts are more like the abilities gained from a character's type or focus in that they change the way the PC is played overall. The difference between an artifact and a type or focus ability is that almost all artifacts are temporary. They last longer than cyphers do, but because they have a depletion roll, any use could be their last.

Like cyphers, then, artifacts are a way for the GM to play a role in the development of the characters. Although armor, weapons, and the like are fine, special capabilities—such as long-range communication or travel—can really change the way the PCs interact with the world and how they deal with challenges. Some of these abilities enable the actions you want the PCs to take. For example, if you want them to have an underwater adventure, provide them with artifacts (or cyphers) that allow them to breathe underwater.

Also like cyphers, artifacts are simple for the GM to create. The only difference with artifacts is that you give them a depletion roll, using any numbers on 1d6, 1d10, 1d20, or 1d100. If you want the artifact to be used only a few times, give it a depletion roll of 1 in 1d6, 1 or 2 in 1d10, or even 1 or 2 in 1d6. If you want the PCs to use it over and over, a depletion roll of 1 in 1d100 more or less means that they can use it freely without worrying too much.

For examples of artifacts, see the Genres chapter.

(You may wish to forbid the use of XP to reroll artifact depletion rolls. That's pretty reasonable.)

FANTASY ARTIFACTS

If cyphers are the expendable magic that is ever-present in fantasy, artifacts are the more durable magic items that can be used over and over again—swords, armor, tomes of weird magic, cloaks of invisibility, and so on. Unlike cyphers, there is no limit to how many artifacts a character can bear; an entire campaign might stem from an ongoing quest to collect all of the legendary items carried by a famous hero.

EXAMPLE FANTASY ARTIFACTS

The rest of this chapter is examples of artifacts suitable for a fantasy game. The artifacts are divided into two tables—one for minor items (artifacts that don't have particularly flashy or world-affecting abilities) and one for major items (artifacts that do). A GM running a campaign where magic is subtle, weak, or otherwise limited can use the minor items table, and a GM of a campaign where some magic can do powerful or even impossible things can roll on either table.

MINOR FANTASY ARTIFACTS TABLE

01-02	Adamantine rope
03-06	Alchemist bag
07-09	Armored cloth
10-15	Belt of strength
16-18	Bounding boots
19-21	Cat's eye spectacles
22-24	Cloak of elffkind
25-26	Coil of endless rope

27-28	Crown of the mind
34	Crystal ball
35-37	Deflecting shield
38-40	Elfblade
41-43	Enchanted armor
44-49	Exploding arrow
50-55	Gloves of agility
56-58	Gruelmake
59-60	Helm of water breathing
61-66	Mastercraft armor
67-72	Mastercraft weapon
73-75	Mindshield helmet
76-77	Pack of storage
78-79	Poisoner's touch
80-85	Protection amulet
86-87	Shield of two skies
88-92	Skill ring
93	Soulflaying weapon*
94-96	Sovereign key
97-98	Tunneling gauntlets
99	Vorpal sword
00	Whisperer in the ether

MAJOR FANTASY ARTIFACTS TABLE

01-03	Angelic ward*
04	Book of all spells
05	Cloak of Balakar
06-07	Crown of eyes
08	Death's scythe
09-10	Demonflesh
11	Demonic rune blade
12-15	Dragontongue weapon
16-18	Dragontooth soldiers
19-20	Explorer's gloves
21-23	Falcon cloak
24-25	Flying carpet
26-27	Ghostly armor
28-30	Guardian idol
31-33	Hand of glory
34-36	Horn of thunder
37-39	Instant ladder
40-43	Lightening hammer
44-47	Necromantic wand
48-50	Ring of dragon's flight*
51-53	Ring of fall flourishing

54-56	Ring of invisibility
57	Ring of wishes
58-60	Smooth stepping boots
61-62	Soul-stealing knife
63-65	Spellbook of elemental summoning
66	Spellbook of the amber mage*
67-69	Staff of black iron
70-74	Staff of healing
75-77	Staff of the prophet
78-79	Storm shack
80-83	Trap runestone
84-88	Wand of firebolts*
89-93	Wand of spider's webbing
94-97	Witch's broom
98-00	Roll twice on the Minor Fantasy Artifacts table

* Artifact found in the Fantasy Artifacts section of the Cypher System

ADAMANTINE ROPE

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: A 50-foot (15 m) length of black rope

Effect: This length of rope has the flexibility of ordinary rope but a hardness greater than steel. It is impervious to damage (including attempts to cut it) from anything less than the artifact's level.

Depletion: —

ALCHEMIST BAG

Level: 1d6

Form: Embroidered velvet bag

Effect: This bag can contain up to one cypher per artifact level, as long as each is no larger than a typical potion bottle or scroll case. These cyphers do not count against a character's cypher limit.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check each time a cypher is added to the bag)

ARMORED CLOTH

Level: 1d6

Form: Suit of typical clothing (robe, dress, jerkin and breeches, and so on)

Effect: This clothing is soft and flexible, as expected, except when it is struck or crushed with force, at which point it hardens, providing +1 to Armor. It then immediately returns to its normal state (which is in no way encumbering). This clothing cannot be worn with armor of any kind.

Depletion: —

BELT OF STRENGTH

Level: 1d6

Form: Thick leather belt with a metal buckle and rivets

Effect: The belt enhances the strength and endurance of the wearer. This increases the wearer's maximum Might Pool by 5 (or by 7 if the artifact is level 6 or higher). If the wearer removes the belt, any excess Might points above their normal maximum Might Pool are lost; if they wear the belt again, the points do not automatically return (they must be restored with recovery rolls, healing magic, or similar effects).

Depletion: —

BOOK OF ALL SPELLS

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Weighty tome filled with pages of spell runes

Effect: This mysterious spellbook is said to contain knowledge of hundreds of spells—perhaps even all spells. Each set of facing pages includes the magical runes for one spell and a description of the spell and how to use it.

When a character first opens the book, the GM randomly determines what type of spell is shown by rolling on the following table, then rolling on the indicated table in the Cypher System Reference Document:

d6	Cypher Type
1–2	Roll on the Manifest Cypher table
3–5	Roll on the Fantastic Cypher table
6	Roll on the Subtle Cypher table

The bearer can cast the spell on the page as if it were a cypher with a level equal to the book's level. This doesn't remove the spell from the page (it can be cast again and again), but it does require a depletion roll.

As part of another action, the bearer can turn the page to find a new spell, but only forward, never backward. It is said that turning to the last page makes the book vanish and appear somewhere else in the world.

The artifact always remembers the last page it was turned to. Opening the book always presents that page. Attempting to copy, remove, or destroy a page only makes the book turn to a later page on its own.

Depletion: 1 in 1d100 (Check each time the book is used or the bearer turns a page. The chance of depletion increases by 1 each time it is used [1 in 1d100, 2 in 1d100, 3 in 1d100, and so on]. Instead of depleting, the book might turn to a later page, or disappear and reappear somewhere else in the world.)

BOUNDING BOOTS

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Sturdy but flexible boots

Effect: The boots assist the wearer's every step to make jumping and running easier. The boots are an asset for jumping and running (easing one of these skills by two steps if the artifact is level 6 or higher).

Depletion: —

CAT'S EYE SPECTACLES

Level: 1d6

Form: Pair of dark crystalline spectacles in a dull wooden frame

Effect: Outside, the wearer can see at night as if it were daylight. Inside, the wearer can see in pitch darkness up to short range (or to long range if the artifact is level 5 or higher).

Depletion: —

CLOAK OF BALAKAR

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Blue cloak with elaborate designs suggesting blowing wind

Effect: The wearer can calm winds of the artifact's level or lower in a radius of 1 mile (1.5 km). Up to once a day, the wearer can create a destructive windstorm up to that size, lasting one minute; this storm's level is equal to half the artifact's level.

Depletion: 1 in 1d6 (on depletion, cloak disappears and reappears somewhere else in the world)

CLOAK OF ELFKIND

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Thin greyish-green cloak with a cowl and clasp

Effect: When activated (by drawing the hood over the wearer's head), the cloak takes on the colors and textures of everything around the wearer for ten minutes (or one hour if the artifact is level 8 or higher). This eases hiding and sneaking tasks by two steps. While the cloak is activated, the wearer can also see in the dark.

Depletion: 1 in 1d100

CLOAK OF FINERY

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Multilayered cloak of glittering material

Effect: This cloak is woven of beautiful fibers and set with dazzling gems. It automatically fits itself to its wearer in the most flattering way. When activated, it enhances the wearer's appearance, voice, tone, and even their grammar, granting an asset to all interaction tasks for the next minute.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

COIL OF ENDLESS ROPE

Level: 1d6

Form: Coil of rope

Effect: The coil of rope can be let out at a rate of 50 feet (15 m) per round; however, no end to the rope can be found no matter how long the user uncoils it. The rope retains its incredible length until recoiled or until it becomes depleted. If cut, any length beyond the coil's initial 50 feet crumbles into powder after a round or two.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check each use that extends it beyond 50 feet)

CROWN OF EYES

Level: 1d6

Form: Metallic circlet set with several crystal spheres

Effect: It takes one round to activate the crown. When activated, the crystal spheres separate from the crown and fly around the wearer at immediate range for an hour. The wearer can see anything the crystal spheres can see. This allows the wearer to peek around corners without being exposed to danger. This gives the wearer an asset in initiative and all perception tasks.

Depletion: 1 in 1d100

CROWN OF THE MIND

Level: 1d6

Form: Crown, circlet, headband, diadem, or amulet

Effect: The crown augments the mind and thoughts of the wearer. This increases the wearer's maximum Intellect Pool by 5 (or by 7 if the artifact is level 6 or higher). If the wearer removes the crown, any excess Intellect points above their normal maximum Intellect Pool are lost; if they wear the crown again, the points do not automatically return (they must be restored with recovery rolls, healing magic, or similar effects).

Depletion: —

CRYSTAL BALL

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Melon-sized crystalline or glass orb, with or without a support stand

Effect: This allows the user to scry (view) remote locations and creatures. The user must make a difficulty 2 Intellect task to activate the crystal ball, then use an action trying to make it show a person or location they know. The user must succeed at an Intellect task against the level of the target; otherwise, the crystal shows only indistinct or misleading images. The task roll is modified by how familiar the target is to the user, how available they are to be viewed, and how far away they are.

Familiarity	
Only have name or description	Hindered
Target has been visited	Eased
Target is well known to the user	Eased
Availability	

Target is willing	Eased
Target is unwilling	Hindered
Distance	
More than 1 mile	Hindered
More than 10 miles	Hindered
More than 100 miles	Hindered

These modifiers are cumulative, so trying to view a level 4 target who the user knows only by name (+1 step), is unwilling (+1 step), and is 20 miles away (+2 steps) is a difficulty 8 task.

The crystal shows the creature or area for one minute before the image becomes muddled and the artifact must be activated again.

In addition to the normal options for using Effort, the user can choose to apply a level of Effort to open two-way communication with the viewed area. All creatures in the area can sense the user's presence and hear their voice, and the creatures can speak to and be heard by the user.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

An unwilling creature's defenses against magic and Intellect attacks should hinder scrying attempts just as they would against a directly harmful mental spell.

DEATH'S SCYTHE

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Double-handed scythe

Effect: This scythe functions as a heavy weapon. In addition, it instantly kills level 1 or level 2 creatures it hits. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, the user can choose to use a level of Effort to affect a higher-level target; each level of Effort applied increases the level of creature that can be instantly killed by the scythe. Thus, to instantly kill a level 5 target (three levels above the normal limit), the wielder must apply three levels of Effort.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check per killing effect; upon depletion, a manifestation of Death appears to reclaim its blade)

Death manifestation: level 7

DEMONFLESH

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Ball of black leather with vein-like red streaks

Effect: When activated, the ball liquefies and coats the body of the user for one hour, appearing to be a form-fitting leather suit veined with pathways of dully glowing blood. As an action, the wearer can become invisible. While invisible, they are specialized in stealth and Speed defense tasks. This effect ends if they do something to reveal their presence or position—attacking, casting a spell, using an ability, moving a large object, and so

on. If this occurs, they can regain the remaining invisibility effect by taking an action to focus on hiding their position. The wearer can inflict 3 points of damage with a touch by releasing a dark crackle of demonic power. This attack ignores most Armor, but Armor made to ward against evil or demonic attacks should work against it.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

To randomly determine what kind of dragontongue weapon is found, see Chapter 4: Medieval Fantasy Equipment, page 34.

DEMONIC RUNE BLADE

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Sword inscribed with demonic runes

Effect: This longsword functions as a medium weapon, but it is actually a powerful demon transformed into the shape of a sword. The demon cannot speak directly to the wielder, but it can make its desires known by emitting bass rumbles and dirgelike melodies, and by pulling in the direction of its desire. The sword eases all attacks made with it by one step, and it inflicts 4 additional points of damage (for a total of 8 points).

If the wielder kills a creature with the sword, the sword eats the creature's spirit and transfers some of its energy to the wielder, adding 5 points to their Might Pool and increasing their Might Edge by 1. This lasts for an hour and allows the wielder to exceed their normal Might Pool and Might Edge stats.

If the wielder misses with an attack, the blade sometimes hits an ally of the wielder instead (this always happens on an attack roll of 1).

Depletion: 1 in 1d10 (check each time a killed creature's life force is absorbed; if depleted, the sword's magical abilities can be recharged if it kills an "innocent" creature)

DRAGONTONGUE WEAPON

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Weapon that roars with red flame when activated, trailing a stream of black smoke

Effect: This weapon functions as a normal weapon of its type. If the wielder uses it to attack a foe, upon a successful hit, the wielder decides whether to activate the flame. Upon activation, the weapon lashes the target with fire, inflicting additional points of damage equal to the artifact level. The effect lasts for one minute after each activation.

Depletion: 1 in 1d100

DRAGONTOOTH SOLDIERS

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Burlap bag containing a handful of large reptilian teeth

Effect: If a tooth is drawn from the bag and cast upon the earth, a dragontooth warrior appears, ready to fight for the user for up to ten minutes before going their own way. The user can draw several teeth at once from the bag, but each tooth drawn requires a separate depletion roll.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

Dragontooth warrior: level equal to the artifact level, Speed defense as artifact level + 1 due to shield; Armor 1; spear attack (melee or short range) inflicts damage and impedes movement of victim to immediate range for one round

ELFBLADE

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Medium sword

Effect: This sword can be used as a normal medium sword that deals 2 additional points of damage (for a total of 6 points). The short sword can cut through any material of its level or lower with ease, owing to its exceptional sharpness. The blade sheds a blue light as bright as a candle to warn when goblins, orcs, trolls, or similar creatures are within 300 feet (90 m). Depletion: —

ENCHANTED ARMOR L

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Full suit of light, medium, or heavy armor

Effect: This armor is carefully crafted and reinforced with magic to be stronger and more protective than typical armor. It is armor according to its type (light, medium, or heavy), but it grants an additional +1 Armor (or +2 if the artifact is level 7 or higher) beyond what it would normally provide. For example, chainmail is medium armor (2 Armor), so enchanted chainmail provides a total of 3 Armor (for artifact level 6 or lower) or 4 Armor (for artifact level 7 or higher).

The additional Armor provided by the magic also applies to damage that often isn't reduced by typical armor, such as heat or cold damage (but not Intellect damage).

Depletion: —

EXPLODING ARROW

Level: 1d6

Form: Arrow with runes carved on the shaft and head

Effect: The arrow explodes when it strikes something, inflicting its level in damage to all within immediate range. Roll d100 to determine the type of damage.

01-20	Acid
21-40	Electricity
41-60	Cold
61-90	Fire
91-00	Necromantic (harms only flesh)

Depletion: Automatic

One advantage of an exploding arrow over a detonation cypher is that the arrow doesn't count toward your cypher limit.

An exploding arrow can instead be a crossbow bolt, sling stone, or other thrown weapon or projectile.

EXPLORER'S GLOVES

Level: 1d6

Form: Thick but flexible-fingered leather gloves

Effect: The wearer can cling to or climb any surface for up to one hour. Even level 10 climbing tasks become routine while the gloves are activated, but taking any other action while climbing requires a new activation.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

FALCON CLOAK

Level: 1d6

Form: Cloak made of feathers

Effect: For ten hours, the wearer becomes a falcon whose level is equal to the artifact level. The falcon can fly a long distance each round, or up to 60 miles (97 km) per hour when traveling overland.

Depletion: 1 in 1d100

Most magic items that turn a character into a different creature make it difficult to use any of the character's special abilities (other than skills) in that form.

FLYING CARPET

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Silken rug with repeating designs bordered with a pattern that suggests scudding clouds

Effect: The carpet flies a long distance each round, carrying up to five passengers. It flies for up to ten hours per activation. When traveling overland, the artifact can achieve a flying speed of 60 miles (97 km) per hour.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

GHOSTLY ARMOR

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Full suit of light, medium, or heavy armor

Effect: This armor is carefully crafted and reinforced with magic to be stronger and more protective than typical armor. It is armor according to its type (light, medium, or heavy), but it grants an additional +1 Armor beyond what it would normally provide. For example, chainmail is medium armor (2 Armor), so ghostly chainmail provides 3 Armor.

When activated, the armor randomly makes the wearer ghostly and immaterial for ten minutes (or for one hour if the artifact is level 9 or higher), which hinders attacks on the wearer by two steps without hindering any of the character's abilities. Special multidimensional weapons or attacks (such as abilities meant to harm ghosts) ignore this defense.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10 (for the ghostly defense ability, but after depletion, the suit still functions as normal armor and provides its full Armor value)

To randomly determine what kind of ghostly armor is found, see Chapter 4: Medieval Fantasy Equipment, page 34.

GLOVES OF AGILITY

Level: 1d6

Form: Supple leather or cloth gloves

Effect: The gloves enhance the dexterity and reflexes of the wearer. This increases the wearer's maximum Speed Pool by 5 (or by 7 if the artifact is level 6 or higher). If the wearer removes the gloves, any excess Speed

points above their normal maximum Speed Pool are lost; if they wear the gloves again, the points do not automatically return (they must be restored with recovery rolls, healing magic, or similar effects).

Depletion: —

GRUELMAKER

Level: 1d6

Form: Clay bowl stamped with symbols of fish and birds

Effect: The bowl fills itself to the brim with a bland-tasting tan porridge that provides enough nutrition for one person for one day (or two people if the artifact is level 5 or higher).

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

GUARDIAN IDOL

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Demonic idol on top of a thin metal leg that is 1 foot (30 cm) tall

Effect: It takes two rounds to balance this artifact on its metal leg, and then it requires an action to activate. When activated, the idol stares at the activating character and nearby creatures for five rounds, memorizing their faces and shapes. After that, if anything the idol doesn't recognize (and is larger than a mouse) comes within long range, it spits a small ball of fire at the target. The fire inflicts damage equal to the artifact level. The idol can attack up to ten times per round, but it never attacks the same target more than once per round. It remains on watch for twenty-four hours or until it has made one hundred attacks, whichever comes first.

Depletion: Automatic

HAND OF GLORY

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Dried humanoid hand with candle-tip fingers

Effect: A hand of glory has several potential uses, including the following. In all cases, the candles making up the hand must be lit and burning to produce an effect. Insensibility: A target within short range is held motionless and unable to take actions as long as the lit hand remains within range (or until the target is attacked or otherwise snapped out of the trance). Invisibility: User is invisible for up to one minute while holding the hand. While invisible, the user is specialized in stealth and Speed defense tasks. Thief's Passage: A locked or barred door or a container whose level is less than or equal to the hand's level becomes unlocked when touched by the hand.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

HELM OF WATER BREATHING

Level: 1d6

Form: Green metal helm with a scaly or fishy motif Effect: The wearer's head is enveloped in a tight bubble of air that constantly renews itself, allowing them to breathe underwater indefinitely, speak normally, and so on.

Depletion: 1–2 in 1d100 (check each day)

HORN OF THUNDER

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Large signal horn banded with metal and carved with runes

Effect: This massive instrument can barely be held or carried by a single person. When activated, it emits a 50-foot (15 m) wide cone of pure sonic force out to long range. Any creature in that area is knocked prone and stunned for one round, losing its action. Unfixed items the size of a human or smaller are toppled and/or moved at least 5 feet (1.5 m). Larger objects might also be toppled.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

INSTANT LADDER

Level: 1d6

Form: Small lightweight metal rod with gem buttons

Effect: When activated, the rod extends and produces rungs so that it can be used as a ladder up to 28 feet (9 m) long. The ladder can be transformed back into its rod form from either end.

Depletion: 1 in 1d100

A creature unfamiliar with the buttons on an instant ladder needs to spend several rounds figuring out the proper sequence to expand or collapse it.

LIGHTNING HAMMER

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Massive silver hammer that crackles with electricity

Effect: This hammer functions as a normal heavy weapon. However, if the wielder uses an action to activate it, the weapon radiates electricity for one round. If used to attack on the next round, the hammer inflicts an additional 10 points of electricity damage. The user can choose to strike the ground instead, sending shockwaves of electricity outward that deal 5 points of damage to everyone within short range.

Depletion: 1 in 1d6 (still usable as a normal heavy weapon after depletion)

MASTERCRAFT ARMOR

Level: 1d6

Form: Armor of exceptional quality

Effect: This armor grants its wearer an asset for Speed defense rolls.

Depletion: —

MASTERCRAFT WEAPON

Level: 1d6

Form: Weapon of exceptional quality

Effect: This weapon grants its wielder an asset for attack rolls made with it.

Depletion: —

Depending on the game world, mastercraft armor and weapons might be magical, mundanely crafted with exceptional quality, or both. To randomly determine what kind of mastercraft armor or weapon is found, see Chapter 4: Medieval Fantasy Equipment, page 34.

MINDSHIELD HELMET

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Lightweight cloth, leather, or metal helmet

Effect: The wearer gains 3 Armor that protects against Intellect damage only. Further, attempts to affect the wearer's mind are hindered (or hindered by two steps if the artifact is level 7 or higher).

Depletion: —

NECROMANTIC WAND

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Bone wand carved with runes

Effect: This wand emits a faint short-range beam of sickly violet light that affects only organic creatures and materials. Living targets hit by the beam move one step down the damage track. Nonliving organic targets are likely destroyed.

This device is a rapid-fire weapon and thus can be used with the Spray or Arc Spray abilities that some characters have, but each "round of ammo" used or each additional target selected requires an additional depletion roll.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

PACK OF STORAGE

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Leather backpack or haversack with multiple pockets

Effect: This pack's mouth can be loosened to open as wide as 6 feet (2 m) in diameter. It is larger on the inside than on the outside, and can carry up to 500 pounds (226 kg) or 10 cubic feet (.3 cubic m). The pack weighs about one-tenth as much as it is holding.

Depletion: 1 in 1d100 (check each time something is added to the pack; on depletion, all objects are expelled from the pack)

POISONER'S TOUCH

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Very thin transparent glove with faint markings

Effect: When the wearer activates the glove (which might require speaking a command word or tracing a specific pattern on its surface), it secretes a small amount of poison. The next creature the wearer touches with the glove takes Speed damage equal to the artifact level (ignores Armor) and must make a new Might defense roll each round or suffer the damage again until either they succeed at the defense roll or five rounds pass, whichever comes first.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

PROTECTION AMULET

Level: 1d6

Form: Stylized amulet worn on a chain

Effect: The amulet reduces one type of damage by an amount equal to the artifact level. Roll a d20 to determine the kind of damage the amulet protects against.

5-8	Cold
9-12	Electricity
13-16	Fire
17-20	Poison

Depletion: 1 in 1d6 (check each time the amulet reduces damage)

RING OF FALL FLOURISHING

Level: 1d6

Form: Gold band inscribed with feather wreath

Effect: The wearer of the ring can fall any distance safely, landing easily and upright.

Depletion: 1 in 1d100

RING OF INVISIBILITY

Level: 1d6

Form: Gold band inscribed with characters that are revealed only if ring is heated

Effect: The wearer of the ring becomes invisible for one minute. While invisible, the wearer is specialized in stealth and Speed defense tasks. The effect ends if they attack or spend points from a Pool for any reason.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

RING OF WISHES

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Plain gold band

Effect: The user makes a wish, and it is granted, within limits. The level of the effect granted is no greater than the level of the artifact, as determined by the GM, who can modify the effect accordingly. (The larger the wish, the more likely the GM will limit its effect.)

Depletion: 1–3 in 1d6

SHIELD OF TWO SKIES

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Small hexagonal amulet

Effect: Upon activation, the amulet creates a faint glow around the wearer that provides +2 to Armor against heat and cold (or +3 for artifact level 6 and higher). The effect lasts for ten minutes.

Depletion: 1 in 1d100

SKILL RING

Level: 1d6

Form: Ring carved with sigils appropriate to its granted skill

Effect: This ring grants its wearer knowledge of a specific skill, such as climbing, jumping, history, or persuasion. This grants the wearer training in that skill (or in two skills if the artifact is level 5 or higher).

Depletion: —

SMOOTH-STEPPING BOOTS

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Pair of boots

Effect: When the boots are activated, for the next hour the wearer can move across rough or difficult terrain at normal speed, walk up walls, and even walk across liquids. In areas of low or no gravity, the wearer can walk along hard surfaces (even vertically or upside down) as if under normal gravity.

Depletion: 1 in 1d100

SOUL-STEALING KNIFE

Level: 1d6

Form: Night-black blade in which distant stars are sometimes visible

Effect: This knife functions as a normal light weapon. However, if the wielder wishes, on a successful attack, it inflicts additional damage (ignores Armor) equal to the artifact's level. If damage from the dagger reduces a target to 0 health, the target's soul is drawn into the blade. The soul remains trapped there for up to three days, after which time it is consumed. (Alternatively, the wielder can release the soul to whatever its fate would otherwise be.)

As a separate activation, the wielder can ask three questions of a creature whose soul is trapped in the blade and not yet consumed. After answering the third question, the soul is consumed.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check each activation)

SOVEREIGN KEY

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Slender golden key

Effect: When touched to a lock or the surface of a sealed object (such as a chest, envelope, or urn), the key briefly glows and attempts to open the target. Sealed objects fall open like peeled fruits if their level is equal to or less than the artifact level, and locks open easily if their level is equal to or less than the artifact level.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

SPELLBOOK OF ELEMENTAL SUMMONING

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Weighty tome filled with pages of spell runes

Effect: When the user incants from the spellbook and succeeds at a level 3 Intellect task, they can summon an elemental of one specific kind described in the book (earth, fire, thorn, or some other type). The elemental appears and does the summoner's bidding for up to one hour, unless it somehow breaks the geas created by the book.

Depletion: 1–3 in 1d20

STAFF OF BLACK IRON

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Staff of black iron set with an eye-shaped crystal headpiece

Effect: The wielder can use an action to gain one of the following effects.

Influence: The wielder makes a mental attack on a creature within immediate range by providing a suggestion. An affected target follows any suggestion during its next turn that doesn't cause direct harm to itself or its allies.

Lightning: The wielder discharges a bolt of lightning that attacks all targets along a straight line out to long range, inflicting damage equal to the artifact level.

Shield: For one hour, the wielder gains the protective effect of using a normal shield (an asset on their Speed defense rolls). This effect is invisible and doesn't require them to hold a shield; merely touching the staff is sufficient.

The staff can have more than one effect ongoing at a time (such as using the shield ability and blasting someone with lightning), but each requires a separate activation and depletion roll.

Depletion: 1 in 1d100

STAFF OF HEALING

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Wooden staff capped with a golden icon

Effect: The staff emits a short-range beam of silvery light that affects only living creatures. A living creature hit by the beam moves up one step on the damage track. A target that is not down on the damage track can immediately make a free recovery roll (or, for NPCs, regain a number of points of health equal to three times their level).

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

STAFF OF THE PROPHET

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Short wooden staff

Effect: The staff has three abilities, each of which requires an action to activate.

Sea Passage. Creates a dry route through a body of water. The route is approximately 20 feet (6 m) wide, up to 1,000 feet (300 m) deep, and as long as the body of water is wide. The path remains open for up to four hours, or the wielder can collapse it as an action.

Snake Form. Staff transforms into a venomous snake whose level is equal to the artifact level. The snake has a bite attack that inflicts 6 points of damage, plus 3 additional points of Speed damage (ignores Armor) for three rounds on a failed Might defense roll. The snake obeys the wielder's verbal commands, but it can't do anything a regular snake couldn't do.

Water From Stone. Produces approximately 10 gallons (38 liters) of pure water within immediate range, as if from a natural spring in the ground.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

STORM SHACK

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Miniature model of a simple wooden shack

Effect: Activating the artifact transforms it over the next few rounds into a simple wooden shack that is 10 feet by 10 feet (3 m by 3 m) with a thin door. Everything inside the area of the full-size shack is protected from

most forms of inclement weather for one hour (or ten hours for artifact level 6 and higher). Leaving or entering the shack before the duration is up makes it harmlessly collapse upon itself unless the character succeeds on a Speed roll against the artifact's level. If collapsed early or the duration runs out, the shack collapses into sticks, dust, and the miniature model, which can be taken and reused.

Depletion: 1 in 1d100

TRAP RUNESTONE

Level: 1d6

Form: Pouch with chalk, sealing wax, and an engraved runestone

Effect: A simple cypher (such as a potion or scroll) can be modified with this set of implements to turn it into a trap. First, the cypher is attached to a surface with the sealing wax, then the user must make a difficulty 4 Intellect task to draw the runestone symbols around the edge of the cypher with the chalk and place the runestone in the correct position. When the trap is triggered, the cypher is activated, so people often use straightforward cyphers such as an explosive spell scroll, a poisonous potion, and so on.

The trigger can react to a specified movement within 3 feet (1 m)—a door opening, a creature or object moving past the runestone, and so on. The higher the level of the artifact, the more sophisticated the trigger. For example, a level 4 artifact's trigger might be based on a creature's size or weight, a level 5 artifact can trigger based on a specific type of creature, and a level 6 artifact can trigger based on recognizing an individual creature.

Depletion: Automatic

TUNNELING GAUNTLETS

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Oversized pair of metallic gauntlets with broad nails

Effect: When activated, for one hour the gauntlets let the wearer burrow up to an immediate distance each round. They can burrow through most soils and even some stone, but only through material whose level is lower than the artifact level. Burrowing leaves behind a tunnel with a diameter of 5 feet (1.5 m) that remains stable for several hours. After that, the tunnel is subject to collapse.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

VORPAL SWORD

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Long sword that sometimes whispers and snickers aloud

Effect: The vorpal sword cuts through any material of a level lower than its own. It is a medium weapon that ignores Armor of a level lower than its own. On a natural attack roll of 19 or 20, the suggested minor or major effect is decapitation if the artifact is higher level than the foe (use this only if the foe has a head; otherwise, choose a different effect).

Depletion: 1–2 in 1d100 (check each decapitation and specific attempt to cut through solid material)

WAND OF SPIDER'S WEBBING

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: White oak wand

Effect: This wand produces a long-range stream of grey spider's webbing that entangles a target and holds it stuck to nearby surfaces. Entangled victims can't move or take actions that require movement. Targets whose

level is higher than the wand's level can usually break free within one or two rounds. The entangling web is highly flammable, and if ignited it burns away over the course of one round, but the intense heat inflicts damage equal to the artifact level on whatever was caught within it.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

WHISPERER IN THE ETHER

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Small crystal

Effect: The bearer of this crystal can telepathically communicate with an immortal being whose location is unknown (probably another dimension or a godly or infernal realm). The user can converse with the intelligence on an ongoing basis, but in general, the whisperer can share a useful bit of information, insight, or advice about once every day. Sometimes, this translates into an asset on one of the user's actions. For example, the intelligence can suggest the right phrase to make friends with a shopkeeper to get a good deal, the right tools to use while trying to break open a door, or the right place to put a shield to deflect an incoming attack. Sometimes the information is more broad, such as the right road to take to reach the next town or why a group of monsters is attacking the caravan the bearer is guarding.

The whisperer's willingness and ability to converse varies considerably. Sometimes it is quite chatty and offers advice. Other times, it must be convinced, cajoled, or tricked into giving information. And sometimes, it is entirely absent for reasons it will not explain. The whisperer's knowledge base is broad but not omniscient. It cannot see the future, but it can often predict outcomes based on logic.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check each day)

WITCH'S BROOM

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A 6-foot (2 m) long wooden broom

Effect: As a vehicle, the broom can be ridden a long distance each round. On extended trips, it can move up to 100 miles (160 km) per hour.

The bearer can call upon the broom to grant them a powerful hallucinogenic state that lasts for four hours, during which time all tasks are hindered. After the hallucinations end, the bearer's Intellect tasks are eased for the next ten minutes.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Skills and Other Abilities

Sometimes, the rules speak directly to character creativity. For example, players can make up their own skills. It's possible to have a skill called "tightrope walking" that grants a character a better chance to walk across a tightrope, and another skill called "balance" that gives a character a better chance to walk across a tightrope and perform other balance actions as well. This might seem unequal at first, but the point is to let players create precisely the characters they want. Should you let a character create a skill called "doing things" that makes them better at everything? Of course not. The GM is the final arbiter not only of logic but also of the spirit of the rules, and having one or two single skills that cover every contingency is clearly not in the spirit.

It's important that players play the character they want. This concept is supported not only with the open-ended skill system but also with the ability to get an [experience point advance](#) to tailor a character further. Likewise, the GM should be open to allowing a player to make small modifications to refine their character. In many cases, particularly ones that don't involve stat Pools, Armor, damage inflicted, or the costs of Effort or special abilities, the answer from the GM should probably be "Sure, why not?" If a PC ends up being really good at a

particular skill—better than they “should” be—what’s the harm? If Dave can swim incredibly well, how does that hurt the game in terms of the play experience or the story that develops? It doesn’t. If Helen can pick practically any mundane lock she finds, why is that a bad thing? In fact, it’s probably good for the game—there’s likely something interesting on the other sides of those doors.

In a way, this is no different than adjudicating a not-so-straightforward solution to a challenge. Sometimes you have to say “No, that’s not possible.” But sometimes, if it makes sense, open yourself up to the possibility.

NPCs and Death

As explained in the [Rules of the Game chapter](#), NPCs have a health score rather than three stat Pools. When an NPC reaches 0 health, they are down. Whether that means dead, unconscious, or incapacitated depends on the circumstances as dictated by you and the players. Much of this can be based on logic. If the NPC is cut in half with a giant axe, they’re probably dead. If they’re mentally assaulted with a telepathic attack, they might be insane instead. If they’re hit over the head with a club, well, that’s your call.

It depends on the intentions of those who are fighting the NPC, too. PCs who want to knock out a foe rather than kill them can simply state that as their intention and describe their actions differently—using the flat of the blade, so to speak.

Creatures

Whenever possible, creatures should be handled like other NPCs. They don’t follow the same rules as the player characters. If anything, they should have greater latitude in doing things that don’t fit the normal mold. A many-armed beast should be able to attack multiple foes. A charging rhino-like animal ought to be able to move a considerable distance and attack as part of a single action.

Consider creature size very carefully. For those that are quick and hard to hit, hinder attacks against them. Large, strong creatures should be easier to hit, so ease attacks against them. However, you should freely give the [stagger](#) ability to anything twice as large as a human. This means that if the creature strikes a foe, the target must make an immediate Might defense roll or lose its next turn.

A creature’s level is a general indicator of its toughness, combining aspects of power, defense, intelligence, speed, and more into one rating. In theory, a small creature with amazing powers or extremely deadly venom could be high level, and a huge beast that isn’t very bright and isn’t much of a fighter could be low level. But these examples go against type. Generally, smaller creatures have less health and are less terrifying in combat than larger ones.

The Cypher System has no system for building creatures. There is no rule that says a creature with a certain ability should be a given level, and there is no rule dictating how many abilities a creature of a given level should have. But keep the spirit of the system in mind. Lower-level creatures are less dangerous. A level 1 creature could be poisonous, but its venom should inflict a few points of damage at most. The venom of a level 6 creature, however, might knock a PC down a step on the damage track or put them into a coma if they fail a Might defense roll. A low-level creature might be able to fly, phase through objects, or teleport because these abilities make it more interesting but not necessarily more dangerous. The value of such abilities depends on the creature that uses them. In other words, a phasing rodent is not overly dangerous, but a phasing battle juggernaut is terrifying. Basic elements such as health, damage, and offensive or defensive powers (such as poison, paralysis, disintegration, immunity to attacks, and so on) need to be tied directly to level—higher-level creatures get better abilities and more of them.

Balancing Encounters

In the Cypher System, there is no concept of a “balanced encounter.” There is no system for matching creatures of a particular level or tasks of a particular difficulty to characters of a particular tier. To some people, that might seem like a bad thing. But matching character builds to exacting challenges is not part of

this game. It's about story. So whatever you want to happen next in the story is a fine encounter as long as it's fun. You're not denying the characters XP if you make things too easy or too difficult, because that's not how XP are earned. If things are too difficult for the PCs, they'll have to flee, come up with a new strategy, or try something else entirely. The only thing you have to do to maintain "balance" is set difficulty within that encounter accurately and consistently.

In a game like the Cypher System, if everyone's having fun, the game is balanced. Two things will unbalance the game in this context.

One or more PCs are far more interesting than the others. Note that it says "more interesting," not "more powerful." If my character can do all kinds of cool things but can't destroy robots as efficiently as yours does, I still might have a whole lot of fun.

The challenges the PCs face are routinely too easy or too difficult.

The first issue should be handled by the character creation rules. If there's a problem, it might be that poor choices were made or a player isn't taking full advantage of their options. If someone really doesn't enjoy playing their character, allow them to alter the PC or—perhaps better—create a new one.

The second issue is trickier. As previously stated, there is no formula that states that N number of level X NPCs are a good match for tier Y characters. However, when the game has four or five beginning characters, the following guidelines are generally true.

Level 1 opponents will be nothing but a nuisance, even in sizable numbers (twelve to sixteen).

Level 2 opponents will not be a challenge unless in numbers of twelve or more.

Level 3 opponents will be an interesting challenge in numbers of four to eight.

Level 4 opponents will be an interesting challenge in numbers of two or three.

A single level 5 opponent might be an interesting challenge.

A single level 6 opponent will be a serious challenge.

A single level 7 or 8 opponent will likely win in a fight.

A single level 9 or 10 opponent will win in a fight without breaking a sweat.

But it depends on the situation at hand. If the PCs are already worn down from prior encounters, or if they have the right cyphers, any of the expectations listed above can change. That's why there is no system for balancing encounters. Just keep in mind that beginning characters are pretty hardy and probably have some interesting resources, so you aren't likely to wipe out the group by accident. Character death is unlikely unless the PCs have already been through a number of other encounters and are worn down.

CYPHER SHORTS

Cypher Shorts are what we call quick and easy adventures for use with the Cypher System. The idea here is an adventure with very quick character creation and minimal GM prep, designed for a one-shot game that can be finished in a single session of three to four hours. If a typical campaign is an ongoing television series, think of a Cypher Short as a movie.

Cypher Shorts is a supplement for the Cypher System. You need the Cypher System Rulebook to play.

There are some key concepts to a Cypher Short that you'll want to keep in mind if you're playing, running, or creating one for yourself. They include:

Very simple characters that are immediately involved in the situation. No long expository lead-ins, no "meet in a tavern" scenes.

Characters have clear objectives, and there's no thought to character advancement. This is a one-shot game, and we aren't concerned about what came before or what comes after.

There is less of a plot than there is a situation. Plot implies a linear direction: "This happens, then this, then this." Cypher Shorts are meant to be framed more like: "You're involved in this situation, so what do you do?"

Just as players should use improvisation to react to and deal with situations they didn't know were coming, the GM should be ready to do the same.

CHARACTER CREATION

Cypher Shorts use an abbreviated character creation system, even simpler than the standard Cypher System. This is to help players move quickly, without spending a lot of time deciding between this focus and that one.

The following character creation guidelines are very broad, designed to work with any genre or situation. In a specific Cypher Short, it's likely that only the type choices will be detailed, using the information here as a starting point. Descriptors and foci are general enough that they'll work with almost any scenario. Sometimes, though, a Cypher Short might require adjustments to suit the situation.

Just like in the standard system, characters end up with a sentence to describe themselves: "I am a [blank] [blank] who [blanks]." All players start with a score of 9 in their stat Pools, with 6 points to divide among them as they wish. They have an Edge of 1 in a stat of their choosing. Recovery rolls are $1d6 + 1$, and characters have an Effort of 1. (Otherwise, don't worry about tier.)

All characters start with 1 XP.

DESCRIPTORS

A descriptor quickly and easily distinguishes the character from the others. Ideally, no two players have the same descriptor.

Tough: Add +3 to Might Pool. You are trained in Might defense rolls.

Quick: Add +3 to Speed Pool. You are trained in Speed defense rolls.

Smart: Add +3 to Intellect Pool. You are trained in Intellect defense rolls.

Skilled: Add +1 to Intellect Pool and choose three skills in which you are trained. These skills cannot be related to combat or interaction.

Charming: Add +2 to Intellect Pool. You are trained in persuasion and deception.

TYPES

This is the role the character will have in the story. Types will likely change from genre to genre, particularly the type names. So in this section, we'll talk about them in terms of the general role the character will have in the story, not what players will write on their character sheet (although a few example suggestions are provided).

Performing Physical Actions

This character might be called a Warrior, a Soldier, a Jock, or a Construction Worker (just to name a few), depending on the situation. Choose two of the following abilities:

- Use any weapon without penalty
- Wear armor without penalty
- Stun an enemy as part of your attack, forcing them to lose their next action (costs 1 Might point)
- Trained in two of the following: climbing, jumping, running, swimming • Add +2 to recovery rolls

Sneaking

This character might be called a Thief, a Scout, a Street Rat, or a Slacker (just to name a few), depending on the situation. Choose two of the following abilities:

- Trained in stealth and disguise
- Trained in perception and deception
- Trained in lockpicking and disabling alarms, traps, and other security devices
- Add +2 to recovery rolls

Searching And Discovering

This character might be called an Explorer, a Detective, a Scientist, or a Middle Manager (just to name a few), depending on the situation. Choose two of the following abilities:

- Trained in perception and Intellect defense rolls
- Trained in Might and Speed defense rolls
- Trained in two of the following: climbing, jumping, running, swimming
- Trained in knowledge-based skills (history, biology, geography, and so on) • Add +2 to recovery rolls

Talking

This character might be called a Diplomat, a Priest, a Con Artist, or a Salesperson (just to name a few), depending on the situation. Choose two of the following abilities:

- Trained in perception and deception
- Trained in intimidation and interaction
- Distract someone, preventing them from acting for as long as you focus on them (costs 1 Intellect point)
- Add +2 to recovery rolls

Wielding Supernatural Powers

This type isn't suited to all scenarios, obviously—it depends on the genre. This character might be called a Psychic, a Wizard, a Superhero, or a Mutant (just to name a few), depending on the situation. The player and GM will have to briefly work out the specifics together. Choose two of the following abilities:

- Possess one offensive power (mental attacks, ray blasts, starting things on fire, and so on) that affects foes up to long range and either deals up to 4 points of damage or causes them to lose their next action. Costs 3 stat points (probably Intellect).
- Possess one defensive power (force field, metal skin, super speed, and so on) that either grants you +3 Armor or eases defensive tasks.
- Possess one miscellaneous power (moving things with your mind, flight, creating a duplicate of yourself, and so on). Costs 3 stat points (probably Intellect). You'll have to come up with some reasonable parameters. You can choose this option twice.
- Have two power shifts.
- Have another power shift.

FOCUS

A focus determines the actions a character might often take in the story.

Fights: You're a fighter. All of your attacks are eased, and you add +1 to your damage.

Plans: You think things through. You are trained in defense rolls, and you can choose two other noncombat skills in which you are trained.

Helps: You help other characters. You can use an action to ease everyone else's action if they're within short range (costs 2 Intellect points). This can represent comforting, giving advice, or physically enabling them, depending on the character and the situation. You're trained in first aid.

Provides Information: You're very knowledgeable. You are trained in three knowledge-based skills (history, biology, geography, and so on). You can ask the GM a question that has a pretty simple answer and get that answer (costs 3 Intellect points).

Provides Comedy Relief: You're funny. You can use an action to allow everyone to recover 2 points to their Pools in between each recovery action you take. You're also trained in Speed defense and stealth.

Works With Tools (or Machines): You're trained in the use of two different skills involving tools and machines. You can modify an existing machine or device to do something other than its original function (costs 2 Intellect points).

Uses Powers: This focus won't fit every genre. You can choose one of the abilities listed under the Wielding Supernatural Powers type. (Note: if that is already your type, you can't select an ability you've already chosen, with the exception of miscellaneous powers.)

THE SCENARIO

When thinking about a Cypher Short scenario, think in terms of what you would expect to see in a movie. And not just any movie, but one where the action mostly takes place in one (probably large, hopefully interesting and dynamic) location

SETUP

This section of a Cypher Short is a brief overview of the setting and the premise of the situation. The basic statement of the genre and setting should be given to the players before they make characters.

POSSIBLE ENCOUNTERS

This section is a list of possible encounters that might happen in the scenario, depending on what the characters do, where they go, and so on. Cypher Shorts don't rely on a keyed map or a detailed outline of a plot. Think of these as the possible scenes of your movie. More than likely, the group will have time for only five or six encounters in one session, so feel free to pick and choose the ones that best fit the way the game seems to be going.

Each encounter is presented with a trigger, meaning that it is triggered by some action of the characters.

Each encounter comes with the relevant game stats: the challenges for common tasks the PCs might attempt, the levels of NPCs involved, and other information not related to game stats, such as the answers to the questions the PCs might ask, the personality of any relevant NPC, and so on.

GM INTRUSIONS

Each Cypher Short comes with a brief list of GM intrusion suggestions that are specific to that scenario.

Remember that GM intrusions are the only way for players to earn XP in the scenario, so they're really important. At the same time, they will probably spend any XP they get. So there might be more calls for rerolls using XP in a Cypher Short adventure than you're used to in a standard Cypher System game.

THE CONCLUSION

Ideally, as with a movie, the end of a Cypher Short session comes to a nice story conclusion (though not every ending needs to be a happy one). Hopefully, the main situation has been resolved one way or another, and the implications of what probably happens next for the characters and the setting are self-evident. But with a Cypher Short, we don't worry too much about what happens next. It's a one-shot scenario.

TRAPPED IN FLAMES

The Premise: The characters work in a tall skyscraper. Suddenly, there's an explosion, and the fire alarms start ringing!

CHARACTER CREATION

The characters should be relatively mundane people. No supernatural powers. Cypher Short character suggestions include:

Office Worker: This is probably someone with the Sneaking type. The player should figure out the character's name, a very short personality brief, what company they work for, and what their job is: data entry, customer service, accounts manager, and so on.

Middle Manager: This is probably someone with the Searching and Discovering type. The player should figure out the character's name, a very short personality brief, and what company they work for.

Salesperson: The Talking type would work well for this character. The player should figure out the character's name, a very short personality brief, and what company they work for.

Custodial Worker: This could be a Performing Physical Actions character, or possibly a Searching and Discovering character. The player should figure out the character's name and a very short personality brief. They have keys to most of the doors of the building and know the layout well. They might also have something like a mop and wheeled bucket, or a cart with various cleaning supplies, if the player wishes.

Security Guard: This is probably someone with the Performing Physical Actions type. The player should figure out the character's name and a very short personality brief. They have a weapon (a nightstick, a taser, or perhaps a handgun), and keys to most of the doors in the building. They know the layout well.

No one has any special equipment other than the typical: a cell phone, car keys, a half-drunk coffee, and maybe a briefcase with papers and pens or a tablet computer.

All random people in the building are level 2 or 3 NPCs.

THE SETUP

The characters all work in a tall skyscraper that houses many different businesses in a large city. They don't necessarily work together or even know each other. But they're all in a large lobby on the twenty-fifth floor, in front of a bank of four elevators, waiting for one to arrive. (A custodial worker probably is cleaning nearby rather than waiting for the elevator.) Suddenly, they hear an explosion, and the floor shudders and shakes. The fire alarms start ringing, and the power goes out, followed quickly by emergency lighting switching on, giving the area dim light.

Obviously, the goal for the characters here is to get to safety. A safety-conscious person (like a security guard) would know that the safest thing to do is stay put, at least until the location of the fire is known (going down into smoke and flames is how many people die in high-rise fires).

What the PCs don't know (yet) is that a terrorist has planted a number of bombs in the building. One of them went off prematurely on the tenth floor. There are more bombs, designed to bring the entire structure down. And because the bomb exploded early, the bomber is still in the building.

Other facts:

- The floor the PCs are on has only a few other people on it currently.
- It will take about ten minutes for first responders to arrive. They will take positions around the base of the building, and, after determining that the fire is on floor 10, will evacuate floors below that and set up on floor 8. This will likely take ten to fifteen minutes. During this time, authorities will attempt to contact anyone on floors above 10 and tell them to stay put, so office phones and some cell phones will start ringing. It's very likely that more bombs will go off at this time, with rescue workers recalled for safety.
- Emergency services will be jammed with calls. • The elevator cabs all descend to the ground floor and no longer function.
- Whenever the fire spreads to a new floor, the sprinklers will go off. This is enough to keep the fire from spreading too much or too quickly, but the incendiary bombs make it impossible for the sprinklers alone to put the fire out.

POSSIBLE ENCOUNTERS

Staying Put: People from higher floors start coming down, alone or in small groups. Some of them claim to have information. Some of it is true and some isn't. Things they might try to say include:

- A gas main broke, and not only is there a fire danger, but the building is also filling with gas. (This is false.)
- This is a terror attack! We have to get out of here at any cost! (This is true, although this NPC has no evidence or details, and the hysterical panic they feel probably doesn't help.)
- Something crashed into the building! (This is false.)
- Terrorists are in the building, killing and kidnapping people. (This is false, for the most part. There's just one bomber, and he's trying to sneak out.)
- Rescue teams are on their way up. (This is false.)
- Rescue teams are landing evacuation helicopters on the roof. (This is false. It might be a tactic they try eventually, but it's not happening yet.)

Most of the NPCs coming down from above continue down the stairs to lower floors, with or without the PCs.

Checking cell phones: PCs can reach their loved ones at first, although this provides no real information. If they're able to get through to emergency services, they are told that emergency responders are on their way and to stay put. It's too soon to get much information from the internet, although a few minutes after it happens, there are reports of an explosion in the building on either floor 10 or floor 12. Building Wi-Fi is down. Data and phone usage becomes spotty about five minutes after the explosion and can't be relied upon.

Going Up a Stairwell to the Roof: There is a pregnant person on the stairway who can't be moved. Helping them deliver the baby safely is a difficulty 3 Intellect-based task and will take about twenty minutes.

Reaching the Roof: There are a few other people on the roof, but no rescue workers. Eventually, a small helicopter flies overhead, and if the bomber is not visibly present, it will circle but not land. This is the terrorist's accomplice in a small two-person helicopter. The pilot is level 3 and has body armor (+2 Armor), a handgun, and a knife. If the bomber is present, the helicopter will land very briefly to try to rescue him.

Going Down a Stairwell: The PCs hear cries for help as they pass by a floor. If they investigate, they find an office close to the stairs where someone is trapped underneath a very heavy shelving unit. It is a difficulty 4 task to rescue them. They are level 2 and their leg is quite injured.

Going Further Down the Stairwell: Three people stand in the stairwell and tell the PCs to go back up. They say it's not safe to try to evacuate, and the PCs should go back up to higher floors. They won't take no for an answer. They will argue with the characters, and trying to win that argument is a difficulty 7 task. They will use force to back up their point—they won't try to harm the PCs, but they will try to physically block the characters. Getting past them is a difficulty 5 task. Individually, they are each level 3.

Going Even Further Down the Stairwell: Smoke! The stairwell is quickly becoming a chimney, even before the PCs get close to the tenth floor. Visibility is almost nil (treat as complete darkness) and characters must succeed at Might defense rolls each round or suffer 2 points of damage and lose their next action. The difficulty level starts at 2 but increases by 1 every other round.

Fire! If the PCs descend to the eleventh floor, they find fire rages there (and it extends down to the ninth). The explosive(s) are incendiary and designed to start hot fires that can eventually bring the building down. Characters on these floors must make Speed defense rolls each round or suffer 6 points of damage. Even characters who succeed at their rolls suffer 3 points of damage from the heat, flames, smoke, and lack of oxygen.

Firefighters to the Rescue: Eventually, the firefighters make a clear and relatively safe path out of the building through one of the stairwells, and they work to get everyone out. This is a great time for one last GM intrusion, or for the PCs who have seen the bomber to spot him trying to sneak out posing as a victim—perhaps as they exit the building.

GM INTRUSIONS

Explosion: First and foremost, the GM's best tools in this scenario are the subsequent explosions from more bombs. The bomber has planted many bombs throughout the building, and they can go off any time, any place. This isn't just one GM intrusion, but several, and they come in two varieties:

Close explosion: One or more PCs are threatened by falling debris (difficulty 5). Speed defense rolls are required; otherwise, victims suffer 6 points of damage and are trapped and need to work to get free.

Very close explosion: All PCs must succeed at Speed defense rolls or suffer damage as mentioned above. Even those who succeed suffer 3 points of damage. Plus, there are smoke and fire dangers in the immediate area, as described in the "Going Even Further Down the Stairwell" encounter. Wherever the PCs are currently, that place is not safe. More debris will fall, floors will collapse, and fire and smoke will spread. If the PCs are on the roof, this might mean there's a risk of being blown off!

The Terrorist: The PCs spot the bomber setting another bomb. He is a level 5 NPC with body armor (+2 Armor), a handgun, and a knife. He'll fight, but mostly he just wants to get away. A GM intrusion allowing him to get away from aggressive PCs means they can encounter him again somewhere else. Eventually, he tries to get to the roof and signal his ally in the helicopter to pick him up. Failing that, he ditches his gear and tries to get out with the rest of the victims when the firefighters arrive.

THE CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the PCs very likely just want to get to safety. When they do, the scenario is pretty much over. They're wrapped in blankets by firefighters and loaded into ambulances. If they stopped or apprehended the bomber, the authorities will want to talk to them, and they will be hailed as heroes in the press.

It's not hard to imagine how you could modify this scenario slightly for the science fiction genre using a space station rather than a skyscraper. You could also have one of the PCs be an undercover FBI agent on the lookout for the terrorist, or even an undercover foreign agent working for the terrorist.

