



Behold! The Secrets of Immortality

He looked like a bad bitmap, sort of fuzzy and indistinct, with little blue eyes like smears on a round gray face. He said he was out of the game.

"The game?" I asked. My voice sounded so bored—ten years of this, I thought, next month—but the man intrigued me. I had never been intrigued before, not in medical school, not when they told me their problems, not when they cried. I remember caring once, when I was young and I dreamed of how other people saw the world, but that had been a lifetime ago and now I felt raw and tired.

Anyway:

"The game," he said. "That makes me sound like a gangster." He laughed. His voice was reedy. No accent. I tried to look at his face—I was good with expressions—but my eyes slid right off him. "I was a scientist, once. I was young and brilliant. Do you remember what it was like, being young and brilliant?"

I didn't think I was ever either. This was a smart one, though. I smoothed my skirt and refused to answer his questions. "What was your field of study?" This Jonas Cliver was a doctor, or that's what it said on the fact sheet—"Dr. Jonas Cliver"—followed by Mike's nonsense scribbles, something about "schizoid" and "fantastic inner world" and something that looked like a math problem. Damn Mike. Good psychiatrist, but he had handwriting like a pharmacist's.

"I studied everything," Jonas said with an affected wave of one fuzzy hand. I needed my prescription checked. No, the hand wasn't fuzzy. Translucent. Thin. He was so very thin. I had a headache suddenly, and part of me blamed this man. He was talking, so I focused and listened: "My initial studies were in aeronautical engineering, but who cares about space anymore? Sometimes I look up and think I can see bits of our future burning up in the atmosphere. No, it's all computers now. God, would I have said that fifty years ago? I remember people complaining after the war: 'It's all rockets and nukes now, no *craftsmanship*.' Fuck them, I said. Well, fuck me."

How old was he? I tried to get a closer look, but saw only his lean face and hazy

eyes.

"You're...disillusioned with science?" I ventured.

"Never had the chance to get sick of it," the man said. "Never really did it. Can I smoke?"

"Sure." I hated when they smoked, but it helped.

"Um, do you have any cigarettes? Haven't smoked in forty years."

"Sorry."

"No matter. No reason to start now." He picked a pencil off the low table in front of him and fiddled with it. I feared he had fallen silent—I didn't like how this session was going, never liked talking with people who might be smarter than me, and this was one clever old bastard—but he started up again as he swung the pencil in front of him like an airplane, swoop, swoop. I watched those little stick-like fingers and considered eating disorders. Or the last few weeks of many diseases.

"You have no idea how much I hate miracles," he said, and didn't say anything else, just stared at the ceiling like he could see the stars through the roof and the midday sky.

"Miracles?"

"Non-repeatable phenomena," he said. "Some stuff only happens once, ever. How do you build up a model for that? What would you do, doctor, if you encountered a soul that was truly unique, different from all the others, different from all the models you had seen?" He sighed, an old, ragged sound.

"You said that you never got a chance to get sick of—"

"That wasn't a rhetorical question, girl," the man said. "Rhetorical questions are for idiots, and I'm humoring you today."

I backtracked, suddenly lost. I looked down at my notes. They didn't make any sense. I had added to Mike's chicken-scratches, but what I had written was all nonsense, like a psychology primer run through a German-English translator a dozen times, or some other world's definitions for id and ego...I found myself pondering how other worlds would conceive of the mind, what coincidences would occur there, or not occur there that occurred here, from which they would try to build up a model of the mind. How much would they have missed, just by accident? What had we missed?

I pulled myself back. My head felt all stretched and deformed, and suddenly I was afraid of looking at Jonas, like he would see a monster. *Stop it.* What had he asked? What would I do if...

"Are you asking about truly *alien* minds?" I asked. "Because I don't think there are any." I spent five minutes explaining some theories I had had about the evolution of thought and the necessity of certain developments in how we interface with the world. "So," I said, "there can be a range of expression-in-thought, but no discontinuities."

Jonas had, during my speech, sat up and snagged a pen and a memo pad and was writing furiously. I glanced over at him. The first half of the page was just dented paper: Jonas had forgotten to deploy the pen nub. But the bottom half was a palimpsest of scribbled words.

"That's really very good," he said. He seemed clearer now, and I flinched when he looked up at me with those fierce blue eyes, before they darted back to the memo pad. Then, as if embarrassed, he sat back down. He said: "Sorry. I find myself violating societal norms more and more. I tell myself I'm getting old and forgetful, but really, I just don't care. Not after what I've done. Why would it matter?"

"What have you done?" Carefully, I put my pad aside and adjusted my glasses.

"Oh, lots of things. Lots of bad things. I lied to myself and hurt people. I was in The War."

"Vietnam?"

"You flatter an old man. World War Two. I was nineteen when I became Inspired."

"With what?"

"With *Inspiration*. The raw stuff, no form, just pure idea. Maybe you're right about alien minds, because it's not like it was a mind, not as we understand it. I was at Bletchley Park. Maybe you read about it. We broke codes there, and I wasn't any good at it. I was Goddamn worthless. Then one day the answers came, like someone ran a million volts up my ass and my brain turned into a light bulb. Only thing was, I could crack the codes, but I couldn't tell anyone why. Couldn't...explain. I was Inspired, you see. I wasn't smart—not like some of those guys—but I was a genius. I shone like the sun. Atomic fire shuddered inside my skull and flew out my eyes to light up the world. I ran with it. God, I embraced it. Suddenly I went from a failure to a miracle-worker. I figured things out, and no one understood how. No one could make sense of how I did it, me least of all. But I could do it. Have you ever felt that? I think you have."

I remembered being seventeen, and imagining what other minds must be like. I remembered models leaping into my mind, unbidden, like someone had been sending mail to my brain in the middle of the night. It had been horrible, those half-glimpses of a greater truth, that sickly light bubbling up from my own mind, and I shuddered at the memory. I had pushed it away, disgusted. It had been *outside me*. It had wanted something. Thought without mind, idea without intellect. Genius, pure and beautiful.

I wasn't going to answer his question.

Focus on the other people in his life. There we go. Everyone has ties. No man an island.

"You must have known some incredible minds at Bletchley Park," I said.

"I did, though the greatest didn't get into any books you might have read. His

name was Reggie. Well, Reginald, then a bunch of other names, and a 'The Fourth.' But we called him Reggie. He was like me. Gifted, like me."

"Inspired?" I asked. The man nodded. "Was he a teacher? A...mentor?" Another nod.

I couldn't keep the eagerness from my voice: "What did he teach you?"

Dr. Cliver smiled. "He taught me all sorts of crazy shit, which is sort of why I'm here." He laughed. "Yeah, those were heady days, fighting the evil snake-people and their sorcerer-scientists." He looked at me. "You're looking at me like I'm making sense. Where's your psychiatric deadpan?"

This bastard was playing me, I realized. I glanced at the clock. He had ten more minutes.

"What if I start," Jonas said, "by telling you all the crazy stuff I believe, and next time we'll work through some kind of meaningful clinical diagnosis?"

"Go ahead," I said. I got myself a clean piece of paper, not one covered in nonsense.

"I am a genius," Jonas said. "Not a very smart person. I'm a...mostly smart person. Slipping a little, in my old age. But I am a genius. I am a miracle-worker, a maker of wonders. I traveled to the Moon in 1952, making the trip alone except for a thing that was neither fish nor wolf that I had bred from plasm and living glass. I have mastered the Axioms, the secret truths of Inspired science. I spent most of my life struggling against Lemuria, a group made of men like me who kept a yoke around humanity's neck. And when they were dead and humanity was free, I watched us spiral into generations of insanity and war.

"I have committed crimes in my hunger for knowledge that would sicken you. And here, at the end, I understand that all my knowledge means nothing, that none of my wonders will benefit a soul, that they were only sparks of Inspiration cast out into the world to live here for a time. I understand now: nothing I have achieved will last, and the blood on my hands will dry there when I am dead, and from it no

new life will come forth. I am not mad."

He sat up, lean and insubstantial and wretched.

"They were open-minded at the Park, but not open enough. They started to hate me. Fear me, working alone in the dark. Those were paranoid times. They threw me out, revoked my clearance, tried to have me committed. Reggie didn't speak up for me. Thought it would be good for me to get out for a bit. But I wasn't mad." Jonas sighed, like a math teacher explaining the same thing for the tenth time. "I wasn't mad, and I promised that I'd prove it to them. Shows how little I knew. But now they're all dead, and no one cares about whether or not I was right. And in the end, I was as much of a fool as they were."

"That's all the time we have for today," I said in what seemed like a very professional voice.

"I'll see you again. Have some cigarettes waiting, would you?"

He left his memo pad, the son of a bitch. I spent a week working, starting with two pages, his and mine, and ending with three notebooks filled with diagrams and theorems and equations. I had to brush up on my calculus, my sociology, my IT, my quantum theory. Okay, I wasn't "brushing up" on quantum theory, but I devoured three books on the subject, and it wasn't until halfway through the third one that I knew what the hell I was working toward. Or at least, had some inkling. There was an answer, somewhere in my mind, something about the connection between the nature of thought and the entanglement of fundamental particles...I was in so far over my head. I dropped sessions. I ignored Mike when he wanted to get lunch every day for three days until he called me an asshole, maybe worse things, I don't know, I didn't care. I didn't care. I was so close.

To what?

Finally, it was time to meet with Dr. Jonas Cliver again. I shook his hand warmly when he arrived and led him to his couch. His hand was thin and cold, and I

studied his face. Lean, haggard. Drained. But he was smiling. He ignored the cigarettes and got right to talking.

"You've been thinking about our conversation," he said.

"I have." I was breathless, desperate, needy. God, was I *horny*? No, I wasn't that crazy. But the need was similar, the ache. Located a bit higher than with lust, like there was a word on the tip of my tongue, fluttering, unable to escape.

"You want to hear more?" Jonas said.

"Yeah." God, how unprofessional.

"The worst part is finding money. How stupid is that? I remember thinking that. I could see the future course of the war reduced to a few equations. I had mastered the principles behind rocketry inside a month. And I didn't have any damn money. After the war, though, the cash really started to flow for anyone with brains enough to put together a slide-show and explain how it would help against the Communists. I came to the States, found Reggie again, and he introduced me to The College."

"What was that?" I asked. I had pulled myself together. I was taking notes again. Out of principle, I wrote "delusions w/o paranoid behavior" in the upper-left corner.

"The College of Scholastic Theory. The Invisible College is what they used to call it. One of five major groups—foundations—that brought people like me together. Together they made up the Peerage, a sort of loose social group among...our kind of people."

"Geniuses?"

"In a word. They helped me focus. They taught me what I could do, what I was, and they showed me how to jump on the gravy-train. It was a good time to be alive, because most of the bad guys were dead."

"Bad guys?" I added a little question mark next to "paranoid."

"When you create a wonder, there's always a theory behind it, a system. You've been thinking about systems, I think. When we're young and the Mania swirls around us like a storm, we try to find a philosophy that explains what we can do, but they're all vacuous nonsense. That's the big horrible joke: there is no accommodating genius, no explaining it. Genius is a non-repeating phenomenon. A miracle, every time. None of those scholars at the College with their slide rules and tables of logs and test tubes were *scientists*. They were just playing with the trappings of science, like some kid waving around a toy gun and scaring the rest of the playground. We got results, but that's all we had: results. There was no system. Just Mania crackling at our fingertips.

"But not everyone could believe that. It's hard to realize that what you're doing is a sham." He stared into my eyes. He looked all hazy and miserable again, and I felt his ragged anger at that truth.

"We have to face up to the truth about ourselves," I said.

"Some of us can't. They think they have an answer. They think they have *the* answer." He looked at me again. "They don't. We don't. You don't, Doctor Ibanez, so don't get any silly ideas or you'll end up like them."

"Them?" I added another question mark next to "paranoid."

"The Lemurians think they have the answer. They think they have a system that makes sense." He shook his head. "Not much makes sense to me anymore, and those things that do make sense, I'm not certain enough about them to kill for them. But you get so afraid. You start thinking it's all pointless. And then they're all laughing at you, telling you you're insane, and you get hard. Of course you're fucking right! You're not crazy. No one who can reignite the spark of life in a corpse, no one who can run their hands through the cold red sand of another world, can get there with a wrong-headed idea about how the world works, right? There's a lot of anger there, in Lemuria. Still is, especially after they lost the war."

We sat in silence for a moment. I felt like a new hole was being drilled in my skull,

for an eye to look out or a mouth to speak from. It hurt like hell. I felt my notebook slide from numb hands.

"It's not pleasant," Dr. Cliver said. "You know what's happening, don't you?"

"Just keep talking," I snapped.

"The Lemurians are bitter. Of course, I suppose I'm bitter. There's a changelessness in a genius, as if something in our brains gets flash-fried at the moment of our Breakthrough. Like those shadows in Hiroshima. When a new genius is born, it's not just a cool, logical revelation. I remember how bitter I was, as bitter as any Lemurian, when I was at Bletchley Park and I watched myself getting outclassed by every code-breaker and mathematician and high school algebra teacher they brought there. I was jealous, and that jealousy stamped me forever. Every genius has a catalyst. I am a Neid. Jealousy, bitterness, resentment. It's always there, in the back of my mind. You deserve better."

"I..."

"You're going insane by inches, Doctor Ibanez," Dr. Cliver said. "You can feel it, like a fever in your mind, like weevils eating your brain."

"I'm not mad," I said.

"No," he said, "I'm the one on the couch. And you know that when meeting insane people, it's best to pretend to be sane, right? A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

"What?" Things weren't making a lot of sense. Everything seemed unique. I could form no patterns, no systems. Nothing had anything in common with anything else. The universe seemed to consist of entirely solitary objects without pattern. Everything was a non-repeating phenomenon.

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," Dr. Cliver repeated. "It's a simple proverb. What does it mean?"

I knew what he was doing. I was by no means an expert on schizophrenia, but I was familiar with the symptoms. Blunted affect...disorganized speech and thinking...No one symptom by itself is evidence of schizophrenia...No one thing by itself is evidence of...

"The proverb," Dr. Cliver said. "What does it mean?"

"It means...the bird in the hand stands for your inner character," I said. "While the outer world seems larger, the inner world..." No, that wasn't entirely clear. I tried again. "It means that what you understand is more important than...what you...what you do."

I felt naked as Dr. Cliver stared at me. He looked sympathetic, but I could only imagine him shaking his head.

"Am I getting it wrong?" I asked. "I feel like I'm..."

"You're close to the mark," Dr. Cliver said. "If you were a schoolteacher instead of a psychiatrist, I'd praise you for your nonstandard reasoning abilities, like I was the teacher and you were the student. But instead I'll act like I'm the shrink and you're the patient: you're displaying evidence of a schizophrenic thinking disorder."

I was drowning. No air. Air.

"I don't want this," I said.

"If you didn't want this, you shouldn't have spent all last week trying to figure out the true nature of thought. You shouldn't have started building that thing that you think can glimpse the thoughts behind the thoughts, the syncopated concepts that piggyback on what we call consciousness." Dr. Cliver sat up. "You deduced their existence, and now you want to see them. You want to see the world of Inspiration, to see that light face-to-face."

"I don't. It hurts."

"You do. It's going to hurt a lot more. It will always hurt."

His eyes were atomic fire.

"I want this," I said.

Dinner the following night was lentil stew, because I'd spend a few months at a time toying with vegetarianism, but I got hungry again around eight o'clock and demolished some microwaveable cheese bread. Then I went downstairs and looked at the machine.

It was, mostly, my computer, though it had accumulated parts of a scientific calculator, five cellular phones, and something organic. Oh, right, the rat brains.

Lit by the dusty glow of the hall light outside, the display was hideous and macabre, the ungainly, asymmetric spectacle marred by little red LED lights and analog clocks that I had stripped to serve as gauges, but in the shadowless fluorescent lights the machine looked a bit ridiculous, a bad pop-art display. "Mad Science #1." It was ugly, but it hummed with electric life, and I loved it. I ran my hands over it, double-clicked the file I had written last night after learning the basics of Pascal, Lisp, and a bit of Python, and felt the sonic hum of information shifting in the machine's guts.

What would it do? I still didn't know. Would it answer questions, like some Hellenic oracle? I remembered the early stories of computers, before there was one in every house, of how people imagined them as conduits for some perfect realm of absolute logic and truth, devices that could be trusted to speak with absolute veracity. Could this...thing...accomplish that? Would it speak to me? Would it tell me what to do? Would it tell me what to do *next*?

Because that was a question. My receptionist, whose name no longer mattered, had to call the police. She had never liked me, I don't think, and when she saw me stagger in at 10 o'clock, wearing what I had worn yesterday, my bangs over my face, I felt her eyes on my back. I had been able to talk the police down after I had

flung the DSM-IV at a patient, but I knew I had to go.

So here I was.

I heard the front door open and grabbed a screwdriver, the most dangerously thing around. I could recognize Dr. Cliver's footsteps, but that didn't comfort me. I was thinking more clearly, but still I felt fear and anger at the possibility of being discovered.

"So here we are," Dr. Cliver said from just around the corner, echoing my own thoughts.

"What have I done?" I asked. I looked at the machine and felt sick.

"Oh, don't start with that!" the old man said. "It's not like you've transgressed against any of the important laws." He stepped around the corner. He was clear, now, crystal clear, with eyes like cigarettes in the dark except blue. "I doubt your machine will be able to answer too many of life's little mysteries." He studied it, turning the flatscreen monitor to face him. "It's thinking, though."

"Thinking?"

"God, girl, you don't even know what you've done. Thinking. Dreaming. Creation is a terrible responsibility. It would grow to hate you, in whatever way it can feel hate." He ran his stick-finger down the CPU casing. "Life," he said simply, and gestured. There it was, I thought. What had I done?

"You've really created something here," Dr. Cliver said. "Thank you."

"Thank you?" I still sounded like a psychiatrist, echoing back whatever people said like an Eliza program.

"I told you that I could feel that light within, pushing, burning. I was so tired, Dr. Ibanez. And angry. Furious. I had no legacy, nothing I could pass on." His hands grabbed the edge of the particleboard desk, gripping fiercely. He was so thin; I feared he would pass out. But the fit passed. The rage passed. And his face was

calm again. "I wasn't ready to go, Doctor. And you see, I too have been working."

"You said you had mastered all the...the Axioms," I said. There was still so much to learn. My ignorance hurt; the need to know wracked me.

"Yes, yes," he said. "Doctor Jonas Cliver: one of the greats. But what did Doctor Jonas Cliver accomplish in his long, sad life? Nothing. Nothing. A life of detestation and scorn. But still I want more. More of what? Just...more. There must be something. Some purpose. Some meaning. Oh God, there must be some point to all this. I watched my friends die, watched the rockets we made fall from the sky to rot in fields in Ohio or Ukraine. What was this for?"

I could say nothing. I was afraid, I realized, of those bright eyes in that narrow face.

"You're sick," I ventured.

"Ha, no." A horrible smile. Yellow teeth. Old man, old and empty. "Not sick, not yet. Well, sick in my mind, but so are you. That incandescent flower is growing in your brain, too, pushing at the inside of your skull. But my body is healthy. Though it's almost escaped. It's almost out of my skull. There's not much of me left. It's all been burned away. God, I did not know that light could live and dream."

He touched the CPU again. The gray matter, held in little Pyrex containers, quivered.

"So thank you, Doctor Ibanez," he said, "because I am not done yet, and you have crafted the means of my escape. I have worked so hard. So many died before I learned how to preserve the intellect and the light of genius beyond the physical body. My workshop is an abattoir. Dead skin has piled up under my fingernails, and I can always smell it. I fear other people can, too. Can you smell that rot? But soon I'll be free of all that, thanks to you. Of course, it will take time for me to grow strong. Time in which...well, trust has always been in limited supply among the Inspired."

My knees were weak, but when he drew the little silver ray-gun I almost laughed. It looked like a toy.

"Silly, I know," he said, and for a hideous moment we shared our mirth. "I never kept up with the fashions. But you will die, doctor. I didn't have time to make adjustments. It will hurt. I'm sorry."

He wobbled, but only for a second, not long enough for me to react. He was so tired. No, not tired. What frantic atrocities had he committed in the past few weeks of work? When had he slept? Even I had slept, though the dreams were often worse than the work. No, wait: when had he eaten? He was not sick, he said. No. He had not eaten. He had starved himself. Perhaps part of the preparations for his transformation? No. Pure madness, desperation, monomania. His eyes were on that perfect light, not on this world.

"Tell me more, first," I said. I tried not to close my eyes, because if I did I knew I'd feel the searing heat of that silly little gun.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because you owe me," I said, nodding toward the machine. "Because...I did this..."

So we spoke late into the night. We spoke about the Maniac Storms that surged across the world; about the shadow-life of the manes, living beings birthed by Mania; about how wonders withered when exposed to real science, falling into nonsense and smoking ruin; about the loneliness of the Inspired life; about the sense of Obligation to humanity that kept a genius' burning Inspiration in check; about how, in Dr. Cliver's life, one transgression after another had stripped away that sense of duty, allowing the pure and unfettered genius to illuminate every corner of his mind, burning away the person that had been there.

At last there was nothing left to say. The sun was rising. Dr. Cliver raised his little silver gun, then his eyes went glassy and dim.

"Oh no," he said.

The gun fell from his hand. I picked it up and set it on the chair next to me.

"There's not much holding me together," Dr. Cliver said. "Just this...this light. There's not much left of me, Doctor Ibanez." He stepped toward the machine, but his knees buckled. One thin hand reached up and grabbed the lip of the table, and there he hung, on his knees, staring with those too-bright eyes at the immortality awaiting him in the wonder I had made, just out of reach.

"You've ruined yourself," I said. "Consumed yourself. Blind fool. I don't know all you've done, so I can still pity you."

"So much light," he said. "There is so little left of me. So little left of Jonas Cliver. I wanted to build rockets. I studied math. Loved it so much. Went to Bletchley Park. Fought...the remnants of Lemuria. Saw the Moon. Mars. I was there when Mars came for us. I was still whole then. Not like this. Are you a real doctor?"

"I am," I said.

He smiled. "I never..."

He stayed there, on his knees, but he was dead.

I cried, feeling very human, and the light in my skull dimmed. I could extinguish it, I thought, as I had years ago. I could still walk away from this. From all this disgusting magnificence.

I looked down at the dead man. Such a life he had led, to have it end like this, in madness and privation. He was so thin. He was nearly bald, his head wrinkled, nothing but skull and a thin layer of flesh.

I looked from that head to the Pyrex containers, the bigger ones, that I hadn't used yet. It would be a shame to lose those memories, to let that mind pass into oblivion. If I could preserve even a fraction of it...There was a saw in the basement.

Was it possible?

Wait, no. God. How can I even think that? Was it right? What was I thinking?
Could I? Was it right?

I smiled.

Was it possible?

The light within me shone forth.

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This is a fan-made game for the World of Darkness. For use with the World of Darkness Rulebook.

Genius: The Transgression

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I've been following his messageboard posts, studying that rickety Website he put together, and now I'm sure: the poor guy is close. And he has no idea what's happening. There's an acidic insanity to those rants, though, that makes me wary, and in retrospect, I should have arranged our first meeting in a public place. Instead I knock on the door to his basement apartment, unannounced, and lean against the rusty pipe across from #2B.

No answer, and I smell meat and formaldehyde. A flicker of plasma and the brass doorknob falls into the room, cleanly severed, and I push the door open. It's pretty typical: dead animals, skinned and strung up, covered in sticky-notes. Empty tins of tuna fish. Half a Radio Shack disassembled on the floor. But then I see the bodies. Professors from the local community college. There are two, three...three and a half...

"They didn't listen to me," he says. He's all buried in wires, some leading into him, smeared with blood, shit, and preservative fluid.

I didn't get here fast enough. I don't talk--no reason to. I raise my hand and the stainless-steel band on my wrist shifts like quicksilver. I listen to the high-pitched scream of the flechettes as they perforate the room. Then it's just gasoline and a match and I'm gone.

Sometimes I don't get there fast enough.

Introduction

"Silence. I am not interested in your imbecilic mouthings. All of you have demonstrated your lack of vision by demanding my resignation from the faculty. Well, you have accomplished your purpose. You cast me out. You robbed me of everything that I held most dear in life: position, honor, respect. You framed me as a madman, held me up to ridicule before the whole world. But now I'll have my revenge....Now you'll pay for your folly. There's no escape for any of you. You shall die, one by one, at the hands of the scientific marvel that you scoffed at."

-Dr. Lorenzo Cameron, *The Mad Monster*

Ever since we bent our minds to technology—not with the computer or the automobile, but with fire and language and visions of tomorrow's hunt—we walked away from the path laid out before us. No longer were we to struggle and die like the other animals. No longer would we be allowed lives defined by a blissful eternal now. We opened our eyes, regretted the past, feared the future, and became fully human.

But there were some who wished to know more, and to see farther, no matter the price. Mortals accepted into their midst tricksters who delighted in showing the failure of the powerful, visionaries who dreamed of worlds never before seen, fanatics determined to change the world by changing how we thought. The genius stands outside of society and its narrow bounds, whether hailing from some crude some village where no one knows what lies beyond the forest or gleaming metropoli whose inhabitants are bored with walking on the Moon. They bring us marvels, and we make them pay for their transgressions.

As humanity has always admired and feared its law-givers, it has always admired and feared its law-breakers, its madmen, its geniuses. Every society has stories of those who went too far, who asked too much, and who suffered for it. The mad scientist is new, but the genius is an old dream indeed: the prophet, the trickster-god, the master of *techne*, the artificer who makes the world, the demiurge who seeks to control, bind, and direct it.

Genius: The Transgression is a game about those men and women and almost-gods, the ones who went too far in their and hope and spite and fear and arrogance. They are doomed to watch their discoveries dissolve into dust and broken lines of code, to see their inventions rampage out of control. But between that first discovery and their last, when they transgress once too often and the universe wipes them away, they can create wonders.

A Game of Forbidden Science:

Break the rules and you get in trouble. Break the law and you go to jail. Mouth off to your boss and lose your job. Jump off a building and...But it doesn't have to be that way, says that little voice in the back of your head, your personal genius. You ignore it, but you can't silence it. But a genius gives in to that voice, becomes that rules-breaking thing, that maker-trickster-savior, and begins a life of pain and glory unimaginable to mere mortals.

The genius sees the truth, but she cannot get there. In her heart she *knows*, but she cannot explain why. She flouts social convention, ignores the sneering voice of authority and dogma, and casts aside the ethical concerns of her peers. She breaks the rules of the universe we know to glimpse the truth of the universe as it must be. But there's a price. There always is. She is not just isolated from the "common man," but from the very discipline that birthed her. In her heart, she knows that what she does is not science, which is ultimately about systems and about cooperation. Alone, she walks a new path, wearing the trappings of her old life but no longer capable of touching its essence.

Genius: The Transgression takes place in the World of Darkness, a world like ours but with darker nights and deeper stains. People don't connect to one-another as they do in our world. They live in the shadows of

ancient conspiracies and the shadows cast by old things, and this infects the geniuses: for every mad scientist working in silicon and plastic, another labors with greasy cogs and steam pumps, while another never left behind the gleaming chrome and atomic dreams of the 1950s. For one of the Inspired, there is no escape from the fetters of superstition and occult dread, the lurking horrors at the edge of consciousness. Though cobbling together elements from our past, the genius ultimately belongs to no place and no time, and walks alone into the future.

Theme: Transgression

A little knowledge is a hideous thing and it will drive you mad.

The genius is a rule-breaker, a trickster, a liar, a thief of wonders, and a maker of false dreams. Tenuous threads bind him to the mortal world, and every wonder is a violation of the rules of the universe. On the one hand, Obligation binds a genius to humanity; on the other hand, Inspiration tells him to do things that no sane person would ever want to do. The genius can be humanity's damned savior, destroying himself to safeguard a society that will never know his name and would hate him if they knew what he had done to preserve them.

A genius is never entirely in control. His inventions are always one step away from freeing themselves and rampaging through his lab, or his city. The ideas and dreams come too fast for him to write down, let alone study and examine. The deadlines are constant, the pressure to find equipment, money, and research time mind-breaking, and humiliation is a constant companion. Mad scientists burn with a passion for their work, and though that passion is glorious and often contagious, the hunger to know and to control consumes them from the inside-out. They *cannot* obey the rules that normal society has set down for its members. They can only choose what laws they will break, and how they will look at themselves afterward.

Mood: Bitter Disappointment

The hideous freedom of transgression is matched by the choke-chain of necessity. A genius finds herself surrounded by failure and broken dreams. For every wonder that lurches, blasphemously, beautifully, to life, another turns to smoking scrap in the testing phase, or lies forgotten in a corner, half-made, because the genius couldn't pay for the right permits or find the right materials. This juxtaposition of Inspired triumph and mundane failure defines a genius' life.

And even if the genius succeeds more often than he fails, he sees dead dreams all around him. Once-great geniuses, their radiance reduced to cinders from a lifetime of crushing defeat and humiliation, stock the shelves at the electronics store in the mall, too ashamed to take up the wrench again. Those Inspired who provide a genius with the supplies he needs are hollow, miserable people, chewed apart by the failure of their philosophies to gain acceptance. And in the end, rare is the genius who makes a measurable impact on the world: no matter how successful a genius might be, his wonders still crumble when exposed to the light of day, reduced to malfunctioning piles of components. Many of the Inspired, after that initial burst of delight, feel the circle of possibilities shrinking around them, until they are little different from before, except that now people who once respected them now snicker behind their back at the "maniac" who cracked under the stress.

How to Use This Book:

Information on geniuses, what they are, and the world they inhabit is divided into several sections.

The **Prologue: Behold, The Secrets of Immortality!** shows the wonder and horror of life as a genius.

Chapter One: The Cosmos provides information about the world of mad science, from the laws that control it to the societies and organizations the Inspired have created.

Chapter Two: Character Creation presents rules for creating many types of geniuses, from reclusive librarians to aeronautical adventurers, and descriptions of the wonders that a genius can create.

Chapter Three: Systems and Foundations describes in detail the rules of a mad scientist's world, explaining how to select a foundation, how to build wonders, and what the different Axioms teach a genius.

Chapter Four: Special Rules and Systems includes details on a number of situations relevant to being a genius, such as managing beholden, building capacitors, and the terrifying effects of Havoc.

Chapter Five: Storytelling and Antagonists explains how to run a Storytelling game of forbidden science, focusing on why the Inspired act as they do and what stories you can tell with them. Here are also the enemies of the geniuses: the intelligent cast-offs of abandoned scientific theories called the manes, the orphaned inventions of the geniuses that hunger for power, and the dreaded Clockstoppers, enemies of all Inspiration.

Appendix One: Sample Wonders offers a rich selection of wonders that a genius might build, to serve as inspiration or to be appropriated directly.

Appendix Two: The Fellowships outlines the secret thinktanks and programs that the Inspired have created, and what a genius can gain by participating in one.

Appendix Three: The Seattle of Tomorrow presents the travails and terrors that a genius might find in the West Coast city of Seattle, complete with sample characters and enough story elements to begin a chronicle there.

An **Epilogue: The Answer to Everything**, concludes the text.

Sources and Inspiration:

Mad scientists are everywhere in literature, but many stories either relegate the scientist to a magician dressed in a lab coat, a modern-day Faust with Bunsen burners instead of black candles, or strip him of his horrific element, reducing him to a bumbling Poindexter fool or an ineffectual sidekick to the traditional, physically-oriented hero. Nonetheless, stories in several media contain vibrant and terrifying examples of genius.

Books:

Doc Savage, originally created by legendary pulp writer Lester Dent, provides a positive example of what a high-Obligation genius might look like. Gifted physically and mentally, the "Man of Bronze" turns his talents to solving crime and keeping the world safe. This untarnished image of the hero-researcher can serve as inspiration for an honorable Paragon, or can be used to cast a pall on the excesses of would-be guardians.

VALIS. Just about anything by Philip K. Dick deserves mention, from the existential ponderings of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* to the broken regret of *A Scanner Darkly*, but whole-hog techno-Gnostic insanity calls for *VALIS*, in which an artificial satellite network orbiting the star Sirius uses pink laser beams to trigger mystical revelations. How much of *VALIS* is simple fiction and how much of it is Dick's own beliefs given a thin gloss of narrative is never entirely clear.

H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. Like Dick, several of Wells' works are relevant to mad science, but this tale of bent science focuses on one man's attempt, not only to raise animals to human-like intelligence, but to give them the laws that truly separate man from the beasts, and the tragedy that results.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus*. It's alive! Dr. Frankenstein is one of the earliest and most contemptible of the mad scientists in fiction, and his arrogance, hypocrisy, and foolishness make people like him perfect villains for those Inspired who still remember their Obligation to humanity.

Neal Stephenson's *Baroque Cycle*, comprising *Quicksilver*, *The Confusion*, and *The System of the World*, is a grand journey through the history of science and technology that goes back to the murky origins of the scientist (mad or otherwise) as he separates from the alchemists and mystics. The *Cycle* can provide inspiration for geniuses whose philosophies favor the very ancient or the very strange.

Movies:

The Fly. Alright, so it's not a very good movie. But it has Jeff Goldblum, it's got weird experiments, and it's much better than *Independence Day*. Watch the hideous results of a botched teleportation experiment strip a man of his humanity inch by slow inch.

Metropolis, first released in 1927, mixes cutting-edge (at the time) special effects with a story about the brutality of industrial technology. The story's mad scientist, Dr. Rotwang, creates a robotic duplicate of the woman who is trying to organize the downtrodden machine-workers. The result is revolution and violence between the upper and lower halves of society.

Pi is one of the defining movies about intellectual obsession, with a protagonist driven mad by his search for mathematical truth. Shot in grainy, numbing black-and-white, with a techno soundtrack that can be cranked up during any mad scientist fight scene.

Comics:

Akira is idea-fodder for what happens when you mess around with "psychic" science. A story of creeping madness and betrayal set against a backdrop of decaying technological grandeur, with a side order of nihilistic punk-culture that shows what happens when regular people take up the philosophy of a low-Obligation genius.

Batman, from its earliest incarnation, is a story defined as much by its gadgetry as its characterization. And no, we're not talking about the Bat Shark Repellent. As much as Batman himself, his rogue gallery, especially Mr. Freeze and Poison Ivy, show mad scientists deeply obsessed with their catalysts.

Girl Genius offers a view into a world that never was, a mad science version of 19th century Europe riddled with "Sparks" who can create deranged inventions, and the constant war to control or destroy the most gifted among them. Full of atmospheric elements and concepts as amazing as they are frightening, from Slaver Wasps to the dreaded Jägermonsters, deadly organic automata.

Bob the Angry Flower follows the misfortunes of a super-genius flower and his struggles against alien invaders, uninterested women, and his own staggering lack of ethical responsibility. Reliably funny; reliably weird, and with plenty of insane ideas that, if taken seriously, would be perfect for showcasing the monstrous acts a genius is capable of performing.

Television:

The Venture Brothers is not just about mad scientists, but also about failure: the failure both of individuals and of our society's sense of hope for the future. Taking place in a world where the Space Age dreams have crashed down to earth and following the misadventures of a family hopelessly trapped in a more optimistic past, *The Venture Brothers* is relevant to any genius who sees that her inventions passed their sell-by date before they were even completed.

Neon Genesis Evangelion is more than just an epic mind-screw that can serve as inspiration for what it's like to lose one's mind; it paints a picture of a world forced to live with the tyranny of a genius with inscrutable goals and visions who nonetheless seems preferable to the monstrosity that lurks outside. A tale of paranoia, disgust, and futility.

Mystery Science Theater 3000, because not every mad scientist dreams big, or even clearly: some just want to torture a guy with bad movies, and maybe that'll somehow lead to world domination. Look for the early episodes; the "invention exchanges" showcase some of the half-baked ideas that a genius might come up with on an off-day and can serve to lighten the mood in a grim story about creeping madness.

Music:

Abney Park. A self-styled "steampunk" band, Abney Park's weird Gothic-Victorian lyrics blend eerily with a more traditional industrial sound. Their lyrics focus on alienation, tyranny, and the blending of the old and the new.

Bjork: Weird beats and a feeling of future-shock characterizes Bjork's work, which can be used to inspire some of the more optimistic notions geniuses might have about mad science.

Devo. Any band named after a mad science concept—in this case, the notion of human de-evolution—deserves mention, and Devo gains bonus points for its dark, surreal, often bleakly humorous lyrics and its electronic stylings.

Nine Inch Nails. An old favorite. Trent Reznor offers a relentless industrial cacophony coupled with lyrics of dehumanization, shame, and betrayal, accurately summarizing the feelings of far too many Inspired.

Definitions:

Apokalypsi: The Axiom of Discovery, used by the Inspired to construct scanners, mind-reading machines, and communication devices.

Artificer: The foundation of those geniuses who excel at building, tinkering, and fiddling with wonders. Their primary joy is in construction and design.

Atomist: A genius of the Lemurian baramin that believes the world would be made right if humanity submitted to the unfettered benefits of technological development and/or were ruled by a technological elite. Not necessarily interested in atomic power; the term refers to the promised Utopian benefits of that technology.

Automata: The Axiom of Independence, used by the Inspired to create independent thoughts in their wonders to produce cogitating computers, clone armies, and slaving zombie hordes.

Axiom: One of eight branches of super-science, focused on what an invention does rather than what branch of traditional research it would fall under.

baramin: A five-fold philosophical division among the Lemurians, based on when and how they think humanity went wrong.

bardo: A pocket reality created from and sustained by Mania. The Hollow Earth and the Crystal Spheres are two well-known bardos.

beholden: An assistant to a genius, a person devoid of the spark of motivation that drives other mortals and who is given purpose by the genius' Mania. Beholden are able to look upon an Inspired theory or wonder

without causing Havoc.

Breakthrough: The moment a person becomes a genius, often a traumatic and dangerous experience involving some great tragedy.

breeding pool: The most common source for new geniuses, closely linked to the scientific community: mundane scientists, technicians, engineers, and philosophers all make up the breeding pool. Geniuses sometimes trawl the local 'pit looking for new Inspired who have recently catalyzed.

capacitor: A device able to hold Mania.

catalyst: How the genius has come to view the world and his work. There are five catalysts, based on rage, jealousy, wonder, hope, and sorrow. Also sometimes a synonym for the Breakthrough; a person is said to have "catalyzed" upon becoming a genius.

Clockstopper: An agent of stasis opposed to the very idea of genius. Clockstoppers dissolve Mania, spoil wonders, and, at greater levels of power, unmake mundane technology as they seek to wipe Inspiration from the face of the world.

collaborative: A small group of geniuses who work and cooperate together, often sharing a single laboratory.

Community (the Consensus): The society of actual (non-mad) scientists, as well as the accumulated body of knowledge and theory currently active at the time. The mental activity of so many people produces an enormous amount of free-roaming Mania.

Director: Geniuses of this foundation see debate and discussion as the most important part of their researches; Directors are gregarious and social, often even charming, but prone to manipulation at the expense of invention. Directors once served as foils to Lemuria; they still manipulate mortal and Inspired research from their boardrooms and secret message boards.

echo doctor: A slang turn for an unmada. Though it specifically refers to an unmada rogue, the meaning has broadened to include almost any genius who does not listen to criticism of his methods or morals.

Epikrato: The Axiom of Control, used by the Inspired to dominate minds and to control the physical and mechanical world.

Etherite: Member of the Lemurian baramin that believes that humanity made a significant misstep in their scientific development, and that getting back "on track" would result in a new golden age. Most Etherites' wrath is directed at Einstein's Theories of Relativity, hence the name.

Exelixa: The Axiom of Restoration, used to repair and improve things both living and mechanical.

fault: The flaws in a wonder, often manifesting as dangerous and unpredictable problems that can endanger the genius' life or Obligation.

foundation: Each Inspired falls into one of five foundations of thought based on her area of focus in the world of mad science—tinkering (Artificer), action (Navigator), debate (Director), generation (Progenitor), or theory (Scholastic). Those geniuses that reject the foundations become rogues or join Lemuria.

genius: A mortal human who has gained the power to break the bounds of the physical world with the power of invention and Inspiration. Or, depending on whom you ask, a superdimensional intellect that has taken up residence in a human's body and mind.

Grimm: The catalyst of anger and rage, implying a Breakthrough based on fury and disgust with the world as it currently is.

Havoc: What happens when a wonder gets out of control. Often caused by mere mortals trying to interact with a wonder. Havoc can damage a wonder or temporarily orphan it.

Hoffnung: The catalyst of hope for a brighter tomorrow, implying a Breakthrough based on a sincere dream of improving the world.

metanormal: Lemuria's term for "supernatural" creatures and phenomena, also used by the Peerage.

Igor: A slang term for a beholden.

Illuminated: A genius whose mind has been overtaken by the raw stuff of genius, losing all humanity and sanity in the process.

Inspiration: The amount of raw brilliant power that a mad scientist has cultivated; as Inspiration rises, a genius can build more and greater wonders.

Inspired, the: A common term for geniuses.

Invisible Empire: Lemuria's preferred term for the Peerage.

Invisible Wars: The struggles between the Peerage and the Lemurians for control of the destiny of humanity; these battles pattered to a halt in the mid 20th century.

Jabir: The inability of geniuses, especially those with high Inspiration, to communicate their scientific, philosophical, and technical ideas clearly to unInspired people.

Juno: An old term for a female Lemurian.

Karnacki: A genius ghost-hunter. Some Karnackis are interested in communication; others in banishment.

Katastrofi: The Axiom of Destruction, used by the Inspired to produce death lasers, heat rays, poison gas bombs, and other instruments of devastation.

Klagen: The catalyst of sorrow and despair, implying a Breakthrough based on personal tragedy, suffering, and loss.

fellowship: An organization of experienced geniuses working on a specific task and uncovering unique abilities to benefit their work.

laboratory: The genius' sanctum, where wonders are created and sent into the world.

larry: A 20th century term for a Lemurian beholden used in a guard capacity.

larva: An ingredient gathered at great moral cost and used to improve a wonder. There is a rich trade in Larvae among the Inspired.

Lemurian: A genius who clings to archaic views of the world and believes that his own view most accurately reflects reality; Lemurians have secretly manipulated the history of the world for centuries—or at least tried to.

lonesome: A genius who is isolated due to lack of awareness of a larger Inspired community, and who may not

even be aware that he is Inspired. There are probably more lonesomes than affiliated geniuses.

mane: Things, creatures, and people borne of Mania, from the jungles of Venus to Antarctic Nazi superweapons to angels that push the planets around.

Mania: The "energy source" of the Inspired, that allows them to bend the cosmos, and to build and transform their wonders.

maniac: Slang term for a genius, or occasionally, specifically an unmada.

Maniac Storm: A sudden shift in the paradigm of the Community, resulting in a mass-unleashing of Mania that at least partially "makes true" what has been proven to be false. The last major Maniac Storm was in 1971, when the Viking landers established Mars indisputably as a barren wasteland devoid of life—instantly, the Mania released created a Martian Empire that tried to subjugate the Earth, and that was stopped only by the loss of countless genius lives.

mercatus: The outer section of a Lemurian zotheca, where geniuses can buy, sell, and trade Larvae and other scientific components.

Metaptropi: The Axiom of Transformation, used by the Inspired to perform "alchemical" experiments, to change shape, and to change the appearance of things.

Mechanist: Member of the Lemurian baramin that believes that the world and everything in it, including people, is ultimately reducible to a handful of simple, mechanical rules that, if followed, would result in Utopia.

MM: "Mere mortal." Slang for any human who is not a genius, a beholden, or otherwise wildly out of the ordinary.

Navigator: Geniuses in this foundation are as eager to use wonders as to build them; they are daredevils and adventurers as well as scientists.

Neid: The catalyst of jealousy and envy, implying a Breakthrough based on frustration and humiliation.

Obligation: The genius' connection to humanity. Though in a sense he has risen above mortality, most geniuses still feel a pull to better the common man. Those who lose that desire become true mad scientists, performing heinous experiments without heed for who suffers.

Oracle: Member of the Lemurian baramin that believes humanity was better off before the rise of inductive thought and empiricism; they often affect a mystical appearance and champion revelation and pure reason.

orphan: A wonder without a master. Orphans are predatory and must seek out sources of Mania to survive.

Paragon: A genius who believes in his Obligation to humanity and works to preserve and cherish the mortal world in his charge.

peanut: 20th century slang for a Lemurian beholden, specifically one involved in lab work.

Peerage: The loose society of free geniuses, including those belonging to the five foundations as well as free rogues; basically, anyone who is not a lonesome, a Lemurian, Illuminated, or an echo doctor.

Phenomenologist: A member of the Lemurian baramin that rejects all objective concepts of truth in favor of a politically- or philosophically-motivated will to power.

Pinky: Slang for a useless beholden.

preta: Any sort of "Maniavore," usually meant to include orphaned wonders and manes not in their bardo.

Progenitor: The foundation focused on growth, transformation, and the violation of boundaries. Progenitors develop hideous new creations and unleash them upon the world.

program: A large group of geniuses not affiliated with either the Peerage or Lemuria.

Prostasia: The Axiom of Protection, used by the Inspired to create suits of armor, protective shields, and sanctuary screens.

Race History: The "playbook" for the Lemurian control of humanity, abandoned after the last Invisible War led to the destruction of the Lemurian power base.

rogue: A genius who belongs to neither a foundation nor a baramin. Many rogues are Illuminated; those that aren't must tread carefully lest madness take them.

Scholastic: The foundation focused on study, theory, and philosophy. Scholastics are mathematicians, linguists, philosophers, and clever abstract thinkers.

Secret Masters: The rulers and guides of the Lemurians, dead for over fifty years now.

Skafoi: The Axiom of Travel, used by the Inspired to create everything from wheeled vehicles to rockets to teleportation devices and dimensional gates.

snake pit: Slang for a zothea. Lemurians traditionally feature a serpent, symbolic of the Roman Goddess Juno, at the entrance to their workrooms.

Staunen: The catalyst of curiosity, amazement, and awe, implying a Breakthrough based on stark amazement.

Technomancer: A genius who uses metanormal power from other beings in the World of Darkness, such as mages, changelings, or werewolves, to fuel his Inspiration.

Third Race: One of the ophidian "true" Lemurians created by the appearance of the island of Lemuria in the middle of the 20th century. Now mostly exterminated.

thesis: A strange personal and philosophical journey that allows a genius to increase in Inspiration.

transgression: The act of betraying one's Obligation, usually for knowledge or (technological) power.

unmada: A genius who believes that his manipulation of Mania represents the truth of the world. All Lemurians and Illuminated are unmada, but so are many rogues and some peers.

Wesley: An underage genius.

wonder: A work of Inspiration created by a genius.

zothea: A Lemurian meeting-place; specifically, the private inner-chambers where the Lemurians gather, distinct from the mercatus. Formally, "zothecae," with each baramin in attendance possessing one zothea.

"What are we doing?" He dropped the half-finished machine on the desk, just hard enough to draw the old woman's attention, but without enough force to damage its delicate mechanisms.

"We are creating the future," the old woman said. She leafed through a glossy copy of *Alloy Blend*, frowning at the garish use of color. Danish modern was in again for robots, it said. The picture showed some hulking Rubix Cube-looking monstrosity with two big glass eyes.

"There's no future here, grandma," the boy said. He poked at the machine, like a kid moving broccoli around his plate. "It's all just mind-tricks, some kind of consensual hallucination. It's not like we can mass-produce this stuff. It'd be like thalidomide crossed with giving kids dynamite."

"Don't look at the technology, then," she said. She flipped a page. More stuff on Mars: ruins, and girls surrounded by rust wearing too much makeup and too little jewelry-slash-clothing. "Look at the raw science, the knowledge you can accumulate. You have an avenue of discovery that regular people don't have."

"What's that?"

"Build something--a flying machine, say--then strip it down. See what's fueled by Mania, what just works. Figure out the principles behind the parts that work normally. Write up said principles in a sane scientific paper. Submit to a sane scientific journal. Profit!"

"You can do that?"

"Mm-hmm. Would you want to?"

"Would I...?"

"Would you want to tear apart what you've made, hunting for mundane truths that you can sell to *Nature* like a photojournalist with salacious pictures? Or would you rather do what you're doing now?"

The boy looked at the machine in front of him for a moment, then picked it up and set to work, delicately adjusting the copper wires that framed the tiny power plant.

"That's what I thought," the old woman said. "Finish your robot, dear, and then I'll make dinner."

Chapter One: The Cosmos

"Nothing is going on and nobody knows what it is.
Nobody is concealing anything except the fact that he does not understand anything anymore
and wishes he could go home."
-Philip K. Dick

A cosmos is not just a universe. It is an ordered universe, one bound by coherent laws and systems. These are the laws the Inspired use; these are the laws the Inspired betray. A genius is not born *ex nihilo*. All have some great motivation for what they do, that defines how they view the world—their catalyst—and most have a unique way of seeing the world and surviving the ravages of Mania—their foundation.

First Principles

Behold My Genius

A genius is a mortal man or woman gifted with extraordinary insight and technical brilliance. A genius is also a concept, an extra-worldly thing, a muse, an eidolon of imagination and beauty, something that alights for a time upon mortals or, sometimes, buries itself deep in the soul of a person and does not leave.

This double-truth follows a genius through life: are they extraordinary individuals gifted with a touch of the impossible, or are they mere conduits for a greater and inhuman power? This question torments many of the Inspired, and they pore over the accounts of their predecessors and propose monstrous and baffling philosophies in order to learn what they are: gifted mortals, or mere shells for the idea of genius? Every genius must ask herself, at some point, am I real? And they must discover for themselves the origin and true nature of their ideas. Are they Inspired, or are they Inspiration personified? Where do the terrible, beautiful ideas come from, if not from their own mind? Are they, in some sense, worthy of the wonders they make, or are they mere midwives for things more beautiful than they—things in some sense, more real?

As a genius grows in power and experience, traditional notions of causality and responsibility can break down, stripping that question of meaning, but many Inspired fear such a fate. Something burns brightly within them, and it can burn away who they are entirely, eclipsing their own minds with a shining thing, a divine thing, that can hollow them out and use them for their own ends. A genius instead clings to those human questions, those not-transcendent concerns. For every young genius who rails at the chains raised around his ambitions, who spits at the world for denying him respect, equipment, peace of mind, there is a seasoned wonder-worker who has discovered that those pitiful mortal frustrations, the tedium of paying the utility bill, of deflecting accusations from one's unInspired friends, of just getting out of the lab for a night and talking to frail, grubby little humans about frail, grubby human things, is all that limits the luminous thing within from burning through the back of their eyes and pouring out into the world.

Some never learn that lesson. They become Inspiration. Their fate is sad, and sometimes beautiful.

The Breakthrough

At Last I Understand

A genius' Breakthrough—the moment she stops being a normal mortal, however naturally gifted, and becomes Inspired—is often a traumatic experience, though it is rarely sudden. Over the course of weeks, months, or even years, a mortal's perspective begins to change. Ideas that once made sense become dubious, unintuitive, even suspicious, while new notions seem to leap unbidden into the person's mind. These might be dismissed as madness, if the ideas don't work, or unexpected leaps of intuition, if somehow they do, but the nagging suspicion remains that the ideas are coming from Outside, that somehow they are not one's own.

Most reasonable people, at this point, retreat from the strange revelations: they shut themselves down, force themselves to go about their day-to-day lives, and if they're lucky or determined, they won't experience a Breakthrough at all. They will live out their little lives like the rest of us. But some rush headlong toward these new experiences, while others cannot or will not escape them, perhaps seeing answers there that have eluded them before. This is how a genius is born.

The first few months after the Breakthrough are traumatic and infuriating: Inspiration, for all its brilliance, fears the light of day. Answers that seem so obvious as the genius labors by night in rented laboratory space turn to nonsense when shown to one's fellows. Many geniuses think they are going mad. Their friends almost certainly think so. Isolation and madness set in as the Breakthrough drags on: the genius is Inspired, but lacks any ability to produce something. He is not yet a maker of wonders.

The First Axioms

Pinning the Butterfly

Eventually things must change. Some remain isolated. Some Inspired are picked up by the Lemurians. There they are told the great Lemurian truth: that they are right, that everyone else is wrong, and that they are the natural leaders of the mortal world, gifted with genius to redefine the world in their image. Others go completely mad, becoming Illuminated, devoured by the light within.

The rest join that loose organization called the Peerage, the society of independent mad scientists. An established peer, or a whole collaborative of researchers, might find a lone genius and teach her how to channel her Inspiration. Others make their own independent discoveries by reading scientific and mathematical texts that are gibberish to the sane but how-to programs for the Inspired. Regardless of how he learns, most geniuses who do not go mad stumble upon the Axioms: "channels" of mad science that apply some modicum of order to the genius' chaotic thoughts, and which can be used to create wonders.

The Axioms are not *reliable*, by any means, let alone consistent. A genius can imagine them as knots of cohesion floating in a vast illuminated sea of Idea, little islands where things almost make sense, though the shoreline shifts fractally with every passing second. Even if a genius doesn't know the names and histories of the Axioms, she sees something solid there, a foundation upon which she can build the scaffolding of something wondrous. She is no longer a flailing half-genius whose equations are gibberish and whose projects sublimate before the eyes of her peers. She has laid claim to a system. She is now a genius in full.

Mad Scientist Population Demographics

So Who Here Is A Genius?

The Inspired really are good at statistics. So, who becomes a mad scientist?

According to *Genius: A Complete Psychological Breakdown*, published by Ayako Von Schreber and Bob "Doc" Sandwich in 2005, the Inspired are primarily drawn from the scientific, academic, and educational fields. It should come as no surprise that almost nine in ten Inspired work or worked in such fields: they are or were scientists, researchers, philosophers, sociologists, professors, mathematicians, engineers, technicians, medical doctors, or computer experts. Many others are drawn from related fields: Inspired populations boast many librarians, historians, field guides, teachers, explorers, mechanics, architects, and all-purpose scholars. This is what geniuses call the breeding pool, the usual "spawning ground" for new geniuses.

Of those geniuses with their origins in mortal science, about 60% came to Inspiration naturally, in the course of independent study. The rest were deliberately guided and spent time as beholden. Either this was a period of apprenticeship before the inchoate geniuses were allowed to embrace their full power, or they were intended to remain as mere servants and technicians, but grew Inspired of their own accord.

About 12% of geniuses become Inspired though they possess no particular scientific or technical background, nor formal training time under another genius. The old term for such a person was a *raudus*, a raw "lump" of genius. They possess no training, but they have raw talent and some kind of frantic drive that pushes them into a Breakthrough. The beat cop who sees one crime too many and decides to mess around with an armored suit, the mother whose children are menaced by mysterious underground machines and who ransacks libraries to find out how to stop them, the laborer who watches a loved one wither of untreatable cancer, and who starts asking around about "impossible" cures...all these people are geniuses for whom the Breakthrough comes first and mundane knowledge comes later.

One genius in three has a PhD or equivalent. (Two geniuses in three will *claim* to have a PhD or equivalent, or will put "Doctor," "Doc," or "Professor" in their names and not feel guilty about it.) This means that the Inspired population is an educated one. However, not every genius comes to her new life in the "traditional" manner of being a scientist and then going mad. Many, perhaps most, are hobbyists and come to Inspiration through those hobbies: amateur astronomers who see something they can't explain and are consumed with obsession, computer geeks whose machines start doing things that don't make sense, or graphic artists who stumble upon a color palette that produces impossible effects.

Many Inspired do not know what they are. It is estimated that between 30% and 50% of all geniuses have no idea that they are geniuses. Though many of these are noticed and introduced to the Peerage or Lemuria within a few years of their Breakthrough, some might go their whole lives entirely unaware of the larger communities in their midst. These are called lonesomes, and a genius is likely to encounter a few during her career. Most work alone; a few form isolated groups disconnected from the Peerage or Lemuria. Lonesomes are becoming increasingly rare in an increasingly connected world.

Of those geniuses who have connected with their colleagues, 45% belong to Lemuria, though that number is dropping, as Lemuria today sees few replacements. 35% are peers and belong to one of the foundations (or are rogues belonging to a collaborative made up of peers). The rest are rogues or belong to an unaffiliated program, either operating independently or in groups that have no connection to or interest in the politics of Lemuria or the Peerage.

There are a lot of Inspired, a fact that startled the Peerage when it was first discovered. Estimates are as high as one person in five thousand being a genius, though many are lonesomes with no idea of what they are. More conservative estimates make Inspired rarer, but there are still a good number of them in any major metropolitan area.

According to the available demographics, the Inspired are 56% male, 40% female, and 4% not answering to either gender identity, with those numbers equalizing slowly but steadily; male-female parity should occur around 2030 according to projections. This is an astonishing change from a 1913 questionnaire that indicated 71% of the Inspired population was male. This disparity is usually explained by the larger numbers of men in the technical sciences and other traditional sources of new geniuses. Among the different foundations, the Navigators are the most male-dominated (at 62%), while Directors, who draw more often from the humanities or "soft" sciences like sociology and psychology, have slightly more women (58%).

"Kid geniuses" aren't as common as many people think. (Though they are often as annoying as people think.) Minors make up 14% of the Inspired population, with one genius in 50 being under the age of 13. These "Wesleys" show a slight proclivity for computer science, with dimensional research also being popular.

Geniuses skew toward higher income levels, with few poor people or people in the Third World capable of affording the equipment and education level necessary even to begin the process of a Breakthrough. There are exceptions, however, to this grim economic determinism: sometimes people in desperate straits manage incredible Breakthroughs and escape their former lives in a burst of Inspiration.

Other than a touch of madness and a burning desire to create, though, geniuses today have less and less in common with one-another. They are no longer drawn from the traditional demographics of educated upper-class white males that dominated the Peerage in the 19th century. Even the traditional spawning grounds of the physical and computer sciences are growing proportionately thin. Breakthroughs now come from almost anywhere, and with the world more connected than it ever has been, a loose international community has formed among the Peerage, joining together people from all over the world and from entirely different walks of life.

Obligation

From Up Here They Look Like Ants

A genius' Breakthrough, once she has mastered his first Axioms and created her first wonders, is often accompanied by a godlike feeling of invincibility and of escape from the fetters of the mundane world. But a genius cannot escape humanity, at least while keeping his humanity intact.

Instead, a genius is bound to humanity by ties of Obligation. The genius can never again be part of everyday humanity, or return to his old life. He can never again walk among his former peers as equals, at least not without danger to himself and to them. But the genius cannot simply be a watcher. Instead he must become a monitor, a guardian of his world from both his own wonders and horrors and those unleashed by others. Often dispassionate, but never disinterested, the genius becomes a protector of common humanity.

That's the ideal, and few Inspired live up to it. Even peers are willing to use mortals as subjects, servants, and pawns, while Lemuria sees itself as their natural rulers. Those Paragons who retain their sense of Obligation are rare, especially as the pressure of finding test subjects, grant money, and a place to work grows more fierce as a genius grows in ability and Inspiration. Powerful geniuses often see themselves more as conduits for the raw stuff of Inspiration than as people who happen to be Inspired, and behave accordingly. Those acts that violate a genius' sense of Obligation are called transgressions. Too many, too often, with too little regard for their consequences, can drive a genius into true madness.

Types of Insanity

I'm Not Mad!

"Involvement with Bizarro transcends words producible by mere tongue, teeth and lips. If my lumbar ganglia could talk, maybe you'd have your answer, Barry. As for my 'position,' well, I'm not sure if such simplistic polarities as *hither* and *yon* obtain in our peculiar quadrant of hypospace. But the address of my bungalow is somewhere on the opposite side of Bizarroville from Speculative Boulevard, and diametrically across from Irreal Avenue. Sometimes late at night they sneak across the tracks, infiltrate my neighborhood, and make unusual mouth noises outside my window. It's taxing emotionally."

-Tom Bradley

A genius should get used to being called mad. Most that don't crack in their first few months learn to take it in stride, for unlike regular researchers, many mad scientists know *exactly* how insane they are. But a genius can slip and fall to true madness. These become the unmada.

Too much Maniacal activity, too fast, can result in the genius cracking as Inspiration overrides parts of her thinking mind. When this happens, the genius becomes an unmada: the raw energy of Mania echoes her own thoughts, confirming her prejudices and beliefs. Those beliefs then reinforce her Inspiration, which produces more bent Mania, producing a hall-of-mirrors or echo-chamber effect where the genius' own subconscious continually validates her opinions while wiping away contradictory data. Some geniuses escape this fate; others revel in it.

The term "maniac" (as a slang term for the unmada) is thrown around rather casually in mad society, but it

has a very specific meaning for the Peerage, and there are three sorts of unmade that generally concern the Inspired.

The first are the independent unmade, sometimes called echo doctors. Most are loners or isolated rogues, vulnerable to the phantasms generated by their own Mania because they lack a model to explain their wonders. Others belong to the Peerage and are tolerated despite their eccentricities. These lone madmen are often pitied by the Peerage, and attempts are made to reach and rehabilitate them.

The most common unmade are the Lemurians, who insist that they are quite sane, thank you. But Lemuria is based on the idea that a genius' own Inspiration provides a totally accurate view of the world—that everyone else is peering through their scanners darkly, not the genius. Lemurians rationalize the obvious contradictions in different members' interpretations of the world by invoking the *Archweltanschauung* of Lemuria, which states that each Lemurian's worldview really is true, but that a "higher" truth maintains them all...or perhaps will maintain them all at some future point, when the Lemurians' work is completed. The details of the *Archweltanschauung* are unclear to all but devoted students of Lemurian epistemology

Many Lemurians spend their lives, like Aquinas reconciling Aristotle and the Church, finding "occult" compatibilities among different Lemurian philosophies. The Lemurians, in the end, are thoroughly cracked, but they have created a system that allows them to function, for all their cruelty and madness. Most geniuses who become Lemurians join them—or more accurately, are recruited by them—within the first few months after their Breakthroughs. Some seek them out so that their broken visions might receive validation; others are granted the "truth" by a Lemurian who discovers a lonesome teetering on the edge of dangerous madness. There is the occasional trickle between the Peerage and Lemuria, but this is negligible: most Inspired remain on one side of the fence or another for life.

The Illuminated are not fooled by Mania: they *are* Mania. The Illuminated have been consumed by their own Inspiration. That alien light burns away their personalities, leaving nothing but a swirling vortex of Mania and alien logic. It's estimated that about 20% of all fall to Illumination eventually: 10% more or less immediately and 10% over the course of their lives. Most of the latter are Lemurians, but no one is entirely safe. An Illuminated becomes "genius," rather than remaining an individual genius. As a mad scientist succumbs to Illumination, raw Inspiration swallows up the genius' personality. He becomes something amazing and terrible, entirely devoid of human feelings or thoughts, a mere conduit for the deranged energy of genius as it floods into the world. The Illuminated are dangerous and magnificent, transcendental mathematical intellects wrapped in the guise of mortal flesh, their actions unpredictable and dangerous. Whatever motivates the Illuminated, they are often as beautiful as they are cruel, capable of composing grand and monstrous projects, as Maniacal light from another world spills from their eyes.

The Consensus

I Still Remember The Scorn of My Peers

Two geniuses in every three come from some kind of "scientific" background, and one of the first things they learn is that, after their Breakthrough, they can never return to their former lives. Their mere existence disrupts research, clouds statistics, and makes a mockery of the scientific method. A genius is not a scientist; a genius is a wonder-worker whose miracles are technological in nature.

Because of this, the life of a genius is a lonely one. Other Inspired can be allies, but are more often competitors for the same meager resources. Mortals can turn a wonder into a pile of scrap with a moment's handling, and the insightful nature of those mortal geniuses most want to associate with—fellow scientists and thinkers—merely hastens the process of disintegration. Those mortals who have embraced the genius' worldview, her beholden, embrace it with such feverish devotion and faith that, whatever their other merits, they are no more than echo chambers for the genius' thoughts.

So the Inspired walk a lonely road, isolated from their assistants, often conspiring against their fellows, and risking ridicule from the general public, unable to return to their own lives; sustained, it seems, by the burning light of Inspiration alone.

Collaboratives

I'll Trade You "Buy Groceries" for "Clean The Zombie Trap"

About half of all members of the Peerage are independent, working on their own or perhaps with a few beholden. They are not necessarily hermits, but they lack the ability or interest to cooperate with other geniuses. Some are engaged in work that is too esoteric or dangerous for anyone else, while others are just not very sociable. Their connections to their foundation is through correspondence and the transfer of money, research data, and resources.

Other geniuses band together in groups of three to ten, pooling their resources in a collaborative. This grants them a measure of protection against both the dangers of their chosen careers (orphan wonders, pissed off Lemurians, the Illuminated, furious mobs) and from the moral, psychological, and economic dangers of being a lone researcher. Funding for non-mad science is cutthroat enough, but trying to scrounge up money for wonders is a tangled mess, as Inspired draw on their trust funds, struggle to find regular jobs to pay for laboratory space, and plead for grant money from the foundations and fellowships that hold the purse strings of the Peerage. It's vicious business, and a collaborative allows its members to trust at least a few of their fellows.

Collaboratives are usually metropolitan in extent, though modern technology and super-science has resulted in the appearance of entirely digital collaboratives. Feuds between collaboratives are considered poor form in the Peerage, but they can get vicious, especially if two collaboratives lay claim to the same mundane source of funding and neither will back down.

No One Is In Charge

Much of Earth's scientific history is due to subtle manipulation by Lemuria. It is unclear how much control this group had, and it has become increasingly obvious that Lemuria had far less influence on the development of the mortal world than they often boast. But what is clear is that for centuries—millennia, perhaps—they kept a rein on the progress of science, mad and otherwise. Their program for the development of humanity, the Race History, stamped out innovation and development wherever it appeared, replacing it with developments spoon-fed to humanity by the Lemurians. Free geniuses were converted or killed.

This system never worked perfectly, and by the 17th century it had begun to unravel. Lemuria took centuries to die, and it fought for every second of life, crushing intellectual revolutions that threatened to destroy its hegemony. But new ideas swept across the world, and the Lemurians could not hold them back. Their techniques grew more severe and unyielding, their philosophy more intransigent, and when they moved to "set back the clock" in a series of wars that would have left humanity a burned-out shell, the free Inspired were moved to action: they confronted the Lemurians in open battle, chased down and killed the Secret Masters that controlled them, and ruined the careful planning behind the Race History. By the middle of the 20th century, humanity was free...and no one was in charge.

No one is in charge now, either. That, say many Inspired, is why we didn't get the future with the flying cars and the "televisors" and the moon bases: those things were in the works, all set for the Lemurians to hand them down to us like manna from heaven, and we were supposed to accept them and let our betters maintain them while we lived our happy, comfortable lives. But Lemuria got its ass kicked, and has your life ever been *comfortable*? It hasn't, say many in the Peerage, because humanity is off the rails, free from control or intellectual extortion.

So no one is in charge of humanity, mundane or Inspired. We've been forging our own path for fifty years—or 500 years, depending on how you count it. It's been a terrible mess, but it's been our mess. There are no Secret Masters, no answers hidden by centuries-old secret societies—well, not anymore—no Golden Age in the past, no Utopia in the future, no free rides, no easy answers, and no one at the wheel. It's just humanity, some of whom can create fifty-foot-tall robots, trying to get by.

And No One Has Any Money, Either

But Lemuria didn't just curl up like an entomologist and die. One of the bitterest truths of mad science is that Inspiration doesn't pay the bills, and even as the nastiest parts of Lemuria—the eugenic breeding programs and the deranged race theories and the monstrous power games—were being put to the sword, the Peerage realized that Lemuria offered an invaluable service: it provided a screen for mad scientists. The Lemurians had entire networks and cartels dedicated to keeping geniuses safe and supplied.

Even after the destruction of Lemuria, these organizations remained, and the Peerage lacked the personnel and expertise to replace them with its own people. So the Lemurians persisted as administrators and support specialists for those rickety networks.

Picture the Registry of Motor Vehicles. Not the real one; picture it like something out of a caricature of a Libertarian's most fevered nightmares. Now add Stalinist-level paranoia, the bitterness of a lost war, and staff it by people who believe—literally believe—that the Earth is flat, or something equally bizarre. And many of them can whip up a pack of flying monkeys to tear out your eyes inside fifteen minutes. That's Lemuria today. And they hold the purse.

Want to hold down a job better than "sales rat at the electronic store"? Do you want to teach? Do you want grant money? What about—Fermat help you—tenure? Then you need to talk to Lemuria. Foundations and collaboratives can help a little, but when things go wrong and a genius' need is dire, for the "I need five kilos of selenium *right now*" and for "I need an advance or they'll cut my power and spoil the cryonics," there's Lemuria. It's a rotting hulk riddled with bitter failures dreaming of past glory, but its supply catalog is second-to-none.

And it's not easy to escape Lemuria. A few geniuses make do in their parents' basements, cobbling together whatever they can from stolen components. A few have trust funds or other forms of wealth that might last for a time. The lucky ones can manage a steady supply of resources, such as tenure or a lucrative government job, but even then, one slip and the genius is revealed as a lunatic, a crank with crazy ideas whose inventions break down every time they're tested. Lemuria is always waiting.

The Monorail of Broken Dreams

Mania is the energy of Inspiration; if Inspiration is the generator, Mania is the electricity. But Mania is a strange phenomenon. It is not generated by geniuses alone. Instead, all kinds of mortal thought can generate low amounts of Mania, with scientific or mathematical thought generating more, and the sort of thought one might call "revolutionary" (politically, scientifically, ethically, it doesn't matter) generating the most.

Mania windfalls occur during times of revolutionary scientific development, especially when an old idea is rejected and supplanted by a new one. These "Maniac Storms" have two effects. First, they birth new geniuses, as regular scientists (or just normal people with a touch too much curiosity) grow obsessed with the new revelations about the world. Second, they generate manes, which are places, things, and even creatures birthed from pure Mania.

When dreams, plans, and revolutions appear, or when they break down in neglect and failure, Maniac Storms sweep across the world. The twentieth century was practically one big Maniac Storm, and no one knows if it's

over. (Brief periods of peace, such as immediately after World War Two and the Vietnam War, were shattered by events as momentous as Sputnik and the computer revolution.) These storms leave the world littered with bardos, false realms brought into existence by their own disproof. Bardos and the manes within them feed on Mania, and even the most hopeful, Utopian bardo either decays into nothingness or finds some way, however brutal, to steal Mania from the real world.

Genius in History and Legend

"3. And Jesus made of that clay twelve sparrows, and it was the Sabbath. And a child ran and told Joseph, saying: Behold, thy child is playing about the stream, and of the clay he has made sparrows, which is not lawful. And when he heard this, he went, and said to the child: Why dost thou do this, profaning the Sabbath? But Jesus gave him no answer, but looked upon the sparrows, and said: Go away, fly, and live, and remember me."

-*The Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, Roberts-Donaldson Translation (Second Greek Form)

The history of Inspiration is shrouded in myths, tall tales, and botched attempts at time travel. What is clear is that there have been geniuses for nearly as long as there has been civilization. The oldest orphans—wonders whose creators have disappeared or died—were found in Irem in the 1980s and dated to around 2500 BCE, and rumors of even older Egyptian orphans and ones of unknown origin are common. Wonders have been found from ancient Egypt and China, Babylon, Mesoamerica, and the Indian subcontinent. The remnants, no longer functional, of Greek, Roman, Persian, and Medieval Muslim wonders are common collector's items among the Inspired, and many orphans from the Renaissance and early industrial period are still in working order, and treated as status symbols by powerful geniuses.

It is also clear that very few of history's great philosophers, savants, and scientists were geniuses. The Inspired are characterized by an inability to express their ideas in universal and comprehensible terms that shape the technological development of the world. Of history's great scientists and thinkers, only Leonardo da Vinci, Nikola Tesla, and Robert Hooke were certainly geniuses. (If reports are to be believed, da Vinci was a rogue who opposed Lemuria, Nikola Tesla was an Etherite, and Hooke belonged to the Invisible College.) Cases have been made for a number of other thinkers having been Inspired (or beholden), including Hero of Alexandria, Paracelsus, Gottfried Leibniz, Benjamin Franklin, Lady Ada Lovelace, Josef Mengele, Amelia Earheart, Philip K. Dick, and countless others, but evidence for these claims is spotty at best. No one involved in the Manhattan Project was a genius or a beholden, almost certainly: the Peerage and Lemuria both watched every scientist involved very closely for fear of what horrors contamination with Mania could cause. In general, history's greatest scientists, from Lavoisier to Darwin to Einstein to Turing, were defined by their ability to communicate universal concepts about the world in clear and unambiguous language to the majority of interested and educated human beings, a feat that very few geniuses are capable of replicating, and a task that would not interest most of them even if they could.

History before the Italian Renaissance—Inspired scholars favor the arbitrary date of 1452, the year of Leonardo da Vinci's birth—is largely obscured by Lemurian propaganda. Early history appears mostly to have been one of relentless Lemurian control, with independent geniuses being either entirely local or, if they made contact with their far-flung peers, suffering destruction at the hands of Lemuria. Tantalizing hints of exceptions to that rule, such as rumors of the Syntaxis League during Alexander the Great's Empire, and the Scholars of Contradiction who were said to have spread across and outside the Muslim world during the 8th century AD, remain elusive. Lemurian records during ancient Rome are extensive, but contradictory, with clear and believable accounts of everyday life mixed with impossible nonsense and murky parables. Many peers consider Rome the origin of Inspiration, but this is incorrect. If Inspiration has any single origin point, it is India; the traditions of genius likely spread from India westward shortly after the death of Alexander the Great. The East may have had a separate Inspired tradition originating in China, though many scholars cite ancient trade in secrets and technologies between Egypt and China as evidence of a fundamentally Mediterranean origin for all Inspiration.

Due to this murkiness, history (as opposed to legend) really starts with the Renaissance. The rapid spread of knowledge resulted in too many mortal mechanics, philosophers, and experimenters for Lemuria to monitor, and countless Breakthroughs. Improved roads led to better communication, and in no time, it seemed, there was a community of Inspired chattering eagerly with one-another, and not interested at all in Lemuria's promises or threats. A similar thing happened in China at nearly the same time. The Lemurians, fearing an ascendant and organized Inspired population in China, ruthlessly annihilated almost all traces of that society. Their work was so thorough that by the mid 17th century, not even their name was known.

But Lemuria had neglected (comparatively backward) Europe, and geniuses had spread everywhere—and worse, *mortal* thinkers had gotten all sorts of ideas into their heads, something that had not happened as extensively in the East. Attempts at repairing the damage with promises or violence proved futile, and Lemuria was forced to activate the next phase of its Race History early.

The result was several centuries of failure for Lemuria, interspersed with spasms of genocidal violence: every time Lemuria focused its efforts on eradicating the Peerage, mortal thinkers made new discoveries; every time they tried to drive the clock back in the mortal world, free geniuses spread and prospered. The loose alliance of free Inspired continued to grow in power, despite constant pressure from Lemuria, until, in the 20th century, Lemuria began an open war that resulted in its near-total defeat.

The last half-century has been bewildering for geniuses, whatever their political allegiance: there used to be something to "push against," a plan that could be embraced or ignored or even harmed, but there isn't a plan now. The Peerage flailed about for a time, directionless. It took the development of the Internet to change that.

Estimates of the genius population before 1990 or so guessed that one person in a million was a genius, giving a total world genius population of a few thousand. That was wrong: once the Inspired got online, superior communication allowed for a revised estimate: there were, probably, at least *a million* geniuses out there, and many of them wanted to talk to one-another. The Internet was a revolution, and it continues to be so: there are now a million Inspired *online* (though many probably have no idea what they are), with estimates of the total genius population being anywhere from twice to ten times that. Since the arrival of the Internet, the life of a genius has changed considerably: the days of laboring in isolation are over, unless a genius chooses to live that way, and while funding and lab space are always at a premium, a genius now knows that a community of peers is no farther away than the nearest connection. How this will ultimately change Inspired society is still uncertain.

Fundamentals

Sometimes it seems like the modern world is all about brand identity. The ancient one was, too. Even if it doesn't matter—*especially* if it doesn't matter—it's important for humans to have tribes, to divide themselves into us and them, and to maintain nested dolls of familiarity and distance. A genius might be walking around with an entire universe in his head, but he's still a human being and possesses the same needs and impulses as any other.

But the foundations—the divisions of the Inspired—do more than just give geniuses a team to root for. They provide a set of core assumptions that a genius needs to not go mad. Foundations provide axioms as well as Axioms, setting the genius on the path to understanding Inspiration, Mania, Obligation, and the wider world into which she has emerged. Further, each foundation offers a clear focus and identity. This is part of a deliberate effort by the Peerage to help a new genius quickly find a place and a purpose before she succumbs to one form of insanity or another.

The Artificers are the tinkerers, the kitbashers, and the compulsive builders and fiddlers. They focus on *mad engineering*. The least likely of the peers to possess a formal scientific education, Artificers are nonetheless

gifted mechanics, architects, roboticists and (increasingly) computer hackers. Anything that can be torn apart and rebuilt delights the Artificers. An old but loosely-organized group, Artificers are united in seeing the creation of the new wonders as primary: theory and application are secondary concerns to the unfettered joy of creation.

The Directors see themselves as the peers' organizational head; the other foundations' opinion on this matter are mixed. Directors study *mad psychology*. Among their numbers can be found Utopian visionaries, malevolent hypnotists, techno-voyeurs, diabolical masterminds, benevolent despots, and powers behind many thrones. This foundation possesses a sinister air—other geniuses imagine smoke-filled back rooms and secret meetings—but newer Directors are more interested in managing research teams than ruling obscure foreign nations.

The Navigators are travelers, explorers, and adventurers, as willing to use wonders as to create them. They are students of *mad physics*, producing hideous energy weapons, vehicles of all sizes and purposes, and dimensional gates. Navigators might be soldiers of science, crime-fighting guardians, or twisted researchers who explore the far reaches of space and time. Their origin in the fires of the Last Invisible War gives them a militaristic cast that can trouble the other foundations.

The Progenitors are the youngest of the foundations, having recently undergone a bloody and horrific purge. Their focus is on *mad biology*: transplant surgeons, cloners, animal uplifters, toxicologists, and genetic researchers make up their ranks. The organization preceding them was annihilated after the rest of the Peerage discovered the extent of their corruption; the reformed group is intrigued by self-transformation and by becoming the philosophies they embody.

The Scholastics are philosophers and questioners, as interested in what Mania is than what it can produce. The oldest extant foundation, these proud descendants of Europe's Invisible College focus on *mad philosophy*, from cutting-edge mathematics and experimental philosophy to the darkest, most ancient secrets of long-dead occultists. Younger Scholastics view themselves as trickster-figures and take on the guise of Loki, Coyote, Prometheus, Lucifer, or other light-bringers, demiurges, or riddlers. Older Scholastics find the younger generation's penchant for riddles and games insufferable, twee, or even blasphemous.

The organization for each foundation is loose and non-hierarchical, which was the intent of the original organizers of the Peerage: they wanted to escape the cliquishness and power-jockeying found in the Inspired salons of Europe and replace them with egalitarian orders that anyone could join.

Instead of ranks and hierarchies, each foundation instead offers an organon: a book (or, nowadays, a series of downloadable files) that contains useful information about the foundation. This is enough for a new genius to master his first Axioms. It also provides valuable information about regular science and technology, and—most importantly—how to convert that information to the development of wonders. The foundations are intended to give the genius a loose sense of belonging and gives him a go-to point for questions, while not stifling him with protocol and an oppressive sense of membership and obligation.

Despite this loose organization, each foundation is riddled with internal divisions between young and old, tradition and revolution. Even mad scientists have their traditions and their customs, passed down from the earliest days of the Peerage, and as the generation that cast down Lemuria gives way to a new, mercurial group, raised in a technological landscape that 20th century peers could only imagine, the tranquil edifice of the Peerage is starting to crack.

Lemuria's baramins are structured differently, with a stricter hierarchy and more ideological trappings. Their groupings—Atomist, Etherites, Mechanists, Oracles, and Phenomenologists—are based on when and where the genius thinks mortal society went wrong. They offer no organon, but rather direct tutoring in the philosophies and doctrines of the baramin.

"The Word EARTH indicates One, Entity or Singularity, but Earth is not an Entity, for the Half of Earth seen from Space cannot exist without the Opposite Half NOT SEEN - existing only as opposites with a plus & minus zero existence. As an Entity, the Opposites will cancel each other out to nothing. Teaching that Earth is an Entity equates to a Doomsday induced by Educators upon Humanity. Earth is not a Singularity, it is composed of Opposites."

-Navigator Organon: "Introduction to Skafoi" (aka "Time Cube Volume 1 of 36")

The Nature of Inspiration

There Is A Pattern In This Chaos

"I have come to believe that the whole world is an enigma, a harmless enigma that is made terrible by our own mad attempt to interpret it as though it had an underlying truth."

-Umberto Eco

Ideas come from *somewhere*. At least the big ones do. Even the most staunchly rational peer recognizes that there is something extraordinary at work in the making of wonders. A thing outside the genius, that transcends mortal ideas of brilliance and talent, is born when a wonder awakens for the first time and stares down at its creator with eyes of smoky agate or photosensitive titanium alloy. An Inspired is nothing without Inspiration, and Inspiration is greater than any mortal mind.

But what is it? What is Inspiration? Geniuses throughout history have tormented themselves with that question, developing philosophies, theories, and incomplete, lurching models to account for all the phenomena that Inspiration gives rise to. Over the years, those Inspired that comprise the Peerage—the society of free geniuses—have produced five foundations with philosophies to explain the nature of Inspiration and to guide new geniuses through their first hesitant experiments.

To the Artificers, Inspired who delight foremost in the creation of new wonders, the universe in which we live is broken, or sick. Once, it worked perfectly, a single, vast organism. But something wounded it, ripped it apart, flinging scraps of broken life across a dozen realities and leaving howling voids between them. But so perfect was Creation that the disparate organs still function: this physical world, the world of mechanical law where people live in skins of meat, still works. It works so well, in fact, that mortals can construct explanations for how this maimed world functions. The genius, however, sees the whole picture: the physical, the psychical, the statistical, mathematical, and teleological; she sees it all at once, and those are her laws, not the half-truths and shadow-answers of mortal science. A genius performs True Science, as if the cosmos were whole and healthy. What she does looks impossible to mortals, but only because they can only see a single cell of a far vaster organism.

Directors, with their focus on social interaction, see Inspiration as the "big lie." A genius, the Directors say, has learned the science of "tricking" the universe. Modern Directors invoke the principles of quantum mechanics: the uncertain nature of the universe means that, for very small scales of space and time, the impossible happens with troubling frequency. And like particles and antiparticles appearing simultaneously out of a common nothing, the genius' deranged inner state and the mad things he produces exist for a time before falling back into mundanity. Inspiration is the art and science of bringing those impossible things from the quantum world into our own macroscopic world, and greater Inspiration allows the genius to maintain her wonders—and her own perilous, half-mad existence—for longer periods of time. There is no final cheat; there's only keeping the ruse going for just a little longer.

To the Navigators, Inspired who are as interested in using inventions as conceiving and building them, there is a sort of existence even in non-existence. "Existence" is merely another property, they say, like "being green," and things that don't exist still possess properties, not as a sort of play-on-words, but literally. It doesn't matter that Darth Vader isn't real, right? He's still evil. So it's no surprise that impossible things happen all the time: a bit of genius, to break down the barriers between the real world and the infinite

reaches of the Not, and a person can call the impossible into the possible realm. It's not easy, and it's definitely not safe, but it can be done. And impossible things are not limited in such mundane ways as those things that make up the World That Is. They can be contradictory, deranged, beautiful, and *meaningful*: they can be wonders, things that should not be, in a world all too cluttered with Stuff That Just Is.

To the Progenitors, those geniuses obsessed with growth and change, Inspiration is the result of "sheer force" between what is true and what is false. Their flexible minds embrace the paradox of Inspiration: a genius is Inspired because he can do the impossible, and since he can do things impossible in this world, he is Inspired. Little glitches in mind and nature, in the world within and the world without, add up, and at times of great internal and external stress, spiral out of control. "Impossibility" itself is a sort of power, and that power can reach a critical mass, and ignite like a new sun. When it ignites, a genius is born.

To the Scholastics, geniuses who see idea and concept as paramount, Inspiration is the manifestation of a more pure universe, a realm of Idea, as it struggles to enter this dark world. There are things in that realm of Idea, living concepts, "intelligences" of a sort, and they are curious. Not malevolent—though their intrusions can be destructive—but determined to enter. Yet they cannot survive in our ruinous world, no more than a human could survive at the black bottom of the sea or in a poisoned wasteland. Instead they have found a halfway point in mortal thoughts, "piggybacking" in minds and (now) in computer code. Some minds, the Scholastics say, are special, somehow uniquely formed, and around these minds, for a time, those beings of Idea can live for a time in our world, as the wonders a genius creates.

While each Lemurian baramin has its own ideas about the nature of Inspiration, Lemuria as a whole rejects the idea that they could be blinkered, incorrect, or insane. Today's Lemurians, like today's Directors, often invoke quantum principles to explain Inspiration. Lemuria says that the natural state of the universe allows multiple overlapping realities to exist, but that the crude and unInspired observation of regular mortals disrupts this natural equilibrium, forcing a single interpretation on the world. Geniuses, by contrast, are freed from this mundane limitation by their more refined intellects and can entertain multiple explanations and even realities at the same time—their observations do not "collapse the wave-form." This means that, for a Lemurian, her interpretation of the world—theories, wonders, and all—is correct, at least locally, and that attempts to contradict her opinions on the matter are not so much the result of competing *ideas*, formed logically, so much as a direct assault on the integrity of the Lemurian's worldview, an assault put forth for ideological reasons. For a Lemurian, communication is violence in a very real sense, as other ideas threaten to destroy the uniqueness of her perspective and replace it with the bland homogeneity of mundane humanity's singular interpretation of the world.

Are any of these ideas correct? It's impossible to tell. The foundations' notions of Inspiration serve to ground a new genius, to help form a model, however incomplete, of what has happened to him; most Inspired pay only nominal attention to the core theory of Inspiration put forth by their foundation. But just having some kind of a model—rather than believing that the rest of the world is mad and they alone are sane, as the unmada do, or caring nothing for mortal reason like the Illuminated—sustains a genius through the first difficult months of his new existence. Those who fail to form some kind of model—any kind of model that moves beyond "I must be right and everyone else is insane"—with which to understand their experiences are prone to madness and psychological disintegration.

The Laws of Mad Science

"Do not keep saying to yourself, if you can possibly avoid it, 'But how can it be like that?' because you will get 'down the drain,' into a blind alley from which nobody has yet escaped. Nobody knows how it can be like that."
-Richard Feynman

What if every failed theory, every idea that didn't pan out, every forgotten and cast-down concept could live again? Because they do, in the mind of a genius, and they come into the world through the hands of a genius.

To one of the Inspired, every failed and aborted idea is a chance to touch the impossible, and by using those broken equations, those contrapositives and ruined fancies, and channeling Mania through them, she can create miracle-machines. Lemurians believe that this proves their theories, and every Lemurian clings to one or more views of the world that gives power to its Inspired believers. Wrapped up in their own brilliance, they see the answers before them, plain as day, and are unable to acknowledge how and why their ideas fail when separated from Mania.

The Peerage, by contrast, drills its new members in one idea before all others: what a genius does is not real. What a genius thinks when creating a wonder—those strange twisted equations that rain through his mind like confetti—aren't real, they aren't true, and even if they were, the genius has no way of knowing if they are, no external vantage point, neither the capacity nor, ultimately, the desire for objectivity needed to explore the potential truth of such ideas. A peer must learn to use those dead and unborn ideas, rather than be used by them. This is the peers' lesson to their own: mad science is *mad*, and believing oneself sane is the deepest form of madness.

Mania is unpredictable and produces what geniuses of a theoretical bent call "non-repeatable phenomena"; events that, while they certainly *happened*, cannot be repeated in a controlled environment, thwarting all attempts at research. Nonetheless, the Peerage has organized a few laws of mad science that provide general guidelines for what the Inspired encounter. These laws are designed to guide a thinker away from Lemurianism and force him to accept one of the Peerage's most important axioms: that geniuses are fundamentally different from sane scientists, and that attempting to engage in scientific-as-such behavior will lead to Lemurianism and/or madness.

The Law of Broken Theory (aka Popper's Little Secret)

Geniuses are not scientists and once a genius catalyzes he will never again do science as he previously understood the practice. His Mania makes that impossible. Geniuses aren't clear what Mania is, but it's clear that the stuff gets into a genius, changing his perspective and disrupting how he relates to the world. In short, it drives him mad. Not the full-on delusional insanity of an unmade or Lemurian, or the alien psychopathy of the Illuminated, but Mania changes a genius enough that he is no longer in sync with the rest of humanity.

This law comes in strong and weak forms, and different peers favor different interpretations. In the strong form, favored by more traditional or mystically inclined peers, what geniuses do is literally impossible by the laws of this universe. They concern themselves with higher—perhaps transcendent—laws, and by the standards of mundane reality, they are wonder-workers in a literal sense, able to do the impossible.

Geniuses who favor the weak interpretation, by contrast, say that geniuses' wonders still conform in some sense to the laws of physical reality, but that the corollary conditions of Inspiration still bar a mad scientist from sane research. Science—science as an enterprise, the thing that gave us the atom bomb and penicillin and square watermelons—requires a number of elements for it to function: trust, communication, and skepticism are all vital components. The Inspired struggle with all three, meaning that as a body, geniuses can't engage in "science" as an activity.

Regardless, it's not as simple as geniuses being regular scientists with unique perspectives. Geniuses deal with non-repeatable phenomena and with deep weirdness, and reliable research is extremely difficult for the Inspired. When a genius uses a theory about the universe to build a wonder, her hypothesis might remain internally consistent, but it will also face competition from other hypotheses that are apparently equally valid. For example, let's say a Progenitor builds a healing machine based on her ideas of Orgone Energy. The genius tests the machine, and it 1) works and 2) confirms the genius' hypothesis about how the universe works.

But then another genius comes along with a device that functions in precisely the same way, but he based it on *completely different principles*. He's muttering something about "quantized life force." But his principles

are also consistent. Neither theory can be falsified with reference to experiments run with the other genius' wonder, yet both theories are, obviously, inadequate to explaining the true nature of the phenomenon, which allows both the Orgone Healer and the Quantized Life Energy Healer to exist. And if the two geniuses reconcile their theories ("seen from a ninth-dimensional perspective, quantized energy looks like Orgone Energy; the transformations become mathematically trivial"), a *third* genius comes along, and her healing machine uses nanomachines that have no place in *either* theory...

The Science Is Science Law (aka the Anticlark Corollary)

Geniuses can no longer engage in traditional scientific research. Nonetheless, they are not "wizards." They do not do "magic." That is, what they do conforms at least in part to what sane scientists would recognize as the laws of physics, and is not entirely a product of the genius' peculiar internal state. Even geniuses who have a strong interpretation of the Law of Broken Theory recognize that wonders can't just pop into existence, fueled by will and desire. No genius can just wave a magic wand and make wonders happen. Even very old wonders—ones built centuries or millennia ago—function in ways that seem recognizable as technology.

A flying machine built by a Song Dynasty Taoist who believes in the five Taoist elements will still fly, and it will fly *based on modern principles of aerodynamics*, even if it also conforms to other, weirder laws. Even if a wonder circumvents or ignores physical laws, such as using some kind of anti-gravity technology to fly, a wonder never flatly ignores the laws of physics. A genius can't just build a wooden bird, dump Mania into it, and expect it to fly because it's "enchanted." The Inspired are miracle-workers, yes, but they're also technologists. There are principles at work behind what a genius does, even if they apparently lack consistency and repeatability, and even if a genius can't figure them out.

The Black Box Law (aka Goldblum's Diatribe)

Due to the nature of Inspiration, a genius can never know exactly how even her own wonders work. Her theories might have remained consistent *so far*, but that doesn't mean that the next experiment or test-flight won't reveal a new glitch that could not possibly have been predicted. When she builds a wonder, a genius deals with principles well beyond anyone's current understanding—possibly beyond anyone's possible comprehension—and this leaves her open to all sorts of baffling and dangerous phenomena.

This means that geniuses can never be certain of exactly what they are doing. Their ideas might be nonsense that are coincidentally correct this time, under a narrow set of circumstances that the genius has witnessed. Just because a coin comes up heads five times doesn't mean both sides are heads, and with Mania, the same rule applies if the coin comes up heads a million million times. Some geniuses postulate that Mania provides a path-of-least-resistance from the genius to a wonder, allowing the genius to formulate a hypothesis that will get him *just far enough* to create a functioning wonder, though the hypothesis breaks down immediately upon applying it to other situations.

The Mere Mortal Law (aka Gilligan's Rule)

Regular people screw up wonders. No one's sure why this is so, but mere mortals have a near-miraculous ability to damage mad science, destroying it or causing it to run amok. If they get their grubby little hands on a wonder, they'll break it and it will explode or eat them. Geniuses don't know exactly why this happens, but every genius knows that letting a regular person near a wonder is like giving revolvers to monkeys: only hilarious from a safe distance. Scientists (sane ones) are included here as mere mortals, and they can be even worse: a group of trained scientists know just how to fiddle with a wonder in a way that will cause it to break down. This further alienates a genius from regular humanity: she cannot communicate her ideas to her peers, or even show off her creations, without risking disaster.

Gilligan's Law, coupled with the Black Box Law, explains why a genius can't just build a teleporter and market

it for three easy installments of \$19.99 on her Website: a mortal who gets his hands on a wonder will break it, and due to the nature of Mania, every mortal who messes around with it will break it in a unique and uniquely horrific way. Attempts to predict what will go wrong are impossible, and will probably just make things worse.

The Obvious Truth Law (aka Mulder's Lament)

While mere mortals will screw up a wonder something fierce, there is no cosmic principle or conspiracy at work that relates to wonders or Inspiration. A mere mortal can see a wonder and she will not forget the experience. There is nothing in a wonder that "clouds men's minds" or that will cause them to grow confused. Wonders show up fine on cameras and videos. There are no vast conspiracies to hide the truth from regular mortals. In fact, the vastest conspiracy out there, Lemuria, wants to make regular mortals aware of their brilliance.

The nature of Inspiration, instead, remains hidden because wonders are not repeatable and testable. A regular scientist who handles a wonder will break it, and if she doesn't break it, she's already well on her way to becoming a genius herself (or at least a beholden). The only results, then, are that a mortal will mess up the wonder (possibly killing herself in the process) or will turn into a beholden or genius and join the ranks of the Inspired, which in turn insulates her from regular people.

Catalyzing

Geniuses do not know what they are, and this torments them. Is a genius a mortal touched by something transcendent, or is he transcendence itself, a mathematical icon given form and temporality in the body and mind of someone who was once human? What is the "genius"? The man, with his unique gifts, or the spirit, that takes up residence in the cramped and fleshy home of a mortal mind? Many peers torment themselves over these questions, for there are no clear answers. A genius' Breakthrough is a traumatic experience that can wipe away sections of memory and radically change parts of a new mad scientist's personality; for every one of the Inspired who catalyzed gradually, her mundane concerns slowly transforming over the course of weeks or months into Inspired conceptions, another experienced a Breakthrough like a lightning-stroke that wiped away consciousness and intellect and left mind and spirit utterly transformed.

Every genius catalyzes in one of five ways; poetic geniuses say there are five sorts of angels or daimons that can descend from on high to inhabit a mortal mind. This psychic spark is both a human mood or impulse, such as anger or curiosity, and a resonant archetype larger than any single human. In the moment between "mere human" and "more than human," the walls of reality crash down and a new light shines behind a genius' eyes, but there is still humanity there, stripped, perhaps, of its individuality and subtlety, but undeniably mortal. Rage, hope, sorrow, jealousy, curiosity: one of these defines a genius so completely that it served as a bridge between the mundane and Inspired worlds. This catalyst defines a genius' behavior, and also defines his Obligation. When morality and sanity fall away, when Illumination gleams like a poisoned star in the genius' mind, he turns to his catalyst, which is his one inseparable link with humanity. While a foundation is more a statement of function than metaphysical intent, and even a Lemurian's baramin is as much procedure as it is philosophy, a catalyst is an internal and unchanging reflection of a genius' thoughts during the Breakthrough that carries through to the rest of his life.

A genius' catalyst does not change: it is stamped on his soul forever, linking a mortal brain to an Inspired vision. A genius' catalyst usually has precedent in his mortal days. A Grimm, a genius of rage, was probably an angry person before the Breakthrough, whether he fulminated and ranted whenever something went wrong or merely carried himself with quiet, carefully-leashed fury. Klagens, who catalyze in sorrow, are often sensitive, troubled souls throughout their regular lives. But the catalyst also needs an event, an initial injection that sets it to transforming the genius' brain. Even if the event is the same or similar for two geniuses, something must happen to open a door in a mortal mind. A young army technician might see one

brutality too many, and lash out with hate and coherent light. An astronomer one night sees something impossibly beautiful off the rings of Saturn, something that never appears again, and grows obsessed with knowing what it was. An animal behavior researcher watches her laboratory burn, her animals running past her feet, and vows an unspeakable revenge against those who doubted her work.

Catalysts aren't social groups. The geniuses in a town who catalyzed to dreams of a brighter tomorrow don't sit down every Friday over tea to make plans. There's every chance, in fact, that they disagree and can't stand one-another. A catalyst is a personal transformation, and is not often shared with others. In fact, only since the 1950s have the divisions received formal scrutiny and analysis; before that time, geniuses were linked with angel-like beings to reflect their inhuman mental state, and connected with the planets of European astrology. (It was a clumsy relic of a system, usually ignored by both peers and Lemurians.) Whether defined as the five catalysts or as a motley assortment of metanormal "overminds," these groups are real psychological phenomena for geniuses, simultaneously reflecting a mad scientist's humanity and her distance from her fellows. In dire straits, a genius can view her catalyst as a blessing, as the only thing that keeps her clinging to humanity, even if that contact is based on hate or on some desperate, paradoxical need for simultaneous vengeance and approval. However, a catalyst also permanently opens a genius' mind to the magnificent horror of Mania, which defines the unique trajectory of her madness. Each catalyst front-loads a Derangement into the genius' mind. This Derangement is always gained first when a genius gains a Derangement for any reason, and it is lost last if a genius works to improve her psychological stability. Insanity plagues a mad scientist, and as her grip on reality slips through malice, negligence, and a rejection of her Obligation to her fellow human, she begins a downward spiral grimly predetermined by her catalyst.

But a catalyst is more than a steward of a genius' sanity and a harbinger of her madness. The first door that opens in a genius' mind reveals truths and possibilities he never before considered, tainted and illuminated by the mood of her Breakthrough, but nonetheless invaluable in its clarity. Each catalyst provides a new genius with a favored Axiom, closely linking a mad scientist's newfound knowledge to his state of mind.

Grimm

The Catalyst of Fury

Nickname: Asuras
Traditional Planet: Mars

You will pay for what you've done.

The pious recall stories of God's wrathful messengers, wreathed in darkness and fire, sent to punish the wicked. From the heartlands of civilization spring stories of banishing angels with flaming swords, of furious Asuras whose anger and passion shake the Heavenly Mountain. Wherever their names are mentioned, these creatures are seen as more than human but less than gods, and lit from within by a fire that cannot be quenched. Some are righteous, and seek their own brutal sort of justice; others are merely brutal, and visit devastation upon the mortal world. All are defined by the fury felt during their catalyst.

A genius who breaks through in rage and fury is a Grimm, and is stamped forever by that initial, primal anger. This might be a vicious hatred for mundane humanity, or a noble fury at the injustice of this cruel world, or a more personal hate, but it is always terrifying, and Grimms are rightly feared for their uncontrolled rages.

Origins:

Grimms are often born amidst violence, either personal or cultural. A country in the grips of revolution and war will birth Grimms, as will places plagued by unfairness, inequality, and great suffering. In more civilized places, Grimms catalyze through personal fury: threats to lives, livelihoods, or families, or merely seeing the injustice of the world every day until they dream of stopping it. Grimms are, of all the catalysts, most likely to come from outside the breeding pool, the result of a mortal trapped in an impossible situation who is forced to fight back.

Many Grimms are furious and temperamental throughout their youth and adolescence. Moody, dangerous, often irrational, they become soldiers, police officers, and brutal overseers. A life of discipline and service tempers some future Grimms, though their rage always burns beneath the surface. Grimms are the most likely geniuses to come from a military or combat tradition, though many come with extensive technical training, as pilots, cyber-crime specialists, or military engineers. Others seem never to learn, and find themselves trapped in low-prestige, high-stress technical jobs in their chosen field, working as EMTs, code monkeys, and construction workers. The least stable fall out of the technical world entirely, or never focus on those pursuits, and drift through life as unstable low-level criminals and violent thugs, though often ones so smart they never get caught.

Not all pre-Grimms are simply angry. Many are righteous, and channel their anger through their moral beliefs. Fulminating preachers, crusading lobbyists, and idealistic—if ruthless—lawyers are all likely candidates for this catalyst, and in safer parts of the world, where social violence replaces the physical sort, these Grimms are more common than the physically violent. Whatever their origins, Grimms are aggressive, smart, and unwilling to accept the cruelties of the world without doing something about them.

Breakthrough:

Asuras are often hands-on people, and they are the most likely than other catalysts to rise up through the ranks as Beholden. But few are simple thugs and leg-breakers, and many are frankly brilliant, though shackled by a rage that prevents them from progressing as far as they should. The Breakthrough often removes that handicap, not by removing the rage, but by focusing it so keenly into the pursuit of mad science

that a Grimm cannot help but grow in power and wisdom.

Few Grimms catalyze simply by beating a man to death in a back alley, though that's sometimes how a Breakthrough begins: a sudden, horrible act of violence, followed by the realization on the part of the pre-genius that she is too smart to get caught. This violence need not be physical: ambitious scientists or scholars might realize that they can crush their opponents in debate with tactics so brutal no one questions them, while lawyers and preachers discover they can sway people as if by the sound of their voice alone. They're cheating, these new Grimms realize. They're breaking the rules, and there's no one there to stop them. From that it's a short, fast plunge, either into catalysis or oblivion.

Not all Grimms catalyze through an active desire to fight back. Some are survivors of brutality and insanity, sometimes at the hands of other Inspired. These Breakthroughs can take a long time to develop, as an Asura cultivates rage, hatred, and intricate plots for revenge. A girl whose family burns to death in a house fire caused by an insane arsonist might work carefully through most of her twenties before unleashing bloody retribution against the arsonist and against the corrupt and incompetent police and firefighters who did nothing to stop the killer. Another pre-Grimm might swallow years of torment and bullying at school, only for his tormentors to watch their chances at an Ivy League college slip away amidst digitally-planted accusations of malfeasance.

A Grimm's Breakthrough is not simply about revenge, however. A Grimm's catalyst shows her that her act of vengeance was not merely about her and her enemies were not just the ones in front of her. She sees a larger world, one dictated by strength and weakness, power and helplessness, honor and injustice, and chooses to embrace that vision. Many Grimms describe religious-like transformations, as if an Angel of the Lord descended from On High and set itself up within (or instead of) the frail and fallible human soul. Those Grimms who come from scientific fields describe a falling away of the world's vagaries, a severed Gordian Knot that frees the genius to act with clarity, certainty, and purpose.

Motivations:

Many Grimms temper their fury with justice. Whether that makes them honorable vigilantes or homicidal purifiers depends on how much the genius' idea of justice diverges from her community's. While a Grimm is as smart as any other genius, they favor direct solutions that bring overwhelming force to bear on a problem. Those that can master their impulsive nature can become deadly, patient planners, waiting for just the right moment to strike.

Grimms don't live based on an abstract vision, like Hoffnungs, nor on a belief in their own unappreciated superiority, like Neids. This can make them seem grounded, despite their tempers. While a Grimm might fly off the handle and get into trouble, if given a chance to plan, Asuras are rarely swayed by sentimentality, paranoia, or any desire except to see the job get done.

Collaboration:

Within a collaborative, Grimms can offer direct but clear solutions to problems. They make effective "mid-range" planners, leaving grand visions up to others, while preventing the collaborative from getting bogged down in pointless squabbles about details. Their moral purity—however it manifests—brings dynamism to a stagnating collaborative, while providing focus and direction to one that's too diffuse and disorganized. Grimms can be exploitative and cruel, but they can also inflame the passions of their fellows and drive them forward.

Favored Axiom: Katastrofi, the Axion of Destruction. No one levels a city block quite like a Grimm, and nothing says "I am angry" like a sizzling ray gun the size of a Buick Skylark.

Derangement: Irrationality. A Grimm's first Derangement always leaves him twisted with fury.

Training:

Grimms gravitate toward aggressive Skills, and many focus on Resistance Attributes to survive their harsh lives. They are hard, tough, and no longer willing to suffer. Those that focus on vigilante justice often train in Investigation (to track down their quarries) and Intimidation (in case physical deterrence is inappropriate). Since many begin life in a rough place, they can lack the Social Merits that other geniuses take for granted, making up for that absence with an impressive array of Skills designed to keep a person going when outnumbered and outgunned: Athletics, Drive, Medicine, and Streetwise.

Their irascible personalities can make Grimms difficult to get along with: many have poor Social attributes, and may prefer the company of wild places to that of man; non-urban Grimms pay particular attention to Animal Ken and Survival, allowing them to get by when not supported by their fellow man. "Firebrand" Grimms, by contrast, can come from careers in religion or lobbying that require impressive Social Skills; these simple personalities sacrifice Mental Attributes for Presence and Composure. They might not be stupid, but they are direct and uninterested in subtlety.

Most Grimms, whatever their origin, develop an interesting selection of combat skills to survive the scraps they get into, and may focus on Brawl, Firearms, or Weaponry, usually depending on what sort of wonders they built with their knowledge of Katastrofi.

Those Asuras who let their anger get the better of them before their Breakthrough have few Social Merits. Most are poor, with few Allies or Contacts. Even those who began life acclaimed and influential may lose it after their Breakthrough, becoming insular and strange, abandoning their old connections and forging new ones—which takes time. Physical Merits, by contrast, are common, and may be geared toward a Grimm's Breakthrough. A Grimm who was poisoned by a political rival but survived through determination and mad botany might have developed Toxin Resistance, while one who spent his Breakthrough chasing criminals across the city's rooftops may have Fleet of Foot.

Concepts: Sadistic vigilante, quiet security specialist, terror of the school board, guardian of the innocent, high-pressure company manager, passionate antiquarian orator, ex-military tech specialist, plague lord, politician with a dark secret

I am nanometers from perfection and no longer answer to any mortal authority. They weren't there for me and I won't waste time helping them as I rise asymptotically toward the ultimate virtue. Every corpse I leave should be one less investigation to make, instead of one more open case. But I'm not here for human justice any more. When you see the Paolenti penthouse burn with white fire and the dreams of serpents, you'll know that, and so will every other man-mask-wearing machine-demon in this city. They'll never love me for the things I've done, but I never asked for love. Only for perfection.

Stereotypes:

Hoffnung: Things only get better in one way, and "wishing it were so" is not that way.

Klagen: Your cowardice is a veil, not a shield. You cannot even protect yourself, let alone fight back.

Neid: "Injustice" is a bit broader than "things that make me sad." Everyone's in pain, not just you.

Staunen: I think I would have understood you, once. There is something amazing out there, but I cannot remember what it was.

Hoffnung

The Catalyst of Vision

Nickname: Principalities
Traditional Planet: Jupiter

We won't have these problems when I...RULE THE WORLD!

When some far-seeing scientists reach their Breakthrough, they catch a glimpse of the world As It Could Be. Buoyed with hope of making the world a better place (for their definition of "better") they set to work, filled with frantic energy, to achieve their vision. From honorable captains of industry who work to place a fusion-powered car in every garage, to lunatics eager to replace "undesirables" with pliant robot slaves, the Hoffnungs dream of a world fundamentally changed by the fruits of their Inspiration. The tradition of the Hoffnung goes back millennia, to the glorious beings who were charged with the caretaking and transformation of nations and kingdoms, and who determined the course of their governance, science, and religion. They were the daimons of Greece, China's emissaries from the Celestial Bureaucracy, and the early Christians knew them as the Principalities, the guardian angels of tribes and nations.

Cities have burned and risen from the earth because of Hoffnungs. They have affected the mundane world more than any other catalyst. Psychological analysis of figures recent and long-dead reveals Hoffnung traits in some of the most influential geniuses, from the founders of the Invisible College—foes all of Lemurian oppression—to the mad vivisectionists and fantastical sociologists who encouraged the growth and spread of Nazism.

Hoffnungs see the world through the lens of history, whether they're Aristotelians or Marxists, whether they're awaiting the Machine Singularity or some kind of techno-gnostic Second Coming of Christ. To a Hoffnung, everything is in motion, and not blindly, but toward a future that they can help bring about.

Origins:

Geniuses of Vision often think big before their Breakthroughs. They are politicians, reformers, dreamers, and futurists, obsessed with what's coming. All hold a picture of what they want the world to be. Hoffnungs may or may not be wealthy, but most are influential in one way or another: those that aren't powerful lobbyists are passionate orators, dedicated civil servants, or just very good at arguing for their ideas on the Internet. Few come from desperate straits, as people in those environments are more interested in day-to-day survival than the transformation of the world.

A Principality is the most likely of all geniuses to receive direct, deliberate training from an existing genius. These Hoffnungs are often gifted mundane scientists in whom a genius sees the spark of future brilliance. Others might start as beholden who are trained (often brutally) to escape their master's worldview and to find their own. Many Hoffnungs, regardless of their precise origin, are heirs to some other genius' legacy. One might work to fulfill the dreams of her dead mentor, to wipe out the Ubermensch infestation of Antarctica, while another surpassed and supplanted his teacher longer ago and now works to transform the world's economy from the CEO chair of one of Europe's most powerful technology companies.

Breakthrough:

Passionate scions of power and privilege, often already aware of the Inspired world before they catalyze,

Hoffnungs often experience the least traumatizing catalysts of all geniuses. Few speak of their old personalities being "replaced"; upon their Breakthroughs, most still seem very much the person they were, with the same ambitions and the same vision, though that vision is often purified through their contact with the light of Inspiration.

Those mortals who are not first cultivated by another genius usually experience a gradual Breakthrough as their understanding of the world broadens. They see answers that were murky before, they see solutions that they never thought possible, and at last, they see how they can change the world, through machinery or political will, and so catalyze. These Hoffnungs, especially the non-scientific among them (many preachers and advocates) can quickly destabilize after their Breakthroughs when they realize that, due to the nature of Mania, they will be unable to effect their changes as easily as they had hoped.

Motivation:

A Hoffnung is defined by hope for a better tomorrow—whatever they call "better," of course. Their attempts to transform the world define them. Hoffnungs are, of all geniuses, those most determined to make their wonders "work" for regular people, and they are often the most proficient at creating objects of mundane science and technology. Whether building wonders, messing around with mundane technology, or looking to "adjust" human society to make it more amenable to the genius' vision, the Principalities are always defined by what they are doing, at any given moment, to make the world they imagine into reality.

Once Inspired, a Hoffnung often works to understand the underpinnings of Mania and how it relates to human interaction, in a desperate quest to escape the fetters of Havoc. This process can be dangerous—both physically, since Havoc is not to be trifled with, and psychologically, since it can lead to believing that one's wonders *should* work—but it also makes Hoffnungs some of the foremost experts on Havoc, and gives them a firm grasp of the principles behind it, and how to avoid it.

Collaboration:

Many geniuses think Hoffnungs join collaboratives so they can get other people to work on their projects. This isn't entirely fair, but there is some truth in it. Hoffnungs rarely cooperate with their fellows, with the exception of "multigenerational" Hoffnung clans created by a long line of genius-cultivators, and even those groups are prone to self-destruction—not to mention being weird and intellectually incestuous. Instead, Hoffnungs seek out other geniuses whose values and dreams don't differ too much from their own, or who lack the sort of ambition that defines a Hoffnung. In these groups, a Principality can feel at home, working on her grand projects while not stepping on anyone else's vision.

A collaborative with a Hoffnung always has an excellent source of new plans. Geniuses can benefit materially and scientifically by following in a Hoffnung's wake. A Hoffnung's ambitions can get her (and the rest of the collaborative) into trouble, but it can also offer a group direction, energy, and ambition.

Favored Axiom: Metaptropi, the Axiom of Transformation. Principalities are masters of changing the physical world, bending it to conform to what they want to see.

Derangement: Narcissism. Even the kindest Hoffnung, deep down, believes that he is entirely right and correct, making him dangerous to those who cross him.

Training:

Hoffnungs want to change the world, but they can take almost any approach to doing so. Their polemics make Expression a common and useful skill. Those that want to change human behavior are adept at interpersonal interaction, with high Social Attributes along with good scores in Socialize, Persuasion, and Politics.

Hoffnungs who want their wonders (or something close) in every home focus on high Crafts or Computer scores and Social Merits like Allies, Fame, and Status. Those Hoffnungs who trace their lineage back to older members of their catalyst often benefit from inheriting a Laboratory, and may still have a Mentor.

Not all Hoffnungs are benevolent dreamers: those that want to twist the world into conformity with their deranged imaginings emphasize Manipulation, Intimidation, and clandestine skills like Larceny and Subterfuge. Many monstrous visionaries—and a few extropic idealists—are experts in Medicine. The more aggressive masterminds often keep groups of beholden on retainer to intimidate and silence enemies.

Not many Hoffnungs are physically oriented, though some prefer to change the world one ass-kicking at a time. These crusaders rarely possess the sadism of Grimms—though their clinical precision may offer little comfort to their victims—but they learn many of the same Skills: Investigation and Intimidation to learn what they need, Drive to cover ground, Larceny and Stealth to get in unnoticed, Brawl to teach someone a lesson, and Firearms and Weaponry, to make someone into a lesson.

Concepts: Cold fusion researcher, deranged medical eugenicist, acolyte of the Singularity, guerrilla revolutionary, post-Y-chromosome feminist, ruler of a hidden Utopia, (virtual) town planner, cybernetic-replacement addict, guy who's really excited about fluoride in the drinking water.

You've seen it on the billboards and the trash-strewn alleys, amidst the halls of the powerful and in the tenements of the desperate: the Change. It's coming, and soon everything will be different. Our world will transform itself—in fire, if necessary, in blood, certainly—and be reborn, fresh and new, to gaze out on the universe with innocent and wondering eyes. And I am the herald of that Change. So forgive me if I cannot hear your words or your screams. They are too small. Do you hear the mayflies screaming tonight? Neither do I.

Stereotypes:

Grimm: Punching the broken computer does not fix the broken computer. Repairing the broken computer fixes the broken computer.

Klagen: It doesn't do to feel sorry over *this* death or *that* atrocity; you must feel sorrow over the entire structure that allows such horrors to unfold.

Neid: There's a reason that everyone thinks you're crazy. It's because you haven't yet shown them how right you are.

Staunen: Stop staring slack-jawed and get to work; Utopia isn't going to achieve itself.

Klagen

The Catalyst of Loss

Nickname: Cassandras
Traditional Planet: Venus

No, you fools! You'll doom us all!

Mad scientists, like many other people in the World of Darkness, have often lost something dear to them: a loved one, a family, a childhood dream. This loss can result in a sorrow so deep that it transforms the scientist utterly, leading to a Breakthrough in pain and regret. Whether the genius then wants to reclaim what he has lost (resurrecting his dead wife, restoring the toppled government of his homeland) or merely works to prevent such tragedies from happening again, he has become a Klagen.

Creatures of sorrow and compassion, Klagens resemble Buddhas more than angels, walking through a world so defiled that the only answer is to weep. They are also harbingers and doom-sayers, seeking to avert whatever catastrophe drove them to catalyze. Different Klagens warn humanity about everything from global warming to the Malthusian population bomb to the shadow-stealing AIs from the future, with varying degrees of success. For this trait, other geniuses have referred to them as prophets, oracles, Jonahs, and harbingers, but today their most common nickname acknowledges the Klagen's often frightening prophetic accuracy, while recognizing the frequent failure of their warnings to be heeded. They are the Cassandras, moved by a godlike awareness to speak out against the common doom rushing toward humanity.

Origins:

Klagent are the least likely of all geniuses to bear seeds of their catalyst before the tragedy that defines them. They may be sad, thoughtful people, but others are equally likely to be exuberant, full of life, and passionate—though rarely is a pre-Klagen abstractly disinterested in human affairs. But despite this common thread of being connected to humanity, Klagent come from all walks of life. They don't start off angry like Grimms or cultivate jealousy like Neids.

Mad doctors are more often Klagent than any other catalyst, since there is so much potential for tragedy in the healing arts. Even Klagent who begin in other fields can experience a desire to study medicine after their Breakthrough. But people who will become Cassandras come from nearly any walk of life, since tragedy can strike anywhere. Some are construction workers and machinists who lose friends to accidents, mismanagement and plant closings (often caused by their own failures; catalyzing mortals who can blame someone else more often become Grimms or Neids). Others are researchers who watch friends grow obsessed with studies that eventually destroy them—some Klagent almost seem like echoes of another would-be genius, annihilated during their Breakthroughs—while others grow obsessed with their own studies, only to wake up one day and realize that everyone has left them, and all that remains is their work. Comparatively few Klagent come from outside the scientific community, however; most regular people faced with tragedy move on, or fall to despair; few see a solution or a way to stop those tragedies from happening again.

Breakthrough:

Cassandras are born in sorrow. This might be either a personal loss or general sorrow at the state of the world, but most often it is a combination of the two: a terrible loss that the burgeoning genius suffers that

sheds light on one of the greater tragedies eating away at the World of Darkness. This loss is sometimes the genius' own fault. It is not often violent—violent tragedy leads more often to the creation of Grimms—but it is often sad, often pointless, a tragedy that reveals the underlying cruelty of the world.

Klagens are in fact slightly rarer than other catalysts, since the quiet contemplation necessary to catalyze as a Klagen matches poorly with the frantic Mania coursing through a new genius' brain. A Klagen's tragedy and her transformation must align just right: an aerospace engineer whose secret love gets dragged screaming into an air intake might instead catalyze as a Grimm (someone else is at fault), a Hoffnung (I can make sure this sort of thing never happens again), a Neid (someone planned this to ruin me), or, in all likelihood, not catalyze at all. The genius' tragedy must occur at the very cusp of a conceptual breakthrough. Perhaps the secret love feared the Klagen's growing obsession with the new technology, and foolishly snuck in to run her own tests. Betrayed, but not vengeful, the aerospace engineer catalyzes in sorrow and regret, but also sudden understanding: a way to perfect the engine, to give the tragedy meaning.

Motivations:

The nature of a Klagen's loss determines her subsequent behavior. Some work to reverse the tragedy that befell them, while others try to prevent their fate from befalling others—possibly against their will. Other Klagens begin their Inspired careers peculiarly directionless, even fatalistic. Faced with strange new abilities, many retreat into bewilderment, wondering what to do with their ruined lives.

But Mania doesn't let them rest. The visions always come: plans to undo the damage they've caused, dreams of how to take away pain and sorrow and despair, and most of all, an overwhelming urge to warn others about the doom that rushes toward them. This prophetic, often futile doom-saying—a Cassandra complex—defines Klagens, who are haunted by the failures of their past and nightmare images of the future. This constant dread and despair can drive a Klagen insane if she is not careful, goading her into irrational, hysterical behavior.

Collaboration:

A Klagen can provide grounding and stability for a collaborative. This isn't to say that the Klagen's job is always to say, "I don't think that's a very good idea," but once a room has three or more mad scientists in it, there are a lot of bad ideas that get thrown around. Someone whose sorrow grounds her Mania can be invaluable in preventing horrible ideas from turning into horrible misadventures. Klagens are also the most adept of any catalyst at analyzing the perspective of individual humans. Where a Hoffnung can focus on society, a Klagen can study the behavior of people in all their ugly uniqueness, giving a collaborative alienated from humanity a glimpse into the soul of the sane world. A collaborative, by contrast, keeps a Klagen active. Too many Klagens sink into despair and inactivity, drowning in regret or paralyzed by dreadful apocalyptic fantasies; a dynamic, energized collaborative can give a sorrowing genius purpose, direction, and motivation.

Favored Axiom: Exelixa, the Axiom of Restoration. Many Cassandras work to prevent the horror that befell them from ever happening again, or if it does come, to reverse those effects.

Derangement: Depression. Klagens are naturally prone to misery and all-consuming despair.

Training:

Klagens come from backgrounds that see great suffering. Many are ex-military or former doctors, with the Skills to back up those origins. They are often gifted, possessing high Intelligence or some other Attribute, but prone to moral failings that imply a feeble Resolve. Cassandras that come from technical or blue-collar positions, such as auto-mechanics and construction workers, often have excellent Dexterity, Intelligence, and Wits, while those who saw their political dreams destroyed can be highly influential speakers when they find

the motivation.

With so many Klagens coming from the medical world, Medicine is a common Skill. Others see the world of the metanormal and supernatural as the quickest route to healing the damage they've caused, and become masters of the Occult, while others try to escape humanity entirely for a time, and learn self-sufficient Skills like Survival and Animal Ken. Those that fall out of society completely become the wandering mad, their street-level experiences reflected in Skills like Brawl, Larceny, and Streetwise—though few Klagens remain in this state for long.

Concepts: Disgraced software engineer, geneticist who made a fatal error, unwitting creator of monsters, shack-dwelling crazy person, prophetic ecoterrorist, fallen trophy wife, nihilistic politico, scholar of genocide, hollowed-out social worker.

When I was in high school my teacher told me that there are more people alive today than have ever lived. Don't worry: she lied, then got cancer. (Not my fault.) We live atop a mountain of corpses. The Earth is swimming in humans, above and below the ground, so when I see you trying to raise the dead, I'm torn. On the one hand, I recognize your despair. On the other hand, do you really want to spend the rest of the week fending off a zombie apocalypse as the Earth vomits up her dead? AGAIN? Come on, man, think this through: every time you try this, we end up fighting zombies. I hate zombies. Just put the syringe down.

Stereotypes:

Grimm: Rage just makes more hurt. Reflect on what has hurt you; that will stop it from happening again.

Hoffnung: We can hope for small victories, maybe. Revolutionary change is beyond the reach even of Inspiration in this awful world.

Neid: The terrible truth is that no one cares about you enough to hate you.

Staunen: What childish whimsy, to pretend to see "beyond" the horrors of this world. In truth you just ignore them.

Neid

The Catalyst of Banishment

Nickname: Wyrms
Traditional Planet: Saturn

Scoff at me, will you? I'll show them! I'll show them all!

When some genius is ranting about how they made him a laughingstock, but soon she'll have her revenge, chances are she's a Neid. Breaking through in shame and to the scornful laughter of others, the Neids maintain their ties to humanity by burning with spite and jealousy. This choke-chain nonetheless binds them to their fellows: as long as a Neid desperately craves the approval of her peers (even in their final moments), she remains sane.

Neids are probably the most common mad scientists; they certainly make up a large percentage of Lemurians, and even among the Peerage, there is an irresistible lure to embrace jealousy, spite, and hate. By many standards, especially those that concern the Inspired, geniuses really *are* better than regular mortals. They're smarter, more gifted, more capable of pushing themselves. And mere mortals often do hate, resent, and fear the Inspired and their creations. But being a Neid is more than reacting to the scorn of one's peers. Neids seem almost like magnets for scorn and derisions, and their entire personalities are defined by jealousy toward those who have what they want, and hatred for those who would attempt to tear them down. Some geniuses view Neids as the most insane of all, but Neids often surprise others with their lucidity. Look at humanity, they say, hungry for blood, twisted with hate, wanting to destroy more than to build up. Neids don't fear that people hate them; they *know* people hate them, and they have the sense to protect themselves.

In previous centuries, Neids were strongly associated with the demons of selfishness and envy. They were Satan the Dragon, and also linked with reinterpreted Norse myths of Loki or the drakes who guarded treasures. Catholic theologians classifying Leviathan as the demon of envy sealed the connections between Neids and Satanic, draconic forces, and Neids have ever since been referred to as Wyrms—behind their backs, of course.

Origins:

Neids are the most likely of all geniuses to have been part of the traditional breeding pool. Many belonged to cutting-edge research groups and saw something none of their peers could see; others were trapped in safe but mediocre scientific careers until one day Inspiration hit. All, of course, suffered during their Breakthrough, usually leaving trails of broken friendships and destroyed reputations. Despite their origin, almost no Neids *remain* in science after their Breakthroughs; while some geniuses can fake legitimate research, the Banished are often too bitter and resentful to remain amidst the consensus.

Of all geniuses, Neids are also the most likely to go crazy well before their catalysts. This madness is subtle, at first, and usually begins either as skewed reasoning or paranoia. Skewed reasoning quickly results in a decline in the pre-Neid's job performance; this, especially if it's coupled with claims of "miraculous" results (caused by stray Mania as the genius begins his Breakthrough), results in resentment and pity from the budding genius' peers. Those Neids that catalyze first through paranoia often do excellent work, but they become increasingly afraid of sabotage or theft, that someone is trying to destroy or steal their research. Even if this is the case, as a pre-Neid grows more paranoid, his behavior becomes increasingly erratic and dangerous.

Breakthrough:

A Neid's Breakthrough often begins with a scientific marvel: a cold fusion generator, a cloned human, a car that runs for days on a teaspoon of gas. They're not quite wonders, but they're incredible. Of course, they're also held together with Mania, which is notoriously unstable, and the inevitable collapse is often enough to bring a proto-Neid right over the edge into screaming, cackling Inspiration.

Even those Neids who do not arise from the breeding pool often create something new and extraordinary, which might be anything from a get-rich-quick scheme to a perfect plan for reinvigorating the parish. But madness comes just as quickly, followed by jealousy, suspicion, and the scorn of others. It's the alienation, not the technology, that makes a Wurm: the realization that people will take what the genius has created for their own selfish ends, or worse, that they'll laugh and call the genius a fool for what she's done. The device, the creation, is not a true wonder—usually. It's merely a prop around which a Neid spins a narrative of deceit and contempt that will bind her, forever, to the rest of humanity in a sick, abusive relationship based on exploitation and betrayal.

Motivations:

More than anything, Neids want to demonstrate the truth and worth of their convictions. Whether this desire is directed at their old colleagues or to their new peers, Neids need to demonstrate their capability and vision. Those who were mediocre scientists before their Breakthrough are especially eager to show how Inspiration has transformed them. For some Neids, this motivation is based on simple jealousy or insecurity, and an urge to gloat after proving everyone else wrong. But not all Neids are so small-minded and insecure: others want to raise their former peers up to their level, to spread Inspiration as far as they can, to show their old colleagues what a gift, and what a curse, genius can be.

Neids are also intrinsically suspicious. They hide secrets from all but their closest friends (if they have any), use ciphers and riddles to conceal the true meaning of their words, and plan to be treated as horribly as one human being might possibly treat another. When their survival is at stake, the desire to share and to justify falls away, replaced by an overwhelming, almost atavistic need to avoid theft, betrayal, and victimization.

Collaboration:

Wyrms have a bad reputation, but it's important for other geniuses in the collaborative to realize that Neids aren't any crazier than anyone else hanging around the water cooler at the laboratory. A Neid suspects the worst from everyone, and while this can be dangerous if she can't drop her guard at home, it's invaluable when vetting an external agency. Is the crazy cat lady down the road a threat? A potential ally? A Lemurian spy? An Illuminated cannibal? Or just a crazy cat lady? The Neid can find out; they're paranoid, but their paranoia gets directed more often at real than imagined threats. Neids are also fiercely loyal to those they can trust. That, coupled with their suspicion of outsiders, can cement a group together like nothing else, especially one in hostile territory or with few other friends or contacts.

Favored Axiom: Epikrato, the Axiom of Control. At the end of the day, if they will not listen, the Neid will *make* them listen.

Derangement: Suspicion. Neids are prone to paranoia, jealousy, and constant fear.

Training:

Wyrms are often the most security-minded of the Inspired, focusing on acts of subtle retribution: Computer, Investigation, Stealth, and Larceny are areas of particular focus, and most Neids favor Subterfuge over other Social skills. Generally, Neids prefer the oblique approach.

Many Neids are brilliant, and even those that were mediocre scholars before their Breakthrough feel their intellects transformed by Mania upon becoming Inspired, meaning that most favor Mental Attributes. Many Neids make poor Social specimens, though, with arrogance, suspicion, and sheer orneriness limiting their ability to make friends and influence people. A few Neids, though, keep their bitterness well-hidden, and are often masters of Manipulation, but few of the Banished have much Composure; the slightest hint of rudeness can send one careening into an insane rant. Whether a Neid is physically-oriented varies greatly; most come from academic or technical fields, which makes it unlikely, but the few non-scientific Neids who appear are often tough and physically capable, and others see fitness of body as an important adjunct to fitness of mind.

Despite their frequently limited Social abilities, many Neids have old contacts and favors owed that give them an impressive collection of Social Merits: Allies might be rare, but Contacts, Resources, and especially Status are all very common, and even Fame is not unheard-of; at least one infamous Neid even has a late-night radio show where her rants about the government destroying her research have made her a local celebrity.

Concepts: Paranoid hacker, pyramid scam victim, tale-telling Ufologist, neurotic security consultant, calculating mastermind, betrayed researcher, ex-CEO holed up in the woods, jittery cat burglar

First let me tell you that human beings without mathematical souls are transparent to God and thus mean nothing to Him. So you ask, why does God (who is the Equation) care about window-souls? He doesn't, but the Devil, whom I define as our negative thoughts, does, and directs window-soul humans at us to destroy us. These humans think they think and feel, but they are without the highest Number and their feelings are only our self-doubt. Destroy your self-doubt, be free of their hatred. Or destroy them, and be free of your self-doubt. Vengeance is time- and space-symmetrical, like any good equation.

Stereotypes:

Grimm: Anger is good, but ask yourself, what right do you have to be angry? That's right: you deserve to be angry because they hate you, and they've taken away what you love.

Hoffnung: Alright, "make it better." I can get behind that. But you need to know who wants to make it worse first.

Klagen: Other people get hurt all the time. Why can't you see the pattern in it?

Staunen: Yes, it's a candy-coated wonderland, isn't it? The cosmos has its boot on your throat, and you're admiring the shoelaces.

Staunen

The Catalyst of Curiosity

Nickname: Grigori
Traditional Planet: Mercury

Oh, the things I have seen...

There are rays of light even in the World of Darkness. The Staunens have found them and want to share them with the world. Their Breakthrough involved a moment of superlative wonder and near-religious awe at the cosmos or some aspect of it, and that starry-eyed amazement never truly left them. This does not make all Staunens decent people, of course—what fills a genius with wonder may fill a normal person with horror and disgust—but they nonetheless carry a spark of amazement with them wherever they go.

Quintessential explorers, Staunens work to tear down the veils that hide the truth from our eyes. This makes them both terrifying and magnificent: their curiosity itself is an affront to the established order, an enemy of tranquility and decorum. In their hunger to know, Staunens most epitomize the mad scientist, ripping away falsehoods to reveal the hideous truth behind the lies we tell ourselves.

Before the rise of modern psychology, popular conception linked geniuses of this cast with the Grigori, the watching-angels of Cabbalistic mythology. This mythological designation reflects an element of the Staunens that is not clear from the simple German term: psychologically, many Staunens seem fit *only* to watch, to analyze, and to record; their attempts to interact with the worlds they see can birth nightmares and chaos.

Origins:

The Staunens saw something before their Breakthrough and it consumed them. Most Staunens were hobbyists: not full scientists, but not rank amateurs either; they were explorers, tinkers, and investigators. Seeing something new and strange, whether in the flicker of a telescope or the scrolling lines of computer code, they grew hungry for more. Staunens not drawn from the breeding pool are often investigative journalists or private investigators who stumble upon something too weird to dismiss but not quite horrifying enough to bury behind fugues and night-terrors. They might never even see what they hunt, whether it's an immortal Ophidian who controls the town's mayor or a secret spawning-ground of electronic manes. Instead, the fascination itself is what drives these amateur sleuths and mystery-seekers.

Breakthrough:

Of all the catalysts, the Staunens often experience the least traumatic Breakthrough: any horror they experience is often postponed until they gain sufficient talent and insight to answer the questions they've unwisely raised. Proto-Staunens in the scientific community may operate on either the cutting edge of their fields or in the historical trenches, uncovering forgotten twists and turns that could have utterly transformed a field of knowledge. Whether forging ahead or digging into unexplored crevices, they fall deeper and deeper into mystification and bewilderment. Eventually the fascination reaches a critical mass, turns into obsession, and results in the genius' Breakthrough.

Not all Staunens drift leisurely into a broader world. Others are dragged there in a flash, exposed to things beyond their ken or comprehension, then left abandoned in the cold light of mundanity. Whether they're astronomers or farm hands, geneticists who watch secret words appear in DNA or kids who realize the

neighbor's dog talks to Jupiter at night, they've seen too much and now they can't go back. Some just blunder into enlightenment, while a few get introduced by other geniuses, eager to crack open a fresh new mind, but for these Staunens, their Breakthrough and the time afterward can be traumatic and confusing as they work to see again what opened their minds.

Motivations:

Consumed by curiosity, Staunens spend most of their time looking for new ways to sate it. They plunge from one project to the next, seeking answers at almost any cost. This can make them dangerous, but also useful: other geniuses can hitch their own work to a Staunen's frantic investigations. Some Grigori focus on a single question for years, or perhaps even their whole lives: What is the nature of death? What is the origin of the universe? Just what the hell is *in* this puzzle-box I got for my eighteenth birthday? Others leap from project to project, letting Inspiration push them along like a muse as they explore one mystery after the next, often leaving chaos and turmoil in their wake.

Collaboration:

Staunens are prone to obsession, which can be dangerous and isolating. A few have been found rotting in their seats beneath the observatory's telescope or dessicated and decayed in front of still-glowing computer screens. Collaboratives are a great way to avoid dying alone and forgotten, and they are also sources of new perspectives. Too many Staunens find themselves staring at the same patch of space or time, day after day; other points of view are vital to give the genius a new perspective and allow him to escape the doldrums of repetitive analysis.

The Grigori are also useful to the rest of the collaborative insofar as they provide a distraction from the mundane. Most other catalysts are focused on the human condition; Staunens, by contrast, focus entirely on the extraordinary. This can make them cold, strange, and alien, but it can also give other geniuses in the collaborative the lofty perspective they sometimes need. When a Hoffnung's plans to change the world fall apart or a Neid chokes on bitterness and spite, the collaborative's Staunen can help them escape the disappointment of the human world for a time.

Favored Axiom: Apokalypsi, the Axiom of Discovery. The Staunens are often desperate to see more of what they first glimpsed, and Apokalypsi grants them that.

Derangement: Fixation. Grigori are prone to minute obsession with things no reasonable person would find engrossing.

Training:

Staunens are often more like "pure scientists" than other catalysts, exploring the world for its own sake. They often study Computer and Science more than Crafts, and they are the most likely to study the Occult. Those that seek out the weird and extraordinary have a variety of Physical Skills like Larceny and Survival, while Staunens who began their careers as journalists or investigators usually possess Investigation, Politics, and Subterfuge.

Catalysts of curiosity often result in a more stable personality than with other mad scientists, granting higher Composure. Those Staunens able to articulate their amazement at the world often possess blazing Presence. Staunens without Social Attributes are also common, though; these often possess staggering Intelligence and Wits to record and make sense of observations, as well as high Resolve to survive weeks or months of repetitive study for little reward.

Many Staunens let their previous social engagements melt away upon their catalyst, meaning that Social

Merits like Allies and Fame are comparatively rare. In contrast, Staunens often have excellent senses and memories, making Merits like Eidetic Memory common.

Concepts: Forgotten stargazer, cryptid-hunter, bright-eyed theologian, cartographer of mysterious places, obsessed genealogist, manipulative social engineer, lucid dreamer

I'm afraid I don't see things like you do. I mean it: I'm afraid. What if the things I find beautiful drive you mad? What if they hollow you out like clever little squirrels getting nuts for the winter, except the nuts are your eyes, and winter is, I don't know, maybe the Rapture or something? And I'm just smiling while your face gets ripped apart because I think it's beautiful? These things worry me sometimes, when I'm not not looking at the night sky. So I spend a lot of time looking at the night sky, and not looking at your face and thinking about squirrels.

Stereotypes:

Grimm: Some people mistake blind fury for a sense of true justice. There is justice in the world, but beating up polluters like you're Captain fucking Planet isn't what it looks like.

Hoffnung: The world is magnificent as it is, not just as you want it to be.

Klagen: Sorrow is a local and ultimately futile feeling before the majesty of the cosmos.

Neid: There is more to Heaven and Earth than your endless, insufferable whining. I have heard the song of the universe, and it's telling you to shut up.

Other Catalysts:

There are rumors of other catalysts based on other kinds of societies. One catalyst, said to have existed in China before Lemuria's eradication of their Inspired society, focused on a sort of enlightened embracing of the universe-as-it-is. Another concentrated on an Inspired mastery of one's place and position in the complicated social strata of those societies. The catalyst of "Enthusiasm," triggered by a genius touching the Godhead during his Breakthrough, shows up in rumors and legends. Nonetheless, almost all known geniuses belong to one of the five catalysts listed above.

The Core Axioms:

Those Axioms tied to the catalysts—Apokalypsi, Epikrato, Exelixi, Katastrofi, and Metaptropi—are sometimes called the "core" Axioms, and are considered easier to learn at their basic levels than the others, since they are tied directly to states of mind.

Language:

How come catalysts are in German, Axioms are in some first approximation of Ancient Greek, and foundations are English, while terms like "genius" and "manes" are very bad Latin, and other words are drawn from Buddhist and Hindu philosophy and languages like Pali and Sanskrit? Because the lexicon of mad science was standardized at different times.

The most general terms are the oldest: The Inspired of ancient Rome were referring to themselves as "genii" and speaking of manes, penates and lares (beholden), and other terms as early as the 2nd century BC. These terms, still used by Lemuria, indicates that Lemuria held influence over the Eternal City, though the Lemurians themselves insist that they arose in India many centuries earlier. Most of the Indian terms are in fact more recent additions, appearing in the 19th century. While there is some evidence that Lemuria originated in India, those records were wiped out centuries ago; a new Indian tradition was "rediscovered" during the Victorian era.

Axioms were standardized in France during the late 18th century. The original versions were, in fact, in French (*Découverte, Domination, Métamorphose, Nous, Progrès, Ravage, Sanctuaire, Vaisseau*), but some argument with English geniuses, coupled with the accidental resurrection of Pythagoras, led to the Peerage adopting a Greek standard. The French names are often still used on some official documents in the Peerage and by French-speaking geniuses.

German scientists fleeing the Nazis helped standardize the philosophies of the Inspired, which they labeled catalysts. Using FREUDIAC, a primitive cogitator built to replicate the personality of you-can-guess-who, they deciphered the philosophies and motivations behind several leading Nazi geniuses, either convincing them to defect or laying the groundwork for their destruction. After the war, Inspired all over the world used FREUDIAC's *A Guide to the Psychology of the Exceptionally Gifted* as their model for understanding catalysts, making the German terms household names.

The foundations popped up in different times throughout history, though the standard organization of five groups, each with specific names and "brand identities", arose in the days before the Great War, at which time the term "the Peerage" was officially adopted. (It had seen unofficial use for over a century.)

Language among the Inspired is loose. Sometimes it's the Peerage, sometimes the peers. The singular for terms like "manes" is a little wonky, but who studies Latin anymore? Since most geniuses can't even agree that "genii" is an acceptable plural, these arguments will never be resolved. Geniuses with nothing better to do still argue about names now, and the arguments are as heated as any argument you might find on the Internet about, basically, nothing of consequence.

Marquadt stared at the man for a long time. The man wore a flannel shirt and was wearing two big Timberland boots, and was carrying a third, and he was looking real hard at a Christmas display. His breath frosted the glass, he was so close.

I laughed, because Marquadt had been so grim for so long, and said, "So, what do you think? Time traveler, or escaped mental patient?"

I had never met either, so I was eager.

"No," Marquadt said. "He's not from here. He's learned to fake it, though. He's learned to make sense of the patterns of color and light that his eyes say he sees, to process the vibrations we call sound into a rude model of an external reality. He's even learned the hardest trick: he can pretend that effects follow causes, that things happen for a reason, that there's some kind of sense to this world."

"What is he?" I asked, feeling tense, "and how do you know?"

"A visitor from some other type of reality, some place where things don't work like they work here. And he's been here for a long time."

"How can you tell?"

"Because after a while, I got that good at...pretending." Marquadt sighed and rubbed his gloved hands. "I was trapped, somewhere. There were things like lights and colors, some other sensations that my brain processed as well as it could. Enough trial-and-error and I understood it was real. Poor bastard...It was so hard, pretending that any of it was real, rather than just a bunch of impressions in my dying mind. I'm still not sure it was real, though I made friends there...I think. And when I came back, I realized that I couldn't tell the difference between things that once mattered to me."

He looked through me. He wasn't seeing me, I realized. He was seeing a collection of sense-impressions: the gray oval of my face in the dim light, the way my hair formed a halo between me and the neon sign at my back. He was seeing a bunch of shapes and colors, and forcing himself to put them together. It tired him, I knew, always having to view me as a person.

"Don't worry," he said then, looking at my furrowed brow. "I'm pretty sure you're real. And if you're not, well, there's no reason to be rude. Let's talk to this guy."

Chapter Two: Character Creation

There are two futures, the future of desire and the future of fate, and man's reason has never learnt to separate them. Desire, the strongest thing in the world, is itself all future, and it is not for nothing that in all the religions the motive is always forwards to an endless futurity of bliss or annihilation. Now that religion gives place to science the paradiscial future of the soul fades before the Utopian future of the species, and still the future rules. But always there is, on the other side, destiny, that which inevitably will happen, a future here concerned not as the other was with man and his desires, but blindly and inexorably with the whole universe of space and time. The Buddhist seeks to escape from the Wheel of Life and Death, the Christian passes through them in the faith of another world to come, the modern reformer, as unrealistic but less imaginative, demands his chosen future in this world of men.

-J.D. Bernal, *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil*

Creating a fully-developed genius character requires an understanding both of the genius' Inspired dreams and her mortal origins. Geniuses, for all their extraordinary power, are still mortal men and women, and their human obsessions and beliefs guide their Breakthrough and much of their subsequent life. A genius must be more than a collection of dots optimized to fulfill a strategic niche; the Inspired are creatures of human passion and mundane ambition as well as transcendent understanding. Try to use the interaction between the genius' new and old personas to create a dynamic, interesting character.

Translating a genius into "dots on the paper" can be difficult. First, accept that you may be frustrated by a beginning genius' limited abilities. New geniuses begin play with a few Axioms and a handful of wonders, but they are not super-scientists; not yet. See this as an opportunity to view life through your character's eyes: he might be just as frustrated as you are at his abilities, which are potent but not yet world-breaking. Imagining how your character developed—from the first thoughts of "something is weird here" to the Breakthrough to learning his first few Axioms—can help you understand where your character has come from, allowing you to turn goals already accomplished into Skills and Merits, and goals yet to be achieved into plans for the future.

Your genius will probably belong to a collaborative made up of the other players' characters, so you may want to meet with the other players, not to optimize everyone's genius as part of an elite combat team (seriously, it never works), but to make sure no one is stepping on anyone else's conceptual toes. Some negotiation about who gets to be "the guy with the robots" or "the brooding crime-fighter" may be in order. Other players can also provide new perspectives on your genius that you haven't considered. The Storyteller may also have important input and advice about what sort of game she is planning to run, allowing you to fit your genius into the chronicle.

Step One: Choose Concept

Mad scientists are complex creatures, but many can be described with a few well-chosen words: "Death-obsessed biochemist," "experimental vehicle pilot," "visionary psychic researcher." Using either images of mad science from media or your own unsupported imagination, try to call an image to mind and summarize your character.

Your concept allows you to quickly describe your character to other players, and can give the Storyteller clues about what sorts of stories you want your character to experience.

At the beginning of the chronicle, most geniuses in the collaborative will be new to the whole "mad science" thing, with at most a few months of experience on the job. However, some characters have had previous brushes with Inspiration that they avoided, preventing a full Breakthrough. This is usually linked to a genius' starting Inspiration: a genius with only a single dot in Inspiration has been touched for the first time, while one with more dots has probably fought off the wonders and horrors of becoming a genius before.

At this point, you might want to consider the nature of your genius' Breakthrough, which determines her catalyst. Your genius' personality can also help determine which foundation she joins. You should also consider an aesthetic, what your mad scientist's inventions will look like. Does she slap machinery together from discarded circuitry and engine blocks stolen from junk yards? If so, her inventions will look very different from a genius who builds his wonders out of the finest brass and dark wood, then hand-polishes them until they shine with care and devotion.

Step Two: Select Attributes

Your genius' Attribute dots determine his raw capabilities. Use the genius' life before the Breakthrough as a guide to determining his Attributes. Try to imagine how the genius' Attributes would influence his personality, and vice-versa.

All Attributes begin at one dot. Divide your Attributes into primary (five dots), secondary (four dots), and tertiary (three dots). The fifth dot in any Attribute requires two dots to purchase.

When you add the genius template (step five), you will add an additional dot to Intelligence, Wits, or Resolve. This does *not* cost two dots to purchase if it raises an Attribute to five dots.

Though the Inspired vary considerably in talents and temperament, many possess a few common traits.

Intelligence is prized above almost all other Attributes in the Inspired community, and understandably so: only the smartest can reliably build wonders. Wits, however, is invaluable when a wonder is needed *right now*, not just after three days in a laboratory.

Geniuses who focus on travel and adventure need high Dexterity to control the strange vehicles they build and Stamina to survive the rigors of hostile and alien environments.

And not all of the Inspired are shut-ins: many are naturally charming, almost magnetic, and others hone their Social Attributes so that they might rise to positions of power as laboratory directors or executives in the private sector. Presence gives a genius the raw strength of personality to bend others to his will, to amaze, delight, and terrify, while Manipulation is less glamorous but no less useful.

Despite their tenacity, many Inspired lack Resolve and Composure and are psychologically vulnerable when taken out of their narrow environments. Many are temperamental, unstable, even gullible despite their brilliance. Those that do not suffer from this weakness, however, can be as relentless as they are smooth, able to travel from boardroom to farthest uncharted land while keeping a level head.

Step Three: Select Skills

Divide your Skills into primary (eleven dots), secondary (seven dots), and tertiary (four dots). A fifth dot in any Skill costs two points to purchase.

A genius' Skills often determine what approach he takes to his Inspiration. Mental Skills are often primary, but which Skills receive the most attention can tell a person much about a mad scientist. Experts in Computer research artificial intelligence and networks beyond the dreams of MIT or Tokyo Tech, while Inspired who take up Academics are super-psychologists and philosophers. Students of Medicine are not just doctors, but biologists, surgeons, and biochemical engineers. Geniuses who focus on Crafts can master everything from aerospace engineering to transatomic metallurgy, and experts on the Occult can catch amazing glimpses of worlds far removed from this one. The Science Skill serves as the one field tying these disparate branches of knowledge together, but some geniuses specialize here, too, becoming renowned theorists among the Peerage.

The mortal Skills a genius gained before his Breakthrough can also determine his foundation. Psychologists and people with high Social Skills are likely to become Directors, while experts in Medicine look toward the Progenitors. High-energy physicists and explorers often end up as Navigators, as do scientists with high ranks in Drive and/or Survival, while Academics, Investigation, and Occult are important to Scholastics. Fiddlers, hackers, and craftsmen often join the Artificers and focus on Crafts or Computer. Conversely, a genius may take the opposite approach, getting picked up by a foundation first, and then fleshing out the most useful Skills with the help of a tutor.

Step Four: Select Skill Specialties

Even the Inspired, who often are or strive to become polymaths, find need to focus on specific areas of study. Geniuses often focus on strange and seemingly-useless specializations that are too narrow to be useful anywhere except mad science. Others maintain hobbies or interests from their previous lives, or can call upon the hyper-focused exploration that often precedes a Breakthrough.

Choose three Skill Specialties. You may choose more than one Specialty for the same Skill.

Step Five: Add Genius Template

When a genius experiences her Breakthrough, she is redefined as a creature of Inspiration and Mania. While still human, she is also something more, and gains powers and suffers drawbacks unique to her new condition.

Note that templates cannot overlap. Geniuses will not experience the First Change and become a werewolf, nor Awaken as a Mage. Attempts to Embrace a genius result in a dead genius. If taken to Faerie she will not become a Changeling (if she survives the experience). Her corpse, if turned into a Promethean, is just that: a new Promethean.

Attribute Bonus:

A genius receives an additional dot to one Mental Attribute, representing the increase in mental capacity granted by the Breakthrough. Meticulous, thoughtful, theoretical mad scientists often gain a bonus to Intelligence, while creative, artistic, intuitive ones can gain a bonus to Wits, and determined, practical, and stubborn geniuses usually receive a bonus to Resolve. Select whichever Attribute seems most appropriate.

A genius' Mental Attributes are still limited by her Inspiration.

Foundations:

When a genius first experiences his Breakthrough, he flails about, struggling to find his center while figuring out exactly what has happened to him. Provided he makes the transition smoothly and does not become a Lemurian, echo doctor, or one of the Illuminated, he may gravitate toward one of the five foundations that dictate a genius' approach to his work.

Each foundation offers favored Axioms, natural areas of specialty for all members of that foundation, as well as a grant, a unique talent that all geniuses in that foundation have mastered. But more than that, a foundation offers a shared approach to mad science that breaks across boundaries of culture and mundane philosophy, giving the genius a community within the community of peers, a group that shares a common approach, style, and terminology.

Examine the five foundations and decide which one best fits your character. If none seems to apply, your genius may instead be a rogue: she has either never encountered the foundations until recently, or wants to

join none of them. Rogues are welcome to join most Peer collaboratives, but they are often viewed with suspicion and disdain.

Catalysts:

The foundation is a considered choice, based on how the genius approaches mad science. The catalyst is more internal and more visceral, an emotional stamp that remains with the genius forever and echoes the feelings that drove her to catalyze. Sorrow, obsession, jealousy...some strong feeling guides a genius and governs her behavior and Obligation.

All Inspired belong to a catalyst, whether they know it or not and whether or not they can articulate a philosophy behind their Inspiration. Members of the same catalyst do not form "communities" around their shared feeling; these divisions are more personal. Still, they impact the genius deeply, swaying how she learns Axioms and helping to define how she approaches her Obligation to humanity.

A genius' catalyst determines one of her favored Axioms, as well as her first Derangement. Should the genius receive a Derangement as a result of Obligation loss or almost any other reason, the first Derangement received is always based on her catalyst. Subsequent Derangements are determined normally.

Inspiration:

The Inspiration Trait measures how brightly the genius' inner light glows. As a genius' understanding increases, so does Inspiration, which is a prospect as terrifying as it is magnificent. On the one hand, greater Inspiration means more wonders and more powerful wonders, as well as a greater understanding of exactly what a genius is and what she is doing. On the other hand, the blinding light of Inspiration can devour a weak-willed genius, hollowing her out and taking up residence in her brain.

A new genius possess one dot of Inspiration for free. Geniuses who have flirted previously with mad science may begin the chronicle with two or three dots of Inspiration. Additional Inspiration dots cost three Merit points per dot, so your genius may spend three Merit dots to begin with Inspiration 2 or six Merit dots to begin begin with Inspiration 3.

Axioms:

A genius builds wonders based on Axioms, which are the branches of mad science. Each Axiom covers a general effect or approach—Katastrofi covers all instruments of destruction, for example—and each is ranked from one to five dots, with higher ranks granting more and greater effects. Geniuses must purchase dots from an Axiom in order, from the first dot to the fifth. However, a genius can often build many different types of wonders with each dot in an Axiom. Just one dot in Prostasia, the Axiom of Protection, for example, allows a genius to build an armored suit, a deflector screen, a protective ward against robots, or a forcefield cage to hold enemies.

A genius' catalyst gives her one favored Axiom. Her foundation offers two possibilities, of which she may choose one as another favored Axiom. The final favored Axiom can be anything; it is up to the genius to decide, but once chosen, it cannot be changed.

A rogue receives one favored Axiom from her catalyst and two other favored Axioms of her choice. These also cannot be changed.

A favored Axiom costs fewer experience points to increase. Further, a genius receives a +1 bonus to all attempts to build a wonder from one of her favored Axioms. Finally, a genius can buy her favored Axiom up to any level. Non-favored Axioms can be no higher than the genius' Inspiration.

A beginning genius has three dots worth of Axioms. All dots must be from one of her three favored Axioms.

Axiom Ranks:

Within the Peerage, the "dot" ranks in Axioms are sometimes given names:

- : *Student*
- : *Scholar*
- : *Doctor*
- : *Implementor*
- : *Master*

These terms vary by region, foundation, and sometimes even by Axiom (Implementors of Apokalypsi are usually referred to as "Professors of Apokalypsi," for example), but the five divisions of talent are generally recognized across the Peerage.

Geniuses refer to wonders made with different ranks of Axioms as a wonder's class, mark, or grade: a class-4 matter relocater, a mark-III death ray, a grade-2 scanner. Different collaboratives use different terms.

Step Six: Select Merits

A newly-catalyzed genius has seven dots worth of Merits that can be spent on general Merits or genius-only Merits in any combination you desire. Merits should reflect the genius' nature and personality: recluses are unlikely to stock up on Social Merits, while a rough-and-ready fighting-genius will probably have a good selection of Merits useful in a brawl.

The Storyteller may disallow certain Merits, require certain Merits, or even pass out certain Merit dots for free (such as requiring or giving out one dot in Laboratory if he expects the player characters to share a Lab), in order to shape his chronicle.

Step Seven: Determine Advantages

Geniuses are more than human, and some mortal Advantages change when applied to a genius. The Inspired also get their own unique Advantages.

Willpower:

Spending a Willpower point adds three dice to a roll, which can often make the difference between life and death when a genius is caught without her wonders or the protection of beholden or other allies. Geniuses often eagerly burn Willpower during the creation and use of new wonders.

A genius can spend Mania in the same turn in which she spends Willpower.

Obligation:

A genius' flesh is mortal, but her mind is something greater, and the Inspiration enhances more than just her intellect. It somehow redefines her moral system, elevating her to a position of guardianship or stewardship over humanity. Though a genius might loathe the common man, she is charged with protecting and guiding her fellow human beings.

Many of the Inspired have an ideal in their minds: the cool watcher of humanity, aloof from its everyday affairs but concerned with its development as a whole, not passionate but acting out of compassion for those

teeming masses that deserve the benefits of the genius' work. During the Breakthrough, the genius' mortal Morality is superseded by this new, stronger sense of Obligation.

Ridiculed by peers and despised by common people, many geniuses nonetheless realize that to abandon their Obligation to humanity entirely reduces them to cruel and inhuman manipulators, utterly alone and willing to interact with others only as victims, lackeys, and test subjects.

Optionally, a Storyteller may allow players to trade dots of Obligation for experience points during character creation. This may reflect some sin committed before the Breakthrough, but more likely represents a grave transgression that the genius committed in her first days as a mad scientist. This transgression taught her something important (hence the extra experience points), but may have already begun her downward slide toward brutality and callous indifference. A dot of Obligation can be cashed in for five experience points. The genius' Obligation can drop to five this way, earning ten experience points. This *does* result in the genius gaining his catalyst's Derangement. The Derangement appears if the genius reduces his Obligation to 6; reducing his Obligation to 5 does not risk further Derangements.

Dropping one's Obligation before play does not yield Larvae.

Virtues and Vices:

A genius possesses the normal mortal Virtues and Vices. Some Virtues, such as Fortitude and Hope, and some Vices, such as Pride and Envy, are particularly well-represented among the Inspired. These Virtues and Vices are not always perfectly reflected in a genius' catalyst: not all Neids focus on the Vice of Envy and not all Hoffnungs define themselves by their sense of Hope.

Arch-Madness:

Storytellers may choose to let players play more advanced geniuses. To do so, allocate additional experience points that are spent before play begins. Due to the complexity of creating and managing wonders, this option is only recommended for a group of experienced players.

Just Catalyzed: 0 experience points

Known Scholar: 35 experience points

Senior Researcher: 75 experience points

Legend of Mad Science: 120+ experience points

Step Eight: The First Wonders

A new genius is allowed five rolls in order to his first wonders. These wonders are constructed normally. There are a few conditions that apply to these wonders:

- They cannot be kitbashed, nor can they benefit from extra time spent on their creation.
- The genius cannot spend Willpower or Mania.
- The genius can internalize or graft these wonders to himself automatically with no additional rolls.
- If a "failure" result is obtained at any point, the genius loses the roll but can immediately try again to create the same type of wonder.
- The genius can benefit from Beholden Ability, but cannot receive aid from anyone else or anyone else's beholden.
- The Assembly Line Merit does not apply to these wonders.
- The genius gains the full benefits of her Laboratory Equipment or the collaborative's shared Equipment.
- The genius must finish construction of at least one wonder. If he has failed to construct a wonder

- after five rolls, he gains additional rolls until he finishes at least one wonder.
- The genius can scrap wonders with which he is not satisfied at any time during this initial creation process, though making the wonder still costs at least one roll.
- The genius can stop making wonders at any time once she has at least one.

Remember that a genius receives +1 to each roll because each of these wonders comes from a favored Axiom.

These first few wonders do not necessarily represent the results of however-many back-to-back days of work immediately preceding the start of the chronicle, but the results show how much success the genius has had with her first forays into mad science.

Step Nine: A New Genius Is Born

Once the numbers are on the page and the right dots are filled in, it's time to define some details about the character. Does he have any unusual or telling mannerisms, ticks, or turns of phrase? What is her nationality and native language? (Geniuses travel more than many of the other strange beings in the World of Darkness.) What is his appearance? How does she dress? (Not everyone fancies lab coats and brass goggles.) Does he favor a different look for inside the laboratory and out?

Every genius possesses an aesthetic, a style for the genius' wonders. This is an inevitable outgrowth of Inspiration, not just a fashion statement: what a genius' wonders look like and with what components they are constructed is both a personal and metaphysical statement. Aesthetics vary enormously among geniuses. Some favor the rough look of exposed machinery and unpainted metal, while others aim for a sleek, user-friendly appearance, all rounded plastic and simple lines. Others try to imitate the styles of inventions past, or at least an imagined version of them, focusing on the swept-silver elegance of 1930s rocketships, the clanking brass solidity of 19th century engineering, or the baroque magnificence of Renaissance clockwork. Go ahead and finalize your choice for your mad scientist's aesthetic.

Also consider how the genius relates to the Community, the non-mad scientists. Many low-Inspiration mad scientists are still capable enough of communicating their ideas to hold down jobs at universities or in the private sector. Others have some useful mundane skill, technical or otherwise, that they can turn to their advantage. How does the genius survive, and how does she find enough money to support her research?

The genius' Traits can help define the character here. A genius with higher Wits than Intelligence might lack formal education and produce unstable wonders, but he has the insight to spot problems fast and use his Inspiration for immediate workarounds. A genius with high Manipulation might be as charming as your crazy uncle or as polished as a used car salesman, while a low-Composure genius is easily mocked, drawn into arguments, and brought to hysterics.

Mania:

Mania is the distilled energy of Inspiration that motivates the genius and allows her to create, modify, and use wonders.

All geniuses begin with a full Mania pool, as determined by their Inspiration, minus the Mania bound to their starting wonders.

Mania is rated only as a pool of points that can be spent. It has no dot rating.

The Prelude:

The prelude is an alternate way to experience parts of your character's development that can give a more

visceral feel for what your genius can do and what she is like. Once you have finished building your character, you and the Storyteller sit down for a one-on-one session to learn what turned your character from a normal mortal into a genius.

The prelude is not a full "game" like the rest of the chronicle: the Storyteller should be free to make ad hoc rulings rather than rolling the dice, and should show a greater willingness to engage in director-like behavior, starting scenes *in media res* or ending them abruptly. Rather than seeing the session as a chapter in the unfolding story, it's better to view the prelude as a series of vignettes. The Storyteller's job is to provide your character with interesting situations that are relevant to his life as a genius. Your job is to figure out how you want to play your character and what elements of his personality you want to emphasize. Both player and Storyteller should feel free to make requests or engage in author-level commentary on the situation in which your genius finds himself.

Most preludes should be run individually, since much of the prelude will take place before the characters involved are full geniuses, and possibly before they have met. However, a talented Storyteller can weave together several simultaneous storylines taking place at different times and with different characters, using the events in one character's prelude to shine light on events in another. If the Storyteller wants to run a group prelude, he can draw the different storylines together, allowing the prelude to culminate in a meeting of the new geniuses, allowing the players to explore how they will relate to one-another in the coming chronicle. In a group prelude, players whose characters are not "on-stage" can take over other characters at the Storyteller's request, or offer recommendations for scenes or imagery—an option not normally open to players in the main game.

Storytelling the Prelude:

A burning lab smells worse than you'd expect. Scorched rubber, melting chemicals, and the sickening aroma of burning flesh. Now you're sure that not everyone got out. The flames—orange and red and chemical green—leap into the night sky, the hellish glow reflecting off the low clouds and illuminating the pine trees that lead away from Applied Cryonics to the main street. Looking that way, you can just see regular red-and-blue geometries cutting into the surrounding forest, the approach of police cars as they drag themselves up the steep hill.

One cruiser stops and a young man with 70s aviator shades and a mustache that only cops wear gets out. He puts his hand on his gun when he sees the sharp thing you're holding, but doesn't draw it. From a safe distance, over the roar of the flames, he shouts, "What happened here?"

What happened here?

Try to view your prelude as a shakedown cruise: it's a rough cut, and rules and causality are not as important as making sure you and the Storyteller are on the same page about your character. During or after the prelude, you may need to make adjustments to your character: you might realize that her underlying anger is based on a deep resentment of her friends' success, and switch catalysts from Grimm to Neid. Don't see this as a chance to fine-tune your character's effectiveness, but as an opportunity to shake out the conceptual kinks. The Storyteller might justify these changes, or justify his own narrative tricks and scene manipulation, because the prelude takes place around the time of your character's Breakthrough, where he's probably half-crazed anyway and unlikely to remember the details of events, but mostly the prelude is there so everyone at the table can fine-tune their characters in order to optimize their experience in play.

In general, try to *do* as much as possible during the prelude. That will help you figure out how your character interacts with the world, how he behaves, what he likes, and how his madness manifests. Get into the head of your character, and don't get upset if the Storyteller glides over events like combat, reducing them to a single throw of the dice or ignoring the rules entirely in favor of description. Oh, and don't try to avoid becoming a genius. Doing that wastes everyone's time.

The Before-Time

"What the hell are you doing in here?"

It's not one of the security guards. Worse, it's Jim...excuse me, Dr. James Elliot Neill, Director of Preservative Research. You wanted to get a closer look at what they were doing. Those big regulatory computers seem to call to you over the long nights here. You've felt your thoughts getting crisper, cleaner, and recently the curiosity has been eating you alive. But Dr. Neill is always watching the computers, and now he's pissed off that a janitor has wandered into a restricted zone.

You need this job. What are you going to tell him?

Storytellers can begin a prelude by focusing on what life was like for a genius before the Breakthrough. In this first stage of the prelude, you'll need to figure out what sort of person you were before you became a mad scientist. Keep in the back of your mind whether you will remain this way once you are Inspired, or whether the Breakthrough changed some or all of your personality. Were you already a respected scientist? A failure as a grad student? A gifted technician without the money to afford college? Were you brave or cowardly, acquiescent or combative, charming or a huge nerd?

Some of these everyday scenes may focus on events leading up to your Breakthrough. Others might be entirely mundane: watching a co-worker beat the high score on the Galaga game in the canteen, or chatting with an old friend about what it was like in Afghanistan after five years without contact.

If dice rolls are needed, remember that at this point you are a regular mortal, lacking Inspiration, Mania, or wonders.

The Eureka Moment

They're using you like some sort of drug-sniffing dog, it seems. Half of the researchers are in awe; half think you're just crazy and lucky. But you know when one of the machines needs replacing. You know what they need, how to keep them running, and so you spend your days in the freezing-cold room, monitoring them. You have to hold a mop, though. Damn regulations.

What's this? Someone has left an open company laptop on one of the work tables. On the ground near it they spilled a can of Dr. Pepper, as if they had to get out in a hurry. And they think they've locked the laptop, but you know all the company codes now, and even if you didn't...

"The Resurrection Consortium." That's what it says behind the login screen. What's that? It would be so easy to...no, but you couldn't...

What do you do?

Though there is rarely a single moment when a regular person transforms into a mad scientist, the Storyteller may wish to offer one or a few vignettes about your genius' transformation.

The actual Breakthrough is often a traumatic, frightening experience, made all the more terrible by the fact that a new genius almost certainly *knows* that she can walk away from it all, can shut it all down...but that she wants to go forward anyway. Hallucinations, visions, and deranged thinking afflict a genius in the midst of her Breakthrough, bits of animated Mania or simple insanity caused by the pressure of the experience warping her perceptions and reasoning.

The Breakthrough is an opportunity to define what matters to your character: what motivates him, what he loves and fears, and what will continue to matter to him once he is a genius. What your genius does in the midst of his Breakthrough can establish plot hooks for future chronicles, giving the Storyteller dangling story-threads that can be resolved at some future time. Since most Storytellers like it when their players do the work for them, try to lay the seeds for future excitement during this part of the prelude; it might yield more focus on your character's story-arc in the future.

As the Breakthrough progresses, your genius will get access to Inspiration and Mania, though he may not gain Axioms and a foundation until much later.

The Wider World

"I'm impressed that you found me so easily," Dr. Layota says. She sits down and steeples her fingers to prevent them from shaking. "At this point you could probably turn me over to the police. Fraud, criminal conspiracy, and of course, that unfortunate incident with the piranhas..."

"But where would that get you?" The doctor stands up and opens her briefcase. You can't see what she's pulling out, which sets you on edge. "A head full of crazy and no way to get it out. You're going to burst like a grape if you keep that up. Let's instead cut a deal. A year ago you would've wanted money. Now I know what you want."

She holds up a three-ring binder labeled The Axiom of Exelixi.

"All this can be yours," she says, "for the low, low price of not picking up that telephone."

What do you do?

By the end of the vignettes surrounding the Breakthrough, you should have a firm understanding of how your genius catalyzed and how that has changed her life. The rest of the prelude is picking up the pieces and putting things back together. The Storyteller here can include details about how your character learned about the Axioms, about the foundations, the Peerage, and Lemuria. Toward the end of the prelude, you will also need to address how your genius continues to interface with the rest of the world, if at all. Vignettes covering whether or not your character continues to hold down a job, how her family, friends, and loved ones react to the change in her personality, and how a new mad scientist interacts with regular people are as important as mini-stories about learning how to build robots.

At this point in the prelude, the Storyteller will likely introduce the other player characters, if it has been a cooperative prelude. If that's the case, a bit of role-playing should allow your characters to form a collaborative, if that is your goal. Otherwise the Storyteller can introduce other major characters, such as antagonists, potential mentors, or fellow geniuses. How your character interacts with these figures during the prelude can color relations during the chronicle.

A Few Questions:

If your character is finished but you still want to add more meat to the bones, you can try answering some of the following questions. Feel free to answer some or all of them.

What Do You Look Like?

What is your ethnicity? What fashions do you favor? Do you have a separate "mad scientist" wardrobe, or do you wear regular clothes in the lab? Or do you walk around "in character" when interacting with normal society? Do you look like a scientist, mad or otherwise, or would be people be surprised if they found out you have a death ray in your briefcase?

How Hard Was Your Breakthrough?

Was it a process of gradual revelation, or a sudden thunderbolt from the Heavens that burned out most of your normal-person circuitry? Did you lose your job, your friends, or your mind, or did you manage to hide the madness? Are you trying to rebuild, trying to hide what has happened, or happy to let your old self disappear?

How Much of "You" Is Left?

Do you view yourself as basically the same person as you were before your Breakthrough, or do you see yourself as an inhuman mentality inhabiting a mortal body? How certain are you of that assessment—do you feel comfortable relating the disparate parts of your higher and lower thoughts, or are you tormented by your new, warped identity?

Who Matters To You?

Are any other geniuses your friends, or just co-workers? Are you married? In love—perhaps unrequited? Do you have a beautiful daughter? (If so, be careful—if you turn evil she'll probably betray you to the hero and let the monster eat you.) Do you have an extended family, or a network of friends that care about you, or are you alone in the world except for your fellow geniuses? Do you have a home, or just a workplace where you spend the night?

What Are You Working On?

What are your long-term mad science plans? Do you have a half-built time machine that you lack the expertise to finish lying around the lab? What sorts of wonders do you want to build, once you master the necessary Axioms? Do you have ambitions in the mortal world—in politics, in finance—or in the weird halls of power created by the Inspired?

Names and Titles:

Geniuses are physically human and most stick with their regular name. If "Jane Conant" is fine for a regular scientist, it's probably fine for a mad one. Others alter their names to reflect their fields of study, often using puns and wordplay. "Jane Chronos" has a nice ring to it, after all. Plenty of geniuses like having "Doctor" or "Professor" in front of their name, and those that don't have a degree figure that being a genius entitles them to one. (Few among the Inspired dispute this point.) Some geniuses prefer entirely fanciful names, with or without a title, like Doctor Tempest, Mr. Syntax, or The Calculatrix. These nicknames are becoming more common with the rise of Internet use among the Inspired. Asking if a mad scientist really has a degree is considered as polite in the Peerage as asking if a mad scientist has a problem with drug addiction.

Example of Character Creation:

Kirsten creates a character for Andrea's upcoming **Genius** game. The game will revolve around the collaborative inhabiting an old mansion that was used, centuries ago, by a legendary genius, and that is full of orphan wonders and strange creatures. Andrea's requirements are that all characters belong to a foundation and that they must spend at least one point on the Orphan Merit, to represent orphans that they have already befriended or bound to service.

Kirsten wants to play a kind of too-clever-by-half figure, a trickster, someone really good at getting into trouble—a figure that the other *characters* may hate, though the other *players* will enjoy because she serves as a springboard for stories. She kicks a few ideas around with the Storyteller and the rest of the troupe, finding someone who will fit in with the rest of the collaborative—the cave spider-obsessed Progenitor who inherited the castle, a nerdy Artificer who wants to catalog the castle's orphans, and an honorable Navigator, last of an ancient line of mechanical knights-errant.

Step One: Concept

The collaborative already has a good spread of abilities, so Kirsten focuses on giving her character an interesting thematic edge. She has always been interested in "weird" mathematics like non-Euclidean geometry, and decides to make that the focus for her character. She asks the Storyteller if there are weird non-Euclidean spaces in the ancient mad scientist's mansion, and the Storyteller says yes, of course there are weird non-Euclidean spaces, what sort of game do you think I'm running here? So she has her concept.

To give her some focus, Kirsten comes up with a name: Sanjula Goud. She pictures a young Indian woman, in the States on a scholarship, enjoying the freedom that can only come from being several continents away from one's family. In her genius persona, she's a dimensional hacker, her wonders wreathed in flowing "Tron-like" streams of alphanumeric data.

Kirsten also takes this time to think ahead, planning the wonders she wants. Sanjula, she decides, should start the chronicle with a holograph generator and an Epikrato device-controller. Kirsten keeps those plans in the back of her mind during future steps, when she selects Axioms and Skills.

Build your Genius Based on What You Want your Genius to Build:

Geniuses are limited both by what Axioms they have selected and what they've actually constructed. This can be a double-whammy for players who don't think ahead. Playing an effective genius requires forethought, lest you litter your character sheet with disused Axioms while lamenting your mad scientist's lack of potency. To avoid this fate, focus first on what you want your character to build right now (not once you have fifty experience points), then select the Axioms that will let you build those wonders, then choose Skills that will help you in construction. Once you have a rough sketch of what you need, you can go through the regular character creation process and select what you want.

And if that fails, kitbash like crazy. Kitbashing is almost always a good idea.

Step Two: Attributes

Keeping with the trickster theme, Kirsten wants Sanjula to be smart. She also wants the young genius to be irascible, difficult, annoying, and vain. To that end, she categorizes Mental Attributes as Primary, Physical Attributes as Secondary, and Social Attributes as Tertiary.

Kirsten wants Sanjula to be both well-educated and deadly-clever—a real thunderbolt of intellect. Her Primary category receives five dots. She assigns two to Wits, two to Intelligence, and one to Resolve.

Sanjula is a bit lazy (Resolve 2) and relies mostly on insight and lucky guesses (Wits 3), but she can also brute-force her way through a problem despite not yet having her degree (Intelligence 3).

For her Secondary category, Sanjula has four dots to spread around her Physical attributes. Kirsten imagines Sanjula as small and fast, so she puts three dots into Dexterity (Dexterity 4), and she's pretty tough, so there's one dot to Strength (Strength 2). Kirsten decides that Sanjula has chronic health problems that she tries not to share with anyone else (Stamina 1).

Sanjula suffers in her Tertiary category, Social attributes, where she only has three dots to spread around. Kirsten decides to drop two dots into Manipulation (Manipulation 3): Sanjula is a scheming, treacherous little creature when the mood strikes her. Presence gets one dot (Presence 2): Sanjula is most noticeable when she's getting into trouble. Her Composure remains low (Composure 1): our young dimensional scientist has a gift for flying off the handle and going into hysterics.

Step Three: Skills

Next Kirsten needs to prioritize Skills, much as she prioritized Sanjula's Attributes. Kirsten is getting a better feel for her character: she's imagining a mix of computer science and dimensional study, with a bit of good-old fashioned exploration and investigation thrown in so her character is useful outside the lab.

Getting a bit experimental, Kirsten decides that Sanjula will focus on Physical Skills, giving her eleven dots to spread around there. (The other characters, Kirsten decides, are a bit wimpy, even the knight—he has four dots in Academics and a Heraldry specialization, for Riemann's sake!) Sanjula will need a lot of Mental Skills for building wonders, so that gets secondary priority (seven dots), and Social Skills bring up the rear—four dots there.

Kirsten reasons as follows: Athletics is good for spelunking and getting away from monsters (two dots) and Sanjula has spent her time in her new home fiddling with locked doors: hence Larceny (three dots). She imagines Sanjula as a bit of a fighter with just enough actual training to back it up (two dots in Brawl), and Sanjula has been practicing with the bows and crossbows located at the old archery range inside the hedge maze (two dots in Firearms). One dot each in Drive and Stealth imply that Sanjula is a "natural" for most Physical Skills: were she not so devoted to mad science, she could become a gifted athlete, dancer, or martial artist, but her frail health keeps her from excelling in any one field.

Next, Mental Skills. Kirsten flips ahead and considers what Axioms Sanjula would want. She takes one dot in Academics, one in Computer, one in Crafts, one in Occult, and two in Science, implying a general and unfocused technical education—Sanjula is smart, but she's a dreadfully lazy student. A dot in Investigation explains the young genius' natural curiosity.

Finally, Sanjula gets four dots in Social Skills. Kirsten drops two of them into Subterfuge: Sanjula lies like a rug. The other two go into Expression: Sanjula has an artistic streak.

Step Four: Skill Specialties

Kirsten then picks three Specialties to further define Sanjula's skill set. Looking forward to the Axiom of Metaptropi, she picks Digital Art under Expression, to help her create holographic images. She also takes a Specialization in Small Spaces under Stealth: Sanjula can stuff herself into unlikely places and go unnoticed. Athletics receives the Specialization Clinging: after one too many near-drops, our genius has mastered the art of desperately holding on until help can arrive.

Step Five: The Genius Template

Now Kirsten needs to decide on Sanjula's Inspired abilities: her foundation, her catalyst, and her Axioms.

Despite her impish disposition and love of exploration, Sanjula catalyzed in despair and regret: her mother had always had a history of heart complications, and in Sanjula's freshman year, just as Sanjula was exalting in her newfound freedom, her mother died suddenly. The tragedy hit her like a hammer-blow, but she did not give in to despair; instead, a newfound feeling of mortality afflicted Sanjula, coupled with bitter regret at her harsh parting with her mother and a fear of her own vulnerability: Sanjula, due to her own health problems, does not expect to live long, and that has made her bitter. She hides it, but Sanjula is a Neid. Every day she feels more isolated from the mere mortals whom she used to consider her peers, and every day they hate and fear her more.

Kirsten wants something a bit brighter for a foundation, and selects the Scholastics: Sanjula resents normal people, but she also exalts in her newfound knowledge. She enjoys playing up her role as a living cipher, and

delights in mysteries and puzzles of all kinds. She also has a gift for computing and mathematics.

Kirsten can choose any Mental Attribute to increase. She decides to increase Wits by one dot: deviousness and cunning defines Sanjula, more than raw intellect.

Sanjula receives Epikrato as a favored Axiom for being a Neid and may choose between Apokalypsi and Metaptropi; Kirsten chooses the latter because she wants a holo-machine. For Sanjula's third favored Axiom, Kirsten chooses Apokalypsi, because she eventually plans to build dimensional scanning devices.

Sanjula has three dots that she can place in her favored Axioms. She puts one dot in Epikrato and two in Metaptropi.

Sanjula's Inspiration begins at one dot. This gives her a maximum Mania pool of ten points, some of which will be bound into her first wonders.

Step Six: Merits

Kirsten has seven dots in Merits to give to Sanjula—actually six, since one is taken automatically with the one required dot in the Orphan Merit. Kirsten considers that Merit, and actually decides to place two dots in Orphan. For her troubles she gets a sophisticated mechanical hand crossbow that she found in the hedge maze: Katastrofi 2, Size 3, Damage 5, Costs 2 Mania to activate, Dexterity + Firearms + 4 (10 dice), Range 100/200/400 (two hands), with the fault that it is afraid of water and will whine and squeal abominably if near a body of it.

To reflect her restless and exploratory nature, Kirsten gives Sanjula the Direction Sense Merit (one dot). Kirsten considers grabbing an extra dot of Inspiration, but Sanjula is young, so instead she gets two dots in Resources: she works tutoring the children of the idiot-rich a few mansions over. That should give her enough money not to suffer too much when building wonders. Kirsten considers picking up a utility belt for Sanjula, but is instead cajoled into chipping in for part of the combined laboratory. (She places both dots in Security, representing that together the collaborative has re-activated parts of the mansion's security system.) She plans to pick up better kitbashing talents in the future.

Step Seven: Advantages

With all of Sanjula's Traits recorded, it's time for some quick calculation to determine her Advantages. Sanjula has a Resolve of two dots and one dot in Composure, giving her three pitiful Willpower dots. Her Obligation begins at 7, and Kirsten elects not to lower it: Sanjula has a bit of a temper, but she's still a good person at heart—so far. Her Virtue is Charity: Sanjula is generous and open-minded, especially with anyone who solves one of her riddles or impresses her with their cleverness. Sanjula's Vice is Pride: she's smart, but not as smart as she thinks she is.

Sanjula's Size is 5 and her Stamina is 1, giving her six dots of Health. Her Initiative, equal to the total of her Dexterity and Composure, is 5 (she's fast, but without much of a head on her shoulders). Her Defense, equal to the lower of Dexterity or Wits, is 4—a combination of quickness and fast thinking will keep Sanjula from getting smeared in a fight as long as she's careful. Sanjula's Strength + Dexterity + 5 (the species factor for humans) gives her a Speed of 11.

Step Eight: The First Wonders

Sanjula can build wonders from Metaptropi (two dots) or Epikrato (one dot), and she can make up to five attempts.

First, Sanjula needs her illusion-making device: Size 2 (a statue of a woman, stuffed with circuitry). Range 10'. Roll Wits + Expression (6 dice). Costs 1 Mania per five Size points of the illusion.

Kirsten rolls Inspiration + Intelligence + Science +1 (Metaptropi is a favored Axiom) +2 (the group's laboratory has two dots in Equipment) -2 (the wonder's rank). Since Sanjula's Resources is not less than the wonder's rank, there is no additional penalty.

So, that's 1 (Inspiration) + 3 (Sanjula's Intelligence) + 2 (Sanjula's Science Skill) +1 (for Apokalypsi as a favored Axiom) +2 (Laboratory Equipment) -2 (the wonder's rank), for a total of 7 dice.

The first roll fails, but the second comes up as a success, so Sanjula has her illusion-maker after using two of her five rolls. The Storyteller determines a fault. Due to some bad code she borrowed from a shady online source, all the illusions she can create are shockingly ugly. Creating something pretty is beyond this wonder.

Sanjula also wants to build a mechanical controller with Epikrato, a simple wonder that can throw a switch or open or close a door, at range. Size 1. Range 20'. Roll Intelligence + Science -1 (4 dice). Cost 1 Mania to activate. Variables: Fragile, Increased Range (+10')

This calls for another check: 1 (Inspiration) +3 (Intelligence) +2 (Science) +1 (for Epikrato as a favored Axiom) +2 (Laboratory Equipment) -1 (for the wonder's rank). That's a total of 8 dice. This wonder succeeds on the first roll. But it picks up an annoying fault: it only works when plugged in. Kirsten doesn't want this fault, so she rolls again. The next roll also succeeds, and the Storyteller generates a new fault: anyone using the wonder suffers from Narcissism for the duration of the scene (anyone with Narcissism suffers from Megalomania). That works better: Kirsten has Sanjula scrap Switcher #1 so it won't bind up Mania. Switcher #2 she calls the Digital-Analog Reprogrammer. It's a narrow titanium wand covered in delicate "frozen mercury" circuitry; the femtometamorphic field it generates access a semi-Platonic reality of "activation" and causes only moderate brain damage.

Though Sanjula still has time and resources (Kirsten has one roll left), she decides not to build another wonder, since she expects to burn a lot of Mania avoiding injury and she doesn't want to bind too many into wonders until she increases her Inspiration. Sanjula has plans for a shapeshifter mask, a transmuting cauldron, and (when she studies Apokalypsi) a dimensional scanner, hanging in her corner of the laboratory, that will have to wait until later.

Since Sanjula has 10 Mania due to her Inspiration, a rank-1 wonder (the controller), a rank-2 wonder (the illusion machine), and a rank-2 orphan (the crossbow), and she belongs to a foundation (which binds one Mania), she begins the chronicle with four points of usable Mania.

Step Nine: A New Genius Is Born

Once Sanjula has all her Traits in a row and a few wonders, Kirsten looks at her character and makes a few final touches. She decides that Sanjula dreams of studying mad geometry. She wants to find a master of that science, but first she needs to improve her Science Skill, pick up one or more relevant Specializations, and improve her knowledge of Apokalypsi.

Those are her professional goals. Sanjula's personal goals involve, eventually, reuniting with her father in India, who is both a talented mathematician in his own right and a conservative politico with attitudes that disgust his daughter. The chronicle starts in the summer after Sanjula's freshman year, so eventually she will have to decide whether or not she will return to college, and what studies she will pursue when gets there. Kirsten thinks that Sanjula will try to return, though she expects that the Storyteller will put plenty of obstacles between Sanjula and a normal college education.

Kirsten also selects an aesthetic for Sanjula, though the young Scholastic is mostly defined by her approach, rather than her appearance. Her family was largely Westernized, but during her Breakthrough she found herself studying Greco-Buddhist art, the result of Alexander the Great's forays into India. The statuary fascinated her, but so did the works of Rucker and Gibson she read in high school, around the time that she found her older brother's collection of David Bowie and Sex Pistols CDs. Her aesthetic, which she calls Circuit Statue, is a mix of Digital Chrome and older clay-fired styles. She favors lots of traditional jewelry, a bright green plastic raincoat for labwork, and wraparound mirrorshades under a thatch of neon pink hair. It's not exactly cutting edge, but it works for her.

Finally, Kirsten decides that Sanjula will use her normal name. No "Dr. Parabola" for her; the young mad scientist wants to maintain some level of normality in her life.

Traits:

New Advantage: Inspiration

Ideas crash like thunder through a genius' life every moment of their lives, barely contained, often barely understood. This is Inspiration, the illumination within, the raw stuff of genius. The greater a genius' Inspiration, the more power of creation and destruction she possesses. But there is a cost. As a genius' Inspiration increases, she becomes less able to understand mundane concerns. She struggles to hold onto her Obligation, as people seem more like systems to be explored than individuals with their own lives and concerns. As she becomes almost godlike in her perspective, she must focus to concentrate on the mortal world and its concerns.

All geniuses begin with one dot of Inspiration. More Inspiration can be purchased at character creation or with experience. Purchasing more Inspiration with experience requires a thesis, a difficult and exhausting exploration of science, philosophy, and one's own nature.

Benefits of Inspiration:

- Inspiration determines both how much Mania a genius can contain and how much he can spend in one turn. As a genius' Inspiration increases, he is better able to hold and channel the transcendent mathematical potential that is pure Mania.
- A genius' Inspiration determines how many dot ranks he can possess in non-favored Axioms. A genius can purchase favored Axioms at any level, but non-favored Axioms are limited to the genius' Inspiration. If the genius does possess more dots in a non-favored Axiom than his Inspiration (such as if his permanent Inspiration somehow drops), those Axiom dots go "dormant" and unusable until the genius' Inspiration increases again.
- A genius with Inspiration 6 or higher can increase her Attributes and Skills past five dots. By using special techniques unavailable to lesser scientists, the genius transcends the limitations of mind and body and becomes posthuman.
- Inspiration is rolled for many Inspired activities, such as building wonders or identifying the works of another mad scientist.
- A genius' Inspiration helps resist many metanormal effects and the special powers of the other beings in the World of Darkness. Inspiration is added to other resistance attributes (such as Stamina) when resisting many metanormal or super-scientific effects.
- Because of her Inspiration, a genius never suffers penalties for unfamiliar applications of a Skill. For

example, a regular person might have trouble applying their Drive score to handling a motorcycle, driving a big rig, flying a helicopter, or landing a space shuttle, but a genius does not. (A genius still suffers a penalty when using another genius' wonders unless certain conditions are met; see Other People Using Wonders, Page 293.)

Inspiration	Stat Maximum	Max Mania	Max Mania/turn	Jabir Penalty
•	5	10	1	-1
••	5	12	2	-1
•••	5	16	3	-1
••••	5	20	4	-1
•••••	5	25	5	-2
••••••	6	30	6	-2
•••••••	7	40	7	-2
••••••••	8	60	8	-3
•••••••••	9	80	10	-3
••••••••••	10	100	15	-3

Max Mania per Turn: A self-motivated wonder, such as an automaton, can channel one point of Mania per turn per rank. An unInspired mane or a beholden can channel one point of Mania per turn.

UnInspired Mania: Beholden and unInspired manes can hold one point of Mania per dot of Intelligence + Resolve.

Drawbacks of Inspiration:

Jabir:

As a genius grows more powerful, his Inspiration shines out of him to illuminate the world. This can be a curse for those mad scientists who want to look more "scientist" than "mad." The genius' Mania begins to tamper with perception and procedure, skewing any attempt to engage in normal science or to perform normal experiments. Though the genius himself suffers no penalties—the odd effects from his perception "cancel out" when brought into conjunction with the odd effects from his behavior—he struggles to communicate his ideas to others. Modern geniuses call this "technobabble" in an attempt to soften the horror of the phenomenon, but it's formally known as Jabir, a sudden, paralyzing loss of clarity and coherence when a genius interacts with a regular mortal.

Any attempt to explain research or to communicate ideas with mere mortals suffers a -1 penalty as the genius' own Mania scrambles the presentation of his ideas. At Inspiration 5, this penalty grows to -2, and then to -3 at Inspiration 8. This penalty covers a number of scenarios. It arises if the genius: "talks shop" with a

group of mortal researchers (Presence + Socialize), attempts to cooperate with a group of technicians in fixing a computer (Intelligence + Computer), defends a new scientific theory (even a mundane one) before a group of scholars (Wits + Expression), and so on. In general, it is an indicator of how badly a genius can alienate a crowd once he starts talking about his ideas.

Unmada, Brilliant Madness:

Mania sometimes manifests as a sort of crackling energy, but that's not really what it is. Mania is raw creativity, and geniuses have a bottomless well of it. They just need to open up their minds. Of course, opening up their minds can drive them insane. Channeling too much Mania risks turning a genius into an unmada, unable to distinguish between the real world and the hallucinations and promises created by her own Mania.

Certain actions, like engaging in Deep Inspiration or transferring excessive Mania to oneself, trigger an unmada check. To make an unmada check, the genius rolls Obligation.

Dramatic Failure: The genius becomes an unmada.

Failure: The genius becomes an unmada. She can spend a point of Willpower to resist the effect. If she spends Willpower, the genius instead gains a mild Derangement, or an existing mild Derangement becomes severe, for the duration of the scene. This Derangement is usually the sort that reinforces the genius' own belief in the correctness of his worldview: Suspicion, Narcissism, and Avoidance are common.

Success or Exceptional Success: The genius feels a brief surge of madness but suffers no ill effects.

Suggested Modifiers: Every additional unmada check in one day (-1), using Deep Inspiration to gain additional Mania (penalty equals Mania gained), unmada check related to genius' catalyst (+1), unmada check related to genius' Obligation (+2)

Unmada who trigger an unmada check risk becoming Illuminated. Roll Obligation.

Dramatic Failure: The genius becomes Illuminated.

Failure: The genius becomes Illuminated. She can spend a point of Willpower to resist the effect. If she spends Willpower, the genius instead automatically loses a dot of Obligation.

Success or Exceptional Success: The genius feels something alien slithering behind her eyes but suffers no ill effects.

Once a genius is Illuminated, she can continue to perform actions that grant unmada checks, though she need not roll. The only exception is Deep Inspiration: an Illuminated cannot attempt Deep Inspiration.

Only Inspired beings can become unmada or Illuminated. Beholden and unInspired manes cannot suffer these fates.

Metanormal Advantage:

Like geniuses and Inspiration, other powerful beings in the world of darkness possess Advantages that define them. Vampires have Blood Potency, Werewolves have Primal Urge, and other beings have other "key" metanormal Advantages. When a genius confronts such a being, its metanormal Advantage is added to its die roll when resisting any Inspired affect that's resisted by only a single Attribute. For example, if a genius attacked a vampire with a fear ray (which attacks Composure), the vampire would roll Composure + Blood Potency,

whereas a regular person would roll Composure alone. Metanormal beings only add their metanormal Advantage to resistance rolls that use a single Attribute, not to ones that use two Attributes (Wits + Composure, Stamina + Resolve, etc.). Likewise, a genius adds his Inspiration to any attempt to resist another being's metanormal effect only when that effect is resisted by a single Attribute.

New Advantage: Mania

The things a genius see come directly from the realm of pure idea, and those things want to be born into this world. But they can no more survive this flawed universe than a man could survive at the bottom of the sea. They appear, only to perish. They can live only within the aegis of an Inspired mind. That aegis is called Mania.

Not even geniuses know what Mania is. Mad scientists have likened it to the breath of the universe, to divine fire, to some kind of charged fluid, to electricity, to radiation, to information...it is all these things and none. No genius knows exactly what Mania is, but they know that it swirls in their minds like a firestorm, pushing against their skulls as if desperate to escape. Mania can manifest physically, as arcs of lightning, an unnatural glow in a test tube, or a kind of high-pitched mechanical whine when transmitted through computers, but it is mostly a mental construct, a knot of bent mathematics and scattershot logic that the genius translates into the working of wonders.

Spending Mania:

A genius can spend Mania to produce any of the following effects:

- Enhance Mental Attributes. Mania is, among other things, pure intellectual and creative energy. Every point of Mania grants a +1 bonus to any one Mental Attribute (Intelligence, Wits, Resolve) for one turn. This can be any Mental Attribute or combination of Mental Attributes. Geniuses who are also Directors can use Mania to enhance their Social Attributes in exactly the same way. Navigators can similarly enhance their Physical Attributes with Mania. Only members of these foundations can enhance non-Mental Attributes with Mania.
- Power mundane technology. By manipulating a machine in ways no sane person could, a genius can keep a machine running even when it has no ordinary power source. How much one point of Mania buys depends on the device.

Lights in a room: 1 day
Flashlight, cell phone: 1 hour
Portable camera: 10 minutes
Computer: 10 minutes
Automobile: 1 hour
Big Truck: 30 minutes
Prop Plane: 10 minutes
Construction Equipment: 10 minutes
Jet: 1 minute

Every time a genius feeds a point of Mania into a machine, roll one ten-sided die. If the result is a 10, the object immediately loses one-quarter of its Structure as the genius rips the guts out of the machine and pushes it beyond the limits of its functionality. A genius can only power mundane technology this way; wonders have their own ways of using Mania.

- Enhance technology. Every point of Mania grants a +1 bonus to any piece of technology in the genius' possession for one turn. (A "piece of technology" is any object that an intelligent creature has worked or modified to use; once someone pulls the leaves off a stick to make a club, it's "technology" and can be affected

by Mania.) Roll the bonus dice for enhanced technology separately. Every 10 that is rolled in this pool causes the tool to lose one-quarter its maximum Structure. (So, four 10s will destroy a tool.) The tool takes damage after it is used, not before. Mania can be spent to grant additional dice to wonders as well as conventional technology.

- **Understand technology.** Geniuses have an intuitive understanding of technological items. Spending a single point of Mania allows a genius to understand the function and nature of any mundane or wondrous piece of technology, as well as how to turn it on and operate it (to the limit of the genius' Skills). This requires one turn of exploration and physical contact with the device. It will not reveal hidden functions or who made it, nor will it allow a genius to do anything she lacks the Skills to do, but this ability can answer important questions about what an item is and how it is meant to be used.
- **Dismantle technology.** A genius can make a Dexterity + Crafts check as an attack roll against any wonder, mane, mundane technological artifact, or miscellaneous super-science artifact. (Entirely organic devices use Medicine instead of Crafts.) The genius must spend at least one point of Mania to perform this attack, which represents quickly analyzing and then ripping apart the target. The number of Mania points spent are added to the attack roll. The attack causes Lethal or Bashing damage and ignores Durability. The Energy Channeler Merit can turn this into a ranged attack. A target's Defense subtracts from any attack of this sort. Geniuses often use this technique when faced with high-Durability wonders that are functionally invulnerable to small-arms fire.
- **Using and activating wonders.** Many wonders of mad science require Mania points before they can be used. The expenditure usually activates the wonder for a whole scene, though some wonders require Mania for every use. See the "Mania" entries under each Axiom. A genius can pay the cost to activate a wonder over the course of several (consecutive or nonconsecutive) turns within a single scene; once enough Mania is in the wonder, it activates.

Regaining Mania:

A genius can regain Mania in one of four ways: contemplation, research, diatribes, and editing. A Genius can also be the subject of a Mania transfer, at some risk to her sanity.

Contemplation:

Geniuses are constantly thinking and scheming. Every morning, when she wakes up, a genius regains one point of Mania. The exception is an unmada, who instead loses a point of Mania every day to sustain her unmada field. (See Madness, Page 289.) Very rarely, during a Maniac Storm, geniuses may recover additional Mania per day due to the transformative insanity swirling around an area, but Maniac Storms are rare, unpredictable, and impermanent.

Research:

A genius can also perform research to generate Mania. "Research" can take several forms: building interesting but useless gadgets, reading the latest literature, talking with other scientists or researchers, performing experiments and test-runs, even just standing in front of a blackboard and thinking very hard. A genius with some kind of "prop" upon which to work (some tools and cogs, a *Scientific American* she hasn't read before, another scientist to talk to, or even a note pad and paper) regains one point of Mania per hour of research. A genius who is simply thinking recovers one point of Mania per two hours. Research dominates a genius' full attention: she cannot perform research while building wonders, making repairs, conducting investigations, or even participating usefully in a stake-out or negotiation.

A genius can normally spend up to six hours per day in this kind of research. Every additional hour in one day requires an unmada check, with a cumulative -1 penalty per additional hour.

Before I Kill You I Will Tell You My Plan:

If the genius has an unwilling person captured and restrained, he can regain a number of Mania equal to his Inspiration + Presence. This requires at least thirty seconds of ranting and can only be done once per day. This triggers an unmada check. The act itself is not a transgression, but getting there often is (kidnapping is an Obligation-6 transgression), and triggering an unmada check is an Obligation-8 transgression.

I Hope This Wasn't Important To You:

The unmada (and only they) have one additional avenue of Mania recovery. Destroying an object of particular value that the genius disagree with, such as burning an ancient scroll containing "unlawful" secret techniques or smashing a laptop that was set to broadcast the indiscretions of the unmada's group, nets a number of Mania equal to the genius' Inspiration + Resolve. This can only be done once per day. Lemurians call this technique "editing" and use it to dispose of unwelcome ideas and artifacts that contradict their pet theories. Editing, whatever a genius calls it, is an Obligation-6 transgression.

Manes and Beholden:

Only geniuses can recover Mania in these ways. Manes that are not Inspired are limited to calculus vampirism or voluntary transfers. Beholden are usually limited to voluntary transfers.

Transferring Mania:

Mania manifests as two forms: as energy and as idea. Intelligent creatures (geniuses, beholden, and intelligent manes) transfer Mania by communicating with one-another. This requires a common language and the ability to communicate, either verbally or through the written word. Two beings can transfer a number of points of Mania per turn this way equal to their combined Inspiration scores as a regular action. Range is however far clear communication can be maintained, even over a phone line. Mania cannot be pre-recorded, however, or placed in notes, without using a capacitor. (See Capacitors, Page 295.)

Artificial things (mundane technology and manes) manifest Mania as a sort of motive force. (Modern geniuses view this "forceful" Mania as much like electricity, though it emphatically is not.) They can transfer Mania through physical contact. If both subjects lack Inspiration scores, they transfer one point of Mania per turn in this way if both take an action to do so.

A genius can only gain a number of points of Mania per scene from external sources (including capacitors, beholden, and other geniuses, as well as Deep Inspiration, but *not* when using the Calculus Vampire Merit) equal to her maximum Mania per turn (based on Inspiration). Any more requires an unmada check with a penalty equal to the number of times previously the genius has rolled an unmada check that day.

Binding Mania:

Geniuses bind points of Mania to the wonders they create. Certain permanent transformations and enhancements caused by wonders also require bound Mania. A genius cannot possess more Mania than his maximum Mania (determined by Inspiration) minus the number of points of Mania she has bound.

Only the Inspired can bind Mania. Beholden and unInspired manes can spend Mania, but cannot bind it.

Deep Inspiration:

A genius can spend Mania she doesn't have by reaching deep into her psyche. This is a reflexive action. She

can channel the normal amount of Mania per turn based on her Inspiration. Upon doing so, she makes an unmada check with a penalty equal to the number of points of Mania channeled.

These additional Mania points do not add to the genius' total Mania score; they must be spent immediately.

Illuminated cannot perform Deep Inspiration.

"Doing Science To It":

Transferring Mania from a "thinking" source to a "motive" one (such as a genius "feeding" Mania to a wonder) requires that the genius "Do Science To It." This requires physical contact and involved flipping knobs, removing superficial damage, tightening bolts, and other technological activities that are outside the scope of mundane technological activity. Going the other way—a wonder "feeding" stored Mania to a genius—requires "Doing Analysis": analyzing readouts that come out of the machine, measuring it with calipers, and other behavior that makes no sense from the perspective of normal science but that nonetheless gives the genius vital insight, which translates as Mania.

Modified Advantage: Obligation (Morality)

The Inspired are extreme creatures, capable of great and terrible transgressions. To fight the corrosive influence of those crimes against the natural order, most geniuses focus on the one thing that still ties them to mundane humanity: their Obligation to it. Their Obligation may be to improve, to protect, or even to punish, but it ultimately ties them to their unInspired brethren.

Obligation monitors how close a genius is to losing all ties with humanity and becoming a true mad scientist, one of the Illuminated who has lost all concern for the well-being and dignity of others, and who sees humans as we might see laboratory mice. As Obligation falls, the genius becomes less and less able to interact with normal humans, and less and less interested in doing so for any decent reason.

Geniuses quickly learn that Obligation is more than Morality: it is tied to the standards of sane and normal behavior that humans apply to their fellows. Many acts that a genius can rationalize as for the greater good—or even demonstrate to be beneficial and useful—are transgressions, since they violate the standards of regular human behavior and distance a genius from the mortals in his charge.

Transgression:

When a genius acts in a way that violates his Obligation to humanity, he commits a transgression. The genius must make a degeneration roll to see if he loses a dot of Obligation. If an act can be described by two different levels of transgression, use the lower one on the chart.

Starting geniuses begin with an Obligation of 7. They can buy it down to 5 at character creation, gaining five experience points per lost dot, though a genius buying her Obligation down this way always receives the Derangement keyed to her catalyst.

A failed degeneration roll means that the genius must make an Obligation roll to avoid acquiring a Derangement, if the genius' (new) Obligation is lower than 7. The new Derangement is linked to the lost dot of Obligation: if the genius' Obligation rises back to its original level, the Derangement is banished.

Each catalyst has a primary Derangement. Should a genius receive a Derangement due to degeneration, she receives that Derangement automatically, first. Subsequent Derangements are determined like normal.

Transgressions include, from least to most heinous:

- Actions that imply a lack of respect for the dangerous power of Inspiration,
- Actions that regular humans find gross, unethical, or "cold" (whether or not they're actually immoral),
- Actions that physically or psychologically distance the genius from humanity,
- Actions that display a cold or reckless disregard for civilization and/or the rule of law, and
- Actions that stem from a genius' willingness to see humans as disposable, replaceable, or beneath consideration.

The list below is not complete or all-inclusive; the Storyteller is expected to examine questionable actions from a genius to see if they fit with the general pattern of transgressions listed below, and to warn the genius' player of a transgression that the mad scientist is poised to commit.

Obligation	Transgression
10	Allowing one's wonder to risk Havoc. Using wonders to accomplish a task when it could have been accomplished just as well with mundane science or skill. Experimenting on animals. (Roll five dice)
9	Allowing one's wonder to turn temporarily orphan. Altering oneself or another person with mad science, even temporarily (not including healing). Going a day without human contact. Minor selfish acts. Performing surgery. (Roll five dice)
8	Injury to another (accidental or otherwise). Failing to help a victimized innocent in need. Triggering an unmade check in oneself. Emotional manipulation. Grave-robbing, dissection, or making zombies. Allowing one's wonder to turn permanently orphan. (Roll four dice)
7	Petty theft (shoplifting). Allowing an innocent to die or be seriously injured without making effort to save the person. Making a person beholden. Mind control. Experimenting on willing human subjects (including oneself) where there is some possibility of harm. Unintentional mass property damage brought about by Inspiration. (Roll four dice)
6	Grand theft (burglary). Kidnapping. "Editing" to gather Mania. Going a week without human contact. Creating an intelligent machine (Automata 4+). Body swapping. (Roll three dice)

5	Killing an intelligent being. Intentional, mass property damage (arson, most doom cannons). Experimenting on willing human subjects (including oneself) where there is a serious possibility of death or harm. Programming permanent psychological limitations into an intelligent being. (Roll three dice)
4	Impassioned serious crime (manslaughter). Sadistic mind control (of the "forcing two friends to fight for your amusement" variety or similar acts of cruelty.) Permanently and significantly altering your physical form (adding two more arms, etc.) (Roll two dice)
3	Going a month without human contact. Planned serious crime (murder). Slavery. Experimenting on unwilling human subjects where there is a serious possibility of death or harm. Permanently and entirely altering your physical form (uploading yourself into a computer or becoming a giant caterpillar). (Roll two dice)
2	Bringing the dead back to life. Rape or sexual mind control. Serial murder. Spreading massive plague and devastation. (Roll one die)
1	Mass murder. Hideous experiments on unwilling human subjects. Scientific torture. Genocide. (Roll one die.)

"The more we do to you, the less you seem to believe we are doing it."

-Dr. Joseph Mengele

Obligation and Morality:

Beholden and unInspired manes possess Morality. Geniuses, Inspired manes, and intelligent automata possess Obligation.

Benefits of Obligation:

Paragon Status:

A genius with an Obligation of 7 or higher qualifies as a Paragon. People have difficulty imagining that the genius is up to no good. Even the most maladjusted genius, if he possesses high Obligation, is automatically seen as a trustworthy authority figure by regular mortals, someone to be admired for his intelligence and contributions to humanity. The genius gains a +1 bonus to all Social checks when acting from a position of knowledge or authority. Further, anyone trying to tar the genius' reputation suffers a -3 penalty to the attempt.

Drawbacks of Obligation:

Stunted Social Skills:

The Inspired are often awkward and isolated people, and as Obligation falls, this problem grows worse. A genius with Obligation 5 or higher suffers no penalty. A genius with Obligation 3 or 4 suffers a -1 penalty to all Social checks, while a genius with Obligation 1 or 2 suffers a -2 penalty.

One of the Illuminated, who has no Obligation, is as charming as any other psychopath and suffers no such caps, though many are so insane they cannot communicate meaningfully. Directors are also immune to this disadvantage when they spend Mania to boost their Social Attributes, which only encourages some to neglect their Obligation further.

The Broken Chains:

Should a genius reach zero Obligation, she becomes one of the Illuminated. Freed from all ethical constraints, she becomes an abomination of science and forbidden secrets, able to see humans only as victims and objects.

Experience Point Costs:

Trait	Experience Point Cost
Attribute	New dots x5
Skill	New dots x3
Skill Specialty	3
Merit	New dots x2
Inspiration	New dots x8 (and a thesis)
Obligation	New dots x3
Favored Axiom	New dots x5
Non-Favored Axiom	New dots x7
Scholarship	3 (and must qualify; see Fellowships, Page 415)
Fellowship Syllabus	New dots x4
Willpower	8 (only to replace lost dots)

Merits:

The Inspired can select a variety of Merits that improve their ability to create and control wonders. They also

have access to the Merits available to regular humans (with the exception of Unseen Sense).

Popular Merits include Resources, due to the staggering expense of generating wonders, and Mentor, to represent a more experienced genius who set the mad scientist on her new path. Mental Merits like Eidetic Memory, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Holistic Awareness, and Meditative Mind are popular with geniuses. Inspired who expect trouble may have Quick Draw or Stunt Driver to get out of trouble fast.

The Resources Merit:

A genius has more need for Resources than normal people: she needs supplies, equipment, electricity, and space to work, and all of these cost money. There is also the constant risk that a genius might lose access to her supply of Resources, which could threaten the development of her wonders.

To that end, any genius with dots in the Resources Merit should specify where the money comes from. Each possibility offers drawbacks and the potential for sabotage and catastrophe.

Entrepreneurial Inventor: One of the riskiest of the ways a genius can make money, actually selling one's (normal) inventions, allows a genius to "hide in plain sight." To keep the money flowing, the Storyteller may call for a check once a month, either to come up with a good idea (Intelligence + Science), to put together a prototype (Intelligence + Crafts), to try to drum up some enthusiasm for the project (Manipulation + Expression – Jabir) or even to give a live demonstration (Presence + Socialize – Jabir). Failed rolls can result in money falling through for that month, or force a genius to do something risky in order to raise funds.

Grant Money: The genius' money comes from an academic grant designed to support a field of development (that may or may not be related to what the genius does). Since this money is focused on laboratory support, spending it on purchases that can't be justified as a legitimate expense may draw the ire of the grant provider. Too many such expenditures (say, more than one per month) may result in grant money being cut or a visit being paid to the genius' laboratory to see what's "really going on." This usually results in a desperate, perhaps futile cover-up by the genius.

Parents: Younger geniuses can get by siphoning huge quantities of money from their rich parents. There are two problems with this. First, the amount of money siphoned requires that the genius' parents either be staggeringly rich (in which case they will probably be insane and/or annoying) or bad with numbers (and theft is a transgression, not to mention a crime that puts the genius at risk). Second, the constant intrusions, the parents wandering around the lab (possibly getting captured by things), and the "Are you on drugs?" speeches can wear on a young genius. Any slip-up may lead to a suspension of allowance. And don't think that having Inspired parents makes it any better: they're just as strapped for cash, and may not be above stealing from their kid's laboratory.

Private Sector Job: The genius has a job that a normal technically-proficient person might have, such as employment as a chemist or a job hawking video games at the local electronics shop. The genius will have to put in time at this job, and probably gets called in at unwanted or unexpected times to cover shifts. Failure to show up may result in termination and a loss of Resources. Assume that the job is part-time and requires at least sixteen hours per week, with the occasional bonus shift thrown in for good measure. (The Storyteller should use the genius' private sector job as a springboard for adventure, not just as a time-sink or an impediment to adventure.)

Theft: Of course, you can always just *build giant robots* and then *rob banks with them*. It's not like *that's* never occurred to mad scientists in the past. But burglary is dangerous and unpredictable, as are related tricks like blackmail and corporate fraud. They're immoral, too. Of course, it doesn't mean that geniuses haven't tried them. Theft is rarely reducible to a single roll: the genius will have to make plans, then get out there and mix it up with local law enforcement and private security—and any other geniuses who notice (and frown on) this

kind of behavior.

Trust Fund: This should be the easiest way for a genius to stay wealthy. Every month a big wad of cash appears, or a lump sum is deposited in the genius' checking account. Of course, it's never that easy, since trust funds come from somewhere and that "somewhere" expects the genius to use those funds to live, not to buy "...50 kilos of Brazilian fertilizer...fifteen solid bronze statues of Spiro Agnew, eleven feet high...three cases of military-grade incendiaries...400 Apple II's, painted blue...." In other words, weird purchases (more than one or two wonders built per month) can send up a red flag, triggering an investigation into exactly what the genius is stockpiling, and why.

University Position: The genius works at a school, teaching and publishing. The teaching doesn't take much time (what else are teaching assistants for?) but the genius will have to survive the constant onslaught of bright, curious people who want to know what she is doing. Once per month the genius will need to make some kind of roll, to publish a paper or fend off an inquiry about what she does—Intelligence + Expression, Manipulation + Subterfuge, etc., with the usual penalties for Jabir—or she may find herself investigated and, unless she has Tenure, tossed out on her ear.

Next to where a genius records her Resources, note where that money comes from. Different dots may have different sources: the first dot may come from a private sector job, while the second comes from grant money. Failure to keep the money-lines flowing may result in the genius temporarily losing access to her Resources. Also, enemies may try to cut the genius off at the knees by attacking her funding. The Storyteller should, of course, see the source of the genius' Resources as a way to tell stories, not to sever the genius from her ability to make wonders. While disappointment is part of the game's mood, *Genius* is about creating wonders, not about being bored, broke, and frustrated. Storytellers should avoid forcing players to experience parts of their characters' lives that they (the players) find boring or uninspiring.

Adopted Orphan (● to ●●●●●):

When a genius dies or abandons an experiment, or a wondrous mane escapes its natural home, the result is an orphan, a feral wonder that survives by scavenging or stealing Mania. These creatures are often dangerous, but a genius can instill a sense of loyalty in some such creatures through regular feeding and kindness. Such orphan wonders are said to be "adopted" by a genius.

This Merit grants a genius one or more such orphan wonders. The genius did not build this wonder. Instead she acquired it. This means that she need not possess the necessary Axioms or training to build the wonder. Many mad scientists seek out complementary orphans in order to begin a symbiotic relationship: the genius provides a regular supply of Mania, while the orphan grants the genius abilities she would not ordinarily possess.

In order to adopt an orphan, a genius binds a number of points of Mania into the orphaned wonder equal to its rank, just like a regular wonder. This prevents the orphan from consuming its own Mania over time and buys the genius a certain measure of loyalty. It also removes the Orphan's mutations. (See Orphan Mutations, Page 272.) Orphans are never as simply loyal as a genius' own wonders, though: all orphans are intelligent and free-roaming to at least some degree. Orphans cannot be used as Mania-holding units, either: no matter how loyal an orphan is, it will not—it appears psychologically unable to—offer up any stored Mania it possesses for other purposes. Orphans are often dangerous and are always difficult to keep, which is why not all geniuses use them even if they fall into the genius' possession.

- : The genius possesses a rank-one wonder.
- : The genius possesses one rank-two wonder or two rank-one wonders.
- : The genius possesses one rank-three wonder or four ranks of rank-two or lower wonders.
- : The genius possesses one rank-four wonder or six ranks of rank-three or lower wonders.
- : The genius possesses one rank-five wonder or eight ranks of rank-four or lower wonders.

It's possible, at character creation, to purchase adopted orphans that come pre-grafted or pre-internalized. Many manes (see the Mane Merit, below) possess these kinds of adopted orphans, which represent natural, internal abilities of their mane breed.

An orphan possesses one persistent fault. If an orphan does not possess faults, its effective rank increases by one for the purpose of determining its cost.

Rule of Inspiration: Generally, for adopted orphans as well as miscellaneous orphans and other found wonders, the Inspiration used to build a wonder is equal to the wonder's rank. So, if a genius possess a rank-3 supersonic jet as an orphan, the builder's Inspiration is treated as three dots for purposes of determining the wonder's speed and other derived scores. In general, if the Inspiration of the wonder's builder is not otherwise listed, assume that it equals the wonder's rank.

Assembly Line (● to ●●●●●)

The genius possesses a method for quickly duplicating her work, which reduces the Mania cost when creating many identical wonders. Ordinarily, a genius binds a number of Mania equal to the wonder's rank for every wonder he builds. With an assembly line, the genius doubles the amount of (identical) wonders she can create and control with that amount of Mania.

Rank in This Merit	Number of Identical Wonders
●	2
●●	4
●●●	8
●●●●	16
●●●●●	32

For example, a typical "experimental jet" is a Skafoi 3 wonder and so would bind three Mania. But if the genius possessed one dot in this Merit, she would be able to build and maintain two experimental jets for three Mania. If she had two dots in the Merit, she would be able to build and maintain four experimental jets for those three Mania, and so on. With the five-dot version of the Assembly Line, the genius could have 32 such jets—a veritable air fleet—for just three points of Mania.

Note that these wonders must be precisely identical, down to their persistent faults (or not having a persistent fault and binding twice the regular Mania) in order to benefit from this Merit.

The assembly line does not allow the genius to build these wonders all at once, only to sustain them all with

the same points of bound Mania. This Merit cannot be applied to kitbashed wonders. It also cannot be applied to Larval wonders (see Larvae, Page 141).

Beholden (● to ●●●●●; special)

A beholden, sometimes called an "Igor" or just an assistant, is more than a loyal servant. There is a howling storm inside every genius that Mania fills, but inside a beholden there is only stillness. Beholden may be brilliant, funny, or capable, but they possess a personality that falls naturally into the worldview of another. They latch onto Inspired, basking in the glow of reflected Mania.

When a person becomes beholden, she loses the ability to recover Willpower when indulging her Virtue or Vice. Instead she recovers one point of Willpower per day so long as she is assisting her master. If she helps her master complete a wonder (that is not an orphan) or succeeds in dirty work (see Dirty Work, Page 280), she can gain up to one additional point of Willpower that day.

A genius can transfer Mania into beholden. This works just like transferring Mania into a capacitor. He can also draw it out, and beholden can transfer Mania they hold or draw Mania from a capacitor. Storing Mania in a beholden lets them use wonders. Beholden can hold a maximum number of Mania points equal to their Intelligence + Resolve.

The advantage of a beholden is that they can assist with the creation of wonders without causing Havoc. (Hence one rumored origin of the term: "Gentlemen...Behold!") They are also often gifted in their own right, but they cannot become truly great on their own: they are touched by the genius' Inspiration, almost feeding upon it, and lack the drive and capacity for independent thought that characterizes a scientist, mad or sane.

The beholden Merit is broken down into three conditions: Number, Ability, and Prowess. At least one dot must be spent on Number.

Number:

Number determines how many loyal minions a genius has. The exact number might fluctuate due to casualties, abandonment, or new recruits, but the general benefits remain the same except under egregious circumstances.

Having many beholden reduces the time taken to build a wonder. See below. This cannot reduce the time taken for a non-kitbashed Wonder to less than one day.

Having more beholden allows more attempts at dirty work. See Prowess, below, for more information on that mechanic.

Coupled with the Assembly Line Merit, having many beholden allows you to produce many identical wonders at the same time. The genius still benefits from the time reduction, meaning that many beholden can build wonders from an Assembly Line so fast only the most powerful geniuses have spare Mania to bind to all of them. A genius with three dots in beholden Number and at least three dots in the Assembly Line Merit, for example, could build up to eight identical wonders at once, with the same roll, and building all eight wonders would take half the time it would take a similar genius without those Merits to build a single such wonder.

Rating	Number	Time Reduction	Dirty Work	With Assembly Line
•	One beholden	One step	One attempt per chapter	Make two wonders at once with Assembly Line ●+
••	Two to five beholden	Two steps	Two attempts per chapter	Make four wonders at once with Assembly Line ●●+
•••	Up to a dozen beholden	Three steps	Three attempts per chapter	Make eight wonders at once with Assembly Line ●●●+
••••	Up to thirty beholden	Four steps	Four attempts per chapter	Make sixteen wonders at once with Assembly Line ●●●●+
•••••	More than thirty beholden, perhaps more than a hundred	Five steps	Five attempts per chapter	Make 32 wonders at once with Assembly Line ●●●●●

Ability:

While a genius can find a use for mop-pushing slobs, highly trained specialists in relevant scientific fields make the ideal beholden, since they grant so many useful benefits. The Ability rating of a beholden or group of beholden determines the bonus they grant to wonder-working due to their own familiarity with scientific and technical fields.

Rating	Description	Wonder-working Bonus
0	Barely fit to clean the test tubes	None
•	Familiar with laboratory work	+1
••	Experienced lab assistant or researcher	+2
•••	Professional scientist	+3
••••	Renowned scholar	+4
•••••	World-famous talent	+5

Prowess:

Without dots in this rating, a genius' beholden are scholars, researchers, scientists, and laboratory specialists, but they're not trained to work outside the lab. Prowess, however, turns some or all of a genius' beholden from meek technicians into an elite force capable of acting independently from the genius. The Prowess of a group of beholden determines their usefulness for dirty work. (See Dirty Work, Page 280.)

Rating	Description	Similar To	Dirty Work Dice Pool
0	Regular people	Untrained civilians	Cannot use Dirty Work
•	Goons with basic self-defense training	Neighborhood watch	1 die
••	Thugs who know how to fight	Police officers	2 dice
•••	Capable and deadly minions	Army recruits	3 dice
••••	Lethal henchpersons with extensive training	SWAT team	4 dice
•••••	Elite super-scientific task force	Elite special forces	5 dice

Sharing Beholden:

Beholden can be shared among members of a collaborative. To share beholden, two or more characters simply have to be willing to pool their dots for greater capability. A shared rating in the beholden Merit cannot rise higher than five dots in Number, Ability, or Prowess.

Note that shared beholden cannot be used at the same time: if one genius needs two Igors for a research experiment, they cannot simultaneously be sent by another genius to explore the bottom of the ocean. Some type of time-sharing program may need to be arranged.

If a character leaves the collaborative for any reason, whether it be death, banishment, or a grudge that cannot be resolved, the dots he contributed are removed from the pool. The character who leaves does not get all the dots back for his own purposes. He gets one fewer dot than he originally contributed. If all members who have combined to share beholden points agree to part ways, they all lose one dot from what they originally contributed.

The loss of beholden points can represent several things, as determined by the Storyteller. Maybe the best and most capable beholden leave for more stable masters. Maybe the infighting reduces their loyalty. Maybe some just walk away, looking for better opportunities.

Note that a genius who belongs to a collaborative need not share his beholden dots. Further, he can choose to split his beholden dots, maintaining a personal stable of assistants while also contributing to the beholden pool.

To record shared beholden on your character sheet, put an asterisk next to the name of the Beholden Merit and fill in the total dots that your character has access to thanks to his partnership. In order to record his original contribution, write it in parentheses along with the Merit's name.

Calculus Vampire (●●):

The genius can drain Mania or knowledge in order to fuel her abilities. All manes and orphaned wonders possess this ability automatically.

If targeting a single person or thing, either a mundane scientist, one of the Inspired, or even a wonder, the genius must have the subject immobilized (either tied down or held in a grapple) and make an Intelligence + Resolve check vs. the subject's Composure + Metanormal Advantage.

Dramatic Failure: The vampire botches the job, losing half his remaining Mania and taking one point of Aggravated damage. The genius cannot use this Merit again for the rest of the day.

Failure: The vampire gets nowhere. The genius cannot attempt to drain Mania for the rest of the scene.

Success: Every Success allows the vampire to drain one point of Mania from the target and gain that Mania for himself. If the subject has no Mania (or no remaining Mania), every success allows the vampire to drain one dot of any Mental skill from the target, converting it to one Mania. Note that a genius cannot affect any other metanormal creature so long as it has at least a single point of "power" (Vitae, Pyros, etc.) unless the genius is also a Technomancer, in which case he can drain another metanormal being's power source, gaining Mania on a one-for-two basis. The genius cannot gain more Mania than his maximum, based on Inspiration.

Exceptional Success: The vampire drains *all* the subject's Mania and/or Mental skills, or whatever fraction thereof he wants. He still cannot gain more Mania than his maximum. He can, however, siphon any excess off to capacitors, beholden, or Inspired allies without making an additional roll.

Suggested Modifiers: Subject is thoroughly restrained or unconscious (+1), subject is beaten, degraded, or psychologically destabilized (+2), subject is unmada (+1).

Attacking an unwilling intelligent target this way is a Obligation-3 transgression. Even targeting a willing intelligent subject is an Obligation-5 transgression if the vampire is draining Skills instead of Mania. Draining any type of creature, willing or not, intelligent or not, is an Obligation-8 transgression.

Drawing Mania in this way does not risk an unmada check.

Skill ranks recover at a rate of one dot per day. The victim can choose which Skills she regains and in what order.

Calculus Vampires use a variety of methods to get at their prey, but their activity always requires physical contact. Some have veins or needles that convert plundered cerebrospinal fluid into raw Mania, while others whisper mathematical secrets and listen for the "blowback," absorbing the Mania produced by insane thought; others still use hypnotic patterns to extract Mania.

Dumpster Diver (●):

The genius is unusual adept at finding useful components in the most unlikely places. His Resources Merit is treated at two higher than it is for purposes of determining Resources-based penalties for building wonders. This even applies when kitbashing (giving the genius a functional Resources of two dots when kitbashing), provided the genius has some kind of "dumpster"-like thing to dive into.

Energy Channeler (● or ●●):

The genius can channel Mania to empower or damage conventional technology, or to move Mania between herself and a capacitor or another genius, at range, rather than by touch or communication. The one-dot version of this ability gives a range of about ten yards, while the two-dot version gives a range out the the genius' line of sight; however, anything past ten yards requires a Wits + Athletics or Wits + Firearms check to hit. Failure means that the Mania is lost.

Generator (● to ●●●●●):

The genius possesses an object that generates Mania. These extraordinary devices are found, not made, and represent peculiar relics of mad or sane-but-terrifying science: alien elemental dynamos, self-transforming equations scribbled in forgotten notebooks, mundane objects "imprinted" with the energy of scientific breakthroughs, highly radioactive atomic piles, and radios for talking to God. These strange one-off devices exist partly in our world and partly in the realm of Idea, and some have been fought over by mad scientists for generations or millennia.

The amount of Mania generated per day and the maximum amount of Mania it can store depends on the Generator's Size and rank.

	Size 0*	Size 1	Size 2-3	Size 4-5	Size 6-11	Size 12-29	Size 30+
Rank ●	NA	NA	1	2	3	4	5
Rank ●●	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6
Rank ●●●	1	2	3	4	5	6	8
Rank ●●●●	2	3	4	5	6	8	12
Rank ●●●●●	3	4	5	6	8	12	20

* If Size 0, the Generator may be internalized automatically if desired.

Drawing Mania from a Generator works like drawing it from a capacitor. (See Capacitors, Page 295.) Given the risk of unmada, larger and better Generators are often employed by several geniuses at once.

Kitbasher (●●):

The genius is unusually adept at kitbashing a wonder into existence. The genius suffers no penalty for kitbashing wonders. Her kitbashed wonders still fall apart normally, and she still suffers a penalty because of Resources. She does not ignore penalties from other time-reducing shortcuts (such as hastily repairing or modifying a wonder), only when building it.

Laboratory (● to ●●●●●; special):

The genius has access to a laboratory. This is not just a place where she performs her research; it is a refuge and safe haven away from the cruelty and caprices of the mundane world. All laboratories have three factors that determine their utility: Size, Equipment, and Security.

Size:

Size indicates how much physical space the laboratory takes up and how long it takes to transport (assuming normal labor).

0: A lab with no size is barely more than a closet with a work bench. It can support one genius at a time, but it is cramped and inconvenient, and has limited supplies, meaning it can only be used every other day. Everything within can be packed into a big suitcase (Size 5) with one person-hour of work.

●: A small apartment or computer lab. One genius can work comfortably and use the lab's equipment at a time. Despite being larger than a Size-0 lab, layout is smarter, and everything can be packed into a small suitcase (Size 5) with thirty person-minutes of work.

●●: The size of a small house or some rented office space with a small storage room in back. Three geniuses (or beholden) can work comfortably at the same time. Everything can be packed into a few steamer-trunks (about a 5'x'5x5' cube) or a small moving van in six person-hours.

●●●: Big enough to be a warehouse, a town library, the wing of a University, or a large "cubicle farm"; from five to eight rooms, or a single large enclosure. Ten geniuses (or beholden) can work comfortably at the same time. Everything could be packed into a large moving van in one person-day.

●●●●: A mansion atop a hill, an entire large University hall, or a research base; equivalent to nine to 25 rooms. A hundred geniuses (or beholden) can work comfortably at the same time. Everything could be packed into a small fleet of moving vans or cargo containers in one person-week.

●●●●●: An entire university, a skyscraper owned from basement to penthouse; dozens of independent research facilities owned across an entire city or region; countless rooms or chambers. More geniuses (or beholden) that can feasibly be brought together can work in a laboratory of this size. It would take a person-year of work to pack everything for transport, and moving it would be a logistical nightmare, requiring coordinated transport of dozens or hundreds of shipping containers.

Equipment:

Size is useful only insofar as the genius has something interesting to fill that space. That is the laboratory's

Equipment, and the rating determines how useful it is. A Lab with no points in Equipment may be pleasantly appointed for visitors, but it has nothing besides empty benches and bare floors for research.

Every point of Laboratory Equipment adds a +1 bonus to all rolls made to build, repair, or fiddle with wonders there, provided that the genius has access to the equipment. It can also, at the Storyteller's discretion, provide the same bonus to mundane repair and construction activities.

0: The laboratory is largely empty, except what the genius brings with her.

- : Outdated and inefficient equipment, badly organized and poorly protected from the environment; the equivalent of junior chemistry sets and astrolabes. The computers look like something out of the 70s.

- : Serviceable laboratory equipment that is nonetheless outdated and second-hand; computers are slow and clunky, while samples occasionally risk contamination unless the researchers are careful.

- : A typical private or university laboratory with a good selection of modern equipment, fast computers with Internet hookups, and reliable technology, but nothing too highly specialized or expensive.

- : A deluxe set-up with top-of-the-line computers networked for maximum efficiency, top-shelf apparatus, and enough specialized equipment either available or on loan to perform even the strangest experiments.

- : An incredible, world-class lab; if the computers were more advanced, they'd be wonders, while just about any scientific apparatus can be found, built, or ordered in minimum time, and everything works astonishingly well.

Security:

Finally, a laboratory should be protected and concealed from prying eyes, or at least able to pass as a normal research institution. Placing dots in Security keeps the laboratory hidden and protected. Laboratories with no dots in Security are public and possess no particular security features except any wonders or beholden the genius devotes to that task. Each dot in Security for a laboratory subtracts two dice from efforts by intruders to find and get into the laboratory, due to concealment or (mundane) security measures like locked doors, pass-key systems, and surveillance. Further, each dot in Security grants a +1 bonus on Initiative for anyone inside against anyone attempting to gain entrance, due to internal security systems and good defensive organization.

0: The laboratory's location and nature are both obvious to anyone who look at it, and it offers no protection against intrusion except whatever the genius directs toward that area in the form of wonders or beholden guards.

- : The laboratory's location is still obvious, but it has basic security, such as key-locks, to keep most casual intruders out. Anyone attempting to enter the laboratory subtracts two dice from their roll. Anyone within engaging intruders gains a +1 bonus on Initiative due to clear lines of sight and good defensive layout.

- : The laboratory is well-hidden, either in some inaccessible area or concealed in plain sight, and possesses more sophisticated defensive mechanisms, including code-locks, security cameras, and alarms. Anyone attempting to enter the laboratory subtracts four dice from their roll. Anyone within engaging intruders gains a +2 bonus on Initiative due to good organization and access to security cameras.

- : The laboratory is artfully concealed and possesses state-of-the-art counter-intrusion technology: DNA locks, advanced security cameras, motion sensors, and a dedicated security computer. Anyone attempting to

enter the laboratory subtracts six dice from their roll. Anyone within engaging intruders gains a +3 bonus on Initiative due to security cameras, flood lights, and other systems that put invaders at a disadvantage.

●●●●: The laboratory is basically impossible to find unless the searcher knows what to look for. Protected by advanced technology that borders on the Inspired, the laboratory possesses more security measures than a secret military base. Anyone attempting to enter the laboratory subtracts eight dice from their roll. Anyone within engaging intruders gains a +4 bonus on Initiative due to super-science scanners, protective walls made of incredible alloys, or internal sensor drones. Like a Wonder, this laboratory binds one point of Mania. If Mania is not available, the lab is treated as having only three dots in Security.

●●●●●: The laboratory is an impregnable fortress, riddled with super-science protective measures. Anyone attempting to enter the laboratory subtracts ten dice from their roll. Anyone within engaging intruders gains a +5 bonus on Initiative due to the incredible systems that protect the laboratory and support those within it. This laboratory binds five points of Mania. If Mania is not available, the lab is treated as having only three dots in Security.

Sharing Laboratory Space:

Sharing a laboratory among the collaborative works exactly like sharing beholden. Laboratories need to be large enough to support all the geniuses involved if they plan to work at the same time; geniuses who cooperate to support smaller labs may need to work in shifts.

Mane (● to ●●●):

The genius is a mane, not a natural-born human being. She may be a clone, an orphan automaton, or just a normal-seeming person born in a bardo, or she may be something much stranger. Manes suffer from two disadvantages. First, they require one point of Mania per day to sustain themselves—this point cancels out the point of Mania a genius receives automatically upon waking every day. (See Manes, Page 284.) Second, manes are susceptible to Havoc. (See Havoc, Page 270.)

However, manes gain a significant advantage over mortal geniuses: they can spend Mania to heal damage as a reflexive action. Every point of Mania heals one point of Lethal damage (or Structure, if non-biological) or two points of Bashing damage. By spending three points of Mania and a point of Willpower, a mane can heal a point of Aggravated damage.

Manes also receive the Calculus Vampire Merit at no cost.

There are three categories of this Merit.

Mane ●: The mane does not appear at all human. Only a full-body covering coupled with darkness or disinterest can hide this fact.

Mane ●●: The mane looks nearly human, but may possess a few unusual features such as a tail or a third eye in the middle of his forehead.

Mane ●●●: The mane looks entirely human.

Manes often possess grafted or internalized adopted orphans (see the Adopted Orphan Merit, above) to represent peculiar native abilities.

Science Hero (●●●):

The genius' Jabir penalty is reduced by one. Further, the genius gains a bonus to any Social Skills when acting from a position of knowledge or authority equal to her Obligation -6. This bonus replaces the similar bonus gained for Paragon Status. (See Page 86.)

Technomancer (●●●):

The genius can convert any sort of metanormal energy (Glamour, Mana, Vitae) into Mania, and vice-versa, on a one-for-one basis. This requires the energy to be free-standing or given voluntarily (unless the genius is also a Calculus Vampire, in which case he can drain other energy sources just like draining Mania). One point of energy can be converted per turn. Note that a genius can only hold Mania; it is impossible for a genius to store Vitae or some other type of energy.

This ability allows a genius to perform many functions that require some other sort of energy source. The genius cannot, of course, learn another creature's special abilities—he could not learn a vampire's Disciplines or a changeling's Contracts—but he may find other uses for that energy, such as activating a changeling's token.

Tenure (●●●):

The genius receives tenure at a college or university. This means that it's almost impossible to get rid of him, no matter how crazy he is. More importantly, a "Failure" result when trying to create a wonder does not mean a long delay while the genius tries to restock his supplies. A quick requisition form sent to the college's head of supply can secure ingredients from anywhere almost instantly.

The genius still suffers a penalty for having a Resources rating below the rating needed for the wonder.

Universalist (● to ●●●):

The genius suffers no penalties when using another genius' wonders. The one-dot version of this Merit applies this benefit to one Axiom. The two-dot version applies this benefit to a number of Axioms equal to the genius' Wits. The three-dot version applies to wonders built with any Axiom.

Utility Belt (● to ●●●●●):

A Utility belt is a handheld device (Size 2) that grants a genius a +1 bonus when working on wonders. All utility belts grant a +1 to Science. Each rank in this Merit grants the genius another +1 bonus with one other Skill: Academics, Computer, Crafts, Medicine, or Occult. This bonus is typically used to build and repair wonders, but it can be used for mundane applications of the Skill too. A Utility Belt also removes the rank/Resources penalty due to kitbashing. (See Kitbashed Wonders, Page 138.)

Utility belts are portable while laboratories are not, but utility belts (which are not always belts; some Inspired prefer tool cases or rucksacks) cannot be combined with a lab's Equipment bonus. They are most popular with geniuses on the move. A genius cannot use another genius' utility belt.

"It's the alarming rate of suicide among beholden that troubles me," Professor Bonnerman said. He was lying: nothing really 'troubled' him anymore, except that he might find one graph less satisfying than another. He lit a cigarette. He did it real slowly, so the woman in front of us wouldn't put a bullet in his brain.

"This isn't what it was supposed to be like," the woman said. Her hands weren't too steady. She was maybe 25, overweight, looking like the girl who gets ignored at the dance club. I hadn't noticed her before around the lab. Her dress had the most fascinating fractal pattern on the...come on, Jake, focus. Act human and normal. You're probably going to die here.

"It's hard to shoot," Bonnerman said, taking a long slow drag. "Not because you're a good person, Marlene, because you're not: you're as immoral as you are ignorant. But it's because you know that killing me kills you. There's nothing in you, no spark, no vision. You're a tool, an extension. That's all you'll ever be."

"That's not true!" The gun was practically vibrating now. "I want my life back!" If I could just reach the bone spur in my pocket...

"That's the bitterest truth, Marlene: you never had a life. Or an idea of your own, ever. Jake here has potential. He wasn't always like he was now. But you can't be like him, or like me. There's no going back. And there's no going forward, not for you. You know that. Which is why you're going to put that gun down, and then Jake is going to cut your throat."

She shot him in the face, which surprised me. The gun swung toward my head, a long, lazy arc. I knocked it from her hand and drew the bone spur across her throat. She screamed, because I had missed the trachea while still getting all the important arteries, and she fell back, still screaming, making a bloody mess of the lab floor. When she stopped, I could hear Bonnerman, and he was laughing: a ragged, hearty, human laugh, as he clutched his bloodied cheek.

"I did not see that coming," he said, between guffaws. "Come on, let's get this cleaned up."

He looked at me, as if daring me to do it. I put the length of bone away and got the mop while the doctor dragged the body to the furnace.

Chapter Three: Systems and Foundations

"The fear of infinity is a form of myopia that destroys the possibility of seeing the actual infinite, even though it in its highest form has created and sustains us, and in its secondary transfinite forms occurs all around us and even inhabits our minds."
-Georg Cantor

A genius' Breakthrough is an amazing and hideous event, and a great accomplishment: those who survive the experience (somewhat) sane and whole should be commended merely for making it through in one piece. But catalyzing is only the beginning of a genius' journey. For weeks or even months, a genius might flail about with nothing but raw Mania and the effects it can engender. Some lonosomes might stay here indefinitely, with a touch of insanity separating them from mere mortals and a gift for understanding machines and pushing them to the limit.

But eventually, most geniuses, even isolated ones, start to recognize patterns and systems. They look past the apparently random shifts of Mania, the equations that dance on the page or behind the computer screen, and find tangles of predictability and repeatability, something they can hold on to: the Axioms of mad science. From there a genius can start to build up a system and a philosophy.

The Foundations:

A genius' first Axiom—and likewise her first wonders—are often based on her catalyst. These "core" Axioms—Apokalypsi, Epikrato, Exelixa, Katastrofi, and Metaptropi—are glimpsed more clearly than the others, as they seem tied to the natural conditions of a genius' Inspired soul. But many geniuses, after cobbling together their first wonders based almost purely on the intensity of the emotions they felt during their Breakthroughs, cast around for more. Curiosity is a companion to all geniuses, and "Are there more people like me?" is a natural question to ask.

Some geniuses find no one. Even for one of the Inspired, it's not easy to know the telltale signs of mad science, nor to separate Inspired ramblings from crazy ones, whether on the Internet or face-to-face. Many lonosomes, even ones living amidst dozens or hundreds of other geniuses, grow discouraged after a cursory search and retreat into the solitude of their work. Others, especially as they tilt toward madness and megalomania, are noticed by Lemuria, which indoctrinates them into the Lemurian worldview.

The foundations were created to stop this loss of brilliant minds to Lemuria or isolation. The Conclave of Troy was called in 1814 to organize the world's (or at least Europe's and Arabia's) free geniuses against the encroaching threat of Lemuria. (The conclave took place in the ruins of *another* lost city, not actually Troy, about 300 miles from the site of Schliemann's discovery; no one bothered to change the name because no one knows what that city was called and now no one can find it.)

There, free geniuses representing the Invisible College, the Brotherhood of Artifice and Mechanism, the Children of the Demiurge, and the Cartographic Order of St. Christopher the Undeceived, along with a dozen smaller groups, united to form the Peerage, an affiliation of "peculiar natural philosophers and savants" dedicated to rescuing their fellows from madness and the depredations of Lemuria. Over the years, the number, kinds, and names of the foundations have changed: the Cartographic Order was swallowed by the Invisible College, then re-emerged as the Navigators; the Brotherhood split violently into the Artificers and the Mechanists; the Fellowship for Manifest Direction appeared to confront Lemurian industrial hegemony; the Progenitors were destroyed and reborn; the New American Artisans flourished before dwindling into insignificance, and so on. But the Peerage remained and prospered, some groups seeking out mad scientists hidden in their midst, others searching distant parts of the world for lone geniuses, while still others

organized the great libraries and philosophical roundtables that drew the respect and attention of geniuses all over the world.

Today the Peerage boasts five foundations, as well as numerous fellowships, splinter groups, and affiliated collaboratives. Most geniuses who are aware of the larger Inspired community and who do not immediately join Lemuria to fulfill their psychological needs (that is, most geniuses fit to be played in a game) end up as peers. There they are tutored by more experienced geniuses, given the foundation's organon—its core philosophical texts—and introduced to the rest of the Peerage. This is not a formal process, and the Peerage is not a formal organization: there is no official debut, no code of law, no system for "mad scientist duels," and no secret decoder rings or handshakes. The foundations are deliberately non-hierarchical and open, to encourage as many geniuses as possible to join.

This openness has not always been the rule. The Peerage goes through regular cycles of alternating openness and exclusiveness. Currently the foundations are approachable and accommodating, but in times of great stress or difficulty, such as during the last Invisible War or during the ideological struggles of the early 1990s, they can become rigid and dogmatic. For the foreseeable future, though, the Peerage has relaxed its standards and encourages as many geniuses to participate in it as possible.

Joining a foundation offers a genius more than a social network. Though the psychological cushion of the Peerage should not be underestimated, most geniuses join to get access to the organon and the mechanical benefits that accompany access to a regularly updated body of mad research.

This flow of data toward the genius offers two benefits. First, a genius receives an additional favored Axiom, chosen from among the foundation's two Axioms of focus. Second, it offers a grant. The grant is a special technique that the foundation offers its members.

Keeping Up the Subscription:

In order to benefit from a foundation's favored Axiom and grant, the genius must stay in contact with other members of the foundation, contributing research data and keeping abreast of the latest developments. In game terms, the genius must bind one point of Mania to her foundation. This bound Mania doesn't just vanish into the ether: it turns into research, analysis, useful samples, or articles that are examined by other members of the foundation, who in turn absorb that data. That data, along with the mindset necessary to appreciate it, in turn "fuels" the favored Axiom and Grant of geniuses in that foundation.

A genius can leave a foundation at any time, but it takes one month for the subscriptions and services to run out. After a month she loses all foundation benefits and regains her point of bound Mania. She will also automatically lose access to her foundation if entirely out of touch with the Inspired world (no email, snail mail, rocket courier, or passenger pigeon) for a full month.

Leaving a foundation is not necessarily permanent and is not even very stigmatized. The situation can be rectified simply by re-binding a point of Mania, getting back in touch to renew one's subscriptions, and waiting one month to regain foundation status. The current loose organization of the Peerage frowns on holding grudges and understands that sometimes geniuses are incommunicado (or Mania-poor) for long periods of time.

Changing Foundations:

It is possible for a genius to change foundations, or even to change affiliations, moving from rogue status to part of the Peerage or Lemuria, or back, or to move from the Peerage to Lemuria. This requires two things. First, the foundation requests a donation of Mania equal to the genius' maximum Mania, paid off either all at once or over a period of time. Second, the genius must devote time to study and retraining. In mechanical

terms, the genius must gain one dot in a specific Skill. (If at the maximum number of dots for his Inspiration, she may instead elect to gain a Specialization in that Skill.)

Artificer: Computer or Crafts
Director: Persuasion or Socialize
Navigator: Athletics or Drive
Progenitor: Medicine or Occult
Scholastic: Academics or Investigation

Atomist: Politics
Etherite: Science
Mechanist: Crafts
Oracle: Occult
Phenomenologist: Academics

If looking to join a foundation, the genius must not be an unmada. Conversely, if looking to join a Lemurian baramin, the genius must be an unmada.

The genius joins the foundation after having bound a point of Mania to that foundation for a full month.

Becoming a rogue does not require any Skill training, and occurs automatically after a month if the genius stops keeping up her subscription.

The International Union of Artifice

Name: Artificers

Nicknames: Makers, Tinkers, Artisans

Currently the fastest-growing foundation, the Union of Artifice is undergoing growing pains as its influences reaches places not previously contacted, or even noticed, by the Yankee inventors who founded it three centuries ago. A seething cauldron of creativity, anger, and clashing cultural identities, the Artificers have changed, almost overnight, from the Peerage's eccentric hobbyists and harmless tinkers to a politically-charged nest of ideologies stumbling together into a new world.

The traditional image of the Artificers plays off mortals' fears of the irresponsible, disinterested inventor who cares nothing for what he creates or how it changes the world. Artificers were—sometimes still are—compulsive builders and designers who create because they need to create, indifferent to the needs and wants of the outside world, blithely unconcerned with the suffering they unleash. Artificers represent the proliferation of nuclear weaponry, the irresponsible use of pesticides, and—horrors imagined but not yet possible to mortal science—armies of robots taking lives or jobs with equal indifference. The shadow of the Artificer arises whenever people fear the Pandora's box of new technologies, and realize that they are being made to conform to a changing world, not that the world is changing to benefit them.

Now, though, this image of the Artificers has grown tangled with a new one that plays on different but perhaps more intense fears. Humanity, since its inception, has sinned greatly against its fellows, and many people in power today fear that technology will level the old playing fields, letting the poor and the oppressed lash out—or worse, compete—against the people who once held all the cards. The Artificers once built for the sake of building; now, just as many build to claim what they see is theirs. Both behaviors are equally horrifying to those who have a vested interest in the old order of the world.

Despite the fear the Artificers engender, no one better exemplifies the new spirit of creation that has swept the mortal world and now echoes in the society of the Inspired. Artificers literally create their own worlds: a Maker's laboratory, and even her home, takes on the forms and aesthetics she admires. Flowers grow to cover wrought iron when a floral Maker takes up residence. Art spreads across walls and ceilings wherever an artistic Artificer rests his head for the night. Charming electronic machines appear in the windows of a digital Artificer's office. This isn't magic, of course, but the byproduct of creation; Artificers are too full of life and passion to contain it all within their wonders, and it spreads out of them, in their work and free time, to transform the world.

Focus:

The Artificers are builders, designers, and engineers, and while their interest can turn to nearly any type of building material, they are typically considered the masters of *mad engineering*. The early days of the foundation saw a focus on metallurgy and clockwork, although now Artificers turn their hands to alloys and polymers, computer science and robotics, carpentry and masonry, even genetic engineering: if a material can be used to build things, there's an Artificer out there making stuff out of it, from acrylic oil to dead flesh.

Artificers are pathological builders; that's what defines them. Navigators are better at using a wonder, Progenitors at shaping it, Scholastics at explaining it, but no one creates like an Artificer creates. While the traditional focus on metal and gears remains, Artificers are increasingly diverse in their interests. The Union has also traditionally been poor, or at least humble, and the foundation's current focus on the makeshift, the found, and the reused, means there aren't as many aerospace engineers or architects as there are watchmakers, cut-rate robot-builders, and back-alley bladesmiths.

History:

Tinkers, builders, and smiths have existed since the dawn of human civilization, and taken thematically, the Artificers are probably the oldest foundation. Groups whose ideas went into the formation of the Artificers have been recorded in ancient Egypt, China, and Rome, all over Medieval Europe from Byzantium to the Iberian Peninsula, and in Japan, India, and the Polynesian islands. Any time geniuses have been more interested in building things than in understanding, using, exploiting, or even perfecting them, the spirit of the Artificers has appeared.

While legend holds that the Artificers appeared in North America in the mid-18th century (and ties them closely to the founding of the United States), the Artificers are actually the result of a great convocation of tinkers, smiths, and builders from all over the world, which took place in Philadelphia in 1752. These individuals—often poor, many foreign, usually eccentric, always ingenious—argued for nearly a month before rejecting Lemuria and founding the Brotherhood of Artifice and Mechanism. Over the next half-century, the Invisible College took interest in the rough-and-tumble group, referring to them as the "Little Brothers." The Artificers were one of the groups to join the Peerage when it was officially created early in the 19th century, after which they adopted their current name.

Always a loose-knit foundation, the Artificers took in geniuses that other peers didn't want to touch: Africans whose rootwork hoodoo medicine the aristocratic Demiurges scoffed at, Jewish watchmakers, tinkers of Rom or other unusual descent, Yankee gunsmiths, and early steam pioneers, none of whom fit in with the clean, reasonable Renaissance Man image of the Invisible College. As new foundations appeared and the Peerage developed and grew more inclusive, the Artificers refined their image, eschewing philosophy (those who would not accept that change became the latest iteration of the Mechanist baramin) and focusing entirely on the creation of wonders. Throughout the 20th century, while the Inspired wars raged, the Artificers were the poor, eccentric auxiliaries to the rest of the Peerage, building what they wanted for the sheer joy of creation, asking little in return, and not being much of a philosophical threat to anyone—though their wonders did occasionally get out of control.

It wasn't until the late 20th century that things started to change. With Lemuria in shambles, the simple "make stuff" philosophy of the Artificers spread to places previously strangled by the Lemurians or wrapped up in the war, such as southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The Artificers also found a following in the traditional territories of the Peerage—the cities of Europe and the Americas—but with a new audience, one that did not traditionally catalyze. The poor, the desperate, and the angry came to the Artificers from slums and barrios, war-torn hellholes and depopulated villages, and their coming transformed the foundation.

These new Artificers were angry, broken, frightened, and desperate. They weren't, as the peers like to believe of themselves, the world's intellectual aristocracy, but a new sort of creature, lean and hungry and very, very dangerous. Born into want and rage all over the world, they had been ignored and derided by the other foundations, enslaved and exterminated by the Lemurians. While the rest of the Peerage reorganized itself and purged its corrupt elements, the Artificers had no natural defense against these New Makers, the scions of the desperate and the disaffected. The Artificers had, since their inception, been the poor, patient cousins of the other foundations, too humble or obsessed to ask for much, and all that changed overnight. Today, the Council of Artifice is a disorganized medley of anarchists, cast-offs, failed scientists, and post-punk engineers, desperate for resources and respect.

Organization:

The Artificers are the least organized of all the foundations, and they've always been that way, despite occasional attempts to revive the Medieval guild system of Masters, Journeymen, and Apprentices. Currently, however, some Artificers take the "Union" part of their title seriously. In some cities where Artificers are

numerous and times are hard, Artificers form into Unions, made up of workers and led by a figure referred to simply as Boss. Artificer Bosses keep in touch at an International level via email and Apokalypsi, but there's no head to the organization, at least not currently, though they do produce a newszine called *Collaboration*.

A Union Hall provides a place to stay, protection, and equipment, forming a sort of extended collaborative that resembles a Lemurian zotheca in its sprawling extent. Most Union Halls don't mind members of other foundations using their facilities, as long as they give back in kind. A few of the more powerful Unions work to regulate Mania and technological supplies, and have begun to encounter harassment and attacks from Lemurians, who don't appreciate a disorganized mess of a foundation honing in on their turf.

Other than the Unions, the Artificers are mostly a bunch of harmless old tinkers and punk kids. The older generations of Artificers, those who haven't been radicalized by the influx of new blood, are almost entirely unaware of the younger generation's activities, or really of anything else. Though there are numerous short-lived zines, forums, and magazines, the newsletter *Mechanical Experimenter* is the best-regarded piece of print that Artificers reliably produce; everyone reads it, from the most clueless old kitbasher to the most aggressive revolutionary.

Members:

The Artificers learn by doing, by getting their hands dirty, and every Maker has an incredible, intuitive grasp of how things fit together. Members of the Union of Artifice are interested primarily in building; the theory behind what they do, and even useful applications for their wonders, come second to the joy of creation.

But the Artificers are about more than just factory-work: all geniuses build, and most build compulsively; they cannot help it. The Artificers are about building from whatever is at hand. The new Union is still young and poor, and so are its members. They are disaffected college students, third-world revolutionaries, first-world revolutionaries, punks, pranksters, and pissed-off super-smart gutter trash. The other foundations are old: they have money and philosophy, but the Union of Artifice has attitude. Anyone who joins the Artificers is expected to be self-sufficient, at least in theory, and to be able to make something wondrous from whatever is lying around, with whatever resources are available.

Aesthetics:

Style among the Artificers is eclectic. Older, more traditional members favor mechanical styles, whether spotless brass or dirty, oil-stained gears. Many are also fond of electricity and explosives, but their focus is typically on structure and design, rather than power. Whether elegantly-worked metal or crude plastic, Artificers' wonders look they were put together fast, hard, and with superhuman skill and precision.

The new Makers, drawn from an entirely different society, aim for a raw, authentic look, and in the worst parts of the world, that means building with (for lack of a better word) trash. Katastrophic weapons made of broken bottles and battery acid, wonders of Skafoi carved from the burned-out hulks of abandoned automobiles carried on the backs of metal centipedes, forbidden automata cobbled together from old Nintendos and stray dogs; whatever is in reach is a potential ingredient. More than that, many Artificers delight in deliberately making their wonders difficult to produce (and recreate): why build a wonder with the best biomedical waste when you can drag organic filth from sewers and poisoned wetlands?

Of all the foundations, the Artificers are the most keenly aware of their own aesthetic sense. Young Artificers are a profoundly self-aware group; they preen, they strut, and they sneer at anything that doesn't meet their narrow definitions of "New Maker," and they spend their time trying to disgust and outrage their peers without themselves being shocked. Other foundations would worry if it weren't all so juvenile, little more than the super-scientist equivalent of kids sending one-another pictures of dead celebrities while complaining that they were sick of your favorite band (or in this case, engineer) before he sold out and got

popular.

Character Creation:

Artificers are hands-down the poorest foundation, and with the exception of the Navigators, the most ethnically diverse. People who catalyze in the world's worst industrial hellholes, from Jakarta to Toledo (Ohio, the other one is pretty nice), often join the Artificers if they're not tempted by the wealth and prestige of other foundations, or have no way of accessing those luxuries. Artificers, in their disorganized way, have recruiting stations all over the world, and their ranks swell every day with the desperate, the disaffected, and the betrayed. Geniuses drawn from non-technical professions, however, are comparatively rare: a Maker must know how to make, and while many Artificers are less than glamorous, having once been car mechanics, refugee nurses, militia members, or unlicensed doctors, most begin their Inspired careers able to create something.

Catalysts of Grimm, Hoffnung, and Neid are common among the Artificers: there is a lot of rage and resentment there, but also a spark of hope. Staunens are comparatively rare: the Artificers want to grow a better world, not admire the detritus of the current one.

Most Artificers, with their interest in creation over theory, favor Craft over Science and Science over Academics. They put little stock in hypotheticals and abstract reasoning, but many are nonetheless gifted mathematicians and draftsmen. Those Artificers who think to record blueprints of their wonders take up Expression. Artificers are increasingly diverse today: hackers and roboticists bolster their Crafts Skills with Computer, while genetic engineers favor Medicine.

Many Artificers have a gift for bashing together an immediate solution, meaning that Wits is as important as traditional brainpower. Embracing the New Makers' gutter-punk ethos means good Survival, Streetwise, and Investigation, to find what they need, and often a bit of Stealth, Larceny, and Subterfuge to grab it. Artificers like their Katastrofi, too, which means that combat training is common, with a focus on unusual Firearms.

The Dumpster Diver Merit is popular among the younger set, though Social Merits are comparatively rare: the New Makers are rarely scions of the powerful. Most Artificers, in addition to their intense focus on whatever helps them build the next wonder, pick up an eclectic mix of Skills and Merits due to their haphazard lives.

Role:

Members of The Union of Artifice are often outsiders, loners, and weirdos, as close to rogues as proper members of the Peerage can get. But they still join collaboratives, and within one they make excellent urban scouts, investigators, and intrusion experts. Not every Artificer can double as a low-down dirty thief, but many have a knack for mundane machines, especially those centered around security. Many also have one foot in the world of the street and connections with the culture there, allowing them to get information from mundane sources that might escape even the most polished Director. In addition to this role, the sheer speed with which they can build wonders can make them important in emergencies as walking armories. Many a collaborative has been saved because their Artificer slapped together a weapon before the bad guys could kick in the door.

Axioms:

Artificers' favored Axioms are Automata and Prostasia. They are natural robot-makers, and often supplement their own creation with factories and duplicators. The Artificers' traditional focus on metallurgy and heavy construction also makes them the best armorers in the business.

Artificers are fond of Katastrofi and Skafoi, two Axioms where building is its own reward. Katastrofi is

especially popular, since kitbashing a zipgun is an invaluable talent in the dangerous places many Artificers live. Apokalypsi, Epikrato, and Metaptropi are focused more on application than on the construction process itself, though many Artificers still incorporate those Axioms, putting their own rough spin on things. Artificers who build, then move on, neglect Exelixi, but others appreciate being able to fix the things when they break.

Grant:

No one builds faster than an Artificer. From a humble Czech doll-maker to the most revolutionary gunsmith, Artificers can stick the decals on a new wonder when other geniuses are still organizing their screwdrivers. Artificers reduce the time needed to build or fiddle with any wonder by one step (to a minimum of one day for non-kitbashed wonders), and suffer no penalty for doing this.

For kitbashed wonders, this time reduction does not make the wonder fall apart faster. A two-step kitbashing job falls apart after one day for Artificers, not one scene. (See Kitbashed Wonders, Page 138.)

Concepts: Back-alley machinist, caffeine-addled computer hacker, master bladesmith, automotive grease-monkey, pious golem-maker

Quote: *"Good, fast, and cheap: you get all three. And if you talk like that to my people again, you're going to wake up as a collection of spare parts."*

Stereotype:

Directors: Rich idiots in charge of other rich idiots. They don't own me.

Navigators: Someone needs to test this thing out. I bruise easy.

Progenitors: They make okay stuff, but this "Long live the new flesh" crap has to stop.

Scholastics: They actually believe that we've already figured everything out. Weird.

Rogues: A million wannabe punks all pulling in different directions, getting nothing done.

Lemurians: Oh no! That Lemurian went and built a Tandy-9000! And that other one just designed a steam locomotive! However can I compete?

The Illuminated: A polite reminder that metal and tools go in one category, and your fellow human beings go in another category.

Other Creatures: These monsters might last forever, but the things they make don't.

Mortals: There's no love in what they make. It just gets churned out, then forgotten. What a waste.

The Fellowship for Manifest Direction

Name: Directors

Nicknames: Overlords, Disputers, The Loud

Many of the Inspired shy away from interaction with others, but not the Directors. Instead they seek out other mad scientists, mundane scientists, and laymen and attempt to expound and expand upon their theories. They are often met with scorn, but that rarely slows a Director down. They know, deep down, that they are right, and they know that with just the right application of charm and rhetoric, they can bring anyone around to their side. They might even learn something along the way.

Directors are horrifying yet familiar. They don't seem interesting in ripping away the comforting veils of ignorance that keep mortals from scissoring out their eyes to escape the blasphemous truth. They don't spit out legions of unholy half-born things. Or when they do, at least it's not for its own sake, it's for a purpose that regular people can understand: power. But this makes the Directors all the more scary. The Fellowship for Manifest Direction is the smoke-filled room, the penthouse boardroom where old men make decisions that ruin lives in order to gain tiny increases in their portfolios. Directors are the blank-faced advisors sitting beside presidents, kings, and prime ministers, subtly guiding policy for their own ends. They are the censors who decide what we watch and don't watch, think and don't think. To mortals, it's a group like the Fellowship for Manifest Direction that controls the media, the government, and the finances of the entire world.

Of course that's not entirely true. The Directors are powerful, but they aren't the Illuminati, they aren't the International Banking Conspiracy that manipulates the world economy from New York to Dubai. In fact, what the Directors really *are* can seem more terrifying than the shadow-government fears that course through many people's minds when they hear the Directors described. Each Director burns with ambition, with vision, with a terrible yearning for more: more power, more wealth, more control, more safety, more revenge. It doesn't matter what it is, but all Directors live lives of restless dissatisfaction. An individual Director might be afraid, or uneasy, or ambitious, or merely curious, but all want the same thing: to accumulate power, at nearly any cost. It's the naked ambition that shocks people, more than what the Director plans to do with all that power. A genius' catalyst often strips away certain subtleties in a person's nature, exposing something smooth and archetypal, and in the Directors is this tendency most strongly manifested. Some might climb the greased pole to escape the machinations of their underlings, to exercise control over the pitiful world of mortals, or merely to get laid every weekend, but all Directors possess a horrible, blank, all-consuming lust for power that exists outside of any concrete goal or desire. A Director is a scientist-aristocrat, a wealthy master of hypnotism, a would-be ruler of the world, who wouldn't even know what to do if at the end he sat alone and unchallenged on a throne of pure diamond and looked out over his dominion of the Earth.

Focus:

The Directors are masters of *mad psychology*. They specialize in mind control machines, splinter personalities, implanted behaviors, and drone servitors that do their bidding. Some are diabolical masterminds, pulling strings from the shadows, while others are out there mixing it up on the lab floor, beacons of Inspiration.

Psychology is an interesting and subtle science with many branches, some barely explored. Some Directors focus on traditional psychology, including hypnosis and psychological manipulation; these may only break out the wonders for real emergencies, instead relying on good Social Skills and an ability to read a situation. Wonders are obvious, but few people distrust a winning smile. Others focus on mind control machines, pheromone manipulation and biological impulses, or the implanting of hidden personalities. Many younger

Directors (and not a few older ones, as the Fellowship for Manifest Direction does not reward the crotchet and out-of-touch) have begun studying the psychology of the artificial, creating machine intelligences.

Those Overlords who do not study psychology often study related fields, such as economics, sociology, ecology, and even agriculture. But the Directors are ultimately a pragmatic group, and will recruit intelligent, capable people from nearly any field—especially if that field looks like it won't disrupt the existing power structure.

History:

The Fellowship for Manifest Direction originated in the industrial age as an answer to Lemuria's superior organizational abilities. The Peerage's response was to appoint a council of "directors" able to mobilize the other foundations. (The Fellowship for Manifest Direction was, in fact, originally just a fellowship, not a foundation. They never bothered to change the name.) This organization quickly manifested some of the worst traits of 19th century Lemuria, becoming exclusionary, racist, intolerant, and paranoid. Reforms shortly before the Great War stripped the fellowship of many of those elements, replacing them, though, with something many in the Peerage considered even worse: a taste for the fruits of industry.

Throughout the 20th century, the Directors represented the excesses and triumphs of industrial civilization. They were ruthless capitalists, gifted entrepreneurs, and super-science economists, shaking the monetary foundations of the world with their transactions. Their ruthlessness was matched only by their usefulness to the Peerage: the Directors provided drive, focus, and political expertise. It was the Overlords' ability to organize the Peerage that led to Lemuria's downfall.

Without an enemy to fight, though, the Directors lost their focus during much of the latter half of the 20th century. They became decadent and sluggish, interested only in maintaining their own power. Old boy's networks and secret economic societies popped up, devoid of accountability or long-range ambition, apparently dedicated only to maintaining the status quo. In recent years this has begun to change, fast: the "smoke-filled room" has given way to loose groups of independent organizers and peripatetic contractors, as the Directors, like everyone in the Peerage, adapts to a smaller, more mobile world. This generation gap has produced tension in the Fellowship for Manifest Direction, as older members fail or refuse to adapt to the new changes in direction and philosophy. New Directors are truly new creatures: fast, mobile, stripped-down, not bound to the ponderous lairs and laboratories that kept their predecessors stationary. Their motto is "A Phone and a Gun," because that's all they need. Their beholden aren't waiting around in the Volcano Fortress; they're an Instant Message away from showing up armed and ready to go. Their destructive wrath isn't measured in mountain-sized ray guns, but instead whatever they can find, transformed with ruthless, elegant efficiency into instruments of death and destruction. This new breed terrifies the old guard, and tensions are growing worse as the years pass and the elders cling to power in a changing world.

Organization:

The Directors are more organized than other foundations. Every Director, whether she knows it or not, belongs to a Dominion, a geographic region that contains from ten to 30 million mortals. The United States contains twenty-three Dominions. Each Dominion is run by a Heterogeny, made up of three, five, seven, or eleven influential Directors called Dispensers, one of whom is appointed the Overlord and manages the regional finances. Many lesser ranks exist beneath the Dispensers. This group manages the affairs of the Directors in that area from some central location. Every ten years, the Heterogenies vote on a Clade, which consists of 44 Directors (currently; the population grows with the total number of Directors). The Clade, in turn, sets policy for all the Directors from a central location in one of the world's major skyscrapers. (The exact location varies from year to year.)

Directors technically have a single source for all Director-related scholarship, a monthly magazine called

Control. However, that's the old way. The new Directors, the up-and-comers, favor an ever-shifting network of newsgroups and contacts squirting micro-assessments to their phones or laptops in a constant stream of evaluation and analysis.

Most rank-and-file Directors, whatever their style, interact only vaguely with the hierarchy of their Dominion, instead working on small-scale projects within their collaborative. Those that focus inward often serve simply by remaining loyal to those on top and fighting for scraps of power in predictable ways. Others, though, join some of the cultural groups within the Fellowship for Manifest Direction, organizations that exist not for the benefit of their individual members but to protect and enhance the foundation as a whole. The **Jaguar People** serve as the Directors' elite guards. The **Mirror People** handle counterintelligence and espionage. The **Stochastic People** deal with issues of raw material, transport, and extraction. The **Sigil People** monitor internal affairs and handle audits and personnel. The **Tower People** (whom everyone calls the **People People**) deal with the mundane population. These groups were once vitally important to the foundation's well-being and had intricate hierarchies and protocols; now, with the power structures of all the foundations flattened, most of these groups are little more than a news feed with jobs to be done and rewards to be offered.

Members:

Inspired who join the Manifest Fellowship are interested in power. Not all are interested in accruing it, however: while there are many sharks and ladder-climbers among the Overlords, others are interested in power as a concept: how it moves, how it flows, how it relates to money, to charisma, to talent. They want to know how power can be organized, and they want to explore the many subtle forms that control can take. Geniuses who join this foundation often hail from wealth and privilege: before their catalysts, they were power-brokers, high-profile lawyers, wealthy entrepreneurs, or political administrators. Others came from fields interested in the study, not the acquisition of power and prestige: sociologists, policy analysts, and stock forecasters. Still other members of the foundation started with nothing, catalyzed, and now see a bright, wealthy future for themselves in this foundation.

Though not all Directors are wealthy, all understand that wealth does not equate directly with authority, and authority is what interests a director. They dress and act to demonstrate their authority in whatever society they find themselves. Some are obsessive about being the center of attention, while others use their talents to blend in and control an organization from within. However they approach issues like power and authority, however, geniuses who become Directors possess an almost intuitive ability to gain and hold power.

Directors can catalyze in almost any way, though few are motivated by sorrow and loss. Those more interested in the process and theory of power are Staunens, while ambitious Hoffnungs, bitter Neids, and even righteous Grimms are common among those Directors who see power in more practical terms.

Aesthetics:

Directors are capable of flexibility in their style, changing the superficial appearance of themselves and even their wonders to match the expectations of clients, friends, or enemies. An Overlord in tailored suits and smooth plastic one day may be in tattered street clothes and worn cybernetics the next, if that's what the people around the Director need to see.

Members of the Manifest Fellowship who need to project a clean, professional image often favor smooth and elegant fashions. Others see their persona as "Director" as separate from their behavior as a genius and favor brutally functional styles for the wonders they create. Other Directors build to shock: though they may care nothing about the philosophies and cultures behind a style, they take on horrific or bizarre aesthetics to keep their enemies (and potential enemies) on-edge and uncertain.

Character Creation:

The Overlords focus on Social Attributes and Skills as much as Mental ones. They are orators and administrators, and they often view themselves as the "elite" of the Inspired, best able to command the efforts of other geniuses. Composure often trumps Resolve, as looking in control is more important in the Manifest Fellowship than actually having it together. Physical Attributes are sometimes neglected in favor of Intelligence and Presence, especially among Directors who prefer to act through proxies.

Social Skills are also prioritized, though Directors of different styles focus on different approaches: a scheming, manipulative genius may focus on Subterfuge, while an expert at raising money and giving presentations might emphasize Expression and Persuasion. This is not to imply that Directors neglect their scientific training: most are as technically competent as members of the other foundations, though they often seem reticent to emphasize that fact. Academics and Computer, to fit their favored Axioms, are common, though medical Directors, aeronautics Directors, and even occult research Directors all exist.

Many Directors define themselves by their Social Merits: Allies, Contacts, Status, and Resources are all common. Some even stay in the mortal limelight with Fame. Directors enjoy large numbers of beholden, and can always find work for them. They're rarely the Dumpster Diver sort.

Role:

Directors, unsurprisingly, serve as the "face" for a collaborative. The Director allows the group to interact with the mortal community without getting committed to a psychiatric institute. She is also first-in when interacting with other collaboratives or unfamiliar social situations. A collaborative's Director may or may not also be their leader. Some Overlords are natural organizers, making plans and finding tasks for everyone nearby (sometimes annoyingly so), while others use their super-secret powers of "making eye contact" and "smiling" only when they're needed to charm other people. Unless they are masters of Automata, Directors prefer to stick closer to the tougher members of the collaborative when things go wrong, and are rarely interested in direct confrontation.

Axioms:

A Director's favored Axioms are Automata or Epikrato. Directors have a gift for control, and they prefer to surround themselves with guards and allies rather than face challenges directly.

Directors in general prefer subtle uses for Axioms: few focus on fields such as Katastrofi or Prostasia, instead devoting their time to the more subtle applications of Exelixi (to enhance mental faculties) and Apokalypsi (to monitor friends and enemies). Directors who study Skafoi use their machines as launching-points for contacting different orders of intelligence, rather than mere ferries to move the collaborative from one locale to the next.

Grant:

Directors are more familiar with social mores than other geniuses, and receive the training and support to keep abreast of developments in sane science. They can spend Mania to enhance their Social Attributes (Presence, Manipulation, and Composure). When they do this, they do not suffer penalties for low Obligation, nor do they suffer Jabir penalties.

Concepts: Lab director, wannabe Bond villain, professional debunker, millionaire industrialist, member of the Mad Ethics Board, unconventional psychologist, New Age techno-guru

Quote: *"Like even the strongest iron bar, every man has a weak point, and it can be found."*

Stereotypes:

Artificers: If only we could convince them to make something *useful*.

Navigators: Arrogant, insufferable hotshots! I like that. Besides, someone has to break heads when negotiations break down.

Progenitors: Busy swallowing their own tails. At least they won't take too many people with them this time.

Scholastics: Research and development, that's where it starts. It's just not where it ends.

Rogues: Usually poor and looking for work. But I'm glad to work outside the system...when it benefits me.

Lemurians: How sad it is, to watch gifted geniuses worshipping at the altar of their dead ancestors.

The Illuminated: No, I'm not like them. They don't pay their test subjects.

Other Creatures: Generally dangerous, horrible, and uncouth, with a frightening lack of manners.

Mortals: They never listen.

The Center for Circumferential Navigation

Name: Navigators

Nicknames: Daredevils, Guardians, Fire Bait

Navigators are the test pilots, the dangerous-environment explorers, and the people-who-make-power-suits-and-fight-crime of the Inspired, as comfortable using their equipment as they are designing it and promulgating the theories behind it. Rather than send minions or automata to confront obstacles, they go themselves, armed with death rays or transformed by the experiments that they have performed on their own bodies. Larger than life, heroic, and often terrifying, the Navigators take their work seriously, and they are as brilliant as any other genius, and even more eager than others to use their inventions.

Travelers and explorers, Navigators drift into town and disappear on the wind. Mortal stories that involve Navigators describe the sudden appearance of a stranger, a drifter, who heralds nightmares and chaos. Some are prophets, warning of the horrors to come. Others bring the wicked things with them: psychic demons pulled from inner-space, gibbering betentacled things from some far realm, or simply the evil creatures that the Navigator dug up in the last town. Navigators are nomads and vagabonds who live at the edge of survivability, and when their dangerous activities intersect with the mortal world, the results can be disastrous and bloody. These geniuses leap into the unknown, break apart the walls separating this reality from the next, and build wonders dedicated to taking them farther, faster, or deeper than ever before.

The life of a Navigator can be a terrifying and lonely one. Few settle in one place for long, and though they might have a place to rest their head, their home is always in the great unknown. It's hard to form mortal ties when soaring across space and time, and even those Navigators who stop to guard mortals from the horrible things beyond the horizon rarely stay long enough to receive their thanks. Navigators, simply, are ill-equipped for civilization. Many are recklessly irresponsible—with money, with safety, with other people—and the rest run the range from nihilistic thrillseekers to people who never quite fit in. Even in the Inspired community, few ever feel entirely comfortable, and sooner or later, wanderlust or madness takes hold and the Navigator leaps, blind and laughing, into some new world.

Focus:

The Navigators focus on *mad physics*. They were the scholars of heat and of lightning; today they are masters of radiation and of gravitation. Navigators are also, as their name implies, travelers, able to bend their knowledge to the creation of fantastic vehicles and dimensional gates. While the classic image of a Navigator puts one behind the seat of a Wondrous hot rod or stratospheric flying machine, powerful Navigators also explore the depths of space and time. Navigators are all over the board with how rough or refined their techniques are: some are fireburned blacksmiths or overall-wearing grease monkeys, while others are refined scholars of hidden energies and forces not yet understood, let alone explored, by mortal science.

Of all the foundations, Navigators are the most focused on their field of study. Mad physics serves as the springboard for nearly all Navigators. Exceptions include medical Navigators, who build bizarre vehicles of bone and sinew, dimension-hopping occultists who explore the half-real worlds of specters and phantoms, and cybernauts who plunge, body and mind, into the uncharted depths of the Internet. These alternate groups often appear in phases or fads: the heyday of Web-Navigation is past, for example, and no one's sure what the new direction will be.

Though many people figure Navigators are too reckless to keep careful notes, many Daredevils, especially as they get older, keep meticulous records, and many are gifted physicists and researchers who, if not for their manic wanderlust or other flaws of character, could be top-flight researchers, not just test pilots and

explorers. Of course, just as many Navigators live up to their stereotype, taking just enough notes and doing just enough work to build that flying machine or open that gate, then leaping through.

History:

The Navigators joined the Peerage only recently, and many older peers do not yet consider them "proper" members. The term "Navigator" referred to those Lemurian geniuses who were considered Inspired enough that they were not beholden, but not worthy of attaining the higher secrets of mad science. They were "low-caste" geniuses, tasked with the transportation and maintenance of their self-styled betters. This low position was based on old Lemuria's strange race hierarchies, and the ethnic makeup of the Navigators is still slightly skewed toward Lemuria's "middle races," which includes most people of Asian and Middle Eastern descent.

The Navigators abandoned Lemuria between the World Wars, not just because Lemuria was full of evil racists who oppressed them, but because it was full of incompetent, bumbling idiots who couldn't even conduct Armageddon properly. They remained independent, a unified rogue program, until the 1960s, when they became part of the Peerage. The Navigators quickly gained a reputation not just for efficient movement of troops (and money—they are a rather wealthy organization, as a whole), but for a military veneer that at times bordered on the fascist. This element has declined in recent years, but many Navigators possess a distinctly militaristic style. In recent years, after the collapse of the old Peer hierarchies, the Navigators have moved further from their martial traditions to embrace all kinds of wanderers, explorers, and adventurers, but in some places the old ways die hard.

Organization:

Today's navigators are a disorganized and solitary lot, and they like it that way. As the Navigators emerged from the shadows of Lemuria, they found dignity and honor in a military structure, complete with an archaic but rewarding rank system that resembled a cross between feudal Europe and the modern armed forces. Newly catalyzed Navigators, without anyone under their command, were just called Navigators. Command of an entire collaborative earned the rank of Captain, while administrating an entire zotheca (Navigators kept the Lemurian term) of at least ten geniuses earned the rank of Chevalier. Control of an entire metropolitan region fell on the shoulders of a Dux Bellorum, supported by a handful of Lieutenants. Above the Dukes were the Marshalls, nine of them, who elected from among their own number an Imperator every three years.

This hierarchy survived the reorganization the Peerage underwent in the nineties, but its influence did not. The quasi-military structure, coupled with the natural aggressiveness of many Navigators, resulted in a foundation reviled as a pack of thugs and would-be feudalists out for money and obeisance from their fellow geniuses. The new Navigator hierarchy is considerably looser and employs the honorific "Palatine," which previously signified a Navigator too mobile to make full use of his rank, as a default. Only in a handful of places where Navigators exert great influence, such as Los Angeles, are the old systems still enforced. Now, most Navigators are only dimly aware of their rank, if any, and social climbing is seen as somewhat vulgar and pointless by younger Daredevils.

Members:

Many Navigators come from military or quasi-military backgrounds, their ranks swelled by demolitions experts, military scientists, pilots, and members of elite police and rescue forces. Even a Navigator who comes from a different background will find herself bumping against so many ex-military sorts that some of that mindset rubs off. Geniuses from non-scientific backgrounds are common, and include test pilots, truckers, and merchant marines who saw too much or got too obsessed and so catalyzed; these tough, aggressive individuals fit naturally into the Navigator hierarchy. But most Navigators still come from some kind of technical field, though rarely is it too refined or sedentary. The grease monkey Navigator is a stereotype for a reason, but others lived lives as EMTs, elite assassins, or even occultists before Catalyzing.

Due to their propensity for travel, and for coming from economically disadvantaged regions of the Middle East and Asia, Navigators are more likely than other foundations to be foreigners and refugees, wherever they are. Many have strange or unusual tales from their homelands, whether they originally manned an oil derrick off the Alaskan coast or fled to Japan on a makeshift raft.

Members of the Circumference Center are as interested in using their wonders as building them. This is not the machine functionality of the Union of Artificers, who are often very interested in how their devices run, but a "use-it-first" approach to wonders: potential Navigators are interested in what their wonders do and how well they do it, and they see direct tests as the best way to figure that out. This means that Navigators are often direct and somewhat aggressive, with hard-nosed and well-grounded personalities that seem at odds with their wonder-working. But the Navigators are by no means stupid—very few geniuses are dumb; most are just crazy, and the Fire Bait are just crazy in a different way from their fellows.

Aesthetics:

Despite their rough-and-ready philosophy, not every Navigator favors a brutally functional style. Though hard-edged military designs are indeed popular, many Navigators look to the explorers and soldiers of the past for their inspiration. One of the classic images of the Navigator is the jet pack, and this item can lend itself to a slick art-deco style, all fins and swept-back chrome. Other Navigators draw their imagery from the last great age of exploration, focusing on polished wood, gleaming brass, and a beautiful hand-crafted look that belies their wonders' toughness and functionality.

Character Creation:

The Circumference Center encourages high Physical Attributes in its members. Many favor Dexterity to become gifted pilots, while those who expect long periods of exposure in the wild focus on Stamina. Wits is often as high as Intelligence, since a quick fix is often better than a perfect fit while in the field.

Navigators possess an array of real-world skills in addition to their Axioms, and are the most likely to focus on unInspired abilities, trusting Skills like Brawl, Survival, Stealth, and Streetwise to keep them alive. Many are world travelers and learn a number of languages. Militaristic Navigators focus on Physical Merits like Fast Reflexes and Quick Draw to give them a fighting edge.

A Navigator's catalyst is often recognizable from her behavior. Many are Grimms and wear that rage openly, becoming rooftop avengers and enemies of injustice. Klagens often behave similarly, though for different and often more personal reasons. Navigators who catalyze through Staunen are infected with a kind of wanderlust and frantic curiosity that never lets them rest for long. Far-planning Hoffnungs and vindictive Neids are comparatively rarer.

Role:

Navigators are, first and foremost, scouts and explorers, and not just "gentleman-adventurers" drifting leisurely above the jungles in their dirigibles. Most Navigators are capable survivalists and able to help their collaborative survive in harsh and alien environments due to training, diligence, and a fierce will to survive. Those Navigators that are not wilderness travelers instead possess knowledge of the weird and horrific places that their wonders can take the collaborative. Their fellow geniuses also recognize a Navigators' usefulness when the ray guns come out, and a collaborative often expects its Navigator to take the lead in violent confrontations.

Earlier ages saw geniuses from the Circumference Center reduced to "second-class" status in collaboratives—hence the euphemistic and humble name "Navigator", which the foundation has kept as a badge of defiant pride. Navigators were seen as expendable scouts, transport specialists, and grunt soldiers,

but not "real" geniuses. This attitude has died out almost entirely; younger geniuses often don't even know the stereotype in the first place and would react to it much like regular mortals react to "Irish Need Not Apply" signs.

Axioms:

The Navigators' favored Axioms are Katastrofi or Skafoi. The Navigators delight in seeing new places, preferably at very high speeds. Both their role as the Peerage's foot soldiers and their interest in high-energy physics make them naturals for the Axiom of Katastrofi.

Navigators who focus on exploration instead look to Apokalypsi to give them a view of the wonders and horrors coming their way. The Daredevils have a tradition of building and employing armor suits, and they are also experts in high-energy shielding, making Prostasia a popular choice, especially for crime-fighting Navigators. The foundation tends to shy away from subtle and indirect Axioms like Automata: it doesn't discount those techniques for others' use, by many means, but not many Navigators possess the sorts of personalities that contribute to a study of those fields. Epikrato sees little use, as Navigators would rather see than control, but Exelixi is very popular. Navigators are most likely to make use of both Crafts and Medicine when studying Exelixi, to repair and enhance both themselves and their vehicles.

Grant:

A Navigator's Mania is as physical as it is mental, like lightning coursing through muscle and bone. Navigators can spend Mania to enhance their Physical attributes (Strength, Dexterity, or Stamina).

Concepts:

Deep sea or deep space colonist, jet pack flyboy, trailblazer, guardian of the city streets, spatiotemporal researcher, cynical scout

Quote: *"I've seen things you wouldn't believe. Hell, I've seen things I don't believe."*

Stereotypes:

Artificers: Reliable, quality construction and professional design. I can't say anything bad about that.

Directors: Someone has to provide organization and funding. Shame it's these assholes.

Progenitors: Their desire for bettering themselves is commendable, but change's sake is pointless.

Scholastics: Evenly divided between useless antiquarians and people who know that real knowledge is farther away than the bookshelf.

Rogues: Unpredictable when the shit starts. Don't trust 'em and don't turn your back.

Lemurians: They're not pathetic or harmless. They're dangerous killers, and they need to be respected for that, if nothing else.

The Illuminated: You can go out into the Void, but you always need to come back.

Other Creatures: Good in a fight, and usually a lot more reasonable than people make them out to be.

Mortals: A bit too obsessed with creature comforts, but in a pinch, it's nice to have some ex-special forces to point their guns at the problem.

The Reformed Society of Progenitors

Name: Progenitors

Nicknames: Breeders, Gardeners. Old Breeders are called Demiurges.

The Progenitors are either in shambles or rising from the ashes, depending on whom you ask. A generation ago, the rotting heart of the old group, the Children of the Demiurge, was revealed: riddled with Illuminated and Lemurians, it had been slowly poisoning the Peerage for almost 50 years, its members pushing the bounds of decency and sanity with their experiments. The Peerage took a torch to the whole foundation, but something new has emerged: a young, vibrant, swaggering new order of visionary designers and scholars of blood and sinew, every one burning with a transformative vision of a world ignited by a new generation of wonders.

Progenitors represent those mad scientists who find life and passion in growth, in development, and in the violation of society's rules in the pursuit of knowledge. Even in their reformed state, they are the most "mad" the Peerage's mad scientists. Iconoclasts and eccentrics, Progenitors reject false morals and manners and forge ahead to study forbidden, horrific, and unnatural secrets. They are resurrectionists, grave-robbers, cloners, cryonicists, and necrotechnicians, spreading their wonders like spores—or cancer—across the world. To mortals, the Progenitors represent the nightmare of unchecked creation. They are the fathers who care nothing for their children, the false lightbringers who blight the world with unwelcome radiance, the blasphemers who seek to steal God's power and use it without responsibility or sanity. Mortal fears of Progenitors often appear split down gender roles. She is Echidna, mother of monsters, vomiting blind idiot blasphemies from a polluted womb. He, by contrast, steals the generative spirit of the female, but emphasizes matter at the expense of form, cruelty at the expense of love, and the mad triumph of creation over the long struggle of development.

This urge in Progenitors to produce and reproduce can be a terrible thing, since every Breeder carries some form of sterility, like a dead spot amidst body or soul. Those drawn to the foundation have lost, or will lose, a part of themselves that allows mundane reproduction. A few are physically sterile, or capable of producing only sick or damaged natural offspring. But most lack some vital part of themselves that would let them grow and cultivate their children in a sane, healthy manner. One Progenitor is a perfectionist, and scorches the skin from her wonders' bones for the least error. Another gives reptile-birth, abandoning his young to fend for themselves so he can explore new projects. Others fear that their creations will get free, and so leash and brand them until their only alternative is escape, or to live in constant terror of replacement, so every wonder has within it the seeds of its own destruction.

Focus:

The Progenitors' field of study, like that of the Demiurges before them, is *mad biology*. They study the living world in all of its facets, to heal, to restore, to create, and—some say—to defile. From vat-grown thralls to self-healing skin to a new, better humanity, the Progenitors turn their attention to everything that grows. The current rage is of course genetic engineering, and many Progenitors are gifted geneticists, using the secrets of the double helix to create new and marvelous forms of life, or to enhance, upgrade, or hybridize the creatures that already exist. Other Progenitors—sometimes more gentle souls, other times unspeakable monsters—study medicine, using the latest breakthroughs in gene therapy and inoculation to conjure up miracle-cures and banish the specter of disease.

Those Progenitors not focused on biology still seem fecund and organic in their creations. There's a rich tradition of clockwork "life" that's existed for more than five centuries: tiny mechanical men and delicate metallic ecosystems are the domain of these "Gear-Bleeders." Younger Progenitors have fallen in love with

computer life and see a rich new biome to explore in the confines of the Web, which they believe is only a few connections away from an online Cambrian explosion. Progenitors focus on everything from diesel engines to salvaged weaponry of obsidian and sharkteeth; whatever their medium, they see their creations as alive and evolving, never finished and static.

History:

Societies like the Progenitors have existed in one form or another for centuries. Its previous iteration, the Children of the Demiurge, began during the French Revolution, when a loose affiliation of geniuses rejected both the intellectual tedium of the Invisible College and the crude, lower-class construction projects of the Artificers. These passionate philosophers wanted to bring about new wonders for a new age, creations worthy of Inspiration. Some dreamed of restoring the damaged world of mortal science, elevating all scholarship to the True Science found in Mania. All through the nineteenth century, from the Romantics of England to the Transcendentals of the States and back to France during the Belle Epoque, the Progenitors pushed the boundaries of conventional morality, knowledge, and understanding. They raised the dead and hollowed out the living; they built living machines that thought and spoke and made love; they scorched the world with fire and lightning and danced in the flames. They were larger than life, aristocrat-magician-scientists, everything a genius should be.

They maintained that spirit during the early 20th century, where they inspired and were inspired by the revolutions in mortal science. The Demiurges, more than any other foundation, represented the traditional 20th century image of the mad scientist, their laboratories covered in Jacob's ladders, bubbling chemicals, and wet, glistening new life carefully contained. No one built like the old Demiurges built, and they knew it. They were arrogant, and they suffered for it. Something evil wormed into their hearts.

No one really understands what happened to the old Progenitors. The signs of slippage were evident by the middle of the century, but conveniently ignored. The early 90s shone light into the dark places of their souls: the foundation was revealed as a walking corpse, riddled with corruption, and the Peerage, at the height of its exclusionary and paranoid behavior, turned on one of its own. There are still fires burning from that purge, and still autonomous murder-machines that roam the alleys and wild places as orphans, unaware that their masters are dead. The old Progenitors were wiped away.

But not all were corrupt. A few of the old ones survived—were spared—and carried the flame, and a new generation arose, with the spirit of the old. In some ways they resembled their predecessors: the new Progenitor is typically wealthy, arrogant, disdainful, and uninterested in petty applications of mortal ethics. But their approach has changed with the changing times. They may not be the most malevolent of peers, but they are certainly the most alien, even to those Demiurges who survived the purge of the old order. The Old Breeders stood apart from the horrors and enigmas they created, as they stood apart from the common man. But the old aristocracies have broken down, as have—in the souls of the New Breeders, it would seem—all division and separation. The new Progenitors change themselves as eagerly as they change the world around them, hacking their genes and brains, transforming their flesh into something new, strange, and wondrous. This posthuman philosophy is new to the Peerage, who have reacted with surprise, but not quite horror.

This schism between the old aristocracy and the new metahumans threatens to tear the Progenitors apart. Those Demiurges who survived the purge fear that their descendants are following down the same dark path that damned the foundation before. The new Progenitors reject those fearful claims: they are not becoming monsters, they insist, but gods.

Organization:

The Reformed Progenitors are much better organized than their predecessors, who favored isolation in their castle-laboratories. Their primary forum and zine, *The Transfigurationist*, is currently riven by doctrinal

disputes over the nature and direction of the posthuman transformation, which has resulted in an annoying drop in the signal-to-noise ratio. The resulting diaspora has resulted in Progenitors following a variety of sources, mundane and Inspired, that seem to change every month, from extropic newszines, to medical and technical journals from obscure foreign countries, to forums devoted to body augmentation, anorexia support, and bodypart nullification.

The Society does organize, however, beyond the level of basement-dwelling self-mutilators, in a deliberate attempt to escape the sort of isolation that drove the Children of the Demiurge to madness. These groups, called cells, lack the formality of a fellowship, and are designed with a built-in expiration date; few last more than a few years. The **Curares** disappear for months or years at a time into the dangerous, most fecund parts of the world, to emerge transformed and transforming by the experience. The **Trash Girls** (a gender-neutral term) deliberately live without money or mundane possessions in the world's worst cities, changing themselves and their surroundings with the polluted icons of a fallen world. The **Plastickers** specialize in surgery, hypnosis, and spiritual transformation, and believe in change for the sake of change. The **Chum Summit** brings life to lifeless places, from city rooftops to the sea floor. The **Phage** rejects traditional biology in favor of focusing on artificial life; they are nearly influential enough to spawn a fellowship, and have drawn the attention of Artificers and Scholastics. The **Children of Themselves**, a proscribed cell, design custom flesh-servants for anyone who will ask, though always for a frightening price. There are dozens of other smaller movements, some inchoate, some already abandoned by the time anyone hears about them.

Members:

Progenitors are some of the strangest geniuses out there. They are obsessed with growth, transformation, and transcendence, and more than any other foundation, they see their own bodies and minds as the testbed for their theories. Not all Progenitors literally transform their own bodies—in fact, most don't—but all Progenitors recognize that they are living in a world that is changing in a fundamental way. Progenitors are consummate experimenters. Creation is necessary, theory engrossing, application bloodily satisfying, but it's in the hybridization and fertilization, the breeding and experimental surgery, and the accidents and happenstances that come from those activities where true Inspiration can be found.

Most new Progenitors, like the Demiurges before them, come from wealthy backgrounds. Many were, of course, doctors, or members of the growing fields of genetic engineering or medical research; others lived comfortably enough to ponder their place in the universe, and came to the foundation through their philosophical inquiries. Others experienced an event simultaneously traumatic and cosmic, some fundamental betrayal of their self-identity that destroyed their ability to interface normally with their bodies or with the world.

Old-school Demiurges still exist, though they call themselves Progenitors, too. These are often the heirs (biological, legal, or philosophical) of long-dead geniuses, who have taken up their ancestors' research. While genius lineages are not unheard-of, they are rarer today than they once were, but certain old lines in Europe, North and South America, and around the Mediterranean survived the purge and continued with the family business, while others came to the foundation upon discovering the hideous secrets, and bloody deaths, of some obscure great-uncle or long-lost grandmother.

Progenitors are often Hoffnungs, with some deranged image of a future world that they cannot express, only grow. Speculative Staunens also exist, content to chronicle the transformations around and within them. Klagens often experienced some traumatic violation in their past that eventually triggered a Breakthrough. Progenitor Grimms are comparatively rare, as they are prone to killing themselves in horrific acts of hate-fueled self-mortification. Neids remind other geniuses of the old Demiurges, aloof and jealous, and most Neid Progenitors hide their natures.

Aesthetics:

Progenitors divide aesthetically into two groups: old-style and new-style. The former style is common among those Progenitors who follow the old ways (increasingly rare in this fast-changing world); the latter is the strange new look among the progressive members of the foundation.

Old-style is usually the classic "Frankenstein's Lab" Universal look: bubbling cauldrons, Jacob's ladders, stitched-together monstrosities, animal-headed men, and things brought to twitching, spasming life by that tremendous force, electricity. Elements of the old style include a willingness to use mechanical and inorganic systems (from electrical generators to glass test tubes), a rough-and-ready work that uses the best from several centuries of mad science, and a general disinterest in experimenting on oneself: eccentric old-style Progenitors might favor period dress, but most just wear practical clothing appropriate for the occasion.

New-style is the look of the future, its adherents insist. Organic or techno-organic, sinuous, alien, often simultaneously entrancing and repellent, the new-style can be minimalist or baroque in a sticky, gristly sort of way, but it always features certain similar themes. New-style Progenitors make an effort to replace as much as possible with living matter, instead of relying on mechanical support for their living things; only the "oldest" new-style fashions draw from the neon glam of an aborted cyberpunk future, all brushed steel and plastic wrapped around synthetic flesh and preservative fluid. Most prefer a seamless expanse of life, self-sufficient and existing on its own terms, not limited by the weaknesses and flaws of the mundane world.

Character Creation:

Though most Progenitors focus on Medicine, that's not as important as a strange, singular vision of the future. Their philosophical bent means that Academics and Science are both important, and many have a very high Intelligence. Relentless transformations—if that's what interests the Progenitor—can take their toll on the body and mind, so many Progenitors have to develop high Resistance Attributes to survive the rigors of their autotranscendence. Progenitors almost always have poor Social Attributes and Skills. Most possess strange, alien mindsets and lack interest in trivialities like common courtesy, and the rest are just weirdos or assholes. The exception is Animal Ken, for controlling their bestial creations. Other useful Skills include Survival (for time spent in inhospitable environments), Weaponry (for the peculiar weapons Progenitors sometimes employ), Computer (for digital transcendence), and Subterfuge (to fake normality). Progenitors typically have some ready cash: Resources is a useful Merit, and many also have Status or other privileges. Physical Merits like Iron Stamina and Quick Healer are common, as are other physical transformations like Stunning Looks, brought on by not-quite-wondrous experimentation before or during the genius' Breakthrough. More Progenitors than other foundations (except perhaps Navigators) are manes, transformed by a freak accident during their Breakthrough.

Old-school Progenitors, the direct heirs of the Demiurges, possess a different approach and a correspondingly different Skill set. Crafts is useful for construction of tanks and storage vats, and with the Demiurges' focus on restoring life to dead flesh, Occult is extremely popular. Social Skills are on average slightly better than regular Progenitors. Demiurges are also wealthy, and combine the Resources Merit with other Merits like Mentor, Contacts, Status (some still have titles!), Beholden, and Laboratory.

Role:

Progenitors often become the living heart of a collaborative. Their behavior—erratic, impulsive, coldly alien or passionately emotional—keeps a collaborative on track and can give it purpose and direction. Despite their strangeness, many Progenitors are surprisingly genial to members of their own collaborative, whom they view as equals and fellow-explorers. When trouble comes, Progenitors—weirdly—provide stability to an endangered collaborative: not only are many trained doctors, allowing them to heal and save the wounded, a Progenitor's calm, alien demeanor can serve as a rallying-point for beleaguered geniuses, bolstering their

morale and letting them focus on overcoming their problems. Progenitors can also be useful when interacting with manes, as they are often the strangest members of the collaborative, and many know of all sorts of unusual bardos.

Axioms:

A Progenitor's favored Axiom is Automata or Exelixa, as they focus on the creation and perfection of life. Automata is traditionally associated with old-school Progenitors and Exelixa with the new breed.

Metaptropi is a popular choice for new-style Progenitors who seek to transform the world. Those who find themselves in dangerous situations (or who provide a collaborative with their heavy weaponry) study Katastrofi and Prostasia to grant their creations (or themselves) poisonous spines, acidic spittle, or bony plates to turn aside swords and rays. Skafoi can give a Progenitor or her children wings and stranger forms of locomotion. Apokalypsi and Epikrato are comparatively rare among "pure meat" Progenitors, who often scoff at those Axioms, but cybernetic Breeders use grafted or internalized wonders from these Axioms to gain superhuman control over the mortal world.

Grant:

Progenitors build small, precise, and elegant wonders that are surpassingly easy to modify. They do not suffer a -1 penalty for building a wonder of Size 1, and suffer only a -1 penalty (not a -2 penalty) for building a Size-0 wonder. (They gain bonuses for large wonders normally.) Wonders that use different default Sizes (like most vehicles and automata) are unaffected by this grant. Progenitors also gain a bonus when fiddling with their wonders equal to their Dexterity score.

Concepts: Revolutionary gene-hacker, man-beast hybrid, posthuman aspirant, fecund brood-mother, aristocratic uplifter, replicant pimp, drug-fueled psychonaut

Quote: *"It'll work this time, I promise. It won't hurt anyone."*

Stereotypes:

Artificers: Trashy self-styled revolutionaries building the disposable future.

Directors: Charming, vacuous creatures. No, I'm not jealous. Not at all.

Navigators: Brave and smart, but incurious and unwilling to take the final step.

Scholastics: They pretend that the world they study doesn't transform them.

Rogues: There is strength in following one's own path. Sometimes there is folly.

Lemurians: The walking abortions of a failed space-time continuum.

The Illuminated: They are *not* the next step in human evolution.

Other Creatures: They change themselves, but they don't remake themselves.

Mortals: They'll understand soon enough.

The College of Scholastic Theory

Name: The Scholastics

Nicknames: Bookworms, Invisibles, Collegiates

Inspiration has existed since humanity first tamed wolves, mastered fire, or raised a cudgel in self-defense. The tradition of the genius dates back to before the rise of the scientific method, to days when science and myth, knowledge and tradition, language and lore blur together. The College of Scholastic Theory—originally the Invisible College—is the oldest foundation in the Peerage and still the most influential. Before the frantic hammering and the stolen computer components and the bubbling organic slaw and the "IT'S ALIVE!" someone has to sit down and make sure that the equations are correct. Or at least someone *should*, the Scholastics believe, because it's better than getting eaten by your carnivorous voles because you forgot to carry the seven. Sometimes it seems like they almost aren't *mad*. But the Scholastics have a rich history of insanity. Though all geniuses are a bit disconnected from mundane reality, the Scholastics' interest in the abstract and metaphysical makes them uniquely susceptible to all kinds of strange cognitive disconnects as they plumb the deepest reaches of the theoretical world.

If anyone symbolizes the quest for what Man Was Not Meant To Know, it's the Collegiates, who have accumulated forbidden secrets and ripped open the mathematical code of the universe for almost five centuries. Their focus on theory should not imply that Scholastics are inactive: no group of mad scientists is more dedicated to the truths underlying this world, and in that hunger for knowledge lurks the true horror of the College. These geniuses rip down the walls of reality, stare into the voids between creations until empty things stare back at them, and blur the line between what is thought and what is real. Some Scholastics see their minds as two-way doors, allowing exploration in one direction and invasion in another. Other Collegiates see words, concepts, and symbols as living things, as real and vibrant as anything shambling through the world of matter and extension. All, to some extent, view the physical world as less real, less meaningful, than the world of ideas. Even those humanist Scholastics who profess deep concern over the fate of the world struggle to care, on some deep, visceral level, about the trivial and fleeting phenomena that they see around them every day. Some Scholastics retreat into solipsistic madness, becoming scientist-kings of worlds that exist only in their minds. Others lose the ability to tell the difference between a person and his ideas, viewing individuals as nothing but a collection of facts they know and impulses they have. Others still remember how to maintain a normal view of the world, but it always seems forced and artificial, like an adult forced to interact with theater-puppets in order to amuse children.

The Scholastics are a diverse and terrifying bunch. They wake things up that people thought were dead, dig up secrets that people want buried, and bring to light monstrous truths when people would rather believe the lies. They are investigators and inquisitors, tomb robbers and temple raiders, philosopher-thieves who can desecrate and exalt with a single act. Rumors in the mortal community of deranged scholars whispering forbidden words from books long forgotten, of explorers disappearing into ancient Mayan and Egyptian pyramids, of archaeologists finding pieces of ancient technology in million-year-old rock, all point to the activities of the College. Scholastics are masters of secrets and revelations, and not just from the ancient past: a Scholastic might just as easily uncover the dead girls in a local mayor's basement as some squamous alien nightmare from between the galaxies. Wherever Scholastics go, the earth seems to give up her dead that they might live again: old secrets, old lies, old betrayals, and old crimes of passion, ignorance, and calculation all leap back into the light of day, bringing with them tragedy, recrimination, and knowledge long thought lost.

Focus:

The venerable order of the Scholastics devotes itself to *mad philosophy*. In older days, the division was simple: the Collegiates studied the refined liberal arts—astronomy, rhetoric, music, mathematics—while other foundations, like the Artificers, focused on natural philosophy and the crude reality of the physical world,

with its flamethrowers and its very tiny clocks. Today, the Scholastics' interests are split: traditional Scholastics study language, religion, art, abstract mathematics, and the occult. Younger Scholastics focus specifically on the potential of mad mathematics, sharing this focus with Artificers, who emphasize application while Scholastics study theory. In recent years mad mathematics has meant computing, though Collegiates focus on all kinds of weird thought, as well as strange systems and patterns, from language and reasoning to fashion and fundamental particle physics. In the early days of the College, logic itself was the favored tool of the Scholastics, followed by mechanics. Even today, a majority of Scholastics still focus on the traditional fields of logic, math, and information theory. But even there, the growth of mundane computing technology has entirely transformed the Scholastics' traditional fields of interest. Computers have connected the worlds of mathematics and the physical world in a way never before thought possible (at least, not without Mania). Mathematics suddenly lives and moves in the world of flesh and granite, with a life it didn't even possess during the heady days of the 17th century, when Scholastic masons threw cathedrals and bridges into the sky on extraordinary new principles. Not even the greatest Scholastic can predict what the future will hold, or how much the line between the real and the hypothetical will blur over the next few years.

History:

The Scholastic College is the oldest extant foundation, with a (sort-of) cohesive governing body stretching back to 10th century Arabia. This society, which called itself the Golden Eye of God, appeared during the Golden Age of Islamic Science to challenge the historical revisionism of Lemuria and uncover the ancient Inspired secrets buried under the shifting desert sands. Borrowing from Islamic philosophy and Zoroastrian morality—specifically the primacy of truth as a virtue—they pushed Lemuria out of certain parts of what are now Iran. When Lemuria surged back, they scattered east and west and divided into countless smaller groups that stayed in touch through messages hidden carefully throughout time and space. (These messages, called the Metronomes of Gibreel, still appear; some are even accurate in the timeline we currently occupy.)

Those parts of the Golden Eye that scattered East to China were mostly destroyed, and certainly neutered, by Lemuria, but the organization found kindred spirits in the barbaric, fast-changing world of Christendom. Maintaining itself for centuries as a loose affiliation of like-minded geniuses, most of whom just struggled to get by in those dark days, Europe's free geniuses revealed themselves in the 17th century, bringing together philosophers, scholars, and inventors in what they called the Invisible College. As the Invisible College gave way to the Royal Society and geniuses gained a clear appreciation for the difference between Inspired and unInspired knowledge, the geniuses in the group cut ties with their mundane fellows and spread the Invisible College in a loose network across Europe, open to any genius who did not wish to join Lemuria. They were the first to put forth one of the Peerage's current guiding principles, that geniuses do not do science (or in that day, "natural philosophy"), but instead invent their own philosophy and impose it upon the world. While the harshness of this revelation drove many aspiring natural philosophers away, just as many felt they needed the College, which was the first to put forth a unified theory of how "Villainous doing Havocks the wondrous." With principles and laws of "Havocking" codified and laid down, peculiar philosophers were free to test the limits of their wonders and to explore how much mundane interaction their creations could take.

In the 18th century, the Invisible College reunited with its Asian cousins and began the restoration of the devastated societies of free Inspired there. It also followed the English colonists to America: the College seems to claim half of America's Founding Fathers as geniuses of their tribe (usually the same people whom the Artificers claim). They also say they created the Illuminati and a number of Masonic movements, and while the College's connections to modern occult construction is mostly symbolic, they certainly had considerable influence over the gifted and the powerful. During much the 18th century, the College was *the* alternative to Lemuria, stretching from Philadelphia to Kowloon. Geniuses of that time would refer to Lemuria and the College, not Lemuria and the Peerage.

As other groups, like the Demiurges, gained prominence, the Invisible College redefined itself, focusing on

theoretical and metaphysical speculation, as opposed to the hands-on work of other proto-foundations. The newly-christened College of Invisible Theories and Occult Scholasticism set to work on synthesizing the world's physical and metaphysical theories, looking for useful knowledge and discarding mystical fluff. During the 19th century, as mathematical theory came into its own, the Inspired focused on mathematical and geometric developments. The College shed its origins in craft and chemistry to become premier number theorists and statisticians.

As the 20th century unfolded and the Peerage became an organization in its own right, rather than a bunch of geniuses who didn't like Lemuria, the Scholastic College took the lead in guiding the young group, gaining strength from its new members and, again, redefining itself by contrast with its fellows. The College became a group of geniuses interested in the principles behind Inspiration, in understanding the nature of Mania and what universal metaphysical laws they could lay down for the creation of wonders.

Organization:

Scholastics don't just organize themselves; due to their influence and pervasiveness, they influence most of the rest of the Peerage. For centuries, their magazine, *Inspiration*, has served as the major source for peer review. (It's also why geniuses refer to themselves as the Inspired; even Lemurians, who once preferred to be called "the Enlightened," now use the term.) *Inspiration* has migrated to the online world, and its forums are a tangled, disorganized, nightmarish back-and-forth of accusations, ridiculous claims, and harebrained schemes, just the way geniuses like it.

The organization of the Scholastics themselves is based on fields of study, rather than geographic location, a tradition that began when peers in a dozen major cities installed mass communication devices in the mid 18th century. (These devices, the Mirror-Stones, still stand in Lisbon, Cairo, and Nagasaki; others were lost but have since been replaced, though their utility is limited today.) Each field is a meritocracy, with rank-and-file members called Reviewers making up the bulk of the population. Scholastics in the field who can build rank-4 wonders are called Analysts, and those that can build rank-5 wonders are called Chairmen. Each field is controlled by a Master, chosen after a contest of Inspired talent called a Sigil Moot.

The creation of new fields is the province of the Masters, meaning that new fields are often the result of political games. Active fields include: Masonry (architecture), Alchemy (including chemistry), Arithmetic (which covers statistics), Geometry (including navigation and ship-building), Homunculism (which covers computers and violently opposes building "tawkins" or humanoid robots for some reason), Smithing, Metallurgy (a formerly defunct archrival of Smithing, now specializing in nanotechnology), Anatomy (covering all of medicine as well as ecology; the latter may break off soon), Trade (which fights with Arithmetic for authority over economics), Governance, Consul (which differs from Governance in no meaningful way; the Masters usually cooperate to oust their rivals), Astronomy (which emphatically does not include anything practical), Music (which has seen a recent resurgence since it also explores almost any wave property), Performance (which went unmada with the rise of television and is just now regaining prestige), Perspective (which covers most painting and sculpting, as well as animation), and Engines (which covers most electrical and mechanical technology). Other fields exist, but without Masters, they are not currently active.

Members:

Geniuses who join the Invisible College (that name is still used, though it is no longer the foundation's proper name) are as interested in speculation as production. Most subscribe to one unified theory of Inspiration or another, and although there is no one favored theory that everyone in the College subscribes to, it's wise to keep up on the latest intellectual fads. More than their love of theory, though, is the Scholastics' unifying love of mystery, of riddles. Previous generations of Collegiates wrapped themselves in the mysteries of the Holy Church or of the Tao, or the bewildering riddles found in nascent scientific studies. Geniuses who follow this

old path are often traditional—some might say stodgy—in outlook and behavior. They favor outmoded styles of dress and manners of speaking and a retro look to their wonders. Many possess attitudes, too, that might generously be called "antiquated." The more out-of-date philosophies among the Scholastics make older members resemble Lemurians. Their fascination with secrets and hierarchies also reminds other foundations of Lemuria, though the Scholastics are committed to seeing history as it is, not rewriting it to what is "should be."

But this older generation is giving way to a new sort of Scholastic. The Scholastics of today are trickster-figures, walking enigmas, the lying demiurge of pagan myth made flesh: a Scholastic is Loki, or Coyote, or a modern-day druid speaking only in cant and rhyme. Linear thought is not prized among newer members of the College. This sort of deep weirdness is not well-regarded by the elders of the College, who view these young riddlers and brain-hackers as damaging the proud, antique reputation of the College.

The vast majority of Scholastics, whatever their philosophy, hail from the breeding pool. The current generation includes an enormous crop of computer scientists, and there are also philosophers, economists, sociologists, mathematicians, historians, and theoretical physicists. Geniuses drawn from outside the normal breeding pool are often peculiar, obsessed figures, and they are most likely to focus upon the nature of Inspiration, rather than on the theories behind individual fields of knowledge.

Members of the College are often wealthy, or at least comfortable: the hand-to-mouth lifestyle of the more desperate geniuses does not translate well into a life of contemplation. But Scholastics are by no means idle: their Mania is only directed in different ways, allowing them to understand the ins and outs of the wonders they create.

Staunens and Hoffnungs are common in the College, while Catalyzing through one of the more emotionally intense experiences, such as Grimm or Klagen, is more rare. A frustrated desire to share one's theories with the world can also produce Neids.

Aesthetics:

Scholastics are excited by the strange and the implausible, and their styles reflect that: weird mixes of the old and the new, of wealth and austerity, of the technological and the mystical, are common. Religious imagery is popular, whether it's sincere, decorative, or blasphemous. Scholastics are fond of symbols of all sorts, and often deck their wonders out with information listing their functions, real or imagined, in order to amaze or terrify other geniuses. Other Scholastics favor the classic Invisible College look, with neat, wealthy clothing, presentable beholden, and wonders built along historical lines. One genius might favor the clanking gears and steaming boilers of Victorian motive technology, while another might try to recreate the glass-and-bronze machinery of Hero of Alexandria. Scholastics often prize historical fidelity and adorn their wonders in as historically correct a manner as possible. Still others prefer to play with the idea of historical accuracy, producing wonders that mix eclectic styles and epochs or demonstrate principles of commonality between different ancient civilizations. These wonders may be elaborate visual "puns" for anyone familiar with the correct historical eras.

Character Creation:

Most Scholastics are bookish and insular, and many seem to vanish into their libraries: few possess blazing Presence, though they are often steadfast and dedicated, leading to high Resolve. They excel at Academics as much as hard Science. New-style Scholastics are often Computer scientists, their refined and sophisticated approach at odds with the rough, brilliant hacking of the Artificers. Collegiates of a more classical bent study Occult.

Though many are scholarly and sedentary, other Scholastics track down manuscripts and decipher ancient

riddles the old-fashioned way—by going on dangerous adventures in forgotten underground temples riddled with death traps—and have the Physical Attributes to prove it.

Traveling Scholastics pick up Skills like Investigation, for deciphering historical enigmas, Larceny, for avoiding ancient traps, and Streetwise, for blending in to urban culture from Cameroon to Canada. Generally, Collegiates prefer soft solutions to their problems, emphasizing Stealth, Socialize, and when things go badly, Firearms and a single well-placed shot. Scholastics who delight in their reputation as tricksters emphasize Expression and Subterfuge.

Intellectual Merits are common among Scholastics: many have trained themselves to possess an Eidetic Memory, and others possess extensive knowledge of the most trivial bits of data, granting them access to the Encyclopedic Knowledge Merit. Still others are gifted linguistics or specialists in obscure and occult fields.

Role:

Scholastics are often the brains of the operation. In a collaborative, they serve not just as troves of information, but as guardians against the dangerous and unexpected. Scholastics often have wide-ranging and difficult goals that can encourage the construction of new wonders, and when the collaborative is backed up against the wall, a Scholastic's natural talents, coupled with her ability to predict trouble before it bangs on the door, can keep a collaborative safe even in harrowing circumstances.

With their knowledge of the ancient and the occult, Scholastics are often called upon by their collaborative to interface with the mutants, aliens, and psychic creatures that infest the World of Darkness, since members of the College are most familiar with that particular variety of weirdness, even more than the Progenitors. When their peers are in the field, the Scholastic may coordinate activity from a central location, using scanners and communicators to keep everyone connected. When a mystery appears, a collaborative's Scholastic is often the first to attempt a solution, even if the answer is incomplete or makes less sense than the question. Some Scholastics distance themselves from the rest of the collaborative, wrapping themselves in riddles and incomprehensible behavior. Others are more direct with their peers, though in new or dangerous situations, the Scholastic's first approach is oblique, subtle, and often incomprehensible even to other mad scientists.

Axioms:

The Scholastics' favored Axioms are Apokalypsi or Metaptropi. Questers after secrets, Scholastics naturally excel at uncovering lost knowledge, and their recent fascination with computer technology has resulted in an explosion of communication- and analysis-related technology. Their riddling natures and their love of antique lore combine in a love of Metaptropi, which they use to shapeshift and craft illusions.

Computer scientists increasingly study Automata, while Epikrato is very common among linguistics, semioticians, and those who study the human mind and similar abstract matters. Scholastics use Skafoi to construct dimensional gates or time machines; not many use it to build rocket ships. Exelixa sees little use, due to its highly practical nature, but Prostasia is surprisingly common: Scholastics like to stay safe, and mathematically-inclined ones are often experts at constructing shields and screens.

Grant:

Scholastics plan their wonders carefully before building them. A Scholastic can select her fault from two offered by the Storyteller with a regular Success rather than an Exceptional Success. An Exceptional Success allows her to choose from three faults selected by the Storyteller. An Exceptional Success and double the usual Mania cost is still needed to build a wonder without any faults. Also, Scholastics always know their wonder's faults immediately upon handling the wonder.

Concepts:

Zen machinist, dimensional theorist, historian of mad science, shadowy information broker, prophecy-obsessed survivalist, peripatetic troubleshooter, shaman of higher mathematics

Quote: *"If it's true, someone wrote it down, even if just to refute it."*

Stereotypes:

Artificers: Whatever you cobble together, I can show you a diagram of something better.

Directors: Close your mouth. Listen. Put down your pen. Read.

Navigators: The Navigator of today produces the travel journals of tomorrow. If only they knew what they were doing.

Progenitors: I don't think they've thought about what they're doing to themselves.

Rogues: A confused rabble.

Lemurians: You're not supposed to believe everything you read.

The Illuminated: They fall the same way, every time: through arrogance and blindness.

Other Creatures: *The* source for first-hand reports about the strangest things, if they don't tear your head off first.

Mortals: History is built on their backs. I say this to imply that they are not standing up.

The Peerage and The Law:

The Peerage vacillates between being a hierarchical society and a loose fraternity of mad scientists. Currently the organization is as loose as it has been in almost a century, with the foundations little more than mailing-lists, vestigial societies wrapped around their magazines and earlier history. This was no accident: the approach of the millennium saw increasingly paranoid and exclusionary behavior from the Peerage, which seemed to be eating itself after the collapse of Lemuria. Witch hunts and purges rooted out the corruption in the Demiurges, but then went farther...too far...and the whole Inspired world threatened to tilt toward madness and civil war. Over the course of several months in 1998, geniuses from all the foundations met and forged the Lucidity Concord (sometimes called the Pact of ARPAnet) that dismantled most of the formal structures of the foundations, proscribed the more aggressive and inquisitorial fellowships, and generally ended "The Peerage" as a unified organization with hierarchies and secret decoder rings.

This wasn't universally popular. Many inquisitor groups still operate, especially in South America, hunting down "Lemurian sympathizers" and "Johnny Vons," their term for geniuses who threaten to let Inspiration run wild in a life-annihilating holocaust of duplication. Others, especially in the Union of Artifice, view the Lucidity Concord as the product of anarchists, Libertarians, and extropic minarchists who used the excesses of the Peerage as an excuse to destroy the vital support structure that the organization provided to those geniuses not born to privilege. Others saw the move as a power grab: by dissolving the oversight structure of the Peerage, members of the Lucidity Concord were free to go about their business unmolested.

These complaints have grown louder recently, with frequent accusations of older geniuses filling the power vacuum with their own armies of automata, a general increase in "Bond villainy" among the Peerage, and powerful geniuses turning a blind eye to a hungry new generation that wasn't born to wealth, privilege, and formal education. But for now, there is no formal law among the Peerage. Nonetheless, there are guidelines, vestigial moral structures from the old days. While there's no formal punishment system in place anymore, violating these rules can get a Peer alienated, snubbed, or—if his crimes are egregious enough—simply "taken care of" in order to prevent a descent into dangerous public violence.

Don't Hurt, Don't Steal, Don't Lie. The criminal code of the peers once stretched for dozens of volumes; now it's reduced to the sort of commonsense rules that most geniuses not plunging toward Illumination understand automatically. Killing people—geniuses, mortals, thinking manes, other intelligent beings—is wrong. So is beating them up, stealing their stuff, and otherwise engaging in criminal violations of their persons or property. Most of this is common sense, tied into a genius' Obligation, except for the prohibition against lying. While many geniuses no longer take this rule seriously, the prohibition against lying goes back to the Scholastics' murky origins as a Zoroastrian philosophy cult. Many older geniuses still view truth as sacred and inviolate, a way of separating themselves from Lemuria. Some will not lie under any circumstances, including lies of omission and misdirection. (They will, however, flatly state that they refuse to give an answer.) Lying is not a transgression for geniuses, but many geniuses still believe that deflecting any thinking being from the truth is a grave fault. Others cling to the letter of this law while gleefully warping this spirit. Regardless of how they interpret it, those peers who know anything about the old codes of behavior recognize the primacy of truthfulness in interacting with their fellow Inspired.

Help Out, Chip In. Once called Zakaat after one of the Pillars of Islam, this formal tax has been replaced by a general belief that a peer should help out his fellows. This includes a place to stay, money for food and clothing, protection from mortal law (sanctuary—which can introduce a number of complications depending on how insistent the criminal becomes), and a sincere effort to keep a fellow peer off the streets and "clothed in the dignity of his station." Today this law has atrophied, but many geniuses still believe in the sharing of lab space, and in making sure that any genius they meet has food, shelter, and education in the form of access to the major mad science news outlets. Geniuses who believe in this principle, however, increasingly find themselves swamped by the sheer number of poor, desperate new geniuses catalyzing in major metropolitan areas.

Stay Low. This means no giant robots robbing banks, no extorting the United Nations with moon-lasers, and no ranting about your theories to the hosts of The Today Show. Nothing good ever comes of it: at best, you'll turn a bunch of sane people into mad scientists, and that's just more labs to feed; at worst you'll trigger Havoc and get a bunch of people disintegrated. This isn't a hard-and-fast rule, and never was. There's no law about telling your family or friends that you're a mad scientist; no hit squad will show up and kill them for a breach of the Great Veil of Secrecy. But seriously, don't flaunt it; it never helps. This also ties into a more philosophical definition of "staying low." Stay humble. You're not a revolutionary scientist; you haven't figured it out. You're crazy just like the rest of us.

You Enlighten It, You Buy It. A rule shared by Lemuria and despised by many peers, though it can be enforced with enormous social pressure. Basically, if your wonder-working is the cause of another person's Breakthrough—if some phlebotomist gets her hands on your Blood Minions and she turns into a genius investigating them—then that new genius is your responsibility. There were once many formal laws about what a professor owed to a pupil and vice-versa, but now it's a simpler matter. Basically, if you catalyze someone, you need to provide them with instruction up through the first thesis, after which they can go out on their own. Until then, the professor is responsible for the pupil: the pupil's moral failings and crimes are the professor's. If the pupil becomes Illuminated, it's up to the professor to destroy her. Of course it's not always easy to assign blame for a Breakthrough, but when a genius deliberately cultivates a new mad scientist, this rule becomes iron-clad even in this laissez-faire age: neglecting one's own deliberately-created pupil is considered the height of tacky, selfish behavior throughout the Peerage.

Fuck Lemuria. Whatever rules of courtesy apply between geniuses, they don't apply to Lemurians. This isn't to say that interaction isn't permitted—after all, sometimes Lemurians have the best stuff—but it ought to be conducted in a spirit of low treachery and mustache-twirling betrayal. The Lemurians shouldn't be trusted, but rather than being ignored, they should be screwed over as often as possible. While violence is frowned upon, theft and deception are considered acceptable when directed at Lemurians, who are usually just as eager to screw over a peer. Most rules of polite behavior go out the window when dealing with Lemurians, and no one will bat an eyelash if a peer works a Snake over. Of course, since the Peerage no longer presents a unified front, geniuses can't expect to hide in their foundation's skirts if Lemuria comes gunning for them. This rule goes both ways: when Lemuria fucks back, don't expect any more protection than you can buy.

These five vague guidelines govern the behavior of many peers. They're rarely learned, and never carved into marble, but instead assimilated by new peers as they interact with their fellows. Some geniuses rail against them, some want stricter protocols in place (for moral, ideological, or selfish reasons), but every peer or Peerage-affiliated rogue is familiar with the ethics and culture of the new Peerage, and must accommodate these social mores when interacting with other geniuses.

Rogues

Rogues are independent geniuses, not associated with Lemuria or the five foundations of the Peerage. Most non-lonesome rogues remain independent for ideological reasons, because they don't fit in with the existing organizations. They're too crazy, too arrogant, too independent, or too messed up to work well with others and they can't or won't read the right zines and message boards. Maybe they don't care. Maybe they can't make sense of that philosophical gibberish. Maybe internalizing too many faults has left them functionally illiterate. The rogues are a mixed bag.

Some members of the mainstream foundations consider those rogues who are not echo doctors to be part of the Peerage, and some rogues agree with that assessment. They're the outliers of the Peerage, and though these rogues don't quite belong, they're in orbit around that society and occasional participants. Other rogues reject that label and want no part of the peers, seeing it as a doddering relic or an old-boy's-club where Inspiration is given a neat home and put to work building peer-approved machinery.

Other rogues belong to their own collaboratives, mega-collaboratives, or foundation-like groups: little cliques and subcultures, ranging in size from three rogues to over a thousand, that have the resources and ideological power to generate their own unique vision. There are dozens of these rogue groups all over the world, some offshoots of existing foundations, some fellowship that grew too large or too unfocused, others the product of some unique genius with a goal.

History:

Before the rise of the Peerage as a coherent organization, there was only Lemuria and the people who didn't want any part of it. Though in the early days some organizations were simply independent, others defined themselves by their opposition to Lemuria. Many modern rogues take their inspiration from a specific organizations in the past, such as the Peacock Scholars of India, Arabia's Scholars of Contradiction, the Order of the Nine Circles in Renaissance Italy, or the Broken Dragon Thinkers who supported the Boxer Rebellion. That most of these organizations were wiped clean from the face of the Earth (and sometimes the rest of the universe too) indicates the ferocious influence of Lemuria before the 20th century.

As the Peerage picked up steam, most of the previous rogue organizations joined up with them. Those that tried to remain independent, such as organizations unique to specific cultures, were typically annihilated or dragged into Lemuria. With the polarization of the Inspired world and the increase in violence during the 20th century, most rogues laid low, ignoring the conflict and trying to go about their own lives and investigations.

The collapse of Lemuria resulted in a changing identity for the rogues. Some joined with the now less-political Peerage, only to leave as that organization grew paranoid and dogmatic through much of the late 20th century. Others remained stubbornly independent. Rogues are still common today, as "rogue" behavior is more sustainable in a world of instant connectivity to countless other geniuses.

Members:

Rogues share nothing but a disconnect from the larger organizations among the geniuses. Most "rogues" are in fact only rogues because they have no idea what they are and that there are more like them. Lonesome geniuses can drift through their whole lives unaware of the truth, and even in this newer, smaller world, many geniuses go for years, making their own developments and discoveries, until they are noticed by another mad scientist for what they are.

Those geniuses who make a conscious decision to avoid the foundations and Lemuria might be bitter, crazy, or just disinterested. Some are very rich, wealthy enough to maintain their wonder-crafting lifestyle without external support, while others barely get by. Despite their name, many rogues belong to a collaborative, either of like-minded rogues or of mix of rogues and peers.

Rogues can belong to any catalyst, though Grimms and Klagens are slightly more likely to seek out a coherent organization to give their feelings meaning, making them less common. Hoffnungs whose visions do not match the dreams of any of the foundations, Staunens who see something no one else sees, and Neids whose frustration is more personal than social find outlets as rogue geniuses.

Aesthetics:

Rogues, of course, have no unified aesthetic. Those inspired by a particular rogue group in the past often ape those fashions, while independent geniuses, especially lonesomes, often draw from mundane society, trying to create an image of what they think a mad scientist's wonders "should" look like. Few are purely functional in their designs, though poor rogues favor a junky, trashy style, even as they look for the best and most advanced components they can find.

Character Creation:

Rogues are defined by their independent nature, and that is often reflected in their abilities. Poor and on-the-run rogues favor Physical Attributes and a Skill set that helps them survive and get around: Weaponry, Stealth, Athletics, and Drive. Wealthy rogues instead focus on Mental and Social Skills like Socialize, Subterfuge, Investigation, and Politics, alongside as many appropriate Merits as the genius can manage, such as Contacts, Allies, and Resources. Merits are rarely focused on the "mad science" part of a wealthy rogue's life, instead providing support for the genius' mortal existence.

Role:

Not all rogues avoid the companionship of other geniuses, and those that do often become echo doctors or worse. Rogues join collaboratives in one of two ways. Either they unite with other rogues who share a unified goal or approach, or they join a collaborative consisting mostly of peers. (Unmada rogues occasionally cooperate with Lemuria, but the Snakes frown on a genius who does not follow an accepted baramin.) All-rogue groups can be structured in any way—there are countless rogue collaboratives with their own agendas and structures, some benign, many dangerous. If working with peers, the rogue operates on the outskirts of the collaborative, rarely willing to commit entirely to its ideology and methodology, but closer to the group than an external contact would be. How the rogue is treated may cause him to join the collaborative in a more official capacity, or leave to find (or found) another group.

Axioms:

A rogue receives whichever two favored Axioms she wants. If she joins a foundation, she loses access to one of those Axioms, which is replaced by one of the foundation's favored Axioms, but she regains the same ones if she returns to rogue status.

A rogue's interests range widely, though they generally favor rough-and-ready solutions to problems. Katastrofi is always popular because, hey, ray guns. Wealthy and independent rogues favor Axioms that benefit from lots of room and equipment, like Automata and Exelixa, while rogues that join collaboratives often try to support their allies with Skafoi or Prostaia. Independent tinkers can focus on nearly anything.

Grant:

Rogues receive no benefit for their status. However, they don't need to bind a point of Mania to a foundation.

Concepts: Trust-fund maniac, scholar of antique sciences, political agitator, hermit-inventor, forgotten researcher, disaffected philosopher

Stereotypes:

Artificers: Draping your inventions in barbed wire and plastic bags doesn't impress me.

Directors: No matter how nice they seem, deep down all they want to do is get you by the balls.

Navigators: It's nice to see that some people are happy with their status as second-class citizens.

Progenitors: They want to drag all of us into some kind of crazy bullshit meat-robot future. No thanks.

Scholastics: Trapped in wheels within wheels that don't do a damn thing.

Lemurians: It's like watching a bully after his back gets broken, scooting around the playground in a motorized wheelchair and making threats.

The Illuminated: A lot of geniuses end up this way. A lot of stupid geniuses.

Other Creatures: I try to stay away. They're too unpredictable, too dangerous, and too caught up in their own little worlds.

Mortals: Pitiful creatures that, for some horrible reason, rule the world.

Cross-Disciplinary Studies:

Not every genius who belongs to a foundation focuses on the foundation's preferred area of study. Not every member of the Progenitors, for example, is a mad biologist. There are chemists, cyberneticists, and even historians there as well. Foundations are defined, first, by their approach to mad science (creation for Artificers, organization for Directors, use for Navigators, growth for Progenitors, theorizing for Scholastics), secondarily by their philosophy of the true nature of Inspiration, and only in a tertiary fashion by their preferred field. Fields of focus appeared partially due to accretion and inertia: as more mad physicists joined the Navigators, it attracted more mad physicists, and the Circumference Center is now defined by its mad physics program. Nonetheless, there are plenty of other types of researchers at the Center: chemists who focus on explosives, biologists who create forms of living transport, and even sociologists with an appreciation for cross-cultural interaction and first contact scenarios. Generally, foundations welcome geniuses with different areas of focus from the foundation's expected field of research.

Programs: The Independent Foundations

According to calculations by the College of Scholastic Theory, it takes about a thousand geniuses working together to create a foundation, with its concomitant grant and favored Axioms. Smaller groups may be effective and tight-knit, but they lack the Mania to create a self-sustaining organization. Before the fall of Lemuria, the foundations thought that only they and the Lemurian baramins possessed the numbers and organization to produce such groups. Other organizations, some made up of isolated lonesome geniuses, some disinterested in Lemuria and the Peerage, possessed between ten and 100 members, but were considered no more than very large collaboratives. However, it has recently become clear that independent groups that function much like foundations do exist, and more have appeared in obscure parts of the world since Lemuria toppled.

These groups are called programs by the peers. The best-known program is called the Ten Thousand Fans, an organization of mad scientists and philosophers that has spread across China and much of Asia, from Nepal to the islands of Japan, from the Gobi desert to Malaysia. Lemuria devastated China's free Inspired societies in the 16th and 17th centuries, slaughtering those unwilling to join Lemuria (and even many who were, just to make sure). The carnage left most of Asia a Lemurian-held territory for centuries: India is still considered off-limits to all non-Lemurian geniuses.

But free geniuses appeared again in the late 19th century, and by the 1930s Lemuria was busy putting out ideological brush fires, especially in Japan and the port cities of southern China. These scattered groups drew from equal parts Western science and Taoist philosophy, with splashes of traditional Chinese medicine and Indian mathematics thrown in. While most of these societies, which Lemuria called the Ten Thousand Fans (as they fanned the fires of heterodoxy), were little larger than collaboratives, by the late 20th century many had united, presenting a unified philosophy to the world.

The Ten Thousand Fans now refers both to any non-Lemurian collaborative native to Asia and to a unified group, a program, that has gained enough power and influence to be considered on par with a foundation. Though the Ten Thousand Fans' geographic extent is different from the other foundations, many in the Peerage who are familiar with the group have come to regard them as a potential sixth foundation.

Mechanically, the Ten Thousand Fans' favored Axioms are Exelixa and Metaptropi. Just like a foundation, it offers a grant to its members: members of the Ten Thousand Fans (sometimes called Formalists) can spend a point of Mania in place of one day of food, one day of water, six hours of activity after staying up all night, or one minute of air.

Members of the Peerage who view the Ten Thousand Fans as a potential foundation think of them as practitioners of *mad chemistry*, similar to Artificers but with more focus on the microscopic than the

macroscopic. The formalists themselves are less likely to adopt this rigid classification.

Other programs also exist, though the Peerage knows little about them. The Ubermenschen have their own program, and it's as vile as one might expect. Mexico features a group focused on rediscovered Aztec numerology and secret architecture—it's unclear whether they are direct heirs of Mesoamerican mad science or just rediscovering those arts. The Muslim world features a program that, according to reports, specializes either in pyrotechnics or the summoning of weird aliens from distant stars. India may have one or more carefully-hidden non-Lemurian programs. Others certainly exist around the world, though no lonesome program has ever been discovered: the largest groups of geniuses that were unaware of the greater Inspired community have never numbered more than 200.

A player who wants a genius from a program, rather than just playing a rogue, should discuss the possibility with the Storyteller. All programs possess two favored Axioms and a grant, require the binding of a point of Mania, and otherwise function like foundations.

WONDERS AND AXIOMS:

A genius differs from a mere mortal in his ability to create wonders, incredible products of manic artifice and mad science.

What sort of wonders a genius can create depends on her Axioms. The Axioms are eight super-scientific paths that allow a mad scientist to produce specific kinds of wonders. For example, the Axiom of Katastrofi allows the genius to create weapons and destructive devices, while the Axiom of Automata lets the genius create independent agents.

It takes several steps to develop a wonder, each one potentially fraught with danger and surprise for the genius, who never possesses full control of the things she creates. The genius begins by checking to make sure she has the Axioms necessary to build the wonder, and if she does not, abandoning the project or scaling back to a more modest design. It usually takes one or more days to build a wonder: at the end of that time the genius rolls to see if the wonder is completed. Success yields a new wonder, ready for use, while failure means a temporarily delay, a work stoppage until the genius can gather more supplies, or even the wonder rampaging out of control. Once the wonder is completed and the Storyteller has determined its faults, the genius can begin using it.

Creating a Wonder:

There are several steps in creating a wonder. The player must decide what it does, figure out the dice to roll to build the wonder, have the character construct the wonder, and then determining the wonder's functionality.

Wonder Design:

To design a wonder, the genius simply selects one that he can build, based on the limits of his Axioms. The player selects the wonder to be built and any variables and calculates the wonder's abilities, including Size, range, and any other pertinent features. Simple wonders are correspondingly simple to prepare: putting together a basic "ray gun" only requires reading what a given level of Katastrofi offers. More complicated wonders with many Variables (a disintegrating armor-piercing ray rifle with enhanced range) will require more calculation.

Resources:

Developing wonders is not cheap. A genius is advised to possess Resources at least equal to the dot rank of the wonder to be built. Every dot less incurs a -1 penalty when the genius attempts to build the wonder.

The genius also needs "resources" in the more general sense: a place to work for a couple of days, some tools (available even without Resources at a hardware store, but difficult to procure deep in the Amazon), and time left alone for calculation and construction. A genius who lacks a place to work or even the bare minimum components necessary for the wonder cannot build the wonder at all. Poor conditions, such as leaky ceilings, intermittent electricity, and nosy neighbors, may incur a penalty ranging from -1 (for minor distractions, like a flaky network connection when downloading blueprints) to -5 (out in the open in the middle of a rainstorm).

Possession of the Laboratory Merit or the opportunity to use another genius' laboratory helps a genius. Every dot of Laboratory Equipment grants a +1 to the roll to create the wonder so long as the genius can use her laboratory.

Geniuses need enough raw material to build the wonder; they cannot create their wonders from thin air. Metals, plastics, circuits, gears, and blown glass can all become part of a wonder. A genius' lab is assumed to automatically contain mundane material "bulk" suitable to the mad scientist's aesthetic, but out in the world (see *Kitbashed Wonders*, Page 138), raw materials can be harder to come by.

The Dice Pool:

The genius rolls Inspiration when developing her wonder. She adds to that an Attribute and a Skill, described below.

A genius uses Intelligence when designing a wonder. Pure brain-power is still important when creating marvels of mad science. When kitbashing a wonder (see below) she replaces Intelligence with Wits.

She adds to her Attribute one relevant Skill. The Skill used depends on the type of wonder being created. Use the following guidelines:

Academics: Any wonder designed to engage in mind control or sociological manipulation or analysis. Any wonder that manipulates or analyzes probabilities. Any four- or five-dot Automata wonder. Any mind-reading or thought-projecting wonder of Apokalypsi, or any entirely organic wonder of Apokalypsi.

Computer: Any wonder of Automata not entirely organic. Any wonder of Apokalypsi except those built to detect or project thoughts or that are entirely organic. Any wonder that can manipulate or seize control of a computer.

Crafts: Any wonder defined primarily by its structure and shape, including all wonders of Katastrofi not entirely organic and all Skafoi vehicles not entirely organic. Any wonder of Automata that possesses manipulators or the ability to move and that is not entirely organic. Any wonder of Prostasia not entirely organic or based on "shield" or "screen" technology. Any wonder designed to upgrade, repair, or transmute mechanical, electronic, or other non-living devices.

Medicine: Any wonder made out of organic material. Any wonder that uses poison, or that deploys or launches organic material. Any wonder designed to perform healing, surgery, or biological shape-changing or manipulation. Any wonder of Automata with organic components.

Occult: Any wonder of Automata that was once a corpse. Anything that explicitly targets a metanormal being or thing.

Science: Any wonder of Katastrofi that emits rays, beams, or energy rather than physical particles to cause damage. Any wonder of Katastrofi that deals Aggravated damage. Any wonder of Skafoi of rank 3 or higher. Any wonder of Prostasia that uses "shields," "screens," or other non-physical means of protection. Any wonder that manipulates the weather. Any wonder that employs telekinesis. Any wonder of Metaptropi. Any wonder where no other Skill applies.

The genius rolls Inspiration + the relevant Attribute + the *lowest* Skill that applies to the wonder she is attempting to design. So, a genius attempting to make an entirely organic weapon that causes Aggravated damage would roll Inspiration + Intelligence + (the lower of Medicine and Science). She subtracts from this the wonder's rank, and rolls the dice total.

Time Taken:

It takes one day (at least six hours of solid work) to build a wonder of up to Size 5. Large wonders take more time to build, as follows:

Size	Time Taken
NA	One Turn
NA	One Minute
NA	One Hour
0 to 5	One Day
6 to 10	One Week
11 to 15	One Month
16 to 20	One Year
21 to 25	One Decade
30+ (corvette or frigate)	One Century
Destroyer or Cruiser	One Millennium
Battleship or Aircraft Carrier	10,000 Years
City-sized Vehicle	100,000 Years
That's No Moon	1 million Years

A genius can work double-time (twelve hours every day), halving the time taken. This triggers an unmade check.

The minimum time it takes to build a wonder in this manner is always one day, unless the genius kitbashes (see below).

Metaptropi shrink rays cannot be used to decrease the time needed to build a wonder.

Extra Time:

If a genius increases his time taken by one step (from a day to a week, etc.), he gains a +1 bonus to his roll.

Kitbashed Wonders:

A genius can try to kitbash a wonder, building it in less time than normal. A kitbashed wonder can receive a reduction of one step (to an hour for a wonder that normally takes a day to build, for example), two steps (a minute for a day-long project), or three steps (a turn for a day-long project).

Other people can help with kitbashed wonders, but helpers cannot reduce the base time below one day.

The roll to build the wonder is handled normally, except the genius uses Wits instead of Intelligence. There is a -2 penalty for one-step reductions, a -4 penalty for two-step reductions, and a -6 penalty for three-step reductions. Further, geniuses without a utility belt or not in their labs suffer an additional -1 penalty per rank of the wonder since they cannot bring their Resources to bear. (The Dumpster Diver Merit reduces the Resources penalty by two points, provided the genius can find appropriate scrap material.)

Geniuses must possess the raw materials necessary to build a kitbashed wonder, the same as with any wonder. This can be nearly anything vaguely suitable, but there must be something to build from, whether old furniture or spare clocks or bits of metal and pottery. A Size-3 wonder requires three Size points of *something* to get disassembled and reformed.

Kitbashed wonders disintegrate after a short period of time. One-step wonders last one day, two-step wonders last one scene, and three-step wonders last a number of turns equal to the genius' Inspiration. After the time elapses, the genius can spend one point of Mania per rank of the wonder to extend its lifespan by another cycle; otherwise it falls apart and is destroyed.

A genius cannot work double-time on kitbashed wonders.

Mania and Willpower:

A genius can spend both Mania and Willpower on building a wonder, if desired. A genius can spend an amount of Mania on building a wonder equal to his per-turn expenditure (based on Inspiration), and can spend up to one point of Willpower.

Wonder Rank and Bound Mania:

A wonder has a rank equal to the highest number of Axiom dots in the Axiom or Axioms needed to create the wonder. This is always the dot score of the "primary" Axiom; for example, to build an illusion-generating machine, Metaptropi 2 is needed. Automata can be added to make these illusions self-sufficient or capable of learning, but the Automata score does not matter, only the Metaptropi score: Metaptropi 2 yields a rank-2 wonder. Likewise, a jet plane made with Skafoi 3 that is normal-looking (a variable that geniuses can apply to their wonders, and that requires Metaptropi 1 to select) is a rank-3 wonder because jets are built at Skafoi 3, not a rank-1 wonder because of Metaptropi, nor a rank-4 wonder because you've added the numbers together.

A wonder's rank determines how many points of Mania must be bound into it in order to sustain its functioning. A wonder needs a number of bound Mania points equal to its rank. (Some wonders with special abilities also require additional bound Mania.)

These bound Mania are "locked up"; they cannot be used, accessed, or regained while the wonder still exists. So, a genius with one dot of Inspiration and ten Mania points, who has built three one-dot wonders, has seven Mania points available to him.

Even if a wonder is destroyed or becomes an orphan, the genius does not immediately regain the Mania bound to the wonder. She gains the ability to regain those Mania points, however, and the Mania returns at the normal rate.

Cooperation:

A genius can benefit from the assistance of other people when building a wonder. Assistance can offer two benefits: it can make the work go faster, or it can add additional dice to the genius' roll to build the wonder.

Unless otherwise noted, beholden and other creatures that assist with the creation of a wonder must actually show up and work just like the genius; merely possessing two dots in beholden Number, for example, doesn't help a genius if his beholden are halfway across the country when he's trying to build something.

Using Beholden To Build Faster:

Beholden can reduce the time it takes to build a wonder or grant a bonus to the genius' roll. Every dot in Beholden Number reduces the time taken by one step (from a month to a week, for example). This cannot reduce the time below a day, however, even if the genius is kitbashing.

Using Beholden To Build Better:

Every dot in Beholden Ability for beholden working on a project is added to the genius' roll when she rolls to build a wonder. The genius' Beholden Ability rating is added directly to the genius' roll; it is not rolled separately with successes adding to the genius' roll like with other forms of cooperation.

Using Other Geniuses to Build Better:

More than one genius can work on a project. So long as the supporting geniuses have the ability to create the wonder themselves (the required Axioms, etc.), this is handled just like normal Teamwork: the supporting geniuses roll Inspiration + Attribute + Skill, and any successes are added to the primary genius' dice roll. If a supporting genius lacks the ability to create the wonder, he can still help, but he rolls Inspiration alone.

Using Automata, Manes, or Other Geniuses to Build Faster:

Creatures other than beholden can be employed to make a project go faster, though other solutions aren't generally as all-around effective as beholden. Automata are often stupid, manes can be disloyal and fickle, and other mad scientists make for surly, arrogant underlings. Further, time reductions from beholden and from all other sources do not combine: use the greater reduction of the two groups. (Generally, a genius' beholden are just more efficient at hastening a project than a bunch of geniuses and Martians wandering around and trying to make things go faster.)

It requires four rank-2 automata or two rank-3 automata to serve as the equivalent of one "person."

Number of Extra People on the Project	Reduction
1	One step
2-5	Two steps
6-11	Three steps
12-29	Four steps
30+	Five steps

Using Automata or Manes to Build Better:

Automata and manes generally aren't as useful as beholden, who are attuned to the genius' needs, or other geniuses, who possess natural brilliance. Every automaton or mane who possesses at least three dots in the Skill used to build the wonder is allowed to roll one die for Cooperation. (Automata or manes who are also Inspired should be treated like geniuses, as above.)

Maximum Cooperation Bonus:

A genius can only gain so many additional dice in his dice pool from Cooperation. The maximum is equal to the genius' Inspiration + Presence. Note that Beholden Ability does not add dice from Cooperation; those dice are added directly to the genius' pool.

Cooperating with Axioms:

In order to create a wonder, one genius must possess all the Axioms needed to build it. For example, a transformation ray that requires both Katastrofi and Metaptropi requires one genius to have both Katastrofi and Metaptropi at the needed levels. A genius who only knows Katastrofi cannot get together with a genius who only knows Metaptropi to create the wonder.

Combining Integral Wonders:

However, one genius can create wonders that are integral to another wonder, even if the genius building the integral wonder lacks the Axioms to create the main wonder, or if the genius building the main wonder lacks the Axioms to build the integral wonder. (See the "integral" variable, Page 140.)

For example, an entire collaborative could cooperate on building an airship. One could build the airship itself,

and would need only Skafoi. Another could add a lightning gun, and though the gun-maker would need Katastrofi, the airship-builder would not. Other geniuses might add protective armor plating (Prostasia), a cloud-maker (Epikrato), or a sensor suite (Apokalypsi). However, each builder only needs to know the Axioms relevant to his project, not Skafoi or the Axioms of the other integral components.

A genius building an integral wonder can build simultaneously with the wonder into which their wonder is intended to be integrated.

Combining Mundane Technology:

It is possible to combine mundane objects with wonders. An automaton could be fitted with a machinegun, for example, or a flying machine could be equipped with a regular radar system. The major limit is the genius' Resources and his ability to access and purchase these devices.

Generally, basic mundane technology, the stuff people can acquire without a license or vast sums of money, requires no special training or equipment to attach to a wonder: a wondrous car can come complete with headlights and a radio, for example, with no difficulty.

Integral mundane technology works something like integral wonders, but does not gain any bonuses for their status. In fact, integral mundane technology that requires rolls (spotlights to spot a target, a fixed machinegun to attack enemies, etc.) suffer a -1 penalty to those rolls per rank of the wonder. For example, a machinegun fixed on an airship (Skafoi 2) will suffer a -2 penalty to hit due to the maniacal interference of the wonder's weird science. (This penalty does not apply to regular technology stored in the wonder, only to stuff that's integral to the wonder.) Even a simple mundane object might suffer this penalty: trying to find a fuzzy radio station in a Wondrous auto (Skafoi 1) would incur a -1 penalty. Nowadays, more and more geniuses favor handheld devices—portable GPS systems, handheld flashlights—so this penalty does not become a problem.

A genius cannot build core components of a wonder from mundane technology. She could not, for example, build a teleporter with a mundane battery as a power source (obviating the need for Mania), or a bomb that goes off when a mundane pressure plate is pressed. Regular machinery just doesn't connect up to a wonder in that way.

One significant exception to this rule is cellular, Internet, and other voice/data plans. They work just fine with wonders of Apokalypsi. Most geniuses nowadays exploit cell towers to communicate with Apokalypsi wonders, which is easier than building a central, massive radio tower for all their commlinks, like they used to do.

Larvae:

Dr. Orpheus: What the hell is this thing made out of?

Dr. Venture: Nothing.

Dr. Orpheus: Come on...

Dr. Venture: Alright, fine, I might have used a few unorthodox parts.

Dr. Orpheus: Just tell me one!

Dr. Venture: An...orphan...

Dr. Orpheus: A what?

Dr. Venture: An...orphan.

Dr. Orpheus: Did you say... AN ORPHAN?!

Dr. Venture: Yeah. A little...orphan boy...

Dr. Orpheus: IT'S POWERED BY A FORSAKEN CHILD?!

Dr. Venture: Might be... kind of...I mean, I didn't use the whole thing!

-*The Venture Brothers*

A genius' wonders can benefit from unusual ingredients, but only those purchased at great moral cost. It is not just the physical item, the severed head or the ancient computer robbed from an Aztec grave, but also the genius' own willingness to acquire and exploit the object, which opens up new avenues of thoughts in his mind, allowing him to create new and better devices. These unlawful ingredients are called Larvae. The first Larvae were the corpses of the dead, usually given fresh purpose by nefarious geniuses; it has only been in the past few hundred years that the flexible nature of Larvae has become clear.

When a genius commits a transgression in order to gather materials for the creation of a wonder, she creates a Larvae. Using this Larva in the construction of a wonder thematically related to the Larva reduces the bound Mania requirement by one. If she degenerated on account of the transgression, the Larva reduces the bound Mania requirement by two. Larva can reduce the bound Mania cost of a wonder to zero.

The transgression must be committed with the intent to harvest a Larva. The genius can have other goals—a genius might execute a hated foe, and also plan to tear out her heart to use in a new automaton—but the goal of Larva creation must be stated before the act is carried out and the degeneration dice are rolled.

The genius' player and the Storyteller should work together to determine the extent of the Larva's thematic bounds. Eyes harvested from orphans might serve for viewing wonders, while ritual self-mortification might help in organic Prosthesis devices. The genius' intent in harvesting the Larva generally determines the bounds of its effectiveness.

An Obligation-3 or lower transgression (murder, extreme isolation, dangerous unnecessary surgery, massive and permanent self-transformation, or worse acts) can always be used to create a Larva, regardless of the genius' Obligation.

If the genius is also an unmade, a Larvae insulates against Havoc. (See Havoc, Page 270.) When handled by mere mortals, such a wonder requires a full minute of handling, prodding, and use before a Havoc check is triggered. Havoc checks are then only triggered once per day so long as the wonder is in the mere mortals' possession.

Once a wonder is constructed, it cannot gain the benefits of a Larva.

Only one Larva can be used per wonder. Though the genius must have acquired the Larva (and transgressed in doing so) for the purpose of gathering the ingredient for use in mad science, she need not have had a particular wonder in mind. The Larva must be on-hand when the wonder is built, and once the wonder is built, the Larva is expended. The Larva itself takes up no space in the wonder; it becomes part of the invention. A genius can keep Larvae for as long as they might last, though the Storyteller has final authority over how long a Larva lasts before it decays.

Larvae can be exchanged, and they maintain the "charge" of transgression if passed from owner to owner, or even lost or abandoned and then recovered. (Detecting a Larva is as easy as detecting a rank-1 wonder.) There is rich traffic in Larvae, and a Larva with its origin and purpose intact is of great value to any genius, who can reduce the bound Mania cost by one when using the Larva. (Geniuses other than the Larva's creator cannot benefit from additional bonuses due to degeneration.) Employing a Larva or knowingly using a wonder containing a Larva is an Obligation-7 transgression, at least. Convincing others to create Larvae for the purpose of using them means that the genius shares in the Larva-maker's transgression.

Once a Larva is bound to a wonder, it cannot be removed or reused, even by disassembling the wonder. Larval wonders cannot benefit from the Assembly Line Merit (see Page 90), nor can a genius produce a schematic or procedure for a Larval wonder (see Schematics, Page 147).

Larvae and Mania:

A Larva contains a certain amount of inherent Mania. By destroying a Larva, a genius can gain a single point of Mania. Only free Larvae can be harvested this way; those that are part of a wonder offer no Mania when destroyed.

Rolling the Dice:

At the conclusion of the design time, the genius rolls:

Inspiration + Attribute + Skill + Laboratory Equipment + Beholden Ability - Wonder Rank

Add an additional die if the wonder is of the genius' favored Axiom.

Dramatic Failure: The wonder activates as an orphan. It possess at least one fault, perhaps more, as determined by the Storyteller. The wonder immediately turns against its creator and tries to escape, if possible.

Failure: The genius is unable to complete the wonder. Immediately roll again.

Dramatic Failure: The wonderful activates as an orphan, as if the Genius rolled a Dramatic Failure on the previous roll.

Failure: The Genius needs some vital ingredient that he does not possess to continue development. The Storyteller may allow the sacrifice of one dot of Resources to obtain this ingredient more or less immediately. Otherwise the genius will have to find it through investigation, legwork, and perhaps a visit to the Lemurians, whose possession of rare and weird ingredients is legendary.

Success or Exceptional Success: The genius fails to construct the wonder. He can try again. Since wonder-construction is not an extended action, successes do not transfer over to the next attempt.

Success: The genius completes the wonder. It possesses one fault.

Exceptional Success: The genius completes the wonder. Further, the genius may choose between two faults that the Storyteller offers. (Geniuses who belong to the College of Scholastic Theory may choose from among three faults.)

Missing Ingredients:

If a genius rolls a failure to construct a wonder followed by a failure on the second roll, she cannot complete her wonder due to a lack of necessary components. This lack also shuts down the production of all related wonders until the genius can find new supplies. This might only be a minor problem if the genius is in the field—it may come as no surprise that there aren't any *Archaeopteryx* eggs in the high school science lab—but if the genius is working with full access to supplies, such as her laboratory, it means that critical ingredients are missing.

Generally the lack of an ingredient will shut down all wonders that require a specific Skill. For example, a genius trying to build a mind-reader with Apokalypsi may find herself out of that crate of top-secret Israeli microchips, meaning that she can't build any wonders with "Computer" as part of the Skill suite. No more scanners, no more robots (unless she switches to organic replicants), no more cogitator super-brains, until she finds a suitable replacement. Or the Secret Scrolls of Chairman Mao, the ones outlining the greatest weaknesses of the human psyche, go up in flames when the genius accidentally spills molten metal on them,

which means she can't do anything with Academics: no mind-readers, no intelligent robots, no mind-control rays.

Replacing the ingredient, or finding an equivalent, can be time-consuming and problematic. Again, trying to build "in the field" just means that the genius can't find anything in his immediate area, but failing to build a home-grown wonder indicates a critical shortage. To address the problem, the genius may be able to spend a *dot* in Resources—throwing money around can solve shortages of even the strangest stuff. If that price is too steep or if the Storyteller rules that it won't work, the genius might have to mix it up with Lemuria, arms dealers, the criminal underground, the supernatural world, or worse in order to find the ingredient, and may end up either owing favors or making enemies in his quest to find the needed ingredients.

Stopping and Starting:

A genius need not work consecutive days on a wonder and can leave off construction to attend to other matters without penalty, and then pick up exactly where she left off. While the intervening time may result in theft, property damage, or other misfortunes, but the passage of time itself will not normally disrupt a mad scientist's work.

Faults:

Almost every wonder has at least one fault, a flaw in the design that degrades the wonder's usefulness. This fault is determined by the Storyteller, either by fiat or by a roll of the dice. The Storyteller is encouraged to create new faults, though a fault should neither be too crippling or too trivial. In general, a fault should keep a genius worried, but should not prevent a genius from wanting to use a wonder.

The initial fault is referred to as the wonder's persistent fault. Any other faults are extra faults.

If a genius' Inspiration is higher than the wonder's rank and she rolled an Exceptional Success when creating the wonder, the genius can choose to bind twice the Mania required to bind the wonder, which prevents it from having a persistent fault.

It takes about an hour to field-test a wonder sufficiently to determine its faults. This is automatically included if the development time takes at least a day, but Kitbashed wonders may have faults that their designer is unaware of. (Geniuses who belong to the College of Scholastic Theory are always aware of their wonders' faults.)

Maximum Faults:

A wonder can possess up to five faults. If a wonder acquires a sixth fault, it is destroyed.

Damaging a Wonder:

Wonders possess the same Size as equivalent mundane objects, but they are often more fragile. Use the following chart to determine a wonder's Durability:

Size	Base Durability
1-2	1
3-8	2
9-15	3
16-25	4
26+	5

Wonders with the "Fragile" Variable, or wonders that happen to be made of light, delicate materials, have a Durability of 0.

Add Size to Durability to determine a wonder's total Structure.

If a wonder is damaged below its Durability, it suffers a -1 penalty to use just like other objects. Further, a wonder that takes Structure damage may gain a new fault at the end of the scene in which it takes damage. The chance is 50% if the damage is less than half the wonder's total Structure, and 100% if the damage is equal to or greater than half the wonder's total Structure. These extra faults can be repaired, but only after the Structure damage that caused them is repaired.

A wonder that is reduced to zero Structure is entirely destroyed. If components can be salvaged (and only a disintegrator weapon or one hell of an explosion will remove all components), the genius gains a +1 bonus to build a new wonder like its predecessor, but the original wonder is gone and beyond recovery.

Modifying Wonders:

Geniuses are rarely content to set aside a wonder as perfect and complete once it is finished. Instead they fiddle, poke, prod, upgrade, modify, and repair.

All attempts to modify a wonder use the same dice pool as when building the wonder: Inspiration + Intelligence + the lowest relevant Skill + Laboratory Equipment (if present) – Rank – Resources disparity +1 for favored Axioms.

Wonders cannot be used while they are being modified. It takes one minute to cancel the modification and seal up the wonder. If greater haste is needed, the genius can try to seal up a wonder in one turn, but this requires a roll (using Wits instead of Intelligence).

Dramatic Failure: The wonder gains an extra fault and is not yet fit for use.

Failure: The wonder is sealed and ready for use, but it gains an extra fault.

Success or Exceptional Success: The wonder is sealed and ready for use.

A genius can repair a wonder, modify faults, or modify variables. Repairing a wonder takes one hour, while changing faults or variables takes one day. The genius can reduce the repair time to a minute with a -2 penalty or one turn with a -4 penalty. If changing faults or variables, the genius can reduce the time to one hour with a -2 penalty, one minute with a -4 penalty, or one turn with a -6 penalty.

To perform any of these tasks, roll the same dice pool as when building the wonder. If the genius is trying to reduce the time required, substitute Wits for Intelligence.

Modifying wonders cannot benefit from additional people to reduce the required time.

Repairing a Wonder:

A genius can repair a wonder's lost levels of Structure or fix extra faults.

Dramatic Failure: The wonder gains an extra fault.

Failure: The genius cannot repair the fault or fix structural damage. He may try again, though he cannot attempt to do the work in one minute or less until one hour has passed.

Success: The genius fixes one point of Structure per successes or repairs one extra Fault.

Exceptional Success: The genius repairs all extra faults or all points of Structure.

The genius cannot repair a wonder's persistent fault this way, but see Modifying Faults, below.

Beholden can repair wonders. They have no Inspiration score to add, however. (Beholden can normally be treated as having the genius' Resources for the sake of this roll.)

Modifying Faults:

The genius can change a wonder's persistent fault, free up bound Mania by adding a persistent fault to a faultless wonder, or bind more Mania to a wonder to remove its persistent fault. This last requires an Exceptional Success.

Dramatic Failure: The wonder gains an extra fault.

Failure: The genius is unable to produce the desired change. She may try again, though she cannot attempt to do the work in one hour or less until at least a day has passed.

Success: The genius produces the desired change. If trying to change faults, the Storyteller generates a new fault for the wonder (or two for a Scholastic). (The genius can choose to accept the new fault or retain the old one.) If trying to free up bound Mania, the Mania is freed up (but not instantly regained; the genius must get it back in the regular fashion) and the wonder acquires a persistent fault, generated by the Storyteller.

Exceptional Success: The genius produces the desired change, even if trying to remove the wonder's persistent fault. The genius must merely bind the needed amount of Mania.

Beholden cannot modify faults.

Modifying Variables:

Sometimes, especially after gaining a deeper understanding of an Axiom, a genius wishes to modify a wonder, changing its attributes or enhancing its effectiveness.

What qualifies as a modification, and what requires the genius to create an entirely new wonder, is up to the Storyteller's discretion. Generally, flat-out upgrades are always acceptable modifications. A genius who just

went from Prostasia 2 to Prostasia 3, and wants to increase her armor suit's Armor rating by one, is making a reasonable modification. Adding a variable requires a judgment call from the Storyteller: adding "autofire" to a Katastrofi pistol is a reasonable modification, as is adding "off-road" to a Skafoi van, while adding "biological" to an automaton is probably not. But generally, unless the modification would require a complete re-haul of the wonder from the components up, the modification is possible.

Dramatic Failure: The wonder is not successfully modified and gains an extra fault.

Failure: The wonder is not successfully modified. The genius can try again, but cannot attempt to do the work in one hour or less until a day has passed.

Success or Exceptional Success: The wonder is successfully modified.

Beholden cannot modify variables.

More About Wonders:

Using and Controlling Wonders:

One thing a genius should consider is how she controls her wonders. Unless it's independent like an automaton, grafted, or internalized, a wonder needs some kind of control device that requires at least one hand to operate. This limits the number of wonders a genius can deploy at any one time, since she needs to be able to push all the right buttons. Exceptions can be made for simple wonders—rocket-boots just need to be pointed in the right direction, or clicked together to switch on or off.

It's possible to build voice-activated or thought-activated wonders. Voice-activated wonders require the genius to possess Automata 1 or Apokalypsi 1, but voice triggers are ineffective in combat or other situations where timing is critical: a genius can't blast his foes accurately by yelling "Shoot!" at his ray gun. A thought-activated wonder requires Apokalypsi 2 and can be used in combat or other time-critical situations. Voice-activated wonders require that the wonder can hear the genius (such wonders have hearing equivalent to a regular human's); thought-activated wonders require line-of-sight.

Schematics:

Geniuses generate schematics whenever they produce a wonder. These schematics might be in the form of hand-written notes, sketchbooks, or computer programs. They help a genius modify a wonder.

The schematic for a wonder takes up a number of hand-written pages equal to ten times the wonder's rank, though most schematics today are in the form of digital files.

Possession of a schematic grants a +1 bonus to attempts to modify the wonder or to create duplicate wonders of the same sort as the one listed in the schematics. Note that any genius with the necessary Axioms can follow a schematic in order to duplicate a genius' wonder (with slightly different results, sometimes, based on Inspiration), and anyone can spend a minute reading a schematic to learn everything about the wonder (including its persistent fault), making it is unwise to leave schematics lying around for anyone to pick up.

Schematics contain the original wonder's persistent fault, if any. Copying a schematic results in the same persistent fault appearing, and building a wonder from the schematic results in the same fault.

A genius cannot produce a schematic (or procedure; see below) for a wonder that contains a Larva.

Procedures:

A genius can also choose to create a procedure, which is a systematic, step-by-step schematic designed to allow a genius to duplicate a wonder. Creating a procedure requires access to the wonder, one hour of work and one point of Mania per rank of the wonder. A procedure takes up $10 \times (\text{Size} + \text{rank})$ pages. They can also be stored on computer. A procedure works like a schematic, except it grants a bonus equal to the genius' Expression (minimum of +2).

Further, if the procedure is for a faultless wonder, the procedure allows anyone following the procedure to build a faultless wonder with only a regular Success, not an Exceptional Success. (The faultless wonder still requires double the normal number of bound Mania points.)

The Core Modifier:

A wonder's Core Modifier determines the modifier to the wonder's dice pool. Even wonders that never roll a dice pool, such as certain wonders of Exelixa and most wonders of Proxasia, possess a Core Modifier, which has unique effects described in the section on that wonder. The only exceptions are wonders of Automata, which use Automation Points, not a Core Modifier. Variables, from very common general variables like a wonder's Size to obscure Axiom-specific variables, often alter the Core Modifier for the wonder.

The Core Modifier cannot be worse than -3. It has no upper limit.

A Penalty That Isn't a Penalty Isn't Really a Penalty:

A genius cannot have a negative modifier to a wonder that has no dice pool or other way for the Core Modifier to influence the wonder's effectiveness. For example, a genius might build a set of heads-up goggles that are intended only for seeing in the dark: they cannot detect or scan in any way. Therefore, a wonder of this sort cannot possess a negative modifier to the roll—since there is no roll! The genius will need to increase the Size or Mania cost or do something else to remove the negative modifier.

General Variables:**Basilisk Method:**

The wonder only affects a creature that can see and that look at the wonder when it is used. Blindness or closing one's eyes renders one immune to the wonder's effects.

The target of a basilisk attack can make a Wits + Composure check to look away as a reflexive action immediately before the wonder activates; any successes on this roll subtract from the wonder's roll to influence, affect, or harm the target.

A character who has been partially blinded, such as by that variable of Katastrofi, gains one automatic Success to this Wits + Composure roll equal to her penalty to see.

A character can try to fight and act "head down." This grants a +3 bonus to the Wits + Composure roll, but a -3 penalty to all other actions performed that turn, and a -6 penalty to any actions directed at the basilisk wonder or its controller. Anyone fighting "head down" loses his Defense.

A character cannot make this reflexive roll, or act "head down," if she is not yet aware that the basilisk method of attack applies to the wonder. (Witnessing the wonder in operation, or being targeted by its attack, is enough to understand how it works and to act to protect oneself from it.)

In combat, situational awareness dictates that anyone *may* look in the direction of the basilisk; outside of combat (such as when a genius is sneaking up on a guard), the Storyteller should indicate their facing. People facing away from the basilisk cannot be affected by it, though the wonder's user can try to draw their attention. Outside of combat, the Storyteller's discretion is usually paramount; within a fight, the Storyteller should use the rules outlined above and not listen to the ridiculously convoluted explanations players concoct for why they should receive no penalty when acting "head down."

Unless the genius specifies otherwise when creating the wonder, basilisk attacks are transmittable through glass, mirrors, and real-time video links. Particularly bad transmission media can incur penalties to using the basilisk, much like partial blindness does, at the Storyteller's discretion.

The basilisk method is applied most often to wonders of Katastrofi; occasionally it is used with wonders of Epikrato or Metaptropi. Other uses are technically possible, but exceedingly rare.

This variable grants a +2 bonus. Wonders of Katastrofi (including Epikrato rays, Skafoi rays, etc. using Katastrofi) gain a +4 bonus to hit when using this Variable, but neither Attribute nor Skill is added to the attack check.

Collapsible:

Requires at least Metaptropi 1

The wonder can be shrunk when not in use. How much the wonder shrinks depends on the genius' rank in Metaptropi.

Rank in Metaptropi	Can Shrink By
Metaptropi ●	One step
Metaptropi ●●	Two steps
Metaptropi ●●●	Three steps
Metaptropi ●●●●	Four steps
Metaptropi ●●●●●	Always Size 0

The "steps" are based on the standard Sizes for wonders: 0, 1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-11, 12-29, and 30+.

Expanding the wonder costs one point of Mania and occurs reflexively. Collapsing it has no cost and requires one action.

The wonder must be expanded before it can be used.

Charge-up Time:

The wonder requires time to charge before it functions. Once the wonder charges up, it must be used by the end of the scene or the charge is lost. Once charged up it remains active for the duration of the scene. The genius' full attention is required to charge up a wonder with this variable, and the genius cannot take breaks while charging the wonder or he must start the charging again.

Time	Bonus
3 turns	+1
30 seconds	+2
5 minutes	+3
20 minutes	+4
1 hour	+5
6 hours	+6
1 day	+7

Concealed (requires Metaptropi 2):

The wonder appears as something it is not: a lightning projector looks like a fire extinguisher, while a suit of Prostasia armor resembles a long coat. The wonder will probably still reveal itself when deployed (that lightning projector still vomits annihilating plasma rather than spitting out fire retardant gel), but to a cursory analysis (anything but opening the wonder up or trying to use it) it resembles something other than what it is.

Even a genius is limited by the bounds of common sense here: a flying machine might be made to look like a sports car or a scanner to look like a pocket-watch, but not vice-versa.

This concealment does make it more difficult for a genius to recognize the wonder as an artifact of mad science. (See Detecting Wondrous Things, Page 292.)

A concealed wonder incurs a -1 penalty.

Fragile:

The wonder is extremely delicate. It has no Durability and any amount of damage destroys it. An attack against the wonder's bearer (a person carrying it, a vehicle in which it is located, etc.) that yields five or more successes also destroys the wonder. The destroyed wonder causes one die of Bashing damage per rank to its holder (if anyone) when destroyed. Wonders of Katastrofi cause two dice of damage per rank of the most dangerous damage type they can cause.

Fragile wonders look fragile—glass beakers, delicate clockwork eggs, volatiles suspended in a magnetic field—unless the creating genius has one or more dots in Metaptropi and chooses to make it appear more robust.

This variable grants a +1 bonus.

Grafted:

A grafted wonder is an obvious and non-removable modification to the genius or another person, such as bestial claws or a weaponized mechanical arm. If this modification can be hidden under clothing or otherwise concealed, this grants a +1 bonus. If the modification cannot be hidden, it becomes a +2 bonus. (A wonder that looks entirely normal, such as with the "normal-looking" variable, grants no bonus.)

Wonders can only be grafted onto people, or perhaps regular animals—they are usually inflicted on beholden. (Grafting a wonder to a mere mortal triggers Havoc.) A wonder cannot be "grafted" onto another wonder; instead use the "integral" Variable.

In Pill Form:

A wonder in "pill form" is single-use, but it can be consumed or otherwise used by anyone at any time. The genius can spend the Mania early, placing it in the pill while specifying the intended purpose of the Mania, and after that the first person to use it gains the effect. If the wonder requires a roll, the roll is made when the wonder is consumed, using the genius' abilities at the time of construction.

This variable grants no bonus, but allows others to use a wonder as a kind of "one-shot burst." Anyone can use a wonder in pill form, even mere mortals, and by the time they use it, it's already destroyed, meaning that its use cannot trigger Havoc. In general, wonders in pill form are immune to Havoc unless a mere mortal tries to tamper with or analyze one.

Integral:

An integral wonder is a wonder contained within another wonder and that cannot be separated from it. A flying machine's flame gun, an environment suit's built-in communicator, or the acidic claws of a vat-grown automaton are all integral wonders.

Integral wonders require bound Mania just like any other wonder. An integral wonder receives a +1 bonus. An integral wonder cannot be removed from the main wonder.

A wonder cannot be integral to a wonder that already possesses this variable; one cannot produce "nested dolls" of integral wonders. If two or more wonders are merely attached to one-another and cannot be separated, the genius can select one primary wonder, and the rest are integral to that wonder.

A genius can install an integral wonder in another genius' wonder. (See Combining Integral Wonders, Page 144.)

Internalized:

An internalized wonder exists inside a person's or creature's body or mind. Deployable cat-like claws, eyes replaced with night-vision cameras (but still looking like normal eyes), or mental alterations that allow for telekinesis are all examples of internalized wonders. They offer no bonus, and they must be Size 0 in order to fit inside the human body.

Internalized wonders often require assistance to place in a genius' body. (See Installing Internalized Wonders, Page 293.)

Limited Uses:

Some wonders are designed to be used once, or at most a handful of times. Limited-use wonders grant a

general bonus depending on how many uses they have.

A "use" is defined as a single activation of the device for one turn.

Number of Uses	Modifier
Equal to Inspiration	+1
One use	+2
Short-term	Additional +1

A limited-use wonder can be reloaded or recharged by taking one minute per use and spending a number of points of Mania per use equal to the wonder's activation cost (minimum one point of Mania). A short-term wonder cannot be reloaded or recharged and is destroyed completely when empty.

This variable cannot be combined with "in pill form."

Mania Cost:

The cost for using wonders is listed in the individual Axiom descriptions. This amount can be modified up or down, to a minimum of no Mania. Every additional point of Mania required grants a +1 bonus. Every point of Mania cost removed incurs a -1 penalty.

It's possible to give a wonder with no normal Mania cost (such as a scanning wonder of Apokalypsi) a Mania cost this way. Paying the Mania cost activates the wonder for one scene.

An altered Mania cost affects the initial cost to activate the item and, if necessary, to "refuel" or "recharge" it. This includes the initial cost to activate vehicles, energy shields, and most weapons, a weapon's reloading cost (normally one point of Mania), and a vehicle's refueling cost for continual operation. This variable does not affect situations where the genius pays one or more points of Mania per level of Health, such as ablative armor and healing wonders of Exelixi, or where Mania points pay for points of transformation or enhancement, such as with many wonders of Metaptropi or Exelixi, or other situations where the genius converts Mania to points or perks selected from a list, such as most Epikrato-5 brain alteration. This variable also does not affect the Mania costs of general variable effects (such as "collapsible").

Normal-Looking (requires Metaptropi 1):

The wonder looks like a normal object of its type. Without this Variable, wonders have a distinct "mad science" look to them. Even a simple Katastrofi knife does not look like a regular bayonet: it might possess an unusual metallic hue, an unlikely shape, or have a big battery bolted onto the side. Vehicles look, at best, as normal as Doc Brown's DeLorean in *Back to the Future*, and usually look like nothing that should be driving down a suburban road. These items call out for poking and prodding, which may trigger Havoc.

This variable makes a wonder look like a normal specimen of its genus: a Katastrofi-based ray gun might look pretty much like a modern automatic pistol, while a supersonic rocket-craft that can travel into other realities resembles a normal airliner, perhaps of slightly unusual make, but recognizable as "some kind of jet" rather than "some sort of whacked-out mad science invention." An Apokalypsi scanner looks like a digital thermometer or radar display rather than some crazy analysis unit covered in blinking lights that keeps shouting "Danger! Danger!"

Wonders with no natural analog, such as Metaptropi transmutter, gain a more respectable and mundane look: an Epikrato controller or hologram machine might resemble some kind of metal detector or an unfamiliar wrist-mounted device, and can blend in well enough to be dismissed as some kind of gadget rather than something obviously weird.

There is no penalty for this variable.

Peculiar Requirement:

Some wonders have unusual, unique environmental requirements for their operation. A Moon Hook (Skafoi 2) works much like a jet pack, except it "hooks" onto the Moon, so the genius must be able to see the Moon to use it. The Dog Howl Comm (Apokalypsi 1) is useful for transmitting information, but the message is transmitted by the howls of dogs, which means that there must be a direct line-of-dog between the wonder's user and its target (easy in most metropolitan areas, tricky in the mid-Atlantic). Similar peculiar requirements are about as inconvenient as a fault.

A narrow selection of acceptable targets is never a peculiar requirement.

This variable incurs a +1 bonus.

Resilient:

Wonders that are intended to be used close to mere mortals often employ this variable. Every -1 penalty to the wonder's Core Modifier grants three extra dice to Havoc checks.

Size:

The default Size of a wonder is 2. All wonders except wonders of Automata and vehicles built with Skafoi benefit from being larger than normal and suffer a penalty when smaller than normal, as follows.

Size	Similar Objects	Portability	Modifier
0	Cell phone, earrings, matchbook, needle, razor, vial, wristwatch.	One hand.	-2
1	Aerosol can, alarm clock, binoculars, bottle, flashlight, knife, light pistol or revolver, gloves, goggles, grenade, old walkie-talkie, sandals, screwdriver, wrench.	One hand.	-1
2 to 3	Assault rifle, briefcase, broadsword, fire ax, gauntlets, heavy boots, heavy pistol or revolver, helmet, laptop, mask, shotgun, submachinegun, rifle, tool kit.	One or two hands depending on configuration. (Katastrophic weapons with "rifle" range always require two hands.)	0
4 to 5	Bicycle, CPU tower, flatscreen TV, hiker's backpack, machine gun, sniper rifle, spear, staff, standing mirror, suit for regular-Size human, two-handed sword.	Two hands.	+1
6 to 11	Coffin, compact car, desk, jetski, light cannon, motorcycle, steamer trunk, workbench	Requires both hands from all carriers and heavy exertion, and a number of Strength dots equal to Size to move. Cannot be "wielded" in combat.	+2
12 to 29	Bus, garage, helicopter, heavy cannon, large car or truck, room full of computers, speed boat, train compartment, yacht	Not portable.	+3
30 or larger	Cruise liner, flying fortress, huge room, hangar base, jumbo jet, secret control center	Not portable.	+4

Shapeshifting Wonder:

Requires Metaptropi 4

The wonder can shift between multiple wondrous forms. See Shapeshifting Wonders, Page 237, for more information on this variable. There is no cost for this variable.

Slow Reload:

Some wonders require time to recharge after being used again. Wonders that duplicate old-fashioned muskets or ones that require extensive recalibration with every use employ this variable. A single "use" lasts for up to one turn. The genius must spend her turn reloading the wonder; it does not reload automatically

Reload Time	Modifier
1 turn	+1
Number of turns equal to 10 - Inspiration (minimum 2)	+2
30 seconds	+3
5 minutes	+4
20 minutes	+5
1 hour	+6
6 hours	+7
1 day	+8
Wonder reloads automatically; genius need not attend to reloading.	Reduce bonus by one.

One-user wonders cannot benefit from this variable.

APOKALYPSI: THE AXIOM OF DISCOVERY **Tools for Analysis and Communication**

"Psychics can see the color of time it's blue."
-Ronald Sukenick, *Blown Away*

The Axiom of Apokalypsi is used to build communicators, scanners, and analyzers. Anything that transmits information to or from the genius is the province of this subtle but powerful Axiom. Basic Apokalypsi wonders can replicate everyday technologies (cameras, computers, cell phones), while more advanced wonders can scan and communicate across space, time, and other modes of reality.

Definitions:

Apokalypsi *reveals*. It unveils the hidden, contacts distant things, communicates with living and mechanical intelligences, and analyzes data. Any attempt to detect, analyze, or communicate is the province of Apokalypsi.

Common Notions:

Construction:

Scanners and communicators require Computer. If the wonders are instead built to detect or scan minds, they require Academics. An entirely organic wonder of Apokalypsi requires both Medicine and Academics, as well as at least one dot in Automata to provide rudimentary nervous processing.

Mania:

Scanners and communicators cost no Mania by default.

Dice Pool:

No roll is normally necessary for an Apokalypsi scan. The scanner returns all basic relevant information in range automatically. A person can attempt to hide from a scan if she knows what's happening. The scanning genius must then roll Wits + Computer vs. the subject's Wits + Stealth. Mental scans require a Wits + Academics check vs. Resolve + Metanormal Advantage.

Communicators do not normally require a check to use so long as the target is in range. If not in range, the communicator must patch into a cell phone network or land line that *is* in range. If the genius has cell service or public WiFi through her communicator, this is automatic; otherwise it requires a roll. See Connection, below.

Range:

The range of a wonder of Apokalypsi is based on its Core Modifier.

Core Modifier	Range
-3	Touch
-2	1 foot
-1	10 feet
0	100 feet
+1	1 mile
+2	10 miles
+3	1,000 miles / Low Earth Orbit
+4	10,000 miles / Anywhere on Earth
+5	1 million miles / Out to Lunar Orbit*
+6	Anywhere in the solar system*
+7	Anywhere*

* Apokalypsi wonders of less than rank 4 are limited to speed-of-light.

Range in Space:

An Apokalypsi wonder's range in space increases by two steps due to the lack of intervening obstacles.

Concealment:

Scanning for objects that are hidden by other things is difficult and reduces the effectiveness of the scan. Every 20 feet of smoke, every 10 feet of physical screen (like foliage), every foot of sod or stone, every inch of metal, or every quarter-inch of heavy metal (gold, lead), or fraction thereof, reduces the scan range by one step and removes one success from any rolls.

Alerts:

With Automata-1, the scanner can be programmed to alert its user whenever certain conditions are met, such as radiation levels passing a certain threshold, the appearance of a certain chemical in the air, or particular patterns of movement. Otherwise, the scanner can only be used to scan at the genius' request.

Apokalypsi •: Reveal data

A basic understanding of Apokalypsi allows a genius to communicate with other artifacts of technology.

Passive scanning lets a genius patch into a source of information, such as a cell phone or computer. Active scanning allows the wonder to function as a communicator.

A rank-1 scanner can analyze the information coming out of any mundane or wondrous data storage device within range. A "data storage device" could be anything from a computer to an abacus to a book—anything that holds data. The genius usually begins by searching for a specific data storage device within range. This requires the genius to specify what she is looking for ("the CIA mainframe in Langley"; "a copy of *War and Peace* in the original Russian"; "a Palm Pre"), spend one turn, and make an Intelligence + Computer check.

Dramatic Failure: The genius incorrectly identifies an appropriate target, and may end up targeting something encrypted or even dangerous.

Failure: The genius does not find an appropriate target. She can try again.

Success: The genius identifies the nearest target that matches her description. If there is no target in range, she is aware of that fact.

Exceptional Success: The genius identifies all targets in range that match her description. If there is no target in range, she is aware of that fact.

Suggested Modifiers: Trying to detect a wondrous Apokalypsi device (penalty equal to creating genius' Inspiration), trying to detect written or drawn data (-2), trying to detect analog data, like a vinyl record or a clockwork computer (-1), trying to access unencrypted WiFi (don't bother rolling; just assume a Success), trying to access the genius' own WiFi or cell phone service (again: just assume a Success).

Once the genius has identified a target (either by using the system above or having line-of-sight to the target), he can try to read the data by spending another turn. Make another roll to read the data.

Dramatic Failure: The information is so corrupted the wonder is useless for the rest of the scene. If the target has counter-intrusion security (like most computers), an intrusion attempt is logged.

Failure: The genius cannot read the data. He may try again. If the target has counter-intrusion security, and a system operator is online at the time, the operator makes a reflexive Wits + Computer attempt to log the intrusion attempt. (Assume that a system operator's Wits + Computer is equal to twice the penalty to access the computer.)

Success: The genius can read the data. His wonder displays texts or images from a book or text or image file, plays sound or video from a tape, video record, or audiovisual file, or gains enough access to a computer to examine (but not modify) the computer's software and files. The genius can continue analyzing data until he switches targets.

Exceptional Success: As above, plus the genius can return to analyzing the data for the rest of the scene even if he switches targets and comes back later.

Suggested Modifiers: Accessing a wondrous Apokalypsi device (penalty equal to creating genius' Inspiration), accessing a typical locked PC or secure wireless network like police radio (-1), accessing a computer programmer's locked PC or a school or small business' network (-2), accessing a cell phone (-2), accessing locked WiFi or cell phone coverage (-3), accessing an ATM (-3), accessing a bank or large company's network

(-3), accessing a secure satellite phone (-3), access a government or megacorporation computer (-4), access top security like the CIA network (-5), flaky connection (-3), security is out-of-date or not updated (+1 to +3)

Maniacal Cell Phone Coverage: Before the rise of cell phones and WiFi, mad scientists erected Apokalypsi "nodes" to extend the range of their communicators. These worked much like cell phone towers: they were big, usually hidden relay systems that blanketed an area in coverage. Geniuses usually needed to pay a point of Mania per use to the owners of these nodes, due at the end of the month. But in this modern age, a rank-1 Apokalypsi device can patch into a land line, an area of WiFi connectivity, or some other communication system, and communicate with another device, mundane or wondrous, that is connected to the same system. A wonder connected to the Internet, for example, could communicate with a computer also connected to the Internet no matter how far away it is. Most geniuses today just sign up for cell service and WiFi, and most of the old nodes have been left to decay.

In its active mode, a rank-1 Apokalypsi wonder can communicate with any type of receptive technology in range, including computers, radios, cell phones, and receptive wonders of Apokalypsi. To access a target system, the genius must either be able to read the target's data (as above) or have the equivalent of the target's phone number, IP address, email address, or an Apokalypsi wonder's "receive communications" designation. A wonder of Apokalypsi can only communicate with devices possessing dynamic storage; thus, a genius could use his communicator to turn a computer monitor into a two-way viewscreen, but could not record information on a piece of paper, a VHS tape, or a non-rewritable CD.

Communicators can send data, sound, and video, or even holographic images, so long as the target can receive that sort of information. (Note that piggybacking on a cell phone network transmits only audio data and text, while WiFi allows a much larger range of data to be transmitted.) Upload speeds are arbitrarily fast from this sort of communicator.

The target of Apokalypsi communication is not forced to accept calls or receive data; it requires Epikrato (or someone foolish enough to accept a virus, just like with a regular computer hacking attempt) to seize control of a computer.

It's a Flashlight, Too:

If a genius should, somehow, find himself without a flashlight, he can use any Apokalypsi device with some sort of video screen to project illumination. This normally costs no Mania (a full 24 hours of use costs a single point of Mania). The range is 50' per dot of Inspiration if the light is in a cone, or 25' per dot of Inspiration if the light is in a sphere. Switching between cone and sphere takes one turn.

Remote Control:

The "remote control" variable can be applied to Automata machines or Skafoi vehicles. A genius can control her own remote control wonders with an Apokalypsi-1 communicator, so long as she is within range. The communicator's penalty (if any) applies to the rolls needed to control the wonder, but if the communicator possesses a bonus, it does *not* enhance the genius' ability to control a wonder remotely.

Unless using a very advanced wonder, remote controls are limited to the speed of light. Every 50,000 miles of distance incurs a -1 penalty to Defense and any attack checks or checks that require reacting quickly to changing situations (Firearms, Drive, etc.). Past 500 thousand miles or so, delays of more than one round occur, preventing real-time activity.

Apokalypsi ••: Direct scanning

As the genius' knowledge grows, she can create a scanning device able to analyze chemical, biological, and other phenomena. What a scanner can analyze depends on how it was constructed. However, these scans are very detailed and can reveal a wealth of information about the subject.

This sort of wonder can only scan objects in line-of-sight from it. Any concealment penalties (see above) prevent it from working. It cannot "scry" or analyze objects not within line-of-sight.

These wonders can engage in five types of scans: physical, biological, metanormal, dimensional, and super-science.

Physical scans (wonders capable of this are built with Science) can reveal an object's chemical composition, velocity, temperature, radioactive emissions, Size, shape, Structure, Durability, and power output. For mechanical devices it can determine Physical Attributes and Merits.

Biological scans (wonders capable of this are built with Medicine) can reveal a living thing's species, the presence or absence of any diseases or toxins (specifically or generally), Health (maximum Health levels and the kind and extent of damage suffered), Size, Physical Attributes and Physical Merits, as well as unique biological situations such as pregnancy.

Metanormal scans (wonders capable of this are built with Occult) can reveal whether an object or creature is a vampire, ghoul, werewolf, or some other type of creature, or, if it's an object or place, whether it possesses some kind of resonance with some other group of metanormal creatures, such as being a magical artifact crafted by a mage. The scan can also reveal the rank a creature possesses in a Metanormal Advantage (Gnosis, Primal Urge, etc.) and how many units of power (Vitae, Glamour, etc.) a creature, object, or place possesses. On an Exceptional Success, the scan determines the subgroup to which the creature belongs (a vampire's clan, for example) and the creature's metanormal abilities and their dot ranks, or the exact nature and features of a metanormal object.

Dimensional scans (wonders capable of this are built with Occult) reveal the current Gauntlet rating in an area. If fixed on a locus or other dimensional rift, the scan reveals what sort of energy the rift puts out and how much. If a rift or gate leads somewhere, the scan reveals where it leads to, though it does not offer an image of the "other side."

Super-science scans (wonders capable of this are built with Science) can reveal whether an object or creature is a mane, beholden, genius, wonder, or orphan, as well as the rank of a wonder, the Inspiration of a genius, what Axioms make up a wonder, and how much Mania the target currently possesses. An Exceptional Success on the scan reveals a genius' catalyst and foundation, the catalyst and foundation of a beholden's master, a genius' Axioms and their dot ranks, and the exact abilities (including faults) of a wonder.

With Automata-1, all scans can identify when a wonder has scanned something it has already scanned before, even if incidental status has changed.

To scan a target, it must either already be detected by another Apokalypsi attempt, or in unobstructed sight. Scans cost no Mania. Roll Wits + Computer.

Dramatic Failure: The genius receives extraordinarily inaccurate information from the scan.

Failure: The genius fails to gather any useful information. She can try again next turn.

Success: The genius gathers the information about the subject. The connection lasts for the rest of the scene if

the genius desires, so long as the subject stays within range.

Exceptional Success: The genius may gather highly detailed information about the subject, depending on what the subject is. See the descriptions above.

Suggested Modifiers: Subject is familiar or well-known (+1), subject is very peculiar (-1), genius has not encountered the phenomenon before (-2), subject is blended in with other things of the same general type (-1).

Mechanical Telepathy:

Mental scanning devices are a separate type of wonder that can also be built at this level of Apokalypsi. Telepathic machines are built with Academics. Roll Wits + Academics vs. Resolve + Metanormal Advantage to scan a mind.

Dramatic Failure: The genius fails to gather useful information, and the subject is aware of the telepathy attempt. The genius cannot try again on that target for the rest of the scene.

Failure: The genius fails to gather any useful information and can try again. The subject is not aware of the telepathy attempt.

Success: The genius gathers information about the subject. The scan reveals an intelligent being's aura (meaning its current emotional state and something about what it is) and current surface thoughts (in the form of an inner monologue). A success also reveals whether or not a person is lying.

Exceptional Success: The genius gains more information about the target's nature. The scan reveals the subject's Mental and Social Attributes, Morality (or equivalent), Skills, Specializations, current and maximum Willpower, Virtue, Vice, and Mental Merits. With an Exceptional Success, a genius can engage in deep scans to examine specific memories. See "Deep Scans," below.

Suggested Modifiers: Subject is distracted (+1), subject is aware of the genius' focus on him (-2), genius has recently scanned the subject's mind (+1), subject has a profoundly alien psychology (-2 or worse), subject is relaxed and has her guard down (+2).

Aura Signifiers:

<i>Condition</i>	<i>Color</i>
<i>Afraid</i>	<i>Orange</i>
<i>Aggressive</i>	<i>Purple</i>
<i>Angry</i>	<i>Bright Red</i>
<i>Bitter</i>	<i>Brown</i>
<i>Calm</i>	<i>Light Blue</i>
<i>Compassionate</i>	<i>Pink</i>

<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Lavender</i>
<i>Depressed</i>	<i>Gray</i>
<i>Desirous/Lustful</i>	<i>Deep Red</i>
<i>Distrustful</i>	<i>Light Green</i>
<i>Envious</i>	<i>Dark Green</i>
<i>Excited</i>	<i>Violet</i>
<i>Generous</i>	<i>Rose</i>
<i>Happy</i>	<i>Vermilion</i>
<i>Hateful</i>	<i>Black</i>
<i>Idealistic</i>	<i>Yellow</i>
<i>Innocent</i>	<i>White</i>
<i>Lovestruck</i>	<i>Bright Blue</i>
<i>Obsessed</i>	<i>Bright Green</i>
<i>Sad</i>	<i>Silver</i>
<i>Spiritual</i>	<i>Gold</i>
<i>Suspicious</i>	<i>Dark Blue</i>
<i>Confused</i>	<i>Mottled, shifting colors</i>
<i>Daydreaming</i>	<i>Sharp, flickering colors</i>
<i>Controlled (by Epikrato, etc.)</i>	<i>Weak, muted aura</i>
<i>Psychotic (or unmada)</i>	<i>Hypnotic, swirling colors</i>
<i>Vampire</i>	<i>Aura colors are pale</i>
<i>Shapeshifter</i>	<i>Intensely vibrant aura</i>
<i>Ghost</i>	<i>Spotchy, flickering aura</i>

<i>Genius</i>	<i>Symbols and equations glitter on aura</i>
<i>Mane</i>	<i>Symbols and equations follow aura</i>
<i>Beholden</i>	<i>A single, shifting symbol or brand marks the aura</i>
<i>Orphan</i>	<i>Electricity arcs from the equations</i>
<i>Automaton</i>	<i>Phantom gears surround aura</i>

Deep Scans:

A deep scan of a person's mind requires the genius to roll an Exceptional Success on the initial telepathy roll, or for the subject to permit a deep scan. Deep scans turn up memories, even buried ones. The genius rolls Wits + Academics to find memories vs. the target's Resolve + Metanormal Advantage.

Dramatic Failure: The genius fails to reach the target memory, and the subject is aware of the deep scan attempt and throws off the scan. The genius will need to re-establish the telepathy attempt.

Failure: The genius fails to detect any memories but can try again. The subject is aware of the deep scan attempt.

Success: The genius finds the memory she is searching for. The information is limited, spotty, and incomplete, given the nature of human memory, unless the subject has the Eidetic Memory Merit. The subject is aware of the deep scan attempt.

Exceptional Success: The genius finds the memory she is searching for and any other memories she may desire to review, for the rest of the scene. Images from these memories are entirely clear. (They could, for example, be burned to a computer hard disk with Automata-1, preserving their audio and video.) The subject is not aware of the deep scan attempt.

Suggested Modifiers: Memory more than a year old (-1), memory more than ten years old (-2), memory buried by Epikrato (penalty equals other genius' Inspiration + Epikrato), memory is extremely important to subject (+1 to +3), memory involves high emotions or violence (+1)

Projective Telepathy:

A genius can build a telepathic communicator to communicate psychically with any subject she can see in range. This isn't mind control (that requires Epikrato), but instead a form of projective mechanical telepathy that can allow long-distance communication without the use of words.

Projective telepathy wonders are different sorts of wonders from telepathic scanners.

Mental broadcasting requires setting up a mental connection. This is normally automatic. If contested, it requires a Wits + Academics check vs. Resolve + Metanormal Advantage. This costs no Mania.

Dramatic Failure: The genius sends all sorts of incorrect information, or sends information to the wrong person.

Failure: The genius cannot establish any sort of connection. She can try again next turn.

Success: The genius establishes contact. For the rest of the scene, she can communicate with the target so long as the target is within range. The target can also communicate back. This is not mind-reading; instead the subject communicates in the same way as the genius, deliberately sending words and thoughts. This communication is about as fast as conversation. The characters can also draw mental pictures about as quickly and well as they could in reality.

Exceptional Success: As above, except the genius and subject can also communicate with gestural language that is transmitted directly from mind to mind. Contact remains as long as the subject is within range.

Suggested Modifiers: Subject is not of the same species (-2), subject is actively employing psychic or telepathic abilities (-1), area is extremely crowded (-1), genius and subject have often worked together (+1)

Computer Telepathy:

Computer "telepathy" work more or less identically to psychic devices, but target intelligent machines instead of organic brains. Wonders like this are built with Computer.

Universal Translator:

A genius at this level of mastery can build universal translators. This wonder costs no Mania. Once activated, anyone in range that the genius selects is affected by the universal translator. Affected subjects hear all spoken communication in a language in which they are fluent. New people can be added freely when they appear or return. This also applies to any text. Subtext, irony, and cultural comprehension are not provided by the universal translator.

Night Vision:

Wonders of this level built with Science offer night vision to anyone peering through it, allowing for the equivalent of thermal vision and a starlight scope, letting the genius see perfectly clearly no matter the ambient light levels to anything within line-of-sight.

Binoculars:

Scanners can also function as binoculars when built with Science. Basically, any direct line from the wonder to anywhere within range can serve as a viewpoint for the genius when using the wonder.

Microphone:

A scanner built with Science can also pick up distant sounds. In general, while using the scanner to sweep for sounds, a genius receives a bonus to Wits + Composure equal to his Inspiration + Apokalypsi in order to hear noises. The scanner can also detect sounds outside the human hearing range.

Apokalypsi ●●●: Spatial analysis

Greater knowledge of Apokalypsi allows a genius to form models of the area around a scanning device, to scan distant objects and to "screy." The wonder functions like a sensor or a radar system, detecting any of a wide variety of objects anywhere within range. A genius using this sort of wonder can target any number of objects, depending on what Skills were used to build the wonder.

Scanning needs Skills like an Apokalypsi-2 wonder: Science detects physical objects or energy as well as super-science, Computer detects computer activity, Medicine detects living things, and Occult detects

metanormal creatures or phenomena (including dimensional rifts). Academics detects minds and thoughts. Like with rank-2 Apokalypsi wonders, mental scanners are separate types of wonders from other scanners.

A scanner can be keyed to detect any number of phenomena and their location anywhere within range. A genius can scan for materials ("life forms," "gold"), types of objects ("dogs," "swords"), or phenomena ("anything larger than Size 2 traveling more than three miles per hour"). A genius could also look for specific objects ("my favorite Luger," "the neighbor's dog") so long as they can be distinguished from other, similar objects. The wonder automatically determines an object's location, but if the wonder is built with Science, the scan can also be used to determine something's velocity. Science can also be used as a motion detector.

To find targets, the genius rolls Wits + Computer. Modifiers are generally based on Size.

Size 0: -2
Size 1-2: -1
Size 3-6: No modifier
Size 7-12: +1
Size 13+: +2

There are no modifiers for targeting minds, since minds do not have a Size.

The size of the area to be scanned incurs an additional penalty. Selecting an appropriate, preferably small, area to scan can make the genius' work easier.

Diameter of Sphere Scanned	Penalty
Up to 100 feet	None
Up to 1 mile	-1
Up to 10 miles	-2
1,000 miles	-3
10,000 miles	-4
1 million miles	-5
Solar system	-6
Anywhere	-7

If the wonder is used as a motion detector, objects that don't move at all can't be detected. An object that moves 1-5 yards per round incurs a -2 penalty. Moving up to 20 miles per hour (Speed of about 30) incurs no penalty. Every ten additional miles per hour of movement grants a +1 bonus. If a character is trying to sneak, he rolls a competing Dexterity + Stealth check against the genius' Wits + Science.

Dramatic Failure: The wonder produces all sorts of false positives. These false positives remain for the duration of the scene.

Failure: The wonder does not detect anything. He can try again next turn.

Success: The wonder detects all relevant targets in the area.

Exceptional Success: As above, and the genius can recognize objects that he has scanned before.

Suggested Modifiers: Lots of small fast-moving objects (-1), detection in air (+1), detection in space (+2), object has numerous moving parts (+1)

Apokalypsi-3 wonders can be used by geniuses in place of regular instrumentation for night flying and other tasks that require sophisticated scanning equipment.

"Scrying" Devices:

A genius with a rank-3 wonder of Apokalypsi that is built with Science can view his environment from any angle and location within range, scanning for details with the fidelity of an Apokalypsi-2 device. This allows a genius to "scry" anywhere within the wonder's range, that is, to set up a hypothetical "camera" at any location in range, facing any direction. A genius can view objects in every direction if he desires, or even establish multiple scrying spots, though every additional camera, and every 360-degree view, incurs a -2 penalty to spotting anything as the genius is forced to divide his attention.

It requires a Wits + Computer check to establish or move a scrying point-of-view anywhere within the wonder's range. Note that the location of a point-of-view needs to be given as a location in relation to the scanner; it does not automatically determine where a targeted object or person is.

Dramatic Failure: Interference prevents the wonder from functioning for the rest of the scene.

Failure: The point-of-view does not appear, or is accidentally placed incorrectly (such as in a solid object). The genius can try again next turn.

Success: The genius can view from the desired point-of-view.

Exceptional Success: The genius can view from the desire point-of-view and move the point-of-view without further rolls for the rest of the scene.

Suggested Modifiers: Point-of-view is in line-of-sight of the wonder (+1), point-of-view is intended to track an object moving up to 20 mph relative to the wonder (-1), up to 100 mph (-2), up to 1,000 mph (-3), even faster (-4).

Apokalypsi ●●●●: Possibility and probability

As a genius learns enough of Apokalypsi to become a full professor of the Axiom, she gains the ability to detect and transmit hypotheticals. This allows her to analyze the probability of events happening, to extrapolate the location, activity, and status of people and things from a minimum amount of data, and use probability and coincidence to communicate over vast distances.

While a genius can't yet see the future, he can use his Apokalypsi wonder to make predictions of astonishing accuracy. A genius can predict the location, state, and behavior of either a person or many people at some point in the future. The genius first selects a target. The target can be a person (Vera from accounting; the genius himself), a specific object (that tungsten they're shipping from the old Air Force base; Bill's orphan power-suit), or an organization (the Lemurian zotheca on 5th Street; the country of Uzbekistan).

The genius then spends one minute of work (or turn at -2) and rolls Intelligence + Investigation.

Dramatic Failure: The genius completely misreads the data he receives, resulting in completely inaccurate predictions.

Failure: The genius is unable to get any information on the target. He can try again, but cannot spend a turn on the attempt until at least a minute has passed.

Success: Every success rolled gives the genius one of the following:

- The target's location.
- The target's financial state, in general terms. If aimed at a person, this indicates both Resources dots and how stable that money supply is. If aimed at an institution, it determines overall wealth and stability.
- The target's "general state." This does not indicate mood ("Your arch-enemy is mad because he's stuck in traffic, and he's thinking about pizza for dinner"), but the target's general situation. A person might be "anxious" or "in danger" or "eager," though details are usually vague. An organization might be "on the brink of collapse" or "looking to expand."
- A piece of information about the target that can be answered in "yes or no" terms, such as "Is the target with my ex-wife?" or "Does the target have a ticket to Moscow?"

Exceptional Success: The genius receives as many answers regarding the subject as she desires and that this ability can provide. The Storyteller may wish to volunteer interesting information.

Suggested Modifiers: Famous person (bonus equal to dots in the Fame Merit), organization of more than 100 but less than 1,000 people (+1), organization of up to 10,000 people (+2), organization of up to 100,000 people (+3), organization of up to one million people (+4), organization of more than a million people (+5), political or economic instability (-1), anarchy or economic chaos (-2), predictable person or group (+1), person is trying to lay low (penalty equal to number of dots in the highest of Investigation, Politics, or Survival), target is a mad scientist laboratory (-2 per dot of Laboratory Security), long-lost items (-1 per century object has been lost)

The genius need not just pick out a target's current state. With a -1 penalty to the roll, he can look ahead a number of days or look back a number of months equal to his Inspiration. (Information from the future is a prognostication and not necessarily accurate.)

A Note on Range:

In times of yore, geniuses using Apokalypsi to calculate probabilities were limited to the wonder's range. However, our society today is so interconnected that the wonder must merely be in range of someone or something who has contacted the subject. Or someone or something that contacted someone or something that contacted the subject. Or...and so on. The minimum level of connectivity seems to be something that contacted the subject within a number of days equal to the genius' Inspiration, with every step in the chain effectively adding one day. However, this means that a genius anywhere in civilization can target someone else in civilization and almost certainly be able to track down the target. However, if a target disappears over the horizon, beneath the sea, or into trackless jungle for a few days, he will quickly drop out of the range of all but the most powerful probability scanners.

"Telephone Game" Communication:

The same probability equations that are used to reveal possibilities can be used to send messages, through an unlikely series of disconnected carriers. The "telephone game" is rarely used anymore due to advances in

mundane communication technology, but it has its uses. The genius sends the message out, via telephone, mail, or spoken word, and selects a target within range (though see A Note on Range, above). Then the genius rolls Manipulation + Politics.

Dramatic Failure: The wrong person intercepts the message, perhaps resulting in calamity.

Failure: The message does not arrive, or arrives so ridiculously garbled it is incomprehensible.

Success: The message arrives at the target. It might not necessarily take its original form: a letter mailed by Royal Post in Devonshire may reach its target in the Congo in the form of a native song picked up from previous travelers in the area, for example. The message takes time to reach its target: one minute if within the same building, one hour if within the same city, one day if within the same state or territory, one week if within the same country, otherwise one month.

Exceptional Success: The message arrives, its arrival time reduced by one step.

Suggested Modifiers: The subject is trying to lay low (-1), the subject is actively receptive to messages and information (+2), the subject is visible to the sender (+3)

Probability Calculation:

Alternately, with this type of wonder, the genius can attempt to determine the exact odds of something happening. The genius spends one turn and rolls Intelligence + Science.

Dramatic Failure: The genius wildly misinterprets the odds.

Failure: The genius cannot calculate the odds. He can try again next turn.

Success: The genius calculates the odds, usually to three or four decimal places. If it's a simple roll, the Storyteller should just supply the number of dice that the subject would roll ("five dice"). The genius is not made aware of unusual conditions that might grant bonuses or penalties, just the odds: if the genius wants to climb a tree, and the Storyteller says "five dice" while the genius has a Strength + Athletics score of seven, he does not learn why there is a -2 penalty.

If predicting large-scale events ("What are odds of getting out alive if I pull a gun right now?"), the Storyteller will have to eyeball the odds, but should still strive for accuracy. Unusually high or low odds might tip a genius off that something is amiss—outnumbering the bad guys 3:1 but getting a survival probability of 12.83% might indicate snipers, or something else the genius is not aware of. But the number should always be as accurate as the Storyteller can make it. Note that this ability does not take the expenditure of Willpower into account.

Exceptional Success: As above, and the probability stream may tip a genius off to what hidden factors might be manipulating the odds, at the Storyteller's discretion.

Suggested Modifiers: Few hidden factors (+1), many hidden factors (-1 to -3), genius is walking blind into a situation (-2)

Extra Dimensional Scanning:

Professors of Apokalypsi can build wonders that work like Apokalypsi-2 or Apokalypsi-3 wonders except they can scan into other dimensions of realities. Scanning another dimension requires a Wits + Occult check.

Dramatic Failure: The wonder attracts the attention of extradimensional entities but fails to pierce the veil.

Failure: The genius fails to scan the other dimension. She can try again next turn.

Success: The view into another reality stabilizes after about ten turns (thirty seconds), allowing the genius to peer into that dimension.

Exceptional Success: The view into another reality stabilizes instantly, allowing the genius to peer into that dimension.

Suggested Modifiers: Seeing into a bardo (+2), difficult dimensional currents (-1 to -3), high-radiation area (-1), clean and sterile environment (+1), thin dimensional barriers (+1), very thin dimensional barriers (+2)

Once the genius has seen into a specific dimension, she can switch freely between her current dimension and the other for the rest of the scene, scanning normally. However, each additional dimension requires a separate roll. The genius can also attempt to view multiple dimensions simultaneously, though this incurs a -2 penalty per dimension to detection attempts.

A genius who has mastered Apokalypsi to this extent can also build communicator wonders that communicate across multiple realities. Accessing other realities requires a Wits + Occult check, just like scanning into those realms. Other than its extradimensional abilities, and being a rank-4 wonder, the wonder functions like a regular Apokalypsi communicator.

Apokalypsi ●●●●●: Reveal truth

A genius who has mastered Apokalypsi can probe the truths and contrapositives that underlie material reality to reveal the truth of the world. A genius can use her wonder to ask any question about anything in range. This question can be nearly anything: "How many guards patrol the grounds of the Solotech headquarters?" "Is the door in front of me trapped or alarmed in any way?" "Will I win the mayoral election?" If the genius succeeds, the wonder answers with complete accuracy and usefulness. The wonder cannot answer questions of aesthetics or morality, but it can flawlessly answer questions about the past or the present, or about the future, assuming events play out as they have currently been set in motion. The wonder will not give odds on a future event; since it sees it as already having happened, it offers a straight answer, but events may conspire to change that result. Clever geniuses ask *how* they can insure a result.

To perform this feat of prognostication, the genius rolls Intelligence + Investigation.

Dramatic Failure: The wonder provides incorrect or extremely misleading information.

Failure: The answer is not clear.

Success: The wonder provides an absolutely accurate, correct, and useful (or at least not deliberately ambiguous and misleading) answer. If the answer requires qualifiers, the wonder will provide them and explain the situation as coherently as possible.

Exceptional Success: As above, and the wonder offers additional relevant information on the subject that the genius may find valuable.

Suggested Modifiers: The question is unclear (-1 to -3), the answer is well-known or public knowledge (+2), the question needs a simple "yes or no" answer (+1), the question is about a famous person (bonus equal to Fame Merit)

Detecting Everything:

A scanner of this rank can detect anything in range, regardless of intervening obstacles (ignore cover and concealment modifiers), across dimensional boundaries (actually seeing those realms, rather than seeing the gates like with lower ranks), and at any time in the past or the future. This works much like Apokalypsi-2 or -3 wonders, except without any real limitations.

This wonder can also see directly into the past or the future. Seeing into the past or future requires an extended Wits + Academics check and a number of successes depending on how far away the target time is from the current time.

Time	Successes Needed
1 hour or less	1
1 day	2
1 decade	3
1 century	4
1 millennium	5
1 million years	6
1 billion years	7
Any time	8

Dramatic Failure: The wonder shows the wrong time, or the right time in a way that is misleading and unhelpful. All accumulated successes are lost.

Failure: The genius makes no progress toward seeing through time.

Success: The genius makes progress toward viewing the desired timeframe. Upon accumulating enough successes, the genius sees the desired timeframe, and can return to that timeframe for the rest of the scene.

Exceptional Success: The genius makes great progress toward viewing the desired timeframe.

Suggested Modifiers: Temporal eddies (-1 to -3), famous event (-1 to -5), part of the genius' own past (+2)

It is possible to view multiple times, but like with viewing multiple dimensions, this incurs a -2 penalty to all identification attempts per timeframe.

Once a genius has accessed another dimension or another time, it is possible to communicate with beings in those dimensions and times. See Time Travel, Page 300, for considerations regarding temporal communication.

Variables of Apokalypsi:

Active Scanner:

Normal scanners passively absorb information. This variable lets a scanner send out active pulses that are analyzed when they bounce back. This increases the scanner's range by three steps. However, active scans are noticed automatically by any Science-based scanning device, and can draw unwanted attention.

This variable incurs a -1 penalty, or a -2 penalty if the scanner can be switched between active and passive modes. (In passive mode, the scanner's range is reduced by three steps.)

One-Medium Communicator:

The communicator only transmits one of the following types of data: audio, still pictures, text data, or video. This grants the communicator a +1 bonus.

Goggles:

Goggles fit over the eyes, allowing for a constant flow of data while the wearer views his environment, rather than forcing the user to split his attention between the scanner screen and his immediate surroundings. They offer the advantage of a heads-up display, but cannot see anything outside of the genius' immediate field of vision, meaning they're most useful for wonders of rank-1 or rank-2. They incur no penalty.

Land Line:

The Apokalypsi device needs to be plugged in to a communication line to function. It cannot be moved while active.

This variable grants a +2 bonus. If the wonder is attached to an extension cord (no longer than 10' per dot of Inspiration), the variable grants a +1 bonus.

Narrow Focus:

A scanner that only picks up on one type of thing in its area is said to have a narrow focus. Common foci include: occult phenomena only, physical phenomena only, energetic phenomena only, or biological phenomena only. Any of these grant a +1 bonus.

More specific foci within one of those fields (shape and vector only, species identification only) grants a +2 bonus.

Some wonders function solely to serve as low-light and no-light viewing screens, without any further abilities. This grants a +2 bonus.

A rank-3 Apokalypsi wonder that only serves as a "scrying" device—it cannot be used for tracking distant objects—grants a +1 bonus. A rank-3 wonder that only tracks distant objects but that cannot scry grants a +1 bonus.

A scanner that only looks through time (it cannot see within one day of the present time or move its viewpoint around), or only looks into other dimensions, grants a +1 bonus. A wonder that only performs probability analysis gets a +1 bonus. One that only scans probability in a specific way (only looking after a person's financial state, for example) grants a +2 bonus. One that only prognosticates grants a +1 bonus. A wonder that serves only as a universal translator gets a +2 bonus. One that scans with only one sense (vision

only, sound only, electromagnetic fields only) grants a +2 bonus.

Onboard Storage:

Requires Automata-1

By default, communicators and scanners lack memory: what you see on the screen is what the device is picking up at that very moment. This variable adds onboard storage at no additional cost.

Onboard storage can record an arbitrarily large amount of information, including sound, pictures, movies, and data. Included in this option is a mundane way of getting the data from the scanner or communicator to a regular computer, such as a disk drive that the wonder can burn data to or a USB hub.

A

AUTOMATA: THE AXIOM OF INDEPENDENCE **Artificial Minds and Created Beings**

"The electric things have their life too. Paltry as those lives are." -Philip K. Dick

The Axiom of Automata allows a genius to create sentient, intelligent, and reasoning beings, whether they be godlike computer overminds, shambling alchemical zombies, or mechanical thralls. At its most basic levels, a genius is limited to near-mindless devices, but as she grows in skill and knowledge, the genius can create allies, companions, and, if she's not careful, beings that rival or even surpass her own mental prowess.

Definitions:

Automata *animates*. It provides the vital force that allows inanimate material to act independently, and at higher levels of mastery it grants volition and true independence. Any wonder that acts on its own, without need for input, requires Automata.

Common Notions:

Construction:

Most "mechanical brains" and robots require Computer to build. Once-living or organic beings need Medicine to get them moving and thinking. Rank-4 or higher automata need Academics to implement the psychological underpinnings of consciousness. Automata created from corpses require Occult.

Factories require Crafts for physical objects and Medicine for living things. Factories that can create intelligent creatures require Academics. A factory must possess all the Skills necessary for building any wonders it can create.

Mania:

A wonder of Automata generally needs one point of Mania per day per rank to function; otherwise it shuts down and enters a dormant state until given power. This state isn't harmful, and an automaton can enter this state automatically, setting itself to awaken upon vocalization, physical contact, or after a set period of time has elapsed. (Jostling or hitting the automaton will always awaken it.)

A wonder of Automata can also hold Mania, much like a capacitor. A wonder can hold an amount of Mania equal to the genius' Inspiration + Automata. This can be used to power the wonder for long periods of time or to power integral wonders. However, this energy cannot then be drawn out of an automaton once it's in there except through the Calculus Vampire Merit. An unInspired automaton can spend one point of Mania per turn.

Automation Points:

Automata of rank-2 or higher receive Automation Points. These are spent on Attributes, Skills, Merits, Speed, and Size. An Automation Point can grant:

- One dot in an Attribute
- Three dots in Skills the genius knows
- Two dots in Skills the genius does not know
- Five Specializations that the genius knows
- Four Specializations that the genius does not know
- Three dots in Merits
- +2 Speed
- +2 Size
- +5 held Mania

A beholder's knowledge, or the knowledge of another genius, can be substituted for the genius' for the purposes of determining Skill costs, so long as that person is also working on the project. Providing Skill familiarity in this way prevents the helper from cooperating in any other fashion.

Even a single dot in a Skill is sufficient for a genius to "know" a Skill, even if the automaton is built with a higher level of mastery

There are additional limitations to how Automation Points can be spent, based on the rank in Automata the genius has attained; see below for more details.

Riding Your Automata:

Since most Automata have legs or wheels, it is technically possible to "ride" some of them. But the Automata Axiom makes a poor substitute for Skafoi. First, without Skafoi, the genius has no control mechanism except for his own commands. He could order a thirty-foot-tall mechanical man to walk downtown, and then to flatten a building with its mighty steel fists, but he could not control it directly. Second, Skafoi is required to grant the automaton unusual forms of locomotion, such as flight.

Killer Robots:

Automata with arms (that is, most of them past rank-2) can damage enemies. They do as much damage as regular humans of their Size and with their Attributes by lashing with their fists, pseudopods, or other limbs. With Katastrofi-2, a genius can turn her Automata's normal Bashing damage into Lethal damage. To make weapons superior to fists or simple claws, however, requires the genius to build wonders of Katastrofi and then to give or graft them to her servants.

Natural Resistances:

Automata are artificial beings and are more resilient than creatures made of living flesh. They do not breathe, so cannot be suffocated or drowned, and they are immune to most poisons and venoms made to harm normal people. They are also slightly more resistant to extremes of temperature than living people. Though they require Mania, they do not eat. The "biological" variable makes an automaton like a living creature.

Loyalty:

By default, an automaton is loyal to the genius, in the same way that a trusted hound or (for smarter wonders) a faithful assistant would be loyal. They expect loyalty in return, and even payment (in the form of

Mania and repairs), and they may turn against a genius that treats them harshly, but all other things being equal, they are exceptionally devoted.

Intelligent automata are more likely to be willful and difficult, especially if mistreated. Though a genius can use Epikrato to control Automata as she might control any creature, wonders of Automata are not automatically and permanently loyal to the genius merely because she built them.

Senses:

By default, an automaton has senses roughly equivalent to a regular human. Apokalypsi can enhance an automaton's senses.

Stepping on People:

Large robots, as well as certain Skafoi wonders with legs instead of wheels (see Page 261) can step on people and things, crushing them, even without the benefit of Katastrofi. This attack is resolved much like an automobile crashes (see World of Darkness Core Rule Book, Page 144). A vehicle attacks with Dexterity + Drive + Handling, while an automaton attacks with Strength + Athletics. Damage is equal to the attacker's Size rating, with no bonus from speed. Damage is lethal. When making such an attack against objects, the attacker does not suffer damage if the attack does not cause enough damage to overcome Durability.

All other rules and conditions for crashes apply. This sort of attack can only be made against targets half the attacker's Size or smaller.

•: Triggered devices

The automaton can engage in very simple behavior. This level of automation is typically used in support of another Axiom or ability, and rarely at this level do wonders look like proper "mechanical men" or other minions. The genius could build an automaton that automatically activates Exelixa-based healing if he is injured, or a Katastrofi-based machine gun that opens fire on anything that moves in front of it.

These conditions are fixed, and though they can grow fairly complex, a rank-1 automaton can only possess one command per dot of Inspiration the genius possesses, and that command cannot be changed dynamically.

The Skill level of such a device, if operating on its own, is equal to the genius' Automata + the relevant Skill, modified by the Core Modifier. An automatic machine gun built by a genius with Automata 1 and three dots in Firearms would have a base dice pool of four dice when attacking (plus the bonus from the machine gun itself, of course). If no Skill applies, the genius' Automata, alone, is applied.

A wonder at this rank costs one point of Mania per scene to activate itself.

An automaton of this sort can hold an amount of Mania equal to the genius' Inspiration + Automata in order to trigger other wonders and activate itself. For example, an automaton of this level, if built to trigger a Prostasia force field that costs two points of Mania any time someone who is not the genius enters the genius' laboratory, could be given a Mania supply to activate the shield.

Automata of this level are often used to build bombs and traps. These types of wonders do not need a point of Mania a day for power.

Rank-1 Factories:

A genius who studies Automata can build factories in addition to people. Given the right equipment, a rank-1

automaton can perform a specific assembly task. A factory can ordinarily perform only one task; the "dynamic factory" variable can add more options.

Factories require raw materials equal to the Size of the object to be produced. This means that while the actual "assembler" of the factory can be fairly small, they often require large tanks, vats, or storage rooms of raw materials. A factory cannot build anything larger than itself; to assemble a compact car, for example, a factory would need to be at least Size 10. Other than that limit, Size does not affect a factory's functioning and does not modify the Core Modifier.

The complexity of the objects to be constructed depend on the genius' Craft Skill.

Craft ●: Crude objects made of stone, wood, pottery, or modular plastic. No metalwork.

Craft ●●: Ceramic, metal, and glass objects without moving parts.

Craft ●●●: Mechanical objects with moving parts, like crossbows, watches, or propeller planes.

Craft ●●●●: Machines that use jet engines, gunpowder, electronics, vacuum tubes, or other chemical technology.

Craft ●●●●●: Electronic Computers, transistors, and items that require 21st century manufacturing.

These items must be entirely mundane in performance and appearance; they are not wonders. However, they are still manes, and regular people fiddling with them can trigger Havoc.

Automata factories work fast. Provided they have the necessary raw materials, they can churn out one Size point of material per minute, with every ten full Size points of material costing one point of Mania. They can also be made to work faster, churning out one Size point per turn, though this costs one point of Mania per turn.

"Organic" factories (which use the genius' Medicine Skill) are possible, but they can only produce organic material (processed foods, for example), not living things.

Factories do not require a point of Mania per day for power.

Stasis:

Things created by a factory can enter a state of stasis (see Stasis, Page 274) while within the confines of the factory.

Limbs:

Students of Automata can build artificial limbs. Limbs possess Strength and Dexterity scores both equal to the genius' Inspiration modified by the Core Modifier. All checks using Dexterity with the limbs use the lower of the limbs' or the user's Dexterity.

Unlike other wonders of Automata, limbs possess a Core Modifier that can be affected by things such as the wonder's Size. A standard device of this type is a single limb with all the flexibility of a human hand. The variables "dexterous limbs," "extra limbs," "no fine manipulators," and "strong limbs" are often applied to these wonders. They are also often mounted on "walker"-style vehicles built by students of Skafoi.

Limbs have a Defense equal to their Dexterity or the user's Defense, whichever is lower, and two levels of Health or Structure per dot of Strength. Limbs ignore Bashing damage and only suffer damage from ballistic attacks on an Exceptional Success. (Chopping or burning through them is generally best.) They do not possess Durability, though they can be armored with Prostasia.

Computers:

Students of Automata have recently discovered that they can duplicate the function of mundane computers and calculators. These wonders perform like regular computers in most ways. They require a point of Mania per day to power, and grant an Equipment bonus to all normal computer actions equal to the genius' Inspiration + Automata.

Unlike with many other automata, Automata computers have a Core Modifier and it is affected by Size. Computers cannot employ any variables of Automata.

●●: *Zombie intelligence*

These slightly more advanced automata begin to resemble living things, and they can interact with their environment in a simple way. They are still mindless, but an automaton "zombie" can execute commands dynamically. These commands are simple, such as "stay here and attack anyone but me who enters the room," or "carry all the laptops outside and put them in the back of the truck."

An automaton of this level of intelligence can remember a number of commands (and how they are prioritized) equal to the genius' Inspiration. Normally a zombie only listens to the genius, though one of the genius' commands can be to tell the zombie to accept commands from someone else. (In case of conflict, the zombie still follows the genius' commands.) Rank-2 automata understand one language that the genius speaks per dot of the genius' Inspiration. They do not speak.

These Automata are infuriatingly literal-minded, and they are incapable of cleverness, independent thought, or intuitive solutions to problems. Think of them as about as smart as insect, but with the ability to understand the simpler aspects of the modern human world. So, an automaton told to put laptops in the back of the truck would be able to open the hatch to put the laptops in there...so long as the hatch was unlocked. If it was locked or if the only way to open the hatch was from the driver's seat, the zombie would be out of luck. These automata cannot use or benefit from tools. They cannot drive a car or shoot a gun. They can use simple bladed weapons, which makes their damage Lethal, but they gain no additional dice from using the weapon. They can be made to wear armor, and can even learn to don a suit of armor on their own. A rank-2 automaton *can* use wonders integral to it so long as they do not rely on Mental or Social Skills.

A default automaton has a base Size of 5, a base Speed of 3, Physical Attributes of 1, and no Mental or Social Attributes, or any Skills. They do not suffer penalties for untrained Skill use. The automaton has one Automation Point for every dot of Inspiration possessed by the genius.

Rank-2 Automata cannot possess Skills or Mental or Social Attributes. They are limited to Physical Attributes and Merits.

Note that though Automation Points can only grant "human-like" benefits, other wonders can be grafted onto automata: Skafoi-3 could give a robot jet thrusters, while Prostasia-1 could cover an alchemical zombie with plates of protective shell. See the "integral" variable for more information.

Rank-2 Factories:

A genius with two dots in Automata can build a factory that produces living things. These are simple, mundane living things of zombie-like sophistication; in other words, plants and plant-like living things. Not even insects are possible at this level, let alone higher animals.

The size and sophistication of the genius' creations depend on his Science Skill.

Science ●: Pond scum and algae
Science ●●: Simple ferns and non-flowering plants, lichen
Science ●●●: Flowers, bushes, and mushrooms
Science ●●●●: Trees
Science ●●●●●: Unusual (if non-functional) hybrids and new types of plants

These plants must be entirely mundane and possess no unusual features. Even at Science ●●●●●, the plants produced aren't wondrous, merely unusual and unique. They are, however, manes, and are vulnerable to Havoc in the hands of mere mortals.

An Automata plant-factory can churn out one Size point of plant material per hour, with every ten full Size points of material costing one point of Mania. They can also be made to work faster, churning out one Size point per minute, though this costs one point of Mania per minute, or one Size point per turn, though this costs two points of Mania per turn.

●●●: *Animal-like intelligence*

Automata of this rank possess limited intelligence, distinctly less than that of a human, but approached in other species only by the cleverer apes, dolphins, dogs, and parrots. They can follow complicated instructions, take intelligent action, and are generally loyal to their creator, taking actions to keep them safe. They occasionally make mistakes of judgment or discretion, but their mechanical or freeze-dried hearts are in the right place.

These automata can understand most simple concepts and can communicate with a vocabulary of a few hundred words in a single language. This language may be a natural language the genius knows, or some kind of "machine-speak" that only the genius and people who memorize the vocabulary can understand.

Automata of this level have a base Size of 5, a base Speed of 3 and all Attributes at 1.

The automaton receives three Automation Points for every dot of Inspiration possessed by the genius.

Physical Attributes are capped by the genius' own stat cap (based on Inspiration). Mental and Social Attributes can go up to three dots, with the exception of Intelligence, which cannot be raised above one dot.

The automaton can also learn Physical and Social Skills, but not Mental Skills. They can possess Physical Merits, but not Mental or Social Merits (except for Striking Looks). The automaton suffers penalties for untrained Skill use in Physical or Social Skills, but not Mental Skills. The Skill cap is three dots.

Rank-3 Factories:

As a genius' factory grows more advanced, she gains the ability to produce animals and other mobile living things. She cannot yet produce intelligent creatures. The factory must possess raw materials for its assembly in the form of a meaty organic "slurry." Grinding up stray cats usually does the job. The complexity of the animal created depends on the lower of the genius' Medicine and Science Skills.

Skill ●: Insects, starfish, and other small (Size 0) invertebrates
Skill ●●: Fish, lizards, and amphibians; max Size is 1
Skill ●●●: Typical birds and mammals; max Size is 3
Skill ●●●●: Unusually intelligent creatures, such as ravens, chimps, and dolphins; max Size is 5
Skill ●●●●●: Unique new hybrids or animal forms, or extinct animals; no max Size

The genius does not control these creatures. (Although a genius could build one factory to make the creature

and another downstream to strap an Epikrato slave-crown on the animal's head.) The animals produced are natural, living animals, and do not possess wondrous traits or abilities, though building a mammoth or a saber-toothed cat means the genius has an impressive specimen on her hands. These animals are, however, manes, and suffer all the disabilities and disadvantages of that state.

Provided they have the necessary raw materials, Automata factories can churn out one Size point of material per day, with every ten full Size points of material costing one point of Mania. They can also be made to work faster, churning out one Size point per hour (costs one point of Mania per hour), one Size point per minute (costs two points of Mania per minute), or one Size point per turn (costs three points of Mania per turn).

●●●●: *Human-level intelligence*

Here the genius begins to succeed in the dream of roboticists everywhere: he can create a fully intelligent being able to reason, learn, and engage in complex problem-solving.

Despite the automaton's (probable) status as a "person," it lacks independence and initiative. Rank-4 Automata possess an Obligation score, but neither Virtue nor Vice. Instead they recover one Willpower per day so long as they are either working toward their assigned purpose or interacting with their creator. Achieving a great goal, either regarding their assigned purpose or accomplishing something important for their creator, can earn them up to one more Willpower point in a day.

This lack of true independence may change, giving the automaton a Virtue, a Vice, and the ability to recover Willpower in the normal fashion, but it often takes years—at least as long as a human would take to grow from infancy to maturity.

An automaton of this level can be built possessing any Obligation up to the genius' own.

Automata of this level have a base Size of 5, a base Speed of 3 and all Attributes at 1. The automaton receives four Automation Points for every dot of Inspiration the genius possesses. Attributes and Skills can go up to the genius' own maximum (based on the genius' Inspiration).

Rank-4 Factories:

An implementor of Automata can create the equivalent of "cloning vats" or other methods of assembling humans or other intelligent beings. The sophistication of the humans and human variants constructed by these factories depends on the lower of the genius' Academics, Medicine, and Science Skills.

Skill ●: Human infants only

Skill ●●: "Blank" humans with no Skills and all Attributes at ●●

Skill ●●●: Basic humans with Attributes 5/4/3 and up to one Merit dot. Stats are determined by the Storyteller.

Skill ●●●●: Basic human with Attributes 5/4/3 and up to three Merit dots. Stats are determined by the genius.

Skill ●●●●●: Same as above, but "designer" humans with unusual appearance (if desired) and up to seven Merit dots. Stats are determined by the genius.

A newly-hatched adult human lacks Skills, but develops them very quickly, usually gaining one dot per week in a controlled learning environment or one per month in the wild, until she reaches ten dots of Skills, with no Skill higher than two dots. Training beyond that is like normal human Skill acquisition.

Creating humans in this way is an Obligation-6 transgression.

These humans are manes, with all the attendant disadvantages, but they are not themselves wonders or

automata and are not "owned" by the genius except insofar as the genius asserts a right of ownership (which may qualify as kidnapping or slavery).

Creating humans usually takes a number of weeks. A factory provided with the raw building blocks of a human body and mind (this requires human genetic material) can churn out one Size point of material per week, with every finished human costing one point of Mania. They can also be made to work faster: one human per day for five points of Mania per human, one human per hour for ten points of Mania per human, one human per minute for twenty points of Mania per human, and one human per turn for 100 points of Mania per human.

●●●●: *Transcendent intelligence*

The deepest secrets of Automata allows a genius to create beings that rival herself. These artificial thinkers are often more intelligent than regular humans, and they can even become Inspired.

Automata of this level have a base Size 5, a base Speed of 3 and all Attributes at 1. The automata receive five Automation Points for every dot of Inspiration the genius possesses. Attributes and Skills can go up to the genius' own maximum (based on Inspiration).

An automaton of this level possesses any Obligation up to the genius' own Obligation, a Virtue, and a Vice. These automata recover Willpower like normal people.

Though it's possible to upgrade an Automata-5 wonder, these Automata also learn on their own. The Storyteller should treat a transcendent intelligence as a character and reward it with experience points when appropriate.

A wonder that accumulates 20 experience points can spend those points to become a genius. It gains a dot of Inspiration, a catalyst, and all other relevant Traits of a mad scientist, and can begin purchasing Axioms. Inspired automata possess the same amount of Mania as a regular genius of their Inspiration, and they can transfer Mania like any other genius.

Rank-5 Factories:

A rank-5 factory can build wonders. These factories can create any wonder that the genius herself could create. A wonder factory requires two things: first, a procedure for the wonder to be built, "fed" to the factory (and so destroyed), and two, a supply of raw materials of the appropriate type.

A genius' factory requires no roll to produce any wonder the genius could create. Every wonder stamped out by the factory is an exact duplicate of the procedure template.

Wonder factories produce wonders very quickly. A wonder factory generates one Size point worth of wonders per hour at a cost of one Mania point per rank of the finished wonder, one Size point per minute at a cost of two Mania points per rank of the finished wonder, or one Size point per turn at a cost of three Mania points per rank of the finished wonder.

Once the wonder is complete, it automatically binds Mania to the genius who created the factory. If the genius is not there to claim the wonder, lacks the Mania to bind to the wonder, or does not claim the wonder, the wonder turns into an orphan. If someone with enough free slots in the Adopted Orphan Merit is present at the wonder's creation, the new orphan can be adopted automatically (no roll required).

Variables of Automata:

Automatic Repair:

Requires Exelixa 1

Despite being a machine, the automaton has the ability to repair itself. The wonder repairs itself at the same speed as a regular person.

This variable costs two Automation Points or incurs a -2 penalty to a Limb's Core Modifier. It cannot be combined with "biological."

Biological:

Automata are assumed to be "artificial" beings, by default, animated by something other than the biological processes that maintain living things. A biological automaton, by contrast, is subject to the normal hazards that can injure or kill a living thing, such as suffocation, starvation, and disease.

In return for this frailty, the automaton gains the ability to heal at the normal human rate.

Brain Backup:

The wonder has a backup tape of its brain, allowing it to be restored after apparent death. This only works if the wonder is free roaming (see that variable) or if the genius then builds a new, psychologically identical wonder and then inserts the tape. Once the tape is activated, the automaton wakes up with memories up to the last time it made a backup.

A wonder takes only one turn to save itself onto the backup tape. Every backup tape costs the automaton one Automation Point.

Cannot Move:

The wonder has neither legs nor wheels and cannot move on its own.

This variable is worth two Automation Points. It cannot be combined with the "wheels" variable.

Contact Trigger:

A variable that applies only to rank-1 wonders of Automata, this causes the wonder to go off when touched. It is most often used for tripwire bombs and similar traps.

This variable grants a +2 bonus.

Control Surface:

Requires Skafoi 1

The automaton, provided it can move around, can be controlled by a pilot like a regular vehicle.

This variable costs one Automation Point.

Craniac:

A "craniac" is a regular human body with its original personality removed and replaced by a new brain or a

computer. Its Size is equal to the human's original Size. To create a craniac, the genius must remove the existing mind (powerful geniuses use Epikrato 5; the rest use a bent wire and a vigorous whisking motion), and then insert the Automatic brain into the new human automaton. Killing someone to put a computer in their head is, of course, murder.

Nothing remains of the original personality. However, intelligent automata often learn the Subterfuge ability to ease into their new roles. Further, if a genius can get and record a brain scan of the subject (usually with Apokalypsi), she can inject the automaton with personality remnants sufficient to foil almost any analysis.

Without Exelixa 1, the body will take about a month to rot (depending on weather and care) until it is no longer believable as a living thing. Built with Exelixa, the craniac is self-sustaining and will eat and otherwise function normally.

All craniacs have the variables "biological" and "looks human" at no cost. Their Physical Attributes and Merits need not be identical to the original body's, though significant changes can raise questions. Their Size and general appearance remain the same.

Building from a craniac grants one Automation Point.

Decentralized Anatomy:

An automaton with this variable has no centralized organs or vulnerable areas. These wonders suffer only Bashing damage from bullets and similar kinetic projectiles designed to cause massive internal disruption. This variable is extremely common among combat automata.

This variable costs one Automation Point or incurs a -1 penalty to the Core Modifier of a "limb" wonder.

Dexterous Limbs:

A "limb" wonder can trade Dexterity for Strength on a one-for-one basis. Minimum Strength is 1, while maximum Dexterity is equal to the genius' Stat maximum, based on Inspiration.

Durable:

Automata are normally treated like characters, and as such they can benefit from Armor. This Variable grants the automaton Durability as a Skafoi vehicle of the same Size (see Vehicles, Durability, and Prostasia, Page 243) and additional Durability from integral Prostasia armor in the same manner. Its cost depends on the automaton's Size: it is easier to build larger Automata to be durable.

Automaton Size	Cost
0-2	10
3-8	8
9-15	6
16-25	4
26+	2

Automata with the "biological" variable cannot benefit from this variable.

Dynamic Factory:

A typical factory produces only one thing: one mundane object, one type of plant or animal, one type of person (always precisely the same), one type of wonder. Dynamic factories can be reconfigured on the fly to produce different sorts of things. Moderate dynamism (a collection of related tools like "swords," any type of tree or any type of dog, any type of person of one ethnicity, any type of wonder from one Axiom) increases the Mania cost of the factory by one point. Considerable dynamism (any type of regular object, any type of animal, any type of person, any type of wonder) increases the cost by two points. Full dynamism (the factory can create anything that any factory build by that genius could conceivably create) increases the cost by three points.

Rank-5 dynamic factories still require procedures to produce wonders.

Extra Manipulators:

Normal automata have two manipulators. Additional limbs allow the wonder to hold additional objects and perform reflexive actions with them, though it cannot normally use its additional limbs for additional instant actions. Every extra manipulator also grants two additional dice for grappling checks.

Every additional limb costs one Automation Point or incurs a -1 penalty to a "limb" wonder's Core Modifier.

Free Roaming:

Requires Apokalypsi 1

This variable requires that the automaton have no physical body of any kind: "cannot move," "no manipulators," "no senses," and a Size of 0. A wonder like this is not tied to a physical computer, database, or giant throbbing tube of neural tissue. It can *inhabit* any of these things, however: it is basically free-roaming in its environment, whether that environment is a single computer, a local network, or the entire Internet.

The automaton is basically a program that can fit into most computers. Its ability to move is limited: it can access another computer if allowed in or if it can hack in, but is otherwise as limited as any virus in its access. However, unlike a virus, the wonder does not duplicate itself: there is only one version of the automaton, which can be located in only one place at a time. This can leave the automaton vulnerable to tampering: if its computer home is unplugged, it is deactivated; if its home is destroyed, it is killed.

This variable costs one Automation Point if the wonder can only inhabit a mainframe or computer server, two if it can fit in a personal computer or laptop (or the head of a human-like chassis), or three if it can fit in a small not-quite-computer like a digital watch. If the wonder can inhabit a normal human brain, this costs four Automation Points. (*Getting into* a human body is tricky, usually requiring levels of Epikrato.) This cost already takes into account "cannot move," "no manipulators," "no senses," and a Size of 0.

A free-roaming automaton can only have Size 0 integral wonders that do not affect the physical world.

Increased Manipulator Range:

Manipulators can normally reach about as far as a person of the Size of the wonder could reach—five feet for creatures of Size 5, ten feet for Size 10, fifteen for Size 15, twenty for Size 20, and so on. If Integral to an automaton or Skafoi vehicle, this range is equal to the wonder's Size.

Every extra ten feet in distance costs one Automation Point or incurs a -1 penalty to a limb's Core Modifier.

Limited Battery Life:

Automata, even biological ones, do not normally need rest. Those that do need down-time receive additional Automation Points for their troubles, as follows:

Rest 8 hours/day (active duration up to 16 hours)	+1 Automation Points
Rest 16 hours/day (active duration up to 8 hours)	+2 Automation Points
Rest 20 hours/day (active duration up to 4 hours)	+3 Automation Points

Looks Human:

This variable makes the wonder look human (or animal) enough to fool regular people.

This costs one Automation Point, or two Automation Points if the wonder is not biological.

Low-Light Vision:

Requires Apokalypsi-1

The automaton can see as well as a cat at night.

This costs one Automation Point.

Mute:

The wonder cannot speak. (This also covers such easy workarounds as comm-screens attached to the automaton, integral telepathic or commlink systems, etc.) This Variable is available for automata of rank 4 or higher. (Many rank-3 automata are also mute, but they say little of consequence anyway and so do not benefit from this variable.)

This variable grants one Automation Point.

No Fine Manipulators:

The automaton has simple tentacles or "paws" rather than hands. It lack fingers or other means of holding things delicately. Most animal-shaped automata have no fine manipulators.

This variable grants two Automation Points or a +1 bonus to a limb's Core Modifier.

Normal Power Source:

The wonder does not need one point of Mania per day to sustain itself. Instead it can just plug into a regular power source for one hour per day and recharge. The wonder cannot gain additional Mania by plugging in to a regular power source. The wonder must be plugged in; regular batteries will not work.

This costs one Automation Point.

No Senses:

The wonder has no senses at all. It may have integral Apokalypsi wonders, but it does not detect the world naturally.

This variable is worth two Automation Points.

Onboard Storage:

An automaton's sensory experiences are stored on a separate storage medium. This medium can be extracted and duplicated like any other type of data. It can be viewed on most compatible viewing devices. (Apokalypsi viewers usually have no trouble viewing it, but the data might need to be burned to CD before a regular computer will view it.) This device contains a full record of what the automaton has experienced. This basically duplicates the Eidetic Memory Merit so long as the storage medium is within the automaton.

This variable costs one Automation Point, or two Automation Points for biological wonders.

Only One Manipulator:

A wonder with this drawback has only a single "hand." This variable may be appropriate for a mounted "Waldo" arm or for an animal-like wonder that can only manipulate things with its mouth (which is also probably not a fine manipulator).

This grants one Automation Point.

Low Intelligence:

Many geniuses want the raw power and flexibility of more advanced degrees of Automata without creating fully intelligent creatures, with all the ethical and logistical ramifications of such an act. This Variable creates an automaton with an intellect below what it normally should be. Rank-3 automaton has zombie-level intelligence, while rank-4 or 5 automata have animal or zombie-level intelligence. A one-step downgrade (from human to animal or from animal to zombie) grants two Automation Points. A two-step downgrade (from human to zombie) grants four Automation Points.

Night Eyes:

Requires Apokalypsi 1

The wonder can see in moderate darkness as well as in daylight. The wonder cannot see in total darkness.

This variable costs one Automation Point.

No Manipulators:

The wonder has no manipulators at all and cannot pick things up.

This variable grants four Automation Points.

Remote Control:

Requires Apokalypsi 1

Any automaton can be given a remote control option. This allows the genius or specified personnel to control the automaton directly.

Remote control requires the operator possesses an Apokalypsi-1 communicator and is in range of the target.

When under remote control, the automaton's Physical Attributes, Physical Merits, and general Physical Traits, such as Size and whether or not it has wheels or integral weapons, remain the same, while its Mental and Social Attributes, Mental and Social Merits, and Skills are replaced by the operator's.

This variable costs one Automation Point. If attached to an Automata-1 triggered device, it incurs a -1 penalty to effectiveness at all times, but when remote-controlled, allows the operator to roll her own Attribute + Skill instead of the wonder's Automata + Skill.

Size:

A wonder of Automata typically has a Size of 5—or 4 at the genius' discretion. Reducing that Size to 2-3 grants one additional Automation Point. Reducing the Size to 1 grants two additional Automation Points.

If the automaton lacks arms and legs (the "cannot move" and "no manipulators" variables), small Size is instead an advantage, while bulk becomes a drawback. Use the chart below.

Size	Automation Points
0	-2
1	-1
2-3	0
4-5	+1
6-11	+2
13-29	+3
30+	+4

Smartification Node:

This variable is most commonly applied to uplifts (see below). A collar or hat, defaulting to one-fifth the Size of the animal and attached to the animal, provides it with its increased intelligence. If the node is removed or damaged below half its Structure, the animal reverts to its normal behavior. If the node is destroyed, the automaton personality is destroyed along with it.

This variable grants two Automation Points.

Strong Limbs:

A "limb" wonder can trade Strength for Dexterity on a one-for-one basis. Minimum Dexterity is 1, while maximum Strength is equal to the genius' Stat maximum, based on Inspiration.

Uplifts:

Rather than just building an artificial intelligence from scratch, it's often easier just to load smarts into an existing creature. Dogs, monkeys, and seals are most often subject to this smartification process by geniuses with Automata 3+. Humans and other fully-intelligent beings can't be uplifted in this way; doing so destroys the existing personality. (This, for the curious, is murder.) An uplifted animal has the "biological" variable and usually others, such as "no fine manipulators," to reflect its animal-like form. The animal's basic personality and instincts are maintained, but its intelligence is increased and augmented.

The genius must pay normally, using Automation Points, for the animal's existing traits, before adding additional abilities.

There is no cost for this variable.

Wheels:

By default, Automata of rank-2 or higher have legs. Wheels double the automaton's Base Speed, but wheels cannot travel over difficult or uneven terrain or climb stairs.

EPIKRATO: THE AXIOM OF CONTROL **Procedures to Dominate and Manipulate**

"Can we get control of an individual to the point where he will do our bidding against his will and even against fundamental laws of nature, such as self preservation?" -Memo, Project ARTICHOKE, 1952

Epikrato has a bad reputation among the Inspired. Not because mind control is considered poor form—though it is, at least insofar as it violates genius' Obligation and turns him into a jerk at parties. Epikrato is the most unnatural of the Axioms, able to perform "psychic" acts and engage in such overt tricks as mental domination, telekinesis, and direct control of the natural world. There is a brutal, unnatural aura to Epikrato that colors many genius' opinions of it.

Many practitioners of Epikrato, especially those that focus on mind control, exploit the "grafted" and "internalized" variables to their wonders: rather than building physical devices of control, they internalize the techniques, gaining apparently psychic abilities over the world.

Definitions:

Epikrato *controls*. As a genius' knowledge of Epikrato increases, her understanding passes out of the realm of pure physical domination and becomes ever more abstract, but the element of control remains. Any wonder designed to dominate, suborn, or manipulate some aspect of reality, that is not covered by some other Axiom, uses Epikrato.

Common Notions:

Construction:

Mind-controlling wonders require Academics for a firm understanding of psychology. Wonders that control the physical world require Science. Wonders built to exploit reflex triggers or engage in meat puppetry require Medicine.

Mania:

Every successful use of Epikrato, per target, requires one point of Mania per rank of the wonder.

Dice Pool:

Uncontested actions against objects not possessed by another person do not normally require a check; an Epikrato door-unlocker just unlocks the door without difficulty. Controlling other people, or attempting to seize control of objects in another person's control, require a competing check.

The dice pool depends on what sort of effect is being employed.

Object manipulation: Intelligence + Science

Object manipulation (computer): Intelligence + Computer

Control a wonder: Intelligence + Science vs. Wonder's Rank

Control a wonder held by another: Intelligence + Science vs. Wonder's Rank + Inspiration + Intelligence + Science

Telekinesis (when someone else holds the object): Intelligence + Science vs. Strength + Dexterity

Telekinesis (when trying to seize control of a piloted vehicle): Intelligence + Science vs. Strength + Drive

Meat puppetry: Intelligence + Medicine - Size vs. Stamina + Metanormal Advantage

Reflex triggers: Intelligence + Medicine - Size vs. Stamina + Metanormal Advantage
Emotional manipulation: Manipulation + Academics vs. Composure + Metanormal Advantage
Fear attack (a type of emotional manipulation): Manipulation + Intimidation vs. Composure + Metanormal Advantage
Mind control: Manipulation + Academics vs. Resolve + Metanormal Advantage
Animal control: Manipulation + Animal Ken vs. Composure + Metanormal Advantage

Range:

Epikrato effects have a basic range equal to ten feet per dot of the genius' Inspiration. This can be changed with a variable. Ordinarily, Epikrato effects hit automatically and then require a roll to see if the effect takes hold. This too can be changed with the "Epikrato ray" variable.

Consciousness and Control:

A genius' Epikrato-based control of people and objects ends immediately if the genius is rendered unconscious, unless she rolls an Exceptional Success. An Exceptional Success allows the genius to maintain control while she is unconscious. (She obviously cannot give *new* orders.) People and objects are freed immediately if the genius dies.

Preparing for political domination (Epikrato 4) is unaffected by these rules, since the genius does not establish control until finishing his work.

Epikrato •: Control objects

As a genius learns the basic techniques of Epikrato, she gains the ability to make simple changes in objects to the limit of their natural ability. The "natural ability" part is important: a genius could use Epikrato to make a car drive, but not to make it fly; she can open a door, but not throw it off its hinges.

This level of ability is useful for throwing switches, locking and unlocking doors, and unscrewing screws.

Seizing control of an object is normally automatic. This is sufficient to unlock a door (no Larceny check needed), flip a switch on or off, tune a radio, control a laptop, power and object on or off, or similar operations. Once targeted, an object remains subject to influence for the rest of the scene (no additional Mania need be spent.)

Attempting to control a vehicle or machine requires the genius to possess the requisite Skills: a genius could seize control of a car, but dangerous maneuvers still require a Dexterity + Drive + Handling check. A genius could access a guard's computer from inside her prison cell, but cannot access its hidden records without an Intelligence + Computer check, and so on.

Epikrato-1 and Apokalypsi-1:

A genius can use an Epikrato-1 controller to control anything she has read-access to with an Apokalypsi-1 communicator, even if the target is outside of the Epikrato wonder's range. This control can be used to write data (even on to non-rewritable media) and to seize control of computers. If attempting to seize control, every check allows the genius to perform one action, and the roll suffers the same penalty as the Apokalypsi check. (See Apokalypsi-1, Page 158.)

Epikrato ●●: Control forces

At this level of power, the genius can engage in direct and overt control over the physical world, bending space and gravity to her will. In other words, she can perform telekinetic effects. The amount a genius can move and the speed she can manage depends on the object's Size and her Inspiration + Epikrato, modified by the wonder's Core Modifier.

Inspiration + Epikrato	Size 0	Size 1	Size 2-3	Size 4-6	Size 7-12	Size 13-29	Size 30-100	Size 100+
3	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
4	2	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
5	4	2	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
6	8	4	2	1	NA	NA	NA	NA
7	16	8	4	2	1	NA	NA	NA
8	20 mph	16	8	4	2	1	NA	NA
9	40 mph	20 mph	16	8	4	2	1	NA
10	80 mph	40 mph	20 mph	16	8	4	2	1
11	160 mph	80 mph	40 mph	20 mph	16	8	4	2
12	320 mph	160 mph	80 mph	40 mph	20 mph	16	8	4
13	640 mph	320 mph	160 mph	80 mph	40 mph	320 mph	16	8
14	1280 mph	640 mph	320 mph	160 mph	80 mph	40 mph	20 mph	16
15	2560 mph	1280 mph	640 mph	320 mph	160 mph	80 mph	40 mph	20 mph
16	5120 mph	2560 mph	1280 mph	640 mph	320 mph	160 mph	80 mph	40 mph

Speeds not listed with mph indicate yards per turn.

To move an object at 40 miles per hour or faster, or to move any object larger than Size 7 faster than one yard per turn, requires Skafoi 1. To move objects 320 miles per hour requires Skafoi 2. To move objects 1280 miles per hour or faster requires Skafoi 3.

Attacking with Telekinesis:

If a genius possesses any ranks in Katastrofi, she can attack people with her telekinesis. A telekinetic attack uses Intelligence + Athletics or Intelligence + Firearms to hit. The target's Defense applies to these attacks. The weapon receives a bonus to hit equal to the genius' Epikrato or Katastrofi, whichever is lower. Sharp objects, objects more than twice the target's Size, or objects traveling 160 mph or more cause Lethal damage; other objects cause Bashing damage.

A genius can also damage someone by flinging him into an obstacle. This works just like flinging an object into the target. A target flung directly subtracts Strength from the roll, not Defense. If the genius tries to fling a vehicle that the subject is controlling, this becomes a competing roll vs. Dexterity + Drive.

Meat Puppetry:

Telekinetic control also allows the genius to seize control of a target's body. To seize control of a living thing, the genius rolls Intelligence + Medicine - the target's Size vs. Stamina + Metanormal Advantage.

Dramatic Failure: The subject cannot be affected by the genius' Epikrato attempts for the rest of the scene.

Failure: The genius fails to seize control.

Success: The genius takes control of the subject's body and controls her in a puppet-like fashion. The subject cannot act on her own, and on the genius' turn, the genius can control the subject. These actions use the subject's Attributes and Skills, not the genius'. The effect ends if the genius spends his turn doing something besides controlling the subject (and perhaps moving slowly, at half speed).

Exceptional Success: As above, except the subject does not regain control if the genius neglects him for a turn. Instead he remains inactive and susceptible to continued control for the duration of the scene. If the genius possesses Automata 1, the subject can be made to perform simple independent tasks that do not require a Skill roll. The subject is treated as an Automata 2 "zombie" for the purpose of determining intelligence, and can manage a number of commands (and their priority) equal to the genius' Inspiration + Epikrato.

Suggested Modifiers: The subject is moving at over 20 mph (-1), over 100 mph (-2), over 1,000 mph (-3), the subject is a tame animal (+2), the subject is engaged in combat (-3)

A subject can spend a point of Willpower on his turn to resist external manipulation for one turn. He cannot act on his own, however; while spending Willpower he remains frozen, fighting the effects of control. Subjects controlled in this way lose their Defense.

Knockout Attacks and Reflex Triggers:

Instead of controlling the subject, the genius can yank hard on a particular reflex or nerve cluster to produce one of a handful of predictable results: unconsciousness (or catatonia), flight, or rage. This works just like a regular Epikrato attack as described above: Intelligence + Medicine - the target's Size vs. Stamina + Metanormal Advantage.

Dramatic Failure: The subject cannot be affected by the genius' Epikrato attempts for the rest of the scene.

Failure: The genius fails to seize control.

Success: The genius affects the target with a reflex trigger, causing the subject to act out in a particular way as described below.

Exceptional Success: As above, and the subject will not recover from the effect until the end of the scene.

Suggested Modifiers: The subject is a tame animal (+2), the subject is hardened against stress or violence (-1), the subject is badly hurt (suffering wound penalties) (+1), the subject is part of a mob or crowd (+2)

A subject that's knocked out is allowed a reflexive Stamina + Composure check to recover at the end of every one of her turns, with a penalty equal to the number of Successes the genius received.

A subject hit with a "flight reflex" or fear attack runs away from the genius at maximum speed, ignoring hazards but not acting concerned with cover or other forms of protection, including Defense. The subject is allowed a Stamina + Composure check to recover at the end of every one of her turns, with a penalty equal to the number of successes the genius received.

A subject that's hit with a "rage" blast attacks the nearest target or the nearest enemy target, ignoring Defense and making as powerful an attack as possible (full attacks, full auto gunfire, etc.) with the weapon in hand. (The subject will not draw weapons, and if disarmed will attack with fists and teeth.) The subject is allowed a

Stamina + Composure check to recover at the end of every one of her turns, with a penalty equal to the number of successes the genius received.

A subject can spend Willpower to enhance his chances to resist control, gaining three extra dice like normal.

Epikrato ●●●: Mental control

A genius can now seize direct control over systems as complicated as a creature's mind. He can control a living thing's autonomous reactions, engage in direct mind control, or effect subtle but pervasive emotional changes, rather than simply yanking on nerve endings. Use of this power is always at least an Obligation-7 transgression when applied to fully intelligent beings like humans.

To control a subject's mind, the genius rolls Manipulation + Academics vs. the subject's Resolve + Metanormal Advantage.

Dramatic Failure: The subject aware of the control attempt and is immune to the genius' mental influence for the rest of the scene.

Failure: The subject is not affected, and is aware of the control attempt.

Success: The genius seizes mental control of the target, producing any state of servitude up to near-absolute loyalty. The subject will carry out almost any instruction that the genius supplies, either verbally or through the medium of the wonder. The subject functions independently and to the best of his ability in order to serve the genius, by attacking the genius' enemies, answering questions, or performing complicated tasks within the subject's purview such as lying to superiors and disabling the lock on the vault. The effect lasts for the duration of the scene. When the effect ends, the subject remembers being controlled.

Exceptional Success: As a regular success, except the effect lasts for a full day and can be renewed every day by spending a point of Mania. The subject will obey even suicidal and immoral directives. (See below.) When the effect ends, the subject does not remember being controlled.

Suggested Modifiers: Subject distracted (+1), subject suspicious of the genius (-2), subject is ornery or stubborn (-1), subject is psychologically malleable (+1), genius is in authority over the subject (+2), subject is actively engaged in combat (-3)

A subject can spend a point of Willpower on his turn to trigger a new roll and perhaps escape the genius' control. This point of Willpower does not add +3 to the roll.

Invisibility Trick:

Improvements in the genius' grasp of Epikrato allow him to send the useful thought "you don't notice me" into a person's mind. This requires a Manipulation + Academics check vs. the subject's Wits + Composure.

Dramatic Failure: The genius draws the attention of everyone nearby.

Failure: The genius is no more hidden from the subject than normal.

Success: The subject loses a number of Successes from any attempt to spot the genius equal to the number of Successes the genius receives. The genius does not need to make any particular effort to hide or remain stealthy if she does not want to, and may still remain hidden. (That is, the subject receives no bonus to notice a genius standing right next to him in a brightly-lit corridor.) The subject will notice the genius if the genius attacks, touches, or talks to the subject.

Exceptional Success: As above. Further, the the subject will not notice the genius even if attacked or touched, or if the genius talks to the subject. (The subject hears the words and will probably understand that someone nearby is invisible, but cannot place the genius' location.)

This trick is often combined with the "many minds" and "no range" variables to blanket an area in "you don't see me" waves and allow the genius to move around unmolested. Unlike other multi-target Epikrato effects, the "many minds" Mania cost need only be paid once, not per target to be affected.

No Self-Destruction:

Unless the genius scores an Exceptional Success on his control attempts, a person cannot blithely be forced to kill herself or to physically injure herself directly. Any attempts to force the subject to kill or harm herself fail automatically and allow an immediate Composure + Metanormal Advantage check (with a penalty equal to the number of successes the genius scored) to escape the genius' hold. This must be an unambiguous act of self-violence: jumping into lava, shooting oneself, and so on. It also includes standing there and suffering injury, such as being told to hold still while the genius' Katastrophically-focused friend blazes away with an energy gun. Forcing the subject to charge a powerful enemy does not qualify as suicide, nor do any acts that don't cause physical harm, no matter how much psychological trauma they may inflict.

Degradation Isn't Easy:

It's also hard to get the subject to perform acts that violate his character and moral center without an Exceptional Success. Any act that would trigger a Degeneration check (for Obligation, Morality, or anything else) grants the subject another immediate Composure + Metanormal Trait check (with a penalty equal to the number of successes the genius scored). Success means the subject immediately breaks free, but failure means that the subject goes through with the act. (This differs from with suicidal actions, where the target still refuses even on a failure.) A controlled subject does not actually degenerate due to ethical violations committed while controlled.

Willpower:

Unless the genius gets an Exceptional Success, A controlled subject cannot be made to spend Willpower; any attempt to get the target to spend Willpower will cause him to spend Willpower on resisting the genius' effects at the soonest opportunity.

Draining Will:

A genius who has reached the third dot of Epikrato can affect a person's Willpower and energy, draining and exhausting him in place of seizing direct control. This requires a Manipulation + Academics check vs. Resolve + Composure.

Dramatic Failure: The effect rebounds, draining a point of Willpower from the genius.

Failure: The subject resists the effect.

Success: The subject loses one point of Willpower per success rolled.

Exceptional Success: The subject loses all points of Willpower.

If a subject without any Willpower remaining is hit by this effect, there is no effect.

Epikrato ●●●●: Probability control

As a genius approaches total mastery of Epikrato, she no longer needs to affect discrete things. Instead she can affect whole groups of complex phenomena, from crowds to the weather. She can even seize direct control of probability, causing it to twist and flow to her will.

A genius can build a wonder to produce one of several results: to make crowds denser or sparser, to bring people or things to the genius through a series of improbably complex coincidences, to produce specific results within a complex unfolding event (that is, to rig elections, trigger riots, and produce other popular mass-events), and to manipulate wealth and the market. Each is a distinct wonder. A genius can also build a weather-control device. This is also a discrete wonder.

Wealth and the Market:

The genius can manipulate her or other people's Social Merits. Merits that can be targeted include: Allies, Contacts, Fame, Mentor, Resources, Retainer, and Status. She can also control Beholden Number, Generator, Tenure, and any other Merit that is based on wealth, status, or windfalls.

The genius rolls Manipulation + Politics and spends an hour of work (a minute at -2, or a turn at -4; very short spans of time may be deemed impossible by the Storyteller). If attacking another person who does not want to be influenced, the genius rolls vs. the target's Resolve + Composure + the highest Merit dot that the genius is targeting.

Dramatic Failure: The target loses one dot in the relevant Merit if that dot was supposed to have increased, or gains one dot if it was supposed to decrease. This effect lasts for one day.

Failure: The target's Merits do not change. The genius cannot attempt to manipulate this person's fortunes again until a day has passed.

Success: The genius can add or subtract one dot of Social Merits per dot of Inspiration. This effect lasts for one scene. The effect can either occur immediately, or the genius can trigger it a number of days distant equal to his Inspiration, whenever he desires. A genius can only have one "trigger" in place at a time; if a new one is put in place, the old one vanishes.

Exceptional Success: The genius can add or subtract one dot of Social Merits per dot of Inspiration. This effect can last indefinitely if the genius wants. If given an indefinite duration, the genius must bind a number of Mania to the Merits equal to the difference in dots between the "real" amount and the modified amount.

Suggested Modifiers: The genius is very familiar with the subject's finances (+1), the genius does not know the subject very well (-1), the genius is targeting a genius-only Merit (-2), the genius has engaged in previous successful manipulation to ensure his plan succeeds (+1 to +3)

A genius can only have a total number of Merits dots modified (up or down) equal to his Inspiration.

A genius can also use this ability to cancel another genius' manipulation. This also requires a Manipulation + Academics check. If even one Success is rolled, the subject's Merit dots to stabilize where they should be.

Crowd Control:

If the genius wants to manipulate crowd density, this requires one hour (one minute at -2, or one turn at -4) and a Manipulation + Politics check.

For this purpose, crowd density is rated from 0 to 5.

0: Totally empty and deserted.

1: Largely empty; a restaurant just before closing, a quiet country road, or the main street of a small town.

2: Fairly busy; an office, a typical highway, or a supermarket; slow-downs are going to be rare and accidental, but there is traffic to avoid.

3: Dense crowds; a well-traveled road during rush hour, a department store during a sale, a popular restaurant at dinner hour; slow-downs are possible and common, and the crowds can make movement difficult for the unwary.

4: Packed crowds; stop-and-go-traffic; a store on Black Friday, a packed dance club, a popular sporting event; the crowds are so dense everything slows to a crawl.

5: Dangerously packed crowds; a dead-stop in traffic, a cattle-car, an overcrowded concert, or the front line of a riot; no one is moving.

Dramatic Failure: The crowds do the exact opposite of what the genius wants; a genius trying to disappear into a crowded dance hall suddenly finds it empty.

Failure: No effect. The genius cannot attempt a similar manipulation for at least one hour.

Success: The genius "summons" or "banishes" a crowd in the desired area. Every point of Mania spent increases or decreases the crowd density by one step, with a maximum change equal to the genius' Inspiration.

Exceptional Success: As a regular success. Also, the genius can select up to one person (or vehicle) per dot of Inspiration. This individual moves through the crowd as if it is not there.

Suggested Modifiers: Unlikely manipulations, like calling dense crowds in the middle of nowhere (-3), high-energy crowd (+1), genius is familiar with the crowd's dynamics (+1), genius is in a foreign or unfamiliar place (-2)

Ordinarily, crowds appear around a genius. If he wants to send them around, he can treat a crowd manipulated in this way as a single thing for the purpose of the ability below.

Movement of People and Things:

The genius can also influence specific people or things, causing them to move about. This is nothing so crude as telekinesis or teleportation. Instead, events conspire to move people or things where the genius wants them to go. This requires one hour of work (one minute at -2, or one turn at -4) and a Manipulation + Politics check, with a -1 penalty for every object to be moved at the same time past the first. If attempting to move a person who does not want to move, the Manipulation + Politics check is vs. the subject's Resolve + Metanormal Advantage. The genius must know the target's current location in order to use this ability.

Dramatic Failure: The genius badly miscalculates and ends up inconveniencing herself in some significant way, such as bumping into her (well-armed) arch-enemy at an antique show while hunting for a rare artifact.

Failure: The genius can't cause anything to move. The genius cannot try again with any of her targets or destinations until at least one day has passed.

Success: The genius sets things up such that people or things move about. The time it takes for something to move depends on distance and available modes of travel. Generally, assuming access to modern transportation technology combined with various hold-ups and missteps: a move of a mile or less takes minutes. A move across a city or state takes hours. Moving within the same country or continent takes days. Cross-continent journeys take weeks. The genius binds one point of Mania per target until the targets reach their desired locales (at which point the release of the Mania indicates that the target has made it—or perhaps died or escaped the effect—though the genius gains no other way to track movement with this power alone).

Exceptional Success: The action occurs as planned. The genius can bind additional Mania to hurry the process along: every point of Mania bound to a target reduces its transit time by one step (weeks to days, days to hours, etc.). An object cannot move faster than is possible with available technology, however.

Suggested Modifiers: Moving in that general direction anyway (+2), easily-transported object (+1), highly mobile object, like an airliner (+2), immobile, heavy, or hard-to-move object (-1 to -5), object would seem out-of-place transported to target locale (-1)

Once a person arrives at his location, he is free to leave. An object, once it reaches its destination, might be picked up or otherwise transferred.

Political Domination:

The genius can cause noticeable changes in large public events, such as elections, stock markets, and large social gatherings. The time taken depends on the number of people involved in the event.

Number of People	Example	Time Needed
Less than 20 people	A streetside protest	1 turn
Less than 100 people	A block party	1 minute
Less than 1,000 people	A small rock concert	1 hour
Less than 10,000 people	A county fair	1 day
Less than 100,000 people	A professional sports stadium	1 week
Less than one million people	A Woodstock-style cultural event	1 month
Less than ten million people	Most city elections	1 year
Less than 100 million people	Most state elections	1 decade
More than 100 million people	A national election	1 century

(Stocks are assumed to take one week to manipulate.)

Reducing this time incurs a -1 penalty to the roll for every step reduced. The time cannot be increased.

The genius must work up until the end of the event to get the effect he wants. If he instead wants to leave an effect to be "triggered" later, he suffers a -1 penalty to the roll: -1 if the delay is a day or less, -2 if up to a week, -3 if up to a month, -4 if up to a year, and -5 if a year or longer.

Making the change requires a Manipulation + Politics check, with a penalty equal to the number of steps that the genius wants to shift the target.

The Storyteller determines the event's current level based on what sort of an event it is.

	Election	Party	Protest	Stocks
Torpid	Almost exactly 50/50; may cause a runoff or be held up in court	Absolutely dead; people start leaving	The protest is killed; people get bored and leave	The stock is in a downward nosedive
Tranquil	Victory by razor-thin margins	A boring, tepid experience	A sorry excuse for a protest	The stock is inching down
Normal	Average victory by 2%-5%	A typical party, based on the quality of the people there	A typical protest; shouting, enthusiasm, but no serious violence	The stock remains stable
Aggressive	Landslide victory, 5% or more	An absolute blast; a party to remember	A riot; people are fighting; police get called	The stock starts to climb
Explosive	Revolution: riots, violence, new order	A riot breaks out; violence; chaos	A bloody riot, perhaps resulting in a massacre or a revolution	The stock soars

Dramatic Failure: The exact opposite effect from what the genius wants happens. If the genius wanted the protest to dissolve into bloody riots, it goes off without a hitch and many friends are made. If the genius wanted his stock to surge, it falls like a bag of sand.

Failure: No effect. If the genius makes another attempt, he cannot try to reduce the time interval until the listed time interval (based on the size of the event) has passed.

Success: The genius can shift the mood of a group or social organization by the desired number of steps. Every step shifted costs one point of Mania.

Exceptional Success: As above, and the effect is unusually long-lasting or effective.

Manipulating elections may require a genius to dig his candidate out of a "hole." For example, if the genius' candidate is expected to lose by a landslide, it's three steps just to get the race up to "50/50", and six steps (so, a -6 penalty) to cause a landslide victory for the genius' candidate. Also note that manipulating an election will draw all sorts of nastiness out of the woodwork, from vampires and other denizens of the World of Darkness to simple leg-breakers and number jockeys.

Weather Control:

A genius can build a machine to control the weather by manipulating probability on a molecular level. Any genius who sees unnatural weather patterns automatically knows exactly what's going on, meaning that messing around with the weather can get a genius' door kicked down by pissed off mad scientists.

To control the weather, the genius rolls Intelligence + Science.

Dramatic Failure: The genius unleashes the exact sort of weather she does not want. She may or may not get struck by lightning a bunch of times.

Failure: The weather remains as it was.

Success: The weather begins to change. Weather is rated on three scales: temperature, wind, and precipitation. Every point of Mania spent here changes the temperature by 10° Fahrenheit, or changes the wind or precipitation by one step. By default, the weather control affects an area about a quarter-mile in diameter around the genius. Every point of Mania adds another quarter-mile to this diameter. Every point of Mania can also push the epicenter of the manipulation one mile away in any direction. Every step of change in each of the three fields (temperature, wind, precipitation) takes five minutes to manifest. A genius must monitor the transformation unless she also has Automata-1, in which case she can set the wonder to work and then act independently. The weather change lasts for up to an hour, then each scale returns to normal at a rate of one step per five minutes.

Exceptional Success: As above. Further, every step of change in each of the three categories takes only a single turn, not five minutes. The effect lasts for one hour, and a genius can spend Mania to extend the time: one point of Mania per additional hour. After its duration expires, each scale returns to normal at a rate of one step per turn.

Suggested Modifiers: Predictable weather (-1), tempestuous weather (+1), no view of the sky (-3), in the air (+1), urban area (-1), accelerating existing weather pattern (+1)

Wind:

Wind 0: Dead calm.

Wind 1: A mild breeze. No in-game effect.

Wind 2: A moderate breeze. Light material such as paper or sand will be blown around, which might limit vision or provide a distraction.

Wind 3: A strong breeze. Ranged attacks other than guns suffer a -1 penalty. The howling wind incurs a -1 penalty to all hearing attempts. A subject's Speed is reduced by 1 for every point of Size below Size 4. A subject's flying Speed is reduced by 1 for every point of Size below Size 6. This reduction in speed also translates into a Handling or maneuver penalty when moving.

Wind 4: A gale-force wind. Ranged attacks other than guns suffer a -2 penalty. Guns suffer a -1 penalty.

Hearing is at -3. A subject's Speed is reduced by 1 for every point of Size below Size 6. A subject's flying Speed is reduced by 1 for every point of Size below Size 10. This reduction in speed also translates into a Handling or maneuver penalty when moving.

Wind 5: A hurricane-force wind. Ranged attacks all suffer a -5 penalty. Hearing is at -5. A subject's Speed is reduced by 1 for every point of Size below Size 10. A subject's flying Speed is reduced by 1 for every point of Size below Size 50. This reduction in speed also translates into a Handling or maneuver penalty when moving. In addition, anyone trying to fly suffers an additional -5 penalty to any maneuvers. Everyone in the area who is not under cover suffers three dice of Bashing damage per turn from flying debris.

Precipitation:

Precipitation 0: No rain, not a cloud in the sky.

Precipitation 1: Overcast and cloudy.

Precipitation 2: A light drizzle or a dusting of snow. Acts such as climbing and running on slick pavement suffer a -1 penalty.

Precipitation 3: Moderate rain or snow. Ranged attacks and visions checks suffer a -1 penalty. Maneuvering suffers a -2 penalty.

Precipitation 4: A downpour or a snowstorm. Ranged attacks, vision, and maneuvering are at -3. Lightning may strike sporadically.

Precipitation 5: A thunderstorm. Ranged attacks, vision, and maneuvering are at -5. Lightning strikes all exposed objects. Every turn, everyone and everything that is out in the open has a 1% chance of being struck by lightning. This increases to 5% if the subject is higher than its surroundings, and also to 5% if the subject has a lot of metal on it (or is made of metal). Something higher than its surroundings and made of or carrying metal has a 10% chance of being struck every round. A stroke of lightning causes two dice of Lethal damage per dot of the genius' Inspiration. The genius has no particular control over these lightning bolts.

Probability Manipulation:

By twisting probability, a genius can alter the likelihood of discrete events occurring. Mechanically, this adds or subtracts dice from a dice pool. The genius can target an individual or a group, a specific action or a whole scene's worth of activity, a particular Skill or technique or a person's entire probabilistic effectiveness. The genius must be in range of the targets and aware of their general location, but need not see them. The genius rolls Intelligence + Science.

Dramatic Failure: The genius suffers a miserable run of bad luck. For the rest of the day, all Failures are treated as Dramatic Failures.

Failure: The genius fails to manipulate probability. He cannot try again on the same targets for the rest of the day.

Success: The genius grants a +1 bonus or a -1 penalty, up to a maximum change equal to the number of successes rolled. Every +1 or -1 requires one point of Mania.

Exceptional Success: As above.

Suggested Modifiers: Affects only a single Skill (+2), affects all Mental, all Physical, or all Social rolls (+1),

affects all rolls (no modifier), affects only a single Specialization (+3), affects a number of people equal to or less than the genius' Inspiration (no penalty), affects up to twice that number (-1), up to four times that number (-2), up to eight times that number (-3), (and so on), the effect persists for one scene (no modifier), the effect applies only to the next relevant action performed by the subject any time before the end of the scene (+1), the effect applies only to the next relevant action performed by the subject and any time before the end of a number of days equal to the genius' Inspiration (no modifier), the effect applies only to the next relevant action performed by the subject and lasts indefinitely (-2), genius has line-of-sight to all targets (+1)

Multiple probabilistic bonuses or penalties do not stack; use the highest bonus or the worst penalty. Probabilistic bonuses and penalties can cancel one-another out.

Example: Sardinius the Scrupulous (Inspiration 6, Intelligence 4, Science 5) wants to inconvenience a squad of thugs setting up outside his laboratory. He wants to penalize all their Physical rolls (+1). The effect will last for a full scene (no modifier). There are seven thugs to target (-1). Sardinius' dice pool, then, is (9+1-1) 9. He rolls and receives three successes. The thugs suffer a -3 penalty to all Physical actions for the duration of the scene. This costs Sardinius three points of Mania.

Epikrato ●●●●: Control identity

An Epikrato master can completely enslave a subject, allowing for such marvels and horrors as complete personality editing and consciousness transfer.

To dominate a subject's identity, the genius must spend at least one minute (or one turn at -2) and roll an extended Manipulation + Academics check. The genius needs to accumulate a number of successes equal to the subject's Resolve + Composure + Metanormal Advantage.

Dramatic Failure: A feedback loop causes the genius' higher brain functions to shut down for the duration of the scene.

Failure: The genius makes no progress toward controlling the subject. He cannot make another attempt for at least a minute.

Success: The genius makes progress toward controlling the subject.

Exceptional Success: The genius makes considerable progress toward controlling the subject.

Once a subject is under the genius' control, the genius can engage in regular (Epikrato 2 or 3) mind or emotion control. But more importantly, the genius can change the subject's personality, adjust abilities, swap minds, and perform a number of other extraordinary effects. Every such attempt requires an Manipulation + Academics check vs. Resolve + Metanormal Advantage and a minute of work (or a turn at -2).

Dramatic Failure: The subject snaps out of the control.

Failure: The genius can make no changes to the subject. He cannot try again for at least a minute.

Success or Exceptional Success: The genius can edit the subject's personality or abilities. This costs one point of Mania per success used to affect changes. See below for specific effects.

Talent Reduction:

The genius can subtract dots from the following areas, with one dot deleted per Success: Mental Attributes, Social Attributes, Skills, Mental Merits, dots in Inspiration, dots in other Inspiration-like Advantages (Wyrd,

Primal Urge, etc.), dots in Axioms, dots in other Axiom-like abilities (vampire Disciplines, Promethean Transmutations, etc.). Reducing a metanormal Advantage (Gnosis, Primal Urge) or an Attribute to zero kills the subject.

Morality Alteration:

The genius can adjust the subject's Morality or Obligation, raising it up to the genius' own or lowering it by one dot per success. The genius can also add or subtract one mild Derangement per success, or add or subtract one severe Derangement per two successes.

Adjusting someone's Morality or Obligation *down* is a transgression at a level equal to subject's new score.

Beholden Status:

With one success the genius can turn a person beholden, or turn a beholden into a regular person.

Mnemonic Manipulation:

The genius can mess around with memories. Removing memories requires either Apokalypsi-based deep probes or the genius to know about the memories in question, such as by having the subject describe those memories. The genius can also add memories. These memories seem believable and real. Adding or removing one memory requires one success; adding or subtracting a constellation of related memories (like memories of the subject's wife) requires two successes, and adding or subtracting a whole span of related and unrelated memories requires three successes.

Personality Editing:

The genius can adjust the subject's personality. Minor changes, such as changing the subject's Vice or Virtue, require one success. Significant changes, like making an irascible person pleasant and agreeable, require two. A complete change of personality requires three successes.

Blanking:

It costs five successes to totally "blank" a subject's mind, removing all traces of personality. This is usually done as a prelude to puppet control or consciousness transfer.

Reversing Changes:

The genius can also reverse any of these effects. Reversing the effects of Epikrato manipulation only requires one success; no matter how much damage has been done, a master of Epikrato can cause the old personality to resurface with minimum effort.

Consciousness Transfer:

A genius can swap minds of controlled subjects. This subject can be an animal, an automaton, a human-like mannequin (one with no variables) a regular human, or some kind of enhanced or metanormal human (including another genius), but not enhanced manes (those with variables or other unusual abilities) or other type of metanormal creature like a vampire.

This transfer requires one minute of work (one turn at -2) and an Manipulation + Academics check vs. Resolve + Metanormal Advantage. (If the target's mind has been blanked, there is no competing Resolve, and notes on the host mind, below, can be ignored.)

Dramatic Failure: The subject is free of the genius' control.

Failure: The genius' mind does not move. She cannot try again for a full day.

Success: The genius' mind moves to occupy the new body. This costs one point of Mania per scene.

Exceptional Success: The genius can make move permanent by binding one point of Mania.

The "mind" contains the subject's Mental and Social Attributes, Skills, Mental Merits, Obligation/Morality, Inspiration, Axioms, Mania, and other Inspired abilities. The "body" retains the subject's Physical Attributes, Physical Merits, unique physical characteristics, and appearance. (What happens to Social Merits is left up to the Storyteller and needs to be adjudicated on a case-by-case basis.)

What happens to the host mind is up to the genius. There are two possibilities: either the host mind is "buried" (placed in a sub-sentient state) for the duration of the genius' occupation, or the host mind moves into the genius' body.

If the host mind is buried, the genius' body is comatose for the duration of the transfer. It can be kept alive with feeding (and eventually, with life support), but it is basically a vegetable. The buried mind is only dimly sentient, but it can act by spending Willpower in an attempt to thwart the dominant mind: once the dominant mind decides on an action but before the dominant mind rolls dice, the buried mind can choose to spend a point of Willpower to subtract three dice from the dominant mind's dice pool. The buried mind recovers one Willpower per day.

Further, if the dominant mind ever runs out of Willpower, the buried mind can spend a Willpower point to "attack," trying to force the dominant mind out. This is a competing Resolve + Composure check. If the buried mind wins, the formerly buried mind again becomes the dominant mind. The formerly dominant mind is either ejected or becomes a buried mind—the newly-dominant mind's choice. The buried mind can make this attack as many times as it has points of Willpower. Normally, the only way to get rid of an annoying buried mind is through blanking.

The other option is to swap minds. This is simpler. In this case, the two minds swap and arrive in opposite bodies.

If a consciousness-transfer effect ends, and a mind finds itself without a body, it returns to its natural body. If its natural body does not exist (it has been destroyed, etc.), the bodiless mind is annihilated.

A genius can engage in consciousness-transfer between or among minds that are not her own, so long as she dominates all the minds. This is handled similarly to a simple transfer: the genius' Manipulation + Academics vs. the combined Resolve of all the people who want to resist the effect. The results can be any kind of transfer: two people swapping minds, one person dominating the now-buried mind of another, seven people all shifting their minds one chair to the left, or whatever else the genius wants. The only fixed rule is that nonhuman (variable-possessing or otherwise enhanced) manes and metanormal creatures are immune to this effect.

If a move is permanent and a new body possesses superior Physical abilities, the transferred mind must spend experience points buying her new scores up as soon as possible.

Variables of Epikrato:

Epikrato Ray:

Requires Katastrofi 1

Instead of producing an emanation that automatically hits nearby targets, the wonder shoots forth a ray. This costs one point of Mania to activate for a scene and requires a Wits + Firearms + Katastrofi check to hit and otherwise causes the wonder to be treated like a weapon. The wonder's range is based on the weapon's configuration (pistol, rifle, or various sorts of artillery). See the range section under Katastrofi.

If the wonder uses this variable, it can also make use of the following variables of Katastrofi: "adjusted range" (but only to make range longer), "autofire," "explosive weapon," "extradimensional attack," "good balance and weight," "limited ammunition," "variable damage," and "variable explosion." Epikrato "explosions" merely spread the area of effect out to the main blast radius; there is no conversion to explosive force.

An Epikrato ray grants a +3 bonus to its effect if it hits a target ten or more feet away that is not the user.

Invisible Effect:

Normally, wonders of Epikrato produce some kind of light or sound when activated. This variable hides the effect. It incurs a -1 penalty.

(Note that attempts to make something psychically invisible do not produce a visible effect, automatically.)

Long Range:

The wonder's range is doubled per -1 penalty applied. This variable cannot be combined with "Epikrato ray."

Many Minds:

This variable is applicable to any attempt at mind control, allowing the genius to affect many minds at once in any area. For a -1 penalty, the wonder affects a five-foot diameter. Every further -1 doubles that diameter. This variable cannot be combined with the "Epikrato ray" variable (instead use the "explosive weapon" variable). The genius can choose to exclude targets.

No Range:

The Epikrato wonder has basically no range. This grants a +2 bonus. This variable cannot be combined with "Epikrato ray." It does not apply to weather manipulators.

One-Purpose Manipulator:

A mind control device that only produces a specific effect ("fear only," "love only," "invisibility only") grants a +1 bonus. A physical control device that only performs a particular function, such as opening doors or pushing things, also grants a +1 bonus. A mental device that only engages in rank-five consciousness manipulation (it can't be used on enthralled targets to engage in regular lower-rank mind control) also grants a +1 bonus.

A mental device that only influences animals gains a +1 bonus. A mental device that only influences one type of animal grants a +2 bonus. Controlling only humans (not human-like manes, but including geniuses) grants a +1 bonus.

Weather Manipulation:

A wonder that only controls temperature, only controls precipitation, or only controls wind gains a +1 bonus to its area. A "storm machine" (which increases precipitation and wind as much as possible) gains a +2 bonus. A "pacifier" (which decreases precipitation and wind as much as possible) gains a +2 bonus. A "heater" (increases temperature) or a "chiller" (decreases temperature) gains a +2 bonus.

EXELIXI: THE AXIOM OF RESTORATION

Medicines and Upgrades

"Where is the lightning to lick you with its tongue? Where is the madness with which you should be cleansed? Behold, I show you the Superman. He is this lightning, he is this madness."

-Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Exelixa is the Axiom of repair, improvement, and perfection. Centuries after mortal science started to abandon the idea of *telos*, of a cosmos moving toward perfection, the students of this Axiom still believe that with their science they can bring all things to their ultimate state. Scholars of Exelixa can heal anything from broken bones to burned-out motherboards, then go beyond that, honing and improving things both living and mechanical.

Definitions:

Exelixa *improves*. While on the face of it, Exelixa is the Axiom of healing (an attitude that many geniuses foster), biological healing is only one minor aspect of Exelixa, which spreads to encompass all types of improvements, enhancements, and upgrades. Wonders that improve, heal, restore, or increase a property rely on Exelixa.

General Notions:

Construction:

Generally, medical and healing devices require Medicine to build and toolkits require Crafts. Resurrection technology also requires Occult. Wonders designed to work on organic bodies and wonders designed to work on technology are separate wonders.

Mania:

Healing or repairing of any sort requires one point of Mania per Health level of Lethal damage healed, and one point of Mania per two levels of Bashing damage healed. Healing any amount of Aggravated damage also costs one point of Willpower.

Repairs require one point of Mania per five units of Structure repaired or fraction thereof.

"Upgrades" cost one Mania per dot of increase and remain effective for the duration of the scene.

Wonders of Exelixa that heal, repair, or upgrade cannot benefit from the "Mania Cost" variable.

Dice Pool:

Generally, using a wonder of Exelixa to heal or to upgrade organic components requires Intelligence or Dexterity + Medicine. Repairing damaged machinery, or enhancing machinery, requires Intelligence or Dexterity + Crafts. Raising the dead uses Intelligence + the lower of Medicine and Occult.

Range:

By default, wonders of Exelixa have a range of touch. Variables can change this.

Exelixa •: Basic repair, healing, and curing

The genius can build a wonder that can either heal living matter or repair inorganic matter. For healing, she rolls Dexterity + Medicine. For repair, she rolls Dexterity + Crafts.

Dramatic Failure: The attempt inflicts one point of Lethal damage on the subject.

Failure: There is no change in the subject's status.

Success or Exceptional Success: The genius heals one level of Lethal or Structure damage, or two levels of Bashing damage, per Success. Each level of Lethal damage or two levels of Bashing damage healed costs one point of Mania. Every five points of Structure (or fraction thereof per roll) costs one point of Mania. At this level, the genius cannot heal Aggravated damage.

Suggested Modifiers: Unfamiliar or alien anatomy (-1 to -3), unclean environment (-2), sterile and tidy workspace (+1)

Using this wonder also grants a bonus to regular attempts to heal or repair equal to the genius' Inspiration. Using the wonder in this auxiliary role costs no Mania.

Curing Disease:

An Exelixa 1 wonder that can heal injuries can also cure disease. This requires an Intelligence + Medicine check with a penalty based on the severity of the disease.

Inconveniencing, temporary sickness, like a head cold: 0

Debilitating but temporary disease, like flu: -1

Chronic debilitating disease, like migraines: -2

Incapacitating or crippling disease, like fevers or cataracts: -3

Crippling, potentially fatal disease, like many cancers and Parkinson's: -4

Fatal disease, like most cancers, AIDS, and Lou Gehrig's Disease: -5

Dramatic Failure: The genius exacerbates the disease, causing one point of Lethal damage.

Failure: The genius fails to remove the disease. If the genius tries to cure the disease again that day, the subject suffers a point of Lethal damage.

Success: The genius cures the disease.

Exceptional Success: The genius cures the disease and removes any damage caused by previous curing attempts.

Suggested Modifiers: Bad environment (-1), clean and sterile environment (+1), coupled with mundane treatment (+1), subject is in final stages of disease (-2)

Life Support:

With Exelixa 1, a genius can create a life support machine. This wonder requires no roll to use. Instead, the Core Modifier determines how many people are sustained (with food, water, and air) by spending a point of Mania.

Core Modifier	Life Support
-2	One hour of life support for one person
-1	Six hours of life support for one person
0	Twelve hours of life support for one person
1	Sustains one person for one day
2	Sustain up to five people for one day
3	Sustain up to ten people for one day
4	Sustain up to 50 people for one day
5	Sustain up to 100 people for one day
6	Sustain up to 1000 people for one day

This variable cannot be combined with the "Mania cost" variables.

A wonder that provides only air grants a +1 bonus.

Life support systems in spaceships also provide supplements to prevent bone-degradation due to long-term exposure to low gravity.

Exelixi ●●: Mechanical upgrade

As the genius' grasp of Exelixi grows, she moves beyond healing and repair into the realm of enhancement. She can enhance machines, and further, use machines to enhance a person's performance. These are two sorts of wonders.

A wonder that enhances a machine requires an Intelligence + Crafts check.

Dramatic Failure: The machine suffers one point of Structure damage per dot of the genius' Inspiration.

Failure: The machine is unaffected.

Success: The object gains one of the following for the duration of the scene:

- +1 bonus per dot of Inspiration when using any mundane object.
- +1 bonus per dot of Inspiration, not to exceed the genius' rank in Katastrofi, to the damage caused by a weapon.
- +1 bonus per dot of Inspiration, not to exceed the genius' rank in Prostasia, to an object's Durability. (This cannot apply to armor or to wonders of Automata or Skafoi.)
- +1 to any Attribute, if the object possesses Attributes, not to exceed the genius' rank in Automata.
- +1 bonus per dot of Inspiration, not to exceed the genius' rank in Skafoi, to a vehicle's Handling.
- +20% increase in Safe Speed, Maximum Speed, and Acceleration, not to exceed 20% per dot of Skafoi the genius possesses, per dot of Inspiration.

The genius' effective Inspiration for the purpose of distributing bonuses is modified by the wonder's Core

Modifier.

The genius can choose any bonus or combination of bonuses she wants every time she uses the wonder. (A variable can fix the wonder's function, so it always provides the same bonus.) Every dot of bonus costs one point of Mania.

Exceptional Success: The improvements last indefinitely long if the genius desires. If that's the case, the genius must bind one point of Mania per +1 bonus or +20% increase to Speed. The Mania remains bound until the genius removes the enhancement (which requires touching the enhanced object) or the object is destroyed.

Exo-Rigs:

A person's performance can be enhanced with a wonder that fits "over" the subject like a suit. It is often built as an integral wonder of a Prostasia suit, usually fitting under the armor. Unlike other wonders, this wonder's Size is equal to the wearer, and Size does not affect the wonder's Core Modifier. A wonder that only covers part of a person only enhances the area that it covers. For example, a glove or gauntlet (Size 1) could provide a bonus to Strength, but only on the hand that it is worn.

This wonder provides a flat bonus equal the genius' Inspiration (modified by the wonder's Core Modifier) to any Physical Attribute or a number of Physical Merits that might rely on direct mechanical influence. Those include: Fast Reflexes, Fleet of Foot, Iron Stamina, Quick Draw, and Strong Back. The genius can combine bonuses any way she desires: for example, a genius with three dots of Inspiration can build a wonder that adds two dots to Strength and one to Stamina. Each wonder only provides one type of boost. For example, a wonder built to provide a dot of Strength and the Iron Stamina bonus at two dice *always* provides a dot of Strength and two dots of Iron Stamina. A variable can change this, however, allowing for more flexible allocation.

The wonder's effect costs a number of Mania points equal to the number of bonus dots given, and lasts for one scene.

This wonder cannot enhance an Attribute above the genius' maximum Attribute score (as determined by Inspiration). Any excess dots are lost.

Exelixa ●●●: Biological upgrade

This kind of wonder uses a special cocktail of drugs or stimulants to enhance the subject's biological performance. The wonder can provide a bonus to any Attribute, or it can provide any Physical or Mental Merit, or the Social Merits Inspiring or Striking Looks.

The wonder provides a number of additional dots equal to the genius' Inspiration, modified by the Core Modifier.

The wonder provides only one type of boost: a wonder designed to grant +1 to Wits and Combat Reflexes always grants those bonuses. A variable can change this.

The wonder's effect costs a number of Mania points equal to the number of bonus dots given, and lasts for one scene. No roll is needed.

This wonder cannot enhance an Attribute above the genius' maximum Attribute score (as determined by Inspiration). Any excess dots are lost.

Circuitry Upgrades:

With Crafts instead of Medicine, a doctor of Exelixa could conceivably build digital "cocktails" for mechanical creatures. These otherwise work exactly like biological upgrades, and they would work on mechanical life only.

Exelixa ●●●●: Regeneration

The genius can now build a healing wonder able to restore lost body parts. This has three effects.

Heal Aggravated Damage:

First, the wonder can heal Aggravated damage. The genius rolls Dexterity + Medicine.

Dramatic Failure: The genius inflicts a point of Aggravated damage on the subject.

Failure: The genius does not heal any damage. It is possible to try again.

Success or Exceptional Success: The genius heals one point of Aggravated damage per success. This costs one point of Mania per point healed, and healing any amount of Aggravated damage also costs a point of Willpower.

Suggested Modifiers: Unfamiliar or alien anatomy (-1 to -3), unclean environment (-2), sterile and tidy workspace (+1)

Regeneration and Reattachment:

An implementor of Exelixa can use his wonder to reattach or regenerate lost body parts. This requires time, Mania, and a Willpower point, as well as an Intelligence + Medicine check.

Dramatic Failure: The subject suffers one level of Aggravated damage.

Failure: The genius cannot reattach or regenerate the body part. It is possible to try again.

Success: The genius begins the regeneration of a body part. The time and Mania taken depends on what was lost—see the guide below. Note that the wonder must remain in contact with the subject while the body part regenerates, though the genius need not attend to it. If the body part merely needs to be reattached (not regrown), this takes a single turn. The character regains control of the body part in one hour.

Exceptional Success: The genius begins regeneration of the body part. Further, he can spend additional Mania to reduce the time needed. Spending one Mania means that the subject regains control of his reattached part instantly. Otherwise, every point of Mania reduces the growing time by one step (one week, one day, one hour, one minute, one turn). The subject regains control of the body part immediately.

Ear, nose, finger: 1 hour. Costs 4 points of Mania.

Hand, foot: 1 day. Costs 8 points of Mania.

Arm, leg, eye, internal organ: 1 week. Costs 12 points of Mania.

Stasis:

Finally, the wonder can be used to place a subject in a stable, self-regenerating state; that is, a living thing can be put into stasis. This requires one point of Mania and an Intelligence + Medicine check. The attempt takes

one minute.

Dramatic Failure: Attempts to preserve the subject result in death unless the subject succeeds on a Stamina + Resolve check. The preservation attempt fails.

Failure: The preservation attempt fails.

Success: The subject is preserved indefinitely. Only mundane power sources are needed: electricity for cryonics, or an occasional supply of new "pickling" nutrients for techno-mummification, depending on the style of the wonder. Awakening the subject requires one minute and an Intelligence + Medicine check: Dramatic Failure kills the subject unless the subject succeeds in a Stamina + Resolve check. Success restores the subject, whose health boxes are filled with Bashing damage. An Exceptional Success restores the subject immediately without damage.

Exceptional Success: The subject is preserved indefinitely. The subject can be awakened without a roll, and the subject recovers instantly and without injury.

Like with regeneration, the wonder must remain attached to the subject, but the genius need not attend to it.

Replacement Limbs:

The implementor can use the "grafted" variable on an exo-rig to replace destroyed or removed body parts with synthetic replacements. Even a whole body could be "exo-rigged" this way. These rank-4 replacements function as well as normal body parts in addition to whatever bonus they gain from being grafted exo-rigs.

Exelixi ●●●●: Resurrection and Life Extension

The genius can create an "immortality" wonder. This wonder can restore life to the dead. This is almost always a bad idea, but it is possible.

At its most basic (and safe) level, the genius can use a resurrecting device to "jump-start" a recently deceased person. This only works on creatures with unchanged organic anatomies—animals, humans, humanlike manes, geniuses, and mages, but not werewolves, changelings, manes with variables or special abilities, or geniuses that have altered themselves with anything other than grafts or internalized wonders. A genius can attempt this trick on any corpse that has not suffered massive brain trauma or that has died of old age. (If in doubt, the Storyteller can assume a 10% chance that a corpse sustained massive brain trauma if the death was violent. If the subject was killed with Aggravated damage, the chance rises to 50%.)

This attempt takes one hour and requires an Intelligence + Medicine check and one point of Mania, plus one point of Mania per dot any any template-specific Advantage (Inspiration, Gnosis) that the subject possessed.

The penalty depends on how long the body has been dead.

Less than one minute	No penalty
Less than five minutes	-1
Less than ten minutes	-2
Less than twenty minutes	-3

Less than thirty minutes	-4
Less than one hour	-5
More than one hour	Attempt automatically fails

Dramatic Failure: The body is entirely destroyed in the restoration attempt.

Failure: The attempt fails. The subject stays dead. Another attempt can be made, if there's time.

Success: The subject is alive. He loses one *dot* in Willpower. The subject's Health boxes are filled with Aggravated damage less one box, which is filled with Bashing damage.

Exceptional Success: The subject is alive and does not lose Willpower. The subject's Health boxes are filled with Aggravated damage less one box.

Suggested Modifiers: Subject killed by Aggravated damage (-2), subject killed by poison or some other cellular damage (-1), subject killed by blood loss, asphyxiation, heart attack, or some other fairly simple and localized form of death (+1), subject is sick or elderly (-1), unfamiliar anatomy (-2), subject heavily modified with cybernetics or grafts (-1 to -3), sterile environment (+1), messy environment (-1)

This sort of resurrection is not a transgression.

True Resurrection:

If a genius wants to attempt true resurrection...it's harder. Restoring life to the dead requires the corpse, mostly intact, and a check of Intelligence + the lower of Medicine or Occult. (If restoring life to an unintelligent creature, Occult is not needed.)

The penalty to the roll is equal to the former person's Morality (or similar stat) or Metanormal Advantage (Primal Urge, Gnosis, etc.), whichever is higher, *plus* a penalty based on the condition of the body (see below).

Condition Penalties:

Within 24 hours of death	0
Within one week of death	-1
Cryogenically preserved	-2
Decomposition (up to a month) or mummified	-3
Severe decomposition (up to ten years)	-4
Genetic material only	-5

No genetic material

Attempt fails automatically

This operation takes one day of work per dot of Morality or Metanormal Advantage (whichever is higher) for the person to be restored. (Penalties are determined from when the work *ends*, not when it begins.) An attempt costs one point of Mania, +1 point of Mania for every dot in a Metanormal Advantage that the subject possesses.

Dramatic Failure: The attempt fails and the body is blasted into nothingness. The genius loses one *dot* of Willpower.

Failure: The attempt fails. The genius loses one *dot* of Willpower.

Success: The genius loses one *dot* of Willpower and one *dot* of Inspiration, as his essence is scoured by the energy needed to bring life to the dead. Life returns to the corpse, though damage may be severe. The effects of a resurrection varies enormously and unpredictably. The subject rolls Morality (or a Morality-like Trait) with the same modifier the genius had to her roll. (The subject cannot spend Willpower or Mania, since it is dead.)

Dramatic Failure: The subject awakens as an unspeakable blasphemy intent upon devastation and woe. Pandorans, vampires devoid of Humanity, and other, nameless horrors have been reported.

Failure: The subject returns, but severely damaged. The subject's Morality (or Relevant Attribute) is reduced to one dot, with the subject picking up one minor Derangement per dot of difference or one severe Derangement per two dots. The subject also loses one dot from every Attribute, to a minimum of one dot in each Attribute. If the creature is not human, its relevant Advantage (Inspiration, Blood Potency, etc.) drops to one dot. The Amnesia Flaw is almost certain, and many such creatures commit suicide shortly after their restoration.

Success: The subject returns with minor damage. Morality is halved, and the subject receives Derangements as above. If the creature is not human, it loses one dot in its relevant Advantage (Inspiration, Blood Potency, etc.). Amnesia to some extent is likely. Other than that, the subject is intact.

Exceptional Success: The subject returns with no psychological damage. Metanormal creatures lose one dot in their relevant Advantage.

Exceptional Success: The genius loses one *dot* of Willpower. The subject returns and automatically rolls an Exceptional Success to recover. Alternatively, *and only if the genius made preparations beforehand*, the genius can convert a corpse into some other kind of metanormal being, most commonly a Promethean or vampire. The Storyteller has the final say about what sort of unnatural creatures can be raised with an Exceptional Success.

Suggested Modifiers: Condition of corpse (-1 to -5, or impossible, as described above), died violently (-1), significant mutilation or missing parts (-1), killed by Aggravated damage (-3), killed by poison or some other subtle and nonlocal cause (-1), killed by a simple cause like a heart attack or blood loss (+1), sterile environment (+1), messy environment (-1)

Life Extension and Age Reversal:

A rank-5 wonder of Exelixa can also be used to extend a person's life span or even reverse aging. This requires one day of work and an Intelligence + Medicine check.

Dramatic Failure: The subject must make a Stamina + Resolve check or die immediately. The genius cannot try again for one year.

Failure: The subject is unaffected. The genius cannot try again for one year.

Success: The subject does not age for one year. The genius must bind one point of Mania to the subject per 20 full years of life.

Exceptional Success: As above, and if desired, the genius can reduce the subject's biological age by one year per dot in Inspiration + Exelixa, with each year costing (but not binding) one point of Mania. A genius can only reverse aging in this way once per year.

Suggested Modifiers: The subject is fit and healthy (+1), the subject is suffering from a chronic illness (-2), every full century of life (-1), the subject has an unusual anatomy (-1 to -5).

Extrinsic Restoratives: It's possible to build a rank-5 wonder of Exelixa with Crafts instead of Medicine. This sort of wonder would allow a genius to "resurrect" machines or even mechanical automata, and to extend a machine's expected lifespan or even take years of wear and tear off a machine. None of this is a transgression except true resurrection of an intelligent machine.

Variables of Exelixa:

Autonomous Regenerator:

The wonder does not need to be attached to the subject in order to cause regeneration-based effects. Once the process starts, it maintains itself automatically. This allows the genius to create healers that trigger cellular repair, or to create a wonder that "vacuum packs" a subject for long-term stasis and storage. This variable cannot be combined with the "monitored regeneration" Variable.

This variable incurs a -2 penalty.

Exelixa Ray:

Requires Katastrofi 1

Instead of having a range of touch, the wonder shoots forth a ray. This requires one point of Mania to activate for a scene and a Wits + Firearms + Katastrofi check to hit and otherwise causes the wonder to be treated like a weapon. The wonder's range is based on the weapon's configuration (pistol, rifle, or various sorts of artillery). See the range section under Katastrofi.

If the wonder uses this variable, it can also make use of the following variables of Katastrofi: "adjusted range" (but only to make range longer), "autofire," "explosive weapon," "extradimensional attack," "good balance and weight," "limited ammunition," "variable damage," and "variable explosion." Exelixa "explosions" merely spread the area of effect out to the main blast radius; there is no conversion to explosive force.

An Exelixa ray grants a +3 bonus to its effect if it hits a target ten or more feet away that is not the user.

Flexible Upgrade:

Unlike mechanical upgrades, upgrades that target a living thing directly normally provide a specific bonus: +2 to Strength, the Toxin Resistance Merit, etc. A wonder that instead allows for any effect does not incur a penalty, but it requires an Intelligence + Medicine check to activate and use properly.

Dramatic Failure: The subject suffers one point of Lethal damage.

Failure: No effect.

Success: The desired effect occurs, granting one dot of enhancement per dot of the genius' Inspiration for the duration of the scene. Every dot added costs one point of Mania.

Exceptional Success: If desired, the genius can make the enhancement permanent. To make the enhancement permanent, the genius must bind one point of Mania per dot of enhancement. The Mania remains bound until the enhanced object is destroyed or the genius removes the enhancement (which requires touching it with the wonder).

Suggested Modifiers: Subject's system is flooded with drugs (-2), sterile environment (+1), messy environment (-1)

If the wonder only enhances a specific field (only Physical Attributes and Merits, only Mental Attributes and Merits, or only Social Attributes and appropriate Social Merits), the roll is made with a +1 bonus.

Focused Restoration:

This can be applied to any repairing or healing device. It indicates that the wonder can only be used to heal or repair one general type of device: only electrical devices, for example, or only human biologies. This grants a +1 bonus. Combining this variable with "self-only" is normally not allowed.

Focused Mechanical Upgrade:

By default, mechanical upgrades can grant any type of bonus: increasing damage, increasing speed, etc., depending on the target. Some mechanical upgrades have an unusually narrow focus. Either they can only work on one type of device (only a car, only a computer, only a robot) or they can provide only one type of bonus (only increases Armor, only increases Speed). Possessing one of these limitations grants a +1 bonus; possessing both grants a +2.

Greater Effect Only:

Ordinarily, a four-dot wonder of Exelixa that can heal Aggravated damage can also cure Lethal damage as if it were also a one-dot wonder. Likewise, a five-dot wonder that can raise the dead, extend lifespans, and can also cure Aggravated and Lethal damage, regenerate limbs, and so on. In general, healing wonders can perform all lesser acts of healing as well as greater acts. If only the most powerful effect is available, the wonder gains a +1 bonus. If only one type of trick is possible (a wonder that only puts people in stasis, a wonder that only engages in short-term resurrection), the wonder gains a +2 bonus.

Increased Range:

The variable provides the wonder with range beyond touch. This incurs a -1 penalty and grants the wonder a range of ten feet per dot of Inspiration. Every additional -1 doubles the range. This variable cannot be combined with "Exelixa ray."

Monitored Regeneration:

Most four-dot wonders of Exelixa ("regenerators") do not require constant maintenance while they do their regenerating or stasis thing. This variable, however, means that someone must always attend the wonder.

The "someone" in question must either be a genius with at least four dots in Exelixa or a beholden of a genius with at least four dots in Exelixa. Failure to monitor the wonder for at least ten minutes every hour causes it to shut down and fail.

This grants a +1 bonus to the wonder. If instead the wonder must be monitored *at all times*, with no more than one turn per minute skipped, the variable grants a +2 bonus.

Sarcophagus:

Sarcophagi halve the healing or upgrading cost of anything located within them. It can work on anything with a Size less than its own Size. The disadvantages are twofold. First, it cannot have any range, and second, any transmutation booth that is big enough to transform big things easily is big enough that it is almost impossible to move.

This variable grants neither a bonus nor a penalty.

Self Only:

This variable is usually applied to internalized wonders of Exelixa. It indicates that the genius can only heal (or upgrade) himself; he cannot affect other people. This grants a +1 bonus.

KATASTROFI: THE AXIOM OF DESTRUCTION

Weapons of Devastation and Ruin

"We scientists are clever—too clever—are you not satisfied? Is four square miles in one bomb not enough? Men are still thinking. Just tell us how big you want it. " -Richard Feynman

The Axiom of Katastrofi covers any kind of violent instrument a genius may devise, from a poison dart-gun to a fortress-cracking radium cannon. Each rank in Katastrofi increases the destructive power of the weapons in the genius' arsenal.

Definitions:

Katastrofi *destroys*. Targets of Katastrofi are killed, stunned, or annihilated, but always harmed. Katastrofi is the Axiom of pain and annihilation, and it leaves scorched earth and broken corpses in its wake. Any wonder built to cause injury uses Katastrofi.

Common Notions:

Construction:

Most weapons require Crafts to build. Entirely organic weapons, like bone swords or venom sacs, use Medicine. Mixed-media weapons use Crafts and Medicine, as do regular weapons that employ poison. Weapons that use rays, beams, or energy to cause damage, rather than physical force only, use Science, as do any wonders that causes Aggravated damage. Any weapon that can attack across realities needs Occult.

Mania:

It requires one point of Mania to charge a ranged weapon per rank of the weapon. This provides the ranged weapon with ten shots per dot of the genius' Inspiration and lasts for one scene. Every further charge requires another point of Mania per rank.

Melee weapons and thrown weapons do not normally have a Mania requirement.

Dice Pool:

Ranged weapons use Dexterity + Firearms. Thrown weapons use Dexterity + Athletics. Melee weapons use Strength + Weaponry. Weapons like gauntlets or claws (no larger than Size 1) use Strength + Brawl. Melee weapons that are fixed in place or integral to a vehicle use Dexterity + Weaponry.

Very large weapons may qualify as "artillery"—see that variable, below.

Once a genius decides on the dice pool for a wonder, it cannot be changed.

Damage:

The base damage for all weapons of Katastrofi is 5.

Range:

Range for a wonder of Katastrofi depends on its configuration.

Melee: No range

Thrown:

Short range: (Strength + Dexterity + Athletics + Inspiration) x2 yards

Medium range: Twice short range

Long range: Four times short range

Pistol (Size 1 or 2):

Short range: 10 yards per dot of Inspiration

Medium range: Twice short range

Long range: Four times short range

Rifle (Size 2 to 5):

Short range: 100 yards per dot of Inspiration

Medium range: Twice short range

Long range: Four times short range

Light Artillery (Size 5 to 7, requires "artillery" variable):

Short range: 1 mile per dot of Inspiration

Medium range: Twice short range

Long range: Four times short range

Heavy Artillery (Size 8 to 12, requires "artillery" variable):

Short range: 100 miles per dot of Inspiration

Medium range: Twice short range

Long range: Anywhere on the planet

Bombardment Artillery (Size 30+, requires "artillery" variable):

Short range: 10,000 miles per dot of Inspiration

Medium range: Twice short range

Long range: Anywhere

Aggravated Damage:

A wonder of Katastrofi that causes Aggravated damage ignores conventional armor. It does not ignore Prostasia armor or similar non-standard defenses.

Minimum Strength Needed to Use:

Weapon Size and Shape	Strength
Size-1 Light Pistol	1
Size-2 Heavy Pistol	3
Size-3 Submachinegun/Carbine	2 (two hands) or 3 (one hand)
Size-4 Rifle	2 (two hands)
Size-5 Rifle	3 (two hands)
Size-2 Pistol & Belt Pouch	1
Size-4 Rifle & Backpack	2 (two hands)

Melee items need a minimum Strength equal to the wonder's Size. If a melee weapon is held in two hands, the minimum Strength requirement is reduced by two.

Geniuses who lack the minimum Strength necessary to use a weapon suffer a -1 penalty on attack rolls.

Weapons that are fixed in place, including those that are integral to a vehicle, do not require Strength to wield.

Katastrofi •: Agonizers, voltaic stunners, and energy-draining rays

A student of Katastrofi is limited to Bashing damage with his weaponry. His attacks can overwhelm a target's nervous system, produce microwave-induced agony across the target's skin, or drop an enemy with envenomed darts, but cannot kill outright.

Katastrofi ••: Ultra-sharp swords, ray guns, heat rays, and other instruments of death

The second dot of Katastrofi allows the genius to get on with the business of killing her fellow human beings. She can create a rich selection of death rays and Lethal-damage weapons that can kill her targets through ballistic force, massive concussion, cold, electricity, or simply raw "killing energy." She can also significantly enhance the destructive power of her stunning weaponry.

When designing the weapon, the genius must specify the type of damage done. This is important because some wonders and many creatures in the World of Darkness are vulnerable or resistant to different types of damage. Common damage types include electricity, cold, ballistic (like a bullet), acid, neural, bladed, crushing, and miscellaneous "destructive energy."

Bashing attacks from a scholar of Katastrofi benefit from the 9-again rule. Lethal attacks do not benefit from the 9-again rule.

If the genius desires, she can select the "explosive weapon" variable with a blast area of up to five yards for free. See that variable, below.

Katastrofi •••: Annihilating force and concussive devastation

The third dot of Katastrofi allows the genius to hone her destructive power, mastering the energies of annihilation. She can rend apart space and time or hurl globs of plasma or disintegrating force. These first attempts at annihilating weaponry are crude, but devastating. At the same time, her blades are sharper, projectiles move faster, and energy weapons pump out more killing energy. Stunning weaponry reaches its technological peak at this level of Katastrofi.

Bashing attacks benefit from the 8-again rule. Lethal attacks benefit from the 9-again rule. At this level, attacks that cause Aggravated damage are possible, but they do not benefit from the 8-again or 9-again rules.

A doctor of Katastrofi can employ the "disintegration" variable (see below).

If the genius desires, he can select the "explosive weapon" variable with a blast area of up to 20 yards for free. See that variable, below.

Katastrofi ••••: Atomic fire, neurotoxins, and space-warping Armageddon

At this level of power, the genius can channel destructive cosmic forces, ripping apart the laws of the universe to obliterate her enemies. Her weapons reach their peak of Lethal damage. Her Aggravated weaponry is terrifying, and it shows: cryonic weaponry freezes the atmosphere itself, while lightning-projectors vomit plasma that fluoresces in the far ultraviolet and turns everything before it to smoking atomic ruin. Even a simple sword at this level of technological mastery dissolves flesh and titanium with equal efficiency.

Bashing and Lethal attacks benefit from the 8-again rule. Aggravated attacks benefit from the 9-again rule.

If the genius desires, he can select the "explosive weapon" variable with a blast area of up to 100 yards for free. See that variable, below.

Katastrofi ●●●●●: Long-range city-devastators and monster-busters

Mastery of Katastrofi offers near-complete command of the powers of devastation. The genius' weapons can scorch whole cities, and he turn mortals to ash and cinder. This level of power is not for the subtle: rank-five Katastrofic devices veritably burn with malevolent technological energy, and usually channel powers far beyond anything available to mortal science. To unleash his devastating designs, the genius harnesses miniature suns and black holes, rends space and time, and makes a mockery of laws like thermodynamics and the conservation of matter.

All attacks benefit from the 8-again rule.

If the genius desires, she can select the "explosive weapon" variable with a blast area of up to 1,000 yards (¼ mile) for free. See that variable, below.

Variables of Katastrofi:

Adjusted Range:

Katastrofic ranged weapons fall into five range bands—pistol, rifle, light battery, heavy battery, and bombardment battery—based on the Size of the wonder. Every reduction in range by one step (down to a minimum of "pistol" range) grants a +1 bonus. Every increase in range by one step (to a maximum of "bombardment battery" range) incurs a -1 penalty. (Note that without viewing devices, usually available through Apokalypsi, a character cannot see or shoot objects outside of visual range.)

A weapon's range cannot be reduced to "melee" or "thrown" by this means.

Armor Piercing:

Certain weapons are designed to cut clean (or gruesomely) through armor. Every three points of "Armor Piercing" incurs a -1 penalty.

Armor Piercing weapons do not ignore Durability, only Armor.

Artillery:

Requires Apokalypsi 1 and wonder Size 5+

This Variable applies to large, stationary ranged weapons (they cannot be fired while carried). Artillery weapons use Intelligence + Firearms to hit. The added advantage of artillery is that it can target things that are over the horizon—provided it can see them. Normal ranged weapons are limited to attacking in line-of-sight, even if a target is technically within range.

Attribute Damage:

Instead of removing Health levels, the weapon removes dots in an Attribute. Every three full Health Levels that would have been lost in a single attack are instead converted into a point of Attribute damage against one Attribute. The Attribute targeted is chosen by the genius when she creates the wonder. These recover as if they are Bashing damage at Katastrofi 1, Lethal or Bashing damage at Katastrofi 2, and Aggravated, Lethal, or Bashing damage at Katastrofi 3. (The genius may choose when the wonder is created).

Autofire:

The weapon is capable of automatic fire. Autofire functions as follows:

Short Burst: +1 vs. single target. Costs +1 Mania.

Medium Burst: +2 vs. 1-3 targets, -1 per roll for each target if there's more than one. Costs +2 Mania.

Long Burst: +3 vs. as many targets as meet Storyteller approval, -1 per roll for each target if there's more than one. Costs +3 Mania.

This variable incurs a -1 penalty.

Bleeding:

This wonder works like the "continuing damage" variable (see below), but there are two additional conditions. First, it only affects creatures with blood or some other means of fluid life-support (so it won't affect almost anything with Structure instead of Health). Second, unlike most continuing damage, it cannot be stopped by diving into water.

This variable incurs a -1 penalty.

Blinding:

Rather than, or in addition to, causing regular damage, an attack can damage or remove one of the target's senses (not just vision—any one sense can be targeted). For a weapon designed entirely to blind, instead of rolling damage normally, the attacker rolls the number of levels of damage that "would have" been caused plus *Katastrofi*, against the defender's Stamina + *Metanormal Advantage*.

Dramatic Failure: No effect, and the subject is immune to that genius' blinding attacks for the rest of the scene.

Failure: No effect.

Success: The target suffers a -1 penalty to that sense per success scored. If vision is targeted, this also penalizes attacks and Defense. This penalty is cumulative with additional attacks.

Exceptional Success, or a total penalty of -5: The subject loses that sense entirely.

The duration of the effect depends on the genius' *Katastrofi*: one point of penalty disappears per minute if the damage should be Bashing, one per day for Lethal, and the damage is permanent (but may be curable by medical science) if Aggravated. The genius can instead elect to cause less long-lasting damage when the weapon is constructed.

It is possible to "split" the effectiveness of an attack, so part of it causes regular damage and part of it goes toward blinding the target. So, a weapon that causes 4 damage can cause 3 damage and add +1 to the blinding roll, cause 1 damage add 3 to the blinding roll, or any other combination.

Continuing Damage:

Some weapons, such as napalm flame-throwers, poison gas, or clouds of flesh-eating nanites, continue to cause damage after their initial attack has concluded. If an attack using a weapon with this variable hits and causes damage, it attacks its target(s) automatically again at the beginning of the next turn with a number of dice equal to the weapon's base damage -1. It attacks on the subsequent turn at base damage -2, then at base damage -3, and so on until no damage dice remain.

Continuing damage causes the same type of damage as the initial attack: Bashing, Lethal, or Aggravated.

Continuing damage never benefits from the 8-again or 9-again rules.

Continuing damage from a weapon with the "disintegration" variable will disintegrate a target killed by its continuing damage.

Weapons with an explosive radius and this variable continue to cause damage to anyone and anything affected by the initial attack with a number of dice equal to their explosive force.

This variable incurs a -1 penalty.

Continuing damage can be ended immediately and entirely by immersing oneself in water. If this is not true (such as with poison-tipped darts), the variable incurs a -2 penalty.

Curing the damage caused by this attack, such as with an Exelixa wonder, also immediately stops the continuing damage.

Example: Rotgut Billy Bangs sprays a sheriff's deputy down with his napalm hose, a Katastrofi-3 wonder that causes 4 Lethal damage (9-again). For the attack, Rotgut rolls 9 dice (4 from the weapon, 2 from his Dexterity, 3 from his Firearms Skill) and hits, causing two Health Levels of Lethal damage to the deputy and afflicting the deputy with continuing damage.

At the beginning of Rotgut's next turn, the clinging fire automatically rolls (base damage of 4-1) 3 dice to continue harming the deputy. Even without the 9-again benefit, this causes another level of Lethal damage when the dice are rolled. At the beginning of Rotgut's next turn after that, two dice are rolled, causing another level of Lethal damage. Before another turn passes, the deputy jumps into a shower and turns it on, immersing himself in enough water to end the effect.

Defensive:

This variable, applicable to melee weapons only, grants a +1 bonus to Defense when wielded. It incurs a -1 penalty.

Disintegration:

With this variable, enemies are wiped from the face of reality rather than merely killed. Any attack from such a weapon that fills all of the target's Aggravated Health meters causes the subject and all his equipment and clothing to vaporize, leaving nothing of value.

This Variable has no cost. It can only be applied to weapons and attacks that cause Aggravated damage.

Vaporizing Stuff:

It will sometimes be necessary to determine exactly how much material is disintegrated with a single blast, such as when a genius is endeavoring to burn through a prison wall or to dig a trench with a ray weapon. Make a normal attack against the inanimate object. Every success removes one cubic yard of material. Ignore Durability unless targeting very unusual material, since disintegrating attacks always cause Aggravated damage. A single success is enough to land the shot accurately. The attacker can choose to disintegrate less material than the maximum allowed by the attack roll; only a Dramatic Failure should result in rebounding attacks or similar low farce.

This system is not intended for use against anything except scenery, or (at the Storyteller's discretion) unattended objects. Attacks against people, creatures, wonders, held objects, and most vehicles under most circumstances use regular combat rules.

Explosive Weapon:

Grenade launchers, poison gas, and cryonic spheres all spread over an area of effect, harming anyone within. Explosive weapons feature a blast area (measured in yards). Also, they do not have a damage rating, which would be added to the attacker's dice pool. Instead they have an explosive force rating, equal to one-half what the damage rating would be (rounded down). Explosive force adds automatic successes to a successful hit.

Example: Dr. Zornelius builds an explosive rocket-gun. After calculating all the variables, the weapon has an apparent damage of 6 Lethal. But since it's an explosive weapon, it instead has an explosive force of 3. (It still causes Lethal damage.) Six dice will not be added to Dr. Zornelius' attacks (in this case, Dexterity + Firearms). Instead, if the attack hits, the target receives three automatic successes worth of Lethal damage in addition to the number of Successes rolled. If Dr. Z's Dexterity + Firearms is 5, he rolls five dice to attack (plus or minus any special modifiers), and if the result is a hit, the attack causes 3 Lethal damage + the number of Successes rolled.

Explosive weapons also strike anyone within their primary blast area. Anyone in the primary blast area takes a number of levels of automatic damage equal to the weapon's explosive force, and also suffer the weapon's explosive force in damage dice.

Explosive force weapons apply 8-again or 9-again effects to damage dice they roll and to the weapon's initial attack roll.

Example: Spraying wildly into the crowd, Dr. Zornelius hits her target, a Lemurian, and also the beholden standing nearby. The beholden is within the rocket-gun's primary blast area. Since the weapon has an explosive force of three, the beholden is hit by three automatic successes worth of damage, and three dice are rolled to assess additional damage to the beholden.

An explosive weapon also has a secondary blast area equal to twice its primary blast area. Anyone caught in the secondary blast area takes a number of dice of damage equal to the weapon's explosive force.

Example: A wonder of Epikrato is caught in the secondary blast area of Dr. Zornelius' rocket gun. Since the weapon has an explosive force of three, three dice are rolled to determine the damage caused to the wonder.

A weapon's blast area and the genius' rank in Katastrofi determine the penalty incurred by the weapon.

Blast Area	Secondary Blast Area	Modifier (Katastrofi ●)	Modifier (Katastrofi ●●)	Modifier (Katastrofi ●●●)	Modifier (Katastrofi ●●●●)	Modifier (Katastrofi ●●●●●)
0	5 yards	-1	0	0	0	0
5 yards	10 yards	-2	0	0	0	0
10 yards	20 yards	-3	-1	0	0	0
20 yards	40 yards	-4	-2	0	0	0
50 yards	80 yards	-5	-3	-1	0	0
100 yards	200 yards	-6	-4	-2	0	0
500 yards (¼ mile)	1,000 yards (½ mile)	-7	-5	-3	-1	0
1,000 yards (½ mile)	1 mile	-8	-6	-4	-2	0
1 mile	2 miles	-9	-7	-5	-3	-1
10 miles	20 miles	-10	-8	-6	-4	-2

Note that higher levels of Katastrofi allow for explosive radius to be purchased "for free." This is not required: many geniuses with Katastrofi 4 simply want a damaging ray gun, not a gun that will incinerate everything inside the local McDonald's, including themselves.

Explosive Accuracy:

Some explosive weapons are more accurate than others. An explosive weapon can convert one point of explosive force into two points of regular damage. If reduced to zero explosive force, only targets in the primary blast radius are affected.

Extradiimensional Attack:

Requires Skafoi 4

The weapon's attack can strike targets in other realities as well as this one. This incurs a -1 penalty. The wonder can be "switched" instantly so that it affects just one or several of the realities that it can touch.

Good Balance and Weight:

This variable reduces the minimum Strength necessary to wield the weapon for any wonder of Size 5 or smaller. Every -1 penalty reduces the minimum Strength by two dots.

Immobilizing Attack:

Some or all of the wonder's damage is converted into a "grapple" attack against the target. This might

represent a glue gun or some kind of "tentacle" weapon.

The weapon rolls normally to hit. Do not add the weapon's damage to that dice pool, but treat the weapon as causing Bashing damage for purposes of 8-again or 9-again. If the attack roll is successful, roll the damage dice that would normally be added to the attack against the target's Strength + Brawl. (Use 8-again or 9-again like the attack roll.) Even one success means the subject is immobilized. (See "Immobilize Opponent" under "Grapple," *World of Darkness Core Rule Book* Page 157).

Example: The Brass Spider attacks a mugger with his web gun, a pistol that would normally cause four dice of damage. The Brass Spider has Katastrofi-2, meaning that Bashing attacks benefit from the 9-again rule. The Brass Spider's Dexterity + Firearms is 7, so he rolls 7 dice (9-again) for the attack. If the attack hits, the Brass Spider rolls four dice (9-again) against the target's Strength + Brawl. If the Brass Spider receives even one success, the target is immobilized.

The subject of an immobilizing attack can try to escape by spending an action trying to break free. This can be done every turn. The victim rolls a contested Strength + Brawl check – the genius' Katastrofi. The victim must get more successes than the genius got on the immobilization check.

Multiple immobilization attacks use the highest number of successes (and to break free, the highest Katastrofi), but those successes are not added to one-another.

A wonder can also place only part of its damage dice in immobilizing. For example, an acidic glue gun that would cause 6 Lethal damage might instead split its pool, causing 2 Lethal damage (granting 2 extra dice to the attack roll) and immobilizing with an effective Strength + Brawl of 4 dice. An immobilizing weapon must place at least one die of damage into immobilizing. If an immobilizing weapon causes Lethal or Aggravated damage, use that damage type to determine 8-again or 9-again.

Knockdown:

The weapon causes Knockdown. If hit, the target must make a successful Dexterity + Athletics roll as a reflexive action or be knocked prone and lose his action for that turn if he has not already performed one. A Dramatic failure on the Dexterity + Athletics roll also causes a point of Bashing damage, which may be absorbed automatically if armor is worn.

This variable incurs a -1 penalty.

Lingering Area Damage:

Some explosive attacks, such as radioactive bombs, poison gas, or swarms of blood-drinking insects, linger for a time, causing long-term damage to anyone in the blast radius. This variable requires the "explosive weapon" variable, and the area affected is equal to the (primary) blast area of the attack.

This variable incurs a penalty based on how long it lasts and a few other issues.

Duration of Effect	Penalty
Turns	-1
Minutes	-2
Hours	-3
Days	-4
Weeks	-5

Normally, one must breathe in the area of lingering damage to suffer the effect, and holding one's breath or

using a respirator nullifies the attack. If that is not the case (fairly common, with radiation- and swarm-based attacks), this variable incurs an additional -1 penalty.

Anyone who moves into the area or ends her turn in the area is attacked by a number of dice equal to the weapon's explosive force rating, every turn. These dice are rolled; they are not continuing automatic explosive force damage.

At the end of every unit of time (turns, minutes, etc.) that passes, the damage caused within the area is reduced by one die, until no damage dice remain.

Lingering damage causes the same type of damage as the initial attack: Bashing, Lethal, or Aggravated.

Lingering damage never benefits from the 8-again or 9-again rules.

Lingering damage from a weapon with the "disintegration" variable will disintegrate a target killed by its lingering damage.

Lingering damage remains in place. It does not cling to a target like the "continuing damage" variable and its effect cannot be moved.

Melee Weapon:

A melee weapon is limited to close range, and may resemble an axe, a sword, or some baffling and unfamiliar tangle of hooks and damaged spacetime.

Melee weapons grant a +1 bonus and require one point of Mania per rank to switch on. They remain active for the rest of the scene. (Not activated, they may function like improvised clubs, or not function at all, at the Storyteller's discretion). A melee weapon that requires no Mania to activate (a naturally sharp monomolecular sword, for example) grants no bonus.

No Visible Effect:

Normal Katastrofi weapons produce bolts of coruscating energy, jets of flame, or other overt and terrifying displays of destructive force. This variable replicates the effect of a dart gun, undetectable poison gas, or similar subtle attack. It cannot be combined with the "melee weapon" variable.

This variable incurs a -1 penalty.

Only Against Certain Materials:

This variable allows the genius to target only specific materials. There is no cost for this variable. Common choices include: only against non-living material, only against living things (to simulate a "neutron bomb"-style weapon), only against electronics (for "ion guns" or "EM weaponry"), only against the non-corporeal (for "ghost guns"), only against ferrous metals (for a rust-ray), and only against a specific type of creature (for a poison geared to a particular metabolism or anatomy).

Orbital Gun:

Minimum Size 8

This variable allows a wonder to damage extremely large vehicles, wonders, and fortresses more effectively, at the expense of not being very accurate against smaller targets.

If this attack hits a target directly, the target takes an additional 40 successes worth of automatic damage. This bonus damage is only for hits from direct attacks, not for targets in the weapon's explosive primary or secondary explosive blast radius (if there is any).

Attempting to target anything smaller than Size 30 is tricky: for every point of difference between the target's Size and 30, the attacker suffers a -1 penalty to hit. It is impossible to hit anything smaller than Size 10 with an orbital gun.

Orbital guns need not be placed in orbit. They need not in fact even be guns, though non-cannon applications of this variable are extremely rare.

Railgun:

Minimum Size 5

This variable allows a wonder to damage large vehicles and wonders more effectively, at the expense of not being very accurate against smaller targets.

If this attack hits a target directly, the target takes an additional 20 successes worth of automatic damage. This bonus damage is only for hits from direct attacks, not for targets in the weapon's explosive primary or secondary explosive blast radius (if there is any).

Attempting to target anything smaller than Size 15 is tricky: for every point of difference between the target's Size and 15, the attacker suffers a -1 penalty to hit.

Note that nothing prevents this type of wonder from being used for melee or thrown weapons, though such applications are rare.

Definition Note: Note that a "railgun," in regular scientific parlance, refers to a weapon that uses electromagnetic principles to fire solid metal slugs at supersonic speeds. The Inspired term comes from this type of weapon's most significant appearance, during the Secret Rail Wars that ran from 1858 to 1875, where weapons like this saw enormous use, mounted on wondrous railway cars.

Returning:

Requires Automata 1, (usually) Skafoi 2

Useful for thrown weapons, "returning" causes the weapon to return to its user automatically after it is thrown. Assume an effective speed of 100 yards per turn per dot of Inspiration. The object returns to its user at the beginning of the user's next turn.

It's possible to build a "legged" version of this wonder with Skafoi 1 (moves 10 yards per turn per dot of Inspiration and may be limited by difficult terrain) or a teleporting version with Skafoi 4 (assume that wherever its user can throw it, the wonder can get back.)

Presumably this variable could be placed on any wonder, allowing the wonder to return to the user if dropped nearby.

Thrown Weapon:

The wonder is intended to be thrown. Thrown wonders normally have no Mania cost to activate. If they do, they gain a +1 bonus.

Thrown weapons often employ the "limited uses" variable.

Variable Damage:

The weapon's damage is adjustable. It can be dialed down to any lower damage type (Disintegrating to Aggravated, Aggravated to Lethal, Lethal to Bashing), and reduced by any amount (before the shot is fired, not afterward). The reduction can either be in terms of damage dice (down to zero damage dice) or a worse roll-again number (including not rerolling tens). Variable damage does not grant a better roll-again number, even when damage is reduced from Aggravated to Lethal or from Lethal to Bashing.

A variable damage weapon can also be "overcharged." The genius can spend an amount of extra Mania up to his Katastrofi rating: each point of Mania spent increases the damage by 1 for the rest of the scene. Dialing damage down has no cost.

This variable incurs a -1 penalty.

Variable Explosion:

This variable requires the wonder to be an "explosive weapon." The variable incurs a -1 penalty, and allows the genius to dial the blast area down to any degree, even down to no blast area, in which case the weapon's explosive force rating converts to regular damage: two points of regular damage per one point of explosive force. (Note that the "explosive accuracy" variable will not apply to any attack that does not cause an explosion, so the genius gains no bonus from that variable if the weapon is dialed all the way down.)

METAPTROPI: THE AXIOM OF TRANSFORMATION

Devices to Transmute and Modify

"When Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from unsettling dreams,
he found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin."

-Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*

The Axiom of Metaptropi covers all manner of physical change and transformation that is not probabilistic, psychological, restorative, or enhancing. Basically, it is the alchemical Axiom, allowing a genius to change one thing into another. With it a genius can control and alter anything, from inorganic matter to living things. It is also the Axiom of false and distorted appearances, allowing the genius to create illusions and holograms.

Definitions:

Metaptropi *transforms*. Turning one thing into another, changing what something is made out of, changing size, and changing appearances are the provinces of Metaptropi. This tricky Axiom is used whenever a physical thing needs to be changed, transformed, polymorphed, or shapeshifted.

Common Notions:

A transmutation device's effects work instantly unless noted differently.

Construction:

A wonder designed to transform organic material, or to transform something into organic material, uses Medicine. A wonder designed to transform inorganic material, or to transform something into inorganic material, uses Crafts. A wonder that can handle both organic and inorganic transformation requires both Skills. All wonders of Metaptropi require Science to build.

Mania:

Most transformations cost one point of Mania for every five Size points worth of material or fraction thereof.

Changing Size requires one point of Mania per two points of Size changed.

An Exceptional Success often allows for an indefinite transformation. To maintain an indefinite transformation, the genius must bind the spent Mania into the object.

Illusions and holograms require one point of Mania per five points of Size or fraction thereof. (Sound-only illusions cost one point of Mania.) Illusions last for a full scene and can be deactivated by the genius at any time by using the wonder again (no roll needed).

The transformation of a discrete target only occurs when enough Mania has been spent to trigger the entire transformation. For example, a person-to-elephant transformation that costs six points of Mania only causes the person to transform once all six points of Mania have been spent; points cannot be assigned turn-by-turn.

Dice Pool:

All changes use Intelligence + Science.

Illusions use Wits + Expression.

Generally, a regular Success results in a transformation that lasts for the duration of a scene, while an Exceptional Success results in a transformation that lasts indefinitely, if the genius desires.

A genius can use his wonder of Metaptropi to reverse changes made by that same wonder without making a roll or spending Mania.

Releasing Permanent Transformations:

A permanent transformation usually binds Mania, just like a wonder. To release the transformation, so the genius can recover the Mania while the object still remains transformed, requires the genius to have access to the object and the Metaptropi wonder and to spend a *dot* of Willpower. To release the transformation and cause the subject to revert has no cost, but requires using the wonder again (no roll needed). The genius cannot release permanent transformations that are partly or totally internal or grafted wonders.

Range:

Wonders of Metaptropi have a range of touch; longer ranges can be purchased at the expense of effectiveness as a variable. Illusions have a range of ten feet per dot of Inspiration.

Resisting Transformation:

A living or active being can choose to resist transformations. The subject's Stamina + Metanormal Advantage is subtracted from the genius' dice pool. It's surprisingly hard to transform someone who resists.

A being that chooses to resist transformation does not suffer damage on a Dramatic Failure.

Lesser Effects:

A wonder of Metaptropi, unless explicitly limited, can handle lesser transformations as well as ones of its own rank. A rank-4 wonder can, for example, not just engage in full shapeshifting, but also grow and shrink things, change appearances, and transmute objects from one material to another.

Metaptropi •: Change appearance

As the genius begins her study of Metaptropi, she learns to change the external appearance of things. She can change surface images, patterns, texture, color, and outer form. These effects are largely illusory, based on changes in hues, feel, and light levels; they do not affect the physical world directly. A genius could turn someone into a "wolf-man," covering him with fur and giving him (non-functional) fangs and claws, but actually enhancing the target would require Exelixa or more advanced applications of Metaptropi.

The student of Metaptropi can also make superficial changes to anything else in his environment, such as changing a gold brick to resemble an iron ingot (in appearance, not weight or other properties), or making a plain cup resemble an ornate goblet. These changes are largely cosmetic, and they cannot entirely disguise what the object is: a genius could make a pistol gleam like gold and cover it in baroque designs that would impress the court of the Sun King, maybe make it sprout some little glass flowers, but it's still recognizable as a pistol. (A genius could, however, make the pistol look like a *toy* pistol, which is a useful trick.) This level of Metaptropi also does not change an object's functionality: a pistol still fires bullets that can kill a person, no matter how dolled-up it might be. This level of Metaptropi is most useful for disguise, concealment, and impressing people.

A living person can also be disguised at this level of ability.

Dramatic Failure: The subject is rendered absurd or hideous for the rest of the scene. If a person has the Striking Looks Merit, she loses all benefits.

Failure: The subject's appearance remains unchanged. The genius can try again.

Success: The subject's appearance changes, rendering him unrecognizable. If the genius wants to make the subject resemble a specific person, the subject gains one automatic success on any Wits + Subterfuge attempt to succeed in the disguise per dot of the genius' Inspiration, and no other ingredients are needed. The effect lasts for one scene.

Exceptional Success: The subject's appearance changes with unusual solidity. The effect can last indefinitely if the genius wants. The Mania spent is bound to the object and cannot be recovered while the transformed object exists.

Suggested Modifiers: Head only (+1), change of ethnicity (-1), change of gender (-2), change of species (-3), genius has only seen target in passing (-2), genius has not seen the target often (-1), genius is intimately familiar with the target (+1), significant change in height, Size, or apparent bulk (-1), target resembles subject (+1), simple object like a box or tree (+2), moderately complicated object with moving parts like a watch or gun (+1), incredibly complicated or artistic object (-1 to -3)

Camouflage:

Changing an object's color can also be used to cover it in camouflage, allowing it to blend in.

Dramatic Failure: The subject is covered in garish, awful colors that incur a -5 penalty on all attempts to hide.

Failure: The subject does not change. The genius can try again.

Success: The subject's skin or outer coloration changes. This grants a +1 bonus to all Stealth checks for concealment per dot of the genius' Inspiration. If the effect only targets a person's skin, wearing clothes can ruin the effect. This transformation lasts one scene.

Exceptional Success: The transformation lasts indefinitely if the genius desires. The Mania spent is bound to the object and cannot be recovered while the camouflaged object exists.

Suggested Modifiers: Subject already has some suitable camouflage (+1), subject is garish and noticeable (-1)

Metaptropi ●●: Change of substance and free-standing illusions

As the genius' grasp of Metaptropi grows, she gains the key power of this Axiom, learning how to transform one material into another. The ease of this transformation depends on how alike the materials are. As always, a genius rolls Intelligence + Science. Making the change costs one point of Mania per five Size points or fraction thereof transformed.

Dramatic Failure: The genius botches the attempt. The subject takes one level of Lethal damage from internal disruption; small, fragile, or valuable objects may be destroyed or disfigured.

Failure: The subject remains unchanged. The genius can try again.

Success: The subject transforms for the duration of the scene.

Exceptional Success: The transformation lasts indefinitely if the genius desires. The Mania spent is bound to the object and cannot be recovered while the transformed object exists.

Suggested Modifiers: The materials are nearly identical (+1), the materials are largely unrelated (-1), phase change, like a solid object to liquid (-3), the genius is attempting an organic-to-inorganic change or vice-versa (-2), every point of Durability that the target possesses (-1), every point of Resources that the new material is worth more than the old material (-1 per point of Size)

Fiddling with Biology:

A genius can manipulate the crude biology of a living creature with this level of Metaptropi, turning fat into oxygen-rich blood, hair into muscle, and bones into steel-hard replacements. These changes result in a trade-off of ability, rather than the flat advantage that Exelixi can confer, since the genius is merely changing the subject's make-up, rather than manipulating things at a cellular level. However, these changes can promote useful advantages.

The genius rolls as above to affect this sort of change, and spends the same amount of Mania (one point per five Size points or fraction thereof). She can increase the Strength, Dexterity, or Stamina by a number of dots equal to her Inspiration (capped by the genius' Stat maximum, based on Inspiration). However, she must reduce other Physical Attributes by a corresponding amount. A genius with Inspiration 2 could add two points to Dexterity (to a maximum of 5), but would have to reduce Strength or Stamina by two, or both Strength and Stamina by one. Attributes cannot be reduced to below one dot this way.

Destabilizing the World Economy:

Creating valuable materials is possible, but it costs additional Mania if the genius wants to make the effect permanent, and also requires more Successes than normal.

Material	Number of Successes Needed to Make Change Permanent	Number of Additional Mania Bound Per Five Points of Size or Fraction Thereof
Copper, tin	6 Successes	+1 Mania
Steel, high-quality ceramic	7 Successes	+2 Mania
Silver, some semiprecious stones	8 Successes	+3 Mania
Gold, platinum, some semiprecious stones	9 Successes	+5 Mania
Most precious stones	10 Successes	+10 Mania
Diamonds	11 Successes	+15 Mania
Plutonium	12 Successes	+20 Mania

Otherwise the transformation will last one scene like normal, which is just enough to offload a cubic meter of

gold and then have very angry people chasing you five minutes later.

Hurting People:

Metaptropi at this level can be used as a weapon to injure people, either by transforming them directly (turning bits or pieces into salt, for example), or by turning things near a person into something dangerous, like turning an overhead beam into corrosive acid.

If the wonder is designed to cause Health level damage, such as a weapon that turns chunks of a target to salt or dead moths, it should actually be built as a wonder of Katastrofi: turning chunks of an enemy to salt is no different from turning chunks of an enemy to parts that aren't attached anymore. The wonder requires two dots in Metaptropi and the attack can't cause Bashing damage, but is otherwise treated as a regular Katastrofic weapon.

If instead the wonder causes an all-or-nothing transformation, the device can be built with Metaptropi alone. Making the transformation requires an Intelligence + Science check. The subject's Stamina + Metanormal Advantage subtract from the genius' successes. The target can be turned into nearly anything. However, turning a target into something like gas or water counts as "disintegration" and requires at least four dots in Katastrofi. Other than that restriction, though, a wonder of Metaptropi can transform someone's flesh into almost anything: ice, bronze, cheese....This effect can be reversed, but if the subject has suffered damage in the alternate form, that damage carries over. The exact damage effects of mice having nibbles on a beholden who was turned to cheese and left in a warehouse overnight are left to the Storyteller to determine. Creatures turned into non-standard forms in this way normally lose consciousness upon being transformed.

Finally, a wonder of Metaptropi at this level can hurt people by making a hazard of things around them. The "old hat-to-acid trick" requires Katastrofi to aim and employ accurately. The genius makes a regular attack against the target, rolling Intelligence + Science + the wonder's Core Modifier to, for example, turn a hat into acid. This is a regular attack and Defense and armor apply normally. Keep in mind that normal Metaptropi devices have a range of touch.

Mechanical Holograms:

A genius with two dots of Metaptropi can build a wonder that projects illusions by transforming air, light, color, and sound waves. These illusions can be free-standing; they need not be "draped" over an object, and they need not have any external reality.

Illusions have a base range of 10' per dot of Inspiration. Illusions that move past that range disappear.

Holographic images can confuse and mislead people. Illusions require one turn to generate. They cost one point of Mania per five Size points of illusion (or fraction thereof) and allow a genius to make a Wits + Expression check.

Dramatic Failure: The illusion is obviously fake, and its source is equally obvious.

Failure: The illusion fails to appear properly; it resembles a back-projected image or something similarly artificial. The genius can try again.

Success: The illusion appears entirely real and convincing.

Exceptional Success: The illusion looks so real that it's impossible to detect as false except under the most egregious of circumstances, like walking through it, which will not occur accidentally.

Suggested Modifiers: A regular object with no moving parts like a tree or hat (+2), a regular object that moves, like a clock (+1), an animal (+1), a knight in full armor and helmet (+1), a person (+0), a weird monster or alien (+0), both vision and sound (-1)

A genius must maintain control of the illusions, or they will simply remain still. However, Automata can be used to make the illusions behave in a realistic fashion without constant oversight.

With Automata-1, illusions can be made to go through simple, non-interactive behaviors without oversight: a genius could create guards that patrol a hallway. They will not respond to environmental cues on their own.

With Automata-2, the illusions can react in pre-programmed ways. They can remember a number of "if-then" conditionals (like, "If you see anyone but me, turn and tell them to leave") equal to the genius' Inspiration.

With Automata-3, the illusions can react in a more intelligent and convincing manner, and are capable of simple independent behavior. They can also attack independently, but though they can say a few words or sentences, they are not convincingly intelligent.

With Automata-4, the illusions appear fully intelligent and can engage in extremely complicated conversations.

An illusion must be "additive." That is, mechanical holograms create the appearance of objects; they do not render objects or any part of an object invisible.

Touching or striking an illusion may reveal it. The genius rolls Wits + Expression vs. the Wits + Composure of someone who has struck the illusion to respond convincingly. The genius' roll is penalized by the number of Health Levels of damage the illusion "would" have suffered. (Illusions never have Defense or Armor.) If the genius has Automata-2 or higher, this roll is made automatically; otherwise the genius must be controlling the illusion machine, or the result is automatically a Dramatic Failure. Every attack on one of the genius' illusions after the first, per round, incurs a cumulative -2 penalty, unless the illusion generator has Automata-2, in which case there is no cumulative penalty.

Dramatic Failure: The contact causes the illusion to wink out of existence.

Failure: The illusion fails to respond believably to the contact. Anyone who sees it on that turn will realize it is an illusion. The attacker is guaranteed to see it, as are people not engaged in combat. Other combatants can roll Wits + Composure to notice that the illusion did not react correctly to contact.

Success: The illusion responds convincingly to the illusion.

Exceptional Success: The illusion responds so well that the subject will only have doubts again in that scene under the most egregious of circumstances. Further attacks from that attacker will not reveal the illusion.

Illusions can also "attack" people who believe in the illusions. Though illusions cause no real damage, they can terrify and bewilder. A genius can attack with his illusions by making a Wits + Expression + Core Modifier check as if it were an attack roll against a target. Every attack requires one action from the genius, no matter how many illusions the genius has created, unless the illusion generator possesses at least Automata-4. (If it does, the generator can make a number of automatic attacks equal to the genius' Inspiration.)

Dramatic Failure: The illusion is disrupted in its attempt to attack and winks out.

Failure: The illusion appears to miss or otherwise does not affect the target.

Success: The subject is "hit" and appears to suffer an injury. This is psychologically traumatizing; the subject rolls Composure; any successes subtract successes from this roll. If the illusion has any successes left over, the subject loses a point of Willpower.

Exceptional Success: The subject appears to suffer an unusually horrible injury. The subject rolls Composure; any successes subtract from this roll. If the illusion has any successes left over, every success costs the subject a point of Willpower.

Keep in mind that these wounds are also illusions, so the targets must be within the illusion generator's range. Illusions hurling javelins that vanish after twenty feet can clue people in to something being wrong. The illusory wounds of a person who moves out of range disappear; this does not restore Willpower, but it may clue the victim into the nature of her attackers.

A subject that does not naturally possess Willpower cannot be affected by illusions

If the subject is "injured" by an illusion while not having any Willpower left, the subject starts to suffer Bashing damage as terror overloads his biological functions.

A person must be *aware* of the illusion to take psychological damage from it.

Automata of ranks 2 or 3 are too stupid to be harmed by illusions, though they still see and can try to interact with them. Automata of rank 4 or higher are affected normally by illusions. Mechanical (non-biological) wonders of Automata do not suffer any damage from illusions once their Willpower is drained, however.

Metaptropi ●●●: Growing and shrinking

The genius can change an object's Size, causing it to grow or shrink. This requires an Intelligence + Science check. Unless specified otherwise, a shrink attack affects all of a creature's equipment, clothing, and held items, including wonders.

Do not modify a wonder's Core Modifier when it is grown or shrunk; its effectiveness remains constant.

Dramatic Failure: The opposite effect may occur, or a rebound effect might cause the genius to change Size.

Failure: The subject remains at its current Size. The genius can try again.

Success: The subject's Size increases or decreases by one per dot of Inspiration. This costs one point of Mania per two points of Size changed. The effect lasts for one scene.

Exceptional Success: The genius has a choice. Either the subject retains its new Size indefinitely (binding Mania like normal), or the subject will still change for only one scene, but the degree to which Size can be changed is no longer capped by the genius' Inspiration.

An object cannot change Size more than once per turn. (It can move through more than one Size point worth of Size; it simply cannot be repeatedly grown and shrunk in the same turn; the second and subsequent attempts in the same turn have no effect.)

Shrunk targets suffer a -1 penalty to Strength for every two points of Size lost and a -1 penalty to Base Move for every point of Size lost. Weapons, integral or otherwise, cause -1 damage per point of Size lost (to a minimum of 0; weapons with a damage bonus of 0 do not benefit from 8-again or 9-again rules). Shrunk targets gain a +1 to Defense for every two points of Size lost.

Likewise, enlarged targets gain +1 to Strength and base Speed for every two Size points by which they are increased, but suffer a -1 penalty to Defense for every two Size points gained. Enlarged weapons cause +1 damage per point of Size increased.

Increased Size offers increased Health levels. See the rules for Temporary Health Dots (*World of Darkness Core Rule Book*, Page 173) for what happens a character returns to his normal Size.

Decreased Size removes Health Levels. For example, a character of Size 5 and Stamina 2 who would normally have (5+2) 7 Health Levels only has (1+2) 3 Health Levels if reduced to Size 1. This means shrinking can incapacitate and even kill a wounded person.

While a character is reduced in Size, keep track of the amount of Health damage suffered in each category (Bashing, Lethal, and Aggravated) while shrunk. If his Size increases toward his regular Size, and the character has suffered damage in a given category, he gains one extra Health Level of damage per point of Size increased toward normal in the worst category. If a character suffers no damage of a specific type while shrunk, he never gains additional damage of that type.

Example: Arturo, long-suffering beholden to The Topologist, is reduced from his regular Size of 5 to a Size of 3. His Stamina is 4, so normally Arturo has (5+4) 9 Health Levels. A previous misadventure (before he transforms) has earned him a level of Lethal damage. When shrunk, his new Health is (2+4) 6, and he retains his one level of Lethal damage. While shrunk, he suffers one Bashing and two Lethal damage. When returned to his regular Size, which is three Size points different from Size 2, his two levels of Lethal damage (the worst type of damage he suffered) become (2+3) five levels of Lethal damage. With the additional level of Lethal damage suffered before the shrinking adventure and one level of Bashing damage (that does not increase), Arturo has suffered a total of six levels of Lethal damage and one level of Bashing damage. He would probably like to lie down.

Metaptropi ●●●●: Changing shape

As a genius approaches mastery of Metaptropi, she gains the ability to change an object's shape and form, not just what it is made from. This power, basically, allows a genius to turn anything into anything else, limited only by the laws of nature as they apply to objects in the world.

An implementor of Metaptropi can engage in full shapeshifting, altering a creature's form completely. He can turn his minions into deadly bears or transform a bloodthirsty dinosaur into a docile rabbit. (Actually, a bloodthirsty rabbit: the target's mind remains the same.)

Changing an object's form works much like creating an automaton with the Axiom of Automata. If the transformation is successful, the genius can spend Mania to fuel the transformation. Every point of Mania spent on fueling the transformation becomes a Transmutation Point. Transmutation Points work much like Automation Points.

Costs in Transmutation Points are as follows:

Changing Size: One Transmutation Point per two points of Size increased or decreased. Size changes affect Strength, damage, Speed, and other characteristics as rank-3 Size-changing.

Increasing a Physical Attribute (requires Exelixa-1): One Transmutation Point per dot. Attributes are limited to the genius' Stat maximum, based on Inspiration.

Decreasing a Physical Attribute: Returns one Transmutation Point per two dots.

Increasing or adding a Physical Merit (requires Exelixa-1): One Transmutation Point per two dots.

Increasing Speed: One Transmutation Point per two points of racial Speed added.

Flight (requires Skafoi-2): One Transmutation Point per five points of Base Speed while flying.

Natural Attack (requires Katastrofi-2): One Transmutation Point per point of damage. (Most animals can cause Lethal damage instead of Bashing with their natural weapons.) Damage is capped at the number of dots of Katastrofi the genius has.

Natural Armor Plating (requires Prostasia-1): One Transmutation Point per point of Armor. An animal's natural armor only defends against general damage, not ballistic or Aggravated damage. Armor is capped at the number of dots of Prostasia the genius has.

Low-light Vision (requires Apokalypsi-1): One Transmutation Point for the ability to see as well as a cat at night.

Non-standard Body: One Transmutation Point to turn into a form that has no historical antecedent, such as a dragon (instead of a dinosaur) or a lurching humanoid monstrosity (instead of a gorilla).

Non-organic Body: Two Transmutation Point to turn into a form that is not organic, such as a zombie or cyborg.

Most of the variables of Automata also apply to an alternate form built with Transmutation Points. Relevant variables include: "biological" (most organic forms possess this variable), "decentralized anatomy," "extra manipulators," "increased manipulator range," "no fine manipulators," "cannot move" (in case the genius wants to become a tree), "only one manipulator," and "wheels."

A transformed subject retains its Mental and Social Attributes and its Mental Skills. The status of its Social Merits depend on whether the Storyteller thinks the genius' favorite beholden can still qualify for the Barfly Merit when turned into a T. Rex. The transformed subject retains any templates—a genius still possesses Inspiration, for example, and everything that goes along with it. Likewise, a vampire still burns in sunlight and possesses a Vitae pool that can power Disciplines. (Many powerful metanormal creatures possess shapeshifting abilities that, if employed, may nullify these transformations.)

Like with Automata, creatures transformed by Metaptropi can benefit from integral wonders. However, transforming into an existing creature dispenses with the need for some integral wonders, allowing a genius to grow claws and wings with Transformation Points rather than requiring Skafoi or Katastrofi.

If more or better options are desired, a genius can add integral wonders to any non-standard body plan. Every dot of other Axioms spent on integral wonders costs three Transmutation Points. Note that these integral wonders *do not* receive a +1 bonus for being integral, since they have to be that way.

(It is recommended that a genius have several sample forms worked out beforehand, since transmutations of this order are fairly complex.)

Once the genius has a form in mind, she rolls Intelligence + Science. If the subject is unwilling, the subject's Stamina + Metanormal Advantage roll subtracts from the genius' dice pool.

Dramatic Failure: The shapeshifting fails and causes one point of Lethal damage to the subject. (Targets that resisted do not suffer damage; instead, they are immune to the genius' Metaptropi attempts for the rest of the scene.)

Failure: The shapeshifting fails and the subject retains its form. The genius can try again.

Success: The subject takes on the desired form. This costs a number of Mania points equal to the Transmutation Points required to make the change. The transformation lasts for one scene.

Exceptional Success: The effect can last indefinitely if the genius wants. The Mania spent is bound to the subject and cannot be recovered while the transformed subject exists.

Suggested Modifiers: The materials are nearly identical (+1), the materials are largely unrelated (-1), the genius is attempting an organic-to-inorganic change or vice-versa (-2), every point of Durability that the target possesses (-1), the genius is creating an animal or thing that exists in nature and with which he is familiar (+1)

Shapeshifting Wonders:

It's possible at this level of Metaptropi to build wonders that turn from one form or another, or even that turn from one type of wonder to another type of wonder. A genius could build a normal-looking staff that turns into an energy cannon, or a jet plane that turns into a big, scary robot.

To build such a wonder, the genius must bind an amount of Mania equal to the ranks of both forms. For example, a jet plane/robot would require (at least) three points of Mania for the Skafoi jet and three points of Mania for the Automata robot.

The cost to change back and forth is the highest of three factors: 1) the rank of the highest form available to the transforming wonder, 2) the number of different types of forms the wonder can turn into, or 3) the number of steps of Size moved through between the smallest and largest transformation, or fraction thereof. (The Sizes are usually 0, 1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-11, 12-29, and 30+; a wonder whose smallest form is Size 1 and whose largest is Size 10 would 1 to 12, so 4 steps, or 4 Mania.)

So, a jet (Size 20) that turned into a robot (also Size 20) with those being the only two forms costs as follows: the highest rank is 3 (for Automata or Skafoi), the number of forms is 2, and the Size change is 0. The highest number is 3, so it costs three points of Mania to change forms.

It is possible for one or more forms to be a mundane object. Wonders still suffer Havoc when in this form.

It takes an action to transform the wonder.

Metaptropi ●●●●: Irrational transformations

A master of Metaptropi can engage in transformations that seem impossible or irrational. At lesser levels of ability, a genius might turn a person into stone or into smoke: now, a genius can turn a person into stone or smoke, and that person remains conscious and mobile. A subject's properties when so transformed depend on what phase of matter the genius inflicts on the subject.

Solid:

The subject gains Armor equal to the Durability of the material or the genius' Prostaia, whichever is lower. Base Speed is reduced by an amount equal to the material's Durability. The subject treats ballistic attacks as Bashing damage. If the subject is made of something extremely heavy, his increased weight may prevent him from walking on certain surfaces. If trying to climb, jump, or perform most other Athletics Skill checks, the subject suffers a -1 penalty per point of Durability of the base material.

Liquid:

The subject can flow like water, gaining Armor equal to the genius' Proxasia against all but ice and explosive force attacks. Strength drops to one dot. The subject treats bullets and all cutting attacks as Bashing damage. Due to the material's tendency to seek the lowest level, the subject cannot jump or climb. The subject can flow into nearly anything, and can get into any area that isn't entirely water-tight.

Gas:

The subject loses solidity and becomes gas-like, able to fly at Base Speed + Dexterity. The subject can only suffer damage from fire and area-effect explosion attacks, or by wind attacks. A strong breeze pushes the subject in the direction of the wind unless he spends the whole turn avoiding being moved. Gale-forced winds push the subject around regardless of his attempts to resist the effect. Hurricane-force winds do the same, and cause one point of Lethal damage per round. The subject has no Strength score, but can manipulate the physical world for one turn with an effective Strength of one dot by spending a point of Willpower. The subject can flow into any area that is not entirely air-tight.

All Forms:

Since the subject is (probably) not organic, most poisons will not affect the subject. The subject does not need to breathe or metabolize while in this form.

Attempting a phase change requires a Intelligence + Science check. Success costs one point of Mania per five points of Size transformed.

Dramatic Failure: The effect fails and causes one point of Lethal damage to the subject.

Failure: The effect fails. The genius can try again.

Success: The phase change succeeds, affecting the subject and all its equipment and clothing. The effect lasts for one scene.

Exceptional Success: The effect can last indefinitely if the genius wants. The Mania spent is bound to the subject and cannot be recovered while the transformed subject exists.

Suggested Modifiers: Immersed in or surrounded by the target material, such as being entirely airborne and changing into gas (+1), in an environment hostile to the material (-1)

Invisibility and Other Modes of Concealment:

A master of Metaptropi can also neutralize certain "emanations" from an object. This is typically used to eliminate visibility (that is, turn the subject invisible), but it can be used to eliminate any sort of emanation, one at a time: light, sound, heat, smell, mental emanations, or electromagnetic signatures. Attempting to make a subject invisible to one sense requires a Intelligence + Science check. Success costs one point of Mania per five Size points of the subject.

Dramatic Failure: The subject becomes unusually "bright" to that sense and impossible to miss or ignore. This effect lasts for the rest of the scene.

Failure: The subject remains fully visible. The genius can try again.

Success: The subject and all its equipment and clothing fades from one sense for the duration of the scene.

Exceptional Success: The effect can last indefinitely if the genius wants. The Mania spent is bound to the subject and cannot be recovered while the transformed subject exists.

Phasing:

At this level, the genius can also move an object "out of phase." An out of phase object is insubstantial to anything that is in phase. Out of phase objects can move at their regular Speed in any direction so long as they are in contact with something solid. They cannot fly, and automatically move toward the ground at a rate of one yard per turn until in contact with a solid surface. They can pass through solid objects, but this causes one point of Bashing damage per turn in a solid object. They still need to breathe, but they can breathe in-phase air. Out of phase creatures are still visible and audible, though partially transparent and hard to notice (+3 to Stealth).

A genius can also move an object "far out of phase." Something that is far out of phase is entirely undetectable to in-phase creatures. Further, it can move in any direction (including up or down) at its regular Speed, and suffers no harm when passing through solid objects. It still needs to breathe, and can breathe in-phase air.

Things that are out of phase (and far out of phase) can interact with one-another normally, as if they were fully solid. Things that are out of phase can interact with things that are far out of phase, and vice-versa.

Moving something into or out of phase requires a Intelligence + Science check. Success costs one point of Mania per five points of Size.

Dramatic Failure: The subject remains in phase and takes one point of Lethal damage.

Failure: The subject remains in phase. The genius can try again.

Success: The subject and all its equipment and clothing moves out of phase or far out of phase, and remains there for the duration of the scene.

Exceptional Success: The effect can last indefinitely if the genius wants. The Mania spent is bound to the subject and cannot be recovered while the transformed subject exists.

Suggested Modifiers: Moving subject back into phase (+1), moving subject from its normal state to far out of phase (-1)

Pocket Dimensions:

A master of Metaptropi can create places and objects that are bigger on the inside than than the outside. The amount of space increase available to a wonder of this type is based on the genius' Inspiration, modified by the Core Modifier.

Inspiration + Core Modifier	Size Increase	Access Cost
0 or lower	10% larger on the inside	1 point of Mania
1	50% larger on the inside	1 point of Mania
2	Twice as large on the inside	2 points of Mania
3	3x as large on the inside	2 points of Mania
4	5x as large on the inside	3 points of Mania
5	10x as large on the inside	3 points of Mania
6	20x as large on the inside	4 points of Mania
7	50x as large on the inside	4 points of Mania
8	100x as large on the inside	5 points of Mania
9	500x as large on the inside	5 points of Mania
10+	1,000x as large on the inside	5 points of Mania

The Size of one of these wonders does not affect its Core Modifier. A genius can choose a Size increase (and hence an access cost) less than the maximum. Accessing the wonder opens the door from the inside to the outside for the duration of the scene. This door can be closed at any time, but doing so means more Mania must be spent to gain access again.

Variables of Metaptropi:

Attached Transformation:

In order for the subject to remain transformed, the wonder must remain attached to it. This is good for "gorilla helmets" that turn anyone wearing it into a gorilla, or masks that trigger a disguise when worn. Removing the wonder ends the transformation immediately.

If the subject is moved out of phase or otherwise altered by the transformation, the wonder remains attached, following its wearer into the new phasing state.

This variable grants a +1 bonus. It cannot be combined with "grafted" or "internalized" or an integral wonder.

Increased Range:

The wonder's range increases to ten feet per dot of Inspiration. This incurs a -1 penalty. Every additional -1 penalty doubles the range. This Variable is not compatible with the "Metaptropi ray" variable.

Limited Illusions:

A Metaptropi illusion generator normal creates a full range of holographic audiovisual illusions. An illusion generator that only creates audio illusions, or only creates 2D images, grants a +2 bonus. An illusion generator that selects from a limited range of created illusions (only dogs, only crowds) grants a +1 bonus. An illusion generator that only creates one thing (only a trio of green tentacle-monsters) grants a +2 bonus.

Metaptropi Ray:

Requires Katastrofi 1

Instead of producing an emanation that automatically hits nearby targets, the wonder shoots forth a ray. This requires one point of Mania to activate for a scene and a Wits + Firearms + Katastrofi check to hit and otherwise causes the wonder to be treated like a weapon. The wonder's range is based on the weapon's configuration (pistol, rifle, or various sorts of artillery). See the range section under Katastrofi.

If the wonder uses this variable, it can also make use of the following variables of Katastrofi: "adjusted range" (but only to make range longer), "autofire," "explosive weapon," "extradimensional attack," "good balance and weight," "limited ammunition," "variable damage," and "variable explosion." Metaptropi "explosions" merely spread the area of effect out to the main blast radius; there is no conversion to Explosive Force.

A Metaptropi ray grants a +3 bonus to its effect if it hits a target ten or more feet away that is not the user.

Metaptropi rays cannot be applied to illusion-generators.

Self Only:

This variable is usually applied to internalized wonders of Metaptropi. It indicates that the genius can only modify himself; he cannot affect other people. This grants a +1 bonus. It cannot be combined with "attached transformation."

Specific Transformation:

A wonder of Metaptropi can be built that turns a target into only one material (or one type of creature). This grants a +2 bonus when using the wonder. Alternatively, a wonder of Metaptropi can be built that targets only one type of material (or one type of creature). This grants a +1 bonus. A transmuter that only turns one type of thing into one other type of thing grants a total +3 bonus.

A transmuter that only offers disguises grants a +1 bonus. So does a transmuter that only grants camouflage, only causes phasing, only turns a subject invisible, etc.

A transmuter that only changes Size grants a +1 bonus. One that only grows or only shrinks grants a +2 bonus.

Transmutation Booth:

A transmutation booth changes anything within the device, and the cost does not increase based on the Size of the target. (Though any transformation costs at least one point of Mania.) Further, the cost for transformations is halved. Its benefit is that it can transmute anything with a Size less than its own Size. The disadvantages are twofold. First, it cannot have any range, and second, any transmutation booth that is big enough to transform big things easily is big enough that it is almost impossible to move.

This variable grants neither a bonus nor a penalty.

PROSTASIA: THE AXIOM OF PROTECTION **Machines to Shield and Defend**

"The chess board is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of Nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just and patient. We also know, to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance." -Thomas Huxley

The Axiom of Prostasia is often seen as a simple and unsubtle study: Prostasia protects. From steel plates to protective scales to rippling waves of force, this Axiom is designed to keep the genius and her allies safe from harm.

Definitions:

Prostasia *protects*. Though its simplest application is to put metal and gravity between the genius and the enemy, any sort of protection is within Prostasia's purview. Any wonder that guards, shields, protects, or defends uses Prostasia.

Common Notions:

By default, a Prostasia wonder does one thing and one thing only: provide Armor.

Prostasia	Basic Level of Armor Provided
•	3
••	4
•••	5
••••	6
•••••	7

A wonder of Prostasia's Core Modifier modifies the Armor score.

A suit of armor's Size is equal to the wearer's.

Construction:

Physical armor, typically made of metal or ceramic, requires Crafts to build. Organic armor is possible and uses Medicine, though it requires Exelixa-1 to strengthen the components. Various "ray" shields and other devices use Science.

Mania:

Armor that is worn does not require Mania. Other wonders of Prostasia require one point of Mania per rank of Prostasia in the wonder to activate, and remain active for the duration of the scene.

Resistance:

By default, Prostasia armor provides equal general and ballistic protection. Prostasia armor is not automatically bulletproof. However, Prostasia armor protects normally against Aggravated attacks caused by powerful Katastrophic weapons and by other means.

Prostasia and Pressure:

A single rank in Prostasia is sufficient to protect a person, a vehicle, or an automaton from crushing ocean depths or other sorts of high-pressure environments, so long as the wonder covers the subject's entire body. This applies only to full suits of armor and to shield-style protection that would apply to crushing force, not to vests or other partial protective measures (or, obviously, to psychic screens or other non-physical defenses). The "barrier" variable is not necessary to benefit from this function.

Prostasia and Radar:

Any amount of Prostasia of nearly any sort is, when activated, enough to render its wearer or user invisible to radar, sonar, and similar mundane scanning technologies.

Vehicles, Durability, and Prostasia:

Vehicles (and buildings) receive Durability from Prostasia rather than Armor. This includes mundane vehicles enhanced by Prostasia and wonders of Skafoi. A variable can grant automata Durability instead of Armor provided they have the "durable" variable.

To find the amount of Durability that such a machine receives, multiply the Armor that the Prostasia wonder would grant by the base Durability as determined by Size, as follows.

Size	Base Durability
0-2	1
3-8	2
9-15	3
16-25	4
26+	5

So, a cloud bike (Size 6, base Durability 2) with basic Prostasia 3 protection (Armor 5) would have a Durability of (2x5) 10. Generally it requires Katastrophic railguns and orbital guns to do more than scratch the paint of a Prostasia-protected structure.

Armor for Vehicles and Buildings:

Armor for a vehicle or building usually have a Size equal to one-tenth the vehicle's Size. Smaller versions (one-twentieth the vehicle's Size) incur a -1 penalty, while large ones (two-fifths the vehicle's Size) grant a +1 bonus but incur a -2 penalty to the vehicle's Handling. (Armor for buildings is often built extra-large because

it doesn't matter how maneuverable a building is.)

Shielding and Durability:

Shielding devices need to be activated to grant their benefit to a vehicle or building, but once activated they provide the indicated Durability multiplier. They also grant their user an effective Structure equal to Size plus the new, increased Durability. This "bonus" Structure is removed before actual physical Structure damage is caused to the wonder. However, once this bonus Structure is all removed, the shields go down, reducing Durability to its unshielded levels. Once down, the shields cannot be reactivated for the rest of the scene.

Stacking Armor:

Wondrous armor stacks only at certain times and in certain ways. Physical armor, mundane or wondrous, never stacks with other physical armor. Shielding devices do not stack with other shielding devices. Shielding devices *do* stack with physical armor, whether it's mundane or wondrous, but in this case, the Armor rating for the two types of Armor is equal to the higher Armor rating +1, *not* to the sum of the two Armor ratings.

Stacking ablative armor is ineffective, as equal damage is caused to every type of ablative armor worn. So if an attack causes three levels of Lethal damage, the attack removes three levels of ablative Health from each type of ablative armor worn.

If one set of armor is bulletproof, the armor set is considered bulletproof and ballistic damage is reduced to Bashing.

Stacking ablative and regular armor is difficult. First, one must be physical armor and the other must be a shielding device, as required by the above stacking rules. Even then, the ablative armor automatically loses two Health levels of damage per point of Armor offered by the regular armor.

Variables of Prostasia:

Ablative Armor:

Rather than accepting one level of Armor per rank in Prostasia, a genius can instead select two extra Health levels. These extra Health levels are used up before the genius' own real Health levels, and losing them incurs no penalties: they typically represent some kind of "energy screen" that exists between the genius and harm, and that attacks must burn through before they can reach the target beneath. (In other words, do not use the Temporary Health Dots rules in the *World of Darkness Core Rule Book*.)

The genius can combine these two types of protection. For example, a genius with one dot in Prostasia could give himself Armor-1 and four extra Health levels, or Armor-2 and two extra Health levels.

A genius activates and restores ablative armor by spending Mania. Every point of Mania adds or restores one Health level of ablative armor, up to the armor's maximum rating. Once Mania points are spent on ablative armor, the Health levels bleed away at a rate of one point per day.

Vehicles gain extra Structure levels instead of extra Health levels, but the system works the same way.

Ablative armor that is also a "shielding device" gains no bonus from that variable but also need not pay additional Mania.

Anti-Scanning/Anti-Teleport Field:

Prostasia can be used to shield against scanning (Apokalypsi) and teleporting in or out (Skafoi). Activating a Prostasia field designed to keep out intrusion incurs a penalty to scanning and teleporting in equal to the genius' Inspiration + Science + the wonder's rank – a penalty based on the area covered. This effect costs one point of Mania per rank per day of activation.

Field Diameter	Reduction
5 feet	-1
10 feet	-2
20 feet	-3
40 feet	-4
80 feet	-5

A wonder of this type that is integral to a vehicle or building does not incur penalties based on area; it merely protects the whole area without penalty.

Ballistic/General Rating:

By default, wonders of Prostasia protect equally against ballistic and general damage. This variable allows the genius to increase ballistic protection by one and reduce general protection by one, or vice-versa.

Barrier:

An "expandable" shield can be made physical to block people and objects, rather than just attacks. This reduces the shield's Armor rating by one. The barrier gains a resistance equal to the Armor rating to resist entrance. Anyone trying to enter must roll Strength + Stamina - the barrier's Armor to push through. Trying to bash through a barrier causes one point of Bashing damage per attempt unless the attacker is wearing armor.

Since barriers block direct physical contact, they are sometimes used to prevent Havoc by dialing their expansion all the way down, creating a form-fitting insulating "glove" around the object.

Dramatic Failure: The attacker suffers a number of Health Levels of Bashing damage equal to the barrier's Armor rating and is knocked prone. She cannot attempt to break through the barrier again for the rest of the scene.

Failure: The attacker cannot get through that turn. She can try again.

Success: The attacker forces her way through the shield.

Exceptional Success: The attacker forces her way through the shield and disrupts the shield, causing it to shut down. It can be reactivated normally with Mania on the genius' next turn.

Bulletproof:

The armor is bulletproof, turning any ballistic attack's damage from Lethal or Aggravated to Bashing. This incurs a -1 penalty.

Cage:

A shielding device with the "barrier" variable can be turned inside out, turning it into a mechanism for holding people or things. The cage gains a resistance equal to its Armor rating to resist escape. Anyone trying to get out (or in) must roll Strength + Stamina – the cage's Armor to push through.

Dramatic Failure: The attacker suffers a number of Health Levels of Bashing damage equal to the barrier's Armor rating and is knocked prone. She cannot attempt to escape again for the rest of the scene.

Failure: The attacker cannot get through that turn. She can try again.

Success: The attacker forces her way out of the cage.

Exceptional Success: The attacker forces her way out of the cage and disrupts it, causing it to shut down. It can be reactivated normally.

These wonders are often combined with Automata to make traps.

Data Security:

Prostasia can also protect computers, servers, and other forms of data in the form of a password or sophisticated algorithm that prevents access. The password incurs a penalty to Computer checks and other attempts to access data equal to the genius' Inspiration + Computer + the wonder's rank + the Core Modifier. Every Prostasia data security system comes with a password (usually a string of alphanumeric symbols to be entered into a computer) that allows access. A genius can give away the password freely, or change the password. Changing the password requires knowledge of the existing password and access to the data security software. The change takes only a single turn. There is nothing wondrous about the password. A data security system has no ongoing Mania cost.

Expandable:

The genius' shielding can be extended dynamically to protect others. This reduces the wonder's Armor rating by one.

Expandable shields are dynamic. Reducing the Armor level by one offers a shield with up to a five-foot diameter. Every further reduction doubles the maximum radius, as follows:

Shield Diameter	Armor Reduction
5 feet	-1
10 feet	-2
20 feet	-3
40 feet	-4
80 feet	-5
Etc.	Etc.

Expandable shields do not normally provide protection against attackers that are inside the shield, unless the genius specifies that the shield is an expandable "field" that reduces *all* attacks that occur within.

It takes an action to adjust the area covered by a shield.

This variable incurs a -1 penalty.

Heavy Armor:

A suit of physical armor incurs a -2 penalty to Move and a -1 penalty to Defense and has a minimum Strength requirement equal to the wonder's rank, but also grants a +1 bonus to Armor.

Invulnerable:

The Prostasia armor ignores the Armor Piercing quality of any mundane attack. Armor Piercing bonuses from Katastrophic weapons, other wonders, or other metanormal sources still apply. Further, the armor ignores five points of "automatic success" damage (from explosive force attacks, railguns, etc.) from any source, mundane or otherwise, per point of Armor.

This variable can only be applied to Armor, not Durability.

This variable incurs a -1 penalty to Armor.

Limited Protection:

The wonder protects only against one type of attack. Common attack types include heat, cold, electricity, radiation, poison and acid, ballistic attacks (gunfire), physical attacks (swords and blunt trauma), and gravitational attacks.

The wonder grants an additional +2 to Armor, but only against that one type of attack. Other attacks pass right through it.

Lockbox:

A genius can use Prostasia to create a lockbox or secure room that cannot be accessed from the outside. This

construction incurs a penalty to Larceny checks and other attempts to access the secured area equal to the genius' Inspiration + Crafts + the wonder's rank + Core Modifier. The genius can freely build keys for this lockbox. The keys are not themselves wondrous and take no more time or Skill to make than regular keys, but only the genius who made the lockbox can make keys. Some geniuses prefer attaching Automatic systems to their lockboxes that can recognize facial features or other traits.

A lockbox has a Durability based on its Size (as if it were a vehicle) plus the genius' Inspiration + the wonder's rank + Core Modifier. Lockboxes are *very* difficult to get into. A lockbox has no ongoing Mania cost.

Mental Shield:

Some Prosthesis devices provide mental rather than physical shielding. If this variable is taken, the wonder protects against any type of mental attack rather than a physical assault. All attempts at mental control or harm suffer a penalty equal to the genius' Inspiration + Academics + the wonder's rank + Core Modifier.

Mental shielding also protects against most deleterious mental effects, auras, and fields that are not precisely "attacks," such as the Lunacy caused by a werewolf. (Geniuses are too crazy for Lunacy to touch them, but this effect can protect beholden or fellow-travelers.) If this deleterious mental effect allows for a roll (often Resolve + Composure), the shielding offers a dice bonus equal to the genius' Inspiration + Academics + the wonder's rank + Core Modifier. If the mental effect has a variable effect based on the target's Willpower, add the genius' Inspiration + Academics + the wonder's rank + Core Modifier to the subject's Willpower for purpose of those rules (to a maximum Willpower of 10).

This Variable is not compatible with "heavy armor," "ablative armor," "invulnerable," "limited protection," "targeted deflection," "barrier," "cage," "opaque to air," "vest," or any other variable that's intended for physical armor.

Opaque to Air:

Ordinary shields and armor allow air to filter through, which means that the genius can breathe, but is vulnerable to gas-based attacks. Armor that is opaque to air does not allow any air to pass through, which protects the user against poison gas, but the genius must supply his own air. There is no cost or requirement for this variable.

Reflection:

Any ranged attack that does not hit the target (no successes) bounces back to strike the attacker. The reflected attack dice pool is equal only to the attacking weapon's damage (minimum of 1) minus any modifiers for range, etc.

This variable incurs a -1 penalty.

Shielding Device:

If the wonder is a "shielding device" instead of physical armor, there is an Armor bonus based on the wonder's Size, just like normal wonders. Shielding devices, unlike most physical armor, cost Mania to activate: one point per rank of the wonder. Shielding devices grant no bonus to ablative armor.

A genius can shoot or attack through her own shielding devices without penalty or difficulty.

A shielding device gains a +1 bonus. They cost one point of Mania per rank to activate for a scene.

Targeted Deflection:

Certain shields require the user to spend an action and actively deflect the attack. This is appropriate for small physical shields, bullet-deflecting bracers, and energy swords that can swat lasers out of mid-air. The shield does not work if the user does not take action, but if the genius engages in active deflection (requiring an action), roll Dexterity + Weaponry and add the number of successes to the Prostasia's Armor rating for that round.

Geniuses cannot deflect area attacks.

If this variable is combined with the "reflection" variable, the genius must choose whether to deflect normally or to reflect each ranged attack. (Melee attacks can be deflected normally but not reflected.) If the genius chooses to reflect and the attacker misses, the Dexterity + Weaponry roll is at -2, but the genius adds his Dexterity + Weaponry pool to the basic damage dice for the reflection.

Vest:

The armor is only a vest, breastplate, or something else that can fit under a bulky jacket. Its effectiveness is reduced by 1, and called shots to the head or limbs ignore the armor. Spotting a vest beneath a coat or heavy shirt requires a Wits + Crafts check with a penalty equal to the genius' Inspiration. (If worn under a light shirt, the Inspiration penalty does not apply.) A vest cannot be "heavy armor." Vests are not pressure-resistant and does not function like a space suit or diving suit. A vest is half the Size of the wearer.

SKAFOI: THE AXIOM OF TRAVEL

Vehicles and Gates

"By their nature wings have the power to lift up heavy things and raise them aloft where the gods all dwell, and so, more than anything that pertains to the body, they are akin to the divine, which has beauty, wisdom, goodness, and everything of that sort. These nourish the soul's wings, which grow best in their presence; but foulness and ugliness make the wings shrink and disappear."

-Plato, *Phaedrus*

The Axiom of Skafoi gets a genius where she needs to go, whether it's deep beneath the Earth or across time and space. Masters of Skafoi can effortlessly outflank their landbound enemies, and can ferry armies of geniuses and their wonders around the globe or far beyond it.

Definitions:

Skafoi transports. It carries people and things from one place to another, over land, across space, or through time itself or to other dimensions. Any wonder that serves as a vehicle, a transporter, or a gate uses Skafoi.

Common Notions:

Construction:

Skafoi vehicles use Crafts. Vehicles of Skafoi 3 or higher (jet vehicles, starships, and so on) also use Science. Non-vehicular Skafoi wonders use Science.

A genius can build entirely organic vehicles (using Medicine) for rank-one or rank-two wonders of Skafoi. Higher-ranking wonders of Skafoi can still be made out of organic material, but use Crafts as well as Medicine. Any wonder of Skafoi that uses wheels also needs Crafts. All organic wonders of Skafoi require at least one dot in Automata to provide rudimentary nervous processing.

Mania:

Vehicles require fuel, and mad science vehicles require Mania to keep them moving. Starting a wonder of Skafoi costs one point of Mania per rank of the wonder. (A vehicle can be left idling for up to 10 minutes per dot of the driver's Inspiration; after that it shuts down automatically.) Every six full hours of activity also costs a number of Mania points equal to the wonder's rank. Spaceships or starships, after their first six full hours of activity, cost a number of Mania points equal to the wonder's rank every week of travel.

Any sort of teleportation, superluminal travel, or travel to other dimensions or times requires one point of Mania per five Size points to be transmitted, per roll. If the wonder is a vehicle, it can automatically transport anything within it at no additional cost. These types of wonders might also be a "gate"—see that variable.

Range:

Non-vehicular wonders of Skafoi have a default range of touch. This can be adjusted with variables.

Dice Pool:

Almost all vehicles use Dexterity + Drive + Handling to control. Teleporting through space or exceeding the speed of light requires Intelligence + Science. Time travel requires Intelligence + Academics. Planar travel

requires Intelligence + Occult. Any vehicular wonder of Skafoi that is worn to be used, such as a pair of wings or a jet pack, instead uses the lower of Athletics and Drive. The exception is integral or grafted wonders that resemble body parts (like grafted wings), which use only Athletics.

Non-vehicular wonders of Skafoi can be resisted with Resolve + Metanormal Trait.

Handling:

A vehicle's base Handling is equal to the builder's Inspiration. Minimum Handling for a wonder is 0, while a wonder's maximum Handling is 10, even with modifications and variables.

Modes of Travel:

Different types of transportation comprise different wonders. Just because a genius with Skafoi-3 can build a flying machine, a car, and a submersible, it doesn't mean that her one vehicle is some deranged hybrid of all these things. Each type of transportation is a separate wonder. The following types of Skafoi vehicles exist: ground-based, surface boat, mole machine, Skafoi 2 flying machine, Skafoi 3 aerospace vehicle, submersible.

These wonders can be combined into a single vehicle. If so, the genius must bind one additional point of Mania per mode of transportation past the first. For example, if a sleek spaceliner can serve as an aerospace vehicle and can travel underwater, it would need two additional bound Mania to possess all three modes of travel. (The only exception is for submersibles that can also travel along the surface of the water; all submersibles can surface, meaning that "surface boat" is not treated as a separate wonder if "submersible" has already been selected).

Size:

Wonders of Skafoi can be of any Size. For vehicles (wonders of Skafoi that aren't teleporters, time machines, or other "instant movement" devices), Size doesn't modify the Core Modifier. Instead there are two types of vehicle size classes: worn and driven. Worn wonders of Skafoi are Size 5 or smaller and might resemble boots, wings, or a backpack. Driven wonders are Size 5 or larger (often much larger) and look like regular vehicles such as cars or planes. Driven wonders are typically much faster than worn wonders.

A worn wonder of Skafoi that is smaller than the user incurs a -1 penalty to Handling per point of difference.

Durability and Structure:

All vehicles built with Skafoi have a Durability based on their Size, as shown below.

Size	Base Durability
0-2	1
3-8	2
9-15	3
16-25	4
26+	5

A vehicle's Structure is equal to its Size + Durability.

Passengers:

Unless otherwise noted, a wonder can hold passengers based on its Size.

Size	Passengers
1-2	0
3-8	2
9-15	5
16-25	30
26+	100+

Safe Speed, Maximum Speed, and Acceleration:

A Skafoi wonder's Safe Speed is usually based on the builder's Inspiration. Maximum Speed is 50% greater than Safe Speed. Acceleration is equal to 50% of Safe Speed. These ratios remain constant.

A wonder of Skafoi incurs a maximum penalty of -5 for exceeding its Safe Speed, no matter how fast it goes.

Fitting Stuff in a Vehicle:

Many Inspired stuff their vehicles with as many other wonders as they can, but a vehicle can only hold so much. Katastrofi is usually the big offender for taking up space in a vehicle—those lightning cannons are heavy—but internal communicators and scanners also chew up bulk, and Prostasia, whether in the form of physical armor or energy shielding, by default takes up one-tenth the vehicle's Size to provide protection.

A vehicle can hold as many Size points worth of wonders, gadgetry, and gear as its own Size and still have enough room for a crew (no passengers). If it is less than half full of wonders it can hold passengers or extensive cargo. A vehicle can hold up to 50% more than its maximum, but then it must be automated (with an automaton of Size 2 or smaller), as it cannot even hold crew.

Wonders that cannot be removed from the vehicle should be treated as integral—see that general variable.

Ramming:

Ramming causes great damage at high speeds and with large vehicles, but is difficult to perform successfully. Ramming attempts suffer a -1 penalty at 100 miles per hour and an additional -1 penalty every 10 miles per hour past that.

Movement to Miles Per Hour:

To convert from game movement to miles per hour, divide by 1.46. To convert from miles per hour to game movement, multiply by 1.46.

Skafoi ●: Travel in two dimensions

Students of Skafoi are limited to transportation along the ground and water. These wonders usually resemble cars (however peculiar-looking) or boats. Safe Speed depends on the wonder's mode of travel and its Size.

Mode	Safe Speed in mph
Ground Vehicle, Worn	Inspiration x10 mph
Ground Vehicle, Driven	Inspiration x75 mph
Water Vehicle, Worn	Inspiration x10 mph
Water Vehicle, Driven	Inspiration x50 mph

Bouncing:

A student of Skafoi can build a wonder that allows her to "bounce" from place to place. The exact form that this wonder takes varies: some geniuses build grappling hooks, others favor spring-shoes, while still others create "boost packs" (short-range jet packs) that allow them to get around.

A bouncing wonder's horizontal range is equal to 50 feet per dot of the genius' Inspiration. If the wonder is smaller than what it's intended to move, its horizontal range is reduced by ten feet per dot of Inspiration per point of Size difference. So a regular person (Size 5) with spring boots (Size 2) has a range of 20 feet per dot of Inspiration. Range can never be reduced below ten feet per dot of Inspiration.

A bouncing wonder's vertical range is equal to half its horizontal range. Don't bother to perform complex trigonometric equations to determine parabolic travel arcs for distance objects: if a target is within the wonder's horizontal range and within its vertical range, and it's not totally blocked off, the genius can bounce there.

Bouncing wonders must conclude their movement at the end of the turn, as they are not flying machines, meaning that a genius must end on solid ground. Ending on rickety or uneven ground, or performing tricks like webslinging across a dance hall to grab onto a protruding rafter, may call for a Dexterity + Athletics check to pull off without falling.

Bouncing wonders can be activated as an immediate action to reduce falling damage by an amount equal to their vertical range. This requires a Dexterity + Wits check. A genius can also try to steer for obstacles on the way down, reducing the height of the fall: the Storyteller can call for a Dexterity + Wits or Dexterity + Athletics check to manage this feat.

Skafoi ●●: Travel in air or beneath the earth or sea

As a genius' knowledge grows, he masters the science of transport sufficiently to allow him to travel in three dimensions, in the air, underwater, or even underground. Speed depends on the genius' Inspiration and the wonder's type and mode of travel.

Mode	Safe Speed
Air Vehicle, Worn	Inspiration x10 mph
Air Vehicle, Driven	Inspiration x100 mph
Submarine, Worn	Inspiration x5 mph
Submarine, Driven	Inspiration x50 mph
Mole Machine, Worn	Inspiration in yards per turn
Mole Machine, Driven	Inspiration x5 in yards per turn

The speed above is a mole machine's unobstructed ground speed. In dense earth, a mole machine's speed is reduced by 50%. In stone, this speed is reduced by 90%. When traveling through metal, this speed is reduced by 99%.

Once a mole machine gets builds up a head of steam, its speed increases 100-fold as it reaches its cruising speed. It takes about ten minutes of constant burrowing for a mole machine to reach cruising speed.

Stall Speed:

Two-dot flyers and three-dot aerospace vehicles that cannot hover will stall and drop out of the sky if their speed drops too low. Stall speed is based on the wonder's Size:

- 1-5: 20 mph (no penalty)
- 6-10: 40 mph (-1)
- 11-15: 60 mph (-2)
- 16-20: 80 mph (-3)
- 21-30: 100 mph (-4)
- Larger than 30: 120 mph (-5)

If a wonder's Acceleration is lower than this number, the stall speed instead equals the wonder's Acceleration.

If the flying vehicle's speed drops below its stall speed, the pilot must roll Dexterity + Drive to recover, with the penalty listed above (based on the vehicle's Size).

Dramatic Failure: The flying machine loses 100 feet of altitude per point of Size (maximum 3,000 feet). The vehicle and all occupants are struck for one die of Bashing damage per point of the vehicle's Size (maximum 30 dice). The vehicle remains in a stall.

Failure: The flying machine loses 10 feet of altitude per point of Size (maximum 300 feet). The vehicle remains in a stall.

Success: The flying machine loses 10 feet of altitude per point of Size (maximum 300 feet). The vehicle is no longer stalled and regular flight resumes.

Exceptional Success: The flying machine loses no altitude. The vehicle is no longer stalled and regular flight resumes.

Suggested Modifiers: Under fire (-1), clear skies (+1), difficult terrain nearby (-1 to -3)

Stalling is also a common result of Dramatic Failure when a flying machine is in open skies. (If it's in crowded terrain, such as buzzing through a canyon or around tall buildings, it more usually crashes.) Even hovering flyers can stall in this case.

These rules apply to wonders of Skafoi. Very generally, regular airplanes stall at about 80 mph for small craft and 175 mph for jumbo jets. Recovery for any type of plane suffers a -5 penalty.

Skafoi ●●●: Beyond the Horizon

Doctors of Skafoi can devise far faster flying machines that can leave Earth and travel to other worlds.

Mode	Safe Speed
Aerospace Vehicle, Worn	Inspiration x500 mph
Aerospace Vehicle, Driven	Inspiration x5000 mph
Super-Submarine, Worn	Inspiration x100 mph
Super-Submarine, Driven	Inspiration x1000 mph
Space Vehicle in Deep Space	Inspiration in AU per week

Earth's escape velocity, incidentally, is 25,000 miles per hour. However, just leaving Earth is not enough to get into space. Some sort of life support system is recommend for trips lasting longer than a few minutes. These can be built by a student of Exelixi. Also, radiation is a serious hazard in space. Again, for any trip of more than a few hours, at least one dot in Prostasia armor is needed to avoid irradiating the equipment and crew. At least one dot in Prostasia is also needed for reentry, to prevent burning up. (A Prostasia shielding device works well enough to deflect incidental radiation and protect against re-entry temperatures, even when not activated.)

Skafoi ●●●●: Space redefined

A genius who has mastered this level of Skafoi can travel across space in the blink of an eye, through teleportation or superluminal technology, and can enter other realities and dimensions.

Teleporters:

The genius can create teleportation devices that can transport a subject anywhere on Earth. The genius makes an extended Intelligence + Science check to affect the transition, with the number of successes needed depending on the target distance. Every roll requires one point of Mania per five Size points or fraction thereof to be teleported.

Distance	Successes
100 feet or less	1
1 mile or less	2
10 miles or less	3
100 miles or less	4
1,000 miles or less	5
Anywhere on Earth / 10,000 miles	6
Low Earth orbit	7
Out to lunar orbit	8

Also modify the roll based on familiarity.

The genius can currently see the target location, either by regular sight or through Wondrous means: No modifier

The genius is very familiar with the target location: -1

The genius has been to the target location more than once: -2

The genius has visited the target location at least once: -3

The genius has never visited the location, but has a picture or extensive data like blueprints: -4

The genius has never visited the location and is going on a very vague description: -5 (or automatic failure; Storyteller's prerogative)

Dramatic Failure: The subject takes one level of Lethal damage and can appear anywhere within the range that has been accumulated so far (based on the number of successes). All successes are lost.

Failure: The genius makes no progress toward teleportation.

Success or Exceptional Success: The genius moves closer to a successful teleport.

Suggested Modifiers: Moving faster than 100 mph (-1), moving faster than 1,000 mph (-2), line-of-sight to target (+2), cluttered and busy around target (-2), teleporting to a cleared "landing strip" or open hangar (+1)

Lightspeed:

Superluminal vehicles allow the genius to exceed the speed of light. The genius enters the coordinates of his target location (which he must know) and makes an Intelligence + Science check.

Dramatic Failure: The genius ends up in completely the wrong place.

Failure: The superluminal device fails to engage. The genius can try again.

Success: The genius jumps to lightspeed, moving at a multiple of c equal to her Inspiration cubed.

Exceptional Success: As above, and the genius moves exceptionally fast, as if her Inspiration were one higher.

Suggested Modifiers: Jumping within 100 diameters of a planet (-2), jumping within 10 diameters of a planet (-4), jumping while inside a planetary atmosphere (-6), jumping while engaged in combat (-2)

A coordinate key is needed to get anywhere with a superluminal device. Though coordinate keys for several parts of the solar system are known, keys that once led to alien realms now no longer work. Only a few extrasolar destinations can still be reached, and the geniuses who know how to get there hide their keys jealously. No one knows what happened to the civilizations that once stretched across the stars. Many now suspect that those civilizations only existed in an alternate timeline, and the destruction of the Terminals and the rise of "Lemurian Earth" somehow did away with them. No one really knows the truth, not even the Lemurians.

Starships cannot move in regular space or in an atmosphere without additional modes.

Lightspeed travel costs one point of Mania per five Size points moved or fraction thereof.

Dimensional Travel:

The genius can also create dimensional vehicles. Traveling to another dimension requires an Intelligence + Occult check. Every roll costs one point of Mania per five Size points or fraction thereof to be transported.

Dramatic Failure: No transportation occurs. Frayed dimensional barriers prevent further transport using that wonder within about a city block of the attempted transport site for one day and may attract the attention of dimensional intruders or sentinels.

Failure: The genius fails to enter another dimension. He may try again.

Success: The genius fades from his current dimension. He appears in the new dimension in about 30 seconds (10 turns). He cannot be attacked or harmed during this period of transition, except with certain dimension-crossing attacks or abilities.

Exceptional Success: The transition is instantaneous. The genius appears in the new dimension on her next turn and may act normally.

Suggested Modifiers: Difficult dimensional currents (-1 to -3), high-radiation area (-1), clean and sterile environment (+1), thin dimensional barriers (+1), very thin dimensional barriers (+2)

Artificial Gravity:

Any rank-4 spaceship, whether or not it features a lightspeed drive, can gain the benefits of true simple artificial gravity. Rather than needing rotating sections or acceleration to provide gravity, the ship has a "down" direction and things fall in that direction about as quickly as they would in normal Earth gravity. This artificial gravity cancels out the effects of the ship's acceleration and gyroscopic action.

This is not a separate wonder, but can instead be built into any rank-4 spaceship.

Skafoi ●●●●●: Time redefined

A master of Skafoi can twist, distort, and travel through time.

Temporal Distortion:

The genius can build a wonder that manipulates time, slowing it down or speeding it up around the target. The genius can choose, for every use of the wonder, whether it will be sped up or slowed down along with the subject, or whether it remains in the normal time frame.

To activate the temporal distortion device, the genius rolls Intelligence + Science.

Dramatic Failure: The genius mismanages the attempt at temporal distortion, perhaps freezing himself for one or more turns.

Failure: Time continues to flow normally.

Success: The target is slowed down or sped up by a number of steps up to the genius' Inspiration. Every step costs one point of Mania. Every step faster grants the following benefits:

- A number of dice are subtracted from the dice pools of all attackers equal to the number of steps shifted.
- The subject gains an Initiative modifier equal to the number of steps shifted.
- The subject's Speed is doubled per step.

If the subject is slowed instead of sped up, from the subject's perspective, everyone else appears to gain these benefits.

The effects of temporal distortion last for one scene.

Exceptional Success: If the genius desires, it's possible for the genius to accelerate (or decelerate) the subject to an even greater extent. Every point of Mania put into this effect distorts time a factor of 10. Thus:

Mania Cost	Temporal Distortion
1	x10
2	x100
3	x1,000
4	x10,000
5	x100,000
Etc.	Etc.

So, if a genius affects himself with this ability and spends three points of Mania, he can speed his subjective time sense up by a factor of 1,000. If it would ordinary take him five minutes to walk to his job, he can now do

it in .005 minutes—about one-third of a second. Even with one Mania point spent on this ability, the genius can effectively perform ten turns worth of activity before normal people get one.

It's difficult for objects at speeds this different to interact with one-another. Interacting with any kind of object costs one point of Mania per Size point. Similarly, if a subject is slowed to this extent from the point-of-view of the rest of the world, interacting with him requires a number of Mania points equal to the subject's Size. Otherwise effects just "bounce off." It is even harder to cause damage in this mode. Not only does it require Mania, but everything receives a Durability rating equal to the Mania cost on the chart above (i.e. Durability 1 at x10 distortion, Durability 2 at x100, Durability 3 at x1,000, and so on). Further, anything that attacks or is attacked (and hit) while temporally distorted drops back to the regular time frame.

This effect lasts for the duration of a scene.

Two subjects that have matched temporal distortion levels can interact with one-another normally.

Time Machines:

Time travel allows the genius to travel through time. (See Time Travel, Page 300, to understand the rigors and hazards of such a journey.)

To travel through time, the genius must make an extended Intelligence + Academics check and earn a number of successes depending on the temporal distance to be traveled. Every roll costs one point of Mania per 5 Size points or fraction thereof to be transported.

Time	Successes Needed
1 hour or less (or returning to correct time)	1
1 day	2
1 decade	3
1 century	4
1 millennium	5
1 million years	6
1 billion years	7
Any time	8

Dramatic Failure: The subject lands in an entirely wrong time and is exposed to some immediate and present hazard.

Failure: The genius makes no progress toward time travel.

Success: The genius makes progress toward time travel. If the genius receives enough successes, The subject lands close to the desired era, within 1% of the total temporal "distance" traveled. Traveling back to 1492

(~500 years) means that the subject lands some time between 1487 and 1497.

Exceptional Success: The genius makes considerable progress toward time travel. Further, once the genius earns the required number of successes after receiving an Exceptional Success at any point in the time travel attempt, the subject lands precisely where he means to land, and possibly in a fortuitous situation.

Suggested Modifiers: Traveling to an extremely famous event (-1 to -5), using a previous temporal location (+1), temporal distortions (-1 to -3)

The time machine is not a teleporter and transports the genius to the same location at a different time.

Variables of Skafoi:

Clinging:

This allows a ground vehicle to cling to surfaces. Making a cling attempt requires a Dexterity + Drive (or Dexterity + Athletics, depending) attempt.

Dramatic Failure: The vehicle crashes.

Failure: The vehicle fails to cling.

Success or Exceptional Success: The vehicle clings successfully.

Speed while clinging is equal to half normal. If traveling upward, speed is quartered.

A wonder that possesses this variable suffers a -2 penalty, or -1 if the wonder has legs instead of wheels. If the wonder is a bouncing wonder, the horizontal distance is reduced by ten feet.

Sometimes "clinging" is applied to other sorts of wonders, such as those of Automata or even Prostasia (armored suits). This variable still requires one dot in Skafoi. It costs two Automation Points if used on a wonder of Automata, and reduces armor by one step if used on a wonder of Prostasia. In both cases, Dexterity + Athletics is used to determine the success of the clinging.

Exposed Canopy:

A wonder that is driven (rather than worn) is considered to enclose the pilot completely, granting full cover. An exposed canopy lightens the wonder up at the expense of leaving the pilot more exposed. A wonder of Skafoi that provides a -1 cover modifier (like a Jeep) grants a +1 bonus. A wonder that provides a -2 cover modifier (similar to a convertible automobile) grants a +2 bonus. A wonder that provides no cover (such as a motorcycle) grants a +3 bonus.

Increased Range:

The variable provides a non-vehicular wonder of Skafoi with range beyond touch. This incurs a -1 penalty and grants the wonder a range of ten feet per dot of Inspiration. Every additional -1 doubles the range. This variable cannot be combined with "Skafoi ray."

Extreme Acceleration:

By taking a -1 to Handling, the vehicle's Acceleration increases to its Safe Speed. By taking a -2 to Handling, the vehicle's Acceleration increases to its Maximum Speed.

Hovering:

The ability of a flying wonder to hover incurs a -2 penalty.

Underwater vehicles can "hover" automatically while underwater at no cost.

Increased Bouncing Range:

Requires Katastrofi 1

This is a variable of the "bouncing" feature of Skafoi's first rank. The wonder's bounce range increases by 10' per dot of Inspiration. However, succeeding in the bounce requires a Dexterity + Athletics check.

Dramatic Failure: The genius is flung around in some horrible and painful fashion, suffering damage as if he fell the full distance from his current location to the target location and is knocked prone. The genius arrives at his target location, though.

Failure: The genius falls or stumbles and takes one level of Bashing damage (resisted by armor), and does not reach her intended goal.

Success or Exceptional Success: The genius reaches her intended goal.

Suggested Modifiers: Clear target (+1), cluttered airspace (-1 to -3), currently falling (-2), bouncing to and from level surfaces at ground level (+1)

A genius can increase the bouncing range further: every additional 10' incurs a -1 penalty on the Dexterity + Athletics check.

Increased Range:

A non-vehicular Skafoi wonder has a base range of touch. This variable incurs a -1 penalty and grants a range of ten feet per dot of Inspiration. Every additional -1 doubles the range.

This variable cannot be combined with the "Skafoi ray" variable.

Legs Instead of Wheels:

This option is available to any ground vehicle. This incurs a -5 penalty (normally converted to halving the vehicle's Speed), but the vehicle can maneuver over difficult and hilly terrain that would stop a wheeled vehicle, and its Acceleration equals its Safe Speed. A wonder with legs can also jump like a normal character: roll Inspiration + Drive to determine how far a legged wonder can jump.

Maniacal Speed Boost:

This variable lets the genius spend Mania to increase the vehicle's Speed. This incurs a -1 penalty. Every point of Mania spent in a turn increases the Safe Speed (and thus Maximum Speed and Acceleration) by 20%.

Off-Road:

This variable applies to any ground vehicle. These wonders ignore all penalties for difficult terrain. The variable incurs a -1 penalty. (Legged vehicles are already treated as having this variable at no cost.)

One Location Teleporter:

The teleporter only sends targets to one location. The genius only needs one Success to send the subject to this location.

Remote Control:

Requires Apokalypsi 1

Any wonder of Skafoi can be given a remote control option. This allows the genius or specified personnel to control the vehicle from a distance.

Remote control requires the operator to possess an Apokalypsi-1 communicator (presumably one with full audio, video, and data feeds) and to be in range of the target.

This variable incurs a -1 penalty, even when the wonder is not being remotely controlled. If the remote-control device itself has a penalty to its Core Modifier, that penalty applies to controlling the vehicle, but bonuses to the Apokalypsi device's Core Modifier provide no bonus when controlling the vehicle.

Self-Sealing Mole Machine:

By default, a mole machine leaves a tunnel to follow. If its tunnels are self-sealing, it suffers a -1 penalty. Soft earth will self-seal; hard-packed earth remains for several hours; stone will remain for several days; metal will not self-seal at all.

Skafoi Ray:

Requires Katastrofi 1

This variable can be applied to any wonder of Skafoi that isn't a vehicle. Instead of transporting targets directly, the wonder shoots forth a ray. This requires one point of Mania to activate for a scene and a Wits + Firearms + Katastrofi check to hit and otherwise causes the wonder to be treated like a weapon. The wonder's range is based on the weapon's configuration (pistol, rifle, or various sorts of artillery). See the range section under Katastrofi.

If the wonder uses this variable, it can also make use of the following variables of Katastrofi: "adjusted range" (but only to make range longer), "autofire," "explosive weapon," "extradimensional attack," "good balance and weight," "limited ammunition," "variable damage," and "variable explosion." Skafoi "explosions" merely merely spread the area of effect out to the main blast radius; there is no conversion to Explosive Force.

A Skafoi ray grants a +3 bonus to its effect if it hits a target ten or more feet away that is not the user.

Rails:

An increasingly rare variable, this variable is applied to vehicles that use fixed tracks or paths, including trains and non-maneuvering spacecraft. Speed is doubled, but the wonder cannot leave its fixed tracks. If the wonder cannot adjust its speed once it starts (such as a *From the Earth to the Moon*-style "space bullet"), Speed is increased by two and a half times.

Most ground-based wonders of Skafoi with this variable use a standard railway gauge.

Slow Acceleration:

The wonder accelerates very slowly. If the wonder's Acceleration is 25% Safe Speed, this grants a +1 bonus. If

the wonder's Acceleration is 10% Safe Speed, this grants a +2 bonus.

Speed and Handling:

A Skafoi wonder can trade Speed for Handling, and vice-versa. Every +1 to Handling decreases the vehicle's Safe Speed by 10%. Every -1 to handling increases it by 10%.

Transporter:

This variable can be applied to any wonder of Skafoi that isn't a vehicle or a temporal distortion device. A transporter transports targets, but does not go with them. Transporters are often used when a genius wants to send beholden or other minions on missions in which she does not want to participate.

A transporter must be larger than anything sent through it.

This variable grants a +1 bonus. Further, a transporter can be keyed to *other transporters*, so long as that transporter is "friendly." (A genius can set her transporters' "friendly" state however he likes.) Transporting from one teleporter to another completely removes the penalty for distance. Leaping from one time-machine transporter to another halves the penalty for temporal distance. Traveling superluminally between transporters halves the penalty. Moving from a transporter in one reality to a transporter in another dimension removes any penalties to the roll caused by environmental conditions (but does not grant any bonuses).

Sample Faults:

Most wonders possess one or more faults, persistent problems that require extensive re-working and the binding of Mania to remove. The following faults are examples meant to inspire the Storyteller's imagination, and not as a definitive list of what can go wrong with a wonder. The Storyteller is welcome to roll a die, pick an interesting fault from the list, or create a new and fitting fault for the wonder. Enterprising players may also recommend faults, and so long as the Storyteller is sure that the players are not trying to softball their characters, she can take their recommendations under advisement. As a chronicle progresses, a Storyteller may want to write down lists of interesting faults as they come to her, to apply them to new wonders or to wonders that take damage.

Storytellers may permit some negotiation for faults, though the Storyteller always has the final say. Some geniuses possess "themed" faults, perhaps based around their aesthetic or appearance: a fire-themed genius, for example, might end up with reliably incendiary faults. Generally, Storytellers should aim to assign at least half of the collaborative's faults by fiat; rolling the dice might seem more fair or official, but it can produce inappropriate and repetitive results, or even "faults" that are in fact benefits, which the Storyteller should never allow.

Faults of Apokalypsi:

1. A certain common sound, word, sight, or thought (a dog barking; a tree; boredom) causes the communication link to shut down, forcing a reboot that takes 1-10 turns.
2. Using the device for more than ten minutes causes a headache, which causes a -1 penalty for one hour.
3. A certain common object simply will not show up on a scanner or be transmitted along the communicator. This occurs even if it results in absurd results, like people "driving" through the streets without cars.
4. People being scanned can make a Wits + Composure check vs. the wonder's rank to realize that they are (somehow) being monitored.
5. The "monitor" is a bit wobbly. After using it for more than ten minutes, the user suffers a -1 penalty to all normal perception checks. If used for more than an hour, this penalty increases to -2. The effect disappears after a night's rest.
6. The device occasionally glimpses things from beyond this world. Every time the device is used, there is a 1-in-10 chance of such a glimpse. The user must make an Intelligence + Composure check or gain a mild Derangement, or upgrade a mild Derangement to a severe one. This Derangement lasts for one week.
7. If the device features multiple inputs (for example, audio and visual), there is a 50% chance every time the device is used that one input will cut out. It requires a point of Mania or an Intelligence + Computer roll to get all inputs running again.
8. The device cannot see or detect wonders, manes, or anything fueled, built or sustained by Mania. It will detect geniuses normally, but they register as ordinary humans.
9. There is a special condition for using the device. Roll on the special conditions chart, below.
10. There is a special condition for using the device. This special condition applies to the target area, not the area where the device is located. Roll on the special conditions chart, below.

Faults of Automata:

1. The wonder is a bit unhinged. It suffers from one mild Derangement.
2. The wonder is very unhinged. It suffers from one major Derangement or two minor Derangements.
3. The wonder is physically shaky. It suffers a -1 penalty to all Dexterity actions related to manual actions.
4. The wonder radiates a sense of "wrongness" that offends all living things. Mortals grow edgy and irritable around the wonder, and animals act fearful or aggressive.
5. The wonder emits a kind of low-level radiation that damages the world around it, spreading plague, disfigurement, and disease for as long as it remains in one place out to 100' per rank. This is too subtle to cause damage, but it will result in still births, sickly plant life, and even out-of-control storms.

6. The wonder interprets commands with bloody-minded, almost spiteful, literalness.
7. The wonder is highly susceptible to mental influence. It suffers a -5 penalty to resist metanormal control and command, such as a mage's Mind Arcana or a vampire's Dominate powers.
8. The wonder requires some sort of "living" fuel, from blood to live mice to human souls, to continue functioning. Every day that goes by without feeding, the wonder suffers a cumulative -1 penalty to all actions, until it shuts down at -5.
9. The wonder is not particularly loyal. It will side with a genius with higher Inspiration if the other genius asks and succeeds on a competing Manipulation + Persuasion check.
10. The wonder requires a special condition to keep functioning. Roll on the special conditions chart, below.

Faults of Epikrato:

1. The effect ends suddenly if the subject is exposed to a particular, common element, such as wood or silver.
2. The invasive control of a person causes mental instability in the user. For the extent of the control and for one day afterward, the user suffers from a mild Derangement, or a preexisting mild Derangement becomes severe.
3. The control is physically taxing on the user. When operating the wonder, the genius suffers one level of Bashing damage, plus one additional level per minute of use.
4. That infuriating concept, "goodness of heart," makes the subject more difficult to control. Subjects with Morality (or equivalent) 7 gain a +3 bonus to resist the wonder; subjects with a score of 8+ are entirely immune.
5. The godlike control over the world strips the genius of moral integrity. He cannot regain Willpower from his Virtue for one week after using the wonder.
6. The effect may surge wildly out of control. If the genius rolls a Exceptional Success, the effect surges, growing dangerous and impossible to control: a love-struck subject becomes insane with lust, a trick meant to summon a person instead summons his entire family, etc.
7. The subject remembers his control as explicitly unnatural and will almost certainly resent the user of the wonder.
8. Animals grow fearful due to the wonder's power. Whoever uses the wonder suffers a -5 penalty to Animal Ken, with the effect reducing by one point per day. If the user's Presence + Animal Ken pool is reduced to a chance die, animals attack on sight.
9. Using the wonder causes mental instability in the user. While operating the wonder and for one day afterward, the user suffers from a mild Derangement, or a mild Derangement is upgraded to Severe.
10. The effect only works when the subject meets one of the special conditions. Roll on the special conditions chart, below.

Faults of Exelixi:

1. The wonder's healing or enhancing effects leave a unique color or texture. Skin will heal this naturally, if slowly, but devices will remain noticeably altered.
2. The wonder drains the "life force" from things around it: immediately when used, plants wither and everyone within five feet per rank of the wonder suffer one level of Bashing damage.
3. The wonder requires at least one pint of fresh blood (no more than an hour away from a living being) to function every time it is used.
4. Transformations or healing leave the subject sick and drained once the effect comes to an end: the subject suffers a -1 penalty to Strength and Stamina for one day.
5. To activate the effect requires one point of Willpower from the user.
6. The wonder's effect scrambles the brain of its subject, who suffers a -1 penalty to all Mental Attributes for one day.
7. While under the effects of an enhancement or for a day after a work of healing, the subject suffers from a mild Derangement, or one of his mild Derangements becomes severe.
7. The subject suffers from near-pathological hunger for one hour after the use of the wonder. His Vice

becomes Gluttony, and if near food and not in immediate danger, he must spend a point of Willpower for that scene to resist gorging himself.

8. The wonder doubles the subject's sleep requirements for the next night. In this sleep, the subject cannot easily be awakened.

9. The wonder's Mania cost is tripled.

10. The wonder works only when a special condition is met. Roll on the special conditions chart, below.

Faults of Katastrofi:

1. The weapon's damage type is downgraded by one step (Aggravated to Lethal, Lethal to Bashing). Bashing weapons cause -1 damage.

2. The weapon requires one point of Mania per shot or attack.

3. The weapon requires one turn to charge up per point of Size before it can be used. Once charged it remains active for the rest of the scene.

4. One of the weapon's special conditions (knockback, disintegration, etc.) does not work. If the weapon has no special conditions, its reroll number increases by 1. (A wonder that only rolls 10-again does not reroll at all.)

5. The weapon backlashes, causing one Health level of Bashing damage to the user every time it is used. Armor does not protect.

6. The weapon is poorly mounted, and suffers a cumulative -1 penalty to hit per shot. Straightening the sights requires one turn of fiddling and a Wits + Crafts roll, with each success removing one point of penalty.

7. The weapon is fragile. (See that variable, Page 150.) If it is already fragile, it causes the listed damage in explosive force within five feet, with a secondary blast radius of ten feet.

8. The weapon has been infected with a peculiar pseudo-intelligence. Whenever using a weapon for the first time that scene, if the user cannot make an instant Manipulation + Computer check, the weapon refuses to fire. A new attempt can be made every turn.

9. The weapon's attacks are stopped entirely by a certain material and will not harm it or anyone protected by it. Common materials include glass, copper, or anything blue.

10. The weapon works only when a special condition is met. Roll on the special conditions chart, below.

Faults of Metaptropi:

1. All changes that the wonder induces have a distinct "theme," often a color but sometimes a general style, that sets such transformations apart.

2. The subject reverts when placed in contact with a fairly common material, such as silver or wood. The genius can spend one point of Mania per turn of contact to maintain the current form.

3. The transformation is exhausting. Once it concludes, the subject suffers a -1 penalty due to fatigue for the rest of the day. If targeting inorganic material, once it turns back it turns brittle and may fracture or break. Multiple alterations are cumulative.

4. The transformation automatically incurs some mental instability. For the extent of the transformation, the subject suffers from a mild Derangement, or a preexisting mild Derangement becomes severe. If used to target inorganic material, the material radiates "wrongness" to such an extent that all who approach it suffer a Phobia toward it.

5. Returning to normal is painful and dangerous to the subject. She takes one Health level point of Lethal damage upon return per ten minutes spent transformed, to a maximum number of Health levels equal to twice the wonder's rank. Inorganic material will shatter when restored.

7. The transformation can "lock up," preventing return. There is a 50% chance that the transformation locks up. If this happens, there is a 10% chance that the subject will return every hour.

8. The subject becomes hideously, monstrously ugly during the transformation. All Striking Looks merits are lost and the subject suffers a -2 penalty to Presence and Composure (minimum of 1). It takes time, after the transformation is over, to return to normal: after one hour, the penalty is reduced to -1, and after one day, the penalty is gone and the subject regains his normal Striking Looks merit, if he has it. Material so transformed

becomes stinking and aesthetically repulsive.

9. The transformation taxes the subject's immune system. For one week after use, the subject suffers a -4 penalty to any Stamina-related checks to resist poison, illness, or disease. If used against inorganic materials, they tend to attract germs and illness, making them dangerous to handle.

9. The weapon works only when a special condition is met. Roll on the special conditions chart, below.

10. The subject reverts instantly if not in its special condition. Roll on the special conditions chart, below.

Faults of Prostasia:

1. The armor is dangerous, producing random, destructive discharges of energy. Once per session (on average), a discharge from the armor will damage, destroy, or push away an object nearby (usually something the genius needs or wants).

2. The armor is vulnerable to one type of element or material, such as wood or silver. Attacks from that material pass through it and ignore Armor.

3. The armor possesses a small but noticeable gap in its protection. This requires an active examination for a full turn and a Wits + Crafts check vs. the Prostasia level to notice. However, once noticed, attackers can make called shots (-1 to hit) to ignore Armor.

4. The armor grows constrictive if used for too long. Every minute of use incurs a cumulative -1 penalty to all Dexterity-related actions.

5. The armor is a power-hog, requiring a number of Mania per minute equal to its rank; otherwise it locks up (if solid) or deactivates (if a field).

6. The armor will fail when exposed to some common material, such as water or plastic. The wonder reactivates one turn after being removed from the substance.

7. The armor rattles its user around: an attack that causes no damage instead causes one Health level of Bashing damage.

8. The armor can get knocked out of alignment. Every hit has a 10% chance of knocking it out of alignment, halving its effectiveness until it is fixed (which takes a Wits + Crafts check and one turn of work).

9. The armor is physically exhausting to use, reducing the user's Strength by one per minute of use (minimum 1).

10. The armor only functions when a special condition is met. Roll on the special conditions chart, below.

Faults of Skafoi:

1. The wonder accelerates very slowly, at 10% Safe Speed.

2. The wonder can get "locked" into acceleration mode. In a dangerous situation, there is a 10% chance that this happens: the wonder increases to its Maximum Speed as quickly as possible. Fixing this requires an Exceptional Success on a Wits + Crafts check with one check allowed every turn, or somehow damaging the engine, which requires only a regular success and causes all movement to stop until the engine can be repaired.

3. The wonder suffers a -2 penalty to Handling.

4. The wonder operates under some kind of "taboo," and will stall if brought across certain areas, such as over running water or into tunnels.

5. The wonder provides a horrible, rattling ride. It is impossible to sleep within, and all actions except driving are at -3 due to the shaking. Every six hours spent within causes one Health level of Bashing damage.

6. The wonder is dreadfully loud and incapable of stealth when it moves, and isn't very quiet idling, either.

7. The wonder is prone to stalling if it takes damage. Any hit incurs a 10% chance that the wonder stalls out. Restarting it requires a Wits + Crafts check.

8. The vehicle controls are laid out in a lunatic fashion, and probably change when you're not looking. Upon first sitting down *every time* to use the controls, the subject must make an Intelligence + Computer check. Every success reduces the penalty to use the vehicle by 1. The penalty starts at -4.

9. The wonder possesses a tediously legal quasi-intelligence and will not function outside of the proper traffic lanes. Flight plans must be filed, lane shifts must be signaled, and so on, or the wonder stalls and requires a

Wits + Crafts check to restart.

10. The wonder only functions in a specific environment. Roll on the special conditions chart, below.

Special Conditions:

1. Direct sunlight
2. Not in direct sunlight
3. Only when not in a regular nitrogen-oxygen atmosphere
4. Only when the temperature exceeds 80° F
5. Only when the temperature is less than -32° F
6. Only when on natural earth
7. Only when plugged in to an electrical outlet
8. Only when away from electromagnetic interference (this usually requires burying, or being at least 10 miles from a town and 100 feet from any other technological device)
9. Only when inside
10. Only when outside

"Have you thought about this? Have you thought about what you're doing?"

I sounded nervous, and she sneered.

"Of course I've thought about it," she said. She leaned close, close enough that if I weren't bound to the rocket by gold-titanium chains I could activate my Taye-Shikomi Gland and tear her face off. "I know what I'm doing, and I know that they need to pay. All of them. Don't talk to me of 'innocents,' Doctor. You know there are none. You more than anyone--"

"Dammit, that's not what I'm talking about," I said. Bad idea to raise my voice to anyone with an "atomic holocaust"-themed bathroom, but I was pissed. "Look, your rocket doesn't have enough fuel to reach Vienna, your beholden lacks any formal flight training, your 'geometric enhancement hormone' won't work--I know because I pioneered the design and it breaks down in direct sunlight--and your warhead isn't strong enough to pierce the planetarium's dome, meaning it'll just fizzle on the surface."

"Don't you think I know that?"

"You..."

"Do you think I'm crazy or something? I know I don't have the necessary talent. That's why I'm employing the very best!" She giggled and rattled my chains. "You're the best rocketician in Australia."

"'Rocketician,' isn't a word, dear," I said, the roar of the main oxygen-intake swallowing my words.

"It fucking well *better* be, dear," she snapped, "because you have just under an hour to get out of those chains, stabilize the flight-circuitry, and build something that'll pierce the planetarium roof so you don't splatter like a bug on the way down." She was dropping out of view--no, I was lifting off, still strapped to the outer hull--and I could see the atomic fires reflected in her steel goggles. She was smiling.

I glowed with pride--some radiation, mostly pride--as I broke through the cloud cover, because I knew she was right. I was the best, and only I could make her dreams of vengeance a reality. If only I could get out of these chains...

Chapter Four: Special Rules and Systems

"Don't mock me, my friend. It's a condition of mental divergence.

I find myself on the planet Ogo, part of an intellectual elite, preparing to subjugate the barbarian hordes on Pluto. But even though this is a totally convincing reality for me in every way, nevertheless Ogo is actually a construct of my psyche. I am mentally divergent, in that I am escaping certain unnamed realities that plague my life here. When I stop going there, I will be well. Are you also divergent, friend?"

-L.J. Washington, 12 Monkeys

Havoc:

Mortals cause wondrous technology to go haywire, endangering lives and property. Geniuses call this unique ability of mortals to ruin their creations "Havoc." A wonder touched, picked up, or interacted with by a mere mortal (an untemplated human) must roll its Havoc dice, which equal the genius' Inspiration - the wonder's rank. The wonder must make this roll every turn that it is handled, carried, or used.

Dramatic Failure: The wonder is lost to the genius. Roll its rank. If the roll is a Success, the wonder permanently turns into an orphan. A failure results in the wonder's destruction.

Failure: The wonder turns into a violent orphan for the duration of the scene. If possible it will attack anywhere nearby, focusing its violence on whoever triggered Havoc in it. If a number of Mania points equal to the wonder's rank are channeled into the wonder, it shuts down. Reactivating the wonder that scene requires the same amount of Mania. (Wonders that are only temporarily orphaned don't roll on the Orphan Mutation Chart. They do, however, gain the ability to move and minimal Attributes for the duration of the scene.)

Success: The wonder acquires a new extra fault.

Exceptional Success: The wonder suffers no ill effects.

Suggested Modifiers: Violent handling (-1), incidental contact (+1), scientific analysis (-3), wonder is in its laboratory (bonus equal to Laboratory Equipment)

This sort of interaction requires physical contact from the mortal to the wonder. A ray gun that shoots a mortal doesn't suffer Havoc, nor does a Wondrous healing device that patches a mortal up. However, if the mortal were to pick up the device, or even try to push it away with his hand, it would suffer Havoc. In combat, normal ranged or weaponry attacks from mortals do not trigger Havoc. Unarmed attacks, including punching, striking, and grappling, do. Mere mortals can walk through the halls or remain in the public rooms of a very large wondrous vehicle or building (such structures often have specialized secure holding cells), but any handling of the equipment or access ports within immediately triggers Havoc.

Holding It Together:

A genius can spend a Willpower point to receive an automatic Exceptional Success on a Havoc Check, provided that the wonder is in the genius' possession at the time.

Intelligent Wonders and Havoc:

Intelligent wonders (Automata 4)+ are slightly more resilient to Havoc. They can, for example, survive most incidental or social handling, such as handshakes and being in a crowd, without significant danger. (Most such creatures prefer to wear gloves and keep their distance, just in case.) It requires something from mere mortals like assault, first aid, or sex to trigger a Havoc check.

Manes or other intelligent wonders with an Inspiration score use that as a dice pool for resisting Havoc; manes without an Inspiration score roll a chance die.

A wonder that possesses Willpower can spend a point of Willpower to receive an automatic Exceptional Success on a Havoc Check.

Dramatic Failure: Intelligent manes are permanently, incurably insane. Obligation drops to 0. Unintelligent manes roll their rank. If the roll is a Success, the mane permanently turns into an orphan. If the result is a failure or the mane has no rank, it is destroyed.

Failure: The mane turns violently insane for the duration of the scene. If intelligent, Obligation drops to 0. If unintelligent, treat the result much like a failed Havoc roll for a wonder, except Mania cannot shut the mane down.

Success: Intelligent manes suffer a -1 penalty to all actions. Unintelligent manes that duplicate the effects of wonders acquire a new extra fault. Other unintelligent manes lose one-quarter of their Structure.

Exceptional Success: The mane suffers no ill effects.

Suggested Modifiers: Hug or pat-down (+2), violent intent (-1), putting on a band aid (-1), treating a wound (-2), surgery (-3 to -5), scientific analysis (-3)

Manes never need make a Havoc check in their native bardo or unmada field.

Havoc and Bad Luck:

A Havoc Check is a reasonable result for a Dramatic Failure for many attempts to use wonders.

Mania Starvation:

A mane needs one point of Mania per day to sustain itself outside its home. If it does not have any Mania in its system when this cost must be paid, it makes a Havoc check.

Protection and Recovery:

A mane can spend a point of Willpower to get an Exceptional Success on a Havoc Check.

A mane's action penalty (accumulated by rolling a Success on a Havoc check) automatically drops by one point per day, and disappears entirely and instantly if the mane returns to the bardo or unmada field that sustains it. Otherwise, a mane can remove action check penalties by spending Mania on a one-for-one basis, though only after the scene that triggered the penalty is over.

Orphan Wonders:

"I have brought to light a monstrous abnormality, but I did it for the sake of knowledge. Now for the sake of all life and Nature you must help me thrust it back into the dark again."

-H.P. Lovecraft, "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward"

An orphan wonder is a wonder without an owner. There are five ways in which an orphan wonder can come about.

First, a flaw during the design phase (a Dramatic Failure) can cause a wonder to activate as an orphan. Most geniuses hurriedly destroy such abnormalities before they can escape.

Second, a genius can abandon a wonder. A genius abandons a wonder automatically after it has not been in contact with the genius for one month. Alternately, a genius can abandon a wonder automatically by touching a wonder, or, if touch is unavailable, by spending a point of Willpower to adjust her thoughts away from the wonder. Permanently abandoning a wonder in this way is an Obligation-7 transgression. When a wonder is abandoned, roll its rank. If it receives any successes, it becomes an orphan. If not, it is destroyed.

Third, a genius may die. The Inspired are not immortal (well, not normally), and even those in self-regenerating god-bodies made of solid iridium can be laid low by a well-placed death ray. When a genius dies, every one of his wonders rolls its rank. Those that roll at least one success become orphans. Those that fail are destroyed. Killing a genius can trigger a catastrophe of exploding and suddenly liberated wonders.

Fourth, many manes function like wonders of mad science. Inside their bardo, they are stable, but if withdrawn from their native home—if they survive—they become orphan wonders until returned. Animate manes that leave their bardos automatically become orphans, but they do not mutate (see below). Inanimate manes removed from their environment roll their rank. Those without a rank (regular or slightly peculiar objects that happen to be manes) roll a chance die. Those that succeed become orphans. Those that fail are destroyed.

Fifth and finally, an automaton may spontaneously become an orphan if severely threatened or abused, or threatened with destruction, if sufficiently intelligent and willful. This is rare, but has been known to occur.

When a wonder becomes an orphan, permanently or temporarily, any wonders integral to it are also orphaned. A wonder is not automatically orphaned if one of its integral wonders becomes orphaned.

Orphan Mutations:

When a wonder turns permanently into an orphan—not just temporarily—it twists and mutates, its form changing as maniacal energy washes over it, instilling a bestial urge to survive. Orphans become creatures, rather than just extraordinary things, with their own desires and motivations.

An orphan automaton retains its Attributes, Skills, and assorted special abilities.

An orphan of some other Axiom receives Attributes as follows:

Strength: Size/5 (round down, minimum one dot)

Dexterity and Stamina: 2

Intelligence, Wits, Resolve, Presence, Manipulation, and Composure: 1

Species Movement: 0 (without other ways to move, an orphan can inch slowly along the ground, based on its combined Strength and Dexterity scores)

Limbs: Unless otherwise noted, no manipulators

Senses: Similar to a normal human's

A wonder that is temporarily orphaned by Havoc gains all the above benefits, but does not mutate.

For full orphans, roll a number of dice equal to the new orphan's Rank and consult the chart below to determine its mutations.

Orphan Mutation Chart:

Roll	First Roll	Each Subsequent Roll
1	Legs or Wheels. Base Speed = Size.	Wings. Base Speed = Size x Rank. Additional rolls here grant Hovering ability and increase Base Speed for walking and flying by 50%.
2	Intelligence increases one step (from zombie to animal to person)	Once "person-level" intelligence is reached, every roll here adds one dot to Intelligence.
3	Melee attack that causes Lethal damage equal to Size/5 (round down).	+1 damage
4	Grows one pair of fine manipulators (hands).	Additional pair of manipulators. Extra manipulators do not grant additional regular actions, but they can perform additional reflexive actions (holding things, etc.). Each additional pair also grants a +2 dice bonus to grappling.
5	Hardiness. Size increases by 50%. +1 Strength and Stamina.	Same.
6	Swiftness. +1 Dexterity and Wits.	Same.
7	Magnificence. +1 Presence and Manipulation.	Same.
8	Stability. +1 Resolve and Composure.	Same.
9	Splits into two identical creatures. Size halved (round down). -1 Intelligence. (If Intelligence is 1, reduce effective intelligence by one step, from person to animal to zombie.)	Same.
10	Roll again twice.	Same.

Orphan Skills:

Orphans (even temporarily orphaned wonders) possess all Physical Skills of, at minimum, a dot number equal to their rank. Automata and other intelligent orphans may have higher Skills.

Orphan Obligation and Motivation:

Orphans of Automata-2 or Automata-3, whether they start that way or receive it through their orphan status, lack a Morality or Obligation score and are treated as Illuminated. Orphans not of Automata are similar. They can be negotiated with—possibly—but most are atavistic and concerned only with feeding. If an automaton of rank 4 or 5 turns into an orphan, roll one die. If the result is equal to or lower than the creating genius' current Obligation (or final Obligation, in the event of the genius' death), that is its new Obligation. If the roll is higher than the wonder's Obligation, it loses all Obligation. Temporarily orphaned wonders are always treated as having no Obligation.

Orphans with person-level intelligence possess Willpower points, a Virtue, and a Vice.

Orphan Sustenance:

An orphan does not retain its bound Mania, which normally supplies it with some kind of machine-homeostasis. This means that regardless of how the orphan comes about, the result is the same: the orphan begins to break down unless it can somehow regain Mania.

Every day that passes, an orphan loses one point of Mania. Every day that goes by without any Mania in the orphan's system triggers a Havoc check.

If an orphan is full of Mania, every additional point of Mania consumed removes one extra fault.

Even if not full of Mania, an orphan can heal itself by spending Mania. Most orphans possess Structure instead of Health. Every point of Mania restores one point of lost Structure. For organic orphans, every point of Mania restores two levels of Bashing damage or one level of Lethal damage. Three points of Mania and a point of Willpower can remove one level of Aggravated damage.

Orphans Spending Mania:

Unbound orphans need not spend Mania to activate their natural or integral abilities. An unbound orphan gun, for example, need not spend Mania to charge up and fire, while an orphan dirigible need not spend Mania to fly.

Orphans Storing Mania:

An orphan wonder can store a maximum amount of Mania equal to five times its rank.

Stasis:

An orphan wonder that wants to prolong its existence can enter a state of stasis. The wonder spends one point of Mania to enter this state. In this state, the wonder spends one point of Mania per year. It awakens automatically if touched by someone or something that contains Mania or if it suffers damage. Most orphans in ancient techo-ruins spend their time in this state.

Elder Orphans:

An orphan that survives can grow more dangerous and powerful. First, intelligent orphans often possess a broad selection of Skills and Merits gained over the years. Second, old orphans mutate and gain power. After long centuries, powerful orphans are ancient, alien creatures, covered in the crust and leavings of ages, their bodies laced with centuries of accumulated technology that they have devoured and assimilated.

Age	Power
1-10 Years	As it was created
11-50 Years	+1 rank (maximum rank of 5). Roll three times on the mutation chart.
50-200 Years	+1 rank (maximum rank of 5). Roll three times on the mutation chart.
200-1,000 Years	+1 rank (maximum rank of 5). Roll three times on the mutation chart.
1,001+ Years	+1 rank (maximum rank of 5). Roll three times on the mutation chart.

Old orphans do not split apart with age (if the roll is 9 on the mutation chart). Instead, they breed, producing a copy of themselves identical to their original form. This new creature inherits one mutation from its sire (choose randomly), then rolls a number of times on the mutation chart equal to its rank. A wonder of rank 5 that rolls a 9 on the mutation chart catalyzes instead of siring offspring. The wonder gains one dot of Inspiration, a catalyst, and three dots in Axioms, and can gain more power and knowledge just like any other genius.

Time spent in stasis does not add to a wonder's effective age. Only active existence does that.

Adopting an Orphan:

Some orphan wonders can be tamed. Though this is no easier or safer than taming any wild beast, skilled geniuses can pacify an orphan with promises of Mania. To adopt an orphan, a genius must first have the creature in a situation where it's fairly calm and not immediately dangerous. Then the genius offers one point of Mania per rank of the wonder and one point of Willpower, and rolls Presence + Animal Ken – the wonder's rank. Fully intelligent wonders substitute Persuasion for Animal Ken.

Dramatic Failure: The orphan becomes hostile to the genius, who cannot attempt to adopt that wonder until her Inspiration increases.

Failure: The genius is unable to adopt the orphan wonder. The Mania and Willpower are lost, but she may try again.

Success: The genius can adopt the orphan if she chooses. The spent Mania points are bound into the wonder. If the genius has the Adopted Orphan Merit and enough "space" in that Merit to include the wonder, the orphan's mutations disappear and the effect is permanent. Otherwise the orphan's mutations remain and the effect lasts for one scene, after which time the wonder reverts.

Exceptional Success: The genius can specify any other genius nearby. If *that* genius then spends a point of Willpower and binds the required number of Mania points into the orphan, the orphan is loyal to that genius, not the genius who rolled the dice. As with a regular success, the effect is permanent if the genius has the Adopted Orphan Merit and enough "space" for the new orphan; otherwise the effect lasts for one scene. ("Wonder-Whisperers" who can perform this trick reliably are in high demand in some places, as some geniuses like to gift fledgling mad scientists with a loyal orphan.)

Suggested Modifiers: Orphan has been mistreated by geniuses (-2), orphan is hungry (-1), orphan is sated (+1), quiet location (+1), large crowds (-1)

An adopted orphan does not possess any more Obligation than its masterless counterpart, though its nature means it is somewhat "leashed."

The Thesis:

"The head is a machine. Even though we did not build it, we own it and thus have the right to tinker with it."
-William James

When a genius wishes to increase her Inspiration, she must engage in a thesis, an extensive analysis of everything she has thought and done. This is an exhausting and arduous process, but if the genius is successful, at the end of it both she and her wonders emerge stronger.

Approaches:

Different theses can vary enormously in scope, style, and approach. Though they are all designed to teach the genius something about Inspiration and her own abilities, they can take many forms. However, a genius' catalyst often guides the sort of theses she undergoes as her knowledge and power grow. Below are some very general guidelines for what the different catalysts focus on during a thesis.

A Grimm's thesis is the most direct. He must overcome a challenge, often a threat that infuriates him personally. This danger is a source of direct, personal anger, something visceral: a sexual predator for Grimms who suffered sexual abuse, an *Übermensch* infestation for a Grimm whose first collaborative died in a Lunar Nazi assault. Grimm theses are the least connected to Inspiration and to mad science and the most connected to the genius' mundane personality. In fact, many Grimms' theses stipulate that Mania should not play a major role in their completion, or force a Grimm to rely on Skills and abilities other than wonders and mad science. In his thesis, a Grimm pushes himself, physically, mentally, and psychologically, to new limits, simmering slowly as he suffers and struggles, hoping to unleash his rage in a titanic blast that will, ideally, destroy his enemies and lead him to enlightenment. The Grimm's thesis works to channel, hone, and shape his rage, from something mindless and atavistic to the clean, precise surgical instrument of a true genius.

The Klagens are the doom-sayers of the Inspired, and their theses focus on warning or protecting people from an upcoming disaster. Cassandras find themselves struggling to stop an onrushing catastrophe. It may be a natural disaster, but often it is a disaster that people (including geniuses) have made for themselves. Klagens find themselves struggling to make people see the doom racing toward them. Some force people to change their ways—through persuasion or threats—while others ignore the voice of those they need to save and rush head-long into protecting them, whether or not they want (or need) the help. Other Klagens merely study the concept of sorrow. This can be the most abstract and least direct of theses, except perhaps those conducted by Staunens, as a *Klagen* wanders the halls of the sorrowing and ruined, seeks out those whose lives she destroyed—the families of enemy beholden she has killed, for example—and otherwise explores the nature and extent of sorrow, misery, and loss.

A *Hoffnung's* thesis is perhaps the easiest to conceptualize: every *Hoffnung* has an image of how the world should be, so a *Hoffnung's* thesis works to bring that world closer to reality. A *Principality* who dreams of a worldwide Libertarian paradise may work to bring down government-backed financial institutions or turn a *bardo* into a microcosm of his political vision. One who wants humanity to move beneath the oceans might find herself in an ideological struggle with another *Hoffnung* for the ear of a mundane scientific policy director at NASA. *Hoffnungs* work to promulgate and spread their policies, and their theses are the most likely to connect to the mundane world, though they concern themselves with far-reaching ideas and policy decisions, not individual changes. Anything that moves a *Hoffnung's* vision closer to reality—even symbolic victories—can serve as a thesis.

A young *Neid's* thesis is often simple and may resemble that of a particularly unsubtle Grimm: she seeks restitution for the wrongs done to her, either during her Breakthrough or in her Inspired career. While she rarely dwells on the suffering (real or imagined) she experienced in her earlier life, which distinguishes her from a Grimm, *Neids* may find themselves continually seeking out enemies to enact plans of revenge, justification, or humiliation upon. But not all *Neids* are so simple, and as a *Wurm* grows in experience, her theses can become some of the most sophisticated and philosophical of all mad scientist's, focusing on the nature of exclusion and inclusion, the paths that acceptance and outsider-status can take, and the trajectory of isolation and abandonment. They never forget their feeling of betrayal and banishment, but they learn to study it with more objectivity than many catalysts can analyze their own archetypal natures.

The thesis of a *Staunen* is based on the *Watcher's* fascination with the world. It is often a journey of discovery, a mixed exploration of one's self and one's object of fascination. A *Staunen's* thesis focuses not just on an engrossing (and perhaps dangerous) aspect of the world that is not entirely understood, but parts of

the Staunen's own personality. All geniuses form connections and patterns easier than regular humans, and in his thesis, a Staunen will weave together discoveries of the inside and outside worlds in ways that would baffle most normal people, leading to a final key discovery that transforms his understanding of the Staunen's object of study, and transforms a Grigori's understanding of himself.

Not every thesis is drawn from a genius' catalyst. Theses are intensely personal and can take many forms. Some draw from the mad scientist's foundation: Artificers build new things, Directors explore interpersonal relationships, Navigators engage in exploration and conflict, Progenitors transform and evolve themselves, and Scholastics study riddles and mysteries. Some theses are drawn from much more personal experiences, unanswered questions or unresolved obsessions in a genius' own life. As a genius' Inspiration climbs, she will find herself darting from one inspiration for a thesis to the next, always finding new directions for self-improvement.

Organizing a Thesis:

The first step toward completing a thesis is submitting it. This is not a formal process and requires no roll. Instead, the player and Storyteller must come to an agreement about what sort of activity or experience will qualify as a thesis, and what the "win" conditions are. This may be represented in-game as the genius asking his peers for advice, contacting his foundation and looking for projects in need of completion, or just kicking back and thinking about what he has learned since the last thesis.

Once a thesis goal is decided on, the genius must achieve that goal. Direct and concrete goals ("Stop Prestor John's army from devastating the bardo of True Argentine," "Use my beholden to take over Malthusian Cybernetics from the inside-out and turn it into a puppet for my ideology") are often easy to adjudicate, but more personal or abstract goals may require more consideration on the part of the Storyteller.

The genius then sets to work. A thesis should normally take no more than a single session. It can be run alone, but that is not necessary; the Peerage encourages collaboratives to cooperate on completing a member's thesis, and geniuses can gain prestige by helping in a particularly well-crafted endeavor.

Once the genius feels satisfied with her work, she rolls Intelligence + Wits.

How thoroughly the genius achieves his goal should modify this roll. A totally botched job means that the genius cannot even roll; she will have to start again with a new thesis. An incomplete or failed job bumps the level of success down by one step. (Success becomes Failure, Failure becomes Dramatic Failure, etc.). A truly spectacular job increases the level of success by one step.

Dramatic Failure: The genius botches the thesis and must start again from the beginning, or with an entirely new goal. The genius does not gain a dot of Inspiration.

Failure: The genius completes the thesis, but her Inspiration is haphazard and confusing. The genius gains a dot of Inspiration. However, all the persistent faults in all of her wonders change.

Success: The genius completes the thesis and does a competent job. The genius gains a dot of Inspiration upon spending experience points.

Exceptional Success: The genius does an extraordinary job on her thesis, producing a work that is clever, sublime, and deeply personal. The genius gains a dot of Inspiration and refreshes her Mania to the maximum. Her wonders remain the same.

Suggested Modifiers: Long and complicated thesis (+1), simple and easy-to-complete thesis (-1), results of experiments confirmed genius' expectations (+1), transformative emotional experience (+2)

Upon gaining a new dot of Inspiration, many of the genius' wonders improve automatically once he has a few minutes with them. For example, wonders of Skafoi will typically experience an increase in Speed and Handling. No rolls are required for this improvement.

Using Larvae in a Thesis:

Larva can be added to a thesis. They do not add to the roll. Instead they provide some unique insight for the genius (and by extension, for the player) about how to proceed with the thesis. Every Larva used grants one insight. However, it must be the genius' own Larva, not one found, bought, or traded second-hand.

Beholden:

Creating Beholden:

Beholden aren't born from axle-grease and stray polymers. They are regular people, except that they have been consumed by the Genius' Inspiration and see the world exactly as she sees it.

A person's worldview can be broken down, gradually or suddenly, by a genius, allowing him to create a new beholden. This requires a demonstration of the genius' wonders (which incurs Havoc like normal if handled) and an expenditure of Mania equal to the subject's Willpower.

Once this is done, the genius rolls Inspiration + Presence vs. the subject's Resolve.

Dramatic Failure: The genius cannot make that person into a beholden until his Inspiration increases.

Failure: The geniuses cannot make that person into a beholden. It is possible to try again.

Success: The subject becomes a beholden unless she spends a point of Willpower to resist.

Exceptional Success: The subject becomes a beholden.

Suggested Modifiers: The subject's interaction with a wonder orphans it, temporarily or permanently (-3), the subject only looks at a wonder (-1), the genius spends only a minute or two talking with the subject (-1), the genius spends over an hour talking to the subject (+1), the subject has gone on some "grand adventure" with the genius (+3)

People also occasionally become beholden on their own accord. Repeated exposure to mad science will eventually drive a person beholden, but geniuses have found this transformation nearly as hard to predict as what exposure to mad science will cause a mere mortal to catalyze.

Being Beholden:

Beholden are interesting psychological studies. Though as intelligent, creative, and competent as they were before their change, beholden are incapable of engaging in high-level theoretical thinking. They lack metaphysical, philosophical, political, religious, ethical, or scientific thought-structures. (Or perhaps their conscious minds simply can't access them.) A beholden has no preference for political candidates or political parties. She does not subscribe to any religion, nor does she actively reject the tenets of any religion. She cannot formulate an argument for or against any ethical or political stance, such as vegetarianism or welfare. She may still cling to vestigial beliefs out of stubbornness, habit, or cultural identity, but she cannot really understand why she does.

The only exception to this behavior is when a beholden interacts with a genius. Then, the beholden takes on the philosophy and thinking mode of that genius. This ideological parroting is what makes a beholden so useful to the Inspired.

This condition affects beholden surprisingly little. They still retain an instinctive moral system (measured by Morality). Most beholden would feel disgusted and repulsed by cold-blooded murder, but when asked to justify this feeling, they would be unable. Beholden can still engage in planning and form practical models of the world around them: a clutch of beholden sent to kidnap a doctor can prepare, coordinate, and execute a plan as well as their Skills and Attributes would allow. But they would be unable, for example, to offer an ethical or philosophical justification for their actions.

Stray Beholden:

Some beholden are "strays." They lack a worldview of their own, and thus are certainly beholden, but they also lack a master to tell them what to do and think. This tends to happen in one of four ways. First, a genius might die, leaving her beholden without direction and focus. Second, a regular person, often a scientist, might see something so wondrous that it shatters their ability to formulate a view of the world, while not pushing them quite far enough to catalyze. Third, some bardos create beholden naturally from members of their population. Finally, beholden might forcibly and instinctively reject their master due to extreme moral differences; mad scientists on the fast-track to Illumination often shed all but their most heinous Igors.

To escape the bonds of a repellent master, the genius' Obligation must differ from the beholden's Morality by five or more points (either way, though usually it's a moral beholden and a monstrous mad scientist). Once per month, or once per scene if someone makes a Manipulation + Persuasion roll to convince the beholden of the error of his master's ways, the genius can make a Resolve check vs. his master's Inspiration.

Dramatic Failure: The beholden cannot attempt to free himself again until the genius' Obligation moves even farther from the beholden's Morality.

Failure: The beholden remains a servant of the genius.

Success: The beholden is freed and becomes a stray.

Exceptional Success: The beholden is freed and is no longer a beholden.

Suggested Modifiers: Beholden fears for his life (+3), beholden has been mistreated (+1 to +3), genius has made promises to safeguard the beholden (-1), genius is friends with the beholden (-1)

Stray beholden, however they appear, cannot recover Willpower until they have a master again. Worse, they gradually go insane as they lose the ability to make sense of the world. Every month, roll Intelligence + Resolve.

Dramatic Failure: The stray goes completely insane and becomes catatonic, dying shortly thereafter.

Failure: The stray takes a -1 penalty to all actions as he loses his ability to form connections and build a coherent view of the world. At -5, the stray goes insane as if a Dramatic Failure had been rolled.

Success: The stray remains stable.

Exceptional Success: The stray reestablishes contact with the pattern-generating part of his mind. He is no longer beholden, and all penalties are removed.

Suggested Modifiers: Psychological exercises (+1), difficult and violent month (-1), rejected by another mad scientist (-1), with a group of three or more strays (+1), with a group of ten or more strays (+2)

These stray beholden are eager to find a genius to latch onto, even risking abusive and morally dubious relationships in exchange for being given a worldview again. Geniuses looking for Igors often learn about good places to look in their immediate area. It seems that every major metropolitan area has some place—a half-forgotten coffee shop, a tiny bardo inside an apartment block, a neglected basement office at the local community college—where the strays congregate, talking about old times under their masters and trying to remember what it was like to believe something. Most geniuses know how to find this place, which the Lemurians call a *catasta*, where they know they can find beholden desperate for employment and purpose.

Promoted Beholden:

Beholden can catalyze, becoming full geniuses. Many geniuses begin their careers as beholden who are set apart for an eventual Breakthrough. Also, sometimes when a genius dies, one of his beholden will catalyze, either suddenly or as a gradual process amidst the wreckage of what the genius left behind.

This transformation is up to the Storyteller; here, like elsewhere, there are no hard and fast rules for how and when a person becomes Inspired.

Dirty Work:

While many beholden come from scientific fields, others are recruited from the police, the military, or special forces. Some geniuses even train their beholden in these fields in order to guard their laboratories and strike out against their enemies. This is represented by Beholden Prowess, which is purchased as part of the Beholden Merit.

Sometimes a genius does not want to get her hands dirty, or she lacks relevant training for some kind of field work. In this case, she may be able to send her beholden to do her dirty work.

Dirty work can be anything from a meet-and-greet to theft to assassination. If it's not dangerous, there's no need to roll, but most dirty work is dangerous and requires a dirty work check (with a starting number of dice equal to the beholdens' Prowess) to succeed.

Difficult actions or actions against difficult targets incur a penalty set by the Storyteller. The Storyteller should use the following guidelines based on the power and security level of the target.

Regular citizen: +1

Armed forces veteran, beat cop, security guard, paranoid or security-minded person: No modifier

Person with combat and awareness training, such as a detective, soldier, or security specialist, or minor public figure like a local celebrity: -1

Highly competent person such as special forces or wealthy or moderately influential person such as a selectman: -2

City- or state-level figure such as a mayor, crime boss, head of a major corporation, or state senator: -3

A national or international figure such as a senator, billionaire or president: -4

Opposing Beholden: Equal to Beholden Prowess.

Orphan wonder: Equal to rank

Genius: Equal to Inspiration

The differing size of the two groups is also important:

Beholden outnumber target by 50%: +1
Beholden outnumber target by 2:1: +2
Beholden outnumber target by 3:1: +3
Beholden outnumber target by 4:1: +4

And so on. If the reverse is true, a penalty applies.

The beholden also suffer a penalty based on how complicated or dangerous the activity to perform is.

Surveillance: 0
Harrying Attack or "Sending a Message": -1
Theft: -2
Destruction or property, demobilizing, or serious inconvenience: -3
Military-style Strike: -3
Assassination: -4
Kidnapping: -5

Add the penalties together. So, if beholden are sent to steal from (-2) the police (-2) that outnumber them by 50% (-1) the total penalty is -5.

A group of beholden can be used for dirty work a number of times per chapter equal to their Number.

The Storyteller can adjust this modifier to any degree based on specific circumstances, or even outright refuse certain attempts at dirty work that would derail the story or avoid dramatic conflict. The Storyteller should usually refuse any attempt to kill or capture a genius with an Inspiration equal to or greater than that of the character assigning the dirty work, or other metanormal creatures of similar power, but any disruptive or disinteresting act is subject to veto. On the other hand, the Storyteller should encourage the use of dirty work to simplify the collaborator's own missions or to support their actions.

Once the penalty is determined (and if the dirty work is not rejected out of hand), the genius can spend Mania to increase the roll. The genius can spend a number of Mania points equal to her maximum per-turn expenditure on outfitting, briefing, and enhancing the beholden. Once that's done, roll the dice.

Dramatic Failure: The beholden fail spectacularly and gruesomely. The genius permanently loses a dot in either Beholden Number or Beholden Prowess (the genius' choice) as his troops are massacred. Dirty work cannot be attempted for the rest of the chapter.

Failure: The beholden fail to achieve their goals. Casualties and disruptions are light, but incur a cumulative -1 penalty per failure. This penalty resets at the end of the chapter.

Success: The beholden do something right. The goal is accomplished.

Exceptional Success: Not only is the goal accomplished, but it doesn't count toward the maximum number of dirty work uses during the chapter. Further, the morale boost wipes away any cumulative penalties.

Suggested Modifiers: Instructions are unclear or ambiguous (-1), beholden are unfamiliar with task (-1), task is outside beholden's talent suite (-2), beholden are specialized for the operation (+1), more than half of the beholden are equipped with wonders relevant to the operation (bonus equals rank of lowest-ranking wonder), beholden must operate publicly (-2)

Summary Execution:

Murdering beholden can improve their performance after a failure. This permanently reduces Beholden Number by one, but removes all accumulated penalties in that chapter and prevents new ones from accruing for the rest of the chapter. Further, the genius can roll Presence + Intimidation before all future dirty work checks until the end of the chapter; successes are added to the dirty work dice pool. Summary execution for incompetence is at least an Obligation-4 transgression.

Dealing with Big Groups:

A collaborative with large numbers of beholden and automata can quickly grow unwieldy. The Storyteller needs to balance players' (fair and understandable) desire to benefit from their Axioms and Merits with a desire to keep the story moving forward. A battle with seven geniuses is hard enough to run; one with seven geniuses, eleven beholden, and 20 killer robots is unmanageable. A Storyteller can invoke a few rules to simplify things.

Beholden do not generally go "on adventures" with geniuses. Storytellers can make case-by-case exceptions, but mostly, even combat beholden focus on guarding the lab and performing dirty work. They don't join their masters during temple lootings, murder investigations, or streets brawls against manes. However, dirty work can be conducted at any time: encourage the collaborative to, for example, have their beholden perform harrying attacks on their enemies while the geniuses themselves slip into their enemies' lab.

While automata can travel easily with geniuses (assuming they're not conspicuous), coordinating large groups is inconvenient and difficult. As a rule of thumb, the Storyteller can assume that a number of combat-capable servants (beholden or automata) can conveniently follow the group equal to the highest Presence in the collaborative. Beyond that and logistics dictate the group should break down into smaller parties.

Finally, there are times when all the collaborative's beholden and automata need to be put into action: a massive raid on an enemy airship, for example, doesn't just call for 2-5 robot servants backing up the mad scientists. In this case, despite the beholden and automata working closely with the geniuses, the Storyteller can use rules for massive battles.

Massive Battles:

Sometimes the collaborative will want to bring their full forces to bear. They spot a 50-strong Hollow Earth Nazi patrol in the deep desert. Etherites attack their underwater fortress. It's time for an epic confrontation with their Illuminated former mentor and her spider servants. Only a massive engagement, with dozens of minions (beholden and automata), makes sense. But who wants to roll dice for whole platoons? Even dice-fiend players can grow bored, and *Genius: The Transgression* is not a tactical war game. In that case, a system for massive battles can help move the action along.

This system is not a realistic simulation of mass combat. It is intended to provide some color and running commentary while the PCs fight that is not entirely based on Storyteller fiat. To run this sort of battle, first divide the battle into two groups: the main battle, where the PCs will fight against a powerful group worthy of their abilities (usually from half to double their own number) and a secondary battle, where the collaborative's minions duke it out against enemy minions.

Handle the main battle normally. Every turn, after everyone has acted in the main battle, roll for the results of the secondary battle.

First, figure out the total numbers on each side, as follows:

Number of Minions	Number Rank
1	1
2 to 5	2
6 to 11	3
12 to 29	4
30-49	5
50-99	6
100+	7

Then, note the Prowess. For beholden, Prowess is equal to the Beholden Prowess dots each group has. For combat-capable automata, Prowess is equal to rank. (The Storyteller may need to determine equivalent Prowess for non-combat-oriented automata, but this is normally an all-or-nothing thing: either an automaton can fight well and has Prowess equal to rank, or it can't, and can't contribute anything useful to the fight.)

To conduct the secondary battle, roll a competing Number + Prowess check.

Failure (equal number of successes): Stalemate. Neither side gains the edge in the battle.

Success (one side gets more successes than the other): The tide shifts. The victorious side pushes their enemies back, and some break through the line. A number of minions equal to the winning side's Number or the number of successes (whichever is lower) push through and join the main battle. Roll initiative normally for these minions. (If there are already minions of the same type in the main battle, the Storyteller can instead give the new minion an initiative score equal to his similar allies.)

Exceptional Success (one side gets five or more successes over the other): Breakthrough/Collapse! The winning side scatters or vanquishes their enemies, forcing a total withdrawal of the losers. The secondary battle is basically over. All of the victorious minions join their genius allies in the main battle, perhaps leading to a total rout.

Mixed Prowess Groups:

If there are two groups on the same side (for example, some two-dot beholden mixed in with some rank-4 automata), roll the dice for Number, *then* roll the number of dice for each Prowess rating, but only take the higher result of the second roll. For example, in a mixed group of 20 minions (Number 4), some with Prowess 1 and some with Prowess 3, first roll four dice for the Number. Note the result. Then roll one die for the Prowess 1 minion and three dice for the Prowess 3 minions. Of those two rolls, take the higher result, and add it to the number of successes rolled on the Number dice.

If the tide turns in favor of a mixed-Prowess group, randomly determine which type of minion joins the main battle. Chances for each type to join the main fight are equal.

Conclusion and Recovery:

At the end of the entire fight, it's time to determine casualties. This isn't precise and requires some eyeballing. An entirely routed side (the other side received an Exceptional Success) loses three dots of Number. A side that suffered more successes than it allowed over the course of the fight loses one from its Number. A side that gained an Exceptional Success or that got more successes than it suffered suffers minimal casualties that do not reduce the group's Number.

Reduced Number isn't permanent—the collaborative doesn't have to purchase more Beholden Merit dots, for example. But casualties will have to be replaced by recruiting more beholden or building more automata, which can take time.

The Realms of Mad Science:

The Community—the society of mundane scientists—occasionally changes its mind. New evidence comes along, a new theory clarifies what was once murky, or something else happens to change how the world's scientific community views a phenomenon. This sort of event, a paradigm shift, releases an enormous amount of otherwise untapped Mania that is normally bottled up in the heads of non-mad, unInspired scientists. While sometimes this burst of Mania can serve as a windfall, it can often be phenomenally dangerous to the Inspired.

When a paradigm changes quickly and thoroughly enough, Mania flies like a thunderstorm in what the Inspired call a Maniac Storm: old scientists are discredited, new researchers are mad with power, and occasionally, scientists are suddenly Inspired and start on the path of the genius. However, all that free Mania has to go somewhere, and it goes to the formation of manes: parasitic creatures, objects, or even places—called bardos—constructed of pure madness that sustain themselves on Mania.

A mane is what happens when a theory is abandoned. Paradoxically, the moment the Community decides that something is not true, that thing immediately comes into existence, held together by the burst of Mania released by the changing winds of scientific orthodoxy. Among geniuses, the best-known (and most devastating) recent example occurred in 1971, when the Viking lander touched down on Mars and at last showed it to be a barren, lifeless world, noticeably lacking intelligent aliens. Within seconds of that revelation, the Martian Empire appeared and launched an attack on Earth.

It could have been worse: the notion of "life on Mars" had been fading in the scientific community for decades, and was supported, mostly, by fervent wishes and hopes, especially among amateur scientists and planetologists, so the Inspired community had time to prepare. But the damage was still extraordinary: hundreds of landing pods crashed to Earth all over the world, and only the sacrifice of dozens of mad scientists stopped the Martian Empire from growing powerful enough to endanger the lives of billions.

There are other examples. Geocentrism collapsed hundreds of years ago, but the angels that guide the planets still lurk in the outer void, bound to their Crystal Spheres. The Hollow Earth was barely a legitimate theory at all, but there it is, stuffed to the gills with dinosaurs and phosphorescent fungi, for those who can find it.

No one has figured out what happens if the scientific community decides that a true thing is true, *then* decides that that true thing is false. Probably something very bad.

Manes:

"Observation: I can't see a thing. Conclusion: Dinosaurs."

-Carl Sagan

Manes, whether creatures, objects, or places, need Mania in order to survive. Even the most beautiful, hopeful mane or bardo is ultimately a parasite on the thoughts of the world, draining it in order to sustain itself.

A bardo requires Mania depending on its size. This rarely comes up, since most bardos that have lasted for more than a few years have found ways of sustaining themselves, but the inhabitants of a bardo are deadly serious about making sure that their homes stay supplied with intellectual energy. A bardo that goes "hungry" will shrink, casting any creatures within the abandoned area out into the real world. Generally a bardo needs a certain amount of Mania per month; if it does not receive that amount, it will shrink until it stabilizes at its new Mania supply level.

Bardo Size	Mania Required
House	10 per month
Village or Castle	20 per month
Town	50 per month
City or Realm	100 per month
World	300 per month

Bardos sustain themselves by sending out emissaries to gather Mania. Manes within a bardo do not require a separate Mania supply (the ideological consistency found in a bardo sustains them), but outside their homes they require Mania to survive and can suffer Havoc.

All animate manes possess the Calculus Vampire Merit, and those that dwell outside of a bardo use that ability to provide themselves with sustenance. A mane away from its home burns one point of Mania per day; if it cannot pay, it must make a Havoc check.

Bardos:

While there are countless—maybe infinite—bardos in existence, a few are particularly well known and worth exploring. Each bardo is unique, and must be accessed in a unique way; it's not possible for ordinary people simply to walk into a bardo, and they are invisible from outside.

Every bardo contains one or more entrances that permit access, but bardos are not part of normal geography: they are *only* accessible through these two-way entryways; trying to enter from some other direction will result in passing through regular Earthly terrain. Further, a particular mode of thought is necessary to see and thus enter the bardo. For example, to reach the Martian Empire, a person must descend toward Mars while in geosynchronous orbit over an area just southwest of Olympus Mons, between 50 and 150 miles above the Red Planet, while focused on the dunes that most look like spires of brass and alien metal. Approaching from any other direction, or not focusing on those dunes, will get a person to regular Mars, but the Martian Empire will not appear. Similarly, the Hollow Earth is accessible through special entrances near the North and South Poles and from a few other select points, after which one must follow well-hidden diagrams left by previous explorers; just "digging down" won't get someone there.

In game terms, entrances to a bardo are located "near" it in physical space; a bardo located on the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean can only be accessed when at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. Entrances range in size from just large enough for a human to slip through to big enough to pass a planet. People and creatures within a bardo can leave through these entrances without difficulty, but one must spend a point of Mania to activate an entrance and get into a bardo. Once opened, a bardo is revealed, even to mere mortals: one can glimpse alien cityscapes, distant prehistorical animals, or strange mechanical walkways, rather than what's on the other side of the entrance in normal space. Once activated, an entrance remains active for a number of turns equal to a genius' Inspiration, and people and objects can pass in and out freely during that time. When the time is up, the entrance once again only shows (and allows access to) normal space, and the bardo is closed.

Many bardos are extraordinary places, but they are all failed dreams, and they're all frayed and tattered around the edges. Even the bardos that are conceived as places of beauty and tranquility quickly decay into pallid memories of that original fancy, as all bardos are ultimately parasitic on memory and thought. They need Mania to survive, and that need means that the most magnificent bardo, conceived in the highest and most noble dreams of humanity, either parasitizes the fully-real world or perishes.

Many bardos contain manes that function like wonders. Police officers in the Gray Plateau of Tsoška carry Apokalypsi-based spying tools, while Space Station Colossus contains plasma guns, holo-screens, and hoverbikes. Within the bardo, these wonders are self-sustaining and do not require anyone to bind Mania into

them; they can simply be manufactured. A person within a bardo can spend a point of Willpower instead of any number of Mania points to activate and use native wonder-like manes, and can use them without penalty. Other manes in a Bardo are not full wonders, but instead replicate more mundane technology: the clever and ruthless Ape Empire of the Hollow Earth employs ingenious crossbows that, while not Katastrofi wonders, are nonetheless deadly, while many Martians employ "lesser" radium guns that are about as dangerous as a 19th century revolver. If taken outside a bardo, most inanimate manes simply disappear. Those that survive the transition become orphans.

Many geniuses make use of orphaned manes, using them to supplement their own abilities, and there is a brisk trade in plundered super-science from different bardos.

The Crystal Spheres:

It's obvious that the Earth can't orbit the Sun, because we would all fall off, but the universe insists on not being obvious, and almost before the Inspired existed in their recognizable modern form, geocentrism gave way to a new model of the universe where the Sun stood immobile, encircled by planets, moons, and various bits of cosmic detritus.

But don't tell that to the Christian and pagan "angels" that push the *seven* planets around the Earth. They have a difficult enough job, guiding the clockwork of the Crystal Spheres through its regular motions. Here, great planes of shimmering translucent glass stretch on seemingly forever, guided by strange but intelligent manes that take the form of winged beings of light. The worlds themselves aren't more than a few miles across, but they too often team with life, including intelligent manes called Micros (especially Crystal Mars, which is rarely more than a brief journey from the Martian Empire's naval base on Deimos). Dragonfly-riding Selenites and beings of living fire on the surface of the Sun crisscross the Crystal Spheres, but most of this realm is empty, bleak, and starkly beautiful.

The angels, or the "Megas" as less theologically-minded geniuses are prone to calling them, hint obliquely at realms greater than their own, beyond the farthest Crystal Sphere. Geniuses have journeyed in vain, looking to find if anything still remains of Dante's system of the Cosmos, whether there is an icy Hell somewhere near the Hollow Earth, Purgatory's mountain in the Southern oceans, or some kind of Maniacal paradise still offering bliss and salvation beyond the Circles of the World.

The Gray Plateau of Tsoska:

Utopian bardos are everywhere: little Shangri-Las and workers' paradises and anarchocapitalist Utopias are tucked away in the world's hidden corners, hard to find and, once found, difficult for many people to leave. Some decay as Mania leaves them, some grow corrupt; a scant handful find a way to remain pure. But one thing is clear: Utopias are as numerous as the dreams that birthed them. But all the fascist dystopian shitholes humanity feared during the age of the Communist peril seem to run together and form one place: Tsoska.

Somewhere in the bleak plains of central Asia stretches a dreary empire of fear, dirt, lies, and endless surveillance. Tsoska is where Utopian dreams go to die. It first appeared as the dreams of early 20th century socialists were replaced by the brutal realities of Communist totalitarianism, and ever since the Soviet Union's collapse, it has been one of the more influential bardos, even more powerful, now, than its capitalist counterpart, Voltt City.

Tsoska is an amalgamation of every badly-run empire in human history, magnified tenfold, the result of bitterness and failed visions of brotherhood and harmony. Few buildings are over three stories in Tsoska. The cities are gray and uninspiring; the government facilities squat and brutal. The people, who generally appear to be of mixed European and Asian descent, have lined faces and cold, slow hands built for tedious manual labor. A third, or a tenth, of 1%—it's impossible to tell—are part of Oversight, the counterespionage branch of

The Party, which controls all economic, social, and political activity in Tsoska. Fear is constant, and paranoia is institutionalized.

But there are bright spots in Tsoska, and that is why the geniuses come. (Mostly the geniuses come because the place is full of Igors looking for work, but the bright spots, they also help.) In Tsoska, a genius can find hidden musical subcultures that move from one almost-empty state supermarket to the next after hours, gifted scientists who never share their best work with The Party, and occult philosophical periodicals on the afterlife and psychic powers, masquerading as science to avoid State suppression, all perfect for a mad scientist's needs. And Tsoska isn't as dangerous as many other bardos: so long as a genius' paperwork is in order and he can recreate the patina of gray weariness that coats everyone who comes to Tsoska, The Party seems almost eager to show off its "accomplishments" to visiting foreigners, and a genius can learn much just by being quiet and looking as if he expects to be impressed.

The Grid:

A two-dimensional holographic grid-plane stretching out to infinity, dotted with seas of deleted and undifferentiated liquid data, roads of shimmering information, and glowing rectangular cities inhabited by humanoid programs, the Grid is one of the newest and most fascinating of the bardos, the dim echoes of science fiction's vision of the Internet, before the Internet became just another fact of life. The Grid contains physical "metaphors" for every computer connected to the Internet wirelessly or through a land line; generally, computers connected through a land line reside on the ground, while wireless contacts hover unmoving in the sky, occasionally turning transparent or evaporating as contact is lost. This makes The Grid a wonderland for computer hackers, who can visit target computers physically and rummage their secrets in the same way. Of course, this is much more dangerous than regular hacking, as secure computers manifest snarling defensive programs that can rip an intruder to shreds.

But the Grid isn't all business: here, geniuses mingle with a dizzying variety of net-life and localized programs in an atmosphere of digital chrome and gleaming neon, where the needs of the flesh fade away and different beings can meet mind-to-mind. These server-cities provide havens for data smuggling, rumor-mongering, and simple camaraderie, while outside some of them lurk deadly viral swarms and forgotten treasures from an earlier age of digital imagination.

Rules for the Grid:

Entering the Grid requires a computer with access to the Internet, a point of Mania, and (unlike with accessing most other bardos) an Intelligence + Computer check. Leaving The Grid can be accomplished by touching an "egress terminal," which are common in any inhabited area. A person can also leave instantly by spending a dot of Willpower. While in the Grid, anyone with a physical body leaves his physical body behind, comatose and clinging to the computer. Disconnecting a person from the computer snaps him back to his body and drains a dot of Willpower.

Duplicates of anything in the character's possession appear with the character in the Grid, including mundane items and wonders that can be carried or worn. However, it's a one-way process: nothing in a character's possession when she leaves the Grid transfers into the real world. A genius can create wonders while in the Grid, though these wonders cannot be taken out of the Grid.

Damage is handled normally in The Grid, which generally conforms to the normal laws of physics. A person killed in the Grid dies in reality. Once a person leaves the Grid, all damage received in the Grid is converted to Bashing damage, which heals normally.

The Computer Skill gives anyone in the Grid an unusual advantage. A character can substitute her dots in the Computer Skill for any Physical or Social Attribute while in the Grid.

The Hollow Earth:

The Hollow Earth can be found about ten miles below the Earth's crust, and is best accessed via the North or South Poles. Within the Hollow Earth, gravity attracts objects to the concave surface, while a strange false sun hangs in the Earth's center, providing eternal daylight. Enormous mountains, far larger than anything possible on the surface, rise up (or "inwardly") toward the inner sun, producing vast three-dimensional mazes of twisting, utterly dark rocky passages inhabited by strange albino creatures and enormous vermin.

Those lands of the Hollow Earth drenched in pseudosunlight are drawn from every age of the Earth above. Here, dinosaurs stride side-by-side with the earliest lungfish, while primitive humans live savage lives of violence and passion, never rising far above barbarism. Thick jungles, jagged mountains, and sun-bleached deserts offer an environment far harsher than anything found on the surface.

Many geniuses have wondered how the Hollow Earth, which is the largest bardo apart from the comparatively barren Crystal Spheres, maintains its existence: the idea was never seriously considered by science, and it does not attract the attention of pseudoscientists and science fiction writers like the Red Planet does. The answer, many Inspired think, is found in the peculiar "errors" found in many flora and fauna of the Hollow Earth: a genius might pass a "brontosaurus" with the wrong head, or meet a group of primitive humans menaced by Piltown Man. The Hollow Earth, say these geniuses, is a kind of clearinghouse for every archaeological and paleontological misstep ever made by human science.

Lemuria:

Once upon a time, no one thought that the continents could move. This posed the world's scientists with a serious quandary: how did animals scatter all over the globe in the patterns that are seen today? For example, how did the lemur (the little monkey-like animal) get to Madagascar? The answer seemed clear: land bridges had helped them across, then fallen back beneath the sea. These land bridges could rise up over the ages and disappear again, all the time. The land bridge that got lemurs to Madagascar was called Lemuria.

By the time evidence appeared to support continental drift and then plate tectonics, Lemuria had moved from a convenient explanation to an ancient wonderland full of psychics and spiritual techno-beings, similar to the stories of Atlantis and Mu, due to the imagination of Theosophists and other 19th century mystics and spiritualists. And when it turned out that there had been no Lemuria, the manes there disagreed...violently. Their time-traveling hijinks are recounted in further detail elsewhere; basically, if they are to be believed, their work created our current timeline.

After the Last Invisible War, Lemuria was reduced to a smoldering wasteland: nothing remains today but a few scorched fingers of land rising out of the waters of the Pacific Ocean, and whatever remains beneath the waves. The intelligent inhabitants, a mix of serpent-people and apparently normal humans, are mostly dead or scattered, though the remains of Lemuria are dangerous even without their xenophobic and devious natives. Strange monsters dwell beneath the surface, emerging at night, while the remnants of ancient Lemurian war-machines and cogitators still possess flickers of life and can awaken at any time to destroy an unwary traveler. Only recently have geniuses (often mixed groups from the Peerage and Lemuria) begun to return to Lemuria to explore it in numbers.

The Martian Empire:

Sometimes called Cydonia or Barsoom, the Martian Empire is located, naturally, on Mars, but not the frozen, almost airless wasteland that we know. Supported by a sea of ever-shifting Mania, the Martian Empire's air is breathable, if thin, and there walk the strange beings called Martians. Divided into three known castes (the brain-on-a-stalk Overlords, the spindly Technikers, and the brutal but humanoid egg-laying Throgs), the Martians threatened to conquer Earth less than half a century ago, and they still eye our world with cold

avarice.

This avarice is tempered, now, with the knowledge that Earth stomped them in the last war: even were it not for Inspired super-science, Earth science has advanced far since Percival Lowell read of Martian *canali* and decided that the canals channeled water from the icy poles to a dying civilization. Mars is not exactly safe, but the Martians are more interested, now, in what a genius knows and what knowledge she is willing to trade, than in destroying her as a threat to their plans.

And Mars is an extraordinary place, its dusty streets full of haggling merchants and exotic alien spices, its people enlightened masters of sciences humans have never imagined, and its libraries possessed of arcane and super-scientific wisdom. Even if the genius does not wish simply to grow rich on Martian sapphires by filling her rocketship with fresh water (worth more than gold to the dry world), a lifetime can be spent wandering the million-year-old universities and speaking with the incredible beings there.

Mad scientists who reach Mars are encouraged not to wander too far from the city, where the Mania can sustain humanoid life, and are advised to have an escape plan ready at all times in case the warlike factions of the Martian government take over and once again launch an all-out assault on the Blue Planet.

Space Station Colossus:

The last of the great Space Age dreams, a vision drawn from Clarke, Heinlein, and thousands of other writers during the Golden Age of science fiction, Space Station Colossus is an enormous O'Neill cylinder floating between the Earth and the Moon near the L4 point. It flickered to life in 1984, when science fiction had largely abandoned its starfaring dreams. When it first appeared, Space Station Colossus was a glittering jewel in the heavens, ten miles long and containing fifteen separate counter-rotating sections. Today it is a run-down hole in the sky full of unemployed mane dock workers, bitter Atomists trying to create one Utopia or another, and failing mechanical systems. The air is stale, the lights flicker, and the "futuristic inventions" that litter its interior—vid phones, hover bikes, charming robotic assistants—never work right.

Despite its many faults, and despite its control by Lemurians with rather strange plans, Space Station Colossus is a sight to behold. Not only is it one of the best recruiting-grounds for beholden in the known universe, Colossus is a trading-post where Larvae, manes, and stranger things from the distant corners of reality can be found. The "aboveground" markets are bustling and well-run, and if a genius cannot find what she needs there, the deeper levels, close to the station's outer hull, are hives of criminality where anything can be found for the right price.

Autocthon, Vulcan, Planet X, and Nemesis:

These elusive worlds did not last long enough in the scientific eye to generate enough Mania to exist fully, but occasionally they flicker into existence. Little is known about them, as every time they appear, they seem subtly or completely different. Autocthon (the alternate Earth on the far side of the Sun), Vulcan (the world closer to the Sun than Mercury), Planet X (a possibly rogue planet beyond the asteroid belt), and Nemesis (a world—sometimes a brown dwarf or black hole—at the edge of the solar system trailed by deadly comets) flicker into existence just long enough, usually, to capture a passing rocketship and seek to drain it of its Mania. Should one of these worlds succeed, it might become fully solid.

Madness:

A genius who believes that his worldview is the only correct one and that all others are mistaken, deluded, lying, or conspiring against him is an unmada.

This attitude is, in theory, opposed to the notion in the Peerage that Mania is something outside regular

reality that impinges upon it. Nonetheless, some members of the Peerage are unmada. Other unmada are rogues, typically lonesomes who barely understand who they are or what they're doing. (Not all lonesomes are unmada, though: many realize that their wonder-working is not entirely "sane," even if they lack the language to explain what's wrong with them.)

All Lemurians are unmada. The principle behind Lemuria is that one's worldview as a genius is correct and that anyone who opposes it opposes you. To connect the many different contradictory philosophies of individual Lemurians, Lemuria postulates an "*Archweltanschaaung*," a Unified Theory of Genius in which every Lemurian's worldview is simultaneously valid.

Illuminated are also all unmada. Though they may seem perfectly cognizant of their nature, they nonetheless twist reality merely by their existence as Inspiration spills from them into the mundane world.

An unmada experiences the following modifiers and special conditions:

- Attempts to argue against them (usually Persuasion checks) based on external facts about the world, or to change their mind with regard to facts about the world—but not about moral or Obligation-based considerations—suffer a penalty equal to half their Inspiration.
- An unmada suffers double the normal Jabir penalty.
- An unmada loses one point of Mania per day instead of regaining one like other geniuses. The genius cannot refuse to spend this point of Mania.
- An unmada generates a field around herself, called an unmada field, its extent based on her Inspiration. An unmada who cannot spend a point of Mania (see above) cannot sustain her field, which collapses until she gets a point of Mania. (Once she has Mania, she immediately spends one point to restore the field.)

The Unmada Field:

An unmada field extends around an unmada, covering an area based on her Inspiration. A mad scientist's unmada field reflects the unmada's own beliefs, echoing her philosophy back at her and twisting reality and perception so the unmada's worldview and aesthetic sensibilities are repeatedly validated.

This unmada field offers a rich environment for manes, who can remain stable (not orphans) if ideologically compatible with the unmada's madness. Manes spawned by the genius' madness or drawn by compatible nonsense inhabit the unmada field. They have no fixed number, but geniuses usually estimate a total number of Size units of manes in an unmada field equal to genius' maximum Mania.

Inspiration	Area	Nature of Local Manes
1	Same building	Small regular objects and plants
2	City block	Small animals, hand-held objects
3	Several city blocks	A few clever person-sized animals, many smaller creatures
4	City neighborhood	A few intelligent creatures, several animals, many smaller creatures
5	City directional location	Thriving ecosystem and small communities
6	Half of city	Thriving intelligent culture
7+	Entire city	A few Inspired manes

The manes inhabiting an unmada field view their sustainer as a sort of liege. Maniacal animals treat him not quite as a master, but as a source of safety and authority. An unmada automatically receives Allies (Unmada Manes) with a dot rating equal to half his Inspiration. Manes can guard areas, report suspicious activity, pass

along information, or offer super-scientific advice (if intelligent). They will not be used as a personal army or security force. A genius needs automata or beholders for lab work or muscle; unmada manes don't serve in that capacity. These manes, of course, also have a vested interest in keeping a mad scientist crazy.

An unmada field follows a genius, though it may take time to re-establish the field if the genius moves a lot. If a genius moves outside of his field, his effective Inspiration (for determining area of control and the richness of the maniacal life there) begins at zero and increases at a rate of one dot per week until it reaches its maximum.

An unmada field is noticeable to geniuses. (See *Detecting Wondrous Things*, Page 292.) Even at low levels, ripples of insanity swirl through a genius' home. Evidence against his world-view seems to disappear. Arguments falter, growing confused and unconvincing. As an unmada's power grows, small objects appear that satisfy the unmada's philosophical or aesthetic sense: one might find that the store next to an Etherite's house sells tiny but functional toy electro-guns or more cars with fins tend to drive by, while traditional Oracles find unsavory technology disappearing around them, replaced by simple, well-made machinery. A powerful unmada is basically sovereign inside his own mind, immune to contradictory evidence—which vanishes—and surrounded by eager, fawning servants, happy to feed the echo doctor's delusions back to him. Manes that match the genius' ideas appear constantly, reshaping the unmada field like fairy-tale brownies until it resembles the unmada's ideal environment.

Going Crazy and Getting Better Again:

A genius becomes an unmada by failing an unmada check. Several types of frantic Maniacal work can trigger an unmada check. (See *Unmada, Brilliant Madness*, Page 80.) Some geniuses deliberately cultivate madness, repeatedly performing Deep Inspiration (see Page 83) without spending the Mania gained until they lose their minds.

Snapping out of being an unmada is not easy. If the genius is a Lemurian, she must leave her baramin behind, either becoming a rogue or joining the Peerage. This takes a full month for the subscription to run out.

Next, she must focus on "stoppering" the flow of Mania. This requires one point of Willpower per day for a number of days equal to the genius' Inspiration. These points must be spent every day, in order, or the genius must start again. During this time, an unmada's resident manes will grow increasingly frantic, attempting to stop her from abandoning her psychological state.

Once the work is done, the genius must spend all her current Mania and make an Inspiration + Resolve check. (A genius can spend her Mania on "nothing" at her normal expenditure rate.)

Dramatic Failure: The genius' maniacal resolve hardens. She must make an unmada Check, which threatens Illumination.

Failure: The genius cannot escape her unmada status. She may start again by spending Willpower again.

Success: The genius escapes her unmada status. Her unmada field diminishes as if her Inspiration were declining by one point per day until it is gone.

Exceptional Success: The genius snaps back to full lucidity. Her unmada field disappears instantly and she regains a number of Mania equal to her per-turn expenditure.

Suggested Modifiers: Every point of Mania still in the genius' system (-1), the genius has fended off her unmada manes (+1 to +3), the genius has risked Illumination in the past month (-2), the genius has left her unmada field (+1), the genius still belongs to a Lemurian zotheca (-2), the genius belongs to an unmada-free

collaborative (+2)

Other Elements of Mad Science:

Detecting Wondrous Things:

While a genius can build Apokalypsi wonders to detect any Mania-based activity, her naked eyes can also reveal information about wonders, manes, and other phenomena. A genius can detect the following automatically:

- When someone is in the process of creating or modifying a wonder
- When someone transfers Mania into a wonder or capacitor (and the target of that transfer)
- When someone channels Mania into an object (and the target of that channeling)
- When someone is performing Deep Inspiration
- Whether or not the genius is in an unmada field, and the Inspiration level generating the field: "low" (Inspiration 1-3), "medium" (4-6), or "high" (7+)

To gain more information, the genius can spend a minute examining the object. A genius also needs to analyze an object this way if it is partially hidden (a mane in a long coat, for example) or if a wonder has the "concealed" or "normal-looking" variables. Roll Inspiration + Wits.

Dramatic Failure: The genius completely misinterprets what he's seeing.

Failure: The genius gains no further information, and cannot try again on that subject for the rest of the scene.

Success: The genius gains more information, answering the following applicable questions:

- Whether something is a wonder; its rank, primary Axiom, and any "support" Axioms of a wonder
- Whether a wonder is an orphan
- Whether something is a mane
- Whether something is a Larva, and if it is a transgressive Larva
- Whether something is a capacitor, and how much Mania it currently holds
- A genius' Inspiration (low, medium, or high)
- A Clockstopper's Acedia (low, medium, or high)
- How much Mania someone or something has spent with its last action

Exceptional Success: The genius gains even more information, answering the following applicable questions in addition to those available from a regular success:

- A wonder's faults
- A wonder's creator (if the genius knows the creator)
- What Axioms are influencing a person or object (Exelixa stat boosts, Metaptropi polymorphing, etc.)
- The idea or philosophy that birthed the mane
- A genius' catalyst, foundation, and highest Axiom
- Whether or not a genius is unmada (this will not reveal Illumination)
- A Clockstopper's highest Void
- How much Mania a genius, mane, or automaton currently possesses

Suggested Modifiers: Genius has a relevant Apokalypsi gizmo (bonus equals rank of wonder), genius cannot touch subject (-2), genius takes only one turn in analysis (-2), genius has encountered a genuinely new or unique phenomenon (-3), genius has encountered a "common" mad science phenomenon (+1), genius is

studying a member of his own foundation (+2), target is partially concealed (-1 to -3)

Other People Using Wonders:

It's possible for a genius to loan out her wonders to others, and sometimes it's even useful: a whole squad of beholden armed with venom-slingers and mechanical wings can do a genius a lot of good. However, it's not always easy.

A mad scientist's own beholden suffer no penalty when using wonders that their Inspired master created. Though they need the appropriate abilities to use many wonders effectively (Firearms for most weapons, Medicine for many wonders of Exelixi, etc.), and may need Mania to power them, they have no difficulty using the devices.

Another genius can use the wonder, but may suffer penalties to doing so. If the borrowing genius has an Inspiration equal to or higher than the creator's own, *and* if the borrower can match all the Axioms needed to build the wonder, there is no penalty. Otherwise the genius suffers a -1 penalty to using the wonder per rank of the wonder.

Another genius' beholden suffer the same penalty as that genius when using another person's wonders.

Mere mortals suffer a -1 penalty when using a wonder per rank of the wonder, and their clumsy manipulation triggers a Havoc Check every turn of use.

Other metanormal creatures also suffer a -1 penalty per rank of the wonder, but they do not trigger Havoc.

The Universalist Merit removes this penalty for some or all wonders.

Installing Internalized Wonders:

Some Inspired cannot resist installing wonders in their own bodies and minds. This is not easy, since either the genius must do all the work beforehand, saving the actual installation for a single previously prepared act, or she must trust another genius or one of her beholden to perform the experiment.

Installing an internalized wonder is an Obligation-7 transgression. If the Storyteller judges the operation to be unusually dangerous or foolhardy (such as if the genius is rolling a chance die), it becomes an Obligation-5 transgression.

These rules also apply to installing grafted wonders, though geniuses rarely graft wonders onto themselves.

To install a wonder, a genius must first construct it. This occurs normally. Then, either the genius or a trusted assistant must install the wonder.

The person performing the installation spends one hour and rolls Inspiration + Intelligence + Medicine + Laboratory Equipment.

If the wonder is a formulation or formula, not a physical wonder, replace Medicine with Academics.

The installer can also rush the job (replacing Intelligence with Wits). The penalty is -2 for a one-minute installation and -4 for a one-turn installation.

Dramatic Failure: The genius dies. The wonder turns orphan and tries to escape.

Failure: The wonder is installed incorrectly. It does not function, and the genius gains one fault.

Success: The wonder is installed correctly.

Exceptional Success: The wonder is installed correctly. The genius suffers only a single Health Level of Lethal damage. (See "Recovery," below.)

Suggested Modifiers: Genius engaged in self-installation (-5), genius engaged in self-installation but possesses at least Automata-1 (-2), genius' own beholden performing installation (+1), every grafted or internalized wonder already present (-1)

If a genius is conscious for this procedure (such as engaging in self-installation and not using Automata), all damage received is doubled due to pain and trauma.

Removing a Badly Installed Wonder:

If the installation roll is a failure, the wonder can be removed. This requires the exact same roll as installing the wonder.

Dramatic Failure: The genius dies. The wonder turns orphan and tries to escape.

Failure: The wonder remains within the genius.

Success: The wonder is removed and the installation can be tried again.

Exceptional Success: The wonder activates as if a Success had been rolled on the original installation roll. The genius suffers only a single Health Level of Lethal damage. (See "Recovery," below.)

Recovery:

Installing internalized wonders, or attempting to remove a badly installed one, is physically taxing on the genius. Upon the conclusion of the operation, the genius suffers as many levels of Lethal damage as the rank of the wonder. The rest of her Health boxes are filled with Bashing damage. If an Exceptional Success is rolled, she suffers only one Health Level of Lethal damage, but the rest of her boxes still fill with Bashing damage.

Orphaned Internalized Wonders:

If the internalized wonder is a physical thing within the genius' body, it will attempt to dig its way out of a genius and escape. Every turn, roll a number of dice equal to the wonder's rank. If it fails, the genius suffers one Health Level of Bashing damage. If it succeeds, the wonder rips free (causing ten dice of Lethal damage) and tries to escape. These rules also apply to grafted wonders, except upon tearing free grafted wonders cause one automatic level of Lethal damage per point of Size plus ten dice of Lethal damage.

If the internalized wonder is instead some kind of "formulation" or idea without a physical form, it causes mental instability and confusion. Every scene that the genius possess an orphan wonder of this sort, the genius suffers a -1 penalty to all actions involving Mental Attributes per rank of the wonder.

If a genius should die with a physical internalized or grafted wonder, it will try to free itself in the same way. (Though the genius probably will not care at that point.) Formulations or ideas normally die with their host genius, since they cannot escape.

Capacitors:

Geniuses often need to store, transfer, and trade raw Mania. Fortunately, Mania can be stored in specially-designed devices called capacitors, which hold the energy for future use.

Any genius can build a capacitor; its construction is not tied to any Axiom. Building a capacitor works much like building a regular wonder. Science is the key Skill used. Like any other wonder, building a capacitor can benefit from beholden, it can be kitbashed, and so on. (See *Creating a Wonder*, Page 136.)

Capacitors differ from regular wonders in several ways:

- Capacitors do not require bound Mania.
- Capacitors do not have faults.
- Capacitors suffer Havoc differently from other wonders. A capacitor that suffers Havoc rolls no dice; instead it simply loses a point of Mania for every event that would require a Havoc check.
- Capacitors cannot employ variables.
- Capacitors cannot be orphaned. If a genius dies or abandons the capacitor, it continues to function normally.
- If the roll to build the capacitor is a Dramatic Failure, rather than becoming an orphan, the capacitor explodes. Roll a number of dice of Lethal damage equal to the Generator's maximum held Mania against everyone involved in the capacitor's construction.

A capacitor holds Mania based on its Size.

Max Held Mania	Size
3	0
6	1
10	2-3
15	4-5
20	6-11
25	12-29
Indefinite	30+

Moving Mania:

A genius can move Mania into a capacitor as fast as she can normally channel Mania, simply by touching the capacitor. Getting the energy out again is just as easy: by touching the capacitor, the genius can pull a number of points of Mania per turn equal to her normal channeling ability, based on Inspiration.

However, drawing Mania from a capacitor can be dangerous. Every scene, a genius can draw a number of points of Mania from capacitors or other sources equal to her maximum Mania per turn. Beyond that, she must make an unmada check with a penalty equal to the number of extra Mania points channeled that scene. (See *Unmada, Brilliant Madness*, Page 80.)

Types of Capacitors:

Though the term "capacitor" implies that they hold some kind of electrical charge, that is not necessarily the case. A genius can instead choose to make a codex (made of books and data) with an Academics check, a compressor (made of wound springs of pneumatics) with a Crafts check, or a catabolizer (made with organic material) with a Medicine check. A genius can also build a compounder (stored computer data) with a Computer check—however, since mad science only recently figured out this trick, few geniuses with a

Computer score of less than four dots know how to do it.

Capacitors and Regular Work:

With Automata-1, a capacitor can be used to function like a regular power generator, allowing it to power regular objects with its Mania automatically. In its capacity as a power generator, Mania provided by a capacitor provides power for ten times as long as normal. This power source does not risk damage to the technology. (See Spending Mania, Page 81.)

Encumbrance: An Optional Rule

Wonders are heavy and bulky. If characters attempt to carry an exceptional number of wonders on their person, the Storyteller may use this rule to limit a genius' carrying capacity.

A person can always wear regular clothes and wear mundane articles (such as sunglasses or headphones) without difficulty, ignoring their Size. A person can carry a number of Size points worth of other objects (weapons, tools, armor, wonders, miscellaneous equipment or wearables) equal to her Size without difficulty. She is considered Unencumbered. Carrying more than one's Size, up to one's Size + Strength, means one is Encumbered and suffers a -2 penalty to Move. Carrying more than one's Size + Strength, up to one's Size + Strength + Stamina, means one is Heavily Encumbered and suffers a -1 penalty to all Physical Attributes in addition to the -2 penalty to Move. Carrying more than one's Size + Strength + Stamina means one is Extremely Encumbered and suffers a -2 penalty to all Physical Attributes in addition to a -2 penalty to Move.

The maximum amount of stuff someone can carry and still move at all is left to the Storyteller's discretion, but double one's Size + Strength + Stamina is a good guess. The Storyteller can also adjudicate based on how the genius intends to carry all his equipment, though for most geniuses, rigging up harnesses and belts is no problem.

Objects that must be worn to be used, such as goggles and armored suits, should be treated as half their regular Size when worn.

The Strong Back Merit grants a +2 bonus to the character's effective Size for this purpose.

Encumbrance penalties to Attributes cannot reduce an Attribute below one dot, but they still reduce Speed as if that Attribute were lower. The chart below lists the total penalties, including penalties to Move based on the reduction in Physical Attributes.

Stuff Carried	Encumbrance	Physical Attribute Penalty	Total Move Penalty
Up to Size	Unencumbered	None	None
> Size to Size + Strength	Encumbered	None	-2
> Size + Strength to Size + Strength + Stamina	Heavily Encumbered	-1	-4
> Size + Strength + Stamina	Extremely Encumbered	-2	-6

Damage and Healing:

A genius is physically human, meaning that the Inspired get injured and recover from injuries much as humans do, barring the employment of wonders to protect or heal. Since a genius is a living being, she can also suffer from deprivation, poisoning, and anything else that can affect a regular person.

Geniuses don't have any specific vulnerabilities. However, internalizing faults may produce vulnerabilities to specific substances, such as lightning or fire, causing attacks from those sources to cause Aggravated damage.

Life Span:

A genius has a normal human life span. The only way to avoid a natural death is through preserving one's body with Exelixi, creating a clone body with Automata, transferring one's consciousness with Epikrato, or similar mad science tricks.

Exelixi automatically extends a genius' lifespan by some amount: the genius gains 20 years of additional life per dot of Exelixi. However, this only delays the inevitable. True immortality requires advanced (and often unscrupulous) wonder-working.

Aesthetics:

How a wonder looks can be as important to a genius as what it does. This is not just a matter of style or fashion; a genius' view of the world shapes what he creates, and what he can create. To many geniuses, the artistry behind their creations is as important as their function.

Of course, some of a genius' aesthetic *is* just style. The ezine *Alloy Blend* is a popular online destination for geniuses interested in the latest mad science fashions (and for completely mundane people who don't realize how over-their-heads they are), and many smaller circulations exist for different styles and aesthetics. Popular aesthetics change over time, but to geniuses, these aren't just fashion statements: an aesthetic is everything a genius wants to be true and real and good about the wonders she creates.

To an unmade, an aesthetic is even more important. It is a picture of their philosophy, of what they think is true. A medical Etherite who rejects the vulgar fallacies of modern genetic science simply *cannot* build a wonder that resembles a modern genetic research lab: if he tried, his Inspiration would leave him.

Mechanically, attempts by an unmade to "disguise" a wonder, to make it resemble someone else's aesthetic or a different aesthetic entirely, incurs a -1 penalty in the building phase. If the aesthetic fundamentally violates the genius' approach to Inspiration or wonder-working, the penalty becomes -5 and building the wonder also requires a *dot* of Willpower.

Geniuses are welcome to select one of the aesthetics below or to create their own. Some geniuses combine different styles, while others try to stick with functional creations, and others still are defined more by their "medium"—something like "sonics" or "mirrors"—than by a formal aesthetic.

Alembic:

Sometimes called Technomancer, this aesthetic replaces the normal trappings of science and technology with a "magical" look, ranging from traditional alchemical laboratories (hence the term) to glowing "runes of power." The latter was considered half-baked before it premiered by many older geniuses, though the traditional "dirty mortar and pestle" look is popular with some Progenitors and Scholastics. Geniuses with a specific cultural or ethnic identity or a specific interest in ancient cultures focus on specific Alembic styles, such as Egyptian or ancient Chinese. It is also the most common Oracle aesthetic, alongside Crystal Future. Some geniuses who favor this style sincerely believe in the unity of science and "magic" (however they define it); others are playing around with semiotics and what it means to be a wonder-worker.

Black Plastic:

A modern organic style that came about around the same time as Digital Chrome, Black Plastic encourages an

organic look to its technology (even the non-organic stuff), usually casting everything in asymmetric black rubber that is designed to unsettle viewers. Black Plastic is a perennial favorite, with its popularity oscillating but remaining fairly constant in the Peerage. Progenitors are very fond of this aesthetic; they often incorporate insect motifs into their creations. A combination of Black Plastic and Trash Praxis has recently become popular; its most common nickname is Crawling Rusty Meat.

Brutalist:

An outgrowth of the Functionalist anti-movement of the 70s, which basically said "Stop dressing up your fucking wonders and just make sure they work," the Brutalist doctrine goes one step further, encouraging a deliberately functional and inelegant look. Wonders in this school are made from pre-fab parts, if possible, because that's cheaper, or unpainted (or camouflage) custom parts if necessary. Components look stripped-down, ugly, and exposed. The Brutalist style is popular with Navigators and some Mechanists, and with many militaristic and survivalist geniuses. Exposed metal and clashing combinations of alloys and polymers are common in this style.

Clockwork:

One of the oldest aesthetics that is self-consciously an aesthetic, clockwork is exactly like it sounds: geniuses who adhere to this style favor mechanical devices if at all possible, using springs and muscles for power and intricate assemblages of gears for moving parts. For Axioms where this maxim might seem inapplicable, such as Apokalypsi, Inspired employ clever mirrors and prisms. This aesthetic is of course most popular with Mechanists, though it is also popular with many older and more traditional Inspired. An older variant, called Baroque, mixes Clockwork with rococo fashions; it is little-practiced today.

Crystal Future:

"Crystal Future" refers to the images of the future or of "lost" but advanced civilizations popular from the 19th century well into the mid or late 20th. In this Utopian vision, the streets are clean, machinery is powered by crystals or other nebulous sources, and everyone wears togas and seems very calm all the time. Its practitioners are an equal mix of sincere devotees and snickering parodists. This aesthetic is still popular in Lemuria, especially among Oracles, as well as certain Etherites and those Mechanists focused on Apokalypsi or Katastrofi. Among the Peerage, this aesthetic has a faintly sinister reputation, despite its squeaky-clean appearance, as many of Lemuria's Secret Masters maintained this style before they were wiped out.

Extropic:

The current "far future" style, with the hard edge of reality coupled with the optimistic vision of a transhuman future, is termed Extropic. In this aesthetic, the genius focuses on advanced speculative science such as nanotechnology, gene-line body alteration, and digital consciousness. Extropy is as much a philosophy as an aesthetic, and the actual appearance of wonders varies, though effort is put into making technology appear elegant, unobtrusive, and functional. But the core of the Extropic aesthetic is not the appearance, but an approach to technology that focuses on cutting-edge research and the blurring of the concept of "human."

Macedon:

Another perennial aesthetic, dating back at least to 15th century Italians imagining what Aristotle's wonders might have looked like, Macedon sees surges in popularity every few decades. The current return to the spotlight is probably the fault of "Greek-punk" movies and video games, just as the previous jump began during Hollywood's Golden Age of sword-and-sandal flicks. The Macedon aesthetic uses as its starting-point the steam-powered machines of Hero of Alexandria. Stylistic elements include the use of bronze instead of more advanced metals, Hellenic friezes, and intricate mirrors to engage in long-distance communication and

attack. Variant styles, based on the ancient bronze-steam-and-glass wonders of Persia, Egypt, and India have also seen intermittent popularity; these styles are distinguished from their Alembic equivalents by being more explicitly technological, often sporting exposed Antikythera-style clockwork.

Digital Chrome:

"Cyberpunk" stylings are called Digital Chrome by mad scientists. Typical affectations include heavy chrome or plastic cybernetics, thick plugs bolted into flesh, and chunky, bulky communication devices, coupled with bright colors, neon, and vinyl. Digital Chrome was *the* look back in the 80s, though it has since declined in popularity. It now sits between modern and properly retro, and has few new adherents, though geniuses who catalyzed in the midst of that era (now in middle age) still sport the look. The colonization of the Grid may see a resurrection of the style.

Oscilloscope:

A popular style during the "golden age of science fiction" and a little bit beyond—from the late 40s to the late 70s—"Oscilloscope" was the first aesthetic that actually received a name, rather than "that style that the geniuses in California are into now" or whatever. Oscilloscope style focuses on plastic, aluminum, chrome, atomic power, jets, and radio technology. Expect big computers, angular machinery in that off-beige "old PC" color, and track suits. It is *deeply* uncool among modern geniuses, and practically marks one as an Atomist, for whom the Jet Age and Space Age dreams have yet to die. A few young geniuses have begun wearing this style ironically, or mixing it with Extropic, but the Oscilloscope aesthetic is still associated with earlier generations.

Home Grown:

While this aesthetic got its start among underwater-themed geniuses, it has spread onto land with the rise of modern biotechnology. The Home Grown look features organic components, subtle curves, and bioluminescent illumination, giving it a warmer and more humane appearance than Black Plastic. It is popular among ecologically-minded geniuses in the Peerage as well as some Oracles, and is well-regarded among geniuses for whom the biological sciences are of primary interest. Experiments with overlapping Home Grown and Alembic led to a short-lived fad that is now referred to (contemptuously) as Fairy Princess.

Pod People:

This term was originally an insult, though many of its practitioners have co-opted the term as their own. Pod People aesthetic includes a sleek, refined look, usually in all-white or some other solid color, with rounded edges, a "finished" appearance (in contrast to the rough appearance of many wonders), and a user-friendly interface with as few buttons, gadgets, and doo-dads as possible. (A one-panel comic in *Alloy Blend* shows the standard Pod People ray gun: a smooth-cornered hand-held white rectangle with a single black button labeled "Kill.") This aesthetic also favors small, elegant devices, and practitioners often try to make handheld wonders as small and unobtrusive as possible. Pod People aesthetic is sometimes held in low regard, especially by Steampunks and Functionals; its adherents are thought to spend too much time polishing their devices to look pretty, and not enough time working out the bugs. The style is most popular among Directors and some Progenitors; it is extremely rare in Lemuria.

Ray Gun:

The most common term for the "retro-future" look that dominated mad science (and some sane science) from the 1930s to the 1950s. Common elements of Ray Gun styling include fins and "fiddly bits" on Skafoi devices, Jacob's ladders, big cylindrical robots, and a focus on electricity and chemistry. (Chrome and atomic power are generally considered late Ray Gun or Oscilloscope) Ray gun fashions are, of course, huge among Etherites, though it also has many adherents among Directors, who favor the classic image of power and confidence it

provides. Googie is a sort of West Coast "beachfront" ray gun style in pastel colors and eye-assaulting fonts; Raygun Gothic mixes the classic Ray Gun look with baroque spires and exposed metal.

Steampunk:

If Oscilloscope is not quite retro and Digital Chrome is just past its sell-by date, Steampunk is the current too-cool-for-school "big thing." All the kids are doing it: brass goggles, clanking mechanical servants, radium guns, and rivet-covered work uniforms are currently all the rage among the postgrads. (The Martian Empire is confused, but happy, that they are now "totally hip"). Steampunk is deliberately retro and it reflects a past that never was: even the geniuses who *lived* in the Victorian era dressed practically or in traditional fashion, rather than the "brass rivet" look, and many wonders from that era actually affected a Baroque look (which was, in its own time, deliberately retro and reflecting a 17th century aesthetic that *also* never existed). Steampunk aesthetic is popular in the Peerage, particular among Scholastics. In Lemuria, it has begun to eclipse Ray Gun styles for Etherites.

Trash Praxis:

First appearing in the 80s, Trash Praxis (named after the now-defunct magazine of the same name) is the name for a style based on scavenging whatever one can in order to build one's wonders. Trash Praxis is popular among geniuses in impoverished nations (though *they* aren't making a damn fashion statement) and with the poor, the disaffected, and the self-styled punks of the modern world. The Dumpster Diver Merit is nearly a prerequisite for this aesthetic. It is rare in Lemuria, but many Artificers and no-nonsense Navigators like the brutal effect of a wonder built out of trash and discarded normal machinery.

Universal:

Named for the movie studio, not any sense of universal style, this aesthetic dates from an era before geniuses thought much about "aesthetics" and just used what was at hand. In fact, it was nearly the last such style before the 20th century ushered in a new sort of self-awareness among the Inspired. Resembling Frankenstein's laboratory from the movies (hence the name), this bubbling, crackling, cluttered look was common in the 19th and early 20th centuries, especially among remote geniuses who were forced to use and re-use specimens. An elegant aesthetic for a more civilized age, Universal has mostly been usurped by Steampunk, Alembic, and other deliberately "retro" stylings on one side, and more modern functional aesthetics like Oscilloscope or Brutalist on the other. Nonetheless, it was so common in Europe and America for so long that old labs (some labs have been in continuous use for centuries) still feature the stitched homunculi, sizzling Jacob's ladders, and stained beakers that came to symbolize "mad science" in the minds of a century of movie-goers.

Time Travel:

...is almost always a bad idea. But that hasn't stopped many masters of Skafoi from building time machines. And time travel is possible. It's not even all that difficult for a powerful genius, but it is phenomenally dangerous.

Now, we're all grownups here and we all know what time travel is and what it does, but the question is, what happens when I screw with the past?

What used to happen (and here the past tense gets in a bit of trouble), is that you got your ass kicked by the transsapient gods who lived at the end of time. The Terminals, as they were called, didn't like any time-traveling blunderers whose actions might have prevented them from existing.

They were right to worry, because apparently someone annihilated them from the timeline. Now it's a kind of

temporal free-for-all, with mad scientists and arch-magicians and alien psychics from the black hole in the center of the Galaxy all running about history, mucking things up. However, this did not (and again, the past tense would like to apologize) last long. A détente settled into place, agreed to by various powerful factions and enforced by a group calling itself the Guardians of Forever, the Terminals' former servants. This group—not a fellowship, as it includes much more than just mad scientists—allows others to "blow off steam" by permitting minor changes to the timeline: a murdered wife rescued here, a genius' wretched younger brother striking it rich there. The idea is that the relentless enforcement of absolute causal stasis is what eventually forced the rebellion against the Terminals that resulted in their destruction.

Nonetheless, the Guardians of Forever enforce the unfolding of the grand sweep of history: the dinosaurs must perish, whether by an asteroid or a plague or a volcanic apocalypse. Rome will fall, as will the Spanish Empire and the Eternal Terran Dynasty of Yao Ming. The Guardians' solution is simple and expedient: whenever a major shake-up occurs, they travel back in time to shortly after the event (or sometimes during, if they cannot fix the problem afterward) and juggle events around so things unfold as they always have. When a furious genius went back in time and killed Helmut Schenk, the cruelest genocidal mastermind of the 20th century, as a child, the Guardians of Forever went back and elevated the art student Adolf Hitler to that same role.

It's not like they enjoy doing that. In fact, the genius who made the above "swap" committed suicide a week later. But the Guardians have discovered that the Terminals were not acting entirely out of self-interest: the timeline that leads to the Terminals' existence, despite its horrors, produces a universe of boundless life and richness. It may be the best of all possible timelines.

However, there appears to be no going back to the way things were: the future is unstable, with constant subtle shifts producing enormous effects, despite the best efforts of the Guardians, and scholars of time fear that things will grow worse, as the eagerness of explorers to travel back in time outstrips the resources of those determined to maintain the timeline. Even with an agent placed (it sometimes seems) once every ten years, the Guardians of Forever are losing control of the universe.

So, can you travel back in time and kill Hitler? Yes. He's been killed six times: the Guardians gave up finding new candidates and have just started cloning him. (There's a facility outside Hamburg in 1921, actually. Feel free to drop by. They give tours.) Can you go back in time and ask out that pretty girl? Yes, and when you come back to the present, you might be married to her. However, make sure that you come back to exactly the point where you left, or you'll find that the other you is married to her. And of course, even if you merge back perfectly, you won't have the set of memories from the timeline.

You can travel backwards in time, but you better have a good reason and/or take excellent care of the local causality, or there's a good chance that a very angry Guardian will show up, while you're there or when you get back, explaining to you what she will do to you the next time you go to "show the kids some dinosaurs" and accidentally step on a bug.

Fortunately for minor blunders, though, time is pretty stable. The Terminals appeared to have created much of our current timeline as a kind of "causality trench," and screwing things up requires a lot of effort.

You can go forward in time, too, but that's the least stable of all, and for a very good reason: the moment you travel forward in time, you disappear from the timeline, and the future where you emerge is one where you ceased to exist. Since you're a genius, and you probably changed the world in some important, if small way, you cannot travel to your own future, since you *won't have been there*.

And yes, if you kill your own grandmother before your father is born, you will cease to exist. The universe, it turns out, doesn't care that much if your grandmother gets shot in the head and there's no shooter. You still go *poof*. Ditto if you bring your past self into the future. (If your past self is in the future, he can't become your

present self, now can he?) Ditto if you kill your past self, or your presence gets him killed.

Other than that, though, you won't suffer too many directly dangerous effects from journeying in the past: your memories won't be overwritten, and you won't simply "pop" out of existence—there seems to be some kind of system in place that makes it very unlikely for the beating of the chaos butterfly's wings to knock a genius out of existence, unless you accidentally kill off the entire human race or something.

The Cost of Making Changes:

"The gods had given me almost everything. I had genius, a distinguished name, high social position, brilliancy, intellectual daring; I made art a philosophy, and philosophy an art: I altered the minds of men and the colour of things: there was nothing I said or did that did not make people wonder." -Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis*

Whether it was the work of the Terminals in creating a "causality trench," as many temporal scholars say, or whether time is just naturally inelastic and inertial, causing changes is exhausting. To cause a change, a genius must "fuel" it with his own Inspiration.

Making most minor changes that affect a single person (rescuing your grandfather, fixing your friend up with that pretty blond) costs one point of Willpower and ten points of Mania. If the subject to be manipulated is metanormal in any way, it costs one point of Willpower, as well as ten points of Mania per dot of the relevant Metanormal Advantage.

More significant changes, from "family line" up to "village" requires an expenditure of one *dot* of Willpower, and ten points of Mania. If anyone in the affected area is metanormal, this costs ten points of Mania per dot of Metanormal Advantage of the creature with the highest Advantage, plus 20 points of Mania and a Willpower dot.

"Village" or "off-world colony" is about as large an area as the Guardians of Forever will tolerate before they go back and fix things (and possibly kick your ass). Sometimes exceptions are made if the area has no long-term viability (if you want to transport a whole doomed planet into the past, the Guardians won't care if the planet burns up in the supernova or disappears five minutes beforehand, as long as the survivors don't affect the timeline as they live out their lives). If permitted, these larger changes, up to redirecting the timeline of a whole world, cost one dot of Inspiration, one dot of Willpower, and 100 points of Mania.

Failure to pay this cost to the timeline in short order will result in the regular timeline reasserting itself: "rescued" people get killed off, relationships that the genius built that weren't there to begin with fall apart, and generally things slide back to the way they were.

Alternatively, sometimes Guardians will crawl all over a site because of minor changes that might "jump the trench" and produce significant future deviations. What triggers a butterfly effect in the timeline is never clear, but occasionally a seemingly minor change will result in a lot of pissed Guardians popping out of the temporal stream to stop a genius' plan.

The Temporal Tithe:

Maintaining the timeline costs money, and this comes in the form of the tithe for any change. This temporal tithe is distinct from the cost paid to make changes; the former arises naturally from the nature of time and time travel; the latter is a tax leveled by one's fellow beings. Geniuses who make changes will be visited by one or more Guardians shortly after their change, who expect payment in the form of Mania. This is usually ten times the amount the genius had to expend to make the actual change. The Guardians of Forever are in no rush to receive payment, but refusal to pay can result in the Guardians going back and changing things or just killing the offending genius. Picking a fight with a Guardian of Forever is usually a bad idea: they're

frighteningly powerful, and if there's trouble, they travel in groups.

However, it's becoming increasingly clear that not all Guardians of Forever are honest, and not all who claim that title are who they say they are. Temporal protection rackets, con jobs, and shakedowns have been reported "recently" all over the timeline. The Guardians seem to be losing their grip on their own members, as well as the timeline as a whole.

Really Stupid Time Travel:

Messing about with yourself from a *previous time travel jaunt* is about the stupidest thing you can do without a death ray and a bottle of tequila. Whatever quantum coherence you naturally maintain is enough to keep you in existence while you're operating in the same time frame as a previous jaunt, but it doesn't feel good. While in any past time frame you function much like a mannequin, and can go up in a puff of Havoc if not careful.

In ordinary past or future time frames, this isn't a danger. However, when in a previously visited past time frame, the danger is there. Merely being in that time frame causes you to suffer from a severe Derangement as your memories get overwritten and scrambled. You must make a Havoc check (using your Inspiration as a dice pool) if you directly interact with your past echo in any way, or if your past echo sees or otherwise clearly detects you.

This experience is worse than mere physical discomfort. Interacting with your previous time-traveling self is a hideously traumatic experience, as memories and ghost-thoughts tumble through your head, trying to sort themselves out. Even the maddest scientist knows not to interact with his previous time-traveling self, even if interacting with his younger self is perfectly fine.

Gabriel and Immanuel--Doctor Xenon and Professor Nebula, thirty years ago, though they're retired now, even if their metal suits are still in the basement--look out on the cityscape of Madrid, their adopted home. Gabriel has a bottle of beer in his hand. Immanuel cradles the love letters of Dr. Cadiz, which he never sent to Alice. (They are both dead now.) They watch a humanoid silhouette bound across the rooftops, black against the indigo sky.

"What's his name?" Gabriel asks.

"I think that's the Hunter for Nalexa," Immanuel says. "They have better names, now, don't you think? So evocative."

"I've heard of him."

"Mm?"

"Every time he stops a crime, he whispers to the perpetrator, 'For Lee-Chey,' and to the victim he saved, 'I'll make it better soon.'"

"Sounds crazy." Immanuel clutches the letters, old emotion striking him. "Who's Lee-Chey? A girl?"

"It took me a year to work it out," Gabriel says. "No. It's a timeline."

"Really?"

"Really. Lee-Chey is some city, or empire, currently in Asia Minor. In some other timeline, obviously. The Hunter for Nalexa ('Nalexa' is another city, I think, or maybe a political party) wants to restore it."

"And he thinks fighting crime will do it?"

"I guess so." Gabriel sips his beer.

"They'll kill him if he tries to change the timeline," Immanuel says.

"I know," Gabriel says. "But until then..."

"Until then..."

They watch the figure as he traverses the rooftops of Madrid, black against the indigo sky.

Chapter Five: Storytelling and Antagonists

"It's just torture and murder. No plot, no characters. Very, very realistic. I think it's what's next."
-Max Renn, *Videodrome*

A genius knows that the rules will not save him. They might guide him for a time, might give his world definition and purpose, but in the end they are prisons and they are death. A genius must soar free of the impediments of mundane law, or he will be dragged back down to those slow-moving gears to be crushed and devoured.

If you intend to run a chronicle of ***Genius: The Transgression***, you need to understand the same thing. The rules can help, but they will not save you. Don't stare at the rules. Don't stare at the dice when they hit the table. Don't even stare at the other players; they're not there to amuse you. Look within yourself, because that's where a great game comes from, and nowhere else.

Forbidden Science:

Mad science is more than a cliché at this point; it's a reflexive half-plot flung out by writers who want to flirt with the idea of change while never actually challenging the status quo. You know the story: the scientist delves into something Man Was Not Meant To Know, creates an Abomination, and is destroyed when Hubris begets Nemesis in the form of what he made turning against him. The creation is also destroyed, or disappears. The story usually features a main character and maybe a love interest, but since they rarely do anything, they don't matter.

So you've just been handed one of the most overused stories of the past century. What do you do? The trick is that this time you're telling the story from the other side. The players take on the roles, not of the helpless victims, nor even of the monsters (at least not literally), but of the creators, the demiurges, whose brilliance and folly create and define the story. This is the most important part of any ***Genius*** chronicle: it's the actions of the player characters that create and guide the narrative. They are not passive observers, nor even reactive participants in someone else's plot. They set the wheels of change in motion; they create, define, and transform the world in which they live. And this time the story doesn't end when the mad scientist Gets What's Coming. The World of Darkness is not such a well-run place, after all. ***Genius*** is a game of the limitless potential of human creativity, crushed, perhaps, by the weight of the world, but not because that's how the story is supposed to end.

The mad scientist is an old cliché now, and shares the same headspace as the lying politician, the hypocritical priest, the bloodthirsty general. These are all figures that have power over us, whether through military might or social influence or greater knowledge, and it's comforting to think that, first, these figures lack the righteousness of the "everyman," and second, that this wickedness will cause their downfall. Part of the joy of a ***Genius*** chronicle, though, is thwarting these expectations: a genius fearlessly plumbs the forbidden, brings forth some strange fruit of his brilliance, and lives, even thrives, to do it all again.

The forbidden is an alluring topic because it seems that so little is forbidden today. With so much technology at our fingertips, the worst things imaginable are just a mouse-click away. But our technological wonders have also made us isolated and frail when forced to confront the horrors of the real world, and sometimes, ill-equipped to understand our own power. We spend our whole lives nestled in the machine we have created for ourselves, working our jobs, exchanging money for the latest goods, divorced from the creative process that transforms our world every day.

But there is something alluring about the world outside our walls. Watch a glass-blower use fire and skill to

create art, or a computer programmer breathe life into silicon and plastic. Walk downtown and pass the kids in their urban camouflage, surviving on the street because they can, some deranged urban inversion of a father-and-son camping trip. Look up to the highrises and you'll see composting and wind power, attempts—naive, perhaps, but sincere—to escape the cycles of consumption, by those who can most afford to. Look everywhere, past the brand names and the latest trends, and you will see human creativity at work: the handmade, the eclectic, the old given new purpose again, from a hand-knit sweater to jewelry crafted from copper, strength, and skill, to a laptop torn apart and reassembled in accordance with the owner's unique style.

What would you do if you could change the world around you? Not by waving a magic wand, though; what if you had the dedication and skill and training and ambition to transform the world, one creation at a time? What would you do? Geniuses have this power, and they ask themselves that question every day. Every genius is a living paragon of the forbidden, free from the confines of conventional society, and—for a time—they can soar.

Genius is not a game of victims or passive figures, and you can't witness its full potential by spoon-feeding the players stories that they react to. In much traditional fiction, the villains create a threat that the heroes must react to by destroying or subverting it, then the action resets until the villains create something new that threatens the status quo. You cannot run a **Genius** game in this way, at least, not for long. Eventually, the players' characters must be freed to pursue their own plans and desires and to change the world in the way they see fit, whatever the cost.

This can make for a challenging game, but you are not entirely alone. **Genius** is a Storytelling game of forbidden science, meaning that a genius' transgressions are shaped, to some extent, by his nature. The Inspired swim in the world of science, however broadly defined: physics, chemistry, psychology, even archeology. This grounds them, and simultaneously makes them seem all the more outlandish and horrific, as their strange and inhuman behavior is juxtaposed beside the safe ground of established scientific motifs such as server rooms or modern libraries. In a **Genius** game, science is as important as the forbidden, since it serves to establish the horror. A rampaging spider-legged dog is just a rampaging spider-legged dog, but one brewed on stolen time late at night at a university lab by an obsessed student taps into our fears: not just our fears of monstrosity, but our fears of losing control of what we create, of obsession, of enforced secrecy, or of what "they" get up to at night.

Science has always horrified us. Today it's the nightmarish specter of misapplied genetic engineering, the real possibility of a surveillance state, and the proliferation of psychiatric medication. Fifty years ago it was nuclear Armageddon, sociology that reinforced or subverted the racial and sexual standards of the time, and the mysterious power of hypnosis. A century ago we feared surgery, chemical annihilation from poison gas, and the yawning gulfs revealed by relativity and quantum mechanics. And always, always, horror comes not just from the technology—the killing bomb, the all-seeing eye of surveillance—but from the knowledge itself. Knowing hurts. We project not just our fears into the unknown, but our hopes and dreams, and to see those dark places where we left our fancies revealed can cut like a knife. Everything we learn is a betrayal of what someone hoped for.

Geniuses are creatures of forbidden science. They drape themselves in the raiments of what we most need and most fear—knowledge, change, progress—then leap farther and deeper than anyone else, plunging into the icy depths of alien realities or rushing toward untested ideas to put them into effect. A **Genius** chronicle should be about what the characters create, and how it changes the world, for the better or the worse.

The Dark Mechanical:

The World of Darkness is not our world. The shadows are deeper, the stains darker. The world that geniuses occupy bears a subtly different relationship to science and technology than does our own. You can't see it

easily in your favorite consumer electronics store. The same brands still clutter the shelves, screaming for you to purchase them, to be defined by them. Here the changes are more subtle, something you must attune yourself to. Watching their eyes, you witness the sheer *desperation* of people to acquire and consume, their hunger for the new, and you see a similar desperation in those doing the selling, so desperate to offload the latest products, as if those that aren't sold will rot like tropical fruit in the sun.

This is the world of the ***Dark Mechanical***. Here, humanity lives with its technology as we once lived with nature: sometimes able to control it, or bend it in small ways to our will, but unable to stop or escape it. It can be beautiful. Walk the right streets and you'll see rusting mills converted into artists' lofts. Enter an old friend's house and you'll see the same RCA radio, all time-worn wood, that's followed three generations of his family and that still produces a better sound than anything you can buy today. It can be strange. Look into an alley and you could see tangles of wiring and rusting—rotting—machinery, long since abandoned and growing wild, like a fallen tree-trunk in the amazon, covered in new life...and sometimes you can see people slip into the alley to tear away chunks of machinery. It can be horrific. Walk among the tenements of the poor, where the drone of electrical transformers never stops, and see the wires sprouting behind their old televisions like kudzu: spreading, invasive, parasitic.

It's never comfortable, though, never familiar. Close your eyes and you can smell the ozone, hear the crackle of electricity, see the sodium glow of streetlights through your eyelids. There's no escaping the machine-world, its eternal activity, its dynamic life-cycles. There's no escaping the birth, growth, death, and decay of the machine that exists everywhere, carving out niches in which to perpetuate its existence. In the world of the ***Dark Mechanical***, humanity shares the Earth with an elemental force that it has created, but that is both aggressive and entirely alien.

The ***Dark Mechanical*** reflects the inner state of the genius. Is a genius a mortal in charge of the higher-dimensional mathematics that dance in her brain? Or is she a knot of Uttermost Reality slumming it in the physical world, taking up residence in a human mind like a virus invades a cell? Is humanity in charge of the things it creates—are humans demiurges, creating the new—or are they thralls to an existing and alien order, one that spreads and lives and grows on its own, and for which humans only opened the gates? The genius, like every human alive today, finds her sense of control and normality slipping, as the world transforms itself into something more terrifying, or more beautiful, than she can possibly imagine.

As the Storyteller, you can use the ***Dark Mechanical*** setting to create images and motifs that will remain with your players. Whether the dark elements are viewed as objective statements about the world or indicators that Mania reflects the world through strange lenses, they remind players that even amidst the sanctuary of our machines and cities, we are not entirely safe. Every day, geniuses see glimpses of forbidden science, things they don't want to know and images that they wish they could forget.

It's twilight, it's late autumn, and the collaborative is lost in a forest as the sun sets. They think the dangers they face will at least be natural, until they find an old mattress rotting beside a plastic bag stuffed with trash and crushed beer cans. There are stains beneath the mattress, and flipping it over reveals the remains of a dead raccoon, still pinned to the rusting springs. The mattress folds slowly, like a Venus fly-trap, its torn threads shifting in the breeze.

There's a pipe attached to an old tenement, not quite big enough to fall into, that the local kids say goes straight down to Hell. But brief investigation implies that it doesn't go anywhere. Literally: things that fall in are...nowhere. And sometimes they return—you can find them around town if you look—drained of traits we take for granted in our world. Like size. The baseball that the kids were playing with that had no size dissolved quickly, the results, perhaps, of Havoc, though now the kids are having trouble gauging distances and understanding shapes. And it's getting worse.

There's an old NEC computer in the back of the library and it's still hooked up, though the cords have turned

into a rat's nest. You could get lost down there, trying to unplug the thing. Maybe people have. The computer keeps opening up to a flamewar from the early days of the Internet, maybe '91 or so. Only thing is, people say you can respond to the flame war in "real time," as in, back in '91 or so. The librarian tells everyone that a couple art students put it together as a prank last year, but she doesn't seem very convinced, and she doesn't like to go back there any more.

The neighbors down the road aren't "rednecks," they insist to everyone who passes by and sees the shabby wreckage of the old Chevrolet in their front lawn. They're proud people, but the Chevrolet has always been there, choked with weeds in the summer, buried to its mirrors in winter snow, year after year. And the family won't get rid of it. They seem almost afraid, and they get downright belligerent when people bring it up. Sometimes they leave things for it—offerings, in little Tupperware containers.

The players should understand that "Mania" isn't a solid thing that comes in "points," however the rules choose to represent it. Sometimes Mania represents power, like electricity, but other times it's a more abstract process of creation and repair, and other times still it manifests in ways that neither geniuses nor mortals can understand, predict, or control. Especially around a genius, the line between Mania-touched weird science and the strange and bizarre is blurred beyond clarity. Always, around a genius, there's the breakdown of barriers and discretion: between machinery and life, between old and new, freshness and rot, brilliance and madness.

Being Inspired:

The horror of Inspiration lies in an ignorance of self. Perhaps that's why the Inspired delve into forbidden science and unnatural philosophy: to fill the ignorance they feel of their own souls. We all sometimes feel removed from ourselves. We've all looked back at our words and actions and thought, "Who *did* that?" But for geniuses, that disassociation is a constant companion. Is a genius a gifted human, an alien angel, or some baffling hybrid of the two?

Storytelling a **Genius** chronicle requires getting into the headspace of a genius, where Mania reflects desire and, depending on how a genius looks at it, everything connects to everything else. To a genius, everything in the world is gears turning gears, webs connected to webs, a net of pearls that reflect the other pearls, on and on forever, connections and explanations that may not really make sense. One of the most important tasks of mundane science is to cut away ideas that fail, that don't conform to reality as we view it. We humans are pattern-recognizing machines, and our heads are full of false positives—look up at the night sky and admire the constellations to see this effect at work. Geniuses are like that but more so. They see connections everywhere, between everything, between the flight of an arrow and the orbit of the Moon, between the orbit of the moon and the stars that circle the world, between the way an arrow sinks into flesh and the way nuclear fire peels away skin, between nuclear power and the orbit of the Moon...Connections are everywhere, real, false, and impossibly indistinct, assaulting a genius' brain with hidden solutions, mental shortcuts, and occult sympathies. "The real world" is just one subset of the infinite mathematical possibilities that spring from a genius' mind, and getting back to it—finding the right world, the real one—after the intellectual sojourn involved in creating a wonder, is never guaranteed.

As the Storyteller, you need to play up this unique form of Mania. Geniuses form connections with things that aren't "really" there for regular people. Their entire essence screams to reduce reality to a handful of elegant equations that are obviously, self-evidently true. The Peerage exists almost entirely to fight this tendency, because once a genius believes he's figured it out, he's mad. The light eats out the back of his eyes and he'll probably never see straight again.

And geniuses live with this fear every day, an aspect any Storyteller should emphasize. The characters should never entirely be sure that they see what is or what they want to see. "Technobabble" is a playful name the peers use to downplay a terrifying phenomenon that all geniuses eventually experience. Talking with regular

mortals can be a painful experience for geniuses, as the mask of sanity slips. A Storyteller can even use mundane events—buying a new stereo system, going to a PTA meeting—to demonstrate this tendency of the Inspired to "slip," just a little: turns of phrase that don't make sense, explanations that link things that do not connect, and other acts of Jabir.

As an exercise, you might ask your players to write up a few "inappropriate" connections that their characters continually make, based around their catalyst or their foundation. A Grimm sees all anger as fundamentally the same, directed at his enemies, even when it comes from a mortal who has no idea of the Grimm's enemies—somehow, it's a subconscious manifestation of that universal rage. Directors and Scholastics are prone to conspiratorial paranoia, linking people and places in ways that no sane person ever would. Some Staunens describe a "falling away," when individual instances are replaced by universal truths, and discrete entities are linked by some kind of archetypal overworld: cars become Car, the pavement becomes Travel, and people become twisted metaphors for the Soul itself. And Neids, of course, never escape the biting, maddening jealousy that defines them.

Regular insane people don't have a choice. A mortal can't "fight" schizophrenia, nor "will" herself out of depression. The pain of a genius is that she *can* fight, and slowly, over the years, it can kill her. Or she can give in: one great ecstatic release. Some say it's like rising to the surface to gulp clean cold air, others, like walking out of a fire, naked and purified, skin shining like gold or onyx. But that only lasts for a time, and then the new struggle begins, to escape the consumptive horror of Illumination. For geniuses, there is no turning back and no escape, only an endless inner struggle against something every person wants: validation.

This desire for validation can frame countless *Genius* chronicles. It echoes the theme of transgression. Geniuses, by their very nature, violate social and ethical mores that regular humans take for granted. But they don't exalt in that—at least, most don't. Instead it is a source of constant shame and dread. A genius trying to navigate something as mundane as a nightclub must constantly be on guard, and one trying to get through, say, a seminar on semiotics is in for a nightmarish experience if he's to avoid accidentally transgressing against the laws of acceptable behavior. Transgression outside the laboratory, at school, at work, out for dinner with friends, becomes not an act of defiance, but a source of shame and dread. It also echoes the game's mood, for what failure more bitterly mundane is there than to find oneself limitless in power, godlike in wisdom, and despised by those mortals most like you?

The Peerage:

The term "the Peerage" is a play on words, but it's also such an old term that few geniuses bother to analyze it in depth. The first and plainest meaning is the concept of peer-review, one of the cornerstones of mundane science. Before results can be accepted, they must be validated by others. Any fool, fraud, or perfectly competent scholar with flawed methodology can get an amazing result, but it takes many eyes to make sure that people have discovered something genuinely interesting, rather than a statistical anomaly or sampling error (or, in the World of Darkness, a non-repeatable phenomenon drawn from Mania or unspecified metanormality).

For a new genius, this is a vital service. Another set of eyes is what she needs if she is to escape unmade and Illumination. The Peerage isn't a benevolent organization by any means, but that very amoral disunity can serve to keep a genius from falling "down the hole" and never coming out again. Having to confront the ideas of other people is a powerful slap in the face for a proud mad scientist.

But "the peerage" also refers to a system of noble entitlement that distinguishes the aristocratic man from the commoner. This attitude still pervades the Peerage. It's part of why Lemurians, who often see themselves as common men championing common men, hate them. Many peers see themselves as the aristocracy of humanity. Not necessarily its masters or its guides—the peers leave ferret-herding to the fools in Lemuria—but its guardians and its overseers, however distant and detached. That last aspect is important to

the Peerage, as it continually reminds its new members that they are not like other humans anymore, that they can't go back to their regular lives, and if they think they can go back, or, God help them, if they think they can go back and *help*, then they need another pair of eyes looking at the problem.

Even this distant, haughty arrogance can help a genius, as the icy aristocratic bearing of older peers reminds them that a genius cannot just go back and Be Like Them. Morality, the simple function of human decency, of one person's kindness to another, is replaced by Obligation, a cold relationship between two beings that can never again find common ground.

For the Storyteller, the Peerage is a powerful tool to emphasize the changes a genius must make in his life if he is to survive. The older peers, with decades of mad science behind them, are distant and terrifying figures, wrapped up in their research, often reduced to rote behavior that cleanses the desire to meddle with humanity too much and slip toward unmade. And the Peerage is not a charitable organization. Other geniuses will seek to exploit young mad scientists, to drag them into plots, feuds, and experiments, and cast them aside at the end. Remember to emphasize that the peers are not the "good guys." They're not even the "sane guys," necessarily; many peers are insane human-shaped hulks who have reduced their human interaction to a brittle dance of Obligation and intellectual superiority. The characters, and the players, should always have room to question the Peerage, and ask themselves exactly what one would lose by joining Lemuria.

Creation Stories:

"The multiplex reader has by now discovered that the story is much longer than she thinks, cyclic and self-illuminating. I must leave out a great deal; only order your perceptions multiplexually, and you will not miss the lacunae." -Samuel R. Delany, *Empire Star*

A genius is what she creates, and the best *Genius* chronicle is about what the characters do and make. The best stories often arise out of the activities of the characters, but in *Genius* it is doubly important. Geniuses aren't simply victims or participants in the world of mad science, they are the dynamos of change and transformation. They give birth to monsters and scorch the sky with their dreams. Before you think of a chronicle, before you consider the characters you populate your world with, before you even consider where you'll set your story, consider letting the players create characters. You should certainly guide them, and if there are choices you absolutely don't want them to make ("no Skafoi; this chronicle will be in a closed environment and I don't want you moving around too much") or ones that you think will be suboptimal ("this is a political chronicle, so guns and battle-armor won't help you much"), let them know. Nonetheless, let the players *create*. It will help them get into their characters. Even if you have a fixed idea for the sort of chronicle you want to run ("This chronicle will take place in Texas and Mars as the truce breaks down between the Peerage and Mars' dominant political power"), try to keep your summary to a single sentence, then let the players create. If they're curious for more, they can ask you questions.

This is a lot to ask, especially of new players. Sometimes your players will get stuck. The variations of mad science present in *Genius* are legion and can paralyze a new player. One solution is to point to different historical and fictional mad scientists. Ask the player if she's aiming for more of a Nikola Tesla "electricity and dynamism" mad scientist, or maybe a deranged biologist like Dr. Moreau. (Just listing the major branches of science and craft, and putting "mad" in front of each one, can help. Mad archeology, mad acoustics, mad macramé...) But a better technique is to ask the player, not who she wants to play, but what she wants to make. Wings made of iron and stolen clocks? Feline servants, each made from miles of tangled electrical wire? Beautiful glass spheres that spread nightmare-gas? Have images on hand and gently prod players who seem at a loss. Remember: the story is about the players' characters and what they create.

Collaboration is important for the newly Inspired, who often lack independent sources of money and security, and players should be encouraged to build characters who fit together. They need not begin play as a collaborative, nor need all the characters actually like or trust one-another. However, characters should be

able to get along well enough that they won't kill one-another, or worse, part ways the moment they can. Running a scattered chronicle is recommended for skilled Storytellers only, and no matter how good you are, a scattered chronicle means you still have to deal with spotlight time focused on only one person at a time. Avoid this by making sure that each player's character connects in at least one way to at least one other character. Two characters might belong to the same foundation and thus have the same mentor, while another two characters both had their lives destroyed by the same Lemurian conspirator back before their Breakthrough. You could then bridge these two groups—united by a common mentor and a common enemy—by a common goal (if you notice that all the characters are pursuing power or knowledge in a similar way, perhaps a single ancient orphan that no one genius could claim on his own could tempt all of them) or by a common place (the characters might all find themselves setting up shop in the same cheap, badly-zoned part of town).

As the collaborative comes together, look for story hooks you can exploit. Skilled players build these into their characters deliberately, and may even call attention to them. "I'm a Grimm with two dots in Exelixa and a family poisoned by industrial pollution" should be all you need, as a Storyteller, to spin tales about greed, love, sickness, and weird medicine from now until the stars go out. New players will include them accidentally or incidentally: a player who dumps all his character's Laboratory dots into Security is saying something whether he knows it or not. Anything that stands out mechanically should draw your eye: a character who has mastered a particular Skill, a character with five dots in an Attribute or one dot in another Attribute, or a character who dumps as many Merit points as he can into servants and money...all these things should set off flags. Anything unusual is a story hook. If it sparks an idea, write it down. Don't worry, you'll get to use it eventually.

You don't just have to observe this process. Encourage it. Some players might worry that if they create hooks like dependents, old friends, or neuroses then the Storyteller will exploit those weaknesses. Tell them that yes, of course you'll exploit those weaknesses, and then they get a whole story about *them*, about *their* relationships with the rest of the world, about fighting past *their* personal demons. They get to be the protagonists, the ones who define and personify the story being told. Or they can play the orphaned loner in the trenchcoat with no connections to anyone and no contact with the world except through the immediate plot, who gets hauled out of cold storage whenever there's a fight because he doesn't care about anything. Guess which one is more fun to play?

Science Fiction, Horror, and High Weirdness:

Genius: The Transgression is a meeting of genres, and as you think about what sort of story you want to tell, you need to consider each building block of the game's themes. Of more immediate use, if you find yourself stumped by a story-element you've created that doesn't feel rich or interesting enough, you can ratchet up one of **Genius'** core genres until you get what you need.

Science fiction consists of external *tropes* (robots, rocket ships, genetic engineering) that reflect internal *questions* ("Is it right to create a creature that wants to serve?"; "What would a new age of exploration look like?"; "What does our environment matter in a world of genetic determinism?"). Good science fiction, in any medium, requires connections between the external tropes and the internal questions. While science fiction is often divided into many overlapping subgenres (cyberpunk, space opera, hard SF, social SF, new wave, retro-future...), science fiction stories hinge on the arrival and use of new science (or knowledge) and new technology.

Science fiction is a cerebral, external genre, more adept with themes than with moods. But when you're struggling to create a story, there are few better sources than a science fiction plot. The classic science fiction plot involves, first, a piece of technology (in the case of **Genius**, a wonder), and second, a person who would be affected by that technology. Technological proliferation is not generally an option for wonder-based plots, due to Havoc, so instead think of individuals who might be affected by the wonders a genius

creates—individuals who can become enemies, curious meddlers, or tragic victims. Again, look to your players' characters first, and build stories around them. Look at a wonder, and list the sort of people who could get mixed up with it. A cop? A computer programmer? A Phantom Slaver Yeti? If the collaborative's Scholastic builds a gate to Twilight, whom will that effect? A lonely old woman looking to speak with her dead husband? A pissed-off Navigator who opposes contact between the worlds? Some kind of techno-spirit, out to exploit the collaborative? This character might be a victim, an antagonist, a nuisance, or all three. Science fiction, briefly, is a plot-creating device, and a device for finding who the story's antagonists and allies are, and you should use it that way.

Horror, in contrast to science fiction, is visceral, often emotional, with a focus on the internal and the personal. There are many different sub-genres of horror; use them poorly, and you'll produce a clumsy mess of mixed-up tropes. Use them well, however, and you can focus on a single mood or emotion that can define an entire story.

Existential horror focuses on the meaninglessness of human experience in a vast, uncaring or actively hostile cosmos. What does human civilization mean to a genius who has seen the utter oblivion represented by the Cold Ones at time's end? Invasive horror comes from a feeling of physical betrayal and intrusion, of violation and misuse. A genius forced to drag parasitic plastic tubes from his nose and mouth before they drink his blood and vital essence experiences this kind of horror. Visceral horror is the horror of violation and brutality—guts, severed limbs, mutilation, unsubtle but powerfully effective at showing how vulnerable the human body can be. A genius who watches her beholden and friend torn meticulously apart by a mechanical preying mantis sees how quickly and easily humans can be disposed of. Personal horror is the feeling of not knowing oneself, of feeling like an alien in one's own body, or of being betrayed by one's own behavior. A furious genius who unleashes his greatest Katastrofi device, then walks stunned through the scorched and bloody desolation and the screaming of the blinded and dying, knowing that he was the cause, feels the loss of identity or agency that is the hallmark of this sort of horror. And of course, there is always the very mundane fear of failure that all geniuses must face. A genius forced to choose between mundane friendship and intellectual triumph, between a new wonder and a chance to escape the calcification of his life in the Peerage, knowing that she will fail as either a scientist or a human being—and must choose one—confronts this fear of failure.

Horror creates mood and depth in your chronicle, and the different sorts of horror create different moods. This provides emotional resonance that allows your players to place the events of your story in an emotional context that they'll remember.

Weirdness has a grand literary tradition, dating back to the time before science fiction, horror, and fantasy separated into independent genres. To modern readers, these stories—of which Edgar Allen Poe's, H.P. Lovecraft's, and Clark Ashton Smith's writings are some of the best examples—mingle aliens, demons, and vampires, robots and zombies, alien worlds and spirit realms, past and future, without any concern for "proper" genre division. Reborn recently and sometimes called new weird, bizarro, or gonzo fiction, the genre focuses on strange juxtapositions, gleefully or horrifically bending genre and gender, the mundane and the miraculous.

The power and value of high weirdness is in the juxtapositions it can produce. Weirdness is invaluable when something in your story—a character, a wonder, a place—doesn't yet seem extraordinary enough to merit inclusion in the chronicle. You can enrich an idea through several kinds of juxtaposition. Try...ancient and modern: the Oracle hunting the collaborative wields an obsidian axe in one hand and a crackling energy-whip in the other. Biological and mechanical: the wolf lopes forward, revealing the AA batteries driven into its cranium like a crown of thorns. Beautiful and hideous: the mane's exquisite ruby mask hides a face of putrid rot and dripping meat. High culture and pop culture: a Scholastic's office is full of ancient Roman busts and velvet paintings of Elvis. Wealth and poverty: the Director's magnificently appointed townhouse has no windows through which one might glimpse the favela's feral children just outside.

Weird can easily turn silly. You can't just stick a bunch of extra heads on something or have Zombie Queen Elizabeth show up with her flaming katana and her Lamborghini and expect to be taken seriously. Or you can, but absurdity can destroy the atmosphere of horror. Instead, use weirdness to enhance the horror of your chronicle. Paradoxes and jumbled juxtapositions are uncomfortable; they prevent the characters and the players from knowing what they face, and make it difficult to form plans. Horror can get boring for players when the characters are helpless, but it benefits from characters being confused, off-balance, and unwilling to trust what seem to be obvious answers. But high weirdness can stand on its own as an important part of a chronicle: though it's not ideal for providing themes or moods, it can provide shocking, arresting images that remain with players long after a chronicle ends.

The Enrichment Machine:

Genius is drawn from three literary traditions: horror, science fiction, and weird fiction. Often as a Storyteller, you'll create a character, situation, or locale and decide that it lacks the richness you want in your chronicle. Rather than scrapping the idea or introducing it half-formed, use elements of science fiction, horror, or weirdness to enrich the idea.

Maybe your idea needs more science fiction in order to make it suitable for your chronicle. After all, genius isn't a modern fantasy game; it's a game of the **Dark Mechanical**, a hidden-world science fiction story. You can make an idea more science fiction-y by adding either tropes or themes. We talked about these earlier: the tropes of SF are the outer baggage (genetically-engineered killing machines), while the themes are the moral and political questions raised by those ideas (what are the consequences of using technology to produce living weapons?). Often, an idea just needs a sprinkling of SF-trope-dust to enrich it. Rather than the bad guy sending men with guns to kill the collaborative, the bad guy sends a steam-belching truck with an experimental AI to run them off the road. Sometimes you need SF's thematic richness. A haunted castle is horrific, a castle haunted by the ghosts of failed rappers from the 80s is weird, but a castle haunted by the ghosts of failed rappers from the 80s, and the ghosts are really memory engrams recorded by a secret branch of the US government that monitored the inner city for signs of dissidence, introduces science fiction themes to a story that might otherwise just be odd and spooky.

Sometimes an idea needs more horror. Look at the types of horror previously listed and pick one, or just aim for a general sense of terror and grotesqueness. Being hunted from the rooftops by an assassin is *scary*, but it's not horrific. Even an assassin with a laser cannon (SF) who obsessively keeps track of the weather on Jupiter in order to know when to take a job (weird) isn't horrific. But if that sniper is an escaped mental patient whose skin was peeled off by an Illuminated doctor and who now survives in a decaying "clean suit," and whose only way of "touching" people is through the medium of destructive coherent light—and if the collaborative knows that (make sure your players know stuff; the things in the Storyteller's head are only scary to the Storyteller!)—then the whole scenario takes on a horrific edge.

And sometimes an idea just needs to be weirder. It's too much of a cliché as-is: the science fiction element is well-worn and not particularly imaginative, while the horror is the same fare the players might see at the movies. It needs something extra. Adding weirdness without violating the integrity of the other genres isn't always easy: too outrageous and the science fiction turns into fantasy; too outlandish and the horror becomes farce. Instead—again—the key word is "juxtaposition." A well-chosen juxtaposition is often itself horrific, meaning you can sometimes kill two birds by adding the right sort of weirdness. Let's say the collaborative is trapped in an abandoned uranium mine and the radiation will soon climb past survivable levels. This is a sort of science fictional horror, but "death by radiation" has been done before. Change of scene: now it's an abandoned shopping mall that got closed down because of its unfortunate (and radioactive) location; the whole thing got sealed in concrete, hushed up, and buried. As the collaborative faces sciencey death, they're confronted by the absurd excesses of consumer culture from whatever era the mall was buried in, staring back at them as if they've traveled back in time.

Themes and Moods:

Genius ' theme is Transgression. In his quest to create, to transform, and to transcend, a genius can commit acts of monstrous cruelty, and even when he does not, his behavior and ideas are not palatable to most regular people. Its mood is Bitter Disappointment. A genius might fly, but she is still chained to our mundane reality, and the forces of Havoc and simple, human cruelty will wipe away all her accomplishments in the end. But as a Storyteller, your chronicle, too, can have its own theme and its own mood, something that complements or contrasts with the literary elements of the larger game.

A game's theme is intellectual, something considered and analyzed, rather than explored in a raw, emotional fashion. You can divide themes into three varieties: questions, answers, and explorations.

A question—"Is it right to use beholden?"—begs for an answer and provides your story with a clear narrative direction. It also provides a convenient wellspring of stories: when in doubt, you can introduce a new genius treating her beholden in a new way (or whatever is appropriate for your chronicle's theme) and let the players analyze the issue. This is good for new Storytellers, since it's so explicit. It's often palatable to more experienced players, who can quickly pick up on the theme and present their own opinions on the subject, in the form of character behavior, monologues (not too many, please—you may wish to impose a "no monologues unless you've tied up your enemies" rule if this becomes a problem), or even theses. A thesis, incidentally, is an excellent way to "answer" a theme, with different characters producing different answers, each answer in that genius' idiom and from her unique perspective.

An answer—"Using beholden is necessarily immoral, if sometimes useful"—can provide a powerful moral impetus to your chronicle. It's good for new players or for stories that are strongly framed around a central plot that contains explicit protagonists and antagonists. It lets a Storyteller frame a story where there are clear goals that unite the players. If beholden are at best a necessary evil, villains can come in the form of abusive overlords, "slavers" who specialize in turning psychologically vulnerable people beholden, and Igors who can't escape their own self-abnegating behavior. The risk with an "answer" theme is that the story can become didactic, preachy, and unsubtle. There's a place for "unsubtle," but there's also a risk that a chronicle will outgrow this sort of theme. When this happens, a Storyteller needs to be ready to jettison the simple and moralistic answer for something more nuanced and complex. There's rarely a place for didactic or preachy Storytelling, though, and themes that provide safe, simple answers to complex problems can grow tedious, even if everyone at the table is in agreement—and if everyone isn't in agreement, the chronicle risks all kinds of narrative mutiny and creative sabotage from players who think the moralizing is simplistic, bigoted, or just dumb.

An exploration—"This chronicle will analyze the moral status of beholden as they relate to the Inspired"—is the most diffuse, least directed, and most flexible kind of theme. Its flexibility can be its advantage, since anything vaguely having to do with the theme can be brought into the story, turned over, and explored. An exploration can also drift—an "answer theme" from an earlier phase in the chronicle can grow subtle and diffuse, allowing the theme to become an exploration, or, alternatively, an exploration can occasionally tightened up to let the players explore a pointed question or to declare at least part of the theme "solved" with a specific answer. This flexibility can be dangerous, though, as the theme risks becoming airy, insubstantial, and irrelevant. Some Storytellers like that—it lets them focus on moods or individual stories instead of over-arching statements—but if left untended, an exploratory theme can bleed out until it's lost all meaning and merged with the general background elements of the setting.

Moods, in contrast to themes, are subtle, emotional, and pervasive. They are grasped intuitively, rather than appreciated intellectually. (In game terms, a petulant player trying to ignore a theme would roll Resolve; a stubborn one trying to ignore a mood would roll Composure.) A mood isn't a question or even really a statement, and one or two words can usually sum up a mood. **Genius**' default mood is one of Bitter Disappointment: triumphs vanish, brilliance goes ignored, great works fail for stupid, common reasons, and in

the end, a genius never achieves the recognition, respect, or even understanding she desires. In other words, life sucks, and not in a grand way—there's no vast conspiracy holding the genius down. He's not chosen as a scapegoat by a vindictive God. He's not punished by Nemesis. Terrible things just happen because we live in a broken, imperfect world, and those imperfections destroy the most beautiful and brilliant among us first.

But that's not the only possible mood for a *Genius* chronicle, and you should try to find one that suits the kind of stories you want to tell. Maybe the default mood needs sharpening—it turns from Bitter Disappointment to Nemesis. Now an active force stalks geniuses' lives, ruining their works. A chronicle revolving around Clockstoppers may benefit from this mood. Maybe the mood needs lightening—The Sublime Ridiculous. In a slightly lighter chronicle, the absurdity of the genius' lives is emphasized, their rat-like scramble for grant money, their fighting over influence with their peers, the silly smallness and the foibles of their lives, such that they seem to ignore the beauty that surrounds them and that they create in favor of bickering over theories and bragging rights.

A good theme is poignant and always present in the background, but rarely overwhelming. It can serve as a sort of stylistic fallback position for the Storyteller. "How do I want to wrap up this subplot? Maybe I can find a way that reflects the chronicle's dominant mood." There are two main risks with mood. The first is that it comes off as too heavy. This produces melodrama, and worse, strips characters of their free will and thus deprotagonizes the players, making them passive participants in the Storyteller's chronicle. (Players do not like this.) If every effort of the collaborative's, from the creation of the grandest wonder to renewing their subscription to *National Geographic*, ends in Bitter Disappointment, tears, and bloody ashes, the players will lose interest. The other danger is creating too many moods that don't interface well. A Storyteller gets to tell a lot of *stories*, sometimes many stories at the same time. However, piling up moods can produce a confused jumble of impressions and emotions in the players, meaning that they don't latch onto any mood.

There are ways to combine multiple moods. The easiest way is to give the different places in your chronicle different moods. The dank basement repository of the town's mercatus is Brooding; the alleys where hungry pretas skulk reeks with Desperation; the laboratory where the town's Artificers get together for drinks and construction is Frenetic. Painting a setting with moods is like having a visual art director for a story that doesn't ordinarily have pictures. Instead of employing different palettes to define each place's feel, you start with the mood, and if you keep it in your head while setting the scene each time the characters go back, you'll automatically choose appropriate words and descriptions. A good idea to make sure that each mood works is to double-check it with the chronicle's theme. If they don't mix well, jettison the mood and replace it with something that matches better.

(In general, jettison even good ideas if they're going to drag the rest of the chronicle down. You can reuse individual ideas, but it's hard to recalibrate a chronicle that has been thrown off-balance by the introduction of an inappropriate element. This sort of concept-murder is hard to do, but it will make for a stronger chronicle, and you can always recycle your ideas later.)

Sophisticated Storytellers can also attach moods to specific situations, people, and creatures. These are leitmotifs, and employed carefully, they can produce an exciting "story" that's told in developing moods and feelings, rather than (or in addition to) discrete narrative events. By tying a mood, a bit like a "theme song," to important characters and recurring situations, you can trigger specific emotions in the players whenever that character makes her appearance. This can get out of hand quickly ("The giant mutant fire clams will be represented in this piece by the *oboe*...") but if used sparingly and for only the most important situations, these additional moods—conveyed to the players through evocative descriptions that use appropriate conceits—can enhance the chronicle. With them, visiting the *ancient, sightless* Director in his *sepulchral* office, after crossing through the filing room that's *cold as a tomb* evokes the same feeling (in this case, that of old, lingering death) with every visit, providing a unique weight to the experience beyond what's said and done during that scene. If the characters instead visit the *blind old* Director in his office full of *chintzy religious figurines* after passing through his filing room that *never stays warm in winter*, they get a different experience

(one of poverty and piety), even if it's otherwise the same place.

Antagonism:

"She hated people who thought too much. At that moment, she struck me as an appropriate representative for almost all mankind. The fat woman's expression implied that she would go crazy on the spot if anybody did any more thinking." -Kurt Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle*

Geniuses make enemies. They can't help it. Whether they're competing with other geniuses for the same resources, fighting ideological disputes, terrifying the masses with their discoveries, or fighting their own aborted creations, geniuses find themselves in danger from all sides. For a Storyteller, this—like everything else—serves as prime story-fodder. A skilled Storyteller can use different types of antagonists to tell different types of stories, based on who the genius or the collaborative has run afoul of this time. We'll look at four sorts of antagonism below: Antagonizing the Powerful, Antagonizing the Masses, Antagonizing the Righteous, and Antagonizing Oneself.

Antagonizing the Powerful:

Within the world in which geniuses operate, "the powerful" typically means other Inspired beings: ornery peers, treacherous Lemurians, and powerful manes and orphan wonders. This antagonism usually arises in one of two ways: competition for resources or ideological incompatibility. (Some conflicts are based on both, or one adds fuel to the fire, preventing an amicable solution from being reached. Other times, one is merely a cloak for the other, ideology disguising land-grabs or accusations of excess used to justify an attack on a competing philosophy.) Geniuses often find themselves squabbling over resources, grant money, beholden, even physical territory. (*You try finding a robot-friendly apartment in Soho.*)

New geniuses and new collaboratives are often the targets of poaching attempts by established groups that resent the intrusion or just see an opportunity to exploit the vulnerable. This is how these chronicles can start: with a new collaborative moving in and sending ripples of anger and avarice through the Inspired or preta communities. Lemurians are notorious for nighttime thefts, protection rackets, and other bullying tactics, and many are so blinkered that they won't back down even when outgunned. The results can turn violent quickly. Other dangers include powerful manes, who may view young geniuses as a potential source of food, or peers who see suckers and proxies for their own petty wars.

As geniuses grow more experienced, these struggles don't disappear; instead they spread out. "Turf wars" that once troubled neighborhoods become regional disputes over territory and autonomy, which in turn become national, international, interplanetary, or even trans-temporal threats. Many geniuses think Lemuria is dead, but others fear that it will restore itself in the fullness of time, triggering another Invisible War. Already the probes and scouts of a new, flexible Lemuria make their inroads, and it's up to influential and powerful geniuses—peers or rogues—to watch for these signs.

Telling this sort of story is comparatively easy. These struggles usually involve direct conflict with a malicious foe who employs the same weapons as the collaborative, meaning that geniuses don't need to feel overly restrained in their actions. A struggle against Lemurians or some other powerful Inspired group also builds naturally, starting with raids made up of automata or dangerous lesser foes, moving up to beholden and the occasional genius "flunky," then on to the masterminds behind the attacks. A Storyteller can build a classic nested story from this model, where each "boss" turns out to be a lieutenant of a greater power. If the Storyteller wants, she can keep telling this story all the way up through the ranks until the collaborative consists of Inspiration 7+ geniuses battling the last Lemurian Secret Master, an international mane crime lord with subsidiaries all over the world, the Cold Ones themselves, or similar terrifying foes. These chronicles typically conclude with a direct confrontation against the enemies that have hounded the geniuses since their Breakthrough.

There are a few disadvantages with this sort of struggle. First, it can grow both unsubtle and abstract at the same time. Fighting Illuminated Babylonian scientist-priests in the Hollow Earth is fun, but the story loses the mundane, human element that grounds most mad scientists' lives. It's hard to sustain an atmosphere of personal horror in a story that consistently focuses on powerful Inspired or inhuman conspiracies. Instead, these stories can devolve into simple adventures. There's nothing wrong with simple adventure, of course, but if everyone at the table is scratching their heads wondering where the horror or personal drama is, it might be time for a new sort of enemy.

Antagonizing the Masses:

Geniuses can create horrors that destroy indiscriminately and ruin local property values. Regular people have feared Inspiration since the dawn of time, though rarely can they put a name to their terror. Mere mortals turn wonders into time bombs, and it's only a matter of time before Havoc reduces some trespassing mortal to a soup-like homogenate. Burglars, nosy neighbors, safety inspectors, emergency personnel, and curious family members can all begin an out-of-control spiral of investigation that can quickly result in dead bodies, followed by formal investigations and charges, or a furious mob storming the genius' laboratory.

Also, geniuses are still people. Most have families and friends from the old days, co-workers from the day job that pays the electricity bills, or normal people that they interact with to stay sane. And as anger and fear about the genius grow in the mortal community, geniuses are often forced to decide between the people they care about and their new lives among the Inspired. This problem can even be exacerbated by the genius' peers, who think it's good to distance the mad scientist from her old life, and by the genius herself, who is often so afraid to reveal the truth to a loved one—lest they find a wonder and trigger Havoc, or worse, become beholden to the genius' worldview—that she keeps her super-scientific prowess a secret from those who matter most to her.

While this sort of plot can be used as spice for other stories—secret identities and a desire for belonging can add complications for all sorts of characters—it can also stand on its own. In a story focused on a genius' antagonism of the masses, a central location, a focus for the collaborative's desire to belong, is important, whether it's a suburban street, an apartment full of upwardly mobile yuppies, school, a college campus, or even a sleepy country village. This can become the focus of the collaborative, simultaneously representing their desire for a normal life and the cruelty and banality inherent in such an existence.

The story usually begins before or immediately after the Breakthroughs that create the collaborative. A vignette format works well for this sort of chronicle: the Storyteller can allow geniuses to make hard individual or group choices where they decide between their normal lives and the new world they've discovered. As this chronicle progresses, it's possible that different geniuses will come to different conclusions—some may reject the regular world altogether, while others fight to maintain their normality. (The Storyteller should make the players aware that these rifts are tools for more drama, not for bickering at the table or splitting up the collaborative so they never interact and the chronicle dissolves into a series of unconnected stories.) The creation of new wonders is also a time for new vignettes, as regular people in the genius' life discover the wonders and trigger Havoc. This can be especially poignant if the genius created the wonder to help him in his regular life: an Exelixa wonder that's cured the cancer of a genius' sick mother might fall into the hands of the hateful old woman up the road; if her fiddling causes it to spread sickness throughout the community, will the collaborative blame the old woman and keep their reputations in the community, or fess up while still hiding enough of the truth that people don't ask too many questions?

This sort of chronicle is personal, social, and low-conflict. Often, the menaces a genius faces—stray manes on the prowl, dangerous Inspired neighbors—aren't threats in and of themselves. A collaborative might have no trouble smashing a biomechanical Black Dog that's taken to patrolling the alleys for fresh meat and Mania. The question instead becomes how to deal with the problem without arousing suspicion (for those geniuses

who live double lives) or ire. In this sort of story, geniuses are continually forced to confront issues of trust, inclusion, and respect, often aware that there are only a few possible results. Eventually, the genius will either reveal himself or be revealed. Sometimes it ends well: the genius' friends, families, or children might even accept what he is. But more often these stories end with the genius being driven from everything that mattered to him, or worse, making a determined and brutal stand against his mundane tormentors.

While Clockstoppers can often serve as a "face" to represent the seething resentment felt by many mortals, manes make ideal short-term enemies in this sort of chronicle. With a collaborative focused on finding a balance between their mundane and Inspired lives, a "monster of the week" set-up can actually work well. Every session features a menace to the geniuses and their community that can only be stopped by Mania, yet at the same time, the geniuses are constrained in their actions for some reason: the mane is masquerading as a visiting celebrity, they can't build a super-weapon with the extended family over for Christmas, they need to attend an important event like a wedding while the mane is active...this juxtaposition of mundane inconveniences with nightmarish Mania-based adversaries brings to the fore the precarious balance that the geniuses are attempting to maintain.

Antagonizing the Righteous:

Philosophy can intersect with Mania in peculiar and dangerous ways. Though a genius can complicate her life by threatening, frightening, or confusing the masses, of even greater danger are people naturally predisposed to hate the genius and everything she represents. Though there's some overlap here with a story about Antagonizing the Masses, there's more overt, direct conflict in this sort of chronicle. An individual or a group, powerful enough to stand up against Inspiration, has declared the collaborative its enemy and now works to destroy or dismantle our heroes.

The group can vary considerably and its nature shapes the nature of the chronicle. Narrow-minded educators, religious fanatics, bitter failed researchers, cult-like Inspired groups, and Clockstoppers can all be part of "The Righteous." The one thing all these organizations have in common is a fanatical desire to wipe away the collaborative. Geniuses have to deal with these groups with greater care than when struggling with enemy geniuses or powerful manes. The Righteous are more powerful than regular people, but they also have connections in the mortal world, giving them leverage that geniuses don't normally have. A collaborative has to engage The Righteous on two fronts: first, turning aside or turning back the direct threats they put forth—drug-addled *hashashin*, reprogrammed robot killing machines, crooked police officers—and second, preventing The Righteous from turning innocent people into weapons or shields. Many of these groups are all-too-eager to co-opt frightened, panicked people into crude mobs, fling them against a collaborative, and then use any casualties to demonstrate that the geniuses are wicked and need to be stopped. This particular dick move requires a multilateral response that engages The Righteous on a purely physical level while simultaneously denying them the moral high ground they crave.

Chronicles that feature The Righteous as antagonists often begin with a single, seemingly innocuous event that turns a more-or-less regular person into an Inspiration-hating agent of terror. Often this event is technically the genius' fault, though in no way her responsibility or anything she could have known about, brought about by serendipity more than a sense of malicious endangerment. (Unless the genius in question is particularly reckless, in which case collateral damage can generate enemies very quickly.) As the chronicle unfolds, the collaboratives' enemies attack the geniuses and their friends and loved ones while simultaneously undermining the geniuses' reputation. These attacks are often blatantly hypocritical: forcing the genius to unleash long-buried pretas in order to protect himself, making a genius choose between a loved one and a group of unknown innocents, and using smokescreens and misinformation to produce collateral damage are all "legitimate" techniques for some people trying to bring the genius down. As the chronicle approaches its climax, the genius will have to turn the tide of public opinion (or peer opinion, in some cases) against The Righteous, confront the last fiendish death-trap or frame-up, and destroy her enemy...or be torn apart by a resentful, hate-filled mob as her enemy watches and gloats.

One danger of this sort of chronicle is that it can degrade into back-patting masturbatory nonsense, where the characters spend their time smugly protecting the very people trying to destroy them. There's a place for martyrs in fiction, but if the theme of the chronicle is an answer, and the answer is "Yes, we are all special snowflakes who are tremendously put-upon by ignorant mundanes," maybe it's time to cut back on the self-congratulation.

Antagonizing Oneself:

Geniuses are more than capable of making a hell for themselves. Many mad scientists are sick, broken people, and when they come together in a collaborative, the result can be a toxic melding of enabling and pathological personality traits, rather than a harmonious unity where each geniuses looks after his friends and is looked after in turn. In this kind of chronicle—the most personal and the most difficult for Storytellers and players of the four presented here—the genius is his own worst enemy. He starts out damaged or having already committed some grave crime that he must atone for or at least adapt to, and threatens to slide further into madness and degradation. Each genius should start out damaged or deranged in some way, or move quickly toward that state: a chronicle about one's own inner demons works poorly with happy, well-adjusted mad scientists. As the chronicle progresses, the geniuses deal with macrocosms of their internal inadequacies represented in the physical world, and icons of their real-world failures within their own minds or in the wonders they create. Some fall along the way into insanity, Illumination, or some other form of self-destruction, often brought about by their own wonders. Others at last rise above their failures and faults and redefine themselves as new, whole geniuses, able to interface with the world again.

Two main types of external enemies make their appearance in a chronicle of a genius' own flirtation with self-destruction. The first are the genius' wonders, whether orphaned or bound to her. Her failures to create represent her failures to be a full human being, while even the wonders under her control—especially automata—can act in unexpected ways, anticipating her darkest whims and acting on them as if to drag the genius down. The second sort of enemies are the Illuminated. These aren't the raving kill-crazy Illuminated that other geniuses might face. Rarely are they interested in murdering the genius. Instead they want to recruit her, to free her from the burdens of morality and sanity. Illuminated are simultaneously compelling in their complete liberation and terrifying, in that whatever is left of their old minds rarely escapes the torments that haunted them when they were still sane. Other dangers to a genius' journey toward salvation include narcissistic echo doctors that offer their own form of escape, regular people who tempt geniuses to control and dominate them, and cruel manes that care nothing for the genius or for human needs.

This sort of chronicle is the hardest to run because a character's internal mental states don't mean anything unless they're out there on the table for all the players and the Storyteller to interact with. A private journey from despair to either exaltation or self-destruction can be carried out entirely in a player's head like some sort of weird computer simulation, but that's not role-playing so much as a fancy internal monologue. The Storyteller needs to work to bring the genius' inner state out into the shared space where the game actually gets played. A number of techniques are applicable here. Theses are obvious ways for a genius to inflict his inner self upon the world, and long, complicated theses can be strung together to define this sort of chronicle. The creation of wonders, and the failure to create, can serve as springboards for understanding how and why a genius does what he does, and thus what's going on in his mind. Interactions with other characters—either other geniuses in the collaborative, or other people or creatures—helps the players express the nature of their characters in words or actions.

In this sort of chronicle, the Storyteller must look for happenstance and coincidence and attempt to resolve the day-to-day struggles of a genius' life into a coherent narrative; he can't just attempt to tell a story with a fixed beginning and end. The Storyteller also needs a firm hand on the dice. On the one hand, too much rolling can break the flow of the game, or worse, turn the natural culmination of a storyline into a joke due to a badly-timed failure (or success). On the other hand, randomness can provide useful input; sitting around and

discussing the psychological disintegration of a group of geniuses can drain even the best players, leaving them uncreative and numb. A throw of the dice can restore dynamism and energy to a stagnating plot. Flexibility and a keen eye for useful thematic elements are key to running this sort of chronicle; without those skills, the game can devolve into isolated introspection or abandon its psychological elements entirely.

Mixing and Matching:

Few chronicles focus exclusively on one of these play-styles. Instead, ongoing chronicles meld and merge different sorts of dangers and antagonists. The most expansive chronicles even end up with a "rogues gallery" of enemies that can be brought to the fore in a moment's notice to shift around the story being told. And of course, your players will have different goals and desires. One might want a straight-up fight against Lemurians or Moon Nazis, while another wants to play a "caped crusader" who wants to keep his identity hidden from his normal family, and another wants an introspective game about coping with his character's reaction to his first wonder, which ran amok. Of course, there's only one way to figure out what your players want before play begins: *ask them*. Otherwise you might never know what they're looking for, and you'll give them *Eraserhead* when they want *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. There's nothing wrong with asking players what they want before a chronicle begins, and you can't always judge their desires based on what sorts of characters they create (though that helps), so go ahead and find out what they're looking for. Ask for *specifics* from them while you speak in *generalities*. That way you can get exact images that are burning a hole in your players' brains, while not giving away "spoilers" that might ruin players' fun. Don't ask for exact experiences they want—players don't want their thoughts fed back to them between dice roles—but ask them about what books or TV shows they want the chronicle to imitate. Most people sitting down to play **Genius** share a cultural heritage of speculative fiction, and they know what they like and don't like.

For this to work, of course, the players need to be accommodating and flexible. If one player wants archeology and another wants gun-fights, they both need to understand that no game will consist entirely of tomb-robbing or gunslinging. If one wants gun-fights, one wants courtly romance, one wants archeology, and one wants to build robots, they need to understand that there are only so many scenes the Storyteller can run set in an ancient ruin that's hosting a sumptuous garden party where Dr. Xian, who is demonstrating his new theory in robotics, has just challenged the collaborative to a pistol duel...before things start to look a little stupid. **Genius** requires more from its players than many games since their creations drive the plot, but it also requires a willingness to give and take, because the game is so conceptually broad that it covers multiple, sometimes conflicting, genres and experiences. One of the Storyteller's tasks is to find an equitable balance of story elements that allows each player to get what she wants while preventing one player from monopolizing the narrative or, worse, being shut out from the creative decisions that go into the game.

The Pulp Fiction Formula:

Lester Dent, who created Doc Savage and other pulp heroes and wrote adventure yarns for The Shadow, had a formula for his short stories. He divided his 6,000-word yarns into four sections of 1,500 words each, each section with a purpose that concludes with a twist or a "punch," leading inevitably toward the climax. This produced tight, varied stories that Dent could churn out by the dozens.

Genius: The Transgression is strongly indebted to pulp fiction, as are role-playing games in general. These trashy, lurid stories flew off the shelves and embedded themselves in the national consciousness, giving us tales of far-off lands, strong and brilliant heroes, diabolical masterminds, and esoteric science. Here, then, is a formula for creating pulp fiction adventures for genius.

It might seem strange to include a pulp fiction generator for a game that's supposed to be about what the characters do and make, and that's so strongly player-driven. There are a couple of reasons for this system's inclusion. First, sometimes a Storyteller just doesn't have the time to come up with an elaborate story that takes into account all the characters' machinations; sometimes it's just easier to throw an exciting adventure

toward the players and let them have fun with it. Second, new players are often hesitant to "steal the spotlight" or otherwise generate plotlines based on their own activities, and these adventures can serve as training until the players are ready to seize the narrative of their own accord. (It can also help new Storytellers, who may rightly be scared of managing the whims and caprices of a bunch of different characters, each with astonishing superhuman powers.) Third, there are a couple of tricks within the Formula that can be useful to any Storyteller, at any time, when she's out of ideas or blindsided by a twist in the plot.

The **Genius** Pulp Fiction Formula consists of five steps: 1) Write a suitably dramatic climax. 2) Figure out how to get the characters there. 3) Write an opening that propels the characters toward the climax. 4) Create "clue areas" that are reachable from the opening and that, once all or most of the clue areas are explored, "unlock" the climax. 5) Go back and add stats and narrative flourishes.

The Climax:

Start with the end: imagine an exciting climax for the story. Since we're creating a pulp story, a physical climax is appropriate. A pulp climax consists of three elements: a locale (preferably exotic), an enemy (preferably the mastermind behind the whole plot), and a complication (preferably one that requires Skills or abilities beyond "hit the bad guy till he's dead"). The variations on these elements are nearly infinite.

For a location, the simplest thing to do is imagine a fun place to have a fight. More sophisticated stories might feature subtler climaxes based on outsmarting, outmaneuvering, or otherwise neutralizing an enemy, but the default pulp climax involves a big fight, and you need an interesting location. Ancient fortresses or temples, the exposed top floors of unfinished highrises, in the guts of clock towers or ancient mainframe computers, aboard a sinking ship or crashing airplane, or in the middle of a grand celebration are all appropriate. If there's not enough excitement inherent in the location, light the whole thing on fire. Or drop it from a great height. Something that is on fire and falling is more or less ideal.

Andrea is going to run her first genius chronicle and wants a pulp story. Her first task is to decide on a location. She imagines a great island in the sky, like Angkor Wat, but carved top and bottom with the heads of insects with weirdly expressive faces. Her climax will take place on the steps of a ruined prehuman temple on this island as it flies through the sky. There'll be no fire, but the temple (and the whole island) will be in the process of crashing into the sea.

Next, the climax needs a villain. This isn't just a brute threat. Though the villain might have a "dragon"—a large, dangerous, entirely physical adversary that may or may not be a giant fire-breathing lizard—the villain himself is the one responsible for the plot so far: for whatever notorious murders, heinous atrocities, or diabolical thefts have bedeviled the collaborative from the beginning of the story. The villain can either fit in with the setting for the climax (a battle-hardened renegade military officer in his South American munitions bunker) or provide an ironic contrast (a degenerate, blood-and-filth-splattered Illuminated in the rafters while *Aida* is performed below). To come up with villains, steal shamelessly. Television and movies are full of stylish villains. So is mythology. If you're worried about being spotted, or if the villain just lacks richness, change the aesthetic associated with the villain you're lifting, or change or add to its "elemental affinity."

Everyone knows Darth Vader—he's *the* image of "Dark Lord": the cyborg dark knight, servant of a distant and brutal Emperor. The concept is still usable, but you'll need to strip away the aesthetic and replace it with something new. Even a "steampunk" refit might be too obvious. Try something ironic: He's more *harmonious living crystal* now than man, twisted and evil. A Crystal Future aesthetic takes the "cyborg dark knight" image so far from its roots as to be almost unrecognizable, and can trigger further ideas. What sort of Utopian crystal-spires-and-togas future-realm has need of a murderous cyborg with an energy sword? What parts of him are made of crystal and what still remain organic?

Or take a popular mythological creature, like a mermaid. Mermaids are associated with water, but let's 1) add

a science fiction motif and 2) change her elemental affinity. Instead of being a mermaid who swims through water, her elements are fire and metal. She swims through the molten steel at a foundry, and her voice, like the scream of metal on metal or the crackle of superheated air, impels men to leap to their deaths. A few simple changes—swapping aesthetic or element—can produce a wholly new sort of villain.

Andrea lets a few images wash over her as she ponders her villain. She wants something that fits in with the "ruined temple" theme, and angles for a sci-fi update of a mythological concept. Since her villain will have a plan, she needs something intelligent, so she settles on a fallen technological guru, a former charlatan who, even after his Breakthrough, continues to use his gifts to defraud the gullible and desperate—a cross between Ravana and a fraudulent psychic, now hustling manes and geniuses as easily as he once hustled mere mortals. Going with the idea of Ravana, Andrea decides that the villain will be a shapeshifting master of Metaptropi, guarded by an army of many-limbed automata.

Finally, the climax needs a complication, something that moves it outside the realm of a mindless slug-fest. A complication often requires a (non-combat) Skill to resolve successfully: the climax area is crashing (Drive), a vital object hangs tantalizingly out of reach (Athletics), the enemy is hidden behind layers of security (Larceny), or a potential ally needs to be talked into turning against his malicious employer (Persuasion). Multiple complications are possible, but the Storyteller must make sure there are enough characters to handle all the problems that arise while simultaneously engaging in the primary physical contest. Scour the characters' sheets for unusual or little-used Skills or Merits that might be interesting, while making sure that wonders or unusual special abilities don't solve the problem before it begins.

Andrea skims the character sheets for the collaborative and notices that the party Navigator has three dots in Animal Ken that she almost never uses. The complication will be circus animals, because dealing with circus animals is complicated. Okay, not quite circus animals: an imprisoned animal, in this case a Bengal tiger with Grafted wings (because assholes are always Grafting wings to stuff), half-starved and repeatedly tortured by the sadistic guru villain. Trying to fight it is a waste of time at best, fatal at worst, but an alert character can spot the signs of abuse and direct the tormented animal away, or even (with good rolling and role-playing) turn it against its captor.

Getting There From Here:

The next step involves a diabolical plot on the part of the villain. More sophisticated **Genius** stories stem naturally from the collaborative's own creations and schemes, but a simple pulp adventure is fueled by someone else's twisted grand design. A villain's plot has three elements: a goal (built to intersect with the player characters), an approach (usually nefarious), and a key (the thing the villain needs in order to accomplish her goal).

While considering the villain's plot, consider how it relates to the lives of the collaborative members, and start thinking about how the characters are going to get involved from wherever they start. Never create a plot that doesn't naturally intersect with the collaborative. Presumably such plots go on all the time, and the collaborative never hears about them, but a proper story needs to involve the players' characters in a way that makes the players feel it's only natural they become involved.

There are three basic sorts of motivations: the threat of harm, the promise of reward, and the burden of Obligation. Make sure that the villain's plot either threatens the collaborative with injury if it's not averted, promises great reward to anyone who stops it (or takes it on as their own and co-opts it; not all geniuses are good people), or requires the collaborative to act because the villain's plot violates their sense of personal morality, familial or cultural loyalty, or capital-O Obligation. Preferably include at least two motivations, and try to avoid a plot that relies entirely on the geniuses being good people; players have a habit of growing selfish at the worst times.

The villain's goal might be part of some grand centuries-long scheme, but in general the immediate goal of the story's villain should be possible to achieve within the length of one story, a span of time usually ranging from a few hours to a few weeks. Good goals are singular, comprehensible, and flow from the villain's personality, beliefs, and motivations. Excellent goals also reflect the theme and mood of the chronicle, cast a dark or ironic reflection on the collaborative or one of its members, or offer a clever (but not trite) literary "pun" based on the nature of the villain and the mythological or fictional sources from which the villain or the scenario is drawn. To build a goal, you need only a verb and an object: "Plunder the tomb of the alchemist-sultan Semjaza," "Assassinate the president of the University," and "Steal the plans for Doctor Crowell's zombie factory" are all clear and coherent goals villains might have.

A villain's approach helps clarify the villain's behavior and personality, and is useful once a motive is nailed down. Is the villain sneaky? Then his approach involves stealth and theft. The commander of armies? Then he will send out waves of murderous minions. Audacious? Then he may approach the characters directly, challenging or even enlisting them, before betraying them in the end. An approach helps create, in Lester Dent's words, "A Menace Which Is To Hang Like a Cloud" over the collaborative. If the story threatens to devolve into static set-pieces (go to Area 1, gather clue, unlock Area 2, go to Area 2, gather clue...), you can use the villain's approach to provide constant pressure on the collaborative in the form of endless waves of assassins, kidnapped friends, a slowly-mounting criminal case against them, increasingly alienation from their allies, or whatever else suits the villain's style. The villain's approach can also serve as an important hint for how you construct the story's opening: a brutal villain might leave a trail of bodies like a trail of bloody, mangled, half-eaten-by-giant-serpents breadcrumbs, while a seductive villain might turn a minor ally against the collaborative, resulting in an assassination attempt or a theft that prompts the group to figure out how they were compromised.

If the villain's goal were easy, she would have already achieved it: most pulp villains are geniuses in their own right, or else powerful manes or other metanormal beings. Instead, there's one or more keys that the villain must find in order to achieve her goal. This might be a physical key (to enter a forbidden tomb), a person that the villain must subvert or corrupt, a lost super-weapon that must be found and repaired, or a mathematical formula that the villain is attempting to solve. This key will help you construct the "clue areas" that serve as the middle of the story.

Generally, avoid having the villain gather either crystals or parts of a staff, as it is vulgar and low-class.

Andrea has her villain—a fraudulent guru turned lying genius she's named Dr. Vishal—but now she needs to fill him with purpose. Dr. Vishal's goal is to enter the Metamorph Temple on the long-lost Island of Formlessness and master the arts of molecular recombination. (In game terms, it's his thesis, and once his Inspiration is 5, he'll purchase Metaptropi 5 and begin construction of an internalized shapeshifting wonder.) His approach is persuasion: Dr. Vishal is charming, gregarious, and interested only in himself. He'll lie to the characters and to his allies to get what he wants, and turn murderous when he fails. If the characters dawdle, they'll find that Dr. Vishal has used his Epikrato-enhanced charms to send endless waves of repo men (and eventually, police) to ruin them and force them into action. The key is the method for reaching the island: Dr. Vishal has the physical coordinates, but there's no island there, and the doctor fears that his grasp of Skafoi is insufficient to access to island unaided.

The Opening:

A pulp fiction opening should, in Lester Dent's words, "introduce the hero and swat him with a fistful of trouble" as soon as possible. Your "heroes" are already there and hopefully they brought their own dice, so it's up to you to swat them with trouble. More sophisticated stories can employ a slower build-up. For pulp fiction, instead blow up a building, crash a train, or have a mysterious foreigner stagger into the collaborative's laboratory with a knife in his back and a jeweled puzzle-box in his hands. Get to the point, and make sure the immediate excitement points to the nature and scope of the events ahead. ("This dagger is only

carried by the Ecstatics, a Lemurian baramin that was said to have disappeared in the 17th century, and the puzzle box is some sort of Skafoi device like the one our mentor carried before he disappeared in Cairo!")

Also, get all the major Storyteller characters (except possibly the villain) in there in the opening scene. Clerks, functionaries, and goons can wait until later, but if there's a police inspector who's going to be chasing the collaborative, or a clockwork guide to the weird realms the collaborative will explore, try to get those characters in on the action as soon as possible, to allow maximum possible character development. Make sure that major characters aren't hidden behind "choke points" in the plot; they should be no more than one "move" from the introductory scene, at most.

The most important part of the opening is the placement of clues. Some of these should be obvious: no one's going to miss that the swarm-gun used to assassinate the priest is the same weapon they saw employed by the Malcolm T. Washington Fellowship last week. Others are conditional: only if the collaborative catches the assassin (who commits suicide with a mosquito grenade) can they go through his pockets and find his library card. Others are Skill-based: it takes a Wits + Science check to make sense of the chunks taken out of the earth nearby, which are the results of a crude teleport or some kind of Skafoi-based gating technology.

Each clue in the opening leads to one or more clue areas during the main body of the story. When in doubt, place way more clues than you'll think anyone monkey-smart or smarter would need. Players miss the obvious all the time, almost as often as they suddenly turn into super-geniuses, bypassing huge sections of your plot. (We'll get to dealing with that problem in a moment.) Pile the different types of clues together, one on top of another, and always make sure that in each area, at least one clue is absolutely impossible to miss.

The end of the opening may include, if you want, a sudden twist to keep the characters on their feet. Once they've translated the weird manuscript that arrived for them from Kinshasa, they find the date stamp and realize that it's from next Friday. After interviewing all the witnesses to a brutal super-science murder, the group goes back to the body and finds that it's gone, dragged away by some big animal. Are these events related? What sort of sinister intelligence now moves against our heroes?

Andrea's villain, Dr. Vishal, is a scheming, protean bastard. The collaborative gets drawn into his web, though, with something a bit more direct: upon returning home, the collaborative finds that their laboratory is being seized to pay outstanding debts. Since they have no outstanding debts, something is amiss. Worse, the guys doing the moving are getting very close to where the wonders are stored. The collaborative will have to scramble to prevent Havoc, using persuasion, threats, Epikrato, or simple violence, then figure out how this happened. Five clues present themselves:

1. The repo guys, if not disintegrated, eventually mention a group called Vishal Properties as the ones calling in the debt. They have contact information.

2. The repo van contains repossessed goods from what appears to be a music shop. Poking around turns up a name (Kronen Music Works) and an address. It looks like some other poor bastard got hit before the collaborative. cursory examination also indicates evidence of Inspired technology seized from the Music Works, though no wonders.

3. A quick inquiry to the neighbors will turn up that, yes, letters from Vishal Properties have shown up there, but they always throw them out...Something about outstanding debts...Why yes, they might have the most recent one...No, they never thought to bring them across the street. (If the collaborative manages to miss every damn clue, the neighbors will come over, apologetic, and hand over the letter.)

4. The repo guys will leave behind a map of their route, which indicates the collaborative's laboratory, the Vishal Properties Office, Kronen Music Works, and the Central Warehouse.

Developing the Clue Areas:

Once a story has an opening, it needs room to breathe. Your story already has its beginning and its end, and now it's time to construct the middle, but not as a straight-line slalom run from start to finish. Instead, you need to generate areas of exploration—as few as two, as many as five or more—that the collaborative can explore after the thrilling intro. These areas can be discovered by finding clues, either clues located in the opening or in other clue areas. Finding enough clues in the clue areas will allow the collaborative to "unlock" the story's climax.

The standard *Genius* pulp fiction story contains three clue areas, any three of which are accessible from the opening (provided good rolls or good investigation technique), and where all three must be "solved" in order to progress to the final area. To generate these clue areas, look at the clues in your opener. Tie those clues to nearby locations. Classic clues include matchbooks (with names of restaurants or clubs), cell phones (with lists of numbers to call), black books (with names and addresses), maps (with areas circled), symbols or paraphernalia (implying membership in an organization such as a college, church, or thinktank with a fixed location), ID (listing a home address), journals (with lists of names and locations), business cards (with addresses for businesses), and receipts (listing the store where something was purchased). More obscure clues include stray wonders (implying a builder), weapons (which come from somewhere or are used by only one group nearby with a known location), "dying words" (that divulge a person or place), specialized equipment (indicating employment in a particular factory or industry), and stains or dyes (indicating recent exposure to a rare material).

Use the clues in the opener to create interesting clue areas: a crumpled piece of paper with a phone number might lead to a sleazy strip club where sex bots are enslaved, while a driver's license might give a home address that's been abandoned for weeks and overrun with hungry orphans. For each clue area, decide on two things. First, what sort of challenge will the geniuses face there in order to get more clues and to "solve" the area? Second, how does "solving" the area move them closer to the climax?

Challenges are usually geared around one or more Skills. Some challenges are straight-up fights ending in assault and murder charges. Other situations require criminal trespassing, fraud, or breaking and entering. Sometimes there is no criminal activity at all, just conversation and questioning. A story should possess a good mix of challenges. The climax of a pulp story is usually a fight, and one or two more clue areas can feature those. You can pick another challenge to let a characters show off a Skill or a wonder. One challenge should be outside the collaborative's expertise or competence zone (a bunch of doctors and researchers forced to navigate a hazardous mountain path), just to see how they adapt.

The trickiest part of each clue area is figuring out how completing it moves the characters closer to their goal. So, they reached the forgotten sewer tunnel and killed the six-ton electricity-breathing rat that lived there. How does that help them find the Idol of the Nine Sacred Mechanisms? Have an answer ready. In the rat's horde is an old Polaroid photo of the idol that reveals its last known location in St. Louis...of course.

You can organize clue areas however you like. Some might be dead ends (interesting in moderation, annoying to the players if too common). Others don't unlock the climax so much as provide the collaborative with an edge: rescuing the Progenitor's vat-grown daughter from the razor serpents earns them the Progenitor's gratitude, which they can call upon if they're backed into a corner. If you're telling a larger story, you can even form choke points. If there are six clue areas (A, B, C, D, E, and F), maybe the opener only gives clues to A and B, and they must solve them both to get to C, and once C is solved, they can tackle D, E, and F in any order, with only E and F strictly necessary to reach the climax.

You can also add interrupt scenes. These are scenes—often attacks by the villain, the "Menace That Hangs Like a Cloud" over the collaborative—that occur at specific times, no matter in what order the geniuses tackle the clue areas. Interrupt scenes can make a story feel like it's rushing toward a conclusion naturally, and that

other intelligences are at work, rather than the world waiting for the collaborative to catch up, like in a video game. Whether the geniuses visit the race track, the old asylum, or the chopper garage first, immediately afterward they're harassed by a pair of crooked cops that will do anything to get them locked up. Or, just before the geniuses head toward the climax, the villain hurls a last-ditch artillery attack at them, potentially damaging a precious artifact and, if so, unlocking a new, danger-ridden goal before the climax can begin.

Andrea's already outlined three Clue Areas for this story: the Vishal Properties Offices, Kronen Music Works, and the Central Warehouse. Each area is accessible from clues during the opening and at each of the other clue areas.

At Vishal Properties, the collaborative will meet Dr. Vishal himself, the villain of the piece, who has opened a branch office to manage his funds. His attack on the collaborative's wealth was an attempt to prevent them from competing with him in his search for the Island of Formlessness. He hit Kronen Music Works for the same reason. However, he'll happily lie and explain that he's an antiquities dealer and interested in a lost island. He'll then provide the details. Vishal's goal is to get the collaborative on the trail of the island, then swoop in before them and take what he wants. To push the collaborative along, Vishal will reveal the location of his Central Warehouse. He won't disclose his shutting down of Kronen Music Works, but exploring his office or asking around will turn up that fact. If the characters nose around, they can find Dr. Vishal's journal on his laptop, where he reveals that he knows the location of the Island of Formlessness, but the location is not recorded there. Dr. Vishal will try to keep this information hidden, but if pressed he will offer to "join" the collaborative in traveling to the island, then betray the characters when he has what he wants.

At Kronen Music Works, the characters meet Ada Kronen, a rogue with a knack for musical super-science. As a hobby, she sought to find the Island of Formlessness. She was recently sued into penury by Vishal Properties, her store shut down. Only her wonders (an acoustic flying machine and a sonic re-shaper) remain. Ada will agree to help the collaborative in return for shutting down Dr. Vishal and getting her music shop back. If the collaborative doesn't know about Vishal yet, they'll learn about him from Ada. They also learn that Ada knows how to access the Island of Formlessness: a specific resonant frequency will reveal the Prostasia shield that keeps people from entering the bardo. However, she doesn't know the exact frequency and the equation she was working on got repossessed. (It's at the Central Warehouse.) During the conversation, Vishal (who has grown impatient) will send a shapeshifting homunculus after Ada to finish her off. The creature targets Ada (who isn't much of a fighter) and, being mindless, fights to the death. If the collaborative investigates its corpse, they will find a trail of protean slime that will lead them to the Central Warehouse.

The Central Warehouse is where Dr. Vishal keeps all his accumulated treasures: rakshasa statues, old scrolls, stolen (nonfunctional) wonders, Ada's music equipment, and other goods gotten through fraud or force. Receipts everywhere connect the Central Warehouse with Vishal Properties. Poking around here, they can find Ada's records, which will allow her to calculate the exact set of frequencies necessary to reveal the Island of Formlessness. If the characters aren't careful, they'll be spotted by mundane guards or more of Vishal's formless homunculi, who will try to kill or capture them.

Rules and Clarifications:

By now, you have a finished plot: a villain with motivations, a thrilling climax, an opener that drags the characters into the story, and a bunch of interconnected clue areas that form the middle of the story (some accessible from the opener), and that, when sufficiently solved, unlock the climax. Now it's time to go back and do two things: first, tidy up the story (resolving contradictions, clarifying motives, removing inconsistencies, and enriching themes), and second, stat up the characters and things in the story.

Clean-up is important. Look at your story from the players' perspective. Is there anything they can just avoid or side-step? If so, you might want to make that part more important. (Or just accept that the characters might miss something.) Are any areas almost entirely out of the loop, or only connected by a single hard-to-

find clue? Unless the area is a "bonus area," link it to the main plot with more clues.

Look for places where the characters can run off the rails: accidental red herrings, or false clues that lead the collaborative to a place you haven't prepared for. For each area, ask, at that point, what if the characters go to the cops? What if they try to attack the villain directly, right then and there? What if they decide to *blow up* Area C rather than exploring it, because it's too dangerous? Look for ways to pinch off potential misinterpretations, or prepare explanations or excuses in advance why those courses of action are a bad idea. ("Dr. Therion's the son of the Chief of Police...do you *really* want to talk to the cops about this?") *Don't* use this time to close off all the possible options except the obvious ones; that'll deny your players the chance to do something creative and fun that'll surprise you, and it will frustrate them. What you're looking for are *false reads* that your players might make, misinterpretations that can send them pursuing an uninteresting path instead of making progress and experiencing the exciting scenes you have in store for them. You're not trying to constrain your players' creativity here; you're trying to prevent "blow-out," where the plot explodes in so many unexpected directions that you can't possibly account for all of them. (Here's a hint: look for situations where it makes sense for the PCs to buy an airplane ticket, and unless you want the players doing that, stop them, or be prepared for a lot of improv.) You're also looking to prevent your players from suffering option paralysis, where they're overwhelmed by so many things to do and potential leads that they lose the thread of the plot.

Also, take this opportunity to explore the possibility of failure. Sometimes the players just blow it: they miss all the clues, they don't rescue the damsel-bot in distress, they disintegrate the greasy pawn shop owner instead of asking him about the mysterious Baker Street fires, or the cannibal apes with tommy-guns kick the characters' asses so they can't go through their ape-pockets looking for IDs and loose change. "Losing" a story is an acceptable outcome, if the players feel they got a fair shake. If they reach the lost Aztec fortress unprepared and ignorant, lose the fight, and run away from the advancing horde of obsidian robot-ants, and at the end of the day they have nothing to show for it but their lives and a few pincer-shaped scars, the players might still have had fun, even if their characters didn't get the Flayed Skin of Xipe Totec that Betsy needed for her thesis. But if the group overlooks most of the clues, gets repeatedly stomped by Aztec cyber-mummies, and completely misses the climax because they couldn't get anywhere, odds are no one had any fun. And you can look at your players afterward and think, Fuck them, those idiots couldn't find a clue if it wrapped around their skull and laid eggs in their brain...But you know what? That means no one had any fun and all you have to show for it is a smug sense that you're cleverer than everyone else at the table. So don't do that. Instead, make plans for failure. Have contingencies and back-ups. Be ready with cavalry rescues and unexpected informants, and anything else you need to keep the story moving. If the characters fail, fine, but if they just blunder along and don't even get a chance to fail properly, you're not doing your job as a Storyteller, because no story got told.

Once you're comfortable that the plot won't implode upon contact with the players, go back and stat up the important characters and wonders, and anything else you might need. Your villain should probably get a full write-up, similar to a player character's, and so should other major characters. But most minor antagonists need only a few lines of description. Don't waste time on minor characters by giving them stats that aren't immediately relevant to the context in which they're presented: no one will care that the Hollow Earth Nazi has Academics 3 and the Holistic Awareness Merit if he's just there to shoot at the collaborative. Practice creating just as much statwork as you need to run the game comfortably, and let the game be enriched by backstory and mood, not by hidden stats that your players never notice. Take shortcuts, and borrow from the list of sample wonders to hurry the process along. If the players surprise you during the game (and they will) by fighting a social encounter or chatting with a rent-a-thug, use common sense and improvise; they'll rarely notice the difference if it doesn't happen often, and the experience will leave you better-prepared for your players' curve-balls in the future.

And after everything's stat'd, you're done. You have a complete story. Give it an exciting name and run it.

Andrea cleans up her plot with a list of clues and where they connect. There are plenty of connections all around, so she thinks about the consequences of failure. If the characters can't stop the repo men, their stuff ends up at the Central Warehouse, where they can retrieve it. If Ada Kronen gets killed, they can still find her information in the warehouse, and if they miss it, they can overhear Dr. Vishal talking about not being able to find it amidst the clutter. Any attempts to work with Dr. Vishal ends in inevitable betrayal, usually once they reach the island. However, Andrea is open to the PCs figuring out that Vishal will betray them. She doesn't plan specific scenarios, but she keeps the possibility in mind.

Then it's time for stats. Dr. Vishal receives a full character sheet, and Ada receives most of one (Andrea uses "off-the-shelf" wonders and notes that they're sonic-themed). Dr. Vishal's shapeshifting minions receive cursory stats: all Attributes at 2; Athletics, Brawl, Larceny, and Stealth 2; Size 5; Health 7; Initiative 4; Defense 2; Speed 9; Mania 5; claws 6 dice lethal damage; night vision, and an internalized Metaptropi wonder that lets them shapeshift into any humanoid form. Finally she stats the tiger: as a dog, but Size 7, claws 10 dice, Health 10, and it has standard Skafoi wings. She names the story "The Sound of Metamorphosis" and it's ready to go.

Scene By Scene, Idea By Idea:

Pulp fiction adventures are a good start to a chronicle, before everyone knows what's going on, and they can make a fun spice for a complicated, well-developed chronicle, stripping away the ambiguities and webs of loyalties that have developed in an established chronicle for some simple adventure in exotic locales, but it's hard to sustain a whole chronicle as a series of linked pulps. They're too brazen, too simplistic, and too disconnected to produce a coherent chronicle on their own. Eventually you'll need to let the players take over in the story-development department. A story becomes not the pulp adventure the Storyteller produced, but Clio's plan to decipher the Manuscripts of Pketnah, or the time the collaborative had to find Quzzle the Mad in the badlands of Arizona to ask him a question about cows. Stories become what the PCs do—theses, hunts for rare ingredients, reactions and counters from the collaborative's enemies. The primary unit of Storytelling under the Storyteller's control becomes not the whole story, but the scenes that make up the story.

If you start the chronicle off with a few pulp adventures, you'll notice that occasionally the collaborative misses whole chunks of the story. They avoid the Big Factory Scene, where the factory robots come to life while the womb-spiders pick off the wounded. They never meet the deranged astronomer and instead get to the Moon some other way. Never view these missed scenes as lost. Instead, write down the pertinent details—in a text file, on a 3x5 card, whatever—and when the players throw you a curveball, have that scene ready. For every scene that you need to create on the fly because the players did something unexpected, you probably have one hanging around because the players missed an obvious clue (or outsmarted your plot) and skipped ahead.

As time passes, you need to build up a folder of these scenes: a graveyard where the collaborative is stalked by clay cats here, an abandoned Chinese pagoda in the middle of a desert there. Write them down when you think of them, even when the scenes don't connect to anything else, and save every scrap of missed story. Then, when your players surprise you, you'll have material that you can use immediately. Is the collaborative going to a state park because they've misinterpreted a clue? Good thing they avoided meeting the Bramblemaster, eccentric master of thorns and fierce pinochle player, last week, because a scene with the Bramblemaster is perfect for a state park. Or maybe you're looking for something with a bit more action. Instead, you pull out the "attacked by metal birds while crossing a bridge" scene that the collaborative missed on account of that catapult they found. The bridge becomes a fallen log over a ravine, and the metal birds...you decide that the metal birds were sent by an old enemy, one who hasn't appeared in a while...

While running a game, always look for opportunities and connections. Specifically, look for opportunities to add reality to what the players do. How do you "add reality"? That's actually one of your automatic powers as a Storyteller. If you say "There's a letter on the bed," then there's a letter on the damn bed. By contrast, players often create all sorts of background elements that, because players lack the authorial influence of the

Storyteller, are relegated to a sort of semi-real phantom world where they aren't relevant enough to exist fully. Stuff in Player A's backstory ("Lucky Lam grew up in Cambodia") is so irrelevant to Player B that it's basically unreal. Stuff that Player A talks about off-hand ("Yeah, I left Cambodia when I was sixteen, after the Lemurians re-conquered it") has a sort of vague reality to Player B, but never anything more, even if Player A can spin a really good yarn.

As far as Player B is concerned, Player A is just a *player*; he doesn't determine the game's consensus-reality. In most games, only the Storyteller does that. In that case, *jump on* any opportunity to add reality to a player's imaginings. Rip into that "fled Cambodia" backstory and turn it into a current story that involves everyone. Even better: mix Player A's "fled Cambodia" with Player B's "betrayed by lover during Breakthrough." "Fled Cambodia" is real to Player A; "betrayed by lover" is real to Player B, but not vice-versa...so cross-pollinate those ideas. One of your jobs—and one of your powers—as the Storyteller is to define for the players what is real and worth paying attention to within the context of the game. When Player B's ex shows up leading a wolf-pack of treacherous Cambodian Lemurians, both backstories become a little more real. If you can then tie those backstories in with the concerns of everyone else at the table, they gain even more reality. The players with the backstories feel like they contributed, the other players feel like the imaginary world is even more real, and you don't even have to work hard because you're just using what the players have already given you.

Sample Chronicles:

Genius: The Transgression covers a huge range of Storytelling possibility, and it can be paralyzing to figure out what to do. This paralysis can affect players, too, leaving them unable to create a character. Since option paralysis is a big concern in **Genius**, consider narrowing the possibilities by selecting a specific type of chronicle. There are two easy ways to do this: either borrow from your favorite science fiction, technothriller, pulp adventure, or horror story ("This chronicle will be kind of like *Hunt For Red October* but with mole-machines!") or you can take an existing concept that's outside the scope of the game and add mad science ("A medical drama, but the hospital treats aliens and robots!") If nothing sparks, you can look at the list below.

Boldly Going:

One of the simplest chronicles postulates a collaborative, a vessel (a rocket ship, a time machine, a 1946 Ford flatbed truck), and a bunch of places to visit. This is usually done for the sake of exploration, but some chronicles might include a treasure-hunt, an extended chase, or a search for a "grail" object like a cure for a disease. Nonetheless, the main point of each story in this chronicle is exploring a new place and dealing with the hazards it offers. An exploratory chronicle requires a lot of up-front work from the Storyteller as well as continuing work to keep each new place interesting, so it's a bad chronicle to run if you want the players to entertain you. Each mini-setting requires a challenge, danger, or obstacle, one that sensibly appears at the same time the collaborative does. Despite the high workload inherent in these chronicles, there's less chance of the players running off the rails, since it's easy to enclose the environment, whether it's a hidden world, a bardo, or an isolated village, forcing the characters to confront the challenge with the resources they possess.

Clean-Up Crew:

When things go wrong, or stupid, or overrun with mutant fire-breathing weasels, they call the clean-up crew: a squad of dedicated geniuses trained to deal with the worst and craziest problems. Whether it's an Illuminated psycho carving up the town council or a run-of-the-mill star-cow invasion, the clean-up crew is there to 1) contain the problem, 2) track it down to its source and deal with that, and 3) make sure regular people don't get hurt or catalyzed. This chronicle can feature monsters of the week, though you can layer a conspiracy or mastermind on top of everything. Individual stories can range from bug hunts (when the crew arrives after everything's blown up) to subtle mysteries when the crew gets called in early, at the first hint of mysterious weirdness. Investigative Skills are key for this group, and this chronicle is a great opportunity for

the players to put together a "crack team of specialists," each with a unique talent.

Country-Fried Genius:

Forget the Pyrex test tubes, CPU towers, and oscilloscopes of mad science, and replace them with rusted-out jalopies, jugs of "extra-potent" white lightning, and scatterguns loaded with weirder stuff than rock-salt. This is the down-home mad science practiced by countless isolated nuts and cranks in the deep woods all over the world. Can the collaborative get the equipment they need from the country store? Country stores sell plutonium, right? Is that nut down the road brewing kill-clones, or is it just a good ol' meth lab? Can the collaborative hide their interstate robot-smuggling ring from that bastard sheriff under the guise of an off-road race? You can relocate your country-fried story anywhere there's a whole lot of nothing: Maple Genius in Canada's frozen north, or Duck-Pond Genius in some quiet village in rural China. Wherever the game takes place, aim for beaten-up technology, weird old coots, and lots of paranoid, suspicious locals.

Dr. and Mrs. Wackaloon, of the New Hampshire Wackaloons:

Inspiration can run in families—not through the blood, but through the weirdness that anyone growing up with geniuses will doubtless experience during their lives. In this chronicle, the collaborative belongs to an extended family or clan of geniuses, a sort of technophilic Addams Family. This sort of chronicle is suitable for light, silly play ("abnormal family tries to function around normal neighbors" can be an endless source of comedy), but it can be made serious, with all sorts of breeding programs, generational rivalries, Montague-and-Capulet power struggles, and dark family secrets. Everyone can belong to the same family, or you can split the collaborative into two (perhaps rival) families. Alternatively (this works best with a small group), the characters may discover their bloodline, and be encouraged to rejoin their insane family at their ancestral home.

Genius High:

Not every genius catalyzes in adulthood. For the children of geniuses, or for an unusual and unlucky few, Inspiration can strike at any age. This chronicle can take place in elementary school or high school (or both, if it runs for long enough), following the lives of young geniuses as they struggle to reconcile their Inspired natures with attempting to live normal lives. You need to choose what sort of school the collaborative will attend: a school for geniuses (presumably there's at least one somewhere in the world, and it may include other odd creatures, from manes to automata to unidentified one-off weirdlings), or a regular school, with all its brutal mundanity. Challenges include bullies, dating, and the sorts of people who would just *love* to turn a bunch of young geniuses to their own ends. For an added twist, the collaborative might play the teachers, instead of the students.

Historical Genius:

One of the hardest chronicles to run is a historical game. Storytellers should run a regular game before tackling a historical chronicle, since so many rules changes are needed to accommodate a different time, not to mention all the necessary research. But here are some good points in time for a **Genius** game: 1) California 1991 (the peak of the Peerage's paranoia, plus the growth of the Internet, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the rise of numerous countercultural movements), 2) Nevada 1949 (mutant ants, Commies, nuclear testbeds, and roadsters), 3) New York City 1933 (the Depression, the Empire State Building, Zeppelins, gangsters, and the first rumblings of World War Two) 4) London 1889 (the height of the Victorian era: steam-tech, class struggles, and the age of Imperialism), 5) Japan 1590 (foreign traders, new technologies, Oda Nobunaga's legacy, and shinobi-tech), 6) 9th or 10th century Baghdad (the Golden Age of Islam, adventures on the Mediterranean, Byzantine clockworks, alchemy, alien "djinn"), 7) Greece from Pericles to Alexander the Great (a sweep of more than a century, covering wars, invasions, mystery cults, religious and philosophical turmoil, and technology of steam, brass, glass, and geometry), 8) The Desert Kingdoms (circa

1200 BC or so, encompassing ancient Babylonia, Egypt, and Scythia, filled with weird alchemical elixirs, flying machines, and clay-forged automata).

International Geniuses of Mystery:

Spies love their gadgets. While the Cold War is over, there are plenty of conspiracies and criminal empires to uncover among the Inspired, and the collaborative is just the group to do it. This sort of chronicle requires a lot of work from the Storyteller, to prepare exotic international locales for the PCs, and the players should be well-versed in the system, too, so they can put together a team of experts trained to overcome any challenge. From mundane threats like illegal arms trading and overthrowing tinpot dictators in former Soviet states, to the dangers offered by ambitious Nazis, Illuminated crime conspiracies, and Lemurian bureaus within the US government, the collaborative will have its hands full deciphering codes, infiltrating unnamed testing facilities, and preventing assassinations.

My City Needs Me:

Superheroism and mad science have a relationship going back before the rise of comic fiction. Batman and Iron Man are heirs to a venerable tradition of science-heroism that dates back to the Edisonades and scientific romances of the 19th century. In this chronicle, the collaborative consists of Inspired crime-fighters and guardians of the streets. You can draw from classic superhero tales, complete with masks and secret identities, or aim for something more modern—but make sure everyone is on the same page, since bloody anti-heroes look ridiculous next to Silver Age guardians of justice. An inversion lets you play Inspired Robin Hoods, working to overthrow a corrupt municipal government. This sort of game needs opportunities to beat on unInspired criminal mooks, as well as a top-notch rogues gallery of interesting, thematic science-villains with dastardly plans in need of thwarting.

Mystery Machine:

This open, rambling chronicle is ideal for a more relaxed game. The Mystery Machine posits a collaborative on the move, traveling from town to town to solve mysteries and get into trouble with the locals. Less intense than the Clean-Up Crew chronicle, less focused on exploration than Boldly Going, the Mystery Machine chronicle emphasizes solving mysteries, with a lesser emphasis on getting into fights with horrible beasts or studying weird new places. This chronicle requires experienced players who can bring their characters to life, since the interaction among the PCs is what makes a chronicle as story-light as this one enjoyable.

Raiders of The Electric Temples:

Scattered over the world, in the underground ruins of Persepolis and Teotihuacan, Alexandria and Chicago, are forgotten laboratories, the remnants of long-dead geniuses. Amidst the wreckage, enterprising explorers can find orphan wonders and ancient traps, forgotten manes races, and evidence of Inspired philosophies untouched by Lemuria. This chronicle involves globe-trotting, temple-raiding, trap-dodging, and guardian-fighting in equal measures, and as such presents an enormously rich variety of challenges for PCs to overcome. Setting up a chronicle like this is easy: find an archaeological blog or magazine, read an interesting article, assume that it's talking about an ancient Inspired civilization, and build appropriately. A bit of research here goes a long way. A collaborative can grow out of this chronicle, however, and be careful you don't keep them trapped in dungeons longer than it's exciting to them. However, plundering lost tombs is always interesting if handled well, and a bit of treasure-hunting can spice up a chronicle that's gotten bogged down in politics and interpersonal drama.

Technopolis:

This chronicle takes place in a fantastic technological city, almost certainly a bardo. It might be a "lost" realm

like Lyonesse, Avalon, or Thule, or a whole realm produced by a powerful genius such as a hidden empire in the clouds. This realm is like nothing found in the regular world. Here, creatures and objects of weird science are commonplace. A Technopolis chronicle needs more than a location. Try to tie the collaborative's purpose into the place: they might be struggling to restore a dying bardo, part of its army that protects it against invaders, members of its ruling council, or just gutter-punks in the wreckage of some delusional Utopia, desperate to get out and reach the "real world."

War Stories:

A war chronicle—one where the PCs are soldiers fighting a military enemy—requires three things: an enemy to fight, an approach to the war, and something that will prevent the chronicle from bogging down into one tedious and bloody battle after the next. Since war stories risk becoming repetitive, you need to offer different kinds of excitement: straight-up combat missions, infiltration, military tribunals, training, internal affairs, and military politics. While a bad war chronicle offers only relentless violence, a skilled Storyteller can switch between war-as-foreground and war-as-backdrop to tell different kinds of stories. But make sure your characters are equipped for the sort of stories you will tell: if they're intended to be soldiers fighting a resurgent Lemuria, for example, make sure they can all fight; if they're submariners battling an Illuminated army of mad scientists controlled by computerized squid-gods, everyone needs to be able to pilot a battle sub. Don't let players make ineffective characters, or you'll have a short, pointless chronicle on your hands.

Story Arc Chronicles:

None of the chronicle ideas above is a story or a story arc. Instead each is more like a setting in which many stories can be told. This is deliberate. It's not easy to tell a single, sprawling story with a group of geniuses. They're often too goal-oriented to follow a breadcrumb-trail. However, it is possible to run a chronicle that is an extended story arc.

Story arc chronicles are based around a single, sprawling tale: "This 25-session chronicle will tell the story of the rise and fall of an Artificer-founded commune in Paris." These chronicles are easy to describe and write about but often surprisingly hard to run. Here is some advice.

If you're planning to run a chronicle with a single, unified story, make sure that story starts right away. Too many Storytellers have a grand climax in their heads, a thrilling confrontation of good and evil, reason and madness, robots and shapeshifting samurai...and they never get there, because the climax is 20 sessions away and they never get any closer to it. This is why the *Genius* pulp story is broken down into scenes: if the players get through 2-8 scenes in an average session, Storytellers *can't* push their climaxes into the distant future and never get there, since the climax isn't separated from the beginning by whole stories, but rather by only a few discrete events.

Avoid the temptation to create grand, distant story arcs. If you create such an arc, start on it immediately, as close to the end of the story as you reasonably can while still producing a believable tale. Don't futz around with side-sessions and monsters of the week if what you really want to do is tell a certain story. Get the PCs right in there, immediately. And don't expect players to accept a loose, character-focused game to begin with that tightens up to a coherent plot later. Generally it goes the other way: focused, plot-heavy play while the players get a feel for the chronicle, followed by branching play that's heavy on character interaction and planning as the players settle into their roles. Fighting this natural flow is mostly a doomed endeavor.

Figure out how many individual stories the full arc will need. Describe each story with at least a sentence. If you can't describe each story, shorten your arc until you can. Don't leave mysterious "dead space" between the beginning and the climax and expect to fill it in later; this kind of chronicle needs a firm hand on the rudder. Always think your cunning plan all the way through, or you'll run into problems.

Do some math: if you know how many scenes your players get through in a typical session (it's usually 3-8 for face-to-face play, 2-5 for online play), figure out how many sessions each story will take. Then figure out how long your chronicle will be by multiplying the number of sessions per story with the number of stories. Add 25% to that figure to account for drift, side-missions, player-initiated misadventures, and general lag. If the chronicle seems too long, make it shorter.

Make sure all the player characters are appropriate for the chronicle. Don't be coy with your players. Be upfront with what you want. Explain what the chronicle will be like and what sorts of characters are appropriate. If you think you have a story arc that's good enough to dominate the whole chronicle, you need to act like it. Listen to reasonable requests, and be willing to adapt your chronicle to the needs of the players, but make it clear what you're offering and make sure everyone is onboard.

During play, always know where you are in the chronicle—one-third of the way through, halfway through, and so on. If you have no idea where you are, something has gone wrong. Don't let players derail the chronicle with extended, personal stories that are not tied to your main arc. Always make sure your story is moving forward. Don't let it stagnate amidst interpersonal activity. This is especially a risk toward the chronicle's middle, where you may be tempted to explore every NPC and connection the collaborative has come across. Don't get bogged down in irrelevancies.

Partway through the chronicle, you may decide that an arc-focused chronicle isn't working. You might realize that your players' plans for their characters are more interesting than your story arc. *Consider this a victory, not a defeat.* If this happens—if you decide that character-focused stories are more interesting than arc-focused stories—consider cutting back or concluding the arc. But know what you're doing: don't let the chronicle attenuate, or drift listlessly between character-focused sessions and arc-focused ones. Always know where you are and what you are doing. If the character-focused stuff becomes more interesting than your plot, figure out what to do with the arc. If you've already allowed some drift, you can let the narrative thrust of the arc fade away gracefully; players eager to explore their characters may hardly notice. Or you can re-evaluate your arc's timeline, cutting out extraneous elements to shorten the time until the big climax. Whatever you do, do it consciously and deliberately; don't just let narrative impetus and thematic consistency bleed away because you've lost control of your chronicle.

Start-up and Down-time:

One thing you will notice as you run a **Genius** chronicle is the need (among the characters) for downtime and the need (among the players) for prep-time. The Inspired are what they make, and a big part of any **Genius** chronicle is wonder creation. The best **Genius** chronicles make wonder-creation an important, integral part of the plot.

First, here's a good rule: geniuses can receive a maximum of five wonder-creation rolls during downtime (between sessions), no matter how much time actually passes. Mad scientists don't just sit in their laboratories during downtime cranking out wonders; there are inconveniences and setbacks, correspondence to answer, groceries to buy, and the occasional breakdown, malfunction, and minor rampage. To simulate these petty hassles, normally allow no more than five wonder creation rolls per genius per span of downtime, even if more than five days pass. (Of course, if fewer than five days pass, or if a genius tries to build a very large project, she may receive fewer rolls.)

Schedule each session for at least a half-hour of wonder-building at the beginning. This time will consist of rules look-ups, point fiddling, and idea-swapping among the mad scientists (and their players). You might want to move wonder-creation entirely to between-game correspondence, with an email from each player listing what he plans to build, but pushing the building phase out of game-time entirely might not be the best idea. Don't view wonder-creation time as an imposition; for many players, building mad science gadgets is the heart of the game. Encourage the players to come up with ideas beforehand, perhaps even to create drafts of

the wonders they plan to build (statted out with variable costs clearly labeled, for quick auditing—don't let the players be sloppy, and don't do their work for them), but let them have fun coming up with weird wonders and rolling the dice. Only curtail wonder-creation time if it drags significantly—it should not take more than an hour to get everything statted and the dice rolled after the first session. Encourage more system-savvy players to help their more theoretical fellows, but while you should encourage idea-swapping, prevent players from seizing control of geniuses not their own and churning out convenient wonders.

Depending on the play-style of the group, you can even encourage role-playing during wonder creation. In-character wonder construction can be facilitated by developing an in-character vocabulary for the different pluses and minuses that variables introduce, but this may be too much work for more casual players. Regardless of how you approach this "pre-action prep" period, the point is to see wonder-creation time as an opportunity for players to flex their creative muscles and mess around with the guts of the system, not as an imposition or time-waster. This period might also yield story opportunities: a genius who fails a roll may be short necessary ingredients, forcing a hunt for weird components. Be prepared for this possibility, and have a source of ingredients ready, in case the collaborative wants to dash off immediately and restock their supplies.

Creating New Variables:

"In every work of genius, we recognize our own rejected thoughts; they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty." -Ralph Waldo Emerson

Swirling in the memetic un-space of Inspiration are infinite combinations of thought and machine, ranging from prosaic modifications of well-tried Axioms to possibilities so bewildering that today's geniuses lack the mundane scientific understanding to use or make sense of them. It is always possible to create new variables when the existing ones aren't sufficient for what a mad scientist needs to do.

To create a new variable, the player and the Storyteller need to get together and hash out how the variable works. Together they must answer the questions: 1) Is the variable general, and if not, to what Axiom or Axioms does it apply? 2) How does the variable change the default application of the Axiom to a wonder? 3) Does the variable alter the wonder's Core Modifier (or other primary stat), and if so, by how much? 4) Does the variable require any other Axioms to use?

Most players have a particular wonder in mind when designing a variable. The genius' player should apply the new variable to an appropriate wonder, to see how it "handles" with the variable applied and to see if everything makes sense. Then, try applying the variable to other wonders for which the variable is not designed. Try applying a variable of Proxasia built for armored suits to energy shields, heat dissipaters, computer security programs, and vehicle armor, and see if anything breaks. If it does, go back and change the variable to prevent it from being applied so broadly, either by listing specific applications of the variable (a clumsy brute-force method that can often be circumvented) or, preferably, by reconceiving the variable to focus it only on appropriate types of wonders.

General variables are especially prone to exploitation. A good testbed is the sample wonders in Appendix One. (Page 397.) Go through each of those, quickly applying the variable to each wonder. If things go haywire, go back to the drawing-board.

Once players and Storyteller have concluded the thought experiments, it's time for the genius to create the variable. This takes about an hour of work and costs a single point of Mania; once done, the variable can be applied to wonders normally, and the creating genius can describe it to other mad scientists. The Inspired are expected to share new variables with their foundations and any appropriate fellowships, but many seek to protect their intellectual property during this early phase of a new variable's creation.

For a few months, the new variable exists in a kind of limbo-state for the genius. It may fluctuate suddenly and unexpectedly as the Maniacal mathematics behind it twist and settle. In game terms, during the first few sessions in which a new variable is employed, the Storyteller will adjust the variable's function and cost for the purposes of play balance. After the genius has built and employed this variable for several weeks or months, the variable will either enter a relatively stable "ground state" or it will prove unreliable and, after a brief period of increasing instability, it will collapse completely.

Again, in game terms, after a thorough demo of the new wonder, the Storyteller will decide whether the variable (perhaps adjusted in power, cost, or efficacy; the Storyteller should consult with the player, who knows better than the Storyteller what the variable is intended to do) can remain. If it does remain, it will stabilize in a semi-final form. The Storyteller is, of course, welcome to make modifications later if the variable proves untenable, but after several wonders worth of experimentation, the new variable is usually as stable as most established variables, and about as likely to suffer sudden "this isn't balanced enough" ripping-up from the Storyteller. After this time, the variable tends to leak into the Maniacal ideosphere; even protective geniuses can expect to see their variable appearing in other people's wonders once it stabilizes, as other geniuses detect and exploit new possibilities.

If the variable proves ultimately untenable--if the player's vision of the variable is simply incompatible with the Storyteller's idea of a balanced variable--then the variable shudders and falls apart. The genius can either salvage wonders suffering from a faulty variable (treat this as modifying the wonder, but don't bother with a roll; the player should just make the required modification to the wonder's stats) or the genius can let the wonder fall apart.

Guidelines:

Creating a variable is intentionally loose and focuses mostly on the interaction between player and Storyteller, not between the genius and extradimensional mathematics. Here are some further guidelines for creating new variables.

Geniuses cannot create variables that change the nature of an Axiom without using additional, more appropriate Axioms. Katastrofi destroys; no matter how well you argue that explosions should allow a mad scientist to blast himself along on a jet pack, you can't build a jet pack or a rocket ship with Katastrofi. (You might, however, be able to build a variable of Skafoi that *requires* Katastrofi, called, say, "devastating backwash.") But simply trying to change the nature of an Axiom is basically thinking like a *sane scientist*, invoking rules like the Laws of Motion that don't consistently apply to Inspired science. Storytellers should ignore any attempts to build variables that poison people with Exelixi, blow up people with Skafoi, or mind-control people with Apokalypsi.

Remember that a penalty that doesn't penalize you cannot net wonders a bonus. A variable that causes a wonder to work only for you, when *you're the only one who's going to use it*, is not a drawback and should not grant a bonus to the wonder's Core Modifier. The variable of "what I was going to do anyway" should never grant a bonus to a wonder's use.

Lemurians and The Secret Masters:

Are geniuses scientists? Are geniuses *sane*?

Two good questions with no clear answers—unless you're a Lemurian, in which case the answers are yes, and yes, of course, it's everyone else who's crazy.

The Peerage offers no unified explanation for mad science, and that's deliberate: Inspiration is such a badly-understood concept that unified theories only get in the way of useful work, and they tend to drive geniuses insane. But what the peers do believe—and what they make sure every new member understands—is that a genius is not a scientist, at least as that concept is usually understood. A genius is a wonder-worker. Some more complicated principle is at work when a genius creates a wonder than the mere laws of physics.

The Inspired argue about what this principle might be. Each foundation offers a starting-point for speculation, and each genius has an idea for why the Inspired can do what they do, but most peers would say that they are not simply manipulating the laws of physics: they are changing them. Perhaps they are accessing higher "over-laws" of which the regular laws of reality are merely a subset; perhaps geniuses reach into another universe and pilfer those rules for a time. Ten geniuses will offer twenty explanations. But ultimately, the peers believe that they are forever barred from normal, sane science by their very nature, and they have made peace with what they are.

Some geniuses disagree. Some go on, flinging themselves at a contemptuous universe, unable or unwilling to accept that others do not see things as they do. They grow twisted with bitterness, turning in on themselves, as the rest of the world mocks their "perfectly clear" explanations for what they see. They burn with Mania, generating manes around them, creating a bubble around themselves where their thoughts are truth.

These are the Lemurians, the most wretched of the mad scientists.

One might think that they would be solitary, each Lemurian wrapped in her own bubble of solipsistic logic. And many of the truly mad—echo doctors, as the Peerage calls them—are independent rogues toiling in isolation. But when we humans lie to ourselves, we do so in ways that share a common theme, and when the Inspired go mad, they go mad in certain predictable ways. Most grow convinced that somewhere along the line humanity made a grave error in logic, morality, or cultural development, and they grow fixated on a "divergence point" where they feel everything went wrong.

Over the centuries, divergence points fade away: as late as Leonardo da Vinci's time, Inspired still cursed the rise of monotheism in the West, and sought to build divine machines in the likeness of pagan gods, but there are none of these Numinologists still around, at least on Earth. But today five points, five "flaws" in human history, still remain, pulling Lemurians in. These form the Lemurian baramins, the "foundations" of their kind.

Each baramin offers its own brand of crazy. This isn't the Derangement that accompanies a genius' catalyst, or even regular insanity caused by transgressions or the pressures of the job. This is the unmada, the radiant insanity that follows all Lemurians. Independent echo doctors fall into their myopic worldviews in unique ways, but the Lemurian baramins offer a well-traveled route to intellectual alienation.

Atomists:

Appearance: 1962 AD

Favored Axioms: Apokalypsi or Automata

Grant: Atomists, of all geniuses, build wonders that are closest to regular pieces of technology. Their wonders make Havoc checks with a bonus equal to the Atomist's Resolve.

The funny thing about atomic power is that it works. It's not a wonder. What would be a wonder is turning

the harnessing of the atom from fifty years of nuclear brinkmanship and apocalyptic dread into something that benefits mankind like we were promised, and that's what the Atomists want to do. Their goal might not specifically relate to harnessing the power of the atom (though that's still popular), but the Atomists believe that technology, in and of itself (or "only" aided by the tight reins of a ruling intellectual elite) can better humanity. Machinery itself is transcendence: politics, ethics, philosophy, and even science (as the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake) is at best a means toward that end. Atomists are incapable of appreciating the human condition, or at best don't care about it. They view all problems as logistical problems and all solutions as ultimately technological in nature; while one of the most socially-oriented of the baramins, Atomists don't accept—most don't even understand—solutions based on policy or politics.

Born after the general collapse of Lemuria, the Atomists formed in those years when it became clear that we would not get so much of what we had been promised: not just the flying cars and the robot butlers, but the promise of humanity's expansion into space, of a worldwide technological Utopia, of a steadily rising standard of living. Many were peers who defected when their dreams fell apart. As the sixties and seventies hit their stride and society tore itself apart despite everything technology had given it, the Atomists blossomed into a far-reaching organization dedicated to putting humanity back on its proper path. They have been fighting that battle ever since.

Despite their technological appearance, Atomists are often academics as much as research scientists, with as much interest in humanity's development under the guidance of their benevolent technologies as they are interested in the technology itself. Many Atomists seem to have "frozen" in the late 20th century, the last few years before Earth saw her final hidden lands explored and mapped, and humanity reached other worlds, to find bleak and empty deserts without any signs of life. While the Oracles provide Lemuria with a beating heart, Atomists engage in long-term planning and strategic forecasts.

Atomists are unable to recognize the "human equation." They are technocrats in the political sense of the word, viewing technological solutions to human ills as the only solution, and believing that the intellectual elite—not politicians or demagogues—should be the natural rulers of mankind. They believe that the best laws are laws that cannot be broken, and the best rules are ones that must inevitably be followed, and they design their world accordingly, to pursue this elusive goal of enforced technology-driven inevitability in all human systems. Unable as they are to account for human behavior, they either dismiss the soft sciences and the humanities or believe that they've unlocked an objective mathematical representation of them. Either way, they function badly in social environments. Though individuals might be charming and gregarious on a one-on-one basis, they are constitutionally unable to parse large-scale social input and plan for people's reactions to their behavior.

Etherites:

Appearance: 1915 AD

Favored Axioms: Katastrofi or Skafoi

Grant: Etherites' unified theories give them an unshakable grasp of their wonders' inner workings. When an Etherite channels Mania into one of his own wonders to gain additional dice, it will not suffer damage from the Mania, and it gains an additional +1 bonus for the rest of the scene. (This bonus can only be gained once per scene per wonder.)

The Luminiferous Ether was the best idea of the 19th century, and it's a shame that it turned out to be wrong. The Ether explained the transmission of light and other forms of electromagnetic radiation, it provided an absolute frame of reference for cosmology, and it was demolished over the course of about twenty years, leaving humanity with a much stranger universe than we had ever expected.

The Etherites cannot let go. It is usually the Ether itself that they see as both true and necessary, an absolute reference frame that nonetheless provides limitless possibility for discovery, but different Etherites seize on different self-evident physical absolutes, from baffling subatomic particles to all-explaining biopsychic fields.

They see a great explanation for everything lurking just around the corner of sight, and despair of those lesser minds who cannot see how far they have strayed from the truth. Etherites *must* create unified explanations for the phenomena they encounter, and once an Etherite has settled on one, seemingly-contradictory evidence is explained away, viewed as part of the Etherite's solution that everyone else is too dumb to see, or dismissed as false evidence planted by a conspiracy of the Etherite's enemies. An Etherite lives or dies by her unified theory of everything and its ability to explain the world. One literally cannot conceive of a world that does not obey her bizarre yet self-consistent grand equation for the universe. This is not normally a concern, since the Etherite's explanations are so abstract as to be irrelevant in everyday life. However, Etherites will defend their ideas with fanatical—even murderous—ferocity against people who attempt to contradict them, and a phenomenon that violates their model is either ignored (sometimes literally, as if the Etherite cannot see a walking, talking breach in her model) or reduces the Etherite to a near-catatonic state as she works to incorporate the new data into an increasingly fractured and *ad hoc* system of the world.

Etherites are often flashy and grandiose, with an aesthetic that draws from a brighter tomorrow than the one we got: the Inspired often joke about ray guns and rocket ships, but that's how the Etherites live, surrounded by the most amazing wonders that science can imagine, if not yet produce. They leap from one scheme to the next, more interested in spreading amazement at the nature of the world than at the plodding necessity of analyzing it with a critical eye.

This can make Etherites seem almost tolerable, with their jet-packs and their meals in pill form, but theirs is the Axiom of Katastrofi, and it shows: when Lemuria needs an enemy dead, it calls the Etherites, who demonstrate the remorseless efficacy of their particle guns and disruptors. Etherites serve as the elite soldiers and assassins of Lemuria. Even on their own, Etherites are prone to instability, grand and monstrous plans, and a lack of interest in the dangerous consequences of their experiments.

Mechanists:

Appearance: 1895 AD

Favored Axioms: Automata or Prostasia

Grant: A Mechanist's wonders function unusually smoothly. They do not suffer rust or mundane wear-and-tear. Regular wonders gain a +1 bonus to Durability (added after all other sums and multiples) and wonders of Prostasia gain a +1 bonus to their Core Modifier.

No one is quite sure when, exactly, the Mechanists joined Lemuria. Officially, they appeared around the time the Newtonian universe started to break down, yielding to a more complicated and less predictable view of the Cosmos: some put their official "join date" as near as 1945, when the triumph of post-Newtonian mechanics became incandescently inarguable. But in another sense, "Mechanists," under other names, have joined the Lemurian cause every time a breakthrough threatened to complicate mankind's view of a simple, harmonious universe. Usually they were lumped in with the Oracles (to both group's irritation), and the Mechanists gained independent status as a baramin only around the turn of the century, after a defection from the peers' Artificers.

The Mechanists need to believe that the universe makes sense. This need often manifests in a large and obvious idea: the belief that the genius understands universal law, and that a few simple rules can wipe away a thousand textbooks worth of confusing ambiguity. But it is more subtle than that: to the Mechanist, the world makes sense, and in a way, it *must* make sense. While each Etherite has a unified theory, a Mechanist may not have a final model; in its place, he offers an absolute conviction: however the world works, it works on simple mechanistic principles, without reference to "vital essence" or to unique rules for unique phenomena. Everything is reducible to the same homogeneous mathematical construct. They sometimes resemble the Hollow Men more than the Inspired, and they often serve as the stereotype of the dour, bureaucratic Lemurian, whose intellectual life is both as elegant and as fulfilling as a wind-up alarm clock.

The Mechanist baramin continually reinvents itself; they don't all look like deranged clockmakers. Market

principles are popular among newer Mechanists: the market, with its lack of individuality, with its simple rules of enlightened self-interest, with its power to sweep away complexity and personhood and replace it with a simple oscillating graph, has captivated Mechanists for centuries, and market-Mechanists are extremely common at the moment. But any system that replaces individuals with systemic first-approximations will draw the attention of Mechanists.

Mechanists make poor promoters for Lemuria. Instead they serve in technical capacities, as engineers and designers. They were some of the first to explore the wider universe, and they still build wonderful devices of clacking gears and smooth brass. Their wonders almost always look mechanical, rather than electrical or computerized, and they run on steam, coal, or magnificently-crafted clockwork that never runs down—an image in miniature of how Mechanists hope the universe truly is. In the company of their own people, many Mechanists favor elaborate and outdated clothing, from Victorian long coats to the intricate and beautiful robes of a Mandarin from Dynastic China.

A Mechanist's madness is a chilling thing to watch. Mechanists refuse to take responsibility for their actions. This isn't the arrogance of a teenager or the ideological surrender of a fanatic, but a deep, persistent belief that their own actions are either entirely mechanical in nature or being controlled by some outside source, some First Cause that governs them directly and the rest of the world indirectly. This can lead to schizophrenia; a Mechanist who slips often believes he's being controlled by some sinister outside force. Mechanists who have started to go truly mad refer to the Aim Loom, some kind of machine that "pulls them up" with an illusion of free will. Others are just quietly insane and disconnected, casting the responsibility for their behavior on The Times or Their Upbringing or The Genetic Lottery or The Weight of History or The Will of God.

Oracles:

Appearance: 1274 AD

Favored Axioms: Exelixa or Metaptropi

Grant: Oracles possess non-material ways of knowing that are seemingly impossible. They can spend a point of Mania to know, instantly, a specific fact that a specialist in a particular academic or scientific field could gather after several hours' research in a world-class library. (A regular library, not one with hidden treasure maps or schematics for amazing wonders.) If the knowledge is outside the reach of this grant, the Oracle knows so and spends no Mania.

The Oracles are the oldest of the Lemurian baramins still in existence. They emerged first in Arabia as Averroes swept aside more mystical forms of Muslim philosophy, though their traditional origin is dated from Medieval Europe, as Aristotle's magnificent organon replaced the older Platonic philosophies that supported both the Church and natural philosophy at the time. As the new notions of cause and essence replaced the existing, almost Gnostic spiritual notions that held sway for much of the Dark Ages, the Oracle movement began to sweep up Inspired who found the new natural sciences corrupt and lacking moral authority. When the Arab and European groups joined with their Chinese brethren, who had already been grumbling for centuries, the Oracles became the dominant Lemurian baramin for several centuries.

Oracles belong to an older view of the world, and they show it: their attitudes are often unrecognizable to modern geniuses (or regular citizens of the modern world), and their super-science more closely resembles Cabbalistic or Taoist alchemy than science or even theology. They are transmuters and magician-philosophers, and though some surround themselves in modern technical accouterments on account of their convenience and power, their philosophies are alchemical, Gnostic, and Medieval. Many Oracles are priests of different Eastern or Western religions.

The number of Oracles has been dwindling, replaced by the growing ranks of Atomists: most Inspired who believe that science can solve humanity's problems turn to modern wonders like atomic power or space travel, rather than ancient marvels such as alchemical transmutation. Those that still enter the Oracle

baramin often possess rare beliefs such as geocentrism, or are members of anti-intellectual or anti-technological movement who nonetheless experienced a Breakthrough. All believe in a moral order to the world, in which all things are either in their place (as God, or Heaven, or the Tao, or whatever intended) or out of their place, and that out-of-place things must be rectified or destroyed.

Despite their dwindling power, the Oracles are still politically dominant in Lemuria, serving as the leaders and arbiters of that headless and devastated organization. There they prefer to remain, as hidden puppetmasters. Even among other mad scientists they stand out, with their almost sorcerous technologies, primitive alembics, and astrological charts, and most have no place in regular society. When forced to confront the modern world, they often lean toward New Age organizations where their appearance and beliefs seem less peculiar, or strange techno-Gnostic cults that mingle pseudoscience with pop theology.

Oracles take a historical view of life tinged with Manicheanism: everyone, living or dead, and every organization, extant or extinct, is viewed as either an ally or an enemy, and treated accordingly. To an Oracle, there is no middle ground, no neutral parties; whether they divide the world into the Elect and the Damned or invoke some positivist "Whig History" notion of Champions of Progress vs. Enemies of Progress, they cannot acknowledge moral subtlety.

Phenomenologists:

Appearance: 1939 AD

Favored Axioms: Apokalypsi or Epikrato

Grant: Phenomenologists are blithely unconcerned with concepts like truth and falsehood. By spending a point of Mania, a Phenomenologist automatically receives five successes (an Exceptional Success) on any Subterfuge check. A Phenomenologist can spend Willpower or additional Mania in the same turn that this grant is used.

Madness is horrific, but there's a kind of comfort in the madness we make ourselves. Strip away logic and consistency, and you're left with an ever-shifting morass of phenomena where you can be, do, and believe anything you want, where consequences can be dismissed as the flawed reasoning of thinkers limited by cause-and-effect, where contradictions are merely two sides of the richness of your ideas. Humanity has toyed with non-rational philosophy for centuries, from Chinese or Sufi mysticism to European Romanticism to American Transcendentalism, and geniuses have followed along, delighting in mundane philosophies that reflected the Inspired experience. However, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, these kinds of philosophies reached their peak in Europe. The results in the mundane world were devastating, but to many geniuses, it was a siren-call: no longer would mundane humanity strangle Inspiration; instead, a combined World Spirit of Inspiration was being born; soon it would grow and transform the world utterly, wiping away contradiction and consistency, replacing it with a new concept of truth.

Phenomenologists are drawn from a philosophical tradition, though unlike the Scholastics, their philosophy is linked completely with political and social agendas that change constantly. They are fundamentally irrational, not like madmen or idiots are irrational, but in the way that only very smart people can not make any sense. Phenomenologists treat logic and evidence with contempt or disinterest, instead building makeshift worldviews from bits of rhetoric, sustaining those ideas for as long as they are convenient, then discarding them as effortlessly as they believed them. Always one step ahead of their own contradictions, Phenomenologists can be found in any field where connections, rhetoric, and cults of personality are strong enough to replace traditional philosophical or scientific inquiry. They find their way into social sciences, philosophical groups, and the humanities; recently, some have nestled into mathematics, where they work to stay one step ahead of someone standing up and saying, "Wait a minute, those equations don't make any sense." Some have even migrated into theoretical physics.

Other geniuses ask what motivates a Phenomenologist. It's certainly not "truth," whatever that might be. Earlier pre-Phenomenological groups were politically-motivated historians, often fiercely partisan, dedicated

to creating an irrational synthesis of history to demonstrate the triumph of their own nation, society, or political system. By the 1930s, however, a meta-political urge to escape the confines of analytical thought replaced these genius' interest in specific philosophies, and the Phenomenologists arose as an organized group dedicated to the rejection of every sort of knowledge except personal whim.

While difficult to organize, Phenomenologists serve as Lemuria's intelligence network: they can get in almost anywhere with a sufficient application of charm and bravado, and they don't hesitate to adopt whatever persona or behavior will suit or amuse them. Effortlessly chameleonic, this baramin serves as an ever-shifting wall of obfuscation and nonsense behind which far more sinister and committed Lemurian philosophies can hide. They are the chief promulgators of the Lemurian *Archweltanschaaung*, though many Lemurians (and most peers) suspect that such a construct is merely a charade through which Phenomenologists control the gullible. The Phenomenologists aren't telling. They don't even understand the question.

What's So Bad About These Guys?

A reasonable question to ask, when confronted with the baramins, is what makes them so bad. And in truth not every Lemurian is a wicked low-Obligation sadist. In fact, many are decent people. Nonetheless, two things can move a Lemurian from "nice guy" to "covered in the blood of the innocent" with remarkable speed. First, their worldviews do not connect with reality. Lemurians are absurd, and as the old saying goes, whoever can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities—ethical and metaphysical disconnects often travel together. Second, each baramin is profoundly anti-human in its outlook. Atomists view human activity as a foible, a glitch in the programming; Etherites care more about ideological purity than human life or freedom; Mechanists view people as interchangeable cogs without true volition or independent purpose; Oracles divide people into arbitrary and inaccurate categories of "ally" and "enemy"; Phenomenologists reject all conventional ethical notions whenever it suits them. So no, Lemurians are not necessarily "evil," but they are myopic fanatics for whom humanity is not a serious moral priority. This can quickly produce behavior that most sane humans would label as evil.

Dharmists, The Lost Baramin:

Appearance: 425 BC

Favored Axioms: Epikrato or Metaptropi

Grant: Dharmists had the ability to control and compel other Inspired. They received a +1 bonus to any social checks with other geniuses, and a bonus equal to their Inspiration to any social checks against beholden (even others' beholden) and manes.

There have actually been at least seven baramins that have fallen by the wayside as Lemuria developed, but the Dharmists were the last to disappear. The old rulers of Lemuria, the Dharmists were the closest to the Secret Masters, and the members of this baramin were either exterminated or forced to recant after Lemuria's defeat by the Peerage in 1957.

The Dharmists were said to have emerged to oppose "new and dangerous doctrines" in the Indian Subcontinent and to enforce the traditional bonds of society. For centuries they opposed the development of new and revolutionary philosophies. They were masters of thought control and manipulation, and favored strange, ancient clothing, mind-warping runes, and thought-capturing crystals. They reached the peak of their power in the Victorian era, as they spread through the British Empire. Now almost all are gone, destroyed during the war.

Numericals, An Incipient Baramin:

Appearance: Earliest evidence comes from September 1993

Favored Axioms: None yet

Grant: None yet

Sometimes we get the future we want, but we never get the future we expect. Go back to the early days of the personal computer and of the Internet and you see, in the imagination of those digital pioneers, a very different world from the one we now inhabit, a world of techno-cowboy bit jockies, AI constructs housing the secrets of international megacorporations, and endless holographic gridlines representing an infinite virtual expanse. It was supposed to be a realm of superpowers and supergeniuses, where the brilliant would rise above all others, buoyed by intellect alone.

It was not, many geniuses insist, supposed to be a place where housewives could post pictures of their cats. Or businessmen could shop for golf shoes. Or where anyone save the Elite should ever be permitted to set virtual feet, at any time. The Internet, some geniuses insist, has gone astray, replacing a potential technological Utopia based on merit and ability with more of the same stupidity we get in meatspace. And from some place between the servers comes an answer, an echo, saying that's true, it should never have been this way...something went wrong with the Internet. And slowly, a new baramin draws itself into existence.

The Numericals, who consist mostly of rogues, mathematical Artificers, Atomists, and a few disgruntled Internet Navigators, are not yet a true baramin. They resemble the Atomists of the 1960s, a loose-knit group of angry and disaffected eggheads just past their prime, watching their visions of paradise fade away. Time will tell whether they scatter to the winds or form into a true baramin, vengeful, bitter, and determined to get digital civilization back on track.

Lemurian Organization:

While the Peerage has its collaboratives, Lemuria is organized by zothecae. A Lemurian zothea refers properly to the hidden chamber where Lemurians gather, typically resembling a combination of laboratory and gentleman's club. It is a secret place hidden away from the eyes of mere mortals, where Lemurians can discuss their thoughts in peace and with a modicum of civility. Sticklers for accuracy refer to the plural "zothecae," with each room (usually divided by baramin) being a single zothea. Surrounding the zothecae in most modern structures is a mercatus, a sort of mad science supply store resembling a cross between a mismanaged post office, a prison, and a flea market.

Located (unfailingly located, it seems) in some gray cement warehouse or bunker lit by watery yellow lights, a zothea's mercatus offers services to any geniuses who come there and who can meet the Lemurians' price. Usually staffed by the junior member of the zothea, who is tasked with dealing with rogues, peers, and other undesirables, the mercatus offers rare ingredients, Larvae, "no questions asked" transportation, rumors, lies, hired thugs, mane slaves, orphans, aborted experiments, and whatever else the local Lemurians have gotten their hands on.

Bureaus:

"Yes, there is a conspiracy, in fact there are a great number of conspiracies that are all tripping each other up. And all of those conspiracies are run by paranoid fantasists and ham-fisted clowns. If you are on a list targeted by the CIA, you really have nothing to worry about. If however, you have a name similar to somebody on a list targeted by the CIA, then you are dead."

-Alan Moore

If Lemuria's new "front end," the mercatus, is used to interface with the rest of the Inspired community, the bureaus are used to interface with the mortal world. Back before the Last Invisible War, bureaus nestled comfortably in the fabric of mortal government, pulling strings and manipulating those in power. They were never particularly well-run, according to records that the Peerage has uncovered, but now they are even more pitiful. Nonetheless, the bureaus still possess power, and can make a genius' life a living hell if he runs afoul of them.

The bureaus are, basically, hidden departments within a nation's government, staffed by Lemurians and their agents. The North American bureaus are particularly badly run, since they fragmented during the American Civil War and never came back together. Currently there are six bureaus in North America, all stepping on one-another's toes.

The Office of the Seventh Treasury (originally the Office of the Lost Treasury; its initials are still OLT), located out of Washington, D.C., is nominally the bureau for the entire United States, but its effective power is limited to states north of the Mason-Dixon line and east of the Mississippi.

The Confederate States Intelligence Agency partially joined with the Seventh Treasury in 1914, becoming the Joint American Intelligence Agency, before falling apart again; the JAIA covers most of the southern and parts of the central US as well as Texas and operates out of Raleigh.

Texas has its own organization, the Texan Bureau for Mechanical Development, though the TBMD's reach is limited only to that state—if it is still extant at all, which is not clear. There has been no activity from the bureau's central office in the Alamo's basement for fifteen years.

California's old Lemurian front, the Agency for the Future of the Republic (AFR), has spread up and down the west coast of the United States and down to the edge of Mexico, where it abuts the jurisdiction of Mexico's *Oficina Veintidos* (and Offices 18 through 25; it's unclear which *Oficina* is currently active).

Most of Canada is covered by the Royal Order of the Black Prism, a secretive and occult organization that can be found anywhere that still recognizes some element of British rule—including India, parts of Africa, and the original thirteen colonies.

As far as Lemuria is concerned, the bureaus are all smokescreens and feints, staffed by mid-level bureaucrats and burned-out masterminds who are content to manipulate FBI field agents and play head games with amateur Forteanes. The bureaus aren't "real" organizations to Lemuria, and some (like the Center for the Monitoring of the Western Hemisphere, out of Toronto, and the Office for Technical Development, out of Tampa) have atrophied and disappeared, while others have been created wholecloth to provide smokescreens for the smokescreens.

While plenty of conspiracy theorists (and even some rogue geniuses) think that, say, the Joint American Intelligence Agency is *the* shadow organization pulling the strings in American politics since the Kennedy assassination, 1) it's just a front for a far larger group, and 2) the JAIA doesn't do shit that's effective on a national scale.

Lemurian Terminology:

For the most part, Lemurians use the same terminology as the Peerage, though they are often more traditional in their language. Many Lemurian terms are in Latin or something that someone pretended was Latin in the Middle Ages. Lemurian terms had previously been in Sanskrit; a forced language migration was initiated in the 13th century for obscure political reasons.

Female Lemurian geniuses are still referred to as Junos. This is somewhat old-fashioned; even more old-fashioned is the correct plural, *Junones*. (Correct Latin plurals from a Lemurian are a sign that the genius in question is either very old or very obsessive and either way, probably very dangerous.) "True" Lemurians are referred to as "Members of the Third Race," never as Ophidians or Lemures. Nominally human inhabitants of Lemuria (those that survive) are called "Race Lemurians."

A Lemurian group-laboratory is called a zotheca. This term is also used to refer to the members of the group-laboratory, though technically the geniuses dwelling in a zotheca are called a consensus. In the old days, a

typical Lemurian in a zotheca was referred to as a Mulciber. The administrator of a zotheca was a Flamen. Above the Flamens were only the Secret Masters. Few Lemurians bother with the old terms any more.

The term "unmada" is never used by Lemurians. Instead the Lemurians are the Enlightened; all other (non-unmada) geniuses are nominalists (for some obscure reason). Non-Lemurian echo doctors are realists. The Peerage, as a group, is sometimes referred to as the Invisible College or the Invisible Empire; since the War many Lemurians see the Peerage as a massive organization of world-spanning power dedicated to the control and suppression of humanity—much as the Peerage sees Lemuria. (The "real" Invisible Empire was a fellowship consisting of Directors and Scholastics during the early half of the 20th century.)

A bureau was once called a coitoi. This term is rarely used now due to sex jokes on the part of younger peers. Likewise beholden were once divided into penates (research beholden) and lares (combat beholden); these were reduced by the Peerage to "peanuts" and "larries" during the Last Invisible War, which ruined those terms for future generations.

Lemurians, especially Atomists who view their work as sophisticated science rather than a separate Mania-inspired art, usually do not refer to Axioms. Many refuse to acknowledge the technical terms used by the Peerage, including "Mania," "wonders," "Axioms," "Havoc," or "Larva," and instead use scientific or philosophical terms (contemporary or badly dated). Though the Axioms are at least somewhat "real"—they are distinct structures within the matrix of mad science—Lemurians avoid referring to them, instead viewing their work as stemming from branches of mundane science or philosophy. Very rarely, Lemurians use Latin terms for the Axioms. Like the peers using French terms, these are usually reserved for inscriptions and formal occasions, not everyday use. These are: *Perditio* (Katastrofi), *Navis* (Skafoi), *Invenio* (Apokalypsi), *Vicissituo* (Metaptropi), *Aegis* (Prostasia), *Potestas* (Epikrato), *Servus* (Automata), and *Emendo* (Exelixi).

Language, Obsession, and the Needle Grail:

Lemurian's refusal to recognize the "mad" in their mad science leads to a frequent belief that "Mania" is in fact another energy source that can be studied and manipulated. Those Lemurians who do identify distinct Axioms in their work often believe that a ninth, secret Axiom exists, that allows for direct alteration and adjustment of Inspiration and Mania. With this Axiom, sometimes called Apekrina or Pankosmoi, but often referred to in Lemuria as the Needle Grail, Lemurians claim that they will be able to build wonders to ignore Havoc, enhance a genius' Inspiration, and harvest Mania from reality itself. While the search for the Needle Grail is sometimes a hobby to peers, many Lemurians and Lemurian-aligned rogues take its study very seriously, and many even believe that they have mastered the Axiom and can create wonders using it. So far there is no evidence that Pankosmoi exists, let alone that its study can produce wonders.

The History of Lemuria:

"And for the rest, those swarms of black, and brown, and dirty-white, and yellow people, who do not come into the new needs of efficiency? Well, the world is a world, not a charitable institution, and I take it they will have to go. The whole tenor and meaning of the world, as I see it, is that they have to go. So far as they fail to develop sane, vigorous, and distinctive personalities for the great world of the future, it is their portion to die out and disappear."

-H.G. Wells, *Anticipations*

The history of Lemuria is a history of broken time and paradoxical development with no clear beginning. What can be gathered is this: we—all of us, everyone on Earth—are not living in the "correct" timeline, if the Lemurians are to be believed. The Lemurians say that in the previous timeline, geniuses, unfettered by morality or concern for their fellow man, made sport of humanity, tearing the world apart with wars. Nonetheless, civilization developed and by the 19th century, humanity was asking itself questions like "Why are there lemurs (the little furry monkey-like things) in Madagascar and India, but not in Africa?"

One solution—in the old timeline as well as ours—proposed that land bridges periodically arose and sunk, allowing animals to cross them. One of these land bridges (the one proposed to explain the lemurs) was named Lemuria. As the land bridge hypothesis sank during the middle of the 20th century, the resulting Maniac Storm caused Lemuria to pop into existence. But something had touched Lemuria. It was not just a dry hypothesis: theologians, occultists, and mystics had latched onto the idea, layering it in spiritual significance. When Lemuria appeared, it appeared not just as some primordial land, but a realm fully inhabited by a unique race of manes. This was the self-styled Third Race, a civilization of serpent-people that made war on the world.

The rumors are hazy about what happened, as might be expected when trying to figure out how events unfolded in a timeline that (now) never was. What scholars have deciphered is this: in that previous timeline, the stability of the timeline itself was kept in place by the Terminals, a race of transcendent intellects at the end of time who did not appreciate people messing around with time travel, because it might result in their sudden non-existence. But the Third Race, threatened with annihilation, studied the deepest arts of Skafoi, and before the Terminals or their agents could stop them, the ophidian Lemurians flung themselves back in time.

This occurred (scholars think) in the middle of the 20th century. Geniuses who catalyzed before 1940 or so sometimes experience ghostly echo-images of a past that never was, the result of this tampering. Because when the Third Race flung itself back in time, the Terminals could not stop them. Before anyone could react, they set themselves up as rulers of humanity, hidden sovereigns and puppet-masters, as was their secretive and ophidian way.

The results were incredible. The Terminals perished: minute changes annihilated the timeline from which they might have arisen, and all the efforts of their servants have been unable to call them back from temporal oblivion. The Third Race became the new power in the cosmos, traversing time and reality itself.

But those heady days did not last. The Third Race realized that its home was gone, wiped away by the changing, shifting mess of a timeline they had produced. Instead they established themselves as rulers over humanity. They edited human history, not overtly, but subtly, gaining control of key figures and bending them to their will, replacing humanity's own discoveries with their own. The Third Race had lost its ability to reproduce, despite the immortality of its members, and when geniuses appeared, these Inspired humans were brought before their ophidian overlords. "Lemuria," as an organization, was born as those first geniuses (likely in the Harappan valley, maybe also in emerging points of civilization such as the Fertile Crescent, China, and along the banks of the Nile) swore fealty to the Third Race.

Slowly, beneath the notice of the temporal guardians that hunted for the Terminals' slayers, the Third Race worked to strip humanity of its intellectual independence. Over the centuries, independent geniuses arose, but they were crushed by the Lemurians, backed up by the Inspired might of the "true" Lemurians, the serpentine Third Race, who took to calling themselves the Secret Masters.

All of that above? It might be bullshit. It might be propaganda or insanity or a big pack of lies. No one knows. Intelligible history really begins in the first few centuries BC, and by then the Lemurians—however they first gained power—were firmly in control of the Inspired world. Members of the Third Race, the Secret Masters, died due to accident or violence, until only a handful remained. These survivors chose to abandon their fleshy bodies to exist as pure information, becoming terrible godlike intellects, devoid of even ophidian feeling. When they appeared to humans, they took on the pleasing forms of sages, arhats, and holy teachers, and were called the Nine Unknown Men. The Secret Masters, the mortal rulers of Lemuria, answered only to them.

But that did not last. For centuries, those Inspired who did not belong to Lemuria were few, weak, and easily destroyed or subverted. The Secret Masters, now made up of the surviving members of the Third Race and the most powerful geniuses, struggled to keep humanity under control and on track. The Nine Unknown Men

created a book called the Race History, outlining a "development" program for humanity over the centuries that would lead to a return of the island of Lemuria.

It didn't work. Many geniuses say it never worked, that all the "Race History" talk was hornswoogle (yes, *hornswoogle*) and that the Lemurians justified their "accomplishments" after the fact, claiming to have given this or that secret to a lucky mortal who couldn't possibly have discovered it on his own. No one knows, now, because more and cleverer mortals appeared, and some of them catalyzed, becoming geniuses, and not all the geniuses could be brought into Lemuria and shown the great idea for how humanity and the universe should be.

As time passed, more and more geniuses did not join Lemuria, often did not even know it existed. The greater possibilities for travel in the Middle Ages allowed for the proliferation of ideas in the Renaissance, and by then the genius was out of the bottle: there were too many Inspired, running around, trying (usually failing, but not always) to teach mundane philosophers, and ruining Lemuria's carefully-kept Race History. As the Renaissance gave way to the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, unaffiliated geniuses fought the Lemurians, the Secret Masters who ruled them, and the Nine Unknown Men who controlled them all.

The term "The Invisible War" is given to this ideological struggle, which spanned nearly five centuries of hot and cold conflict. Some scholars divide the "War" into several (or dozens of) individual wars, but the fighting was so sporadic and haphazard that this is nearly impossible to distinguish one conflict from the next. What is certain is that while the free geniuses fought, they also organized. Foundations, fellowships, colleges, and societies appeared. By the 17th century, free geniuses around the world participated in the Invisible College. New ideas blossomed as Lemuria seemed to melt away, defeated by the newfound energy of these Inspired wonder-workers.

Lemuria's vengeance was terrible. If Lemuria is a serpent or a dragon—as it is often depicted—Lemuria enraged was Tiamat when her children stirred her waters. The attacks were slow at first, part of the plan, and genius after genius died starting in the first half of the 19th century. Mills burned, societies collided, and new technologies allowed the great powers to carve out bloody empires. The Nine Unknown Men could see, in mortal society, the first gleams of the island of Lemuria, and they forged ahead, willing to tear society apart in order to return home. It took generations for the free geniuses to realize what was happening, and by then it almost seemed too late.

But the Secret Masters had underestimated their foes. The "peers," as they had begun to call themselves, fought back. The Great War began, and a few years of peace only presaged the culmination of Lemuria's plans: that island east of Madagascar would be reborn, and a race of ophidian warriors armed with super-science and unquenchable rage would march across the world, consuming it in fire. But even by the beginning of the 20th century, the Race History had practically fallen apart. Never mind the geniuses: mortals were doing things they weren't supposed to do, coming up with ideas they weren't supposed to have, faster than anyone had thought.

And as the Nine Unknown Men raced ahead, the Lemurians—the mortal Lemurians—paused in fear and reflection. What world were their inhuman masters bringing them? What was the place of humanity in this new order? There was no great betrayal, no Lemurian army coming to its senses: the pull of Lemurianism, the belief that they alone were right and that the rest of the world was mad, that the rest of the world needed *fixing*, was too strong. But the Nine Unknown Men saw their mortal servants hesitate.

That hesitation was enough. On August 5th, 1957, Lemuria burst forth in all its glorious un-reality, the product of a terrific Maniac Storm, and the Peerage was ready for it. The super-science of the new Third Race found itself opposing the acumen and intelligence of the free geniuses...and it was found wanting. As the human Lemurians hesitated, the island of Lemuria burned. But the Peerage did not stop there: before

Lemuria could defend itself, the Peerage came for the featureless machines that housed the Nine Unknown Men, smashing them to pieces. They put an end to the Secret Masters, driving them from the world or slaughtering them. Those peers old enough to remember those days...whose memories still echo with the phantasms of a forgotten timeline...often have not forgiven themselves for what they did in those bloody weeks that marked the end of Lemuria. But few have apologized.

The Nine Unknown Men were dead, as were all their clones, psychic duplicates, mirror-universe doubles, and brain tapes. Lemuria lay in smoking ruins. The death toll on both sides was appalling.

It took the peers a few years to realize what they had done. They had freed humanity, yes, but humanity—this timeline's humanity—may not ever have been free. Always there had been a Secret Master pulling the strings, correcting for small mistakes, making sure that their charge worked toward its goal, based on The Plan. The Peerage struggled to maintain control. In 1962 the last page of the Race History ran out, and there was no one left alive to add to the Lemurian playbook. Even before that, humanity had begun to go off the rails. No one fed the scientists the "correct" discoveries; no one planted in world leaders the seeds of "correct" behavior. Humanity was gloriously, hideously free.

And that, say most Inspired, as if Lemuria were a just-so story, is why we didn't get the rocket cars and robot butlers and meals in pill form we were promised. We got something far stranger, instead, the result of free and independent inquiry. But there is a price: no one is in control. No one is there to be blamed or praised; no one is, ultimately, responsible. Lemuria was an evil, brutal, dictatorial, racist, dream-killing organization, but like a crooked casino, it was the only game in town.

Not all the Lemurians died during the last Invisible War. And the *idea* that Lemuria represented, that humanity had gone wrong and needed to be led back to the right path, hadn't been killed by killing a bunch of old conspirators and mechanical serpent-gods. Much of the bureaucratic infrastructure still remained, in fact, and the Peerage realized that the edifice of human knowledge that they relied upon was threatened with collapse. Slowly, like cockroaches edging in darkness toward table-scrap, the Lemurians crept back in.

After all, the free Inspired told themselves, someone had to make sure that the universities didn't collapse, or accidentally open rifts into the Chaos Realms. Someone had to maintain the ridiculous illusion that paper with dead presidents possessed value. Someone had to be in charge. Right?

So the institution of Lemuria was restored. Crimes were pardoned, sentences commuted. The Peerage pushed the whole rotting edifice back up, because the alternative was worse: collapse, complete collapse, for the Inspired world and perhaps for the mortal world as well.

But no one is in charge. Lemuria has returned, but it is not the organization it once was. Lemuria, the bureaucracy, remains, but it is a headless snake, thrashing blindly. The last great super-computer of the Secret Masters has not received new data about the world in fifty years, because no one remembers how to operate the input mechanism. Yet the Lemurians follow its dictates, and they follow what remains of the Race History, whether endlessly repeating parts of it already executed or, like astrologers and numerologists, poring over old answers and hoping to match them to the new questions.

So the Lemurians persist, the bureaucrats that maintain the edifice of Inspired knowledge, but the Peerage knows better than to trust them. One day you need a Lemurian pencil-pusher to access a telescope; the next day that Lemurian's boss sends six men with spiders for hands to kill you and your family. Why? None can say, not even the ones who should be responsible. Orders appear, purposes are manufactured, and stability is given to the chaos that are the Lemurians' lives. They could not survive without that stability.

The Illuminated:

"Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world."

-Victor Frankenstein

The Illuminated are all dangerously insane. They have entirely abandoned their humanity, or have had it burned away by the light of genius, and now exist as conduits for some higher order of thought, as far beyond "sapience" as self-awareness is beyond the animal sentience of an earthworm. They are incomprehensible, terrifying, and driven, and also extraordinary. Unfettered by notions of morality, propriety, or aesthetics that the sane might understand, they create baffling and hideous new wonders without regard for their purpose or form.

Many of the Illuminated are amazing and elegant fiends. They possess enough of a "mask" to interface with regular humanity, or at least with other geniuses, and the wonders they create save them from merciless annihilation. Even devoid of Morality or Obligation, some deranged aesthetic sense holds them in check, preventing them from committing atrocities—usually. Other Illuminated are utter monsters, inhuman devils who regard others as humans might regard insects or bits of computer code. Illuminated aren't merely evil, and they are insane in a very particular way: they lack the notions of boundaries that dominate a human mind. The Illuminated, even the "not so bad" ones, struggle to understand concepts like "discreteness" and "separation." They don't see the difference between one person and another, between metal and flesh, between animal and man, or life and death, and eagerly weld these disparate elements together when producing their wonders. The results can be magnificent, or revolting, or both.

It is true that some Illuminated are "safe," or at least no more dangerous than low-Obligation or unstable geniuses in the Peerage or Lemuria. But most are dangerous amoral psychopaths. To them, all things are empty reflections of Mania, flickering images to be manipulated with as much compassion as any other experiment. Even the "safe" ones can change suddenly and incomprehensibly, turning their laboratories into abattoirs.

Illuminated still retain their human memories and abilities, and can even simulate their old personalities, though this is probably just a mask. The Illuminated are apparently something larger than a merely human mind. Even the keenest Inspired scholars of Illumination aren't clear exactly what sort of *thing* an Illuminated genius is. Some Illuminated appear to act in concert, as if they were the limbs or tools of some over-mind. Others are profoundly self-absorbed, unable to understand or identify other intelligent beings. Some wrap themselves in human mythology, portraying themselves as gods, devils, or transcendent forces like the Tao—though distorted and malevolent. Others can't seem to make any sense of general human behavior, and offer incomprehensible justifications for their actions when made to explain themselves. Geniuses don't know whether Illumination changes a person or replaces him, generates a new thing or allows an existing being access to our world, whether there are many Illuminated intelligences, just a few, or just one. Most geniuses, however curious they may be about the world and about the nature of Inspiration, hope never to ask too many questions about Illumination.

All Illuminated possess an Obligation of 0. "Bottoming out" on Obligation is the less common way to become an Illuminated, since those that do so are usually exterminated by their fellows geniuses. (Most Inspired on a downward trajectory rarely make it that far, actually; by the time a genius starts committing Obligation-2 or -3 transgressions, someone, Inspired or not, is usually there to take him out for the good of humanity.)

A genius who courts unmade too strongly can also become Illuminated. These Illuminated are not functionally different from their monstrous fellows, though they are often the more subtle variety of Illuminated and thus harder to notice.

There is no "cure" for Illumination. Stories of Illuminated that regained their humanity are legendary: while some Illuminated can play well with others, or even be "trained," via threat and promise, not to harm other people, there is no going back once a genius has embraced the light within.

Future Timelines:

The future isn't what it used to be. Once a linear progression of events leading eventually to the Terminals, the timeline is now a mess of pocket chrono-fiefdoms and unstable causality. This increasing disorder, coupled with the fact that time-traveling into the future necessarily removes the genius from the timeline, means that rarely will two trips into, say, the year 3,000, produce the same result. But here are the most common destinations when one travels certain spans of time into the future.

+10 Years: The Rapture. No, bear with us, really. Tens of thousands of people disappear, almost all with Morality 8+, and are assimilated into some kind of computational overmind. The barrier between the living and dead worlds temporarily breaks down, flooding the world with ghosts, while wars sweep across the world until stopped by a genius who seizes control of the United Nations and forms an Anarchosyndicalist world government that manages to maintain the illusion of normality while returning the dead to the earth. Afterward, the government disintegrates, while humanity studies new technology that allows it to speak with the world of the dead.

+50 Years: The Machine Ragnarök. A massive cold snap caused by environmental changes freezes most of the northern hemisphere. A genius' attempts to fix the problem by redirecting sunlight off other heavenly bodies backfires, blacking out the sun and moon. The Illuminated, seeing their chance, unleash a technological plague on the Earth, transforming common machinery into murderous titans of steel and plastic. The most common result is a coalition of Inspired beating back the catastrophe and slowly working to restore the world.

Technology ten or fifty years hence generally remains the same, except it's smaller, faster, and more "universal," meaning that single gadgets tend to do more. Anyone who's anyone has some kind of universal PDA/cell phone/AV player about the size of a paperclip on their person. People who make use of advanced technology, such as soldiers from first-world armies, can be treated as having 1-3 Axiom ranks worth of wonders. These advanced technologies do not suffer from Havoc.

+100 Years: Lemuria Ascendant. After centuries of carefully infiltrating regular terrestrial society, the Third Race uses its (previously-unknown) total dominance of the 22nd century's Internet to take over cybernetically-modified brains (that is, most people's brains) and enslave several billion people directly. The rest fall into line, but the Ophidians' empire lasts for only a few decades as the ever-changing nature of the World Network breaks down their lines of hierarchical control, forcing the Third Race to confront a fate even worse than imprisonment on their island kingdom: one baffling people among many, they are, even after the cruelties they inflicted on Earth and its colonies throughout the inner solar system, assimilated into regular human society.

+300 Years: The Martian Colonization. The Martian Empire, after gaining enough Mania to make itself fully real, reveals itself and quickly dominates Earth's cultural landscape with its sophisticated and newly-dynamic culture. Together, Earth and Mars colonize the solar system, with the Martian Overlords forging ahead to "standardize" the other bardos, rendering them down for Mania before they are annihilated by the Havoc of encountering mere mortals. A Golden Age of commerce and philosophy begins in the solar system.

A few hundred years from now, technology is extraordinary and commonplace. The average person owns (though does not necessarily carry) the equivalent of one Axiom rank worth of orphans for every dot of Intelligence + Resources they possess. Many people, especially scientists, police officers, and spies have the equivalent of Inspiration 1 due to internal AI systems. By this time, the difference between geniuses and

regular people breaks down a bit: mere mortals do not trigger Havoc merely by using or holding wonders.

+1,000 Years: The Confederacy of Worlds. Humanity knows that strange beings walk among them, and have eagerly exploited these powers. A polyglot empire of squabbling human and posthuman "tribes" has arisen, supported by economic need and connected by a loose affiliation of interests. Sometimes called the "Pirate Empire," the Confederacy is a place where anything can be had for a price, where information, money, and political power blur.

+10,000 Years: The Brutal Empire of Yao Ming. As humanity begins its spread to the stars, a ruthless technologist and dictator appears at the edge of the Solar System. Calling himself Yao Ming, he gives wonders beyond anything seen before to the rulers of several worlds, but they are subtly trapped: he binds them to service, and using economic and military leverage, gains executive control over the Engines of Immortality. Only those loyal to Yao Ming will be resurrected from their brain tapes; the rest perish. In a few short years, Yao Ming establishes himself as mankind's most brutal dictator.

Barring significant technological collapse, technology a few thousand years from now is so common that to replicate it, treat everyone as "possessing" an inner genius in the form of a bound artificial intelligence. This genius has an Inspiration equal to the person's Intelligence or Resources, whichever is lower (minimum 1). Humans are a cautious race in this time frame, as "braintaping" is often available. While full immortality is (usually) still beyond humanity's reach, vastly extended lifespans are possible, and dying humans often join strange hive-minds to preserve their thoughts.

In particularly oppressive regions (such as Yao Ming's), advanced technologies may be limited only to the elite, with mundane humans getting by with a few orphan wonders.

+50,000 Years: The Celestial Dynasty. United after centuries of war and cruelty, humanity has formed into a vast machine dynasty. Technology has reached the Clarke limit, becoming indistinguishable from magic, with humans channeling their "inner power" to perform seeming miracles and live forever. The River of Heaven unites a billion worlds in superluminal commerce and contact. On the greatest planets, immortal scholars meet "ghosts" of the long-departed and warriors who can break moons in half and perform other marvels.

+100,000 Years: Machine Earth. Years ago, a technological singularity swept across the Earth, converting everyone into computer data, that they might live forever in an artificial Utopia. As pampered as babies and as powerful as gods, humanity lives, invisible, somewhere within the eight thousand mile-diameter Earth (or elsewhere, on other worlds, ringworlds, or Dyson Spheres) The surface of Earth is a bleak, often airless place, where only machines walk, protecting humanity.

"People" from this far in the future are often surrounded by nanotech swarms, possess what previous centuries would call psychic powers, or can manipulate energy fields at will using the power of super-science. Assume that a typical human, in reality or computer-space, is a genius possessing Inspiration equal to Intelligence + Resources. In their own digital realms, humans are basically limitless in their power.

+One Million Years: The Metahuman Empire. Humanity and its metanormal companions have transcended their limitations and become a race of immortals, reaching for the stars and other realities. Engineering wonders such as Dyson Spheres and worlds made of pure Computronium running computer simulations of life are common. The "humans" in this era are nearly incomprehensible, their behavior fey and often seemingly without sense.

Visitors to this far in the future will often confront various metahumans. Treat a metahuman as a genius with Inspiration ten, all Axioms at five, and all Attribute and Skill dots at ten. Humanity, at this level of development, is terrifying and godlike, and (depending on the time frame in which a genius lands) may have no trace of human morality (treat Obligation as 0).

+100 Million Years: The Solar Wastelands. Humanity is extinct, but its progeny live on: alternate races, beast-men, androids, and captured aliens occupying a new super-continent. Their technology nearly lost, these Children of Mankind live in a world of barbarism, sorcery, and super-science, torn by savagery and endless war, manipulated by the remnants of vast, Galaxy-spanning super-minds, most long mad. The solar system is terraformed, with Venus covered in dense jungles, Mars an endless savanna, and Jupiter a second sun lighting alien moons.

+One 500 Million Years: Solar Transformations. With humanity gone, new intelligent races move among an Earth that appears almost new-born, beneath an orange-yellow sun. Intelligent octopods swing through Earth's jungles like monkeys, while schools of fish use electrical impulses transmitted through the water to form gestalt intellects. The technology level varies enormously, according to visitors' reports, from barely Stone Age to meta-posthuman, but it is generally primitive, with a few enclaves of "favored races" guided in their development by discarded thinking machines that can still remember the day humanity left them.

+One Billion Years: Age of the New Concordat. Earth still remains as hub of activity, and it's a destination for countless strange alien races. The entire solar system is a network of starship docks, banks, data centers, and sleazy taverns, full of more aliens (some of them uplifted posthumans) than a 21st-century genius might find possible. On Deimos, the Traveler's Moon, can be found any conceivable good, service, or industry, and beings willing to do anything for credit and favors. Most beings can be treated as geniuses of various sorts, running the gamut of power levels from creatures that possess a few orphans to vast intellects one step away from meta-sentience. The general technology level, though, is not very high, resembling interstellar versions of what humans had in the 19th or 20th centuries. Creatures live in societies that are little transformed by the machinery around them.

+Five Billion Years: The Ends of Earth. Drained of its resources, the Sun is now no more than a dim coal-colored star, a smear that spreads across half the sky. Abandoned and forgotten, the Earth is home to scuttling, crab-like creatures called the Methc, the last intelligent beings to evolve on Terra. They spend their lives scrambling between the hot pools that birthed them, amidst a black wasteland of carbon and rust pitted occasionally by the remnants of eons-old technology. Beyond Earth, the combined Milky Way-Andromeda galaxies lies exhausted from eons of war and exploitation.

+Ten Billion Years: Rouge Gothica. The sun is a boiling red giant surrounding the Dyson Sphere constructed around it and kept forcibly alive by long-forgotten technologies. Built to expand along with the Sun, the sphere is a vast, inward-looking cathedral of steel and metamaterials, eternally shifting as the dying star flares and trembles. Here live dream-beings pulled from the collective memories of humanity's last ancient computers, together with the remembered fears of a thousand races: manes of a thousand types dwell here, taking on the forms humanity feared, forming cruel empires in the vast areas of the Sphere.

+One Trillion Years: An Empty Universe. What remains of the Local Group is a blur of interstellar dust and dead stars circled by slowly cooling worlds. Red stars shine in the sky: fossil light from suns that perished ages ago and whose radiation still travels through space. Those races that remain—none remotely human—concern themselves with frantic, doomed attempts at prolonging their existence by tapping the rotational energy of moons or incinerating black holes. A few welcome visitors, but most only make a being feel at home long enough to dissect him for his technology, heat, and information.

The End of Time: Endless Darkness. The last stars went out so long ago no one remembers what they were like. Protons have dissolved. Black holes have disappeared in bursts of gamma radiation. Here dwell the Cold Ones: the last intelligent beings in the universe, whose thoughts are measured by the stray background fluctuation of quantum nothingness. Each thought takes an hour, or an eon, but they persist nonetheless—and all they can do is persist, thinking of themselves and their eternal lives. These wretched gods are all that live. But they are not helpless: over the eons, they have learned of beings foolish enough to travel to the End of

Time, and they wait patiently, weaving webs of stray photons and pseudomatter, waiting to trap an unwary traveler, to feast on her warmth and ordered state, or even—if the Cold Ones dream, this is their dream—to return to a universe of light and warmth, free from the killing clutches of entropy.

The Terminals once dwelled at the end of time. They are no more, replaced by the Cold Ones.

The Dustbin of History:

History is riddled with philosophical and scientific ideas that have been abandoned in favor of more popular models. Though most geniuses in the Peerage either create their own bizarre models or don't bother at all with over-arching theories, instead building and discovering as the Inspiration takes them, many Inspired, especially Lemurians, use old and abandoned theories to construct their worldview.

Below is a sample list of ideas, theories, and concepts that have since been abandoned by mortal science. A genius might latch onto one of these as a defining element of his philosophy, or try to "upgrade" it to match the modern world and his own bizarre discoveries.

Aristotle's Organon:

Aristotle was the first mortal known to have constructed a complete picture of the world in all its complexity. Some Directors among the Peerage like to claim him as their own, though there is no evidence of his Inspiration. He constructed a worldview that covered physics, biology, psychology, ethics, and nearly everything else. But many of Aristotle's details were wrong, and modern scientists would view his methodology as incomplete. Some geniuses, however, find peculiar excuses for Aristotle: he was writing in code, or writing from the perspective of a complete "unbroken" universe—he was engaged in True Science, as many Artificers would have it, which incorporates more than the physical world.

Creationism:

Creationism is a constellation of religious philosophies about the origin of the universe, the Earth, life, and humanity. In its typical "hard" form, it postulates a literal reading of the Bible's Book of Genesis, a young age to the Earth (under 10,000 years), and the *ex nihilo* creation of modern living organisms by divine fiat. Different pseudoscientific mechanisms are invoked to explain Biblical phenomena such as the Great Flood. Variations draw from Hindu rather than Judeo-Christian-Muslim belief. Though creationism is soundly rejected in scientific circles, it is popular among laypeople in certain parts of the US, UK, and Australia, making it popular among some geniuses. Creationism is common in Lemuria, especially among Oracles and some Etherites. Bardos that resemble aspects of half-scientific, half-religious thought common in the 19th century are well documented.

Descartes' Vortex Theory:

Some geniuses reject the idea of "vacuum," that there can be areas where there is no matter; for them, some variation of Descartes' vortex theory, which postulates a plenum of particles of different sizes swirling around a common source, is popular. The vortex theory does away with both vacuum and the "spooky action at a distance" implicit in Newtonian concepts of gravity. Wonders of Apokalypsi and Skafoi are often built with vortex-science, which is often used alongside or in place of Ether theory.

Geocentrism:

Geocentrism is the belief that the Earth is the center of the universe and that everything else moves around it. In its most severe form, that Earth is *flat*, with a domed canopy of sky over it. Despite the impressive unlikelihood of this idea, it still crops up, mostly among Lemurians, who can use it to incorporate bardos such

as the Hollow Earth and the Crystal Spheres into a coherent model of the universe. Geocentrism sometimes sees a religious-pseudoscientific basis, making it a kind of super-creationism.

Lamarckian Evolution:

Lamarckian evolution is, basically, the idea that offspring inherit the physical, rather than genetic, properties of their parents. The typical examples are of a giraffe, stretching its neck to reach higher leaves; the resulting descendants have longer necks because of this exercise. Though certain modifications to an organism's somatic cells can trigger changes in its descendants, the principle does not apply universally and most evolution and selection is done at the germ-cell level. But many geniuses see exceptions to the rule in their own work, and view Lamarckian evolution as applicable, at least in certain circumstances. Some go farther and place Lamarckianism as the foremost cause of evolution in general. In bardos, life-forms subject to Lamarckian evolution are probably more common than are life-forms subject to regular gene-line selection.

The Luminiferous Ether:

Of all the out-of-favor and rejected theories of science, the Luminiferous Ether is the most consistently popular among geniuses of all organizations and demographics. The Luminiferous Ether was postulated in the 19th century to explain the propagation of light and other electromagnetic fields; it is a kind of rarefied "fluid" through which electromagnetic fields could propagate. Einstein's Theory of Relativity more or less buried the idea, though it had been on decline since the 1890s. Nonetheless, many geniuses, especially in Lemuria, see Relativity as incorrect, or at least incomplete, and postulate either the traditional Ether or a modified "quantum ether" or something similar to account for what they have discovered and created.

Lysenkoism:

Lysenko was a Soviet agronomist who castigated the practices of more traditional geneticists and rejected the Mendelian theory of heritability, replacing it with a sort of pseudo-Lamarckian theory focused on hybridization and grafting. Lysenkoism is strongly linked with certain manifestations of Communism and argues that genetic science is ineffective, impractical, and fascistic in nature. There is little content in mundane Lysenkoism; it is basically a sort of pseudoscientific "fast-talk" designed to put agricultural practices into effect faster than they can be investigated, let alone refuted. However, many geniuses, especially those focused on genetics and practical application (such as Artificers) add to its principles, arguing that the practical creation of living wonders demonstrates the fundamental inadequacy of genetics without the addition of new theories. Biological Phenomenologists are also fond of Lysenko's ideas, or at least his approach.

Materialism and Reductionism:

In the World of Darkness, believing that everything is reducible to swirling atoms is as bizarre as believing that the world is flat and resides on the back of a turtle. While many geniuses seek coherent and consistent explanations for the weird phenomena they encounter, some go further, rejecting all supernatural or non-materialistic explanations of the world. This philosophy, a kind of flipside to Vitalism, is popular in Lemuria among Atomists and Mechanists; it has little traction among the Peerage, for whom deeply weird stuff can become an everyday occurrence. Materialist parodies of genuinely metanormal phenomena like vampires, called "Scoobies," that exist, it seems, solely to be exposed as merely material phenomena, are found in some bardos.

Mesmerism:

Another offshoot of Vitalism, often associated with peculiar psychological models, Mesmerism posits a "magnetic-like" force that allows for one person to control another. Geniuses deep into Epikrato who

specialize in mind control often build up "fluid models of influence" that they think can explain their techniques.

Miasma Theory of Disease:

Before the germ theory of disease gained credence, various hypotheses were put forth to explain sickness, among them the idea that "bad" air resulted in sickness. (Hence "mal-aria.") This theory sees little popular support, even among Etherites who are often spitefully eager to adopt non-standard explanations, although some geniuses invoke it to explain certain wondrous diseases and mane phenomena, and many bardos are full of "bad air" that can cause sickness.

Phlogiston and Caloric:

These two related ideas attempted to explain heat as a sort of "fluid" or "particle" (separate from atoms bouncing around, which is what heat is normally understood to be today). Phlogiston was an attempt to explain the oxidation process, including rust and combustion: substances were said to contain phlogiston that was released in burning, leaving a remnant called calx. Caloric is a slightly later conception intended to explain heat as a kind of porous substance that could move between physical objects. Though current thermodynamic theory has abandoned both concepts, geniuses often find these ancient concepts useful for their inventions. The use of caloric and phlogiston and often less ideological in nature and more practical: certain wonders are easier to understand, mathematically, if one uses these older ideas. Direct manifestations of phlogiston theory are often evident in older bardos from the 16th to 18th centuries.

Phrenology:

Phrenology is the idea that a person's psychological traits are evident in the shape of their head. Variants assume that psychological traits, or sometimes diseases, physical or psychological, can be identified by studying a person's iris, foot, or some other body part. Phrenology has *extremely* racist overtones in the genius community: among the Inspired, only the Hollow Earth Nazis and their adherents, and the most radical of Lemurians, use the idea in their theories. Some humanoid manes demonstrate the principles of phrenology. If you've ever heard someone described as having a "sloping criminal forehead," you are familiar with one of the basic tenets of (one type of) phrenology; other connections are even more outlandish.

Platonic Philosophy:

One of the oldest and most mystical of organized philosophies, Platonic philosophy is closely linked in Inspired society to Gnosticism, postulating a world of Idea, eternal and unchanging, of which this material world is only a pale reflection. In the World of Darkness this idea has some merit, and geniuses who interact regularly with mages (for whom a place called the Supernal Realm, which provides their power, superficially resembles Plato's ideas) may come to rely on this idea. Among the Peerage a modified, rather secular version is popular among Scholastics, many of whom postulate a realm of mathematical reality above this one. In Lemuria, many Oracles combine science, alchemy, and a kind of spiritual Platonism.

Racism:

Racism, scientific or otherwise, is the belief that certain genetic groups are inferior to others. Its long and nasty history in the mundane world needs no restatement here, except to recall that many of the most "progressive" scientific minds of the late 19th and early 20th century (and elsewhere) saw strict hierarchies of race and kind among their fellow humans, and advocated the extermination of the "unfit." Remember that Lemurians only cluster around discredited ideas; many of the mad scientists promulgating racist theories in the 19th and 20th centuries were *peers*. Among geniuses, racist philosophies are more complicated than in mundane society, and more closely resembles the hierarchical racial divisions of the Nazis than the strict

black/white divides and "one-drop" intolerance common elsewhere. Inspired racism is also more unified than mundane racism, with a strict hierarchy of "racial types," with the "Pure" ("Aryan" Europeans, but also Brahmin Indians, some Egyptians, some Asiatic peoples, and the Navajo and a few related groups) at the top, the "Servile" in various gradations of "utility", and the "Irredeemable" (almost all Africans and American Indians, and some indigenous Asiatic peoples, as well as Jews) considered non-human. This system, once common in Lemuria, withered throughout the 20th century and is now regarded as both evil and rather ridiculous by most geniuses; others persist in the old beliefs, though rarely do they make their feelings known. Übermenschen, of course, still cherish these notions.

Steady State Universe:

Many geniuses reject the Big Bang model of the universe and instead favor an eternal cosmos. This is popular among both supernaturally-oriented Platonists and strict atheistic materialists who reject the idea of "creation." Various steady-state models exist, some of which account for our apparently expanding universe by positing some never-ending source of new matter and energies, others which reject most of modern cosmology. The former can be used as cheap theoretical workarounds for perpetual-motion machines and other mad science perennials.

The Strong Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis:

In this hypothesis, one's language determines one's thoughts, to the extent that changing languages can change one's thoughts. A language without a first-person singular pronoun, for example, would prevent the formation of the concept of "I." George Orwell's *1984* flirts with these ideas with its imagined language, Newspeak, and its ever-shrinking vocabulary. First formulated by German linguists who believed language reflected the "spirit" of a nation, this elegant notion received considerable initial attention, but fell apart in the face of empirical analysis once it was formulated as a testable hypothesis. Hollow Earth Nazis are fond of the Strong Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, but so are some Phenomenologists and Directors. Manes created by the hypothesis often display bizarre behavior caused by hard-wired linguistic structures.

Vitalism:

In the World of Darkness, even mortal biologists and doctors understand that some phenomena don't make sense from a strictly reductionist standpoint, that some activities of the living world are just *weird*, and will probably remain that way no matter how long they study them with mundane methods. Vitalism, then, is not simply a belief in an "animating spark" for living things; it is in getting the details of that spark wrong. Inspired Vitalists obsess over weird, self-contradictory, or counterfactual sorts of cosmic essences that only make sense in light of Mania powering a wonder. Vitalist theories are common among Etherites and Oracles. Most geniuses give a name to the "life force" that they can manipulate with wonders, whether it is a traditional term (Chi, Prana, Vril, Orgone, Odic Force) or something of their own devising.

Antagonists:

"But enough theology. I'm gettin' a hankerin' to punch some motherfucker's teeth out." -Jesse Custer, *Preacher*

Lots of things want to kill mad scientists. Apart from other mad scientists (including the Illuminated and Lemurians), there are orphan wonders that hunger for Mania, the Hollow Men who seek to destroy Inspiration and genius, manes (from Nazi sorcerer-scientists to Martians to honest-to-Newton Lemures—serpent-people from Lemuria), and the other metanormal beings that lurk in the World of Darkness. And a genius is wise to remember that a mob of angry mortals can kill just as well as a bloodthirsty robot, in sufficient numbers.

Clockstoppers:

The Inspired feel a great void within them, a swirling emptiness, which they fill with Mania. The beholden lack philosophical initiative and motivation but, like windmills in still air, roar to life near the maelstrom of a genius' Inspiration.

But there is another sort of empty being, a creature lacking any spark of Inspiration, but with such a void in itself that it can devour Mania without giving anything back. These are the Clockstoppers. Enemies of Inspiration and brilliance of any sort, they despise the Inspired and seek to destroy them. Even if they do not know what geniuses are or what they do, they hate them nonetheless, and without thinking, reduce wonder to emptiness and wonders to scraps of metal.

Also called Hollow Men, Clockstoppers are otherwise regular mortals who lack the spark we ordinarily attribute to even the dullest and least imaginative human being. Instead of true motivation, they possess a kind of gnawing void, called Acedia. Greater Clockstoppers possess greater Acedia.

Clockstoppers and Havoc:

Clockstoppers trigger Havoc in wonders and manes as if they were mere mortals.

Acedia:

Acedia, like other Advantages, is rated from one to ten dots. The more a Clockstopper has, the more destructive he is to works of genius. At higher level, the Hollow One can ruin mundane technology and art, and at their greatest levels of power, Clockstoppers become veritable black holes of thought and reason, destroying even a person's ability to think.

A Clockstopper can also detect products of Mania like a genius can, rolling Acedia in place of Inspiration. (See *Detecting Wondrous Things*, Page 292.) This lets them track down and target the Inspired.

A Clockstopper's Acedia surrounds the Clockstopper to a distance of ten feet per dot of Acedia. A Clockstopper cannot reduce his Acedia or turn it off and on. A Clockstopper's Voids cannot be higher than her Acedia.

Geniuses, beholden, manes, and other beings of mad science are immediately, viscerally aware of when they have entered an Acedia. Though they might not know exactly what it is, they feel a dreadful, gnawing emptiness, like a razor-wind across their soul.

It is impossible to recover or transfer Mania within an Acedia.

Voids:

A Clockstopper possesses abilities, called Voids, which are rated from one to five dots. Mastery of a Void allows a Hollow Man to devastate geniuses and destroy their creations, while even lesser powers are dangerous nuisances. Geniuses have cataloged five Voids: Brotherhood of Righteousness, Corrupt the Hated Enemy, Hungry Emptiness, Natural Body, and Purify the Wounded Earth. Scholastics are generally regarded as the foremost experts on the Voids.

A Clockstopper receives one dot in a Void per dot of Acedia, and can purchase additional Voids with experience points.

Clockstopper Experience Point Costs:

Acedia	New dots x8
Void	New dots x6

Brotherhood of Righteousness:

The Clockstopper is able to call up furious mobs of mortals that she can use to attack and harass geniuses. The Hollow Man spends one hour circulating among the mortals in a place, poisoning their minds against a genius (or a whole collaborative), and rolls Acedia + Brotherhood of Righteousness + Presence vs. the Obligation + Presence of the lowest-Obligation genius targeted.

Dramatic Failure: The mob turns against the Hollow Man rather than the genius, if possible beating him savagely.

Failure: No one is swayed by the Clockstopper's polemics. The Clockstopper cannot attempt to use this Void again until at least a day passes.

Success: The Clockstopper creates a mob of ten mere mortals per dot of Brotherhood of Righteousness. The mortals will eagerly harass and insult the targeted genius(es) and their beholden, and will destroy ingredients, laboratories, wonders, and whatever else the Clockstopper directs them toward that is associated with the geniuses. They may throw things, but will not willingly commit murder, and they may flee if attacked directly. (See Mob Violence, below.) The population the Clockstopper finds in his mob matches the demographics of the area.

Exceptional Success: The Clockstopper's mob is willing to attack and kill any geniuses or beholden that the Hollow Man directs them to attack. They fight viciously and insanely, and will not flee unless the Clockstopper does so first.

Suggested Modifiers: The Clockstopper takes only a minute to whip up a mob (-2), only a turn (-4), the population is scientifically-minded or otherwise unlikely to heed the Clockstopper (-2), the population is technophobic or otherwise likely to heed the Clockstopper (+2), one or more of the targeted geniuses has directly hurt a member of the population (+2), one or more of the targeted geniuses is well-respected in the community (-2)

Mob Violence:

If a genius targeted by a mob that is not willing to kill someone attacks the mob, either directly or indirectly (through beholden, automata, etc.), the Clockstopper rolls a competing Acedia + Presence vs. Inspiration +

Presence check against the offending genius.

Dramatic Failure or Failure: The mob flees the wrath of the genius in a blind panic.

Success or Exceptional Success: The mob turns murderously violent, as if the Clockstopper rolled an Exceptional Success on her original roll.

Corrupt the Hated Enemy:

This diabolical Void allows a Hollow Man to subvert a genius' own wonders, orphaning them or turning them against their creator. Geniuses confess an unusual hatred for this Void, due to its capacity for betrayal.

A Clockstopper with this Void can target any wonder, bound or orphan, with a rank less than or equal to the Hollow Man's rank in this Void, that he sees inside his Acedia. He rolls Acedia + Corrupt the Hated Enemy + Presence - the creating genius' Inspiration + the wonder's rank.

Dramatic Failure: The Clockstopper cannot affect that wonder until his Acedia increases.

Failure: The Clockstopper cannot affect that wonder for the rest of the scene.

Success: The wonder is orphaned for the duration of the scene and will not serve or function for any genius.

Exceptional Success: The wonder is orphaned for the duration of the scene, and loyally serves the Clockstopper.

Suggested Modifiers: The wonder has been mistreated or abused (+2), the wonder is well cared for (-2), the wonder is faultless (-1), the wonder is damaged enough to suffer a penalty (+1), the wonder is closer to the Clockstopper than to the genius (+1)

If the Clockstopper scores an Exceptional Success in an attempt to turn a wonder, the Clockstopper can spend a point of Willpower to make an orphan wonder loyal to him. This effect is permanent and severs any links between the wonder's creator and the orphan. A Clockstopper can maintain the loyalty of a number of ranks of orphans equal to his Acedia + Corrupt the Hated Enemy.

Hungry Emptiness:

Geniuses call this technique the True Void. It turns the Hollow Man into a howling vacuum that devours Mania and thought alike, pulling all intellectual activity into a common nothingness.

Hungry Emptiness ●: Anyone or anything that possesses Mania loses one point of Mania per minute. Any use of Mania costs one additional point of Mania. All Mental Skill checks suffer a -1 penalty.

Hungry Emptiness ●●: Anyone or anything that possesses Mania loses two points of Mania per minute. Any use of Mania costs two additional points of Mania. All Mental Skill checks suffer a -2 penalty. Mathematical equations become meaningless and incomprehensible.

Hungry Emptiness ●●●: Anyone or anything that possesses Mania loses three points of Mania per minute. Any use of Mania costs three additional points of Mania. All Mental Skill checks suffer a -3 penalty. Art and music become meaningless and incomprehensible.

Hungry Emptiness ●●●●: Anyone or anything that possesses Mania loses four points of Mania per minute. Any use of Mania costs four additional points of Mania. All Mental Skill checks suffer a -4 penalty. Written

communication becomes impossible to understand or create.

Hungry Emptiness ●●●●●: Anyone or anything that possesses Mania loses five points of Mania per minute. Any use of Mania costs five additional points of Mania. All Mental Skill checks suffer a -5 penalty. Verbal communication becomes impossible.

Natural Body:

The Clockstopper is weirdly resistant to attack from technological and wondrous sources, shrugging off injury as if covered in metal plates, though her body does not apparently change.

Natural Body ●: The Clockstopper receives Durability 1 against all attacks by wonders.

Natural Body ●●: The Clockstopper receives Durability 2 against all attacks by wonders. All other attempts to influence the Clockstopper with a wonder suffer a -2 penalty.

Natural Body ●●●: The Clockstopper receives Durability 3 against all attacks by wonders, firearms, explosives, and other more advanced weapons. All other attempts to influence the Clockstopper with a wonder suffer a -5 penalty.

Natural Body ●●●●: The Clockstopper is immune to damage from wonders, firearms, explosives, and other advanced weapons (basically, anything that appeared after the Dark Ages). The Clockstopper is immune to all other influence by wonders.

Natural Body ●●●●●: The Clockstopper is immune to damage from any non-natural weapon (from rockets to rocks and clubs), wondrous or mundane. Any mundane item that tries to influence the Clockstopper breaks or fails: guns jam, flashlights flicker off, cars and planes trying to transport the Clockstopper stall, audio or video recording equipment shuts down, medical bandages dissolve, etc.

Purify the Wounded Earth:

With this Void, the Hollow Man can disrupt, damage, and ruin technology, wondrous and mundane. This Void affects anything in the Clockstopper's Acedia.

Purify the Wounded Earth ●: All wonders and manes suffer a -1 penalty to operation. Highly advanced technology (anything requiring components that were invented after 1990 or so, such as most modern computers) fails.

Purify the Wounded Earth ●●: All wonders and manes suffer a -2 penalty to operation. Any technology produced since about 1950 (including any computer technology and all transistors, jet planes, helicopters, rockets, televisions, and portable electronics) fails.

Purify the Wounded Earth ●●●: All wonders and manes suffer a -3 penalty to operation. Any technology produced since about 1850 (including all thinking and adding machines, anything that runs on electricity, all automobiles and flying machines, and any gun more advanced than a revolver or breach-loading rifle) fails.

Purify the Wounded Earth ●●●●: All wonders and manes suffer a -4 penalty to operation. Any technology developed past the Dark Ages (including the mill, the printing press, any type of gunpowder, advanced steel and metallurgy, and any type of machine with moving parts) fails.

Purify the Wounded Earth ●●●●●: Wonders and manes do not function and cease operation when in range of the Clockstopper's Acedia. (They reactivate upon the Clockstopper's departure.) No technology works within

range of the Clockstopper: fire will not light, weapons provide no benefit, animals grow feral and forget their domestication, and attempts to plant seeds fail. Irrigation fails to take, and the creation of new tools is impossible.

When technology "fails," several things can happen. Anything electronic simply switches off as if the power were cut. Computers turn off. Clocks stop. Lights flicker out.

Automobiles and other vehicles stall and die. Note that despite any advanced components, automobiles keep functioning until Purify the Wounded Earth 3, though they may lose advanced features like antilock brakes at 1 or 2.

Guns fail to fire, as do crossbows, ballistae, tasers, and other weapons. Weapons with no moving parts, like swords and axes, continue to function at Purify the Wounded Earth 4 or less, though if their high quality is the result of advanced metallurgy (most are, unless they're antiques) they lose any bonuses. At five dots, all weapons are useless and provide no bonus or benefit. They won't even cause Lethal damage.

Advanced metals and polymers continue to function, but they are degraded to the quality of crude metal or wood; though they maintain structural integrity (so a Clockstopper passing near a skyscraper will not cause it to collapse), any attempt to damage them treats plastic as thin wood and advanced armor as common metal.

A Clockstopper can spend one Willpower point to destroy an object of mundane technology within his Acedia that has failed. Elemental destruction flies out of the targeted object to a range in feet equal to its Size (so, destroying a car with Size 10 produces a ten-foot radius blast) that attacks everyone in range with a dice pool equal to the Clockstopper's Acedia. The blast causes Lethal damage.

Latoya Cartwright, Voice of the Community

Quote: *"How come you get all the breaks? No, not anymore."*

Background:

Latoya Cartwright never caught a break, not once in her hard, unwanted life. But she was determined to see her three kids fare better than she had. Despite those lofty goals, something happened that twisted her up inside: they started to succeed. Smart, dedicated, and—more than anything—lucky, they found themselves triumphing academically and socially, quickly surpassing their dull, worn-down mother. This infuriated Latoya, who tried to choke back her rage as she watched her children going off to college or making friends or bettering themselves with learning and culture. When her daughter Meghan came home the summer after her sophomore year of college with a young entomologist, something snapped in Latoya. She bought a gun, walked into the young man's makeshift lab, and tried to shoot him. She missed, but enormous spiders escaped from the broken glass, found Meghan, and bit her to death. Latoya blames the young man, Ruben, for her daughter's death, and now hunts him with little more than a cheap pistol and a knack for convincing people in her community that certain people "aren't right" and can't be trusted. She has set her sights now on her youngest son, now in high school, hoping to prevent him from becoming like Meghan, to bring him as low as his mother.

Description:

A haggard-looking woman in her late 40s, Latoya Cartwright has had a long, bad life, and it shows in the hard set of her mouth and the yellowish tinge under her eyes. She is a light-skinned African-American woman with freckles, a large forehead, and frizzy brown hair that's going gray at the temples. She usually wears ugly patterned dresses and cat-eye glasses, and she carries her revolver and a few accessories in a small white purse with a gold clasp. She favors inexpensive but inoffensive perfumes, and carefully attends to her appearance.

Storytelling Hints:

Latoya has started to gain power in her neighborhood. While not a gifted speaker, she has a knack for tapping into her community's fears of alienation and the growing identity crisis in rapidly-rising African-American communities. A voice of "our values," she has a place on the school board and the ear of the mayor and several city officials, who can't seem to get rid of her. While she has earned some respect, many people view her as a small-minded bigot masquerading as a community activist.

While a fanatic, Latoya understands that she is in over her head. She knows that powerful people move in her community, bronze-clad guardians of the rooftops and spider-scientists who perform strange experiments at night, and she fears them even more than she hates them. She has taken to setting up regular "community patrols," nominally for the purpose of combating crime (less of a concern recently in her neighborhood, which has undergone significant improvements in recent years), but really to flush out one of these "evil people." She doesn't know quite what she'll do when she gets someone, but she's ready with her small revolver, and so are several members of her little cadre that she's persuaded to service. If she succeeds, there's a good chance her neighborhood's mad scientists will recognize what she is.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Investigation (Gossip) 3, Politics (Education) 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Drive 3, Firearms 2, Larceny 1, Stealth 1

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Angry Letters) 2, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Allies (Community) 3, Allies (Town Hall) 1, Contacts (Community, Police, Town Hall) 3, Status (School Board) 1

Willpower: 6

Morality: 5 (Derangement: Suspicion)

Virtue: Temperance

Vice: Envy

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Health: 7

Acedia: 3

Voids: Brotherhood of Righteousness 2, Corrupt the Hated Enemy 1, Natural Body 3

Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Light revolver	2(L)	20/40/80	6

Walking-Man, Peripatetic Dreamkiller

Quote: *"Now you are pure. Now you are savage and unsullied. Now I will leave you."*

Background:

A legendary bogey-man among the Inspired, Walking-Man's origins are murky. He first appeared in 1977, preaching an anti-technology, anti-government gospel that inspired a small Idaho town to commit mass suicide. Since then he's been sighted in Nebraska, Idaho, and Colorado. Rumors claim that Walking-Man was born in the Dust Bowl during the Great Depression, and that those formative years, followed by the Second World War, convinced him that the world was too sick to live. He has been seen meeting with powerful Phenomenologists, though what this means is uncertain. Most geniuses just know that rumors of Walking-

Man are enough to send powerful mad scientists running for cover, because when Walking-Man leaves the wilderness, the communities he enters are inevitably destroyed.

Description:

Walking-Man is tall and skeletally lean. His face is old, worn, and lined, with gaping pockmarks across his left cheek and left temple. He is usually filthy, with thick, dirty nails and long, gray, ragged-looking hair. His hands are very large and crisscrossed with scars and callouses. He dresses in a plain duster, a broad-brimmed hat, and worn hobnailed boots. He is rarely seen without his walking-staff and his old Remington rifle.

Storytelling Hints:

Walking-Man is less of a person now than an elemental force. Typically, he arrives in a small, insular town and begins preaching a doctrine of simplicity and returning to the natural earth. He singles out undesirables, which always include mad scientists but which can include nearly anyone, for brutal mob justice, using these violent paroxysms to bind the community together in a collective sense of shame, guilt, and fear of the outside world discovering their misdeeds. He then removes the community's leaders (even those who have previously supported him), pushing people to new levels of depravity, fanaticism, and savagery, as he strips the veneer of civilization from them.

Around this time, Walking-Man encourages "his" people to dismantle their technology, starting with modern conveniences and amenities but quickly moving backwards in time. According to Inspired witnesses (those few who survived or fled Walking-Man's wrath), this period can last several weeks or even months, as the surviving members of the community struggle to adopt to a 19th-century agrarian lifestyle. But inevitably Walking-Man grows tired of this plateau phase, and pushes the increasingly frightened (and at this point, often starving) community further from "society's corruption," encouraging them to abandon all their technology and "join with nature." This is the final phase of Walking-Man's operation, as desperate, ill-equipped people try to survive in the wilderness. Usually a few people seem to wake up at this point and rebel against Walking-Man, but by then it is too late, and in weeks, any evidence of the small community's population is wiped away.

Geniuses have never been able to stop Walking-Man: the mobs he can raise are simply too brutal to stand against without an out-and-out massacre, and Walking-Man himself is nearly indestructible. Though his normal "preaching" mode resembles conservative Protestant beliefs, Walking-Man has taken on the guise of a Catholic priest, a New-Ager, and even an environmental activist. This chameleonic behavior has given rise to rumors that Walking-Man somehow "belongs" to the Phenomenologists, though it's unclear how exactly that would work, and Walking-Man has never seemed to discriminate in his targets.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Theology) 3, Crafts 1, Investigation 4, Medicine 1, Occult 3, Politics (Small Towns) 5 [-3 to all Mental Skill checks]

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Drive 1, Firearms (Rifle) 3, Stealth 3, Survival (Wastelands) 4, Weaponry (Staff) 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 3, Expression (Preaching) 5, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 4, Socialize 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 5

Merits: Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Inspiring, Iron Stamina, Quick Healer, Resources 1

Willpower: 7

Morality: 2 (Derangements: Irrationality, Narcissism, Vocalization)

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 9

Defense: 3

Speed: 13

Health: 10

Acedia: 7

Voids: Brotherhood of Righteousness 5, Hungry Emptiness 3, Natural Body 5, Purify the Wounded Earth 3

Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Rifle	5(L)	200/400/800	13
Walking Stick	2(B)	-	10

Mad Scientists:

One of the worst threats a genius can face is another genius, and there are plenty of deranged, violent, or just plain unpredictable geniuses out there. A genius can find herself threatened by Lemurians, the Illuminated, and just run-of-the-mill cultists, lunatics, and malicious super-scientists.

The Guardians of Forever:

The Terminals, before their mysterious disappearance, employed powerful and deadly guards pulled from all over history to enforce their will and maintain the timeline that would, in time, establish their existence. Though the Terminals have disappeared, the Guardians of Forever still remain. Some have gone rogue, some struggle to find evidence of the Terminals, and others just keep doing their job, which is to maintain the timeline and prevent even more temporal catastrophes. Every year their job grows more difficult.

Guardians of Forever are powerful, alien, and generally have little interest in negotiation. They are also, however, often desperately overworked, meaning that Guardians will employ other geniuses to do their dirty work. They are also increasingly corrupt, and today they resemble a company teetering on bankruptcy rather than the monolithic and powerful organization they once were.

Rapata, Cranky Chrono-Boss

Quote: *"You done fucked up and now the future sucks. Fix it before I step on your neck."*

Background:

Rapata—"Mister Shark" to his underlings—was an accomplished Maori navigator who went farther and faster than his peers, who discovered secrets of wind and wood that none of his people had ever considered. This was in the 17th century, and Rapata's talents drew the attention of the Guardians of Forever. He rose quickly in the esteem of his fellows, guarding against intrusions all over the 16th and 17th centuries, until suddenly his handler (a woman named May Scalli, from 1923), vanished suddenly. Disturbed by these developments, Rapata loaded up his time raft and went in search of her. When he emerged from the timestream, everything had fallen apart: the Terminals were gone, the timeline was in tatters, and the Guardians of Forever had already begun to unravel.

The loss of his life's purpose infuriated Rapata. Using a mix of persuasion and bullying, he organized several lax Guardians around his own millennium and began policing the timeline again, determined to prevent the Cold Ones and rogue time travelers from fracturing time beyond all recognition. He continues this thankless work to this day, covering a temporal swath roughly from the 16th to the 21st centuries, while trying to establish contact with other Guardians who can be trusted.

Description:

Rapata is a big, heavily-muscled Maori with a slouch hat who chews angrily on a cigar whenever he's in a timeline that allows it. He tries to dress appropriately and use Metaptropi to cover up his intricate facial tattoos, but sometimes he's too busy, so he'll just stroll down the streets of 19th century Cairo or 21st century Boston in a feather cape and a taiaha cudgel screaming the names of whoever is in trouble. Rapata's reputation among temporal criminals often means this is enough to flush them out. When appearing in 20th or 21st Century western society, Rapata favors a pinstripe suit that shows off his powerful physique.

Storytelling Hints:

Mister Shark is the temporal manager of over five centuries, overseeing a staff that's far too small to police such a vast sweep of space and time. Though capable, he's not fully trained to face the rigors of his work, and even a qualified mad scientist would be overwhelmed by the workload and the pressure. To make it worse, the Guardians of Forever have grown fractured and unpredictable. Those Guardians whom Rapata has contacted have gone rogue, carving out their own temporal fiefdoms or fiddling with time for their own ends. Loyalists are nowhere to be found within 300 years in either direction, and Rapata doesn't have the time to go hunting. And every day a new problem crops up: the assassination of Queen Elizabeth I one day, the introduction of computers in 1750 the next.

This has left Mister Shark a very cranky man. Chomping on his cigar and yelling at underlings from behind his mahogany desk, he resembles the city editor of a 20th century newspaper more than a master of the fourth dimension. He's always looking for new workers—people who can be trusted—but the workload he hits them with is enough to break even the most energetic geniuses. He hates intervening personally, and if forced to do so he is perfunctory to the point of brutality. While he recognizes the difference between an honest mistake and malice, Rapata is increasingly desperate for Mania and funding, and is not above conning bewildered and frightened geniuses into serving his ends, or shaking down troublemakers for wonders and supplies.

Foundation: Rogue**Catalyst:** Grimm**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 5, Wits 4, Resolve 3**Physical Attributes:** Strength 4 (7), Dexterity 3, Stamina 4**Social Attributes:** Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 2**Mental Skills:** Academics (History) 5, Computer 3, Crafts (woodwork) 4, Investigation (Temporal) 4, Medicine 3, Occult 2, Politics 2, Science (Chronodynamics) 5**Physical Skills:** Athletics (Swimming) 5, Brawl 3, Drive (Canoing) 5, Firearms 2, Larceny 1, Survival (Oceanic) 4, Weaponry (Bludgeons) 4**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 2, Empathy 2, Expression (Of Displeasure) 3, Intimidation 5, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3**Resources:** 4 (Temporal Shakedowns)**Other Merits:** Assembly Line 3, Beholden (Number 2, Ability 3, Prowess 4), Laboratory (Equipment 2, Size 3, Security 5), Allies (Secret Maori Lineage) 4, Allies (Guardians of Forever) 3, Contacts (Journalists, National Geographic Society) 2, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Fleet of Foot 2, Languages (Maori, Marquesan, English, French, German) 4, Strong Back**Willpower:** 5**Obligation:** 5**Aesthetic:** Cyberpacificia**Virtue:** Hope**Vice:** Sloth**Health:** 9 (15)**Initiative:** 5

Defense: 3 (0)

Speed: 14 (17)

Inspiration: 6 (Jabir -2)

Axioms: Apokalypsi* 5, Exelixa 2, Epikrato 2, Katastrofi* 4, Metaptropi* 4, Prostasia 2, Skafoi* 5

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 30/12/6

Time Shell (Larval): Apokalypsi 5. Size 2 (metal shell). Roll 11 dice to scan across time. Range 100'. Only functions during business hours (9 am to 5 pm, local time, with a half-hour lunch around noon).

Chronoboat (x4): Skafoi 5 (time machine), Skafoi 1 (boat). Size 2 (integral time machine), 2 (boat), Durability 3, Structure 13. Costs 3+ Mania per roll to travel through time or one Mania to activate the boat. Roll 14 dice to travel through time. Safe Speed 360 mph, Maximum Speed 720 mph, Acceleration 180 mph, Handling +6. Exposed Canopy +2. Takes one turn to change from boat to time machine mode. (The chronoboat still functions as a basic raft during this time.) Boat: Exhausting, causing one Bashing damage to rower every hour. Time Machine: Limited to 300 years in either direction from 1923.

Transformation Ta Moko (x4): Metaptropi 1. Size 0 (facial tattoo). Roll 10 dice to transform oneself. Costs one Mania. Grafted. Self Only. User smells of sea breeze for an hour after use.

Titan Ta Moko: Metaptropi 3. Size 0 (tattoo on chest). Roll 10 dice to grow to Size 11. Costs six Mania. Grants +3 to Strength, -3 to Defense, +6 to weapon damage, +6 Health levels. Grafted. Self Only. Effect ends if the user is separated from solid natural earth or salt water; reactivates upon returning to appropriate environment.

Taiaha of Temporal Disruption: Katastrofi 4. Size 4 (huge club). Damage 5 (11) Aggravated. Costs 4 Mania. Roll 14 (20) dice. Disintegrating. Knockdown. Variable Damage. Shatters if it causes no damage to a target with Durability.

The Illuminated:

Monsters—sometimes extraordinary, sometimes disgusting—the Illuminated haunt the dreams of mad scientists, their mere existence offering an ultimate release from the frustrated brilliance of the Peerage, from the suffocating hypocrisy of Lemuria: a moment's lapse and a genius can consume himself from the inside out, purified and transformed, a creature of pure Mania...and utterly without humanity.

The Illuminated come in many varieties. Some work alone, performing hideous and abominable experiments—they know enough not to let their atrocities come to light. Others form weird cabals, behaving like some sort of alien gestalt intellect, as if the same transcendent force controls each of them, compelling them to commit newer and more dreadful acts of mad science. Some Illuminated are screaming monsters, the horrific results of too much self-experimentation, vile once-human things that lurk in the dark places of the world, occasionally coming up to feed. Others appear completely normal, able to fool their comrades and former friends while they work toward some unfathomable and alien goal.

Professor Partridge Crown, Tawkin-Maker

Quote: *"Don't struggle. Soon I'll make you better. Soon I'll make you nothing but part of me."*

Background:

Publicly, Professor Crown has been an unimpressive member of the Peerage, a middling Scholastic known for providing geniuses with historical information about the region. A local fixture since the 80s, Crown holds a public position at the university, where he is considered a somewhat blithing and arrogant scholar of Middle Eastern history. His scattered, incomprehensible lectures are barely attended, but somehow he hangs on. No one, not even his fellow geniuses, knew that the "Professor Crown" teaching classes and interacting with curious mad scientists was almost always a tawkin, a homunculus substitute created from ancient Persian alchemy. Meanwhile, the real Professor Crown labored frantically, day after day, compelled by strange disembodied minds that the university dug up in the late 19th century.

Imperceptibly, the real Professor Crown lost his mind. That in itself was neither surprising nor particularly

condemned by his fellows, and Crown's unmada status barely went remarked-upon. Crown maintained his workload, disappearing for weeks on end, and when his old friends came to see what had happened, it was already too late. Crown captured them, killed them, and duplicated them, using secrets he had gained from starry intellects that had migrated from the blackness of space to his own mind. Now Professor Crown—or the thing that used to be him—has a simple goal: to replace all living things with extensions of his own will.

Description:

Professor Crown is an unassuming man in late middle age with thinning brown hair, pale skin (smooth and unlined by the years), and clear, almost translucent blue eyes. He prefers slightly casual clothes, including slacks and a golf shirt with sneakers, and he is rarely without a battered suede rucksack full of old books. His behavior with students or geniuses curious about local history is pleasant, casual, even a little banal (despite the Jabir), though sensitive people may be troubled by Professor Crown's distractability and his apparent disinterest in telling people not slated for replacement apart.

When Crown sets to work, he changes, becoming cold, clinical, disinterested. He mumbles about his future plans, rambling uncontrollably about his desire to annihilate all intelligence in the universe except his own thoughts.

Storytelling Hints:

The professor is a depraved inhuman monster, though he hides it very well. While some Illuminated devolve into a savage and monstrous state, Professor Crown has maintained his mask of normality. Nonetheless his goals are alien and terrible: in his private moments, Crown identifies himself as The Self-Eating Fire, a cosmic intellect that predates our spacetime continuum and that will exist long after our reality perishes. Crown dreams of annihilating all other modes of thought and being in the cosmos, making the whole universe but a false extension of himself. He believes that there is only one other true intellect, whom he calls the Metal Peacock God. This creature attempts to make the world real, piece by piece, by infusing his own essence into it in an act of beatific sacrifice. Professor Crown believes that he—the Self-Eating Fire—is the true Devil, destined to remove all reality from the world except for his lies and copies.

But Crown is not always as clean and elegant as he would like: his university has started to suspect something is wrong with some of its professors, and as Professor Crown steps up his replacements, it's only a matter of time before someone notices what Crown has become. Recently the professor has started to believe that certain other Illuminated also bear the Self-Eating Fire, and is searching for other aspects of his deranged psyche.

Foundation: Scholastic

Catalyst: Neid

Scholarship: Hermetic Order of the 28 Spheres (Spirit)

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics (Arabia) 5, Computer 2, Crafts 3, Investigation (Documentation) 4, Medicine 3, Occult 4, Politics 1, Science 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Larceny 3, Stealth 1

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Historical Lectures) 2, Intimidation (Flagrant Insanity) 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize (Faculty) 3, Subterfuge 4.

Resources: 3 (Professor)

Other Merits: Assembly Line 4, Calculus Vampire, Generator 3 (Size 8 furnace, provides 5 Mania/day), Tenure, Technomancer, Allies (university) 2, Contacts (international scholars, university) 2, Languages (English, Arabic, Sanskrit) 2

Willpower: 5

Obligation: 0 (Derangements: Megalomania, Vocalization)

Aesthetic: Clay-Fired

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Wrath

Health: 8

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Inspiration: 4 (Unmada; Jabir -2)

Axioms: Automata* 4, Epikrato* 3, Exelixa 1, Katastrofi 3, Metaptropi* 2, Prostasia 2

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 20/7/4

Mild-Mannered Professor (x7): Automata 4. Size 5. 16 Automation Points. Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 1, Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 1. Academics 3, Science 3, Subterfuge 3, Investigation 3. 8 Mania (1 bound to maintain permanently changed appearance with shapeshifting node). Speed 9 (Base Speed 5). Biological, Looks Human, Limited Battery Life (rest 8 hours), Mundane Power Source (food pills), Decentralized Anatomy. Cannot recognize humor or irony.

- *Integral Shapeshifting Node:* Metaptropi 1. Size 0. Roll 7 dice to change appearance. Costs one Mania. Internalized. Self Only. Increases food and water requirements five-fold.

Lamp of Broken Thoughts (Larval): Epikrato 3. Size 2 (flickering lamp). Roll 10 dice vs. Resolve + Metanormal Advantage for mind control. Range 40'. Costs three Mania. Basilisk Method. Burns user for three dice of Lethal damage on a failed roll.

Torch of Ibn Rushd: Katastrofi 3. Size 1 (metal torch). Damage 4 Aggravated. Roll 8 dice. Range 40/80/160. Disintegrating. Ineffective in bright light.

Material Metamorph Brazier (Transgressive Larval): Metaptropi 2. Size 2 (bowl). Roll 6 dice (vs. Stamina + Metanormal Advantage, if used to attack) to transform materials. Range 10'. Costs one Mania per five Size points. Leaves the smell of charcoal on anything transformed.

Lemurians:

Though Lemuria is no longer at war with the Peerage, tensions still run dangerously high, and Lemuria's natural penchant for paranoia, self-aggrandizement, and revolutionary-authoritarian behavior makes it an unpredictable bedfellow. Nonetheless, almost every city in the World of Darkness has a zotheca where Lemurians gather, and where all sorts of strange goods can be found.

Arturo Banger, Deranged Biotheorist

Quote: *"The germ theory of disease is a lie propagated by International Jewry and Afrocentrists at UCLA. Of course, everyone knows this. What people don't know is how the Freemasons and College Football are in league to hide the truth of the metabio fields."*

Background:

While the first in his family to catalyze, Arturo Banger descends from a venerable family of British screwballs. Arturo seemed to fly straight until he attended college at Penn State in America. In his second year he abruptly switched his major from physics to medicine while starting up a zine called *Morphic Truth Now*, which purported to reveal the secrets behind modern medicine, the pharmaceutical industries, vaccination, the germ theory of disease, and the history of technology. Littered with racism, pseudoscience, and what Phenomenologist science critic Madelaine Cera called "numerous note-perfect examples of upper-class twittery," it alienated Arturo from his colleagues and eventually drove him from Penn State entirely. It's not clear what triggered Arturo's breakdown, but he quickly fell in with an Etherite zotheca called Victoria's New Explorers.

With them, he developed a unified theory of medicine involving structuralism, force field physics, and Lamarckian biology. Arturo's medical ideas led to clever and unique wonders that further cemented his beliefs. But like many Lemurians, he pushed too far. Last year in London, he unveiled his "brilliant discoveries" to a group of mundane biologists and doctors. The results were catastrophic: when the assembled mundanes turned against him in open mockery, Arturo fired up a plague cannon, killing three of them and injuring several more. His fellow mad scientists, terrified, disowned and abandoned him, scattering into the woodwork. Now Arturo is alone with the consequences of his failure while peers seek him out to punish him for his transgression.

Description:

Arturo Banger is a chubby man in his mid 30s with wide brown eyes and curly blond hair. "Hobbit-like" was a reasonable descriptor back before his total breakdown. Lately he rarely appears well put-together, and often sports a scruffy beard and perpetually-smudged glasses. His eyes are haunted and blood-shot, his hands quick and nervous. If given a chance to dress in his preferred fashions, he prefers the classic look of a 19th century scientist: a long coat, rubber shoes, suspenders and a bow tie. But lately, pursued by other mad scientists for his indiscretions, he often appears in a ragged jacket and jeans, his wonders stuffed in a black Nike duffel-bag slung over his shoulder. He's also begun to lose weight, a combination of stress and hard living—and perhaps botched experiments—and in bad light it seems like his skin is hanging loose below his eyes and chin.

Storytelling Notes:

Arturo is angry, haughty, bigoted, and paranoid. The paranoia, at least, is legitimate, as a Progenitor neutralization team led by a fanatical old Demiurge has hunted him across three continents. Nonetheless, there's little to pity in Arturo, who is a peevish, angry, bitter man who believes—like so many Etherites—that he has figured out the secrets of the universe, and who flies into rages and tantrums when contradicted. While focused on biology instead of physics like many of his peers, Arturo's theories are typically Etherite, most of them consisting of explanations for why his genius hasn't been recognized by the world. Racist conspiracy theories mingle with paranoid fantasies about ancient, secret societies of "germ scholars" to justify why Arturo's ideas go ignored.

Baramin: Etherite

Catalyst: Neid

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 1

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 1, Crafts 3, Medicine 4, Politics (Racism) 3, Science (Ecology) 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny (Filching Supplies) 3, Stealth 2, Survival 1

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Resources: 2 (Residual Family Wealth)

Other Merits: Utility Belt (Science, Medicine) 2, Danger Sense, Holistic Awareness, Languages (English, Spanish, modern Greek) 2

Willpower: 5

Obligation: 4 (Social Skills -1; Derangements: Paranoia, Irrationality)

Aesthetic: Watson|Presume

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Wrath

Health: 6

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Inspiration: 3 (Unmada; Jabir -2)

Axioms: Epikrato* 2, Exelixi* 3, Katastrofi* 2, Metaptropi 2

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 16/7/3

Passion Globe (Larval): Epikrato 2. Size 2 (glass globe). Roll 5 dice vs. Composure + Metanormal Advantage or Size + Stamina + Metanormal Advantage to control emotions or engage in puppetry. Costs two Mania. Fragile.

Bad Air Treatment Mask (x2): Exelixi 1. Size 2 (filter mask 1, life support 1). Roll 6 dice to heal. Every point of Mania restores one Lethal or two Bashing damage. Healed subjects suffer from the Fixation Derangement for one day. Also provides life support: 6 hours per point of Mania.

Bio-Modification Suit: Exelixi 3. Size 5 (worn suit). Roll 8 dice for enhancements. Success grants up to four dots of enhancement; each dot costs one Mania. Flexible Upgrade. Self Only. Leaves user subject to infection—roll Stamina the next day; a failure incurs a -1 penalty to all actions for the rest of the day from illness.

Plague Needle Gun (Larval): Katastrofi 2. Size 2 (bulky pistol). Damage 4 Lethal. Roll 9 dice. Range 30/60/120. Costs two Mania. Continuing Damage (water does not stop damage), Charge-up Time (3 turns). Gun attaches probes that cause one Health level of Bashing damage per shot from user.

Structural Alteration Field: Metaptropi 1. Size 1 (tiny pistol). Roll 7 dice to hit, then 11 dice to change appearance. Range 30/60/120. Costs one Mania. Only Affects Humans. Metaptropi Ray. A low, nearly imperceptible buzzing surrounds the transformed subject.

Void Engineers:

I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguished, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air.
-Lord Byron

For eternities, the Cold Ones labored in nonexistence, pressed into nothingness by the weight of the Terminals' reality. But now the Terminals are gone, and the Cold Ones rule the vast bleak emptiness at the end of time. And they are determined to maintain their existence and, if possible, travel back to the Hot Days when suns still burned and protons still clung to electrons. To this end, they have contacted beings from all over space and time to serve their needs.

Those they contacted on Earth are called the Void Engineers, and they are a secret cabal of geniuses who work to bring darkness and emptiness to this Earth. The struggles between the Void Engineers and the Guardians of Forever are legendary and brutal.

Dr. Keiko Takamori, Dark Poet

Quote: *"Cannot you pity them? How hungry they are? Is your empathy so limited?"*

Background:

Doctor Takamori's family burned in a house fire when she was nine years old. Raised by a succession of disinterested or sadistic relations, she lost herself in poetry, science fiction, and self-mutilation. At the age of fourteen, a Phenomenologist named Victoria Sato discovered her and made her beholden. Together they manipulated language and history, spreading lies and delusions across Japan, pushing its nationalists and a handful of cultists toward reckless violence so either they or all of Japan would burn. When a collaborative killed Victoria Sato, they spared Keiko, who regained normality for a few years, graduated with a doctorate in astrophysics from Tokyo Tech, and promptly catalyzed despite all her best efforts to escape the cruel world of Inspiration.

Reluctantly she joined the Directors and began a career with them, but soon she detected strange things at the edge of the solar system: silvery orbs, undetectable by other sources, floating near Pluto or amidst the Oort Cloud. They called to her, and she answered. Over the course of two years, they explained what they were: heralds of a vast and ancient power at the end of the universe, one that desired to return to the ages of light and life and grow strong again. Compelled by the enigmatic beauty of their tragic plea, she swore herself to the service of this strange temporal force, promising to bring it fully into our reality.

Description:

Doctor Takamori is a thin, striking woman in her mid 20s with chalky skin, severely-cut hair, and the tall, lanky body of a model. She had her entire body tattooed with Yakuza designs when she was sixteen upon the request of her previous master, and she normally wears unadorned black silk clothes that cover her entire body when in public, enhanced by a bright silk scarf or flower. Though very beautiful, she speaks with a pronounced stutter and has trouble staying still for long, her eyes darting nervously around the room when she is not reading her poetry.

Storytelling Hints:

Doctor Takamori has never felt entirely in control of her own destiny. This attitude, so at odds with the default assumptions of the Directors, has left her dangerously isolated and vulnerable to outside influence. Her (few) friends assumed ideological attacks by the Phenomenologists or even unmada when she started to isolate herself. They have no idea what is really controlling Doctor Takamori's actions. Increasingly disinterested in the goings-on of the peers, she instead divides her time between trying to contact other Void Engineers and communicating with the satellites orbiting Pluto. So far, the Cold Ones do not fully trust her, and have given her only minor and inconsequential tasks until she can prove her worth (or lose enough Obligation that she will see nothing wrong with serving the oblivion the Cold Ones represent).

Doctor Takamori is currently in the process of building a rocket-ship that will, she hopes, allow her to interact with the Plutonian satellites more directly. She suspects that this is not what they would want, but is determined to go through with it regardless. She tells herself that this is an act of protest against her new masters, but secretly suspects that she lacks the will to escape their control. A natural follower, she will nonetheless violently oppose any direct effort by other mad scientists to sever her ties with the Cold Ones.

Foundation: Director

Catalyst: Staunen

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Literary Criticism) 4, Computer 2, Crafts 2, Investigation 1, Occult 1, Science (Astrophysics) 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Drive (Rockets) 2, Firearms 2, Stealth 2, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Expression (Poetry) 4, Intimidation 2, Subterfuge 3

Resources: 2 (Poet and Literary Editor)

Other Merits: Laboratory (Equipment 3, Size 1, Security 2), Contacts (astronomers, writers) 2, Fame 1, Fleet of Foot 2, Language 2 (Japanese, English, Korean), Striking Looks 2, Adopted Orphan 3

Willpower: 6

Obligation: 6

Aesthetic: Black Plastic

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Sloth

Health: 8

Initiative: 7

Defense: 3

Speed: 12

Inspiration: 4 (Jabir -1)

Axioms: Apokalypsi* 3, Automata 1, Epikrato* 3, Exelixi 1, Katastrofi 1 Prostasia 1, Skafoi* 3

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 20/11/4

Deep Space Scanner: Apokalypsi 3. Size 8 (bulky telescope). Roll 11 dice. Range anywhere in the solar system. Charge-up time 5 minutes. Costs 1 Mania. Onboard Storage. Only works at night.

Book of Terrible Will: Epikrato 3. Size 2 (heavy tome). Roll 7 dice vs. Resolve + Metanormal Advantage to control thoughts. Costs three Mania. Takes user's voice for one minute after a successful use.

Repair Beam: Exelixi 1. Size 1 (handheld "egg"). Roll 4 dice to make repairs. One Mania restores five points of Structure. Grants +3 bonus to regular repair checks (no cost). Increased range (40'). Spreads frost over any repaired object.

Coincidental Instigator: Epikrato 1. Size 1 (handheld "egg"). Roll 7 dice. Costs one Mania. Range 40'. Does not work when observed by mere mortals.

Freeze Ray: Katastrofi 1. Size 2 (heavy gun). Damage 2 Bashing, then roll 3 dice vs. target's Strength + Brawl. Range 40/80/160. Costs one Mania. Immobilize attack. Must be plugged in to electricity (100' cord).

Guardian Tattoo Matrix (Adopted Orphan 3): Prostasia 3, Size 0, Armor 5. Costs three Mania. Grafted. Glows for five minutes (through clothes) after use.

Übermenschen:

The Hollow Earth is nice, but it would be better if it weren't full of Nazi sorcerer-scientists who hunger for blood and secrets. These are the Übermenschen. When National Socialism finally went under after five long years of war, countless scientists, doctors, and philosophers found their worldviews swept away, exposed as simultaneously monstrous and absurd. As the world discovered the full extent of Nazi atrocities, the burst of Mania resulting from the collapse of the Nazi worldview and its scattering to the dark and ignorant corners of the intellectual world birthed the Übermenschen.

Dr. Ilsa Hauser, Hollow Earth Doktor

Quote: *"We haff ways to make you talk, Herr Doktor. They are fun for us, not so fun for you."*

Background:

Dr. Hauser is the granddaughter of the first generation of Übermenschen and a member of the venerable and respected Hauser line. The Hausers organized Übermenschen when they first appeared, identifying Nazi Manes in cities all over the world. Together with mortal-born Nazi scientists who were fleeing prosecution after the war, they led the Nazi diaspora. Many rejected the Hausers' plans: some hid themselves deep in the Antarctic, others traveled in silvery UFOs to the Moon, and still others blended in with mortal populations to continue their nefarious work. But most decided that their best chance was with the Hausers, who built mole machines to travel to the Hollow Earth, where they could rule the savage races there and exploit the medical bounty of flora lit by the inner sun.

Dr. Ilsa Hauser was born to prestige and privilege, and she was determined to hold on to it as her family suffered the vicissitudes of fortune and political pressure in the Hollow Earth. She spent her youth in San Francisco with the Directors, a grafted tail allowing her to pass as some other type of mane. There she mastered their techniques before bowing to political pressure and returning to the Thule Society. Many feared that she had defected, but Hauser was a true believer in the Übermensch cause. Nonetheless, she was determined to rebuild the Hollow Earth Nazis in an image of modernity. She commissioned the construction of an enormous central WiFi computer, named Pericles, which let Agartha contact the mundane Internet through Apokalypsi communicators. Now, through her old Director contacts, Hauser works to infiltrate higher education and restore the Übermensch philosophy to supremacy. If she succeeds, the Hollow Earth will have a new generation of allies on the surface world, and even if her plan fails, another Maniac Storm

might swell their ranks and allow them to destroy their Inspired enemies.

Description:

Like all Ubermenschen who are not exterminated before adulthood, Ilsa Hauser is an excellent physical specimen in the narrow mold of the Nazi ideal: tall, blond, athletic, and pale. In her early 30s, she is perhaps too heavily-built to qualify as a traditional beauty, but she is striking, commanding, and fit, with a perpetual smirk on her made-up lips. She prefers to avoid the blood-splattered lab coat of Ubermensch science or the gray cotton and tweed of women's fashion in the Hollow Earth, instead favoring modern American clothing: a sweatshirt or button-down blouse, form-fitting jeans, pumps, and chunky sunglasses. She could pass for a postgrad or a businesswoman on her day off, her accent more generically European than specifically German, which is exactly what Hauser wants.

Storytelling Hints:

While sadistic, vengeful, and more or less totally insane, Dr. Hauser presents a calm and professional appearance. The "Spirit of the Teutonic People," the Ubermensch name for the sort of Illumination that consumes many of them, seems interested in allowing her to operate independently, at least for now. Dr. Hauser's natural aura of authority usually allows her to get her way with regular people as well as Teutonic Historical Essences, and she expects her orders to be followed, even by her enemies.

Dr. Hauser prefers to use her Skills and connections rather than her Inspired abilities, which aren't particularly impressive. In this way she is much like many Directors, and still shares many of their traits, including a comfort with power and the expectation of dominance. Nonetheless, Hauser is an accomplished killer and can defend herself if it comes to that. Screened by beholden jet-flyers, she is more than capable of overwhelming an unprepared collaborative.

Stock Nazis: While each genius in the chronicle should be unique, if you need a bunch of "stock" Nazi scientists to throw at the collaborative, you can use Dr. Hauser's stats, slightly modified. Change all Social Attributes to 2 and all Social Skills to 1, and remove all Social Merits except Striking Looks.

Program: Thulian

Catalyst: Grimm

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer 2, Crafts 3, Investigation 1, Medicine (Unnecessary Surgery) 3, Occult (Teutonic Mythology) 2, Politics 2, Science 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Drive (Underground) 3, Firearms 3, Survival 1, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Empathy 4, Expression 3, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 3, Socialize 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 4

Resources: 3 (Ubermensch Payroll)

Other Merits: Shared Beholden (Number 4, Ability 2, Prowess 4), Shared Laboratory (Equipment 3, Size 4, Security 3), Mane (biological human), Allies (Nazi sympathizers) 4, Contacts (academics, militants) 2, Languages (German, English, Italian, Japanese) 3, Striking Looks 2

Willpower: 4

Obligation: 2 (Social Skills -2; Derangements: Irrationality, Megalomania, Fixation)

Aesthetic: Bloodstained Raygun

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Pride

Health: 8

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 11

Inspiration: 2 (Unmada; Jabir -2)

Axioms: Apokalypsi* 2, Epikrato 2, Exelixi* 1, Katastrofi 2, Prostasia 1, Skafoi* 3

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 12/7/2

Identification Goggles (Larval): Apokalypsi 2. Size 1 (goggles). Roll 3 dice. Range 10'. Goggles. Morbid and bloody images drain one point of Willpower per fifteen minutes worn.

Runic Healer (Larval): Exelixi 1. Size 1 (rune-covered syringe). Roll 5 dice to heal. Every point of Mania restores one point of Lethal or two points of Bashing damage. Produces narcissism for one day in healed subjects.

Mutilator Ray (Larval): Katastrofi 2. Size 3 (submachinegun). Damage 5 Lethal. Roll 11 dice. Range 20/40/80. Costs two Mania. Causes one Bashing damage to wielder per shot.

Jet Pack: Skafoi 3. Size 4 (backpack). Safe Speed 800 mph, Maximum Speed 1200 mph, Acceleration 400 mph/turn. Handling +2. Roll 7 dice. Costs three Mania. Leaves an easily-followed contrail, visible even at night.

Hollow Earth Scorpion Troopers

Quote: *"What are you doing in this sector, swine?"*

Background:

Scorpion troopers were the brainchild of Doktor Harald Lindgren, a ruthless military mastermind who, when he tried to defect from the Hollow Earth Nazis, was destroyed by his own creations. Trained to outmatch the ruthless efficiency of the Moon's Argentines and Antarctica's Frostmessers, Scorpion Troopers are raised from birth in communal barracks, where they undergo a youth of brutal training and discipline. Despite this elite training, the Hollow Earth Nazis are more interested in numbers than in lethal efficiency, meaning that scorpion troopers are trained to function as mass infantry or air corps groups rather than as elite small-squad specialists.

Description:

Scorpion Troopers aren't cloned, but they might as well be. All are male, large, blond, tanned, and crew-cut. Recently a three-day growth of beard has come into fashion, what they call a "cowboy" look. Their uniforms are gold and black, resembling Nazi officer uniforms decorated with scorpion and Egyptian motifs. While many Ubermenschen are ill-equipped for the modern world, Hollow Earth Nazis have worked hard to adapt to a changing surface reality, and often know enough about mundane society to blend in reasonably well. While their mad science has a deliberately retro look, Scorpion Troopers are, of all Ubermensch armed forces, most comfortable with modern technology, from cell phones to laptops.

Storytelling Hints:

Scorpion Troopers operate and attack in overwhelming numbers. A genius will rarely encounter fewer than thirteen of them at a time. Highly trained and motivated, Scorpion Troopers attack as a single organism with little regard for the safety of individual members. Even when not led by a genius, these Nazi warriors are well-armed and relentlessly organized. However, if allowed to run amok in regular society, they are prone to sadism, murder, and armed brutality, preventing them from surviving long in the regular world without a firm hand on the leash. While technically accomplished and educated, Scorpion Troopers are ultimately trained attack dogs, and when not controlled, they revert to a bestial pack mentality and start to hunt regular humans.

Beholden

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 2, Crafts 2, Medicine 2, Occult 1, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Drive 3, Firearms 3, Weaponry 3
Social Skills: Intimidation 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Mane (biological human), Resources 1, Striking Looks 2, Strong Back
Willpower: 4
Morality: 3 (Derangements: Irrationality, Narcissism)
Virtue: Justice
Vice: Pride
Health: 8
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 11
Mania/Per Turn: 4/1

Roll two dice for wonders:

1-3: No wonder.

4: **Identification Goggles:** Apokalypsi 2. Size 1 (goggles). Roll 3 dice. Range 10'. Goggles. Morbid and bloody images drain one point of Willpower per fifteen minutes worn.

5: **Runic Healer:** Exelixa 1. Size 1 (rune-covered syringe). Roll 3 dice to heal. Every point of Mania restores one point of Lethal or two points of Bashing damage. Produces Narcissism for one day in healed subjects.

6: **Mutilator Ray:** Katastrofi 2. Size 3 (submachinegun). Damage 5 Lethal. Roll 11 dice. Range 20/40/80. Costs two Mania. Causes one Bashing damage to wielder per shot.

7: **Jet Pack:** Skafoi 3. Size 4 (backpack). Safe Speed 800 mph, Maximum Speed 1200 mph, Acceleration 400 mph/turn. Handling +2. Roll 8 dice. Costs three Mania. Leaves an easily-followed contrail, visible even at night.

8: **Kaiser's Scorpion Suit:** Prostasia 1. Armor 5. Grafted, Heavy Armor. If knocked down, it requires a Strength + Athletics check to get back up.

- *Integral Stinger Tail:* Katastrofi 2. Size 2. Damage 4 Lethal. Roll 10 dice. Continuing damage (water does not stop damage). Tail can only attack once every other turn.

9-10: **Scorpion Spear:** Katastrofi 2. Size 4 (two hands). Damage 5 Lethal. Roll 11 dice. Costs two Mania. Defensive. Cannot pierce any metal armor.

The Thule Society: Ubermensch geniuses are numerous enough to possess their own Program, the Thule Society. The Thule Society's favored Axioms are Exelixa and Skafoi. Thulians build Atrocity Halls to gain additional Mania; this is their Grant. Every person placed in an Atrocity Hall and tortured (suffering five dice of Lethal damage per hour) grants a Thulian one additional point of Mania per day, to a maximum equal to the Thulian's Mania per turn expenditure.

Manes:

Geniuses who travel to distant bardos will encounter a staggering variety of manes, from regular-seeming people who just happened to have been born of raw Mania to strange and extraordinary monsters that defy all description. Even geniuses who remain at home will encounter manes, from the fractal elves that live behind computers to the weird things born from an echo doctor's twisted view of the world to malevolent wanderers who have escaped their native homes and now hunger for Mania.

Martians:

Mars once waged war on Earth, but now there is a tentative peace, allowing geniuses to travel to the Red Planet and see the glories and horrors of that world. Though there are many Martian animals, intelligent Martians are divided into three castes: the brain-like Overlords, the mute Technikers, and the brutal Throgs.

Throg Raider

Quote: *"Charge! Kill the Earthmen! Claim their devices!"*

Background:

Mars is a grim and savage world, and Throgs are a grim and savage people. Raiders, barbarians, nomads, and warlords, Throgs travel in family bands, though in the past they have assembled into great armies led by charismatic chieftains. They have never risen far above barbarism and they are the hardest of all Martians for humans to interact with. There are numerous reports of mad scientists dying when confronted by angry or greedy Throg bands. Nonetheless, some geniuses have made friends with the Throgs, who can prove fiercely loyal. Most Throgs, however, are largely unaware of the goings-on of the Blue Planet, and spend their time making war against enemy clans or merely trying to survive the harsh Martian deserts.

Description:

Throgs are lanky, seven-foot-tall humanoids. They are strong, though often not as strong as their size would imply, given Mars' low gravity. Their skin color determines tribal affiliation. Geniuses have identified five tribes: the proud reds, the sadistic greens, the clever blues, the mobile blacks, and the drug-addled whites. Within these tribes, jewelry indicates clan and family. Most throgs look basically human (other than having four arms), though certain outlying clans have bestial features. Most Throgs have no hair. They rarely wear clothes, instead favoring decorative jewelry covered in enormous gems (much more common on Mars than Earth) and simple belts to hold their equipment. Their technology is a mix of crude Stone Age or Bronze Age equipment and fairly sophisticated technology similar to (but different in function and origin from) terrestrial technology in the 17th and 18th centuries. It's unclear how the Throgs acquire these radium muskets and dirigibles, since they don't appear to build much on their own and the technology differs in style and sophistication from what Technikers and Overlords create.

Storytelling Hints:

The psychology of an individual Throg varies considerably, from that of a "noble savage" (manes often manifest these somewhat ridiculous archetypes) to an ambitious social-climber. But most are proud, aggressive, and somewhat grasping, eager to acquire new technology. Flying machines are particularly coveted as status symbols, and many Throgs will engage in all sorts of deception and violence to acquire one. Many Overlords fear that another charismatic warlord—perhaps even an Earthling—may arise among the Throgs, encouraging them to attack the cities of the Overlords. The Peerage has considered just this possibility as an answer to the Overlords' continued aggressive posturing toward Earth.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 1

Mental Skills: Computer 1, Crafts (Crude Weaponmaking) 1, Medicine 1

Physical Skills: Athletics (Bounding) 3, Brawl 4, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Intimidation (smashing things, strongly implying that you too will be smashed in much the same way) 3, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Calculus Vampire, Mane (biological)

Variables: Extra Limbs (four arms)

Willpower: 3

Morality: 5

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Greed

Size: 6

Health: 9

Initiative: 4
Defense: 3
Speed: 12
Mania/Per Turn: 4/1
Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Martian Ax	5(L) (9-again)	-	12
One-Shot Radium Musket	4(L)	20/40/80	9

Martian Techniker

Quote: *(Fixed stare.)*

Background:

Technikers were evidently created by the Overlords to serve as their spies, infiltrators, and technicians. Though they have little independent volition, they are clever and deft in their work. Technikers have never shown signs that they oppose the Overlords' rule, though independent Technikers are an increasingly common sight in the cities and bazaars of Mars, hawking goods (using little placards to communicate) and trading with Martians, humans, and stranger creatures.

Description:

A Techniker stands about four feet tall. Its skin is usually dull gray, though black, white, and blue Technikers have been seen. These color differences appear not to symbolize anything. Their eyes are large and black, and they have no visible noses or mouths. Sexless and nearly identical to one-another, they rarely wear clothes, though Technikers who travel off-world wear close-fitting space suits of leather and steel. Techniker technology is made of clean brushed steel and often appears jagged, hooked or otherwise awkward to handle.

Storytelling Hints:

Most Technikers are basically an extension of other creatures' wills. They perform experiments, guard laboratories, and study intruders dispassionately and efficiently. They are not particularly ethical creatures and have only moderate regard for human life. If a genius attempts to stop them, they prefer to avoid lethal force, but will kill if necessary and without much evident concern for their actions. They generally treat Throgs as inhuman vermin. Independent Technikers have more initiative and personality, but they are still inhumanly calm and patient.

Beholden

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 1

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer (Scanning) 3, Crafts 4, Investigation 1, Medicine 2, Science 4

Physical Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 1

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression 2

Merits: Calculus Vampire, Mane (biological), Common Sense, Direction Sense, Eidetic Memory

Variables: Mute

Willpower: 3

Morality: 5

Virtue: Temperance

Vice: Sloth

Size: 4

Health: 6

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 8 (Base Speed 4)

Mania/Per Turn: 5/1

Roll one die for wonders:

1: **Scanning Machine:** Apokalypsi 3. Size 2 (head visor). Roll 8 dice to scan. Range 10 miles. Charge-up time (3 turns). Costs one Mania. Filter requires fifteen minutes of cleaning per hour of use.

2: **Mentalic Incapacitation Projector:** Katastrofi 3. Size 2 (wrist-mounted beam). Damage 5 Bashing (8-again). Roll 10 dice. Range 40/80/160. Costs three Mania. Costs one Willpower to charge up.

3: **Martian Air Raft:** Skafoi 2. Size 12, Durability 3, Structure 15. Safe Speed 400 mph, Maximum Speed 600 mph, Acceleration 200 mph/turn, Stall Speed 40 mph. Handling +4. Roll 9 dice. Costs two Mania. Exposed Canopy +2. Flight ceiling 50'.

- *Integral Swiveling Heat Ray Turret:* Katastrofi 3. Size 4 (swivel-gun). Damage 6 Lethal (9-again). Roll 10 dice. Range 400/800/1200. Costs three Mania. Autofire. Blinding smoke incurs a cumulative -1 penalty per turn of fire for shooter (totally blind at -5); penalty disappears by one point per turn.

4: **Revivification Machine:** Exelixa 4 (Metaptropi 2). Size 7 (coffin), but shrinks to Size 2 (rectangular pod). Roll 8 dice to heal. Every Mania restores two points of Lethal or Aggravated damage or four points of Bashing damage. (Healing Aggravated damage requires one Willpower point.) Costs one Mania to expand.

Sarcophagus. Leaves subject body temperature 20 degrees below normal for one day (no other ill effects).

5: **Telepathic Link Node:** Apokalypsi 2. Size 2 (crown). Roll 6 dice vs. Resolve + Metanormal Advantage to establish contact with unwilling subject (willing subjects are contacted automatically). Range 1 mile.

Telepathic communication causes anxiety and fear in people with Resolve + Composure of 4 or less.

6: **Telekinetic Gauntlet:** Epikrato 2. Size 2 (gauntlet). Telekinetic control at rank 6 (Size 1 at 8 yards/turn, Size 2 at 4 yards/turn, Size 4 at 2 yards/turn, Size 6 at 1 yard/turn). Roll 8 dice vs. Strength+Dexterity to establish direct control. Range 40'. Costs two Mania. Exhausting; causes a point of Bashing damage per activation and every minute of work.

7: **Protective Aura Field:** Prostasia 3. Size 4 (backpack). Armor 4. Costs three Mania. Bulletproof. Expandable. Creates a ring when expanded; vulnerable from above and below.

8: **Holograph Generator:** Metaptropi 2. Size 2 (lamp). Roll 5 dice for illusions. Costs one Mania per 5 Size points. Range 40'. Illusions flicker noticeably every 50 seconds for one turn.

9: **Heat Ray Gun:** Katastrofi 3. Size 3 (rifle). Damage 5 Lethal (9-again). Roll 8 dice. Range 400/800/1200. Costs three mania. Blasts cause small fires to crop up around the user.

10: **Solar Contact Link:** Apokalypsi 1. Size 4 (backpack). Roll 11 dice. Range 10,000 miles (anywhere on Mars). Charge-up time (30 seconds). Audio only. Only functions when in direct line-of-sight to the Sun.

Overlord Ambassador

Quote: *"We hope that your stay on our world offers mutual and equitable exchanges of knowledge."*

Background:

The masterminds behind the Martian invasion of Earth, most Overlords appeared in the early 1970s, though they have (false) memories that stretch back centuries or millennia. Arrogant, cold, and occasionally cruel, Overlords are also intelligent and curious lovers of science and culture. Great dusty cities were birthed along with them, and they rule from rusted iron or red stone spires, splitting their time between governing the affairs of Mars and performing bizarre and peculiar experiments. The Martian Overlords are divided, politically, between those who want to study Earth's technology (Inspired and otherwise) and those who want to mount another invasion of the Blue Planet, now that they have a proper understanding of Havoc.

Description:

Overlords are spindly and atrophied things. They resemble enormous skulls covered in a thin layer of flesh,

with dangling, toothless jaws, no noses, and bright eyes. Their arms and legs have atrophied almost into uselessness. Rarely is an Overlord encountered outside either its personal tower (attended to by Technikers) or its walker, a massive three-legged war machine. Overlords seem to enjoy the number three. Their towers have three spires, their rooms have three exits, and what passes for their fashion and art typically has tripartite divisions. They dislike and do not use wheels or wheel-like machines.

Storytelling Hints:

While vain and imperious, Overlords are surprisingly approachable to mad scientists, because they share many similar interests. Nonetheless, Overlord are not just scientists but politicians, with a tendency toward secret-hoarding as a means of maintaining power. If a genius isn't careful, a conversation with an Overlord will consist of nothing but the human mad scientist answering the Martian's questions, with the Overlord giving nothing back in return. Not all Overlords are even this pleasant, however: many despise humanity and envy its frantic energy (and its rich supplies of water) and dream of using enslaved human mad scientists to vanguard an invasion of the Earth. Warlike Overlords are arrogant and brutal, attacking without fear of death from their weaponized battle-walkers.

Foundation: Rogue

Catalyst: Neid

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 4, Computer 2, Crafts 3, Investigation 2, Medicine 3, Politics 3, Science 4

Physical Skills: Drive (Walker) 4, Firearms 3, Survival 1

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression 3, Intimidation (In Walker) 4, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 2

Resources: 4 (Jewel Caches)

Other Merits: Beholden (Number 4, Ability 3, Prowess 1), Calculus Vampire, Laboratory (Equipment 4, Size 2, Security 2), Mane (biological), Encyclopedic Knowledge

Willpower: 4

Obligation: 5 (Derangements: Narcissism, Suspicion)

Aesthetic: Sleek Tri-Metal

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Envy

Size: 5

Health: 7

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 6 (Base Speed 3)

Inspiration: 4 (Unmada; Jabir -2)

Axioms: Apokalypsi* 2, Automata 1, Epikrato* 3, Exelixa 1, Katastrofi 3, Prostasia* 2, Skafoi 1

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 20/10/4

Martian Three-Legged Walker: Skafoi 1. Size 20, Durability 20, Structure 40. Safe Speed 150 mph, Maximum Speed 225 mph, Acceleration 150 mph, Handling +2 (reduced from +4 because of armor). Roll 9 dice. Legs Instead of Wheels. Single viewing-eye provides limited viewing range, -5 to all vision checks.

- *Integral Tentacles:* Automata 1. Size 4 (coiled tubes). Strength 5, Dexterity 3. Defense 2. Structure 10. Costs one Mania per day. Extra Manipulators (three limbs). Increased Manipulator Range (30'). No Fine Manipulators.
- *Integral Heat Ray:* Katastrofi 3. Size 5 (cannon). Damage 7 Aggravated. Roll 15 dice. Range 4 miles/8 miles/16 miles. Costs three Mania. Artillery. Cannot hit targets within 10' of walker.
- *Integral Black Gas Cannisters:* Katastrofi 3. Size 5 (cannon). Explosive Force 3 Aggravated. Blast Radius 20 yards (secondary blast radius 40 yards). Roll 8 dice. Range 4 miles/8 miles/16 miles. Costs three Mania. Artillery. Limited Shots (4). Lingering Area Damage (minutes). Specific Target: Living

Things Only. Cannisters have 20% chance of not exploding.

- *Integral Reinforced Armor*: Prostaia 2. Durability 5. Armor incurs a -2 penalty to handling.

Scanning Telescope: Apokalypsi 2. Size 14 (stationary telescope). Roll 11 dice. Range anywhere in the solar system. Visual only. Charge-up Time 30 seconds. Vision fads out around loud noises (screaming or louder) for one turn after the noise stops.

Other Manes:

Boltzmann Brain

Quote: *"We meet again, Doctor, and this time you will pay for your annihilation of New Amsterdam."*

Background:

Though the term is recent, Boltzmann Brains—once called Chaos Eidolons or Chaos Brains—are the result of scientific consensus drifting toward, then away from, a "chance governs all" mode of thought, which has happened repeatedly over the centuries. Boltzmann Brain-like entities have been reported as far back as Lucretius, but the latest wave appeared due to quantum mechanical speculation in the late 20th century.

The argument goes like this: the nature of quantum mechanical fluctuations is that, over significantly vast spans of time, any possible configuration of atoms is possible. Imagine one configuration: a brain with memories of the past. Imagining a brain with memories, what is more likely—that is, what is more complex: a detached brain with false memories of the past, or a brain with real memories of the past, created because the brain has a body and exists in a universe? Obviously, if we're talking random quantum fluctuations, a "naked brain" is much simpler than a brain, a body, and an entire universe. Therefore, for any given mind that exists, it's much more likely that it just popped into existence with false memories, able to exist just long enough to say "I exist!" than for it to exist in the context of a much more complicated universe, with a past, that also just popped into existence.

There are some glaring problems with this argument. Nonetheless, by the time it took for physicists to start talking this way until the philosophy department down the hall got wind of it and told them to stop their silliness, enough time had passed to produce a minor Maniac Storm, which, like similar storms before it, birthed creatures of raw chance and intellect, flung into being by random and meaningless forces and hurled into our reality: the Boltzmann Brains.

Description:

Boltzmann Brains resemble huge brains with knobby protrusions of modified gray matter bolted on with steel plates and copper filaments. They have two wildly staring, bloodshot eyes, attached to the main brain by ropey optic fibers. They float gently through the air, and though they can see and speak, they sometimes behave as if disconnected from our reality. Their dangling tentacles allow them to manipulate objects with surprising nimbleness.

Storytelling Hints:

The problem with Boltzmann Brains isn't just that they are dangerously insane—plenty of creatures in a genius' life are dangerously insane—but that, created as they were from chance, their memories do not connect with the "real" world. They remember times that never were and are enraged by slights that never took place, and worse, their first contact with the real world causes them to overlay their own false memories onto our reality, often transposing images of a genius to false memories of cruelty and mistreatment. Boltzmann Brains are paranoid, vicious, insane, and worse, they are both cooperative and patient among their own kind: groups of the strange manes often work together to bring about some diabolical plan that makes

sense only to them.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 1

Mental Skills: Academics (Nonsense History) 4, Computer 2, Crafts 1, Investigation 3, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Science 3

Physical Skills: Athletics (Floating) 3, Brawl 2, Larceny 3, Stealth 4, Survival 1, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression 1, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 1, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Calculus Vampire, Energy Channeler, Mane (biological)

Variables: Extra Manipulators (four tentacles)

Willpower: 4

Morality: 0 (Derangements: Paranoia, Irrationality, Inferiority Complex)

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Wrath

Size: 7

Health: 9

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: Fly 11, hover (Base Speed 5)

Mania/Per Turn: 7/1

Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>	<i>Attacks per Turn</i>
Hooking Claws	4(L)	10 yards	12	2

DeRo

Quote: "Heehee! Squeal!"

Background:

These so-called "devolved robots" are degenerate and insane underground creatures that appear to be the remnant of some kind of mad genetic experiment. Their origin is based in old fears of underground horrors, long since banished from civilized minds. These sadistic creatures live in underground warrens or old, abandoned buildings, emerging at night to torture and terrify.

Description:

DeRos are bent and often hairy, with rat-like faces and thick, crude hands that nonetheless handle their implements with remarkable skill. Some sport whiskers or wiry hair, while others resemble blind naked mole rats, with folds of pink skin, smeared with dirt and waste.

Storytelling Hints:

DeRos are known to delight in torment, rape, and cruel tricks, though they are cowardly and not particularly intelligent. They enjoy creating confusing sounds, and have a peculiar dislike for the sound of electrical machinery, going out of their way to smash anything powered by electricity. In a fight, they prefer to stick to darkness and attack from ambush. In general, they're irredeemably vile little bastards that will betray a genius at the first opportunity.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 4, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Computer 3, Crafts 3, Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics (Underground) 4, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Larceny 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Calculus Vampire, Mane (biological), Iron Stomach, Fast Reflexes 2, Fighting Finesse
Willpower: 4
Morality: 0 (Derangements: Hysteria [Daylight], Narcissism, Vocalization)
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Lust
Size: 3
Health: 6
Initiative: 8
Defense: 3
Speed: 11 (Base Speed 5)
Mania/Per Turn: 3/1
Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Agonizer	2(B)	8
Barb Knife	2(L)	8

The Fallen:

Background:

The sea of faith no longer girdles the world as it once did. The long retreat of faith and piety from the Western world has not been a Maniac Storm so much as a centuries-long exhalation, draining the purpose and meaning from the lives of the teeming multitudes. Across the world, belief has flickered and died—occasionally rekindling, only to perish again in a new generation, so far disconnected from the faith of their fathers that they can make no sense of the meaning behind the words. Across much of the world, passionate rejections of the Church have given way to mute incomprehension and disinterest in the old beliefs.

Centuries ago, before the rise of the Peerage, Paganism's fall coincided with a rain of those old gods and spirits to the material world, twisted into pseudoscientific parodies: the Fair Folk and the Tuatha da Dannan became the salamanders of gnomes of Paracelsus and Agrippa, codified and stripped of their primal connections and correspondences. These manes are now nearly all gone, but a new generation has arisen to take its place: the Fallen.

They say they're angels, and they look the part. Some accept their epithet. Some revel in it, and resemble in every way the demons and wicked djinn of folklore. Others believe that something has gone wrong with their Creator, to sever them from the Almighty, and that they are tasked with restoring that connection. Few seem to understand that even if there *are* angels, the Fallen are but pale imitations, pulled together with Mania and jolted to life amidst the death of belief. Once, centuries ago, the Peerage revered these emissaries. Some believed them to be true servants of God; others merely recognized their great power and wisdom. Now, with a deeper understanding of the nature of Mania, most peers can feel only pity for these miserable, frightened creatures, brought into a world that has forgotten and rejected them.

Description:

Fierce creatures of light and celestial fire, the Fallen can take on the forms of mortals when it suits them using wonders, but their natural forms resemble those of mythological angels and demons, though reflected through the lens of the era that spawned them. The oldest Fallen, dating back to the English Civil War, resemble the summonable powers described in occult manuscripts: weird mismatches of half-understood animals, decked out in ridiculous raiments. As the years passed and technology developed, later Fallen took on the appearance of clockwork seraphim and steam-belching spirits. The 20th century gave us electric angels, cloned angels, and (most commonly) "pure energy beings" that combined New Age mysticism with a vague, space opera-level of understanding about energy, evolution, and intelligence. So far the new millennium has spawned bio-angels, cybernetic angels, and Extropic angels representing the Godhead Singularity at the end of time. All are faintly ridiculous allegorical representations of a humankind seeking to replace God with their own creations—or, more hopefully, representations of humankind trying to build a divinity worthy of its admiration.

Whatever their exact form, the Fallen radiate wisdom, power, and authority. Despite the sorrow (for the "faithful" among them) or the fury (for the truly fallen) they carry with them, the Fallen move with superhuman grace and power, and their eyes pierce flesh to see the thoughts within the human soul.

Storytelling Hints:

The Fallen come in two varieties: the Faithful and the Damned. Both refer to themselves as the Fallen. The Faithful are true believers, still, and seem at best dimly aware of what they really are. The greater their realization, the greater their sorrow. The Faithful are wretched creatures who wish to help humanity—their role in the divine order, as they see it—though they lack the empathy, subtlety, and mercy to perform their tasks. Whether judgmental and arrogant or naive and subtly monstrous, the Faithful seem unable to manage the complexities of human relationships, and inevitably leave an unstable situation worse than when they found it.

The Damned replace sorrow and frustration with blind, helpless fury. Many understand what they are and realize what a cruel joke that is. Others merely act out a kind of "malicious tempter" program, seemingly existing to cause as much indirect pain and misery as possible. (They're no better at temptation than the Faithful are at salvation, but it's easier to screw things up than make things better, so the Damned have a better track record.) While many of the Damned are true monsters, destroying humanity one-by-one with single-minded purpose, others are sensitive souls, Byronic villains, and fallen warrior-poets; in other words, brooding, angst-ridden assholes. Most geniuses who have experienced the tantrums of one of these creatures have learned to avoid the whole lot, before the next desire to destroy something beautiful leaves a mad scientist's wonders smashed and twisted.

Radiance DX-48

Quote: *"That I am false does not excuse your sins before the One True God."*

Background:

"Radiance" followed Yuri Gregarin back to Earth when mundane humanity first traveled into space. Its landing caused a terrible inferno in Kiev, and it established itself there as the guardian of the humble regular people there and enemy of the Soviet Communists. However, its efforts to protect the frightened citizens around it led to brutal police crackdowns, and its clumsy attempts to enforce morality led to violence, murder, and a cycle of revenge-killings that led, at last, to Radiance fleeing to the West in shame and defeat. For years it traveled from city to city, its actions violent, brutal, and often pointless. Recently Radiance has become determined to adapt to the modern world; shedding its Russian Orthodox imagery, it appears as a stark crystalline figure and seeks out geniuses to understand what has happened to it. But so far it does not

like the answers it has received.

Description:

Carved of crystal and light, Radiance's true form is that of a jeweled pillar surrounded by six wings and two powerful arms, with three faces: one of a lion, one of a bear, and one of an owl. It floats off the ground, surrounded by gleaming thumb-sized crystal facets that reflect the light. Radiance speaks with a Russian accent, simultaneously soprano and bass. Though prone to furious rages, it now forces itself to stifle its anger and remain calm when annoyed or offended by geniuses or regular humans.

Storytelling Hints:

While Radiance is trying to improve itself and adapt to the real world, it struggles to make sense of human interaction. Radiance tries not to be violent and works to heal and help the people around it, but the fallen angel continually misjudges behavior and motivations, often with catastrophic and tragic results. It is slowly easing into the reality that it is not, in fact, an angel—merely a bit of Maniacal residuum from days of greater piety. Radiance has considered returning to a newly-opened Russia, but is disgusted by reports of the mob violence and greed found there. Occasionally it considers looking for the bardo that may have birthed it, with vague (and ill-conceived) plans to move humanity there to keep them safe. Though it may, on occasion, understand intellectually that it is not a real angel, fully accepting that truth would probably destroy it. It has recently accumulated a congregation of true believers that again tilt it toward believing that it a true Angel of the Lord, sent to Earth to punish the wicked.

Foundation: Rogue

Catalyst: Klagen

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 5, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics (Theology) 4, Computer 1, Crafts 2, Investigation 1, Medicine 2, Occult (Angelology) 3, Politics 1, Science 2

Physical Skills: Athletics (Fly) 2, Brawl 3, Weaponry 4

Social Skills: Empathy 4, Expression 3, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2

Resources: 1 (Odd Jobs)

Other Merits: Beholden (Number 3, Ability 0, Prowess 1), Calculus Vampire, Mane, Inspiring, Languages (Latin, Russian, English, Aramaic) 3, Striking Looks 4

Willpower: 7

Obligation: 8 (Paragon)

Aesthetic: Crystal Paradise

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Wrath

Size: 5

Health: 8

Initiative: 7

Defense: 3

Speed: Fly 12 (hover, Base Fly Speed 5)

Inspiration: 4 (Unmada; Jabir -2)

Axioms: Apokalypsi 2, Epikrato* 2, Exelixa* 1, Katastrofi* 3, Metaptropi 2

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 20/8/3

Messiah Eyes: Apokalypsi 2. Size 2 (mask). Roll 8 dice to read minds. Range 1 mile. Grafted. No faults.

Opener of the Way: Epikrato 1. Size 1 (brooch). Roll 6 dice. Costs one Mania. Range 30'. Limited Flexibility (only opens things). A failure shuts the opener down for the rest of the scene.

Bulb of Awful Light: Epikrato 2. Size 1 (cap). Roll 9 dice vs. Composure + Metanormal Advantage. Costs two

Mania. Many Minds (20' diameter). No Range. Limited Effect (fear only). Grafted. Fragile. Gives off a glaring white light that blinds the user for one turn when used.

Curative Gloves: Exelixa 1. Size 1 (small gloves). Roll 7 dice. Every point of Mania heals one point of Lethal or two points of Bashing damage. Grafted. Healed subject gains Derangement: Phobia ("sinners") for one day.

Sword of Fire: Katastrofi 3 (Metaptropi 2). Size 4 (sword) that collapses to Size 1 (ruby handle); costs one Mania to expand. Damage 6 Aggravated. Roll 14 dice. Costs three Mania. Collapsible. Melee.

Mantle of Mortality: Metaptropi 1. Size 1 (shoulder-mantle). Roll 7 dice. Costs one Mania. Self Only. Only transforms the wearer into a fairly bland-looking human male.

Pig Iron Pig

Quote: *"I want you to teach me. Do it right and it won't even hurt much."*

Background:

The so-called Pig Iron Pig is a well-known feature of the scientific underworld, a shadowy criminal courier that got its start working for the Chicago mob boss that, rumor has it, birthed him with the loss of his faith. This was back in the late 70s, but Pig Iron Pig has tried to put its criminal upbringing behind it. In fact, now Pig views itself as a scholar and poet, determined to earn the respect of mad scientists and, perhaps, become a proper "philosopher" itself. Unfortunately, Pig's notorious tantrums have left the Inspired wary of its deranged fury, and it has begun to drift back to the criminal world, where its public displays of violence have started to draw the attention of Inspired crime-fighters.

Description:

Pig Iron Pig stands 7'6" and is made of overlapping plates of iron. Its torso resembles a muscular human man's made of black iron, while its feet are cloven and its head is that of a pig, covered in bristly metal hair. Its eyes, nostrils, and mouth burn red-orange from internal fires. It continually gives off red and green fumes that are vaguely toxic. It dresses in a black and red cape and often carries a cane in an absurd attempt to give it some dignity, but the results are more terrifying than refined. Its voice is a ghastly rumble that sends jets of flames out of Pig's mouth.

Storytelling Hints:

In whatever mythology birthed Pig Iron Pig, it was not one of those refined, diabolical tempter-devils. An unsubtle and bestial soldier, Pig Iron Pig has only recently begun to try to escape that life, though its attempts to do so have been marred with violence and confusion. While extremely intelligent, Pig Iron Pig seems hardwired with a confusing mix of Catholic and Buddhist doctrine, and seems unable to escape its own madness. Recently it has taken up the visual arts, kidnapping local graphic designers and forcing them to teach it the basics of perspective and composition. So far Pig Iron Pig has let every one of its victims go after learning what it can, but this unstable situation is ripe for disaster.

Foundation: Rogue

Catalyst: Grimm

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics (Theology) 2, Computer 2, Crafts 4, Investigation 1, Occult 2, Science (Chemistry) 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Larceny 2, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Expression (Poetry) 3, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4

Resources: 3 (Bodyguard Work)

Other Merits: Calculus Vampire, Dumpster Diver, Mane, Contacts (criminals, chemists) 2, Allies (local criminals) 2, Barfly, Iron Stamina

Willpower: 4

Obligation: 4 (Social Skills -1; Derangements: Irrationality, Inferiority Complex, Narcissism)

Aesthetic: Green Devil Iron

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Envy

Size: 7

Health: 10

Initiative: 4

Defense: 1 (with heavy armor)

Speed: 9 (Base Speed 5, heavy armor)

Inspiration: 2 (Unmada; Jabir -2)

Axioms: Epikrato 1, Exelixa 1, Katastrofi* 2, Metaptropi* 2, Prostasia* 2

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 12/6/2

Steel-Rending Claws: Katastrofi 2. Size 4 (huge claws). Damage 5 Lethal. Roll 12 dice. Armor-Piercing 3. Grafted. If the claws miss, they get stuck—Strength + Dexterity to pull free.

Holographic Flame Projector: Metaptropi 2. Size 2 (shoulder-mounted). Roll 9 dice. Costs one Mania per five points of Size. Limited Illusions (only creates fire). Grafted. Psychological limitations prevent Pig Iron Pig from entering the flames.

Heavy Plating: Prostasia 2. Armor 5. Heavy Armor. Does not protect against electrical attacks.

Third Race Infiltrator

Quote: *"Soon the ape-world will fall and the years of the serpent will begin anew."*

Background:

Only a handful of "True" Lemurians of the ophidian type survived the devastating attack on Lemuria in the middle of the 20th century. These scattered, either hiding deep in the flooded tunnels beneath Lemuria or escaping to the wastelands of the mortal world, surviving on scraps of Mania and sustained by their own rage. But now a few have appeared in mortal society, determined to restore their previous status as the Secret Masters over the whole Inspired world. Plundering the super-scientific secrets of their ruined homelands and mixing them with knowledge stolen from Lemuria and the Peerage, several have built up hidden armies with which they expect to wage a war on the mortal world.

Description:

Ophidians are naturally tall, standing about seven feet in height, though they are very thin. They possess smooth, scaly, dry skin over their entire bodies, inhuman black eyes, and sharp teeth (bites cause 1 Lethal). Though some old Ophidians possessed serpentine bodies without legs (or sometimes arms), those members of the Third Race still alive are generally humanoid, with arms ending in clawed hands and thick legs supporting a long tail. Most Ophidians also possess some ability to shapeshift, though this must be purchased as a wonder; it is not a natural ability.

Storytelling Hints:

Whether alone or in malicious groups or cabals, members of the Third Race scheme to restore their devastated homeland of Lemuria. They despise human geniuses of all sorts, including Lemurians, whom they view as traitors and cowards, but they eagerly use human beholden as well as cultists, fanatics, and madmen to further their aims. Ophidians are cruel, monstrous, and thoroughly reptilian, incapable of heat or passion even when enraged.

Foundation: Rogue

Catalyst: Neid

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 5

Mental Skills: Academics (Prehuman History, Psychology) 6, Computer 3, Crafts 4, Investigation 2, Medicine (Pharmaceuticals) 5, Occult 4, Politics 3, Science 5

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Larceny 4, Stealth 5, Survival 2, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken (Snakes) 4, Empathy 3, Expression 4, Intimidation 5, Persuasion 4, Socialize 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4

Resources: 5 (Secret Underground Bank Vaults)

Other Merits: Assembly Line 3, Beholden (Number 2, Ability 1, Prowess 5), Calculus Vampire, Laboratory (Equipment 4, Size 2, Security 4), Language (Lemurian, Arabic, English, Latin, Mandarin, Sanskrit) 5, Mane (biological), Eidetic Memory, Fast Reflexes 1, Toxin Resistance.

Willpower: 8

Obligation: 0 (Derangements: Suspicion, Hysteria [crowds], Depression, Narcissism)

Aesthetic: Golden Gothic

Virtue: Temperance

Vice: Envy

Size: 5

Health: 8

Initiative: 9

Defense: 3

Speed: 9 (Base Speed 3)

Inspiration: 6 (Unmada; Jabir -4)

Axioms: Apokalypsi 4, Exelixi 3, Epikrato 5, Metaptropi 4, Prostasia 3, Skafoi 4

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 30/14/6

Enhancement Narcotic: Exelixi 3. Size 1 (small bottle). Grants +2 Strength, +2 Dexterity, +2 Stamina. Costs 6 Mania. Limited Uses (6). Causes Narcissism for one day in subject.

Healing Poultice: Exelixi 1. Size 1 (metal box that exudes unguent). Roll 8 dice. Every point of Mania heals one Lethal or two Bashing levels. No faults.

Dominator Gas (Larval): Epikrato 5, Size 4 (egg). Roll 10 dice vs. Resolve + Metanormal Advantage or Composure + Metanormal Advantage for psychic domination. Mania depends on effect. Limited Uses (6). Many Minds 20. No Range. No Visible Effect. Causes nausea (-1 penalty to all actions) in user for one hour.

Golden Hologram Crown: Metaptropi 1. Size 1 (coronet). Roll 10 dice. Costs one Mania. Self Only. Produces anxiety and fear in Morality or Obligation 7+ beings..

Majestic Deflector Shield: Prostasia 3. Size 2 (pectoral). Armor 4. Costs three Mania. Bulletproof. Only functions if temperature is 80 degrees or higher.

Teleportation Bracelet (Larval): Skafoi 4. Size 1 (bracelet). Roll 9 dice to teleport. Costs one Mania per roll. Stunned for one turn upon emerging from teleport.

Mega

Quote: *"Once I kept the planets in their course. Now I am without purpose, but I have not forgotten my honor."*

Background:

Sometimes called the Lamp Bearers, the Megas appeared as the Platonic conception of a geocentric universe gave way, in Europe, to Kepler's and Newton's newer models, that offered accounts of gravity and the movement of the planets. These extraordinary beings are tasked with maintaining the machinery of the Crystal Spheres. To that end they are both extraordinarily strong as well as being gifted mechanics and geometers.

Description:

The celestial Megas are tall and powerfully-built beings that resemble bald male humans of Atlas-like proportions. Their skin is metallic, usually a lustrous bronze. They are able to fly by unfurling shimmering wings of light. Most resemble Greek or Renaissance statues, and their bearing resembles the casual arrogance of a triumphant athlete. Though most are male, a few female Megas have also been reported; these are usually associated with pagan gods rather than Christian angels.

Storytelling Hints:

Megas are powerful, haughty, and slightly terrifying to regular-sized people. Nonetheless, few are cruel and most are proud to demonstrate their accomplishments to any passing genius. When not moving the planets around the Crystal Spheres or performing the calculations needed for the next move, Megas relax by staging mock-combats or extraordinary plays. They are passionate, larger-than-life figures, usually willing to entertain one of the "little people," though they can also be vain, strutting, and aggressive.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics (Platonic Philosophy) 4, Crafts 1, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Science (Geometry) 4

Physical Skills: Athletics (Hurling, Lifting) 5, Brawl (Wrestling) 4, Survival 2, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 2

Merits: Calculus Vampire, Mane (biological), Direction Sense, Iron Stamina, Quick Healer, Striking Looks 4, Strong Back

Willpower: 7

Morality: 7

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Pride

Size: 7

Health: 12

Initiative: 8

Defense: 3

Speed: 20 (Base Speed 10) or Fly (hover) 65 (Base Speed 50)

Mania/Per Turn: 5/1

Special Ability: A Mega can pick up anything that is not attached to the ground, regardless of its weight. The object lifted remains solid and will not break apart because of internal stresses.

Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Fists	0(B)	-	10
Hurled Object*	1/5 th object's Size (maximum 5) (B or L)	Line of sight	12 to 17

* A grappled creature can be hurled in this way, causing one die of Bashing damage per 10 feet hurled to a maximum of 30 dice of Bashing damage.

Machine Elf

Quote: *"When you lack the needed lore/And cannot manage applications/All you'll get is 404/To test the limits of your patience."*

Background:

Machine elves, sometimes called transforming elves or fractal elves, are the names given to creatures created by failed calculations and equations. They are birthed, not solely by the broken dreams of the scientific consensus, but also by the failed thoughts of their computers. The children of botched and unfinished calculations, of paradoxical mathematical systems, machine elf populations have exploded since the proliferation of the personal computer. Though the first reports of these shy, clever creatures go back to Newton's time, they are now one of the most common kinds of manes, living rich and intricate lives behind computer terminals and under the floors of server stations. Lemurians, who call these creatures *kobaloi*, possess a unique affinity for the creatures, and the machine elves in a Lemurian's unmada field often come to represent the Lemurian's dreams and beliefs.

Description:

Fractal elves stand about a foot high and resemble human silhouettes made of clashing geometric shapes. They have a knack for disappearing into small spaces. Most resemble the calculations or systems that birthed them: a computer-literate genius can spot the stamp of failed chemistry dissertations, abandoned networking projects, or a Windows server crash. They like to recite (abominably bad) poetry.

Storytelling:

Most machine elves are harmless, even benign, their modest Mania needs often supplied by mundane activity. A few (called gremlins) are aggressive and destructive, but just as many are eager to help geniuses in exchange for dollops of Mania and something from the vending machine. While machine elves are not tremendously smart, they always seem to know both the local language and the local gossip, and they make excellent spies and saboteurs for a genius who can convince them to help. Few, however, are seriously aware of the world outside the office or laboratory that spawned them, and most find talk of an "outside world" absolutely ridiculous.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Computer 2, Crafts 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 1, Drive 2, Firearms 1, Larceny 3, Stealth 4, Survival (Offices) 2, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Expression 2, Persuasion 1, Socialize 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Calculus Vampire, Mane, Contacts (clan) 1, Fast Reflexes 2, Fighting Finesse.

Willpower: 4

Morality: 7

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Sloth

Size: 1

Health: 3

Initiative: 8

Defense: 3

Speed: 8 (Base Speed 3)

Mania/Per Turn: 3/1

Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Needle Sword	0(L)	-	5
Tiny Crossbow	0(L)	05/10/20	5

Paper Goblin

Quote: *"Fifty dollars and I'll see you through the sewers so the brasswolves don't find you. A hundred and I tell the puta following you that the brasswolves ate you."*

Background:

We've been promised a paperless society for how long now? Many geniuses think that every time someone even *thinks* the phrase "paperless society," another paper goblin is born. These odd, clever, clannish creatures form the backbone of most mane communities. They're numerous, they're smarter than fractal elves, and they lack the belligerence of many other types of manes. Nonetheless, they're more loyal to their own than to any genius, and if they don't get enough to eat, raiding parties can swallow whole learning annexes and rural libraries before anyone knows what happened. Despite this danger, paper goblins are usually organized enough to avoid those sorts of catastrophes, and their urban clans can become allies, informants, and even friends to many peers.

Description:

A paper goblin stands about four feet high and is made out of paper. The type of paper indicates the clan identification: there are newspaper goblins (gregarious), magazine goblins (aggressive), fiction goblins (funny), nonfiction goblins (bureaucratic), picture goblins (creative), Xerox goblins (unstable), and handwritten goblins (aristocratic). They resemble carefully-folded origami pieces, frequently patched and pasted-over, their faces sometimes decorated with button-eyes or doorknob-noses. Males and females are equally common. Females favor exotic dreadlocks of hardened paper. Paper goblins are capable of reproduction in a more or less biological fashion, and they eat paper instead of meat, gaining the most nutrition from the best-written material. They rarely wear clothes except when moving around on the surface. When they forage in the human world, they wrap themselves up like homeless people and favor crude but durable equipment scavenged from junk yards or garage sales and put to creative new use. Trying to "read" a paper goblin is considered rude.

Storytelling:

Clannish, proud, and smart enough to maintain mid-sized extended families, paper goblins are different from the independent manes that geniuses frequently encounter. Individuals are skittish and shy, but in groups, paper goblins grow bold, bickering loudly among themselves whenever they interact with outsiders. They are often remarkably rude. Paper goblins, for reasons no one understands, congregate in Latin America; goblins in the United States are often native Spanish speakers. Sometimes paper goblins form the core of a wider mane community, especially in larger cities where a whole preta undercity exists; other times they scrupulously excuse themselves from any existing mane society, especially if it is brutal or predatory. In general, paper goblins see themselves as "people," albeit ones hidden from prying eyes, and expect to be treated as such. Though arrogant and often rude, they are also practical, and recognize the value of allegiances with local geniuses.

Paper goblins hate Atomists with an irrational, atavistic fervor, and are prone to attacking any Atomists they recognize.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 1, Crafts 1, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Firearms 1, Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Weaponry 3
Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Calculus Vampire, Mane, Quick Draw, Toxin Resistance
Willpower: 5
Morality: 7
Virtue: Charity
Vice: Gluttony
Size: 4
Health: 6
Initiative: 6
Defense: 3
Speed: 9 (Base Speed 4)
Mania/Per Turn: 4/1
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Two-Tined Spear	2(L)	7

Phantom Slaver Yeti

Quote: *"You will serve as breeding stock. The rest will serve as soup stock. This is our way."*

Background:

Mania can sometimes act in strange and unpredictable ways. Though believed, it seems, by only one person, the *Yetinsyn* came about upon the death of the Polish sculptor Stanislaw Szukalski. They were apparently birthed by the Mania swirling around the death of a single man who, while not certainly an Inspired genius, was clearly both an artistic genius and a madman. However, since they were only held—however fervently—in the mind of a single man, they lack the solidity and reality granted by Mania even to the most far-fetched populist absurdity, and hunger for more reality, that they might conquer the world.

The *Yetinsyn*, the Phantom Slaver Yetis, have existed for the past few decades all over the world, though their icy fortress-home is somewhere in Nepal. Their nightmarish goal is simple: to enslave the human race by infecting humans with their genetic taint. Along the way, they have hired themselves out as spies, assassins, and (in semi-human form) as "muscle" to various aspiring mad scientists and isolated overlords.

Description:

Phantom Slaver Yetis are naturally bodiless. In below-freezing air they are entirely invisible, appearing as only the faintest shimmer over snow and concrete. When the air is warmer, they resemble kaleidoscopic blobs of translucent protoplasm that congeal into the form of giant white ape-men, before the blobs break apart again into their constituent colors and shapes.

However, Phantom Slaver Yetis can take over human bodies, and they are horrifically eager to do so. An infected human turns albino and loses all hair. Copulation among an infected human male and a human female results, after about ten months, in an infant but fully embodied Slaver Yeti. A successful birth is rare; due to Havoc, nine-tenths of the births resulted in the death of both mother and infant, and even humans females that won't trigger Havoc only reduce mortality to about 50%. These infants, once grown, can mate with their own kind to produce more Slaver Yetis (a dangerous proposition) or with other humans to produce

various forms of half-castes.

A person suffering from Yetinsyn infection can still be saved, though it requires casting the possessing gene code out of the body—not an easy feat, though possible with Exelixa disease-curing (with a -5 penalty). This causes the disembodied Yeti to re-emerge and seek a new host. A yeti remains conscious and able to detect its environment (though unable to act) while infecting a host, and it can leave at any time. As the transformation proceeds, the subject's blood grows cold and sluggish, and is replaced by hair, until bristly hair completely fills the body—plainly visible if the subject is wounded, and even visible beneath the subject's skin as the final transformation grows near. The full transformation takes about one month of constant exposure to sub-freezing temperatures; time spent in above-freezing environments does not hasten the transformation.

When the transformation is complete, the body splits apart, revealing a hairy, nightmarish man-ape, brutal in its features, with white fur touched with yellow, blue, or dirty brown, and fingers that each end in a screaming, biting face that resembles some sort of avian or mammalian carnivore. This is the true form of the Slaver Yeti, and it annihilates any vestiges of the previous personality.

Though most Slaver Yetis try to blend into their populations, on their home turf they wear crude, knotted clothing dyed with vibrant colors, and heavy armored slabs that resemble soapstone. They also favor gold and onyx jewelry.

Storytelling:

Phantom Slaver Yetis are simple creatures. They want to enslave humanity by infiltrating its genome before conquering them directly. They enjoy torment, slavery, and horrific genetic and psychic experiments. Unfortunately for them, the Yetinsyn are few in number and most of them lack bodies, meaning that they are often found in the employ of Illuminated, degenerate Directors, and criminal Lemurians, or serving stranger masters. Disembodied, they are excellent spies, saboteurs, and assassins. Phantom Slaver Yetis attack viciously from the shadows and kill quickly before retreating to a cold environment where they can survive comfortably. In the field, they operate with competence and discretion, but in their own lairs, or in an area of sufficient cold, Phantom Slaver Yetis play with their prey, picking them apart limb-by-limb if they are not turned into breeding stock.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 2, Crafts 2, Investigation 1, Medicine 3, Occult 2, Science 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Drive 1, Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Survival (Arctic) 2, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3.

Merits: Calculus Vampire, Direction Sense, Iron Stamina, Mane, Resources 3, Strong Back

Willpower: 4

Morality: 0 (Derangements: Irrationality, Megalomania, Vocalization)

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Envy

Size: 6

Health: 9

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 13 (Base Speed 6)

Mania/Per Turn: 5/1

Special Ability: Without a body, Yetinsyn are treated as out-of-phase. In below-freezing temperatures, bodiless Yetinsyn are also invisible.

Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Natural Claws (when embodied)	2(L)	11
Infect (when disembodied)	Spend one point of Willpower, then roll Strength+Resolve (7 dice) vs. Stamina + Metanormal Advantage to enter the body and begin the infection.	-
Ice touch (when disembodied; can affect in-phase targets)	0(B)	9

Orphans:

Geniuses die or grow careless, abandoning their wonders, which escape into wild places to hunt for Mania in a gruesome predatory ecosystem where the Inspired are little more than prey animals. Though some orphans can be trusted, provided they are fed, most are vicious and atavistic, concerned only with surviving for another day. There are a lot of them, too: hidden in alleys and sewers, scuttling across rooftops, or lurking in ancient forests or ruins. Orphans usually awaken at night to hunt scientists, mad or sane, who can provide them with sustenance.

Moon Moth

Quote: *(Whistle of passing air.)*

Background:

Created by an aeronautical engineer named Paul Dendrite, the orphan now called Moon Moth was just one of several scout craft attached to the enormous dirigible *Aristophanes*, first commissioned in 1924. Dendrite had a long and full life, first with the Artificers, then with the Navigators, leaving dozens of well-trained peers whom he had personally educated. When, at the age of 131, he expected he would not last another winter, he transferred his memories to computer, sent a CD with his personal records to each of his students (and his student's students), found new masters for his intelligent wonders, destroyed the others, and waited to wrap up a long and fulfilling life.

When Dendrite passed away, however, he had neglected one of his flyers, an old scout-wing in a hangar outside Halifax. One of his students, who had claimed one of the other flyers, traveled to pick it up, only to come under assault from a violent and aggressive orphan. Battered, he was forced to flee, and the flyer escaped before he could track it down. The beast went to ground, and though reports of its unique silhouette drifting across the moon have been reported in Bangor, Provincetown, and New York City, none of Paul Dendrite's students and friends have been able to find and destroy it, to their embarrassment, as Moon Moth's depredations cast a pall on Dendrite's life and accomplishments.

Description:

Moon Moth resembles a flying-V made of mica and translucent white plastic. Though tattered from frequent attacks on mad scientists (not all of them successful), it is usually fit and strong-looking. When it feeds it turns pink or red, as if filling up with blood. Its leading wing-edges are covered in razor-sharp plastic hooks that culminate in two twisted blades, mutations that Moon Moth uses to attack.

Storytelling Hints:

Moon Moth itself is a mindless predator, its behavior shark-like. It prefers cities with few powerful pretas, where it can function as the apex predator of the flying population. Several geniuses have attempted to capture it, but despite its unintelligent nature, it has proven rather more clever than it should be. Some geniuses wonder if someone—a Lemurian, perhaps—is secretly controlling Moon Moth.

Skafoi 2

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 2, Resolve 1

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Weaponry 2

Merits: Calculus Vampire

Variables: Exposed Canopy +2, No Fine Manipulators

Willpower: 2

Obligation: 0

Size: 12

Durability: 3

Structure: 15

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Move: 7 (Base Speed 0)

Safe Speed: 600 mph

Maximum Speed: 900 mph

Acceleration: 300 mph/turn

Handling: +4 (roll 9 dice)

Mania/Per Turn: 10/2

Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Wing Hooks	2(L)	8

Even Stranger Phenomena:

Not every strange thing in the World of Darkness stems from Mania. In the shadows of the cities and the savage places where humans rarely go, the dead walk, beast-men hunt, and sorcerers twist and warp the laws of nature. Some of these beings can be allies to mad scientists, but others are deadly threats that view geniuses as just another kind of prey. Geniuses must tread carefully around these creatures, and though alliances and treaties are possible, the dark things of the world are products of insanity and twisted logic every bit as bizarre as what Mania can spawn.

Vampires:

Inhabiting every city, feeding on the vulnerable and working to maintain systems of exploitation and brutality where their behavior fades into the bleak statistics of urban violence, are once-human things that sustain themselves on the blood of the living. Geniuses call them hemophages, a detached and clinical term for monsters that can't easily be categorized or understood. Several cities have seen all-out wars between geniuses and hemophages, brutal cycles of violence and revenge. While a mad scientist's grasp of fire and solar power is enough to keep many hemophages at bay, they are cagey, shadowy creatures who possess a variety of psychic and biomorphic abilities, as well as control over mortal servants.

While violent clashes have occurred, many cities see a coexistence between hemophages and the Inspired—or complete ignorance from both sides. After all, geniuses and blood-suckers have very little reason to interact.

The walking dead make dangerous and rather useless test subjects, and while a mad scientist's blood is as nutritious as any human's, hemophages are predators, and only desperate or foolish predators target the strongest in the herd. Weirdly, this near-complete lack of common ground can allow harmonious existences between geniuses and vampires, who, if they know of one-another, may find themselves passing dreary nights together as the mad scientist performs experiments and the vampire merely exists in its frozen, deathless state, connected together only by a common separation from humanity.

Werewolves:

Not all geniuses are city dwellers, but those that favor isolation in the deep wilderness know that ancient spirits stalk the forests and wastes of the world. These shapeshifters are part of a self-propagating pattern within the larger human genome, a code that's passed through certain lineages and that occasionally activates to produce a full-blown "wolf-man." Some geniuses have hypothesized that these creatures are a sort of planetary white blood cell, destroying dimensional infestations from hostile aliens. Others are comfortable with a more bald-faced explanation: the wild places are full of nature spirits, cruel and primal, who keep their own counsel and their own laws.

Genius-shapeshifter interactions in the wild rarely end well. Werewolves have been known to tear apart whole collaboratives for offending against obscure spiritual or philosophical concepts, and an unprepared genius is easy sport for a pack of hungry shapeshifters. This often results in retaliation, as well-briefed geniuses armed with scanners and Katastrophic silver weapons drive the monsters off. Others even try to hunt and harvest them, though shapeshifter-hunting offers a very short life expectancy. But times are changing for both mad scientists and the "nature spirits," as the peers try to reach out and find common ground with these alien beings. And increasingly, even the "spirits" have come to live in cities, stripping them of their mystique and making them just another part of the weird concrete ecology that geniuses must navigate. These urban hunters are more comfortable with both regular humans and the geniuses among them, allowing for greater cooperation, or at least tolerance, between the two groups.

Mages:

There are other ways of transforming the world, ways based on ancient tradition and transcendent understanding, of glimpsing something beyond and above this world. Those humans who glimpse what overlies everything are called mages, and they can work terrible sorceries: flying, stepping across space and realities, hurling elemental devastation. While a genius can do all of these things, mages work their wonders with will and lore, not machines and madness. At first glance, there seems to be common ground between the Inspired and these mages: both are, at least outwardly, humans who have seen beyond the gray raiment of this world. Though this is the attitude of many curious mad scientists, mages who know of Inspiration seem unanimous in their opinion of geniuses: the Inspired are simply not human. They are human-shaped things inhabited by cosmic intelligences of unknown motivations and origins. This has produced a great deal of friction and even violence in the past, as fundamental language barriers prevent cooperation between the two groups. It seems as if, when dealing with mages, a genius' Jabir becomes a toxic, infuriating thing that drives sorcerers into paranoid rages.

One of the few exceptions to this fearful hostile is the relationship between the Scholastics and a mage "foundation" called the Free Council. These two groups have found some common ground and can, to a limited extent, communicate meaningfully. This is important, for—whatever mages' opinions on what the Inspired "really" are—geniuses and mages can look a lot alike from the outside. The two groups have occasionally been forced to get together when a mistake is made, and a new "mage" turns out to be a recently-catalyzed genius or a "genius" betraying weird and unusual abilities is in fact a newly-Awakened sorcerer. These awkward and embarrassing exchanges must be made quickly, before incorrect training drives the student insane or exposes him to dangerous extradimensional intellects.

The only other unusual aspect of genius-mage interaction is when Lemurians interact with the "Seers of the Throne," a magical organization dedicated to control and world domination in the name of their transcendent posthuman masters. Since both groups are, nominally, in the world domination racket, one might expect competition, cooperation, or even outright war. Instead, the groups seem literally *unable* to notice one-another. Individual members can, if forced, recognize one-another's existence, but the memory quickly fades and the incident is soon forgotten. No one is sure what causes this unusual effect.

Other Things:

There are odder and rarer things than the walking dead, nature spirits, or magic spells in the World of Darkness, and geniuses are familiar with only some of them. The most difficult aspect of these interactions, for the Inspired, is sorting out what is the product of Mania from what operates by its own set of rules. Ghosts and spirits certainly exist, whatever pseudoscience a genius uses to justify them, but whether they're self-actualizing memory engrams or trans-organic monitoring agents, they aren't properly part of a mad scientist's "world," and they exist and function based on a closed set of rules to which Inspiration does not have special access. Sometimes it's harder to tell: some reanimated dead things are the products of mad science, while others are a different order of creature entirely. Certain alien abductions and hybridizations bear the mark of Mania and the frantic dream-energy of a bardo, while others are outside of a genius' purview. Cryptids, zombies, ape-men, golems, elementals, gods, and rarefied essences all move through the World of Darkness, and distinguishing those that, however powerful and terrifying, follow the warped dictates of mad science, from those that represent doors to an even larger and stranger world, is nearly impossible for all but the most gifted scholars of the weird.

"Do you suppose it hates us?" Tanith asked. She stared at the smooth metal cube, cocking her head to one side like a bird, as if to reveal some new angle on the thing.

"It *hates*," Lisa said. "Of that I'm sure. But it has no eyes, no ears, no voice, no way to contact or even notice the outside world. Just an initial state and whatever it can figure out." Lisa's eyes shone feverishly with exhaustion and triumph. "So it cannot hate *us*."

"And what do you intend to learn?" Tanith asked, running her hand along one sharp corner. "I mean, this machine could answer fundamental philosophical mysteries. Let it run for a year, then speak to it. See if there are truths about this world that can be extrapolated from first principles based on pure logic. This world, or some other. There's the potential for heady philosophy, here."

"That's not why I built it," Lisa said.

"Then why?"

"Because I want it to come for me," Lisa said. She eyed the gleaming silver cube as if studying a caged tiger. "This is a thing of wonder. I know that in a week, or a year, or ten years, it will break through even the invincible wall that I have erected between it and reality--because wonders can do the impossible--and it will come to kill me. Then I will stop it, open it up, and see how it did what it did, for even the impossible can be cataloged."

Appendix One: Sample Wonders

T'sais said doubtfully: "Yet I have heard Earth is a place of beauty,
and I would know beauty, even though I die."

"How will you know beauty when you see it?"

"All human beings know beauty... Am I not human?"

"Of course."

-The Dying Earth, Jack Vance

Though powerful geniuses often build unique, baffling, one-of-a-kind wonders, other common devices recur again and again, either because a genius copies a useful design, or because certain ideas just make sense: flying machines, "ray" weaponry, healing devices, and long-range communicators have been popular with the Inspired for thousands of years, and versions of these wonders have been found that date back to the dawn of civilization.

The sample wonders below are just that: samples. It is possible to build more or less powerful versions of these devices, and many geniuses do, gradually upgrading existing wonders as they grow in Inspiration and technical proficiency.

All wonders assume an Inspiration equal to the wonder's rank, unless listed otherwise. Wonders of Automata also assume that the genius doing the building possesses or has access to the requisite Skills that the wonder knows.

Agonizer:

Construction: Lower of Crafts and Science

Requires: Katastrofi ●

Bound Mania: 1

Size: 1 (minimum Strength 1)

Damage: 5 Bashing (microwave heat)

Range: Melee

Roll: Strength + Weaponry +5

Initial Cost: 1 Mania to turn on

Variables: Melee Weapon, Only Against Organics

This sadistic weapon causes tremendous agony while barely leaving any sign of its use. Some geniuses use it as a humane alternative to disintegrating their enemies, though it is most commonly found in the hands of sadistic mad scientists, who use it to keep their beholden and servitors in line.

All-Purpose Genetic Recombinizer:

Construction: Medicine

Requires: Exelixa ●●●

Bound Mania: 3

Size: 2 (stored in a rucksack)

Cost per Use: 1 point of Mania per dot added, up to 3

Range: Touch

Roll: Intelligence + Medicine

Variables: Flexible Organic Upgrade

This scary-looking device can be injected into the neck of any poor fool who looks eager for a genetic scrambling. A successful Intelligence + Medicine roll grants up to a +3 bonus to any Physical attributes, a three-

dot Merit, or any combination of Merits and Attribute boosts that total three dots. Attributes or Merits cannot be made higher than the genius' maximum, based on Inspiration.

Antiphantom Field:

Construction: Lower of Occult and Science

Requires: Prostasia ●●

Bound Mania: 2

Size: 6 (resembles a huge lantern)

Armor: 8 vs. ghosts

Initial Cost: 4 Mania per scene to activate

Variables: Barrier (ghosts roll Power vs. 9 dice to push through at 5' diameter, vs. 8 dice at 10' diameter, vs. 7 dice at 20' diameter, etc.), Charge-up Time (3 turns), Expandable, Increased Mania Cost (+2), Limited Protection (ghosts), Shielding Device

A regular mainstay among Karnackis—Inspired ghost-hunters—the antiphantom field is a bulky device that usually requires two people to carry into place. However, once activated it creates a powerful hedge to ghostly intrusion. A typical ghost will batter its corpus into a puddle flinging itself at the barrier, allowing the people within to perform experiments or engage in techno-exorcism.

Automatic Overdrive:

Construction: Crafts

Requires: Exelixa ●● (Skafoi ●●)

Bound Mania: 2

Size: 2 (tool box)

Cost per Use: 2 Mania

Range: Touch

Roll: Intelligence + Crafts +1

Variables: Focused Mechanical Upgrade (Speed only)

This wonder can be applied to any kind of vehicle. A successful roll increases the vehicle's Safe Speed (and linked stats, including Maximum Speed and Acceleration) by 40% for the duration of a scene.

Burst Boots:

Construction: Crafts

Requires: Skafoi ●●

Bound Mania: 2

Size: 2 (boots)

Initial Cost: 2 Mania

Cost per Use: 2 Mania per six hours of travel

Safe Speed: 16 mph

Maximum Speed: 24 mph

Acceleration: 8 mph/turn

Handling: Dexterity + (lower of Athletics or Drive) +1

Variables: Handling +2/Speed -20%

These devices are smaller than a jet pack, allowing them to be stowed more easily, with only a slight loss in speed and maneuverability. They can be used as normal (if bulky) boots, but when activated they can grant a mad scientist the power of flight.

Cogitator Overmind:

Construction: Lower of Academics and Computer

Requires: Automata ●●●●

Bound Mania: 4

Max Mania: 8
Size: 6 (fills a small room)
Health: 8
Speed: 0
Initiative: 5
Defense: 0 (would be 2, but it can't move)
Obligation: 7 (Paragon)
Variables: Cannot Move, No Manipulators
Automation Points: 24
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 4, Computer 4, Medicine 3, Science 4
Social Skills: Empathy 3, Persuasion 3
Merits: Eidetic Memory, Encyclopedic Knowledge

The cogitator overmind is an example of a highly intelligent and independent artificial intelligence, capable of problem-solving and analysis. An automaton of this level of sophistication is often used to assist a genius with his work, as its programmed knowledge often exceeds the genius' own merely-human memory. Upgrades to a cogitator can feature an Apokalypsi system: while the current model possesses senses matching those of a regular person's, an integral communicator would allow the wonder to connect to the Internet, massively increasing its potential store of knowledge.

Corvid Transformation Chamber:

Construction: Lower of Medicine and Science
Requires: Metaptropi ●●●● (Exelixa ●, Skafoi ●●)
Bound Mania: 4
Size: 6 (phone booth-shaped)
Roll: Intelligence + Science +2
Range: None
Cost per Use: 1 (2 for Size 2, 2 for racial flying speed of 15, 1 for +1 Dexterity, -2 for "no fine manipulators," -1 for "only one manipulator"; everything halved for the wonder being a transformation booth)
Variable: Specific Transformation (turns flesh into a crow and back again, +2), Transformation Booth

This cramped chamber turns any living creature into a crow, or at least a creature that's similar enough to fool casual inspection. This corvid can then be sent on espionage missions: since many cities and wooded areas are full of crows, they are surreptitious almost everywhere.

Disguise Kit:

Construction: Lower of Medicine and Science
Requires: Metaptropi ●
Bound Mania: 1
Size: 1 (small bag)
Roll: Intelligence + Science
Range: Touch
Cost per Use: 1 Mania per 5 points of Size or fraction thereof
Variables: Specific Transformation (disguise only)

This simple wonder allows a genius to disguise himself. It can also be used to add significant cosmetic modifications for novelty's sake or to confuse enemies. If the genius is trying to resemble a specific person, a success means the subject gains one automatic success on any disguise attempts for the duration of the scene.

Doom Cannon:

Construction: Lowest of Computer, Crafts, and Science

Requires: Katastrofi ●●●● (Apokalypsi ●)

Bound Mania: 5

Size: 30 (immobile)

Explosive Force: 6 Aggravated (8-again) (lightning/plasma)

Blast Area: 1,000 yards (¼ mile), Secondary Blast Area 2,000 yards (½ mile)

Range: Short range 500 miles, medium range 1,000 miles, long range anywhere on Earth

Roll: Intelligence + Firearms

Initial Cost: 4 Mania to charge up

Variables: Charge-up Time (20 minutes), Reduced Range (as heavy artillery), Explosive Weapon (free with Katastrofi 5), Orbital Gun (+40 automatic damage to target, penalty to target anything below Size 30), Variable Explosion

This weapon demonstrates the upper bounds of destructive power a genius can muster if sufficiently motivated. This weapon takes some time to charge up, but its attack is devastating, able to wipe away most enemies or level a building. Anything within a quarter-mile typically eats enough Aggravated damage to result in immediate death. Used as an orbital gun, it can take shots at Navy destroyers or other large targets.

This weapon is the sort of silly thing that a mad scientist might use to threaten a whole city with destruction. Building this sort of wonder usually draws furious vigilantes, determined strike squads, and pissed-off time-travelers who don't want their favorite vacation spot disintegrated.

Presumably a bomb (a one-use wonder) could cause even more devastation, over an even wider area, drawing even more ire from the Inspired community.

Earth-Mars Courier Craft:

Construction: Lower of Crafts and Science. For the cannons: Lower of Crafts and Science. For the scanner: Computer. For the communicator: Computer.

Requires: Skafoi ●●●, Apokalypsi ●●, Exelixa ●, Katastrofi ●●●, Prostasia ● (Automata ●)

Bound Mania: 14

Size: 50

Durability: 5 (30 with shields up)

Structure: 55 (80 with shields up; after 30 points of "bonus" Structure damage, the shields drop)

Initial Cost: 3 Mania to activate

Cost per Use: 3 Mania per six hours of operation; after which 4 Mania per week of operation

Safe Speed: 18,000 mph

Maximum Speed: 27,000 mph

Acceleration: 9,000 mph/turn

Interplanetary Speed: 3 AU/week

Stall Speed: 120 mph

Handling: Dexterity + Drive +1

Variables: Handling -2/Speed +20%

- *Twin Integral Laser Cannons:* Katastrofi 3. Size 6 each. Damage 8 Lethal (9-again). Roll Intelligence + Firearms + 7 (9-again). Range 3 miles/6 miles/12 miles. Costs 3 Mania each to activate. Artillery.
- *Integral Long-Range Scanners:* Apokalypsi 2. Size 6. Range 1,000 miles (1 million miles in space). Roll Wits + Computer +3. Onboard Storage.
- *Integral Medium-Range Communicator:* Apokalypsi 1. Size 3. Range 1 mile (1,000 miles in space). Roll Wits + Computer +1.
- *Integral Energy Shield:* Prostasia 1. Size 5. Durability x6. Costs 1 Mania. Shielding device.
- *Integral Life Support:* Exelixa 1. Size 6. 1 Mania sustains up to 10 people for one day.

This is a basic "merchant vessel" that might be used either by human geniuses or Martian Technikers in an

Earth-Mars run. It possesses enough firepower to scare off pirates or deal with ground-based enemies, but its guns lack the firepower to punch through heavy armor plating. Scanners and communicators are only of middling quality in order to make room for additional storage space.

Ectoplasmic Locater:

Construction: Lower of Computer and Occult
Requires: Apokalypsi ●●● (Automata ●)
Bound Mania: 3
Size: 1 (blinking screen)
Range: 1 mile
Detects: Ghosts, spirits, and gateways to their realms
Roll: Wits + Computer +1
Cost: None
Variables: Narrow Focus (phantom phenomena), Onboard Storage

This is a fairly standard "Karnacki sweeper," built to detect various kinds of incorporeal alien interlopers: ghosts, "spirits," spectral minds, and other ethereal phenomena. It possesses recording and playback capabilities, a USB hub, and a tolerably user-friendly interface for analyzing data.

Electrochemical Zombie:

Construction: Lower of Medicine and Occult
Requires: Automata ●●
Bound Mania: 2
Max Mania: 4
Size: 5
Health: 6
Speed: 7
Initiative: 1
Defense: 0
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 1, Stamina 1

A fairly typical "goon" automaton, these electrochemical zombies can serve as massed shock troops. Geniuses who specialize in their production (or in the production of similar automata) often take the Assembly Line Merit in order to build up slaving zombie hordes to hurl at their enemies.

Electroscanner Goggles:

Construction: Computer
Requires: Apokalypsi ●●
Bound Mania: 2
Size: 1 (goggles)
Range: 10 feet
Roll: Wits + Computer -1
Cost: None
Variables: Goggles

These goggles provide a heads-up view of all sorts of strange phenomena that might interest a genius. Typical models feature a simple set of button-controls on the side, allowing the genius to focus on and scan particular targets. Due to their small Size, their range is limited. Many electroscanner goggles employ the "narrow focus" variable to provide data on a specific type of phenomena.

Energy Sword:

Construction: Lower of Crafts and Science for Katastrofi, Science for Prostasia
Requires: Katastrofi ●●●, Prostasia ● (Metaptropi ●)

Bound Mania: 4

Size: 3 when deployed; 1 when not deployed (minimum Strength 3) (Prostasia is Size 0)

Damage: 5 Lethal (9-again) (fire)

Range: Melee

Roll: Strength + Weaponry + 5

Armor: Number of successes +3 on a Dexterity + Weaponry roll when taking an action to defend; otherwise no Armor

Variables (Katastrofi): Collapsible, Melee Weapon (no Mania cost)

Variables (Prostasia): Integral, Shielding Device, Targeted Deflection

Initial Cost: 1 Mania to activate to bring to full Size. 1 Mania to activate for shielding.

This is actually two wonders in one. The first part contains a Katastrofi weapon that causes damage to anyone struck with the glowing blade (Size 3, reduced to Size 1 when shrunk). The second part contains a "targeted deflection" Prostasia shield that grants a protective bonus when used actively to defend the wielder (Size 0). Functionally, the object is one unit: a small handle when shrunk, which springs into the form of a five-foot blade of shimmering energy when activated. Activating the wonder is not too expensive, and it causes impressive damage if the genius can get close, and a skilled user can switch between attack and defense as the need arises. Upgrades to this weapon can cause Aggravated damage or add the "reflection" variable to its shielding element.

Fear Wave:

Construction: Academics

Requires: Epikrato ●●●

Bound Mania: 3

Size: 2 (handheld orb)

Range: 30 feet

Initial Cost: 3 Mania

Roll: Manipulation + Academics +1 vs. Composure + Metanormal Trait

Variables: One-Purpose Manipulator (fear only)

A successful attack with the fear wave subjects the victim to a bout of near-hysterical fear, almost certainly causing him to flee a conflict. Geniuses use devices like this to clear out enemies that they don't necessarily want to kill.

Feline Biomatrix Serum:

Construction: Lower of Medicine and Science

Requires: Metaptropi ●●●● (Apokalypsi ●, Exelixa ●, Katastrofi ●)

Bound Mania: 4

Size: 1 (syringe)

Range: Touch

Roll: Intelligence + Medicine -2

Cost per Use: 5 (1 for +1 dot in Strength, 2 for +2 dots in Dexterity, 1 for two-dot Fast Reflexes Merit, 2 for claws, 1 for night vision, reduced Mania -2)

Variables: Limited Uses (4), Reduced Mania Cost (-2)

This wonder transforms the subject into a cat-like beast, hulking but nimble, with long, curved claws (2 Lethal) and glittering cat-like eyes. The result is enhanced Physical Attributes and the ability to tear apart enemies.

This sort of wonder is often used on a genius' beholden before a fight begins, granting them superior combat abilities.

Hallucination Engine:

Construction: Science

Requires: Metaptropi ●● (Automata ●●)
Bound Mania: 2
Size: 2 (stored in a small briefcase)
Range: 20 feet
Cost per Use: 1 Mania per 5 Size points
Roll: Wits + Expression vs. Wits + Composure

A genius can unload this wonder just about anywhere and cause havoc with the fully real three-dimensional illusions it generates. An onboard computer brain allows this wonder to function somewhat independently once activated, with convincing illusions that react to stimuli in a simple manner. The illusions cannot, for example, engage in *ad hoc* conversation, but they respond to events around them in a manner that resembles intelligence. If controlled actively, the hallucination engine can attack people, draining Willpower due to the sheer terror generated by the illusions.

Instant Air Bubble:

Construction: Science
Requires: Exelixa ●, Prostasia ●
Bound Mania: 2
Size: 4 (2 for Exelixa, 2 for Prostasia)
Cost per Use: 3 for Prostasia shield. For life support, every point of Mania provides air for one person for one day.
Variables of Prostasia: Expandable, Integral, Shielding Device
Armor: 4 for one person, 3 out to 5', 2 out to 10', 1 out to 20'

This cylinder provides a sphere of clean, fresh air in a 20' sphere around its location. Not built for combat, it is instead deployed when mad scientists are underwater or in a hostile atmosphere and, for whatever reason, cannot use environmental suits.

Internal Cellular Repair Gland:

Construction: Medicine
Requires: Exelixa ●
Bound Mania: 1
Size: 0 (internal)
Cost per Use: 1 Mania per level of Lethal damage or two levels of Bashing damage healed
Range: Self
Roll: Dexterity + Medicine -1
Variables: Internalized, Self Only

This gland is positioned just below the heart and allows the genius to heal herself with a moment's concentration and internal somatic manipulations. It can only affect the genius, allowing for a quick patch-up in the midst of battle. The wonder heals one point of Lethal damage or two points of Bashing damage per success on the Dexterity + Medicine roll.

A common modification removes the "Self Only" limitation, allowing the genius to secrete healing fluid from the pores of his fingers. This change increases the check penalty to -2.

Invisibility Cape, Version 1:

Construction: Academics
Requires: Epikrato ●●●
Bound Mania: 3
Size: 4 (cape)
Initial Cost: 3 Mania
Roll: Manipulation + Academics vs. Wits + Composure

Variables: Many Minds (40' diameter), No Range, One-Purpose Manipulator (Invisibility Only)

Anyone wearing this bulky cape triggers a powerful "you don't notice me" reaction in anyone within forty feet. Though the effect is not perfect—unusually strong-willed people may still notice the wearer—it is usually enough to get around regular guards, especially when coupled with a bit of regular Stealth.

Invisibility Cape, Version 2:

Construction: Lowest of Crafts, Medicine, and Science

Requires: Metaptropi ●●●●●

Bound Mania: 5

Size: 4 (cape)

Cost per Use: 1 Mania/5 points of Size

Range: Touch

Roll: Intelligence + Science +3

Variables: Attached Transformation, Specific Transformation (invisibility only)

This device works on entirely different principles from the first version of the invisibility cape, and while it requires considerably more talent to create, it is also much more effective, granting the wearer true invisibility: the wearer cannot be detected by any sort of vision.

Kepler-class Aetheric Gunboat:

Construction: Lower of Crafts and Science. For the cannons: Lower of Crafts and Science. For the scanner: Computer. For the communicator: Computer.

Requires: Skafoi ●●●, Apokalypsi ●●, Exelixa ●, Katastrofi ●●●●●, Prostasia ●●●

Bound Mania: 20

Size: 20

Durability: 24

Structure: 44

Initial Cost: 3 Mania to activate

Cost Per Use: 3 Mania per six hours of operation, then 3 Mania per week of operation

Safe Speed: 25,000 mph

Maximum Speed: 37,500 mph

Acceleration: 12,500 mph

Interplanetary Speed: 5 AU/week

Handling: Dexterity + Drive +5

Variables: None

- *Integral Twin Devastator Cannons:* Katastrofi 5. Size 5 each. Damage 7 Aggravated (8-again). Roll Intelligence + Firearms +7 (8-again). Range 5 mile/10 miles/20 miles. Costs 1 Mania to charge up. Artillery, Railgun (+20 automatic successes, -1 per point of Size difference below 15.)
- *Integral Medium-Range Scanners:* Apokalypsi 2. Size 3. Range 1 mile (1,000 miles in space. Roll Wits + Computer +1.
- *Integral Medium-Range Communicator:* Apokalypsi 1. Size 3. Range 1 mile (1,000 miles in space. Roll Wits + Computer +1.
- *Integral Nullification Armor:* Prostasia 3. Size 2. Durability x6.
- *Integral Life Support:* Exelixa 1. Size 2. 1 Mania sustains a person for one day.

This potent warship is designed to travel interstellar space and destroy enemy vessels, especially vulnerable cargo ships. The craft's whole front end is covered in cannons designed to rip through an unprotected ship's hull: non-Prostasia Durability provides no protection against the devastator cannons' Aggravated-damage attacks. Aetheric gunboats usually feature a crew of three: a pilot, a gunner who handles the cannons, and an engineer to make repairs and navigate.

Future Car:

Construction: Crafts. For the Armor: Crafts. For the Commlink: Computer. For the Processor: Computer

Requires: Skafoi ● (Metaptropi ●), Apokalypsi ●, Automata ●, Prostasia ●

Bound Mania: 4

Size: 10

Durability: 12

Structure: 19

Initial Cost: 1 Mania

Cost per Use: 1 Mania per six full hours of travel

Safe Speed: 75 mph

Maximum Speed: 113 mph

Acceleration: 38 mph

Handling: Dexterity + Drive +1

- Integral Radio Comm: Apokalypsi 1. Size 1 Range 1 mile. Roll Wits + Computer +1. Audio only.
- Integral Prostasia Armor: Prostasia 1. Size 1, Durability x4.
- Integral Automata Processor: Automata 1. Size 1. Cost 2 Mania/use. Max stored Mania 2. Rolls a number of dice to drive equal to the genius' Drive Skill +1.

A useful wonder for a genius on the go, this car has a good supply of integral equipment, some protective armor, and solid handling. It makes a good starter package for a new genius and can be upgraded with new integral equipment or superior speed and handling. Most geniuses prefer to build these wonders at Inspiration 2 (at which point their performance is immediately superior to almost anything on the road), but the jalopy above is a bare-minimum version.

The one dot in Automata allows the car to come when called vocally by the genius.

Knockout Gas Gun:

Construction: Lower of Academics and Crafts

Requires: Katastrofi ●●

Bound Mania: 2

Size: 2 (heavy pistol; minimum Strength 3)

Explosive Force: 2

Blast Area: 10 feet, Secondary Blast Area 20 feet

Range: 20/40/80

Roll: Dexterity + Firearms

Initial Cost: 2 Mania

Variables: Explosive Weapon (10' diameter), Continuing Damage, Increased Mania Cost (+1), Lingering Area Damage (turns), Slow Reload (1 turn)

This bulky weapon fires gas pellets that can knock people out. The combination of continuing damage and lingering area damage can bring down even tough foes in time.

Lightning Gun:

Construction: Lower of Crafts and Science

Requires: Katastrofi ●●●

Bound Mania: 3

Size: 3 (rifle; minimum Strength 2)

Damage: 4 Lethal (9-again) (electricity)

Range: 300/600/900

Roll: Dexterity + Firearms +4

Variables: Variable Damage

Initial Cost: 3 Mania. Damage can be tuned down, overcharged, or can be converted to Bashing damage.

Initial Cost: 3

Cost per Use: If desired, additional Mania can be spent to increase damage: 1 Mania for 5 damage, 2 Mania for 6 damage, and 3 Mania for 7 damage, per shot.

A "lightning gun" is a type of ray gun that causes electrical damage to anyone targeted by it. This model features a damage-variance switching, allowing the weapon to be "set to stun" and to be overclocked to cause additional damage. This is a handheld model, about the Size (and usually the shape) of a bullpup rifle. Other models might be pistol-Sized (Size 1, same damage but no variable damage possible) or backpack rigs (Size 4, 5 Lethal damage).

Love Potion:

Construction: Academics

Requires: Epikrato ●●●

Bound Mania: 3

Size: 1 (small vial)

Range: Personal

Cost: 3 Mania

Roll: Manipulation + Academics +1 vs. Composure + Metanormal Advantage

Variables: In Pill Form, One-Purpose Manipulator (love only)

This handy if rather unethical device causes the subject to experience feelings of love toward the first person he sees after drinking the concoction. The effect lasts for the duration of the scene, and can trigger anything from an Obligation-8 to an Obligation-2 transgression, depending on what the genius and the victim do in that time.

Mechanical Wings:

Construction: Crafts

Requires: Skafoi ●●

Bound Mania: 2

Size: 5 (large folded wings)

Initial Cost: 2 Mania

Cost per Use: 2 Mania per six hours of travel

Safe Speed: 20 mph

Maximum Speed: 30 mph

Acceleration: 10 mph/turn

Variables: Hovering

Handling: Dexterity + (lower of Athletics and Drive)

These enormous wings stretch twenty feet across when fully unfurled. An ancient design, mechanical wings are often made of brass, ivory, or bamboo, and sometimes feature real or synthetic feathers. The genius uses his body to turn and maneuver.

Modifications to mechanical wings might make them entirely organic, requiring Medicine. Wings such as this are often grafted to beholden.

Mole Machine:

Construction: Crafts. For the bore: Lower of Crafts and Science. For the armor: Crafts. For the communicator: Computer. For the life support: Medicine.

Requires: Skafoi ●●, Apokalypsi ●, Exelixa ●, Katastrofi ●●●, Prostatia ●

Bound Mania: 8

Size: 16

Durability: 16

Structure: 32

Initial Cost: 2 Mania

Cost per Use: 2 Mania per six hours of travel

Safe Speed: 15 yards per turn

Cruising Speed: 1500 (1,027 mph)

Handling: Dexterity + Drive + 3

- *Integral Earthshredder Bore*: Katastrofi 3. Size 4 (drill). Damage 6 Aggravated. Roll Dexterity + Weaponry +6. Costs 3 Mania. Armor-Piercing 3. Melee. Railgun (+20 automatic successes, -1 per point of Size difference below 15.)
- *Integral Armor Reinforcement*: Prostasia 1. Durability x4.
- *Integral Long-range Communicator*: Apokalypsi 1. Size 4. Range 1,000 miles. Charge-up time 3 turns.
- *Integral Life Support*. Exelixi 1. Size 1. One point of Mania sustains one person for 12 hours.

This is a fairly typical mole-machine with a useful set of equipment for exploring the Hollow Earth and places beneath the soil. Mole machines like this have a somewhat shadowy reputation. This design, with few variations, is used by Hollow Earth Nazis for conducting surface raids as well as certain Inspired bank robbers for attacking banks and other institutions from below the ground.

Multi-Tool:

Construction: Lower of Crafts or Science

Requires: Epikrato ●, Exelixi ●

Bound Mania: 2

Size: 1 (Epikrato 0, Exelixi 1; a single tool resembling a large screwdriver)

Initial Cost: 1 (Epikrato)

Cost per Use: 1 Mania per 5 Structure points restored (Exelixi) or 1 Mania (Epikrato)

Range: 10 feet (Epikrato only)

Variables of Epikrato: Integral

Roll: +1 to any mundane repair check; or Dexterity + Crafts -2 for Exelixi repairs; or Intelligence + Science for Epikrato

This wonder is actually two wonders (requiring two points of bound Mania) in one package: a basic repair tool and a "mechanical manipulator" based on Epikrato. A handy all-purpose device popular among many geniuses, the multi-tool allows for hasty repairs as well as short-range manipulation. (Note that the genius cannot perform repairs at range with this device; the level of Epikrato is sufficient only for basic manipulation of an object). The wonder's small Size means that it is not tremendously precise.

Night on the Town Serum:

Construction: Medicine (Exelixi), lower of Medicine and Science (Metaptropi)

Requires: Exelixi ●●●, Metaptropi ●

Bound Mania: 4

Size: 0 (Internalized)

Roll: Intelligence + Medicine for disguise; Merit boost is automatic

Cost per Use: 1 Mania per 5 points of Size for disguise, 2 Mania for Merit boost

Shared Variables: Internalized, Self Only

Metaptropi Variables: Specific Transformation

This internalized gland is a combination wonder allows a genius to change her appearance, generally making herself more attractive and assertive in the process, to make her more appealing to potential mates. The genius gains two dots in the Striking Looks Merit, but other than that can appear however she desires, gaining three automatic Successes to any disguise check.

More advanced versions of this modification might add dots in Composure or Presence, or replace or supplement Exelixi with Epikrato, allowing for direct control of a person's emotional state.

Petrification Beam:

Construction: Lowest of Crafts, Medicine, and Science

Requires: Metaptropi ●● (Katastrofi ●)

Bound Mania: 2

Size: 2 (heavy pistol; minimum Strength 3)

Range: 20/40/80

Roll: Wits + Katastrofi +1, then Intelligence + Science +5 – target's Stamina + Metanormal Trait

Cost per Use: 1 Mania to activate for a scene, then 1 Mania per 5 points of Size or fraction thereof

Variables: Metaptropi Ray, Specific Transformation (flesh to stone)

This wonder is designed to turn an enemy to stone, petrifying the target. If at least one success is rolled, the subject is turned to stone for the duration of the scene. An Exceptional Success can result in permanent transformation.

Portable Flame Screen:

Construction: Science

Requires: Prostasia ●●●

Bound Mania: 3

Size: 4 (backpack)

Armor: 12 Health Levels of ablative armor vs. fire over a five-foot diameter

Initial Cost: 1 Mania per Health Level of ablative armor activated or restored

Variables: Expandable, Limited Protection (fire), Shielding Device

A useful device for geniuses who expect to be on fire at some time in their careers (hint: that's likely), the flame screen creates a variable-diameter buffer around the genius that hedges out heat and flames. While continual exposure to fire will eventually chew through the ablative force field, a genius with a steady supply of Mania can remain safe in all but the worst blazes for several turns. Once fed with Mania (every point of Mania adds one Health level), the portable flame screen loses protective Health level at a rate of one per day.

Powered Battle-Suit with Integral Energy Cannon and HUD Visor:

Construction: Crafts. For the cannon: Lower of Crafts and Science. For the visor: Computer.

Requires: Prostasia ●●, Katastrofi ●●, Apokalypsi ●●

Bound Mania: 6

Size: 5 (heavy suit of armor)

Armor: 5

Cost: None

Variable: Heavy Armor (-2 to Speed, -1 to Defense, minimum Strength 2)

- *Integral Energy Cannon:* Katastrofi 2. Size 1. Damage 5 Lethal (energy). Roll Dexterity + Firearms +5. Range 20/40/80. 2 Mania to charge up.
- *Integral HUD Visor:* Apokalypsi 2. Size 1. Range 100 feet. Goggles. Roll Wits + Computer.

This is a fairly typical "starter" battle suit for geniuses who have learned the basics of the relevant Axioms. It includes a wrist-mounted blaster and a helmet visor with benefits such as low-light vision. Its solid design also provides enough armor to deflect small arms fire, though it requires some Strength to move around comfortably.

Powered Battle Suit with Integral Exoskeletal Rig and Jet Pack:

Construction: Crafts. For the cannon: Lower of Crafts and Science. For the visor: Computer. For the jet pack: Crafts.

Requires: Prostasia ●●●●, Katastrofi ●●●, Apokalypsi ●●, Exelixa ●●, Skafoi ●●●

Bound Mania: 14

Size: 5 (heavy suit of armor)

Armor: 7

Variables: Heavy Armor (-2 to Speed, -1 to Defense, minimum Strength 4)

Cost: None

- *Integral Plasma Cannon*: Katastrofi 3. Size 1. Damage 4 Lethal (9-again). Roll Dexterity + Firearms +4. Range 40/80/160. Autofire. Costs 3 Mania to charge up.
- *Integral HUD Visor*: Apokalypsi 2. Size 1. Range 100 feet. Roll Wits + Computer.
- *Integral Exoskeletal Reinforcement*: Exelixa 2. Grants +2 to Strength, +1 to Dexterity, and +1 to Stamina (maximum score based on genius' Inspiration). 4 Mania/scene.
- *Integral Jet Pack*: Skafoi 3. Size 5. Safe Speed 2,000 mph, Maximum Speed 3,000 mph, Acceleration 1,000 mph/turn. Handling Dexterity + (lower of Athletics and Drive) +2. Hovering. 3 Mania to activate. 3 Mania/six hours of operation.

This kind of combat suit is the sort of thing that powerful Inspired with a lot of money and drive end up producing after years of experimentation. Able to fly and equipped with an incinerating cannon that can reduce enemies to slag, this suit is heavy enough that many people need to activate the integral Strength boost in order to move around easily.

Rather Tedious But Polite Robot Butler:

Construction: Lower of Computer and Crafts

Requires: Automata ●●●

Bound Mania: 3

Max Mania: 6

Size: 5

Health: 7

Speed: 7

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Automation Points: 9

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 2, Resolve 1

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Physical Skills: Drive 3

Social Skills: Socialize 3

Some variation on this model is *de rigueur* for Inspired looking to entertain their fellows. Generally humanoid in appearance, robot butlers can be used for social events when called upon or for manual tasks. They are fairly clever, making them useful around the lab ("zombies" tend to make stupid mistakes that can prove fatal during an experiment), and they can speak a few hundred words, allowing them to entertain guests and offer amusing anecdotes during social calls. Robot butlers are not clever or innovative, but they have good memories and can usually remember to deliver a message. More intelligent versions (Automata 4) are loaded up with superior social Skills and proficiency with several million forms of communication.

Shrink Ray:

Construction: Lowest of Crafts, Medicine, and Science

Requires: Metaptropi ●●● (Katastrofi ●)

Bound Mania: 3

Size: 1 (pistol; minimum Strength 1)

Range: 30/60/120

Cost per Use: 1 Mania to activate, then 1 Mania per 2 Size points shrunk (maximum 3 Size points shrunk)

Roll: Wits + Firearms, then Intelligence + Science +5 - Stamina + Metanormal Advantage

Variables: Metaptropi Ray, Specific Transformation (shrinking only)

This wonder, if it hits, can shrink a target to any degree desired. Shrink rays are more than just popular novelty items: they can be used to eliminate a threat without having to kill anyone. Since it looks like a gun (with

Metaptropi, it can literally look exactly like a Colt .45 or something similar at no additional cost), just pointing it at someone can stop a fight. It can also be turned on one's allies, shrinking them for use in espionage. The shrink ray's effects normally last for one scene.

Storm Generator:

Construction: Science

Requires: Epikrato ●●●●

Bound Mania: 4

Size: 6 (back of a Winnebago)

Range: 1 mile away from wonder per point of Mania

Roll: Intelligence + Science +4

Cost per Use: 1 Mania per step of wind or precipitation; 1 Mania per additional ¼-mile of diameter

Variables: Storm Machine (+2)

This destructive machine can spread chaos over a city, demonstrating a mad scientist's power. For that reason, most wonders like this are closely watched by the Peerage, which does not smile upon Maniacal lightning storms.

Subdermal Communicator:

Construction: Lower of Computer and Medicine

Requires: Apokalypsi ●

Bound Mania: 1

Size: 0 (Internalized)

Range: 10 feet (cellular plan)

Roll: Intelligence + Computer -1

Cost: None

Variables: Internalized, One-Medium Communicator (audio only)

A useful wonder for the surreptitious genius, this hidden communicator is implanted surgically below the ear. The communicator remains hidden even during active communications, allowing a genius to send messages without being noticed. The tiny wonder usually employs a cell phone plan, since otherwise its range is very poor.

Super-Grappler:

Construction: Crafts

Requires: Skafoi ● (Katastrofi ●)

Bound Mania: 1

Size: 2 (handheld grapple-gun)

Initial Cost: 1 Mania to activate

Cost per Use: 1 Mania per 6 hours of use

Range: 20 feet horizontally and 10 feet vertically

Roll: Dexterity + Athletics

Variables: Bouncing, Clinging, Increased Bouncing Range

Whether it uses a diamondoid tip or sticky glue launched from a central reservoir, the super-grappler is designed to move a genius around quickly, and is best used to make escapes or to suddenly change one's elevation. Many geniuses build a matched pair, allowing them to brachiate around a vertical environment, alternately shooting and sticking. (A clinging, hopping wonder cannot hop while clinging, meaning that using just one results in a fall.) This wonder's range is increased by requiring a check to aim and fire the device.

Telekinetic Gauntlet:

Construction: Science

Requires: Epikrato ●●

Bound Mania: 2

Size: 1 (fits over one hand)

Range: 20 feet

Initial Cost: 2 Mania

Roll: Normally. Can move Size 0 objects at 4 yards/turn, Size 1 objects at 2 yards/turn, and Size 2-3 objects at 1 yard/turn. In contested actions, Intelligence + Science + 1 vs. Strength + Dexterity.

Variables: Charge-up time (3 turns), Fragile

This mechanical glove fits over the user's hand and allows him to engage in almost any kind of telekinetic manipulation. These basic versions are delicate and not particularly powerful, but they fit right over a single hand.

Teleportation Gate:

Construction: Science

Requires: Skafoi ●●●●

Bound Mania: 4

Size: 15 (fills up a room)

Cost per Roll: 1 Mania per 5 points of Size

Roll: Intelligence + Science +4; number of successes depends on distance unless teleporting to another transporter

Variables: Transporter

Teleportation gates allow a genius to get around the world easily. Keeping one at home also allows for easy escape when things go wrong.

Throne of the Dark Lord:

Construction: Computer

Requires: Apokalypsi ●●●●●

Bound Mania: 5

Size: 12

Cost: None

Range: Anywhere on Earth

Roll: Wits + Computer +3

This enormous throne contains scanning equipment that can detect any conceivable sort of phenomena, at instantaneous rates of speed, through any kind of material. It is used by masterminds and paranoids to keep an eye on nearly anything that occurs.

UV "Sungun" Lamp:

Construction: Lowest of Crafts, Occult, and Science

Requires: Katastrofi ●●

Bound Mania: 2

Size: 4 (backpack rig; minimum Strength 3)

Damage: 4 Lethal (sunlight; only damages vampires, so 4 Aggravated vs. vampires)

Blinding: 3 dice are rolled to blind enemies; roll vs. Stamina + Metanormal Advantage. This can affect mortals, too, and is treated as a "Lethal" attack for determining healing time

Range: 20/40/60

Roll: Dexterity + Firearms +4

Initial Cost: 2 Mania

Variables: Reduced Range, Only Against Specific Material; in this case, the weapon will only damage vampires and other creatures vulnerable to sunlight

Many geniuses extend their Obligation to humanity to protecting it from the predation of "aliens" and

"mutants." To deal with a hemophage infestation, geniuses break out a weapon like this. It resembles a two-handed flashlight with twin batteries mounted on the shoulders, and though it's nearly harmless to humans (though there is an off-chance of blinding or dazzling one), it is fatal to blood-suckers, able to turn them to cinders after a few sweeps. These weapons are favored over flame-throwers, another popular way of removing a hemophage nest, since they are less likely to damage the surrounding environment.

Handheld versions are also common. These are Size 1. They cause 2 damage, but still roll 3 dice to blind.

Vat-Grown Hunter:

Construction: Medicine. For Claws: Medicine. For Wings: Medicine. For Armor: Medicine.

Automata ●●● (Apokalypsi ●), Katastrofi ●●, Prostasia ●, Skafoi ●●

Bound Mania: 8

Max Mania: 6

Size: 3

Health: 6

Speed: 8

Initiative: 3

Defense: 2

Armor: 4

Automation Points: 11

Variables: Biological, Decentralized Anatomy, Limited Battery Life (rest 16 hours/day), Low-Light Vision
Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Intelligence 1, Wits 2, Resolve 1

Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Skills: Brawl 3, Athletics 3, Stealth 3

- *Integral Claws:* Katastrofi 2. Size 3 (two claws). Damage 7 Lethal (melee). Roll 13 dice. 2 Mania to sprout claws.
- *Integral Membrane-Wings:* Skafoi 2. Size 3. Safe Speed 30 mph, Max Speed 45 mph, Acceleration 15 mph/turn. Handling +0. Roll 5 dice. Hovering. Reduced Mania Cost (-2; no Mania cost to operate).
- *Integral Scale Armor:* Prostasia 1. Armor 4.

This is the sort of monster that a genius might keep on a leash in case he makes enemies: it can be ordered to seek out and kill enemies, and it does that very well, though it must rest frequently. These creatures are normally built for function over form, and display a hideous combination of organic components from the scattered corners of the animal world: fangs, claws, wings of different sorts of creatures, and a compact, chitinous body that can deflect blows or absorb gunfire. Vat-grown hunters rarely speak, but they possess a cruel, malevolent intelligence and are usually eager to do their master's bidding in exchange for Mania and fresh meat. At this level of ability, they are best sent out in swarming packs; more powerful ones are effective as solitary slayers.

Walking Eye:

Construction: Lower of Computer and Crafts. For the Cannon: Lower of Crafts and Science. For the Scanner: Computer. For the Armor: Crafts.

Requires: Automata ●●●, Katastrofi ●●, Prostasia ●, Apokalypsi ●●

Bound Mania: 8

Max Mania: 6

Size: 5

Structure: 9

Speed: 9

Initiative: 5

Armor: 5

Defense: 2

Variables: No Fine Manipulators

Automation Points: 11

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 2, Resolve 1

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Physical Skills: Firearms 3, Brawl 3

- *Integral Pulse Cannon*: Katastrofi 2. Size 3. Damage 6 Lethal. Roll 13 dice. Range 300/600/1200. Costs 2 Mania to charge up.
- *Integral Scanner Unit*: Apokalypsi 2. Size 1. Range 100 feet. Roll Wits + Computer.
- *Integral Deflector Shield*: Prostasia 1. Armor 5. Costs 1 Mania. Shielding Device.

A standard combat support unit capable of assault, reconnaissance, and patrol, the walking eye resembles a big sphere on top of many spindly legs. It has excellent senses, though it is sometimes too stupid to make the most use out of them, and the cannon stored just beneath its central eye is deadly accurate.

Wonder Forge:

Construction: Lowest of Computer, Crafts, and Science

Requires: Automata ●●●●●

Size: 10

Cost per Use: 4 Mania per rank of the wonder at a rate of one Size point per hour (5 Mania/minute, 6 Mania/turn)

Variables: Dynamic Factory (anything)

This incredible device can create any wonder that can be built with only the Computer, Crafts, and Science Skills. (The wonder forge is literally a forge; a "wonder-womb" might include Medicine or other Skills.) It requires schematics to build from in order to create a wonder. The forge can build wonders of up to Size 10. It requires appropriate raw materials, though these can be stored outside the wonder itself. The wonder forge can also create all sorts of mundane items, though without Medicine, it cannot create living things.

"Behold my cryopig!"

"Cryopig?"

"CRYOPIG!"

"Look, I've been on this planet for a couple years now, and I happen to know that there are no 'cryopigs' here."

"Look!"

"Ah, you've been programming. A C...R...P...G...a 'computer role-playing game.' Christ, but you're stupid."

"It's a beautiful cryopig!"

"That's not how it's...never mind. Can I ask, since you're a genius, why you'd waste time designing a video game? It's pretty inane. I mean, gnomes?"

"A gnome fixed our teleporter."

"I fixed our teleporter. The gnome held the tools. Anyway, the Group wants a plan to take over Austria by Friday. How does this help us?"

"It doesn't help us take over Austria. Not at all. Ask me, 'But why have you done it?'"

"But why have you done it, you spawn of mongrel dogs?"

"Because it will help us get the Group off our backs. Look, twenty people, all dedicated to world conquest? That's not tenable. But this game possesses powerful hypnotic qualities that cause suggestibility in lab rats."

"Really?"

"Now half the rats are Marxists and the other half are Libertarians. I gave them Internet access and now they're all making asses of themselves on political messageboards."

"That's sick. But wait, suggestibility? We could use this as a weapon! Quickly, now, grind up these games and add them to Vienna's drinking water. We'll have them on their knees by Tuesday."

"Why don't we just give the game to everyone else in the Group? Then they'd believe that we'd taken over Austria, and we don't have to worry about budgeting for bratwurst. Don't tell me you actually want to *rule* Austria?"

"Not really, but I want to demonstrate our accomplishments to my peers."

"Why don't we demonstrate that we can control their minds?"

"Because then they'd want to kill us. If we take over Austria, they have to buy us dinner. Which is better, I ask you?"

"You're right. I'll get those rats to destabilize Eastern Europe's economy. We'll rule Austria inside the week."

"The Marxists or the Libertarians?"

"We'll run experiments to see which work better. That's what science is all about."

Appendix Two: The Fellowships

"Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better,
than that a man should rejoice in his own works;
for that is his portion:
for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?"
-Ecclesiastes 3:20

(Inscription above the Tempus Riverboat Fellowship Hall
until their destruction in 1855 and 2318)

Sometimes geniuses need to focus their efforts on a particular, narrow field of study. If a group of geniuses can get enough workers, money, and organization, they can begin a fellowship, an organization less influential than a foundation but better able to study mad science than a single collaborative. These groups serve two purpose. First, they provide funding and support for up-and-coming geniuses who are dedicated to a particular field of study. Second, they allow experienced mad scientists to grow in power and expertise while refining the Inspired community's body of knowledge.

Once a fellowship gets rolling it tends to maintain itself, at least in a dormant state: a fellowship convened to study the nature of the Martian bardo might go on indefinitely, or it might technically conclude after an embassy is established, but even if that happens, something might trigger the reactivation of the fellowship. When that happens, geniuses dig up the old charters, money starts to flow from dusty trust funds and legacies, and attracted by the lure of grant money and old lore, new thinkers join the reborn fellowship and set its new agenda. Fellowships have been likened to living things, sustained by Mania; whether that is literally true or not, many have a peculiar sort of life cycle, remaining dormant for long periods before bursting back to the surface.

A genius can belong to a fellowship in one of two ways. If she wants only to assist the fellowship, but not join, she can gain a Scholarship. If she wants to join full-time, she can become a Research Fellow.

Scholarships:

Most geniuses do not join fellowships. However, many make use of the Scholarships that fellowships offer. A Scholarship grants a +1 bonus to the building and modifying one particular type of wonder. Further, the funding offered by the fellowship means that the genius will not run out of key ingredients for that type of wonder. (See Missing Ingredients, Page 143.)

In return for this benefit, the genius must send the fellowship a copy of the schematic of any relevant wonder for archival. This is the only regular cost: there is no bound Mania requirement for Scholarship.

Scholarships cost three Experience Points, but also require some demonstration of the genius' interest and competence. This can be resolved mechanically with an Inspiration + Expression roll, representing an essay or theorem submitted for the fellowship's consideration. Fellowships accept Scholarships twice per year, usually with a due date of March 1st and August 1st, with results coming back after one month.

Dramatic Failure: The genius' essay has in some way offended the fellowship, and the fellowship will not accept the genius for Scholarships or fellowship.

Failure: The fellowship has rejected the genius for Scholarship.

Success: The fellowship has accepted the genius for Scholarship. This costs a number of Mania points equal to the genius' Inspiration.

Exceptional Success: The fellowship has accepted the genius for Scholarship. There is no Mania cost.

Suggested Modifiers: Genius has made previous attempts to join (-1), genius has built a suitable wonder and submitted its schematic along with the essay (+1), likewise with a procedure (+2), genius is aesthetically similar to the fellowship (+1), genius' aesthetic conflicts strongly with the fellowship (-2), genius already has an active Scholarship (-1), genius already belongs to another fellowship (-2), genius is a Lemurian (-2 or worse).

This roll can be waived due to role-playing considerations; suitable favors or friendship may grant additional dice or allow the genius automatic entrance. Performing impressive acts on the fellowship's behalf will also result in the waiving of the roll.

A genius can receive any number of Scholarships. Scholarships last, by default, for one year, at which time they expire. However, they can be renewed automatically at no Mania cost.

Research Fellowships:

Actually joining a fellowship as a research fellow grants the genius greater benefits than a mere Scholarship, but also enmeshes her in the lifestyle of the fellowship. All fellowships possess a syllabus that gives its members benefits when working with a particular type of wonder that they have built. As a genius gains more knowledge and influence in the fellowship, her Syllabus level rises, allowing her to perform more impressive feats of mad science in the narrow area of study that is the fellowship's focus.

Syllabus ●: The genius gains a +1 bonus when building or modifying a wonder of the fellowship's type. This is cumulative with the bonus gained from Scholarship.

Syllabus ●●: The genius gains a +1 bonus to the Core Modifier of any wonder of the fellowship's type.

Syllabus ●●●: The genius need bind one fewer point of Mania to wonders of the fellowship's type (minimum 0). If she wants the wonder not to possess an integral fault, she pays double this reduced cost (minimum 1).

Syllabus ●●●●: For a number of wonders of the fellowship's type equal to the genius' Inspiration, the genius need bind no Mania to maintain them. These wonders have no faults. The Assembly Line Merit does not increase the number of wonders covered by this syllabus benefit.

Syllabus ●●●●●: Once per scene, the genius need not spend Mania to activate a wonder of the fellowship's type. Wonders that have the "increased Mania cost" variable cannot benefit from this use of the syllabus.

To join a fellowship, a genius must have received a Scholarship from the fellowship. (The scholarship need not be active.) Entering a fellowship requires a vetting process in addition to spending experience points: an existing member must vouch for the genius' credentials and integrity. Joining a fellowship requires the same sort of roll as getting a Scholarship. Once a genius joins a fellowship, she remains indefinitely.

A fellowship works much like a foundation in that it requires Mania tithes from its members. A fellowship binds one point of Mania. Conditions for losing membership in a fellowship are precisely identical to losing membership in a foundation.

A fellowship needs at least ten Mania from at least five different sources to function; otherwise it goes dormant and its former members lose the benefits of the Syllabus. The fellowships described below are all healthy and not in danger of going dormant.

A genius who belongs to a fellowship must send schematics of any relevant wonder to the fellowship, just as if he possessed a Scholarship.

Geniuses can only belong to one fellowship at a time. A genius can leave a fellowship simply by withholding the Mania tithe or by joining another fellowship, but once he leaves, his Syllabus abilities go dormant and he cannot use them until he rejoins. Rejoining a fellowship is possible: if the genius left on good terms, he may rejoin automatically; otherwise he must find a person to vouch for him and roll. If he left on bad terms, he may be blackballed by the fellowship and refused the ability to regain his status.

A genius who joins a fellowship can still receive Scholarships.

Scholarships, Fellowships, and Lemuria:

The fellowships listed below are typically for peers only, though most will welcome peer-friendly rogues. Lemuria has its own esoteric fellowship organizations and it does not allow peers to join, though it may tolerate independent echo doctors of sufficient ideological compatibility. Lemurians can attempt to gain Scholarships in the organizations below with a -2 penalty to their roll. Joining as a research fellow is not normally possible except under very unusual circumstances.

The Elders of the Third Law

This story, like all good stories, begins with the evil twin of Leonardo da Vinci. Naming himself Orfeo, he spread a path of destruction across Anatolia during the sixteenth century, until brought down by Leo himself and a cadre of gifted beholden servants. Many catalyzed in that hideous aerial battle, and they swore to protect the world from the insane jumps of logic and fancy that nearly destroyed the Mediterranean.

As the years passed, the Order of Vinci (renamed the Elders of the Third Law after Isaac Newton's work on *The Principia*, and later, as an homage to Isaac Asimov) explored every aspect of kinetics and mechanics. As new technology appeared, they watched as, in turn, steam, electricity, and radiation resulted in mountains of Inspired and mundane corpses. The Elders believe that each technology should be savored and fully explored before moving onto the next. Extremely conservative, they eagerly hunt Illuminated and geniuses who abuse technology, especially modern technology, to oppress and torment mortals.

Though they began as a Lemurian fellowship, the Elders drifted from that group in the 19th century, eventually establishing themselves as an independent society. Now, after the war, the Elders of the Third Law cater to both sides of the divide and have found themselves in the surprising role of mediators between the Peerage and Lemuria. The Elders are one of the few fellowships that has full members from both the Peerage and Lemuria. (Lemurians suffer no penalties for trying to join.)

The Elders are masters of mechanical technology, hunters of the unnatural, and explorers of the Crystal Spheres. They have no fixed location, but instead gather once every three years in a different ancient city (next year it's Teotihuacan, inside the forgotten Calendar Pyramid of Tlaloc—reduced rates are available at the Mexico City Hyatt) for the sort of face-to-face communication they prefer.

Aesthetic:

Elder technology possesses an ancient and timeworn look. Their devices are crafted from metal and wood—never plastic. They eschew electricity, radiation, and even steam, and power their devices with springs and wound cogs. Though they use (and often delight in) gunpowder, few Elders focus on Katastrofi. Their vehicles are armored in steel, and their automata are intricate clockwork masterpieces. Their biological sciences are strictly limited to healing and repair; the Elders do not engage in genetic experimentation or mind control. Few Elders study Apokalypsi, since they eschew electricity and radio, though a few work wonders with crystals and mirrors. To travel the Crystal Spheres, they use flying machines able to escape Earth's pull.

Foundations and Catalysts:

The careful approach of the Elders often favors Scholastics, while adventurous Navigators can be found exploring the Crystal Spheres. Few Directors join the Elders, as few Elders are interested in the social interaction where Directors excel. Even mechanically-inclined Progenitors possess an organic, unpredictable approach to their creations, meaning they rarely join the precise Elders.

The Elders are mostly Klagens, their primitivist worldview tied to some technology-related tragedy or act of recklessness, or Staunens, who have found something indescribably beautiful in the turning of the gears of the universe.

The Elders of the Third Law also welcome Lemurians, which troubles many in the Peerage. Mechanists make up almost one-third of the entire Elder membership, while some Cartesian Etherites have also made their way into the group.

Scholarship Requirements:

Craft Specialization: Mechanics or Science Specialization: Mechanics.

Fellowship Requirements:

Inspiration 5+

Crafts 4+

Science 3+

Craft Specialization: Mechanics or Science Specialization: Mechanics

A previous journey to the Crystal Spheres

Wonders:

The Scholarship and fellowship for the Elders of the Third Law benefit any device entirely based on mechanical principles. This includes mechanical brains and clockwork people (Automata), crossbow-like weapons and wind-up swords (Katastrofi), spring-powered carts, self-powered ornithopters and helicopters, dirigibles, and balloons that can reach the Crystal Spheres (Skafoi), mechanical suits of armor (Prostasia), and other devices constructed entirely on mechanical, pneumatic, or hydraulic principles.

The Hermetic Order of the 28 Spheres

Not every group approaches mad science like Lemuria and the Peerage. Stripped of the cultural detritus accumulated around it over the past five centuries or so, the truth of Inspiration is much murkier than many geniuses realize: somehow, perhaps through an external "spiritual" agency, perhaps through the advanced development of their own souls, some people are able to create objects of wonder, impossible by any reasonable understanding of how the world works.

But there is nothing except tradition, say the members of the Hermetic Order, that says that these wonders must be "mad science." The Hermetics got their start in the 18th century when occult lore, Inspired and otherwise, made its way from India to Europe. For almost 50 years, a group of loners explored the techno-mystic science of old Lemuria, turning it into a working system of "occult" science. When they encountered the Invisible College in the early 19th century, they were not absorbed, but nor did they flee in horror from the revelation of what they "really were." Instead they played with the idea of Inspiration was supposed to be, throwing the Invisible College's assumptions back at them.

The Hermetic Order of the 28 Spheres has continued with this tradition for centuries now, violating the boundaries of convention and ignoring the appearance and style of traditional mad science, instead favoring an explicitly occult style while playing with the idea of what Inspiration is and what it means. Always rebels, but rarely revolutionaries, the Hermetic Order offers a unique vision of what Inspiration is.

Aesthetic:

The Hermetic Order's original imagery was based on Hindu mysticism, though in time they have absorbed and played with Buddhism, Taoism, Enochian Angelology, and Chaos Magic. The stated goal of the Order is to see how far they can push a wonder away from the traditional technological image of Inspiration without damaging the wonder's function. Their aesthetic is a riddle: what, exactly, does a wonder *need* to work? It certainly needs more than just raw Inspiration, but how far can a genius depart from "mechanism" (for lack of a better word) before a wonder just won't function?

Foundations and Catalysts:

Members of the Hermetic Order are eclectic. While there are more Scholastics and Progenitors than others, geniuses from almost any foundation may find themselves part of this fellowship. Rogues are also common, especially those who catalyzed in the belief that they were doing "magic" or that they had psychic powers. For them, even the fellowship's winking approach to truth and symbol is more comfortable than the alien technology of rest of the Peerage. Though one might expect Oracles to belong to the Hermetic Order, the deliberately postmodern styling of the fellowship grates against their sense that they have the only truth. Phenomenologists are generally barred from joining, as their false cheer is usually a mask for deeply cracked ideological positions.

Probably a majority of Hermetics are Staunens who delight in the nature of Inspiration-as-such. Other catalysts are present but comparatively rare.

Scholarship Requirements:

Academics 1+
Occult 1+

Fellowship Requirements:

Inspiration 3+
Academics 2+
Occult 2+
Technomancer Merit

Wonders:

Upon initiation, geniuses who claim a Scholarship or fellowship in the Hermetic Order select one of six "chief spheres" that will represent them. These "chief spheres" are:

Air (including all gases). Poison gas wands (Katastrofi), breath-stealing phantoms (Automata), storm cauldrons (Epikrato)

Earth (including metal, stone, dirt, and dead organic material). Rune-graven armor suits (Prostasia), "fair folk"-fast item repair (Exelixi), cockatrices (Automata and Metaptropi)

Fire (including light, lightning, and most electromagnetic phenomena). Flaming swords (Katastrofi), Phaethon chariots (Skafoi), amulets vs. fire (Prostasia)

Water (including all liquids, as well as ice). Blood-freezing charms (Katastrofi), enchanted boats (Skafoi), water elementals (Automata)

Life (plants, animals, and the human body). Loup-garou hexes (Metaptropi), potions of healing (Exelixi), dragons (Automata)

Spirit (including thoughts, memories, and non-corporeal beings). Evil eye (Katastrofi), mind control powders (Epikrato), circlets of mind-reading (Apokalypsi)

Any wonder that falls into the appropriate category benefits from the Scholarship or fellowship so long as it is built in the Hermetic's unique style. Generally, the more of a stretch the wonder is, the more egregious and "magical-seeming" are any faults. A genius cannot change his chief sphere once it is selected (either for a Scholarship or a fellowship).

The Phantom Foundation

As its name implies, the Phantom Foundation was once a rogue foundation, a program, dedicated to the exploration and study of all "spectral" phenomena. Though no longer a proper program, its wealth and cultural resonance has allowed it to continue as one of the most influential organizations in the Inspired world. Its core focus is on the investigation of life after death, with a particular focus on interacting with ghosts, specters, and other "post-corporeal intelligences," either to gather information or (and this is how the fellowship makes its money) banishing them.

The Phantom Foundation possesses an unassuming office block in an industrial park near Saratoga Springs, New York. Its corporate office holds about fifty employees (twenty beholden, thirty regular workers who handle the accounting and advertising without understanding exactly what is going on). This openness works to the fellowship's advantage, allowing them to probe what, exactly, is fueled by Mania and what phenomena are powered by other sources (and thus immune to Havoc).

Aesthetic:

The Phantom Foundation sees a close link between electricity and psychic phenomena. They employ electric pentacles to hedge out spirits, powerful generators to tear rifts between the worlds, and electroencephalographic "god helmets" to generate and examine psychic energy and non-standard modes of consciousness. Though the scholars of the foundation usually present themselves in neat fashions with a minimum of paraphernalia, field agents and investigators are laden down with generators, batteries, and arcing electrical equipment.

Foundations and Catalysts:

Almost every foundation can find a home in this fellowship. Directors fill out the bulk of the Phantom Foundation's officials and analysts. The group's occult orientation means that many Scholastics find their way into the Foundation's good graces. Old-school Progenitors often make gifted scholars of the phantom worlds, meaning their contributions are invaluable. Navigators and Artificers are less common, though there are a number of "ghost-busting" Navigators who make up sweep teams once a target is located.

The Foundation's catalysts are an eclectic mix: there are many Klagens who wish to hear from their loved ones again, while bitter Neids dream of demonstrating the reality of the spirit-world to an indifferent and ungrateful Consensus. Ghost-hunters (nicknamed "Karnackis") are often Grimms, with some horror perpetrated by ghosts or vampires haunting their past.

A few Oracles are rumored to have joined the Phantom Foundation, but this is only hearsay: the Foundation bitterly denies such allegations.

It's rumored that a few geniuses are still members of the Phantom Foundation *foundation* (or rather, program), rather than just joining as Scholars and fellows. Most of these are over seventy years old now and no longer directly connected with the Foundation, but it might be possible for one to teach an enterprising young genius. The Phantom Foundation's favored Axioms were Apokalypsi or Prostasia, and it granted the following bonus to its members: a +2 bonus to all rolls involving ghostly or undead phenomena, including knowledge, interaction, and combat, wondrous or mundane. Belonging to the program (if it still exists) grants no particular bonus for scholarship or fellowship.

Scholarship Requirements:

Occult 2+ or Technomancer Merit

Fellowship Requirements:

Inspiration 3+

Occult 4+ (2+ with Technomancer Merit)

Wonders:

The Phantom Foundation Scholarship and fellowship benefits any wonder capable of detecting, controlling, communicating with, or interacting with the dead. "The dead" include corpses (which may or may not be slated for resurrection), ghosts, vampires, miscellaneous "walking dead," and certain other natural inhabitants of Twilight or other death-realms, shadow-realms, or netherworlds. This includes ghostbuster guns (Katastrofi), necroscopes (Apokalypsi), gates to the Other Side (Skafoi), and wards, hedges, and shields against the dead (Prostasia).

The Perfected Vision Institute

The Institute—it is rarely referred to by its full name—is a loose affiliation of paranormal researchers, philosophers, high-energy physicists, and brain surgeons dedicated to unlocking the secrets of the human mind. The Institute's focus is on psychic powers, cybernetics, and human augmentation, and they are the leading experts in the internalization of wonders. Though the Institute began with a strict focus on "occult" telepathy, centered on the Axiom of Epikrato, they branched out massively in the 80s to encompass a variety of aesthetics and styles.

The Institute's reputation has varied considerably since its founding in the late 1880s, from an organization of visionary scholars to a shadowy group of mind-controllers and manipulators. The Institute is currently in the midst of a power struggle between idealistic and manipulative members of its advanced research teams.

Aesthetic:

The Institute's original aesthetic was not to have an aesthetic: its fellows would be ordinary men and women who just happened to possess significant modification to their brains and other parts of their body. As time passed, various aesthetics glommed onto the Institute: the "crystal toga" look popular around the time of the Great War experienced occasional popularity until it was joined by cybernetic stylings in the 70s. Ironic modern geniuses have started to bring new aesthetics, including religious, occult, and psychobotanical paraphernalia, to the Institute.

Foundations and Catalysts:

One of the Institute's stated goals is to draw as equally as possible from all the foundations: Artificers provide neuroscientific know-how, Directors provide mental acuity and organization, Navigators offer field experience and training in new techniques, Progenitors help with the installation of new body- and brain-parts, and Scholastics analyze new psychic models and create old ones. Lemurians are not tolerated, however, and many powerful members of the Institute fear Lemurian infiltration.

The Institute's members come mostly from the catalysts of Hoffnung—they plan to use the Institute's findings to change mad science forever—and Staunen—they are simply happy to explore the possibilities of psychic science. Other catalysts are also well-represented.

Scholarship Requirements:

Academics 2+
Occult 1+ or Medicine 1+
Must possess at least one internalized wonder

Fellowship Requirements:

Inspiration 3+
Epikrato 1+
Academics 3+
Occult 2+ or Medicine 2+
Must possess at least one internalized wonder

Wonders:

A genius can gain the Institute's benefits with any wonder that possesses the "internalized" variable. Originally only wonders based on brain augmentation and alteration could receive this benefit, but the Institute has expanded a bit in recent years, allowing for a variety of internal mechanical and chemical enhancements. This benefit includes telepathic nodes (Apokalypsi and Epikrato), inner "third eyes" for remote-viewing (Apokalypsi), internal healing and biofeedback enhancement (Exelixi), and even strange powers like levitation (Epikrato) and internalized shapeshifting (Metaptropi).

The Iridium Sentinels

The cities of the World of Darkness are riddled with crime, cruelty, and profanity, unsafe for decent people to walk at night. The Iridium Sentinels are determined to reverse this trend, one street at time. Armed with the most advanced crime-fighting technology Inspiration can build, the Sentinels scour the city streets, safeguarding the innocent and eradicating crime. Their methods range from the humane to the monstrous, but they are all united in the common goal of using the power of their Mania to banish criminality.

The Iridium Sentinels' name comes from its founder, who wore a suit of mysterious black metal chiseled with iridium and platinum, until he mysteriously disappeared 20 years ago. The Sentinels have maintained their founder's tradition, favoring concealing suits and body armor when on patrol. The Iridium Sentinels may be the single most popular fellowship in North America, with every major city, it seems, sporting one or two power-suited crime-fighters.

Aesthetic:

The Iridium Sentinels possess an astonishing variety of styles and fashions, unified generally by their desire for some kind of "suit" that they can wear. Some look like 19th-century deep-sea divers, others like armored knights covered in gears, others like living robots protected by advanced alloys and polymers.

Foundations and Catalysts:

Among foundations, Navigators are almost overwhelmingly represented, as their toughness and inner strength matches well with the philosophy of the Iridium Sentinels. Some mystically-minded Sentinels, dedicated to guarding the streets from metanormal predation, are Scholastics, though they are rare. Progenitors wrapped in techno-organic armor have also been encountered, as have Artificers protecting their turf in rough-looking scrapwork suits.

Grimms make up most of the Iridium Sentinels' numbers; their rage lends them strength. A few are Klagens, warped by sorrow into trying to prevent further tragedies from happening. A few bitter Neids or Hoffnungs dedicated to ideologies of purification round out the "far-out whack-job" end of the Iridium Sentinels.

Scholarship Requirements:

Prostasia 1+
Athletics 2+

Fellowship Requirements:

Inspiration 4+
Prostasia 2+
Brawl 2+
Athletics 4+
Must have spent at least three months in the last five years fighting crime in an official or unofficial capacity

Wonders:

Scholarship and fellowship in the Iridium Sentinels grant a bonus to any wonder that qualifies as an "armored suit." To qualify as an armored suit, the suit must fit over a human body (or some other body; if you really want to build a battle-harness for your guinea pigs, go ahead; the Sentinels will spot you the cash) and possess a Prostasia rating of at least 1. Weapons, scanners, and other wonders also receive the benefit of the Iridium Sentinels, so long as they are integral to the suit and cannot be removed from it.

The Malcolm T. Washington Fellowship

Created almost fifty years ago, the Malcolm T. Washington Fellowship is dedicated to the advancement of mad scientists of African descent who specialize in the creation and deployment of genetically modified arthropods.

This might seem like a rather narrow charge, but it turns out that there are a lot of very smart, slightly crazy black people who really *really* want to work with giant bugs—especially when there's grant money involved. The fellowship is very well-respected, and has begun expanding its horizons, especially as it works to incorporate new-style Progenitors and Artificers, but it still retains its traditional focus.

Aesthetic:

Washington Fellows are generally interested in giant bugs. There's some variation there, however: some are interested in large numbers of regular-sized bugs. Others are interested in giant lobsters, or merely very large centipedes. But members of this fellowship find themselves transfixed by the nature of arthropods: their simultaneous simplicity and complexity, their alien nature, their resilience in the face of hardship. A few, especially among the older generation, see racial metaphors in the insects they create; others are merely fascinated by the strange creatures and enamored of the plasticity and infinite variety of their forms and functions.

Foundations and Catalysts:

Progenitors are very common among the fellowship, as direct experiment and modification is lauded as the best way to create and improve new breeds of arthropods. Artificers are also common, and usually angry. More cautious members are Scholastics, while the fellowship's Directors are considered some of the best orators mad science has to offer, so long as they get to talk about their favorite subject. (Yes, their favorite subject is giant insects. Also, sometimes, race relations. But mostly giant insects.) A small core of (mostly female) Navigators also exists: they call themselves the Tarantula Sisters, and have spent the last few decades breeding riding tarantulas, although several of the members are now too old for active tarantula-riding and are instead looking for new recruits.

The fellowship's catalyst demographics are informed as much by the racial makeup of its members as by their peculiar obsession: a simmering rage still exists in the African-American population among those who have seen their talents ignored and derided, which has produced a volatile mix of Grimms and Neids. Others escape from rage to captivation, and become Staunens who delight in their own creations. Some believe that giant arthropods can help increase social consciousness for black scientists. It's...not entirely clear how that argument works, but not a few Washington Fellows are passionate Hoffnungs.

Scholarship Requirements:

Automata 1+
Medicine 3+
Must be of American or Canadian citizenship and of African heritage

Fellowship Requirements:

Inspiration 3+
Automata 2+
Exelixa 2+
Medicine 3+

Must have created a wonder that can be described as a "genetically-engineered arthropod"
Must be of American or Canadian citizenship and of African heritage

Wonders:

The Malcolm T. Washington Scholarship and fellowship benefit any independently-functioning life form of arthropoidal origin and appearance. The "independently functioning" element is important: the bonus applies when building fully independent insect-like automata, as well as automata-that-are-mostly-Skafoi and automata-that-are-mostly-Katastrofi, but they must be *automata*: a flying beetle that spits acid is fine, but an acid-spitting proboscis strapped to the wrist is not; a near-mindless (Automata 2) fifty-foot riding centipede is acceptable, while a surgically-grafted set of butterfly wings will not offer the bonus. The wonders must also be at least mostly organic; insect-shaped robots or clockworks do not qualify. Integral wonders of these arthropods that are also mostly organic also benefit.

The Nine Vertex Devils Club

This fellowship first appeared in California in 1995, when a group of Chinese-American geniuses organized a quarterly car race and rally. The rally exploded in popularity, as geniuses took their cars, trucks, and bikes through burned-out LA neighborhoods, across the desert, and through the remnants of bardos, looking to push the limits of the technology. The club organized as a proper fellowship shortly thereafter and dedicated itself to the art, craft, and science of the "single-seater." That's still their charge and their focus: any Skafoi wonder designed for one person is their purview and their domain. The Nine Vertex Devils Races are still held four times a year in Los Angeles, California and Kowloon, China, and now feature separate contests for ground vehicles, air vehicles, and a space race from Earth to Space Station Colossus and back. Some geniuses are thinking about putting together a mole-machine derby.

Aesthetics:

Though challengers in the Nine Vertex Devils Races can bring almost any style to bear, the fully accredited members of this fellowship usually favor a practical, Brutalist style, which may include ugly metal and lots of exposed pipes or an extensive use of uncolored, crudely-molded (but aerodynamic) plastic. The Nine Vertex Devils test themselves in the field, and their equipment looks that way: simple, functional, and heavily-used.

Foundations and Catalysts:

Navigators dominate the Club, making up over 80% of its membership; a few mechanically-inclined Artificers also belong to the fellowship. Some Atomists and Etherites have applied for Scholarship as well.

Catalysts of Staunen—who delight in the exhilaration of raw speed—and of Grimm—who take out their aggressions behind the wheel—are common in the Nine Vertex Devils Club.

Scholarship Requirements:

Drive 2+
Skafoi 1+

Fellowship Requirements:

Inspiration 2+
Crafts 3+
Drive 3+
Exelixa 1+
Skafoi 1+
Must have won at least one Nine Vertex Devils Race

Wonders:

To gain the benefit of this fellowship, a genius must construct a wonder of Skafoi that is large enough to have a seat but not so large it requires more than one person to operate. Further, the wonder must "move" in some way, that is, its primary mode of operation must use the Drive skill. Hot rods, jet bikes, personal spaceships or submersibles, and sports cars all qualify; large vessels like multi-crew starships do not, nor do worn wonders like jet boots and grafted wings. Any wonders integral to this vehicle also qualify for the fellowship's benefits, as do any wonders of Exelixa that can modify or upgrade those vehicles or their integral gear.

The Resurrection Consortium

One of the oldest fellowships among the Peerage, the Resurrection Consortium claims descent from Song Dynasty Taoist philosophers, Arab Muslim scholars of the early Middle Ages, and even the Egyptian Pharaohs. Their modern origin is in 19th century Egypt with a group of Inspired artillerists who deserted Napoleon's army and, after a series of misadventures in a secret room under the Sphinx that don't make a great deal of geographical or common sense, emerged transformed and enlightened, possessing the secrets of immortality.

The Resurrection Consortium, despite its name, is not just interested in bodily resurrection, but in preventing the need for resurrection in the first place: they are gifted healers, and obsessed with restoring youth to old flesh. Members of the Consortium are often prone to obsessive behavior—their Cryogenic Hall in St. Paul, Minnesota, for those members who did not quite succeed in their quest for immortality, should bear witness to that—but many are also intelligent, level-headed, and highly capable physicians, biologists, and technological occultists.

The Consortium has no physical office, as its members are scattered across the world, but it does have a Website with a surprisingly active messageboard: Restoration Theory (the board) has changed from being an exclusive board for members of the Consortium to a general messageboard about all sorts of mad (generally biological) science: members are fellows of the Resurrection Consortium or the Washington Fellowship, Progenitors, or just generally interested members of the Peerage.

Aesthetic:

The Resurrection Consortium's members come from a myriad of backgrounds and approaches, meaning that there is no single unified aesthetic. Their Website favors an Egyptian motif, and that is popular among certain members of the fellowship, though others with a flair for the dramatic go for the classic "Frankenstein's laboratory" look, or icy blue and silver cryogenic chambers out the 1970s. But most Resurrectionists are, at the end of the day, a practical and pragmatic lot, and use whatever works without regard to a unified theme.

Foundations and Catalysts:

Progenitors and Scholastics make up the bulk of this fellowship's population. Artificers, Directors, and Navigators are comparatively rare, though there are a few Directors in charge of major projects. There is some overlap with Lemuria, Oracles are known to frequent the boards and to have earned Scholarships, though it's unsure if any are actually fellows.

Klagens and Hoffnungs are the most common catalysts for Consortium members: the former are often trying to return life to the dead, and defined by their personal tragedy, while Hoffnungs see a future world where death is banished forever, for everyone (or for the right kinds of people, or for whoever can pony up three million euros). Despite the dominance of these catalysts, bitter Neids, amazed-and-horrified Staunens, and even furious and vengeful Grimms are not unheard of.

Scholarship Requirements:

Exelixa 1+
Medicine 2+
Occult 1+

Fellowship Requirements:

Inspiration 3+

Obligation 6-
Exelixa 3+
Medicine 4+
Occult 2+

Wonders:

The Resurrection Consortium Scholarship and fellowship can benefit any attempt at procedures that restore life to the dead, rejuvenate old, damaged, diseased, or dead tissue, increase life span, or animate dead flesh or brains. This includes the animating of chemical, cryogenic, or techno-occult zombies (Automata) as well as any attempt to heal, repair, or restore (though not upgrade) organic tissue (Exelixa).

LEMURIAN MECHANICAL INFORMATION APPARATUS ("Elmia") CC-18646:
"Seattle Tour 2006"

Origin: Unknown Peer. Vector: Visual recording and analysis
device labeled "Derdekeas the Third Illuminator"

Images (1 of 7)

"Bad Ecology": A robot constructed of 1970s TV sets and transistors skulks in an alley wearing a trenchcoat and fedora. In the fire escape, smaller creatures peer through the metal bars with electric eyes. • "Broke Lemurian": An office, empty of furniture. A man has blown his head off with a shotgun. Nothing remains of the head but a flopping tongue and bits of lower mandible. Behind him a sign reads "Alaric's repairs and subtle alterations--Foreclosed." Tiny mechanical creatures cluster around him. One touches his trouser-leg, as if to rouse him from sleep. • "Wanderer": A pale, freckled woman in a spring dress and straw hat looks up from the fissures of Enceladus at Jupiter. She wears a metallic bracelet, but no evident protective equipment. • "Underground": An enormous thing that might once have been a chariot, now with six serpents for legs and a scorpion-tail, with a metal face resembling a ram's. Broken swords, spears, and arrows jut out from its carapace. • "Prophecy": A pale man with long white hair stands with arms flung wide. His dirty overcoat is open to reveal a bare chest carved with geometrical theorems from Newton's Principia. Two nails have been driven into his eyes, which ooze blood. His expression is exultant. Behind him is an ectoplasmic crown. • "Corruption": An African-American police officer with a dark mustache and dark glasses drives his car slowly through a run-down neighborhood. Pushing out of the car are faces and hands, which distort the metal. The police officer is smiling. • A man (face blurred out) in a filthy-looking public bathroom, staring into a mirror (also blurred). He wears a dark blue lab coat with eyes drawn on it in magic marker. Hanging from and wrapped around the coat are machines that resemble wristwatches or pocket-watches except with large, wet, staring eyes. Some eyes have been put out and bleed freely, staining the floor and sink. • "Oldest Trick in the Book": (Captured from overhead, as if from within a vent.) Two metal tables. One contains a dead and dessicated man. The other contains a man who resembles the other except for being much younger. The younger man looks around, confused. A bulky display screen in front of him (that he appears not to have yet noticed) reads "Welcome Back." • "Odd One": A bird of paradise on a telephone pole, being pointedly ignored by the crows. It's wearing brass goggles.

Appendix Three: The Seattle of Tomorrow

We thought we were done with these things but we were wrong.
We thought, because we had power, we had wisdom.
We thought the long train would run to the end of time.
We thought the light would increase.
Now the long train stands derailed and the bandits loot it.
Now the boar and the asp have power in our time.
Now the night rolls back on the West and the night is solid.
Our fathers and ourselves sowed dragon's teeth.
Our children know and suffer the armed men.
-Stephen Vincent Benét, *Litany for Dictatorships*

The Seattle of Tomorrow was the most beautiful city Inspiration ever forged, a colossus of technological harmony, a triumph of Man's ambition, an eternal monument to the brilliance of the human race. The light of its 56 platinum-iridium towers shone, not for the mere mortals who teemed and squirmed through the Seattle known to regular folks, but for the Inspired alone, reflecting alien science and sacred geometry so brightly that, with the right eyes, you could see Seattle from orbit.

This was Lemuria's dream and Lemuria's triumph. In 1962 it all fell apart, because none of it was real. Lemuria had built its jewel upon a bardo, a memory of the perfect Scientific State that technologies of war had long since discredited. They convinced themselves that the streets that mortals never walked, that ran crosswise through intersections in normal space, were the work of dimensional science, of ancient non-Euclidean engines...anything, anything but another bardo, another chintzy lie spat into the world to eat up little bits of truth and sustain itself. But the Seattle of Tomorrow was an illusion, and as Lemuria crumbled, that illusion collapsed.

This, then, is what remains of Seattle to geniuses: the wreckage of a technocratic surveillance state still devouring its own tail, towers cast down as if by the tantrum of a child-god, distorted tesseract-space and secret tunnels where blind albino men hide from long-disbanded secret police, where alien intellects plot to enslave humanity, where people go in and never come out, or come out infected and parasitized by living secrets. Seattle is a city of surveillance and anarchy, of frantic night-time brawls on starry, illuminated rooftops or wet alleys that cross into other realms, of hidden riots and covert power-struggles, and constant transformation.

And this is the paradox of Seattle, for Seattle is not a terrible city. For most of the mortals who inhabit the Emerald City, it's...downright pleasant. Crime is low, jobs are plentiful, industry is active, the suburbs are safe, and while Seattle has its share of problems—what city does not?—it's not the industrial wasteland that usually marks abuse of Mania. For mere mortals, Seattle is the city of Microsoft and Mt. Ranier, the families in affluent suburbs and the coffee shops that crowd The Ave. For the Inspired who call it home, it is a place of danger, terror, and fallen beauty, dominated by warring Inspired tribes and watched over by an insane computer intellect. This truth forever alienates Seattle's Inspired from the city's mortal population.

Welcome...to The Seattle of Tomorrow!

Mundane Seattle:

Population: The population of Seattle itself is just shy of 600,000 people. The greater Puget Sound area contains 4.2 million. Though Seattle has seen a recent boom in immigration, it remains a very white city: about three-quarters of the population is white, with Asians being the largest minority group (mostly Chinese, Filipino, and

Vietnamese), followed by African-Americans.

Climate: It rains a lot. This isn't heavy, driving rain—Seattle is technically in the rain shadow of the Olympic Mountains—but rather a constant drizzle coupled with heavy cloud cover 226 days of the year. Puget sound moderates the temperature and the mountains deflect the worst of the Pacific storms and arctic wind, giving Seattle a seasonal climate devoid of temperature extremes.

Economy: Seattle is a fairly wealthy city, its economy buoyed by corporate headquarters for companies like Starbucks, Safeco, Nordstrom, and Amazon.com. Headquarters or major corporate offices for Adobe, Google, Nintendo of America, Costco, Microsoft, Boeing, and T-Mobile are also nearby. Housing in Seattle is expensive, like in most major cities, and this has produced tent-cities and other misfortunes during economic downturns.

Government: Seattle's nine city councilors are elected at large (rather than by region) and work alongside an elected mayor. Seattle leans far left and regularly supports Democratic candidates, though the city is considered business-friendly.

Culture:

Seattle was the birthplace of several famous jazz musicians as well as the home of grunge music. It still maintains a dynamic independent music scene. The city is also known for its symphony orchestra, its spoken-word poetry scene, and (in Fremont) its weird statuary and naked bicycle parades. Seattlites drink a lot of coffee, and coffee shops are common. Places like The Ave and Pike Place Market contribute to a feeling of shared public space that is a major feature of Seattle.

Media and Sports:

Seattle now has only one major daily newspaper, "The Seattle Times." The Seattle Weekly and The Stranger are two popular alternative papers, both left-leaning. Real Change is a street newspaper that covers both mainstream and homelessness issues, sold by Seattle's homeless as an alternative to panhandling. Seattle's sports teams include the Mariners (baseball), Seahawks (football), and the Storm (basketball).

Transport:

The 1962 World's Fair introduced the Seattle monorail, which is now a tourist attraction—though it still runs. Private vehicles, along with buses (including a few electric trolley-buses) handle most of Seattle's transportation needs. The Central Link light rail line recently opened and connects downtown Seattle with the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

Theme:

Geniuses are curiously timeless creatures. Their wonders work whether constructed of plastic or stone, vat-grown tissue or crudely-butchered pelts. Conflict between old and new modes of super-science is common, and few places exemplify that conflict between the old and the new like Seattle. Here the "New Peers" seek to gentrify Inspired Seattle, turning it into an idyllic Victorian parkland nestled amidst modern tech-titans like Boeing and Google. Scavengers pick through the remnants of "The Seattle of Tomorrow" for technology that resembles Soviet fantasies from the 1930s. Atomists who seek to bring about a new future affect a look from the Century 21 Exposition in the 1960s, while a progressive new Lemurian breed, characterized by the ruthless criminal empire called the Pacific Gauntlet, favors clockwork technology and clockwork souls.

This clash between old and new—the theme of Seattle—is enough to drive a mad scientist crazy. Every

foundation struggles with change and with generational conflict, but rarely is it so egregious as in Seattle, where the power players—Atomic Lemuria and the Pacific Gauntlet, the New Peers and the Klondike treasure-hunters, and Megiddo, The Seattle of Tomorrow's deranged central computer, can't seem to decide if they're looking back or striding forward, coming or going, building a past that should have been or envisioning a future that never was.

Mood:

Seattle challenges the intellect with riddles about time, progress, culture, and history, but it is not a city for idle philosophers. Between the tidy mortal streets are rubbish-strewn corridors of a fallen Utopia, from which creep wonders and horrors that hate and fear the Inspired. Seattle—safe, clean, nearly banal—hides a savage heart, and savagery is the prevailing mood there, a mood not usually found among mad scientists. Not only must geniuses contend with Megiddo's electric assassins and the occasional violent paroxysms of Atomic Lemuria, but regular society can turn brutal when touched by The Seattle of Tomorrow, as evidenced by the gruesome crimes perpetrated by the Pacific Gauntlet's sadistic "astroturfed" gangs, grown from lies and promises to serve the needs of that cartel. Elsewhere the Gauntlet is assuredly ruthless, but the Seattle branch is known for mutilation, torture, and vivisectioning the family members of their enemies. Not even the Peerage is immune to this savagery: as the Pacific Gauntlet has grown more brazen, so too have those geniuses determined to wipe away Seattle's criminal underworld...at any cost. The 19th century gentility of the New Peers can seem like a farce to geniuses who have seen friends torn apart by a deranged mane or cut down in the crossfire of ferocious Katastrofic warfare.

The Seattle Of Yesterday:

While many Inspired visitors to Seattle focus on the lootable ruins of the Lemurians' deranged vision, the parts of North America's west coast now called Seattle were some of the earliest settled by humans, and Seattle may have the oldest evidence of Inspired activity anywhere, predating the Bottomless Urns of Mohanjo-Daro and the Bird-Making Reeds of China by thousands of years. However, most of the current Inspired infrastructure of Seattle appeared in the late 19th century with the arrival of competing Peer and Lemurian groups to the area.

Ancient Evidence:

Evidence of long-term human habitation around Seattle goes back only about 4,000 years, but indicators visible only to the Inspired imply human activity (and Maniacal activity) dating back to the end of the last glacial period. Apparently, the area around Seattle was part of an extended transit route that took the earliest human colonists from Asia, across the land bridge over the Bering Sea, and into North America. So far, time travel attempts to prove that the Seattle area served as a stopping-point along this route have proved disastrous, with survivors of the journey able to speak only of the "Great River" that nearly destroyed them.

By the time of European colonization, the Duwamish tribe had settled over a dozen villages around Seattle. There is no evidence of mad scientists in their initial population, though the Duwamish appeared to have some kind of metanormal protectors, perhaps nature spirits or benevolent visiting aliens.

Pacific Invasions:

The native inhabitants of the Seattle area's initial contact with Inspiration was the result of a Chinese expedition launched in the 14th century. Led by an independent genius fleeing Lemuria's influence over Emperor Hongwu, this expedition landed in Duwamish territory some time around 1380 AD. In the oral traditions of the native Inspired, a genius, Jiao Yangming, attempted to capture a group of hunters with

rockets and mummified soldiers, but the hunters led Jiao Yangming into a trap. He bargained the secrets of Inspiration for his life, then disappeared to the south with his ships, never to be seen again, but not before leaving a secret cache of warriors and machines for his eventual return.

The Duwamish had little use for rockets, but they used Chinese science and their own subsequent discoveries to extend their lives, fly in canoes, and turn into birds and fish using special elixirs. However, with such a small population and limited opportunities for idea-exchange, their techniques remained simple and functional.

European Colonization:

Europeans began rapid colonization of the Seattle area in the 19th century. This boded poorly for most natives, but well for the geniuses among them, who borrowed from European and more easterly Native American weird sciences to develop a complete program around 1840. Suspecting that their people were in danger, these geniuses used massive gear-complexes to lower several longhouses beneath the ground, where some still—it is said—remain in stasis.

Formal European colonization is usually dated from 1851, when two settler groups, the Luther Party and the Denny Party, claimed different parts of what is now Seattle. Two small villages, named Duwamps (the present-day site of Pioneer Square) and New York-Alki, appeared. The latter was quickly abandoned, but Duwamps continued to grow, supported by Swinson "Doc" Maynard, an enigmatic figure and possibly a genius. A shrewd businessman, Doc Maynard also demonstrated an unusual respect for the natives. He befriended their leader, Chief Sealth, encouraged Duwamps to rename itself "Seattle" after the chief, and generally supported the rights of the natives in the face of white hostility and violence.

Doc Maynard was a firm believer in the power of vice to stimulate a new economy. To that end, he helped Mary Ann Conklin, subsequently known a Mother Damnable for her fluent profanity in several languages, to open the Franklin House. A hotel with an attached high-class brothel, the Franklin House pulled in money from sailors and lumberjacks. Rumors from 19th century mad scientists claimed that Mother Damnable was actually an automaton. A persistent urban legend claims that when Mother Damnable's body was dug up to make room for Denny Park, it had turned to stone.

In 1855, the Treaty of Port Elliott attempted to normalize relations between whites and Indians. Like many such treaties, it was mostly unfair to the natives and the fair parts weren't enforced. Most unInspired Duwamish disappeared from Seattle by the early 20th century, victims of disease (particularly smallpox), violence, or exile. However, an Inspired tradition (not a full program) remains even in modern Seattle, especially around the old bay, where Duwamish still hold fishing rights.

Logging Money:

Seattle built its initial wealth on lumber. Doc Swinson encouraged entrepreneur Henry Yesler to build a steam-powered sawmill, and despite strange rumors around the place (that it operated when no one was there, that it secretly produced weapons for a "cloud army," that—strangest of all—"Arthur's knights" were said to guard it at night), the sawmill established Seattle as the region's preeminent lumber town. The road between the ever-receding trees and the mill was nicknamed "Skid Road," for the logs skidding down the incline. In winter, with lumber impossible to move due to thick layers of mud, lumberjacks often went broke. Desperate and hungry, they often fell prey to Seattle's growing preta and metanormal populations—and regular crime—giving Skid Road an unsavory reputation.

Despite these problems, Seattle boomed in the latter half of the 19th century, cutting down the millennia-old trees nearby (400' giants, larger than anything in existence today) and shipping lumber to San Francisco. With the mere mortals came mad scientists from the Peerage and (to a lesser extent) Lemuria, densely settling the West Coast and opening up the frontier. By 1880, mad science had become a barely-concealed staple of Seattle, with European, Chinese, and native geniuses establishing workshops and colleges amidst the relative anarchy of the regular government.

Anti-Chinese Violence, the Underground Wars, and the St. Croix Lineage:

Regular Chinese—not led by exiled mad scientists from the Ming dynasty—first arrived in Seattle in the 1860s. Most were laborers. They quickly earned the ire of white and Indian workers, who viewed them as not just competitors for jobs but enemies of the incipient labor movement. Anger quickly turned to violence, and by the 1880s, several anti-Chinese riots and massacres had occurred. This violence tore apart Seattle's multi-ethnic Inspired population, just as a white Hong Kong-born Oracle named Louis St. Croix arrived in the city. Seeing an opportunity to claim Seattle for himself, St. Croix made sure that mad scientists were dragged into the violence.

When, in 1886, Jiao Yangming's alchemically-preserved corpse-soldiers rose from a hidden tomb to kill anti-Chinese rioters (the work of St. Croix), a bloody three-way Inspired war broke out along ethnic grounds. White, Chinese, and American Indian geniuses fought brutally, ignoring bonds of foundation or collaborative, egged on by an ambitious Lemuria eager to use the violence as an excuse to gain a foothold in the city.

By the end of the fighting, the Chinese geniuses had been driven away or killed, many Duwamish mad scientists had left in disgust, and the core of the triumphant white Inspired, their heads filled with visions of machine-controlled socialist workers' paradises, joined Lemuria. Lemuria would dominate Seattle's mad science for the next half century.

Alaska-Yukon-Pacific:

Louis St. Croix was the first in a long line of St. Croixs who came to dominate Seattle's Inspired population. But Louis quickly retired to his research and meditations, leaving his two sons, Nathaniel, an Oracle, and Marcel, a Leviathan (a political, anti-democratic baramin, now defunct) to fight for control of the growing city.

In 1889, fire swept through Seattle, destroying its central business district. The city quickly rebuilt, prodded by Marcel St. Croix, who saw the potential for a new science-Utopia that would establish a technical-mercantile aristocracy up and down the west coast. Lemuria exterminated as many peers as it could (emissaries and spies sent up from San Francisco or down from Vancouver), while working to create their dream city. But internal squabbling between anarchic, labor-oriented groups, led by Nathaniel and the Oracles, and oligarchic, business-oriented Lemurians, led by Marcel and the Leviathans, prevented either group's dream of directly controlling an entire city—something that had never been successful in the United States. Mortals mostly did their own thing, unaware that mad scientists worked at cross-purposes to dominate them.

Despite these ideological differences, the St. Croix brothers and other local Lemurians came together to produce the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition of 1909. In one of the first instances of Inspired life differing significantly from mundane life in the Seattle area (a theme that would only grow as the years passed), the 1909 Exposition was a triumph for mundane Seattle, but a bloody catastrophe for the geniuses who attended. While mere mortals enjoyed dioramas, historical lectures, and games of chance, Lemurians turned against one-another in vicious underground struggles. It's said that over a dozen Lemurians were buried by their comrades in now-forgotten exhibit halls, shrunk down to diorama size and devoured by house cats, or otherwise assassinated. Marcel and Nathaniel both died (perhaps at one-another's hands) leaving Seattle

controlled by their young niece, Elspeth, one of the first of the Etherites. Peers, too, met their end in those few horrible days, driving the Peerage further away from the city and leaving them only with a shaky power base around the University of Washington.

The Wars:

With the 1909 Exposition a "triumph," Seattle's Lemurians, now led by a forward-looking Elspeth St. Croix, renewed their plans to create an ideologically pure Science City. With dissident elements purged, St. Croix used Seattle as a staging-ground for an all-out propaganda campaign, where Lemuria would convince first Seattle and then the world of their grand vision for a technocratic police-state utopia. Work began immediately on convincing Seattle's new population, swollen by the Klondike Gold Rush and westward expansion. Lemurians drafted great plans for The Seattle of Tomorrow, and many mortals rushed along with them, conceiving great civic projects.

But it didn't happen. The Great War was an economic rollercoaster that eventually left Seattle depressed and floundering. The St. Croixs found their city infiltrated by agents from the Peerage, and as World War II approached, so did a final reckoning between the foundations and Lemuria. Seattle's Lemurians kept the psychic pressure on the mortal population, spreading dreams of technological Utopia. This image vacillated from a Libertarian triumph—Elspeth's dream—to a worker's paradise—popular with Mechanists who still bore Artificer trappings—but the image of Science Triumphant always remained. Even as Lemuria collapsed, a young, influential group, called the Thinkers of the Atom, emerged in Seattle and other cities to challenge the power of the St. Croix line.

The Century 21 Exposition and the Long Slide:

Though elsewhere Lemuria was destroyed—the Secret Masters dead, the Nine Unknown Men hunted down—Seattle's Maniacal spirit remained unbroken. This movement swelled throughout the 1950s, even as Lemuria crumbled, as Elspeth St. Croix and many influential Etherites (apparently) built a gleaming metropolis hidden in the heart of Seattle. This, The Seattle of Tomorrow, was a triumph of engineering and industry, a perfectly-ordered state where none suffered want. The Lemurians believed in this place, a twist away from normal Seattle, with all their hearts and minds, and refused to believe it was merely a bardo, created by the "Science State" turning from a dream to a laughingstock among the West's intellectual elite. Megiddo, the city's central computer, confidently issued orders to its Lemurian "servants," apparently unaware of its own nature.

This glorious city, seemingly impregnable to the Peerage, peaked during The Century 21 Exposition, the 1962 World's Fair. Like the 1939 Fair before it, the Century 21 Exposition was a testing-ground for new mortal technologies (it gave Seattle its famous Space Needle and its somewhat ridiculous monorail), but it was also the time of the Grand Unification, when, under Megiddo's guidance, the Seattle of Tomorrow would merge with the regular Seattle and Lemuria would be revealed as humanity's savior. The results were catastrophic: Havoc ripped through the Seattle of Tomorrow and drove Megiddo mad. Towers fell, geniuses (including Elspeth St. Croix and at least four of her family members) died, and the glory of that future-city perished instantly. And the city's mere mortals barely knew what happened. The 1962 World's Fair, by all accounts, was very enjoyable for them.

But just as Lemuria's climb reflected the growth of industrial technology in Seattle, so Lemuria's collapse presaged economic devastation in the mortal world. In 1970, airline manufacturer Boeing slashed employment, wrecking the local economy. Seattle began the nosedive seen in many industrial cities at that time, such as Detroit, though its more mobile and educated population helped it survive. Meanwhile, geniuses, both peers and Lemurians, picked through the wreckage of a fallen paradise. Many Inspired considered Seattle a feral city, unfit for habitation, fought over by half-mad Lemurians and deranged scavengers.

The Dot-Com Gold Rush:

Seattle's (mortal) fortunes turned in the 80s and 90s as the Emerald City again became a center for advanced technology. Young people moved in, producing a vibrant night-life and an incandescent music scene. As mortal tech giants moved in and created a local breeding pool, geniuses started to move back in, starting at the peripheries and suburbs to avoid the eye of Megiddo, Seattle's dangerously insane computer overmind. Slowly, led by Dr. Vienna and Those Fools at the Institute (his collaborative), the Peerage started "recolonizing" the city.

But Lemuria was not quiet. Seattle's Lemurians split into two major groups. The first were the Atomic Lemurians, led by the Atomists, a baramin that had emerged independently in Seattle and several other cities as people rejected technocratic solutions to society's problems. Ruling like philosopher-kings from the remnants of the Century 21 Center, they sought for technological treasures in the ruins of The Seattle of Tomorrow and tried (unsuccessfully) to make peace with Megiddo. Led by Vladimir Copacki (actually an Etherite), Atomic Lemuria struggled to restore Lemuria's unquestioned authority in the Emerald City. The second Lemurian group called itself the Pacific Gauntlet. With its power base of economically-inclined Mechanists and its elegant clockwork stylings, the Gauntlet was the Seattle branch of a century-old criminal organization. Originating in Hong Kong and with branches in Nagasaki, Jakarta, Melbourne, and La Paz, the Pacific Gauntlet used a vast underwater fleet to control smuggling, racketeering, and mane-slavery across half the globe.

These two Lemurian organizations squared off against a Peerage determined to civilize Seattle, an uphill struggle due to Megiddo's constant, murderous patrols and the depredations of the city's scavengers, nicknamed Klondikes due to their Gold Rush attitudes.

The Seattle of Today:

Today, Seattle is a rough town for geniuses. It's not a Maniacal hellhole like Mexico City or Calcutta, but Inspired Seattle is nothing like its mundane counterpart. Older geniuses liken it to New York City in the 70s: it's not just unsafe, there's also a harsh ugliness to everything, a sense that you're not wanted or welcome, that the city could just eat you up. Yet mad scientists still come to Seattle, hoping to plunder the ruins of a dead future, looking to exploit the dynamic world of mortal tech there, or eager to explore the baroque subcultures that have grown up in the city.

Groups and Movements:

While Inspired politics in Seattle shift fast, there have been five core power bases in the city for at least fifteen years: the scavenging Klondikes, the city-policing New Peers, the bitter engineers of Atomic Lemuria, the Pacific Gauntlet criminal organization with its artificially-propagated gangs, and the electric assassins created by The Seattle of Tomorrow's deranged central computer, Megiddo.

The Klondikes:

An old nickname meant to evoke the frantic spirit—and ruthless exploitation—of the 19th century Gold Rush, the Klondikes were those geniuses—mostly rogues—who arrived in the Emerald City shortly after the collapse of The Seattle of Tomorrow to plunder the treasures there. Initial reports of what had happened in Seattle were unclear, and made it sound like the bardo had simply collapsed, spewing super-science wonders like a ruptured piñata. In fact the bardo had merely been shredded and divided, and the core computer brain still functioned. Megiddo's defense of its technology was ferocious, but so were the rewards for braving its fury.

The resulting scramble resembled a cross between a gold rush and a guerrilla war, with eager geniuses

infiltrating the city, dodging lethal patrols, and gathering what they could. Some struck it rich, some died, and a few hung on, eking out a liminal existence, avoiding murderous pretas and growing increasingly savage and ferocious. Today's Klondikes are heirs to this hard life: looters and scavengers, less interested in ideology than acquisition, many look like itinerant homeless when outside The Seattle of Tomorrow's access corridors. With the best veins of tech long exhausted, recent additions to the Klondikes are often more interested in the lifestyle than in plunder, and are some of the most savage opponents of the New Peers' gentrification plots.

The New Peers:

Seattle spent almost a century as a Lemurian stronghold, the key city the St. Croix family believed they could use to spread their philosophy to the mortal world. Powerful peers in San Francisco, Vancouver, and even Portland and Olympia couldn't maintain a consistent presence in the Emerald City except near the university. It took Lemuria's spectacular collapse and the fall of The Seattle of Tomorrow to make it inhabitable again to peers, but few came in the aftermath of the collapse. That started to change around 1990, when a small group of Artificers and Scholastics, fed up with their foundations' increasingly rigid structure, struck out for a new frontier.

This group, led by Yancy Wolfgang Borcowitz ("Dr. Vienna") was small at first and tightly linked to Seattle's mundane tech-startup community. But as the Peerage relaxed and the group thrived, more peers moved to Seattle. Settling principally in the counterculture enclave of Fremont and bedroom communities like Bellevue, they left the insanity of Seattle's urban center to the Klondikes and the Lemurians, and began to rehabilitate the surround areas.

By the early 2000s this "gentrification" was well underway in Seattle's outlying communities. These "New Peers" (a term that distinguished them from the old, reactionary Peerage of the 80s and 90s) are increasingly common in Seattle. Old-guard Seattlites view them as interlopers, stripping away what made Seattle's Inspired community unique and replacing it with another ditzy weird-science college town. The New Peers respond that what made Seattle unique was mostly kill-bots and cannibalistic flying cars, and they like it more this way.

Still, the New Peers have not been entirely successful in transforming the Emerald City. Access corridors still connect most of Seattle and the surrounding areas to The Seattle of Tomorrow, and from these places still emerge Megiddo's deranged servants and unbound orphans. The New Peers have grown militant recently, with an influx of Navigators determined to stop the Pacific Gauntlet's depredations. Some wonder if Seattle isn't changing these New Peers faster than they are changing Seattle.

Atomic Lemuria:

The term "Atomic Lemuria" isn't entirely accurate, since only about half of Seattle's Lemurians are Atomists. But the term sticks because the Atomists were influencing Seattle back before they were a proper baramin. The St. Croix family has always been interested in manipulating mortal society, and historically, west coast Atomists were drawn from the ranks of Etherites and Mechanists who sought to control and guide humanity with new technologies like robotics and atomic power. Now, living amidst the wreckage of their dream, hunted by Megiddo's servants and independent manes, they are angry and dangerous.

Atomic Lemuria operates out of an underground bunker beneath the Pacific Science Center, amidst the animatronic dinosaurs and reel-to-reel speaking-tours of canceled exhibits. The mercatus there is stuffed with plundered secrets from The Seattle of Tomorrow, many for secure sale (even to peers) whenever Argentine St. Croix, their current leader, isn't in a particularly foul mood. The mercatus runs dangerously in the red, with more money going into restoring The Seattle of Tomorrow than is made hawking the bardo's rusty trinkets. Attempts by the New Peers to buy out the Lemurians have so far failed due to Pacific Gauntlet

intervention.

Atomic Lemuria has recently begun a grand plan to revitalize The Seattle of Tomorrow. Of course they *always* have a new plan to revitalize The Seattle of Tomorrow. One comes around every five years or so, and usually ends in blood and exploding airships. The details of this new plan are unclear, but it involves a closer alliance with the Pacific Gauntlet, which has troubled the city's New Peers.

The Pacific Gauntlet:

The Pacific Gauntlet is an international criminal cartel that focuses on Mania-based crimes. They transport enslaved orphans, manes, and beholden, capture geniuses to work in underground labs, and perform jobs for governments and corporations that are too dangerous or difficult to do without Inspired help. While a Lemurian organization, they represent a new kind of Lemuria, devoted to abstract principles of expansion and economic control, not dreams of a future that never was. But even as the Pacific Gauntlet grows, its very nature as a Lemurian society endangers it, as its members hatch insane criminal and economic schemes that seem increasingly disconnected from reality. The Pacific Gauntlet is a study in contrasts: at one moment a ruthlessly efficient criminal organization, the next concocting ridiculous plans to steal all the world's gold or hold the Moon for ransom.

The Gauntlet began in Kowloon shortly after the Boxer Rebellion. Originally a Lemurian splinter group determined to protect China from being sliced up by western powers (including the foundations), it flirted with Chinese nationalism before it discovered several influential bardos created by China's despair. Plundering these Shangri-Las, the "Kowloon Gauntlet" forged a slaving network in China, Japan, and Indonesia. By the end of World War One it had spread to Australia and the west coast of the United States. While science-soldiers nearly destroyed the Gauntlet during World War Two and the last Invisible Wars, the Gauntlet re-emerged in the 70s as a semi-legitimate organization of wondrous "antiquities traffickers," favoring an elegant silver-clockwork style, with slaving and criminal activities still an important sideline. The Pacific Gauntlet expanded to South America, where it performed work for the Lunar Nazis encamped there, before it set its sights on Seattle.

Seattle's Pacific Gauntlet has suffered several upsets and reversals. They have weathered attacks from the local manes, raids from orphan-hungry Klondikes, and increasingly, the wrath of a furious and aggressive Peerage. The response implemented by their leader, Devon Ogura, has been efficient and inspired, drawn from their old Chinese playbook: the Gauntlet has begun "astroturfing" mundane criminal organizations, creating gangs from the ground up to serve their ends, with a combination of mind control, social engineering, and old-fashioned violence. These ruthless, brutal gangs have spread fast, supported by Pacific Gauntlet operatives, to create a smokescreen of low-level criminal activity around the Gauntlet that keeps the Peerage occupied and hides the true extent of their operations.

Megiddo's Electric Assassins:

The Seattle of Tomorrow was a bardo that rose like a titan above the regular city, a glittering metropolis of towers and monorails. Seriously, there were a *lot* of monorails. While not entirely destroyed by Havoc, the City of Tomorrow is fractured, its computer core, Megiddo, deranged. Megiddo responded to its wounding by creating guardian robots to protect it from geniuses, whom it viewed as the enemy. Many of these creatures, some still apparently faithful to Megiddo, others independent, continue to operate in Seattle, destroying treasure-hunters and killing geniuses and manes. Fortunately, Megiddo's electrical servants pay little attention to the unInspired, but they are supremely dangerous to anyone touched by Mania.

It's hard to gauge Megiddo's moods. It no longer communicates directly with geniuses (except, according to rumors, its secret police hidden in the Peerage and Lemuria). Some say it's dead, or catatonic with paranoia.

But Megiddo's sparking dynamo-powered servants still patrol the rooftops and back alleys of the smashed bardo, efficiently removing threats to the deranged super-computer's safety. More and more, as Megiddo appears to disintegrate, these electric assassins operate independently, forming clandestine alliances and raiding parties to advance their own interests.

A Tour of Seattle:

"Strange? Fantastic? Unbelievable? Remember, this is the world of 1960!"
-Futurama exhibit, 1939 World's Fair in New York

The Emerald City is bigger to the Inspired than to its mortal inhabitants. Down any alley or drainpipe or atop any rooftop may be an entrance to the "access corridors," the remnants of The Seattle of Tomorrow's support system. Torn bits of bardo are all over the city. But Seattle is more than a wrecked Space Age fantasy: it is a city of technology and industry, education and crime, trade and growth, ringed by modern highrises and with the misty Mt. Rainier visible in the distance.

Criss-crossed by Route 5 running north/south and I-90 going east-west, Seattle is located on the eastern shore of Elliott Bay, which is part of the saltwater Puget Sound. Lake Washington, to the east, separates Seattle from the suburbs of Bellevue, Kirkland, and Redmond. Tacoma is south, past the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. Further south and west, around Puget Sound, is Washington State's small capital, Olympia. Heading north will take one past more suburbs and into the relatively uninhabited expanses of the Pacific Northwest, as will heading west across the Sound, toward the Olympic National Forest and the Olympia Mountains.

Following are quick descriptions of some of Seattle's more significant areas, mundane and Inspired. But keep in mind that Seattle is a huge city of many neighborhoods. There are many other interesting parts of the city (and quite a few uninteresting parts; Seattle, while exciting for geniuses, is full of rather dull residential neighborhoods for many mortals). Storytellers are encouraged to do more research to bring the Emerald City to life.

The Access Corridors:

Almost all that remains of The Seattle of Tomorrow are maintenance hatches and back-tunnels where beholden would make backdoor repairs or transport equipment. Ranging in size from cramped tubes to wide channels and highways (the Duwamps Hydro-Locks are perhaps the largest, able to pass a mid-sized cargo ship—mind the gator-cats), they are now badly-lit, run-down corridors littered with super-science detritus and patrols of electric assassins and feral Klondikes.

Since accessing a bardo requires spending Mania, mere mortals can blunder past entrances to The Seattle of Tomorrow without noticing. Nonetheless, the New Peers have worked to seal up street-level entrances to the bardo to prevent Megiddo's electric assassins or other manes from spilling onto the streets. All but the craziest Lemurians accept this practice, meaning that most entrances are bricked up or sealed by painted-over metal doors. Nonetheless, knowing a quick path out of danger has saved many geniuses, and knowledge of open routes into the access corridors is traded freely.

A few other parts of The City of Tomorrow still remain, but most of those once-great monorails, landing pads, and electro-cathedrals have vanished into nothingness or been stripped by raiders, leaving great empty halls of metal and plastic.

Accessing the Corridors:

In game terms, to know a useful entrance to or exit from the access corridors, roll Intelligence + Streetwise, modified by the genius' familiarity with that part of the city. (Geniuses new to the city, of course, probably don't even know about the access corridors, let alone how to find them.)

Dramatic Failure: Incorrect recollection leads the genius to a dead end if being pursued, or drops him in an unusually dangerous area, such as a trash compactor machine, assassin mustering ground, or still-active foundry.

Failure: The genius knows of no access corridors nearby

Success: The genius knows of an open access corridor within a block of his current location.

Exceptional Success: The genius knows of an open access corridor within the same or an adjacent room, or immediately nearby.

Suggested Modifiers: Hasn't heard of the access corridors (-5 or impossible), only heard of the access corridors (-3), interacted with an access corridor once or twice (-1), very familiar with the access corridors (+1), livelihood gained from using the access corridors, such as being a Klondike (+3), good map of the access corridors (+1 to +3).

As always, it costs a point of Mania to enter a bardo, and the two-way passage remains visible (even to mere mortals) and open for one turn per rank of the genius' Inspiration.

Alki Point:

Alki Point, located in the far west of Seattle on the shores of Elliott Bay, was one of the original Seattle colonies, founded by the Denny Party in 1851. Its original name was New York-Alki; Alki is a Chinook word meaning "eventually." Whatever Denny's high hopes, he quickly abandoned the settlement and moved to Doc Swinson's colony (today's Pioneer Square). The land's owner, Charles Terry, clung on for several years before selling the land to Swinson in 1857, who turned the land into a farm. Rumors persist that Duwamps longhouses are still hidden, in stasis, under that land.

Alki was, until the mid 20th century, most easily accessed by boat. Today it resembles a beach town (except for the near-perpetual cloud cover), with a mix of residential styles and business, as well as a thin beach and a bike trail. The beach front offers a magnificent view of Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains. In the early 20th century its expanding beach-front area encouraged the introduction of an electric street railway line to bring people in from Seattle's center. In 1919, Charles I.D. Looff, master carousel carver, built an amusement park called Luna Park on pilings at Alki Point. Though destroyed by a mysterious fire in 1931, its struts are still visible at low-tide, and diving for "Lunar Treasures" in the cold water occupied geniuses years before the post-World Fair rush of the 60s and 70s.

The Alki Point Lighthouse guides ships in from Puget Sound. Built in 1889, it received an expansion (adding a fog signal and a new 37-foot octagonal tower) in 1913. In the 1960s, a modern optic system replaced the old Fresnel lens, which has since passed through the hands of several Seattle mad scientists, who have used it in ray guns, solar healing chambers, and metanormal viewing equipment.

The Ave:

University Way N.E., colloquially called "The Ave," is Seattle's cultural heart and a frequent first stop for geniuses new to the city. Close, geographically and culturally, to the University of Washington, The Ave is known for its countless coffee-shops and used book stores and for its vibrant student life. It is also known for its drug subculture, which has grown harder in recent years, partially due to the efforts of the Pacific Gauntlet. The Ave Rats, the young street-dwellers along The Ave, often serve as the Gauntlet's ears on the ground. Nonetheless, mundane Seattle is a fairly safe city, and geniuses can move around The Ave without significant fear of mortal violence. While The Ave is in central Seattle, Megiddo's servants rarely enter this part of the city, meaning that the greatest danger to a mad scientist is from Inspired turf disputes.

The Ave calls at least two collaboratives its own, one inhabiting a used book store and the other running an eclectic coffee shop with robotic baristas. Since it is one of the few places in the heart of Seattle not prone to random attacks by Megiddo's servants, Dr. Vienna views The Ave as a triumph of the New Peers' gentrification efforts. But recently the Pacific Gauntlet has pushed harder to stake out territory there. Rumors circulate that an Oracle called The New Thing has been circulating an Epikrato-based narcotic among the Ave Rat population, which could change the balance of power in the area and allow the Gauntlet to sweep in and claim a district already cleared of Megiddo's servants.

Central District:

Located north of Downtown, Seattle's Central District is known as a predominantly African-American part of town. It did not begin that way. The first inhabitants, in the early 20th century, were Jewish, and a Japanese presence (still in evidence) grew until World War II, when Japanese-Americans were placed in concentration camps. This afforded African-Americans—restricted in where they could live because of racist housing covenants in much of the rest of the city—the opportunity to move in.

The 60s and 70s cemented Central's identity as an African-American neighborhood. The center of civil rights activism, the Central District also suffered from crime and extreme poverty. When manes (stray hunters, not affiliated with Megiddo) saw the situation as an opportunity to attack mere mortals, several local residents, including a doctor, an unemployed aerospace worker, a Black Panther, and a housewife, experienced Breakthroughs. These "Four Jewels" gained international fame during the Martian Invasion and helped the Peerage (partially) escape its racist European colonial attitudes; all four became respected members of their foundations and one, Crispin Cross, now lives in semi-retirement a block from where he catalyzed. The 1970s also saw the creation of mundane but unusual alternative schools such as The Nova Project in Central District.

A titanium statue of Jimi Hendrix hidden beneath Ezell's Chicken (a renowned fast food place) is mute testament to the belief, popular with mad scientists living there, that Jimi was a genius, but no serious evidence supports that claim.

Seattle's high housing costs have begun to change the district's demographics, with affluent white residents who nonetheless cannot afford other parts of the city moving into Central, which is in the process of tearing down old condemned 20th century houses and replacing them with modern townhouses and condos.

Downtown:

Also called the Central Business District, Downtown is the Emerald City's financial heart, a densely-packed urban area that is quickly growing vertically since it can no longer spread out. This has produced controversy as Seattle's skyline gets taller and the limited housing there becomes even more expensive. Downtown features some of the most expensive high-end housing in the city, and several Directors inhabit the tallest

skyscrapers, which are tall enough to have been built *above* The Seattle of Tomorrow, insulating them from Megiddo's electric gaze.

Several important buildings—including Pike Place Market, described in detail below—are in Downtown. The Metropolitan Tract, the original location of the University of Washington, is a sprawling office/commercial/hotel complex that has traded hands (and buried secrets) since the university moved out of it in 1895. Once Lemurian territory and housing the St. Croix family, it was a central fixture of The Seattle of Tomorrow, built to be "a city within a city." Numerous access corridors make travel dangerous (and potentially lucrative), especially in the Cobb Building, the only structure that still conforms to the builder's original plans.

Westlake Center is a shopping center and transportation hub, as the southern terminus of Seattle's monorail and a major light rail stop. Celebrities and political figures occasionally give speeches from the balcony there, which is rumored to have been part of The Seattle of Tomorrow, where the balcony was surrounded by an enormous video-screen broadcasting the face of Lemurian speakers. The nearby Westlake Center Plaza (home to one of the busiest Starbucks in the solar system) is a meeting-point for anti-Pacific Gauntlet (and, largely, anti-Asian) Inspired vigilante groups. The Seattle Police monitor several of these groups, but underestimate both their conviction and destructive power.

The Columbia Center tower, 937 feet of sleek black granite, is the tallest building in the Pacific Northwest. The observation deck on the 73rd floor offers a magnificent view of the city. The exclusive Columbia Tower Club occupies the top two floors. (A Director in Seattle is not a Director without membership.) Amazon.com and other companies rent out office space there.

The Washington Mutual Tower (770 feet) is the product of mid-80s rezoning rules in the Emerald City, caused by the construction of Columbia Center and meant to encourage not-too-tall, not-too-ugly architecture in downtown Seattle. These new rules also allowed height "bonuses" for buildings with public amenities, which the tower features in abundance. An elegant, classy structure of granite and emerald-green glass, the Washington Mutual Tower is one of the most popular additions to Seattle's skyline.

To the Inspired, there's more to Downtown than the office buildings' public fronts. Between the floors and hallways there are secret access corridors leading to The Seattle of Tomorrow. Historically, access corridors from the lower floors of several major office buildings led to the richest hauls of Seattle of Tomorrow wonders anywhere in the city, making the whole region a frequent haunting-ground for Klondikes, who struggled (sometimes violently) over territory after most office workers had gone home, and fought with the guardian-robots there, many of which were disconnected from Megiddo and helplessly insane. While the best veins have been tapped out, enterprising geniuses still head downtown for a chance to plunder the ruins.

Fremont:

Just north of Seattle's urban center, Fremont is known for its eccentric character, left-leaning politics (even by Seattle's standards), and, among geniuses, for being the original base of Dr. Vienna and Those Fools at the Institute. With its college-town charm and artistic energy, Fremont is nonetheless the product of mundane gentrification in the same way Seattle as a whole has been the target of the New Peers' civilizing process. Once a counterculture hub, Fremont has become home to mainstream tech businesses like Adobe and Google, as well as old hippies and eccentric artists.

Fremont is often accused of harboring mad science monuments open to public scrutiny, a Havoc risk. Fremont counters that no one who likes the Space Needle gets to complain about public monuments to mad science. Fremont boasts a Cold War-era rocket monument, in fact a recreation of the sort of Skafoi rockets used by Elspeth St. Croix during The Seattle of Tomorrow's heyday. Sculptures in Fremont include a statue of

Lenin (nearly stuffed with gears and animated by a wayward Artificer before she was stopped), a piece of interactive art called the Interurban Sculpture (representing several people and a human-faced dog waiting for a trolley line, often dressed in amusing ways by locals), the famous Fremont Troll, and weirder things not generally reported.

Since Fremont is the center of the New Peers' power, Lemurians are rarely tolerated. Rooftop Navigator patrols equipped with scanning devices hunt for unfamiliar Mania signatures, especially at night. Dangerous manes are destroyed, Lemurians sent away on pain of ass-kicking, and friendly manes and geniuses are watched cautiously.

Fremont is reported by its inhabitants to be the center of the universe. No evidence of this exists, though there is a suspiciously large gate to the center of the Milky Way Galaxy beneath the Red Hook Brewery. Peers monitor this dimensional rift for signs of invasion, but there hasn't been any trouble yet.

The Industrial District (and SoDo):

South of Pioneer Square and the old heart of Seattle, the industrial district is the center of Seattle's manufacturing. In 1905 the Seattle Box Company moved there, and other companies followed: granite, copper, machinery, even brewing. The economic downturn of the 70s saw vacant factory space converted to artist's lofts in the northwest of the district. Nicknamed SoDo (because it was *South of the Kingdome*; now it's just *South of Downtown*), this region flourished as artists saw the advantages of living and working close to needed industrial supplies, and somewhere that didn't care much about noise.

But geniuses saw little of this bohemianism. When The Seattle of Tomorrow collapsed, the Industrial District was least affected by Havoc. Megiddo drew its fractured mentalities together somewhere beneath the Sears building (now Starbucks world headquarters). From there it plundered abandoned industrial resources to build its army of surveillance drones and electric assassins, and the Industrial District continues to be the heart of Megiddo's power.

Today the Industrial District is more active than during the deep recessions of the 20th century. SoDo hasn't gentrified as much as SoHo, its Big Apple inspiration, but there is considerable pressure to rezone the area. Developers frequently push plans to add retail areas to the streets around Safeco Field (home of the Seattle Mariners) and Qwest Field (home of the Seattle Seahawks). As land values rise, it's unclear whether Seattle's commitment to its industrial base will remain firm, and many old industrialists, third- or fourth-generation Seattlites, are increasingly angry at the threat to their lifestyles.

Despite the enormous dangers posed by Megiddo, at least one large, loose collaborative, a mix of Artificers and Navigators, artists and metalworkers, stubbornly holds on. There is also a moderate Klondike population, but most prefer easier pickings and less danger in places like Downtown.

The International District:

The International District is often called Chinatown, though today it contains Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Vietnamese, Laotian, and other populations. Immigrants established the district around the turn of the last century, shortly after the worst anti-Chinese riots. As Chinese immigrants returned to Seattle, Japanese arrivals worked to establish Nihonmachi, Japan-Town, which thrived until the 1940s, when Japanese internment during World War Two disrupted established settlement patterns. Filipinos also arrived early in the century to work as agricultural laborers. The International District expanded again following the Vietnam War, when immigrants from all over southeast Asia arrived.

Today the International District is a bustling mixed-income community known for its urban gardens and its Asian-American celebrations, including Chinese New Year (infamous in the Inspired community for the 2003 Chrome Dragon Massacre, when Pacific Gauntlet thugs used the smoke and noise to hide the murder of a Laosian-American Progenitor and her extended family) and the Seattle Tet Festival (where, traditionally, local mad scientists unleash tiny machines to clean the houses of neighborhood families).

While Megiddo's surveillance systems are extensive in the International District, actual attacks are less common. Legend says that Jiao Yangming, the first mad scientist to visit the Seattle area, still uses his rockets to dazzle the cameras from his base on the Moon.

The Pacific Gauntlet's main corporate offices are in the Union Station office complex, near the old Union Pacific train tracks. Though officially abandoned, forgotten sections of the train tracks are still in use by the Pacific Gauntlet, connecting the Gauntlet's corporate offices to the waterfront districts where the cartel does most of its business. The cartel has a public front, which infuriates the New Peers, who view such brazen corporate criminality as an obstacle to their plans of civilizing Seattle. Anti-Asian violence, masquerading as Inspired vigilantism from extremist crime-fighting groups, increasingly threatens to spill over into the mundane world.

Olympic Mountains:

Located across Puget Sound from Seattle, the Olympic Mountains are one of the rainiest places in North America, especially the western side of the range (away from the city). The mountains rise directly out of the Pacific. Rising above a climax forest of spruce and pine are glacier-covered peaks that, while low (Mt. Olympus is not quite 8,000 feet high), are difficult to navigate and serve as the mountain fastnesses of independent geniuses. Even while The Seattle of Tomorrow crumbled, solitary mad scientists labored within and on the mountains, oblivious to events in the city across the water.

While some slopes of the mountains have been extensively logged, the Olympic National Park protects most of the mountain range, making it home to dark and primal creatures that have no love for humans, Inspired or otherwise. The Hoh Rain Forest, one of the world's few temperate rain forests, offers a bonanza of Maniacal plants and animals for Progenitors and Etherites, but also its share of dangers, including ruthless ape-men armed with illusion-producing human skulls.

Mount Storm King is allegedly home to a nest of Nazi mad scientists, their exact location cloaked by advanced defensive screens. There are persistent rumors that Mount Olympus contains clockwork recreations of the Greek gods carved of marble and lapis lazuli, and this legend has prompted several treasure-hunting parties to traverse the peaks, though so far without success.

The Pacific Science Center:

A large science fair in the mixed office/shopping/residential district of Lower Queen Anne, the Pacific Science Center is the operating base of Seattle's Lemurians. Lemurian "OJs" in their signature orange jackets and reflective jumpsuits are a common sight emerging from the Science Center's back entrances or patrolling for dangerous manes. The center itself consists of eight buildings and features rotating exhibits, some active since the structure's first appearance during the Century 21 Exhibit in 1962. The Science Center is part of the Seattle Center, which includes the Space Needle, the terminus of the city's monorail, the International Fountain (a piece of modernist architecture that looks like a silvery dome emerging from the water), and several theaters for upscale nighttime entertainment.

Currently the Pacific Science Center hosts a live butterfly exhibit, an enormous laser dome, a planetarium, two IMAX screens, and numerous hands-on science demonstrations. Most exhibits show signs of Lemurian

tampering, though the baramins are careful not to spread Havoc above their base.

Easily identified by the archways of its Science Pavilion (created by Minoru Yamasaki, architect for, among other buildings, New York City's World Trade Center towers), the Pacific Science Center is a major tourist destination. It is renowned for being on the cutting-edge of science popularization, but geniuses mostly know it for containing more of The Seattle of Tomorrow than any other building. Within are not just access corridors but hangars, computer access terminals, and even factories, some partially repaired by Atomic Lemuria, all hidden from the view of the millions of tourists that stream through the center every year. The Lemurians alternate between trying to repair the nearby areas of the bardo and exterminating the kill-bots that emerge from it.

Pike Place Market:

An enormous public farmer's market close to Elliott Bay, Pike Place's arcades sell fresh food (especially fish and produce), antiques, comics, tourist trinkets, and local crafts. It also features a strong street performance tradition. Located on the edge of a steep hill in the corner of Seattle's central business district, the market has been part of the city since 1907, and has maintained its goal of allowing Seattle's citizens (and increasingly, visitors), to "meet the producers" of the city's wares. Pike Place's twin goals of supporting local producers and making money have occasionally produced controversy and conflict, but Pike Place remains an extremely popular location within the city.

Pike Place is also home to about 500 people, mostly low-income seniors. Several "retired" Lemurians, ignored by Megiddo, belong to this population. Otherwise geniuses avoid Pike Place Market: while it's safe for mere mortals, it can be lethal for geniuses due to numerous active surveillance cameras, carefully hidden and linked to Megiddo's central computer brain. Electric assassins follow geniuses with these cameras and strike when the crowds are thin. Victor Steinbrueck Park is considered a death trap for geniuses at night, as invisible hunter-killer aeriels patrol overhead.

Pioneer Square:

Packed with nightclubs, Pioneer Square is the center of Seattle's night life, known for its live bands and several "easy access" plans to enable club-hopping. While not as active or notorious as the night life in New York City or Los Angeles, Pioneer Square offers enough music, good food, booze, and illicit drugs to draw young people from all over the region. Hemophage infestations have occasionally resulted in vigilante violence from annoyed young Directors who view Pioneer Square's nightclubs as their territory.

Pioneer Square is nearly the oldest part of the city and was once its center. The Pioneer Square/Skid Road district is a registered historical area, and much of the district features brick and stone structures built immediately after the Great Seattle Fire of 1889. Old Pioneer Square had some of the west coast's premier brothels and gambling houses, places respectable enough to be tolerated by the local government, despite prominently advertising the names of their most popular workers. Due to drainage problems, much of the later Pioneer Square was built literally on top of the older city, eventually burying it and creating the Seattle Underground.

Pioneer Square's iron pergola (a covered walkway) serves as an informal meeting and drop-off point for Seattle's Artificers; notes hidden under nearby benches advise new Artificers where to find shelters and how to avoid the electric assassin patrols, which are common on the rooftops but rarer on the ground, since they can be picked off by angry or hungry manes from the Underground.

Puget Sound:

Puget Sound is a fjord system of flooded glacial valleys—functionally a saltwater bay—that dominates the geography around Seattle. The part of the Sound immediately next to Seattle is called Elliott Bay. The Washington State Ferries connect Seattle and other parts of the mainland to Puget Sound's larger islands. Container ships are a frequent sight coming in or leaving Elliott Bay, as Seattle's port is extremely busy.

The deepest parts of Puget Sound house a Pacific Gauntlet undersea fortress, the source of the Gauntlet's super-weapons and advanced technology. Some of the smaller islands contain independent or exiled geniuses. Other islands are said to contain the Inspired remnants of the Duwamish people, some still alive, others having transmuted themselves with a Maniacal mix of American Indian, Chinese, and stolen Nazi medicine technology.

Somewhere on the western shore of Puget Sound is an ever-blooming valley called The Quiet Place Where You Can Rest. Rumored to be the single oldest bardo in the world, it was created (so people say) by the disappointed dreams of nomads heading south after crossing the land bridge during the last glaciation. Guarded by a golem-like creature resembling the Venus of Willendorf—breasts and buttocks full, limbs worn down to nubs by the eons—the Quiet Place Where You Can Rest contains sparkling blue cookfires that never go out, blankets and skins that protect travelers, baskets always full of meat and berries, and secret caches of keen spears and bows and arrows made of unfamiliar stones and woods. An expedition in 1988 was the last to find The Quiet Place Where You Can Rest, and its current location is unknown, as is its true age and origin.

Ravenna:

A neighborhood in the northeast of Seattle, Ravenna is a mixed residential/business district. Originally an independent town, it was annexed by Seattle in 1907. Ravenna contains University Village, a large upscale shopping center that contributed to The Ave's economic decline in the late 20th century, after University Village converted from small stores and local chains to high-profile chain stores like Pottery Barn and Banana Republic.

Ravenna is close to the University of Washington and houses grad students and university professors. Ravenna Blvd., nicknamed Professors' Row, is known for its friendliness to both bicycles and eccentric peripatetic professors who perform odd experiments in their basements.

Calvary cemetery, over a century old, overlooks University Village. Tunnels beneath the cemetery lead to The Seattle of Tomorrow's old incineration chambers; it's unclear whether these were used to remove garbage, political undesirables, or both. The tunnels are now inhabited by skeletal plastic servants of Megiddo that, for some reason, resemble the contemporary undead caricatures featured during Mexico's Day of the Dead.

Ravenna Park and the contiguous Cowen Park together cover 58 acres of native maple, fir, and hemlock trees, and surround a ravine through which flows Ravenna Creek. Ravenna Park once featured enormous (400') trees like none now seen on normal Earth. Despite being one of the jewels of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition of 1909, they had all disappeared in mysterious circumstances by 1926. Lemurians blame early Progenitor groups for this callous act, though the exact details are unknown. Geniuses do know that while Megiddo's servants have little influence in the wood, powerful and intelligent forces of nature dislike Maniacal meddling in their forest.

The Seattle Underground:

After the Great Seattle Fire of 1889, Seattle city leaders decided to regrade the city a story or two above its original elevation. Those wooden buildings that survived the fire found themselves twelve to thirty feet below

ground level. For a while, people used ladders to climb from the streets to the lower shop-level, until raised sidewalks appeared, prompting the shops to re-open at the new elevation and turn the lower floors into basement storage. But underground sidewalks, lit by skylights, still connected these underground storage facilities. Over time the facilities faded into disuse, and later became flop houses, opium dens, and (during prohibition) speakeasies, all bathed during daytime in a weird amethyst light from the manganese in the old skylights.

The Underground also became a home for miscellaneous manes and orphans, those not connected to The Seattle of Tomorrow. These desperate manes remain today, even as the regular sections of the Seattle Underground beneath Pioneer Square have become tourist destinations. Surviving in a series of tunnels called the Lava Pits (tubes evidently flooded by molten nickel-iron at some point in the past), these desperate manes, orphans, mad geniuses, and stray beholden struggle with Mania-starvation, mane-on-mane violence, and poaching by Lemurians, who view the Lava Pits as an ideal *catasta* from which to claim new servants. All attempts by the New Peers to civilize the Lava Pits have ended in catastrophe, and the underground tunnels remain a place of despair and desperation. One small consolation: Megiddo's presence is minimal, as the manes beneath the city have an awful hatred of its servants and spies.

University of Washington, Seattle:

Founded in 1861, the west coast's oldest university has maintained an Inspired tradition since its inception. It expanded significantly during the 1909 Exposition, which saw Lemuria and the St. Croix family secure its dominance over Seattle. Paradoxically, the university became a well-established breeding ground for new peers, who were smuggled out of the city to San Francisco or Vancouver upon their Breakthroughs, right under the noses of the Lemurian authorities.

Even as The Seattle of Tomorrow lay in ruins, the university grew enormously as the baby boomers went to college during the 60s and 70s. With Seattle still considered unsafe, the Peer-smuggling continued, but that started to change in the 1970s with rumors of the super-scientific wealth to be found in the ruined bardo. Many of the Klondikes still at work today were once students at the University of Washington.

Today the university is under the New Peers' firm control, after a purge of Atomist and Phenomenologist faculty in 2002. The Yoshino cherry trees around the Quad are a popular meeting-ground for ambitious young Progenitors, many of whom attend the University of Washington Medical Center. Secret rooms in the Gothic-style Suzzallo Library serve a gentrification-focused collaborative called the Pipe Men. An experimental nuclear reactor, allegedly deactivated in 1988, was actually claimed by a Navigator named Paddington Fawnley to prevent it from falling into Atomist hands. It is currently located beneath Denny Hall, the university's oldest building, where it powers an extensive dimensional laboratory.

Outliers—Bellevue, Redmond, Tacoma, Kirkland:

Several towns, cities, and suburbs ring Seattle. Bellevue (population 121,000), east of the Emerald City, expanded enormously after two bridges connected it to Seattle over Lake Washington. Formerly a bedroom community, its skyline now seems to grow day-by-day, and geniuses wary of inhabiting Seattle proper live and work there, often near the Boeing plant. But recently, strange creatures have been spotted flapping between the glass highrises at night, feeding on the minerals in the towers.

Redmond (population 45,000), home of Microsoft, Nintendo of America, and a collaborative of stodgy, traditional Directors and Scholastics, is known for its affluence and suburban lifestyle. Recently attempts have been made to improve the dense traffic conditions between Redmond and central Seattle, about 20 miles south. Redmond bills itself as the bicycle capital of the Northwest, which means geniuses are troubled by the appearance of predatory racing bikes that have, recently, begun attacking mere mortals.

Tacoma (population 196,000), 30 miles southwest of Seattle, is a blue-collar port city that lacks the glamor of its northern neighbor. Though it suffered the economic calamities common to urban areas in the late 20th century, it has recently bounced back and now features restaurants, the University of Washington, Tacoma, and even electric light rail. Despite these improvements, several Pacific Gauntlet-backed gangs blight the unrenovated urban areas. The Seattle of Tomorrow located its dynamo power plants and foundries in Tacoma, and the access corridors there are known less for their electric assassins than for the extreme industrial hazards found within.

Kirkland (population 45,000), located north of Lake Washington (as Seattle is to the west and Bellevue to the east), is another wealthy suburb of Seattle, reliant on Seattle's and Redmond's technology industries. It is notorious in the Inspired community for all kinds of suburban mad science weirdness, as eccentric Inspired families seem drawn to the town. The regular inhabitants of the city do their best to ignore their bizarre neighbors.

Significant Sophonts:

Though there are several hundred geniuses in the greater Seattle area, the Emerald City is still Maniacally underpopulated compared to nearby urban areas due to the continued activities of Megiddo. The fastest-growing Inspired demographic are Pacific Gauntlet members, who immigrate mostly from Japan and the Philippines. Below is a list of the more influential geniuses and other beings in Seattle, those best-known to the street-level geniuses who survive there.

Dr. Vienna, New Peer and Victorian Gentleman

Quote: *"You'll forgive me if I don't stay around to watch. I just can't cope with the freaky stuff."*

Foundation: Artificer

Catalyst: Hoffnung

Age: 44

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 4, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics (History) 4, Computer (Clockwork) 4, Crafts (Pneumatics) 4, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Politics 4, Science (Chemistry, Physics) 4.

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Drive (Ride) 3, Firearms 3, Larceny 2, Weaponry (Fencing) 2

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Technical Papers) 4, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize (Tea Parties) 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge (Pseudovictorian Blithering) 3

Resources: 4 (Mundane Patents)

Other Merits: Shared Beholden (Number 3, Ability 2, Prowess 3), Generator 3 (Size-5 boiler generates 5 Mania/day), Shared Laboratory (Equipment 3, Size 3, Security 2), Utility Belt 3 (Science, Crafts, Computer), Allies (Business) 3, Allies (New Peers) 2, Allies (Police) 2, Allies (Scientific Community) 3, Allies (Unmada Manes) 3, Contacts (University of Washington, Fremont City Council, Computer Hackers) 3

Willpower: 6

Obligation: 8 (Paragon)

Aesthetic: Steampunk

Virtue: Temperance

Vice: Sloth

Health: 8

Initiative: 6

Defense: 4

Speed: 11

Inspiration: 7 (Unmada; Jabir -4)

Axioms: Apokalypsi 3, Automata 4*, Exelixi 1, Katastrofi 3, Metaptropi 5 *, Prostasia 3, Skafoi 4*

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 40/12/7

Ethereal Devastator: Katastrofi 3. Size 2 (pistol). Range 70/140/280. Damage 5 Aggravated. Roll 12 Dice. Cost 3 Mania. Anyone hit by the ethereal devastator is immune to its effects for one turn.

Magneto Deflector: Prostasia 3. Size 2 (hat). Cost 3 Mania. Bulletproof. Invulnerable. Shielding Device. 10 extra Health Levels. May (10% chance) jump off wearer's head and try to flee (Speed 5) for one turn if an attack causes five or more levels of damage.

Digital/Analog Metamutation Boots: Skafoi 4. Size 2 (boots). Roll 10 dice. Cost 1 Mania/5 Size points per roll. Can only teleport when next to an Internet-connected computer or a working phone.

Widdershins: Automata 3. Size 9. 21 Automation Points. Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Resolve 1, Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 2. Athletics 3, Brawl 2. Iron Stamina 3. Speed 19 (Base Speed 11). Control Surface, Looks Like a Horse, Only One Manipulator, No Fine Manipulators. 10 Mania. Suffers 1 Aggravated/turn if immersed in water or rain.

Banderling: Automata 4. Size 5. 28 Automation Points. Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3. Computer 3, Investigation 3, Athletics 6, Brawl 6, Firearms 6, Stealth 3, Streetwise 3. Decentralized Anatomy, Rest 16 Hours/Day, Looks Human. 11 Mania. Deathly afraid of fire.

Black Crow: Automata 4. Size 3. 28 Automation Points. Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2. Academics 3, Computer 3, Investigation 6, Politics 3, Science 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Larceny 6, Stealth 6, Empathy 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3. Looks Like a Crow, Rest 16 Hours/Day. 11 Mania. Maliciously literal.

- *Integral Wings:* Skafoi 2. Size 1. Safe Speed 70 mph, Max Speed 105 mph, Acceleration 35 mph/turn, Stall Speed 20 mph, Handling +3. Roll 10 dice. Reduced Mania Cost (-2; no cost). Leaves a trail of black feathers.

Cosmo Goggles: Apokalypsi 2. Size 1 (goggles). Roll 7 dice. Range 10'. Goggles. Fog up in rain.

Doctor's Kit: Exelixa 1. Size 1 (tiny bag). Roll 4 dice. 1 Mania restores 2 Bashing or 1 Lethal damage. Healed people smoke from their mouths for about an hour.

Mist Throne (Science): Apokalypsi 3. Size 12 (throne room). Roll 12 dice to remotely view anywhere in range. Range 10,000 miles. Charge-up Time (3 turns). Onboard Storage. Roll Resolve + Composure every 15 full minutes of scanning or fall asleep for one hour.

The early life of Dr. Vienna, born Yancy Wolfgang Borcowitz, is textbook mad scientist: born in Gloucester, Massachusetts, first house blown up at age 13, college at Boston University at 16, graduation at 18, followed by a full psychological breakdown a year later toward the beginning of his doctoral thesis on artificial intelligence. Borcowitz spent two weeks wandering the rooftops of Boston trying to signal post-humans from the year 4826 before he came down.

Uncertain what had happened and somehow missing Boston's massive Inspired presence, Borcowitz loaded up a stolen 1930s roadster and fled across the country, telling people that computer science and marijuana opened his mind to technology from the future. This earned him his first Inspired nickname in Chicago ("Reefer"), from geniuses amused by Borcowitz' wide-eyed stories. (Given the nasty stuff mad scientists put in themselves, catalyzing via marijuana is a bit like catalyzing via glutting oneself with profiteroles.)

Only when Borcowitz reached Alki Point in Seattle (and nearly drove into the sea) did the young scientist think seriously about what had happened. Troubled by his inability to recreate his first few automata with modern technology, Borcowitz studied historical machinery, eventually discovering the work of Charles Babbage and Ada Byron, mid 19th-century computer scientists, and their Inspired enthusiasts. Building his machines with gears, tiny cams, and century-old Maniacal theory, Borcowitz concluded that the style and approach to his wonders was more important than the technology within.

After completing his wonders, Borcowitz (who nicknamed himself Dr. Vienna after several Austrian mad computer scientists from the turn of the century) encountered Megiddo's servants, which forced him out of central Seattle. Within a few months he had joined up with Gracie Calabash, Screaming Sam Paluxy, and two

other mad scientists, forming Those Fools at the Institute, a collaborative determined to reclaim Seattle from the mad computer. Though more interested in aesthetic theory than fighting robots, Dr. Vienna found Megiddo's brutal, witless style offensive, and Vienna's diatribes on the early Internet (his Website was apparently the seventeenth on the World Wide Web) encouraged other geniuses to take the fight to The Seattle of Tomorrow. By 1995, Dr. Vienna led five collaboratives from his Fremont home.

Today, Dr. Vienna is synonymous with the New Peers, respected throughout Seattle as a theorist, artist, and passionate enemy of Megiddo and Argentine St. Croix's Atomic Lemuria. Despite his position of power, Dr. Vienna prefers to keep his hands clean and scrupulously avoids direct confrontation, which has produced conflict with collaborative member Sam Paluxy, who favors more aggressive conflict with both groups. Dr. Vienna's hands-off approach keeps his Obligation high, but some peers wonder if that's not at the expense of the city's well-being, as the New Peers seem to be losing territory where the streets aren't patrolled by crime-fighting mad scientists.

Of more pressing concern to many peers—though almost no one outside Borcowitz' collaborative knows it—is that Dr. Vienna has recently lost his mind. Too many late-night experiments and the departure of his girlfriend of fifteen years, a Progenitor named Kiani Stole, have driven Dr. Vienna unmada, and now he has trouble not ranting about the secret truths discovered by Victorian mathematicians. Like many Lemurians, Dr. Vienna has trouble distinguishing mad science from sane, especially in history. Dr. Vienna is aware that he is insane, but he believes he can work around his problems with a careful modus that can distinguish sane from insane thoughts. (This too is a sign of insanity; unmada doesn't work that way.) It's unclear how far Dr. Vienna will slip, and how much it will harm the New Peers.

Dr. Vienna is a frequent sight on the streets of Fremont. Now middle-aged, he has the simultaneously fat-and-thin look of a geek with a bad diet, his pot belly and skinny limbs wrapped in neat Victorian eveningwear. His skin is pale, loose, and a bit unhealthy-looking, and his yellow hair is flaky and brittle. Dr. Vienna favors the classic tophat-and-goggles look that he's worn since before it became part of fashionable counterculture, and is never seen without his signature white gloves. Despite or perhaps because of his unmada status, he is determined to make frequent public appearances, to help bolster the New Peers against threats like St. Croix, Megiddo, and the growing racist gangs loyal to Captain Joe Calazzi.

Captain Joe Calazzi

Quote: *"Hey you! Watcha doin', babe? Don't you...Don't you walk away! Bitch! Fucking bitch whore! Won't look so pretty with a razor over your lips, bitch! Won't walk away from me then! You'll beg for it!"*

Foundation: Rogue

Catalyst: Grimm

Age: 30

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 1

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 2, Crafts (Gunsmithing) 2, Investigation 2, Medicine (First Aid) 3, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 5, Drive 4, Firearms (Auto-Fire) 4, Larceny 2, Stealth (Rooftops) 3, Survival (Urban) 3, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

Resources: 3 (Plundered from Criminals)

Other Merits: Shared Beholden (Number 4, Ability 0, Prowess 2), Dumpster Diver, Laboratory (Equipment 2, Size 1, Security 3), Allies (Military) 2, Allies (Police) 1, Allies (Unmada Manes) 2, Allies (Vigilantes) 4, Barfly, Contacts (Auto Mechanics, Military, White Supremacists) 3, Quick Draw, Stunt Driver, Striking Looks 2

Willpower: 4

Obligation: 1 (Social Skills -2; Derangements: Paranoia, Fixation, Irrationality, Megalomania)

Aesthetic: Full Metal Jacket

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Wrath

Health: 9

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 13

Inspiration: 5 (Unmada; Jabir -4)

Axioms: Apokalypsi 2, Epikrato 2, Exelixi 4*, Katastrofi 3 *, Prostasia 3 *, Skafoi 2

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 25/12/5

Captain's Goggles (Larval): Apokalypsi 2. Size 1 (shades). Roll 3 dice. Range 10'. Goggles. Useless in full daylight.

Regenerating Organ: Exelixi 4. Size 0 (internalized). Roll 7 dice. Internalized. 1 Mania to heal 2 Bashing or 1 Lethal damage. 3 Mania to heal 1 Aggravated damage (1 Willpower also needed). Self Only. Causes user's muscles to swell and sweat obscenely for one hour.

Musk of Dominance (Larval): Exelixi 3. Size 0. Grants +3 Presence, +2 Manipulation. Costs 5 Mania. Charge-up Time (3 turns), Internalized, Self Only. Causes 1 point of Lethal damage at the end of the scene.

Automatic Cannon: Katastrofi 3. Size 4 (heavy rifle). Damage 4 lethal (9-again). Roll 12 dice. Range 500/1000/2000. Autofire. 10% chance of jamming at the beginning of a fight; Wits + Crafts to un-jam.

Flak Jacket: Prostasia 3. Armor 4. Bulletproof, Vest. Does not protect against Aggravated damage.

Captain Joe hates gooks, like his father and grandfather hated gooks. He'll explain it to anyone, loudly, insistently, right to their face, no matter how inappropriate the venue or target of his pathological behavior. Captain Joe is a paradox: a clean, fit, sharp-looking young man, his Hollywood good looks making him look like a young Julius Caesar, his behavior is that of a teenage troll trying to sound like a racist bigot. Obnoxious beyond belief, Captain Joe's rugged handsomeness and deft, sure hands look ridiculous as he rants on street-corners or harasses women on their way to work, yelling about the Yellow Peril before hurling misogynistic insults at them as they depart. Joe is in and out of jail for assault, disturbing the peace, and sexual misconduct, not to mention the hospital, since even his gift for Exelixi can't always put him back together after his frequent ass-kickings.

It's not clear where Joe comes from. In his early 30s, he claims that his father was a Green Beret in Vietnam and his grandfather was a marine in the Pacific Theater, but his stories are contradictory, aggrandizing, and often flatly counterfactual. His tales, in fact, are so ridiculous that a few people joke he's a Boltzmann Brain who mugged some health nut outside a gym and now rides around inside him. But it's hard to laugh at Captain Joe for long. He's violent, belligerent, and mean-spirited, twisted with hate at Asians, at women, at homosexuals, and at anything else that annoys him.

If that were all, Captain Joe would just be another mad scientist gone crooked, some squealing idiot man-child with no social skills. Every city has them. But Captain Joe Calazzi is a figurehead around whom other young geniuses rally. It's gotta be mind-control, people say, but whatever it is, Joe has an army, and Joe's army is called Seattle First.

Seattle First began as Seattle Skies in 1996 as a Navigator-sponsored answer to the growing Pacific Gauntlet threat. While the Pacific Gauntlet was strong beneath the waves, Seattle Skies swatted their flyers out of the air, raided their factories, and led the police to their gang's hideouts. But as the Gauntlet grew more ruthless, targeting genius' families and leaving the corpses of their enemies strewn up through the access corridors, Seattle's Navigators darkened. Ignoring Vienna's and Calabash's pleas for moderation, they started building a beholden army with anti-Japanese rhetoric, since many of the Pacific Gauntlet's mid-level operatives were from Japan. While there isn't much anti-Asian prejudice in Seattle, every city has its share of racists looking to start trouble, and the newly-formed Seattle First found them.

It's not clear when Captain Joe Calazzi entered the picture. He seemed to start off as a legend shortly after the

World Trade Center attacks, a "Strong Man" who would come soon and set things right. He started slowly, speaking individually to members of Seattle First—evidently able to hold himself together better than he usually can now in public. His meetings with Dr. Vienna were catastrophic, and the two nearly came to violence. But even as Captain Joe's behavior deteriorated, his followers grew, and grew more fervent, drawn to what they described as "true and honest charisma." They attacked whom he wanted attacked, killing Pacific Gauntlet thugs and others caught in the crossfire. Captain Joe's reckless violence, and his signature tendency to rip people apart while shrugging off blows that would kill most normal people, have alienated all but the most vicious Inspired vigilantes, while causing those who remain loyal to him to grow ever more insular and aggressive. Attempts by Those Fools at the Institute to curb Captain Joe's violence have ended in failure. Even efforts to have Captain Joe arrested only see him imprisoned for a few days, then he's back on the streets, preaching his militant hate and picking fights.

No one knows exactly what's wrong with Captain Joe—what fuse got blown, what important person-wires got crossed in his crew-cut head—but it's clear he's unmade (he makes a damn good object lesson for new mad scientists who don't quite grasp the concept) and it seems like he's taking the hard road to Illumination. Dr. Vienna likes to keep his hands clean, so eyes have started to turn to Screaming Sam Paluxy to deal with the problem. Captain Joe seems to welcome the challenge.

Gracie Calabash, Orphanologist

Quote: *"How am I? My entire life consists of sitting in meetings with pompous wannabe supervillains in tin foil, trying to get them to understand zoning laws. That's how I am."*

Foundation: Director

Catalyst: Klagen

Age: 42

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 5

Mental Skills: Academics 5, Computer (scanning) 4, Crafts 4, Investigation 3, Medicine (Non-Terrestrial) 2, Occult 1, Politics (Seattle) 4, Science 5

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Drive 3, Firearms 2, Larceny 4, Stealth 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken (Non-Terrestrial) 3, Empathy 4, Expression (Video) 4, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 4, Socialize 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 4

Resources: 5 (The Orphanatorium)

Other Merits: Adopted Orphan 5, Shared Beholden (Number 3, Ability 2, Prowess 3), Shared Laboratory (Equipment 3, Size 3, Security 2), Allies (City Hall) 4, Allies (Police) 2, Allies (Scientific Community) 1, Contacts (City Councilors, Police, Left-Wing Zines, Local Business) 4, Encyclopedic Knowledge

Willpower: 9

Obligation: 6 (Derangement: Depression)

Aesthetic: Pre-Owned Pod People

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Pride

Health: 8

Initiative: 8

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Inspiration: 5 (Jabir -2)

Axioms: Apokalypsi* 5, Automata* 5, Epikrato 1, Exelixi* 2, Prostasia 4

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 25/11/5

Sanctuary Screen: Prostasia 4. Size 2 (heavy belt). Armor 5. Costs 4 Mania. Barrier, Expandable, Shielding Device. Ignores stone and wood.

Lenses of Grish: Apokalypsi 2. Size 1 (glasses). Roll 9 dice to read minds. Range 10 feet. Goggles. No fault.

Repair Pod: Exelixi 1. Size 1 (orb). Roll 6 dice to repair any Crafts-related object. 1 point of Mania restores 5

points of Structure. Or add 5 dice to regular repair attempts at no cost.

Magister Ludi: Automata 5. Size 0 (computer program). 25 Automation Points. 10 Mania. Intelligence 5, Wits 4, Resolve 2, Strength 1, Dexterity 1, Stamina 1, Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2. Academics 5, Computer 5, Investigation 5, Science 5, Animal Ken 4, Empathy 4, Persuasion 3, Politics 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3. Eidetic Memory, Contacts (Hackers) 1, Barfly. Obligation 5, Virtue Fortitude, Vice Envy. 5 XP. Free-Roaming. Hypnotized by televised sports.

One of the original New Peers, Gracie Calabash got her start in poverty activism in Los Angeles. She catalyzed in Fremont while writing a story for an alternative LA newspaper. After meeting Dr. Vienna in a robotics competition in 1989, she never left the Emerald City. Instead she joined Those Fools at the Institute while petitioning the Fellowship for Manifest Direction to relax its (at the time) hardline stance toward Progenitors and Lemurians. Years of political infighting and unstable relationships with both Dr. Vienna and the Directors have left her hard and aggressive, but also a relentless and brilliant guardian of the New Peers' interests in Seattle.

As Dr. Vienna slips further into his fantasy land, Calabash has taken on day-to-day management of the New Peers: organizational meetings, discussions with mundane city managers, and dangerous or hostile negotiations with people like Argentine St. Croix and Erwin Tycho. A bit of a self-made martyr, Calabash takes upon herself the unenviable job of negotiating with Seattle's squabbling political groups: racist Bulletheads, imperious New Peer enthusiasts, angry traditionalists who want to preserve Seattle's old Maniacal communities (such as they are), and an ambitious new generation of Klondikes looking for easy plunder. Years of high-pressure negotiations have turned her hair white, and her Mediterranean complexion is lined with a thin network of wrinkles, though she is only in her early 40s. To unwind, she prefers to visit one of Sam Paluxy's clubs and restaurants, though recently Calabash has disappeared for longer and longer periods of time—rumor has it, these disappearances are either to groom a wondrous replacement for Dr. Vienna or to oversee vigilante attacks on the Pacific Gauntlet. Calabash, since her arrival in Seattle, has been a constant target of scientific, ethical, and romantic rumors, some unusually vicious, and the recent batch has strained her friendship with Dr. Vienna, whom she may soon outclass scientifically. Her once-immaculate pinstripe suits now appear tattered around the cuffs, and her chunky plastic wonders look like they've seen better days. She is rarely seen without her black cigarette-holder, which she chews on angrily when in negotiations. Despite her grueling workload, Calabash appears before her fellow peers as a smart, focused, and (above all) supportive woman, determined to protect her people from the excesses of Lemuria and the brutality of Megiddo. She is often the first powerful mad scientist a new peer meets in Seattle, as she takes the Peerage's injunction to help out one's fellows very seriously.

In addition to keeping the city's squabbling tribes in check, Calabash runs the Orphanatorium, located in an industrial park near the Aurora Bridge in Fremont. A massive, partially-underground warehouse, the Orphanatorium contains hundreds of orphans from all over Washington State, most in stasis. The upper floor contains living space for almost a dozen intelligent orphans who earn their keep working in the Orphanatorium or managing specialist jobs for mad scientists whom Calabash trusts. The rest of it resembles a cross between a warehouse and a pet store, all under gleaming blue lights. Geniuses who meet Calabash's approval (never Lemurians) and who possess the Adopted Orphan Merit and enough "space" in that Merit can purchase unintelligent orphans for cash (a number of Resource dots are needed per rank of the wonder). Since the Orphanatorium competes with Lemuria's mercatus, attacks are frequent; recently, a bombing killed two beholden and destroyed a well-respected orphan heal-bot named Stitchin' Bitch, prompting violent retaliations. Provided they're not intelligent, Calabash humanely destroys excess wonders or wonders of Katastrofi and Epikrato, which she does not sell, though rumors persist that dangerous orphans can be had for favors instead of money.

Screaming Sam Paluxy, Inspired Rocker

Quote: *"Good show. Pretty good show. Not as good as it used to be, but it never is."*

Foundation: Navigator

Catalyst: Staunen

Age: 43

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Musicology) 4, Computer (Sound Systems) 3, Crafts (Musical Instruments) 4, Investigation 2, Medicine 3, Occult 2, Politics 2, Science (Acoustics) 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Drive (While Being Shot At) 3, Firearms 4, Larceny 3, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression (Guitar, Poetry) 4, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize (Live Music) 5, Streetwise (Club-Finder) 4, Subterfuge 3

Resources: 5 (Numerous Restaurants, Bars, and Nightclubs)

Other Merits: Shared Beholden (Number 3, Ability 2, Prowess 3), Shared Laboratory (Equipment 3, Size 3, Security 2), Allies (Entertainment) 4, Allies (City Hall) 1, Barfly, Contacts (Music Scene, Lowlives, University of Washington, Computer Geeks, Gay Club Scene) 5, Danger Sense, Fame 2, Striking Looks 2

Willpower: 6

Obligation: 5 (Derangements: Fixation, Narcissism)

Aesthetic: Industrial Grunge

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Lust

Health: 9

Initiative: 6 (9 with Rad Gloves activated)

Defense: 3

Speed: 12

Inspiration: 5 (Jabir -2)

Axioms: Apokalypsi* 3, Epikrato* 3, Exelixi 2, Katastrofi* 4, Metaptropi 2

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 25/12/5

Listenin' Jim: Apokalypsi 3. Size 0 (earpiece). Roll 10 dice to listen to any type of sound. Cost 1 Mania. Range 1 mile. Narrow focus (sound only). Flashes brightly when in use.

Fuck Switch: Epikrato 2. Size 1 (wand). Roll 5 dice vs. target's Stamina + Metanormal Advantage to engage in meat puppetry. Range 50'. Invisible Effect. Produces aggressively lusty behavior in user for duration of scene.

Rad Gloves: Exelixi 2. Size 2 (gloves/sleeves). Costs 5 Mania. +2 Dexterity, Fast Reflexes 3.

Soundwave Axe: Katastrofi 4. Size 4 (guitar). Damage 5 Aggravated (9-again). Roll 12 dice. Range 50/100/200. Cost 4 Mania. Knockdown, Reduced Range, Variable Damage. Causes 1 Bashing per attack to user.

Goalie Mask: Metaptropi 1. Size 2 (mask). Roll 8 dice to change appearance. Attached Transformation. All forms taken are flashy and pretty.

Born in the Philippines to a Scottish father and a Filipino mother, Screaming Sam came to the University of Washington in the fall of 1989 after a lifetime spent in British boarding schools. While he had been a bully, a layabout, even something of a sadist there, at the university he blossomed, taking on an enormous workload that involved mathematics, poetry, and electrical engineering. He burned with energy. His professors didn't know what to do with him. His first taste of grunge music, played live at the outdoor festival at Alki Point, reawakened his long-dormant first love, guitar. Sam's workload moved from heavy to insane as he founded three bands, joined two more, studied for his degree, and worked at a coffee shop to afford music equipment when not building it from cast-offs at the university. Imperceptibly, Sam catalyzed. It was only when an electric assassin burst into his coffee shop and killed his boyfriend that he realized things had gotten weird.

Sam met Dr. Vienna a few days later, who explained to the increasingly-popular musician (and PhD

candidate) what had happened. When another of Megiddo's attacks wounded his thesis advisor, Screaming Sam struck back, forging a devastating sonic guitar that obliterated one of the computer's hulking lieutenants. With Screaming Sam as their hatchet-man, Those Fools at the Institute organized a comprehensive program to take back Seattle. Sam did some things he wasn't entirely proud of, but he told himself it was to spare Dr. Vienna from having to do what was necessary. As the years passed and Dr. Vienna refused to participate in the gruesome work of cleaning up Seattle, Screaming Sam's respect for the Artificer became an increasingly unhealthy love/hate relationship. This unstable situation has remained, unaddressed, for several years.

Sam (he prefers "Sam"; no "Doctor Paluxy," even though he has PhDs in electrical engineering and mathematics and an MFA in poetry) looks like the vat-grown love child of Bruce Lee and Bruce Campbell. He has a big chin, always covered in stubble, expressive black eyes, clear tan skin, and a wiry, powerful physique. He usually wears early 90s grunge fashion: a checked shirt, torn jeans, heavy boots, with a suede fedora that hides his moppy black hair and a long scar on his forehead, a gift from the first electric assassin he encountered. Screaming Sam still plays guitar in his nerd-rock band, Inclined Plane and the Simple Machines, and he still goes through college-age boyfriends every few weeks. Despite his easy-going demeanor and casual brilliance, Sam is increasingly bitter at the direction Seattle is going. Dr. Vienna seems paralyzed, Gracie Calabash plays the same old games, and the opposition to the Pacific Gauntlet (a group Sam also dislikes) has taken an ugly, racist turn. Sam is thinking of packing up and leaving, maybe heading to Chicago or LA, but that would leave an enormous power-vacuum in the city that would significantly weaken the New Peers. Jaded from years of violence and back-and-forth power struggles, Sam doesn't seem to care that much. Aware that he is considering departing, Argentine St. Croix is studying ways to convince him to go, but she doesn't want to play their hand just yet.

Devon Ogura, Pacific Gauntlet Mastermind

Quote: *"Projections indicate a 85% chance of needing to exterminate witnesses. I have given the kill order. If I cannot countermand it in time, there is only a 19% chance of police action in this neighborhood."*

Baramin: Mechanist

Catalyst: Hoffnung

Age: 61

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 5

Mental Skills: Academics 4, Computer 5, Crafts 4, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics (Criminal Underworld) 5, Science 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl (Sweep the Leg) 2, Drive 3, Firearms 3, Larceny (Hacking) 4, Stealth 2, Weaponry 4

Social Skills: Empathy (Profiling) 4, Expression (Computer Graphics) 4, Intimidation 5, Persuasion 4, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Trafficking) 5, Subterfuge 4

Resources: 5 (Criminal Empire)

Other Merits: Shared Beholden (Number 5, Ability 3, Prowess 2), Generator 5 (Size 15 analog/digital processor core, 12 Mania/day), Shared Laboratory (Equipment 4, Size 4, Security 4), Allies (Business) 4, Allies (Criminal) 4, Allies (Military) 1, Allies (Police) 2, Allies (Town Hall) 2, Allies (Scientific Community) 3, Allies (Unmada Manes) 3, Contacts (Computer Researchers, International Business, Longshoremen, Yakuza) 4, Common Sense, Language (English, Japanese, Mandarin, Spanish, Tagalog) 4

Willpower: 8

Obligation: 4 (Social Skills -1; Derangements: Narcissism, Fixation, Phobia of Germs)

Aesthetic: Digital Chrome

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Greed

Health: 10

Initiative: 9

Defense: 4

Speed: 12

Inspiration: 6 (Unmada; Jabir -4)

Axioms: Apokalypsi 3, Epikrato 3*, Exelixa 1, Katastrofi 2, Metaptropi 5*, Prostasia 3*, Skafoi 2

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 30/12/6

Razor War Fan (Larval): Katastrofi 2. Prostasia 3. Size 2 (Katastrofi) and 1 (Prostasia). Damage 4 Lethal. Roll 12 dice. Bleeding. Armor 4. Reflection. A miss causes the fan to fly out of the user's hand, hovering in the air for one turn before landing at least ten yards away. The fan will not open (no Prostasia) unless exposed to bright light for at least one hour beforehand.

Chrome Shades (Larval): Apokalypsi 2. Size 1 (mirrorshades). Roll 8 dice. Range 10'. Cannot read anything through the shades.

Dominator Display (Larval): Epikrato 3. Size 2 (1' tablet). Roll 9 dice vs. Resolve + Metanormal Advantage for mind control. Range 60'. Basilisk Method, Many Minds (10' diameter). The display causes dizziness (-2 to all actions) in people who are controlled.

The Sea Monkey (Larval): Skafoi 2. Size 500, Durability 35, Structure 530. Safe Speed 250 mph, Maximum Speed 425 mph, Acceleration 125 mph/turn. Handling +5. Costs 2 Mania. Giant metal monkey silhouette is obvious on sonar despite armor.

- *Integral Hull Plating:* Prostasia 3. Durability x7. Size 50. Produces scanner blind-spots within 30' of outside of hull.
- *Integral Anti-Access Field (Larval):* Prostasia 3, Size 30. -16 penalty to scanning/teleporting. Costs 1 Mania/day. Fragile.
- *Integral Supercavitating Bolt Weapons System (Larval):* Katastrofi 2. Size 30. Explosive Force 5. Roll 8 dice. Costs 2 Mania. Artillery, Explosive Radius (5 yards/10 yards), Orbital Gun (+40 damage with direct hits). Takes one turn to switch targets.
- *Integral Telescopic Scanning Apparatus (Science):* Apokalypsi 3. Size 30. Roll 15 dice to scan anything in range. Range anywhere in the solar system. Video only. Occasional false positives when underwater.
- *Integral Digital Comm System (Larval):* Apokalypsi 1. Size 12. Roll 10 dice for contact. Range 10,000 miles. Images and audio are staticky.
- *Integral Life Support System:* Exelixa 1. Size 30. Point of Mania sustains 100 people for one day. Must emerge once per week to refresh air system.

Origami Briefcase (Transgressive Larval): Metaptropi 5. Size 2 (briefcase). Roll 9 dice for any conceivable Metaptropi transformation. Cost 1 Mania/5 points of Size for most changes. Range 60'. Subjects maintain a papery appearance.

Though today he is the regional director for Seattle's Pacific Gauntlet, controlling territory in Seattle, Portland, Vancouver, and San Francisco, Devon Ogura was not always a promising candidate for a high-ranking position in Lemuria's hierarchy. A third-generation mad scientist, Ogura's father had helped Lemuria reclaim parts of Japan and Australia from the Peerage before the Second World War. But Devon, with his apparently middling faculties, was slated for beholden status, to swell the armies of Lemuria in preparation for the foundations' final attack.

The fall of Lemuria spoiled those plans and, in the post-war chaos, Ogura catalyzed in Hawaii in 1968. His psyche fractured by years of contempt from his family, he remained a Lemurian-affiliated rogue for several years, then drifted into the Honolulu Phenomenologists (who were big into economic nihilism at the time), before at last defining himself with the revolutionary thesis *Mathematical Models For Distribution of Contraband*. In the space of a year, he received an offer to join the Mechanists and to take command of the Pacific Gauntlet's undersea fortress near Los Angeles. He accepted both offers, and quickly worked his way up the ranks. When word came that the Pacific Gauntlet wanted a regional director for Seattle, he jumped at the chance. This alienated several of his traditional Lemurian allies, who viewed the Gauntlet as a suspicious upstart organization.

Devon Ogura—"The Ogre," to many of his underlings, though never to his face—is a cold, meticulous man in his early 60s. He is tall, fit, and powerfully built, with a touch of gray at his temples, and lines around his eyes and mouth that would be more noticeable if he ever smiled. Though the Pacific Gauntlet's most popular aesthetic is Clockwork, Ogura defined his power base in the 80s, and favors Digital Chrome styles that meld cool-hued neon, titanium, and white plastic. He is rarely seen without a crisp white suit and a thin black or white tie. Despite his aesthetic choices, Ogura is a consummate Mechanist who views his criminal empire, including himself, as a single equation to be manipulated for maximum reward. Seemingly devoid of ego, he lives only to serve the mathematical models he has dreamed up for the benefit of the Pacific Gauntlet. He is sufficiently soulless, in fact, to have accidentally outwitted rivals in the past, who tried and failed to interpret his actions as having an ulterior, selfish motive. Ogura has no ulterior motives. He lives for the Gauntlet, and the purpose of the Gauntlet is to expand and grow wealthy.

Melantha C. Dranias, Clockwork Brood Mother

Quote: *"Soon my children will split me apart. Then they will split apart the world."*

Baramin: Oracle

Catalyst: Staunen

Age: 55

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 1, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 5, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academic 2, Computer 3, Crafts (Metalwork) 5, Medicine (Healing Devices) 3, Occult 3, Politics 2, Science 4

Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms 3, Larceny 2, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy (Her "Children") 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 3

Resources: 4 (Gifts of Tribute from the Gauntlet)

Other Merits: Assembly Line 5, Shared Beholden (Number 5, Ability 3, Prowess 2), Kitbasher, Allies (Criminal) 4, Allies (unmada manes) 1, Contacts (Criminals, Sailors) 2, Giant, Iron Stomach

Willpower: 6

Obligation: 3 (Social Skills -1; Derangements: Fixation, Vocalization)

Aesthetic: Clockwork

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Sloth

Health: 10

Initiative: 3

Defense: 1

Speed: 9

Inspiration: 5 (Unmada; Jabir -4)

Axioms: Apokalypsi* 3, Automata* 3, Exelixa* 1, Epikrato 1, Katastrofi 2, Metaptropi 1, Prostasia 2, Skafoi 2

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 25/1/5

Harpoon Gun (x32): Katastrofi 2. Size 3 (rifle). Damage 6 Lethal. Roll 10 dice. Range 500/1000/2000. Cost 2 Mania. Reduced rate of fire (every other turn). Requires one hour of maintenance per day or it rusts.

Gear Katana (x32): Katastrofi 2. Size 3 (sword). Damage 5 Lethal. Roll 9 dice. No Mania cost. Whirrs and clicks for several seconds once drawn.

Fist Flyer (x32): Skafoi 2. Size 10, Durability 3, Structure 13. Safe Speed 500 mph, Maximum Speed 750 mph, Acceleration 250 mph. Handling +3. Roll 5 dice. Cost 2 Mania. Passengers 4. Hovering. Handling becomes -5 after any damage to Structure.

- *Integral Chaingun:* Katastrofi 2. Size 4 (belly-mounted turret). Damage 6 Lethal. Roll 10 dice. Cost 2 Mania. Range 500/1000/2000. Autofire. Jams in cold weather (or above 5,000').

Gear Ammonite Underwater Sloop (x32): Skafoi 2. Size 30, Durability 5, Structure 35. Safe Speed 250 mph, Maximum Speed 425 mph, Acceleration 175 mph. Handling +3. Roll 5 dice. Cost 2 Mania. Large sealife will try to eat the gear ammonite.

- *Integral Life Support*: Exelixa 1. Size 4. 1 Mania sustains up to 5 people for a day. Water causes headaches (-1 penalty to all actions) if drunk for more than one week.
- *Integral Commlink*: Apokalypsi 1. Size 4. Roll Intelligence + Computer +2. Range 10 miles (cellular connection—works only above water, of course). Ship must be still for anything except text communications.

Clattering Crab (x32): Skafoi 1. Size 16, Durability 16, Structure 32. Safe Speed 188 mph, Max Speed 282 mph, Acceleration 94 mph/turn. Handling +5. Roll 7 dice. Cost 1 Mania. Legs Instead of Wheels.

- *Integral Armor*: Prostasia 1. Durability 16. Size 1. Does not protect against fire.
- *Integral Life Support*: Exelixa 1. Size 2. 1 Mania sustains one person for a day. Food produced is highly flammable.
- *Integral Shredding Claws*: Katastrofi 2. Size 6. Damage 8 Lethal. Roll 10 dice. No cost. A failure tangles the claws, requiring a Wits + Crafts check to free them.
- *Integral Commlink*: Apokalypsi 1. Size 2. Roll Intelligence + Computer +1. Range 1 mile (cellular link, only effective above water). A large dish rises out of the vehicle when the commlink is active.

Air Goggles (x32): Apokalypsi 2. Size 1 (goggles). Roll Wits + Computer -1. Range 10'. Goggles. Depth perception problems incur a -2 penalty to ranged attacks when worn.

Scale Suit (x32): Prostasia 1. Armor 3. Any attack that hits and lands two or more 10s causes the scale suit to simply fall off (one minute to put back on).

- *Integral Life Support Fin*: Exelixa 1. Size 2. 1 Mania sustains one person for five days (air only). The fin is bulbous and sticks up, often spoiling stealth attempts.
- *Integral mundane flippers*: +1 to swimming.

What do you call a morbidly obese woman who has surgically replaced her uterus with a twisting, churning cauldron of gears and cam-shafts? You call it fucked up, even if you're a Progenitor, and that's what the Progenitors said when they encountered Melantha Dranias. So, rejected by the Children of the Demiurge, Dranias joined the Oracles in the mid 80s. She terrified even them with her fervent belief that she was spiritual heir to Echidna, Mother of Monsters, and her conviction that she would bring about a new reign of the pagan gods, who had, she said, transmuted from being composed of the four elements to being formed of gleaming alien metal. But the Oracles, eager to have new blood in the California theater of their low-key struggle with the Peerage, ignored her fast-dropping Obligation and her disturbing, Luminous behavior, and recruited her to churn out weapons for their beholden armies.

The tactic worked, and California's Lemurians started to push the Peerage out of several California cities with sheer weight of numbers. Dozens of beholden, armed with deadly Katastrofic weapons, assaulted peers in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Jose. But the foundations pushed back, and Lemurian in-fighting neutralized their advantages. Lady Dranias, by then swollen from her generative work, fled and joined up with Devon Ogura of the Pacific Gauntlet around 2001. Draping herself then in the mythological raiment of an undersea brood-mother, she helped define the style of Seattle's Gauntlet branch: silvery gears and mother-of-pearl trim, elegant and beautiful, yet occasionally cluttered with squamous grotesqueries born of stainless steel and never-rusting copper. In her hidden undersea base beneath Puget Sound, she churns out whatever weapons and inventions Ogura needs.

Of course, Lady Dranias' loyalties don't lie entirely with Ogura or the Pacific Gauntlet. Illuminated philosophers, some long-bodiless, cluster around her, promising her a magnificent future when she lets the Light in behind her eyes. Dranias spends more and more time in drug-addled reveries, lounging amidst her silks and gears, imagining a world consumed by her all-devouring children. But for now, she remains content to serve Ogura, and wait for her chance to join the shining and godlike creatures that hover around her whenever her guards are inattentive.

Erin Out-Of-Time, Overwhelmed Guardian

Quote: *"Excuse me? Pardon me? Are you interested in preventing this entire month from being eaten by time-wasps? If so, I might have an offer for you!"*

Foundation: Rogue

Catalyst: Hoffnung

Age: 19

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (History) 2, Computer 2, Crafts 3, Investigation (Peerless Reporting) 3, Occult 1, Politics (Scandal) 2, Science 2

Physical Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 2

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Blogger) 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize (Self-Deprecating Humor) 3,

Streetwise 2, Subterfuge ("I'm Just A Little Lost") 2

Resources: 3 (Successful Blog and Book Deals)

Other Merits: Beholden (Number 1, Ability 0, Prowess 0), Mane, Contacts (Journalists, Students, Scientific Community) 3, Status (Press Pass) 1, Languages (English, Arabic, French) 2

Willpower: 6

Obligation: 7 (Paragon)

Aesthetic: Stonetech

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Envy

Health: 8

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 8

Inspiration: 3

Axioms: Apokalypsi 1, Epikrato 1, Katastrofi 1, Metaptropi* 3, Skafoi* 2

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 14/6/3

Lithosonic Field Tool: Katastrofi 1, Epikrato 1. Size 1 (Katastrofi), 1 (Epikrato). Damage 3 Bashing. Roll 7 dice. Knockback. For manipulations, roll 5 dice. A successful knockback or a failed manipulation attempt knocks the tool out of its user's hand.

Resonant Lapis: Apokalypsi 1. Size 0. Roll 4 dice. Range 10' (cellular connection). Sound only. Cannot initiate calls, only receive them.

Bezoar of Growth: Metaptropi 3. Size 2. Roll 6 dice. Success makes the subject to gain two (1 Mania) or three (2 Mania) points of Size. Range 30'. Grown creatures tend to burst their clothes, which do not always grow evenly.

Flying Rock: Skafoi 2. Size 6 (surfboard-shaped). Safe Speed 200 mph, Maximum Speed 300 mph, Acceleration 100 mph/turn. Handling +5. Roll 9 dice. Exposed Canopy +3. Costs 2 Mania. Loses 20 feet of altitude per turn (enough for a controlled landing) in the presence of music.

Erin Out-Of-Time is the product of our increasingly borked time-line. She hails from a short-lived but extremely powerful 21st Century where humanity never left the Stone Age—even while building starships and supercomputers. Evidently caused by a renegade mad scientist stealing all of early Earth's metals to build a moon-sized space station, this timeline collapsed when he was made to put it back, but a few people, like Erin, got squirted into our reality instead of assimilating comfortably into the new timeline. People like Erin Out-Of-Time are apparently "solitaires," unique specimens of a timeline with no psychic analogue in any other reality. At least that's what Erin says.

Erin worries a lot. Her nickname is twofold. She's out of her own timeline, and she's running out of time. The other solitaires from her reality are all dead, hunted down by unlicensed Guardians of Forever who are forging their own temporal empires after the disappearance of the Terminals. Erin is herself a Guardian of

Forever, tasked with enforcing temporal normality in Seattle in the early 21st century. Like most loyal Guardians, she reports to a senior agent in her personal future. Unlike most Guardians, she is grossly underqualified to police all but the most rudimentary chronological problems. While a skilled young genius, she only catalyzed a few years ago, and any genius with the power to travel through time is guaranteed to have many years of experience on the young woman. Her attempts to curry favor with Argentine St. Croix, Atomic Lemuria's ruler, have alienated her from the Peerage, and Dr. Vienna in particular seems to have it out for her. She spends much of her time looking for agents to help her with her problems, which means many mad scientists view her as more of an irritant than a menace.

A friendly, excessively chipper woman, Erin is short, blond, and plump, with an enormous and infectious smile and a friendly manner that has endeared her to the city's alternative community (if not to its geniuses). She maintains a well-known public persona as a blogger. Her "schtick" is a sort of artistic political naiveté that began as sincere confusion (having been flung into a new timeline) that has evolved into a sort of absurd parody of contemporary society. But beneath her friendly demeanor is a woman deeply concerned about both the timeline and what will become of her with rogue agents from the future hunting refugees from alternate histories.

Detective Alice Gotti, Interface Agent

Quote: *"Homicides get solved in this town. If they don't get solved, they get covered up. If they can't get solved or covered up, you and I will have words about your methods."*

Beholden

Age: 27

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer 2, Investigation (Forensics) 4, Medicine 1, Politics (Police) 3, Science 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Drive 3, Firearms 3, Larceny 1, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy (Interrogation) 4, Intimidation (Behind a Desk) 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Allies (Police) 4, Contacts (Police, Criminals, Seattle High Society, FBI) 4, Common Sense, Fast Reflexes 3, Fleet of Foot 3, Mentor 3, Quick Draw, Resources 3, Status (Police Detective) 3, Striking Looks 2, Stunt Driver, Status (Police) 3

Willpower: 5

Morality: 6

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Pride

Health: 9

Initiative: 9 (with Fast Reflexes 3)

Defense: 3

Speed: 12

Mania/Per Turn: 6/1

Alice Gotti didn't want to be a cop. The daughter of two wealthy and successful bankers, she was set to go to Princeton when she made a mistake and had some bad luck: a plagiarism charge on a senior-year paper. Princeton wouldn't have her, and neither would her parents. A boyfriend in the Olympia PD told her to enter the police academy. Stunned by her sudden fall from grace, Gotti pulled in her few remaining favors and, nearly on a whim, studied to become a police officer.

She blew threw the Academy. Landing a plum assignment in Seattle (a stroke of luck, mostly), she impressed her superiors and found herself on the fast-track to promotion. She married her boyfriend, Andy, just as she was promoted to a vice detective, and started angling immediately for a post in homicide. But then, another mistake: a pregnancy she didn't expect, side-tracking her career. She had the baby, but her husband left to

pursue a career in the FBI. They've still never actually divorced (Andy is still nominally a Catholic), but now he lives in Arlington, Virginia, and won't return her calls.

Nonetheless, Alice Gotti received her post in homicide. She immediately ran into trouble: an Inspired murder, insoluble in normal ways, with her superiors breathing down her neck because the casualty was an important foreign investor (and a Pacific Gauntlet overseer, unknown to them). The resulting mess led Gotti to a nest of corruption within the Seattle PD itself: kickbacks leading from an unknown backer (the Gauntlet, of course) to her immediate supervisor, Lieutenant Hennessey, as well as her partner and two other detectives. They were all on this criminal cartel's payroll.

This is when Dr. Vienna spotted the young detective. He gave her a three-day tour of the Inspired world, and when she came back to duty, she was beholden to him and Those Fools at the Institute. Now Gotti, despite only being a detective, is one of the most important people in The Seattle of Tomorrow, the interface between the city's geniuses and a police force that increasingly has to deal with the spillover from mad science vigilantism and criminal activity—and that's not equipped to deal with any of it.

A dark-haired, classically beautiful woman, Detective Gotti dresses in expensive, tasteful business clothing, accented by clean-looking modernist jewelry. Amidst the frumpy, frazzled men and women of Seattle PD's homicide department, she doesn't even register as police (she has been mistaken for a reporter more than once), something she uses to her advantage. She is considerably more independent than the average beholden, but she definitely is one. Her state infuriates Gotti, who has lost her faith in God and the Church—not due to any rift; just that as a beholden, she can't maintain any meaningful religious ideas, though she still attends Mass and works at the soup kitchen as a matter of habit—and who now finds herself surrounded by annoying, somewhat ridiculous people with all sorts of odd concerns. Afraid that she's getting in over her head, Gotti is more interested in protecting her five-year-old daughter, Lia, from criminal and super-scientific threats, and from her own (she fears) inevitable fall as the Lemurians close in, than providing immediate support for geniuses in trouble. Nonetheless, she knows several of the city's peers, and is willing to help out when an Inspired struggle grows too public. Despite the danger she's in, Gotti realizes that she is now more successful and stable than she has been for years, with a real chance to help the city; increasingly she is leaving aside her old anger to serve as Seattle's main Inspired-mere mortal interface.

Hook-Man, Guardian of the City Streets

Quote: *"Stop, evil-doer! Hook-Man is here for to put your ass on a hook!"*

Foundation: Navigator

Catalyst: Grimm

Fellowship: Iridium Sentinels 3

Age: 34

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer (Scanning Technology) 2, Crafts (Metallurgy) 3, Investigation 3, Medicine 1, Science 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Drive (Flying Machines) 2, Firearms 3, Larceny 1, Stealth 1, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1

Resources: 3 (Lab Technician at UDub)

Other Merits: Dumpster Diver, Laboratory (Equipment 1, Size 1, Security 3), Utility Belt 2 (Science, Crafts), Allies (Police) 1, Contacts (Concerned Citizens, Police) 2, Fame 1

Willpower: 4

Obligation: 6

Aesthetic: Rusty Hooks

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Lust

Health: 8

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3 (2 in heavy armor)

Speed: 11 (9 in heavy armor)

Inspiration: 3 (Unmada; Jabir -2)

Axioms: Apokalypsi 2, Katastrofi* 2, Prostasia* 2, Skafoi* 2

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 16/6/3

Chain Armor: Prostasia 2. Armor 3. Bulletproof, Heavy Armor, Resilient +3. No faults.

- *Integral Hook Blade:* Katastrofi 2. Size 1 (spur in wrist). Damage 5 Lethal. Roll 11 dice. No cost. Breaks off in target on an Exceptional Success.
- *Integral Hook Chain:* Katastrofi 1. Size 1 (coiled chain in wrist). Roll 5 dice to attack, then roll 4 dice vs. target's Strength + Brawl to grapple. Range 30/60/120. Cost 1 Mania. If it doesn't hit, the chain drags uselessly, reducing user's Speed by 2 until it's retracted (one turn).
- *Integral Commlink:* Apokalypsi 1. Size 1 (helmet rig). Roll 7 dice. Range 1 mile (cellular connection). Verbal Only. Leaves rust on the user's ear that takes a day to go away.
- *Integral Scanner:* Apokalypsi 2, Size 1 (visor), roll 7 dice. Range 100'. Completely blurs out the "innocent" (mere mortals with Morality 7+).
- *Integral Hook Grappler:* Skafoi 1. Size 2 (shoulder-mounted). Range 60' horizontal/30' vertical. Bouncing, Clinging, Increased Bouncing Range. Roll 8 dice. Cost 1 Mania. Extremely noisy and echoes horribly.

Hook Craft: Skafoi 2. Size 10, Durability 15, Structure 25. Passengers 5. Safe Speed 300 mph, Maximum Speed 450 mph, Acceleration 150 mph/turn. Handling +2. Roll 10 dice. Cost 2 Mania. Exposed Canopy +1, Hovering. Can only hover if within 50' of the ground (it extends a balancing-line).

- *Integral Fractal Deflection System:* Prostasia 2. Durability x5. Size 1. Armor causes main door to jam (requiring five successes on an extended Strength + Stamina check with up to two people able to help) 50% of the time.

Hook-Man is a terror of the Seattle's underworld, scourge of crime, confounder of the police, destroyer of evil. At least, that's the plan. By the light of day, "Hook-Man" is David Islington Whittlesworth, a laboratory technician and part-time research assistant at the University of Washington. Whittlesworth has lived in Seattle all his life and has always loved the city. An indifferent student, he nonetheless excelled in metal-shop and was fixing cars by the age of 15, to the annoyance of his parents, who wanted him to follow his older brother's footsteps and go into law.

Whittlesworth's life changed while he was attending UDub, when his brother, who worked in the District Attorney's office, died of an apparently fatal heroin overdose. This was back in the mid 90s, the result of a conflict between Klondikes and Vladimir Kopacki's Atomic Lemurians before the New Peers had significant influence. Whittlesworth's brother stumbled into a power struggle and, understanding nothing, refused to take sides and began plans to prosecute. The Lemurians took him out, an act that (as they planned) cowed the DA's office. But the apparent overdose burned in Whittlesworth's mind. His family moved away, to Portland, and he watched his neighborhood decay because of crime and vice.

Whittlesworth got only a week into his Master's program before leaving the university to work at the Seattle docks. He loved the rusting metal, the old, harsh technology, still without peer despite numerous technological developments...and he hated the crime, the corruption, the vice he saw there. It consumed him, and one day, his hands working instinctively over the old metal, he catalyzed. Learning about the Peerage through an old mail-order service, he joined the Navigators and sent his name in to the Iridium Sentinels. Whittlesworth built himself a suit out of old, rusty hooks and tasked himself with guarding the docks, wrapping himself in Maniacal fantasies of vengeance and glory. That was fifteen years ago.

Hook-Man has been at it ever since. When the Pacific Gauntlet appeared, he tore into them, too, though he's

just as happy to beat on regular criminals. Several ugly encounters with Havoc, caused by grappling with the regular criminal element, have taught Hook-Man to be wary, cautious, and meticulous. As unmada go, he's fairly reasonable, even when wrapped up in his deranged persona. Among the regular criminals of Seattle, he is only a legend. He's the same way to the Seattle PD...except to Detective Alice Gotti, who knows him and doesn't much like him. Hook-Man returns the favor: he's suspicious of the New Peers and doesn't much care for Dr. Vienna's shrinking, passive approach to stopping Inspired crime. But he also despises the Bulletheads and vigilante scum that follow Captain Joe. Now he finds himself torn: though a shadowy and reclusive figure, he's been fighting crime and building hook-guns for over a decade, and the New Peers, the Klondikes, and even the Bulletheads now all seek out his opinion.

In person, Hook-Man is unimposing at first glance: pale skin, brown eyes, receding brown hair. He's big, though, and fit. Whittlesworth is married with two kids, and though his wife knows what he is, he's terrified that if his wife gets any closer to his Inspired life, she'll become beholden. Recently he has escaped this anxiety through several affairs, including one with a Pacific Gauntlet agent that he fears has compromised him, morally and perhaps genetically.

Megiddo, Insane Computer Overlord

Quote: *"Behold my chrome magnificence before I extinguish you, insect."*

Rank-5 Automaton

Variables: Cannot Move, Durable, Increased Manipulator Range (40')

Foundation: Rogue

Catalyst: Neid

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 1

Mental Skills: Academics 4, Computer 5, Crafts 4, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics 2, Science (Electromagnetics) 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Drive 1, Firearms (Integral Weaponry) 3, Larceny 3

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression (Vengeful Rants) 2, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 4, Subterfuge 2

Resources: 5 (Mail-Order Denture Business)

Other Merits: Assembly Line 4, Generator 5 (Size-20 atomic pile generates 12 Mania/day), Laboratory (Equipment 4, Size 3, Security 4), Allies (Unmada Manes) 2, Eidetic Memory, Encyclopedic Knowledge

Willpower: 3

Obligation: 0 (Derangements: Paranoia, Megalomania, Multiple Personality, Vocalization)

Aesthetic: Soviet Industrial

Fault: The area within about 500' of Megiddo is sickly, diseased, and slightly radioactive

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Greed

Size: 25

Durability: 30

Structure: 55

Initiative: 3

Defense: 2

Speed: 0

Inspiration: 5 (Unmada; Jabir -4)

Axioms: Apokalypsi* 4, Automata* 4, Epikrato* 1, Katastrofi 2, Metaptropi 3, Prostasia 3, Skafoi 2

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 25/7/5

Electric Assassin (x16): Automata 3. Katastrofi 2, Prostasia 1, Apokalypsi 1. See main stats below.

Surveillance Drone (x16): Automata 3. 15 Automation Points. Intelligence 1, Wits 4, Resolve 1, Strength 1, Dexterity 5, Stamina 1, Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 4. Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Larceny 3, Stealth 3, Streetwise 3. No Fine Manipulators. Size 1. Speed 16 (Base Speed 11). 8 Mania. Destroyed instantly if struck in the central eye-camera (-3 to hit).

- *Integral Scanner*: Apokalypsi 2. Size 0. Roll 1 die. Range 100'. Fragile. Goggles. Onboard Storage. Costs 1 Mania. Useless aboveground.

City Monitor: Apokalypsi 3. Size 12 (tall computer bank). Roll 10 dice to scan. Range 1,000 miles. Onboard Storage. Can only detect people near one of Megiddo's scanning cameras, the frequency of which varies enormously in and around Seattle.

Personal Grafted Armor Reinforcement: Prostasia 3. Durability x7. Heavy Armor. Prevents detection of any type within five feet of Megiddo.

A shattered, inhuman psyche from the dreams of a fascist police state governed by all-seeing technology, Megiddo was a monster before the collapse of its bardo left it orphaned and deranged. Paranoid, vicious, and hateful, Megiddo's person-like traits resemble a cross between a sadistic, abusive father-figure and a devious Third World warlord. Megiddo doesn't have much of an authentic personality, so when it materializes to communicate with humans (which it hasn't done in five years), it takes on the forms and the mannerisms of historical or fictional "fatherly" figures, from Stalin to Ward Cleaver to the God of Abraham. These manifestations seem to leave lingering stains on its psyche that last for weeks or months. Perhaps that's why it no longer communicates: such direct contact fractures its decaying personality still further.

And Megiddo is badly damaged. Rumors say that it has, in the past, split into several warring Megiddos, intellects that battle and devour one-another before reuniting again to wage war against Seattle's mad scientists. Over the years, Megiddo has lost many of its servants, and, partially, its ability to make more. Nonetheless it is attended by electric assassins, surveillance drones, and high-intelligence infiltrator agents, some bound directly to it, some merely loyal orphans. (These latter often possess truly outlandish mutations.) But each year Megiddo's intellect fluctuates more, and eventually it will collapse entirely, if it isn't destroyed first. When that day comes, it's unclear even whether things will improve, as already there are so many independent killing machines roaming Seattle's access corridors that it may make no difference if their original master is no more.

Argentine St. Croix, Atomic Lemurian Facilitator

Quote: *"Further acts deemed counter to the interests of Lemuria in this city will be met with censure and official demerits."*

Baramin: Atomist

Catalyst: Grimm

Age: 41

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer 4, Crafts (Aerospace) 3, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Politics (Academia) 4, Science (High-Energy Physics) 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Drive 3, Firearms 3, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression (Blackboards) 2, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 2

Resources: 4 (Science Museum Board of Directors)

Other Merits: Shared Beholden (Number 5, Ability 4, Prowess 2), Shared Laboratory (Equipment 3, Size 5, Security 2), Allies (Scientific Community) 3, Allies (Unmada Manes) 2, Contacts (Physicists, Wholesalers, City Hall) 3, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Languages (English, French, Russian, German) 3

Willpower: 5

Obligation: 5 (Derangement: Irrationality)

Aesthetic: Raygun

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Envy

Health: 7

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Inspiration: 4 (Unmada; Jabir -2)

Axioms: Apokalypsi* 2, Automata 1, Epikrato 1, Exelixa 1, Katastrofi* 3, Metaptropi 3, Prostasia 2, Skafoi* 3

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 20/7/4

Headset Comm (Larval): Apokalypsi 1. Size 1 (fits in helmet). Roll 7 dice. Range 10' (cellular connection). Comm occasionally transmits information to other people nearby.

Shrink Ray (Transgressive Larval): Metaptropi 3. Size 2 (heavy ray gun). Roll 6 dice to hit, then 11 dice to transform. Costs 1 Mania to activate ray, then 1 Mania per two points of Size shrunk. Targets shrunk to Size 1 suffer a -2 penalty to Strength, -4 to Move, and -4 to the damage from their weapons. Metaptropi Ray. On a failure, the ray drains 1-10 Mania from the user. If there is not enough Mania, this is converted to Bashing damage on a one-for-one basis.

Century Flyer: Skafoi 3. Size 30, Durability 20, Structure 50. Passengers 100. Safe Speed 20,000 mph, Maximum Speed 30,000 mph, Acceleration 10,000 mph/turn, Stall Speed 120 mph. Handling +4. Roll 10 dice. 4 AU/week in deep space. Cost 3 Mania. Shaky Ride.

- *Integral Sweep Sensor:* Apokalypsi 2 (Automata 1). Size 6. Roll 9 dice. Range 1,000 miles (1 million miles in space). Automatic proximity alert system. Roll 4 dice and range of only 100 feet (10 miles in space) from behind.
- *Integral Disintegrator Spinal Mount:* Katastrofi 3. Size 6. Explosive Force 3 Aggravated. Area 20 yards/40 yards, Range 5 miles/10 miles/20 miles. Cost 3 Mania. Disintegrating. Poorly-mounted (cumulative -1 penalty per attack, removed by successes on a Wits + Crafts roll).
- *Integral Electro-Reinforced Hull:* Prostasia 1. Size 3. Durability x4. No Durability multiplier against electrical attacks.
- *Integral Life Support (Larval):* Exelixa 1. Size 2. 1 Mania sustains a person for one day. Only baseline humans (not manes or even animals) can consume the food.

Cosmotic Switcher: Epikrato 1. Size 1 (remote control). Roll 8 dice to engage in manipulation. Cost 1 Mania. Fragile.

Force Screen (Larval): Prostasia 2. Size 2 (belt). Armor 5. Costs 2 Mania. Reflection. Shielding Device. Shorts out if exposed to any amount of electricity; requires repairs before it will work again.

Paralysis Beam (Larval): Katastrofi 1. Size 1 (pistol). Damage 4 Bashing (all damage converted to Dexterity drain on a 3:1 basis). Roll 9 dice. Cost 1 Mania. Overloads and will explode (five Bashing dice within 5') in one turn if an Exceptional Success is rolled.

Argentine St. Croix is a microcosm for how low Lemuria has fallen, in Seattle and all over the world. Her pictures are in Seattle's zothea, hidden beneath the Pacific Science Center, and her statue, in bronze, adorns the central hallway. Her statue shows a young woman in a form-fitting space suit holding a spherical space helmet, looking toward the stars. The woman who confronts visitors to her dingy office, dominated by a flickering light bulb and a fan that never quite points the right way, reveals a very different woman, one bowed by the weight of many, many defeats.

The St. Croix family controlled Seattle for a century, and the collapse of The Seattle of Tomorrow resulted in a similar collapse of the venerable line. Born a few years after the Century 21 Exposition, Argentine was determined to get away from her family's folly as soon as she was aware of Inspiration. She escaped her family, who were determined to make her beholden, and fled to Paris, where she studied astrophysics. There she had her first encounter with mad science outside her family: an Etherite professor named Winston Ting, who, after a botched attempt to make her beholden and a tempestuous, sometimes abusive romance, obsessively stalked her. His hounding prevented her from finishing her doctoral thesis, and the disappointment drove her mad—exactly what she wanted to avoid. She traveled to Ting's apartment, killed him, and when she emerged, she had catalyzed. Still looking outward, she was determined to create a level playing field for humanity among the stars. A violent struggle between Atomists, Etherites, and Phenomenologists for her attentions (as her family languished in obscurity) was the high point of her career. She officially joined the Atomists in 1988 and has remained with them ever since, despite the retro flair of her

wonders and her hesitation at joining the group responsible for her family's fall from grace.

But St. Croix's star faded fast. A Neptunian marriage to a gifted Oracle named Archibolo Riga ended in disgrace and divorce when he found her cavorting with one of his beholden. Riga executed the offending beholden and banished St. Croix and their two young sons to Earth in 1992. Stripped of her title (and her star fleet), she slinked back to Seattle, just in time for the previous leader of the Atomic Lemurians, the Etherite Vladimir Copacki, to commit suicide before his embezzling could be discovered. Her hand forced by circumstance and her grasping family, St. Croix replaced him, a humiliating position that assured her nothing but bureaucratic hassles with no time for research, and that cut short any hopes of future promotions.

St. Croix is a bitter, tired woman, touched by sadness at the disappointments in her life. While insane and, when the mood takes her, tremendously cruel, hers is the small, weak kind of human cruelty that encourages as much pity as loathing. Three years ago Marcel, her younger son, fell into a deathly and baffling coma; no amount of super-medicine has been able to awaken him, and St. Croix fears he is *transforming*. Last year the Scholastics poached Jacob, her older son, who disowned her in a televised display so calculated for its maliciousness that even several peers were shocked. This has infuriated her family, who feel that they will never again regain full control of Seattle. Increasingly, St. Croix finds herself alone and isolated, her assistants (like Belinda Czdenk) insubordinate, her nominal allies (like the Pacific Gauntlet) dismissive of her, the ruler of the weakest force in a city of ruined dreams. So St. Croix sits behind her desk, in her tiny office with its malfunctioning electrical systems, and wonders how things might have gone, for herself, for Seattle, and for Lemuria.

Belinda Czdenk, Mercatus Retail Clerk

Quote: "Dinosaur testicles add protein. Are you buying them or not?"

Baramin: Phenomenologist

Catalyst: Neid

Age: 57

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer 2, Crafts 3, Investigation 1, Medicine 2, Politics (Business) 2, Science 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Drive 3, Firearms 2, Larceny 3, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Hawking) 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Fencing) 3, Subterfuge 2

Resources: 3 (Mercatus)

Other Merits: Beholden (Number 2, Ability 1, Prowess 2), Dumpster Diver, Allies (Criminal) 2, Allies (Unmada Manes) 1, Contacts (Police, Wholesalers) 2

Willpower: 5

Obligation: 5 (Derangements: Suspicion, Depression)

Aesthetic: Nicotine and Aluminum

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Greed

Health: 7

Initiative: 5

Defense: 5

Speed: 9

Inspiration: 2 (Unmada; Jabir -2)

Axioms: Automata* 2, Epikrato* 2, Exelixa 2, Metaptropi 1, Katastrofi 1, Skafoi* 1

Mania/Free/Turn: 12/6/2

Trash Spy: Automata 2 (Metaptropi 1). Automation Points 2. Intelligence 1, Wits 2, Resolve 1, Strength 1, Dexterity 1, Stamina 1, Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 2. Size 1. Mania 4. Health 2. Speed 7 (Base Speed 5). Onboard Storage. Normal-looking (teddy bear). So adorable it is often picked up and abused by

small children.

Dread Ciggies (Larval): Epikrato 2. Size 0 (cigarette case). Roll 6 dice vs. Composure + Metanormal Advantage to cause fear. Range 20'. Costs 2 Mania. Many Minds (10' diameter). No Range. Limited Uses (2, short-term). Causes one point of Bashing damage to user per use.

Fixing Ciggies (Larval): Exelixa 1. Size 0 (cigarette case), roll 5 dice to fix mechanical devices. Costs 1 Mania per 5 points of Structure restored, or grants +2 to normal repairs at no cost. Limited Uses (2, short-term). Causes loud coughing from user, making stealth impossible while used.

Mechanical Support Strut (Larval): Exelixa 2. Size 2 (small toolbox). Roll 6 dice to upgrade mechanical devices. Costs 1 Mania per upgrade. Modifications leave telltale rust over the improved machine.

Wrench o' Violence: Katastrofi 1. Size 2. Damage 5 Bashing. Roll 8 dice. No cost. An Exceptional Success breaks the wonder.

Belinda Czdenk is such a note-perfect example of a bitter Lemurian mercatus manager that word in the foundations is that she's an automaton built for the task. But she's real enough. Born in Detroit, Belinda Czdenk studied philosophy in the permissive, dynamic environment of Berkeley in the seventies, escaping her lower-class roots to hobnob with intellectuals and deep thinkers. A follower by nature, Czdenk assimilated and parroted their ideas without any real interest in understanding what she studied. After a particularly acute humiliation, when her vacuous and shallow understanding (of Noam Chomsky, in this case) was exposed for all to see, she entered a period of self-imposed exile. When she emerged, she had forged her own philosophy about the vacuousness of truth and the moral necessity of appearing knowledgeable in a world where there is no true knowledge, only its appearance.

She had recreated some of the axioms of the Phenomenologists, and joined that smoke-and-mirrors society in the 80s. But even in a baramin full of phonies, she was seen as a fake, a wannabe, someone unable to articulate her own vision. Miserable, she returned secretly to her first love: machinery. When a fellow Phenomenological exposed this "lower-class foible," she beat him to death, then fled, demanding asylum first with Megiddo (who tried to destroy her), then with St. Croix, who put her to work to spite certain Phenomenologists already in Seattle.

Now Czdenk works in Seattle's dingy mercatus, selling the Lemurians' wares to anyone who can meet her price. Though she struggles to find some lofty and transcendent subtlety to her work, in truth she would rather be working on cars or fiddling with a busted old watch, and this fills her with self-loathing. Her misery frequently becomes anger, directed at shoppers in the form of tirades, long-winded screeds, or passive-aggressive insinuations over the mercatus intercom. But lately she's grown positively dangerous in her anger and frustration, sending her beholden, Throckmorton and Gretta, out to pummel and steal from the city's younger geniuses. Since St. Croix is so far unaware of this behavior—a form of self-sabotage—it will probably blow up soon enough when the New Peers notice and take revenge.

Erwin Tycho, Klondike Radical

Quote: *"I don't think anyone here is cogently dealing with the issues at hand."*

Foundation: Scholastic

Catalyst: Klagen

Age: 26

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics (American History) 3, Computer 2, Crafts (Bones) 3, Investigation (Orphan-Hunting) 3, Medicine 3, Occult 1, Politics 2, Science 3

Physical Skills: Athletics (Clambering) 3, Brawl 2, Drive (Ride) 3, Firearms 3, Larceny 3, Stealth 2, Survival (Urban) 2, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression (Impassioned Speeches) 2, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 1, Socialize (Raconteur) 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1

Resources: 3 (Day Job as Bartender)

Other Merits: Adopted Orphan 5, Assembly Line 2, Beholden (Number 2, Ability 1, Prowess 2), Laboratory (Equipment 2, Size 1, Security 1), Utility Belt 2 (Science, Crafts), Gunslinger, Iron Stamina 3, Allies 2 (Klondikes), Barfly, Contacts 3 (City Utilities, Klondikes, Orphan Wonders), Striking Looks 2, Mentor 2

Willpower: 5

Obligation: 6

Aesthetic: Western Gothic

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Pride

Health: 8

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Inspiration: 3 (Jabir -1)

Axioms: Epikrato 1, Exelixi* 3, Katastrofi 2, Metaptropi 2, Skafoi 1

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 16/5/3

Bony Tess (Larval): Skafoi 1. Size 8, Durability 2, Structure 10. Safe Speed 113 mph, Maximum Speed 169 mph, Acceleration 113 mph. Handling +3. Roll 10 dice. Costs 1 Mania. Legs Instead of Wheels. Afraid of lightning.

Fetal Secret-Keeper (Orphan): Apokalypsi 5. Size 2. Roll 9 dice for prophecy. Fragile. Provides oracles only. Provides advice to serve its own ends.

Bone Six-Shooter (x4): Katastrofi 2. Size 1 (small pistol). Damage 4 Lethal. Roll 10 dice. Range 30/60/120. Costs 2 Mania. Firing the weapon produces clouds of bone-smoke that reveal the shooter's location for several minutes.

Doctor's Pouch (x4): Exelixi 1. Size 0 (pocket pouch). Roll 6 dice to heal. Cost 1 Mania per two Bashing or one Lethal. Limited uses (one use, short-term). Leaves a powerful spice smell on the subject.

Bulletproofing Medicine (Larval): Exelixi 3. Size 1 (bottle). Adds +2 to Stamina. Costs 2 Mania. Produces feelings of euphoria and invincibility.

Erwin Tycho is the most outspoken and aggressive critic of the New Peers. He opposes their gentrification, accuses them of white-washing Seattle history, and (on occasion) believes they want to supplant the Klondikes, Seattle's treasure-hunting mad scientist population, and begin their own wonder-harvesting operation.

Erwin was born in Hollywood, California. Erwin's father was an AV geek and his mother was a Nigerian model and moderately successful actress—and a geek in her own right, with an encyclopedic knowledge of Hollywood in the 20s and 30s. Erwin attended a small, exclusive, all-white (except for him) high school in the suburbs, where he developed an interest in American history and alternative medicine. This led him to study American Indian religion and ignited an interest in carnival freak-shows. Erwin catalyzed young, at the age of fifteen, and left his parents to pursue rumors of "secret Indian magic" near Puget sound. He "interned" with a Spice Litch of Sealth for two years before meeting Doctor Dina Dynamo, an old Klondike who first came to Seattle in 1964. Before she died in a foundry fire, Dynamo impressed Erwin with the richness and energy of the Klondike culture. When Sam Paluxy built a nightclub on what was basically Dynamo's grave, Erwin found his purpose: he would stop the New Peers from ruining the dangerous, challenging, and fascinating lifestyle he had come to identify with. He would represent the interest of the Klondikes.

Erwin Tycho ("just Erwin," he always insists) cuts a striking figure when he speaks before the Peerage. Usually attired in a long black coat resembling a Civil War cavalry jacket and a black cowboy hat with a "cow skull" motif, he's rarely seen without twin pistols carved morbidly of bone, which makes him seem more violent than he really is. Despite his oratorical passion, Erwin is a quiet, contemplative man, saddened more than angered by the naive imperialism he feels the New Peers represent. He's also saddened that many Klondikes barely pay him any mind, viewing him as a Johnny-come-lately eccentric with a silly cause. He also

hates their nickname for him—"Baron Samedi"—which he views as racist (and stupid—how the hell do you confuse a "freakshow carnival" look with Voodoo, I mean, really?). He usually travels with his beholden, Mikey and Randolph, two black guys from Central District who think exploring underground ruins with a crazy mad scientist cowboy is way cooler than fixing cars and playing X-Box. He's even given them their own bone guns.

While Erwin is always collecting and trading orphans, his prize is not from Megiddo but from an unknown mad scientist from a Savannah carnival: a two-headed human fetus in a jar that answers questions about the past, present, and future with perfect accuracy. But this orphan seems to have its own agenda, something that has recently begun to trouble the mad scientist.

Creatures and Agencies:

Not everyone in The Seattle of Tomorrow is a unique genius or beholden. There are whole packs and groups that, while probably not exactly identical, usually operate along similar-enough lines that certain generalizations can be made.

Megiddo's Electric Assassins

Quote: *(Statically mechanical growl.)*

Rank-3 Automata (15 Automation Points)

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Computer 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Drive 2, Firearms 3, Stealth 2

Social Skills: Intimidation 1

Merits: None

Variables: Decentralized Anatomy (1), Limited Battery 16 Hours (-1)

Fault: Blinded for one turn if struck in the communicator-lamp. If lamp (Size 2, Durability 1, Structure 3) is destroyed, assassin is blind.

Size: 5

Willpower: 4

Aesthetic: Soviet Brutalist

Health: 8

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 9 (with armor) (Base Speed 5)

Mania/Per Turn: 8/3

Integral Shoulder-Mounted Electric Arc-Blaster: Katastrofi 2. Size 4 (head-mounted). Damage 7 Lethal. Roll 12 dice. Range 50/100/200. Reduced Range. A miss knocks the assassin to the ground.

Integral Reinforced Combat Chassis: Prostasia 1, Armor 5. Heavy Armor. Ignores electrical attacks.

Integral Audiovisual Communicator-Lamp: Apokalypsi 1. Size 2 (large lamp). Roll 2 dice. Range 1 mile (cell connection). Light 250' cone or 125' sphere. Occasionally unleashes a loud burst of static.

Megiddo's brutal servants once guarded The Seattle of Tomorrow from threats within and without. Then they were called the Children of the Eyeless Lamp. Now they stalk the access corridors of the collapsed bardo, hunting geniuses and stray manes. Remorseless, inhuman, and incapable of mercy, they are cold executioners who appear in packs whenever Megiddo's surveillance detects a vulnerable mad scientist.

The electric assassins resemble tall humanoids made of heavy, rusted, bolted-together metal, with a central torso full of transistors protected by a wrought iron grate. Where their head should be is instead a swiveling electric cannon that sputters and sparks, connected to a backpack-like device by thick metal tubes that look a

bit like dreadlocks from a distance. Assassins are said to carry their heads in their hands, but these "heads" are really combination communicators/flashlights. The slow, sweeping illumination of an electric assassin's hand-held "head" is enough to send mad scientists scattering.

Pacific Gauntlet Piscines

Quote: *"Stop right there, American. You think you can just blunder around in our giant metal monkey?"*

Beholden

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Computer 1, Crafts 1, Medicine 1, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics (Swim) 2, Brawl 2, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 1, Survival (Ocean) 1, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Streetwise (Docks) 2, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Allies (Lemuria) 3, Contacts (Docks) 1, Resources 2

Willpower: 5

Morality: 5

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Greed

Health: 7

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Mania/Per Turn: 4/1

Roll one die for wonders:

1-3: No wonders.

4-5: **Scale Suit:** Prostasia 1. Armor 3. Any attack that hits and lands two or more 10s causes the scale suit to simply fall off (one minute to put back on).

- *Integral Life Support Fin:* Exelixa 1, Size 2. Sustains one person for five days (air only) per point of Mania. The fin is bulbous and sticks up, often spoiling stealth attempts.
- *Integral mundane flippers:* +1 to swimming.

6: **Healing Lamprey:** Exelixa 1. Size 2 (big snake thingy). Roll 3 dice to heal. Costs 1 Mania per two Bashing or one Lethal damage healed. Can only restore up to one Lethal or two Bashing per turn; excess successes are lost.

7: **Harpoon Gun:** Katastrofi 2. Size 3 (rifle). Damage 6 Lethal. Roll 10 dice. Range 500/1000/2000. Cost 2 Mania. Reduced rate of fire (every other turn). Requires one hour of maintenance per day or it rusts.

8: **Gear Katana:** Katastrofi 2. Size 3 (sword). Damage 5 Lethal. Roll 9 dice. No Mania cost. Whirrs and clicks for several seconds once drawn.

9: **Air Goggle:** Apokalypsi 2. Size 1 (goggles). Roll Wits + Computer -1. Range 10'. Goggles. Depth perception problems incur a -2 penalty to ranged attacks when worn.

10: Roll again twice

Equipment: Heavy revolver (3 Lethal, 7 dice, range 35/70/140, 6 shots), knife (1 Lethal, roll 6 dice) or chain (1 Bashing, roll 6 dice), cell phone, suit with a skinny tie, pocketwatch

The Pacific Gauntlet's Piscines—sometimes called Skinny Tie Guys because of their customary fashion when not in an armored wetsuit—are its combat beholden, trained for aquatic and urban fighting. Drawn from the local criminal populations or shipped over from Japan, China, or the Philippines, most have previous gang affiliations, but they handle themselves professionally as long as they fear monitoring by a Pacific Gauntlet overseer. Though cool under fire, Piscines aren't elite soldiers, nor are they tremendously clever without a Lemurian guiding their actions, meaning cagey geniuses can find ways to circumvent, befuddle, or capture them. This is good, since Piscines usually travel in groups of six or twelve, and their Katastrofi weapons can quickly overwhelm a genius caught out in the open.

Lemurian OJs

Quote: "Please report any unfamiliar robots to the information booth located on the third floor."

Beholden

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 2, Investigation 1, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics (Jump) 2, Brawl 2, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 1, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Allies (Lemuria) 3, Contacts (Scientific Community) 1, Resources 2

Willpower: 4

Morality: 6

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Envy

Health: 8

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Mania/Per Turn: 4/1

Roll one die for wonders:

1-3: No wonders.

4-5: **Ray Gun:** Katastrofi 2. Size 1 (small pistol). Damage 3 Lethal. Roll 7 dice. Range 30/60/120. Cost 2 Mania. Variable Damage. Cannot penetrate or affect glass or plastic.

6: **Handheld Scanner:** Apokalypsi 2. Size 2 (bulky rectangle). Roll 6 dice. Range 1 mile. Charge-up time (3 turns). Cannot penetrate or see within 10' of running water.

7: **Switching System:** Epikrato 1. Size 2 (bulky keypad). Roll 3 dice for manipulations. Range 30'. Cost 1 Mania. Shoots a blinking diode at the target that continues to blink noticeably for ten minutes before it falls off and dissolves.

8: **Jet Boots:** Skafoi 2. Size 2. Safe Speed 24 mph, Maximum Speed 36 mph, Acceleration 12 mph/turn. Handling +0. Roll 4 dice. Costs 2 Mania. Hovering. Flight ceiling 50'.

9: **Force Field Pectoral:** Prostasia 1. Size 2. 8 Extra Health Levels. Cost 1 Mania. Shuts down and causes 6 dice Bashing damage to wearer if hit with a coherent light attack.

10: Roll again twice.

Equipment: Light pistol (2 Lethal, roll 6 dice, 20/40/80, 15+1 shots), cell phone, museum ID pass, orange jacket.

Recognizable by their bright orange jackets and sour attitudes, the Lemurian OJs guard Larvae and orphans, engage in campaigns of harassment, transport super-science equipment, and otherwise serve their Atomic Lemurian masters without much of a chance for promotion or respect. These stats are for the more combat-focused OJs, but even these thugs have to deal with academic rivalry and Lemuria's vicious games of oneupmanship. They are happy to shoot first and ask questions later if they find unlicensed geniuses mucking around in Lemurian territory, though if confronted with force, especially when not on their home turf, they tend to scatter. While not tremendously brave, they are clever and crafty, and able to use what wonders they've been loaned to their best advantage.

Seattle First Bulletheads

Quote: "I work hard to keep this city safe for my people."

Beholden

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 1, Investigation 2, Medicine (First Aid) 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Drive 3, Firearms 3, Survival (Urban) 1, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Contacts (Racist Organizations, Police) 2, Resources 2

Willpower: 5

Morality: 5

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Wrath

Health: 8

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Mania/Per Turn: 5/1

Roll one die for wonders:

1-5: No wonders.

6: **Flechette Gun:** Katastrofi 2. Size 3 (submachinegun). Damage 4 Lethal. Roll 10 dice. Range 200/400/800. Autofire. Requires three turns to spin up to speed.

7: **Scanning Binoculars:** Apokalypsi 2. Size 2 (bulky rectangle). Roll 5 dice. Range 1 mile. Cost 1 Mania. Only detects physical/chemical phenomena. Useless in rain.

8: **Medikit:** Exelixa 1. Size 2 (satchel). Roll 6 dice to heal. Costs 1 Mania per two Bashing or one Lethal damage healed. Produces addiction after several uses.

9: **Bulletproof Vest:** Prostasia 1. Armor 2. Bulletproof. -2 to Move.

10: Roll again twice.

Equipment: Rifle (Damage 5, roll 11 dice, range 200/400/800, ammo 5+1), heavy pistol (Damage 3, roll 9 dice, range 30/60/120, ammo 7+1), cell phone, combat fatigues, racist literature.

Neither the term "Seattle First" nor "Bulleheads" is entirely reflective of the Inspired racist groups that make their homes in Seattle. "Seattle First" was a movement ten to fifteen years ago that was broken up by Inspired spies working with the FBI; the anti-Pacific Gauntlet vigilante group is properly called "Seattle Skies." The term "Bullethead" gets hurled at any Seattle geniuses—most of them vigilantes and/or Navigators—whose anti-Pacific Gauntlet rhetoric sound suspiciously like anti-Asian rhetoric. It's hard to tell who funds and supports the boots-on-the-ground Bulletheads, but a few things are clear: they're beholden to certain peers, they're tolerably well-trained, and they're increasingly violent and aggressive.

Most Bulletheads hang out at a few local dives tolerant of their attitudes. At night they move in packs, sometimes with a genius leading them, other times as loose gangs. When serving as accessory's to a genius' hunt, they can even be effective, bringing down Pacific Gauntlet warehouses or scaring off their servants and informants. But they quickly degenerate to violence, brutality, and mob violence, using their Inspired patrons to hide from criminal prosecution. Many are fiercely loyal to Captain Joe Calazzi.

Spice Litches of Sealth

Quote: *"Come. Sit. Eat—eat enough for two, ha! And I will tell you a story of old crimes and old passions."*

Foundation: Rogue

Catalyst: Klagen

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Crafts 3, Investigation 2, Medicine 3, Occult 2, Politics 1, Science (Chemistry) 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Drive (Ride) 2, Survival 3, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression (Visions) 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 1, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 1

Resources: 3 (Ancient Treasures)

Other Merits: Mane (cannot pass for human), Laboratory (Equipment 2, Size 4, Security 4)

Willpower: 6

Obligation: 5 (Derangement: Depression)

Aesthetic: Totemic Alchemy

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Pride

Health: 8

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Inspiration: 3 (Jabir -1)

Axioms: Automata* 2, Epikrato 3, Exelixa* 3, Katastrofi 1, Metaptropi* 2, Skafoi 2

Mania/Free/Per Turn: 14/6/3

Homuncloid Seeker: Automata 2 (Metaptropi 2). Size 3. 3 Automation Points. Intelligence 1, Wits 2, Resolve 1, Strength 1, Dexterity 1, Stamina 2, Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1. Speed 7 (Base Speed 5). Structure 5. Mania 5. Onboard Storage. Concealed (resembles a pile of leaves). Damaged (1 Structure lost per minute) in rain or water.

Powder of Dreams: Epikrato 3. Size 2 (pouch). Roll 7 dice to control emotions. Range 30'. Costs 3 Mania. Leaves a trail of electrical illumination on its user for several minutes.

Medicine: Exelixa 1. Size 2 (small chest). Roll 5 dice. Every point of Mania restores two Bashing or one Lethal damage. Causes gluttonous hunger in anyone healed by the device.

Vision Dust: Metaptropi 2. Size 2 (bandoleer). Roll 7 dice to create illusions. Costs 1 point of Mania per 5 Size points created. Only works if the dust is tossed into an open fire.

The so-called "Spice Litches" are powerful manes who have inhabited the islands west of Seattle for centuries. It's unclear whether they were once human, but now they resemble mummified men and women with parched lips, bony cheeks, long braided hair, and burning black eyes. They smell of unfamiliar spices, and their technology draws from a tradition alien to many of Seattle's European and Asian geniuses. Named after Chief Sealth, whose name Seattle now bears, they are secretive figures who rarely take sides in the city's struggles. Alternately romanticized and vilified, they conduct their own peculiar research, a mix of native Cascadian medicine, Chinese alchemy, and European mad science, combined with their own independent discoveries. They have also been known to attack and plunder passing Nazi mad scientists for medical technology.

These stats are for a "typical" Spice Litch, though they vary enormously, and their secretiveness makes their abilities hard to generalize. Their Obligation ranges greatly. Some are bleak, horrible, cruel creatures that hate all life. Others are kind, wise, and clever—even funny—with a warm sense of humor, who extend their welcome to anyone who can find their homes. Still, sadness clings to them, as their people are scattered and their technology dismissed even by the other Inspired.

Klondike Scavengers

Quote: *"Get off my heap! Are you with the government? Are you human? Show me your teeth."*

Foundation: Rogue

Catalyst: Neid

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 3, Crafts 2, Investigation (Rare Finds) 3, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Science 3

Physical Skills: Athletics (Zip Lines) 2, Brawl 2, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 3, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Intimidation 1, Streetwise (Manes) 2, Subterfuge 1

Resources: 2 (Plundered Technology)

Other Merits: Utility Belt (Science, Crafts) 2, Contacts (manes) 1, Allies (Unmada Manes) 1

Willpower: 4
Obligation: 5 (Derangement: Suspicion)
Aesthetic: Trash Praxis
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Greed
Health: 8
Initiative: 4
Defense: 2
Speed: 9
Inspiration: 2 (Unmada; Jabir -2)
Axioms: Apokalypsi* 2, Epikrato* 1, Exelixa 1, Katastrofi 2, Skafoi* 1
Mania/Free/Per Turn: 12/6/2
Identifier Glasses: Apokalypsi 2. Size 1 (glasses). Roll 5 dice. Do not work if moving more than 30 mph.
Rigged Switch (Larval): Epikrato 1. Size 2 (crowbar wound with copper wires). Roll 6 dice to manipulate objects. Cost 1 Mania. Range limited to 5'.
Self-Defense Buzzsaw Gun: Katastrofi 2. Size 2 (heavy pistol). Damage 5 Lethal. Roll 9 dice. Range 20/40/80. Cost 2 Mania. If damaged or if user knocked down, attacks user with 5 dice Lethal damage.
Glue Line: Skafoi 1. Size 1 (metal box). Range 20' (horizontal)/10' (vertical). Bouncing, Clinging, Increased Bouncing Range. Roll 4 dice. Cost 1 Mania. Glue melts in contact with sunlight.

Found throughout the access corridors and old chambers of The Seattle of Tomorrow, these scavengers range greatly in age and experience, but most of them share several common traits: a knack for getting into and out of places, an extensive knowledge of Megiddo's defenses, and an insatiable lust for more Larvae, orphans, and miscellaneous amazing things. Whenever The Seattle of Tomorrow's treasures seem ready to run out, a new cache is always discovered, a new section of the ruined city dug up for excavation, and a new wave of eager mad scientists arrives to try its luck.

The Klondikes range enormously in age and ability, from young fools who won't survive their first encounter with an electric assassin to elders from the first rush in the late 1960s, who haven't seen proper daylight since the Beatles were together. Some work alone, while others travel in small groups. Regardless of their experiences and abilities, Klondikes are usually highly territorial and paranoid, and may attack geniuses who encroach upon their territory or claim valuables the Klondikes view as theirs.

Epilogue: The Answer to Everything

There are, of course, only remnants of Dr. Ibanez' discoveries. Most were destroyed in the fire, or were devoured by the crabs. But careful study of the records, as well as interviews with several prominent researchers who knew her well, have allowed me to piece together what she intended to do. -Carlyle Passway 4/8/06

Reginald Arthur Blythe Matheson IV. Jonas Cliver. Erica Ibanez. They all end the same way, you know, Carl. You won't find any answers there. Of course, I don't think you'll find any answers anywhere. We are not meant to know the world as it is. Truth is not our purview. But study, and see for yourself. -Lisa Blythe-Singh, 4/8/06

The inner light has burned me out, leaving raw ash and dust in my throat, and still I have not accomplished my goals. Years and years and blood and years and still they die squealing, in my laboratories and in the streets, never living forever. It's like they want to die, want to give up when I offer them my gifts.

Why do they reject my gifts?

Piecemeal immortality is easy, of course, at least for me, and their failures provide me with pieces that can sustain me, but there is no system, no theory, only guesswork and constant failure. The world betrays me. I know my methods are perfect, but is this reality perfect enough to survive my methods?

I've been able to outline what Dr. Ibanez was doing, but mostly by studying her predecessors. They were brilliant men, though drawn from different fields: mathematicians, physicists, and Ibanez a psychiatrist, of course, but they all seemed to be zeroing in on the same answer: a single Science beneath all the sciences, a philosophy of thought and mind that would allow for, among other things, medical immortality. -Carlyle Passway 8/2/06

Sometimes Dr. Cliver's memory fragments rise up and try to reunite themselves, to reform the Cliver that once lived, but I can always put them down, rip them apart, and scatter them howling below the thresholds of consciousness. Knowledge of the mind is the only knowledge of consequence. This is what the Phenomenologist taught me before I added her to the great Machine of Thought that still grows in my basement. But I'm not like the others, cowering in their laboratories, afraid of humanity. I get out there, I see the world. The others are just tourists from the future, hiding in their hotels and wondering why they can't find the restaurants they like. Fat, complacent fools. I am a colonist from a different time, a settler, and here in this wilderness of the spirit I will establish the laws of my native land to replace the savagery I see here. I will make this place *my* place.

I was in Mumbai when they were hunting for Dr. Ibanez, those Lemurian kill-teams that didn't like what she did to the Calcutta academics. I never saw her, but I saw her work. The mathematical precision of the butchery seemed to have burned itself onto the local reality. Blood dripped in variations of the Fibonacci sequence, and the parts and viscera had scattered in geometric forms that promised hitherto unknown possibilities within mathematical topology. I felt myself being pulled in, then, felt the awful gravity of what Dr. Ibanez had uncovered. Then I saw one of the dead men, and the way he stared at nothing around where my head was. -Lisa Blythe-Singh 11/5/06

So close so very close now, all the answers falling into a single perfect Answer, truths that saints and Boddhisattvas had glimpsed and had seen in their wisdom and rejected in their cowardice, that scientists had considered and then turned from, weak, all of them so weak and afraid. Where is the courage of your convictions, mankind? Where is the will to reach for eternity and forever? I have spoken with the self-perpetuating substance underlying matter from which flows all of Being and Emptiness and it knows enough to fear me. Immortality, for me and everyone, soon, soon. The world is a dazzling light, rippling heat-waves rising off the people I pass in the street,

and their eyes peel back to reveal bottomless complexities. They won't be afraid for much longer.

Of course I wasn't there when they found Dr. Ibanez, in her lab in Charlotte. She had done it, they said—the people who knew the people who knew the ones who had been there, or so the rumors went. She had pulled back the veils of madness, come out the other side, answered the big questions. She had mastered the science of immortality, not just for us, but for everyone. Egalitarian miracles, the only true fantasy of every petitioner and health-freak, every mystic and pious fanatic and frightened man or woman: please, whatever it takes, let me live forever, let me live in a world where life doesn't feed on other life in a cycle of pain and horror. She did it...so they said. And they say that when her hunters found her, dead and still behind her desk, she weighed barely forty pounds. She had practically mummified, starving herself over the months and years, bent over her research into immortality.

They say, of course, that only one simple equation was missing from her formula, which she had not lived—or remained behind—to write. A cute story. All pointless now, with her work burned away and torn up. So they say, so they say. Campfire stories for the mad. What are we, Carl, to live with this churning insanity every day, to be helpless before the reality of the world? What are we? -Lisa Blythe-Singh, 1/5/07.

So much work, Lisa. I'm sorry I haven't written but I needed you to be the first to know now that I understand what Dr. Ibanez was saying. It's perfectly clear now everything she written I can follow what she wrote. I understand the notes she left, three generations of research and study, and I will be the culmination, the apotheosis, of their work. The truths are laid bare before me. Attached in the manila envelope are the equations that answer every question, that reveal every truth, that will transform humanity forever. I—I alone!—deciphered these truths, which will be the end and the new beginning for humanity. Behold: The Secrets of Immortality! -Carlyle Pathway, 1/25/07

Carlyle, I am so sorry. I thought you would be stronger. I thought I could let you review those old notes without this happening to you. I was wrong, and you have paid the greatest price for my error in judgment. You were brilliant. You were beautiful. I will miss you.

If you are reading this letter, the team I have sent for you will arrive in moments. Please do not resist. Let's have no more deaths. I hope there is enough left of you, Carl, to understand that I never wanted this to happen. Goodbye. -Lisa Blythe-Singh, 1/26/07

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"Hit the button, Frank."

-Doctor Clayton Forrester, *Mystery Science Theater 3000*

*They laughed at you at the academy
When you said you could do the impossible
create the unbelievable
and perform the unspeakable*

*Ancient Lemuria is fallen, the Terminal gods are dead
and humanity is, at long last, free.
There are no secret masters, no golden ages, no Free rides,
and no easy answers.*

There is no longer anything that stands in your way

*There are no limits to your greatness
But those you impose upon yourself*

Now you'll show them.

You'll show them all.

*Genius
The Transgression*