

ABERRANTTM PLAYERS GUIDE



POWER YOU WON'T BELIEVE.

THIS IS NOT THE SUPER-FRIENDS

It may surprise you to discover that **Aber-rant** is not a superhero game. Not a superhero game? How can that be? There are people in capes and masks and that living spandex we call eufiber, and they're flying around zapping each other with power bolts from their fists, and that's superhero stuff, right?

Well, yes and no. I suppose there may be a few of those costume-wearing clichés walking around, but most of them are elites or XWF brawlers. Sure, there's a place for the traditional mask and cape ensemble in the world of **Aber-rant**, but for every grandstanding, mask-wearing quantum ham, there are ten people whose eruption did not awaken in them an unconquerable urge to dress up like a comic-book character.

For the record, I'm defining a superhero as someone who wears a mask and a costume, probably has a mild mannered alter ego, and fights for truth, justice and the American way without having much of a life outside of the costume. Characters like this were staples of comic books from the thirties to the present. That's one way to play **Aber-rant**, I suppose, but it hardly uses the full potential afforded by the game and the world it takes place in.

Only a fraction of those who get quantum powers are inclined to don masks to fight crime, and there are a *lot* of other ways to play the game. Let's look at a few of these powerful folks:

Jasmine Prezeau, the Haitian woman who erupted when her husband tried to stab her with a kitchen knife, wears a very conservative suit now when she goes to her job at DuPont. Likewise, Darnell Washington, the attorney from Alabama who erupted when a drunk driver slammed into him at 90 miles per hour, wears eufiber khakis and a golf shirt as he works as Alejandra's bodyguard.

No superheroes here.

The point is that **Aber-rant** is a game about people — very realistic people like you, your parents, your professors and that guy you don't like who lives two doors down from you. There is no other unifying factor beyond the ability to control the forces of the universe with a

thought. Most of them don't wear funny eufiber costumes. Only a minority of them fly. They're certainly not uniformly heroic. Beyond having an M-R node, novas have nothing in particular in common. They're black, Asian, gay, straight, white, female, male, noble, petty, Catholic, Jewish, Sufi, atheist, dumb, brilliant, redheaded, brunette and blond. They speak Danish, Swahili, Russian, English, Czech, Portuguese, Arabic, German, Chinese and a few hundred other languages. They don't all look like Ken and Barbie in spandex. Some small percentage of novas — like some small percentage of any other group — might have the strength of character to selflessly serve others or spend the vast portion of their time fighting crime and injustice. But Teragen propaganda aside, most of them are like most of us. They want to enjoy life, hang out with friends, make lots of money, live in a nice house and get laid from time to time. That's no formula for superheroics, that's a formula for living. Sometimes that's enough to make them happy. Sometimes it's not.

These are the people you portray when you play **Aber-rant**.

Blaine Renaud, the nova chef, prepares meals for the wealthiest and most discriminating connoisseurs on the planet. He owns three estates and is happily married to a stunning Vietnamese woman who thinks he's the greatest man on Earth. What need does he have to dress up in silly costumes and fire quantum bolts at people's heads?

Jasmine Prezeau worked her way through Harvard as a teleporting courier and now uses her nova powers primarily as a means of avoiding traffic on her way to the office — which is good, since her commute is around 1,200 miles.

Ashley "Boom Box" Winthrop got great powers when she erupted. She can juggle tanks, move faster than the baseline eye can follow and take a bazooka shell in the gut without wincing. Regrettably for poor Ashley, she was dumb as a box of rocks before erupting and just as stupid afterward, leaving her with not a lot of options. Her manager (who has carefully arranged things so

that he takes three quarters of her earnings) has to give her a pep talk every night before she goes out into the XWF ring, otherwise she refuses to put on her mask, cape and tight little spandex outfit. She cries every night when she goes to bed and wishes she could go back to working at the Godiva boutique at the mall.

All these novas have super powers, but there's not a superhero in the lot.

There are plenty of ways to play the "people with powers" without resorting to superhero clichés. Look at *Village of the Damned* (either version) or Stephen King's *Firestarter* or *The Dead Zone*. Or try David Cronenberg's *Scanners*. Or H.G. Wells' *The Invisible Man*. Or Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Or *Dark City*. Or John Carpenter's *Starman*. The point here is that **Aberrant** has a very flexible and multifaceted world; it doesn't need to be played as a superhero game.

If your **Aberrant** series centers around enormous quantum battles and you're having a grand old time playing that way, then by all means, don't fix what's not broken.

If, on the other hand, you find the combat growing a little tiresome, then maybe it's time to inject a dose of realism into your game and go high concept. That's what a lot of this book is about. Yeah, there's the obligatory stuff that sells the book: Merits and Flaws, spectacular new powers, updates on the **Aberrant** universe circa 2015, etc., but there's also material in here to let you really get into your character's head. What was it like to erupt? How did it feel? What triggered the eruption? Was he the target of an attempted gay bashing? Did a spree killer open fire on her office? Did a mugger try to take his wallet? Was she going through DTs after her dealer cut her off for non-payment?

And what about after the eruption? Did it make the dull-witted person brilliant? Did it turn the chubby housewife into a luminous supermodel? Maybe it transformed the brainy physics major into a quantum-bolt spewing angel of death. Okay, that's par for the course. The question now becomes: Why? Get inside your character's head, and figure out why she does what she does. What hidden hunger or secret need caused her to erupt with the particular powers she got? Now that she's erupted, are those needs satisfied, or do they still gnaw at her and push her in certain directions that even she only partly comprehends?

Unless you're content to paint your character with the broad strokes of stereotype, roleplaying requires a modicum of insight. That's

one of the things that distinguishes roleplayers from non-roleplayers. Any moron can sit in front of a Playstation, twiddling his joystick, but roleplaying — stepping into the mind of a fictional character, assuming his persona for a few hours — takes effort and thought. If you want to use **Aberrant** to play a four-color superhero, you can do that, but the challenges associated with becoming a fully-realized, three-dimensional individual (who happens to have some spectacular powers) deliver a payoff far greater than just destroying the "supervillain" because he had fewer dots on his character sheet than your "superhero." Ultimately, playing **Aberrant** is like anything else; the more you put into it, the more you get back.

That goes for research as well. Ideas for a good character or an interesting series don't have to — and probably shouldn't — come from comic books. Whether you're looking for theme ideas for a game or researching how to play a particular character, the mass media provide an almost endless source of ideas for your **Aberrant** series.

There are many, many books that can give insight into your **Aberrant** series. Obviously, the Wildcards series is a great source of possibilities, although, again, the further afield you go from the supers genre, the more interesting things are likely to get. For a Teragen series, anything written by Friedrich Nietzsche, but especially *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*, is a great source of inspiration. Also good for understanding the Teragen worldview would be, in no particular order, Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* and Herman Hesse's *Demian*. If you're more excited about a Directive series, John Le Carré and Ian Fleming have written a few things that might serve to inspire a game (or three).

Film is another medium that has a lot to offer an **Aberrant** series. Any number of movies can supply you with ideas for your game. *X-Men* is high on the list if you're going for a heroic feel (and conversely, Magneto's Brotherhood may spark a few ideas for Teragen series). If you want to play a game about a nova losing himself to taint, watch the David Cronenberg version of *The Fly*. His take on *The Fly* is a particularly insightful look at the toll high levels of taint take on a nova's friends and social life. Nearly anything Cronenberg directs is likely to give you ideas for an **Aberrant** series one way or the other; start with *Videodrome* and the aforementioned *Scanners*.

Alternatively, for a movie that clearly shows the connection between power and taint, watch *Akira*, an animé classic in which high levels of

power also bring about enormous (city flattening) degrees of taint. Another film with an angle on taint is *Powder*, a movie that could have come right out of a game of **Aberrant**.

Mega-Attributes appear in any number of movies. If you're thinking about a series with elites using a lot of Mega-Attributes, take a look at *Universal Soldier* starring Jean-Claude Van Damme. *The Silence of the Lambs* shows what happens when a character with a couple of dots of Mega-Intelligence winds up accumulating too much taint. Likewise, *The Matrix* shows you the benefits of Mega-Dexterity. One of the best examples of Mega-Manipulation ever seen in film is found in a brilliant movie called *The Last Seduction* starring Linda Fiorentino. Not only does Fiorentino's character have Mega-Manipulation, she has the Trickster enhancement and the flexible ethics to back it up.

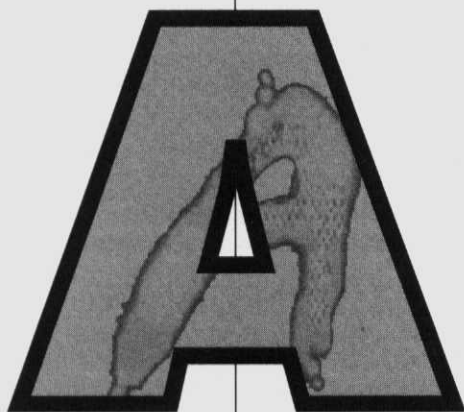
And there's also that other medium that seems so popular to the folks who play this game: comic books. If I had to make a list of the comics (and graphic novels) that have had the greatest impact on the **Aberrant** line, I'd have to include *Watchmen*, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, *Kingdom Come*, Kurt Busiek's *Astro City*, *The Authority* and *Marvels*.

There are a number of older comics titles presenting super-powered folks in realistic settings that you might want to track down as well; many of these are out of print, but some have been collected in trade-paperback format and might still be available. Others you may need to track down through comics specialty stores such as Mile High Comics. I'd recommend such titles as *Suicide Squad*, *Heroes for Hire*, *Pantheon* (written by Bill Willingham), *Harbingers* (written by Jim Shooter and published by Valiant Comics), *Squadron Supreme*, *Marshall Law*, *Damage Control* and *Rising Stars*.

But that's it for me. I've weighed in on my side of the battle (and will continue to do so in the forums and on the mailing list), but realistically, it's not about what constitutes the superhero genre or any other kind of developer dogma. Ultimately, it's about what you want to do to have fun. Anything else is extraneous to the point of a game.

I now return you to your regularly scheduled programming.

K.





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From Nova
News Now
segment,
Mackenzie
Robertson

Registering Codenames

Hello, darlings, from beautiful Addis Ababa. Mackenzie's here on business, of course, but when you work for N!, business can only be described as an absolute pleasure! The topic of the day is names. No, not the ones your parents gave you — we can't all be as blessed as I — but those monikers that the objects of our relentless fascination, the world's novas, choose for themselves. Now, granted, I'm no nova (if I were, I wouldn't have these horrible thighs), but I've met enough to know that eruption does *not* enhance common sense, and it has been known to cause aesthetic sensibilities to go the way of the dodo. I am utterly dumbfounded by some of the things these *blessed* creatures decide to call themselves.



It seems every week another urban primitive is *bursting onto the scene* as "Mr. Edge" or "Fire-something" or "Doctor" this or "Captain" that. It goes on and on. Then you have one nova getting rather irate at another for using the same name, or changing the spelling some small degree. Why, I was in Paris a few weeks ago and was *almost thrown into the mud* by a group of smelly children who wanted to see two elites battling over the name "Professor Mortis." How horrible! How *passé*! You would think that a person who could destroy a city block with a wink of an eye or bring nations to their knees with a careless toss of the head would show a little creativity, a little spark, a little *jazzzzz* when it comes to their public face — their very identity.

Well, don't worry, darlings. Mackenzie, as always, is here to save the day:

Mackenzie Robertson's Rules for Creating an N!tense, N!ticing, N!tacular Codename.

Here are some tips so that if your head goes boom in the night you don't make a regrettably tacky mistake.

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Um... excuse me, sir, with the hooves, but where's the diploma? — If you never went to college or just majored in lechery and consumption of "Natty Light," then you certainly have no excuse to call yourself a doctor. Or a captain or a professor or a *father* for that matter. If you're going to use one of these horribly popular prefaces, then please have the paperwork and attitude to back it up!

Y, Y, Y! — I'll never trust a letter that can't decide if it wants to be a consonant or a vowel. "Fyre" is not a "kewl" nova name; it's an insipid misspelling that will get you docked five points in elementary school. Besides, I'm sick of my spell checker yelling at me every time I want to do a piece on "Mephistofoleeeeeeeez."

Children Present! — You're a Nova, not a street thug! *Always* remember that billions of people around the world, even the little ones, will be chanting your name, so get rid of the potty mouth. Mr. "Stone Badguy." Indeed!

Brevity, Brevity, Brevity! — It is, after all, the soul of wit. You need a name that rolls off the lips. Three or fewer syllables, puh-lease. Something sharp, sassy, seductive and... pronounceable. If you think "Doctor Catoblepas" is a good codename, child, you done bumped yo' head. Did you skip marketing 101? Keep it simple, sweetie!

Express Yourself — Another piece of common sense that is too often ignored. I'll spell it out slowly for those of you with the oozing skin and non-functional brains. *Choose a name that fits you!* If you fly and throw fireballs you *my not* call yourself "Hydronus."

Well, there we are folks. I've got to get going to a party. There's a new recruit at the T2M office I want to interview. He has *tentacles!* And remember, if you can't follow my simple rules, well, sometimes that name your parents gave you is good enough.

Until next time, remember: The opposite of good is *not* evil. The opposite of good is *tacky*.

Kisses,

— Mackenzie!!!

From the *London Times*,
September 18, 2012

Nova Injured in Name Dispute

London—American nova Curtis Jones was severely wounded today when he was attacked by British nova James Heyman. Jones was in Piccadilly Circus promoting his new novox chip *On Blitzzen* when Heyman appeared in the crowd. A brief verbal confrontation ensued with Heyman referring to Jones as a "thieving American bastard." Jones attempted to soothe the angry Heyman but was unsuccessful, his words only seeming to exacerbate the situation.

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Jones fan Antony Lord had this to say: "We was just there listening to the music when that big wanker with the green eyes showed up. Next thing you know [Jones] was on the ground screaming, and the big guy had run off. I wanted to get my album signed, but after what happened to his hand.... "

Heyman has been charged with reckless endangerment and assault with a deadly weapon. "He will be charged and prosecuted to the fullest extent of British Law" said police chief Ciara McIntyre.

The argument apparently grew out of Jones use of the "codename" Betablitz. According to sources close to Heyman, he has been going by that moniker for almost a year since his eruption and did not appreciate Jones' adoption of it.

"I'd never even heard of the guy," said a pained and delirious Jones. "I mean, Jesus, it's not my fault the guy's such a wallflower. "

Events have forced Jones to cancel the remainder of his European tour. It remains to be seen whether or not Utopian parapsychicians will be able to repair his severely damaged hand and arm.

Thankfully, no bystanders were harmed.

From Fastcompany.com —
February 22, 2006

In a Manhattan press conference today, Jacob Lexington, formerly of the DeVries Agency, announced the formation and official operation of Appellate Lexington Enterprises. Appellate Lexington, a privately held company, will be responsible for officially registering the names and personae of novas worldwide, ensuring thereby that those names and personae are not used, adopted or in any way infringed upon by anyone not cleared by the registered nova or his or her agents. The conference was attended by representatives of both the DeVries Agency and Project Utopia and seems to have the endorsement of both nova-heavy organizations.

Jacob Lexington, who will serve as both President and CEO of Appellate Lexington, is a former DeVries Agency Public Relations representative and has spent several years dealing with the vagaries and ramifications of nova copyright law. When asked if he thought the registration of nova names might be better handled by a government endorsed and run organization, Mr. Lexington replied, "Yes, I suppose, if you never want anything to get done."

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N! Sight with Parker Stevenson

Parker Stevenson: Howdy, folks, and welcome back. For those of you just tuning in, my guest today is founder and CEO of Appellate Lexington Enterprises, Jacob Lexington. Now before the break, we were discussing just how you came to create this organization. Why did you think there was a need?

Lexington: Well, Parker, to be blunt, there was a niche, and we filled it. Since the crash of the *Galatea*, every year has seen a notable increase in the number of novas bursting onto the public scene. In my old job at DeVries, I worked with Bruce Sauvage in the Superimpose office, crafting names and personae for new operatives, and when things got out of hand — when novas started killing each other over words... names — it seemed the right time to move in and bring a little order.

Stevenson: And how do you bring this order?

Lexington: The main problem before was simple confusion. Generally, there was no way for a nova in Australia to know that a nova in South Africa was already calling himself "Vortex." Appellate Lexington is here to remove the confusion and provide a service where novas can be sure that they are the only ones in possession and use of a particular "codename."

Stevenson: How do you maintain this order? How do you get novas to register?

Lexington: I'm afraid it's really pretty boring. We have blanket deals with both Utopia and DeVries and individual deals with hundreds upon hundreds of novas. Generally, a recently erupted client will generate a name and call, or have someone call, the AL office to make sure their choice is still available. If it is, they pay us a registration fee and the name is theirs. It's pretty simple really, not unlike registering an OpNet site or a corporation name.

Stevenson: And that's all you do?

Lexington: Not at all, Parker. We employ a full staff whose only job is to make sure that the names and personae of our clients aren't being abused anywhere in the world. Several of our employees scan newspapers, OpFeeds, police records, magazines, movies, etc. all day, just to make sure that our registrants' rights are protected.

We also help clients craft an appropriate name and persona before they are unveiled to the world. Public image is crucial to novas, and for a fee, our researchers and creatives will do all the work necessary to ensure the novas create the right one. Our clients are, of course, welcome to create their own names and "gimmicks," but for those who want our advice, we're quite willing to give it.

Stevenson: One more question. What happens if someone tries to register a name that has already been taken? Is that it, are they just turned down or...?

Lexington: A blanket response would be yes, that's it. But... there are exceptions. There are always exceptions.

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From N!'s "Two Minutes Hate"



Lorena Mann. Lorena Mann. Just saying your name makes me sick, Lorena Mann, but I keep doing it because come Sunday, when you and I finally meet face to face on N! EX-TREME, I'm gonna make sure that I never need to say your name, that I never even need to think about you again! Sunday night on N!, we're gonna let the PEOPLE decide. We're gonna let the PEOPLE decide who the REAL Razorburn is, and when all is said and done, I'm going to walk out with my rightful, registered name and you're just going to be another embarrassed punk!

The Fight for a Name

Even with a registration system in place, there are times when two novas butt heads over who really "owns" the rights to any particular string of letters or costume design. While Appellate Lexington does not condone the practice, there have been several occasions where one nova has called another out to compete for the rights to a name. These contests have varied from the amusing — an invent-a-thon for the name "Patent" — to the patently illegal — a "brain-hacking" competition over who deserved the name "Tekhead." The nature of the competitions and the often astounding feats accomplished under their auspices, have made them very popular with the public. N! has shown particularly interesting and marketable competitions on several occasions and will most likely continue to do so. The point of the trials is generally to determine who best "fits the suit." In N! sponsored trials, a neutral third party and nova expert is asked to determine an appropriate test. When the competition is over, Appellate Lexington transfers ownership of the name to the new owner. In this way, several names have traveled between three or four "owners."

Appellate *Lexington*

The Registration Process

Here at Appellate Lexington, we take every possible step to make sure the registration of your name goes as smoothly and easily as possible. The first step on your part should be to take a look at yourself and your quantum abilities and try to think of a name that truly represents what you, as a nova and — more likely than not — a public personality, are all about. If you're having trouble creating your own name, the Appellate Lexington staff will be happy to assist you (please see Chapter 4, Professional Persona Creation). Once you've settled on a name, simply go to our OpNet Site (op.lexington.com) and type it into our searchable database. You will instantly be told whether or not the name has already been registered to another nova. (Note: Registered or not, names of comic book, video game, television etc. characters will not be allowed as Nova codenames. Any such use, particularly in the sale of merchandise, is a breach of international copyright law.)

APPLICATION FORM

Please fill out the following information as completely as possible. In addition to this form, Appellate Lexington will require a \$5,000 initial payment and proof of nova status. This proof may be submitted in the form of medical records, Rashoud facility documents or through a demonstration of your abilities in front of our staff.

Note: Appellate Lexington does not allow any single nova to register multiple codenames. While we acknowledge that there are novas who maintain multiple personae, we have decided it is in the best interest of Appellate Lexington and the nova community to disregard all secondary codenames.

REAL NAME:

DATE OF BIRTH:

HEIGHT:

WEIGHT:

DATE OF ERUPTION:

EYES:

HAIR:

DESIRED CODENAME:

SECOND CHOICE, IF FIRST CHOICE IS UNAVAILABLE:

WOULD YOU LIKE TO EMPLOY THE SERVICES OF OUR CREATIVE STAFF?

DESCRIPTION OF QUANTUM/NOVA ABILITIES:

Internal Correspondence

J

We've finished compiling data on nova designate Tyrone Hoskins from Baltimore. After skimming through his Rashoud facility report and questionnaire, we've narrowed it down to three hot choices with above-average branding possibilities and "coolness" factor among 12 to 24 year olds. Send me your comments. You may want to inform Mr. Hoskins that General Mills would not be favorably inclined to grant his request for the name "Captain Crunch."

1. Mastodon
2. Slamasaurus
3. Mister Crunch

Golf Friday? How's the new wife working out?

—S

Appellate
Lexington

Chapter Four: Persona Creation

The creation of a memorable, appropriate and *marketable* nova persona is a tricky process, as much art as science. While our Appellate Lexington clients are, of course, welcome to create their own names and "looks," many find it worth the extra time and cost to have our professional and award-winning staff of linguists, poets, designers and marketers help them to create a persona that will benefit them most over the life of their public nova career. Whether you plan on working as a DeVries Elite, a member of Team Tomorrow or in any aspect of the private sector, the sound and "weight" of your "codename" and cut of your "costume" (if you desire such a thing) will determine how your fellow novas and the public at large treat you.

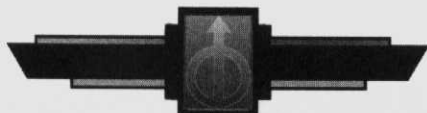
The Codename: The idea of a codename for quantum-powered individuals harkens back to the days of comic-book superheroes desperate to conceal their true identities. Here at Appellate Lexington, we think of the codename not as a way to hide the nova beneath, but as a way for one to express one's individuality. It is of utmost importance that the name selected fit the personality and quantum abilities of the nova in question.

The creation process begins with an informational meeting. You will meet with one of our creative executives to discuss your beliefs, abilities and general plans for your career. Our staff will take the information gathered during this period and get to work researching possible themes and identities for you.

If you are planning on working in some vigilante or freelance capacity, you may require appropriate costuming. Our staff will work hard to create a unique iconic visual design for you. Our mask designs, in particular, have won praise from the municipal defender and elite communities.

The creation of an appropriate name and image can take up to two months. This may seem like a long time, but remember that once you present yourself to the public with this name, it will be exceedingly hard to change it. We take great care to ensure you are given the right name from the start.

Once your name has been presented, we give you several hours to try it out and get used to it. If, at the end of the trial period, you're pleased with it, the name is immediately registered to you, and your public life as a nova is ready to begin. If not, well then, it's back to the drawing board, and the process begins again. Whether it takes one try or 90, we never let a client walk out unsatisfied.





They come to you saying that they want to protect your identity! They come to you saying that they want to help you make your mark! But it's a **LIE! A RUSE! EVERY NOVA WHO PUTS THEIR NAME ON THE LIST OF APPELATE LEXINGTON IS A NOVA MARKED FOR DEATH!** If your smart enough not to have gone to one of those Rashoud facilities and to have avoided the **UTOPIA BLOODHOUNDS**, good for you! But if you go to Appellate Lexington and **REGISTER YOUR VERY IDENTITY**, then you've given them all the information they need! **APELLATE LEXINGTON IS NOTHING BUT A FRONT UTOPIA USES TO GET ITS HANDS ON ALL THE NOVAS - ABERRANT - TERAGEN - INDEPENDENT - WHO DON'T TOE THE LINE AND JOIN UP WITH THEIR TEAM TOMMOROW FOOT SOLDIERS!!!! EVERY PIECE OF INFORMATION YOU GIVE THEM WILL BE USED AGAINST YOU OR SOLD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER!**

WHEN THEY COME KNOCKING ON Your door.
Don't Say I DIDN'T WARN YOU!

-Anonymous.

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FROM NOVA NEWS
NOW SEGMENT
"THE REGISTRATION
QUESTION"

Registering codenames is all the rage with the trendy and paranoid among the nova set. DeVries requires all operatives to register, either in-house with Superimpose or with Appellate Lexington, before taking them on as operatives, and Utopia reportedly had their in-house novas (including all of Team Tomorrow) registered with Appellate Lexington within three hours of the firm's first official day of business.

Did you register your "codename"?

Kikjak — Yeah, I registered. It was easy, not too expensive and, like, it's just one more way for me to look after my public image.



Gillian Jones — I'm still working on a "cool" codename, but when I think of one, I'm going to go straight to Appellate Lexington and register it. I don't know what I would do if I couldn't just check their database for what's already taken. There's something like 10,000 novas in the world already. I just know I would have chosen one of theirs, and you know, I really don't need that kind of stress in my life right now. I'm still getting used to the wings!



Mephistofoleez — Any punk-ass, fool son of a bitch tries using my name is gonna get his ass kicked. That's all the damn "registration" I need. Now get that shit out of my face.



Nova Law

The Legal Ramifications of Nova Abilities

by Stewart Long, Director, Project Utopia Legal Division

As an agent of Project Utopia, you represent the Project to the public of the world. It is important, indeed vital, that as a representative of everything Utopia stands for, you understand the legal ramifications of your abilities and your actions. Novas have the potential to become entangled in complex legal issues. We here in the legal department have prepared this briefing to provide a simple and quick overview of the kinds of issues you should be aware of before you head out into the field. Naturally, it is impossible to cover all the potential legal issues you may encounter in this single document. Fortunately, the resources of the legal division are available to you 24 hours a day. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Internal Abilities

Generally speaking, most of a nova's so-called "internal" abilities, like enhanced strength, speed and so forth, are minimal legal concerns at best. Apart from some areas where merely *being* a nova can be illegal (such as parts of the Middle East), the law does not regulate nova abilities any more than it does baseline strength or intelligence.

However, some of the *uses* of these internal abilities are legally regulated. Mega-Strength novas should particularly note that their Strength is considered a "lethal weapon" in most jurisdictions, notably the United States and Europe. Likewise, novas with extreme martial arts skills may find themselves placed under the category of "lethal weapon." Such abilities should be exercised with extreme caution.

The social abilities of some novas have also caused legal concerns. Of particular note is the use of nova abilities for fraud or misrepresentation. I'm certain I don't need to admonish nova agents to show restraint in the use of any ability that might be considered undue influence and to avoid legally compromising



situations involving misleading the public or individuals dealing with the Project.

Sensory Abilities

Nova sensory abilities have evoked numerous right to privacy and illegal search and seizure issues worldwide. Although granted certain legal enforcement powers by the United Nations, agents of Project Utopia are and remain private citizens, which is something we've used to our advantage in the past. Most police forces are limited by legal restrictions on search and probable cause, but in cases like *Burdeau v. McDowell* (1921), the US Supreme Court has established that private citizens are not so restricted. Evidence gathered by a private citizen that would be considered inadmissible were it gathered in the same manner by a law-enforcement officer, was and is permitted.

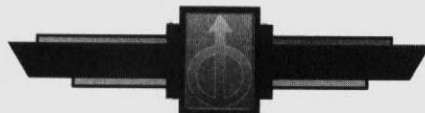
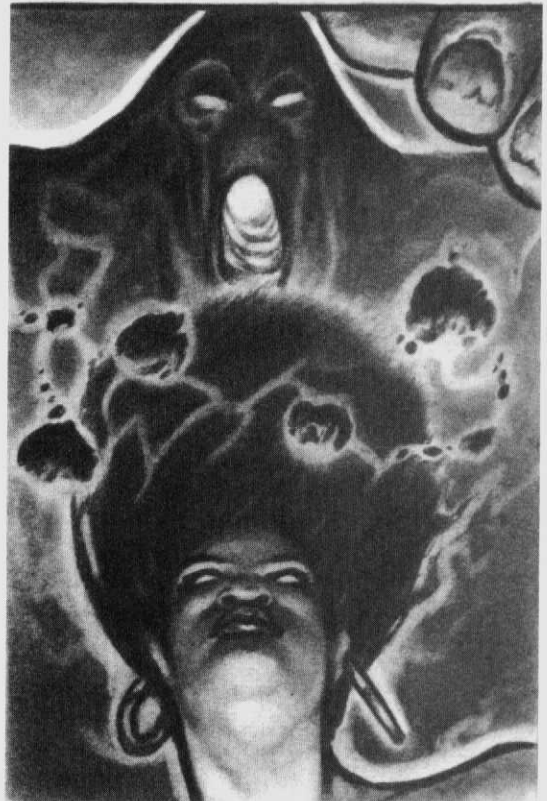
The State of New York v. Gambione (2001) extended this ruling to cover novas acting as private citizens. In the case of *Gambione*, members of Team Tomorrow used telepathic and other metasensory abilities to gather incriminating evidence on members of the Mafia families operating in New York. Defense for the accused maintained that such techniques violated their clients' Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination along with US search regulations. The US Supreme Court ruled that, since the members of Team Tomorrow were operating as private citizens, the precedent of *Burdeau* applied. For more information, see the inspection guidelines of the Science & Technology Division.

This does not mean novas have carte blanche to use sensory abilities however they wish. Cases of invasion of privacy have arisen in a number of countries, usually over the alleged indiscriminate use of telepathy and ESP-type abilities. Fortunately, the use of such abilities is extremely difficult to prove, so all the cases to date have ruled for the defendant. Utopia agents are encouraged to avoid such legal complications whenever possible.

Control Abilities

A more involved legal issue is the use of so-called "control" abilities, particularly nova abilities that directly influence the mind. These abilities break entirely new legal ground, since there are few precedents or existing laws designed to deal with them. A number of cases, including the recent *Cooper v. Somersworth* case in England, have tried to tackle issues of "mental invasion" (or "psychic rape" to use a particularly sensationalist term).

Like metasensory abilities, the question of mental influence depends on being able to establish proof beyond a reasonable doubt. This remains difficult. It may rely largely on eyewitness testimony of the victim's altered or unusual



behavior. There is also a growing precedent for the use of nova experts to provide testimony of mental tampering, although most courts currently give only limited credence to such testimony.

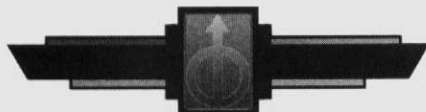
In the field, limited use of control abilities, particularly in self-defense and the defense of others, is considered permissible, even encouraged. In the *Nishidon* case in Japan, a drug runner fought his arrest on the ground that he was “abused” when a Nippontai nova mentally influenced him. The prosecution rightly pointed out that Nishidon-san was firing a machine pistol at the novas at the time and that the members of Nippontai could have just as easily vaporized him in self-defense. The judge congratulated Nippontai on their restraint and dismissed the objection.

The one control ability that tends to violate these general guidelines is cyberkinetic or “computer empathy” ability. Most municipalities, particularly in technologically developed nations like the United States and Japan, are very touchy about computer security. While we’ve been able to invoke the *Burdeau* precedent to protect unauthorized scans of computerized databases in the past, it is becoming increasingly likely that nations will pass legislation similar to the US Electronic Information Protection Act, which makes illegal access to any computer system an act of criminal trespass. Since it is far easier to prove computer tampering, this law is more easily enforced, although nova computer hackers rarely leave useful “fingerprints” behind. Several cases currently pending between the Japanese government and Utopia’s Science & Technology Division are based on evidence we obtained through cyberkinetic means, and they may lead to precedents involving this ability. For the time being, Utopia agents are encouraged to avoid excessive use of cyberkinesis unless through official channels or authorized by the S&T Division.

External Abilities

The full range of “external” nova abilities is too wide to cover in detail but, as a general rule of thumb, these abilities are subject to the same laws and legal restrictions as similar technologies and machinery. For example, a nova with the ability to project kinetic energy or accelerate metal fragments to bullet speed operates under the same restrictions as a baseline carrying a gun, with the exception that the nova’s abilities are more easily concealed and more difficult to “disarm.”

Nova agents should follow all Project Utopia guidelines on the proper use of their abilities in self-defense. Authorities have begun to crack down on novas that use “excessive force” in the field, particularly if they are able to prove that a nova could have disabled their opponent



without the need to resort to lethal force. If you're bulletproof, then it's difficult for you to claim you roasted a gunman to a crisp out of "self-defense." Exercise restraint while in the field.

The other major area where nova powers can cause problems is property damage. While we're fortunate that the few major conflicts between novas have been away from major metropolitan areas, the power of a nova to inflict damage on his or her surroundings should always remain uppermost in a field agent's mind.

A conflict between just two novas can easily level a city block, while a battle between a group of novas can lay waste to an entire city.

In Conclusion

The legal ramifications of nova abilities are wide and far-reaching and often put roadblocks in front of us. But working together, it is possible to overcome these problems and help protect Utopia's goal of building a better future for everyone. Please remain aware of these legal issues, and contact the Legal Division if you have any questions.

Radio Transcript

Transcript of the syndicated *Jordan McDevitt Show*, a talk-radio program, aired December 10, 2001:

Jordan McDevitt: Okay, time for you to sound off, listeners, legal restrictions on novas, good idea or bad precedent? 1-888-TALK-OUT. Let's go to the phones. We've got Dan from Philadelphia on the line. Go ahead, Dan.

Dan: Jordan, I don't understand why the government has to tie the hands of novas just like they tied the hands of the police and everyone else. I mean, the novas took down the Mafia in New York and Chicago, something the police and the FBI weren't able to do in 80 years, and they did it in, like, two weeks. That sounds like a good thing to me. If I had their powers, I'd probably be doing the same thing. Novas like Team Tomorrow do good work. Why can't the people in Washington see that?

McDevitt: Okay, thanks, Dan. Sounds like we've got an opposing view from Richard in New Jersey. Richard, you're on the air.

Richard: Hoo-ah, Jordan! I just want to say that the government is absolutely right to want to put some legal limits on what novas can and can't do. I mean, what else do ordinary people like us have to protect us? Sure, it's all well and good when Team Tomorrow is rounding up organized crime, but what happens when they decide to use their powers to become some kind of thought police? I bet Dan from Philly isn't going to be so happy with them then. Novas should be governed by the same laws as everyone else.



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Should Justice Wear a Mask?

Superheroes. Caped crusaders. Masked marvels. Mystery men. Call them what you will, most of the people in the United States, and a good many people in the world, were raised on the closest thing the 20th century has to a heroic mythology, the adventures of comic book superheroes. I know I was. From the radio serials and pulp magazines of the 20s and 30s, through the birth of comic books as a medium in the late 1930s and the development of television and translation to the big and small screens, superheroes were the icons of the century. What kid didn't at one time tie a makeshift cape around his neck and pretend he had powers far beyond those of mortal men?

It seems only fitting somehow that the larger-than-life characters, with their amazing powers and outlandish costumes, chose the end of the 20th century to step off the newsprint page, out of the television screen and into the real world. As if nearly a century of their exploits merely prepared us for their arrival. Seeing a nova for the first time, on television or in person, who couldn't help but think of a comic-book hero, come to life? In fact, I think if it wasn't for the almost subconscious association between novas and superheroes, we would never have been able to handle the idea. If you stop and think for a while about what novas can really do, what they have already accomplished, I suspect you'll agree.

And that is why the natural tendency to associate novas with the comic-book heroes of our childhood is sometimes a dangerous and deceptive one. Not because of anything novas have done — I commend the novas of Project Utopia and Team Tomorrow for their good works. It's because — although the comic book heroes have stepped into our world — we have not stepped into theirs. This is not the simple, colorful world where Our Hero figures everything out in 23 pages and the damage done to the city by his Arch-nemesis will be entirely gone by next month. It's not a world where the police commissioner of a major city can entrust law enforcement to a masked vigilante he knows nothing about.

Since novas first appeared, vigilantism is on the rise, both here and abroad. A great deal of that stems directly from our image of what a nova should be: a superhero. Not only are an increasing number of novas taking the law into their own hands, so are an increasing number of baselines. Mysterious figures in masks are becoming an almost regular sight around the world, working behind the scenes, supposedly for the cause of "justice." That may work fine in a comic

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book story, but that's not how we do things in the real world. In our society, justice should not be *allowed* to wear a mask, much less be expected to.

I'm not just talking about a nova's choice in eveningwear. I'm talking about people who believe they are above the law, even if their actions are for the greater good. If a police officer decided to use his position to trample on the civil rights of a suspected felon, decided to operate as judge and jury, we would be outraged. Accusations of wrongful arrest and police brutality have increased immensely over the past 20 years. But at the same time, we applaud the actions of masked vigilantes "fighting the good fight" because it seems they are not tied by the same morass of red tape that binds the hands of our public law-enforcement officers.

But that red tape exists for a myriad of reasons, not the least of which is to protect the rights of the accused. The founders of the American legal system chose to err on the side of caution, to possibly allow a guilty man to go free, in order to help ensure the innocent were not wrongfully punished. The Founding Fathers *feared* the power of unrestrained "justice" and rightly so. They built legal machinery to ensure "justice for all" without grinding the innocent in the gears. They knew the risks of giving the power of judge, jury and executioner into the same hands.

So the next time you hear a report about a masked nova vigilante on the news and quietly applaud their success in operating "outside the system," consider how you'd feel if that same "superhero" decided *you* were guilty of something. When novas set themselves up as the final authority, there is no higher power to appeal to for justice. At least, not in this life.

From "An Evening With
Count Orzaiz" from *Playboy*,
June 2006

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When I turn the topic of our discussion to the Teragen and his involvement in that philosophical movement, Count Orzaiz's eyes seem to darken slightly, and there's a sense of disappointment around him, like a silent sigh. I'm sure that's all anyone wants to talk to him about these days. Still, his smile remains as dazzling as ever and his tone just as charming as I ask him to explain something of the Teragen philosophy to me and to our readers.

"I'm sorry," the Count says, his tone indulgent and truly apologetic, "but I wouldn't want to bore you or your readers. Suffice it to say that a great deal of our philosophy is of little interest to anyone except fellow novas."

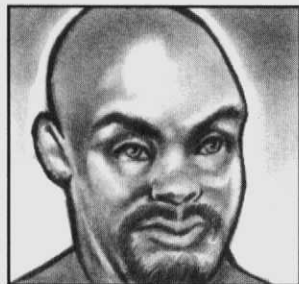
I ask Count Orzaiz if he meant the Teragen philosophy couldn't be explained. "Not at all, it's quite simple, actually, but I've found that it's the simple things that are often the hardest for some to grasp."

Taking a different approach, I ask the Count if the Teragen believe the proclamation in Divis Mal's *Null Manifesto* that novas are above the law.

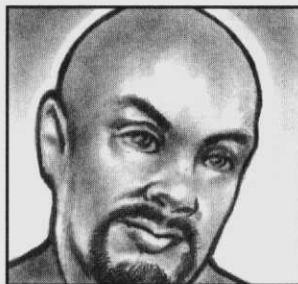
"Human law," the Count answers. "And I prefer not to use the term 'above.' It would be more accurate to say we are 'outside' human law altogether. It simply does not relate to us, any more than humanity has allowed itself to be governed by the laws of the animal kingdom."

So does the Teragen advocate some sort of nova anarchy?

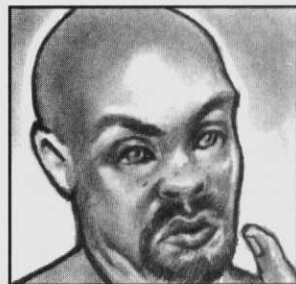
"Well, 'the Teragen' does not advocate anything, Mr. Moore," the Count replies. "It is against our own ideals to dictate what others



"You could call us
anarchists..."



"It would be more
accurate to say we are
'outside' human law
altogether."



"I see no need to apolo-
gize for Geryon's
actions..."

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should or should not believe. In fact, I cannot speak for any of my associates, since I am solely responsible for my own behavior and they for theirs, as it should be. That is the Teragen philosophy, individual responsibility and accountability. In that sense, you could call us anarchists, I suppose, because we do not believe that any baseline government or individual should dictate to novas or limit our growth or potential."

So, what laws *do* Terats (as members of the Teragen are called) uphold?

"That's an individual decision," Count Orzaiz says. "Speaking for myself, I am bound by no laws except those I choose to follow. I am reminded of the works of Aleister Crowley [notorious British occultist in the late 19th and early 20th centuries]. He was a man before his time and wrote a number of remarkable things. He's perhaps best known for his maxim 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.' He could easily have been speaking to us. Unfortunately, many of his baseline followers have taken this maxim as license to act in whatever childish manner they wish, when, in fact, Crowley's maxim is a call to greater personal responsibility."

But if the Teragen believe in personal responsibility, how does Count Orzaiz explain Terats like Geryon, who seem like little more than terrorists?

"I see no need to apologize for Geryon's actions," the Count says defiantly. "I am speaking of responsibility, while you — and others — remain focused on the law. Geryon does what he feels is *right*, as do I, not necessarily what baseline law requires. How often have you watched a news report, or even had an experience in your own life, and thought that the law was unfair or unjust? If you have the power to do what you feel and believe is right and the laws tells you no, what should you do? That is the decision all novas face, sooner or later. Many choose to abrogate their responsibility by allowing others to make their decisions for them, by following human laws or the dictates of organizations like Project Utopia. We Terats are united by our mutual decision to take up the burden of responsibility placed on us by our gifts, to use them as well feel is best and to answer only to own our conscience in the end."

And what of the human authorities that disagree with the demands of Teragen conscience? On that matter Count Orzaiz was succinct.

"Baselines who think they can control us do so at their own peril. If you spend time in the company of tigers, sooner or later you *will* feel their claws."

Excerpted from a Project Utopia Briefing on International Law for new novas

As a nova, you are, more than most, a citizen of the world. Your special abilities belong not just to you or your nation, but to the whole world. You may have never left your own country before or met people from other countries, but as an agent of Project Utopia, you'll travel the world and meet people from many different nations. That's why it's important for you to understand the kind of reception you're likely to get in different parts of the world and how the laws of different nations deal with novas and their abilities.

First off is the world community itself, the United Nations and Project Utopia. The Project has its own regulations regarding its nova agents, and novas are expected to uphold the high standards of Team Tomorrow. The United Nations itself, through the Zurich Accord, recognizes novas as part of the human community and respects the individual human rights of all novas. All member nations of the UN are expected to uphold the Zurich Accord, and most do, although there are some exceptions.

The UN gives Project Utopia and Team Tomorrow certain special rights involving international law enforcement, particularly in the area of monitoring and controlling the development and use of new technologies through our Science & Technology Division. The United Nations also calls upon Project Utopia's Peacekeeping Division to provide novas to help end wars and stop border skirmishes and diplomatic conflicts from turning into wars. The UN gives these privileges only to Project Utopia novas. Not just any nova can decide to help police the world! Private nova citizens are offered the protection of the Zurich Accord and the legal systems of their home countries and are expected to abide by them.

North America

North America, the United States in particular, has a sort of love/hate relationship with novas, reflected in their legal system. On the one hand, the United States has a long tradition of independence and a desire for prosperity and world peace. On the other hand, the United States also tends to have tunnel vision when it comes to the world community, thinking that what's best for the US is best for the world. Some factions in the American government view the growing power and prestige of Project Utopia and our cooperation with the United Nations as a threat to the US's status as the "world superpower."

Thus, while the United States has few laws governing being a nova, it does impose legal restrictions on what you can do with your nova abilities. The actions of novas

are carefully scrutinized by the US authorities, including the FBI, the NSA (National Security Agency) and, believe it or not, the FDA (Food and Drug Administration), the CDC (Center for Disease Control) and, especially, the IRS (Internal Revenue Service). One of America's biggest concerns about novas is making sure they pay their taxes! So long as novas don't constitute a threat to public health or safety (in the government's view), they're generally left alone.

The US government takes a very dim view of nova troublemakers and an even dimmer view of nova criminals. The current trend of "franchising" novas in the United States allows municipalities to have their own novas, ostensibly to deal with any quantum-powered trouble that might come along. Your goal is to ensure they don't consider you trouble.

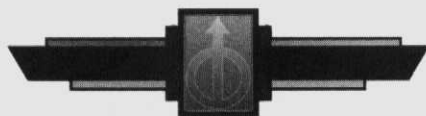
In fact, one of the largest legal problems facing novas in North America, particularly the United States, is that of civil litigation. The US has a long history of being lawsuit-happy, and novas offer tempting targets for ambulance chasers and opportunists. Known novas are frequently hit with lawsuits ranging from issues over damages resulting for the use of their powers to palimony suits to claims of mind-control and "undue influence" to things like "emotional distress" resulting from their actions or even their mere existence! If you are threatened with or served such a lawsuit, please contact the Project's legal department immediately and allow our staff of expert attorneys to advise you.

Central and South America

Central and South America — notably Mexico and Brazil — are generally open and welcoming toward novas. Mexico was the first nation to uphold a nova's right to wear a mask in public and to establish a separate "identity" based around his or her masked "persona." This has spread to become a precedent in international copyright and intellectual property law. Mexican novas commonly wear masks, but where the United States tends to look upon mask-wearing novas with suspicion, Mexico treats them as celebrities. Novas are afforded wide latitude, provided they violate no local laws.

Likewise, Brazil treats novas with considerable respect and admiration, particularly since the Sao Paulo bombing incident. Where they once looked on novas with suspicion and doubt, Brazilians have embraced them wholeheartedly. Although the Brazilian authorities are willing to cooperate with Project Utopia and Team Tomorrow in many matters, you should keep in mind this is a privilege and should not be abused.

Not all the nations of Central America welcome Utopia or novas in general. Many of these nations have



suffered from the depredations of nova elites in the employ of local governments or even individuals with a political agenda to advance. The nations of Central and South America have also seen trouble from Aberrant and Teragen terrorists and novas in the employ of the Medellín cartel. This makes nations like Colombia edgy about novas, and small Central American nations tend to look upon novas as either potential saviors or potential oppressors.

Europe

Throughout most of Europe, you will find only willingness to support Project Utopia and its goals. Europe is enamoured of novas and Utopia, and European laws regarding novas and the exercise of their abilities are almost non-existent, apart from complying with the Zurich Accord and supporting local legal restrictions.

The prime exception is the United Kingdom, which remains staunchly conservative and uncooperative toward Project Utopia's goals. The UK requires all nova citizens and all visiting novas to register their names and abilities with the government. They do not recognize the so-called "*mascara* laws" of nations like Mexico that protect the privacy of novas. Although novas are allowed to wear masks in public, they are expected to inform the government of their true identity.

This has led some novas with Teragen sympathies to flout the registration laws, even adopting multiple masked identities in order to confuse the authorities. Young people in London and elsewhere have taken up the torch and begun adopting masks and costumes as a fashion statement and to further confuse matters

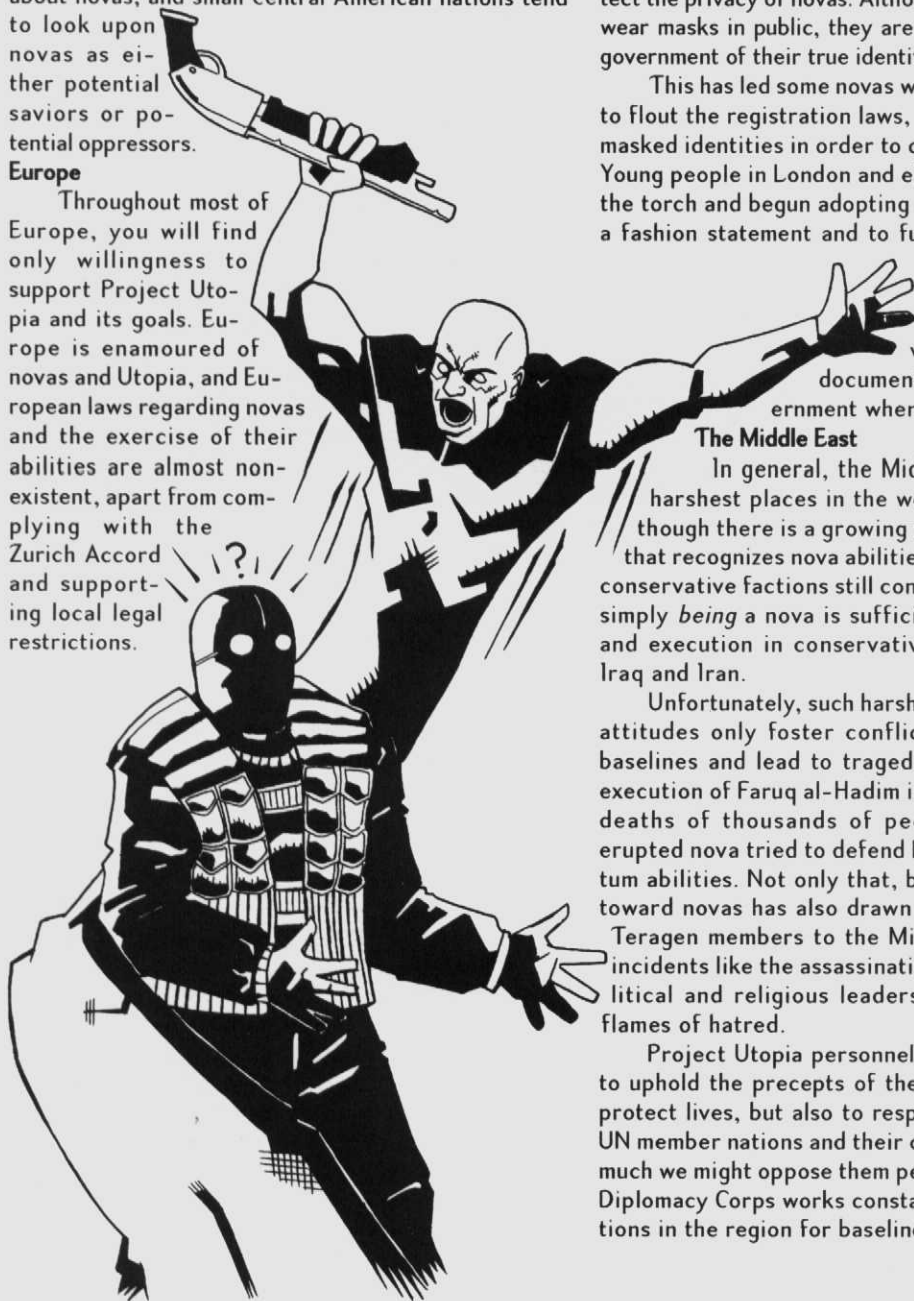
for the British legal machine. Naturally, Project Utopia provides all the necessary documentation to the UK government when required.

The Middle East

In general, the Middle East is one of the harshest places in the world toward novas. Although there is a growing movement within Islam that recognizes nova abilities as special gifts, more conservative factions still consider novas "evil," and simply *being* a nova is sufficient to result in arrest and execution in conservative Islamic nations like Iraq and Iran.

Unfortunately, such harsh laws and superstitious attitudes only foster conflict between novas and baselines and lead to tragedies like the attempted execution of Faruq al-Hadim in Iran, which led to the deaths of thousands of people when the newly erupted nova tried to defend himself using his quantum abilities. Not only that, but their harsh policies toward novas has also drawn the attention of many Teragen members to the Middle East, resulting in incidents like the assassination of conservative political and religious leaders, further fanning the flames of hatred.

Project Utopia personnel are not only expected to uphold the precepts of the Zurich Accord and to protect lives, but also to respect the sovereignty of UN member nations and their customs, no matter how much we might oppose them personally. The Project's Diplomacy Corps works constantly to improve conditions in the region for baseline and nova alike.



Africa

Most of Africa welcomes its nova citizens, although there are some nations that value novas primarily for their ability to act as military proxies in various border wars like the Trans-Tanzanian Conflict. Many central and sub-Saharan African nations are understandably wary about novas because of incidents like these.

The epitome of nova law in Africa is undoubtedly Ethiopia, which welcomed Project Utopia with open arms and currently extends citizenship to virtually any nova wishing to emigrate there. Addis Ababa is a fine example of a modern 21st-century city, and local laws prohibit all lethal weapons. Local novas help enforce these laws, making the city one of the safest in the world.

On the other hand, the nation of Nigeria flouts the authority of the United Nations and strictly regulates its nova population. Novas are required to register with the Nigerian government and to serve in whatever capacity the government sees fit "to help protect the Nigerian people." Novas and their families are given lavish living quarters in Lagos, but the government also makes it clear that the continued well-being of a nova's family depends on his or her continued cooperation.

Asia

Asia varies a great deal from country to country in terms of its legal and social treatment of novas. Nations such as Japan and the Russian Confederation treat their novas well. Japanese novas become instant celebrities and do not lack for opportunities. Russian novas are treated well by their government and offered opportunities to develop their abilities and use them however they wish. These nations recognize the rights of novas affirmed by the Zurich Accord and treat novas as equal citizens (albeit citizens with special abilities).

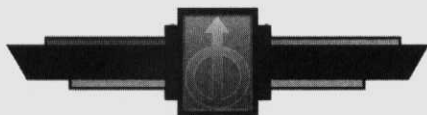
India, with its caste-driven culture, treats novas like virtual gods. In fact, so many cults have sprung up around Indian novas that the term "India Syndrome" has come into popular use, referring to a nova who accepts worship as a god or cultic figure. These Indian "avatars" do as they please in the rural areas of the country. Fortu-

nately, most of these novas are content to use their abilities to protect and help their people. The United Nations and Project Utopia once tried to investigate rumors of dark and bloody nova cults to ensure the safety of India's population, but when India objected, that course of action was terminated. This isn't as problematic as it may sound, however, as those programs were costly and little or no hard evidence of such cults was ever brought to light.

Unlike the freedom of Japan or the worship of India, China continues to maintain some of the harshest laws and regulations in the world regarding novas and their abilities. With the second largest population of any nation in the world, China has the potential to have the second largest population of novas as well. Exact numbers are unavailable, but estimates place the number novas in China at as many as 1,000, a sizable fraction of the world's novas.

China requires all novas to register with the government within 48 hours of their eruption. Registered novas are entered into a government-sponsored training program to test their abilities and teach them how to control them properly. Novas like Wing-Xao Ji claim these "training facilities" actually serve to control novas through the use of drugs, coercion and techniques such as electroshock and possibly even brainwashing. The Chinese government denies any involvement in such violations of the Zurich Accord and publicly claims to uphold the Accord.

Still, China's unwillingness to cooperate with UN and Project Utopia initiatives and continued rumors of nova abuses in China have led to uneasy relations between the Project and the Chinese government. It has also attracted the attention of Teragen members, who target Chinese officials and training facilities for attacks, claiming they are acting to protect their fellow novas in China. Project Utopia novas are advised against crossing over into Chinese territory without explicit permission from a Project director.



Status (or How to Win Friends and Influence Factions)

Novas are powerful, independent and influential individuals. Each theoretically has an agenda of some sort and a desire to see it through. Unfortunately, novas do not live in a vacuum — there are roughly 8,000 other novas on the planet along with them, each of whom also has a personal agenda. Depending upon any given nova's goals, he may need to associate himself with some other agency to accomplish what he wants to see done, for whatever reason. Length of affiliation, incidentally, does not automatically indicate a high degree of backing by one's faction. Favor ebbs and flows, and while the Backing Background can increase if the character behaves wisely and well, it can also decrease if the character is rash or acts contrary to the goals of the faction in question.

Of course, for a nova to get an agency to support his agenda, he needs to work his way up the ladder. A nova can't walk into Project Utopia one day and expect to have the degree of backing Caestus Pax enjoys. To that end, he has to have (and use) enough social skills to play by Utopia's rules. That means spending time earning status and gaining influence within Utopia's organizational structure.

Project Utopia

A nova who works for Project Utopia generally starts with a fairly attractive situation — incredibly lucrative salaries and benefit packages, plenty of fringe benefits and so on. She does have an advantage over baseline employees, though not a huge one. She'll typically have management supervising her (baseline or nova) and a clear set of duties. Project Utopia does give novas significant leeway in prioritizing their work or even in deciding what it is they want to work on. Still, that leeway ends where Utopia's official disapproval begins. Good idea: Aiding Utopia in repairing damage to the environment. Bad idea: Using Utopia information and resources to arrange eco-terrorist attacks on corporations that practice unsound environmental policies.

Initiative and Vision

Novas who show initiative, who outline projects for Utopia to undergo that will improve its PR or fulfill its charter, who show vision in outlining these projects are greatly valued within Utopia. During his time as a Project Utopia researcher, Spencer "Antaeus" Balmer rapidly gained status and responsibility thanks to his ambitious and effective plans for solving environmental troubles on a global scale.

Contrariwise, novas who act without Utopia sanction and seek apology rather than permission will find that this is not the best policy. Utopian officials don't like dealing with

potential PR disasters or worse. Under normal conditions, it's always best to ask for permission. During times of crisis, a nova may have to act first and assess consequences later — such occasions call for a review afterward to insure that the nova acted in the best (or most acceptable) manner possible.

Careful consideration is of the utmost importance, especially in the time following Corbin's surrender to the World Court and Utopia's bungled raid on the Amp Room. Public opinion of Project Utopia is not at its best, and every operative, employee and agent must be careful about public perception of future activities.

Rank Has Its Privileges

A nova whose activities please her superiors, who acts in a way that benefits Utopia and who clearly has the vision and initiative to justify greater authority within Utopia greatly improves her chances of promotion. Promotion brings a great many perks, not the least of which is increased access to Utopia resources, larger paychecks and an greater influence over Utopia activities.

Backgrounds

Allies, Backing, Contacts, Followers

Promotion means increased access to important people who have their own information networks, resources, etc. A nova also has increased discretionary powers to hire a support staff on Utopia's dime and other means of increasing the purely social Backgrounds on her sheet. A UN delegate may not have time for a relatively unknown Utopia nova but will probably make a point to meet with someone who has a proven track record and clout within the organization.

Allies

When you're in power, people want to be your friend. Sometimes, associations like this can lead to genuine friendships. Either way, novas can line up more important and influential people whom they can count on.

Even at high levels, it does require a certain amount of effort to cultivate truly reliable allies versus fair-weather friends. Promotion provides increased access, but not necessarily increased chances, to befriend anyone this important.

Backing

Utopia is an enormous organization with vast resources, monetary and otherwise. From Novation Toys to extensive research facilities to teams of elite baseline agents trained to deal with berserk novas, Utopia has quite a toolbox to draw from. A competent and helpful nova can expect increased access to Utopia resources as he demonstrates his ability to use them wisely and with care.

Of course, Utopia being what it is, it's best not to use the Project's resources for tasks that could cause it further trouble, especially given recent events (as mentioned previously). Careless use of Project assets can lead to demotion very quickly.

Contacts

Similar to dealing with allies, a high-ranking nova has increased opportunities to find people who know things or who can get things. They're certainly more casual than true allies but require their own special maintenance.

Again, the advantages of rank make it easier to establish an important official or bureaucrat in national or international affairs (or a CEO, a military officer, etc.) as a useful contact. He may be unable to provide the full support an ally can offer, but he can still offer assistance (or ask for it) in other ways.

Followers

Increased standing means increased access to Utopia resources (see Backing, above). Other Utopia employees may want to attach their fortunes to a successful nova who's rising through the ranks, or the nova could seek out and hire executive assistants, agents or whomever. Either way, the increased privilege does tend to attract hangers-on — some are even useful.

Influence

High-ranking officials in Utopia's chain of command don't necessarily gain any influence in the rest of the world. But, careful application of political acumen, public image and a reputation for "doing the right thing" can make it possible for a nova to engineer greater acceptance and sway with the public, other organizations and VIPs.

Resources

The simplest to improve. Promotions get you raises, and most novas begin with a hefty paycheck regardless. Typically, a nova's starting salary within Project Utopia puts her around Resources 3. Further promotions can increase that. Of course, novas also have options for patenting new technologies, licensing their images for action figures, comic books, etc. and even simple investment.

Teragen

The Teragen are a very informal and somewhat disorganized faction. The Pantheon has several smaller factions within it, each with conflicting goals. Backing and rank in the Teragen is then a much more fluid thing than it is in more structured organizations. A Terat who impresses Raoul Orzaiz may find that he just offended Geryon as a result.

This means that there are really only two important standings within the Teragen: You're part of the Pantheon, or you are not. How do you get into the Clique of the Gods?

Initiative and Vision

If a nova wants to join the Pantheon, she must impress someone who's already a part of the Pantheon, preferably at least two or three members. Explicating an interesting new take on *The Null Manifesto* or finding unusual and clever ways to promote the Teragen's overall agenda among other novas are good possibilities. Also, keeping Proteus and Utopia confused while using their own weapons (public relations and information) against them can serve an ambitious nova well.

Terats must show a transhuman perspective. It's not necessary to look down on humans as apes or whatever, although they are acknowledged as more limited beings. It is necessary to understand the changes that the M-R node brings put novas on a level beyond humanity. Novas who support Utopian ideals are novas who have sold out their own godhood. They willingly serve less-evolved beings. Terats generally see themselves as beyond this (many exist



peacefully alongside humanity, and some *do* work within Utopia or other human agencies).

Despite Utopia propaganda, the Teragen organization isn't composed entirely of terrorists. Some notable examples — Geryon, for example — stand out. Other Terats associate for philosophical or revolutionary reasons. While many wish to radically alter the current social order as it relates to novas, that does not mean they wish to become murderers and terrorists as a way of proclaiming their beliefs.

Backgrounds

Teragen beliefs and practices don't always lend themselves to easily improving many backgrounds (other than Node). This is not to say it's impossible, just that membership in the Pantheon does not usually bring a hefty paycheck.

Allies, Contacts, Followers

While it's possible to get introduced to important people and make friends (especially if hanging around with Count Orzaiz), it's not something that Teragen affiliation particularly makes easier. The secretive nature of Teragen membership usually means that it has little to no effect on a nova's social life. If Teragen membership is known, it can actively hinder a nova's chances to win new friends, depending on the nova and her reputation.

Baseline humans envious of novas or who agree with Teragen philosophy could easily end up hanging around a Terat, depending upon his tolerance level. Terats are certainly as capable of hiring secretaries as anyone else. Humans who support transhuman philosophy could find interaction with a Terat fascinating, if not necessarily agreeable.

Backing

Backing among the Teragen is informal. The Background reflects how much support other Terats are willing to provide when needed and how often a Terat might be expected to provide support to other members of the Teragen. Terats who prove themselves intelligent, powerful and useful tend to get more support than those who are indiscrete or careless.

Influence

Some Terats use membership as a means to gain influence — Raoul Orzaiz comes to mind, as the Mega-Sociable public spokesman for the Teragen. Generally speaking, Teragen membership isn't a ticket to fame and influence.

Mentor

Many of the Pantheon can serve as useful and interesting mentors. If a Terat actively impresses one or more members, that member may choose to take the character under his wing. This tends to be a one-time event, but it is possible to attract more powerful or influential mentors over time (or the character's original mentor might himself increase in personal power or influence).

Resources

Teragen do have the same opportunities to earn money as any other nova. Even Divis Mal and Geryon have licensed their images to Pandaimonion Playthings, a toy company that produces action figures and other toys based on novas.

The Directive

The Directive is structured like a typical intelligence agency, with idiosyncrasies resulting from its international composition. Novas in the Directive tend not to float to the top of the heap as they do in other organizations due to a pervasive paranoia inherent in the organization.

The Directive prefers subtle agents who can be stealthy, applying force when absolutely necessary, and who otherwise remain nothing more than "rumors." Directive agents cannot afford to be glory hounds (at least not in public) and tend to be lethally effective when defending the Directive's secrecy.

Promotion

While it's normal for a nova to move upward (especially if he's Mega-Social), it's not rapid. Other nova agents might interfere with potential competition, and baseline elements might resist the tendency to promote novas into administrative roles, fearing subversion from within.

On the other hand, the Directive doesn't employ many novas anyway, and those it does hire tend to be treated well, if only to foster loyalty. The Directive can't afford anyone going public or allow data to leak out to any other faction or agency, so they do their best to make it an unattractive option, both through open reward and implied threat.

It should be noted that the Directive's hierarchical structure is nothing short of labyrinthine, possessing multiple tracks upward and many hidden cells. In fact, some try to influence the paths novas take through the organization to prevent their discovery. When encountering a Directive cell, it's sometimes difficult to tell who is the subordinate and who is the superior, who's been assigned to watch and whom you should be watching ("everyone else" is usually a safe guess). In some cases, an agent may be promoted beyond his competence so as to *force failure* on a critical mission and, thus, a loss of standing. The Directive is composed of the most devious minds in the intelligence community, and they're still hesitant to trust each other.

Advancement in the Directive is sometimes akin to swimming through shark-infested waters. It's possible for a nova, especially one with Mega-Intelligence or Mega-Manipulation, to use the lack of trust and communication to her own advantage. She may backstab a rival by seeking out (or manufacturing) evidence of wrongdoing, or she may destroy her immediate superior's career, thereby opening the way for her own advancement. Of course, if she can play dirty, so can her rivals....

Discretion

More than anything else, "stealth" is the watchword for Directive operations. When a Directive agent or cell moves into an operation, they do their best to avoid notice. Agents who are good at this ascend the ladder fastest. Agents who get noticed or identified as Directive or who otherwise fail to maintain a suitably low profile will find a glass ceiling preventing them from advancing, or they may be marked for termination.

Backgrounds

Directive novas aren't flashy (unless they need to be for an assignment). They don't make public service announcements or market their images for comic books and Saturday morning cartoons. They live in the cracks. A nova agent's Backgrounds will reflect this.

Allies, Contacts, Followers

The Directive lends itself to building up contact and support networks. A nova who relies purely on what her superiors tell her is going to have a very skewed vision of what's going on. Those novas smart enough to realize this will actively seek outside assistance.

Additionally, the Directive has an extensive network of informants and other shady types whom a nova can easily get to know and integrate into her own support system. Just working for the Directive tends to build webs of contacts and followers (and the occasional ally).

Backing

A successful nova will earn increasingly more authority, and with authority comes increased access to the Directive's resources — and hopefully, an increased awareness of how to use them discretely and effectively. A single high-ranking Mega-Intelligent nova can be terribly efficient in the field.

Literally, Backing is a direct representation of a nova's rank within the Directive.

Cipher

One of the many perks the Directive provides for both its baseline and nova agents is assistance in altering or deleting personal records to make it more difficult to gather information on their employees.

The process isn't always complete and may take time (reflected by an increase in the Background). Higher-ranking members may have an easier time directing resources to wipe out evidence of past activities or existence. Note that this kind of "strategic unpersoning" isn't always a pleasant experience for the agent in question. It can be disconcerting to watch colleagues systematically tracking down and destroying or deleting the remnants of one's former existence; things like birth certificates, car titles and property deeds bear more symbolic weight than an agent might realize, and the Directive likes to proceed slowly with "unpersoning." On the other hand, some agents have found it to be quite liberating....

Mentor

The Directive is not a huge organization like Project Utopia, and a skilled agent can and will attract the attention of his superiors. He might receive better training, more interesting or challenging assignments and more consideration when it's time for promotion. A mentor might seek to teach the agent everything he has learned from 30 years of undercover work, or he might just put in a good word when the agent's performance is being discussed by his superiors. On the other hand, such favors often (if not always) come with strings, and the mentor may call on the agent to return the favor at some point.

Resources

The Directive's nova agents are well-paid. As with Utopia, novas are considered valuable resources to be courted. With that in mind, a nova will receive a salary ap-

propriate for his abilities and performance. Most novas working for the Directive will have at least Resources 3.

The DeVries Agency

The DeVries Agency is an odd combination of a temporary employment agency, Central Casting and the French Foreign Legion. DeVries aggressively recruits novas for their services whenever possible. They keep files on all known novas; consequently, when a job comes up for which none of their regular contractors would be suitable, they can contact outside talent and hopefully recruit them for future work.

It's not regular employment, but the contracts are always lucrative — DeVries takes a reasonable percentage, and few contracts come in at less than six figures. Most come in at seven or eight.

A DeVries Elite often considers himself somewhat superior to other novas, an outlook fostered by the agency. He doesn't have a fixed schedule and, unless under sanction, can generally pick and choose the best of the jobs he's offered. Provided he's not on assignment, it's relatively easy to take a vacation and run off to Ibiza for a few days or weeks, so long as he notifies his DeVries representative (or has his agent do so). Of course, turning down too many jobs can lead DeVries to look elsewhere when the prime contracts come in.

A nova coming to DeVries has to establish himself as reliable and useful within his preferred fields of work. A cyberkinetic could hire out for any number of jobs, involving anything from penetrating an advanced security system to setting up security on a sensitive network. Because of the sensitive nature of many DeVries contracts, most novas must sign statements of "non-disclosure," contracts that forbid them from revealing sensitive material related to their work. A nova who does not respect confidentiality will quickly lose credibility, both with employers and DeVries.

A nova who accepts jobs she can't perform well is less likely to receive future offers. Representatives at DeVries prefer to work extensively with novas to insure this doesn't happen, but some novas have overstated or even outright lied about what they can do. An elite can do this once before DeVries is aware of the situation, and it will never employ that nova again.

Promotion

Contractors don't really have rank, per se. Rather, contractors with proven records (and higher ranking on the N! charts) get preferential treatment — higher pay, better jobs and more generous fringe benefits. In many cases, a company or individual may develop a working relationship with a particular elite and request him on a regular basis. Such relationships can, given the right circumstances, lead to permanent employment (although DeVries gets "finder's fee" whenever such hirings occur).

Novas who accept difficult or unpleasant jobs get more jobs. Novas who accept more jobs get fewer jobs. Novas who accept few jobs get fewer offers. It's a self-reinforcing cycle. An elite needs to demonstrate her willingness and ability to



do work appropriate to her abilities (or fake it *really well*) in order to improve her rating as a DeVries contractor. It's also productive for a nova to check in with her representative on a regular basis to see if any jobs suitable for her are in the queue. An enthusiastic beginning elite can steal assignments out from underneath a mid-range contractor just by being persistent and contacting her DeVries agent on a regular basis and asking for contracts. Elites with Mega-Social Attributes may find that schmoozing helps get contracts as well.

Backgrounds

DeVries doesn't really have a formal organization in the manner that Utopia or the Directive, but its method of operation leads novas to develop a wide-ranging field of contacts and allies and extensive financial assets.

Allies, Contacts

Easy to get. When a nova works a week at ViaSoft, then two more weeks recovering experimental equipment for a high-tech research firm and then another week at a computer R&D firm in Kuala Lumpur, he's going to meet a lot of well-connected people very quickly. Not all of them will necessarily like the nova or make suitable contacts, but a regularly employed DeVries nova will know people throughout the business, political and media sectors. Novas who get the better contracts will meet and possibly get to know even more influential and important people.

Influence, Resources

Novas working DeVries jobs often get fairly high-profile assignments and can be in the forefront of the public mind.

A nova who develops a reputation for dramatic and nearly impossible rescues, for example, could easily capitalize on that image via other avenues. More people will listen to her when she talks about topics of interest to her. True, much of the work elites do *isn't* glamorous and wouldn't be considered so if it weren't for the fact that it's *novas* who do it.

By the same token, DeVries Elites make a *lot* of money simply by using their quantum abilities. The exposure mentioned above makes a popular nova a marketable icon, and as such, licensing and other opportunities are available for the elite to take advantage of. DeVries is happy to help its elites with licensing and other issues (for a slight fee, of course).

DeVries is in the business of making money. To do that, they help their elites make money. Intelligent and outgoing novas can use this to their advantage.

Nova Day-to-Day Life

Eruption is like having all of one's favorite dreams come true at once. Instant fame, instant wealth, instant glory; all of these things come easily to novas. Unfortunately, eruption isn't entirely a rose garden. With great power comes great responsibility? Not necessarily. But with great power comes great annoyance: relentless hounding from the press, pushy Utopia recruiters, jealousy from old friends and all kinds of attitude from the public.

Welcome to Recruiting!

Congratulations! You've qualified to join our global network of recruiters, as part of one of our most important duties — bringing new novas into the Project Utopia family.

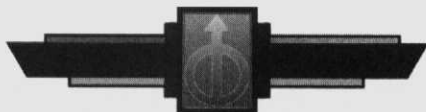
Before you begin, you'll want to make yourself extremely familiar with our recruitment techniques. This four-week course will cover the following points:

- Gaining a nova's trust. Utopia thrives on the goodwill of its nova employees. Before we can develop that goodwill, a relationship based on trust must exist between the nova and Project Utopia. To facilitate this process, you will learn proper techniques for approaching and befriending recently erupted novas. We will also instruct you on how best to highlight the wide range of opportunities that Project Utopia can offer novas.
- Countering a potential recruit's objections. Utopia exists to make life easier for everyone, baselines and novas alike, something we cannot do if they do not wish to come to us. Unfortunately, due to a number of destructive rumors and a few instances of bad press, many people believe some very peculiar things about us. A good recruiter needs to know how to address these concerns.
- What you can offer, and what you can put in writing. Many prospects will require assurances and promises before signing on with the Project. They'll ask for mind-boggling salaries, fringe benefit packages that would shame an emperor and a leadership role in Team Tomorrow. While novas are among Utopia's most valuable assets, you can't offer them everything. You will learn just how far you can go in offering prospects a position or training with Utopia. It's important to understand that while all such promises are given in good faith, Utopia cannot always fulfil them. Openings are not always guaranteed, and some training may require special security clearances. If the prospect wants you to put anything in writing, you will know precisely what is acceptable and how to phrase things in such a way that Project Utopia is safeguarded against legal action.
- Persistence. You will learn how to become a fixture in the nova's life. While it's a rare prospect who won't come to a Rashoud facility as soon as contacted, there are a stubborn few who require more effort. You'll learn befriending techniques that will show you, first, how to become a part of their lives and, later, how to use that time to make Utopia such a tantalizing option that the prospect can't say no. Novas are one in a million people — Utopia can't afford to let any slip away. Which brings us to the next topic....
- Our rivals. Other organizations seek to draw novas to their respective banners or employment. The DeVries Agency constantly sends headhunters after our own agents (especially T2M), the rabid Teragen seeks to subvert our philosophy and drive a wedge between novas and Utopia, and other agencies work to undermine all we've accomplished. You must understand how these organizations work, how to identify their agents and how to neutralize their efforts.

Remember, in an ideal world, all novas would *want* to work for Project Utopia. It is up to you to help create that ideal world.

Welcome to this important position. We have chosen you because of your raw talent, we will provide you with the best training available, and we wish you the best of luck in fulfilling the high expectations we have of you.

Assistant Director Elendsohn,
Recruiting



Welcome to the Nova Site, the only site on the OpNet devoted to self-made novas by self-made novas.

Now that you've made yourself into a nova, you need to know about a few things you need to deal with. Like Utopia. They're almost everywhere, and where they're not, they want to be. Mainly, they want **you**. That's right, and they'll do everything they can to get you. Whether you want to is up to you, but after all that Slider/Corbin conspiracy stuff and those weird sterilization rumors, I'm not going to touch them with a 10-foot M-R node.

When word gets to the press that you're a nova - and unless you're the sneakiest bastard this side of Divis Mal, they're going to find out - Utopia will be all over you. No, they're not going to kidnap you and fill you full of brainwashing drugs, they can't afford that kind of publicity. But they'll do everything they can to sucker you in.

Their recruiters are slick. Slick like the king of used car salesmen. Those guys could talk Splash into buying a glass of water. They're as charismatic as they come - which is natural, given that they serve somewhat double duty as "PR flacks" for Utopia. They'll slide right in and try to become your best friend, and they're *good* at it. When they come for you, they're ready to sell you the Moon if they think it'll draw you in.

The trick, of course, is to get everything in writing. The recruiter will shy away from pie-in-the-sky promises when he's nailed down, but it'll be hard to aim the hammer. The recruiter has to make Utopia look better than any other option. In fact, he'll try his damndest make everything else look undesirable as hell.

Once he's in, it's that much easier for him to draw you into Utopia. He has to sell, sell and sell until you crack. He won't (usually) push so hard that he will alienate you. The trick is to get the recruiter off balance and away from you. If you think it'll work, contact DeVries or some other "talent" agency. Once you're in, it won't stop Utopia, but if they harass you, DeVries will send lawyers to get them to lay off. Of course, you've just sold your soul to DeVries.

CLICK HERE to join the OpNet Novas mailing list

CLICK HERE to skip to the next OpNet NovaRing site

CLICK HERE to register with the Renegade Nova League

Dealing with Recruiters

Whether they work for Utopia, DeVries, the XWF, the Directive or some other group, a recruiter's job is to bring new nova talent into the organization. In that regard, they are very like military recruiters or corporate headhunters. Recruiters are paid to be convincing and persistent, and they typically work on an incentive program that gives them huge bonuses for every new nova they sign on. Consequently, they tend to be rather mercenary. To these groups and many like them, novas are the most valuable resource on the planet. With that in mind, they will spare no expense to bring them in.

Vidcast Excerpt (text only)

Excerpt from N! interview with DeVries contractor, Luther Fleming, on "N! Sight with Parker Stevenson"; show aired August 20, 2011

Fleming: ... and I'm left standing there, looking Lance Stryker in the face, telling him to get his ass off company property. Thank God backup was only seconds away.

Stevenson: That had to have been absolutely nerve-wracking for you.

Fleming: Damned right it was! I had visions of my name on the N! charts just winking out and the other elites' names just clicking up to fill in the space. It was spooky, man.

Stevenson: Uh-huh. So, whatever happened to Julia? Last time we talked, you said you were engaged and a June wedding was in the works. Now June has come and gone with no wedding, and I see you're not wearing the ring. Can you tell us about that?

Fleming: We split up. Everything was fine at first, you know, it was love or whatever, but we just had less and less in common. She couldn't relate to my life, and I just couldn't see myself getting hitched to a... to a baseline.

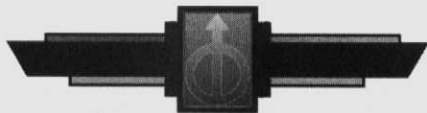
[Audience gasps.]

Stevenson: Oh. Isn't that a bit... bigoted? I mean, Julia's quite a package, and she certainly seemed devoted to you.

Fleming: Of course she was. I'm a nova. She was all over that, big time. Oh, yeah, I mean, I think she went for that. I never knew if she liked me for me or just because I can juggle Volkswagens, know what I mean? And there were other things, I guess... I had a hard time caring about her. I mean, she gets sick! How can I deal with that? What if I lose my temper? I don't want to accidentally cripple or kill my wife. I'm not a bigot, it just can't work. I mean, even Confucius said "Have no associates not your equal." It just took a while for me to realize what he meant, y'know?

Stevenson: I see. So, how's Julia taking it?

Fleming: I don't know. I haven't seen her since I told her it was over. I changed my cell number and stuff so she couldn't call or anything, so I just... I don't really know, y'know?



Relationships

Novas don't always have an easy time relating to baseline friends, family members and lovers. The reverse is also true — jealousy can easily poison any kind of relationship between a nova and a baseline.

Consider an existing relationship where both partners are baselines. Everything's fine, the wedding is planned for June, the whole nine yards. People who see the couple can't imagine how the two were ever apart. They were "made for each other," or they "look beautiful together," etc. This is just fine until one erupts, at which point things can just seem to fall apart without either party understanding what's going wrong.

Many factors can lead to this kind of outcome:

- The nova is smarter/richer/more famous/stronger/more attractive/what-have-you. It's hard to be suddenly and unexpectedly upstaged, even by a loved one. It can be even worse if the relative positions reverse: A doctor of theoretical physics is married to a man who, while intelligent, doesn't have the education his wife does. He erupts and develops superhuman intelligence (perhaps out of a desire to be able to communicate with his wife) and an intuitive understanding of advanced physics, mathematics, chemistry and other sciences. Suddenly, what she spent years to get, he has in one explosive moment of illumination — worse, he's better at it. For a day, a week, a month, things seem to be fine, possibly even better than before, but over time, resentment and bitterness well up, and the relationship becomes deeply troubled.

- It's also possible that a nova who suddenly develops superhuman intelligence may find that she literally cannot relate to her husband or boyfriend on any kind of intellectual or emotional level. She experiences realms of perception, emotion and thought no baseline could ever *imagine*, no matter how she tries to describe or share it with a lover. Simple frustration can lead to a parting of the ways, amicable or not.

- The newly erupted nova may have a grotesque or disturbing aberration — glowing hands, little anemone-like tentacles growing around the genitals, even a third eye could be unsettling. How does a baseline partner react? Even "true love" might have a tough time when your one-and-only has no hair, four arms and giant tusks.

Friends and Neighbors

Relationships with friends and neighbors aren't as intense as with spouses and lovers. They don't have the same regular and intimate contact, and this means fewer opportunities to clash after eruption. On the other hand, a newly erupted nova could find herself with more friends than she knows what to do with. Someone who was a passing acquaintance the day before suddenly becomes the "best of friends" because he needs help from the Mega-Strong nova to move his new dining set or knock out a wall in his new condo. There are no fewer opportunists in the world of **Aberrant** than in our own, and novas have no shortage of people willing to take advantage of quantum-powered favors when they can. It's not really malicious or devious,



people simply assume privilege by association. It's a part of life that most novas just take for granted.

Power and Responsibility

For seven decades, baselines have thrilled to stories about heroes with powers beyond those of mortal men. With the *Galatea* explosion last decade, those heroes have come

to life. The names, faces and costumes are a bit different, but who really cares? Caestus Pax strikes an imposing figure with his bulging muscles and vast might, Skew is distinctive with his own unique costume and style. Drivis Mal is simultaneously regal and threatening with his incredible power, icy intellect and separatist approach to human/nova relations. Many, if not most, baselines assume that novas have every intention of using their powers to defend the common man, but not all novas assume the same — eruption does not automatically bring out a nova's altruistic tendencies. Even Team Tomorrow pays its novas hefty seven-figure salaries (plus contracting, plus bonuses, plus licensing fees, etc.).

Eruption doesn't remove a nova's ambitions, desires or needs, though it may change or intensify them, depending on the form eruption takes. In some cases, a nova's needs and wishes may be fulfilled in the quantum baptism. In others, those needs may simply become easier to meet. A man whose eruption grants him prodigious intelligence and charisma may find that fantasies he previously thought impossible — say, of having friends and being admired — are now not only possible, but also simple to attain.

On the other hand, every time a natural disaster strikes, terrorists bomb an embassy or a criminal robs a bank, baselines ask, "Where are the novas?" Team Tomorrow, municipal defenders and others show an image of novas who are there to *help*. When no nova appears to assist, the baseline public wants to know *why*. It's the same impulse that drives people to ask why there's never a police officer around when you need one.

The Media

Novas have a love/hate relationship with the media. Many (if not most) take to it like fish to water. The instant and easy fame that comes with photogenic eruptions is a powerful current, and many novas are, initially, all too willing to dive in. Media agencies like Novation and N! are happy to oblige that same craving for fame. Really, how many people would turn down the adulation and adoration of millions?

Novas who seek fame have their own problems — they have to deal with agents, talk show bookings, licensing deals (action figures, comic books, etc.), and they have to make sure their representations are as accurate as possible. Few people realize just what kind of life media stars experience — that it's not as easy as it looks and can be very stressful. Sure, people love them, but that means people want to *know* what they're doing. It's one thing to be one of N!'s major stories, but it's quite another to find your face plastered across all of the major tabloids (complete with fabrications about your disastrous love life, myriad neuroses and secret Teragen connections).



Going Interplanetary

Space Exploration Made Easy

by Cyrus Katrak

"My God, it's full of stars."

—2001: A Space Odyssey

So you're a nova and you want to go into outer space. Why wouldn't you? With your powers, you probably feel like there's nothing beyond your reach, even the stars themselves. That may be true, but before you head out into the final frontier, there are some things you should think about and be aware of in order to make sure your trip is a safe one and that you'll be able to come back and tell everyone about it. Trust me, I've been out there, and I know what it takes.

Getting There is Half the Fun

The first thing you're going to need is the ability to leave Earth. It isn't *that* hard to accomplish, plenty of novas can fly, and plenty of others can teleport or create space warps to cover huge distances. Of course, the ability to fly alone isn't enough to handle travel in outer space, but it's a necessary first step unless you're planning on convincing Project Utopia or NASA or somebody to shoot you up there in a rocket or something. Make sure your mode of transportation works outside the atmosphere, as well as inside. I know it should go without saying, but if your ability to fly relies on, say, using fire for rocket thrust, it's not going to work without any oxygen to burn. My own gravity control powers work for propulsion pretty much anywhere, but that's not true of all novas.

The next thing is, you have to be able to travel *fast*. Space is big, bigger than you can even imagine, until you've been out to the orbit of Jupiter and looked back on the bright star that is our Sun. The distance to the Moon alone is over 350,000 kilometers (at its closest). Even if you can outpace fighter jets flying at around Mach 3 (around 3,600 KPH), it'll still take you a little over *four days* to reach the Moon. I've known more than one nova capable of making the trip to the Moon who turned back simply because they got bored with trying to get there. There's a whole lot of nothing out there, people.

Of course, there's nothing in space to cause drag, so you can accelerate pretty much constantly, which makes things easier (provided you know when to start slowing down, so you don't plow into the Moon at Mach 20). Still, your best bet is to be able to fly at near light-speed, like Lumen when he transforms into light, or to teleport or open spatial warps like I do. Sometimes I take League members along for the ride when I head out. If you're interested in joining the League, I might be able to arrange for you to "hitch a ride" next time.

Okay, so you've figured out that you can get there, and you're willing to give it a try. Now you have to *survive* there. Sure, I know you think you're tough, but living out in deep space isn't like shrugging off a few bullets or a couple punches from some drunk at the Amp Room. There are a lot of hazards out there to consider.

The first is the vacuum of space. They say Mother Nature must love vacuum, because she sure made a lot of it. That means no air to breathe and no air pressure. I don't care how long you can hold your breath, it's not going to be enough. If you still need to breathe, don't head out into space without some kind of life support gear.

Next is the cold. It's about as cold in space as it can get. At the same time, however, you're also exposed directly to the heat and radiation of the sun without the protection of Earth's atmosphere. To paraphrase the old saying, if you can't take the heat (and the cold), then stay out of space. Speaking of radiation, space is full of it, mostly coming from the Sun and the stars. You've got to be able to handle major doses of radiation or have some kind of shielding to protect you from it.

To handle these kinds of conditions, you either have to be able to morph into something that doesn't breathe or care about heat, cold or radiation (like Lumen's light-form or Gaussian's power to turn into a living magnetic field), or you have to be able to channel quantum to protect your body from their effects (as I can). Your other option is the same as the one baselines have: Wear a spacesuit, and bring along some oxygen. You *maybe* able to cut a deal with Utopia, a national government or even some corporations to set you up with a spacesuit and the necessary gear. Check out our Resources page for more info.



Fun in Space

So, if you're still reading and you think you have what it takes to go out there, what are you planning on doing while you're there?

There's always sightseeing, of course. Take it from me, you haven't truly lived until you've skimmed over the rings of Jupiter, swooped down into the Red Spot (a storm larger than the entire Earth) and walked on the surface of the Jovian moons, looking up at the stars. Space is full of wonders, and we've only barely begun to explore them.

I've been known to collect some souvenirs from my trips. The *New York Times* (and NASA) certainly appreciated the soil samples I gave them from Titan and Ganymede and the rocks from Jupiter's ring system. In fact, you can find *tons* of things to do for space agencies like NASA, and they're willing to pay very well for something I'd do on my own just for fun (but don't tell them I said so...). That's one of the advantages of being able to go into space solid (unlike energy-types like Lumen, sorry Milo!); you can move things around and bring them back with you.

The [Resources](#) page has links to the recruitment pages of the world's major space agencies. If you're a nova who can handle space, you can write your own ticket (but I'm sure you don't need me to tell you that).

Space Travel in Aberrant

Most novas have more than enough things on Earth to keep them busy without worrying about going out into space, but there are novas interested in exploring what lies in the final frontier, with the ability to go there on their own. Members of Team Tomorrow have handled problems in space like the space shuttle *Discovery* disaster, and they assist Project Utopia's Space Sciences Division with various projects (see the **Project Utopia** sourcebook for more information). Independent novas like the members of the Daedelus League also explore space on their own (see page 165 for more on the League).

The Fatal Frontier

There are many, many things in space that can kill unprotected characters. The temperature in space ranges from 1000° C when exposed to direct sunlight to -273° C in the shade. The character is bombarded by cosmic radiation and suffers from a lack of oxygen and air pressure. See **Aberrant**, p. 257, for a complete discussion of these hazards. Basically, an unprotected person (even a nova) exposed to space dies almost instantly. Fortunately, novas have ways of protecting themselves from the dangers of space.

What It Takes

First, a nova needs to be able to survive in deep space. This requires either a spacesuit or suitable nova powers. Acquiring a spacesuit requires Resources 4 or better or the appropriate Contacts or Backing. It provides protection and life support for up to 6 hours in space, but would-be astronauts should keep in mind that spacesuits are fairly fragile for novas and can be punctured or destroyed by a nova's own powers.

For true survival in space, a nova needs either Bodymorph (to assume a form unaffected by the rigors of space) or Mega-Stamina with the Adaptability enhancement. A nova can also purchase the Body Modification Space-worthy for 3 nova points (or 9 experience points). This allows the nova to exist safely in deep space but does not provide protection against other hazards like Adaptability does.

In order to get around in the microgravity environment of space, the nova needs a form of propulsion. The Flight power is the most effective, so long as it does not rely on atmospheric conditions (like the presence of oxygen). Novas able to acquire a spacesuit can probably also acquire a thruster pack able to move the suit along at a decent speed with a successful Pilot roll.

Finally, in order to go anywhere meaningful in space (outside of Earth's orbit), a nova needs a means of rapid travel like

the Teleport or Warp powers. For ease of reference, the table below provides major interplanetary distances in the solar system, the time needed to traverse them at the speed of light and the Teleport or Warp successes needed to reach them. The distances are expressed from one orbit to another and assume the planets in question are at their closest possible distance. The Storyteller can require an extra success or two if conditions are less than ideal. Note that the nova's Quantum rating counts as an equal number of automatic successes for both powers.

Adventures in Space

Storytellers can use outer space as a setting for original and offbeat stories in an **Aberrant** series or as a staple of a series based around space exploration and discovery, such as a series involving Daedelus League novas. Space-worthy novas can help rescue space shuttles and stations endangered by meteorites (such as in the *Discovery* disaster), place satellites in orbit, repair malfunctioning space equipment, survey the Moon and other planets, bring back samples of soil, rock and atmosphere for study and take some truly spectacular pictures for their personal OpSites.

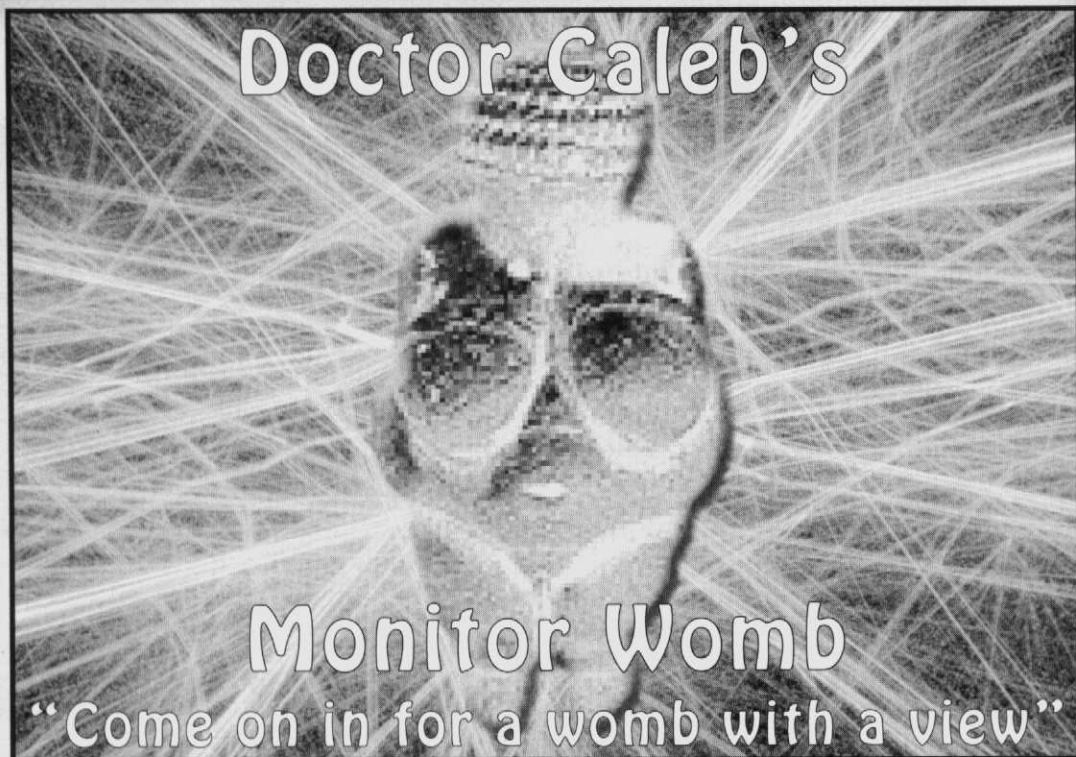
Scenario Seeds

Deep Armageddon: Scientists discover a large asteroid on a collision course with Earth. According to their calculations, it will strike near the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, creating tidal waves that will destroy the coastlines of the Americas, Europe and Africa and setting off other natural disasters that will signal the End of Civilization as We Know It. Humanity's only hope is to send a team of space-worthy novas (or novas outfitted with spacesuits) to the asteroid in order to divert its course or destroy it, either using their own powers or explosives designed by Mega-Intelligent nova researchers. Imagine their surprise when the novas discover that the asteroid's course isn't an accident. It appears that something (or someone) *pushed* it toward Earth. But who, and why?

Houston, We Have a Problem: The characters are all members of a space shuttle or station crew, possibly testing new or experimental technology. A crisis like a meteor strike or systems failure threatens the lives of everyone on board, causing the player characters to erupt and become novas. Unfortunately, their untested nova powers may be more of a detriment than an asset in the midst of the crisis, and some of them (perhaps all of them) are *not* able to survive in space. Can they find ways to use their newfound abilities to return to Earth safely with the baseline members of the crew? Will they still have "the right stuff" afterward to explore space, or will their powers take them in different directions?

Spatial Distances Table

From Earth to...	Distance	Lightspeed Delay	Successes Needed
Luna	356,400 km	1.18 sec	7
Mercury	0.54 AU	4 min, 30 sec	9
Venus	0.27 AU	2 min, 15 sec	9
Mars	0.38 AU	3 min, 10 sec	9
The Asteroid Belt	1.7 AU	14 min, 10 sec	10
Jupiter	3.95 AU	32 min, 55 sec	10
Saturn	8.01 AU	1 hour, 7 min	10
Uranus	17.28 AU	2 hours, 24 min	11
Neptune	28.8 AU	4 hours	11
Pluto	28.7 AU	4 hours	11
Alpha Centauri	4.3 light years	4.3 years	14



Response

"Dr. Caleb is the High Priest of the OpNet information revolution. His books, interactive documentaries and commentary pieces set THE standard for the **New World Media**" — **Wired**

"While sometimes abrasive and vulgar, Dr. Caleb's willingness to make himself a guinea pig has yielded results best described as 'fascinating'" — **TIME.com**

"One of the most extensive and thoroughly catalogued collections of pornography available for public perusal. Not for the faint of heart or the young of age, his section (complete with commentary) of genuine nude Nova Photos is an education unto itself." — **Penthouse Newbie Corner**

If you're unfamiliar with the OpNet (prenatal or just crawling out of your "Y2K" fallout shelter — you must feel like an absolute wanker), here are some basics for you.

OPNET (N) — The global communications network linking approximately 56 percent of terrestrial homes and businesses (as of 2014.) The OpNet, which employs, among other technologies, wireless transmission and superconducting **EUFIBER** derivatives, was introduced to the public in 2002 and has since all but completely replaced the copper-wire based telephone, cable television and cellular communications networks. Through the OpNet, a "plugged in" individual can browse through the sum of the world's knowledge, access a wide (too wide) variety of programs and games or communicate with friends, acquaintances or arch-enemies anywhere in the world.

EUFIBER (N) — Any and all substances derived from the secretions of Anibal Buendia. When used for its communicative properties, eufiber (real or synthetic) can transfer at rates approaching 3Tb per second per millimeter width.

FUBAR (Adj) — The State of the American and world entertainment industry when the OpNet first went online in 2002. No longer able to effectively schedule programming or advertising by day and time slot and weakened by the gradual loss of homegrown (Hollywood) content, the top media and entertainment companies reacted with a slew of

executive firings and restructuring that virtually ruined the used BMW market, as former hotshots and bad-girls could no longer afford their kickin' wheels.

When's it on?

The introduction of the OpNet and the rapid convergence of television, computer games and Internet programming has virtually obliterated the idea of "Prime Time" programming. While some live events — most notably XWF broadcasts — still produce huge first run numbers, the idea of only being able to view programming at a specific time is considered quaint and old fashioned by the denizens of the 21st century. After a program's initial air date (IAD) and time, it can be accessed for viewing via the network OpNet site. The vast majority of OpScreens can be programmed to show several weeks of programming in any order the viewer desires. Even better, traveling to a different market or country no longer means you need to miss your favorite shows. It's something of a "viewer's paradise," except of course for the ever-present — and ever lengthening — advertisements.

Likewise, thanks to close-captioning technology, a viewer can program his OpTerminal to scan CC programs for key words like "Republican," "wrestling," "beauty," "gay" or "Catholic" and record only programs containing those words, thereby providing the discriminating viewer with an entire day's worth of personalized programming any time he wants to access it.

History

Excerpt from N! Documentary: The Making of the OpNet (produced by Doctor Caleb)

Narrator: ...The first eufiber cable was laid in 2002. It would take another three years to replace the miles upon miles of copper wire that we had relied on for so long, but by 2005, the "information superhighway" was looking like rush hour in pre-time-zone Los Angeles — slow, overcrowded, dangerous, yet still amusing in that antique Atari sort of way.

Dr. Timothy Johnson of MIT: It was amazing really. Sure, cable modems, DSL, etc. had taken us far from the clunky days of 28.8 and 56k modems, but to suddenly have the bandwidth for true interactivity — computers that could display television shows at UHDTV resolution, TVs that came standard with navigational devices for Web sites, practical video telephony — in those three years, the way the world communicated was completely redesigned.

Professor Jeremy Murray-Brown, Boston University's College of Communications: ...but the first ongoing program to really take advantage of the new broadcast speed — and this is worldwide, instantaneous, would be **Will and Grace** in 2002. Their willingness to put their program up for non-time specific viewing and some of their "interactive" elements allowed that show to last a good two or three seasons longer than expected.

Content

"57 Channels and Nothing on"

Bruce didn't even know how good he had it.

Personal OpNet Log, Dr. Caleb – October 15, 2012

0700. Awoke to the sounds of an epic XWF fight first made available for access on September 18. Gave up coffee in favor of the sound of Peter Myth's face being ground into the pavement by Nettlehawk's giant quantum hammer. Need to make a copy before it drops into the archives. Something about the sound of that purple stuff he calls skin being ground against the concrete gets my blood moving. Immediately opened PIP window on terminal and placed order at PZZZZZZZA.com. The pie was at my door and slid through the slot within 20 minutes. Told the kid to debit my account.

0800. Randomly surfed Time-Warner/AOL chat rooms "wearing" my favorite "interFACE" screen persona. Engaged in look-but-don't-touch (LBDT) fornication with a housewife from Idaho. Finished my pizza.

0900 Checked OpMail. Continued to check OpMail. Decided I didn't have the time and deleted 1,025 messages from fans, colleagues, ex-wives and assorted malcontents.

1000 Set terminal to surf through primary entertainment channels with CCScan. (For about two months after moving completely onto the OpNet, most stations left their access pages silent, full of nothing but icons and propaganda. They underestimated the passivity and laziness of the average viewer. Most "stations" now make sure to have something being put out "live" so that clicker monkeys will have something to latch onto. Some of the old fashioned, tech-challenged, knuckle-walking, cave dwarf types out there are **still** not ready to take control of their own broadcast day.) Inexplicably sucked into a documentary on salmon fishing. Played the accompanying game for a full 20 minutes before catching a 20-pounder and regaining control of my limbs.

1100 Logged on to Ultima interactive channel. The AI is getting better, but they have got to get some better actors. While casting spells and forming an "adventure" group with a friend from Australia and a Bollywood "touch engineer," fired up my portable and went shopping. Requested books are downloaded instantly into my library for later (eventual — OK, maybe never) consumption. Died on the Ice Queen level. Again. Made a note to look into buying "experience."

1330 Ordered out for Malaysian. Excellent roti canai.

1400 Checked N! Accessed Parker Stevens interview with Caestus Pax. Tried to quit before the commercial but wasn't fast enough. Forced to watch 1 minute, 30 second spot for new sonic tooth-cleaning system. You can pause, you can rewind, you can access a program anytime you want, but you can never, EVER fast forward through the propaganda.

1600 Placed a call to my mother. Wished she didn't insist on video feed. She looks so... old. She told me to shave. I suggested she should take her own advice.

1700 Accessed live traffic copter video feed. Laughed. It's good to work from home.

1800 Ordered more pizza, this time without anchovies. Spent 10 minutes flirting with the order girl who somehow made that horrid outfit attractive.

1830–2030 Two hours spent simultaneously watching Japanese game shows and recording a lecture for my history of media class. Spent 10 minutes discussing Philo T. Farnsworth's distaste for his flickering child. Expect students to be confused by long tangent on the virtues of the Asai moonsault.

2030 Turned off every terminal in the house, including my portable and subcutaneous. Spent 30 full minutes utterly alone. Cried.

2100 Waited patiently for the newest XWF show to become available. Waited longer. Waited longer. Finally, at 2120, the link flashed green. The announcers said that one of the competitors, Christine "The Terminatrix" Jesensky, had knocked out the broadcast booth. Spent the next hour sating my need for quantum-powered, theatrical ultra-violence. Saw the new Emmy-winning VIR-GOG commercial. Clever and creepy at the same time. Nice combo.

2300 For fun, did a search for "Teen Girl" on a net-wide search engine while watching Party-N! in a background PIP. Well over three million responses. Spent several minutes marveling at the god-like power of constant information and entertainment access.

0000 Realized that I hadn't left the house in well over two years. Laughed.

Access

The sheer number of "OpNet enabled" devices available on the commercial market is absolutely mind boggling. From flat-panel viewing walls to conventional desktop computers to wireless viewing goggles to PDAs, it's possible to watch your favorite show, access your favorite site or play your favorite game anywhere in the world and while doing virtually anything else simultaneously. Many corporations have been forced to screen their employees for personal OpNet devices as they enter each morning and attempts to unplug classrooms of children during school has on multiple occasions sparked miniature riots.

Christopher Andrew Gaal

Quote: *The way I see it, LA's primary industry and export is artifice. The powers that be simply use the city as a showroom.*

Background: Born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the son of an Engineer father and a mother who taught high school French, Gaal got his undergraduate degree in Telecommunications from Ohio University, his masters from Northwestern and "finally" settled in Los Angeles, diving head first into the "glamorous" entertainment industry. Or not. By 1999, Gaal had settled into a staff job at Greystone Communications, creating graphics and effects for History Channel documentaries and A&E Biographies. While by no means horrible, his life was predictable, safe, boring and more than a little lonely. He erupted late one night after drowning his sorrows at his favorite Chinatown dive. Chris left the bar on the dark edge of morning and was jumped by three well-armed adolescent malcontents who liked to fancy themselves tong members in training. Five minutes later, Chris was sitting on a nearby rooftop rubbing his temples and muttering about "flying drunk" while his assailants curled up in the fetal position and cried.

He met his soon-to-be partner 16 days later while undergoing aerial training at a Rashoud facility. The two became fast friends, and it wasn't long before the premise of becoming the world's first nova filmmakers took hold.

Chris enjoys the lifestyle that success has brought him (most especially his house in South Africa), but he's uncomfortable with the fame and lack of privacy that comes with being a nova. His favorite topics for film have always been the world's overlooked places and people. It's hard to get a subject to be honest and sincere when your face and name constantly grace the OpNet.

Image: Chris is a skinny white guy of Hungarian descent. He dresses in simple, pragmatic, clothes with lots of zipped pockets for the tricks of his trade.

Roleplaying hints: You're an "optimistic cynic" (read: realist) who is much more comfortable behind the camera than in front. Always have a cynical comment at the ready. If conversation seems to be focusing too much on you or getting to heavy, throw out a joke to lighten the mood and distract your questioners. It takes a lot for someone to get you to put down your "public face" and be wholly sincere.

Gear: UHDTV camera, spare lenses, cell phone, tool kit, dark sunglasses, press pass

Nature: Realist

Allegiance: N!/Independent.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 5, Appearance 3, Manipulation 3, Charisma 4

Abilities: Academics 1, Arts 4, Athletics 1, Awareness 5, Computer 2, Drive 2, Endurance 3, Engineering 3 (Cameras), Investigation 3, Legerdemain 5, Rapport 2, Resistance 3, Science 1, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1, Survival 1

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Attunement 5, Backing 4, Contacts 6, Resources 4

Quantum 3, Quantum Pool 26, Willpower 7, Taint 0

Powers: Mega-Stamina ••• (Hardbody, Regeneration), Mega-Perception ••• (Electromagnetic Vision), Mega-Wits ••• (Artistic Genius, Enhanced Initiative, Quickness), Flight •••, Force Field •••

James Najarian

Quote: *Since leaving academia, I've had a major realization: It's all poetry, man, or it should be. For me, every word I write, speak or think should be poetry. Life should be poetry. And when you're a nova, baby, it's all boldfaced and italicized.*

Background: The suave face man of the documentary duo, Najarian grew up on a goat farm in western Massachusetts, went to college in Northampton and wound up, for reasons he still finds inexplicable, teaching Victorian poetry at Boston College. Away from the academic setting, Najarian lived a secret life that his stodgy colleagues never knew about. His exploits were nearly discovered, however, when his parachute failed to open during one of his skydiving trips. He erupted moments before hitting the ground. Once he met Chris Gaal at the Utopia facility and turned his many talents to filmmaking, the face of the OpNet was changed forever.

Image: Najarian has the black hair, big brown eyes and intense smile to prove his Armenian heritage. Najarian is a spectacularly handsome (if unusually hirsute) man, and it falls to him to be the face man of the team and the narrator for all Gaal and Najarian documentaries, a task he accepts graciously and performs with smooth and winning competence.

Roleplaying hints: You appear quite charming and laid back about everything. Everybody wants to be your friend because you're just so easy going. That's the case only when you're not on a deadline. When it's time to film, you switch from the classic Type B personality to a relentless Type A and nothing can stop you.

Gear: Journal, cell phone, tool kit, spare clip-on microphones, press pass

Nature: Thrillseeker

Allegiance: N!/Independent.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Appearance 5, Manipulation 3, Charisma 5

Abilities: Academics 4, Arts 4, Athletics 1, Awareness 2, Brawl 1, Bureaucracy 2, Computer 2, Drive 2, Endurance 4, Etiquette 2, Investigation 1, Linguistics 2 (Armenian, French), Perform 4, Rapport 4, Resistance 3, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2, Style 4, Subterfuge 2, Survival 2

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Backing 4, Contacts 6, Node 1, Resources 5

Quantum 4, Quantum Pool 28, Willpower 6, Taint 0

Powers: Mega-Stamina •••• (Adaptability, Durability, Hardbody, Resiliency), Mega-Appearance •• (Almost Live, First Impression), Mega-Charisma ••• (Center of Attention, Soothe), Armor ••••, Flight ••••, Hypermovement (Flight) •

Nielsen Report for 4/18/12 to 4/24/12

Most Accessed Passive Program for Week: XWF "Nova Extreme" special featuring "Kamikaze" Kiwalski and Superbeast in a flaming-steel-cage, cattle-prod, I-quit match. 180.7 million accesses worldwide.

Most Accessed Interactive Program for Week: Team Tomorrow RPG. New episodes available daily. Most popular adventure so far has been "Geryon in Seattle." Most popular personae remain Caestus Pax and Ragnarockette.

For full-access report of commercial and entertainment OpNet sites please enter ID and Password below.

Login Name

Password



Censorship

And Who Wants to Keep You from Seeing It All?

From an interview with Mark Rosenthal, former chairman of the FCC:

A damn headache is what it was. We'd been dealing with litigation stemming from Internet smut for a few years but there was no way we would be given power — or would even have the ability — to censor the OpNet. Every civilized city, town or village in the whole damn world connected at the speed of light. Zero travel time. Forget about zoning, forget about time zones and only allowing certain harsh or "adult" language, swearing, at certain times of night. The whole damned world became one big market. No control. Chaos. Things fell apart. The center could not hold. Sure, there are parent locks, and most of the really bad stuff is on expensive pay services, but still, there's always going to be someone out there trying to corrupt the youth of America, and if they're broadcasting out of some tree in Botswana, what the hell could we do about it? All you need is a camera, an address and a cute chick to sell it all!

From the Associated Press, January 12, 2004:

The UN has today announced the formation of a new Global Media Council, purportedly being set up to study the effects of the OpNet and the instantaneous spread of incredibly high volumes of information. "The introduction of eufiber optical cable has pushed communications technology years ahead of what it would have reached on its own. The ability to transmit information instantaneously, worldwide, and the inability to limit that broadcast to just one region must be carefully studied," said former FCC chairman Mark Rosenthal. "We do not wish for American programming and propaganda to be allowed such free reign in our country," said Raschid Dawood from the Iranian Embassy.

Looney of the Week

From the OpNet site of the "Children of Batu"

And, oh, Great Brothers and Sisters, the work is almost done. Our agents have done their jobs well. The fibers of this OpNet, created by one of Batu's Chosen Messengers, has been spread in the necessary pattern. Soon, this great antennae will broadcast out the message, and our masters will return from their long journey to find us, their children, ready and **desperate** for their blissfully cruel rule.

As always I remain your host and housebound narrator — Doctor Caleb

Eruption

The moment that defines every nova's life forever after is, at best, poorly understood. What sets it off? Why is it so different for every nova? How is it that one nova erupts so quietly he barely notices and another suffers crippling headaches and nausea for days on end?

The Trigger

Literally any event or experience can trigger eruption. No consistent rule has been established so far, and it's unlikely any ever will be. Extremes of emotion (positive or negative), emergencies (medical or otherwise), even death can trigger the transformation into a demigod.

Eruption Triggers

Aberrant (p. 117) discusses several common triggers for eruption. The following discusses possible ways to play out and/or describe triggers:

- **Accident:** Novas who erupt in accidents will always manifest powers that will enable them to survive the accidents — the powers might not be intuitively obvious to an observer, but with something as unpredictable as eruptions, that's almost par. A nova who erupts in an automobile accident might develop enough Density Control to simply become insubstantial, enough soak to survive the impact, the ability to teleport out of harm's way or to open a warp in front of the vehicle before collision actually occurs. In such cases, the first power use is often reflexive and intuitive.

- **Deliberate:** Most people who attempt to trigger the eruption of their M-R node die or wind up maiming themselves. Those few individuals who are successful tend to have an idea of what kind of powers they want, and with that in mind, they try to arrange the circumstances in such a way as to get the desired power or set of powers. Skydiving without a parachute may net Flight, while one who douses herself with gasoline and lights a match can expect control over fire. A person who chooses to force an eruption tends to be very determined, somewhat suicidal and not very bright. As with "accidents," the nova could erupt in any number of ways that will enable her to survive the experience, and not all of these will necessarily result in the desired powers, but they will be reflections of the nova's unconscious mind in any case.

- **Emotional Trauma:** A latent nova suffering from an emotional extreme usually erupts in a manner that allows him to eliminate or ignore the cause. A teenager whose parents constantly argue around him to the point that he simply doesn't want to be around them, could develop Domina-

tion or Empathic Manipulation to force them to stop fighting, or he could develop Silence to shut them up. He could also gain Mega-Manipulation and simply talk one or both into divorce and go with whichever parent he favors. If he blames himself for parental strife, the eruption could very well remove those qualities about himself that he fears causes the arguments. Of course, any or all of the above can and probably will backfire on the newly erupted nova, but nobody expects M-R nodes to come with a user's manual.

- **Excitement:** At the other end of emotional extremes, latent novas can just as easily erupt during joyous or passionate occasions. Eruptions under such circumstances tend to be more varied and, on the whole, less destructive. A latent nova could erupt after completing and passing his doctoral dissertation or after getting a gallery showing for his sculpture. Such occasions reinforce positive self-image, and that in itself may shape the course eruption takes. The nova whose successful dissertation triggers eruption might actually become the world's expert on whatever field he studied. Depending upon what his dissertation was about, he might also gain power over what it covered (say, elements of high-energy physics or environmental influences over plant growth). He could also develop complementary competence, perhaps in areas that he neglected in the pursuit of his goal. A sculptor, on the other hand, might develop the means to pursue his art without tools (like Elemental Mastery: Earth or Disintegration).

- **Exposure to Quantum Powers:** Active novas tossing around large amounts of quantum energy sometimes trigger eruptions in nearby latent novas. This happens most often when novas expend a lot of energy (often fighting) using their powers. A latent caught in the wrong place (or the right place?) at the wrong time (or the right time?) can suddenly erupt, manifesting powers somehow related to the conflict nearby. He may develop powers to counter one or more of the other combatants. He could also, as with an "accident," develop defenses or a means of rapid escape, depending upon his personality and immediate impulses. A young mother trapped near a pair of battling elites might suddenly develop powerful Telekinesis which she then uses to turn Pursuer's bullets back upon him or a force field which she uses to surround herself and her child for protection (or possibly both).

- **Revelation:** Eruptions aren't always dramatic events. Sometimes, they can happen with a minimum of fuss or warning. In such cases, it is literally possible for a latent nova to erupt without realizing it, at least for a little while. The erup-



tion might seem to happen over several days following the actual trigger event. The eruption, in this case, just seems to happen with no obvious stimuli, though many novas claiming to have this type of eruption were in the midst of some form of profound spiritual experience (Sufi whirling, Zen meditation, Tantric sexual practices, etc.). The powers the nova displays in these cases tend to express some element of the nova's spirituality or her concept of the divine (as understood by her subconscious) and may not necessarily fulfill her personal desires.

- **Threatening Situation:** Like accidents and deliberate action, a latent nova threatened with violence will manifest powers that make survival a certainty. If held at gunpoint, she will become bulletproof or develop abilities that make it easy for her to disarm and/or disable her opponent. As above, she may also develop a rapid means of escape (Enhanced Movement, Teleportation, etc.). As always, the powers will take shape based on the nova's subconscious and personality. An anime fan might develop an incredible mastery of martial arts, inhumanly fast reflexes and perhaps Claws (to simulate a "chi strike").

Other possible eruption triggers include:

- **Illness:** Any kind of acute or terminal illness can trigger eruption, whether it's the disease's interaction with the body or the sudden news that the latent nova has tested positive for HIV. The eruption generally eliminates the illness (and frequently grants Mega-Stamina). People who suffer through frequent or long-term illnesses tend to think more about good health, and the manifested powers will reflect that. A nova, embittered from a lengthy battle with cancer might develop the power to inflict it on others (and perhaps Taint reflecting the cancer's ravaging of his own body), while another might develop Healing to cure those who suffer from similar illnesses.

- **Suicide:** This eruption is a cross between "threatening situations" and "deliberate." The latent nova attempts to kill herself (the method is unimportant), only to erupt instead. Some novas develop an appearance and set of powers that reflect the self-loathing that might drive someone to suicide. Others might develop along less morbid lines, as their eruptions eliminate the conditions that lead them to attempt suicide.

Powers

The form eruption takes is dependent upon the incipient nova's conscious and subconscious wants and needs. A nova who erupts in an auto accident is likely to manifest powers that will grant her survival in that circumstance. A nova who erupts while daydreaming will have a much different result.

Wish Fulfillment

Interestingly, a nova seems more likely to develop powers in areas where he's deficient (or believes he's deficient), rather than areas of confidence. A nova who is shy and withdrawn, with little self-confidence, is likely to become a quantum-charged "life of the party," whereas someone who's already fairly confident and outgoing, might have less of a need or want for such development.

It is a rare person who is completely satisfied with herself as she is. Perhaps she thinks she's too fat (or thin) or not intelligent enough. Or perhaps she wants to become the greatest novelist the world has ever known. These desires act upon the nova during eruption.

Wish fulfillment is not limited to quantum powers, Mega-Attributes or enhancements. A typical nova will transform into an idealized version of herself (this does not necessarily imply Mega-Appearance, although it can). At it's base, all novas have hyperactive metabolisms, which means that novas will generally have an ideal body-fat percentage, pleasing proportions and an aura of health no normal human could ever aspire to. A nova who is unhappy with her hair color, facial structure, sex or disabilities (physical and/or mental) will probably alter in form to match her desires. Novas simply don't suffer from ingrown toenails or diabetes mellitus. These changes don't necessarily reflect nova points expenditures, but working out how a nova might

transform during eruption can add insight in reactions to eruption.

Survival

Many a nova has erupted during some sort of life-threatening activity, accident or natural disaster. These stimuli offer a more pressing need than a typical person's day-to-day fantasies and shape the final form a nova takes post-eruption. It doesn't matter how little Luther cares about possibly being resistant to harm, when the rockslide hits him, he'll manifest some form of protection. Whether he teleports out of harm's way, telekinetically shoves the rocks aside or simply develops enough Armor or Force Field to handle the impact, this will affect how his eruption manifests.

Side Effects

Eruption often inflicts incredible physical stresses upon the recipient. First, the M-R node grows (anywhere from the size of a walnut to that of a grapefruit) in the brain, which may cause intense headaches, seizures or mild hallucinations (similar to those caused by brain tumors). Beyond that commonality, a nova could develop extra limbs, gills, armor-plated skin, super-efficient muscles or nearly any other physical modification anyone could possibly imagine. Even the incredibly adaptive nova metabolism may have difficulty adjusting to the incredible stresses of these transformations. The resulting symptoms often manifest as nausea, cramping and even massive allergic reactions (as their bodies purge themselves of a lifetime of accumulated environmental or dietary poisons).

Not all novas experience adverse symptoms. Some simply don't physically change much, and others might change in such ways that they simply won't suffer from the side effects (novas with the Adaptability enhancement, or even Mega-Stamina in general, suffer fewer symptoms than most, but this is not a hard and fast rule).

Eruption Mechanics

Whatever the cause, some mechanism in the brain awakens the M-R node. In theory, an increase in neural activity causes eruption. Lacking sufficient laboratory instances of eruption, it's difficult to identify just what brain activity triggers the node to develop full functionality.

The most common eruptions happen instantaneously, but the manifestations can take hours or days to fully appear. At the moment eruption occurs, the incipient nova literally has the universe at his fingertips. Some theories indicate that the actual eruption occurs in Planck Time

Nova Abilities

A newly erupted nova can start with literally dozens of additional Abilities beyond the initial 23 provided in Step Three of Character Generation (*Aberrant*, page 114). Where do they get all this extra expertise? One nova may suddenly have full recall of everything he's ever read or heard about ecology. Another nova might gain an intuitive understanding of the laws of physics or musical theory. Yet a third nova might develop a brief but intense telepathic link with anyone and/or everyone nearby and absorb what they know in some form of hyper-psycho osmosis. Whatever the cause, a nova can, post-eruption, suddenly become one of the world's top 10 experts (if not *the* expert) in literally any field.

(the shortest possible duration, at 5.4×10^{-44} seconds). In that literal instant, he can do *anything*. The first thing every newly erupting nova does is limit himself. He imposes his own expectations over the infinite possibilities available to him. The human mind simply cannot handle infinite possibility and short circuits itself into a more limited framework.

A nova's self-imposed limitations are not a disadvantage. On the contrary, the initial expectations provide every nova with a basis from which she can grow into greater power. A nova who simply erupts into greater power is likely to experience other difficulties — commonly manifested as taint.

Powers

As discussed above, novas can manifest nearly limitless combinations of powers. While it may seem that a nova's powers should necessarily be themed around a specific special effect (or group of related effects), this won't always be the case, at least not from any kind of logical or physics standpoint. A nova's powers will be thematically linked under most conditions, even if that theme seems somewhat difficult to explain (how do you put *Immolate: Fire and Flight* on the same character?). The point isn't that the connection fit the laws of physics, but fit the character's perception of the world.

Typically, a newly erupted nova has an intuitive grasp of her powers. If not sure of the specifics on how much she can lift or how hot her

flame blasts are, she'll know that she's very strong and can hurl flame hot enough to melt steel. The eruption grants novas the equivalent of new limbs, perceptions and personal limits — since these all derive from the nova's own mind, it's unlikely she'll be unaware of her new capabilities.

Taint

Many novas erupt with some degree of taint — always a tradeoff for more power. While taint is a side effect caused by the flow of quantum through a human body, it, too, is likely to manifest in ways that reflect the nova's subconscious. A nova who is uncertain about his appearance could develop *Unearthly Beauty* or *Sheer Hideousness*. Not all aberrations are necessarily bad for the nova, although they tend to make baselines shy away. Some are simply special effects (*Colored Skin*, *Anima Banner*), while others can have a real impact on the nova's life (*Allergic Reaction*, *Feeding Requirement*). Also, much like powers, aberrations may also reflect the circumstances that triggered the eruption. A nova who erupts in a burning house may develop a "halo" of flickering flames around her body.

How Did You Erupt?

None of the above is meant to limit the myriad forms a nova can take upon eruption. On the contrary, the intent is to provide inspiration for characters — how they erupt, how their powers appear, how they discover their powers and so on. Use it as a tool, not a box.

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From the
Weekly World News,
12/04/03

Lost Biblical passages reveal the truth:

JESUS WAS A NOVA!

Researchers funded by Project Utopia and the Aeon Society have discovered evidence in the Middle East that proves Jesus of Nazareth was in fact a nova, possibly the first nova ever. The archeological expedition, working in Iraq, discovered clay vessels containing ancient tablets from the time of the New Testament. The tablets appear to be accounts of Jesus' miracles, written by his contemporaries, possibly the Apostles. Information on these tablets suggests Jesus was, in fact, a nova.

"The tablets focus on the miraculous powers of Jesus as proof of his divinity," says a source close to the find, who preferred to remain anonymous. "They talk



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about the halo of light that often surrounded him, the power of his 'third eye' and refer often to his insight into the inner workings of Creation. All these points are similar to modern novas, who have an activated 'third eye' in the form of their M-R node, often give off light or other radiant energy when exercising their powers and have insight into the quantum mysteries of the universe."

Certainly, the miracles attributed to Jesus are within the power of modern novas; walking on water, healing the sick and injured and transforming water into wine are all feats novas have been able to duplicate, in one form or another. Even the resurrections Jesus performed may have been examples of quantum power, possibly including his own suffering on the cross and "resurrection" three days later. Many novas are capable of surviving the terrible tortures Jesus endured and recovering from such terrible injuries with a few days' rest. Some suggest this lends credence to the theory that Jesus did live on after his resurrection, traveling to other lands to preach and spread the gospel, as described in *The Book of Mormon*.

The Catholic Church maintains that nova abilities are God-given talents but denies any divine connection between novas and God. This denial has not stopped numerous small shrines dedicated to various novas from springing up around the world, nor has it prevented people from speculating about the nature and origin of nova abilities. Project Utopia representatives had no comment about the archaeological evidence, except to say they "support the expansion of human knowledge and furthering the understanding of novas and their extraordinary abilities."

Gods, Heroes & Monsters: The Secret History of Novas

By Dr. Charles Cermontes

Published by Harper-Collins, San Francisco, 2013

256 pages, e-book and paper editions

There were giants in the earth in those days.

—Genesis 6:4

So begins *Gods, Heroes & Monsters*, Dr. Cermontes' exposé on "the Secret History of Novas." Using a variety of historical, literary and mythological sources, Dr. Cermontes attempts to prove that not only did novas exist among us before the *Galatea* disaster in 1998, but they form the basis for many (if not all) of our most fundamental myths, stories and legends. In Dr. Cermontes' opinion, novas are indeed the "Gods, Heroes & Monsters" of the title. How does Cermontes go about proving this opinion?

The book begins at the end, starting with an overview of the past 15 years of nova history, from the *Galatea* disaster and the eruptions of the first novas such as Randel Portman, through the discoveries of Drs. Marin and Rashoud and the classification of novas as subspecies of *Homo sapiens*. Dr. Cermontes particularly examines nova eruptions mirroring the abilities of mythic or religious figures, particularly novas in India and parts of Asia, as well as some novas in North America, notably Mexico. The chapter concludes with an examination of the biology of the M-R node and a basic overview of the biology of mutation and evolution in general. This sets the stage for the book's thesis, but stating that such a radical mutation as the M-R node could not have developed even within one generation, but required multiple generations, perhaps even hundreds of years, to develop to the point where novas are today.

Next, Cermontes takes us back into the misty depths of prehistory, looking at some of the most basic human beliefs and the earliest myths. In particular, he considers the shamanic state of consciousness and its possible relationship to the various psychic powers exhibited by novas. Was the shamanic "otherworld" a vision of quantum reality or perhaps some kind of shared telepathic "dream world"?

In "The Ancient World," Cermontes looks at various cultures, with an emphasis on Egypt, Greece and China, considering various myths and comparing them to feats performed by modern-day novas. Were the heroes — or even gods — of myth actually novas? Were the wonders of the ancient world like the Great Pyramids built using nova ingenuity or even nova powers? Cermontes looks at Taoist and Platonian philosophy as early understandings of quantum holism and the holographic structure of the universe.

In Chapter Four, "Figures of the Bible," Cermontes tackles perhaps the most controversial subject in his book. Were Biblical figures like Moses and Jesus novas? Were the angels described in the Bible humanlike beings with powers beyond baseline comprehension? Are portions of the Bible literally true, but based on phenomena we are only now discovering? Cermontes breaks down and looks at dozens miraculous feats described in the New and Old Testaments and provides examples of modern novas capable of doing the same things. He suggests the classical image of angels as beautiful, shining beings is similar to the appearance of some novas. It behooves us to ask ourselves, "If Alejandra were born three millennia ago, is there any reason to doubt that she would be considered an angel?"

In a similar vein, the following chapters look at different historical periods and the development of myths and legends surrounding them. Cermontes looks at the legends of the ancient Celts up through the stories of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. He poses the question of whether or not Arthur's legend may be based on an actual Celtic war chief, as has been suggested by many historians, but also whether or not Arthur's mentor Merlin may have actually possessed some of the fantastic powers attributed to him in legend. Merlin is often described as being only "half-human," with an unearthly father, and other magicians of the Arthurian stories, such as Arthur's nemesis Morgan LeFey, are depicted as having an "otherworldly" nature that makes them something more than human.

In "The Victorian Era," Cermontes describes psychics and witches and the formation of the Society for Parapsychological Research, along with numerous mystic cults and secret orders devoted to studying the occult. Although he doesn't claim every would-be occultist in the 19th century was actually a nova, he does hint that some of the more spectacular or successful of them may have been and that the "psychic" abilities groups like the SPR were investigating may have been nova-inspired, at least in part.

"The Twentieth Century" continues the trend with a look at a wide range of "unexplained phenomena." From psychic research (including government sponsored projects like the CIA's Stargate), through to sightings of strange creatures, alien abductions and nearly everything else Charles Fort included in his famous collections of the unexplained and the mysterious. His commentary on the "mini quantum boom" of the 20s, 30s and 40s is especially well researched, persuasive and perhaps a little disturbing.

Dr. Cermontes concludes the book by taking all the evidence and ideas introduced in previous chapters and using them to build an argument to suggest that pre-*Galatea* novas might be able to explain many myths, legends and mysteries of the past. He calls for further study and research in this area, in hopes of illuminating new information in the field of "novology."

I found Dr. Cermontes' scholarship beyond reproach and the book flawlessly researched, but I was not entirely convinced by his arguments. A great deal of the "evidence" Cermontes draws upon is anecdotal at best; myths, legends and stories handed down and translated over centuries. Even Cermontes himself admits to the existence of a "chicken and egg" problem where nova powers are concerned. Are some novas similar to mythical figures because their abilities are somehow directed by cultural context or because those original figures were themselves novas? Certainly, there are similarities between what novas can do and myths around the world, but that's at least partly because novas appear capable of almost *anything*.

Cermontes' background is in biological psychology, and he takes what is called a "psycho-historical" view, dealing more often with the impact of ideas and cultural memes than documented events and personalities. He makes extensive use of documented source material but — as he himself points out — much of the documentation he's looking for simply isn't available. The tiny lump of brain tissue that separates a nova from a baseline doesn't survive long enough for historians and archeologists to find, although he points out that MRI scans are being performed on a number of well-preserved mummies for any evidence of an M-R node. This lack of hard data makes Cermontes' arguments little more than speculation, albeit well-supported speculation.

Cermontes also plays the "psychic" card a bit too often in his work. He claims that much of the previous century and a half or so of research in psychic abilities such as ESP, telepathy, remote viewing and telekinesis is at least partly based on early, weak manifestations of nova abilities. While it is certainly true that novas have displayed powers previously thought of as psychic, there is no evidence that famous or well-known psychics were in fact novas. In fact, latter-day studies of psychic abilities, including MRI scans, show no evidence of an M-R node in any of the psychics tested, despite the fact that some had significant scores on various ESP tests.

Still, *Gods, Heroes & Monsters* poses a lot of interesting questions, even if the answers are by no means certain. By the end of the book, I found myself echoing Dr. Cermontes call for further research into this topic. If you are at all interested in history, and some interesting speculation into the possible role of novas in it, then I recommend you read this book.

— John Flemming

What do *you* think?

A waste of time (13 replies)

Cermontes' book is right up there with "writers" like VonDankken. His so-called "theories" are little more than New Age claptrap dressed up in psychobabble. There is no evidence whatsoever that novas existed before the *Galatea* explosion. This book is just a transparent attempt to cash in on nova-mania by suckering gullible consumers. Avoid it like the plague.

— Tom Volczek, tvolczak@vsnet.com.op

Too quick to judge? (5 replies)

I think you should read this book before passing judgment on its validity. Dr. Cermontes makes a lot of good points that aren't really touched on in this review. I don't know whether he's right or not, but he really gave me something to think about. If novas are the source of some of our basic myths, then what does that mean for us and for them?

— Andy Detwiler, andyman@usnet.com.op

Sending the wrong message (27 replies)

This book sends people the wrong message about Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To suggest that the Son of God was "just another nova" is not only blasphemous, it undermines the ideals of our faith and cheapens the lives of everyone who has fought and suffered to spread Christ's word. Jesus was sent to us to show us the way to God and to save us from our sins. He died and was reborn for you because he was the Messiah, not because of some mutation in his brain! It's just this sort of thinking that has led to the persecution of Christians in America and elsewhere.

— Laura Nyland, lauranyland@victorynet.com.op

The novation of history (18 replies)

The thing that bothers me about this book is how it tries to stretch the mantle of the nova too far. It makes the nova craze retroactive. It's bad enough that the modern age is all about nova this and nova that. Do we have to twist history, too? Cermontes would have us believe that nearly every mythic hero, pagan god, psychic, mystic or charismatic leader in history was actually a nova or a "latent" nova (his way of saying "like a nova, but not"). What does that say about "baseline" humanity? That we would never have crawled out of our caves if it weren't for the assistance and leadership of the secret novas among us? I think Cermontes' theory cheapens the achievements (and the failures) of humans throughout history.

— Scott McAllister, mac@empirenet.com.op

Novas Before N-Day

The Marin-Rashoud Node that gives novas their powers is a mutation, a development that does not spring up in a species overnight. The mutation leading to full expression of the M-R node following the *Galatea* disaster took centuries to develop in humanity. Although 1978 is known as the year when novas first appeared in significant numbers, it is believed that the mutation — and its potential — has lain dormant in humanity for a very long time. That potential has sometimes expressed itself in a few extraordinary people.

The truth is that novas did exist before 1978, although there were far fewer of them and they were, on the whole much less powerful than those appearing afterward (somewhere between 10 and 20 nova points is a good range for novas erupting before 1978). Although the existence of these novas is a fact, it's largely up to the Storyteller to decide who these historical novas were, what they did and what became of them. This book doesn't provide a definitive list of who was and was not a nova in "real" history. It's recommended that you keep the number of historical novas to a minimum. Before *Galatea*, the M-R node appeared very rarely, perhaps eight to ten nova births per century.

Those few novas that did erupt were usually weak compared to modern novas, and they tended to have a poor understanding of the nature of their abilities and what they could do with them. Novas may well have been responsible for myths about legendary heroes and magical powers, but while most historical novas didn't have the tremendous power associated with the gods or figures of legend, the tales of their deeds were like the speck of dirt in an oyster shell around which a pearl develops.

Storytellers can use the existence of historical novas as nothing more than a background element in a modern-day **Aberrant** series (and an obscure background element, at that). Alternatively, Storytellers can incorporate the existence of novas from before *Galatea* as a more important element in the series or even as the basis for a series set before 1978.

Historical Games

Storytellers wanting to run an **Aberrant** series set in a different period of history need to do some research about the particular era where the game is to be set. Some suggestions are offered here.



Why should you run a historical game? In addition to being a great change of pace, a historical game allows players to experience a different time and place and puts an entirely different spin on the abilities (and responsibilities) of nova characters. It can also provide a sense of continuity and history for a modern-day **Aberrant** series later on.

Unless you are planning on running an alternate history game (see below) the number of novas in the world should be only a handful, just enough for the main characters and a few nova adversaries and that's all. That makes each nova character even more important, since each is a truly rare and unique commodity. It also makes each nova character more powerful, since he or she has fewer peers. For this reason, you may want to limit the power-levels of historical nova characters, giving them only 15, 10 or even fewer nova points to spend during character creation.

Important Eras

With a historical game, you have all of human history to choose from to be your setting. Before starting out, do some research on your setting. History books, atlases, textbooks and biographies are good sources to get the gist of the period, its character and its important places and people. Historical novels and films can provide more detail on the "feel" of the setting and how to present it to the players. The History Channel and the Internet are your friends in this quest for useful setting information. You may also find useful material in your library of game books. White Wolf's line of World of Darkness historical games can provide detail on their particular settings (provided you ignore or modify the supernatural elements) and various other game companies have historical settings for many of their games which may spark ideas as well.

- **Prehistoric Times:** "Prehistory" ranges between 10,000 BC to 5,000 BC, before the first human civilizations arose. This is very fertile ground for a historical **Aberrant** series because so little is known about the dim and distant past. It is a time of wandering, nomadic tribes of hunter-gatherers, as well as a time when some of the first human myths and legends began. Perhaps some of those legends are based on the existence of a small number of novas. Nova characters in this type of series can easily become powerful heroes and respected leaders of their people. Perhaps Mega-Intelligent novas are responsible for advancing primitive technology by discovering fire, agriculture and other techniques. Mega-Social novas also have the potential to shape cultures and even found nations. Novas may be regarded as gods, spirits, sorcerers, demons or all of the above. Their battles may set the tone of future myths like Ragnarok, the Deluge or events from the Mayan, Aztec or Hindu myths.

If the Storyteller wishes, the novas may be responsible for the creation of an advanced society, long before any human civilization was supposed to exist. Perhaps legends of lost continents like Atlantis, Lemuria or Mu are based on this civilization. Novas use their powers to create an advanced and peaceful utopia, until the influence of taint begins rotting their society from within and leads to its terrible downfall. The sinking of Atlantis

(or the historical basis for the legend) could certainly have been caused by the power of an out-of-control nova.

References for a prehistoric series include *Clan of the Cave Bear* by Jean M. Auel and *The Adversary: Saga of Pliocene Exile* by Julian May, along with *GURPS Ice Age* from Steve Jackson Games.

- **The Ancient World:** From 5,000 BC until the fall of the Roman Empire around AD 450-500, a number of classical civilizations reign, from the Egyptians to the Greeks, Romans, Celts, Chinese and more. Many of these ancient civilizations reach great pinnacles of achievement in the arts and sciences, and all of them spawned numerous myths, legends and stories that make excellent fodder for a historical **Aberrant** series.

Greek mythology, in particular, evokes the spirit of **Aberrant**. While possessing tremendous power, the Greek gods were very human in their passions and their failings. Characters in a historical series may be the inspiration for tales of the gods, or perhaps they dare to masquerade as gods but have to wonder whether or not "real" gods exist, who might object to their deception! Stories can re-create some of the classical myths, with enough small changes that players are well advised not to rely too heavily on their knowledge of how things "should" happen.

Resources for this sort of game are plentiful, you need look no further than the mythology section of most libraries. *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, *The Bible*, *The Koran*, *Beowulf*, *The Mahabharata*, *The Tain*, *The Poetic Edda* and any of the other great works of mythology from around the world can be used to spark ideas for series in the ancient world. Classical cultures are also the subject of numerous textbooks, as well as many plays, films and television programs (few of them historically accurate, however).

- **The Middle Ages:** After the fall of Rome, the darkness of the Middle Ages descended on Europe. Novas have an opportunity to be a powerful source of light in the darkness, provided they can deal with witch-burning inquisitors, warring petty kingdoms, plagues and the fear of a superstitious populace.

One option is a "romantic" game, with the novas as heroic knights supporting a society like King Arthur's Camelot or Charlemagne's Paladins. Their powers are considered magical, and some novas may be considered wizards like Merlin, while others are renowned for their Mega-Attributes (particularly Strength and Stamina). Novas might try to create a "perfect" society like Camelot, only to have it torn apart by internal strife.

Another option is a "secret" nova game, where novas conceal their powers for reasons of their own, usually to avoid being burned at the stake and hounded by the Inquisition. They use their abilities in subtle ways, careful to avoid suspicion. They can become involved in the tangled politics of Europe or head off to the Crusades to free the Holy Land. Maybe along the way they can investigate and loot an abandoned tomb or ruin, just for fun.

There's no lacking in source material for this era. **The Vampire: The Dark Ages** setting for White Wolf's World of Darkness provides ample material. Other re-

sources include Atlas Games' *Ars Magica*, Green Knight Publishing's *Pendragon* (for material on Arthur and medieval Britain) and various *GURPS* books (notably *GURPS Middle Ages*). Storytellers may find the *Chronicles of the Deryni* by Katherine Kurtz and Poul Anderson's *The High Crusade* useful sources of inspiration.

- **Renaissance and Reformation:** Following the Middle Ages is a time of great change, filled with political intrigue, exploration, discovery, art, science and all the drama a Storyteller could want for an **Aberrant** series. The rise of the middle class, the decline of the monarchy and explosions in science, art and religion offer a world ripe for the abilities of a few novae. Swashbuckling action is one of the settings' prime genres, with pirates, privateers and swordsmen, although the setting is also well-suited to plotting and political intrigue. Storytellers may find any of the numerous Hollywood pirate films useful inspiration, along with games like *Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade*, *GURPS Swashbucklers* and *7th Sea* from Alderac Entertainment.

- **The Victorian Era:** The later half of the 19th century is a time of great expansion and prosperity for Europe and great suffering for native peoples displaced by colonists and nations playing the game of Empire. The Industrial Revolution grips Europe, and Science is king. People are exposed to strange and exotic lands and bring back new customs, vices and amusements with them. A strict code of behavior governs people, but honor and class are held as virtues.

Into this setting, novae can be gentlemen (and lady) adventurers, perhaps possessed of strange powers or of great prowess (Mega-Attributes). A character with Mega-Perception would make a fine consulting detective, and a nova with Mega-Charisma could become the leader of a nation. Alan Moore's comic book *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (published by America's Best Comics) is the quintessential resource for this sort of game, along with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories and the works of Jules Verne. *Castle Falkenstein*, from R. Talsorian Games, is perhaps the finest Victorian era RPG, closely followed by *Space: 1889* and *Forgotten Futures*.

The other side of the Victorian coin is the lawless frontier of the American West, portrayed in endless western movies and novels. Storytellers can use the **Werewolf: the Wild West** game for reference, along with *Deadlands* by the Pinnacle Entertainment Group. *The Justice Riders* by DC Comics presents an interesting alternate west for novae.

- **The 20s and 30s:** The era of promise that is the 1920s featured super science, bootleg liquor, speakeasies, flappers, jazz and a general desire to forget the horrors of World War I. Following closely on the heels of the 20s, the 1930s set the stage for the Great Depression and a great deal of turbulence in Europe, as Germany saw the Weimar Republic fall and the Nazi Party come to power. While it was a time of great trouble, it was also a time of larger-than-life heroes doing amazing



deeds, and it was the setting for the first modern comic-book superhero (who first appeared in 1938).

Novas in this time can take after heroes of the pulp magazines like Doc Savage, the Man of Bronze (a man with Mega-Attributes if ever there was one), the Shadow, with his power to cloud men's minds, and the Spider, Master of Men. Heroes explore strange, faraway lands, battle villainous masterminds bent on conquest and find lost treasures and the dangers that guard them. And, of course, this time features the founding of the Aeon Society by the mysterious Max Mercer.

Resources for the era include the aforementioned pulp stories, films like the Indiana Jones series and *The Untouchables* and games such as *Call of Cthulhu* (for the 1920s). Most other game supplements dealing with the pulp era are out of print and difficult to find, like the pulps themselves.

- **World War II:** World War II offers tremendous opportunities for an **Aberrant** game. The novas could be out in the forefront, battling enemy novas on the front lines, or they could be operating behind the scenes as spies and saboteurs, perhaps aiding the French Resistance or working on the home front to thwart the schemes of enemy agents. The golden age of comic books, including the adventures of the Justice Society of America provide a great resource for the period, along with an endless string of war movies up to and including *Saving Private Ryan*.

Alternative History

One limitation of a historical series is that the future is basically already written. Storytellers willing to take on a bit more of a challenge can choose to run an alternative history game, where the players are not bound to follow the constraints of history as it unfolds (or unfolded) in the **Aberrant** world. In an alternative history, novas can truly change the world. They can defeat the rebel colonists and ensure the Americans remain British subjects. They can prevent the fall of Rome (or accelerate it), fight on either or both sides of the American Civil War, win or prevent World War II, try to set up their own private utopia and make it work and nearly anything else you can imagine.

Although alternative history campaigns can be more work in terms of research, they are very liberating in terms of freedom of choice. The players don't feel railroaded by the dictates of history, and the Storyteller doesn't have to ensure things turn out a particular way. Of course, if you want an alternative history but also want to keep things a part of an ongoing **Aberrant** series, you can choose the next option.

Alternative Universe

The Universe Creation power (described on page 140) allows a nova to create entire worlds, including worlds based on alternative histories. This gives the Storyteller a tool for creating alternative worlds, similar to the history of our own, for novas to adventure in. This has all of the benefits of the alternative history concept, with the additional advantage that the characters can (hopefully) re-

turn whence they came when the story is over. The main drawback the Storyteller should be aware of is the possibility that the players may tend to treat an alternative universe with even less regard than the "mainstream" universe and may act without any concern for the consequences. Of course, players who do so provide you, the Storyteller, with any number of adventure hooks for future stories that confront them with the consequences of their actions. For example, what if the wronged universe happens to have novas of its own and they discover a way to follow the characters back to where they came from?

Time Travel

The Time Travel power (described on page 136) makes the possibility of modern novas visiting other time periods a reality. The mechanics and difficulties of time travel are described along with the power. The Storyteller can use this ability as a hook to involve the characters in a story set in a different era. The prime difficulties are dealing with any changes or temporal paradoxes the character may create and keeping history "on track." If necessary, the Storyteller can always declare that the characters have succeeded in creating an alternative universe (above), that "splits off" from the mainstream universe, without affecting the characters' present at all. However, this is an option of last resort, since it tends to make time travel a moot point when it comes to actually influencing the future.

One interesting story idea for Storytellers looking to minimize the number of historical novas is to assume the first novas did appear following *Galatea*, but because time is no more a barrier to some novas than space, there are novas in other eras, who are simply travelers through time.

Visiting the Future

The existence of time travel also makes it possible for some novas to visit the future (or for novas from the future to come back and visit the present). Storytellers should decide whether or not events in the future are immutable or can be changed, in which case any "future" the characters visit (or met a visitor from) is only a "possible" future, which may or may not come to pass. This fits in well with the quantum nature of nova powers.

Traveling into the future is a great way to arrange a cross-over story between an **Aberrant** and a **Trinity** series, with novas from the past arriving in the 22nd century, only to discover a world that hates and mistrusts them, which is protected *against* them by the psions. For an interesting twist, have a time-traveler from **Trinity** come back to the **Aberrant** era in order to warn the world and prevent the Aberrant War (or at least give humanity a chance to better protect itself). This can get interesting if the visitor is a psion, raised to believe aberrants are all dangerously insane, especially if she's pursued by an unstoppably powerful aberrant who seems very familiar to the characters for some reason. Or maybe its an aberrant trying to prevent the Aberrant War (or start it early) and a strike team of psions looking to stop it....

Internal Æon Society Missive

TOP SECRET • Babel Dossier — File #753-1998-07-09-P • EYES ONLY

Arena: Global

Status: Active

Author: M. A. Mercer

Subject: Project Pandora

Minimum Security Rating: Theta

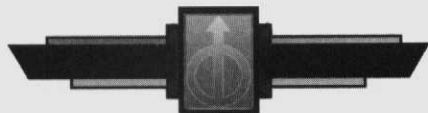
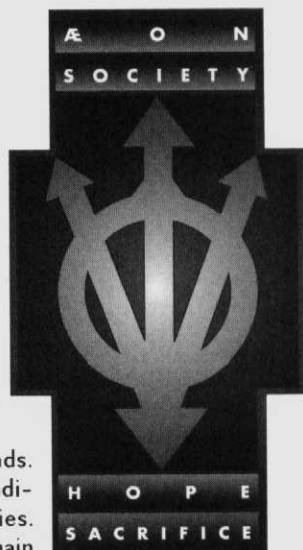
We are on the verge of a new millennium, one vastly different from any previous age. I speak not only of rapid technological advances, but of new developments in human evolution. Specifically, I refer to three possible offshoots of *Homo sapiens* that my good friend Doctor Fenster long ago labeled *eximorphs*, also known as *novas*, *psychomorphs*, also known as *psiads*, and *paramorphs*.

The first group, “novas,” is the focus of our rather zealous Project Utopia colleagues. Project Tantalus more quietly pursues study of the obscure paramorphs.

As part of Project Pandora, your focus is the middle group, psiads. Seemingly unchanged in physical nature or temporal stability, these individuals nonetheless possess a wide range of wondrous and strange abilities.

Pandora’s efforts — and those of Tantalus, for that matter — remain shielded from public view. Only novas have made enough of an impact on society to warrant establishing a visible front. The number of known psiads and paramorphs remain exceedingly small (a handful documented of the former and only one confirmed of the latter). As such, maintaining a covert agenda helps ensure that we can learn more of our curious subjects with a minimum of distraction.

This does not mean that Pandora is less vital to Æon and humanity than Utopia. Indeed, one could argue that it is more important. Now that these “novas” are well known, literally millions of people are hard at work, hoping to discover the eximorphs’ full potential. The compelling psiads have only you: the few diligent souls of Project Pandora.



Psychomorphs

Project Pandora

The Æon Society, the organization that established Project Utopia and the Triton Foundation, is built around secrets. Puzzles are its trade, enigmas its agenda. Not the perpetuation of mysteries, though, but the solving of them. The people of Æon are driven by a need to *know*. But know what, exactly? What drove Maxwell Anderson Mercer to found the Æon Society for Gentlemen back in 1923?

Nothing more (but nothing less) than the urge to discover humanity's true potential and to subtly nudge mankind down the path toward fulfillment of that destiny. Max Mercer, intellectual, philanthropist and two-fisted adventurer of the 1920s and beyond, created the Æon Society as a club for others who shared his vision of a future in which humanity would realize its untapped potential.

Efforts like Utopia, Proteus and Mercer's current focus, Pandora, are notable examples of this drive. Before delving into just what Pandora's about, though, it helps to understand Æon the society and Mercer the man.

Æon's Course

The Æon Society has long acted as a positive, albeit covert, force for change. This is not to say the group was free of errors in judgement. In hindsight, some choices clearly ranged from the embarrassing (supporting Prohibition efforts) to the tragic (not shutting down the fledgling Nazi Party). Still, overall, Æon acted in humanity's best interests. Its efforts, though seldom known by the world at large, were a great boon to mankind.

In the beginning, Æon spent its time gathering together stalwart individuals and investigating the mysteries of the world. These adventures, undertaken largely beyond the bounds of public awareness, were meant to find anything that might impact mankind's potential — whether a person, group or phenomenon — and then determine whether the given subject would help or harm this progress. Such an investigation could take anywhere from a few days to a number of years. Steps were taken only when Mercer and his crew were confident that they'd gathered all the data they could to make an informed decision.

Each of these investigative groups operated with a great deal of independence (Mercer doesn't believe in micromanagement). As a given subject grew in significance, the study received more personnel and resources from the Society, but otherwise charted much of its own course. Whatever the manner in which its various groups evolved, Æon itself

stayed in the background. Project Utopia is a notable example of how far such pursuits can go, but it's certainly not the only one of significance.

In the early days, when Æon was still relatively small and its areas of research limited, Mercer was in direct control. As the organization grew, Mercer couldn't maintain close contact with every aspect. He appointed dedicated, highly capable people to assist him. Not all of the individuals who attained positions of power within Æon shared Mercer's goals, though. By the Nova Age, some of these influential figures redirected many of the Society's programs to forward their own agendas. Even those who supported Mercer's vision had to begin making their own decisions when the Father of Æon vanished in the latter decades of the 20th century. Given 30 years without Mercer's astute direction, time during which the Æon Council acted on its own and others advanced personal plans, it's not surprising that much of the Æon Society's efforts turned away from what Mercer envisioned originally.

The irony was not lost on Mercer, who saw upon his return in the mid-1990s how much things had changed. He had started the Æon Society with similarly forthright motivations.

While Æon suffers from internal divisiveness, it's not as if it turned from an altruistic group into some malevolent secret society. An instance like Slider's death does show that there are some truly bad — or at least severely misguided — apples in the bushel. That has increased unrest within the venerable organization, and forces are slowly polarizing into separate camps. It's difficult to know where loyalties lie — especially within groups like Project Utopia, Proteus or the Triton Foundation that have become so divorced from the parent organization.

Mercer retains a great deal of control over the Æon Society itself, but only Project Pandora retains his complete confidence at present. Mercer sees how far projects like Utopia and Proteus have gone — in large part developed by people who believe they're following his vision — and sees that he's failed somewhere. The Father of Æon isn't one to throw out the baby with the bathwater and is doing what he can to try and bring his wayward children back into the fold.

A large part of that is talking with the Æon Council and trying to construct a cohesive plan for Æon and the groups under its umbrella. Pandora, one of his oldest and most secret undertakings, remains a kind of ace in the hole as he pursues his other efforts.

Internal Æon Society Missive

TOP SECRET • Babel Dossier — File #020-1977-11-06-M • EYES ONLY**Arena:** Individual**Status:** Archive**Author:** Whitley Styles**Subject:** Private Journals**Minimum Security Rating:** Epsilon

I'll tell you right out that Mercer knows — at least generally — what might happen in the future. Love to say how, really I would, but the man himself made us all give our word we'd never spill. So far as I know, I'm the last of the original crew who's still around to tell — but I'd as soon break my word to Max as cut off my own head, you get me?

But look, knowing what might happen isn't the same as knowing *how* or *when* or *why*, see? He did what he could with the Society to try heading off the bad and making sure the good happened. But Mercer's still just a man. A great man, to be sure, and saved my hide more times than I can count, but he ain't no god. (Though I'd say he and that "old friend" of his, Divis Mal, are a damn sight closer to it than most of us.)

Max is an utter enigma. I've never met a man so cocksure and yet so humble at the same time. Fate dealt him a helluva hand — cursed to live in interesting times indeed, as the Chinese say. Yet he rose to the challenge with flair. He's like anyone else — opinionated, flawed, *human* — but despite this, maybe because of it, he truly embodies those tenets of hope, sacrifice and unity. He's the type of guy to say, "There's *got* to be another way." By God, if he hasn't said that very thing to me... and by God again, if he hasn't found another way!

Mercer saw Æon as a group that'd help humanity reach a higher state — of individuality, technology, culture, society — the whole ball of wax. But it was only supposed to act as a guide. Then he wanted, what do they call it, "planned obsolescence"? See, after a while, mankind would take the steps on its own, and Æon wouldn't be needed anymore. That was at the heart of his dream.

Some people say Mercer followed what we'd call the aristocratic impulse. But look at it more like the democratic method in action. Government representatives are elected to speak for the citizenry, right? Well, most citizens are too lazy or preoccupied with their own lives to bother telling representatives what they want or need. So the reps take it upon themselves to decide. (There are distinctions, but that's the general deal, you get me?)

Æon isn't too different. The Society'll find any fella with active community spirit, drive or a higher purpose — or, just as often, he contacts Æon himself. In a pretty democratic fashion, these folks can lend a hand and help guide their fellow man to whatever degree they like.

Course, now that Mercer's been away for a while — and believe you me, just because he's gone don't mean he ain't coming back — the new guard is calling for changes. They want a "more aggressive Æon," keeping pace with the times, as it were. Mercer never intended for Æon to intrude where it's not wanted. If some country, from government to citizens, wants to have a civil war and spurns Æon's aid, the Society'd leave them be. But if even a handful of people call on Æon for help, in we'd come! Lots of this talk nowadays smacks of justification and politicizing, you ask me. That goes against the very "unity" that Mercer proposed back in the 1920s.

(Speaking of Æon's tenets, don't get me started on how they want to turn Proteus into some kind of — what is it? — "wet works"? That's not what Mercer meant by "sacrifice." As the man himself told me once, "Whit, my boy, there's never a situation where death is the preferred option." An incurable optimist, was he.)

Just goes to show what can happen when others carry on a man's dream.



Psiads

Novas are beings of tremendous power. However, despite what the Teragen might think, they are not the only possible future of human evolution. As Mercer learned long ago, there is at least one other evolutionary direction mankind could explore. Project Utopia studies the novas — or eximorphs, as Mercer calls them. Its sister group, Project Pandora, researches psiads who, over a century in the future, will be known as *psions*.

If you're familiar with the science-fiction adventure game *Trinity*, you've seen a couple brief references to "psychomorphs" and "proto-psions." However, you still have little more to go on than someone who's never read about *Aberrant's* future setting.

You could be told that a psiad is a naturally-manifesting psi user, but what does that mean? You could know that psi is also called subquantum energy, but how's that different from quantum energy? Off-hand, a psiad using psi doesn't sound much different from a nova using quantum. Indeed, in many ways, it's not (and there are those in the Trinity Era who are quite concerned about the similarities). However, psiads and novas are dramatically different in fundamental ways. To provide you with a solid understanding of the distinctions, we must cover a few concepts first.

Noetic Energy: A Primer

Aberrant takes a close look at how novas manipulate quantum energies. Researches into these fundamental powers — electromagnetism, gravity, weak and strong nuclear forces — comprise the foundation of a Grand Unification Theory. But scientists are unable to fill in all the theory's blanks. That's because they haven't yet discovered the final, fifth element that binds it all together: noetic energy.

Also called subquantum or psionic energy by those in the Trinity Era, noetic force is both separated from and inextricably entwined throughout the physical universe. Put most simply, the subquantum stratum contains a blueprint for everything within our reality — for the actual and the possible. It is the medium in which the physical universe "floats," as well as the "bowl" that contains it all. Viewed in this manner, everything interconnects through the noetic medium. Were this energy to be measured scientifically, it would explain the whole "missing mass" issue that currently troubles scientists — and would be the final piece of the Grand Unification puzzle.

Taken to the extreme, one could reasonably conjecture that other realities are possible within this paradigm. The common element is the subquantum stratum itself. It serves as both the barrier (the "bowl") and the link (the "fluid") between realities.

This is not to say that noetic energy is more essential to the universe than are the other fundamental forces. Simply that it exists on a different level. The subquantum medium affects the cosmos indirectly, by changing information content. Quantum forces reach out and poke at the universe directly.

Given that, it shouldn't be surprising that accessing noetic power requires a different set of tools from that needed to channel quantum energy. Consider such manipulation as analogous to generating radio communication. A nova's quantum manipulation is not unlike a direct FM transmission. A psiad accesses noetic energy more subtly, like a spread-spectrum frequency hopping radio. In the end, though, each uses a different method to achieve a similar effect.

Not only do psi and quantum interact with the physical universe differently, they don't get along particularly well with one another. To continue the communications analogy, it's not unlike getting overlapping transmissions. The energy of one disrupts the other, garbling both. While this doesn't result in an explosion as when matter and anti-matter collide, it's often enough to disrupt the intended effect.

Psychs and Novas

As psi and quantum function differently, it's not surprising that psiads (sometimes called "psychs" by the crew of Project Pandora) are distinct from eximorphs.

Just how they're distinct raises a number of thorny pseudo-scientific issues. At the most fundamental level, novas and psychs derive from similar genetic potential. That's the only thing that novas and proto-psions share. The variables involved are many, but once the developmental switch flips one way, it can't be flipped back. An individual with the proper genetic background might erupt as a nova, or he might manifest as a psychomorph. A nova doesn't develop latent psi talent; he grows an M-R node. Conversely, a psych won't develop a node; he possesses latency, which may later develop into psychic power.

The unique genetic characteristics shared by both nova and psych at the nascent stage are as yet beyond science's ability to measure. Neither the Mega-Intelligent nova scientists of the Nova Age nor the advanced science of the Trinity Era can answer all the questions of nova (or psiad) genetics. Sure, novas have the Mazarin-Rashoud node, but that doesn't explain everything about being an eximorph. The same goes for psiads. Most significantly, where does it all begin? Before a nova's node actually starts to develop, before a psych's noetic powers manifest, what makes a person different?

As far as *Aberrant* and *Trinity* are concerned, that question will never be answered conclusively.

Nor was it ever meant to be. We leave it up to you to decide.

Still, we can shed some light on which way nascent individuals flip. In the Nova Age, the majority of nascents become novas. Why? Well, to put it simply, it's easier. Quantum forces have a more direct impact upon the physical universe than noetic energy. This holds true for a nascent subject. Due to the existence of a particularly powerful nova on earth during the **Aberrant** era, it's easier at this stage of human history for the genetic variables to line up properly for a nova eruption than it is for them to trigger psionic abilities.

Psiad-Nova Distinctions

Novas and psiads derive their powers from the same initial genetic source, but it's a nascent genetic potential, not a readily identifiable physiological organ. In proto-psions, a subtle genetic change occurs, but not in any one area of the body as with a nova's M-R node. Instead, the psych's entire physical form becomes a receptor for, and conduit of, noetic energy. As a result, psiads gain special advantages (and limitations) that their distant cousins don't have.

The distinctions noted here derive from the simple fact that psychs don't channel quantum energy. The reasons for being listed should be self-explanatory. See **Aberrant** for more information on a given Trait or circumstance.

- A psiad doesn't suffer from taint. This also provides him with immunity to aberrations, possible taint-related illnesses or ambient taint radiation (see **Aberrant**, pp. 148-151).

- A focused quantum effect can cause injury, but the psych can add his Psi score to his soak (see below). Quantum-based powers affect him normally.

- A psiad cannot have any Backgrounds relating to quantum — Attunement, Dormancy, Eufiber or Node (see **Aberrant**, pp. 139-143).

- A psych does not register on any form of quantum detector (see **Aberrant**, p. 143). In the Nova Age, only a proto-psion can detect a fellow psi user. Handle this as a standard Psi roll (see below for more on the Psi Trait).

- None of the nova-related drugs, including mite, mox, soma and Red 7 have any effect on a psiad. As with taint influences, the proto-psion's genetic makeup is resistant to their effects. At worst, an injection of the above calls for a standard Resistance roll. If failed, the psych is at +2 difficulty to Physical actions for the next hour as his body works to flush the drugs from his system.

- A psych can have the Disrupt power (see below for purchasing powers). Instead of using quantum energy, the psych focuses psi energy to disrupt an opposing nova's control of quantum.

Once that nova takes his leave of Earth, the eruption rate drops precipitously. Psiads, and later psions, will become more common as the nascency required to channel psi is more reliably passed down than is the capacity to become a nova. As more psions and proto-psions appear during the Trinity Era, their offspring are more likely to not only have nascent potential, but for that potential to trigger as psionics. (No one in the **Aberrant** or **Trinity** Eras has yet realized this significant tidbit, though.)

Playing a Psiad

This section covers playing a proto-psion in the early 21st century. That being the case, it uses the rules established in **Aberrant**, starting on p. 112. See the "Psiads in **Trinity**" sidebar for rules consistent with the **Trinity** science-fiction game.

Speaking generally, the same process a nova experiences can also apply to a psych. Much like a jet and a bird can be considered the same because both fly, a nova and a psych can likewise be considered similar. But, just as a jet and a bird have dramatically different physical makeups and processes, the same can be said for eximorphs and psychomorphs. The distinction, really, is in the source of each one's powers. The steps described explicitly here, therefore, address only those aspects that are notably different between the two character types.

Phase One: Human

Follow the same steps for this process as described in the rules, with the following changes:

Attributes: A psych character doesn't get quite as many points to play with here. The player has six dots to divide among primary Attributes, four for secondary Attributes and three for tertiary ones.

Backgrounds: A psiad gets the standard seven points, but cannot buy Attunement, Dormancy, Eufiber or Node.

Quantum: A psych has no rating in this Trait. Substitute Psi for it instead. The character is limited to five dots at character creation and has a Psi Pool of 10 plus (Psi x 2). Recharging psi energy is handled in the same fashion as that described for quantum points.

Taint: As a psiad takes a different path of development, he is not subject to taint.

Phase Two: Psiad

Again, basic mechanics don't differ much. A psych's effects use a different form of energy than what a nova uses, though. For those powers a psiad uses, substitute Psi for Quantum in rules references.

Eruption: In many ways, this natural triggering is similar to the eruption a nova experiences (see **Aberrant**, pp. 116-117). Instead of the headaches and other feelings of displacement and discomfort that a

nova feels as his node grows prior to erupting, a psych feels increasingly "in tune" with the universe, a sense of... *right-ness*. This can manifest as brief flashes of insight, *déjà vu*, luck or simply a growing feeling of calm or confidence. Otherwise, you can extrapolate easily enough from the options listed in this section — even "Exposure to Quantum Powers."

Nova Points: There's a lot one can do with nova points (really, they should be called "psych points", but things are likely confusing enough already without changing game terms). A proto-psion doesn't have quite as many options as a nova does, though.

A psiad character gets 12 nova points to start. As with a nova, he should get powers most suited to his character concept (see **Aberrant**, pp. 154-232).

There are limitations. A psych is subject to the Quantum Trait minimum (substitute "Psi" for "Quantum"). He can only spend nova points on Mega-Attributes, Enhancements, Psi (to a maximum of 5) or "quantum" powers. Further, he cannot buy anything as tainted.

Mega-Attributes: A psych cannot purchase Mega-Physical Attributes at all; he can, however, buy

up to two dots of any other Mega-Attribute. On the bright side, he is not limited with regard to the Mega-Mental or Mega-Social enhancements he may buy.

Quantum Powers: A psiad cannot purchase a power with a Quantum minimum (or, for our purposes here, Psi minimum) higher than four. Further, he can only buy up to two dots in a power (although he may buy two separate techniques if they're available). The powers function about the same as written; just substitute "psi" for "quantum" when necessary.

A psych may *not* purchase the following powers: Aberration Transfer, Absorption, Bodymorph, Chimeric Aberration, Clone, Density Control (Increase), Disimmunize, Disintegration, Elemental Mastery, Entropy Control, Flight (use Magnetic Mastery instead), Gravity Control, Homunculus, Hypermovement, Invisibility, Invulnerability, Matter Chameleon, Matter Creation, Molecular Manipulation, Node Spark, Nova Proxy, Quantum Bolt, Quantum Construct, Quantum Conversion, Quantum Forgery, Quantum Imprint, Quantum Leech, Quantum Regeneration, Quantum Vampire, Shroud, Sizemorph (Grow, Shrink), Temporal Manipulation, Weather Manipulation or any of the new powers in this book (except Psychic Link).



Psychomorphs in Trinity

Those of you who play *Trinity* may wonder about the difference between psiads and psions. Practically speaking, there is little variance. The information that follows explains any distinctions in *Trinity* terms.

Triggering

Psions are triggered through an artificial process called the Prometheus Effect (see *Trinity*, pp. 38-39), while psiads manifest naturally. See elsewhere in this section for details on a psych's natural triggering.

Character Creation

Character creation is handled much as described in *Trinity*, with the following modifications:

General Character Creation: Considering psiads don't undergo the Prometheus Effect's genetic reconstruction, the Storyteller is encouraged to have a psych's player create his character based on the rules for normals (sidebar in *Trinity*, p. 169). Otherwise, the Storyteller may have the player use the standard *Trinity* character creation rules (pp. 163-171). Note that the psiad's Psi Trait and Aptitudes are determined as described below.

Choosing Aptitudes: Unlike a psion, a psych is not limited to a single Aptitude. Instead, he has access to "primary" and "secondary" Aptitudes. Primary Aptitudes are similar to a psion's single Aptitude in that they're the psiad's strongest noetic manifestation. Secondary Aptitudes are not unlike a psion's auxiliary Modes in that they aren't a key focus. (However, a psych is *not* restricted to one dot in his secondary Aptitudes.)

Determining a proto-psion's primary and secondary power sets is a simple matter. A psych falls into one of three sub-categories: "cognitive," "biological" or "energetic." Each sub-category includes two Aptitudes, like so:

Cognitive	Biological	Energetic
Clairsentience	Biokinesis	Electrokinesis
Telepathy	Vitakinesis	Psychokinesis

A cognitive psiad is highly attuned to extra-sensory processes. A biological psych is adept at manipulating physical forms, whether his own or others.' An energetic proto-psion can master the manipulation of energy forms.

When you choose a sub-category, your psych is assumed to have its corresponding two Aptitudes as primaries. The remaining four Aptitudes automatically default to secondary status. Teleportation is always considered a secondary Aptitude, and psiads cannot manifest Quantakinesis at any level.

As outlined above, since a psiad isn't restricted from using any Aptitude (except Quantakinesis), he can potentially develop skill in all noetic areas. It's always easiest for him to develop his primary Aptitudes, so only a very experienced psych is well-rounded in all areas of noetic study. Considering how scarce proto-psions are to begin with, such veteran psiads are rare indeed.

Buying Primary Aptitudes: The player can use starting points to buy her character's primary Aptitude levels (see "Aptitudes" in *Trinity*, pp. 166-167). She can spend bonus points for more dots at a cost of four points per dot gained. Raising a primary Aptitude Mode with experience costs [current rating x 5].

Buying Secondary Aptitudes: The player cannot use starting points to buy secondary Aptitude levels. However, she can spend bonus points at a cost of five points per dot purchased. Raising a secondary Aptitude Mode with experience costs [current rating x 7].

Restrictions: So far, proto-psions are pretty versatile compared to psions. Here's where that ends. The psiad's greatest advantage is his noetic versatility. However, he is not as genetically refined as a psion. As such, a psiad has practical limitations on his noetic development:

- A psych cannot start with higher than Psi 5. Increasing Psi costs [current rating x 7].
- A psiad can buy up to three dots in any Aptitude (except Quantakinesis); see above for point costs. A psych needs a Psi rating of 9 or 10 before she can buy a fourth dot in her primary Aptitudes. She is still restricted to a three dot cap on secondary Aptitudes.

Why No Quantakinesis?

The Quantakinesis Aptitude was a specific result of the Doyen experimenting with human genetics. It operates much like Electrokinesis and Psychokinesis do — using psi energy as a kind of "noetic glove" with which to manipulate another form of energy. Electrokinesis does it with electromagnetic energy, Psychokinesis with atoms, Quantakinesis with quantum energy. Considering psi and quantum are opposing forces, it's not an easy thing for a psi-user to attempt. As such, Quantakinesis requires a greater degree of genetic evolution than psiads have thus far attained. Maybe in another millennium or two....

Psychs in Action

Æon and its groups work with novas quite a bit. It knows that few quantum-using types are really evil. However, the increasing manifestation of taint calls for caution.

That's where Project Pandora comes in. So far, psychs have proven to be entirely immune to taint. And even if they might have an Achilles' heel of their own, their correspondingly weaker power levels make them much less of a threat than novas are if they get out of hand.

Plus, in general practice, a psych isn't nearly as conspicuous. (You can't track one by his quantum energy signature since he doesn't have one.) If the psiad

is amenable, Pandora helps him learn how to use his powers to greatest effect (and so he doesn't mistake himself for a much harder nova and end up getting killed doing something stupid).

Aberrations and Errors

Nobody's perfect. Unfortunately, several errors in the **Aberrant** core rules slipped by during the development process. Hopefully, the following clarifications should close some gaps and clarify matters.

Example character, page 118: Rob purchased the Resiliency enhancement as tainted, giving Phillip four dots of permanent Taint. For the sake of argument, he took the Glow aberration, which manifests as flickering black "sparks." Note that the number of enhancements in the example are correct.

Increasing Abilities, page 125: The "experience cost" table on page 124 identifies Abilities as "current rating x 2." The example on page 125 incorrectly gives the cost to raise Firearms from 2 to 3 as eight experience points. The actual price should be four.

Dormancy, page 141: Dorm'ed characters keep all Attributes, Abilities, Backgrounds and Willpower purchased with nova points. Dorm'ed characters also keep their extended lifespans (based on Mega-Stamina in nova form) and free Endurance and Resistance dots. Novas who choose different forms at Dormancy 4-5 keep the above mentioned Traits while dorm'ed.

Dorm'ed characters do not keep Mega-Attributes, enhancements, quantum powers or access to Attunement or Node.

Dying For Power, page 147: Health levels burned to gain quantum points may not be healed with Regeneration or Healing; novas may only heal them at the normal rate for the character's Stamina and Mega-Stamina. As an optional rule, it costs two quantum points to recover each health level burned in this manner.

Colored Skin, page 152: The final sentence should read "... is up to the player or Storyteller."

Mega-Attributes, page 154: A nova may purchase Mega-Attributes no higher than his normal Attribute or his Quantum + 1, whichever is lower. **Example:** *Magdalena has Charisma 4, Quantum 1. Her player may purchase Mega-Charisma as high as two dots. Luther has Strength 4, Quantum 5, and his player may purchase Mega-Strength as high as four dots.*

Enhancements, page 155: When a nova purchases a Mega-Attribute, she may select one enhancement to go with it. It does not matter how many dots she purchases, she only gets one free enhancement. All enhancements after the first must be pur-

chased with nova points (3 per) or experience points (5 per). **Example:** *Magdalena's player purchases Mega-Charisma 2. For her one free enhancement, she selects Soothe. She decides she wants Magdalena to be a bit of a rabble-rouser, and spends three additional nova points to add Natural Agitator.*

Crush, page 157: Replace system with — Strength damage is normally bashing damage. A nova with this ability inflicts bare-handed (Brawl or Martial Arts) as *lethal* damage. Additionally, each quantum point spent adds one level of lethal damage, up to the amount allowed by Node. The nova must spend a full turn to focus his attack and spends the chosen amount of quantum points (minimum one) to augment the damage. He makes the Crush attack on the following turn, at his normal initiative. This enhancement only lasts for one strike, but can be reactivated as long as the nova has quantum points to power it. This enhancement is cumulative with Claws. **Example:** *Luther has Strength 4, Mega-Strength 4 and Node 3. Normally, he can inflict 6d10[20] Bashing. With Crush, his player can spend up to 12 Quantum Points (adding 12 automatic damage levels and converting from bashing to lethal) to increase Luther's damage to 6d10[32] Lethal for one strike.*

Shockwave and Thunderclap, page 157: Crush may not be used to make damage caused by these enhancements lethal.

Enhanced Movement, page 158: Enhanced Movement applies to all forms of movement *except* Teleportation, Warp or other "instantaneous" modes or movement powers gained as techniques.

Adaptability, page 160: All references to Life Support actually refer to Adaptability. Additionally, the enhancement description refers to possible quantum point costs for extreme environments. It should be stressed that this is purely for dramatic license and depends upon the individual Storyteller and player needs. If one Storyteller wishes to emphasize the incredible power novas possess, he may never apply a cost to maintain Adaptability, even if the nova chooses to fly across the surface of the Sun or Jupiter. Another Storyteller may decide to focus on a more down-to-earth style and charge for high pressures and vacuum. A third might choose to base it on the nova's Quantum score, where Quantum 1 novas pay one quantum point per scene to avoid drowning while underwater and Quantum 5 novas can survive in the vacuum of space without expenditure. Mainly, choose a method and be consistent with application.

Also note that Adaptability will protect from any *environmental* condition. The Sun's surface, the bottom of the Mariana Trench, the bubbling magma in a volcano's interior and the vacuum of space all qualify as environments. The nova's body can adapt to the constant conditions present and protect the nova

from harm. Adaptability does not generally protect the nova from attacks.

Regeneration, page 161: Regeneration may heal aggravated damage at triple normal cost.

Resiliency, page 161: Resiliency may be purchased twice. The second purchase doubles the nova's soak gained from Stamina (but not Mega-Stamina). Players may not purchase these in reverse order (a player cannot purchase Resiliency once and choose to apply it to Stamina soak instead of Mega-Stamina soak).

High-End Electromagnetic Scan, page 163: Each use of this power lasts for one action — to look through a wall, for instance. For three quantum points, the enhancement lasts for the scene.

Taint Resistance, page 168: Taint Resistance negates Taint for the purposes of resisting mental aberrations. Subtract Mega-Intelligence from the Taint penalty to Willpower rolls in such situations.

Synergy, page 170: Change the system as follows:

The part which reads: "... the nova's player may make a Wits roll. Everyone in the group receives an additional die for each success the nova's player achieves on his roll," should read: "... the nova's player may make a Wits roll. The group receives an additional "dice pool," equal to one die per success on the Wits roll, that may be applied in whole or part to any task or member in the group, except for the nova using Synergy." **Example:** *Magdalena has Wits 5, Mega-Wits 2. She's researching a story with the help of three baseline assistants. She uses Synergy, and her player rolls her dice: 7, 8, 9, 9, 3 and the Mega dice come up 10 and 9, for a total of 9 successes. Magdalena's character applies three successes to each of the nova's assistants to aid their research rolls.*

Boost, page 186: Range is Self.

Clone, page 186: Use the following system for Clone. It replaces the version in **Aberrant**.

Clone

Level: 3

Quantum Minimum: 5

Dice Pool: N/A

Range: Self

Area: N/A

Duration: One scene

Effect: Creates up to Quantum + Clone duplicates.

Multiple Actions: No

Description: This power allows a nova to create "clones" of himself from quantum energies and nearby molecules. To use it, he spends one quantum point per duplicate he wishes to create (up to the maximum listed above).

Clones are exact duplicates of the character — they have the same Attributes, Abilities, powers,

clothes and equipment (except that clones do not have the Clone power). They are separate persons in a game sense; if one is knocked unconscious or killed, the others are not affected. Clones do not have any sort of telepathic link; they communicate by talking.

Clones share their creator's quantum pool and Node rating — this means that if Luther, with Node 3 and quantum pool 30 creates three clones (for a total of four Luthers), they have one 27 point quantum pool, and may only spend 10 quantum points per turn total.

It takes one turn for a nova to create clones, but the character can do nothing else during that turn (not even walking). Once created, clones remain for a scene or until they "recombine" with the original character. To recombine, the creator must only touch the clone he wants to merge into himself; again, they can perform no other action during that turn. Clones who do not recombine dissolve at the end of the scene, as the energies that form them dissipate.

If a nova melds with his clones, he may absorb their memories. If they dissipate or are killed, then he may not access their memories.

Disorient, page 190: Subtract Mega-Dice first.

Elemental Mastery, page 194: In addition to the techniques listed for Elemental Mastery, a nova may also select any of the techniques listed for Elemental Anima, as Mastery covers the ability to control as well as create.

Entropy Control, page 196: Dice Pool should read as Variable. Refer to each technique for the associated pools.

Hypermovement, page 203: As stated in the power description, characters moving at full tilt may take no actions (except Hyperspeed or Aerial Slams). Characters may also make Hyperspeed Strikes.

Immolate, page 204: Immolate gives two different damage values (one under **Effect** and one in the **Description**). Use the following: Quantum + (power rating x 3) bashing or Quantum + (power rating x 2) lethal.

Shape Alteration, page 213: Use Intelligence + Molecular Manipulation, as per the **Description**.

Quantum Vampire, page 219: Quantum Vampire may drain: Attributes (including Mega), Abilities and quantum powers. Quantum Vampire may not drain: Quantum, Willpower, Taint or Backgrounds.

Shapeshift, page 220: Life Support refers to Adaptability and counts as one power. Clinging refers to Body Modification: Adhesive Grip and counts as one power. Shrinking and Growth refer to Sizemorph (Shrink) and Sizemorph (Grow), respectively.

Shroud, page 221: Add the user's Quantum score to the final successes and subtract from Mega-Perception dice before normal Perception.

Sizemorph (Grow), page 222: Effect should be x8 mass, not x2.

Telepathy, page 224: Use of Telepathy can be resisted with a Willpower roll, with each success subtracting from the telepath's rolled successes.

Warp, page 228: Warp's Dice Pool should be "Perception + Warp." Like Teleport, each point of Quantum (the Trait, not the Pool) the user has counts as one automatic success. A nova who uses Warp as an attack still rolls Dexterity + Warp to determine accuracy, but Perception + Warp to determine range. The Dexterity + Warp roll does not receive the benefit of automatic successes from Quantum.

The duration of Warp is listed as "Special." When determining how long a nova can maintain a Warp, roll the nova's Willpower; the number of successes indicates how many turns the Warp remains open. The nova can extend the duration by spending Willpower points to keep the warp open for an additional turn per Willpower spent.

Warps work both ways for people who travel through them (as well as for objects carried or tossed through). Pressure and temperature will not equalize between both sides (so you can't open a Warp to the center of the Sun and cause a jet of superheated plasma to shoot out and incinerate your enemies).

Aggravated Extra, page 231: Ranged attacks purchased with the Aggravated Extra have a range equal to $5 \times (\text{Quantum} + \text{Power Rating})$ or half-normal range, whichever is lower. If the character has Quantum 5, treat an Aggravated Quantum Bolt as Disintegration (page 190).

Climbing, page 233: The final sentence should read: "A character with Body Modification: Adhesive Grip may climb without a die roll."

Throwing, page 236: The last paragraph should read: "Characters with Mega-Strength may throw objects of weight equal to their base lifting ability; to do so, they use the normal rules for throwing. However, when throwing objects whose mass is less than half their base lifting ability (e.g., a nova with Mega-Strength 2 attempting to hurl a 1000-kg automobile), they may multiply their normal throwing distance times their automatic Mega-Strength successes!"
Example: *Luther has Strength 4, Mega-Strength 4 and Might 5. He can normally lift (and thus throw) a 50,000-kg object at his Might score (Strength 4 + Might 5) \times five meters, or 45 meters. If he lifts a 10,000-kg fighter jet, he can throw it 45 meters \times 20 automatic successes for Mega-Strength 4, or 900 meters.*

Kick, page 244: Kicks should inflict Strength + 4 damage.

Radiation, page 257: Life Support refers to the Adaptability enhancement for Mega-Stamina.

Hugo the Bouncer, page 284: Danger Sense is listed as one of his powers. Replace the reference with "Intuition."

Quantum Powers Chart, page 289: This chart refers to Invisibility as Concentration. It should be Maintenance. The chart also lists the Psychic Link power, which was left out of the rulebook. Here are the rules for its use:

Psychic Link

Level: 1

Quantum Minimum: 1

Dice Pool: Perception + Psychic Link

Range: See below

Area: See below

Duration: See below

Effect: Establishes a mental link between two or more characters.

Multiple Actions: N/A

Description: The nova imprints some of his quantum signature on another's (nova or baseline) brain, allowing mental communication.

This power allows the nova to establish an unbreakable "psychic link" between himself and another living thing (typically another person, but possibly an animal companion). The link is in effect Permanent, though either member can turn it off at any time, and the nova may break the link to establish one with another character. Furthermore, the link has a maximum range equal to $1,000 \text{ miles} \times (\text{Quantum} + \text{Psychic Link})$; if the characters are separated by a greater distance, the link automatically deactivates. In either case, reactivating the link requires a Perception + Psychic Link roll. It costs five quantum points to initially establish a link, but no further expenditures are required to reactivate or communicate through it. Establishing the link requires concentration and effort by both parties and can be broken at will by either party.

A Psychic Link allows its members to communicate mentally. In essence it functions as a very limited form of Telepathy. But it also exposes the characters to mental attacks — if a power like Domination is used on one member of the Link, it affects all members of the Link. However, the presence of multiple linked minds increases innate resistance to such attacks. Add +1 difficulty to all psychic attacks for each mind (beyond the first) in the link. Attempts to dominate other minds through the link must also overcome this resistance.

A telepathic nova who is within range of a linked individual may eavesdrop on conversations with a Perception + Telepathy roll, if his successes exceed the linking nova's Quantum + Psychic Link total. A telepathic nova may sense the presence of a link by rolling Perception + Telepathy and achieving 4 successes (2 if the link is active). The nova must actively sense for a link. At the Storyteller's

discretion, a telepathic nova directly in the line of "broadcast" may attempt to eavesdrop. This should be difficult to arrange.

Extras: Extra Link (allows the nova to psychically link to two other people)

Different Masks

The **Aberrant** rulebook presents a satisfactory character creation system, which serves nicely to create a pack of demigods that any group of players can enjoy. The **Aberrant** world, on the other hand, presents a setting where novas vary widely in power and capability. In a world where you can have characters ranging in power level from Phillip Long (**Aberrant**, chapter two) to Divis Mal, player characters should certainly be able to span different power levels as well.

Following are several suggestions on customizing and fine-tuning the character creation process to deliver whatever results the players and Storyteller prefer. Of course, it should be noted that the Storyteller is the final arbiter on exactly what rules are used for character creation in her series.

Pooling Attributes

The simplest modification, cribbed directly from **Trinity**, involves simply pooling the Attribute numbers — apply 15 points to be distributed anywhere. This makes it easier to create a character who's crippled (and thus has one dot in each Physical Attribute) or is an utter genius (with eight or nine additional dots in Mental Attributes).

Pooling Bonus Points

A starting **Aberrant** character (sans nova points) has the equivalent of 147 bonus points (and one dot in each of the nine Attributes and Willpower). The increased flexibility allows for a character who's very talented (high Attributes) but has little training or someone who has wide-ranging influence and contacts in society but perhaps is physically below average. Be careful about making characters *too* lopsided with this option.

Varying Nova Traits

Quantum powers, Mega-Attributes and Taint are arguably what makes a nova shine. Changing the power levels involved can greatly change a series' tone. Done prudently, applying a different set of assumptions to nova point allocation can greatly enhance a game (or, if done poorly, utterly destroy it). It's wise to determine exactly what kind of series the players and Storyteller want to run before tinkering with nova point allocations, but with that in mind....

Change Limits

A good example is found in **Aberrant**, page 103,

in a section titled "Creating Aberrants in **Trinity**." Base and maximum Quantum are both raised by two dots (to three and seven, respectively). For a higher-powered game, this is a good start.

It's also possible to lower the power levels in a game, allowing Quantum ratings no higher than three, for example, or disallowing Level 3 (or higher) powers. Perhaps Mega-Attributes are limited only by the mundane Attribute or solely by Quantum (or Quantum + 1, or -1). It's possible to restrict quantum powers or Mega-Attributes entirely or limit them universally to three dots each.

On the other end of the scale, raising base Quantum to two, three or more dots is possible. The upper limit could remain at five or increase along with the base (providing a base Quantum of four, with a limit of eight, for example). In the **Aberrant** setting, very few novas have Quantum scores higher than five before the 2020s. Setting a series in a later time period provides more flexibility in power levels if one wishes to hew to the official timeline.

Other limits include:

- **Excluding Quantum Powers:** In this variant, novas have only Mega-Attributes and enhancements but no actual powers. The game would tend to focus more on characters who have astonishing levels of skill and raw talent over characters who fly and toss around plasma bolts. This is ideal for a Directive series. Arguably, such a game could appear more realistic (to a point). Additionally (at the Storyteller's discretion, of course), some powers might be adaptable as enhancements.

- **Excluding Mega-Attributes:** On the other end of the scale, you have novas who can have quantum powers but no Mega-Attributes. Some Mega-Attributes (e.g., Mega-Strength) should probably be adapted as powers, but overall, the characters have powers but no inherent superhuman Charisma or Intelligence. Such a series might have more of a "comic book" feel.

- **Limit Mundane Traits:** It only takes seven nova points to raise all mundane Attributes to 5. It doesn't take too much more to make a nova a world-class expert in many fields. This kind of character can be a great deal of fun to play, and there's nothing wrong with this, but a Storyteller might want to limit mundane Traits in some way, either by putting a cap on the number of nova points a player can spend in a particular category (i.e., Attributes or Abilities) or by limiting the number of nova points a player can channel into Traits. It's not out of line to limit such increases to nine nova points total or only five nova points in any given category, etc. This is especially useful at higher power levels, if one doesn't want to see characters with every single Attribute, Ability and Background increased to five dots (and Willpower to 10).

Where's the Juice?

Aberrant assumes that novas are incredibly powerful, but the M-R node and the nova's body can safely channel only so much energy before doing so takes its toll. This is reflected in "Dying for Power," page 147 in the **Aberrant** rulebook.

At the same time, an otherwise enthralling **Aberrant** session can come to a jarring halt if the characters run out of power in the midst of a pitched battle, and it can be damned inconvenient to hit empty just as a key character is preparing to deliver the smackdown with her Two-Handed Galactic Double-Firefly Pinwheel Fusion Blast. For those who want a bit more oomph in their games, the following suggestions provide a higher power level for nova characters. Use of these rules allows characters to last longer in the "quantum battlefield" and dish out (and take) more damage. This is a good variant for elites or other combat-intensive series. If the players adopt this system, the Storyteller needs to upgrade his antagonists accordingly.

Quantum Pool: Increase initial Quantum Pool to 50 + (Quantum x 5).

Increase Quantum: During character creation, novas gain five additional quantum pool per nova point spent. Afterward, each additional quantum pool increase costs one experience point.

Recovery: Recovery rate is 5 + Node when active, 10 + 2(Node) when resting.

Dying for Power: The player may burn one health level to gain five quantum points, but these points dissipate after three turns. Injuries inflicted through this method manifest in a manner appropriate to the nova's powers or anima (i.e., lightning burn for a weather controller, stroke for a mentalist, etc.). All such wounds are aggravated injuries, except that they cost five quantum points to heal with the Healing power or the Regeneration enhancement.

Rapid Recovery: Roll Stamina + Node at +1 difficulty per three quantum points gained over normal recovery.

Quantum Regeneration: Quantum Regeneration adds 5x the power's rating to regular recovery per Willpower point spent. Yes, this means that a nova with Quantum Regeneration 5 with the Extra Double will add 50 quantum points to his recovery for one Willpower point.

Recovery Times

A nova's development also governs how often she may recover quantum points. Use the following table to judge how quickly novas may recover.

Quantum Rating	Recovers
1-3	Once per hour.
4	Once per 30 minutes.
5	Once per 15 minutes.
6-7	Once per 10 minutes.
8-9	Once per 5 minutes.
10	Once per minute.

Other Options

Mega-Strength: Mega-Strength already works differently than other Mega-Attributes, but it provides a means to inflict large amounts of damage for zero quantum points. Consider the possibility that using Mega-Strength to inflict damage costs two quantum points per use.

Level Three Powers: Many Level 3 powers provide a multitude of techniques (like Elemental Mastery) as opposed to a single power (like Warp). In such cases, most techniques are roughly equivalent to Level 2 powers and should cost two quantum points per use.

Optional Rule: Specialties for Nova Points

As written, the rules allow players to purchase six Ability dots with one nova point or one Ability dot for two bonus points. It's also possible to purchase specialties for one bonus point apiece but impossible to purchase any with nova points.

One possible change is to allow players to purchase five Ability dots and two specialties for one nova point, rather than six Ability dots. Players may still purchase six Ability dots with a nova point, as per the standard rules.

Changing Power Levels

30 nova points is a good default for most games. It tends to give a good range of power types, while leaving room for advancement. Still, it doesn't cover every possible level of play, from the low-powered "street novas" to "fat, cracklin' cosmic power o' the gods." A change in starting nova points may or may not reflect a change in the world's overall power level.

• **Mean Streets (10-20):** Characters at this level aren't necessarily going to be obvious candidates for

huge movers and shakers (unless they're typical for the series' power level). On the other hand, they may tend toward a more "locally oriented" stance. It's somewhat easier to focus a low-powered series in one city. It could be akin to *Daredevil* or *Hitman*. Look also to James Ellroy's LA quartet for a sense of mood.

• **Average Paragons (20-30):** **Aberrant's** default power level. Novas of this power level tend to have enough power to make a difference but only stand out from other novas because of their actions. This is not an indication that they're mediocre or weak. Only slightly more than one person per million is a nova at the end of 2015, so they are quite rare. Every nova, therefore, stands out in some way. A popular, charismatic nova can, if she applies herself intelligently, make a much bigger difference than Caestus Pax ever will, despite the difference in degree of raw power. Characters at this level are equivalent to Spider-Man or the Fantastic Four at the beginning of their respective careers. Also look to novels like the Wild Cards series or Julian May's Galactic Milieu trilogy.

Power Isn't Everything

Characters need interesting hooks, weaknesses and challenges. Roleplaying is about donning a mask, taking on another's weaknesses, foibles and strengths. More important than a game's power level is the degree to which is *interesting*. The higher the power levels, the more important it is for players to really get into what makes their characters strange, scary, fun and complex. Otherwise, it's not really worth the time. With that in mind, find a level everyone's comfortable with and go with it. **Aberrant**'s not about limits, but about people who transcend everyday limits. The powers are just how they do it.

Don't be afraid to change back the game's power level if it leaves everyone unhappy, and don't be afraid to throttle things back (or ramp up the antagonists) if the characters seem too powerful to challenge.

Games don't need to be about flying at mach 15 and tossing off city-destroying energy bolts. They can be about politics, the media or working social change over a long period of time and/or a large scale. Anyone with brains will treat a powerful nova with kid gloves — and a powerful nova needs to treat the world similarly. Going off the deep end and destroying major cities every other week can dampen a series' mood. Besides, quantum powers simply can't solve all of a nova's problems and often bring a truckload of new ones.

It's a good idea for players, during the character creation process, to create a list of potential and actual problems his character might face. Certainly, these hooks would be implicit in a well-developed background, but setting a list of pointers on paper makes it easier to insure that the Storyteller will know about and apply them mercilessly.

Examples of **Aberrant** signature characters who can't simply change the world in a desirable fashion (some could certainly change it drastically, but they may not like the results) through a gratuitous application of raw power include Divis Mal, Caestus Pax, Antaeus, Scripture, Sophia Rousseau and others. Each of these novas has an incredibly complex agenda, yet they must accomplish their goals without demonstrating incredible powers (at least, not often).



- **First Among Equals (30-50):** Novas at this level are real powerhouses. Most have one or two powers at five dots and several Mega-Attributes. Characters can lay down some serious power here. The characters in *Planetary* or *X-Force* tend to be at this level. Novas with this much power get *noticed*, to say the very least, and everyone (Utopia, the Teragen, etc.) wants novas with this kind of raw power working for them. They're perceived as more important in the scheme of things and a valuable, irreplaceable resource. Jane M. Lindskold's Athanor novels provide good inspiration for characters of this level.

- **Movers and Shakers (50-75):** Novas at this power level are few and far between and vitally important to anyone with an agenda (who doesn't mind working with novas). Project Utopia tries to grab as many for Team Tomorrow (or Proteus) assignments as they can manage, simply to keep the raw power under their guidance and control. Unfortunately, even

Tomorrowites have minds of their own (look at Corbin and Slider). Of course, not all are necessarily suited for membership in some factions. It's not really viable to coerce novas this powerful, but persuasion methods (like Mega-Manipulation) exist. *The Uncanny X-Men* and *The Avengers* are good comic resources for this level. Julian May's *Saga* of the Pliocene Exile series and S.M. Stirling's *Drakon* serve as useful inspiration.

- **Fat, Cracklin' Cosmic Power o' The Gods (75-100+):** A nova with this much power is a literal god. She strides the world like a titan. She is not invulnerable, nor all-powerful, but as far as most of the rest of the world is concerned, she may as well be. It's important when starting at this power level (or any other, but it needs to be stressed here) to give a character good hooks — enemies, friends and support networks are vital. Also consider personality — what it's like to have this kind of power. Does the nova consider herself above petty concerns? Does she see it as her duty to use her powers to aid humanity? Does she want to take *The Null Manifesto* that extra step? Every action she takes has the potential to cause deep ripples or messy splashes. National governments may compose contingency plans just in case she decides to go on a rampage. *The Authority* and *JLA* offer excellent portrayals of characters at this power level and do an excellent job of conveying their importance to the world. Good books include Dan Simmon's *Carrión Comfort* and his Hyperion/Endymion quartet. Iain Banks' *Culture* novels also serve as good inspirational material.

Taint Permutations

Taint represents the cost the M-R node extracts from novas. It's a measure of the toll quantum channeling has taken on the nova's body and mind and an indicator of just how far removed from baseline humanity a character is. It's a harsh price, but it also serves as a distinguishing hook for characters.

Under certain circumstances, a group may opt to change the mechanics of how characters gain Taint at character creation. The Quantum or Node levels that cause Taint accumulation can be adjusted up or down (although up is not recommended).

- **Very Low Taint:** Only in the most extreme cases (maxing a Level 4 power several times in the space of an hour, for example) can a nova accrue Taint. This is consistent with a game using second generation novas (the offspring of two nova parents), whose bodies are more adept at channeling quantum energy and who, therefore, do not gain Taint easily.

- **Low Taint (Aberrant Default):** Novas don't really need to worry about Taint unless they deliberately take actions that cause it (buy powers at reduced cost, purchase high Quantum, etc.).

- **High Taint (Trinity Default):** All novas have

some Taint, it's simply impossible to avoid. This really plays up a nova's "otherness" from humanity, and characters will tend to stand out as unstable tentacled monsters.

- **Alter Taint at Character Creation:** Rather than halving the cost of tainted quantum powers, Mega-Attributes and Quantum, assign a set number of extra nova points per point of Taint — one to three should be sufficient, depending on the game's power level.

- **Limit Starting Taint:** It's easy for a new character to load up on Taint and end up 60 seconds from complete meltdown. It's certainly not against the spirit of the rules to limit beginning characters to five or six permanent Taint to avoid tentacled psycho freaks made of solid mercury at the outset.

Varying Costs

Costs can be altered to highlight, de-emphasize or limit certain elements in *Aberrant*. If players want a game wherein the characters use more powers than Mega-Attributes, powers can be made cheaper to reflect that, or vice versa. One caveat: Varying what can be purchased with nova points in some cases (quantum pool, Attributes, Abilities, Backgrounds) can affect the game's balance in critical ways. This sort of tweaking requires a bit of effort to avoid unbalancing the game and to maintain the right feel. Bear this in mind as you tinker with the system, and don't be afraid to change back if the alternative systems don't work for you.

In Summation

Aberrant has so many options for character creation, even without fiddling with the rules, that the choices can get a bit overwhelming — do you purchase a dot or two of Weather Control, or do you boost your Mega-Dexterity? Do you want Healing or Mega-Intelligence and Medical Prodigy? The intent here isn't to increase complexity, but to provide more options for players and Storytellers to better tailor games to personal preference.

Take what works, toss the rest, extrapolate more material beyond that presented here. Just remember that it's a game, and the point of games is enjoyment. Keep that in mind, and you'll be fine, whatever kind of variant game you opt to play.

Merits and Flaws

Merits and Flaws are optional Traits used to further define characters in *Aberrant*. *Merits* are special advantages, while *Flaws* are limitations and disadvantages. They are not rated with dots like most Traits, although some Merits and Flaws do have multiple levels.

Merits and Flaws can only be taken during

Altered Games

Example 1: Zach wants to start an **Aberrant** game in which characters can easily get Mega-Attributes and quantum powers but have something of a lid on Quantum. He doesn't want to just add nova points because he doesn't want to deal with characters who have 30 nova points applied to Abilities and Attributes. He gives the players the following character creation guidelines:

Trait	Nova Point Cost
Mega-Attribute	2
Enhancement	2
Quantum	5
Quantum Power (Level 1)	1
Quantum Power (Level 2)	2
Quantum Power (Level 3)	3
Quantum Pool	3 per Nova Point

Zach chooses not to change the costs for Attribute, Ability, Background or Willpower dots. He also decides that players can't purchase Quantum with bonus points. He does change base quantum pool to $30 + (\text{Quantum} \times 3)$ to give characters more staying power.

Example 2: Heather decides she wants her game to focus on Mega-Attributes over Quantum Powers, and adjusts point costs to match:

Trait	Nova Point Cost
Mega-Attribute	2
Enhancement	2
Quantum	5
Quantum Power (Level 1)	2
Quantum Power (Level 2)	4
Quantum Power (Level 3)	6

All other costs remain unchanged.

character creation. Merits are bought with bonus points and Flaws give you bonus points to spend. A character can have as many Merits as the player wishes to purchase, but it is recommended that no character have more than 10 total points in Flaws. Otherwise, the character risks becoming a caricature, and allowing unlimited Flaws can introduce some unwanted wrinkles into the character creation system.

In general, Storytellers should be aware of Flaws that are easily countered using certain nova powers, which may make the Flaw less of a hindrance. The Storyteller should joyfully veto any combination of powers and Flaws that seems abusive. Specific cases are addressed in individual Flaw descriptions.

Merits and Enhancements

A few Merits, such as Lightning Calculator and Photographic Memory, duplicate the effects of certain Mega-Attribute enhancements. These Merits are only available to characters that do *not* have the appropriate Mega-Attribute(s). They do not "stack" with existing enhancements. If a nova takes one of these Merits and later acquires the Mega-Attribute with the similar enhancement, convert the Merit into the enhancement at no cost. For example, Andy's character has Photographic Memory. He later uses experience to give his character Mega-Intelligence 1. He loses the Merit and gets the Eidetic Memory enhancement for free (in addition to the usual free enhancement).

Flaws and Dormancy

A nova with four or five dots in the Dormancy background (**Aberrant**, p. 141) has the option of having separate "nova" and "baseline" forms. A Flaw that applies to only one of the nova's forms, such

as the baseline form being Lame or Blind, has only half its normal value (rounded up to the nearest point), since the nova has the option of switching forms and not dealing with the Flaw. Merits retain their normal cost whether they are usable by one form or both, although only the nova form can make use of Quantum Merits.

Flaws and Aberrations

Physical

Acute Sense [1 point Merit]

One of your senses is unusually sharp, giving you an extra die for Perception rolls involving that sense. Note this extra die does not affect other Perception rolls (particularly power rolls). This Merit is compatible with Mega-Perception.

Ambidextrous [1 point Merit]

You're equally able to use either hand. You suffer no off-hand penalty and no penalty for using two weapons at once. In fact, you roll an extra die when attacking with two weapons. This Merit does not affect your ability to perform multiple actions. You must have a minimum Dexterity and Wits of 3 (or *either* of Mega-Dexterity or Mega-Wits) to have this Merit.

Huge Size [4 point Merit]

You're a big one, over two meters tall with a build to match. You have one extra Bruised health level and +1 Stamina for soaking bashing damage. The drawback is your size may make it difficult for you to fit into enclosed places and to use some equipment designed for normal-sized people. You must have a minimum Strength and Stamina of 3 (or 1 dot in either Mega-Strength or Mega-Stamina) to take this Merit.



Short [1 point Flaw]

You're noticeably smaller than average, less than 1.5 meters. Your running speed is half normal, and you may encounter problems using certain equipment designed for people with average builds, as well as jokes and prejudice regarding your smaller stature.

Speech Impediment [1 point Flaw]

You are unable to speak clearly, especially under stress. You may stutter, stammer or lisp. Listeners must make a Perception + Willpower roll to understand what you're saying under stressful circumstances. You can spend a Willpower point to overcome this Flaw and speak clearly for one scene.

Weak Sense [1 point Flaw]

One of your senses is poor or compromised in some way (perhaps related to your powers or taint), imposing +2 difficulty penalty to all Perception rolls involving that sense. When affecting vision or hearing, this Flaw can be corrected by wearing a suitable prosthesis, such as glasses or a hearing aid. Novas with extrasensory abilities can apply this Flaw to them as well.

Dependence [1-7 point Flaw]

You require a particular substance in order to live. If you go without, you begin to suffer damage. The value of this Flaw depends on the rarity of the substance and how quickly you suffer from being deprived of it. A fairly common substance (like water) is worth 1 point. An uncommon substance (like chlorophyll or silver) is worth 2 points. A rare or illegal substance (like plutonium or soma) is worth 3 points. You suffer one level of bashing damage for every 24 hours your go without a "dose" of whatever you need. If you suffer damage every 8 hours, increase the Flaw's rating by one. If you suffer damage every 4 hours, increase by two. If you suffer damage every hour, increase by 3. If you suffer lethal rather than bashing damage, increase by 1.

This Flaw can simulate characters dependant on a particular environment (such as amphibians) as well as characters dependant on certain medications to keep them alive.

Mute [2 point Flaw]

You cannot speak, either due to damage to your vocal cords or some psychological or neurological trauma. You automatically fail rolls dependent on speaking and cannot use powers based on it (such as many Mega-Social enhancements).

One Eye [2 point Flaw]

You have only one functional eye, giving you no depth perception. You suffer +1 difficulty to all

ranged attack and dodge rolls, and +2 difficulty to Perception rolls. You can have the Acute Sense Merit, meaning your remaining eye is exceptionally sharp, but the penalties here still apply.

Addiction/Compulsion [2-4 point Flaw]

You are driven to use some substance (addiction) or engage in some action (compulsion). For each 24 hours after the first 24 where you fail to satisfy your craving, you suffer +1 to all of your difficulties. This continues until you satisfy your addiction (so going "cold turkey" for four days imposes a +3 difficulty penalty).

This Flaw is worth 2 points if the addiction is something legal, like cigarettes, alcohol, sex or the like. It's worth 4 points if the character is addicted to something illegal or hard to get, like Amp Wells, soma or murder. Note that novas are generally immune to most addictive drugs used by baselines, like cocaine and heroin. Soma is one of the few substances a nova can get high on.

Nova characters can also be addicted to using their powers. This is a legal addiction for most powers, the nova is simply addicted to the "high" of being able to fly, shapeshift or whatever, though this makes the nova poorly suited for covert missions. Illegal power addictions include abilities that affect other people, like Domination, Hypnosis, Quantum Leech and Telepathy.

Lame [2-4 point Flaw]

Your legs and lower body don't function as well as they should. For two points, your movement rate is one-quarter normal and you suffer a +2 difficulty penalty for all actions involving lower body movement (including dodging). You walk with a noticeable limp. For four points, you require a cane, crutches or braces to move more than a short distance on your own. Your movement rate is one-quarter normal, and you suffer a +4 difficulty penalty for actions involving lower body movement. Dodging may not even be an option for you under some circumstances.

Deaf [3 point Flaw]

You cannot hear and automatically fail rolls requiring hearing. You cannot have the Hyperenhanced Hearing enhancement of Mega-Perception or any power that requires hearing. On the upside, you're immune to the effects of powers based on hearing, like many uses of Mega-Social Attributes. You can use powers like Telepathy normally. You can use one dot in Linguistics to learn to read lips with a Perception + Linguistics roll and one dot to learn sign language.

Disability [3 point Flaw]

Some part of your body is defective in a way that inhibits your abilities, causing you to suffer a +2 difficulty penalty for certain actions involving a single Attribute — for example, severe arthritis, imposing a +2 difficulty on all Dexterity rolls. The disability may be the result of a birth defect, an illness or an injury.

Disfigured [3 point Flaw]

Your Appearance is 0 and cannot be raised (either during character creation or later using experience). This may be due to a birth defect, injury, disease or another cause you and your Storyteller agree on. You automatically fail Appearance rolls and any Social rolls based on Appearance (except Intimidation).

Blind [6 point Flaw]

You are unable to see at all and automatically fail rolls requiring sight. You cannot have the Electromagnetic Vision, High-End Electromagnetic Scan and Ultraperipheral Perception enhancements of Mega-Perception, although you can have any of the others. You can use sensory powers like Mega-Perception and ESP to partially compensate for your blindness. Make a roll for the sensory power, then perform the task normally at +5 difficulty. For every success over the sensory power's required difficulty, subtract one from the +5 penalty.

Paraplegic [6 point Flaw]

You are permanently paralyzed from the waist down. You require a wheelchair (or some similar conveyance) to move any real distance on your own. You cannot perform actions involving lower body movements (including dodging) and opponents get +2 dice to hit you in combat, since you are basically a non-moving target. Some powers, notably Flight, can compensate for this Flaw, but it still limits ground movement and retains its full value.

Mental Concentration [1 point Merit]

Your powers of concentration are greater than normal, allowing you to ignore difficulty penalties for distractions other than wounds and giving you an extra die for Meditation rolls. If you're involved with an extended task, the Storyteller may require a Perception roll for you to even notice certain distractions.

Internal Compass [1 point Merit]

You have an excellent sense of direction. You can always find north (even indoors or underground) by making an Awareness or Navigation roll. You can retrace your steps with an Awareness or

Navigation roll at +1 difficulty. This Merit is very useful for novas with movement powers such as Flight or Teleportation.

Time Sense [1 point Merit]

Your internal clock is extremely accurate. You can estimate what time it is down to a minute or two. If you were sleeping or knocked out, you know roughly how long you've been out. You can also execute very accurate countdowns. This Merit is similar to the Temporal Manipulation technique Internal Clock (although not quite as accurate). Characters with Temporal Manipulation cannot take (and do not need) this Merit.

Devotion [2 point Merit]

You have a particular devotion to a cause, ideal, code of honor, organization or even an individual. Attempts to sway you from the object of your devotion are at +3 difficulty. However, you must remain true to your devotion in order to retain this benefit. If you deliberately and knowingly betray the object of your devotion, you lose the inner strength it gives you until you make amends (in the Storyteller's opinion).

Lightning Calculator [2 point Merit]

You have a remarkable ability for doing complex mathematics in your head. You can keep a calculator with you during the game and use it any time you want. When performing a task involving any type of mathematics, make an Intelligence roll. Each success adds one die to the Ability roll. This Merit is essentially the same as the Mathematical Savant enhancement of Mega-Intelligence. Characters cannot have both.

Speed Reading [2 point Merit]

You can read text at four times the normal rate with no loss of comprehension. While reading, make an Intelligence roll. Each success increases the speed multiplier by one, so two successes allow you to read at six times the normal rate. This Merit is the same as the Speed Reading enhancement of Mega-Intelligence, and characters cannot have both.

High Pain Tolerance [3 point Merit]

You're able to shrug off the effects of injury more easily. Reduce all of your wound penalties by 1, so you function as if you were unhurt when Hurt or Injured and Injured when you're Wounded and so forth. You still suffer damage like anyone else and still drop when you're Incapacitated.

Photographic Memory [3 point Merit]

You can perfectly recall anything you've experienced. This Merit is the same as the Eidetic Memory enhancement of Mega-Intelligence, and characters cannot have both.

Iron Will [6 point Merit]

You have an iron core of determination and willpower. You can spend a Willpower point to shake off any attempt to control you through the use of Social Abilities or powers such as Domination or Hypnosis.

Costume Fetish [1 point Flaw]

You have a penchant (some might say obsession) for wearing a certain type of clothing. It can be skintight eufiber, leather and spikes, liquid latex, a mask or full Renaissance Faire garb. The important point is that it's odd, and you tend to wear it even under the most inappropriate circumstances. This can impose a +1 or greater difficulty on your Social rolls and may be a serious faux pas in some situations. It also makes you stand out in a crowd and makes you a less than ideal candidate for subtle and covert activities. You can spend a Willpower point to dress "normally" for a scene, but you don't like it (as you're likely to tell just about everyone).

Intolerance [1 point Flaw]

You're extremely narrow minded, and there are just some people you don't like based solely on their race, sex, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality or some other quality. You suffer a +2 difficulty on all Social rolls involving this class of people and prefer not to associate with them unless absolutely necessary (and you're not likely to be too popular with them, either). You can spend a Willpower point to overcome your prejudice for one scene.

Lusty [1 point Flaw]

You have an insatiable libido coupled with a regrettable inability to control your desires. Any attempt to seduce you gains three extra dice, provided the advances come from someone you consider even vaguely attractive, and you are at +1 difficulty to resist such attempts. You can spend a Willpower point to ignore the effects of this Flaw for one scene, alternatively a very cold shower will have the same effect.

Overconfidence [1 point Flaw]

You tend to overestimate your abilities (a common failing among novas). In any situation where an assessment of your abilities is a factor, the Story-



teller will tend to exaggerate them ("He doesn't look so tough to you," or "You've seen this kind of security system before, and they're easy," for example). You must also make a Willpower roll at +1 difficulty to back down from a direct challenge to your abilities. You can spend a Willpower point to ignore this Flaw for one scene.

Trademark [1 point Flaw]

You have a particular "signature" and feel compelled to use it to "sign" your work. It may be leaving a particular poem or a rose at the feet of a defeated opponent, carving your logo or initials into the nearest wall (or enemy...) or leaving your vanquished foes without clothes. The key is that the trademark clearly shows you were there and requires some small risk on your part, both the distraction of leaving the trademark and the possibility of it being traced back to you. Storytellers may permit higher values for especially involved or nasty trademarks. You can spend a Willpower point to avoid leaving your trademark when you absolutely have to.

Pacifist [1 or 4 point Flaw]

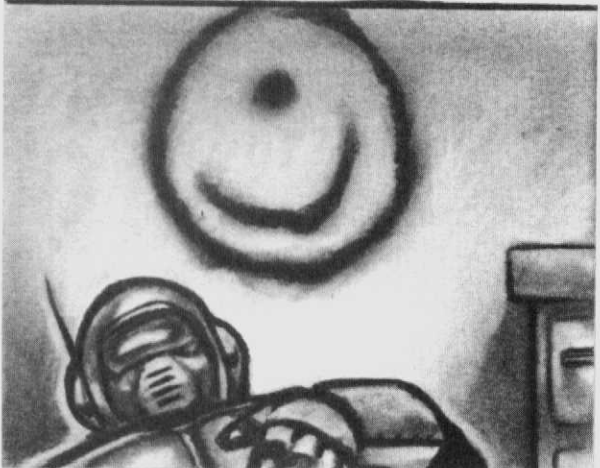
You are against violence and prefer to avoid it whenever possible. You must spend a Willpower point in order to initiate combat, although you can fight to defend yourself and others. You must also

spend a Willpower point in order to use a lethal attack, although you can use bashing attacks freely. For four points, you must spend a Willpower point to be able fight *at all*, and you cannot use lethal attacks.

Obsession [2 point Flaw]

You are fascinated with a particular person, place or behavior and do everything you can to satisfy your interest. If you're obsessed with a person, you spend all your available time with them and learn all you can about them (you're basically a stalker, whether or not you mean any harm). If you're obsessed with a place, you spend all your time there, and you're very reluctant to leave. Characters may also be obsessed with a particular behavior, such as lying, curiosity, crime-fighting and so forth.

You have to make a Willpower roll to resist the lure of your obsession whenever it beckons, even if now isn't the best time for you to indulge yourself. The Storyteller may adjust the difficulty if the circumstances are particularly tempting, such as an obsessive crime-fighter confronted with a mugging in progress or an obsessively curious character confronted with a file marked "TOP SECRET: EYES ONLY." You may spend a Willpower point to overcome your obsession for one scene.



Overwhelmed [2 point Flaw]

You don't deal well with chaotic or confusing situations. They tend to overwhelm you. You suffer a difficulty modifier of +1 to +3 in such conditions, determined by the Storyteller. This is the opposite of the Concentration Merit, and you cannot have both. This Flaw is most common among novas with Mega-Perception, whose enhanced senses are more easily overloaded by chaotic conditions.

Phobia [2 point Flaw]

There is something you are morbidly and irrationally afraid of, from darkness, to spiders, to circus clowns. Whenever you are confronted with the object of your fear, you must make a Willpower roll at +1 difficulty to avoid retreating from it as quickly as you can. If you botch the roll, you collapse from fear and become virtually catatonic for the scene or until the object of your terror is removed, whichever comes first. Some phobias can be particularly troublesome for novas, such as acrophobia (a fear of heights) for a nova gifted with Flight. Novas may also suffer from phobias baselines do not, such as a nova teleporter with a fear of teleporting blind.

Vengeful [2 point Flaw]

You don't forgive or forget. In fact, you tend to get mad and then get even — in the nastiest way possible. You have to make a Willpower roll at +1 difficulty to avoid repaying any slight, insult or offense against you in equal, if not greater, measure. This can range from getting in the last jibe to killing someone who tried to kill you (or have you killed). You can spend a Willpower point to ignore a particular offense (although you're still likely to carry a grudge about it).

Combat Paralysis [3 point Flaw]

You tend to "freeze up" in combat situations, either due to inexperience, previous trauma or simple fear. Roll two dice for Initiative and take the lowest result. Enhancements to your Initiative still apply.

Flashbacks [3 point Flaw]

You have some traumatic experience in your past that you sometimes recall with terrifying clarity. Whenever you are in a situation similar to that experience, you must make a Willpower roll at +1 difficulty to avoid being overwhelmed by memories of it. You tend to mistake people, places and things for similar things in your memory and may act on those erroneous conclusions. If you botch the Willpower roll, you become almost catatonic, entirely lost in your recollections. You can spend a point of Willpower to ignore the effects of this Flaw for one scene.

Low Pain Threshold [3 point Flaw]

You have very little tolerance for pain. You suffer wound penalties as if your injuries were one level more severe than they really are, so you are at -2 when Hurt or Injured and so forth. You are at -5 when Crippled and knocked unconscious at Incapacitated. You are also at +1 difficulty to resist pain, such as torture or the symptoms of a painful disease.

Amnesia [3-5 point Flaw]

You've lost some or all of your memory, either due to some sort of trauma, or from deliberate brainwashing using drugs, hypnosis or nova powers like Telepathy. For three points, you don't recall anything about your past, including your own name. You begin the game as a blank slate. The Storyteller gets to decide who your character really is (with input from you). This makes for an excellent story hook, particularly in series dealing with nova cults.

For five points, you not only don't know who you are, you don't even know what you can do. The Storyteller keeps your character sheet secret, and you don't know the levels of your various Traits or even what Traits you have. The Storyteller comes up with your Traits (possibly based on input from you). This requires some effort on the Storyteller's part and considerable trust on yours.

Uneducated [5 point Flaw]

Although Project Utopia has improved the level of education worldwide, there are still people in many nations lacking even a basic education. You are one of them. It costs you two Ability dots or three bonus points to gain one dot in any Intelligence-based Ability at character creation, and you may not raise those abilities higher than two dots. Once the game starts, you must pay six experience points for a new Intelligence-based Ability and [current level x 5] to raise one. Linguistics is the exception to this rule; you pay normal prices for it.

Social

Natural Leader [1 point Merit]

You have a way of getting people to do what you tell them. You gain an additional die for Leadership rolls and two if you are leading by example in some way that puts you at risk or otherwise makes people empathize with you.

Sexy [1 point Merit]

There's just something about you that attracts people. Maybe you have pretty eyes, or maybe it's just pheromones, but in any case, you get two extra

dice for seduction rolls or to otherwise influence people using your sexuality. However, some people may be jealous of you and consider you a rival.

Debt

[1-3 point Merit or Flaw]

Sometimes, it's not who you know, it's who you owe. If you take this as a Merit, somebody owes you, but as a Flaw, you owe someone a favor. For one point, the debt is a socially or emotionally significant one (you offered some friendly advice or a shoulder to cry on). For two points, it's financially significant (you loaned out money or provided some professional help free of charge). For three points, the debt is a matter of life or death (you saved someone's life or one of her loved ones). You can call in a debt any time, at which point you lose this Merit. Likewise, the Storyteller can decide to call in a debt you owe, getting rid of your Flaw. Refusing to honor a debt may have serious consequences, not the least of which may be ruining your reputation and turning a friend into an enemy.

Minority [1 point Flaw]

You belong to a group outside of "mainstream" society. You have to deal with prejudice, stereotyping and incorrect assumptions about you. You may suffer increases on the difficulty of Social rolls, at the Storyteller's discretion, when dealing with people who are not accepting of your kind. This may range from +1 difficulty for someone who's merely uncomfortable or doesn't quite know how to deal with you to +3 or more when dealing with true bigots. On the upside, you get to roll an extra die when making Social rolls dealing with your own kind (a sort of free Etiquette specialty).

Storytellers should note that this Flaw is very subjective; nearly everyone is a "minority" somewhere! Whether or not a particular minority status is legitimate as a Flaw is up to the standards of the series and the types of stories (and people) the characters are likely to be involved with. Also note that, despite being one of the smallest groups in the world, novas are *not* considered a "minority" for the purposes of this Flaw.

Secret [1/3/5 point Flaw]

You're hiding something that, if known, would compromise you in the eyes of others. For one point, your secret would seriously change your life if it got out. This might be your true identity (as opposed to your masked nova identity), past political affiliations, your sexual orientation, elements of your background and so forth. For three points, your secret would result in your arrest and imprisonment if it were revealed, such as a crime

you committed. For five points, your secret is so dreadful it would result in your death if it were revealed, such as being an undercover agent infiltrating Project Proteus. Generally, the Storyteller should threaten your secret at least every other story, and it should come up in almost every story. If you don't take adequate precautions to protect it, the Storyteller should feel free to expose your secret and let you deal with the consequences.

Bad Vibe [1-3 point Flaw]

There's just something not right about you. It may be a lack of personal hygiene, a personality quirk or just a "strange vibe," but something about you makes people uncomfortable. You suffer a +1 difficulty on all Social rolls for every point in this Flaw, and people are increasingly uncomfortable around you.

Enemy [1-7 point Flaw]

There's somebody out there who dislikes you. A lot. The value of this Flaw is based on two things: how much that person hates you and what he is capable of doing about it.

The default is an unfriendly rivalry. For one point, your enemy would like to see you seriously humiliated, professionally ruined or perhaps imprisoned. For two points, he'd like to see you dead.

For one point, the enemy is less powerful than you are. For two points, he is roughly as powerful. For three points, he is more powerful. For four points, your enemy is roughly twice as powerful as you are, and for five points, he is truly godlike (one of the most powerful novas in the world).

Needless to say, characters with more than four points in this Flaw are walking targets, just waiting for their powerful adversary to kill them off. Players should take high levels in this Flaw with caution.

Dependant [4 point Flaw]

You have someone — a family member or loved one — who depends on you for support. Your dependant relies completely on you and often requires your attention and sometimes your protection. Unlike an ally or contact, a dependant has nothing to offer you but love and moral support. Otherwise, they are hooks for the Storyteller to use.

Quantum

Quantum Merits and Flaws are available only to nova characters; neither baselines nor psiads can purchase them.

Eufiber Attuned [1-3 point Merit]

You are especially in-tune with eufiber materials (Aberrant, p. 141). They adapt easily and well to your quantum signature. Each point in this Merit al-

lows you to store an additional quantum point in a eufiber colony attuned to you. You may subtract your rating in this merit from the difficulty of Weave rolls, and you also get an extra die per point in this merit for Style rolls involving eufiber clothing. You must have at least one dot in the Eufiber Background to take this Merit.

Quantum Recovery [1-3 point Merit]

You recover expended quantum energy more quickly than most novas. Each point in this Merit increases the amount of quantum points you recover by one per hour. So a nova with three points in this Merit recovers 5 quantum points per hour (7 if she's sleeping or meditating).

Taint Resistant [5 point Merit]

Your body channels quantum energy particularly efficiently, and you are therefore unusually resistant to the effects of taint. When you botch a roll while maxing a quantum power, you gain temporary Taint only if you roll two or more 1s. Rolling a single 1 on a power roll without getting any successes still counts as a botch, but it does not give the character Taint. When rolling for the rapid recovery of quantum, a simple failure accrues no Taint and even a botch accrues only a single point of temporary Taint.

Eufiber Rejection [2 point Flaw]

For some reason, you cannot attune to eufiber, in fact, your quantum signature "kills" eufiber that remains in contact with you for more than an hour. You cannot have the Eufiber background, and you gain no benefit from eufiber clothing. One of the more troublesome aspects of this Flaw is that you have to wear ordinary clothes, which may be destroyed regularly by your quantum powers. Without the Attunement Background, novas with powers like Imolate, Shapeshift and Sizemorph will have a particularly tough time with this Flaw.

Backgrounds In-Depth

Allies

Skew was grateful for the night off. Things had been crazy lately, and for the first time in weeks, he could just unwind at HQ and watch OpNet. He was about 10 minutes in on 1 Was a Teenager Terat when the phone rang.

"Lo?" Skew answered, hoping to God Ricardo didn't need him for some job.

"Drew? It's Paolo," replied the voice on the other end.

"Paolo?" asked the T2Mer, quickly muting the movie's sound. "Oh, my God, Paolo. I haven't heard from you in months. How's Miami?"

"Not great, Drew. Miguel's in some kinda trouble. The Spangler Posse's got it in for him.... He's in the hospital. It was a drive by. The policías say they're looking for the hombres but—"

"Forget the cops. I'll take care of it. Those Spangler fucks just messed with the wrong nova's godson."

"Muchas gracias, amigo."

The Allies Background represents a character's closest relationships. It's quite possible that they are closer to the character than the other members of her team, each dot representing a complicated reciprocal relationship. Allies may be a character's family, boyfriend or old college roommate, but they are invariably the people to whom the character turns in times of trouble. Of course, the reverse is also true, and a character needs to make time for her allies if she intends to keep them.

All allies need a well-developed origin explaining their connection to the player's character, explaining why each is willing to go to the wire for the other. The player and the Storyteller should consult with one another to establish these relationships — though the Storyteller should further develop each ally's history and Traits himself. No one knows *everything* about her friends and family, obviously, and such mystery is useful for the Storyteller intent on bringing a character's allies into a series or perhaps making one central to a story.

Remember that allies are people with strong feelings for your character and for whom your character probably has strong feelings. Don't use them as mere gophers or suppliers. If all a character does is to make demands of his allies, without offering them aid or simple friendship, then it's quite likely that they'll get tired of being used and distance themselves from the character. Whether or not amends can be made, and the relationship salvaged, is up to the Storyteller, who is under no obligation to make such forgiveness easy to come by.

Therefore, treat your allies well. Send them e-mail from Ibiza stating "Wish you were here!" Bring them back a T-shirt from Addis Ababa. Surprise them on their birthdays. When they need help, give it. As the saying goes, you can never have too many friends.

Attunement

With invisible eyes, Figment watched Portman's speech from the catwalk. The President was in fine form tonight. He fairly radiated the same good-natured honesty that got him elected to the nation's highest office. With tonight's speech, Randal

Portman would formally announce his intention to run for a second term in that office. The President seemed confident, even exuberant, as he stepped up to the podium.

Figment let herself fall from the catwalk. Silent and invisible, she dropped toward the stage and, as she did so, decreased her density. She felt a chill as cool air slid through her insubstantial marrow, raising goosebumps on imperceptible flesh. She then experienced the rough grain of the wooden podium and dais, each feeling distinctly different as it slipped through her nerve ganglia.

Underneath the raised platform lay a primitive dynamite bomb, complete with alarm clock timer ticking away the last few seconds till detonation. As she fell into the device, Figment reached out with both her hands and her quantum signature, charging it and taking it with her into the cold concrete below. There she released the device, made inert through its becoming one with the concrete, arched her back and allowed her momentum to take her, like a diver, to the surface.

Pulling herself free of the concrete, Figment felt a deep sense of satisfaction at having saved the President's life... even if she had voted for Morrison.

All novas have a natural immunity to their own powers. Those who possess the Attunement Background have learned to charge other objects, both organic and inorganic, with their quantum signatures, thereby conferring their immunity to the charged objects. Novas may also use their powers on attuned objects as if they were extensions of their own bodies. Most novas with this talent use it to attune their clothing to potentially destructive powers — including Immolate, Sizemorph (Grow) and Bodymorph — others use Attunement to avoid the embarrassment of losing clothes to Sizemorph (Shrink) and Density Control (Decrease). More thoughtful novas, however, find a plethora of potential uses for this Background. With a touch, a nova with Forcefield may envelop an endangered baseline within its protective radius. Such Attunement is a must for certain powers, in fact, to avoid mayhem, death and other unpleasantness. Quantum powers such as Hypermovement and Immolate, for example, will almost certainly destroy objects carried by novas using these powers unless they are attuned to said novas. (**Note:** Powers that would have to alter an object's physiology in drastic ways to be effective, such as Body Modification, Claws and Armor, cannot convey their benefits to said object. The Storyteller is the final arbiter in such a situation.)

Attunement is only effective with quantum powers. It cannot be used in concert with Mega-Attributes or their enhancements (i.e., a character can

not pass her Mega-Stamina on to the lamp post with which she is bludgeoning her armored opponent).

The Storyteller determines which powers Attunement works for and which require the Affects Others Extra.

Backing

"So, the money's right. What's the job?" asked Stryker.

"The Chinese government wants to weaken the Heaven Thunder Triad," Anna DeVries began. "To that end, they contacted the agency, in hopes of hiring 'The Stone Badass' to capture one of the triad's top nova operatives, one Tao-shan Chu, AKA Shining Mountain. They apparently want to interrogate the guy and use the info to take down his bosses."

"I've heard of him. He's supposed to be one dangerous son of a bitch. If I go after him, I'm gonna need an airbike, a couple of satchel charges, a BFG and probably a smartweb and a shitload of mox. The big guy's not gonna come quietly, and that's a damn fact."

"Done."

Backing represents a character's standing within some organization. This may be anything from a private corporation, such as ViaSoft, to a philosophical movement, such as the Teragen. It is even possible to have the Backing of more than one organization, by say belonging to both Project Utopia's Team Tomorrow and Utopia's secret arm, Project Proteus.

Typically, the higher the level in Backing, the greater a character's power within an organization. Of course, with this power comes a correspondingly higher degree of responsibility to the organization. So while it is possible for a character with Backing ••••• with Team Tomorrow to call the entire T2M-Am down upon the heads of Colombian drug traffickers, the character is also expected to drop anything she may be doing in order to join the team in a PR tour of the Canadian provinces.

Most organizations provide their members with anything they may need to carry out work for the group. However, it is often difficult to convince your superiors of the need to use certain expensive assets of the organization, especially if you're a low-ranking member. An easy way to reflect this is for the Storyteller to assume that a character with this Background has access to any equipment or resources her organization has available that are equal to or less in worth to the equivalent number of dots in the Resources Background. Of course, this equipment does not belong to the character, and the organization expects to have it returned in most cases. The destruction of such property or the failure to return it may lead to a loss of Backing for the character responsible.

Cipher

"So, what do we know about this 'Divis Mal' character," asked Director Harris.

"Not a lot, I'm afraid," answered Special Agent Barrows. "He just seemed to come out of nowhere on October 31st, 2005 to usurp worldwide telecommunication and deliver The Null Manifesto."

"No one comes from nowhere Agent Barrows," replied Harris. "Everyone leaves data trails and whatnot. That's your whole *raison d'être*, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir. But we have to assume that if Mal can take over all the broadcast frequencies on the planet, he can certainly erase any computer traces of himself."

"Mm. Okay, given that, what about other forms of intelligence?"

"Well... after his address, we kept Mal under surveillance to the best of our ability until September of 2006, when we lost track of him again. Believing him to be undergoing what Terats refer to as a *Chrysalis*, we projected his reemergence to occur in 2010. Unfortunately, Mal returned in 2008, long before—"

"I'm well aware of these events. What I want to know is who Divis Mal really is, where he comes from and his connection, if any, to Utopia."

"I'm sorry, sir. We just don't know."

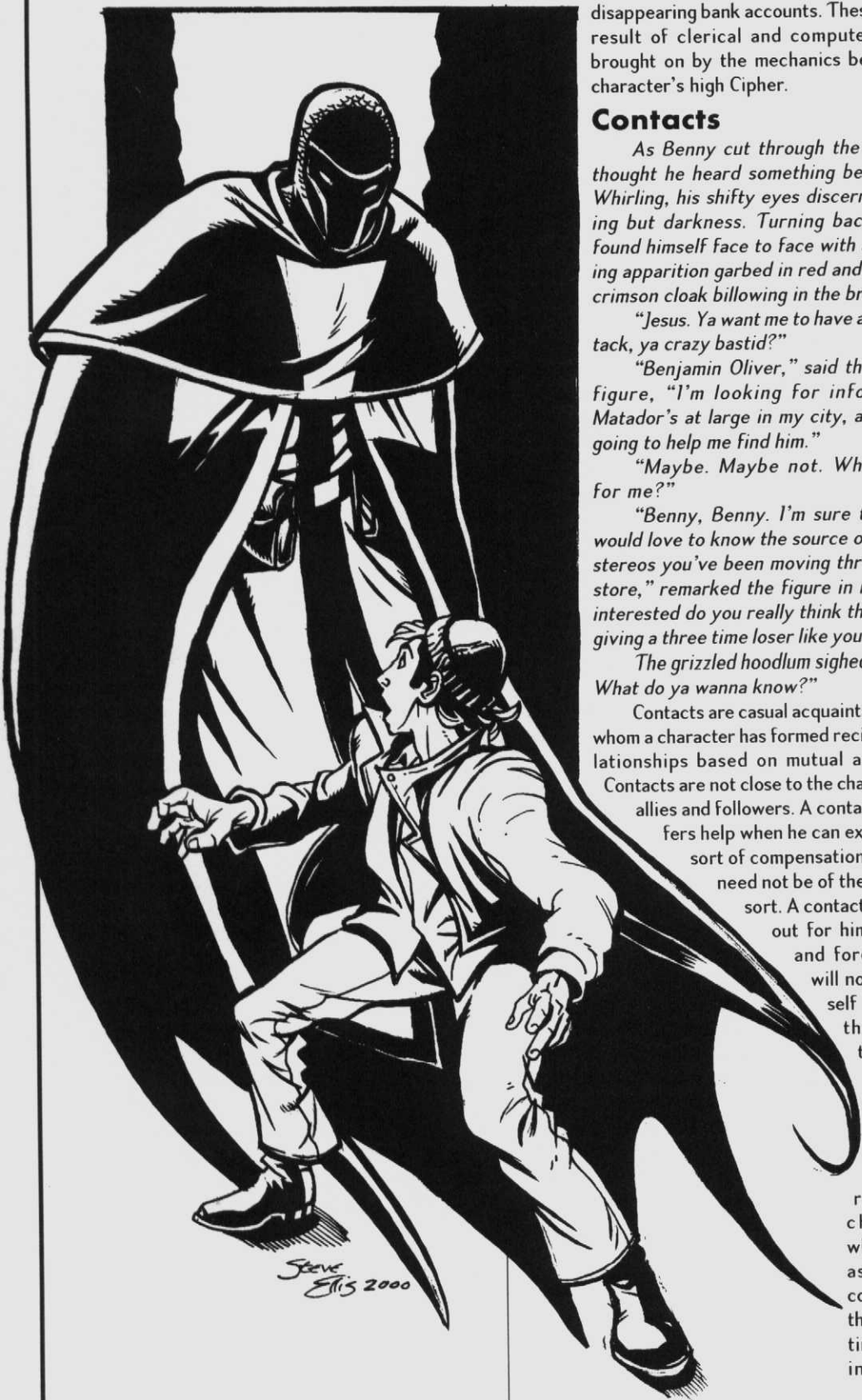
Cipher operates like an invisible data shield, providing the character who possesses it with protection from scrutiny. It won't keep a character from showing up on security video after a break-in at a Project Utopia facility, but it may make it so that the T2M members assigned to track you down can't put a name to your face. Unlike most Backgrounds, it is entirely passive (there are no Cipher rolls). It only comes into play when some agency or individual begins poking around in a character's life, attempting to get information or dirt on that character.

As a Background, Cipher is a must for certain secretive character concepts. Directive agents, Proteus operatives and those novas possessing "secret identities" all benefit from high levels of Cipher. Generally, there are two ways of "explaining" Cipher.

Some people just tend to leave very small data trails naturally. Maybe they don't subscribe to OpNet, put their real names on utility accounts or use credit cards, or they may have very common names, so that their history and another's, or even several people's, tend to get mixed up.

The other type of character with Cipher consists of those people who have had their identities systematically erased by some powerful agency, specifically to make them hard to trace.

No matter the cause, high Cipher may occasionally confer some problems in addition to its many benefits. Characters with values of 4 or 5 might have problems with "missed" OpNet account payments or



disappearing bank accounts. These are the result of clerical and computer errors brought on by the mechanics behind the character's high Cipher.

Contacts

As Benny cut through the alley, he thought he heard something behind him. Whirling, his shifty eyes discerned nothing but darkness. Turning back, Benny found himself face to face with a terrifying apparition garbed in red and black, its crimson cloak billowing in the breeze.

"Jesus. Ya want me to have a heart attack, ya crazy bastid?"

"Benjamin Oliver," said the cloaked figure, "I'm looking for information. Matador's at large in my city, and you're going to help me find him."

"Maybe. Maybe not. What's in it for me?"

"Benny, Benny. I'm sure the NYPD would love to know the source of all those stereos you've been moving through your store," remarked the figure in red. "How interested do you really think they'd be in giving a three time loser like you a break?"

The grizzled hoodlum sighed. "What... What do ya wanna know?"

Contacts are casual acquaintances with whom a character has formed reciprocal relationships based on mutual advantage.

Contacts are not close to the character like allies and followers. A contact only offers help when he can expect some sort of compensation, though it need not be of the monetary sort. A contact also looks out for himself, first and foremost. He will not put himself at risk for the sake of the character.

It is possible, however, that a Storyteller character who begins as a major contact may, through continued dealings and

good roleplay, develop a closer relationship to the character, that of an ally, follower or even mentor. In that case, the Storyteller should inform the player of this change and modify the game accordingly. Of course, it's also possible to alienate a contact, perhaps even creating a new antagonist for the character to deal with, by abusing your relationship. Players and Storytellers should be aware of these characters' potential for good roleplaying and take full advantage of that fact.

Dormancy

Geryon couldn't stop smirking. The looks on the ignorant zips' faces as he leapt onstage and staved in Piper's skull with the statue of St. Michael were priceless — bloody, fucking priceless. The Upie security looked like landed fish, with wide eyes and mouths agape. The first to regain his wits was that prat Montoya-Bernal. "Get him," he says. Brilliant fucking leadership, that.

Geryon hurled the metal statue into the crowd. That's Skew out of the chase, he thinks. Sure enough, the poncey git takes the bait, pushing his magnetic powers to catch the hurtling projectile before it smashes the bloody monkeys into rhesus pieces.

The Terat jumped from the stage, feeling the satisfying crunch of bone underhoof. A sudden Ka-Tang to the side of his head let Geryon know he'd counted Magno-lad out of the game too early. He definitely felt the blow and it slowed him down enough for pretty boy Makara and stretch monster Montoya-Bernal to join the fun. Geryon's massive fist wiped that perpetual smirk — and a good three layers of thick skin — from Makara's face. With Makara down, Geryon proceeded to the main event. Montoya-Bernal attempted to entwine the Terat in his serpentine arms, but before the überluchador could get a good grip, Geryon threw the Tomorrowite backward toward his teammate Skew. With nothing on his leader to grab onto magnetically, the T2Mer was struck by the flailing of one of Montoya-Bernal's extended limbs.

Realizing this respite would last only seconds, Geryon plunged into the squealing mass of Michaelites. While they scattered, Geryon concentrated on his M-R node, shutting off its flood of quantum energy. He felt his massive frame implode, resolving itself into the baseline form of James Booth. Screaming wildly, James joined the panicked zips in their flight, pausing only to tell Montoya-Bernal that "the aberrant monstrosity ran that way, (you right bastard) sir. Please, smite him dead for our righteous God and the poor Grand Deacon." Bloody fucking zip-lovers, Booth thought to himself, they fall for it every time.

Dormancy allows novas who possess it to temporarily shut down their M-R nodes, thereby halting

the flow of quantum energy from that gland. While in this state, novas no longer have access to either Mega-Attributes or quantum powers, appearing instead like the baselines they were prior to eruption. When "dorm'ed down," novas are nearly indistinguishable from normal humans, exhibiting only the increased Endurance and Resistance common to their kind. Taint and its accompanying aberrations are also submerged by this process; only the most taint-ridden novas exhibit outward signs of mutation while Dormancy is in effect.

An interesting physical phenomenon occurs with many novas who have more than three dots in the Dormancy Background. These novas possess two forms — one nova, the other baseline. At level four, the nova form appears drastically different, but it shares certain basic features with the baseline form, such as retina patterns, fingerprints and blood type. At level five, however, the nova and baseline forms are completely different. (Note that, while in baseline form, the nova has no access to any of his quantum-charged characteristics.) Recently, nova paraphysician Dr. Daniel Fortesque found a startling number of cases of novas who possess two forms exhibiting taint-derived Multiple Personality Disorders, lending credence to the belief that differences between baseline and nova involve a number of mental changes as well as the more obvious physical changes brought on by eruption.

Eufiber

Spinner leapt from the Trans' superstructure near the summit of the Addis Arcology. At his mental command, his eufiber costume created patagia to connect his arms and legs on either side. Catching an updraft, the nova glided toward the center of the arcology, inhuman agility allowing him to weave between the tall buildings and remain airborne. Gliding near the Addis Guard HQ, Spinner dissolved the eufiber membranes and entered freefall. As he fell, the Utopian concentrated, and eufiber tendrils whipped out to grasp the building's flagpole. Swinging beneath and around the pole, the nova used his momentum to carry himself up to a ledge on the 12th floor, where he landed with preternatural grace and entered an open window. Inside, Spinner's costume altered its color, warp and weft, quickly resolving itself into the uniform of a Guard member.

Eufiber is a catch-all term for a complex polymer extruded by Costa Rican nova and fashion designer Anibál Buendía and its synthetic derivatives first developed by nova engineer Ardis "Artifex" Longley. Since its "invention" in 2001, eufiber has proved a boon to baseline and nova alike. A colony of tube shaped molecules made chiefly of carbon, hydrogen and silicon, eufiber possesses remarkable

physical resiliency and chemical stability. It also conducts light with almost zero loss of signal strength or clarity, a fact that has led to its use in a number of industries.

The world of high fashion is fond of the substance both because of its combination of light weight and tensile strength and because of eufiber fabrics' ability to conduct light, allowing for beautiful shimmering gowns that glow with their own inner light or that may alter their color schemes at the press of a button. Owning one eufiber garment is like owning a whole new wardrobe. The fact that it conducts light as efficiently as optical fiber but at a fraction of the cost to produce has made it the most popular medium of data transmission in the 21st century. This same property makes it ideal for internal laser surgery and for video surveillance.

The colonies of living eufiber excreted from the epidermis of Anibál Buendía are in demand almost exclusively by novas. Clothing made of this substance offers benefits to novas that are unavailable to baseline wearers (though some wealthy fans of *haute couture* still seek to own clothing made of "real" eufiber as a status symbol). When worn by novas, such colonies adopt their wearers' quantum signatures and genetic codes. This confers immunity to the harmful effects of the owners' quantum powers, as if the garments had been Attuned, and allows the eufiber to act as a battery, storing the novas' quantum energies for later use.

While thus charged, the eufiber reflexively uses the stored energy to defend itself and its wearer. Some scientists theorize that this is the result of a connection to the wearer's unconscious mind. Just as a person reflexively flinches or raises an arm to block an incoming blow, eufiber likewise tightens its cellular structure to resist physical attacks and uses its ability to conduct quantum energy to shunt harmful energy assaults away in response to its hosts perception of a threat. Other scientists feel that living eufiber colonies possess a rudimentary intelligence and a drive for self-preservation. There are apocryphal tales of situations where a nova's eufiber clothing has sapped quantum against that nova's will, even to the point of feeding off the nova's life energy, in an effort to replenish its own supply, thereby weakening the nova at a critical moment. (Such concerns have led the Directive to ban the use of eufiber by its nova agents.) The truth may well lie somewhere between these two extremes.

Another concern has come to the attention of scientists and parapsychicians in recent years. Just like any other living organism, eufiber colonies are susceptible to both poison and disease (the only exceptions have had hosts with Mega-

Vampiric Eufiber

If a player wishes, he may buy his character a colony of vampiric eufiber at half the cost of regular eufiber (rounded down). The suit provides the same benefits as regular eufiber, except it will attempt to keep its store of quantum points at maximum at all costs — including the host's life. Whenever the nova spends quantum points from his eufiber, the colony immediately attempts to replenish its supply from the character's own quantum pool. The Storyteller rolls as many dice as the nova possesses in Vampiric Eufiber; the nova resists with his Wits Attribute alone. Points in Mega-Wits count as automatic successes, and a player whose character possesses the Weaving Skill may add that to the Wits roll as well. Each success the Storyteller gains above the number rolled by the player is a point of quantum drained by the colony, up to the eufiber's rating. If the character lacks sufficient quantum to replenish the colony, the character takes the difference in unsoakable levels of aggravated damage.

Stamina, especially those with the Adaptability enhancement, or an Invulnerability to poison and/or disease). Such occurrences are as rare as they are disturbing.

Poisoned eufiber is generally sluggish in response to mental commands and often exhibits a muting of its normally vibrant colors. Diseased eufiber shows the same symptoms as poisoned eufiber, but it also bears obvious signs of its illness, including cysts, sores, buboes and tumors. Specialists at Atlanta's Center for Disease Control have been working on ways of treating the diseased colonies but with limited success. The best way for either poisoned or diseased eufiber to recover is for the nova possessing it to continue wearing the material, lending his enhanced metabolism to the eufiber to help it heal.

Eufiber is most at risk for sickness when it is worn into combat situations more than once a day. Researchers theorize that too-frequent fluctuations in the eufiber's quantum charge cause stress in the material that weakens the colony. Exposure to Eufreeze (see **Aberrant: The Directive**, p. 56), in particular, appears to take a heavy toll on eufiber.

The most recent development of use for "natural" eufiber has been on the OpNet. Various cyberkinetic novas have discovered that they may attune sections of the OpNet made up of organic eufiber. Within their "webs" of eufiber, these novas are able to both wield their quantum talents more easily and hamper those of others. For each point of eufiber thus attuned, the nova gains an extra die to use in any Cyberkinesis attempt. Conversely, anyone trying to effect a system within a cyberkinetic's web has her difficulty raised by one for each point of eufiber in the web. A cyberkinetic nova's web spreads out for one kilometer per point of eufiber.

New Wits Ability

Weave: This Ability allows the nova who learns it to use eufiber to its maximum potential. He may shape it in a variety of ways for remarkable effects. (Please note that none of these stunts may be attempted untrained. Only someone possessing this skill may attempt them.) A nova with weaving may use his eufiber to form useful weapons, spines, patagia, grasping appendages and defensive camouflage. The list goes on. To perform any of these stunts, a character rolls Wits + Weave. (A character with the Eufiber Attuned Merit may subtract his rating in that Merit from the difficulty of his Weave roll.) The number of successes determines the degree to which the eufiber conforms to its host's desires. (The maximum number of successes may never surpass the character's Eufiber rating.) Each success represents one additional die that may be allocated to the nova's next appropriate roll. Thus, the dice would add to the damage roll for weaponry (in addition to making it lethal if edged weapons are formed), inflict damage with sharp spines or barbs on enemies striking him, add to an Acrobatics roll for gliding with patagia or add to Stealth rolls by forming flawless camouflage. Eufiber tendrils may extend a number of meters equal to the Eufiber Background and have a Strength rating equal to dots in Eufiber minus the number of meters extended.

Example: *Arachne has four dots in the Eufiber Background. Her vindictive ex-husband has drugged her as part of his plan to sell her to a nova rendering plant (run by the Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate) to be vivisected and turned into soma and other assorted nova-based pharmaceuticals. Knowing that his ex-wife is primarily a cyberkinetic, he simply binds and gags her and locks her in the closet of her own house while he waits for the Megasyndicate goons to come for her, not knowing that her very fashionable little black dress is made of eufiber. It takes only 10 minutes for Arachne's nova metabolism to burn off the Mickey he slipped her.*

Thirty seconds after Arachne wakes up, her dress begins to pulse, systematically pushing off the ropes that bind her.

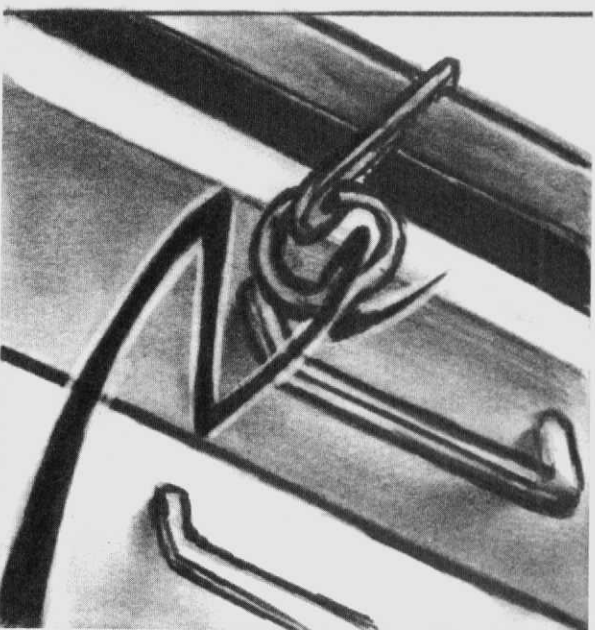
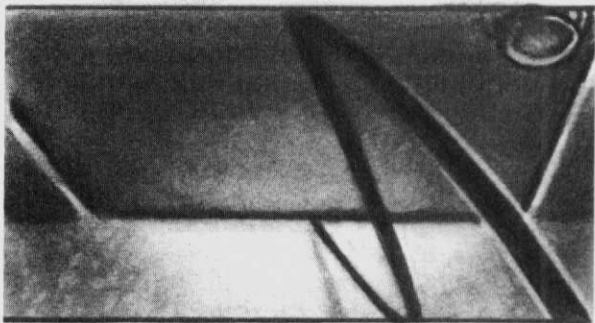
A minute later, a lacy black eufiber tendril slips under the door and stretches three meters to the mission-style table across the hall. It wraps around the knob of the drawer, where the closet key is kept, and pulls it out. The tendril slides back and forth like a delicate black tongue licking the bottom of the drawer until it finds the key. The tendril only has a Strength of 1 at this point, but that's enough to take the key from the drawer and unlock the door.

When the C-Z goons arrive half an hour later, her ex-husband has no prisoner to give them. In fact, he can't even bribe them, because Mother Matrix has cyberkinetically emptied his bank accounts, cancelled his credit cards and planted a phony data trail showing him embezzling money from the Megasyndicate.

Meanwhile, she's 40 miles down the road in his top of the line BMW, flawlessly dressed in what she jokingly refers to as her Swiss army dress.

This Ability is very rare, and the Storyteller, therefore, is the final arbiter of whether or not a character can have Weave.

Specialties: Camouflage, Stretching, Weaponry, Defense, Gliding



Followers

Jeremy approached the door with trepidation. Like everyone at Flare, he'd heard the stories — tales of madness, debauchery, cannibalism and worse. How he'd won the Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of the Equatorial Wars. How he was the finest journalist on the planet.... How, of his last three assistants, one had been eviscerated, one had been committed and the third was still missing. Nervously, the young man knocked lightly—

The upper right corner of the door exploded, and Jeremy heard a bullet whiz past his right ear. Screaming wildly, the terrified intern hit the deck.

"I'll kill all you whores! Come get some!" shrieked a man's voice from inside the office.

"Mr. Rollo, sir. Flare sent me. I'm your new assistant."

"Bollocks," answered the voice. Another shot burst through the door at chest level.

"I... I have whiskey," the intern pleaded, "and cigarettes. Mr. Lester had me bring them."

A long silence fell. Then Jeremy heard skittering within the office, closely followed by the flip of the door's deadbolt. There was more skittering, then silence again. Cautiously, Jeremy eased open the door and stepped inside.

Duke Rollo stood there behind his desk in a floppy hat, sunglasses — and nothing else. In his right hand was a large caliber revolver. He motioned with it, and in response, Jeremy handed over the carton of cigs and the Jack Daniel's. Sitting down at the desk, Rollo wasted no time before lighting up. "Ah, Dark Mother. Once again, I suckle at your smoky teat."

"Um... Mr. Rollo. If you don't mind me asking, why are you... um... naked?"

"Oh. That. Well, kid, I discovered the Directive had seeded my clothes with a nanotech virus designed to infect my computer system and turn everything I write into indecipherable gibberish," Rollo said, hurling a handful of papers upon which were printed a jumble of non sequiturs and rambling nonsense. "I was, therefore, forced to burn my clothing in the wastepaper basket."

"Oh... I see," Jeremy lied.

Rollo brightened noticeably. "I like you. You've got good reflexes. I'm sure this is the beginning of a long and fruitful working relationship. Now," Rollo said, aiming the revolver at the intern's head, "hand over your pants."

Followers are the close associates of characters. They may be anything from personal assistants, chauffeurs, managers, groupies or even worshipers. Like allies, they need to be fully fleshed out by the Storyteller and players, but like contacts, they are designed to be less powerful than the characters

themselves and should not draw the spotlight away from the them. Followers tend to be loyal to a fault, but if constantly abused or put into danger by the character's actions, followers will find someone more deserving of their affections.

Followers are useful for series in which the Storyteller and players don't want to sweat all the details. In such situations, the group's followers take on support positions, freeing the players' characters to concentrate on their own agendas. In a media series, for example, followers can take on the roles of publicists, agents, cameramen and directors, while in an elite series, followers may take the roles of support troops, transport pilots and combat medics. These folks can step in when they're needed but don't have to be with the team all the time, and they take care of many of the minor jobs that detract from the flow of the game. Such followers can also provide emergency aid when things are going against the characters... or convenient hostages when things are going too easy for the group.

Influence

"I'm sorry, but you can't go in there," said the receptionist. "Mr. M is in an important meeting."

"It is imperative that I speak to him," stated Alejandra, carefully modulating her voice as she spoke. "Surely, you understand."

With a dazed expression, the receptionist answered, "Oh, of course. Go on in."

"Gracias," replied the novox singer, opening the door to Mefistofaleez' office.

The elite entrepreneur sat behind a large mahogany desk in a black leather chair, a wide smile on his face. In his lap, a head bobbed up and down vigorously. "Ah, yeah. That's right."

With a soft "ahem," Alejandra cleared her throat.

At that, a beautiful young Asian woman quickly stood up and, after grabbing a notepad, rushed past Alejandra and out of the office. "We'll continue this dictation later," the nova called after the woman, while quickly zipping up. "Damn!"

"What the fuck do you want?" asked the elite, turning his attention to the striking Latina. "I was in the middle of something."

"So I was unfortunate enough to see. I'm sorry to burst in unannounced, but some of my associates at New River passed me a demo of Zipkilla by Paypavue, an artist of your Quantum Boom label, I believe."

"What's it to you, huh? You want him to sing backup on one of your punk-ass chips?"

"No. I'm concerned about the lyrics. Tensions between novas and baselines are at an all time high, and I worry that this song may exacerbate the problem."

"Well, boo-fuckin'-hoo. Listen up. You think you can walk your bitch ass into my office and tell me how to do business? Fuck you lady! You can just suck my big, black dick, you dig?"

Alejandra narrowed her eyes as she replied. "No, you listen, pendejo. Unless you do exactly as I've requested, I'll see to it that every major chip chain and OpNet music site has to make a choice between receiving New River product or Quantum Boom. I'm the most popular entertainer on the planet. Two more of the top five also work for New River. How long do you think it will be before Quantum Boom folds like a cheap suit?"

"Whoa, whoa. Let's not be too hasty. Uh... I'm sure we can come to terms."

"Yes," said the beautiful Latina singer, "I'm sure we can."

Influence represents a character's ability to exert his will on society. This ability may be derived from a number of sources — political office, business acumen or fame. Whatever its origin, influence may be used in many ways to benefit its possessor.

Influence provides those who possess it with the ability to make the things they want to have happen come to pass. This can be something relatively minor, such as garnering a couple of free tickets to see your favorite novox performer, or something that will impact the lives of millions, such as pushing a bill you support through the Senate. It's the Nova Age, and people are falling over themselves in their attempts to please novas. Therefore, even characters who start the game with no dots in Influence find it relatively easy to gain over time.

The Storyteller should bear in mind the source of a character's prestige. No character's influence is universally recognized. Let's face it, a internationally famous terr'r artist is not going to hold much sway at a Directive meeting; in fact, such a character is more likely to be held in contempt by those in attendance. Influence can also prove problematic whenever a character is striving to keep a low profile. (Aren't you Sharp Liberty? *Oh my God!* I'm your biggest fan!) It's important, therefore, for players to specify where their characters' influence comes from.

Mentor

"I'll never get the hang of this, 'Tima," Teardrop complained, hiding her pout behind a curtain of silver hair. "I can puddle and glush my water form OK, but I just can't freeze it."

"Certainly not with that attitude, Julia," opined Splash, smiling despite herself at her pupil's melodramatic display. "It's all a matter of concentration and practice."

With that, Splash extended her right arm, transforming it into pure, translucent water. "You see, my arm is made up of millions of individual water mol-

ecules — all of them dancing around excitedly. The secret is to use your will to coax them all into slowing down a bit." While Teardrop watched, amazed, her teacher's outstretched limb solidified once more, but this time into an appendage of delicate, shimmering ice. "Now you try."

"Alright... here goes." Teardrop's form cleared to one of transparent water.

"Now don't worry or excite yourself. Form reflects mind. Excitement will only agitate your surface more. The idea is to be calm. Cool. Still."

Teardrop relaxed her mind, thinking only of being still... quiet... cool. As she did, small shards of ice formed within her body of water.

"Yes, that's it," encouraged her instructor.

Soon, Teardrop's entire body had coalesced into a scintillating statue of ice — a statue that beamed with a broad smile of accomplishment. "I did it."

"I knew that you could. We'll continue to practice this, though. And next week, you'll do vapor."

"Ah, maaan."

Mentor differs from similar Backgrounds such as Allies and Followers in that a character's mentor is, by definition, someone with more experience than the character. A mentor may offer advice and information, teach Abilities or train the character in the use of quantum power. She may even bail the character out of a jam on occasion; this is not something a character should take for granted, however. A mentor, by virtue of her power, often shoulders a great deal of responsibility and cannot be expected to drop everything to come to her protégé's aid. Besides, if she did so, how would the character learn to stand on his own?

Remember not to limit yourself to nova mentors. While it's true that novas constitute a source of great personal power, they still constitute a tiny percentage of the human race. Propaganda to the contrary, it's still a baseline world, and most positions of authority are held by mainstream humanity. Also bear in mind that organizations may act as mentors, grooming those characters with potential for positions of power within the group (though the power such preparation grants is the province of Backing).

Node

El Muerte entered the abandoned warehouse cautiously, alert for any surprises. If the word on the street was to be believed, this is where the Teragen mascaras responsible for the N-Day bombing have been hiding out. The nova's ultrakeen eyesight pierced the darkness within; it might as well have been daylight. Nada but a few broken bottles and other assorted refuse. Olfactory senses keener than a bloodhound's sampled the air — and were immediately overwhelmed. Clever, bastardos, very clever,

thought *El Muerte*, spying the broken bottles of cleaner mixed in with the other trash. If they're here, the ammonia will make it impossible for me to scent them out. There are other ways, however.

El Muerte forced himself to relax and concentrated. As he did so, deep within his brain, the lump of gray matter that made up the nova's M-R node pulsed like a tiny quasar, releasing waves of quantum. Almost instantly, *El Muerte* felt the tell-tale "ping" of three other sources of quantum bounce back from below the warehouse.

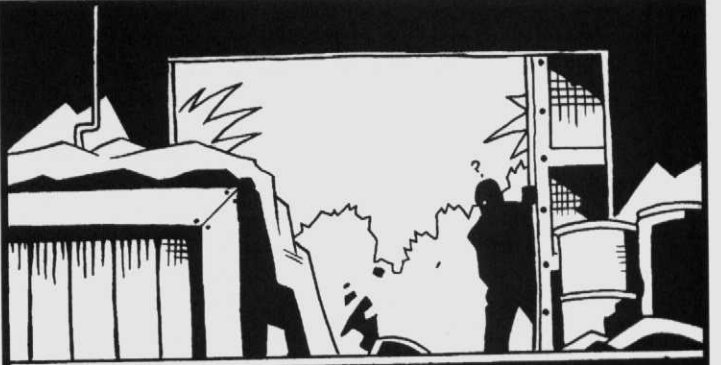
Well, thought *El Muerte*, either someone's hidden a cyclotron here or this is the place. If the Terats weren't so arrogant and ashamed of their humanity, they'd have dorm'ed down and evaded me altogether. How ironic.

A nova's Mazarin-Rashoud node is what differentiates him from baseline humanity. The node is a lump of brain matter just above and forward of the corpus callosum. The tissues of the node are permeated with cells called "farahcytes" after Farah Rashoud, and it is the brain's sudden generation of these cells during the process known as eruption that grants novas access to the quantum forces that fuel their powers. While all novas possess M-R nodes, a nova with this Background possesses one that is more highly developed and more capable of channeling quantum. This development offers deleterious side effects in addition to its benefits to the nova.

As it grows larger, a nova's node puts pressure on his brain, increasing that nova's chance for mental aberrations. Only hyperintelligent novas have shown any resistance to this growing dementia (as reflected by the Mega-Intelligence enhancement Taint Resistance).

There is some speculation, mostly from Teragen-linked sources, that one or two novas may even have farahcytes scattered throughout the entirety of their brains, protecting them from the deleterious effects of a powerful node while simultaneously making one big, immensely powerful node of their whole brain. No evidence of this has yet been forthcoming.

There are distinct advantages to having a well-developed node. For one, a nova may both spend and regain quantum at a higher rate. This allows greater versatility in a fight and quicker recovery



times afterward. Another advantage is that highly developed nodes are more sensitive to the presence of quantum energies. The most common use of this sensitivity is in the detection of invisible, shapeshifted, dorm'd down or otherwise hidden novas. An often overlooked benefit to this heightened sensitivity, however, is the ability to detect other sources of quantum. Thus, a nova may concentrate on his node in an effort to detect a source of power within a Nakato stronghold and thereby discover the yakuza base's hidden sublevel. Some novas with highly developed nodes have even proved capable of absorbing the energies of highly concentrated power sources. With a 4th instar node, a nova may absorb one point of quantum a turn, two at the 5th instar, and three at the 6th. A nova *must* be extremely close to a source of tremendous energy to do this, however (e.g., inside the containment vessel of a nuclear plant or close to the surface of the Sun), and is in no way protected from the destructive effects such energy sources produce. Remember that the node is a nova's link to the quantum world, and it could have other uses which remain, as yet, undiscovered. Storytellers should encourage and reward creative uses of Node by players. Within reason, of course.

Resources

Count Orzaiz paced back and forth within his Ibiza villa like a caged panther, mulling over the events of the past few days. A knock at the door interrupted his reverie. "Come in, Andrew," Orzaiz commanded.

Through the door walked a pretty young man dressed in tight shorts and tank top. "You have a well-trained ear, my dear Count Orzaiz"

"You have a distinctive knock. And please Andrew, it's Raoul to my friends.... What is the Amp Room's prognosis?"

"Ironskin" Andy Vance sighed deeply before answering. "Decidedly unfabulous. T2M really did a number on the place, Tremor in particular. Thorn's vines are the only things keeping the walls up. Repairs, if we go that route, will cost a fortune."

"Excellent. Then forget repairing it. Burn the vines. Bulldoze what's left of the old structure, and we shall build the Phoenix Room in its place. Trav admittedly showed vision far surpassing most of her kind in erecting the Amp Room. Its fundamental flaw, however, was that it was conceived by baseline minds, constructed according to baseline principles, built of baseline materials and informed by baseline aesthetic sensibilities. The structure we raise in its place, however, will be built by novas for novas. Piotr Enrikssen will design it, and we'll draft Ardis Longley and possibly even that boor Buendia to create bold new

materials for this extravagant nova pleasuredome of ours."

"Do you have any idea how much that's going to cost?"

"Of course I do, my dear fellow, but why should that deter us? It's only money."

Resources represents a characters overall assets, including money, property, clothing and equipment. Each level of the Resources Background is explained in more detail below.

x

No dots in Resources means the character is destitute and essentially homeless (if they have a place to live, it is either at the sufferance of others or because they are squatters). By their very nature, novas are worth a great deal, so only the most taint ridden or selfless earn this little. Leviathan and "Sloppy Joe" Bennatti subsist at this level.

•

This is the level of earning for the average college student. You have a small apartment (or a larger one with roommates) and an older model used car. Typically, you live from paycheck to paycheck, barely staying ahead on bills. You pull in around \$250 a week after taxes. At this level, your money probably comes from college scholarships/loans or a part-time service job. Examples of novas living at this level include Beltaine and Apocrypha.

• •

At this level, a character can get by in relative comfort. You live in a nice apartment and drive either a nice used car or an affordable new one. Earnings come in at around \$1,000 a week after taxes. Bills are caught up, and you even have a little money in savings. This is the average starting income for Project Utopia, as well as that for an XWF jobber. Examples of this level of income include André Corbin and Melissanda Estevez.

• • •

Perhaps best described as upper middle class, characters with this amount of Resources are quite affluent, owning their own homes or condominiums and driving new cars. You're pulling in about \$2,500 after taxes each week. This is the typical beginning salary for Directive agents, municipal defenders of small cities and nova elites. Grayson Lorry of the Directive and El Muerte are good examples of this level of Resources.

• • • •

This level represents the low end of society's upper crust. At this point, you probably own a mansion and other pieces of real estate and drive a top-of-the-line automobile. Weekly income is in the \$10,000 range. Experienced elites and municipal defenders of large cities command this level of resources. Kikjak and Lance Stryker exemplify this level.

• • • • •

The fabulously rich possess this amount of Resources. With this much income, you more than likely own multiple homes throughout the world and have fleets of cars, possibly even an aircar,

depending on local regulations. Typically, you pull in an income in excess of \$100,000 a week. Even among novas, such wealth is rare. Count Orzaiz and Luciano Camparelli are both rolling in it and enjoy life at this level of income.

Resources of greater than five do exist but are typically in the hands of certain large corporations rather than any one individual. However, the heads of certain multinational companies, such as Anna DeVries of the DeVries Agency and Pedro "The Mathematician" Santiago of CORE International, have personal assets in excess of five dots of Resources. Basically, just assume such individuals have access to anything they need at any time.

New Abilities

The Abilities in **Aberrant** do a good job of covering most of the areas of skill important to characters in the game setting. **Aberrant** Abilities are broad, covering a wide range of different skills under a single Ability. In some cases, a more precise focus may be desired. This section breaks out some Abilities considered specialties in **Aberrant** and makes them Abilities in their own right, along with adding some completely new, more specialized, Abilities not previously covered.

The Storyteller should choose which (if any) new Abilities to add to the game. These new Abilities function the same as the basic Abilities described in **Aberrant**, and are purchased the same way, either during character creation or using experience points later in the game.

In some cases, adopting these new Abilities may force changes in the Abilities of certain characters, designed using the basic **Aberrant** Abilities. In this case, the Storyteller and the player should work together to determine which Ability suits the character best and adjust the character's Abilities and ratings accordingly. For example, a nova with Style (Disguise) 3 primarily intended as a master impersonator may wish to exchange the Style Ability for the Disguise Ability described here. On the other hand, a character with Survival doesn't necessarily have to pick up the Navigation Ability, unless the player feels it is part of the character's concept.

Strength

• **Throwing:** While anyone can throw something (and many novas can throw really *big* things), throwing something accurately is an Ability of its own. How heavy an object a character can throw is determined by Might (see **Aberrant**, p. 236). This Ability is used to determine if the character hits what he's throwing the object at. Use the normal ranged combat rules for thrown objects and weapons.

Specialties: Baseballs, Grenades, Hatchets, Knives, Spears (Mega-Strong novas can also specialize in Automobiles, Boulders, Lampposts and so forth)

Dexterity

• **Archery:** This covers the use of any sort of bow, including a crossbow. It includes compensating for wind direction, firing arc and other factors that don't affect firearms. Although archery is considered more of a sport than a serious combat skill in the 21st century, there are still many people who practice it as a hobby, and some novas are reviving its popularity. A normal bow does 4d10L damage, with a Strength minimum of 2. A crossbow does 5d10L damage with no Strength minimum.

Specialties: Longbow, Crossbow, Target Shooting, Hunting

• **Gunnery:** Gunnery covers the operation and maintenance of machine controlled, vehicle-mounted weapons, from machineguns to cannons, missiles and rotary heavy machineguns. Targeting locks and firing computers help reduce the difficulty of most gunnery actions so it's possible to hit an opposing plane moving at Mach 2, even if the gunner's own reflexes could never do it. Some nova gunners are able to do so even without the aid of targeting systems.

Specialties: Surface-to-Surface, Surface-to-Air, Air-to-Air, Air-to-Surface, Human (Nova) Targets

• **Heavy Weapons:** This Ability covers the operation and maintenance of various sorts of man-portable and vehicle mounted weapons, from BFGs to high-caliber, tripod-mounted machine guns to rocket launchers, flame throwers and grenade launchers (all the weapons listed on p. 276 of **Aberrant**). This Ability is used to handle vehicle weapons mounted on a simple swivel or hardpoint. Computer-controlled or remote-targeted weapons use the Gunnery Ability.

Specialties: Machine Gun, Rocket Launcher, Flame Thrower, Field Stripping, Maintenance

• **Ride:** Although the horse and camel are no longer prime modes of transportation, many people in the world still know how to ride them, either for recreation or necessity in areas of the world that have not yet benefited from the economic boons promised by Project Utopia. This Ability allows a character to ride well and perform maneuvers while in the saddle. It can be used in place of Athletics to perform a dodge maneuver while the character is mounted. This Ability is also usable like the Animal Training Ability (below), but limited to mounts.

Specialties: Horses, Camels, Racing, Bronco Busting, Training, Dressage/Show Riding

Perception

- **Artillery:** In a world where novas can sheer the tops off mountains and take out armored divisions, the military sometimes has to call in the heavy artillery. This Ability covers sighting and aiming in direct-fire weapons like mortars and artillery pieces, as well as indirect fire of weapons like grenade launchers (direct fire of these weapons is covered by the Heavy Weapons Ability). This Ability is also used to act as a forward observer and to communicate with someone else acting as a forward observer to get useful firing data.

Specialties: Fire Control, Forward Observer, Mortars, Weapon Emplacement

- **Navigation:** Most people only need to know which roads to follow, but novas, who can often move at supersonic speed on their own, need some way to know where they're going. More than one newly erupted nova has flow (or run or swim) off, thrilled by their newfound abilities, only to call collect from some distant country wondering how to get back home. Navigation covers the Ability to determine distance and direction outdoors, working from references as simple as the Sun and the stars or as advanced as a GPS receiver. Characters with this Ability are rarely lost (or, at least, rarely lost for long). It is considered vital for novas with spaceflight abilities; if you become lost in deep space, finding Earth again could take a very long time.

Specialties: Air, Land, Sea, Stellar Navigation

Wits

- **Meditation:** Meditation focuses on clearing the mind and relaxing the body through a variety of different traditions and techniques from tai chi to zazen sitting or chanting. Characters can use this Ability to focus and block out distractions, each success on a Wits + Meditation roll reduces the difficulty due to distractions by 1. Meditating novas recover quantum points at a rate of 4 points per hour of meditation. At the end of the meditation (provided it lasts at least 30 minutes), the nova can make a Wits + Meditation roll and recover one additional quantum point per success.

Specialties: Focus, Moving Meditation, Resting Meditation, Ritual

- **Tactics:** This Ability relates to understanding combat situations and how best to handle them. By making a Tactics roll, a character can figure out the best way of dealing with a tactical situation. Simple conflicts can be resolved with opposed Tactics rolls for the two leaders; the one with the most successes wins. On a more narrow scale, a successful Tactics roll gives a character a bonus equal to the successes to be added to Initiative or any one combat maneuver in a particular combat.

Specialties: Military, Nova, Police, Small-Unit, Strategic Operations

Intelligence

- **Demolitions:** This is the Ability to blow things up, given a little time and the right materials. Naturally, many novas are quite good at blowing things up on their own, but the power of a few carefully placed shaped charges should not be underestimated. This Ability helps the nova engineer explosions of precisely the right magnitude, assuring that he blows up what he wants to blow up and nothing else. This Ability also covers disarming explosive devices, an extremely handy skill if you're not tough enough to simply throw yourself on the explosion. This Ability is fairly rare outside of military, terrorist or special ops circles, although a number of demolition specialists work in the construction (or, rather, destruction) industry.

Specialties: Disarming/Disposal, Implosion, Precision Blasting, Shaped Charges, Timed Charges

- **Gambling:** Although often as much a matter of luck as it is skill, gambling is an Ability many people claim to have (although only a few of them really do). A gambler understands games of chance: how to play, how to calculate the odds, and how to cheat. A simple Gambling roll between the player and the house (or all the players) is enough to resolve most games. The highest success wins. If you want to cheat, roll Intelligence + Gambling and add the successes to your regular Gambling roll. This result is also the difficulty for someone to notice you cheating with a Perception + Gambling or Awareness roll.

Specialties: Baccarat, Bluffing, Craps, Poker, Roulette

Appearance

- **Disguise:** Disguise is the Ability to make someone (including yourself) look like someone else through the proper use of makeup and clothing. Acting like someone else requires the Performance Ability. The successes on an Appearance + Disguise roll becomes the difficulty for others to see through your disguise. The Storyteller may adjust the difficulty based on the complexity of your disguise. It's easier to pretend to be someone of roughly the same height and build than it is to be someone with a radically different build, appearance or gender. If the Storyteller wishes, novas with the Shapeshift power or the Copycat enhancement of Mega-Appearance may have to make a Disguise roll in order to imitate another person (or thing) exactly.

Specialties: Clothes, Hairpieces, Makeup, Prosthetics, Disguise Others, Disguise Self

Manipulation

- **Diplomacy:** The fine art of diplomacy is the ability to help people to get along and be agree-



able, even people who may not like each other very much. It includes proper behavior in a diplomatic setting, as well as techniques for negotiation, discussion, debate and reaching agreements. The Ability is useful in nearly all feats of social graces in a diplomatic setting. In the world of **Aberrant**, a skilled diplomat can often win more battles than the most powerful nova.

Specialties: Arbitration, Debate, Foreign Relations, Trade Negotiations, Treaty Negotiations

- **Hypnosis:** Despite its fearsome reputation, hypnosis isn't capable of most of the things nova abilities can do. Still, it is a useful therapeutic tool and, in the wrong hands, a means of manipulation. The Hypnosis Ability is capable of doing everything listed under the Hypnotic Gaze enhancement of Mega-Manipulation (**Aberrant**, p. 174), except it requires at least 10 minutes. In fact, a nova with Hypnotic Gaze may add his Hypnosis Ability to his Manipulation when making rolls for that enhancement. Hypnosis is also capable of recovering repressed or forgotten memories. The difficulty of recovering memories erased or altered by Telepathy is equal to the number of successes on the Telepathy roll that altered those memories.

Specialties: Clinical, Memory Recovery, Post-Hypnotic Suggestion, Therapeutic

- **Seduction:** This Ability allows you to gain the attention and interest of anyone who might be interested in you sexually (whether or not you're interested in *them* is up to you). Your subjects roll Willpower to resist your advances (if they have a reason to) or Rapport to notice if you're not sincere. So long as you have more successes, they are interested in you.

Specialties: Bars/Night-clubs, Online Dating, Pickup Lines, Social Functions

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Charisma

- **Animal Training:** Characters with this Ability know how to approach and handle animals and train them to perform tricks. This sort of training takes time, even for friendly animals like dogs or dolphins, and animals will not generally risk physical danger. They require constant attention and rewards to reinforce their good behavior.

Specialties: Birds, Dogs, Dolphins, Guarding, Show Tricks

- **Carousing:** This is the Ability to encourage others to relax and have fun. It can impress people in social situations, make you the life of the party and improve the attitude of potential allies. The Storyteller may increase the difficulty for large groups or particularly "tough rooms," and people dead-set against having fun can roll Willpower to ignore your encouragement.

Specialties: Drinking, DJing, Food, Games, Throwing Parties

- **Instruction:** This Ability allows characters to impart knowledge to students. Every week of instruction, at a minimum of four hours per day, allows the teacher to roll Instruction. The difficulty is equal to six minus the sum of the student's Mental Attributes. Success grants the student one experience point to spend on the Ability studied. These experience points cannot raise the student's Ability higher than the instructor's rating.

Specialties: Lecture, Mental Abilities, One-on-One Instruction, Physical Abilities, Social Abilities, Textbooks.

Optional Rule: No Dot Specialties

If the Storyteller wishes, characters can take "no dot" specialties in some Abilities, at a cost of 1 bonus point (during character creation) or 1 experience point (during play). This represents a little knowledge about a specialty, with no knowledge of the broader skill, such as a character who knows how to draw or write a bit but nothing about other Arts or a character who knows a little about biology but not about other fields of Science. The character rolls 1 extra die when using the Ability.

Unlike normal specialties, characters can only have one no dot specialty per Ability. If more training than that is desired, the player should purchase the full Ability at rating 1. He can either pay full price and retain the specialty or drop the specialty and reduce the cost of the Ability to 2 experience points rather than 3.

Qualities and Specialties

Two often overlooked advantages for **Aber-**
rant characters are qualities and specialties, which

provide the character a bonus while helping further define his or her Attributes and Abilities.

Qualities (**Aberant**, p.134) are special qualifiers for high ratings (4+) in an Attribute — a particular aspect of the Attribute the characters is best at (or known for). Not every Strength 5 or Intelligence 5 character is the same. Some strong people are athletic and good at sports, others are massive weightlifters, while some are deceptively weak-looking but wiry. Likewise, some intelligent people are amazingly logical or wizards at math, while others are widely read or have an amazing memory.

The advantage of a quality is that you get to reroll any "10s" that come when your roll for actions involving that Attribute and its quality, such as a Strength 5 (Athletic) character climbing a rock face, for example, or an Intelligence 4 (Logical) character trying to figure out a puzzle. Any successes gained on the additional rolls add to your total, and if any of the additional rolls come up "10s" you get to reroll them, too!

There's no hard and fast rule for when the quality bonus applies. The Storyteller determines when and if a quality applies in any given situation, but there's no reason you can't suggest ways your quality can help you out. You can also try to play to your strengths and find ways to use your qualities in different situations. As always, look to the Golden Rule (**Aberant**, p. 106) for guidance.

A quality serves to both describe and define your character's high Attribute rating, so go for a quality that's descriptive and fits your view of the character. Ask yourself "in what way is this character strong/intelligent/charismatic/etc." Use the quality in descriptions of your character to get the idea across to others, such as "my character is highly intuitive, cunning and eloquent." The qualities give everyone an immediate image of your character, and the reroll bonus helps reinforce this image through play.

Here is just a sample of possible qualities to choose from:

Strength: Athletic, Brawler, Broad-shouldered, Brutish, Compact, Huge, Power-lifter, Rugged, Stout, Well-built, Wiry.

Dexterity: Acrobatic, Agile, Coordinated, Delicate, Fast, Flexible, Graceful, Nimble, Quick Fingers, Rhythmic, Steady Hand.

Stamina: Determined, Enduring, Energetic, Healthy, Long-winded, Resilient, Stubborn, Tenacious, Tireless, Tough, Unflagging.

Perception: Alert, Astute, Attentive, Detail-oriented, Gut Feeling, Insightful, Intuitive, Keen Eye (Ear, Nose, etc.), Nitpicky, Observant, Patient, Sensitive.

Intelligence: Bookworm, Bright, Clearheaded, Discerning, Excellent Memory, Imaginative, Pragmatic, Rational, Thoughtful, Trivial, Widely Read.

Wits: Clever, Creative, Cunning, Graceful, Ingenious, Iron Nerves, Jaded, Level-headed, Sharp Tongue, Shrewd, Unfazeable.

Appearance: Alluring, Exotic, Honest Face, Imposing, Luminous, Photogenic, Pleasant, Sensual, Sultry, Statuesque, Stunning, Wholesome.

Manipulation: Authoritative, Cunning, Devious, Domineering, Inspiring, Persuasive, Slick, Sly, Way With Words, Witty.

Charisma: Charming, Cool, Eloquent, Genial, Polite, Public Speaker, Quiet Confidence, Rebellious, Suave, Sympathetic, Telegenic.

Abilities in **Aberrant** are fairly broad and inclusive. Specialties (**Aberrant**, p. 136) focus on more specific areas of expertise, allowing you to differentiate one scientist from another, even though they both have Science 3. One might be a physicist, while the other is an agronomist. Unlike qualities, which come free when a character has a certain rating in an Attribute, specialties are learned and must be purchased, either with bonus points during character creation or with experience points during play. Specialties represent particular areas of training, rather than the natural talents of qualities. Characters can have a maximum of three specialties per Ability. Specialties do not have ratings, a character either has one or does not.

A specialty allows you to roll an additional die for Ability rolls that fall within the specialty. For example, if you have Science 2 (Physics), you normally roll two extra dice for Science rolls. If the roll involves physics, you roll three extra dice instead.

Specialties are useful for characters that want to focus on a particular aspect of a skill, allowing them to purchase the skill at a lower rating, while still being competent in their specialty. They also help differentiate characters with the same skill ratings. For example, an ex-jewel thief and a Delta Force commando both have the Intrusion Ability, but they are trained in different specialties. Likewise, a pickpocket, a card shark and a stage magician all know Legerdemain, but focus on different aspects of the Ability.

Suggestions for various specialties are offered on pages 136-139 of **Aberrant**. Players should also feel free to create additional specialties whenever desired, subject to the Storyteller's approval.

Aberrations

Aberrations are the result of too much taint. Basic guidelines for aberrations are provided on pages 151-153 of **Aberrant**. This section expands the range of aberrations and clarifies some existing ones. Storytellers and players should note the range of possible aberrations is almost endless. They should feel free to create their own aberrations to inflict on their nova characters, using the material here as inspiration.

Social Consequences of Taint

As they accumulate taint, novas become less and less human and more... something else. People can sense the "otherness" in such novas, and it makes them uncomfortable. In game terms, novas with high levels of Taint suffer penalties on all their Social rolls, +1 difficulty for a permanent Taint of 4 and an additional +1 difficulty for every two points of permanent Taint beyond that (+2 at 6 points, +3 at 8 points and so forth). This is in addition to any social penalties caused by certain specific aberrations, such as Sheer Hideousness.

This social penalty is somewhat less problematic among the nova's own kind. It does not apply when dealing with novas with higher levels of Taint (whatever aberrations you have aren't likely to shock them), but it *does* apply when dealing with novas with lower permanent Taint, since you're just a reminder of what they could become someday if they're not careful.

Aberrations and Powers

A nova's aberrations are often strongly tied into the nature of her powers, either a power the nova bought as tainted (**Aberrant**, p. 151) or a power the aberrant was using when she acquired additional Taint. So a nova purchasing Armor as a tainted power might suffer from strangely colored skin or grow scales. A nova with additional Taint from pushing his energy control powers too far might pick up the Glow or Energy Emission aberrations. And so forth.

Aberrations and Flaws

Some aberrations (particularly mental aberrations) resemble various Flaws described on pages 68-76 of this book. This is not surprising; novas hardly invented things like paranoia or obsession. However, there are a few key differences between Flaws and aberrations. The most notable is the fact that increasing Taint makes the effects of many aberrations more difficult to resist, while Taint has no effect on Flaws. Flaws are also only available at character creation, while novas may develop new aberrations during the course of play due to increasing levels of Taint.

At the Storyteller's discretion, players may use some of the Flaws in this book as the basis for new (mostly low- and medium-level) aberrations. The Storyteller should compare the Flaw to existing aberrations to determine what level it falls under, and

keep in mind that Taint penalizes Willpower rolls to overcome aberrations.

Likewise, if the Storyteller wishes, characters may opt to take aberrations as Flaws. These Flaws do not count against the nova's required number of aberrations based on Taint, but they are also not affected by the nova's Taint rating. As a general guideline, low-level aberrations are 1-2 point Flaws, medium-level are 3 points, and high-level aberrations are 5 point Flaws. The Storyteller should feel free to adjust the Flaw level as needed.

Physical Aberrations

Low-Level

- **Albinism:** The nova's body is leached of all pigment, leaving him with white hair and skin and pink eyes. The nova is sensitive to daylight (+1 difficulty to all actions when in direct sunlight or equivalent) and may need to wear sunscreen or heavy clothing for protection.

- **Androgynous:** The nova's appearance becomes increasingly androgynous, equally masculine and feminine. The nova is exotically attractive to some (androgynous novas are particularly popular in Japan) disturbing and "unnatural" to others. The nova may also have to deal with unwanted sexual attention from people of the wrong gender.

- **Disturbing Voice:** The nova's voice takes on an unusual quality. It might sound tinny or metallic, especially deep and resonant or hollow and whispery. It might even have a perfect tone, like the voice of an angel. This aberration is common for novas with Mega-Charisma or certain body modifications (especially those affecting the mouth and throat).

- **Feeding Requirement:** The Storyteller may treat a medium-level feeding requirement as an addiction (see page 71), while a high-level feeding requirement may be considered a dependency (see page 70). At the very least, failing to fulfill the feeding requirement means the nova cannot regain quantum points. At 0 quantum points, the nova has to make Willpower rolls (modified by Taint) to avoid giving in to her hunger. Novas with the appropriate powers, notably Absorption, may feed on energy rather than matter. Novas with Quantum Leech may feed on pure quantum energy, while novas with Telepathy may "feed" on thoughts, emotions or dreams (or nightmares...).

- **Hairless:** The nova loses all body hair, including head hair and eyebrows. The nova's appearance is slightly odd, and people may find the nova's condition attractive or repulsive.

- **Fur/Feathers:** The nova's skin is covered in a fine layer of fur (or feathers). These may be the same as the nova's normal hair color or nearly any shade, as well as varying in texture and length. The

nova is better able to handle cold conditions (+1 die to Stamina rolls) but not as good at handling heat (-1 die to Stamina rolls). The nova's appearance is also quite distinctive. Some people may find the aberration attractive, but most will find it strange and may even consider the nova more of an animal than a person.

- **Scales:** The nova's skin is covered in fine scales, like those of a snake. They may be rough or smooth, with nearly any color (or pattern). The scales are not tough enough to provide any Soak bonus, although they are slightly more resistant to minor scratches than human skin. Although some people may find them exotic, most are likely to find scaly novas repulsive.

- **Poor Sense:** One of the nova's senses becomes weaker than normal, like the Weak Sense Flaw (p. 70).

Medium-Level

- **Allergic Reaction:** The nova loses dice from dice pools or suffers damage from contact with a particular substance or condition harmless to baselines. At medium level, contact with the allergen causes a loss of 2 dice or a health level of bruising damage each minute. A high-level allergic reaction causes the loss of 4 dice or a health level of lethal damage each minute. The nova must make a Willpower roll (modified by Taint) in order to remain in contact with the allergen and resist the urge to flee.

- **Fragile:** The nova's body systems become more delicate or vulnerable in some way. This might be a loss of bone or muscle tissue, thin skin, more complex (and more fragile) organs, a more sensitive nervous system or similar modifications. The nova loses her Bruised health level. Any damage takes her directly to Hurt.

- **Hermaphrodite:** The nova acquires the sexual characteristics of the opposite gender, becoming a true hermaphrodite. Although some may find it attractive, most people will find the nova's condition disturbing and have difficulty dealing with it, especially romantically. The nova may also have some social and sexual hang-ups about its new condition.

- **Sensitive:** One of the nova's senses becomes abnormally sensitive to overstimulation. The nova suffers a +1 or greater difficulty modifier in circumstances where that sense is overloaded, such as a nova with sensitive hearing dealing with a crowded city street at rush hour or a nova with sensitive smell in a landfill. In some cases, the nova may have to make a Willpower roll in order to overcome the sensory overload and act at all, such as the nova with sensitive hearing at a rock concert or a nova with sensitive taste sampling a particularly exquisite chocolate. Alternately, the nova might become sensitive to pain, similar to the Low Pain Threshold Flaw (p. 75).

Note that although this aberration is most common in novas with Mega-Perception, it is not a prerequisite, and the nova gains no benefit to Perception rolls for being sensitive. Novas with psychic abilities can also have this aberration, to reflect the effects of overwhelming psychic input, like a telepathic nova overwhelmed by crowds or hostile emotions.

- **Sexless:** The nova loses all sexual characteristics, becoming completely androgynous and sexless. In addition to being unable to enjoy sexual relations, the nova's condition is likely to disturb others and make them uncomfortable. On the upside, the nova is immune to seduction attempts.

High-Level

- **Sensory Dysfunction:** The nova loses his sight or hearing, exactly like the Blind and Deaf Flaws on pages 71. This may be due to neurological damage, changes in the sensory organs or alterations in the nova's physiology (such as armor plates growing over the eyes and/or ears).

Mental Aberrations

Resisting Mental Aberrations

In many cases, a nova has to resist the impulses of a mental aberration. This requires a Willpower roll at standard difficulty, subtracting the nova's permanent Taint rating from the Willpower pool before rolling. If this reduces the nova's Willpower pool to 0, the nova must spend a Willpower point in order to resist the urge to give in to the aberration. If the nova has no Willpower left, he is at the mercy of his mental aberrations and his Nature. For high-Taint novas, even low-level mental aberrations can become serious problems.

Low-Level

- **Absent-Minded:** The nova has difficulty remembering things. The Storyteller can require an Intelligence roll at any time to see if a nova remembers a particular fact, appointment, duty or such. The Storyteller can also spring "surprise" events on the nova from time to time, which the nova knew but forgot about.

- **Bad Temper:** The nova has problems controlling her temper and tends to react violently in most situations. The nova must make a Willpower roll to reject violence or threats as the first solution to a problem. If the roll fails, the nova must resort to intimidation or outright violence to achieve her goals, although she doesn't necessarily have to use lethal force.

- **Obsession:** The nova becomes obsessed with a particular thing, like the Flaw of the same name (p. 73), only the Willpower roll to resist it is penalized by the nova's Taint.

- **Phobia:** The nova develops an irrational fear of something, like the Flaw of the same name (p. 74), only the Willpower roll to resist it is penalized by the nova's Taint.

Medium-Level

- **Amnesia:** The nova's memory seriously deteriorates, leaving him with no conscious recollection of his life or identity, like the Flaw of the same name (p. 75). High-level amnesia includes no memory of the nova's abilities, like the 5-point version of the Flaw. Some novas have been known to suffer amnesia as a result of a particularly traumatic eruption, giving them the sensation of being "reborn" as a nova, with their memories and experience a blank slate.

- **Bipolar Disorder:** Also known as Manic-Depressive Disorder. The nova goes from periods of extreme lethargy, apathy and depression to manic bursts of energy and frantic activity. The Storyteller determines when an episode of mania or depression comes on, and the nova can roll Willpower to resist its onset, modified by her Taint.

- **Delusions:** The nova has hallucinations, or comes to incorrect conclusions about things with no basis in fact. For example, a nova might see images of spiritual figures, hear the voices of "guides" and come to the conclusion that his powers are spiritual in nature (either as a curse or a blessing). A nova might come to believe her powers are magical or supernatural, that she is a reincarnation of some historical or mythic figure, that she is a character in a comic book or television show or just about anything else. Delusions usually start out small and become increasingly irrational (as the nova's Taint increases), but they may spring full-blown from the nova's twisted mind. Storytellers are encouraged to come up with interesting delusions, and players are encouraged to roleplay them accordingly.

- **Flashbacks:** The nova has vivid hallucinations revolving around a particular incident or experience (often their eruption), similar to the Flashbacks Flaw (p. 74) but more intense as the nova's Taint increases.

- **Masochism:** The nova derives pleasure from feeling pain and humiliation. The nova still suffers penalties for injuries, but often because he's too busy *enjoying* them. The nova tends to seek out opportunities to feel pain, whether dangerous assignments or dangerous liaisons with a willing partner. This aberration most often shows up among novas with protective powers like Mega-Stamina and Armor. Sometimes pain is the only sensation the nova can really *feel* enough to enjoy.

- **Multiple Personality Disorder:** More properly called Dissociative Identity Disorder, this aberration causes the nova's personality to break into distinct parts, each with its own Nature, personality and

identity. A nova may be a classical "split personality" with two identities, or there may be dozens of personalities. Usually, the personality with the most appropriate Nature to deal with a situation is dominant at any given time, but personalities can sometimes switch for no apparent reason. The nova can make a Willpower roll to avoid such a change.

Novas often develop splits between their nova and human natures, having a "nova" and "human" identity that know nothing of each other. Novas with the Clone power may find their clones taking on individual identities, with personalities (and agendas) of their own. Novas with Quantum Construct sometimes find their "creatures" taking on a life of their own, while novas with Homunculus may manifest a war between their personalities as a true separation into individual beings.

- **Obsessive/Compulsive Disorder:** The nova suffers from the Addiction/Compulsion Flaw (p. 71), with a penalty to the Willpower roll equal to her permanent Taint.

- **Paranoia:** The nova becomes increasingly convinced that "others" are out to get her and sees plots and conspiracies everywhere. The nova has to make a Willpower roll to avoid overreacting to any "suspicious" things she notices. She tends to keep secrets and doesn't trust anyone completely. Ironically, paranoid novas often find themselves involved in just the sort of conspiracies they imagine. In the world of *Aberrant*, just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're *not* out to get you!

- **Sadism:** The nova derives pleasure from inflicting pain and degradation on others. This may start out with willing partners, but the nova must also make Willpower rolls to avoid giving in to the need to inflict pain even in inappropriate circumstances. The nova tortures people to get information from them (and eventually, for simple amusement) and is generally cruel and sadistic. This aberration will almost certainly ruin a nova's reputation if it becomes publicly known and will earn the nova few allies, except those of a similar inclination.

- **Seizures:** The nova is prone to seizures similar to epilepsy under stressful conditions. The seizure effectively renders the nova helpless for 10 turns, minus one turn for each success rolled using Willpower (modified by Taint). A botch on the Willpower roll also does a health level of bashing damage to the nova from his convulsions (which can also do considerable damage, if the nova happens to have Mega-Strength). The nova can spend a Willpower point to gain an automatic success on the Willpower roll.

- **Sexual Aberrations:** A nova may develop any number of sexual aberrations. In addition to sadism and masochism (above), a nova may pick up a particular sexual fetish, often relating to clothing such

as costumes, leather, latex, eufiber or similar materials. True changes in sexual orientation tend to be rare, but novas may develop "kinks" like an appetite for rough sex, orgies, sex games, sex toys, multiple partners and the like. At the extreme end are things like rape, pedophilia, bestiality, necrophilia and "snuff" sex, wherein the nova derives pleasure from the death of a sexual partner. The nova has to make a Willpower roll (modified by Taint) to avoid opportunities to indulge a sexual aberration.

Sexual aberrations are sensitive topics, and the players and the Storyteller should discuss how (or if) they wish to deal with them before they are introduced into the story. Players should be respectful of each other's limits in this and other areas.

High-Level

- **Megalomania:** It's not overly difficult for a nova to develop a "god complex." A megalomaniac has supreme confidence in his abilities and opinions. Not only does he know what is right for everyone; he has the power, authority and even the *duty* to make it happen. Baseline megalomaniacs usually experience delusions of grandeur but do not have the power to make them a reality. Novas, on the other hand, *do* have the power to set themselves up as gods, if they so choose. A megalomaniac nova can *never* be in any position other than supreme leadership, and he must make a Willpower roll to see any flaw in his complete correctness and perfect abilities.

- **Schizophrenia:** Extreme levels of mental aberration can result in total disassociation from reality. A schizophrenic nova may be completely delusional, no longer interacting with the real world at all. The nova is lost in an (often incoherent) fantasy world of her own making and must succeed on a Willpower roll in order to overcome her delusions and act normally, even for a short period of time. A schizophrenic nova might become catatonic, completely lost in the world within her own mind (although still able to influence things using certain powers), or she might continue to function physically but behave very erratically. The details of the nova's delusions are left up to the Storyteller and the player.

Quantum Aberrations

Low-Level

- **Black Thumb:** The nova radiates a low level of taint at all times, inimical to normal life. Simple plants like grasses and flowers die and shrivel up when the nova touches them, along with simple animal life like insects and other small creatures. If the nova spends a long period of time in a particular area (no more than a 100 or so square meters), it may become completely sterile and blighted.

- **Eufiber Rejection:** The nova gains the Eufiber Rejection Flaw (p. 76).

Medium-Level

- **Bad Luck:** The nova's taint warps quantum fields, bending probability and causing misfortune to seek him out with alarming frequency. The nova botches rolls whenever he rolls no successes and a 1 or a 2 comes up on any die.

- **Dumbo Syndrome:** Named for the Disney cartoon elephant who used a "magic feather" to fly, the Dumbo Syndrome causes the nova's powers to become tied up in some sort of physical object. With the object, the nova can function normally, but without it, none of her nova abilities (including Mega-Attributes) function. She is, in effect, a baseline. This effect is completely psychosomatic but no less real because of it. The nova is completely dependent on her "magic talisman" for the use of her abilities. The permanent loss or destruction of the object eliminates this aberration but causes the nova to automatically gain another point of permanent Taint and a new aberration.

- **Uncontrollable Power:** The nova has a power that is not entirely under control. The nova can use the power normally, but it also seems to have a mind of its own, activating under conditions of stress or any other trigger deemed appropriate by the Storyteller. The power uses the nova's normal dice pool but adds his permanent Taint in bonus dice to determine its effect. The exact effect of the power depends on the circumstances and the power itself. Uncontrolled Elemental Mastery might cause the nova to raise a devastating storm when angered, while uncontrolled Telepathy might cause the nova to read (or alter) people's thoughts at random. Uncontrolled shapeshifting may cause the nova to change form at random or based on certain stimuli (like the feelings of people around him). Powers with no dice pool cannot be uncontrollable.

- **Uncontrolled Transformation:** You have two forms, a "human" and a "nova" form, just like a character with five dots in Dormancy may possess, but you are unable to control when you switch from one form to the other. Instead, a particular stimulus causes you to switch forms, such as anger, darkness, moonlight, immersion in water, a particular song and so forth. When you are affected by the stimulus, you change form automatically, unless you spend a Willpower point to avoid it. You must do so each turn or until the stimulus goes away (whichever comes first). Additionally, if your nova form's quantum pool ever reaches 0, you automatically revert back to your human form.

- **Vulnerability:** The nova takes extra damage from a particular type of attack. This differs from Allergy in that it affects things that are already harmful to others. The Storyteller and the player choose the form of attack, from fire, electricity or



another form of energy, to a particular power or substance (such as weapons made from silver). The attack inflicts three extra dice of damage against the nova. High-level vulnerabilities either expand the type of attack (to common attacks like blunt weapons, sharp weapons or energy attacks) or an existing vulnerability does five extra dice of damage rather than three.

- **Weakness:** A particular condition or substance causes the nova's powers (including Mega-Attributes) to cease working altogether, such as a nova whose powers only work at night or in shadow. In the daylight, the nova is no more powerful than any other baseline. The "trigger" for the weakness can be virtually anything: light (or lack thereof), music, scents, water, weather and so forth. The Storyteller decides if a particular trigger condition is appropriate.

High-Level

- **Contagious:** The nova's altered physiology gives off a virus or toxin harmful to baselines. In effect, the nova has an uncontrollable version of the Poison power (*Aberrant*, p. 213) with a power rating equal to half her permanent Taint (round up) and costing no quantum points. The contagion is harmless to other novas, but baselines may consider the nova a true "Typhoid Mary."

- **Hyde Syndrome:** You have two forms, a "human" and a "nova" form, just like a character with five dots in Dormancy. However, your forms have totally different personalities (and Natures), and neither remembers what the other experiences — you're like two separate people. In effect, you suffer from a very specific type of Multiple Personality Disorder (above). Moreover, you have no real control over when you change from one form to the other, just like the Uncontrolled Transformation aberration (above). Novas with Shapeshift and this aberration may have many different forms and personalities!

- **Jinx:** This aberration is similar to Bad Luck (above), only worse. In this case, the nova's quantum perturbations cause misfortune for him and his allies. In effect, the nova has the Luck power (*Aberrant*, p. 206) at a rating equal to half his permanent Taint (round up). However, the Storyteller rolls makes the Luck roll and applies the result *against* the nova and his allies, either improving the opposition's rolls or subtracting successes from the rolls of the nova and his allies. About the only good thing about this aberration is that it doesn't cost the nova quantum points.

- **Permanent Power:** One of the nova's powers with a range of Self gains a duration of Permanent. The power is always active and does not cost the nova any quantum points to use. The draw-

back is the permanent power may make it difficult for the nova to interact with other people and the environment. The Storyteller is the final judge of whether or not a power sufficiently inconveniences a nova to qualify for this aberration. For example, a permanent version of Absorption is actually more of an Extra. Powers well suited for this aberration include: Bodymorph, Density Control, Force Field, Immolate and Sizemorph. Other powers may be better suited for the Uncontrollable Power aberration (above).

- **Taint Bleed:** The nova's body gives off taint energies. This affects most living creatures like exposure to radiation (*Aberrant*, p. 257) and can also cause areas where the nova spends considerable time to become permanently blighted and sterile. The Taint energies can also cause strange mutations and aberrations to appear in lower-life forms exposed to it, giving the Storyteller an excuse for including weird mutant creatures in a story. A nova with this aberration is likely to become a pariah, exiled from contact with civilization (and most living things).

Powers and Abilities Far Beyond

Personalizing Powers

With their ability to command the fundamental forces of the universe, novas are capable of vast displays of power, limited only by the strength of their M-R node, their willpower and their own unconscious desires (and, of course, the number of nova points they get to spend during character creation). The *Aberrant* rules offer an exhaustive list of nova powers (with even more included in this book). Still, even after searching through the power list, you may have some difficulty finding exactly the sort of quantum ability you have in mind for your character. Fortunately, there are a number of options for customizing the basic nova powers from the game to suit virtually any character concept under the sun.

Special Effects

The simplest option for customizing a power is defining that power's "special effects." These are things associated with the power that don't really change how it works in the game, just how it looks (and sounds, feels, etc.) to other people. For example, when your nova uses Teleport, is there a bright flash of light, a puff of smoke, a popping noise, a clap of thunder, a sparkly "transporter" effect or something completely different? Maybe

the nova "fades out," swirls apart into multicolored motes or simply vanishes into thin air. Likewise, when your nova shapeshifts, does she become a glowing silhouette as she transforms, or is there a wet, squishy sound as muscle and bone change shape? When he uses Telepathy, do your character's eyes roll back into his head? Does his forehead glow? Are there any outward signs at all?

Defining a nova's special effects helps give the character more style and individuality. When you're thinking of special effects, try tying your nova's abilities together with a theme, such as their anima. A nova with a flaming anima, for example, might manifest different powers with fiery visual effects, even if there are no real flames, like "burning" quantum points from a target with a cold fire (Quantum Leech). A set of unified special effects can make a character distinctive even if his powers are fairly "vanilla."

Describing your nova as "a gal with Flight, Force Field and Quantum Bolt" is dull. Describing her as "a sort of avenging angel with fiery wings sprouting from her back (Flight), surrounded by an aura of golden light (Force Field) and breathing fire from her mouth (Quantum Bolt)" makes her sound interesting! The same set of powers could also belong to a nova who flies inside a whirlwind that deflects attacks and strikes with bolts of lightning or a nova who glows brightly, leaving a rainbow trail behind him as he flies, shooting laser beams from his hands. The possibilities are almost endless.

In some cases, a particular special effect might constitute a power weakness (see page 141). Consult with your Storyteller about whether or not the effect you have in mind should be considered a weakness. In general, only special effects that really restrict a nova's use of a power should be considered true power weaknesses.

Player-Defined Powers

Many powers in the **Aberrant** rules lack a predetermined "special effect" to define them. These powers offer a menu of options you can personalize for your character. For example, if you want a nova capable of shooting lightning bolts from her hands and eyes, you're not going to find a "lightning bolt" power on the power list. However, there is Quantum Bolt, which "allows a nova to project a damaging blast of energy at a target." That energy can be defined as lightning if you choose, or it could be a laser beam, shards of glass, a jet of fire, pure kinetic force or anything else you can come up with to inflict damage at a distance.

There are numerous player-defined powers in the game, including Body Modification, Bodymorph, Claws, Elemental Anima, Elemental Mastery and Quantum Bolt. These powers can be adjusted to simu-

late a wide range of nova abilities. Moreover, the predefined powers in the game can easily be redefined to suit a particular character concept (see "Same Power, Different Name").

Storytellers should take the definitions of a nova's power into account during play. An electrical bolt may be more effective against an opponent standing in a pool of water and less effective against an opponent that's insulated or not grounded. On the other hand, a fire bolt is more likely to ignite flammable objects but not as effective against fire-retardant materials.

Mega-Attributes and Enhancements

In some cases, the "power" you're looking for isn't actually a quantum power in **Aberrant** terms, but a Mega-Attribute or enhancement. Mega-Attributes offer plenty of opportunities to personalize your nova character, particularly with the use of various enhancements. Consider the type of character you want when choosing Mega-Attributes and enhancements. Should your Mega-Dexterity nova be amazingly fast (Enhanced Movement, Fast Tasks, Rapid Strike) or super-humanly graceful (Accuracy, Catfooted, Physical Prodigy)? If a nova character has a high level in an Attribute, don't forget about qualities (p. 90) to help further define it.

Same Power, Different Name

You may have a particular ability in mind and find there isn't any power in the game for it. The player-defined powers don't cut it, but there might be an already defined power that's close to what you're looking for. Your best bet in this case is to look at the *effect* of the existing powers, find one that does what you're looking for and then just change the name of the power to suit your concept.

For example, you want your character to be able to materialize a suit of silvery medieval armor and a shining sword out of thin air to use in combat. The armor you've got covered, that's just the Armor power with a special effect (it looks like a suit of metallic armor, and the nova can make it appear or disappear at will). The sword is tougher. It's not really a piece of equipment, it's part of the nova's power. It's not a Quantum Bolt, because it can't be used to attack at range. You also don't see it costing the character quantum points every time he swings it. You could use Matter Creation or Quantum Construct to let the nova create a sword out of thin air, but that seems awfully expensive for the effect you want. You just need a power that does lethal damage in melee combat and adds to the character's Strength damage. A quick look through the book shows that Claws (**Aberrant**, p. 186) do just that. So you take

the description of the Claws power and rename it "Quantum Sword." The effect is the same; it just sounds better than saying your character has Claws.

New Power Techniques

Some quantum powers — such as Cyberkinesis, Elemental Anima and Weather Control — offer a variety of different techniques, or ways the basic power can be used. Coming up with new and different techniques for your character's powers is a great way to personalize them. Such broad powers are at least Level 3, and their techniques often simulate the effects of Level 1 and 2 powers. For example, Elemental Anima has a Blast technique that works similarly to Quantum Bolt (although with somewhat reduced range and effect). The Gravitokinesis technique of Gravity Control and the Magnetokinesis technique of Magnetic Mastery are both similar to the Telekinesis power.

The easiest way to add new techniques to a power is to borrow them from other, similar powers. For example, a nova with Elemental Anima (Air) might learn an "Aerokinesis" technique, using air to lift and move objects. Simply take the effects of the Gravitokinesis technique (*Aberrant*, p. 201) and substitute Elemental Anima for Gravity Control. Likewise, a nova with Molecular Manipulation might pick up the techniques of Crush and Imprison from Elemental Mastery and Wall from Elemental Anima. You can only learn techniques for powers with Quantum minima equal or less than your own Quantum rating.

The next way of adding a new technique is by taking an existing Level 1 or 2 power and turning it into a technique of a Level 3 power. For example, a character with Elemental Mastery (Shadows) wants to create an area of darkness. This sounds like the Enhance/Diminish technique of Elemental Anima, but the effects are more like the Shroud power. So the player decides to borrow the effects of Shroud for describing the technique; each success subtracts one from the Perception Traits of those in the affected area (as defined by the Enhance/Diminish technique).

Finally, you can always make up a completely new technique. Use the existing techniques in *Aberrant* (and in this book) as guidelines. Once your Storyteller approves the technique, you're ready to go. For example, you want your nova with Temporal Manipulation to be able to summon duplicates from alternate timelines. You come up with a technique called "Temporal Fugue" based off the Clone power. Every two successes on a Stamina + Temporal Manipulation roll summons one duplicate of the character with identical abilities and the usual restrictions of the Clone power (p. 63). The Storyteller also mentions there may be some unforeseen side effects from the nova's temporal tampering, but chooses to keep the

details to herself for a future story.

Keep in mind that a nova can use *any* technique of a power without mastering it, the technique simply costs twice the normal amount of quantum points and is rolled at +1 difficulty. This permits players to come up with new techniques for their characters even during play. The Storyteller should carefully consider any new techniques that come up during a game, and players should understand the Storyteller has the right to remove any technique that becomes abusive or hurts everyone's enjoyment of the game. The character's use of that technique can be explained away as a one-time thing, done under unusual conditions. The limitations of novas and the mechanics of their abilities are still largely unknown in the world of *Aberrant*.

Extras and Weaknesses

Players can use power Extras and weaknesses to personalize their characters' powers. Each power usually has one or two specific Extras that enhance the power or change how it works. Adding an Extra can help separate a character from the pack. There are also a number of Extras that can apply to any quantum power (*Aberrant*, pp. 230-232). Some of these, when applied to existing quantum powers, create entirely new powers for a character. For example, the Range Extra can create ranged versions for existing powers like Boost, Healing or Quantum Vampire. Extras added to a Level 3 power increase it to a Level 4, 5 or 6 power, as described in this book, making them very expensive.

Even more than Extras, weaknesses can help define and personalize a nova's powers by imposing restrictions on them and narrowing their focus. For example, a shapeshifting nova able to assume only the forms of jungle animals is more memorable than a nova able to turn into anything. Like special effects and Extras, a nova's weaknesses should ideally work along a "theme" of some sort that is based on the character's psychology, giving the player a better "hook" to hang the nova's personality on and making the character more memorable.

Aberrations

Lastly, players can use various aberrations to help personalize and define a nova's powers. A number of aberrations affect powers, directly and indirectly, and physical aberrations can certainly make a nova distinctive and memorable. Some aberrations are permanent versions of a nova's "special effects," like a nova whose eyes always glow when he uses his powers finding that his eyes now glow all the time. Or a nova with energy powers giving off sparks or flares of energy at random. An Anima Banner is a highly personal trait for novas, and while a Permanent Power can make a nova's life difficult, it makes the character distinctive (folks

are likely to remember the guy who's always on fire or five meters tall, for example). For more information, see the "Aberrations" section (p. 91).

The Continuing Adventures: Developing Powers

The *Galatea* was just the beginning. Novas continue to show new powers as the 21st century goes on — not just more abilities of the sorts seen before, but qualitative leaps upward. The world's most powerful novas stand as far above the typical recently erupted nova as novas do over humanity at large.

Rules don't replace player and Storyteller judgment. Work out an agreement on what sorts of characters you're playing, and tune the rules to suit. It's the Storyteller's prerogative, for instance, not to allow purchase of Quantum over 5 until some key crisis that triggers a sort of "second eruption" for the characters. It's the players' prerogative to suggest alternatives. Characters face adversaries in the game, but this isn't the same thing as the players facing the

Quantum to 10. Developing a single dot of a Level 6 power takes another 18 experience points. That's all the experience points earned from 40 to 50 complete stories, each one requiring quite a bit more than minimum acceptable behavior from both character and player. This set of costs isn't a fast or cheap road to power. It simply puts great power within the reach of those characters and players prepared to roleplay well and work hard for it and sacrifice alternative possibilities for character development.

Godhood by Favor

The Nova Age infuses the world with ever-greater quantities of ambient Quantum energy. This age also sees a number of novas who (consciously or otherwise) activate latent powers in others. If the story warrants it, your Storyteller may choose to give your character an automatic boost, perhaps one level of Quantum each decade. As your character's Quantum rises "naturally," you can buy new Extras and, eventually, new powers. Time-based grants of power happen at your Storyteller's discretion. Discuss it with the Storyteller, just remember that there's no wrong answer except the ones that aren't balanced, fun and fitting for your particular series.

Series that begin long after 2008 may benefit at the outset from a power boost. As discussed in *Aberrant*, p. 103, Trinity-era novas begin with Quantum 3. Your Storyteller may choose to start characters who erupt after, say, 2030 at Quantum 2. She may also reduce the cost of the first level of Quantum or the first several levels. The population of novas is large and diverse enough that the rules necessarily refer only to the typical nova experience. Since the whole point of eruption is that it's distinctive, individual and atypical, various sorts of modification may well suit your series. Discuss it with your Storyteller.

Godhood by the Numbers

Trait Increase	Cost
Quantum Power (Level 4)	Current rating x 9
Quantum Power (Level 5)	Current rating x 12
Quantum Power (Level 6)	Current rating x 15
New Trait	Cost
Quantum Power (Level 4)	12
Quantum Power (Level 5)	15
Quantum Power (Level 6)	18

Storyteller as adversaries.

This progression simply builds on the curve of costs in *Aberrant*. Some players and Storytellers may worry that this makes supreme power too easy to come by. It doesn't. A character who begins at Quantum 5 must spend 40 experience points to raise to 6 and then 12 more to get the first dot in a Level 4 power. That's every single experience point earned from completing nine stories in which the player demonstrated exceptional roleplay and creativity, made a significant discovery, acted with remarkable heroism and wisdom and was part of a cohesive group, using the experience guidelines in *Aberrant*, p. 123. The character would get no other benefit from those nine stories along the way, unlike his colleagues who strain less at the upper end of their powers.

A character who begins at Quantum 5 must earn a total of 280 experience points to raise her

To the Max

Optional Rule: Extra Successes

When you play a baseline character, you're unlikely to ever roll more than five successes on any given task. Nova dice pools being what they are, you may often end up with more than five successes, particularly when Mega-Attributes come into play. Here are some guidelines and suggestions for making the extra successes count in clear ways.

When you roll five successes, you can choose one of the options for maxing out, as presented on *Aberrant*, p. 147 or below, or you can reduce the quantum cost of a power by 1. For every three

What Powers Do

When a nova develops a power, he also develops whatever's necessary to use it. Take Mega-Strength as an example. In real life, a person who could somehow pick up a 50-ton tank couldn't actually hoist it overhead without breaking bones and ripping muscles. Nor could he actually lift it, since the human body simply doesn't provide the leverage. According to the **Aberrant** rules, however, a nova can indeed lift that tank (if he has four dots of Mega-Strength). Whether he creates a force field or engages in some other quantum trickery, the nova's own body stays together, and the tank doesn't fall apart or refuse to budge.

Apply this principle: If the rules say that a character can produce a given result, he can, unless he specifically weakens or redefines the power. A nova doesn't have to buy anything extra to use his power, beyond the requirements given in the rules.

You can play **Aberrant** with more realistic (or otherwise more restraining) science if you want to. Make sure that everyone playing in the game understands what's going on, though. Exploring an uncertain environment can be a great deal of fun; being tormented by capricious Storyteller sabotage is rarely fun for anyone except the Storyteller, and roleplaying is a group activity. It's generally better and more satisfying all around to disallow a power if it creates too many problems, rather than to try to undermine it and water it down into something marginally acceptable but no longer interesting.

If someone in your group finds a power problematic — particularly if that person is the Storyteller — take time before play to work it out. Maybe you can arrive at a mutually satisfactory compromise. Maybe you can experiment with the power in play for one or more sessions to see how it goes, since there are often surprises that just reading the text won't reveal. Maybe you should just take another power. Gaming is still a group activity, and with great power comes great responsibility not to be a disruptive weasel. Discussion and persuasion are good; arguments and ill will are not.

You'll encounter the advice "cooperate and negotiate rather than argue" a lot in this section of the book. We really mean it. When characters have powers this sweeping, there's just no way to work out one-size-fits-all solutions. Start with ideas presented here that appeal to you, just keep in mind that you'll very likely end up adjusting them to suit your particular circumstances. Make the adjustment a source of strength and interesting hooks rather than an occasion for bitching and making things boring, banal and bland.

successes thereafter, you can choose another maxing-out option. Since you've already succeeded on the roll, there's no risk of gaining temporary Taint this way.

Maxing Out

This is a set of extra options for use when maxing out powers. You can use some, none or all of the options here in addition to the ones in **Aberrant**, p. 147, if your Storyteller agrees.

Ways to Spend Max Successes

- **Damage.** You can choose an auto-success for attack powers.
- **Duration.** Instead of doubling duration, you can change a power's duration category from Concentration to Maintenance.
- **Extra.** Two *additional* successes lets you add any applicable Extra to the power.

The Benefits of Maxing Out

If you successfully max out a power, you can gain one experience point to use specifically for improving that power. You can only gain one experience point per session per power this way, no matter how many times you max out the power that session. You should apply this experience point toward buying the sorts of things you've been doing while maxing out. You can buy a reduced version of a maxing-out effect in many cases by purchasing the equivalent strength (see "The Mark Of: Customization," below). Your Storyteller has final say on whether you can purchase a particular strength twice and trade that in for one full level of the power — it fits some character concepts to turn a specialization into a general boost in competency and doesn't fit others.

Recurring Maneuvers

Any nova who isn't just sitting complacently and never, ever trying to challenge his limits should have some favored techniques at the outer edges of his current performance level. Really, all your nova's maneuvers should be distinctive — the world absolutely doesn't need the 745th completely generic Quantum Bolt — but high-end stunts in particular should carry the imprint of your character's personality and style. And as your nova does things that express his innermost nature as enhanced by eruption, these stunts should become a little less risky over time. You can spend one point of experience earned from successful maxing out to cancel a point of temporary Taint gained from a botch on a stunt your nova's tried more than once.

So it pays to take some time and work out specific stunts for your character. The maxing-out examples in **Aberrant** offer some good inspiration. Every nova should be cool, unless for some reason you made being uncool part of the character concept.

Fear of Taint

While we're on the subject... it certainly makes sense for some novas to worry about taint problems. While there is definitely a population of novas rushing to embrace a transhuman condition, others have no desire to become distinctly inhuman. In addition, different gaming groups have different styles when it comes to handling taint's manifestations. Novas, however, don't read the rulebook and, in the vast majority of cases, would have no way of noticing minor taint. You, as the player, shouldn't feel that a drop of taint here and there is a death sentence for your character.

In particular, don't feel compelled to hold back from maxing out simply because there is some risk of gaining temporary Taint. Temporary Taint goes away with moderate effort. Most worthwhile goals require small sacrifices of one sort or another. The theme of paying a manageable price for a burst of superheroic effort runs all through folklore, mythology and modern storytelling. The risk of temporary Taint for maxing out shouldn't look like an insuperable barrier, but, rather, like the calculated risk that it is. Note that the risk of botching is really never very high in the first place, so act boldly. Without risk, there can be no true heroism.

Unimagined Potential: New Enhancements

Mega-What?

There are times when it makes sense to match an enhancement with a Mega-Attribute other than the one it's usually associated with. A nova who punches his feet into the rock to stay where he is, for instance, can plausibly take Immovable Object (see below) with Mega-Strength rather than Mega-Stamina. A nova who's extremely fast and good at fighting, even though she lacks super-human mental characteristics, should be able to take Quickness (normally associated with Mega-Wits) as an enhancement to her Mega-Dexterity.

This isn't carte blanche to engineer a slew of peculiar combinations. Rather, feel free to make a few appropriate adjustments for the sake of a good, coherent character concept. As with everything in this section, your Storyteller retains the right of final refusal.



Mega-Strength

The first five dots of Mega-Strength present a not-quite-smooth curve of increasing power. Each dot of Mega-Strength past 5 adds the following benefits:

- The nova can carry an additional 1,000 kilograms without encumbrance.
- The nova gains 5 automatic successes to Strength/Might rolls and close combat damage dice pools.
- The nova can deadlift twice the weight she could at the previous level: 200 tons at Mega-Strength 6, 400 tons at Mega-Strength 7, 800 tons at Mega-Strength 8 and so on.

Irresistible Force

Things get out of your way, whether they want to or not. When you apply yourself, very little manages to stay where it is if you think it should be somewhere else.

System: This enhancement doesn't make it easier for the nova to attack — instead, it makes it harder for others to stay standing if she hits them. Each point of Quantum spent adds +2 to the difficulty of any opponent's roll to resist knockback or knockdown when struck by the nova. The enhancement remains in effect for one scene. Outside combat, spend one quantum point to add the nova's Quantum rating to Mega-Strength for one scene for feats of sheer brute force: walking through walls, shoving tanks over and the like. The added Quantum rating also applies to efforts to resist Immobilize and other powers that try to physically fix the nova in place.

Precision

Through experimentation and an innate sense of your own power, you can inflict just the amount of damage you want when you hit something.

System: When the nova inflicts damage, you can choose how many of the rolled successes to apply. This enhancement is always on and costs no quantum to use.

Thrower

You're not actually *stronger* than any other nova with the same level of Mega-Strength. You're better at using it for throwing things, whether it's through strength in the particular muscles that throwing uses or the intuitive grasp of how to use what you've got.

System: Each point of quantum spent doubles the distance the nova can throw something. One point lets a nova throw objects up to the nova's Mega-Strength base lifting ability a distance of Might x 10 meters, two points extends this to Might x 20 meters, and so on. Thrown objects do no extra damage, they just go farther.



Mega-Dexterity Fine Manipulation

You can move your body in very, very precise ways. If you can see what you're doing, you can shift a finger just a fraction of a millimeter and manipulate microscopic objects.

System: The nova must have the means to resolve microscopic distances, like an actual microscope or Electromagnetic Vision. Each dot of Mega-Dexterity increases the precision of the nova's movement 10-fold: 1/100th of a centimeter at 1 dot, 1/1000th of a centimeter at 2 dots and so on. Fine Manipulation can enhance tasks like watchmaking, lockpicking and computer repair. Make a Dexterity roll. Each success adds a die to the nova's dice pool for the next roll relating to the fine-manipulation task. This enhancement is always active and requires no quantum to use.

Omnidexterity

You can use both hands and feet with equal ease. You can also do the same thing with both hands — writing a letter with each, firing a gun with each and so on — without penalty. Furthermore, the nova's feet are just as agile as her hands, allowing her to pick things up, write or thread a needle with her toes. The nova remains constrained by her anatomy, and she still lacks the equivalent of an opposable thumb on her foot and therefore cannot, for example, fire a gun with her feet. Tails, tentacles and the like all benefit from this

enhancement as well (if the nova has them).

System: This enhancement costs no quantum and is always on. The penalty for multiple separate actions remains in effect; the nova would need Multitasking to fire a gun with one hand while writing a letter with the other all while using her feet to knit a sweater.

Perfect Balance

The nova has no problem standing, walking or even driving a motorcycle over ice or other treacherous surfaces. Log-rolling, surfing, running along the top of a moving train, bouncing along a tightrope and walking along a building's icy ledge are all simple feats for novas with this enhancement. The nova feels and adjusts for tiny shifts in his balance and momentum with such precision that he has no problem keeping his feet. Novas with this enhancement will also invariably land on their feet if dropped from any height over three feet or if something sweeps their feet out from under them.

System: This enhancement costs no quantum and is always on. In certain extraordinary circumstances, the Storyteller may require the player to spend a point of quantum to keep his feet.



Mega-Stamina

The first five dots of Mega-Stamina present a not-quite-smooth curve of increasing power. Each dot of Mega-Stamina past 5 adds the following benefits:

- Add another multiple to the nova's healing rate: eight times better than normal at Mega-Stamina 6, nine times better at Mega-Stamina 7 and so on.
- The nova's base Resistance and Endurance ratings are 5, and the nova gets one automatic success at any Resistance or Endurance roll for each dot of Mega-Stamina above 5.
- The nova's natural lifespan doubles: 500 years at Mega-Stamina 6, 1000 years at Mega-Stamina 7 and so on.
- The nova receives five extra soak against bashing damage and three extra soak against lethal damage, plus one per dot of Mega-Stamina over 5. The nova also receives three extra Bruised health levels, plus one per dot of Mega-Stamina

over 5 and one extra Wounded health level per dot over 5.

Health

Your body resists disease, poisons, Utopian sterility cocktails, chemical agents of all sorts and similar complications.

System: One level of this enhancement subtracts the nova's Mega-Stamina from the Virulence rating of any poison, disease or other biological or chemical intrusion, including those caused by quantum powers. Two levels allow the nova to selectively apply the reduction — for instance, letting alcohol through long enough to get pleasantly drunk, then detoxifying when done carousing to become instantly sober.

Immovable Object

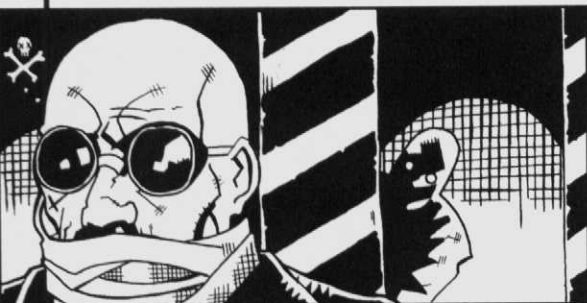
When you plant yourself, you don't move unless you want to. It's hard to knock you down or knock you back.

System: Each point of quantum spent gives you a -2 difficulty bonus for one scene on all efforts to resist maneuvers that produce knockdown or knockback results and to all efforts to regain your footing after suffering knockdown or knockback. Outside of combat, spend a quantum point to add the nova's Quantum rating to Mega-Stamina for one scene for resisting efforts at physically moving the character against her will.

Tireless

You can keep going and going.... You don't fight off disease or other complications better than anyone else, but you resist fatigue unusually well. A nova with this enhancement could *sprint* two marathons back to back without even elevating her breathing rate.

System: Each purchase of this enhancement adds three dice to the character's dice pool for purposes of resisting fatigue. Where a numerical rating applies without a roll, treat the character's Mega-Stamina score as 1 higher than usual. The character can march or run longer, perform a particular task longer and so on.



Mega-Perception

Fast Sense

Biology limits how quickly most people can perceive something. One of your senses works faster than that, with direct quantum awareness enhancing the normal physical process of sensation. Your eyes may work like a strobe camera, able to resolve a scene as it was for a tiny fraction of a second, or your ears may work like a super-fast sound-activated microphone that picks up a millisecond's sound.

System: Spend a point of quantum. For the rest of the scene, the nova can choose to "freeze" a particular moment for one of her senses. She remains completely aware of the ongoing flow of events in real time. The captured moment simply lingers as a perfectly preserved memory, allowing her to describe a scene, a face, a block of text, a scent or a particular tune with perfect accuracy, even months after the fact. Isolating one instant this way is a reflexive action and doesn't count as a separate action for dice pool purposes.

Sensory Organ

You can sense the world through any part of your body: see with your hair, smell with your fingers, hear through the soles of your feet, whatever seems like a good idea at the time.

System: Spend a point of quantum to move one sense per dot of Mega-Perception to some other part of your body. It works just as it normally does: normal range, normal acuity, normal in all regards except that it's not attached to the usual organ. If the current sensory point takes damage, the nova must make a Willpower roll to continue sensing despite the pain or to return the sense to its normal organ. Otherwise, he loses the use of that sense for the rest of the scene.

That Creepy Feeling

The nova knows when he's being watched, overheard or monitored in any way.

System: If the nova is being monitored directly — watched from the shadows, peered at through binoculars, eavesdropped on from around a corner, etc. — he will know it automatically without needing to spend quantum. Furthermore, if the spy is in a group of people, the nova will know which one is doing the snooping. If the monitoring is mediated by listening devices, video surveillance systems or the like, the expenditure of one quantum point allows the nova to sense that he's being watched (or whatever) and reveals the location of the device.



Mega-Intelligence

Compartmentalized Mind

You can split your conscious thought processes remarkably well. In the face of a physical or mental assault on your thoughts or emotions, you can pull back and protect a portion of your consciousness.

System: When subjected to physical or mental trauma, spend one quantum and make an Intelligence roll. Each success lets the nova buffer one dot of Intelligence; it takes two successes to compartmentalize one dot of Mega-Intelligence. Activating Compartmentalized Mind is a reflexive reaction and does not count as an action.

The mental compartment isn't aware of the outside world, but can attempt to shock the foreground consciousness back into self-control. Make opposed rolls of the Intelligence in the mental compartment versus the Intelligence left in the primary compartment. If the mental compartment's successes equal or outnumber successes on the roll that imposed Dominate, Hypnosis, Telepathy, torture or other manipulation on the nova, the foreground consciousness shakes off the effects of the power used on it. The mental compartment can try again if the initial attempt fails, but each repeat effort adds +1 difficulty.

The mental compartment reunites with the foreground consciousness at the end of the scene, or earlier if the nova so chooses. Note that while Compartmentalized Mind is in effect, the nova has conscious access only to the dots of Intelligence and Mega-Intelligence remaining in the foreground consciousness. This impairment is very obvious to anyone who knows the nova at all well.

Mental Prodigy

• **Administrative:** A nova with this enhancement understands how organizations work. He knows about the problem of subordinates only telling superiors what the subordinates think the superiors want to hear, about the mythical man-

month and about all the other social complications that interfere with a group's ability to act on its shared goals. He gives orders in the language that others in the group understand and senses where others are hiding weaknesses (or even advantages they want to exploit themselves). It's not flashy or dramatic, but an Administrative Prodigy gets things done through group action better than any other nova.

System: When the character makes rolls related to the working of his organization, make an Intelligence roll. Each success on that roll adds a die to the ensuing roll.

• **Strategic:** A nova with this enhancement may not know the optimal course of action for a specific battlefield, but understands the broad sweep of events and possibilities. Analyze Weakness provides greater insight into the present moment and Tactical Prodigy covers short-term engagements like specific battles, while Strategic Prodigy gives insight into possibilities, courses of evolution, situational outcomes and catastrophic changes that may unfold.

System: When the character works on long-term plans (over the course of days, years or even centuries), the player make an Intelligence roll. Each success adds a die to the next roll related to developing or executing the plans.

Self-Analysis

You've driven yourself a little bit crazy, setting aside part of your mind to review the rest. When you engage in Self-Analysis, it's almost like having someone else look for all the dumb mistakes and wrong conclusions you've drawn, except that nobody else needs to know how thoroughly you've messed it up.

System: The nova must spend one scene of waking time or one night's sleep using Self-Analysis. During this time, his effective Mega-Intelligence is one lower than usual, as part of his mind is otherwise occupied. When finished with the analysis, make an Intelligence roll (with full dice pool restored). Each success lets the nova identify one conclusion drawn erroneously, thanks to a botched mental roll since the last time he engaged in Self-Analysis. The player may choose to spend three successes for an intuitive insight, realizing one key error arrived at without the help of any botching. This enhancement is most entertainingly played out between the player and the Storyteller, with the player speaking aloud what the character is thinking and with the Storyteller giving hints and suggestions until the character arrives at the right conclusions.



Mega-Wits

Group Awareness

You can sense the subconscious impulses of the members of a group. You know when they're about to turn into a mob or disperse, for instance and how close they are to panic or rage. This enhancement gives you advance warning and the ability to shift the group's direction.

System: This enhancement lets the nova read the mood of the people around her. Spend one quantum, and make a Wits + Rapport roll. If it's successful, the nova can tell what the group will do in the next few turns — one turn per dot of Wits plus two turns per dot of Mega-Wits. Successes on the Rapport roll provide a pool of bonus dice to use in efforts to affect the group's behavior. Each bonus die can be used in one roll made during the period the nova foresees. The player cannot carry over dice earned from one use of Group Awareness to the next. Each use creates a new dice pool; any remaining from the last use are forfeit (no harm done, but no gain from them, either).

Human Nature

You can piece together the clues in speech and behavior that suggest what really motivates another person. You don't get any particular insight into the person's truth or falsehood at the moment, nor to the person's immediate state of mind: This enhancement cues you into deep, long-term concerns.

System: The nova can attempt to discern another person's Nature. Spend one quantum and make a Wits + Rapport or Wits + Awareness roll (whichever is higher). Add +1 difficulty for each point of permanent Taint or Chrysalis the target possesses over 3, as the cues such individuals give off become increasingly exotic and unrelated to human norms.

Redirection

You may not be faster than anyone else at your level of Mega-Wits. You just avoid confusion when changing courses of action better. Sudden complication? No problem.

System: The nova can abort planned combat actions without spending a point of Willpower and takes half normal penalties (rounded down) from surprise-

related penalties. This enhancement costs no quantum to use and is always on.



Mega-Appearance

Almost Live

Whatever the particular features Mega-Appearance gives you, they remain just as potent when you're recorded. Videotape, holographic storage and the like all convey your overwhelming attractiveness.

System: The nova can be recorded while using Appearance-related Abilities. They apply with full strength when shown to audiences elsewhere: Targets must resist the successes the nova achieves, just as if they were present when the nova used his power.

Blind Bewitchment

Almost all Mega-Appearance features require the audience to see you. This enhancement lets you impress them through another sense.

System: Each purchase of this enhancement lets the nova use Mega-Appearance and any relevant enhancements through a sense other than sight. Specify the sense at the time the nova gains this enhancement. Most novas with Blind Bewitchment make their speech impressive, imitative, terrifying or whatever; others use it to produce pheromone-based effects through smell, and some find ingenious applications for taste and touch. This enhancement costs no quantum and is always on.

Mirroring

All people subtly mimic the facial characteristics and mood cues of those around them; it's one of the reasons that long-term couples are often said to resemble one another. This enhancement uses that tendency to the nova's advantage. Those around the nova take their emotional cues from her facial expressions and physical gestures. A bubbly, laughing nova using this enhancement can cause a whole room to lighten up and start laughing, while an angry, pacing nova can incite those around her to riot.

System: The nova spends a point of quantum and then takes on the demeanor she wants to instill in those around her. The length of time it takes to make the change depends on the ambient mood in the room. Taking a crowd from calm and happy to boisterous

and jovial takes only one turn. Taking a neutral or bored crowd to jovial takes three turns. Going from one extreme to another, say from cheerful to morose, takes six turns of the character moping around and looking grim. This effect lasts for one scene.



Mega-Manipulation

Conflicting Accounts

When addressing two or more people, you can slant your appeal so that each one hears just what he wants to. Each one gets the distinct impression that the nova favors him, though if they compare notes, they'll find that they remember the event quite differently.

System: Spend one quantum and make a Manipulation roll just before using Mega-Manipulation or one of its enhancements. Each success on the Conflicting Accounts roll lets the nova create an additional account that some of the audience will remember; the nova decides who hears which story. What the nova *really* says must be relatively bland and open to interpretation. Though the audience will not hear it that way at the time, recordings of the nova's words will reveal this to be the case.

Example: *Dr. Newton wants to clear out a crowd of people from a building she wishes to use as the base for some upcoming experiments. She has Trickster. But it's a motley crew and she's not sure a single story will do it. She makes her Conflicting Accounts roll and gets two successes. Then she successfully uses Trickster, gesturing and speaking in elliptical, allusive language. The street people go off in search of a shelter they think she's told them about, while the building inspectors leave with the distinct anticipation of a big payoff and the artists head home to wait for calls from the new street-art gallery they think will be opening there soon.*

Creeping Paranoia

Baselines naturally hang on every word of Mega-Social novas. After all, such beings far transcend the normal boundaries of human communication and impress deeply upon the psyche. Though many garner love and adoration, the novas are, to humanity, virtual gods — and humans have always feared their gods.

A nova with the Creeping Paranoia enhancement to Mega-Manipulation has the sort of authority that causes doubt, fear and guilt. While the nova doesn't necessarily cause humans to feel such emotions all the time, she does have the capacity to play upon this subconscious turmoil. With a properly-stressed phrase, a casual choice of certain words or a look to accentuate a bit of innuendo, the nova causes some of her speech to burrow into the subject's subconscious mind, there to fester and roil until it bubbles forth in a morass of psychosis, trauma and self-inflicted paranoia.

At first, the nova's words seem normal — the subject simply treats them like any other part of casual conversation. Over time, though, they cause tiny doubts and questions — did the nova really mean what she said, or was she hinting at something else? Was it really a veiled threat or just innocent conversation? Does she actually know secret things about me? Has she judged me and found me wanting? The subject's own fears and guilt latch on to the nova's words and take root. The subject can do nothing but fixate on the phrase, turning it over and over obsessively to paranoically scrutinize the nova's intent. Eventually, the subject may overcome this dread fascination... unless the nova deliberately reinforces the terror until the subject breaks.

A nova might, for instance, agree to an interview with a particularly loathed media personality. At the end of the interview the nova simply states, "Glad to be here. *Be seeing you.*" The interviewer heads off to edit the tapes and go about his business, but later that night, he starts thinking about the nova's words — "*be seeing you*"? Does the nova intend to drop in unexpectedly? Was that a threat because of the interview's penetrating nature? Or is the nova secretly spying on the interviewer — and with the nova's phenomenal powers, aware of all the reporter's hidden secrets? The interviewer watches the tapes over and over, looking for other hints that perhaps the nova was concealing some other motive or innuendo, and his mind automatically latches on to perceived behaviors and slights. To any other observer, the interviewer seems obsessed, delusional; after a few days, when nothing happens, he finally starts to put it from his mind — until he heads home and checks his voice mail, discovering a message from the nova: "Just wanted to catch up. Thanks for the interview. *Be seeing you.*" And the cycle continues until the interviewer finally cracks....

System: Spend one quantum; the nova simply stresses a particular phrase while in personal conversation with someone. The nova must be physically present with the victim. Roll Manipulation (+1 difficulty for each point of Willpower that the vic-

tim has over 5). Every two successes scored (rounded down) implants the necrotic suggestion for a day. At first, this has no immediate effect. Within eight hours, though, the nova's phrase keeps cropping up in the subject's mind. Concentration suffers; the victim takes a +1 difficulty penalty on all actions. Sleep becomes difficult and fitful, and the nova's words keep creeping into the subject's head even during other actions, sometimes driving the victim to interrupt other actions and go back over the phrase again and again. Once the power subsides, the victim pushes the phrase back into the subconscious and is able to concentrate normally again. However, the nova can reinforce it by repeating the phrase to the victim with another point of quantum (and this time, doesn't have to do so in person).

Each day that a subject languishes under this power, the player of the victim must make a Willpower roll. If failed, the subject loses a point of Willpower. If the subject runs out of Willpower, then he gains a Derangement — typically, some variation of Paranoia or Obsession. If the subject goes for a full week with the Derangement and no Willpower, then he suffers a psychotic break and may seek to kill the nova or himself, simply to escape the torment.

Overwhelming Question

The nova asks a question of one target, and for the duration of the nova's concentration, the target can do nothing but answer to the best of his ability.

System: Spend a quantum point to activate this enhancement for one scene. Once the nova makes eye contact and asks the question, the target makes a contested Willpower roll against the nova's Manipulation + Interrogation. If the target fails, he can do nothing for the duration of the nova's concentration but answer the question, starting with the most salient points and gradually telling the nova everything he knows that's even vaguely connected to the topic at hand. If the target is attacked or tampered with in any way, this enhancement fails. **Note:** This is not a pleasant experience. From a subjective standpoint, the target feels as though he's drowning in the question and the only way to save himself is to answer as completely and in as much detail as possible. For the duration of the nova's concentration, nothing exists for the target of this enhancement but the nova, the question and his complete and honest answer. If the target knows nothing, he'll babble and cry and lapse into a debilitating anxiety attack for the duration of the nova's interrogation. The question must be asked in a language the target understands. This enhancement does not work

on the blind unless the nova also has the Blind Bewitchment enhancement.



Mega-Charisma

Center of Attention

You may not be any particular good at giving orders (apart from your innate Mega-Charisma advantage), but everyone in the area notices you. People feel an urge to check with you before leaving; when you arrive, things stop for a moment as everyone looks to see what you want.

System: Spend one quantum, and make a Charisma roll. Everyone in your line of sight feels a compulsion to pay attention to you. Each success on the Center of Attention roll adds +1 difficulty to any roll that requires people to turn away from the nova. The nova's own efforts at command and manipulation remain at their usual difficulty, it's just that he's got a somewhat captive audience.

People in the area automatically sense the nova's arrival. Those with as many or fewer dots in Willpower than the nova has in successes on the Center of Attention roll must turn to look at the nova when he enters the area; people with more Willpower must make a Willpower roll, with the Center of Attention roll's successes adding to the Willpower roll's difficulty.

Inspiration

Your fervor carries. People rally to your side and carry with them a bit of your passion for whatever ideas you propound.

System: Spend a quantum when using a Charisma-related Ability or enhancement, and make a Charisma roll. The nova's targets get a +1 die bonus when attempting to persuade others of whatever the nova just persuaded them of. The effect lasts one hour per success. The nova can choose to make the effect more intent but briefer, using extra successes to boost the dice pool bonus rather than extending the duration. For instance, three successes could provide a +1 bonus for three hours or a +3 bonus for one hour or a +2 bonus for one hour followed by +1 bonus for another hour.

Perfect Guest

You're the paragon of whatever group it is you're a part of at the moment. You're the one who does all the right things and none of the wrong things. When others in the group say, "You should go get a clue about what we're doing," you're the one they point to as an example.

System: Spend a quantum point to turn this enhancement on for one scene. The nova can make a Charisma roll before attempting an action endorsed by the group she's with or before making a Wits roll to realize a faux-pas in the making. Add the successes on the Charisma roll to the ensuing roll. The end result is to make the nova seem like one of the group, particularly clueful about the group's shared likes and dislikes. It doesn't prevent the nova from giving individual offense — it applies to the consensus of the group.

Like Nothing Seen Before: New Powers, New Extras

Quite apart from the new Extras and other options available to them, novas with high Quantum can keep buying more dots of existing powers. A nova with Quantum 7, for instance, can buy seven dots of a power (if he has the nova points or experience points for it), and this allows effects most novas can't duplicate. As Stalin once said, "Quantity has a quality all its own."

Special Effects

Players often come up with ideas that don't actually require the creation of new powers, they just require a willingness to adjust the way an existing power takes effect. Don't be afraid to invent a new power when a concept really requires it, but keep in mind that if the effect you want only differs in a few specific ways, you can think about simply modifying the existing power to suit. Below, we list a few examples of special effects that would not count as Extras to a power and allow you to customize your character to a greater degree.

See "The Mark Of: Customization," p. 141 below, for information on strengths and weaknesses that let you fine-tune how your character's powers work. Many modifications fit into the framework provided there. Sometimes, you'll want to invent a new Extra. Do it when it's appropriate, but don't rush it: Remember that Extras raise the cost of a power, to purchase and to use, so only

add Extras that really do take the power to a whole new level.

Special effects cover the lesser changes you might want to make to a power — not making it more or less effective, just distinctive. Use the categories presented here as a starting point for your own variations. Remember that **Aberrant** power descriptions cover the average and that, in some ways, this is misleading, since no nova is average. Novas don't pause to consult the rulebook during eruption. You should consult it during character creation, with the awareness that you can take liberties. As long as your Storyteller permits them, feel free to make the changes that fit your character and your group.

Acceleration and Retardation

Your nova's powers may take effect more quickly or more slowly than usual. The Attraction technique for Elemental Mastery, provided below, usually draws up the attracted element with just enough force to overcome resistance. Your nova may be able to summon a flood of water that cascades uphill with tremendous force — you won't get any damage bonuses without paying for them, but the flood can shove open blocked doors and move other obstacles out of the way. Entropy Control techniques usually apply at once, but your nova may use Breakdown to introduce a dramatic display of cascading failures in a complex system over a period of minutes or longer.

Halo

Powers that affect the environment, such as Weather Manipulation, generally create whatever physical factors they need to work. Your nova may have powers that work, at least in part, by arranging and concentrating existing features of her surroundings. For instance, if she heats up the area within range of her powers, a larger area beyond that may become slightly chilled — not enough to produce any benefits (or hindrances) in terms of game mechanics, but something that sensitive people and instruments might notice.

Mild Damage

The Storyteller system uses fairly big steps in tracking health levels — even one level of bashing damage matters. It's often appropriate to include power effects that don't do that much quantifiable damage but which matter narratively in the course of play. Almost any power might generate a distinctive tone that sets people's teeth on edge or create a flash of light that distracts bystanders or release a noxious (or very pleasant!) odor. Powers that affect inanimate objects, like Cyberkinesis, may require your nova to press her palms against a computer hard enough to leave bruises on her hands.

Such hard-to-quantify effects are the elements from which drama is woven.

Persistent Effects

The actual mechanical effects of a power end when the description says they do. You can still have some narrative consequences linger, however, and some sorts of persistence are well-established in stories that make good **Aberrant** fodder. A nova with Hypermovement might leave a series of after-images in mid-air, while a nova with precognitive powers might see "before-images" of varying opacity, marking where people will probably be in the future. In some cases, your character may always manifest her powers at a very low level: A nova with Hypermovement may constantly jitter and move abruptly, while a nova with Telepathy or Pretercognition may have the disconcerting habit of answering questions before others finish asking them.

Reflexive Use

In some cases, your nova may not even know that she's using her powers; in extreme cases, she may not know that she has a particular power at all. A nova with mind-control powers, or simply a great deal of Social Mega-Attributes and enhancements, may automatically interfere with anyone attempting to tell her something she doesn't want to hear. She may believe that she's a super-soldier created in a secret lab and unconsciously use her powers to stamp out anything that would challenge her self-image. Powers like Luck and Healing lend themselves to reflexive use, as do Disrupt and Disorient. A nova with Matter Creation may not realize that she's creating things rather than finding them in her pockets. With a little imagination, most powers can be made to work in ways besides the nova deciding consciously to use her power at a particular moment.

Signature

Novas often use their powers in distinctive ways. Sometimes a nova can control the extent to which her powers proclaim "Regina Mundi is here!" and sometimes not. Your nova might, for instance, find all his Mirage and Hologram creations subtly tinged a distinct shade of blue. Every complex device he makes with Matter Creation might have a certain Victorian style, with teak and brass fixtures.

Subtle Result

The power whose effects aren't immediately obvious is a staple of comics. Your nova might have Disintegration, for instance, with the special effect that the target remains apparently intact. The target only crumbles to dust once someone brushes against it. A shapeshifter may gain animal powers without actually changing into animal form, surprising everyone

once she leaps into action. A nova with a combat power like Claws or Stun Attack may conceal it in ordinary appearance: The nova with Claws might have perfectly normal-looking hands reinforced with super-alloys or infused with quantum energy, while the Stun Attack may take advantage of sonic resonance and other environmental factors to inflict harm without any obvious source.

Animal/Plant Mastery

Extras: Micro-life (character can exercise mastery over microscopic life forms down to the level of viruses)

Bioluminescence

Extras: Monochromatic (light radiates in just one frequency, avoiding senses and sensors looking elsewhere in the spectrum); Tunable (the nova can specify the range of frequencies each time the power is used)

Body Modification

- **Dispersed Organs:** (three nova points/six experience points) The nova can buy one or two levels of this modification. Her internal organs are divided into smaller pieces spread throughout her body, so that anything damaging just one part of her body does less harm than usual.

With one level, the nova's organs exist as discrete sub-units in small nodes. Targeted attacks get only half their normal damage bonus, and the nova suffers one less die penalty than usual from wounds to specific parts of the body. (Dispersed Organs help protect against bullet wounds and the like but not from being set on fire or run over by a steamroller. The player and Storyteller must discuss how to handle specific cases.) With two levels, the nova's entire body is a mass of relatively undifferentiated tissue. It might all be some spongy mass or something like the classic vampire's undead body, with all the usual parts but less vulnerability to harm or something else entirely. Targeted attacks inflicted no extra damage.

Depending on the details, the character may look very disturbing indeed when cut open, and even with one level of this modification, conventional medical treatment is at a +1 difficulty penalty thanks to the nova's unusual anatomy.

Reduce the cost of this modification by one nova point or two experience points per level if it doesn't include the brain.

- **Second Brain:** (two nova points/four experience points) The character has a literal second brain, some backup cluster of neurons that supports a significant chunk of the character's mental activity. Divide Intelligence and Mega-Intelligence dots between them. Damage to one brain or the other reduces the

character's Intelligence accordingly until the damage heals. Yes, this does mean that a nova could get his whole head blown off and remain functional (albeit without senses or much ability to eat) if the second brain is somewhere else. The second brain must remain in the same body as the first — the nova can't use Homunculus or other powers to store it somewhere else.

- **Subdermal Senses:** (one nova point/three experience points) Some or all of the nova's sensory organs (specify which when purchasing this modification) lie beneath a layer of skin. The character takes a +1 difficulty penalty on all rolls for using those senses, but the penalties from environmental distractions, sensory-overload powers and the like are halved, rounded down. The result generally looks very disturbing and imposes a +1 difficulty penalty (or even more, depending on details) in most social interactions.

Clone

Extras: Extra Clones (each additional quantum spent generates [Quantum] clones, maximum [Quantum x power rating] clones); Mental Link (all clones are in telepathic contact with each other)

Cyberkinesis

Initialize

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Cyberkinesis

Area: N/A

Duration: Instant

The cyberkinetic resets all hardware and software in the target computer to their default settings. This power doesn't physically move jumpers or external switches, but can toggle any physical element that instructions from within the computer can affect. All customization of software disappears; at the character's discretion, all storage media are completely erased. The computer enters whatever state it was in when just assembled and certified ready for use.

Opening

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Cyberkinesis

Area: N/A

Duration: Special

The character leaves behind a residual quantum "daemon" that detects and attempts to subvert efforts at securing the target computer. When someone attempts to install or activate security features, they must get at least as many successes on a computer roll as the nova has levels of Cyberkinesis. If a given roll would normally succeed but is blocked by Opening, the programmer or administrator can tell something's wrong; on a failure or botch, everything looks fine. A roll that gets twice as many successes

as the nova has levels of Cyberkinesis disrupts the Opening effect and prevents further interference for the rest of the scene.

A single success creates a quantum daemon strong enough to interfere with security efforts for one scene. Extra successes provide more daemons. These quantum daemons can linger in a computer for a maximum of (Quantum + power rating) days and dissipate at the rate of one per day.

Tag

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Cyberkinesis

Area: N/A

Duration: (Quantum + power rating) hours

The nova can leave a cybernetic mark in a computer, once he's gained control of it through other techniques or simply physically hacked into it. Tag creates a quantum impression that the nova can follow later, reducing the difficulty penalty for distance by one per success on the Tag roll (to a minimum of 0). The successes rolled on Tag also add dice to the nova's subsequent Computer rolls to manipulate the computer, for the duration of the Tag. Only one use of Tag applies at a time: If the nova uses Tag again, whatever bonus remained from the previous effort is immediately lost.

Significant changes to the computer, such as a total reformatting of all internal storage or installation of new primary circuits and supporting components may reduce or negate the bonus Tag provides, at the Storyteller's discretion. Relatively minor changes, such as adding or removing software and peripherals, don't affect Tag.

Animation

Quantum Minimum: 6

Dice Pool: Wits + Cyberkinesis

Area: N/A

Duration: Maintenance

The nova makes one or more computers or computer-controlled machines, up to (power rating) machines per success, "come to life." They move in any way that they are built to; a computer-controlled car affected by Animation, therefore, would be able to drive around at the nova's behest, but a desktop computer would still just sit there.

The nova can use the animated machines to intimidate others. People being menaced by machines come to life must make a Willpower roll, with a difficulty equal to the number of successes on the Animation roll.

Possession

Quantum Minimum: 6

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Cyberkinesis

Area: N/A

Duration: Maintenance

The nova shifts his consciousness into the network; his body falls into a coma-like state (unless he's using Compartmentalized Mind). He can move at lightspeed through the network and occupies an effective space about (power rating) x 100 meters across. Damage must affect more than half of the networked computers in that space to affect him. He has full access to all the sensory attachments available to computers in the target space (and whatever machines beyond that they can issue commands to) and can use mental powers of his own. He can issue commands to computers in his space. If it's physically possible for the hardware to do something, he can construct a string of instructions to make it possible. He can also modify software and data to his heart's content. It requires a Hacking roll to pierce encrypted data and data in languages the nova doesn't speak.

Synchronization

Quantum Minimum: 6

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Cyberkinesis

Area: N/A

Duration: N/A

The nova can make a number of machines all take on the hardware and software configuration of the machine he designates. This power allows him to reset all software, and to modify hardware insofar as there's provision for software instructions to change it. Each success lets him synchronize (power rating) computers networked together or a single computer that isn't networked to the source machine but is within (Quantum + power rating) x 10 meters. Synchronization can't install new software or change hardware specifications — machines with differing capabilities get as close as they can, but don't magically change into something they're not.

Extras: Branding (the character exploits knowledge of particular system strengths and weaknesses; make Intelligence + Computer roll, add successes to Cyberkinesis roll); Network Effect (the character affects [Quantum + power rating] linked computers simultaneously)

Density Control

As presented in **Aberrant**, p. 189, Density Increase requires a roll and has variable result, while Density Decrease has fixed results each time. A nova may choose to have fixed, predictable Density Increase as well. The character automatically gets (power rating + 1) levels of success, plus one per extra point of quantum spent when using the power, up to a limit of (Quantum + power rating) levels. Each level doubles the nova's weight, adds one dot of Strength (up to Strength 5, after which extra levels add Mega-Strength up to Mega-

Strength 5) and gives the character one extra soak against bashing and lethal damage. The Full Control Extra applies as usual. Affects Others lets the nova grant up to (power rating) levels of density change to a target object or person.

Extras: Extreme Density (the nova can spend as many quantum points as he's got available on Density Increase, but Mega-Strength may never be made higher than 6 through the use of this power)

Disintegration

Extras: Prolonged Effect (the Disintegration result applies at a rate of one to [power rating] levels per turn, at the nova's discretion).

Elemental Anima

Extras: Personality Imprint (any other character using Elemental Anima on the same elemental stuff within [Quantum + power rating] days suffers a +1 difficulty penalty per level of the character's Elemental Anima); Selective Anima (the character can narrow the target to a particular frequency of sound or light, one isotope of an element or the equivalent)

Elemental Mastery

Animation

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Elemental Mastery

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 3 meters

Area: N/A

Duration: Concentration

The nova can stir some of the element into a semblance of mindless life. Each success on the Animation roll lets the nova animate about 100 kg of a solid or liquid element or about two cubic meters of a gas or otherwise intangible element. The animated element can move at half the nova's own walking speed and reshape itself freely. It can't form tools for fine manipulation, nor does it become more (or less) resistant to any sort of damage. Use the Material Strength chart on **Aberrant**, p. 257, as a guideline for the animated element's Strength in combat. Intangible substances can perform non-damaging maneuvers with an effective Strength equal to the nova's Intelligence. The element's Dexterity is equal to the nova's Wits.

Once animated, the element can move up to twice the nova's range limit. If it goes further, it automatically returns to its inanimate condition.

The player and Storyteller should negotiate the game mechanics for special effects as suitable for the element in question.

Note: Yes, this is pretty much the same thing as a Molecular Manipulation technique. It's provided here for Elemental Mastery concepts (e.g., electricity or sound) that don't necessarily make sense in the framework Molecular Manipulation provides.

Attraction

Dice Pool: Strength + Elemental Mastery

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 10 meters

Area: N/A

Duration: Maintenance

The nova can make separate pieces of the element draw together (or, alternatively, they are attracted to the nova and move toward him in whatever fashion he requires). They must all be within his range. He can "charge" up to 100 kg per success of solid or liquid matter or up to two cubic meters of gas or intangible element. The attracted pieces converge at whatever point the nova designates. They move at one meter per turn per success and have a Strength equal to the nova's power rating for the purposes of pushing through obstructions and the like. They retain their normal material strength and other properties.

Attracted elements will do normally impossible things like flow uphill. Such activities will be just impossible enough to allow the element to move toward the point of attraction: For example, water flowing up stairs flows up the steps in a very thin layer and doesn't rush up the walls or ceiling. (This is just a guideline. If player and Storyteller favor more dramatic effects, go ahead and use them!) Once the Attraction wears off, normal physical laws take over. Objects in midair fall down, but they don't automatically return to where they were earlier.

Excitation

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Elemental Mastery

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 10 meters

Area: (Quantum + power rating) meters

Duration: Maintenance

The nova increases or slows the rate of molecular activity in each piece of the element within the target area. One level of Elemental Mastery lets the nova heat or cool the element; choose which at the time of purchase. Each success makes the element hot or cold enough to inflict a level of bashing damage on anyone in contact with it. If the nova gets twice as many successes as the target's material strength after soak (see *Aberrant*, p. 257), the element melts, sublimates, shatters in brittle collapse or otherwise breaks.

Phase Change

Dice Pool: Wits + Elemental Mastery

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 10 meters

Area: N/A

Duration: Concentration

The nova can change the element from one state — solid, liquid or gas — into another. Each level of Elemental Mastery lets the nova transform one state of the element into one other; decide

which at the time of purchase. The nova can affect 100 kg of solid or liquid per success, or two cubic meters of gas or intangible element per success. The element retains its normal properties. If it couldn't normally exist in its new state given the current conditions, it begins immediately shifting back to its earlier state. Ice, for instance, melts at room temperature, while liquid oxygen boils quickly into gas. Concentration lets the nova hold these losses to 5–10 percent of the original mass (or volume) per turn.

Normally intangible elements like light or shadow become solids of a somewhat crystalline nature and highly viscous liquids, respectively. They gain one health level for every two levels of the nova's power rating, rounded up.

Plasma Conversion

Dice Pool: Wits + Elemental Mastery

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 10 meters

Area: (Quantum + power rating) x 3 meters

Duration: Maintenance

The nova converts the target volume, up to (Quantum + power rating) x 10 meters on a side, into pure plasma. Plasma is unlike any of the three states of matter common on Earth, though it's the most common state in the universe at large. A plasma forms when matter becomes hot enough to separate electrons from nuclei, creating a cloud of charged particles. Flame is plasma, as are the contents of a fusion reaction. Nova-created plasma inflicts one level of lethal damage per success on the Plasma Conversion roll per turn for the duration of the effect. See *Aberrant*, p. 256, for a comparison chart of fire intensities.

Powers relying on magnetic effects work with double efficiency on elements in plasma form. Powers that affect normal matter work with half normal efficiency. In each case, round in favor of the nova using Plasma Conversion.

The plasma inflicts very little harm on the converted element. The target volume loses one percent of its mass every (Quantum + power rating) turns and returns to its usual state with (depending on the element in question) slight scorching and other superficial traces of fire damage.

Extras: Extended Range ([Quantum + power rating] kilometers); Personality Imprint (any other character using Elemental Mastery or Elemental Anima on the same elemental stuff within [Quantum + power rating] days suffers +1 difficulty penalty per level of the character's Elemental Mastery); Selective Mastery (the character can narrow the target to a particular frequency of sound or light, one isotope of an element and the equivalent)

Entropy Control

Bioentropic Vortex

Dice Pool: Stamina + Entropy Control

Range: N/A

Area: (Quantum + power rating) meters

Duration: Instant

The nova turns herself into a sort of entropic black hole, absorbing the effects of entropy on other people and objects in the area. Each success lets the nova transfer one level of damage from another person to herself, or take on one die's worth of penalty due to mental confusion and the like. The nova may choose how to apply each success, gaining a subconscious knowledge of entropic problems within the area. The nova may use one success to start a stopped machine, repair one specific break in a mechanical or electronic device and so on; each of these improvements inflicts a level of bashing damage on the nova. Canceling other novas' uses of entropy- and chaos-manipulating requires one success at Bioentropic Vortex to negate one success on the cancelled power's roll and inflicts on the nova one level of bashing damage per success used this way.

The nova takes damage that is in some way evocative of the transferred entropic harm: scars that resemble repaired fractures, for instance.

Entropic Front

Dice Pool: Perception + Entropy Control

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 10 meters

Area: (Quantum + power rating) x 5 meters

Duration: Maintenance

The nova alters the strength of entropic forces in the target area, which can be any shape up to a cube (Quantum + power rating) x 5 meters on a side. In one half of the area, designated by the nova, entropy increases, while on the other side, entropy decreases by the same amount. Each success adds +1 difficulty to all rolls to resist mechanical or electronic failure, worsening of medical complications and the like on the high-entropy side and adds one die to all rolls to resist such things on the low-entropy side.

Point of Failure

Dice Pool: N/A

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 10 meters

Area: N/A

Duration: Special

The nova can designate one particular part of the target inanimate object as the point where the next mechanical, electrical or electronic failure will take place. If the point the nova wants to select isn't visible or is otherwise unobvious, at the Storyteller's discretion, the nova must also make a successful roll against the relevant Ability to properly identify the point of failure. The nova may spend extra quantum

while using Point of Failure; each point spent adds +1 to the roll that will be required to fix the failure once it happens. Point of Failure doesn't make the failure happen any sooner or any more catastrophically. It just indicates where failure will come.

Serial Order

Dice Pool: Wits + Entropy Control

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x10 meters

Area: N/A

Duration: Special

The nova can affect exactly when in a series of similar events a particular outcome takes place. A single success on the Serial Order roll lets the nova specify the first half or last half of the sequence, and each additional success doubles the resolution. At two successes, the nova can specify which quarter of the sequence will have the result he wants, at three successes, which eighth, and so on. Thus, a nova can say "in this run of coin flips, heads will come up here," "in this assembly run, there'll be a defective unit there" or "the person in this district who votes for candidate X will show up at this time." Serial Order can't make an event more or less probable — if it takes an average of one thousand units made on the assembly line to produce a unit with the defect that nova's interested in, he has to apply Serial Order to the whole 1,000-unit run.

A nova can only use Serial Order to one series of events at a time, unless his Quantum is 6 or above. At Quantum 6, he can keep track of two series simultaneously, at Quantum 8, three series simultaneously, and at Quantum 10, four series simultaneously.

Failure

Quantum Minimum: 6

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Entropy Control

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 2 kilometers

Area: variable

Duration: N/A

The nova specifies a particular kind of mechanical, electrical or electronic failure — a short circuit, a lubrication failure, a gear slippage or the like. Every machine within an area 100 meters in diameter per success experiences that failure. Machines with special shielding may get a chance to resist, pitting their defenses against the nova's Quantum + power rating; others simply break right then and there.

Stability

Quantum Minimum: 6

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Entropy Control

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 2 kilometers

Area: (Quantum + power rating) kilometers

Duration: (Quantum + power rating) scenes

The nova reinforces physical and social forces in the affected area so that things just don't change very much. The successes on the Stability roll add dice to rolls to resist mechanical or electronic failure, to resist disease (and *subtract* from rolls to treat conditions in effect when the nova creates Stability), to fend off persuasion or the inculcation of new ideas and so on. Physical aging, weathering and the like do take place. The effect wears off when people and objects leave the area and only affects later arrivals whose Willpower is less than or equal to the successes on the Stability roll. Outsiders may make a Perception roll to notice the sameness of it all, after one scene in the target area.

The nova may also invoke intense Instability: Things break more easily, people get sick and well more easily, it's easy to sell new ideas to people and hard to keep them thinking the same way, and so on.

Point of Attraction

Quantum Minimum: 7

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Entropy Control

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 2 kilometers

Area: (Quantum + power rating) kilometers

Duration: (Quantum + power rating) scenes

The nova creates a physical or mental "strange attractor," a center of subconscious attention.

If the point is physical, people in the area must make a Willpower roll and get more successes than the nova did on the Point of Attraction roll to resist the urge to gather at that point. Loose objects, self-propelled toys and the like tend to end up somewhere near the point of attraction. They don't actually roll uphill, but drift by random motion or strange coincidence across level surfaces.

If the point is mental, everyone in the area must make a Willpower roll, again needing more successes than the nova got on the Point of Attraction roll, to avoid adopting a particular one-sentence concept the nova specifies. Those who succumb add one die per Point of Attraction success to their attempts to resist efforts to change their minds. People who get no successes at all on their Willpower rolls become obsessed by the idea, developing some suitable derangement for the duration of the power. Even after the power wears off, those who were affected tend to find the idea attractive.

Example: *The Ebon Claw decides that he'd like to settle down somewhere. Rather than go through and purge everyone in the area who might interfere with his schemes, he uses Point of Attraction to implant the notion that his enterprises are vital to the well-being of the neighborhood. Anyone trying to stop him jeopardizes the health and prosperity of everyone in town.*

He gets five successes. Anyone in the area attempting to get in his way must get at least five

successes on a Willpower roll — many people have no chance of this at all, and even strong-willed people face a steep challenge, thereby giving the Ebon Claw time to work out longer-term defenses.

Synchronization

Quantum Minimum: 7

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Entropy Control

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 2 kilometers

Area: (Quantum + power rating) kilometers

Duration: (Quantum + power rating) scenes

The nova creates quantum "buffers" that gently steer people and objects away from potential collisions. People naturally walk and drive in ways that lead to near-misses rather than accidents. Lines of people in public places and the flow of traffic on free-ways remains orderly. Stones in an avalanche (or an asteroid belt) follow complex trajectories that won't end in impact until after the Synchronization ends. Debris thrown by sports fans at a losing team won't collide with the other thrown pieces or with the players on the field.

Everyone in the area adds one die per success on the Synchronization roll to efforts to avoid collisions and the like. The effect wears off once people leave the target area and doesn't apply to people who enter the area after the nova uses Synchronization unless their Willpower is equal to or less than the number of successes rolled.

A nova inclined toward chaos can also use Synchronization to establish subtle patterns of disharmony; in this case, the successes on the Synchronization roll *subtract* from efforts to avoid collisions.

Extras: Entropic Threshold (nova can specify that a technique automatically inflicts no more than a particular level of damage or takes effect only when the total damage reaches some minimum level); Entropic Selectivity (nova can specify that power only affects targets with more than a particular level of damage from other sources or only affects previously uninjured targets)

Force Field

As described in *Aberrant*, p. 199, Force Field provides a variable result, depending on the roll for each time it's used. It's also possible to buy Force Field in a fixed-result mode. Activating Force Field this way automatically provides (Quantum +3) extra soak versus bashing and lethal damage, plus two more soak per point of quantum spent (to a limit of [power rating] points of extra quantum). The Wall Extra works the same regardless of whether Force Field is fixed or variable.

Extras: Projection (the nova can create a Force Field around one human-sized target within [Quantum + power rating] meters)

Healing

Extras: Detox (rolled successes subtract from the dice pool penalties for poison and disease even before the nova's cured the underlying condition)

Homunculus

Extras: Detachable Organs (the character can remove some or all of her organs, which behave just like independent limbs as per the usual Homunculus rules; the character suffers no metabolic or other problems for doing this, but damage to the organs while removed affects the character just like a targeted attack aimed at the organ usually does)

Information Manipulation

Level: 3

Quantum Minimum: 5

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Information Manipulation

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 10 meters

Area: One person or one object no larger than a person

Duration: Variable

Effect: Character can manipulate information in various forms.

Multiple Actions: Yes

Description: A character with this power can work directly on the information contained in physical objects, the environment and other people's minds. It overlaps somewhat with powers that command various parts of the world around the nova, but unlike them, it doesn't affect matter or energy as such. It deals with the information itself — the content and meaning of physical artifacts, energetic processes and symbols.

At the Storyteller's discretion, Taint in the target may add a difficulty penalty. Information Manipulation relies on deep structures in the human mind and physical universe, and Taint can change both. Mind-warping Taint may raise the difficulty by as much as +1 per level of Taint, while not-directly-related Taint raises difficulty +1 for every two or three levels of Taint.

Coherence

Duration: See below

The nova can extract the intended message from garbled or distorted impressions. With this technique, the nova can filter out static, gain an impression of the contents of a shredded letter, fill in the gaps while listening to someone talk who gets periodically drowned out and the like. Each success gives the nova one turn (in combat) or one minute (outside combat) of clear comprehension. Coherence doesn't automatically provide translation or other context, just the signal itself. The

nova uses her usual reading speed when appraising written information.

Disinformation

Duration: Maintenance

The nova can alter the meaning of the target's communication, whether the target is a particular person or an artifact no larger than a person. The nova doesn't get to specify in detail what the outcome is, but can indicate a general effect, such as making a love song sound like an angry, cynical denunciation, or turning a challenge to combat into a surrender. People attempting to understand the target's real intent must make a Perception + Awareness rolls to pick up the cues beneath the nova's alterations, and must get more successes than the nova got on the Disinformation roll.

Example: *The Hollyhock Goddess has gotten tired of the particularly virulent anti-nova rantings of a wingnut preacher in Oregon. Since her various research projects are all in order for the moment, she sets out to make his life miserable. She uses simple disguises to mingle with the crowd and then applies Disinformation from a safe distance (several dozen meters, given her power level). She turns his anti-nova rants into tirades against some randomly chosen target: the price of toilet paper, the color of the sky, whatever seems likely to bewilder the audience of bigots. With Intelligence 5, Mega-Intelligence 3 and Information Manipulation 5, she routinely gets six or more successes on her Disinformation rolls, and few of her audience beat that on their Perception + Awareness rolls to discern the preacher's true intent.*

Information Void

Duration: Maintenance

The nova can destroy the meaning in the target's communication. This power affects one person or an artifact no larger than a person. With a single success, the nova renders the target's message into utter gibberish. With three or more successes, the target seems to make sense, it's just that others in the area realize later they retain no concept of the target's intent. Information Void doesn't just affect language, but extends to body language, telepathy and other non-verbal expression as well.

Steganography

Duration: Special

The nova can conceal one message inside another. The concealed message must be no longer than the overt one: no more words if it's written or spoken, no longer in duration if recorded and so on. The concealed message manifests itself once triggered. The nova can specify the trigger conditions as widely or as narrowly as he liked: when the message is accessed by a particular person, whenever someone

with red hair reads it, when the temperature rises above freezing, one year later or whatever strikes his fancy. The message then remains visible (or audible or however it manifests) for (Quantum + power rating) turns. At the end of this time, it disappears and leaves no residue.

Anyone searching for the concealed message must achieve more successes on the relevant inquiry roll than the nova got on the Steganography roll.

Translation

Duration: Maintenance

The nova selects an individual person or a particular object no larger than a person (a book, an inscribed pillar, etc.). If successful, the nova experiences the intent of the person's communication or the meaning in the object. Translation overlays the nova's native language on the target's speech or prose: the original remains visible or audible, just faint. With three successes, the effects of the Translation become perceptible to everyone in the area, rather than just the nova (if the nova so chooses). Each success thereafter lets the nova add another language or communication form, so that others who don't know the nova's first Translation choice can also share in the experience.

Transposition

Duration: Maintenance

The nova selects two targets, either individual people or objects no larger than a person. If the Transposition roll succeeds, the information content of the two targets swaps. If both targets speak, listeners hear one deliver the other's message, if the targets are books or inscription, readers find the meaning of one in the other, and so on. With three successes, the nova can add in a third target, plus one more per successes thereafter. This power does extend to the targets' minds — a telepath reading one target's mind would encounter the other target's thoughts.

Extras: Extended Duration (the nova can spend extra successes to increase the duration by 10 times)

Magnetic Mastery

Extras: Paramagnetism (the nova's power works on some class of substances comparable to "metallic objects," like noble gases or radioactive substances; each level of Paramagnetism adds another class of substances)

Matter Chameleon

Extras: Selective Chameleon (the nova can choose which properties to adopt — mass but not brittleness, for instance)

Who's Mastering What

The boundaries between nova powers aren't entirely arbitrary; each power with multiple techniques brings its pieces together into a coherent overall theme. These boundaries don't exhaust the universe of possible coherent combinations. You may have a character idea that includes powers straddling the line, drawing on (for instance) a couple of techniques in Entropy Control, one in Molecular Manipulation and one in Information Manipulation. Don't go too far overboard in turning the power listings into a homogeneous smorgasbord. Discuss possibilities with your Storyteller and other players; they may point out ways to get what you want within a single power. If you consider the alternatives and find they don't work and everyone involved thinks your character concept is a good one, do go ahead and pull techniques from different powers. Decide which power provides your basic framework, and modify the other techniques to suit it in terms of dice pool and effects.

Matter Creation

Extras: Specialization (the nova is particularly good at making objects at one level of complexity or one category of size and needs half the usual successes for that criterion, rounded down, when creating such objects); Template (the nova suffers half the usual complexity penalty, rounded down, when duplicating an object within touch range)

Molecular Manipulation

Extras: Combined Manipulation (the nova gets -1 difficulty bonus for using a second technique on a target while the first remains in effect, -2 for the third technique while the first two remain in effect, and so on), Template (the nova needs half the usual successes, rounded down, to transform a target to resemble an object within touch range)

Momentum Control

Level: 3

Quantum Minimum: 4

Dice Pool: Variable

Range: Variable

Area: Variable

Duration: Variable

Effect: Character can manipulate inertia in the area.

Multiple Actions: Yes

Description: A nova with this power affects how objects interact with the universe around them, controlling their speed, acceleration and direction. Momentum Control doesn't change the target's mass, the local gravity or even the minds of any people it affects. The nova simply rewrites the balance of physical forces and then lets the laws of physics take their course.



Momentum Rotation

Dice Pool: Wits + Momentum Control

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 5 meters

Area: One target, (Quantum + power rating) x 2 meters

Duration: N/A

The nova can change the motion of a target object (animate or inanimate). The target retains its speed and orientation in space, but it now moves in the direction the nova specifies. The nova can change the target's direction by up to 30 degrees per success, so that it takes six successes to make the target suddenly start moving in reverse. The inertial rotation itself inflicts no damage; the secondary complications can be pretty nasty. The whole target must fit within the nova's area of effect.

A nova with Mega-Wits can attempt to dodge a suddenly impending collision. First make a Mega-Wits roll, with one success required for a turn of up to 90 degrees and two successes for further turning. If that fails, then make any normal dodge, athletic leap or other maneuver to avoid running into something.

Momentum Swap

Dice Pool: Wits + Momentum Control

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 5 meters

Area: Two objects, total area (Quantum + power rating) x 3 meters

Duration: Instant

inertia manifests as a slight warming throughout the nova's range.

The swap itself inflicts no harm on the targets. Their new movements may create secondary problems for others in the area, however.

Example: *Dr. Newton sees an out-of-control car rushing toward a helpless crowd. There's a construction site within her range and a pile of loose bricks there that weighs half what the car does. Her player achieves three successes. The car instantly comes to a stop, leaving the shaken driver and passengers to clamber out. The bricks instantly begin hurtling through the air in the direction the car was moving, and at twice its speed since they weigh half as much. Dr. Newton uses the extra two successes to halve the bricks' speed, and then halve it again. The car was moving at 80 kilometers per hour; now the bricks zip along at 20 kph. They will inflict serious damage if they hit anyone. Fortunately for bystanders, Dr. Newton picked her pile of bricks well, and they slam into freshly poured concrete wall (knocking many pieces out) rather than into flesh and bones.*

Momentum Transformation

Dice Pool: Wits + Momentum Control

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 5 meters

Area: One target, (Quantum + power rating) x 2 meters

Duration: N/A

The nova can change the target's speed and acceleration. As with other modifications of momentum, the change itself inflicts no damage, but the target's new situation can be very dangerous. While Momentum Rotation shifts the direction of movement, Momentum Transformation can't move the target in a different direction. The target keeps the same heading.

Each success on the Momentum Transformation roll lets the nova change the target's speed or acceleration by 20 percent. It takes five successes to bring a target to a complete stop or to double its speed. A target not currently accelerating or decelerating gains a 10 percent nudge with the first success the nova dedicates to acceleration change and another 20 percent thereafter.

Each success spent to slow a target increases the temperature throughout the nova's range by 1-2 degrees Celsius, as momentum transforms into heat. Each success spent to speed or accelerate a target cools the area 1-2 degrees, as heat becomes momentum.

Example: *Dr. Newton wishes to brake a runaway car, barreling at an out-of-control 150 kph. Her player gets four successes on the roll. Three go to reducing the car's speed, for a reduction of 60 percent. The car's speed instantly and safely falls to 60 kph. The fourth goes to decelerating the car. The car's now slowing by 10 percent of its original velocity, or 15 kph, per turn, and will continue braking until it stops altogether or the driver deliberately accelerates again.*

Extras: None

Poison

Extras: Relapse (the nova can set aside up to half the successes for a second bout to occur after the first once is cured; the relapse occurs up to [Quantum] days after curing the first round, at a time chosen by the nova)

Pretercognition

Extras: Moving Vision (the nova can move her viewpoint through an extended period of time; for each success spent on movement rather than timeframe, the nova can look around in that period — with four successes, for instance, the nova could look up to a week away and look throughout an hour-long period or through all the entirety of one day past or future); Viewpoint (the nova can see through the viewpoint of someone else at any distance away, as long as the nova is in line of sight with that person when using Pretercognition); Shared (the nova can show others the pretercognitive visions in her head)

Quantum Construct

Extras: Longevity (the construct lasts [Quantum + power level] days and does not require maintenance); Self-Awareness (each success allocated to this purpose lets the nova give the construct three dots divided among Mental and Social Attributes)

Quantum Imprint

Extras: Enhanced Imprint (the nova may increase a power's effect up to his own Quantum limits, even when greater than the target's); Longevity (the imprint lasts [Quantum + power level] days and does not require maintenance); Multiple Targets (the nova can copy the powers of more than one target, through separate uses of the power); Range (the nova can use the power on another nova up to [Quantum + power rating] x 5 meters away)

Sizemorph (Shrink)

Extras: Super-Shrinking (the first point of quantum produces the usual effect; thereafter, each point reduces the nova to 10 percent of his current height and 1 percent of his current mass)

Temporal Manipulation

Extras: Sliding Time (the character can decide how many successes go into effect each turn, from one to all)

Warp

Extras: Selective Permeability (the nova can designate some sorts of targets that pass through a warp without moving under their own power or being pushed: inorganic material, material with less than a specific velocity or momentum, material of a certain color and so on)

Weather Manipulation

Extras: Extended Range (10 times normal range, which varies per technique); Sustained Decay (the full effect lasts only half as long as usual, but the effect wears off gradually, losing the benefits of one success each time half the normal duration elapses)

A Singular Manifestation: New Extras

Merged

A nova with this Extra can combine the effect of his power with the effort of another nova who has the same power, even if the other nova doesn't have the Merged Extra. Each nova uses his power separately, with +2 difficulty (+1 one if both have Merged). If both succeed, pool the successes to produce one jointly impressive result. Both novas must be able to aim at the same target.

Reflexive

The nova can designate a power that activates automatically, without requiring her conscious effort. The player must designate a condition that triggers the reflexive. The most common trigger is the arrival of an attack capable of penetrating the nova's other defenses, with reflexive launching of Force Field, Armor or healing powers. The reflexive activation does not tie up one of the nova's actions for that turn and takes immediate effect, so that a defensive power can reduce the damage of the attack that triggers it. One level of Reflexive constrains the nova's deliberate use of the power, adding +1 difficulty to any non-reflexive applications. Two levels of Reflexive allow the nova to use the power freely.

Mastery

A nova with Quantum 6 or more can transform the scope of an existing Level 1-3 power with the Mastery Extra. Mastery improves many aspects of the power all at once. A nova gains the ability to apply Mastery at successively higher Quantum levels. The nova must acquire Mastery 1 before taking Mastery 2 and Mastery 2 before Mastery 3.

Each level of Mastery always raises the power's effective level by 1, even if the nova's Quantum score allows regular Extras without level change.

You can choose not to apply one or more of the boosts provided in the Mastery bundle — for instance, boosting each aspect of the power except Scope. Each boost you forgo counts as one level of weakness.

Mastery 1 (Quantum 6)

- **Quantum Cost.** Level 1 powers cost no quantum to use. Halve the cost of Level 2 and 3 powers, rounding down.

- **Scope.** The power's range and area change from meters to kilometers.

- **Effect.** The power's effect doubles. Examples:
Armor: Character receives +6 soak against bashing and lethal damage per dot in Armor.

Quantum Bolt: Inflicts (Quantum x 6) + (power rating x 8) dice of bashing damage or (Quantum x 4) + (power rating x 8) dice of lethal damage (player's choice).

- **Duration.** Concentration powers become Maintenance powers with time measured in turns (see *Aberrant*, p. 179). Maintenance powers' duration changes from turns to hours or scenes.

Mastery 2 (Quantum 8)

- **Quantum Cost.** Level 1 and 2 powers cost no quantum to use. Level 3 powers cost one-quarter the usual quantum requirement, rounded down.

- **Scope.** The power's range and area change from meters or kilometers to units of one hundred kilometers. For instance, if the original range was (Quantum + power rating) meters, now it's (Quantum + power rating) x 100 kilometers.

- **Effect.** The power's effect increases fivefold.

Examples:

Invulnerability: Provides +30 soak per dot against a specific type of attack.

Stun Attack: Does (Quantum + successes) x 5 levels of damage only to daze or knock target unconscious.

- **Duration.** Concentration powers become Maintenance powers, lasting (Quantum + power rating) hours before needing a renewal of quantum energy. Maintenance powers' duration changes from turns or hours/scenes to days.

Mastery 3 (Quantum 10)

- **Quantum Cost.** Level 1-3 powers cost no quantum to use. Halve the cost of Level 4 and 5 powers, rounding down.

- **Scope.** The power's range and area grow to units of 10,000 kilometers. For instance, if the original range was (Quantum + power rating) meters, it's now (Quantum + power rating) x 10,000 kilometers.

- **Effect.** The power's effect increases 20-fold.

Examples:

Force Field: Quantum + (40 per success) extra soak versus bashing and lethal damage.

Disintegration: Causes (Quantum + successes) x 20 levels of aggravated damage.

- **Duration.** Concentration powers become Maintenance powers, lasting (Quantum + power rating) days per charge of quantum energy. Maintenance powers' duration changes to months.

Quantum and Extras

When a nova of Quantum 1-5 buys a single Extra for a power, that power moves up a level: A Level 1 power now costs the same to buy and use as an Level 2 power, and so on. This changes at higher Quantum. A nova can now buy more than one Extra for a power without changing its quantum power level. The following chart shows the number of Extras required to raise a power to the next higher level, based on the nova's Quantum:

Quantum	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5
6	2	2	2	1	N/A
7	3	2	2	2	N/A
8	4	3	2	2	1
9	5	4	3	2	2
10	6	5	4	3	2

Extras that don't raise the power to a new level cost the same as the dot of the power at its current level: one nova point or two experience points for Level 1, three nova points or five experience points for Level 2, etc.

Note that Extras count as levels of a power for purposes of buying techniques — that is, someone with three levels of a power and two Extras can buy a total of five techniques.

Example: *Dr. Newton reaches Quantum 6. She's been studying the ramifications of her control over fundamental forces and integrates the results with self-examination to develop a new Bioluminescence ability. She can take her first Extra, Spectrum, at the same cost as another dot of the power. Her second Extra, Area, lets her induce Bioluminescence in everyone within range and raises the power to Level 2.*

Many years later, she rises to Quantum 7. If she adds a third Extra, the Bioluminescence power will become a Level 3 power. She cannot add a third Extra without boosting it that way until she reaches Quantum 9.

Shaking the Heavens: High-Level Powers

As the 21st century unfolds, some novas continue demonstrating untapped potential. The curve of power continues to rise. With the development of ever-higher levels of Quantum, novas manifest new powers.

Quantum and Power Levels

Power Level	Quantum Minimum
4	6
5	8
6	10

In 2008, the single most powerful nova in the world has Quantum 8. By the middle of the 21st century, he may have a few (or even dozens) of peers, and the race will be on to be the first to develop Quantum 10. As more novas ascend into the heights, the question "what would you do with the power of a god?" becomes ever more appropriate. Gods and monsters walk among humanity (and fly overhead and delve through land and sea). Increasingly, the fate of the world rests in the hands of a very few individuals. Characters who achieve this level of power cannot be insignificant: By definition, what they do or don't do affects the world.

Some general guidelines help in establishing expectations for high-level powers:

- **Level 4:** Powers affect regions, from cities up to continents.
- **Level 5:** Powers affect the whole world.
- **Level 6:** Powers affect fundamental structures in the universe. Many produce no directly visible results, and notions of "scale" don't really apply.

How Powers Define the Setting

Novas always matter. It's one of the central themes of **Aberrant**. Novas don't get junk powers, nor should any nova be a pointless duplicate or useless shadow of someone else. Everyone who erupts has, in some measure, a very significant chance to change the world in some way.

The higher the Quantum and power level, the wider and deeper a nova's powers can go. "Shaking the pillars of Heaven" isn't very metaphorical when it comes to changing the pace of evolution or creating new universes. These powers are *supposed* to let the nova make drastic changes.

Now, nothing requires players and Storytellers to want to deal with literal world changing in any particular **Aberrant** series. There are plenty of interesting stories yet to be told about novas at lower levels, fresh combinations of powers and Abilities to try out and a whole world to explore. Novas with starting power levels are still among the world's elite, and the fact that some individuals in the setting may have the equivalent of dozens or hundreds of nova points more doesn't change the fact that 30 nova points buys a whole lot of power. So there isn't, or at least shouldn't be, any moral merit or rugged roleplaying courage award implied for wanting characters with more power, just as there's no implied cowardice or failure of will for preferring to keep point totals lower. It's the intolerant ranter who chooses to impugn the motives of players who like different power levels that's the problem, not the players who know their preferences and do what's fun for them.

Knowing What You Like

Since roleplaying is for fun, not for proving oneself some sort of superior person, you shouldn't feel an obligation to play characters at power levels or in situations you don't expect to find enjoyable. But sometimes, you should take a gamble. Everything has to be done for the first time, after all, and you might find an option that didn't look very entertaining proves unexpectedly enjoyable. Allow a little room for things to turn out better than you think they will. Sometimes experience will confirm a pessimistic assumption. Sometimes not. Give it a try!

That said, certain consequences follow when players design or develop characters with high levels of Quantum. They're not inevitable in the sense that the Gaming Police will demand you use them all in your series. (The Gaming Police are still busy shooting people who diverge from World of Darkness canon, and it'll be a while before they can get to the **Aberrant** fans. Apologies to those of you who miss the jackbooted thugs.) Rather, high-level powers tend to lead to certain situations, given the nature of the game world.

- **Playing in the big leagues.** As of 2015, characters with Quantum 7 and a good spread of powers are on par with Caestus Pax. Existing characters with that sort of power keep a keen eye out for competitors and allies. The characters must at some point deal with the big-name protagonists and antagonists. Some factions will try to recruit them, others to remove them.

Which Am Us

There's an alternative to players' high-powered characters encountering their peers. The players' characters may take the roles of those novas, if the Storyteller and players feel like tracking the changes to the setting. A physically strong and personally forceful nova at Caestus Pax's level, who erupts in 1998, could easily become the front man for Team Tomorrow instead of Pax, who might not exist in this version of the game world. A Mega-Intelligent nova inclined toward philosophizing and bent on pushing the nova condition to its extreme could replace one of the founders of the Teragen movement and perhaps take it in an altogether different direction. This sort of modification takes some work and cooperation, but then so does every option involving high-level powers.

- **Accidents count.** Botching is never much fun for a nova. Botching with high-level powers isn't much fun for anyone in the area, which may include whole continents. A high-powered nova who loses control can inflict unimaginable suffering. Your Storyteller shouldn't be seeking to make your life as a player miserable, but do keep in mind that sometimes things go horribly wrong. Mythology shows us that the gods are often petty monsters and tyrants, and the power

of a god doesn't make your character noble or completely in control.

- **Radical changes.** The world presented in **Aberrant** and **Trinity** goes through a series of radical transformations. They're underway in 2008, but they come faster and harder as the century goes on. Novas with high-level power lead the way, for both good and bad. If you choose to follow the standard timeline, leaps into space and global war alike wait for the characters, and if your nova develops Level 4-6 powers, she'll be part of remaking the world. Tracing out the ramifications of the characters' actions can take effort. New ideas may set in motion ripples that keep on affecting society for years to come. So can new diseases and other sorts of complications. Be prepared for it, and this can be a lot of fun rather than a drag.

- **Unique powers.** Every nova should have unique powers, not quite like anything else other novas do. Remember that the game mechanics describe how powers work for purposes of play, but that people in the **Aberrant** world don't see little pop-up notices explaining which power the nova uses and how big his dice pool is. Still, there are some recurring motifs among low-level powers. At high levels that's much less true. It's quite possible that only one nova in the world will ever develop a particular high-level power. If it's your character, make him shine! Put thought into building on the descriptions given here to integrate the power with everything else your nova is and does. There should never, ever be a boring high-level power.

Authority: Level 4 Powers



Crosstime Travel

Level: 4

Quantum Minimum: 2

Dice Pool: Perception + Crosstime Travel

Area: Self

Range: N/A

Duration: Instant

Effect: Allows character to move between alternate universes.

Multiple Actions: No

Description: The universe splits in two each time a decision takes place that involves a significant release of quantum energy. The science of comparative cosmology develops very slowly and erratically in the first half of the 21st century, and nobody can really say for sure why some events create branching timelines and some apparently don't. Rival theories about how it all works circulate through the OpNet and attract vigorous debate at scientific conferences.

A nova using this power forms a mental impression of the quality she seeks and searches, more or less subconsciously, through the quantum medium in search of a universe that matches her criteria. She then converts her body into pure quantum energy and reassembles it in the new universe, in the same spot she occupied in the old one. The number of successes on the Crosstime Travel roll affects how close she gets to what she was seeking:

Successes Approximation

One Very Remote. Some overall feature — “the South won the American Civil War,” “the *Galatea* didn't explode” — applies, but all the details are up to the Storyteller's discretion.

Three Remote. The nova gets to a universe that is in general accordance with her wishes — “the South won the American Civil War, and things turned out better overall;” “the *Galatea* didn't explode, and novas who erupt keep their powers secret” — but contains many uncertainties.

Five Moderate. The nova gets to a universe that's more or less what she sought — “the South won the American Civil War, and things ended up better; Southern-based solutions to racism mean that the race riots of the 1960s didn't happen;” “the *Galatea* didn't explode, novas keep themselves secret, and Project Utopia works with secret novas without feeling the need for a Proteus.”

Seven Close. Nearly every detail the nova thinks to itemize does apply in the universe she ends up in. The Storyteller may require a separate Intelligence roll to keep it all straight and retains a free hand in settling matters the nova didn't specify.

The nova may or may not have a counterpart in the new universe. If it diverged before her birth and if she does not specify her existence as one of her search factors, then the Storyteller can decide whether the accidents of genetic recombination produced someone with the same genetic makeup. (This applies to everyone else, too: Once the new universe exists, the genetic lottery comes out different.) She can remain in the other universe indefinitely, but returning home is a simple matter of focusing on her own universe.

An outside observer in trans-universal hyperspace would see the two universes branching off a

shared trunk. Someone from either branch who travels back in time before the point of divergence arrives in the same history, so that time travelers from very different futures may end up at a single destination in the past.

Extras: Affects Others (the nova can shift one other person besides herself per dot of Crosstime Travel); Exotic Worlds (the nova can specify changes in fundamental laws, such as magic working, only Level 3+ powers existing and so on)

Not That Way

Fiction presents many competing models of Crosstime Travel. The version given here fits with the default assumptions for Time Travel (see below). As always, your Storyteller may adjust some factors to suit his particular chronicle. He gets the last word on how universes diverge and how they behave afterward — if they diverge at all. Work out the details of your particular nova's powers with him, and set aside some or all of the description given here if something else works better for the game you play.



Disease Authority

Level: 4

Quantum Minimum: 6

Dice Pool: Perception + Disease Authority

Range: Variable

Area: Variable

Duration: Variable

Effect: The nova gains particular power over illness and disease. Systemic failures leave distinct marks on victims' quantum signatures, which the nova can analyze and manipulate.

Multiple Actions: Yes

Description: Disease Authority is the ability to identify, cause, cure and otherwise effect a range of pathological conditions. While the character does not need relevant Abilities (like Medicine), it may facilitate the use of Disease Authority.

As with certain other quantum abilities, this power comprises several techniques. A nova may learn and freely use one technique per dot in the power. He may attempt other techniques, but he must pay double the quantum cost and roll against a difficulty penalty of one to activate these powers. Techniques include:

Diagnosis

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 100 meters

Area: (Quantum + power rating) x 10 meters

Duration: (Quantum + power rating) hours

The nova can recognize diseases and illnesses within the target area by a combination of distinctive features (like skin discoloration) and subconscious cues. The nova can recognize complications of a virulence equivalent less than or equal to the number of successes on the Diagnosis roll. (See **Aberrant**, p. 214, for virulence ratings.) Conditions with a virulence equal to half the number of successes rolled (rounded down) or less become visible to everyone. It takes some study to associate the visible manifestations with the underlying conditions, but once that's done — a simple Medicine roll with a difficulty equal to the virulence rating suffices — this power allows for instant diagnosis without intrusive examination.

Pestilence

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 100 meters

Area: (Quantum + power rating) meters

Duration: Instant

The nova creates or intensifies a disease. Each success adds one to the virulence equivalent of a specific disease in the target area: Three successes, for instance, can transform a single flu strain into the equivalent of Ebola. It takes two successes per virulence rating to create a disease from scratch out of some neutral organism like stomach bacteria. Once modified, the disease runs its course just like any other.

Each extra success the nova applies to the purpose can add a mode of transmission or grant the disease resistance to a particular treatment. Two successes, for instance, could make a strain of AIDS airborne and resistant to the Utopia drugs that eradicated the original strain.

Sterilization

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 1,000 meters

Area: (Quantum + power rating) x 100 meters

Duration: Instant

Each success lets the nova reduce the virulence equivalent of a particular disease in the target area by one level, down to a minimum of zero. Once the nova has completely neutralized her initial target disease, she can apply additional successes to neutralizing others in the same area, reducing the virulence of each by one per success allocated. A powerful nova can wipe out pretty much everything harmful in an area.

This power applies equally to diseases caused by microorganisms, poisons, radiation and bodily dysfunctions like cancer. Benign microorganisms like intestinal flora are not affected.

Extras: None



Elemental Authority

Level: 4

Quantum Minimum: 7

Dice Pool: Variable

Range: Variable

Effect: The nova can create, alter and control substances or phenomena on a broad scale.

Multiple Actions: Yes

Description: Elemental Authority extends the scope of Elemental Mastery. The nova can destroy as well as create a particular element and can affect it over a wider area for longer period of time. Like Elemental Anima and Elemental Mastery, Elemental Control consists of several techniques. A nova learns one Elemental Control technique per dot in the power; she can use the others, but they cost twice the normal quantum energy and impose a +1 difficulty penalty. A nova can also use one dot of Elemental Control to learn two techniques from Elemental Anima or Elemental Mastery.

Characters can also develop new techniques. As with all matters involving high-level powers, players and Storytellers should negotiate the details. Under no circumstances assume that a technique that happens not to be listed here is therefore automatically bad or unwelcome. Start with this list; don't feel compelled to stop with it.

Except where noted otherwise, Elemental Authority botches generally reinforce the target's existing form, making it more difficult to manipulate. The nova's power rating applies as a difficulty penalty to the next effort to use Elemental Authority on that target.

Purification

Dice Pool: Wits + Elemental Authority

Range: (Quantum + power rating) kilometers

Area: N/A

Duration: Permanent

The nova can extract the pure element from molecules, compounds, alloys and other composite forms. Each success on the Purification roll lets her extract 10 kg of a solid or liquid element or one cubic meter of a gas or intangible element. The purified element appears in a continuous volume at any point within range designated by the nova.

The potential side effects vary a great deal. Extracting elemental hydrogen from water, for instance, releases free oxygen to boot. Purifying iron leaves it in the white, ductile state it occupies when not oxidized, while leaving oxidation and other impurities heaped around it. Purified light is one frequency — as coherent as a laser, but radiating in all directions — while purified sound is a single tone without harmonics. Elemental Authority over earth or water lets the nova use Purification to purge toxic wastes into a single mound at the edge of the nova's range (while Elemental Authority — Toxic Waste would let the nova gather the wastes anywhere in range). Elemental Authority over air would allow the nova to purge smoke and airborne contaminants, including dust and pollen. The player and Storyteller should work out what "pure" means for more exotic elements.

In theory, some forms of Purification could do horrendous damage. Extracting all the iron from someone's blood, for instance, would kill them in horrible fashion. How lethal Purification can be is a matter for each series. Storytellers shouldn't be too quick to let this ability substitute for more combat-focused powers. Property damage is more appropriate than harm to people in most cases, but as always, discuss and negotiate.

Transmutation

Dice Pool: Wits + Elemental Authority
Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 100 meters
Area: N/A
Duration: Permanent

The nova can change the element he controls into one other element, and vice versa. Each level of Transmutation lets the nova designate one more element as a transmutation target. Each success on the Transmutation roll lets the nova convert up to 100 kg of a solid or liquid or two cubic meters of a gas or intangible element. The transmuted element retains its state (solid, liquid, etc.) and shape.

Storm

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Elemental Authority
Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 100 meters
Area: (Quantum + power rating) x 50 meters
Duration: Maintenance

The nova creates turbulent motion within his chosen element. Liquids froth and rage as if in a hurricane, while solids explode as if caught in an eruption. Anyone in the affected area must make a Dodge roll to avoid taking one die of bashing damage per level of power rating, if the nova chooses to make the storm damaging. Each success on the Storm roll can apply as a penalty to visibility in the target area and has other effects as appropriate: dangerous footing, disruption of electrical or electronic circuits and so on, as the Storyteller and player agree are appropriate.

A botch on the Storm roll amplifies the effect, doubling its area per point of the nova's Quantum (beyond the normal range limit, if appropriate). It takes a successful Storm roll to damp out the effect; if the second roll botches as well, the storm drains off some or all of the nova's quantum pool, doubling its area again for each point so siphoned. The nova can still halve the area of the uncontrolled storm per point of Willpower spent. The botch-created storm feeds itself but wears down gradually over a course of hours or days.



Molecular Authority

Level: 4
Quantum Minimum: 6
Dice Pool: Manipulation + Molecular Authority
Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 100 meters
Area: (Quantum + power rating) meters
Duration: Special
Effect: The character can affect matter more thoroughly and closely than with Molecular Manipulation.

Multiple Actions: Yes

Description: The nova gains an intuitive understanding of the world around him on the molecular level. He can make a Perception + Molecular Authority roll at any time to analyze the chemical composition and properties of anything within his line of sight. This costs no quantum to use.

Each success on a Molecular Authority roll lets the nova alter one property of matter within the target area. Changes normally last for (power rating) hours. One extra success increases this to (power rating) days; two extra successes increases it to (power rating) months; three extra successes make it permanent.

Common effects include:

- **Conductivity.** The material becomes superconductive, offering no resistance to electricity at all (unharmed by any amount of current and passing it on without any loss of power over distance to whatever's on the far side of the target area), or superinsulative, completely blocking all electrical flow, or any state in between.

- **Molecular Bonds.** The nova can strengthen or weaken the ties that bind a molecule or compound

together. Each success spent this way changes the target's health levels and soak rating by 1. At 0 health levels the target collapses into a monatomic fog of loose atoms. Living targets can resist this with a Will-power roll; each success restores a level of lost material strength.

- **Opacity.** The material becomes completely transparent, completely opaque or any degree of opacity in between, as the nova chooses. A single success affects the material in visible light. One extra success applies to infrared and ultraviolet as well, and a second extra success lets the nova adjust the material's opacity throughout the electromagnetic spectrum.

- **Radioactivity.** It takes one success to raise or lower the level of soft radiation by one level, two successes to raise or lower the hard radiation rating by one level.

- **Reaction Rate.** Each success doubles or halves the rate of a chemical reaction. It normally takes just a few seconds to burn a pile of magnesium ash; the nova can stretch it out to minutes or hours with enough successes. Conversely, the nova could speed the rate of oxidation to make a brand new car rust in seconds.

- **Solubility.** Normally insoluble matter, such as oil on water, becomes capable of smooth merging, while normally soluble material like trace elements in water may be made to suddenly precipitate out.

At the Storyteller's discretion, a botch may either reinforce the material's existing properties (with the nova's power rating applying as a difficulty penalty to the next effort to affect the material) or create an uncontrolled change to some value within the nova's range that is presumably undesired.

Example: *Chemist Charles Rubeh is still exploring his newfound power of Molecular Authority. Remembering heated exchanges in the scientific journals from his pre-Galatea grad student days, he decides to create "polywater." He gets seven successes on his roll while attempting to transform a swimming pool full of regular water. One success makes the water double its normal density, and another makes it 15 times more viscous than normal water. A third success raises its boiling point to 170 degrees centigrade, while the fourth reduces its freezing point to -40 degrees C. He uses the remaining three successes to make the viscosity change permanent. Rubeh has four levels of Molecular Authority, so the other effects wear off in four hours.*

Extras: None



Quantum Authority

Level: 4

Quantum Minimum: 7

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Quantum Control

Range: (Quantum + power rating) kilometers

Area: Variable

Duration: Variable

Effect: Increases nova's control over quantum energy.

Multiple Actions: Yes

Description: The nova can manipulate various aspects of the quantum field. Various techniques let the nova alter her own manifestations of quantum and to affect the manifestation of quantum powers in others.

Novas with linked quantum signatures become partially immune to each other's powers. They gain 3 extra soak levels per success on the Quantum Authority roll (and three automatic successes on their efforts to resist mind control and other powers that don't inflict physical harm).

Quantum Duplication

Area: One nova

Duration: Maintenance

The nova makes her quantum field identical to that of another nova. Any power that detects a nova on the basis of overall quantum field, psychic signature, special effect and the like perceives the nova using Quantum Duplication as precisely resembling her target. The first success provides this result without actually modifying the nova's own powers. Each addition success lets the nova copy one level of the target's powers for the duration of Quantum Duplication.

Quantum Diffusion

Area: (Quantum + power rating) x 100 meters

Duration: (Quantum + power rating) hours

The nova spreads her quantum signature out into the surrounding environment. She can choose to create up to one quantum "ghost" per dot in Quantum Diffusion, which she can move around at will anywhere in the area. Nova senses register the ghost, but there's nothing actually present at the spot except the little knot of quantum force. The nova can also choose to spread her signature throughout the

area, so that all someone checking for her signature can tell is that she's somewhere in the vicinity. The area of effect won't move unless the nova moves outside it, in which case it re-centers on her. It's a 2-point strength for the nova to anchor the diffusion area to a stable center point.

Example: *A new alliance calling itself the Thunder Squad is hunting independent nova Thomas Erickson, who's learned just a wee bit too much about the novas' schemes. They have several members with quantum senses, and they know, in general, where Thomas is. Fortunately for his personal well-being, Erickson has Quantum Authority and uses Quantum Diffusion to hide himself. He has three levels of Quantum Authority and can therefore send three quantum ghosts of himself out to lure the stalkers away — with his Quantum 7, up to a kilometer away from his actual location. With the Squad's best hunters otherwise occupied, he sneaks out.*

It's a pity he didn't think about the hunters using enhanced normal senses.

Quantum Imposition

Area: One person

Duration: Maintenance

The nova can force some of her own quantum signature onto other novas. Each success lets her replace one randomly chosen level of a target's power with one randomly chosen level of her own. It costs one extra success to specify the target power being replaced and an extra success to specify the power of hers she's replacing it with. The target's quantum signature appears to nova senses to have a blurred overlay resembling that of the nova using Quantum Imposition.

Quantum Intensification

Area: one person

Duration: (Quantum + power rating) hours, plus special

The nova can boost the quantum signature of one person (herself or another individual). Each success on the Quantum Intensification roll gives the target a pool of dots equal to the nova's power rating. One dot can buy a point of Quantum, two levels of regular Attributes, five levels of Abilities, one level of Mega-Attribute or power or one enhancement or Extra. All costs are doubled when using Quantum Intensification on a baseline. In any case, the powers should reflect and extend the target's existing personality and aptitudes. Dots begin fading at the end of the duration, at the rate of (power rating) dots per hour. Subtract from enhancements and Extras first, then powers and Mega-Attributes, then regular Attributes and Abilities and finally Quantum.

Baselines channel quantum very inefficiently, and the strain of using full quantum powers does horrible things to baseline physiology. Any time a baseline target of Quantum Intensification rolls to use a quantum power (not Mega-Attributes or enhancements, however) every die that comes up 1 or 2 gives the character a point of temporary Taint.

Example: *Just before meeting his very ugly demise, Thomas Erickson gives some help to a fellow fugitive from the Thunder Squad, sympathetic baseline Zechariah Manosian. Realizing that he's in serious trouble, Erickson maxes the power and picks up four extra successes on the preliminary roll. Those add to the five he gets on the main roll for a total of nine. One goes to waste, thanks to the doubled costs for affecting baselines. The first four successes buy Manosian two levels of Dexterity. The remaining four grant a total of 10 levels of Abilities: 5 in Stealth, 2 in Survival and 3 in Streetwise. Manosian is now equipped (for the next 10 hours) to make his way to safety.*

Quantum Reduction

Area: One person

Duration: (Quantum + power rating) hours, plus special

The nova can temporarily suppress an individual's quantum signature. Each success lets the nova dampen (power rating) levels of Mega-Attributes, powers, enhancements and Extras. If the target loses all nova abilities this way, extra successes become the functional equivalent of levels of Dormancy. The suppression begins wearing off at the end of the duration, with powers coming back at (power rating) levels per day. The target gets to decide which powers return first.

Extras: None



Quantum Awareness

Level: 4

Quantum Minimum: 6

Dice Pool: Perception + Quantum Awareness

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 10 kilometers

Area: N/A

Duration: One scene

Effect: The character expands the range of her senses, to operate remotely and intuitively.

Multiple Actions: Yes

Description: The nova uses quantum nonlocality to spread her senses throughout surrounding space. She can move her point of view to any spot within range. Moving the viewpoint at less than her maximum running speed requires no particular concentration. Moving faster than she can run counts as an action for that turn and imposes the usual multiple-action penalty. With one turn of full concentration, she can shift the viewpoint anywhere else in range.

The projected viewpoint leaves a noticeable quantum trace. Novas with quantum senses may catch on — make an opposed roll of the projecting nova's Wits + Quantum Awareness against the target's Perception + power rating in the quantum-sensing power. If the projecting nova's roll botches, the target knows where she is and gets some sense of her personality. If the target gets more successes than the projecting nova, the target is aware of being watched but gains no extra insight.

The nova may choose to project some or all of her senses, while retaining some inside her body as usual. (The ability to project just one sense is a level 3 weakness, while the ability to project one sense at a time is a level 2 weakness.) When the nova is attacked or injured, make a Wits + Quantum Awareness roll. Each success lets the nova return one sense to her body immediately and without penalty. She suffers a -1 penalty to all actions for one turn for each additional sense yanked back. Shifting a sense into her remote viewpoint or back into her body outside of combat requires one turn of concentration.

Direct Awareness

Quantum Minimum: 8

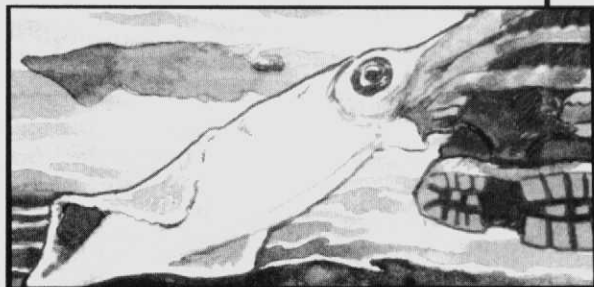
This technique extends Quantum Awareness into the realm of direct perception, "below" the level of normal senses. The nova gains an impression of the emotional and intellectual currents around her projected point of view and can tell in a general way how actively quantum powers have been used there lately. This information often presents itself to the nova's mind in symbolic and metaphorical terms. Some novas find the experience practically a religious one, as it takes them into direct contact with the quantum medium.

Extras: Expanded Range (each success multiplies the range by a factor of 10); Separate Senses (the nova can move each sense to a different location within range); Non-standard Senses (the nova can add one unusual sense, such as magnetic field orientation and intensity, for every three points of Quantum, rounded down, per level of this Extra)

The Beginning of Mastery: Level 5 Powers

The Pace of Global Powers

There are no special rules here for global changes taking any longer than making one's finger light up. However, the Storyteller may decide to add some brakes of his own. This is another one of those things players of characters with high-level powers should negotiate. When working changes on the planetary scale, it's not unreasonable for the Storyteller to decide that a power might work just once a scene, just once a day or some other interval of time. It depends on just how rapidly the people involved want the world to change in that particular series; there's no universally correct answer.



Ecological Supremacy

Level: 5

Quantum Minimum: 8

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Ecological Supremacy

Range: Varies

Area: Varies

Duration: Varies

Effect: The character affects some aspect of the planet's ecology.

Multiple Actions: Yes

Description: The nova gains control over the ecology of the Earth (or whichever planet she's on at the moment). Most effects only apply for a limited time, but the changes they create last, just like natural changes would.

Ecological Supremacy works primarily on non-sentient targets. Your Storyteller gets the final say on whether it takes Consciousness Supremacy to affect self-aware beings or whether there's an increased difficulty (like +1 or more per dot of the species' average Intelligence) when using Ecological Supremacy on sentient species.

Every species has a distinctive quantum signature: All the quantum-mechanical activity in every cell adds up to a pattern unique to each species, which the appropriate quantum senses can easily recognize.

Each technique in this power acts on that pattern in different ways.

Adaptation

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 1,000 km

Area: (Quantum + power rating) x 100 km

Duration: One year, minus (power rating) months

The nova can induce changes of a particular sort in target species: They change in some way to suit their environment. The nova can't control what the change is, manipulating quantum energy in indirect ways. Currently living members of the species don't change but give birth to offspring with the appropriate adaptations, unless the environment is so hazardous that the species must change or perish quickly.

It generally takes just one success on the Adaptation roll for the nova to insure that the species he targets will change to suit the environment he's put them in (or that they've otherwise ended up in). Additional successes let the nova target more species in the same habitat. At the Storyteller's discretion, hostile environments like the interior of Antarctica may require two or more successes per species, while extremely hostile environments like the bottom of the ocean may require three or more successes per species.

The nature of the change should be as small as possible to ensure survival. A desert animal moved to cold, temperate forest may need nothing more than fur and a slight change in diet, while plants dropped into wet spots on Mars must develop temperature-resistant hides, toughened roots, more efficient photosynthesis and the like. Major changes may also have cascading ramifications throughout the ecosystem, though part of the innate nature of Adaptation is to keep such disturbances to a minimum. This technique is not a tool with which to destroy the world (there are much more direct ways of doing that), and the Storyteller should work with rather than against players in detailing the results.

Example: *Antaeus' current project is the Florida manatee, almost completely extinct thanks to loss of habitat and the countless manatees killed every year in collisions with speedboat propellers. Ensnared comfortably on a patch of moss somewhere in the Florida Keys, he reviews manatee biology and behavior and floods the area with quantum energy. He achieves four successes, so four distinct adaptations show up in various scattered manatee communities: doubled thickness of hide, an acute sonar sense to warn of approaching trouble, better eyesight and reduced body mass for more agile swimming. He has Ecological Supremacy 3, so the changes appear over the course of nine months. All of them breed true — in the absence of other severe disruptions to their environment, the manatee will fare better in coming years.*

A good afternoon's work, Antaeus thinks.

Acquisition

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 1,000 km

Area: (Quantum + power rating) x 100 km

Duration: Permanent

This technique upsets biologists. It lets the nova target a population of some species and lets the target members pass on acquired characteristics. This is Lamarckian evolution, which Darwin and successors proved decisively to be impossible for all complex organisms. While Acquisition applies, any improved capability an individual develops — a new Ability learned, for instance — is passed on to offspring as part of their heritage with slight or no diminution.

Successes

One

Two

Three

Four

Five

Inheritance

50 percent chance of any acquired characteristic being transmitted; if it is, it appears at about one-quarter the level of the parent's aptitude.

50 percent chance of transmission, at 25–50 percent of parent's level.

75 percent chance of transmission, at 50–75 percent of parent's level.

100 percent chance of transmission, at 75–100 percent of parent's level.

100 percent chance of transmission, at 100 percent of parent's level.

The nova may use extra successes to affect multiple species in the target area. It takes one success to double the distance or double the target area.

Example: *Regina Mundi wants to evolve a strain of super-intelligent dogs to keep her company on Eden. She uses Acquisition on the canine population around the city where she lives, with a total of five successes. These go to make sure her experiments will work with optimal efficiency. Then she sets about training dogs through various intelligence-boosting exercises and neurosurgery. At the end of the Acquisition period, she has a strain of mastiffs with 1–2 dots in Intelligence, and their offspring carry the genetic legacy. She can use Acquisition again later with them as her starting point.*

Extinction

Range: Global

Area: Global

Duration: (Quantum + power rating) months

This technique makes species die. Alternatively, it can be used for a shorter period of time to rectify unchecked overpopulation. Disease and systemic failure of all kinds strike mature members of the species, while fertility drops and reproduction plummets. This technique is the quantum equivalent of hitting a species' quantum pattern with a big sledgehammer until it breaks or the nova gets tired.

The nova generally doesn't get to say just what goes wrong; Extinction batters at every available

weak point with little fine control. Each success increases mortality by 5 percent and decreases fertility by 10 percent for the duration. (The nova can choose to change only mortality rates, in which case there's a 10 percent increase, or only fertility, in which case there's a 15 percent decrease.) The nova may choose to extend the effect by one month per success dedicated to increased duration. When the effect wears off, the target species suffers a permanent 1 percent increase in mortality and 2 percent decrease in fertility, plus another 1 percent mortality increase and 2 percent fertility decrease for each success the nova dedicates to that purpose. It takes two successes to specify a particular problem, like increased skin cancers or reduced transmission of nutrients to embryos.

21st-century science can undo many of the problems, though scientists must accumulate more successes on solution-related rolls than the nova got on the Extinction roll. In addition, other Ecological Supremacy techniques can counteract it. Each success on a Mutation roll cancels out one Extinction success, if the Mutation-using nova chooses, and successful Speciation can breed daughter species not vulnerable to the Extinction-related problems.

Extinction only affects one species at a time. The Storyteller may decide what ramifications follow the reduction or elimination of a species — in general, any species that depended on the extinct one as prey suffers a huge decrease as well, while any species the extinct one preyed on experiences a population boom. An edited ecosystem may swing through boom and bust cycles for some time before reaching a new state of equilibrium.

Example: *In 2039, a moment's carelessness with powerful mutagenic chemicals led to a proliferation of altered species around Lake Vostok, the lake buried deep beneath Antarctic ice. One in particular, a unique form of algae, is interfering with the Protectorate. Thomas Sering, the Protectors' de facto leader, makes a deal with the nova known as Belladonna (she normally doesn't like to mitigate nature's wrath, but she has a particular interest in the Protectors, and Sering makes her an offer she can't refuse). She decides to solve the problem by quantum-tweaking the algae into extinction. She stretches her power a bit and gets a total of eight successes. She applies five to messing with the algae in the present moment: Its mortality rate rises 25 percent and its fertility rate falls 50 percent, making cleanup a lot easier. She uses one success to give her Extinction effort an extra month's duration and two to inflict a lingering blight. Even once her main quantum hammer ceases falling on the algae, it'll be 4 percent less fertile and 2 percent more prone to premature mortality than beforehand.*

She hasn't altogether removed the species, but at this point, her nova colleagues inside the Protectorate will have no further problems, and it wouldn't take much extra effort to confine it to the few environmental pockets most favorable to its continued existence.

Mutation

Range: Global

Area: Global

Duration: (Quantum + power rating) months

This technique lets the nova stir up the target species' genetic legacy with a quantum stick. While Mutation lasts, the species experiences a markedly greater rate of mutation. As with Extinction, the nova generally can't "steer" the process with much precision: She can set the volume but not make the species' quantum signature play a particular tune.

Each success on the Mutation roll produces one significant widely distributed mutation each month. There are also many minor mutations each month. Most are slightly deleterious or insignificant, like an increased susceptibility to baldness or reduced ability to synthesize some rarely used amino acid. Significant mutations are peculiar and generally fall outside the scope of normal biology: Body Modification and minor to moderate aberration features provide good examples. This is not the stuff of real-world genetics, but of science fiction and comic books.

The nova may choose to aim for fewer, bigger mutations, "pooling" successes to produce a single effect. Two successes induce an enhancement or equivalent mutation (yes, without the accompanying Mega-Attribute required), while three successes induce a Mega-Attribute (without any automatic enhancements). When pooled, each success can buy one nova point's worth of a power. The mutated plants or animals don't have a full-blown Quantum stat, but should be considered to have the minimum Quantum necessary to use the power and a quantum pool of 5 per Quantum pseudo-dot.

Mutations can boost Attributes and raise Abilities — in each case, at one dot per success. Mutations can also *reduce* Attributes and Abilities at the same rate. The nova must allocate one additional success for each two successes that she wants to have produce some unknown beneficial effect. Otherwise, the Storyteller should assign an even mix of desirable and undesirable results.

The mutations this technique creates appear at random throughout the population. They are dominant, so that children of the mutated parents are more likely to inherit the same changed Traits. Mutant individuals remain capable of breeding with the rest of their species.

Example: *Belladonna decides that the United Nations needs a lesson in just what they're dealing with and wants to remind them that novas can change any part of the world at any time. For her example, she chooses the common cockroach. Meditating in comfort at her Australian compound, she unleashes a torrent of quantum energy into the portion of the quantum field that defines cockroaches. Once again, she stretches the limits of her power and gets nine successes.*

Three successes go to refining her target area: New York, Geneva and a handful of other cities with major UN presence. The remaining six she pools, so as to create three significant mutant strains of roach. One develops Enhanced Movement, one develops Adaptability and one develops six extra health levels (two nova points' worth of Body Modification — Extra Health Levels). The super-fast roaches appear first, the super-adaptable ones three months later, the super-tough ones three months after that. By the end of the year, cities with UN presence are up to their eyebrows in super-vermin, at least until some other nova wipes out the new strains.

Speciation

Range: Global

Area: Global

Duration: (Quantum + power rating) months

This technique is the counterpart to Mutation. It doesn't radically change the members of a species, but it introduces and reinforces subtle yet important incompatibilities which turn one species into several distinct ones. The members of the various new populations can't interbreed with each other and will, in the fullness of time, evolve in their own distinct directions.

The nova splits off one daughter species per success, appearing at random sometime during the duration of the power. One extra success lets the nova specify whether a particular daughter species appears in the first or last half of the duration, and additional successes let the nova halve the window of opportunity again each time for one of the daughter species.

The daughter species generally possess a few Traits higher or lower than their parent species but nothing very remarkable (e.g., where the parent species eats bugs, the daughter species eats bugs and berries). The nova can apply two extra successes to produce the same result as one success at Mutation or Adaptation for one of the daughter species.

Spontaneous Generation

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 1,000 meters

Area: (Quantum + power rating) x 100 meters

Duration: Instant

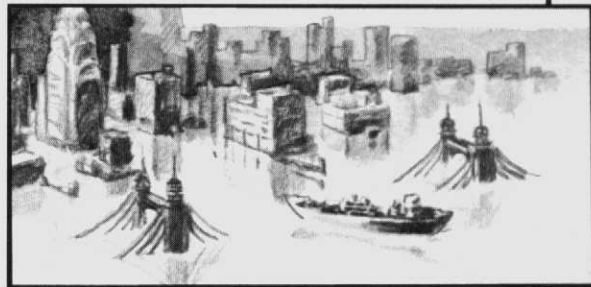
The nova literally creates life out of lifeless matter. It takes three successes to create a very

primitive, one-celled organism, less complex than algae, out of a very rich mixture of amino acids and other organic molecules. Creating new life in a life-rich habit requires five successes, while creating life in the midst of totally barren rock, sterile sea floor, vacuum and other harsh environments may require seven or more successes, at the Storyteller's discretion.

Additional successes let the nova create more complex life. Each extra success lets the nova add one dot of Attribute or Ability. (Once created, of course, the nova can use Acquisition and Mutation to refine the species.) Only the nova's patience, imagination and number of successes limit the complexity of creatures that can emerge via this technique.

The target area fills with individuals belonging to the new species. They use up most of the free biological material in the area. They're "born" with only rudimentary instincts, though species with notable Mental Attributes quickly develop into their potential.

Extras: None



Climatic Supremacy

Level: 5

Quantum Minimum: 8

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Climatic Supremacy

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 10,000 km

Area: (Quantum + power rating) x 2,000 km diameter

Duration: (Quantum + power rating) months

Effect: The character manipulates weather on the planetary scale.

Multiple Actions: Yes

Description: Climatic Supremacy lets the nova affect the weather, both what it's doing now and how it operates in the long term. The nova can focus on any aspect of the planet's climate and shift it. Climatic Supremacy effects generally apply to the entire planet. The nova can choose to narrow the scope: It takes one extra success to affect a single hemisphere, two extra successes to affect one continent, and three successes to affect a smaller area like one big metropolitan area or county.

The nova can modify several aspects of the climate with one use of Climatic Supremacy. Each success can affect one of the following:

- **Oxygen.** Increase or decrease the percentage of atmospheric oxygen in the target area by 1-2 percent. A 2-5 percent increase is equivalent to constantly dosing everyone in the area with spike or other stimulants (see **Aberrant**, p. 280), while a 2-5 percent decrease is the equivalent of a constant dose of depressants. All healing takes place at one rank lower than normal in reduced oxygen, and the difficulty of all physical tasks increases by +1 (or more, as oxygen levels fall). Increasing the oxygen percentage further risks spontaneous combustion: Any minor spark can start raging conflagrations. Oxidation of all kinds (including damage to nasal tissues and other areas where blood vessels are close to the outside air) increases rapidly. At around 40 percent oxygen, fires are inevitable and last until all the oxygen in the area is depleted. Oxygen concentrations below 15 percent or so make normal respiration impossible for oxygen-breathers, and only life that doesn't require oxygen in the air can survive.

- **Temperature.** Increase or decrease temperature in the target area by one degree Celsius. A five-degree cooling is more than sufficient to trigger widespread glaciation and inaugurate a new ice age. Five degrees of warming melt the pole caps and raise the world's sea level by about 100 meters, with massive changes to winds and climate all over the world.

- **Rainfall.** Increase or decrease rainfall in the target area by 10 percent. A persistent decrease of 20-30 percent is generally sufficient to induce drought. A sustained increase of even 10 percent can easily induce flooding.

- **Wind.** Increase or decrease average local winds by 5-10 kilometers per hour. Areas that depend on monsoon rains and the like are seriously harmed by the absence of the winds that carry the rain, while sustained high winds strip crops and otherwise interfere with life.

The nova can use extra successes to increase duration, at one month per success. In addition, the nova can try to renew an effect as it expires, simply by getting at least as many successes on a new attempt at Climatic Supremacy in the month before the old one expires. If the nova meets this goal, the condition continues without interruption. Three successful extensions in a row make the change permanent.

Novas can use Climatic Supremacy to cancel out each other's changes, at a straight one-for-one rate. If one nova uses three successes to increase global rainfall by 30 percent, another can use three successes to return the normal condition. This sort of

neutralization breaks the string of extensions necessary to create permanent change, and the nova who wants to permanently alter the climate must start over again.

It takes one hour per success for Climatic Supremacy changes to take effect. The nova has to spend time establishing a quantum rapport with the planet and working the changes piece by piece.

Extras: None



Consciousness Supremacy

Level: 5

Quantum Minimum: 8

Dice Pool: Variable

Range: Variable

Area: Variable

Duration: Variable

Effect: The character manipulates individual and collective consciousness.

Multiple Actions: Yes

Description: This power governs the workings of sentient minds, including creating new minds where none existed before.

Create Consciousness

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Consciousness Supremacy

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 10,000 km

Area: (Quantum + power rating) x 2,000 km

Duration: Instant

This technique awakens any sufficiently complex physical system into self-awareness: It makes things think.

The human brain has about 100 billion neurons, each with multiple connections and complex interactions with its neighbors. A typical home OpNet unit is at least that complex by 2015, as is an algal bloom, fungal colony or other extended plant growth. Animal brains are generally not sufficiently complex, and it takes surgery or suitable powers to make them suitable targets for Create Consciousness. At the Storyteller's discretion, several not-quite-sufficient minds may form a single hive-mind entity or distributed consciousness. This requires two successes to do at all, and raising the Attributes of the resulting mind takes an additional extra success at each step.

The new mind has 1 dot in each Mental Attribute by default. The nova can add another dot to one Mental Attribute for every extra success and add a dot of a Mental Mega-Attribute for two extra successes. Adding Social Attributes takes two extra successes per regular dot, three per Mega-Attribute dot. The new mind retains whatever Abilities its components possessed before becoming self-aware but must be taught other Abilities.

This technique creates one mind, doubling for each extra success the nova allocates to the task (up to the limits of the complex physical systems available). The extra successes the nova spends adding Attributes apply to all the minds created.

Enhance Consciousness

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Consciousness Supremacy

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 10,000 km

Area: (Quantum + power rating) x 2,000 km

Duration: Instant

The nova boosts the intelligence of every mind belonging to a particular sentient species or all the self-aware minds of a particular type, such as all computer consciousnesses. For every two successes, the nova can add a dot in one of the Mental Attributes or a dot of innate Ability (or two specialties). It takes three successes to add an Extra — the nova can do this without meeting the usual requirements for Mega-Attributes — and five successes to add a dot of a Mental Mega-Attribute. Social Attributes, Extras and Mega-Attributes cost one more success each than their Mental counterparts.

The changes made with Enhance Consciousness are permanent. They can only be removed by species-wide medical work or powers like Ecological Supremacy.

The nova can choose not to affect every eligible mind. One extra success lets her specify one half of the target population to affect, and each additional success lets her halve the target population again.

Groupthink

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Consciousness Supremacy

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 10,000 km

Area: (Quantum + power rating) x 2,000 km

Duration: Instant

This technique fuses separate minds into a single collective intelligence. One success lets the nova link any two minds together; each extra success doubles the number of linked minds. The nova can specify the degree of linkage, from shared surface thoughts to complete fusion. It takes an additional success to make the link a variable one, allowing participants to tune out if they wish. Targets must make a Willpower roll and get more successes than the fusing nova did on the Groupthink roll to resist.

Groupthink lasts indefinitely. The creating nova can choose to cancel it out; this requires an-

other Groupthink roll with at least as many successes as he got on the first roll. Groupthink is not inheritable unless the nova chooses to make it so. That requires two successes for the first two minds and two successes thereafter for each doubling of minds linked. The link between minds remains instantaneous, no matter how far apart the targets are. The Storyteller can decide whether or not it's affected by relativistic time dilation and other physical phenomena.

Groupthink provides some subconscious access to shared knowledge and Abilities. Members get one extra die added to Mental and Social dice pools for every power of 10 members who possess a particular Ability: +1 die for 1-10 members, +2 dice for 11-100 members, +3 dice for 101-1,000 members and so on. If Groupthink unites personalities into a single new entity, any unit in the group automatically has the highest rating possessed by any unit, plus one die for every power of 10 members who also have it. No Mental or Social score can include more dice than the creating nova's Quantum score.

The nova can choose to allow minds to relocate into other bodies within the group. This requires no roll if the minds currently in each body choose to cooperate or a contest of Willpower rolls if the mind in the target body resists. It takes one extra success from the initial Groupthink roll to make this effect possible.

Even a weak Groupthink influences the outlook of its participants. Members tend to end up agreeing with each other: Apply a -1 difficulty bonus to Manipulation, Intimidation and related rolls for every power of 10 members in the group. Conversely, any effort to use mind-altering powers, persuasive Abilities and the like on group members by anyone outside the group incurs a +1 difficulty penalty for every power of 10 members. On a botch, the would-be mind controller may be assimilated into the group and must get more successes on a Willpower roll than the creating nova did on the Groupthink roll to retain independence.

If the nova creates a unitary group mind, it begins with an averaged outlook reflecting the majority views of the minds fused into it; thereafter it develops on its own. The nova can designate a particular mind as "in charge" of the group. That individual's views are subject to some modification by other members, but he, she or it only experiences half the usual vulnerability (rounded down) to persuasion and the like.

Each body in the group gets its normal quota of actions, and communication through the group is an instant action that does not affect dice pools. A large group mind in operation is a terrifying opponent.

Mental Block

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Consciousness Supremacy

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 10,000 km

Area: (Quantum + power rating) x 2,000 km

Duration: (Quantum + power rating) months

This power lets the nova mark a concept “out of bounds” in the minds of one target species or class of intelligences. One success lets the nova specify one simple sentence’s worth of facts or ideas that simply don’t occur to others for the duration of the power. Each additional success lets the nova add another clause, parenthetical remark or simple sentence.

Someone attempting to think of the forbidden topic must get at least as many successes on a Willpower roll as the nova got on the Mental Block roll. A nova using Analyze Weakness and other such deductive powers can deduce the existence of the block, but is no more able to break through it than anyone else. An individual who does succeed in breaking through the block won’t have an easy time persuading anyone else of it: Her persuasion efforts must get at least as many successes than the nova got on the Mental Block roll. Otherwise, other victims perceive the ex-victim as suffering from some sort of delusion.

Yes, this power can be deadly if the nova chooses to blank out a concept like “fire burns” or “the Mr. Yuck label indicates poison.” The Storyteller may, at his discretion, allow victims a Willpower roll at a moment of impending danger. Subtract the levels of damage an action would likely inflict from the number of successes on the Mental Block roll — the impending victim needs to get only that smaller total of successes to feel a subconscious urge to avoid the action even though the block remains more or less in place.

Muse

Dice Pool: Charisma + Consciousness Supremacy

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 10,000 km

Area: (Quantum + power rating) x 2,000 km

Duration: Instant

Muse is the counterpart to Mental Block; Muse allows the nova to give people an idea. One success lets the nova give one simple sentence’s worth of facts or ideas (or images or other concepts) to 100 people. The nova targets specific individuals, specifies criteria for the recipients — left-handed disabled writers, for instance — or scatters the inspiration completely at random. Each additional success lets the nova multiply the number of people inspired by a factor of 10 or add another clause or simple sentence’s worth of inspiration.

Targets who get one or more successes on a Perception + Awareness roll may be aware of the idea as something out of the ordinary; they must get at least

as many successes on this roll as the nova did on the Muse roll to realize fully that the idea was implanted in their minds by someone else.

Suppress Consciousness

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Consciousness Supremacy

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 10,000 km

Area: (Quantum + power rating) x 2,000 km

Duration: (Quantum + power rating) months

The nova can reduce his targets’ self-awareness.

This isn’t the same thing as making them stupid: Some animals are extremely intelligent, and so are some computers. It’s just that they have little or no “interior life,” no driving goals beyond instinct and rudimentary personalities. A person with suppressed consciousness can respond to stimuli and even carry out complex instructions. She simply can’t analyze her own behavior or formulate her own goals and desires, nor does she have a mind in the sense that telepathy and other powers aim at.

One success lets the nova reduce a target individual’s Willpower by 2. At Willpower 0, the target becomes functionally non-sentient for the duration of the power. The nova can use an extra success to reduce the target’s Willpower by another two points or to double the number of affected individuals. The nova may specify particular individuals to affect or set categories — “the people nearest to me,” “the wealthiest people in North America,” “the people who most hate me.”

Extras: Omni-Intelligence (the nova can affect sentients of any species or class, including more than one type in a particular usage of the power)



Geological Supremacy

Level: 5

Quantum Minimum: 8

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Geological Supremacy

Range: Global

Area: Global

Duration: (Quantum + power rating) months

Effect: The character affects some aspect of the planet’s geology.

Multiple Actions: Yes

Description: The nova gains control over the workings of the Earth (or whichever planet he's on). The effects are temporary but can become permanent with repeated effort.

The nova picks one aspect of the global geology, including (but not limited to):

- Level of volcanic activity.
- Location of the magnetic poles.
- Rate of continental drift.
- Rate of radioactive decay and natural radiation.
- Strength of magnetic field.

Each success on the Geological Supremacy roll changes that aspect of the planet by 5 percent for the duration. The nova can use the power again before it wears off. Successes on the second roll extend the duration; extending a modification three times in a row makes it permanent.

Novas with Geological Supremacy can seek to counter each other's effects. The planet tends to repair itself, and natural processes work with novas. Each success spent to undo Geological Supremacy modifications cancels two successes used to create a change... until the change becomes permanent. Then the new situation is the planetary baseline and must be modified just as it was the first time around.

It takes one hour per success to put Geological Supremacy into effect. The nova has to spend time establishing a quantum rapport with the planet and working the changes piece by piece.

Geological Supremacy effects generally apply to the entire planet. The nova can choose to narrow the scope: It takes one extra success to affect a single hemisphere, two extra successes to affect one continent and three successes to affect a smaller area like one big metropolitan area or county.

The full consequences of Geological Supremacy be very complex. Players and Storytellers keen to get the details should look at introductions to geology. Sample effects include:

• **Volcanic activity.** A 5 percent increase in volcanism warms the planet 1 degree Celsius and increases cloud cover 5-10 percent. Dormant volcanoes erupt, and active ones become more active. At a 50 percent increase in volcanism, volcanoes deemed extinct begin erupting and new ones appear along active fault lines. A 5 percent decrease in volcanism cools the planet one degree Celsius and reduces cloud cover 1-5 percent.

• **Magnetic pole location.** Compasses point to magnetic north, of course. Migrating animals rely on an innate sense of the magnetic poles to navigate.

Each 5 percent change in the location of the magnetic poles adds +1 difficulty to rolls related to migration and orientation by magnetic sense. Human beings possess a rudimentary magnetic sense that contributes to balance and equilibrium: Each 20 percent change in the poles' location adds +1 difficulty to balance-related rolls and feeds a general sense of disorientation and confusion.

• **Continental drift.** Each 5 percent change in continental drift rates changes the rate of earthquakes by 10 percent, since plate movements create most earthquakes. Each 20 percent change in continental drift rates produces a 5 percent change in volcanism, since the two processes interact.

• **Radioactive decay.** Each 5 percent increase in radioactive decay warms the ground 1 degree Celsius, plus another degree per kilometer beneath the surface. At 20 percent increase, uranium-rich lodes turn into low-powered natural nuclear reactors, and at 100 percent increase, the lodes spontaneously explode as very high-yield atomic bombs. Particularly rich lodes may begin exploding at 50-75 percent increase. Each 5 percent decrease in radioactive decay cools the ground 1 degree Celsius. A 20 percent change in radioactive decay also produces a 5 percent change in volcanism or continental drift rates.

• **Magnetic field strength.** Each 5 percent decrease in the planetary magnetic field increases the mutation rate of all living things by 1 percent, and adds +1 difficulty to rolls to resist electronic failures created by cosmic rays. When the magnetic field reaches zero, the magnetic poles reverse; as the field rebuilds (which it does automatically at 1-5 percent per year), the former magnetic north is now magnetic south. Each 20 percent reduction in the magnetic field cools the planet 1 degree Celsius, as extra incoming radiation evaporates more water and feeds the growth of clouds and glaciers. At 10 percent of normal magnetic strength, the planet almost always enters an ice age. Each 5 percent increase in planetary magnetic field adds +1 to the difficulty of long-range electromagnetic communication efforts and to related powers. Each 10 percent increase adds +1 difficulty to rolls to resist disease, as it disrupts individuals' neurology and immunology and increases the intensity of existing psychological disorders.

Extras: Extended Range ([Quantum + power rating] x 10 million kilometers)



Quantum Supremacy

Level: 5

Quantum Minimum: 8

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Quantum Supremacy

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 1,000 kilometers

Area: Variable

Duration: Variable

Effect: The nova gains extensive control over the quantum field.

Multiple Actions: Yes

Description: With Quantum Supremacy, a nova manipulates quantum as an extension of his own will. Various techniques let him radically transform his own quantum signature and those of others.

Novas with quantum signatures linked by this power become wholly immune to each other's powers (though they can always choose to be affected).

Quantum Enhancement

Area: (Quantum rating + power rating) kilometers

Duration: (Quantum + power rating) months

The nova raises (or lowers) the effective Quantum level of everyone in the target area. One success grants +1 Quantum to people in the area; two successes can reduce Quantum by 1. The nova can't raise Quantum above his own score. Novas with one or more levels of suppressed Quantum must earn more successes on a Willpower roll than the enhancing nova got on the Quantum Enhancement roll to use powers the suppression blocks and pay double quantum costs for the difference between their normal and current scores.

Baselines gain limited benefits from the enhancement. They gain 1 Quantum for every two successes on the Quantum Enhancement roll. They don't develop powers, but may (subconsciously) choose to develop Mega-Attributes and enhancements, at one dot per point of this temporary Quantum boost.

Quantum Enhancement affects everyone in the target area when the nova uses it. They remain affected no matter where they go; people entering the area later are also affected if the nova chooses to spend one extra success for this result.

Quantum Synchronization

Area: Special

Duration: (Quantum + power rating) months

The nova fuses two or more quantum signatures into a composite entity. In practical terms, the individuals with synchronized signatures gain all of the powers any of them possess. Further, as they develop new capabilities, those all become part of the shared signature. This technique affects all aspects of the targets, including mundane Abilities as well as nova powers.

Each success lets the nova affect one other person within range. The nova normally takes part in the synchronization; if he chooses not to, it takes two successes per target, since the nova has to work harder at manipulating a quantum pattern he's not directly tied to. If the target is willing, the synchronization happens automatically — people can feel the influx of powers and choose whether or not to accept them. Targets who resist must make a Willpower check and get more successes than the synchronizing nova did on the Quantum Synchronization roll.

Shared Abilities and powers rise to the highest score any of the synchronized characters has but cannot go higher than the number of successes on the Quantum Synchronization roll.

Targets who haven't erupted on their own get a temporary Quantum score equal to half the Quantum Synchronization successes, rounded up, and a quantum pool of 5 dots per success. The synchronizing nova may decide whether or not targets share their quantum pool or not.

Synchronized individuals can drop out of the pattern at any time, if they entered voluntarily; they must get more successes on a Willpower roll than on the Quantum Synchronization roll if they resisted in the first place. Once the pattern is set, it can't be added to. A nova who wants to add more participants must let the old synchronization lapse and create a brand new one.

Quantum Transformation

Area: One target

Duration: Instant

The nova can rewrite a quantum signature, adding and deleting nearly at will. The target must be willing or, at least, not actively resisting: To use this technique on an unwilling target, she must first win a contest of Willpower, gaining a total of one extra success per point of the target's Willpower. If the nova fails one of the rolls, she must start over, and if she botches, she cannot attempt to transform the target again for a full day.

Each success on the Quantum Transformation roll lets the nova add or subtract three nova points worth of freebies from the target. For instance, one

success lets the nova add or remove a dot of a Mega-Attribute, an enhancement, a Level 1 power or 9 dots of regular Attributes. See the nova point chart on **Aberrant**, p. 120, for the full list. Two successes lets the nova add 1 Quantum to the target and have a nova point left over. This *does* induce regular, permanent, full eruption in someone who wasn't previously a nova.

"Unrupting" a nova, by removing the last dot of Quantum, is a difficult task. It requires twice the usual nova point cost — that is, 10 nova points, which ties up four successes (with two nova points left over for other tasks).

The nova using Quantum Transformation can choose to accumulate successes over several uses, to heavily modify a target. The target's pattern becomes charged with not-quite-focused quantum energy. The nova can attempt Quantum Transformation once per day. Accumulated successes dissipate at the rate of one per day, so the process isn't entirely efficient. On a failure, the nova can't try again for a number of days equal to the target's Willpower, and on a botch, all accumulated successes are lost. Once the nova has all the successes she seeks, then she



Time Travel

Level: 5

Quantum Minimum: 8

Dice Pool: Variable

Range: Variable

Area: Variable

Duration: Variable

Effect: Character moves through time; details depend on the technique.

Multiple Actions: No

Description: Time travel can exist in many forms. Your Storyteller has the final say on which methods, if any, actually apply to your particular series. In some games, just one method works. In others, several do. If more than one works, a particular character may be able to use just one or may be able to learn several. Even more than with most of the high-level powers, the fact that a technique appears here isn't license to demand it in a particular game. Negotiate and adapt as need be to suit your game.

The most fundamental question for time travelers is "Can you change the past?" Possible answers include:

- **No.** No time traveler ever changes the past. The documented facts of history cannot be changed. Novas in their past can make a difference when the specific events aren't known in their native time, when the nova's actions don't produce changes that will eventually affect known history.

- **No, changes create new timelines.** The time traveler's own history always remains intact. Changes to history create a new timeline. Whether the time traveler returns to his own present or to the present moment in the new timeline depends on how the time travel method works.

- **Maybe.** It's hard to tell if history changes. Documentation is never completely accurate. Certainly the time travelers can't make big, dramatic changes, but they simply don't know how far minor changes cascade.

- **Yes, but it's hard.** History has a sort of inertia. Kill off a dictator as a child, and someone else much like him appears to occupy the same role. Stop the *Galatea* from exploding, and the spacecraft blows up a few months later. Nonetheless, carefully planned actions can alter history, sometimes in dramatic ways.

- **Yes, and it's catastrophically easy.** Everything a time traveler does changes the past. The air turbulence created by walking moves the wind a little then and the patterns of global weather a few years later. Every social interaction cascades forward; within a generation, a whole different set of people is born, the result of each genetic pairing going differently.

Sooner or later, time travelers are bound to do something that would affect the chain of events that leads to them travel into the past. Can they create paradoxes? Possible answers include:

- **No.** However much a time traveler can change history in other ways, the laws of causality prevents him from murdering his immediate ancestors (at least for three or more generations), stopping his younger self from making contact with others responsible for the time traveling and so on.

- **Sort of.** Time travelers can alter some aspects of the causal chain that brought them into the past, though they can't cancel out the whole thing. They may or may not remember the original version of events.

- **Yes.** Once a time traveler is in the past, the universe doesn't care how she got there. Time travelers can wipe out their ancestors and even their past selves. They remain in existence and either remember the original course of events or remember an overlay of both versions. This may or may not be a violation of causality from the point of view of the universe as a whole. It looks like a paradox to three- and four-dimensional observers, but perhaps only because they don't see the flow of events in all N dimensions of space-time. Alternatively, messing

with their ancestors in any way could delete the novas from space-time altogether.

Finally, time travelers may try to undo changes they made or that others made. Does the universe “remember” its prior state and attempt to reset itself, given a nudge? Possible answers include:

- **No.** The current state of affairs overwrites and displaces anything that used to exist. One change is as good as the next, and once done, it’s done. Attempting to reset history won’t automatically restore a previous state.

- **Sort of.** The events most directly affected by a compensatory change do return to their original state. Events at a further remove may or may not change. The resulting history is a composite of the changed and original versions.

- **Yes.** No matter how easy it is to change the past, it’s also easy to restore history. The universe “wants” to go a certain way.

Traveling into the future raises a distinct question of its own. Is the future that the traveler encounters what must be? Possible answers include:

- **No.** The time traveler goes to one of the infinite variety of futures possible at the time he leaves his present. If he returns to his present and goes forward again, he may return to that same future or enter a different one. In either case, what actually happens to the people living through time from second to second probably isn’t what he experiences.

- **Sort of.** The events the time traveler deals with most directly do become set. The rest of the world, unobserved by the time traveler, remains free to evolve as it will.

- **Yes.** The act of traveling into the future casts it into temporal concrete. If the past can’t be changed by time travelers, then the same prohibition applies to all of history to the farthest future moment reached by a time traveler. It’s all locked down.

One concept may seem unobvious, even confusing, at first. In some versions of time travel, a change to history instantly affects the whole universe from that point forward. In others, it takes “time” from the point of view of an outside observer. Likewise, time travel itself may take a while.

Example: *A mad scientist sets out from 2058 to change the Galatea explosion. She creates a temporal transit bubble and heads back at a subjective*

rate of 10 years per minute, so she arrives in 1998 in six minutes. She succeeds in making a change, which moves forward (and backward) at one year per minute. She immediately returns to her own time, taking another six minutes. 2058 still looks as it did, and does so for another 54 minutes. Then the front line of changed history arrives. The world alters around her, and only she remembers the earlier history, thanks to the temporal transit bubble.

Aberrant assumes by default that time travelers can change history but that it’s hard to do so, that time travelers can partially alter their own causal pasts, that history does tend to restore itself, that traveling into the future defines the future partially but not completely and that changes to history apply instantly.

All methods of time travel operate with the same results per success. The player decides how to allocate successes between timeframe (how far into past or future the nova can go this time) and duration (how long the nova can stay there). Time normally passes at the same rate in the nova’s native time and in the time to which she travels; lack of temporal synchronization is an Extra (see below).

At the Storyteller’s discretion, the basic number of required successes for timeframe and duration get the nova to the right general vicinity, but with a margin of error equal to one time frame unit less than the trip involves. For instance, a nova allocating four successes to timeframe can go up to one month per dot; he’ll arrive with an error margin of one week (no matter how many dots he has). Extra successes can narrow the margin by one level of timeframe per dot. This is an optional rule for characters and series where it’s appropriate. Adopt it only if everyone involved agrees.

Time Warp

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Time Travel

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 10 meters

Area: (Quantum + power rating) meters

It’s astounding. The nova creates a two-dimensional gateway into another time. Objects must move through it under volition — that is, they must be sentient beings or be driven, thrown or otherwise moved by sentient beings. The portal can be any shape the nova chooses, and the nova can choose whether it shows a view of what’s on the other side or not.

Successes

One
Two
Three
Four
Five
Six
+1

Timeframe

Up to one hour per dot
Up to one day per dot
Up to one week per dot
Up to one month per dot
Up to one year per dot
Up to 10 years per dot
x10 years per dot

Duration

Up to one minute per dot
Up to one hour per dot
Up to one day per dot
Up to one week per dot
Up to one month per dot
Up to one year per dot
x10 years per dot

Mental Projection

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Time Travel

The nova's body stays in his native time, and he sends only his consciousness back into the past. The nova gets one automatic success to apply to timeframe, since there's less temporal resistance to non-physical passage. The nova can apply extra successes to specifying the nature of his host in the past or future: One success lets the nova set very broad criteria (gender, race), while five successes lets the nova choose a particular individual. Powers that identify possession and the like can spot the nova, and if the host realizes the intruder is there, the nova must win a contested roll of Willpower scores to remain in the host. The nova can specify whether he simply rides silently in the host, takes complete control or exercises some intermediate level of influence.

Physical Projection

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Time Travel

The nova physically sends herself (and anything Attuned to her) into another time. The process looks more or less like teleportation, depending on the nova's chosen special effects. The nova automatically shifts just enough to avoid materializing inside of something in the target time.

Time Bubble

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Time Travel

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 10 meters

Area: (Quantum + power rating) meters

The nova sends everything in the target area back or forward in time. Unwilling individuals may make a Willpower roll to resist, with a difficulty equal to the number of successes on the Time Bubble roll. The time bubble exchanges its contents with whatever's in the target space in the other time. Everything the nova brought into the past returns to the present when the time bubble expires; requiring people and things from the people to return to within Time Bubble range of the nova is a 2-point weakness, and requiring a return to the original spot is a 3-point weakness.

Extras: Asynchronous Time (the nova can decide how much elapses in his "present" no matter how long he spends in the past or future); Asynchronous Location (the nova can apply successes in accordance with the Teleportation range chart to emerge at a different spot)

Weaknesses: Only into past/only into future (3 points), Fixed timeframe/fixed duration (2 points each, choose a single category for the successes chart that applies every time the nova uses the power)

Consummate Mastery: Level 6 Powers



Creation Ex Nihilo

Level: 6

Quantum Minimum: 10

Dice Pool: Wits + Creation Ex Nihilo

Range: (Quantum + power rating) x 1 million kilometers

Area: (Quantum + power rating) x 5,000 kilometers diameter

Duration: Instant

Effect: The character creates solid (and liquid and gaseous) matter out of nothing and complex forms from simple ones.

Multiple Actions: Yes

Description: In a sense, this is Matter Creation on steroids. The nova can assemble the raw materials of the universe into any form of matter he can imagine. The would-be world builder gets best results working on purely inorganic material.

The number of successes governs the degree of complexity the nova can add to or subtract from his raw materials. See the Object Complexity chart in *Aberrant*, p. 210. Each success lets the nova shift the complexity of any specified set of targets by one, if they're inorganic. It takes two successes to move a set of organic targets by one and four successes to move sentient targets by one.

The "sets" are fairly flexible. "All elemental hydrogen" is a good target when working on a cloud of interstellar gas, for instance, if the nova wants to create a new planet. The targets must all be at the same level of complexity and must all share a similar, though not identical, composition — all OpNet computers, for instance, or all sedimentary rocks. The nova must also transform them all into something similar — breathable pure air, for instance, or fungi.

Extras: None



Planck Scaling

Level: 6

Quantum Minimum: 10

Dice Pool: Wits + Planck Scaling

Range: (Quantum + power rating) million km

Area: (Quantum + power rating) meters

Duration: (Quantum + power rating) hours

Effect: The character magnifies the realm in which all normal physical laws break down.

Multiple Actions: Yes

Description: The physical laws that govern the universe are statistical: Quantum mechanics describes how probable various events are, given any particular set of circumstances. When events happen quickly enough or closely enough together, the statistics break down. Planck length, 4×10^{-35} meters, and Planck time, 1×10^{-43} seconds, mark the boundaries of natural law. Note that these are very small scales indeed: An electron is 10^{-15} meters across, while most atoms are on the order of 10^{-10} meters across.

Planck Scaling lets the nova increase the scope of space and time within which probability become meaningless. Inside the "Planck bubble," consciousness reigns supreme, as the mental states of those within can imprint themselves on the quantum field around them without constraint. For novas, the experience has a strong overtone of *déjà vu*, as it's very much like eruption.

Within the Planck bubble, complete indeterminacy prevails. People looking in find their subconscious beliefs, fears and desires made manifest, insofar as a space a few meters across can reflect what's in their minds. Each extra success doubles the bubble's diameter. Once the bubble includes one or more sentient minds, it stops reflecting outside thoughts. The mental states of those inside reign supreme.

The nova can spend extra successes to increase duration. Each extra success applied to this purpose doubles the bubble's lifespan. When the power wears off, normal reality reasserts itself. Physically stable structures, even if wildly implausible, remain. The bubble evaporates just slowly enough to avoid inflicting harm on sentient beings inside — it won't leave them stranded halfway through walls or otherwise in immediate danger of death. Changes that

people inside make to their own bodies and minds last, with some reservations. Each success on the Planck Scaling roll provides a pool of two nova points that each person inside the bubble can spend on permanent modifications.

As with Universe Creation (see below), anything goes with this power. If the nova includes herself in the bubble, her own desires reign supreme, and others' minds influence only incidental details. Otherwise, reality becomes completely subjective and consensual around the people in the target area. Dreams and nightmares alike come to life. The player and Storyteller should work out cooperatively just how weird things get; this power is as close as it gets to remaking the universe in one's own image.

Extras: None



Quantum Inferno

Level: 6

Quantum Minimum: 10

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Quantum Inferno

Range: (Quantum + power rating) million km

Area: (Quantum + power rating) x 100 km diameter

Duration: Instant

Effect: The character unleashes huge quantities of quantum energy in a destructive form.

Multiple Actions: Yes

Description: Quantum Inferno is the consummation of all damage-dealing powers. The nova inflicts (Quantum + power rating) x 50 levels of bashing damage, (Quantum + power rating) x 25 levels of lethal damage or (Quantum + power rating) x 10 levels of aggravated damage to every cubic meter in the target area. Focused as a beam, Quantum Inferno can blaze through nearly everything; spread out into a cone or sphere, it can annihilate planets. (A hundred-kilometer-wide hole through a planet is the direct prelude to globe-shattering explosions.)

Quantum Inferno serves as a catch-all for any power of godlike destruction, from controlled sun flares to true vacuum. The player and Storyteller should work out the details of the particular character's ability to obliterate much or everything in sight.

Extras: None



Universe Creation

Level: 6

Quantum Minimum: 10

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Universe Creation

Range: N/A

Area: N/A

Duration: Permanent

Effect: The character creates a new universe.

Multiple Actions: No

Description: Yes, really.

The four-dimensional universe in which novas live is only a fraction of reality. There are literally infinite ways to go “sideways” from the **Aberrant** cosmos into other spaces and infinite corners in which to tuck an entire new universe. 21st-century physics has demonstrated that every universe begins as a bubble zooming off from some prior universe; with this power, the nova adds her own bubble to the endless series.

The new universe connects to **Aberrant** Earth (or wherever the nova is when she makes her universe), with one additional point of contact per extra success the nova dedicates to the purpose. The additional points must all be places the nova could go, through physical travel or powers. Before creating a gateway in some place shielded by defensive powers or otherwise inaccessible, the nova must spend the quantum energy and make the rolls necessary to get there; even though she doesn’t actually move at this time, she must put forth the mental effort to create a path through the quantum field to her desired gateway sites. The gateway may also occupy a point in relation to the nova rather than relative to the world at large — one step to her right, for instance.

The details of the new universe depend entirely on the nova’s ability to form a coherent image and concentrate while using this power. Any features the nova doesn’t specify default to the same as the nova’s own universe, so that an “unspecified” universe is an exact duplicate. (This isn’t altogether useless: a nova could, for instance, study Duplicate Earth’s secrets, wipe out her competitors there as she goes and use that information back on Original Earth.) The two universes diverge once created, of course, with quan-

tum indeterminacy producing different random happenstance in each case unless the nova specifies a continued quantum link.

With one success, the nova gets only a very vague approximation of her intended universe. With 10 successes, she gets precisely what she wants in every detail, including the subconscious desires she didn’t actually concentrate on but which she’d have included if only she thought of it. Five successes are sufficient to produce a very satisfactory universe. The nova can’t get more successes on any one roll than she has dots in Universe Creation (see below for how to refine a universe once created).

The nova can generally only maintain one universe at a time, but she can reshape her universe from within and from without with equal ease. Once she’s created it, the nova can tinker with her new universe by making another Universe Creation roll. The first time she does this, the roll suffers a +1 difficulty penalty, and it goes up by two every time thereafter (+3, +5 and so on). As long as she gets at least one success, any further successes add to her first roll, allowing finer definition. If she fails, nothing happens if she got more successes on the failed roll than on the original one. If she failed and got fewer successes this time, subtract the difference — her universe becomes less desirable. On a botch, the entire new universe, from ants to meteors to sentient creatures, takes on a subtle malevolent tone toward the nova, and at the Storyteller’s discretion, the new universe may try to prevent the nova, in whatever ways it might devise, from returning to her native universe for a period of one week for each dot she has in Universe Creation.

The default gateway resembles a Warp. It’s slightly visible as a distortion in the air, and anyone can move through; while in use, the gateway ripples and stretches through empty air, like a stylized hole in reality. One extra success lets the nova modify the appearance of the gateway to anything she prefers, from complete invisibility to brimstone-reeking pits to Hell. Each extra success the nova applies to the purpose lets her limit the range of people who can move through, granting the equivalent of a target-restriction weakness (see p. 141, below). With five successes, the nova can make the gateway usable only by the people she specifically grants permission to at any given time — wherever she is, she feels a semi-conscious tingle, can identify the people trying to go through the gateway and can choose to allow or disallow their passage.

Each gateway has its own criteria and must be regulated separately. (If the nova makes further Universe Creation rolls after the first, extra successes can go to gateway definition as well.) The nova can close one or more gateways at any time, simply by choosing to close them. Reopening them requires a

separate Universe Creation roll, subject to the cumulative rising difficulty, with half the successes required first time around required to reestablish the gateways. Creating new gateways requires the same number of successes as building the initial ones.

There are no boundaries on the nature of the new universe. It could be just like the nova's homeworld except that everyone she hates was never born due to extra-effective contraception. It could be a classic fantasy realm. It could be an Aristotelian universe with crystal spheres. It could be a nightmare realm with vampires and zombies. The new universe may not have an Earth at all — or it may, but the gateways go somewhere else. Time may flow faster or slower in the new universe. Whatever the nova chooses to imagine, that's what she gets.

To maintain an existing universe while creating a new one, the nova must spend three points of permanent Willpower. This sacrifice stabilizes the earlier creation while her attention goes elsewhere.

Extras: None

The Mark Of: Customization

Each nova's powers work in a distinctive way. Novas don't read the rulebook and pick generic powers. They erupt and make their subconscious desires and fears manifest. The rules provide ways of quantifying common effects. They're a starting point, not the last word. This section covers ways of tuning powers, giving them strengths and weaknesses of various sorts.

The modifications presented here each apply to the particular powers you choose to modify. They change how those powers work. They don't give you bonus points to spend elsewhere; these aren't like Flaws.

Weaknesses

A weakness is just what it sounds like. One point of weakness means that your character's power is weaker than normal in particular way. For each level of weakness, choose *one* of the following:

- **Dice Pool.** Roll less dice than usual when using this power, or add one less success than usual if the power doesn't call for dice rolls.

- **Range.** Subtract one from the power rating when calculating range. If the final range is half a meter or less, treat it as requiring touch. With this weakness, a power whose normal range is touch can only affect the nova.

- **Area.** Subtract one from the power rating when calculating range. If the final area is a meter across or less, treat it as affecting just one target.

- **Duration.** Subtract one from the power rating when calculating duration, or shorten the category of duration — a Permanent power becomes Maintenance, a Maintenance power becomes Concentration, and a Concentration power becomes Instant.

- **Damage.** Roll one less die than usual when totaling damage, or add one less level of damage than usual if the power doesn't involve rolled damage.

- **Multiple Actions.** A power that normally allows multiple actions can only be used once at a time.

Some forms of weakness count as one or more points, depending on their precise definition. See the charts below for Target Restrictions, Sensory Basis and Linked Powers.

Target Restrictions

This category of weakness calls for a measure of judgment and cooperation on the part of players and Storytellers. Like many aspects of **Aberrant**, you can abuse it horribly and torture out tremendous advantages at little or no real cost to the character. If everybody you play with has similar notions of appropriate style, it could even be fun; it's just not what these rules focus on. The guidelines here do assume that you'll police yourself a little bit and work with your Storyteller to rate a restriction you have in mind against the examples provided here. "Only works on enemies" is *not* a weakness, for instance, nor would be "Only works while nova is alive."

No list of examples can cover the range of possibilities. Apply the general principle for each level, negotiate where there's uncertainty, and don't fret too much about something possibly being at the "wrong" level.

1 Point

The power doesn't work in some specific set of circumstances. It's fine most of the time, just not always.

- **Animal Mastery.** The power doesn't work against birds or doesn't work against cephalopods.

- **Domination.** The power doesn't work against people who are Wounded or more seriously injured or doesn't work against children under 12.

- **Invisibility.** The power doesn't work in direct sunlight or doesn't work under sodium fluorescent lights.

2 Points

The power only works in half the range of possible circumstances.

- **Animal Mastery.** The power only works against marine animals or only against land-dwelling animals.

- **Domination.** The power affects only men or women.

- **Invisibility.** The power only works outdoors or only works during the daytime.

3 Points

The power only works against a fairly broad but defined set of targets.

- **Animal Mastery.** The power only works against fish (not sea mammals or other forms of aquatic life) or only against land-dwelling mammals.

- **Domination.** The power only works against Muslims or people who aren't injured and suffer from no chronic disease.

- **Invisibility.** The power only works between sunrise and noon or only in the week centered on the full moon.

4 Points

The power only works against a fairly narrow set of targets.

- **Animal Mastery.** The power only works on sharks or only against primates.

- **Domination.** The power only works against people who've been deprived of sleep for more than 24 hours.

- **Invisibility.** The power only works within an hour of sunrise or sunset or only when the sky is at least half overcast.

5 Points

The power only works against a very specific set of targets.

- **Animal Mastery.** The power only works against great white sharks or only against gorillas.

- **Domination.** The power only works against people between 20 and 30 years old or only against people with cancer.

- **Invisibility.** The power works only on the infrared wavelength.

Sensory Basis

Most ranged powers require sight to use. Not all novas rely on sight, however. It's possible to base a power on any of the other senses, with varying levels of weaknesses associated with each.

- **Sound.** 2 point weakness. Basing a power on sound lets the nova aim at targets she can't see but which make noise in the vicinity. It cancels out much or all of the penalty for operating in darkness, intense light and other visually disruptive conditions. On the other hand, it's completely useless in vacuum. Line of hearing is generally half or less the line of sight, and the speed of sound is significantly slower than the speed of light (unless the nova is playing around with exotic matter or highly, *highly* unusual conditions).

- **Scent.** 3 point weakness. Basing a power on scent is a lot like basing it on sound but less so. It takes enhanced senses to resolve specific scents at more than a few meters, and while sound is useful in liquid, scent generally isn't.

- **Touch or Taste.** 4 point weakness. These senses share the same general limitations. They're

not really ranged at all and go beyond normal human reach only if the nova happens to have an extraordinarily long tongue or fingers or other sensory organs. Nor are human beings very good at discriminating between a wide variety of tastes or textures reliably; enhances senses are even more important for these senses than with scent.

No, you can't use Telepathy or other senses that are themselves dependent on powers for sensory basis, nor for the supplemental-senses strengths. These strengths and weaknesses apply to the normal set of human senses, even if enhanced through powers.

Linked Powers

Some novas can't use just one power at a time. The rules present distinct powers, but in the mind of a nova with linked powers, they all tie together. The degree of connection determines how much of a weakness the linkage is: The less time the nova has between using one power and using the other one linked to it, the more levels of weakness.

Level of Weakness Activation Delay

1	Quantum turns
2	1 turn
3	Simultaneous, no dice-pool penalty
4	Simultaneous, normal split-actions penalty

Each power requires its usual quantum costs and other restrictions to activate.

If the nova doesn't activate the linked powers within the time allowed, the active powers shut off, and the nova takes one automatic level of bashing damage per level of link weakness. The nova must also let one turn per level of link weakness go by before attempting to use either of the powers again.

Some novas have powers that don't have to be simultaneously activated, but one only works if the other is already on.

Level of Weakness Dependency

1	Can use the dependent power on its own, at half normal power rating
2	Cannot use the dependent power at all except in conjunction with the primary power

Example: *The Chakran erupted in a fit of panic during a CAT scan, filled with an awareness of magnetic fields and their importance to life processes. His Luck and Healing work best while he's maintaining a Magnetic Field (a Magnetic Mastery technique) — they're at half normal rating if he tries using them without the proper magnetic environment. This is a 1 point weakness. As his studies develop, he becomes more convinced of magnetism's fundamental role, and he gains a second level of weakness. Now he can only Heal or enjoy Luck after creating a Magnetic Field.*

Tradeoffs

Three points of weakness in a power let you buy one Extra for three nova points, without raising the quantum level of the power. Five levels of weakness let you reduce the power's level by one (to a minimum of 1, naturally).

Strengths

Some novas can use their powers better than normal, in some specific way. Strengths each apply to a single aspect of a power. You can buy strengths two ways. Each level of a weakness lets you buy one level of strength for some other aspect of the power, and you can buy strengths independently at half the cost of one level of the power (rounded up). Note that buying a weakness and then adding a strength in that same aspect of the power is just silly, and your Storyteller is well within her rights to stop you from wasting time that way.

- **Range.** Add one to the power rating when calculating range. A power that's normally touch-only gains a one-meter range for the first level of strength in this aspect.

- **Area.** Add one to the power rating when calculating range. A power that's normally single-target in effect gains a one-meter area of effect for the first level of strength in this aspect.

- **Duration.** Add one to the power rating when calculating duration, or increase the category of duration — a Concentration power becomes Maintenance, while a Maintenance power becomes Permanent.

- **Damage.** Roll one more die than usual when totaling damage, or add one more level of damage than usual if the power doesn't involve rolled damage.

- **Multiple Actions.** A power that can normally only be used once at a time can be used with the multiple-actions rules. (Note: This requires two levels of strength applied to this aspect of the power.)

Yes, these levels of strength are quite a bit less dramatic than the power-modifying Extras. That's deliberate. These are incremental modifications, useful but not radically changing the basic nature of the power they alter.

Supplementary Senses

It takes two levels of strength to use a ranged power based on a second sense in addition to sight and one level of strength thereafter for additional senses. The sensory basis weaknesses apply to using senses *instead of* sight; these strengths cover the ability to use senses *in addition to* sight. The nova decides which sense to use with a particular power at the time of each attempt. Add one strength level per sense (three for the first, two per sense thereafter) if the nova can switch between senses during the duration of an ongoing power.

Example: Michael Donighal (who would later become *Divis Mal*) became *Awe-Inspiring* (a *Mega-Appearance enhancement*) quite early on. In one of his periods of withdrawal from the world, he studied how to create similarly manipulative effects through senses other than sight. Careful voice training, psychological study and exotic research let him gain the benefits of *Awe-Inspiring* through voice and other sound as well as through sight. Now the simple fact of his stride, coat or cloak snapping in a convenient breeze, triggers as much awe in others as his commanding features. It takes two strength levels to allow Mal to decide that on this particular occasion, he'll be *Awe-inspiring* through sound rather than sight. With a third level of strength, he can change back and forth between sight and sound at will.

Novus Ex Machina

The Quick and Dirty Guide to Gadgeteering

All quantum power is personal, drawing on the nova's deepest hopes and fears. Many people dream of changing the world directly, and their powers reflect that. Others dream of changing the world through tools — they expect on a subconscious level to build the new world rather than reshaping the existing one with bare hands and force of will. Engineers and gadgeteers also dream of having the power of a god, it's just that in their case the god is Vulcan or Ogun.

This section focuses on tools rather than concepts. See **Aberrant: Year One**, p. 109, for rules on expanding the scope of known science. All gadgeteering efforts culminate (if they work) in some specific tool.

A "gadget" is any device that mimics the effects of a normal human Ability or a nova power. Nova gadgeteers cannot duplicate psi aptitudes, thanks to the fundamental conflict between quantum and noetic forces. The gadget may be mechanical, electronic, nanotechnological or even biological — these rules do allow for genetic engineering, phenotype manipulation and other tricks to transform living tissue.

Gadgets cannot fully duplicate the range of quantum powers. Some things just don't work in hardware (or wetware), no matter how hard a nova tries.

But I'm Iron Man!

For good or ill, no, in **Aberrant** you're probably not Iron Man. Your character isn't, either.

These rules reflect the distinctive cosmology of the **Aberrant** universe. This is how quantum powers work. If you want to use the **Aberrant** rules for some other setting, discuss possibilities with your Storyteller. Perhaps the gadget doesn't need a separate dice pool but automatically works with the user's own Ability, or perhaps the cost for extra levels in various factors remains constant rather than becoming more expensive above a threshold. In another universe, you can modify the rules to reflect that universe's nature.

Making Things

Gadgeteering requires an extended Engineering roll for mechanical and electronic devices or an extended Science roll for bio-engineering. Novas can learn Quantum Engineering as a specialty for Engineering and Biological Engineering as a specialty for Science, for use in gadgeteering efforts. A nova seeking to make gadgets with quantum powers must have Mega-Intelligence, and especially advanced gadgets require either the Engineering or Scientific Prodigy enhancement (for inorganic devices) or the Medical Prodigy enhancement (for biological ones).

Any attempt at gadgeteering requires a minimum of one hour per success required for the nova's desired result. (Fast Tasks can reduce this time.) The nova can work as many hours per day as her physiology allows; the player makes one gadgeteering roll per 24-hour period. The device becomes operational when the nova accumulates the minimum number of successes. She can continue to work on the gadget after that, applying the successes from additional rolls as she sees fit.

A failure on any gadgeteering roll cancels out any successes earned in that 24-hour period. Two failures in a row require the nova to start the whole process over. A botch can have any one of several effects, including but not limited to:

- Add one success to the total. The Storyteller makes a note that the gadget has some fatal flaw and will cease to work at some inconvenient moment.
- The device does the opposite of what the character intended.
- The device blows up or otherwise painfully collapses, inflicting one level of bashing damage per success accumulated so far on the nova and anyone else nearby. This damage can be soaked.

The Storyteller should vary the results, since the whole point of a botch is that it produces something unpredictable and bad.

Required Successes

This list may look formidable. Don't worry, it's straightforward in practice. Skip ahead to the examples, if you want.

Each gadget has the following properties.

- **Uses per scene.** The number of times the gadget can imitate a particular power without requiring quantum from a storage system or from a nova using the gadget at the time. The gadgeteer sets this total separately for each power.

- **Dice pool.** The number of dice to roll when seeing if the gadget works. The gadgeteer sets this total separately for each power, too.

- **Effect level.** If the attempted gadget use succeeds, the gadget produces a fixed level of effect. (This is one of the key differences between gadgets and innate powers — novas can't push gadget-based powers.) The gadgeteer sets this total per power.

- **Quantum.** The gadget needs enough intrinsic Quantum to meet the Quantum minima for all the various powers. The gadgeteer only sets this for the power with the highest Quantum minimum; the others are covered automatically.

- **Power rating.** The level of each particular power. This differs from effect level in some cases, as when power rating sets the power's range or duration as well as damage and the like. The gadgeteer sets this level independently per power.

- **Quantum storage.** Quantum energy available for extra uses. The nova sets this once for the gadget as a whole.

- **Versatility.** Who can use the gadget and under what circumstances. This varies per power.

- **Duration.** How long the gadget lasts, and what happens when it wears out. The gadgeteer sets this just once for the whole gadget.

- **Durability.** The gadget's capacity to withstand damage. This applies to the gadget as a whole.

Uses Per Scene

Spend one success to add one use per scene, up to (gadgeteer's Quantum - 1) uses. Spend two successes to go from (Quantum - 1) to (Quantum) uses, and spend double the successes for each additional use: four for (Quantum + 1) uses, eight for (Quantum + 2) uses and so on.

Dice Pool

Spend one success to give the gadget one dot of an Attribute or Ability score the nova possesses, up to one less than the nova's own rating. Spend two successes to go from (Trait - 1) dots to (Trait) dots, and spend double the successes for each additional dot thereafter.

Spend two successes per dot for an Ability the nova doesn't possess but which someone else can demonstrate in the lab during gadget creation. The



demonstrator must spend two hours per dot of Ability the nova seeks to incorporate into the gadget. The gadget's Ability score can't go higher than (gadgeteer's Quantum - 1) or (gadgeteer's Engineering or Science Ability - 1), whichever is higher.

Spend three successes per dot for an Ability the nova doesn't possess and must study at a distance. This requires three hours of careful observation, research and general experimentation per dot of Ability. The gadget's Ability score can't go higher than (gadgeteer's Quantum - 2) or (gadgeteer's Engineering or Science Ability - 2), whichever is higher.

A gadget's user can choose to use her innate Ability rather than the gadget's own dice pool. If the user's total is less than the gadget's, just go ahead and use it. If the user's total is higher, she must pay one quantum point per level of difference, whether out of the gadget's reserves or from her own quantum pool. Baseline users cannot exceed the gadget's built-in dice pool.

Effect Level

Spend two successes to add one effect level, up to (gadgeteer's Quantum - 1). An effect level is one successes' worth of result: However large the dice pool, a gadget with one effect level can only inflict one level of damage, affect the smallest unit of target substance, work on the minimum number of tar-

gets and so on. Spend four successes to go from (Quantum - 1) to (Quantum) levels of effect, and double the successes for each level thereafter. The gadget can't produce more than (Quantum x 2) effect levels.

When building a gadget with a quantum power, the gadgeteer can decide which effect levels work like Quantum levels and which work like power rating levels, as long as she assigns at least as many to Quantum as the Quantum minimum of the power. For normal Abilities, the nova can allocate effect levels to Attribute and Ability results, as long as there's at least one level of Attribute-based effect.

Quantum

Spend two successes to add a dot of Quantum score, up to (gadgeteer's Quantum - 1). Spend four successes to go from (Quantum - 1) to (Quantum) dots, and spend 16 successes to go from (Quantum) to (Quantum + 1) dots. The gadget can't have a Quantum score more than one higher than the gadgeteer's own Quantum.

Power Rating

Spend one success to add one dot of power rating in a power the nova possesses, up to (gadgeteer's Quantum - 1). Spend two successes to go from (Quantum - 1) to (Quantum) dots, and double the successes required for each step thereafter. The gadget's total

Quantum + power rating dots for any given power cannot exceed twice the nova's Quantum.

Spend two successes per dot of power rating in a power the gadgeteer doesn't possess but can study in the lab, up to (gadgeteer's Quantum - 1) or (gadgeteer's Science or Engineering - 1), whichever is higher. (For Mega-Attributes, the limit is (2 [gadgeteer's Mega-Intelligence] - 1). The demonstrator must spend three hours per dot of power, so that the gadgeteer can study all its effects.

Spend three successes per dot of power rating in a power the gadgeteer can only study at a distance, up to a limit of (Quantum - 2) or (Science or Engineering - 2), whichever is higher. (For Mega-Attributes, the limit is (gadgeteer's Mega-Intelligence - 2).) The nova must spend six hours per dot of power in research.

Separate techniques cost the same as entirely distinct powers to build into a gadget.

Quantum Storage

Spend one success to place two dots of quantum in some appropriate sort of battery, up to half the gadgeteer's quantum pool, rounded up. By default, the nova loses this quantum until it's actually spent; spend an extra success per dot to allow the nova to power up the gadget but regain the use of her own quantum pool as usual. Spend an additional success per dot to allow the pool to recharge, at one dot per hour.

If the gadget lacks a power source, it must draw on the quantum pool of the nova using it.

Why Make Gadgets for Myself?

The primary reason for a nova to make gadgets for her own use is effect level. A gadget works as designed, no matter how depleted or injured or otherwise impaired the nova is at the time.

Versatility

By default, only the gadgeteer can use her creations (though, given time, a nova with Mega-Intelligence equal to or greater than the gadgeteer's will also be likely to figure the device out). Spend three successes to allow other novas to use a particular power in a gadget and five successes to make it accessible to baselines.

Baseline users must spend one quantum out of the gadget's battery for every use and double that for each successive use after the uses-per-scene limit. Nova users don't have to spend quantum until they exceed the uses per scene limit, and then spend just one quantum per additional use either out of the gadget's battery or their own quantum pool (assuming the gadget has some place for the nova to channel quantum into it), because their intrinsic quantum automatically provides routine operating force.

Duration

By default, a gadget remains stable and functional for (12 - gadget's Quantum) months. Thereafter, its dice pools fall by one dot per week. When the last of them reaches zero, any remaining stored quantum discharges in a flash that inflicts one level of bashing damage per quantum point on anyone within (Quantum) meters. Spend one success to increase the operational lifespan by one month. The gadgeteer can always disassemble the gadget before its final discharge and can choose to release remaining quantum explosively or in a slow trickle.

Durability

A biological gadget generally has one less health level than usual for its species or composition (since the extensive modifications required for gadgetry interfere with normal physiology), while an inorganic gadget has one less health level and soak rating than usual for the material strength of its most fragile component (see *Aberrant*, p. 257). Spend one success to add an additional health level or soak rating, and double the number of successes for each health level thereafter. The gadget cannot gain more additional health levels than the gadgeteer's Quantum.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The Storyteller and player need to work together when settling on specific strengths or weaknesses for a gadget — some make a lot of sense, and some just don't. It takes two successes to add a level of strength to one power in the gadget and three successes for a level of strength that applies to the gadget itself, affecting all powers in it. Each level of weakness applied to a specific power reduces the success total by one, and each level of weakness applied to the gadget itself, affecting all powers, reduces the success total by two.

Examples

That was a lot. Time to see it in action.

What Am I Doing?

Let's look at this from the point of view of your character.

Your nova doesn't allocate successes or keep track of dots in various ratings. She thinks thoughts like "I want this gadget to let me fire as quickly as my friend Headshot" and "I want these mechanisms to produce about the same chance of success I have when using my power directly."

Most novas soon develop a working sense of how much effect they can produce, with what reliability and at what cost to themselves. In fact, a fair number of them work out rating scales of various sorts. Some match game mechanics closely, others don't. If it's appropriate, go ahead and use such things for "color" as you play out the process of gadgeteering. Just keep your nova from talking as if she were reading the rules alongside you.

Example #1: Squid Williams has had one too many fights in which he ran out of energy before his assailant did, so he's going to build a monocle with the power of his optical laser blast. The Squid has Quantum 4, so he can get to three uses per scene with one success each. (The fourth use per scene would cost him two successes, and he wants to keep this relatively straightforward.) He has Dexterity 5, so he can give it four dots of Dexterity dice pool for one success each. It doesn't need any Ability-based dice pool, just the power rating, which he'll come to in a moment. With his Quantum 4, he can give it three effect levels for two successes each, and he decides to settle for that for the time being. He allocates the minimum necessary (one) to Quantum and two to power rating, so that it'll do $(2 + [2 \times 4])$, or 10, dice of lethal damage with each successful discharge.

He settles for a gadget Quantum of 3, again for two successes per dot. He has three dots in Quantum Bolt, but he wants the gadget to have five dots for the sake of range. The first two dots cost one success each. The third dot requires two successes, the fourth requires four and the fifth requires eight, for a total of $(1 + 1 + 2 + 4 + 8)$, or 16, successes. The gadget now has Quantum 3 + Quantum Bolt 5, which is twice his own Quantum of 4, as high as it can go.

The Squid has the stock quantum pool, 28 dots in his case. He gives the gadget a quantum battery of 10 dots — he's not sure he'll ever need that much, but it doesn't hurt to prepare. Since he prefers not to tie up a big chunk of his quantum pool indefinitely, he spends the two successes for every two dots of quantum (or one success for each dot), for another 10 successes.

He thinks that he just might want to hand his laser monocle off to someone else at some point, so he'll need five more successes to make it usable by both novas and baselines. He's satisfied with the default longevity of $(12 - 3)$, or nine, months; he may want to redesign the thing later. The laser monocle's weak point is its glass lens, giving it one health level and no soak at all. He decides to beef it up, allocating three successes each to give it three more health levels and a soak of 3.

All told, he's looking at 3 successes for uses, 4 successes for Dexterity dice pool, 6 successes for Quantum, 15 successes for power rating, 10 successes for quantum storage, 5 successes for versatility and 6 successes for durability. That's a total of 49 successes required. The Squid has Intelligence 5, Mega-Intelligence 2 and Engineering 4, with the Quantum Engineering specialty. With Mega-Stamina 1, he can work around the clock in the lab. He has a dice pool of 10 regular dice (Intelligence, Engineering, specialty bonus) and 2 mega-dice. In theory he could complete the laser monocle

in just four days, though in practice, it's likely to take longer than that.

Example #2: Colombian botanist Esperanza Ruiz erupted with genius even by nova standards but also with her native shyness reinforced to pathological levels by aberration. Rather than plunge into the spotlight herself, she watches for worthy individuals — novas or baseline — and privately offers them assistance in the form of algae-like layers of matting which add powers when incorporated into clothes (or armor or costume). Recently she's become fascinated by the exploits of her countryman, police officer Jose Maria Felisando. He's brilliantly effective as an individual... enough so that he's attracted the attention of powerful criminal syndicates. He needs to spend more time on teamwork, but frankly, he's not very good at it. Ruiz sets about helping Felisando, with a bioengineered armored vest that will enhance his social capabilities.

Ruiz starts with 5 dots each of Manipulation and Charisma and a dot each of Mega-Manipulation and Mega-Charisma. (She'd like more Mega-Attribute rating, but her own Mega-Intelligence is 3, so a single dot is all she can build in.) She has 2 dots each in the regular Attributes and neither of the Mega-Attributes. The first dot (one less than her own rating) requires one success. The second dot requires two successes, the third four, the fourth eight, and the fifth 16. It takes three successes for the Mega-Attribute dot and six hours' research. That's a total of 34 successes for each of the 5 regular dots + 1 Mega-dot combos, or 68 successes total, plus 12 hours' research.

She goes on to build in two levels each of Interrogation and Command. She doesn't have either and studies them in use from a distance. This takes three successes and three hours' research per dot; fortunately, two dots is well below the cap, since she has Quantum 4 and Science 5 with the Biological Engineering specialty. The total for Ability dice pool dots is 12 successes and 12 hours' research.

She's realized this project is going to take a while anyway, so she decides to put more time than she originally planned into effect levels. With a dice pool of seven regular dice and one mega-die, Officer Felisando could do quite well for himself. She builds in six levels of effect for each of the Abilities. The first three require one success each; the fourth requires two; the fifth requires four; the sixth requires eight. That's 17 successes for each Ability, or 34 total.

The single dot of Mega-Attribute requires one dot of Quantum, which takes two successes. Since Felisando is a baseline, Ruiz must build in a quantum pool. She decides on a pool of 15, somewhat less than half her own quantum pool of 36, and

makes it capable of regeneration. That's three successes per dot, for a total of 45. An additional five successes are necessary to make the device usable by baselines; otherwise, it wouldn't do Felisando much good.

Ruiz wants the vest to last for two years. By default, it's good for 11 months, so it takes 13 more successes. She also wants it to be durable and allocates a total of 10 successes to give it five health levels and a soak of 5.

The vest takes $(68 + 12 + 35 + 2 + 45 + 5 + 13 + 10)$, or 190, successes to make, plus 24 hours' research into Mega-Attribute and Ability behavior. Ruiz has Intelligence 5, Mega-Intelligence 3, Medical Prodigy and Science (Biological Engineering) 5, giving her a dice pool of 11 regular dice, three megadice and the bonus from the Mental Prodigy roll. The vest likely takes a solid month of work on her part, but she regards the effort as worthwhile.

Example #3: The Hollyhock Goddess decides to build a cryptographic tool for her nova allies. She has tremendous powers of information and entropy manipulation, but she's not always around to help with clues and secrecy.

She doesn't envision her Crypto Glove being necessary all that often. She has Quantum 6 and regards five uses per scene — the maximum possible for one success each — as perfectly sufficient. She has Intelligence 5 (and Mega-Intelligence 3) and gives the Crypto Glove 4 Intelligence dice for its dice pool, at the cost of one success each. She wants the glove to be useful for most cases and settles on four effect levels, at one success each.

Information Manipulation, the power she wants to use, has a Quantum minimum of 5. She can give the glove Quantum 5 at the cost of two successes each, for a total of 10 successes. She gives the glove three levels each in Coherence, Steganography and Translation. Since she has more than four levels of Information Manipulation, each of these costs one success per dot; nine successes covers the three techniques.

She dispenses with a quantum pool for the glove, since only novas will be using it. Three successes make the three techniques accessible to nova users (the versatility rating). Five successes increase the glove's longevity from a default of seven months to twelve. She doesn't bother giving it extra durability, on the assumption that it's not really for use in dangerous circumstances.

The Hollyhock Goddess has a particular effect in mind: The user wears the glove and touches the text to be understood (or concealed), line by line.

Her player and the Storyteller agree that this is a three point weakness, and since it applies to all three techniques, each level reduces the necessary successes by two.

All told, the Crypto Glove requires $(5 + 4 + 4 + 10 + 9 + 3 + 5 - 6)$, or 34, successes. With her Intelligence 5, Mega-Intelligence 3, Scientific Prodigy and Engineering 4, she'll be able to put the Crypto Glove in the hands of her friends in a matter of days.

Why isn't this in Trinity?

Much has been said about keeping Aberrant-era technology in line with the ostensibly greater tech levels of Trinity.

Forget about it.

In the days before, during and especially after the Aberrant War, whole nascent technologies produced by Mega-Intelligent novas are destroyed. Laboratories are raided and burned. The stormtroopers of Utopia's S&T Division initially take the creations of nova inventors for study and research purposes, but once a few of the gadgets (or androids or bioengineered lifeforms) misfire, blow up or devour investigators, Utopia and the Directive put a blanket destruction policy in place to rid the world of "tainted tech." If nova scientists and gadgeteers do not hide their research notes, blueprints, prototypes and the like, the items are impounded and destroyed. Patents are rescinded and prototypes melted to slag. At the peak of the anti-nova, anti-intellectual uproar following the Aberrant War, hundreds of hypertechnical devices are crushed, burned and melted down every day. Project Utopia (what remains of it) and, later, the Aeon Society do an aggressive job of mopping up, and by the Trinity era, what little is left — whether hidden in cleverly camouflaged undersea research vaults or in hastily excavated holes dug by frantic inventors running for their lives — is perhaps a 10th of one percent of the body of technological wonders created by novas.

It's disturbing, but it sometimes happens that knowledge, even archived knowledge — notes, books, magnetic, digital and optical storage media — can be destroyed or lost. When the Library of Alexandria was burned, Western culture lost philosophical texts, mathematical treatises, poetry, plays and other works of art and scholarship that will never be seen again.

Ugly things happen in times of war. Fear makes knowledge (and those possessing knowledge) seem sinister and, in so doing, makes a virtue out of ignorance. Of such things are dark ages made.





COME, GERYON, LET'S FINISH THIS.



I THINK YOU HAVE OTHER THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT!



TENSHI! ASAH! NAGINATA! GET THE PEOPLE OUT!

KYOJIN, HELP ME HOLD THE WALLS!



THERE WILL BE ANOTHER DAY, GERYON.

其利差三

CHAPTER THREE: NOVA AFFILIATIONS

The pride of Nippon, and heroes to people everywhere, Nippontai is a nova team sponsored by the Japanese government (and various allied corporations), a symbol of *Saisho*, "The New Beginning" of Japan.

Nippontai formed fairly quickly after the Japanese stock market crash and the subsequent *Saisho* plan to resurrect the Japanese economy in 1999. The government was quick to see the value of novas employed in a variety of fields but, most particularly, as a source of public pride and a symbol of a better world. The immense popularity of Project Utopia's Team Tomorrow made that clear. Japan was also seriously concerned about losing what novas it had to organizations like Utopia, so Nippontai provided a place where Japanese novas could serve their country and become local heroes, accompanied by extremely generous salaries and benefits.

The project was a success, and Nippontai quickly recruited several new Japanese novas. The government established a headquarters for the team inside a reconstructed Tokugawa-era castle near Osaka, equipped with all the technology and amenities they could provide. They also provided an extensive civilian staff to handle the day-to-day matters of running Nippontai, dealing with the public and finding and training new novas as members of the team.

Nippontai grew slowly, and the team has lost two members since its founding. Haruhiko "Tama" Otani, left the team to put his superhuman marksmanship and weapons skills to work as an elite, working for DeVries among others (still a sore point between DeVries and the Japanese government). Masae "Ku-rashi" Nomura was killed in action fighting arms dealers in the East China Sea. Unfortunately, Nippontai was unaware the dealers had hired a nova elite to protect their operations. Ku-rashi's killer remains unknown and at large. Many Japanese associate their beloved heroine's death with the death of Team Tomorrow member Jennifer "Slider" Landers. In fact, some conspiracy theorists link the two events as part of some greater plot.

Nippontai's main roster has stabilized around a core of eight members, several of which tend to operate behind the scenes, leaving the more public operations to those members whose powers are best suited to them. The current team roster includes the following:

- **Kou** ("Phoenix"): Mayumi Morioka is the leader of Nippontai, much to the surprise of many, including herself. Mayumi's nova powers of Telepathy and Telekinesis erupted when a riot broke out in Tokyo during the collapse of the Nikkei in mid-1999. She instinctively used them to help calm and control the rioters, preventing considerable damage. She became Nippontai's first recruit and discovered her nova abilities gave her a newfound sense of courage and determination, as well as making her a natural leader. Although Nippontai's sponsors have made it clear they would prefer to have a man leading the team, they have all been forced to concede that Kou's leadership has been exemplary and that none of the male members of the team are as suited for the job as she is.

- **Asahi** ("Rising Sun"): Ryu Okano erupted during a martial-arts competition, badly injuring his opponent when his hands burst into flames. He immediately came to the attention of Nippontai, and it offered to train him in the use of his abilities. Asahi is very strong and fast and capable of projecting superheated plasma from his hands and eyes. He greatly admired the older and more experienced Tama and took it personally when Tama left Nippontai to become an elite. The two haven't faced off since then, but most people know it won't be a pleasant reunion.

- **Naginata**: Michiko Kasai was known as one of the finest students of the naginata (Japanese sword-spear). During an exhibition, she struck a mislaid power cable and was nearly electrocuted, but instead, she erupted and gained the abilities to absorb and control electricity, to channel it through her chosen weapon and move with great speed and grace. Michiko admires Kou and wants to be more like Nippontai's dynamic leader.

- **Kyojin** ("Giant"): Haruki Furukawa came from a poor family in Chiba. When a minor earthquake collapsed the construction site he was working at, Haruki erupted, growing to giant size to push aside the rubble and help rescue his fellow workers. He is a humble fellow, somewhat awed by his membership in Nippontai and fiercely loyal to the team.

- **Tenshi** ("Angel"): Fujiko Kono tried to leap to her death in Tokyo to escape from a loveless marriage. Instead, she erupted and gained fiery wings and the power to fly at supersonic speed. Convinced her salvation was a sign, Fujiko began building a new life by joining Nippontai. She has had some problems with her ex-husband (they divorced shortly after her eruption), but Fujiko is happier now with her new "family" than she has ever been. As Tenshi, she is the fastest member of Nippontai and acts as the team's scout and messenger.

- **Denshi** ("Electron"): Norumyo Kozaka worked for one of the largest computer manufacturers in Japan, until his nova abilities erupted, giving him the ability to interface with computers directly and control the flow of electricity. Denshi operates Nippontai's state-of-the-art computer network and coordinates the team's communications. He also gathers information for Nippontai and — it is rumored — for certain Japanese corporations looking to stay ahead of Utopia's Science & Technology regulations.

- **Miko**: Mariko Kuramoto is a Shinto priestess who claims her "eruption" happened quietly and easily as a result of her meditation and spiritual devotion. She is a nova with enhanced sensory abilities, ESP and the intermittent power to foretell the future. She acts as another useful source of information for Nippontai, supplementing Denshi's information gathering. She and Denshi each find the other's methods and ideas alien, but they work together for the good of the team. Miko rarely accompanies Nippontai on field missions.

- **Kagemusha** ("Shadow Warrior"): The mysterious Kagemusha is master of the shadows. He takes his name from, able to cloak himself in darkness, moving silently and unobserved. He can see in total darkness and shape shadows into different forms. Kagemusha operates behind the scenes

most of the time, acting as a scout, infiltrator and spy for Nippontai. His dark power and mysterious nature makes him hugely popular with many young Japanese, much to Kagemusha's chagrin. The *manga* devoted to his exploits outsells all other solo stories. Kagemusha provides assistance to the Directorate from time to time, as part of Japan's cooperation with that organization.

Nippontai makes public-relations appearances, assists local and national authorities, provides help in times of emergency and disaster (such as the earthquake that triggered Kyojin's eruption) and protects Japanese sovereignty and interests. It deals with any nova lawbreakers in Japan (such individuals usually being too dangerous for conventional authorities). This had led to several brushes between Nippontai and Teragen members. Nippontai also seeks out and offers to train newly erupted Japanese novas in the use of their abilities.

Story Hooks

- The characters are asked to fight Nippontai at an "exhibition match" in Tokyo as a public-relations stunt, to the mutual benefit of Japan and the characters' organization. However, things don't go as planned when the members of Nippontai seem to go crazy during the fight and things become deadly serious. Are the Japanese novas under some sort of outside influence? And who would want Nippontai to look like aggressive killers?

- The characters pursue an investigation or a personal matter to Japan, possibly something for Utopia's S&T Division or involving the Yakuza. Any use of nova powers in Japan is almost sure to draw the attention of the authorities and Nippontai. A member of the team (most likely Kou) may even show up to give the characters a "friendly warning" about obeying the laws in Japan or else.

- A new nova erupts near Nagasaki, and all indications suggest she has considerable power. Nippontai wants to recruit her for the good of the country, Project Utopia and the Teragen want her for their causes, while the Aberrants want to ensure she stays out of Utopia's hands. The race is on to decide who controls the fate of this new nova. The only question is, does she *want* to pick a side?



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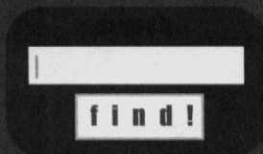
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Script excerpt from
documentary program
“Nova-Philes”,
episode #22.

Team Tomorrow. The Xtreme Warfare Federation. The DeVries Agency. Nippontai. Even the mysterious Teragen. *Nova-Philes* has brought you behind the scenes of some of the most powerful and famous nova teams in the world. In this episode of *Nova-Philes*, we take you to the nations of northern Europe, where we'll look at some of the brightest stars of its nova constellation, Nordlysene, the Northern Lights.

[Opening credits roll]

Scandinavia. The nations of northern Europe are known for their politically and socially progressive stance, along with their devotion to the quiet life. Nations like the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway have made up the backbone of the European Union, but they are far from the bright lights and bustling activity of cities like Paris, Venice, Antwerp and Ibiza. Still, the region is home to the cosmopolitan city of Amsterdam, as well as the Hague, and has a long history of supporting the United Nations, including the UN's association with Project Utopia. But the question is “does Utopia have a history of supporting Scandinavia?”

The 2001 decision to move Project Utopia's headquarters to Venice met with some criticism from the Netherlands, which hoped to host Utopia's new headquarters in Amsterdam, and hurt feelings from the people who felt Utopia rejected their city because Amsterdam's reputation was not “good enough” for Utopia.

[Insert sound clips of man-on-the-street interviews and 2001 press conferences.]

Not long after the Utopia decision, in early 2002, the Netherlands began quietly talking with the other Scandinavian nations about how they were going to handle the situation. Amsterdam was already one of the cultural centers of Europe, but the Scandinavians still felt overlooked by Utopia's focus on central and eastern Europe, particularly trouble in the Balkans. The Scandinavian nations were concerned about the collapse of the Russian

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N!sight

N!tre nous

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economy and the newly forming Russian Confederation, as well as trouble in Estonia and other former Soviet provinces. Utopia and the United Nations answered their questions with assurances that did nothing to ease their concerns — certainly not as much as a Team Tomorrow branch close at hand might have done.

The nations of northern Europe waited patiently, but even when Utopia reorganized Team Tomorrow into four teams, Team Tomorrow Europe remained in Venice. Following the announcement, representatives of the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden met and laid the foundation for an independent Scandinavian nova team. The team debuted three months later, calling themselves Nordlysene, or “Northern Lights,” officially known as *Det Fælles Nordiske Nova Team*, or “The Unified Nordic Nova Team.”

[Insert press conference footage.]

Since their formation, Nordlysene has served, most importantly, as a symbol of pride and achievement to the Scandinavian people. They’ve also helped protect their homelands from ecological and natural disasters. The Northern Lights send a clear message to nova elites, terrorists, and opportunists: “don’t bother Scandinavia, unless you want a whole lot of trouble.” The message seems to have been received loud and clear. The worst nova fights and trouble in Europe have steered clear of the Scandinavian nations.

When we come back, we’ll offer a closer look at the formation of Nordlysene, some of the team’s early activities, and their first conflict with Team Tomorrow. All that, and more, after these messages....



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Nordlysene, or The Northern Lights, as they are more popularly known, is a team of novas sponsored and organized by the governments of the nations of Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands. The team protects its sponsors' interests, aids their citizens and provides a public relations tool to equal (or at least balance) the attention Team Tomorrow Europe has drawn to central and southern Europe. The Northern Lights have been quite successful at all these tasks, making them (and other national nova-teams like Nippontai) the model for similar teams of the future.

Nordlysene is based in Amsterdam, but it operates throughout the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, and its members are drawn from all three nations. Since one of the team's prime functions is providing good public relations for Scandinavia, the Nordlysene novas are quite attractive, and many of them have Mega-Appearance, enough so the team has earned the nickname "the Swedish Nova Bikini Team" from some in the US and Project Utopia. The team currently includes:

- **Holger "Danske" Centery:** A nova from the Netherlands, Holger takes his nova name from a mythical Danish hero, also named Holger. His dashing good looks, tremendous strength and near-invulnerability make him one of the stars of the team, and his natural charisma and leadership abilities make him a hero in his homeland. Holger combines a sense of duty to all humanity with considerable patriotism.

- **Nikolaj Lemche:** A nova from the Netherlands with the power to control the weather, Nikolaj caused some trouble when he erupted a few years ago. An OpSite designer, he was ill-prepared for his powers, which appeared when he became lost in a snowstorm on a camping trip. Nikolaj's lack of meteorological skill resulted in some serious weather-related blunders, including a record heat wave (and some flash flooding) in Norway in February of 2005. He has since learned a great deal more about his powers and has helped prevent bad weather from seriously affecting his homeland.

- **Jennifer "Jernnæve" Svanberg:** Jernnæve lives up to her name, which means "Iron Fist." She has the ability to transform her entire body into steel, becoming incredibly strong and resistant to injury. Her steel-like form also allows Jernnæve to manipulate magnetic fields, controlling iron and ferrous metals, even magnetizing her own metallic body.

- **Evette "Lynet" Solonger:** Lynet ("Lightning") was a gifted track star when she erupted and gained the ability to outpace the fastest land vehicles in the world. Lynet can run at supersonic speed and has a

mind that reacts just as quickly as her body does. She's famous for becoming the first person to ever cross the North Sea... on foot.

- **Freya Oswyn:** Named for a Nordic goddess, Freya is her namesake's match in beauty and "mistress of the Northern Lights," able to manipulate light energy in a wide variety of ways. She usually surrounds herself with her trademark "necklace of light," shimmering spheres of multicolored light. During a blackout in Rotterdam, Freya lit up the entire city almost as bright as day for several hours, until power could be restored. She's the darling of much of Europe and was a regular visitor to the Amp Room in Ibiza prior to its destruction.

- **"Jättarna":** A young Swedish nova able to create and animate objects made of ice that is harder than steel. Jättarna is best known for his "ice giants," towering constructs of ice and snow, some as much as 10 meters tall. The teenaged Jättarna has earned a considerable reputation (to say nothing of a few euro) for his beautiful ice sculptures, some of which have lasted for over two years, thanks to his powers (and some judicious refrigeration).

Story Hooks

- While visiting the newly built Phoenix Room (either on business or pleasure), the characters happen to notice a gorgeous, golden-haired nova woman, surrounded by a halo of light, chatting with Count Raoul Orzaiz. It's not difficult to recognize the famous Freya of Nordlysene. The question is, why is she talking so intimately with one of the best known members of the Teragen?

- Something is sinking ships in the North Sea near Norway and Sweden. Rumors abound about mutant sea-creatures or monsters spawned by genetic tampering. Evidence does point toward sea-creatures but of a far more normal variety, except for the fact that their attacks seem remarkably well coordinated. Novas asked to investigate can easily run into Nordlysene doing their own investigation. They might try to work with the other team or find themselves becoming rivals.

- Nikolaj Lemche, Nordlysene's resident weather controller, has been having increasingly bad headaches while exercising his powers. Eventually, he begins having "seizures" similar to epileptic fits, only they also cause his powers to go out of control, creating bizarre weather over areas of Scandinavia, possibly even other parts of Europe. Nordlysene wants to avoid Utopia involvement that might make the team look bad, but they need help to treat Nikolaj's problem.

From the Nova-Watch OpSite discussion boards

Subject: Australian novas

From: mdawson@opcom.sydney.au (Matt Dawson)

Date: 7 April 2009 22:44:37 GMT

On 7 April 2009 at 20:05:56 GMT, novamanic@opsource.bos.us (Tom Miller) writes:

>I don't get the problem Australians on this site seem to have with their own novas. I mean,

>c'mon, Australis is a good team, and they've done a lot for your country, even if they
>aren't Team Tomorrow. I think the idea that every country should have its own Team
>Tomorrow is ridiculous, why can't you be happy with the novas you have?

Probably because Australis is made up of a bunch of wankers organized by the government to look good and pose for photo ops and not a whole hell of a lot else. We Australians have a fine, long-standing tradition you Americans may not understand: We hate our celebrities. Nobody wants to stand out in Australia because it just means everyone is going to get on your fucking tit about something. The higher you climb, the harder we'll try to pull you down.

That's why any Australian nova with an ounce of brains gets out of the country as fast as possible. Why the hell would you want to stay here and become the "hero" of the godforsaken Outback when you can join up with Team Tomorrow and become a media darling or sign on with DeVries and make scads of money? About the only novas who can be bothered to stay around here are the Teragen who like to tromp around the Outback looking for interesting things to do (they should have asked me — I could've told them there's not a damn thing out there worth the "Master Race's" attention) or novas that have patriotism and sunshine blown up their arses by the government because it's looking to hold on to a few novas of its own, just in case it needs them for something other than taking up news time and posing for the cameras.

Me? I'd rather scan old newsvids of Team Tomorrow than watch a live feed of anything Australis is doing, unless it involves Michelle Medford getting naked.

— Dawson

"Eruption. You can bet some really frustrated scientist came up with THAT term."

— Jordan McDevitt

Subject: Australian novas

From: lightkeeper@opcom.melbourne.au (The Lightkeeper)

Date: 7 April 2009 23:17:40 GMT

On 7 April 2009 at 22:44:37 GMT, mdawson@opcom.sydney.au (Matt Dawson) writes:

>That's why any Australian nova with an ounce of brains gets out of the country as fast as

>possible.

That may be true, but isn't that why Australis exists in the first place? To keep all our local novas from just flying (or teleporting or whatever) off to Europe, Africa and the rest of the world?

I think the novas of Project Utopia have done a fine job, but you can't forget about local problems and issues, and that's what Australis is all about. They're Australian novas taking care of Oz and not some other place halfway around the world. If there's a disaster in Sydney or Melbourne, you can bet it'll be Australis and not Team Tomorrow that shows up first and does whatever it can to help out. Why Utopia decided to put T2M-A/P on Talaud Island instead of here in Oz, I don't know.

The Lightkeeper

"Just do your best, it's all anybody can do."

— Corona

Departmental Letter

From a letter written by Anna DeVries to Recruitment and Public Relations:

Subject: Australian Recruitment

As you know, DeVries has had considerable success in recruiting potential nova agents from situations where they feel trapped or isolated. We attribute this to the fact that DeVries gives them something their unique abilities can solve. This may range from young novas seeking emancipation (such as young Mr. Scott), novas from third-world countries and novas from nations like Australia, eager to get involved in the international scene. Already, DeVries has a reputation as the first place for novas to come looking for fame and fortune (as opposed to doing "community service" with Utopia).

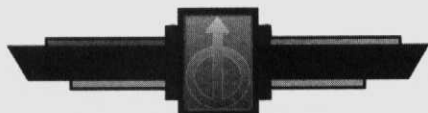
This is a good thing and something I want to see maintained. An area we need to tread more carefully in is Australia. Although we've had good luck there before, the country is becoming increasingly divided about "their" novas going off to work for us or Utopia or whomever. (As if its people didn't have the ability to make their own decisions!) The presence of the Australis nova team provides a "home team" to root for, although the Australians are notoriously disinterested in the group.

I'd like to see us play up some PR angles to keep DeVries looking glamorous and exciting in Australia, without it looking like we're impinging on "their" resources. Recruitment, I need surveys of projected long-term recruitment potential in this area and some ideas on avoiding trouble with the Teragen. It seems it's also taken a shine to parts of Australia. Must be the combination of isolation and "do whatever you want, just don't bother us" mentality. Maybe we can arrange a little sparring match with some Terat novas? It would certainly make for great footage. Look into it (discretely, of course), and take whatever measures are necessary to ensure the safety of our people.

I'd like to see reports on these matters by the end of the week.

Regards,

Anna DeVries



Australia, the Land Down Under. The sixth largest country in the world, Australia is blessed with a great deal of land but not an overly large number of people. Still, Australia boasts a number of local novas. Unfortunately, the majority of Australian novas have chosen careers and opportunities that led them away from their homeland. Although the majority of the population doesn't seem to mind, politicians in Canberra want to keep "local" novas around. They want the novas because of their potential for attracting tourism and their ability to handle local problems (without the need to call upon the resources of Project Utopia). The politicians also realize that any nation without a nova to call its own is seen as "second class" at best, and on that count, some Australians agree. Most importantly, one of Australia's most famous novas — and still a resident of the country — also agreed.

So the concept of the Australis was born — a government-supported nova team, similar to other national teams such as its "rivals" Nippontai (or so it appears from the Australian point of view). The nucleus of the team formed around Michelle "Corona" Medford, nova actress, spokesmodel and municipal defender of Sydney. The team has added members slowly and currently numbers four, with hopes of adding more novas soon:

- **Michelle "Corona" Medford:** Michelle Medford grew up in Sydney and dreamed of being a famous actress. She had some potential, but what she really lacked was the driving motivation, the willingness to do whatever it took to achieve her goals. Instead, Michelle lapsed into a teaching job after her graduation from university, and although she became involved in local theatre, she never pursued her dream. Afraid of the dark since she was a small girl, Michelle erupted during a blackout in Sydney on New Year's Eve 2000. Shining brightly, she flew up over the city, becoming an instant celebrity. Since then, Michelle has gotten everything she ever wanted: fame, fortune and hordes of adoring fans around the world. She considers Australis a personal project and wants to see it succeed.

- **Jenette "Coral" Rutherford:** A marine biologist working to study and preserve the Great Barrier Reef, Jenette Rutherford's eruption caused her to develop flesh like rocky coral, which she can shape at will, along with the ability to survive underwater for unlimited periods of time. Coral is known for her signature swimsuit and "hardbody" look, like an alabaster statue, along with her support for local ecological causes.

- **Kyle "Outback" Moore:** A wilderness ranger, Kyle Moore erupted when he was attacked by a



crocodile while assisting in the filming of a nature documentary. His abilities appear based around what scientists call “morphic resonance.” In short, he can acquire the abilities of virtually any animal by concentrating on that creature’s image. Kyle can fly like a bird, swim like a fish and lift cars with the strength of an elephant. The foreign media tagged him with the name “Outback” (which he hates), and he’s regularly flooded with requests from scientists interested in studying his powers and people who are convinced his powers bring him “closer to nature” (usually neopagans and would-be shamans).

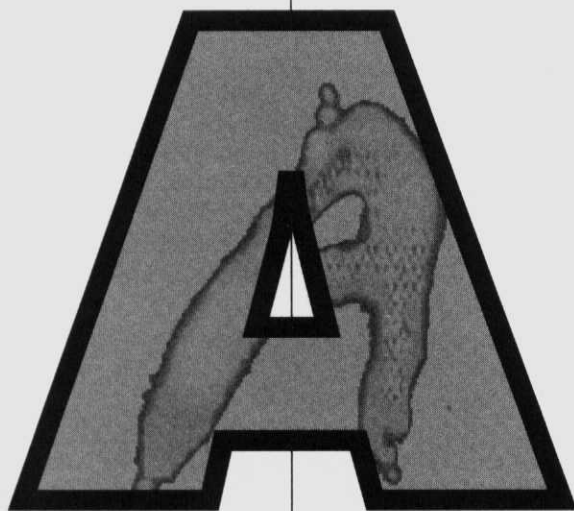
- **Michael “Phobos” Phelps:** Michael Phelps used to be afraid of nearly everything. Most importantly, he suffered from almost crippling agoraphobia — the fear of open places. His fear rendered Michael a shut-in for much of his life, unable to handle social situations or even going out to work. When he sought treatment with a Reichian therapist, Michael was forced to confront his fear, and he erupted. He developed the ability to sense the emotions of others and to project the fear inside him, creating terror in others. His eruption cured Michael’s own phobias, and he joined up with Australis as Phobos, “master of terror,” although some point out that Phelps *still* hasn’t gotten too far from home.

Australis primarily serves a public relations function. Its members pose for photos and show up at important events. The government allows them (particularly Corona) to do media work on the side, and Michelle Medford has a new career in India that everyone is watching. In between appearances, the group helps out local law-enforcement (again, primarily for the cameras) and handles any problems beyond the abilities of the local authorities.

Story Hooks

- The characters are involved in a public appearance in Australia, which, by definition, has to involve Australis. When a few Teragen radicals decide to crash the party, the characters discover their “allies” aren’t as helpful (or coordinated) as their press releases make them out to be.

- Pornographic video footage of Michelle Medford is making the rounds of the OpNet, at a speed only porn can travel. The leader of Australis is humiliated and infuriated, even more so since she claims she’s *never* allowed herself to be filmed like that. Corona makes it her personal crusade to track down the source of the infamous video, which turns out to be a rival nova actress with Copycat, looking to cause trouble for Corona.





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usFrom Newsweek,
4/11/14

Welcome to Nova-Town

Plenty of cities have their own nova. How does yours stack up?

Novas have been among us for years now, and many people are becoming used to the idea of a nova *living* in their home town, but how about a nova *working* for their home town? The latest nova trend is what has come to be known as the "nova franchise," cities hiring novas to represent them and their interests, and why not? Corporations began hiring novas shortly after they first appeared back in 1998, but it took municipalities a bit longer to get used to the idea of nova employees. Once they did, however, the idea caught on like wildfire. Now, every city that can possibly afford it wants a nova to call its own, and there are apparently plenty of novas willing to seize the opportunity. Thirty-four US cities have officially licensed novas working for them, along with dozens of cities in other countries.

The idea is a fairly simple one, dating all the way back to the comic books. Gotham City had Batman. Now, New York City has the Gothic Knight, and it doesn't have to go through its police commissioner or flash a spotlight skyward to get in touch with him. On the contrary, the Gothic Knight (like many nova "municipal defenders") maintains his own OpSite and a 24-hour help line run by the City of New York. Rather than just lurking in the shadows, the Gothic Knight also shows up during the day, although his nova powers are more than capable of turning day into night if he needs a little mood lighting. The Knight (as he's affectionately known by most New Yorkers) assists the NYPD, puts in public appearances and generally helps protect the city, particularly from quantum-powered problems.

A number of other cities in the United States and elsewhere have picked up the "municipal defender" banner, with varying degrees of success. Detroit's resident nova, Jonas "Kikjak" Kincaid, is one of the most popular franchise novas in the world, owing a great deal to Detroit's clever marketing campaign and efforts to clean up and revitalize the city. In between working for the city government and doing promotions for Nike, Kikjak devotes time to programs to help keep kids in school, off drugs and away from gangs.

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On the other hand, Houston has had problems with its city-nova program. Its first municipal defender, Graham "Houston Tornado" Herron, was gifted with the ability to control the wind, often surrounding himself in his namesake cyclone to fly through the air. Unfortunately, Herron's powers were not enough to protect him when he was brutally attacked — shot, stabbed and beaten to death by a mob of adherents to the Church of Michael Archangel. The city of Houston searched for 10 months to find a replacement for Graham Herron, and novas proved understandably reluctant, until Lynette Calender came along. The Houston Tornado now flies again, and with Ms. Calender's ability to transform her entire body into air, would-be attackers are going to find her a *much* more difficult target.

Other cities have had even worse problems with their nova defenders. Sara "Tenor" Meeks hired on as the municipal defender of her hometown of Seattle shortly after completing her training at Project Utopia's Rashoud facility in the city. In February of this 2008, Meeks accidentally shattered the Second Narrows Bridge in Tacoma with her sonic powers while confronting a Teragen malcontent. Apparently, the bridge's "superglass" structure was vulnerable to the particular frequency of Tenor's powers. The Sea-Tac Metroplex filed a civil suit against Meeks for reckless endangerment and destruction of public property, along with suits against Project Utopia and the designer of the bridge, Ardis "Artifex" Longley. The suit was eventually settled out of court, and rumor has it that one of the conditions of the settlement included Meeks acting as Seattle's municipal defender for a number of years on a *pro bono* basis. Who says indentured servitude is a dead institution?

Still, despite any problems, most cities seem quite pleased with their nova defenders, and the trend seems likely to continue. The DeVries Agency already has people on board specifically to deal with municipalities interested in hiring novas. If your area doesn't have its own nova, odds are good it will be courting one soon. These days, if you don't have a nova, you're falling behind.

N! Query Poll

"Do you feel safer living in a city with a nova defender?"

Yes: 76%

No: 18%

Undecided: 6%

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Top Ten City-Defenders

(By approval rating. Based on an OpNet poll taken May 14, 2013)



1. Anton "Gator" LeBec
— New Orleans, LA



2. Jonas "Kikjak"
Kincaid — Detroit, MI



3. Michelle "Corona"
Medford — Sydney, Australia



4. The Gothic Knight —
New York, NY



5. Robert "Rainbow"
Rodi — San Francisco, CA

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6. Miguel "El Gato Negro"
Esposito — Madrid, Spain



7. Lynette "The Houston
Tornado" Calender —
Houston, TX

8. Malcolm "Terminus"
Jackson — Atlanta, GA



9. Violette "La Vitesse"
Dulaire — Cologne, France

10. Elizabeth "London Fog"
Barton — London, England

Currently the lowest-rated municipal defender, coming in at #71, is Sara "Tenor" Meeks of Seattle, WA.



The City Life

Working as a “municipal defender” for a major metropolitan area has its advantages and its headaches. City novas tend to be tied down to a particular area (their city), but they tend to have a better working knowledge of their turf, and they’re usually more popular and appreciated by the public than any visiting nova. Cities take pride in their nova defenders, and it’s a sign of prosperity for a city to have a nova to call its own. Nova characters may find themselves drawn to these opportunities, especially if they enjoy a steady income without all the moving around required by organizations like Utopia or nova agencies like DeVries.

Setting up a group of novas as defenders of a particular city or country can provide a useful framework for an **Aberrant** series. While the characters tend to be more limited to their own particular area, the Storyteller is allowed to provide additional depth and supporting characters, which are more difficult to do in a globe-trotting series where the characters rarely stay put for long. The characters also get to see the results of their actions — both positive and negative. If they clean up a bad neighborhood, they can see how life improves for people there. On the other hand, if a quantum conflict levels a neighborhood, the characters get to see the aftermath and the rebuilding process (which they will inevitably get drafted to help with). The characters also get all the “fun” of dealing with local politics, which can add an interesting twist to ongoing series.

Interesting opportunities also present themselves if only one of the characters is a franchised nova, sometimes causing conflict between the character’s duties to her employer and her duty to the group and its goals.

Possibly the best option for a city-based **Aberrant** game is to use your own “home town” (or the nearest major metropolitan area) as the setting. Players are likely to be familiar with it, and there’s a lot to be said for kicking around on familiar turf. Alternatively, it can be fun to research a new city entirely and live somewhere else — Madrid, for example — for the duration of your **Aberrant** games.

DeVries



There's a piece of outer space sitting on my desk right now, several pieces, in fact. I have soil and rock samples from four of Jupiter's moons. They're simple plastic containers of ordinary looking dirt with some slightly funny colors. But just thinking about what they are and how far they've come to sit here on my desk fills me with a sense of awe and hope I haven't felt in a long time.

A week ago, I wrote in my editorial "Who Won the Space Race?" that novas make no significant contribution to the history of space exploration. After all, Janos Karagian's landing on the Moon (*without* the use of life support equipment), while an amazing sight, was nothing Neil Armstrong hadn't achieved nearly 50 years ago. And I still maintain that Armstrong's "small step for man" was the greater achievement, considering the risks the Apollo astronauts took, all without nova powers to protect them against the harsh realities of space travel. And, after all, aren't we — mere baselines — beginning the process *even now* that will result in the first permanent lunar colony?

I thought I'd made up my mind and was done with it. However, another astronaut, Cyrus Katrak, changed my opinion about the contributions of novas. I call him an astronaut, but Mr. Katrak has no training with any space agency, nor does he receive any funding or support from them. He has no degree in astrophysics or pilot certification (though, years before his eruption, he did graduate magna cum laude with a degree in anthropology from the University of Chicago), but Mr. Katrak does have the qualities of vision and courage that make him as much an astronaut as Neil Armstrong or Yuri Gagarin. He also has the power and the drive to realize his dreams.

Among his nova abilities, Mr. Katrak has the power to control gravity. Scientists at Project Utopia believe that his gravity power allows Mr. Katrak to create what physicists call "wormholes." They are tunnels through the structure of space-time, a kind of "shortcut" that lets a man travel from Earth orbit out to the orbit of Jupiter — a distance of hundreds of millions of kilometers — in the blink of an eye. Mr. Katrak's body is also tough enough to withstand exposure to the deadly vacuum of space, and its attendant radiation, freezing cold and searing heat.

Imagine if you will, soaring up out of Earth's atmosphere, naked to the infinity of lifeless space, surrounded by the cold brightness of the stars, with the cloud-streaked blue and

green globe of the Earth rotating below you. A ripple distorts the light of the stars as one of the fundamental forces of the universe bends to your will, and that ripple becomes a shimmering ring of light. You slide through it, and find yourself hovering high above the rings of Jupiter, out near the orbits of the Jovian moons. The giant planet fills your field of vision, larger than anything you've ever imagined. The sun is only a bright star in the distance and the Earth an inconsequential speck lost in the vastness of space. The silence is deafening — the majesty of it all, overwhelming.

That's just a hint of what Mr. Katrak experiences, of what draws him out into space. It's the same wonder that led the first generations of astronauts to ride giant rockets into orbit and then to the Moon. As President John F. Kennedy said, "We choose to go to the Moon because we *can*." And the benefits of that race to the Moon for our culture have been considerable — not just in scientific developments, including advanced technologies and products spun off from space research, but in cultural pride and identity. The sight of Neal Armstrong planting the United States flag on the lunar surface is one etched into our cultural memory. I suspect, soon, images of novas standing on the surface of Mars, Europa and other planets and moons will similarly inspire us.

I said the abilities of novas made no significant contribution to the exploration of space. I hereby rescind that statement. I was wrong, and I've never been happier about it in my whole life. I have a piece of the final frontier, a piece of the future, sitting on my desk today, and it seems to me like nothing is impossible. Assisted by the powers and courage of novas like Cyrus Katrak, we can explore the universe like we have never done before, and humanity will travel out among the stars. It will be a long road, and not an easy one, I suspect, but with the assistance of brave men and women, nova and baseline alike, we can make the dream a reality. We can finish the process Project Utopia has begun, put aside the mistakes and problems of the past, grow up and prepare to leave the cradle of Earth and enter a new stage as an adult civilization out there, among the stars.

**New York Times
editorial, 03/14/15**

**The Final Frontier
is Closer Than
We Think**

The Daedelus League

Mission Statement: The Daedelus League is an organization for those who wish to explore the frontiers of space for the advancement of scientific knowledge and the benefit of the people of Earth.

History: The Daedelus League started with nova Cyrus Katrak and his own passion for space exploration. Katrak's nova abilities made him perfectly suited for traveling beyond the confines of Earth, and over time, he made contact with other novas who shared his interest in exploring space. The League started out as a simple "hobbyist" group with an OpSite and an e-mail list circulated among its members. The two things Daedelus League members had in common were an interest in space exploration and a desire to do things their own way, without the bureaucracy of organizations like Utopia or various national governments weighing them down.

For several years, the League went about its activities quietly, staging several "outings" beyond Earth's orbit. They were largely ignored by the rest of the world, which suited them fine, until Cyrus Katrak read an editorial in the *New York Times* dismissing the potential for novas to enhance space exploration, following nova Janos Karagian's landing on the Moon (sans space vehicle or life support equipment). The editorial referred to the Karagian landing as a "mere publicity stunt" and said novas had "nothing to contribute to the exploration of space that baseline humanity hasn't already achieved." A week later, Cyrus called a press conference where he presented the editor of the *Times* with soil samples he collected from the Jovian moons. The *Times* published a retraction of his editorial the very next day, and the Daedelus League was thrust into the public eye.

Membership: A small handful of novas (just over a dozen or so) belong to the Daedelus League. Originally, the group appealed solely to novas able to travel into deep space on their

own. Since the League's public profile has increased, other novas have joined up, looking to use their abilities to assist the League's goals in some way. The League doesn't turn away any members, whether they are space-worthy or not, although they take great precautions in ensuring only novas capable of handling space travel leave the atmosphere under their guidance. Cyrus Katrak recently posted guidelines for novas interested in spaceflight on the groups OpSite.

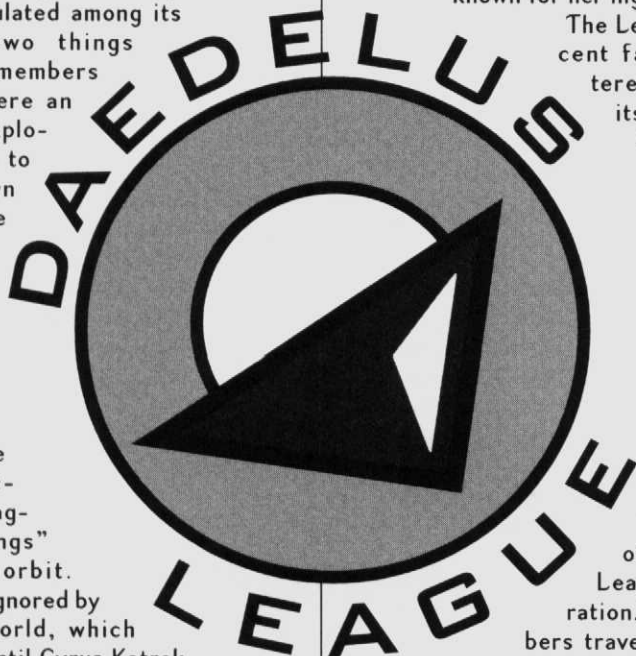
In addition to Katrak, other Daedelus League members include Milo "Lumen" Rosenberg, Sharon "Gaussian" Monashi and Dafileh Kirouri, known for her night-black skin tone.

The League also has a decent fan following, centered primarily around its OpSite, which follows the members' explorations through journal entries and extensive photo essays and provides links to various astronomical and space-science sites and organizations.

Activities:

The prime activity of the Daedelus League is space exploration, of course. Its members travel regularly out into space, under their own power, and usually visit other bodies in the solar system. The farthest out any member of the League has gone is the orbit of Saturn, although Katrak has plans to jump out as far as Neptune in the near future. League members visit the Moon on a fairly routine basis, and they have visited all of the inner planets, particularly Mars. A few members of the League have even walked on the surface of the Sun ("which redefined my idea of a religious experience," says Katrak).

Members of the Daedelus League are more than happy to share their findings, pictures, video footage and "souvenirs" (usually rocks and soil samples) with the scientific community, and many space researchers check the League's OpSite obsessively the moment OpMail comes in with news that the site has been updated. The League has only two restrictions: They refuse to become a formal part



of any other organization, although they accept grants and payments, which go to help fund the OpSite and purchase equipment for further exploration; and they refuse to deal with military organizations at all.

Allies & Enemies: The members of the Daedelus League are considered heroes in most scientific circles. The N! Network special on the League earned high-enough ratings to convince N! to provide regular coverage of the League's activities. Still, some scientists publicly denounce the League as "amateurs stumbling around out there" and think their nova abilities should be harnessed to a "true" scientific exploration of space.

Project Utopia is concerned about the activities of the Daedelus League because it likes to keep tabs on novas as much as possible, something it cannot do when novas go off-planet. Attempts to recruit members of the League for Utopia have failed.

Getting Involved: Any nova can join the Daedelus League, although novas with space-flight capabilities are most welcome. All that is needed is a sincere desire to explore space and some ability useful to that end. The most useful powers are Teleport and Warp, helping span the vast distances between bodies in the solar system. The League also looks for Mega-Intelligent novas with a knack for space sciences to help them calculate the best ways to apply their abilities and achieve their goals. Novas with Mega-Perception can learn a great deal operating in deep space, especially if they have the Electromagnetic Vision, Hyperenhanced Hearing and High-End Electromagnetic Scan enhancements.

In addition to their exploration of space (and the challenges that poses), Daedelus League members can become involved in rescue operations in space or assist space agencies in exploration and testing new equipment. (It's handy being able to test a new spacesuit in actual field conditions, with a wearer who doesn't really need it and can survive a total systems failure). Daedelus novas prefer to work on their own terms, but they're willing to cooperate, especially if an agency can offer them some neat new toys to play with.

Project Utopia and other organizations (notably the Directive) have reservations about the League's activities and what they might mean for the future. Utopia's efforts to bring the League into the fold have failed. The Directive is also considering inserting an agent into the group, but their nova resources are thinly spread already, and the League is a low-priority matter for the time being. Nova employment agencies like DeVries, Novelty Consulting and NovaCom are all interested in the abilities of space-worthy novas and what they could have to offer their clients (see **Aberrant: Elites** for more information).

For more information on space-based stories, see "Space Travel in **Aberrant**," p. 36.

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From *People Magazine*,
April 7, 2005

Dangerous Intimacy:

One woman's struggle with nova mind-powers

Jeanette Cooper was a fairly typical young American woman living and going to school in London. She studied pre-law, played sports, wrote and called her parents back in the states on a regular basis, went out with her friends shopping or to concerts and nightclubs. A very attractive young woman, Cooper had a healthy and active social life and dated a number of young men, although none seriously. At the popular London nightclub Swingers, Cooper met a man who changed her life forever.

His name was Donald Somersworth, better known as "Insight." Somersworth is a nova with telepathic abilities, sometimes employed by Scotland Yard as a "police psychic" and regularly employed by nova agencies like DeVries and Novelty Consulting. Somersworth was out for a night on the town when he met up with Jeanette Cooper, who describes their first meeting as "electric."

"He was like no one I'd ever see before," Cooper says. "Our eyes met inside the club, and it was like he was looking right into my soul. I thought he was handsome, of course, but it was more than that. Something passed between us, the sort of thing you only read about or see in those romantic films."

Donald Somersworth introduced himself to Cooper, and they began seeing each other on a regular basis. The early days of their relationship were "blissful" says Cooper. "I'd never been so happy. Don was so kind and thoughtful, and we had so much in common. We loved the same music, the same clubs, doing things outdoors. He completely swept me off my feet." Somersworth even introduced Cooper to some of his nova friends. "I was amazed to meet some of the people Don knew, like Shard, Zephyr and Deepak Palit." Somersworth also introduced Jenette to various baselines of his acquaintance, including film and music stars and even members of the House of Lords. For a young woman from rural Maine, the whole thing must have seemed like a fairy tale.

But Cooper's fairy tale didn't end "happily ever after." After being involved with Somersworth for almost two months, she noticed a change in their relationship.

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"Don talked about taking our relationship to 'the next level.' He said he loved me and wanted to make me happy, and I believed that, so I... let him do what he wanted." What Somersworth wanted was to use his telepathic abilities to go "inside" Jeanette Cooper's mind, to experience life through her eyes. To many women, a man not only capable, but willing to understand their point of view so completely would seem like a dream come true, as it seemed to Cooper. But it turned out to be more of a nightmare than a dream.

"After we 'linked' — that's what Don called it — after we linked a few times, Don started acting differently toward me. He'd always been attentive, but now he was doing things before I even asked, things like finishing my sentences and running errands I hadn't asked him to. It was nice, but it was also eerie. He also insisted more and more that we be truthful with each other, even to the point where he became tactless, like when he told me one of my favorite dresses made me look cheap."

As these incidents became more common, Cooper and Somersworth's relationship suffered. "The worse it got, the worse he got," she says. "Don came to me and said he wanted to help me, that he wanted to make things better. I was terrified, but I let him link with me again. I realized there wasn't really anything I could do to stop him. There was... there was a moment when I couldn't tell where I ended and he began. That's the only way I can describe it. It was like I knew *everything* about him and he knew everything about me. It's like those dreams where you realize you're naked in front of the whole class, but a thousand, a million times worse. He knew things about me I would never tell anyone. Things you shouldn't have to share — every bad, sinful, guilty, dirty feeling or thought I'd ever had. Then it all just came apart, and he... and he looked at me like he *pitied* me, like I was some pitiful thing. That's when I left."

Jenette Cooper later filed charges against Somersworth for assault and emotional distress, but the charges were dismissed in a London court due to lack of evidence of Somersworth's so-called "mental invasion of privacy" and due to the consensual nature of their relationship.

The Gestalt

Mission Statement: The Gestalt is devoted to exploring the frontiers of the mind, the development of consciousness and the power of thought. It seeks to expand the reach of human knowledge concerning the powers of the mind and to dispel fears and concerns involving mental abilities and their use.

History: The Gestalt began, as many modern organizations do, from a small group of people sharing a common interest via the OpNet. In this case, the small group was made up of novas with psychic abilities (particularly Telepathy). Their common interest lay in the growing concern and fear among baselines about psychic powers and the novas possessing them.

Of all the amazing abilities novas commanded, few inspired irrational fear in baselines as much as so-called “metasensory” powers. They allowed novas to look inside homes, businesses and even people’s minds to know what was going on inside. Worse yet, some novas could even *control* people’s minds, forcing them to do as the nova wished. While this was all well and good for novas dealing with criminals and would-be dictators, the specter of “nova mind control” became a common staple of the sensational press and a frequent visitor in the mainstream media as well.

The case of Jenette Cooper vs. Donald Somersworth became the spark that ignited a wave of anti-nova sentiment directed at metasensors, particularly telepaths. A number of them began discussing ways to deal with the repercussions of unrestricted psychic powers, as well as the positive uses for their abilities. Somersworth himself participated in some of the discussions and became one of the founding members of the Gestalt. The membership voted to take the group public, out of concern that hiding their activities would only make them appear suspect in the eyes of the public. In 2011, the Gestalt issued a press release announcing the formation of a nonprofit organization for the study, development and regulation of metasensory powers. It established a small headquarters for the organization in Paris and offered training, testing and education to the world community.

Response to the existence of the Gestalt has been mixed, even amongst novas. On the one hand, the organization does valuable and charitable work in studying the development and use of psychic powers and in seeking peaceful applications of those abilities. On the other hand, many people fear the Gestalt is

just what the group claims it wants to prevent — a group of psychics gathered together to increase their powers and use them to influence people without their knowledge. Project Utopia’s drop in public approval has seen a similar rise in mistrust of many novas, particularly people like the Gestalt.

Membership: Active membership in the Gestalt is open to any nova with “metasensory” powers, focusing particularly on so-called “psychic” abilities like ESP, Telepathy and Pretercognition. The organization also has a small staff of baselines who handle various day-to-day matters. It is funded by grants from different charities, including the Aeon Society. Unbeknownst to most of its members, almost half of the Gestalt’s membership are not novas at all, but baseline psychics called psiads, many of whom do not, themselves, realize that they are not novas.

The Gestalt counts some three dozen members. None of the psychics from Team Tomorrow belong to the Gestalt, although eight employees of Project Utopia (including Leland Cornwall) do. The group’s members often work freelance for agencies like DeVries and Novelty Consulting, and the Gestalt has begun to gain a reputation as an organization to contact when looking to hire a psychic, although the Gestalt does not collect fees or function as an employment agency.

Activities: Members are expected to contribute their time to group-sponsored activities such as scientific studies, public speaking to raise awareness on metasensory issues, conducting classes for health care and law enforcement professionals and so forth. This time commitment can be as little as eight hours a month or as much as the nova wishes. The organization only charges fees to cover its expenses and does not pay its members for their services.

One of the Gestalt’s primary areas of interest is research into the nature of psychic abilities — what they are capable of and how they can be applied to help people. The organization’s ostensible focus is on the psychological, counseling and therapeutic uses of psychic abilities, but there are numerous potential uses in the fields of communication, diplomacy, education, law enforcement and even entertainment. The Gestalt treads carefully in all these arenas, since the group is well aware that baselines are often uncomfortable with what they’re capable of.

Education is another major focus of the Gestalt’s efforts. Its members hold seminars and classes to educate baselines dealing with metasensory novas, from family and friends to

professionals in various fields. They also teach novas to understand and respect the various laws limiting metasensory powers (see "Nova Law," p. 13, for more information) and help them to use their abilities responsibly. Rumor has it the Gestalt also serves as a "self-policing" organization for metasensory novas, helping ensure their fellow novas don't cross the line. The organization has no official regulatory powers, but then, neither did Utopia before the United Nations granted them.

Allies & Enemies: The Gestalt works openly with any organization that shares its goals. It has repeatedly been willing to work with Project Utopia and abide by Utopia's regulations in its dealings. Although Utopia does not officially endorse the Gestalt, it does consider the group a useful resource and ally. Project Proteus also considers the Gestalt valuable because it has gathered so many metasensory novas together and because its research may prove useful in the future. Proteus has agents (both nova and baseline) within the organization to keep an eye on any interesting developments.

The Gestalt has cordial relations with most elite agencies, including DeVries, and agencies turn to the group from time to time to find a nova with the right metasensory powers for a job. Strangely, the Argus Agency (see **Aberrant: Elites**) has as little to do with the Gestalt as possible, and company owner and founder John Argyle has refused several invitations to become a member of the group.

The Aberrants do their best to avoid the Gestalt, largely because they figure a group of psychics must know about the conspiracy within Utopia, meaning they've probably already been co-opted, plus the Gestalt could ferret out hidden Aberrants. The Teragen largely consider

the Gestalt a feeble attempt by novas wanting to be considered "normal" and accepted in baseline society. Some Terats see a glimmer of potential in the Gestalt's desire to teach novas to reach their potential, but the group is too mired in politics and kowtowing to Utopia to be useful to the cause. The Directive keeps a close eye on the Gestalt, mistrusting any group with such powerful information-gathering abilities and doing its best to snatch potentially useful metasensory recruits out from under the Gestalt's nose.

Getting Involved: Any nova with the right powers could be a member of the Gestalt, particularly a telepath. The organization's demands are fairly light, all but the most dedicated novas could combine membership in the Gestalt with another allegiance, provided the two weren't at odds with one another. Involvement in the group can start out as a background element for a psychic nova (or psiad), including a little volunteer work between stories and behind the scenes. Stories involving the Gestalt may deal with the group's research into psychic abilities, potential backlash against metasensory novas, the discovery of psiads or an attempt to handle a "problem" nova quietly to prevent public outcry. With their abilities, stories dealing with the Gestalt should be full of intrigue, paranoia and suspicion, since the characters never know who might be reading their minds or influencing them in ways they cannot detect.

Novas outside the organization might be assigned to investigate it, a good mission for Proteus and Directive characters. Utopian novas may be assigned to work with the Gestalt (or some of its members) for a particular mission, and Terats may try to sway members of the organization over to their way of thinking.

Police Department Interview

Excerpted from a Nagasaki Prefecture Police Department interview with Sato Tanaka, president of Genyo Products.

Det. Ishido: How long has he been like this?

Off. Okana: Since they found him, apparently. He goes from almost catatonic to raving to just humming and singing to himself.

I: Tanaka-san, I am Detective Ishido with the Nagasaki Prefecture Police, can you hear me?

Tanaka (crying): Why did they do it? Why? We did nothing!

I: Did what, Tanaka-san? Who?

T: I was happy, so very happy. Our child had been born only a season ago. Our wonderson. Oh joyous miracle!

I: Does Tanaka-san have children?

O: Yes, two, but they are both teenagers, and girls.

T: We floated, and the food was bountiful and good. The songs passed through the water-light and shimmered all around us. We danced and sang about it to the world.

I: Tanaka-san... Tanaka-san, can you hear me?

T: We thought the dead, floating things were something to play with. We didn't know, didn't know. They did not seem bad even though they smelltasted bad. But they bite! They bite us! They boom and roar and stab and bite us. Blood. Blood all around, clouding the song, song of fear, song of anger. (Humming and sobbing noises). Why?

I: Call a psychiatrist.

O: We already have, one is on the way — and an ambulance.

T: (gripping Ishido-san's arm). They don't hate us, you know. They feel *sorry* for us. I don't understand. Why don't they hate us for killing them? Why?

I: Tanaka-san, can you—

T: Our child! Our child! Our beautiful child! (Sobbing). He floats, he does not move. He is dead. My wifemate is dead. They bite me, the dead things. The bite in my side becomes a thousands bites, like a school of sharks feasting. I am dead. I cannot move, I cannot sing. They chatter and scurry, the creatures on the floating things, like lampreys around a shark. They chatter and bite with their long, sharp teeth and bite and bite and bite and bite.... (This goes on for some time before Tanaka-san collapses into sobbing and humming again).

I: See he's made comfortable, and keep him calm until the paramedics arrive. Contact Nippontai immediately.

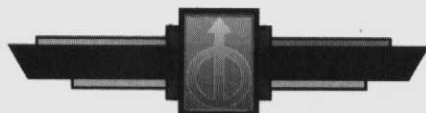
O: Nippontai?

I: Yes. I believe their expertise will be needed. Have them contact me. I have some calls to make.

Note found next to Mr. Sato Tanaka on 06/14/08:

To those who have declared on war on Mother Earth: Be warned. She is not defenseless, and those who rape the land, commit genocide on other species and steal from generations yet unborn will pay a dear price for their crimes. The laws of nature are higher than the laws of humanity, and as you sow, so shall you reap.

—Greenwar



From an Interpol report on Greenwar dated 08/07/08:

Dr. Susan Durant, chief of research, NewGen, Inc. Found in her home in Baltimore on 12/04/07 in a catatonic state, with signs of forced entry to the home. Dr. Durant later regained consciousness but exhibited psychotic behavior, including extreme terror of medical personnel and instruments, medications and people in general. Interviews have established a fantasy of being a laboratory rabbit, repeatedly tortured (experimented upon) using techniques employed by Dr. Durant's company to test new pharmaceuticals.

Anthony Farrell, owner, Farrell and Sons Meat Packing. Found in his Chicago factory on 02/07/08 by local police, hanging from a meat hook after a severe beating. After regaining consciousness, Mr. Farrell related a story to police about an "incredibly realistic dream" where he experienced the entire life of a veal calf, from birth to slaughter, in incredible detail. Psychiatric observation following Mr. Farrell's discharge describes recurring nightmares and a total aversion to eating meat. Mr. Farrell sold his company a month later and retired.

Janos VanDeMeer, "export agent." Mr. VanDeMeer's severed head was found wrapped in an illegal pelt in his suite at the Voi Lodge Nature Preserve in Kenya on 03/11/08. A number of other illegal pelts were found on the premises, along with evidence of VanDeMeer's involvement in a poaching ring operating in Kenya. The head was cleanly severed from VanDeMeer's body by an unknown instrument, and the teeth were all removed. The body has not been recovered.

Ricardo Mendez, investor. Found dismembered and packed into a crate in a warehouse owned by him in Belmopan, Belize. Also found in the warehouse were the bodies of numerous tropical birds, packed into small, sealed shipping containers, apparently for illegal shipment out of the country to pet shops.

Sato Tanaka, owner, Genyo Products. Found in his home in Nagasaki on 06/15/08, with signs of forced entry into the home. Mr. Tanaka was in a psychotic state, with delusions of being part of a pod of whales, apparently attacked and slaughtered by whalers. He remains under psychiatric care in Tokyo.

These five cases are part of a much larger pattern of activity on the part of the eco-terrorist organization known as "Greenwar." Their method of operation is attacks against those Greenwar believes have "declared war on Mother Earth." What makes them dangerous is that the core of the organization is made up of novas, who have thus far been able to evade the authorities and carry out their activities with virtual impunity.



Greenwar

Mission Statement: Greenwar is sworn and dedicated to do whatever is necessary to protect Mother Earth from the nations, corporations and individuals that have declared war on her, for the sake of all life on this planet.

History: Greenwar developed out of a loose alliance of ecologically minded novas. Radical eco-activism has always been a hazardous occupation, particularly when it runs counter to local government and law enforcement. The dangers faced by eco-terrorists and ecoteurs, have caused some to erupt and become novas. Perhaps the most famous is Dr. Spenser Balmer, AKA Antaeus, formerly of Project Utopia.

But Antaeus is far from the only nova to erupt because of eco-activism. A number of other novas have done so as well, fueled by their rage at the damage being inflicted on the environment or their fear when attacked or captured by the authorities (or people looking to administer swifter "justice"). One such person was Shawna McShane, a crusader for animal rights who erupted when police attacked her at a demonstration in New York City in 2003. Another is Ryan Abbnet, who erupted during a raid on an animal-testing lab the same year. McShane and Abbnet became the founders of Greenwar, under the names "Fauna" and "Animus."

Since it's founding, Greenwar has taken the battle for the environment directly to the people the group feels are responsible. The organization and its members are wanted for numerous crimes, including murder, assault, kidnapping, theft, sabotage and vandalism. Greenwar has added a number of other novas to its ranks, along with a core of baseline supporters.

Membership: The exact membership of Greenwar remains unknown. The group is believed to include somewhere between six and 10 nova members, including Fauna, Animus, a plant-controller named Rose and an electronics and engineering genius from Australia named Peter McGinnis. Fauna is a shapeshifter, able to turn into virtually any sort of animal, from a mouse to an elephant. She also apparently has the ability to communicate with and control animals to some degree. Animus is a telepath able to communicate with animals. He apparently has the ability to project memories he's absorbed from animals (usually injured or dying ones) into the minds of people, causing severe trauma. The group may also have a member capable of teleportation or the creation of spatial warps, since Greenwar often manages to appear and

disappear without a trace, although they may simply be the application of the known members' powers. They have entered many places by force, so their transporter (if they have one) isn't always available or reliable.

In addition to its nova members, Greenwar has a core of some 50-100 baseline members, mostly university students, who assist the nova members in their activities, arrange supplies and contacts, gather information and carry out minor operations. Most of these baselines are radical former members of other ecological groups like Greenpeace and Earth First! They are known for their adherence to the group's extreme beliefs and methods. They are also regularly telepathically scanned by Animus to ensure their loyalty. To date, no one has defected from Greenwar.

Activities: Greenwar's primary goal — inspired by the book *EcoDefense* — is the protection of the environment by striking back at what they call "ecological war criminals." The group stages terrorist attacks against people they hold responsible for ecological damage, as well as operations harmful to the environment. They have, in the past, attacked whaling ships, clear-cutting crews and poachers. In these cases, Greenwar usually leaves the people relatively unharmed, while destroying their equipment, vehicles and such (although there have been some casualties in these attacks). If attacked, they are more than willing to defend themselves with lethal force.

The group also goes directly after individuals, particularly those in positions of power and influence over the groups Greenwar attacks. Most of these incidents are "eye for an eye" justice in Greenwar's view. Victims are kidnapped or assaulted and sometimes killed in a manner befitting their crimes, such as when Greenwar novas murdered African poacher Janos VanDeMeer, pulled his "ivory" (teeth) and wrapped his severed head in one of his own illegal pelts for the authorities to find. In other cases, the victim is given "a taste of his own medicine" by Animus, who projects the memories of suffering animals or people into his mind, sometimes over and over again. Most victims of this treatment suffer severe psychological damage.

Allies & Enemies: Every mainstream eco-activist organization repudiates Greenwar and its activities, although members of many such organizations secretly admire the group. A few more fringe organizations offer support for Greenwar, although they claim neither knowledge of nor involvement in their activities.

Greenwar is wanted by the legal authorities in over a dozen countries, including the United States, Japan, Brazil, England, Australia and several South American and African nations. The Directive considers Greenwar a low-priority threat. Unless the organization does something to jeopardize the security of its member nations, the Directive tends to leave Greenwar to Interpol and the local authorities. Project Utopia also considers Greenwar a fairly minor problem, compared to groups like the Aberrants and the Teragen. However, Team Tomorrow is under standing orders to arrest the nova members of Greenwar should the two groups cross paths. Most alarmingly, the Directive and Project Utopia both believe Greenwar to be somehow connected to the Darker Nature, an "eco-nihilist" cult led by a powerful nova named Belladonna.

The Aberrants have tried making contact with Greenwar, but have found the novas too wrapped up in their own crusade to assist in exposing corruption within Utopia. The Teragen applaud Greenwar's initiative and willingness to act in the defense of their ideals, but otherwise, there is no relationship (good or bad) between the two groups.

Getting Involved: Ecologically-minded novas looking to make a difference might hook up with Greenwar to take the battle to the polluters themselves, rather than waiting around for Project

Utopia to pass another "initiative" while the Earth is being raped. Characters can join up with Greenwar as junior recruits, having to prove themselves to the more experienced members, or they might start a group of their own to further their ecological causes. Perhaps the characters are some of the founders of Greenwar, along with Fauna and Animus.

As adversaries, Greenwar may target corporate and government sponsored novas as part of their crusade. Certainly, novas working for anyone targeted by Greenwar can be assigned to track down and arrest or eliminate the group. Perhaps some of Greenwar's victims decide to pool their (considerable) resources to hire a team of nova elites and fight fire with quantum fire. National nova teams like Nippontai might also become involved in investigating Greenwar's activities.

Characters might also be assigned to infiltrate Greenwar and learn more about the group and its plans. This requires Psychic Shield, psychic blocks (see **Aberrant: The Directive**, p. 63) or considerable Willpower to resist having Animus uncover their true loyalties telepathically.

Characters who belong to Greenwar may balk if they discover that the organization is affiliated with the Darker Nature (detailed in **Aberrant: Cult of Personality**), and conflicts between wide-eyed idealists and whacked out cultists always make for a rollicking good time.

Mission Log

Mission log, Alexi Mirovna, 04/20/08 [translated from the Russian].

Life simply isn't fair. Alejandra, she erupts and captures the hearts of millions. Caestus Pax goes from a nobody to leader of Team Tomorrow. Other novas get the power to fly or move mountains or shoot lasers and things like that. What do I get? I get invisibility, immunity to temperature extremes, sharper senses — all abilities that make me “the ideal choice” to send on a secret mission to the most Godforsaken place on Earth. Nature is a bitch with a cruel sense of humor.

All right, Alexi, enough of that. There's work to be done.

Mission Report: 20 April, 2008, 0322 hours. I have made my way across the Antarctic glacier some 20 kilometers from the landing zone, well over 200 kilometers from Zhukov Station, reaching the outer perimeter of the territory claimed by the so-called “Protectors.” The area is a natural range of mountains, towering up over the endless frozen wastes of this land. If it were not for my nova abilities, I would never be able to approach this close without being detected. The Protectors have warned off all unauthorized aircraft and have even destroyed two spy satellites trained on their haven. Clearly, they have some advanced means of detection. So far, I have seen no signs I have been detected. I am proceeding with the surveillance mission as planned.

Mission Report: 20 April, 2008, 0514 hours. I have completed my survey of the Protector's haven, and I am on my way back to the landing zone. My survey establishes that the haven was carved out of solid bedrock in the mountains using nova powers.

The main entrance has massive stone doors, carefully fitted and camouflaged to blend in with the surrounding stone. I estimate each door weighs around 5 tons, requiring the services of some sort of mechanism or a very strong nova “doorman.”

The only external indications of power I found were a series of steam vents that may indicate natural or engineered hot springs of some kind. No signs of fossil fuels or of the nuclear power some were concerned about. I did detect residual traces of quantum energies nearly everywhere in and around the haven, suggesting nova powers were and are used heavily there.

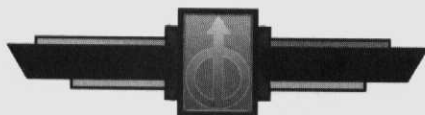
Through a combination of useful intelligence and good timing, I arrived shortly before the Protectors received a visitor of their own. Cyrus Katrak touched down just outside the entrance to the haven. I was able to detect Katrak's approach well before he arrived, and I waited with him as the doors of the haven opened. Thomas Sering, the Protectors' organizer, greeted Katrak and invited him into the haven. I followed close behind, apparently undetected.

I decided to use the opportunity to survey as much of the haven as possible, so I was only able to pick up portions of the conversation between Sering and Katrak. It appears the Protectors are cultivating contacts with the Daedelus League. Perhaps they are considering the possibility of some sort of space colony or interplanetary exodus? If they are, then our concerns about them may be moot.

I estimate the population of the haven at around 20 novas — many more than reports had led me to believe — and perhaps seven or eight times that many baselines, between 140 and 170. The interior caves and tunnels show signs of being worked using quantum powers, and mineral hot springs are located in the depths of the caves, providing heat and fresh water, some of which is stored in large cisterns. The haven has a surprising level of technical sophistication, making it likely the Protectors include a nova (or novas) with enhanced intelligence and engineering skills.

The entire site is extremely well protected, buried beneath tons of solid rock, with limited access from the outside. The haven also has a stockpile of weapons, small arms, assault rifles, grenades and ammunition. Most of the equipment appears Russian in manufacture, I obtained some serial numbers to begin a trace on its origin (I suspect leftovers from the collapse of the USSR, personally).

Overall, the behavior of the Protectors is classical survivalist; an isolated locale, weapons stockpiles, stores of food and water, independent power and so forth. It is still too early to tell, but I believe the Protectors are not involved with Project Utopia in any way, nor are they an immediate threat of any kind. I recommend they be placed under regular surveillance — preferably automated, thank you very much — and watched for any signs of trouble. Otherwise, it is best that we leave them alone. We have enough problems to deal with without going into caves and prodding sleeping bears.



The Protectors

Mission Statement: We, the Protectors, seek to establish a safe, peaceful, self-contained community away from the violence, corruption and social decay that threaten the nations of the world. We invite like-minded individuals to join us and advise those who would threaten our freedom that we can and will defend ourselves.

History: The Protectors' mission statement was transmitted to United Nations observers along the coast of Antarctica in November of 2006, from a location hundreds of kilometers inland. Limited communication with the site revealed a large number of baselines and a collection of novas establishing a habitation inside a mountain in Antarctica. The leader of the Protectors, an American nova named Thomas Sering, was known as a survivalist. During the late 1990s, when a number of small survivalist groups sprang up in anticipation of the year 2000, he became the survivalist movement's most rational advocate. Sering supposedly erupted on New Year's Eve 2000 when the anticipated "end of the world" failed to come, partly due to the efforts of Project Utopia and Team Tomorrow.

Using his M-R node granted intelligence, Sering began contacting like-minded novas around the world. He gained a reputation in the nova community as a harmless crank with utopian ideals, who was unwilling to trust any large organization, particularly Project Utopia. Sering increasingly withdrew from society and maintained connections with nova allies and his baseline followers via the OpNet. A number of meetings took place at Sering's isolated cabin in the Rocky Mountains, including meetings with various novas.

Finally, in late 2006, a group of nearly a dozen novas and five dozen baselines made an exodus from Colorado in North America, all the way down the Pacific Coast and into the interior of Antarctica. Radar tracking systems picked up the group flying at an altitude of over 4,000 feet, and nova observers detected gravitational and quantum fluctuations. The group avoided restricted airspace and remained over international waters, ignoring all attempts at communication. After a few Argentine jets provoked warning shots from the group, they were left well enough alone.

Since their arrival in Antarctica, the Protectors have apparently done nothing except excavate and develop their mountain stronghold. A number of additional novas and baselines have joined the group, and the United Nations, Project Utopia and the Directive have

all kept the Protectors under surveillance, although this has been difficult due to the nova powers of the Protectors' leader and the novas following him. There has been some debate about what to do about the Protectors, but since Antarctica is unclaimed territory and the Protectors pose no immediate threat (although they could certainly do so if provoked), the prevailing decision has been to leave them alone for the time being.

Membership: Membership in the Protectors is open to any nova or baseline willing to accept the group's rules and work within them. The Protectors do not recruit; they are, in fact, quite selective about who may join. Novas receive preferential treatment, of course, and the group is most interested in recruiting novas with families and baseline allies willing to join the community as well.

Baselines in the Protectorate must be willing and able to pull their weight, but before they even get the chance, they are put through a comprehensive screening program. All adult baseline candidates must at least have a bachelor's degree before they will be considered for inclusion in the community. All potential members are aggressively tested for disease, psychological disorders and "genetic viability," the term used by the Protectors to denote the absence of congenital defects. Finally, candidates are run through a series of personality tests, and only those candidates who rate as "highly pro-social" are accepted as members of the Protectorate.

The group currently has some 20 novas, including Thomas Sering. The novas consider themselves the stewards and caretakers of their micro-society. They use their powers to provide comfortable living conditions, protection from the elements, food, water, shelter and all the other necessities of life. They also protect the refuge from outsiders and gather information about events taking place in the outside world.

That's not to say the baselines in the society are pampered or helpless by any means. Everyone has work to do, and the Protectors have a strong work ethic, believing each person has a need to feel useful and to have a place in society. The group's culture is somewhat socialist, with a strong sense of social responsibility.

Should a Protector, nova or baseline, decide that he no longer wishes to be a part of the community, any sensitive information in his possession is gently edited out of his memory, and he is returned to the world, with the understanding that he has forfeited his membership and will not be allowed to return.

Activities: The main goal of the Protectors

is to create a stable, independent society apart from the "mainstream" culture that they feel is corrupt. They believe Project Utopia has the right idea, using nova powers to benefit humanity, but that they're going about it the wrong way. Utopia is turning baselines into helpless dependents of their nova benefactors and teaching them that no matter how much they screw up, the novas will come along and fix things for them. The Protectors want to encourage small, strong, independent communities of novas and baselines who work together. Their haven is an "experimental community" seeking to create just such a society.

In the long term, Thomas Sering believes two things. First, world civilization is headed toward an inevitable collapse. The presence of novas has delayed it in some ways but accelerated it in others. When it happens, humanity will need the kind of people Sering leads, independent and capable of surviving without the infrastructure that will disappear. Second, Sering believes it is humanity's destiny to leave Earth and expand out into space. In order to do so, humans will have to radically alter the way they live and the kind of communities they live in. Colonizing Antarctica is the first step in building a viable culture for a colony in orbit or on the Moon or Mars.

Allies & Enemies: The Protectors have few allies, which is just the way they like it. Sering has opened talks with members of the Daedalus League (p. 165) as a means of gathering more information about space and the possibility of eventually starting an independent colony off Earth. The idea intrigues most of the Daedalus novas, and they are more than willing to share their information. The Protectors are also in contact with various survivalist groups around the world, although Sering prefers to avoid becoming entangled with groups with aggressive

political agendas. He believes the collapse of most national governments is inevitable; it's just a matter of time.

The Protectors don't have any enemies per se, although their activities provoke some concern from organizations like Utopia, the United Nations and the Directive. These organizations watch the Protectors to see what they are up to and to gain some warning of any possible trouble but otherwise tend to leave the novas alone. One area of concern is the fact that the Protectors have some supporters among the Teragen leadership, most notably Divis Mal and Jeremiah Scripture, and seem to share the idea that novas should not allow themselves to be governed by pre-existing societies and institutions. Utopia is concerned the Protectors might offer aid or shelter to the Teragen, but their isolation keeps them a minor concern at best.

Getting Involved: Characters can get involved with the Protectors in several ways. The first is by joining up with the group and working to fulfill its goals of a better society. This presents a very different roleplaying challenge, and Storytellers may wish to consult material on colonization and structured societies. Robert Heinlein's *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* offers some interesting ideas. The series can go from the Antarctic haven to attempts to establish a true space colony.

Characters may also be asked to infiltrate the Protectors undercover for an organization concerned about their activities. The characters have to avoid detection and win the community's trust, and it's possible the characters' loyalties might be called into question once they find out the Protectors' goals.

Finally, characters might belong to another group such as the Daedalus League or simply ally themselves with the Protectors. They might be Terats looking for shelter or even Aberrants looking for allies against Utopia or a place free of the agents of Project Proteus.

NOVA AFFILIATIONS

OK, Pax, I followed Andy Vance to his "private party" at the Phoenix Room like you asked. Here's what I got. Shocking, isn't it? *Real* subversive stuff, all right. Don't we have actual *problems* to deal with? Next time you want play voyeur with the QNA, maybe you should do it yourself, stud. I've got better things to do.

— Figment

Ragnarockette: ...so it turns out he wasn't even a nova, just some guy who liked dressing up in costumes, with a fantasy of getting beaten up by a strong nova woman.

Ana Graça Texeira: And the whole time he's yelling "Ai, mommy! Si! Si!"

Copykat: [laughs] And they say *our* proclivities run to the exotic....

Glamora: Andy, darling! [runs over and gives him a big kiss] *Love* the outfit, what little there is of it, anyway!

Andy Vance: Likewise, doll. You're looking fabulous, as always, and I don't use the "f" word lightly.

Tommy Orgy: Yo, Andy, 'sup?

Texeira: Hello, Andy.

Derek: Greetings, fearless leader. Where's the hubby?

Vance: Hi, guys. Sorry I'm late. Jake spent all day in court testifying against those Team Tomorrow jerks — sorry, Ana, sorry, Guggie — and isn't feeling up to joining us. He's in a seriously crappy mood, but on the bright side, it looks like we may win this one after all.

Ragnarockette: Pax would kill me for saying this, but

good for you. If there were anyway I could have given you warning without breaking my —

Vance: Hey, relax, Gug. It wasn't a great night for you, either. I hardly expect you to risk one of Shelby's temper tantrums on my account, and since we're rebuilding anyway, it's a moot point.

Glamora: Oh, poor Jake. Give him a kiss for me, Andy, and tell him to feel better. Come, sit down.

Texeira: So how have things been, other than getting things back to normal after the riots?

Vance: Kind of tense lately, Ana. There seems to be some kind of weird edge of... desperation, I guess, to the fun everyone's having. Like everyone's trying to get away and shut out the outside world for a little while. How are things with T2M?

Ana: About the same. Ever since that prick Pax had me assigned down in South America, I've been almost too busy to breathe. This is my first full week off in ages. The cartels are putting up a good fight, and they're not really any kind of match for us, but we've gone toe to toe with half of DeVries' rent-a-masks in the last month. The hard part is pulling up all the roots the cartels have put down in the government around here. But we'll take care of them. Still, it's nice to be close to home, and the beaches in Rio are amazing, so there are compensations.

Vance: Hmmm, maybe a visit to Rio would do Jake some good. I could use a vacation myself.

Texeira: Oh, you should! Tommy's going to be playing Rio soon, and Guggie and I were going to go to the show. We



could all get together.

Glamora: Really? Tommy, darling, I thought your kind of one-man-band was, well, less than popular south of the border.

Orgy: [laughs] Are you kidding, G? I pack 'em in down here! The show in Mexico City was sold out. Ms. Catholic School isn't the only novox singer in the world. The women adore me, not to mention the guys!

Flamer: Double your pleasure, double your fun....

[Four duplicates of Tommy appear out of thin air around him, all speaking in unison. Gorgeous, gay and able to duplicate himself; it's a wonder Tommy Orgy ever leaves his house.]

Orgys: More like quintuple these days... at least.

Vance: You *have* been practicing!

Orgy #1: [the original... I think] Hey, I'm more than just a pretty face, you know.

Evan: More like several pretty faces, T.

Glamora: Well, if there's a party in the making, count me in! I have connections, darling. Anything you need for the party, no matter how exotic, debauched or illegal, I can get. One phone call!

Vance: [laughs]

[The laughter dies down a bit as Roger "The Master" Morrison enters the room.]

Glamora (whispered to Andy): Uh oh! Break out the whips and chains!

Evan: Hey, Big M.

Orgy #3: Roger, slow night at the dungeon? I'm surprised you could tear yourself away.

The Master: Well, if it isn't the "one man boy band." You should address me by my proper title, Thomas.

Orgy #2: As if.

Orgy #4: That'll be the day.

The Master: Yeah, won't it?

Orgy #1: I'm not one of your "boys," Roger.

The Master: No, you're not. But in the fullness of time, you could be several.

Orgy #1: Go fuck yourself!

Glamora (whispered): Meow!

The Master: I thought that was more your forte, Thomas.

Evan: Well, according to every other fanfic I read on the OpNet anyway....

Mustang Sally: Guys....

Vance: [standing] OK, that's enough, you two. You know the rules. Play nice or you get kicked out of the sandbox.

The Master: Of course, Andy. I'm sorry to have caused trouble. (to Tommy) See? Some of us know how to show proper respect to authority.

Orgy: Sorry. [At this point, Tommy's duplicates faded out.]

Vance: [sitting down again] So how many of you have seen the new stuff on the Phelps site?

Glamora: Oh, lordy, what are they up to now?

Dr. Q: There are times when I think your homeland is a lost cause, Andy.

Vance: More of the same hate-speech but focused around the anniversary of the "Reverend" Phelps' death.

Glamora: Are they still blaming us for that?

Orgy: Jeez it's been like four years now. Get over it! I mean, the man died of a stroke!

Texeira: Yeah, while he was leading a protest at one of the biggest gay pride events in the country and in the middle of a speech calling down the wrath of the Almighty on us. I've got to admit, it's something I dreamed about nearly every time I read about some of the stuff he was responsible for.

Dr. Q: It was mighty convenient....

Vance: That's beside the point. The point is, Phelps' people just turned him into a martyr, and they're carrying on his "holy work." And now it looks like they're forming some sort of alliance with the Church of Michael Archangel, going for the anti-nova and anti-gay crowd together.

Mustang Sally: Intellectually, I know we're better off not using their obnoxious tactics against them, but emotionally, I still wish we could have been protesting outside his funeral.

Vance: Tempting as it may be, Sally, we don't sink to their level. It gets us nothing but a quick rush of satisfaction and then years and years and years of bad press.

Mustang Sally: I know [sighs], but I can dream, can't I?

Vance: But just because we're not willing to use their tactics, doesn't mean we're going to let them get away with it. I'm talking to some people about getting media coverage for the Pride events going on, especially the opening of that new Outright youth center in Houston. N! is ready to eat it up, so the more novas we can get together, the better.

The Master: Andrew, if I may?

Vance: [nods]

The Master: I have an additional "resource" to consider: A certain very highly placed fellow in Phelps camp has... shall we say "seen the light"? He's been visiting me recently, and his training is coming along quite nicely. I'm sure he could be of use.

Orgy: Oh. My. God.

Vance: Roger, that's exactly the kind of thing we don't need right now! It just reinforces the idea that we can "turn people queer" with our "devilish nova powers."

Texeira: I can't believe you turned one of Phelps' people into one of your slave boys.

The Master: I turn no one, they all come to me because it's what they really want, deep down, whether they know it or not at the time.

Vance: OK people, let's stay on topic here. Here's what I think we should do...

Make sure HR informs all J2M members — again — not to involve themselves in this kind of political crap.

The Queer Nova Alliance

Mission Statement: The Queer Nova Alliance is dedicated to the promotion of the fair and equal treatment of all gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people, through charitable work, the presentation of positive role models and political action.

History: "Ironskin" Andy Vance, one of the first publicly "out" novas, founded the Queer Nova Alliance (or QNA) in 2003. Vance started the organization as a combination social club, support group and activist organization to protect and advance the rights of queer people throughout the world. The QNA's initial public-service announcements (paid for almost entirely by Vance himself) featured the story of Andy's eruption in his hometown of Cody, Wyoming, when a trio of high school jocks assaulted him for being gay. Andy made appearances on *N!*, MTV and numerous other networks and OpNet sites, calling for fellow queer novas to come out publicly and offer their support.

He received a strong response from the nova community. A large number of novas contacted him and asked how they could help. A few made threats against Vance for "pushing the gay agenda," but they found it difficult to threaten an invulnerable man, and Vance's dream for the Queer Nova Alliance went ahead. Vance held a press conference in Ibiza to formally announce the formation of the group, and he and several other QNA members were honored at the San Francisco Gay Pride Day celebration later that year. Vance was quickly named "Man of the Year" by *The Advocate*, *XY* and several other gay publications.

Since its founding, the QNA has founded gay community centers in a number of cities, supported charitable work including support groups for gays and their families, gay-straight alliances in schools and education on gay issues for public institutions. Members appear in commercials and PSAs supporting equal rights for sexual minorities and condemning prejudice, hate-crimes and discrimination.

Membership: The exact details of the QNA's membership are confidential, but an estimated 100-plus novas worldwide belong to the group (which, ironically, makes the QNA one of the largest nova groups in the world). Some of the more famous QNA novas include Ironskin Andy and his partner, Jake "Dragon" Korelli, Team Tomorrow members Ana Graça Texeira and Gvuthbjörg Danielsdóttir (alias Ragnarockette),

drag-queen superstar and illusionist Glamora, "Queen of the Glamazons," novox artist and actor Tommy Orgy, San Francisco municipal defender Robert "Rainbow" Rodi and XWF nova "Mustang Sally" Kellerman.

Since its founding, the QNA has also attracted a sizeable baseline following from the queer community. There are OpSites devoted to the group and its members, a free e-mail list for news and events and a large pool of volunteers who help support many of the organization's charitable works.

Activities: The QNA promotes queer rights through charitable donations, including part of the proceeds from Tommy Orgy's recent concert tour, which helped raise millions for the organization. The QNA funds grants to queer organizations like PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), the Gay Games, the Human Rights Campaign Fund, numerous gay youth organizations and queer-rights action groups. They also helped support AIDS vaccination programs in the gay community.

QNA members march in political protests and gay pride events to help raise awareness of issues in the public eye. The mainstream news media has certainly become more willing to cover these events since novas began appearing at them. The QNA is aware of this, and it milks the coverage for all it's worth. QNA novas have also helped assist initiatives to make neighborhoods safer and to prevent hate-crimes.

Allies & Enemies: The QNA is a religious right nightmare come to life: queers with quantum-powers willing to stand up for their rights and provide an example to the world. Extreme right-wing organizations frequently denounce the QNA for "corrupting youth" and trying to "recruit people into the homosexual lifestyle." They try to paint QNA novas as depraved people without morals, using their powers to push around helpless heterosexual baselines. The Church of Michael Archangel and similar groups point to the QNA as clear proof that novas are the tools of Satan.

The QNA has relatively few allies and is okay with that. They work with baseline gay groups and civil-rights organizations, including the ACLU and the Lambda Legal Defense Fund. Project Utopia refuses to officially endorse the QNA, although it says it "supports the goal of equal and fair treatment for everyone." In some cases, members of Team Tomorrow have been unofficially reprimanded for their involvement with the QNA, since Utopia officials fear it might lead to a backlash against the organization.

Most other organizations ignore the QNA,

considering it beneath their notice or simply outside their spheres of interest. The Directive keeps tabs on QNA novas a matter of course but otherwise doesn't bother with the organization. The Teragen seems to have no opinion one way or another, although some members of the QNA are also known Teragen sympathizers, which doesn't do good things for the group's public image. More problematically, a British tabloid recently released pictures of Andy Vance and Jake Korelli having lunch at an exclusive restaurant in Prague with Divis Mal and Jeremiah Scripture. Some observers have wondered out loud if those pictures were the real cause behind Team Tomorrow's ill-fated raid on the Amp Room.

Getting Involved: Any "out" gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered nova in good standing is almost sure to be courted by the QNA as a member and spokesperson. Closeted novas may face the prospect of being "outed" (a controversial matter within the QNA, but it has

been known to happen). Some straight novas join the QNA, but most avoid it like the plague for fear of being labeled "queer by association." Belonging to both the QNA and another organization like Utopia or the DeVries Agency can pose an interesting dilemma for novas when their loyalties conflict. QNA members also have to deal with inter-group politics, the attention of the media and threats and slurs from bigots and anti-gay organizations.

Novas outside the QNA can get involved when they're asked to "police" a gay rights rally or pride march where authorities fear conflict between the QNA and right-wing protest groups. A character could find out a friend, relative or ex-lover is now a member of the QNA. Characters can also get involved in the group's "dark side." Despite the QNA's best efforts, queer novas are just as prone to foibles (and taint) as any other novas. So there are queer novas that abuse their powers, build up sex- and fetish-cults around themselves and commit rape, murder and other crimes. The Alliance does its best to draw a line against such novas and the threat they pose to the good work the QNA does.



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From the Mail Bag column of the February 2012 issue of *Nova Beat*

Studying English Lit

Dear *Nova Beat*,

Hey! I'm a huge fan of tn2m. I think they're mega-cool. I especially like Lit. He's a total cutie. Can you please run more pictures of tn2m, especially Lit. I need a lot more pics to put up in my room. *Nova Beat* rulez!

Sincerely,

Kelly R.

Shreveport, LA

Dear Kelly,

We have received a megaton of letters and e-mails requesting more tn2m, and you can bet we'll be running new pics each and every issue. And if you like Lit, check out our interview with the hot tn2mer in this very issue.

Alexander the Great

Dear *Nova Beat*,

I am head over heels in love with brainy Alex Payne (Smart Alex) of Teen Tomorrow. So, if you could answer some questions for me about him, I'd be grateful. 1) How old is he? 2) Where is he from? 3) Does he have a girlfriend?

Sincerely,

Kristy S.

Griffin, GA

N

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Dear Kristy,

To answer your questions: 1) Alex is 15. 2) He's from Auckland, New Zealand. 3) According to Alex, he's not dating anyone seriously, but his ideal girl would be smart, confident and have a great sense of humor.

Totally tn2m

Dear *Nova Beat*,

Howdy! I'm a huge tn2m fan. I love how they took down Clarion and his Kabal and saved all those kids. It sucks that Clarion escaped. Is Teardrop doing OK? I heard she had to be hospitalized after the fight, and I hope she's doing alright.

Sincerely,

Maggie M.

Bolton, ON

CANADA

Dear Maggie,

Last we heard, Julia "Teardrop" Fetzner was on the road to recovery. It seems she suffered some inner-ear damage from her brawl with Teragen bad boy Clarion, but her doctors say the damage isn't permanent, and she should be back with the team by mid-summer.

Have a question or comment for *Nova Beat*? If so, just send your letters to *Nova Beat's* Mail Bag, P.O. Box 2049, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156 or e-mail at mailbag@novabeat.com. If your letter is selected to be answered in Mail Bag and you'd like to be notified ahead of time, be sure to write your return address on your letter. We're waiting to hear from you!

Letter of Summons

Dear Mr. Alfred Holmes,

On Tuesday, the 22nd of December 2010 at 2:45pm at Marks & Spencer department store, your child, Desmond Ethan Holmes, was reported for the offence(s) of shoplifting, resisting arrest, and assaulting an officer.

As a result of this incident, I am inviting you and your child to attend West End Central Police Station. You are not obligated to attend the police station but I would stress that this request is being made in order that police can consider how best to dispose of the offence(s) for which your child has been reported.

The police have a number of different ways in which they can deal with the offence. In brief, your child could either be prosecuted (sent to court), be given a reprimand or warning (an alternative to appearing at court, dealt with by a senior police officer), or have no further action taken against them in respect of the case.

If you ignore this letter or fail without good reason to attend the police station having agreed to do so the police may prosecute your child for the offence(s) highlighted. Your child's attendance at the police station provides police with an opportunity to interview and to obtain the fullest possible picture of all the circumstances in order to make a fair and balanced decision. However, it does not automatically follow that your child's attendance at the police station will avoid a prosecution.

Can you please contact Inspector Reginald Smythe on telephone number (020) 7437 1212 between the hours of 9.30am and 3.30pm Monday to Friday in order that a date and time suitable to all parties can be arranged.

You are free to seek legal advice at any time if you so wish.

Yours Sincerely

Inspector Reginald Smythe
Criminal Justice Unit Traffic.

Bury this!!!

— M. H.

Private Memo

To: Justin J. Laragione, Director Project Utopia

From: Caestus Pax, Director T2M-C

Re: "Teen Tomorrow"

Let me just go on record saying that this is a bad idea. I've already lost four T2Mers in the line of duty and now you're saddling me with kids. Remember the Harmattan fiasco? This move may garner some good press initially, but in the long run, it's bound to end badly.

Private Memo

To: Caestus Pax, Director T2M-C

From: Justin J. Laragione, Director Project Utopia

Re: Teen Tomorrow

I have every confidence in Director Hodge, and I believe in his goal. If we begin these kids' training this early and feed them a healthy diet of Utopian ideals, think of the T2Mers they'll make when they come of age. Truth be told, I'm getting tired of seeing every other teenager on the street sporting a T-shirt with a picture of Narcosis on it or, worse, the "I'm Mal'icious" slogan. This program will give young novas someone to identify with and believe in besides the Teragen. That alone warrants the risk.



Mission Statement: Teen Tomorrow is a new addition to Project Utopia's nova program, a T2M Auxiliary made up entirely of novas under the age of 20. Its purpose is both to train the next generation of T2Mers and to promote the Utopian ideal to young people everywhere.

History: Teen Tomorrow began as the dream of one man, Michael Hodge. Hodge worked as Project Utopia's New Personnel Processing Director and, in that capacity, noticed a rising trend toward more adolescent eruptions. Keeping an eye on this trend, he also noticed that a larger percentage than their numbers would reflect of nova crime, needless deaths and taint-related dysfunction stemmed from these young novas. What leads a Clarion, a Tanica Hill or a Harmattan to "crash and burn"? Hodge theorized that these young novas were not yet equipped to deal with the responsibilities of being an adult, much less to deal with the added responsibility of godlike powers. In general, those who managed to find their way to a Rashoud facility were given, at best, cursory training in the use of their powers and sent on their way. Each was a loose cannon bound to go off sooner or later, either as the result of a failed romance, a threat to their person or scholastic stress. They needed a peer group that understood what they were going through. They needed role models.

In July of 2011, Director Hodge came up with a proposal for Justin J. Laragione outlining the formation of the young persons' answer to T2M, which he termed Teen Tomorrow. After consulting with Dr. Farah Rashoud, Assistant S&T Director Dieter Elendsohn and Caestus Pax on the matter, Director Laragione gave Hodge the go ahead to create a test team based at T2M-Am HQ (despite strong objections from Pax).

Hodge conducted an exhaustive recruitment effort and within six months had a team of nine young novas from seven different countries. He couldn't have been more pleased. If his experiment proves successful, Hodge plans to suggest an expansion of his program that would attach a tn2m to each of the Teams Tomorrow.

The press conference on March 21st, 2012 that unveiled the new team garnered a great deal of positive press, something Utopia certainly needed given it's recent PR problems, and the team soon found itself a sort of pop phenomenon, joining the likes of Alejandra, Lance Stryker and the members of Team Tomorrow in dominance of magazine covers and OpNet sites. Since that time, tn2m has worked in its position as an Auxiliary to Team Tomorrow to provide a positive portrayal of nova youth for the benefit of baselines and novas alike.



Director Laragione seems pleased with the team's performance thus far, and assuming everything continues to proceed smoothly, it's likely that Hodge's dream to expand the program will come to fruition.

Membership: Membership of tn2m-Am includes —

Atlas (team leader): the highly charismatic gravitokinetic from Ethiopia

Lit: Great Britain's tough-talking firebrand

Smart Alex: hyperintelligent nova from New Zealand

Teardrop: America's lovely water-witch

The Bomb: volatile American former gangsta

Tomboy: the Canadian girl whose motto is "anything you can do, I can do better"

Tantrum: Spain's fit-throwing scream queen

The proposed expansion of the tn2m project would almost certainly see various members of this team move onto the new teams, perhaps in a leadership capacity.

Activities: Since its formation in early 2012, Teen Tomorrow (or tn2m) has traveled the globe, promoting the Utopian ideal among both baseline and nova youths. They're not just posing for photographs either: They've worked on Operation Genesis, broken up nova-led gangs in New York and Los Angeles and even participated in a brawl with the Teragen-sponsored youth group the Kabal — with their superior training and teamwork, tn2m captured almost the entirety of the Terat team; only Clarion escaped justice.

Allies & Enemies: Obviously, Team Tomorrow and the resources of Project Utopia are behind the team. In addition, Teen Tomorrow has a huge fan following worldwide, mostly in the 11-17 demographic, made up of both baselines and a few novas. The opposite side of the team's Utopia connection is that its enemies are also opposed to tn2m as well. The Directive's position is that it's too dangerous for young novas to play at being T2Mers. The Aberrants feel that the kids are being brainwashed into being "good little soldiers" by Project Proteus. And the Teragen has mixed feelings — some Terats agree with the Aberrant position, while others, notably Clarion and his Kabal see the members of tn2m as tools of the baseline hegemony and rivals to be eliminated.

Getting Involved: Any nova teen going through one of Utopia's Rashoud facilities is a potential recruit for Teen Tomorrow. With expansions proposed for T2M's Central, Europe

and Asia/Pacific teams, a number of new members will be needed to fill out rosters built around the more experienced members of the current team.

Desmond "Lit" Holmes

Background: Life wasn't always so perfect for Desmond Holmes. He grew up in a lower-class neighborhood in London's West End, with an alcoholic father who had both physically and emotionally abused the youth for as long as he could remember. Holmes' mother did what she could to intervene on her son's behalf, often taking the brunt of the abuse. Soon after the birth of Desmond Holmes' brother, Timothy, she died in an "accidental" fall on the stairs. Holmes' was desperate to leave, but he couldn't run out on his little brother. Instead, he did what he had to do to see that his brother was taken care of. Since his father spent the majority of his dole money on liquor and Holmes' own part-time job as a tattoo artist didn't pay very well, this often meant petty theft.

Soon, young Holmes had a reputation as a young repeat offender with the West End Central branch of the Metropolitan Police. It was only through a combination of luck and the generosity of the West End police (many of whom had grown up in similar conditions) that he avoided jail time.

Holmes was well on his way to becoming a career criminal when Fate stepped in and changed the troubled teen's life forever. After a night partying with friends, Desmond Holmes had returned home and passed out on his bed, cigarette in hand. He awoke with a pounding headache to find his bedroom in flames and his little brother screaming in terror. In a panic, Holmes instinctively used his nascent powers to rob the fire of its heat, grabbed his brother and ran from their flat.

Leaving his badly burned sibling with neighbors, Holmes rushed back into the inferno, ostensibly to save his father from the fire. Instead, finding his lifelong tormenter lying in a pool of his own filth, Holmes redirected the fire's heat to incinerate the man. To this day, he's unsure whether or not his father was alive at the time.

Once outside, Holmes found himself surrounded by Metropolitan police and firefighters. Disoriented and in pain, Holmes lashed out at the authorities, destroying one squad car and injuring two bobbies. Only the timely intervention of London municipal defender London Fog kept



things from escalating. Through her efforts, Holmes was taken into custody and detained at New Scotland Yard's Directive-sponsored nova detention facility.

The following day, Holmes received a visit from Michael Hodge. Hodge offered him the best legal defense money can buy and to see that his brother received the highest quality medical care available for his injuries. All Holmes had to do was join Hodge's Teen Tomorrow project and use his quantum powers for the betterment of all. Being no fool, Holmes jumped at the chance.

Holmes took the nova name Lit, both to describe his powers and to remind himself of the state he was in when he erupted... and what that did to his brother. When he's not on duty, Lit often visits his brother at the Mexico City Triton facility.

Image: At 16 years old, Lit stands 5'10" and weighs in at 165 lbs., with close-cropped brown hair (often dyed different colors) and bright green eyes. Not particularly handsome by nova standards, Lit still stands out from the rest of tn2m thanks to his many tribal tattoos and body piercings. Not really one for uniforms, he eschews the typical tn2m togs favored by the more traditional members of the team, generally appearing in a wide variety of hip fashions. The only common features to his clothing are a predilection for flames and asian dragons.

Roleplaying Notes: When it comes right down to it, Teen Tomorrow is the best thing that ever happened to you. It saved you from jail. It saved you from the West End. It gave you a future. You'd kill or die to preserve this team, but you'll be damned if anyone else learns your true feelings. Let the others tow the line and conform, not you. You are tn2m's resident bad boy, and you like it that way.

Gear: Cell phone, beeper/tracer

Nature: Rebel

Allegiance: Teen Tomorrow

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Appearance 2, Manipulation 2, Charisma 2

Abilities: Arts 3 (Tattooing), Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Brawl 3, Drive 1, Endurance 3, Intimidation 2, Intrusion 2, Interrogation 1, Investigation 1, Legedermain 3, Melee 2, Rapport 2, Resistance 3, Science 2 (Physics), Stealth 2, Streetwise 3, Style 2 (Fashion), Subterfuge 3

Backgrounds: Attunement 1, Backing 2, Eufiber 5, Mentor 2, Resources 2

Quantum 4, Quantum Pool 28, Willpower 4, Taint 4 (Glow)

Powers: Mega-Perception • (Electromagnetic Vision), Elemental Anima • • (Alter Temperature, Lethal Blast), Immolate • • •, Invulnerability (Heat/Fire) • • •

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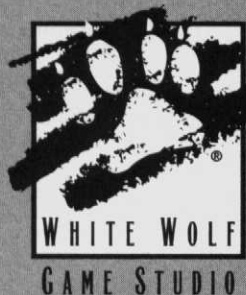
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: This is not the Super-Friends	1
Chapter One: The World of Aberrant	4
Chapter Two: Game Systems	55
Chapter Three: Nova Affiliations	149

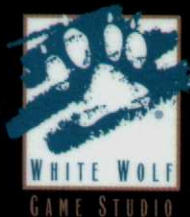
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