

GAMMA WORLD

CRYPTIC ALLIANCES &
UNKNOWN ENEMIES™



An Organization and Conspiracy Sourcebook
for the d20 System

GAMMA WORLD[®]

CRYPTIC ALLIANCES & UNKNOWN ENEMIES

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INTRODUCTION



This is a book about social life in the Gamma Age: How different kinds of groups live, how they interact in peace and war and how the characters in a campaign can take charge. It's a resource for both Game Masters (GMs) and players, with new complications to throw at player characters (PCs) and more mechanical details and supporting advice about ways they can respond to the new challenges.

Combat is popular in roleplaying games for a lot of reasons, among which are these: It's clear, and it's not all-or-nothing.

Players and GMs can look up the rules for fight scenes and find maneuvers, equipment and all the rest laid out in clear terms. It still takes interpretation in play, and there's room for a lot of variation, but the foundations don't depend on "oh, just roleplay it out" or anything else that vague. Furthermore, the existence of hit points and multiple rounds of combat mean that characters can take some damage and still rally to win in the end, and that their opponents have comparable chances. This is unlike most non-combat mechanics, where a single roll leads to complete success or complete failure, and that's it for that task.

Cryptic Alliances & Unknown Enemies aims to bring the clarity and flexibility that combat enjoys to the social side of characters' existences. In the description of allegiances, leadership styles and the like, you'll find enough clarity to make choices of particular options meaningful in mechanics as well as in expressing a character's personality in roleplaying. In the rules and advice for skill use and community interactions, you'll find tactics and strategies suitable for negotiation, diplomacy, intimidation and other ways that one person or group may deal with another.

The rules in roleplaying games are means to an end, rather than the point in and of themselves. On the other hand, the rules are there precisely because we want you to use them to assist in the task of creating the game experience with the other players. When everything goes just right, then the rules may or may not matter; but good rules provide both inspiration for creations of your own and support for translating your ideas into actual play.

WHAT'S HERE

This book aims to help you make your characters' social lives as vivid and interesting as their battles. The contents are categorized as follows to make it easy for you to spot the subjects most relevant to the situation at hand.

- **Introduction:** What you're reading now.

- **Chapter One: Allegiance.** This chapter covers the bonds of loyalty in their many forms, with new rules and advice for using *d20 Modern's* allegiance rules and several new kinds of allegiances, from imposed obligations (including slavery) to pure self-interest extreme enough to provide game-mechanics benefits and complications. There's also a whole bunch of cryptic alliances ready for use, including both old favorites updated from earlier editions and brand-new ones.

- **Chapter Two: Leadership.** This chapter is about just what it says — the gaining and use of power over others. The Gamma Age being what it is, here you'll find new mutations, nanotech, cybernetics and psionics along with fresh details about applying existing skills and lengthy discussion of ways that character class, allegiance and occupation all shape opportunities for characters who want to lead.

- **Chapter Three: Community Life.** This chapter expands on material in the **Gamma World Player's Handbook** and **Gamma World Game Master's Guide** to detail more features of communities in the Gamma Age. Here are more feats and skills for communities, along with a master tally of them all and a system for quickly generating the principal features of a community randomly. The chapter also includes a discussion of gatherings large enough to count as several separate communities merged together, and exotic communities differentiated by special interest (like military units) or nature of organization (like hive minds).

- **Chapter Four: Contact and Conflict.** The last chapter of this book describes ways communities interact, from initial diplomacy to trade and warfare, and presents ways that characters can influence the course of events. This chapter will help you play peacemakers, war leaders and others who define a community's future.

All four chapters come loaded with examples. Whether your game needs a lone villain, a small cabal of mysterious strangers, a faction to play a prominent and ongoing role in the characters' lives or an epic challenge to give focus to a whole campaign, ready-made resources wait here for the picking. As always, you can use these as is, pick out the specific features you want and discard the rest, or ignore the whole example as-is but take inspiration to do something neat all your own. As long as it leads to more enjoyable play, there's no "wrong" application of anything in this book.



CHAPTER ONE
ALLEGIANCE

The guards escorting Piether kept their distance from him, with weapons held at the ready. The Cyclor tried not to smile, but it wasn't easy. He had no interest in making trouble for mere guards; they weren't challenge enough for him to gain anything by killing them. Of course there were many more armed men within the camp, and Piether knew they'd be on him in moments if he dropped the guards. Four men with rifles might not be a challenge, but an entire armed camp would at least get his blood pumping. And if the next few minutes didn't go well, the Cyclor knew he'd get to test himself against just that.

The guards led him to an armored vehicle in the center of the camp, its Gears marking obvious. Piether recognized the Gear clan's Granthfa, an old mutant named Bleeckmun, standing to one side of a dais set up against the vehicle. Bleeckmun had saved Piether's ass once when the Cyclor was younger, and the two had almost become friends. That had been a long time ago, and Piether wasn't sure it would help him now, but it couldn't hurt. The Gears had obviously fallen on hard times, to have teamed up with greed-driven scum like those guarding him. He nodded to the Granthfa once, respectfully, before turning his attention to the woman sitting on the dais.

Piether had never met the woman before, but he recognized Lady Meshe instantly. She had the fine features of a pure-strainer, and cyber wires were mixed in with her raven-black hair. Her armored jumpsuit and laser sidearm looked almost new, rather than more than a century old. She was the most powerful Restorationist within a month's travel, and her greed for technology was famous. Piether had crossed her "repairman" goons a dozen times, and trounced them on every occasion. Her face contorted into a mask of barely controlled rage as she realized who he was. Her voice, however, showed no sign of her emotions.

"The famous Cyclor. Bane of my existence, these past few months. Tell me why I shouldn't kill you now, and put an end to a major stumbling block in my efforts to conquer the Archivist fools of the hills to the west?"

Piether did let himself smile now, but kept his voice equally calm. "Because then you wouldn't have my help tracking down your enemies to the east."

Meshe snorted in dismissal. "What enemy could possibly draw me away from the Archivist stronghold I know the idiots are trying to evacuate even now? I can't imagine anything that would convince me to let that prize slip away."

Piether met her gaze, and held it. "A band of Steel Foes is gathering to the east, intent on destroying that same trove."

"So? I'll deal with them at my leisure later. Chances are they'll run rather than face me once I'm armed with the Archivist weapons."

Piether nodded. "Yeah, they probably will. Which is why you won't wait. This band is led by Bloody Irid. The man who destroyed Thradegime. My childhood home. And yours."

Lady Meshe chewed her lower lip, her eyes boring into his. He could see she wanted to disbelieve him, wanted to kill him now and claim the Archivist prize. But he also knew she hated Irid even more than he, that she'd spent a decade trying to track him down. When she looked away, Piether knew he'd won.

"Get the vehicles ready, Bleeckmun. We're going east." Her voice was controlled, but Piether heard the stress in it. She turned her gaze back to him. "Alright, Cyclor. We're allies, for now."

Piether looked at the Gears, striving to get the caravan ready while the Restorationist guards did nothing. He gave a slow nod.

"Allies. For now."

ALLEGIANCES AND ALLIANCES

Alliances and allegiances are related but separate concepts. Alliances represent actual organizations and religions found within the Gamma World. Allegiances are internal beliefs and loyalties that drive and motivate characters. Obviously the two concepts are linked, but it's

important to remember they are not the same. A character can be a member of an alliance without being so loyal as to take it as an allegiance. Similarly, a character's allegiances may well make him an ally of a group she is unwilling or unable to join officially.

ALLEGIANCES

The **Gamma World Player's Handbook** discusses four kinds of allegiances — community, organizational, personal, and theological/philosophical — outlining each and giving example benefits and limitations for characters. This chapter offers specific examples of each allegiance, and expands on the list of allegiance types and rules for gaining and changing allegiances.

Within each category of allegiance there are an endless number of specific possibilities. GMs should feel free to design allegiances appropriate to their specific campaigns, but they should also allow players to suggest allegiances their characters might have. Player-selected allegiances are a good way for players to do some of the design work of a **Gamma World** campaign. With the GM's help, players can create home communities, organizations and leaders to swear allegiance to. Not only does this free the GM from having to invent everything from whole cloth, the allegiances players take can give the GM guidance on the kind of campaign the players are looking for. If no one selects a community or personal allegiance, the players are much more likely to be looking to wander through far ruins and explore the far reaches of the remnants of the world.

GMs should use the examples and guidelines in this section as benchmarks when designing allegiances for their campaigns. A good selection of allegiances can greatly enhance a game, giving it a theme, tone and direction. Allegiances define who a character really is. They provide insight into a character's motivations and personality and a guideline for how a character should react in a given situation.

SPECIFIC ALLEGIANCE

The allegiances presented in the **Gamma World Player's Handbook** can represent a wide

variety of possible motivations. It's difficult for a GM to determine what is a reasonable allegiance and when its benefits would apply to a player character's (PC's) actions. To help show how allegiances are supposed to work, here are specific allegiances, each acting as an example of one of the existing allegiance types.

COMMUNITY ALLEGIANCES: YORGVILLE

This allegiance represents loyalty to Yorgville, one of the communities of Nau Yorg. Characters with this allegiance gain its benefit whenever acting in the best interests of Yorgville. Since there is regular fighting between the factions of Nau Yorg, this benefit obviously applies when fighting invaders trying to raid Yorgville. It also applies when seeking relics and foodstuffs for the community, protecting leaders and technicians important to the city, and seeking solutions to problems that directly threaten Yorgville. Not everything the characters do can be considered a gain for the community, however.

The crucial question is, does the character's current goal have a direct, noticeable gain for the community he is loyal to? Secondary benefits to the community do not count for this purpose, and the GM must be careful when deciding if a benefit is primary or secondary. For example, retrieving a new power generator for the community provides a direct benefit. Thus a character on a mission to acquire such a generator gains the allegiance benefits for all actions that move him closer to that goal. If the character is sidetracked however, perhaps investigating a nearby ruin because it might have valuable resources, he does not gain the benefits during the side-trek. Once he returns to his main goal (or any other goal with direct benefits for the community), access to the benefits returns.

If characters are on a mission to gain weapons to arm their town's defenders, they gain the benefit. If they're looking for weapons for their own use they do not, even if they are among the town's defenders. The primary gain is to their own power level, and the community benefits only indirectly. Of course "gain" includes preventing a loss: A group trying to prevent its community from being flooded is certainly working directly for its improvement, since it is fighting off a direct threat.

An action that spreads gains among a community and its allies in equal part may or may not qualify for the allegiance's benefits. The basic rule is if the action creates new threats at the same time it provides new resources, the allegiance benefit is not gained. For example, if characters loyal to Yorgville are working to prevent an old atomic weapon from destroying all of Nau Yorg, they certainly gain benefits for working to improve their community. If they attempt to restore power to all of Nau Yorg, however, they give Yorgville's enemies new resources that may outstrip the gain to their own community, and thus gain no benefits from their allegiance.

COMMUNITY ALLEGIANCES: BORDLAINT

In principle, allegiance to Bordlaint works just like allegiance to Yorgville; characters gain the

allegiance's benefits when acting to improve and protect their community. The difference is, Bordlaint isn't under constant attack from nearby foes, and values the "spirit" of its community more than any specific element of its physical structure. The "community" of Bordlaint has less to do with its tree-top homes than with the desire to keep its traditions and culture intact.

Thus, purely physical threats such as mutant raiders and wildfires are only a threat to the community if they threaten to make it impossible to continue the people's traditions and work. A character trying to rescue three kidnapped residents isn't working to benefit Bordlaint, because their disappearance doesn't threaten what's important... unless the victims are biotech scientists, in which case they are crucial to the "spirit" of the city. Similarly, striving to gain new foodstuffs for Bordlaint doesn't rate gaining the allegiance benefit, but seeking a new source of gene-splicing nanite technology does.

ORGANIZATIONAL ALLEGIANCES: HEALERS

The most accepted and welcome of all alliances is the Healers, who swear oaths to do no harm. Characters who take the Healers as an allegiance must obey its ethos, even if they do not work as physicians or other treaters of injury and misery.



Only creatures who have taken oaths to cause no harm to others, even in defense of their own lives, are trusted enough by the Healers to be given medical supplies, healing manuals and other useful tools (represented by a bonus in Wealth, as these materials are excellent trade goods).

A member of the Healers only receives the +2 Wealth bonus per level if she visits one of the group's secret hospitals at least once before she gains her next character level. A character out of contact with other Healers simply has no way to get the material the Healers would share with her if she's in the middle of a desert or halfway around the world. The character can catch up once she's back in contact with one of the centers of Healer activity.

A wide variety of individuals and groups ally themselves with the Healers, guarding their secret hospitals and escorting wandering Healers, without taking the group as an allegiance. They usually have allegiances to friendly groups or compatible philosophies, but they are not dedicated directly to the goals of the Healers themselves. The Healers appreciate these associates and may give them preferential treatment, but they are not the clearly and fanatically loyal pacifists the Healers entrust with valuable materials.

Even a member of the Healers may not have an allegiance to the organization. A renegade doctor who believes social diseases should be treated with a gun, for example, may just barely pass muster for membership with the Healers, but she will not get serious consideration when it's time to allocate the most important resources. Characters who buck the system or campaign for change to a group from within can gain the social benefits of membership within an alliance, but are not given the additional resources allocated to those with clear allegiance to the group's goals and methodology.

ORGANIZATIONAL ALLEGIANCE: ELFIVERS

A character who takes an organizational allegiance to the Elfivers is not only supporting the group's end goal (which could be done with a theological or philosophical allegiance), he's directly promoting and aiding the structure of the group itself. He's most likely to be an apprentice to a Elfiver master, or a young Elfiver just going out on his own. A GM should only allow this allegiance

if it fits well in his plans for the campaign. A community without the means or willingness to fly is not a place an Elfiver is likely to stay.

A character who starts with an organizational allegiance to the Elfivers gains the full +4 Wealth bonus, but is unlikely to gain the additional +2 Wealth bonus at each level. The group has few strongholds, and these are well hidden and secured. A character under the guidance of an Elfiver master would qualify as being in regular contact, but simply meeting one in passing is not good enough. The GM may want to keep track of how many Wealth bonus increases the character misses, and present a working dirigible or similar very expensive item to the character after enough Wealth bonuses would have been granted if the Elfivers had a more regular system of contact. A player shouldn't expect such a gesture, but it is a good way for a GM to provide better transportation to a group if she's ready to move her campaign to a new locale.

PERSONAL ALLEGIANCE: BEDER JAICHSON

Beder Jaichson is the current leader of Yorgville; a character could easily take both a personal allegiance to him and a community allegiance to Yorgville. The two allegiances are separate, however, and could potentially come into conflict. A personal allegiance to Beder Jaichson drives a character to see after Jaichson's well-being and strive for his personal success and advancement. As long as Yorgville accepts Jaichson this isn't a problem, but if the people revolt against him, or Jaichson decides to betray them to some outside force, a character loyal to him must turn against Yorgville.

The benefits granted by this allegiance apply only when the character is working to prevent a direct threat to Jaichson himself. Fighting off attackers assaulting Yorgville counts, as the raiders clearly want to kill or capture Jaichson if they can. A counter-attack against the raider's camp doesn't qualify, as the raiders aren't taking immediate action against Jaichson. The benchmark for this is: If the character fails in his current effort, would direct harm come to Jaichson as a result? If the answer is yes, the character gains the allegiance's benefit. If not, no bonus is gained.

ALLEGIANCES AND ALIGNMENT

Players coming from *Dungeons & Dragons* rather than *d20 Modern* are sure to notice the lack of alignments in the **Gamma World Player's Handbook**. The Gamma World isn't a place of black-and-white distinctions between good and evil, and conflicts between law and chaos tend to be focused on the establishment or destruction of a community rather than philosophical distinctions. Most creatures are more worried about survival than ethics, and two groups may both believe in good and order but still end up trying to destroy one another.

However, there's still room for a character devoted to an ideal, even if such characters are in the minority. A wanderer who only fights for just causes, or a philosopher seeking to restore

lost visions of how the world should work, are viable characters, and may well be dedicated to such lofty concepts as good or law. In a world with insane AIs and personality-changing viruses, it's even conceivable a character might be dedicated to spreading evil, for no reason other than being programmed to do so.

Such characters are examples of philosophical allegiances to specific ethics, moralities and principles. Not every character should take these allegiances, just those with very strong feelings regarding their moral views. Most characters fall into the many shades of gray of the Gamma Age, lacking the driving convictions needed to take a philosophical allegiance.

PHILOSOPHICAL ALLEGIANCE: ETHICS

This sort of allegiance describes how a character feels about order, as represented by law and chaos. An individual with a lawful outlook tends to tell the truth, keep his word, respect authority and honor tradition, and he expects others to do likewise. An individual with a chaotic outlook tends to follow her instincts and whims, favor new ideas and experiences, and behave in a subjective and open manner in dealings with others.

In order to gain the benefits of a philosophical allegiance with this outlook, the

character must exemplify his chosen position in all his activities. This does not mean a character with an allegiance to the ethical philosophy of chaos must act insane, or roll knucklebones to randomly decide among all possible courses of action. But it does mean that if the GM feels the character is not taking the chosen ethos to heart in a given game session, the allegiances benefit shouldn't be available for that session. Only extremists can expect to gain a benefit from an ethical allegiance in every session.

PHILOSOPHICAL ALLEGIANCE: MORALS

This describes the character's attitude toward others, as represented by good and evil. An individual with a good allegiance tends to protect innocent life. This belief implies altruism, respect for life and a concern for the dignity of other creatures. An evil allegiance shows a willingness to hurt, oppress and kill others, and to debase or destroy innocent life. Like the ethical philosophy, only a character who is guided by these ideas in all her dealings in a game

session can draw upon the benefits of these allegiances.

The evil moral philosophy is an exception to the self-allegiance rule regarding multiple benefits: A character with self and evil allegiances can gain the benefits of both aspects. Such a character suffers double the normal -2 penalty on Charisma-based checks made to interact with characters of opposed alliances (a total of -4), except for Intimidate checks which are made normally.

NEW ALLEGIANCES

Though allegiance categories are of necessity broad, there are a few types of allegiances not covered in the **Gamma World Player's Handbook**. These are less common than those covered in the core rulebook, and could all be considered theological or religious allegiances. They offer a different set of benefits, however, and are distinct enough to deserve brief treatments of their own. Some of the new allegiances are unlikely choices for PCs. An external allegiance in particular is only likely to come into play when specifically arranged for by the GM. Even so, these allegiances can be useful guidelines for a GM when defining nonplayer characters (NPCs).

EXTERNAL ALLEGIANCE

An external allegiance is one forced on the character from the outside. It resembles some other allegiance, but instead of being chosen by the character it is selected by someone or something else with the ability to change the character's perceptions or priorities. External allegiances are rare, but form an important driving force when encountered. Any time a character is loyal to a cause he has no independent interest in, he's under the effect of an external allegiance.

In most cases external allegiances are the products of Final Wars technologies, such as cybernetic implants, nanites, genetic viruses, wetware re-wiring of the brain and psychotropic drugs. Such methods are no longer common in the Gamma Age, but the occasional dormant psycho-weapon can still be found, designed not to destroy enemies but absorb them. Such weapons may be hard-wired to a specific allegiance (often causing confusion, as a character may become fiercely loyal to the Micronesian Liberation Guild without having any idea of what or where it is), or leave the character open to the first philosophy she hears explained after being affected, causing her to attach herself to whatever group or religion she encounters next. These external allegiances are sometimes permanent, and whole alliances have formed from groups afflicted with them. Ironically, such groups can recruit true loyalists later, who take the new allegiance willingly.

Psionics and mental mutations can also generate external allegiances, though generally only for short periods of time. Even unthinking creatures can create such allegiances, such as a creature that

exudes a chemical that causes anyone who touches it to feel strong love for it, protecting it in the face of any danger. Few mind-affecting powers have the staying power to enforce an external allegiance for long. Of course, the wielders of such abilities can gain great power very quickly, often baffling other groups in the same region.

More mundane effects can also result in external allegiances. A character whose daughter has been kidnapped to ensure his loyalty certainly has a personal allegiance (to his family), but as months and years pass, he develops an external allegiance to the group he's working for. A character who has suffered great stress or hardship may well suffer a kind of mental collapse and begin sympathizing with those causing her pain, forming a purely emotional external allegiance. Brainwashing, both the simple form practiced by many cults and more complex "mind-games" can also trick a character into holding an external allegiance.

Mundane external allegiances rarely last long without regular reinforcement. The kind of reinforcement required varies depending on the coercion used to place the allegiance. Brainwashed characters must be reconditioned at least weekly, while those blackmailed must be reminded of the threat monthly.

A player certainly could decide on an external allegiance as part of a character background, but in general this sort of allegiance is for use with NPCs and special effects defined by the GM. Any psionic power or ancient technology that forces a change in perception or loyalty can be treated as an external allegiance. Because the behavior of a character suffering under an external allegiance can be discerned as strained or unusual (see limitations, below), the allegiance guidelines are useful even though no one selects this choice willingly.

- **Benefits:** If the emulated allegiance has a physical, obvious benefit such as an increase to the character's Wealth bonus, the GM may decide to grant the benefit to a character operating under an external allegiance. Less tangible benefits, such as bonuses on skill checks or changes to the function of an action point, are never gained. Even if the character doesn't realize it himself, his allegiance is too transitory to inspire the kind of determination that grants these benefits.

- **Limitations:** The main drawback of an external allegiance is itself — the disadvantages of holding an allegiance without choosing it are obvious. The character is forced to advance a cause she has no real love for, and may well make enemies of similar minded-creatures who do not realize her true beliefs. The character is constantly struggling with her enforced commitment, causing her to never truly open up when interacting with others. As a result, she suffers a -1 penalty on all Charisma-based skills and checks. Additionally, her lack of true devotion can be detected by those who deal with her regularly. A character may make a Sense Motive check to realize an individual with an external allegiance is under some form of coercion (DC 15 if the individual is aware of the external allegiance, 25 if the force pressuring her to hold the allegiance is hidden even to the character holding it).

SAMPLE EXTERNAL ALLEGIANCE: SECCONCOM NAS

This external allegiance is created by a dying and likely mad AI which calls itself SecConCom Nas (Sector Control and Command, North American Sphere). SecConCom Nas can be placed anywhere by a GM, where it controls a small ruin with few working defenses but stout remaining walls. The central chamber of SecConCom Nas includes an interrogation chamber, which is equipped to allow the AI to implant neural transmitters into helpless targets. Those so implanted are allowed a DC 15 Will save, with failure resulting in an external allegiance to SecConCom Nas.

This allegiance appears to be a personal allegiance, with those afflicted acting to protect the AI and expand its area of influence. A few raiders and vagabonds have fallen under SecConCom Nas' power, but they are always looking to recruit more good members. If a group seems too powerful to be overcome, SecConCom Nas' forces try to ally themselves, offering the AI's vast computing power (though its analysis abilities have largely degraded over the centuries).

The neural transmitters work perfectly as long as victims remain within a mile of the AI's base. Victims are allowed another DC 15 Will save each week, with an additional save allowed the first time they are forced to violate an existing allegiance. Agents who go further than a mile from SecConCom Nas gain a save every day, with a

cumulative +1 circumstance bonus on their saves each day they are outside the computer's influence. A successful save allows the character to abandon the external allegiance permanently. Even a new neural implant cannot restore SecConCom Nas's influence.

OBJECT ALLEGIANCE

Sometimes a character's allegiance is not to a person or a place, but to a thing. This may be a holy relic, a repository of genetic material to repopulate the world, a beloved heirloom or anything else unique and noteworthy a sentient being might give its life to protect. Such objects are often the focus of towns or organizations, but a character may care more about the inanimate thing itself than the place or people devoted to it.

If the object is too large to be moved easily, the character treats its location as an important community or shrine. In these cases the character acts as though he had a community allegiance to that location, but his actions may be very different from those of characters who care about the location itself or the people living in it. A shrine-keeper defends the home of his beloved object against any threat to it, but might well betray the people living there to a more powerful group if convinced the new group makes better defenders for his object.

If the object is mobile, the character wants to carry it with him at all times. If he can, he acts like a character with a self-allegiance, though it is the object he carries that he truly wishes to keep safe. If someone else is carrying the object, the character protects and aids that person, at least until he can get the object for himself. Few characters are selfless enough to admit that someone else may make a better defender for the focus object, but those who are that honest with themselves spend a lot of effort finding the best bearer for the object of their loyalty, and try to convince her to carry and defend it.

If the object is lost, the character's primary focus is to locate it. This comes close to a theological allegiance, as the character is essentially on a quest. It's even possible for a character to be devoted to finding an object that doesn't exist. It may have been destroyed, or it may be a mythic device that never existed to begin with. Characters with this allegiance can't ever settle in one location, as they are constantly driven to hunt down the object, even if they have no better clue to its location that "not here."



- **Benefit:** A character with an object allegiance gains different benefits, depending on the status of the object. If it's in a location, the character gains the benefits of a community allegiance. If it's on a person, he gains the benefits of a self-allegiance (if carrying it) or a personal allegiance (if someone else is carrying it). If it is lost, he gains the benefits of a theological allegiance while searching for it.

- **Limitations:** If the object of a character's allegiance is threatened (may be destroyed, stolen, damaged or lost within the next 24 hours), the character has difficulty concentrating on anything else. Until such time as the object is clearly safe, all action point expenditures not directly related to protecting the object cost double the normal amount. For example, a character who wishes to add 1d6 to a d20 roll must spend 2 action points instead of 1. The GM is the final arbiter of when an object seems threatened, and when it appears to be safe once more.

SAMPLE OBJECT ALLEGIANCE: THE SWORD OF GABRIEL

The Protectors of the Second Tower are a religious community, sworn to prevent the unwary from entering the Tower of Babel and being

destroyed by its guardian angels. They are led by the ailing Aindony Purrohs, the lone survivor of an early expedition into the Tower's compound. When he emerged he had a single object with him, a shard of laser-reflective metal with the name "Gabriel" etched on one side. Purrohs passed the "Sword of Gabriel" to one of the younger members of the community, and quickly forgot about it.

Heoppyr Ohn, the recipient of the sword, hasn't forgotten. At night, he can hear Gabriel singing to him in his sleep. He's convinced the sword is the key to safe passage to the Tower of Babel, and that it can unlock an amazing secret. He considers the sword more important than the tower, the Protectors or his own life. No one else takes him seriously, but his own fanaticism carries him without the support of others. Ohn has tried to convince others to go with him into the Tower, so the sword could be protected by its angels rather than his own weak efforts.

In truth the Tower of Babel is the remains of the Nevada Orbital Beanstalk, and the angels defending it are the robotic defenses run by Michael, the AI in charge of security. The "sword" is all that remains of the station's other AI, Gabriel, once the manager of the beanstalk itself. A number of more

advanced communities in touch with the Protectors have begun to suspect the sword's real importance, and are offering to trade valuable resources for it. So far Purrohs has refused, but his concern for the future is causing him to reconsider. If Ohn realizes his sword may be taken away into the hands of heathens, he's sure to either run into the complex, or make a dash out into the rest of the Gamma Age.

OPPOSED ALLEGIANCE

Where most allegiances represent a dedication to aiding and protecting a person, place or thing, an opposed allegiance marks the character's desire to destroy something. A character with an opposed allegiance wants to see a community, organization or person brought low. The target might even be something as nebulous as a general philosophy or outlook, for players who don't mind their characters having no real shot at ever completing their goals.

A character with an opposed allegiance is constantly striving to hurt and destroy her sworn enemies, and should only be allowed if this is not disruptive to the campaign as a whole. So total is the character's focus on her opposed allegiance, she is not allowed to have any other opposed allegiance, and just one positive philosophical or religious allegiance. If a character successfully destroys the target of her opposed allegiance, she may either immediately replace it with a related opposed allegiance ("The Purists may all be dead, but the villages that supported them still exist!"), or drop the opposed allegiance with no penalties.

- **Benefit:** While directly attacking the person, community or organization she opposes, a character with this allegiance gains a +1 morale bonus on all attack rolls and weapon damage rolls.

- **Limitation:** A character with this allegiance is obsessed with destroying the target of her hatred. If an opportunity arises to strike out against her target and the character doesn't take it for any reason, she suffers intense emotions of anger at the circumstances that have blocked the course of her revenge. These impose a -2 circumstance penalty on all Intelligence-, Wisdom- and Charisma-based checks she makes until she successfully hurts her foe in some way.

Additionally, the character can not abide those who support her hated foe, and suffers a -4 penalty on all Charisma-based checks (except Intimidate) she makes when interacting with a known supporter.

SAMPLE OPPOSED ALLEGIANCE: AGAINST THE PURISTS

The Purists are mistrusted and despised by many of the inhabitants of the Gamma Age, but a character who takes an opposed allegiance to them hates them with a burning passion. Such a character is likely to be a mutated human or animal who has lost loved ones or suffered directly from the activities of the Purists, though a pure-strain human who lost a friend or lover might take the opposed allegiance as well.

Though a character opposed to the Purists is likely to hold great disgust for their allies and supporters, she only gains the benefit of +1 on attack and weapon damage rolls when fighting the Purists directly. An attack against a known Purist gets these benefits, while attacks made to fight off beasts guarding a bomb the Purists have planted does not. The opposed allegiance bonus is the most direct and obvious to apply: Only direct attacks against the opposed person, community or group gain the bonuses. The character can reasonably be required to act against the opposed group at every opportunity, but only direct attacks gain any benefit.

SELF ALLEGIANCE

A character with self allegiance places his own needs and desires above those of any other individual or group. A self allegiance means dedication to your own shelter, wealth, safety and comfort before worrying about taking care of others. Such a character may be open about his allegiance ("You gotta look out for number one"), or he may hide it behind a veneer of caution, cowardice or pragmatism ("I couldn't risk myself, I'm the only one who knows how to repair the truck").

Though self allegiance is by definition selfish, it is not necessarily "evil." A character can place his own needs first without being willing to harm others to achieve his goals. A character with this allegiance is unwilling to make sacrifices for the good of others (unless of course he sees long-term gain in doing so), but he may not automatically be willing to steal, lie or cheat to get ahead, either. Certainly most self-allegiant characters are willing to bend or break the normal conventions of acceptable behavior, but many are also smart enough to realize they shouldn't do so obviously. It's bad for long-term survival to get a reputation as a me-first lawbreaker.

The more powerful a self-allegiant character is, the more obvious his allegiance is likely to become. The ruler of a city-state or general of a mighty army can afford to make his priorities clear. Indeed, human nature being what it is, many leaders find the more luxury they surround themselves with, the more loyal their followers become (presumably in hopes of gaining some small part of that luxury as a reward for their service). A poor farmer scraping a meager existence out of the irradiated dirt, however, may be just as focused on himself, but can't afford for others in the community to realize it.

Many AIs have a self-allegiance, a fact that may have caused many of the problems before and during the Final Wars. The need for such systems to defend themselves from hackers and similar attacks is obvious, but as the systems became more complex, designing them to defend themselves only up to a point became difficult. Those AIs who were willing to go to the greatest lengths to defend themselves were most likely to survive into the Gamma Age, and many are very unapologetic about their loyalty only to their own survival.

A self-allegiance simply isn't compatible with groups that regularly risk themselves for others. A character with this philosophy won't work out in many communities or alliances. Though anyone can hide his nature for a short time, a self-allegiant character can't fit into groups whose members place some cause above their own well-being, such as Elfivers, or limit themselves for a philosophical belief, such as the Seekers. Some groups attract self-allegiant characters, either because they provide a high degree of security like the Peace Brigade, or because they encourage self-development like the Cyclers.

- **Benefits:** A character with self-allegiance who spends an action point to add to a saving throw is allowed to roll 2d6. He adds the bonus from the higher of the two dice to the saving throw.

- **Limitations:** A self-allegiance is considered opposed to all other allegiances, with the sole exception of personal allegiances dedicated to the character with self-allegiance. (If a general has a self-allegiance, those with a personal allegiance to him are not opposed.) Because of this, a character with a self-allegiance suffers a -2 circumstance penalty on all Charisma-based checks made when interacting with characters with other allegiances.

A character may not gain the benefit of a self-allegiance and any other allegiance. Either the character is too selfish to gain the benefit of another

allegiance, or he's not selfish enough to gain the benefit of a self-allegiance. This does not prevent a character from taking other allegiances, though normal limits apply, but does prevent any of those allegiance benefits from applying.

SAMPLE SELF ALLEGIANCE: DAUNCA MERRET

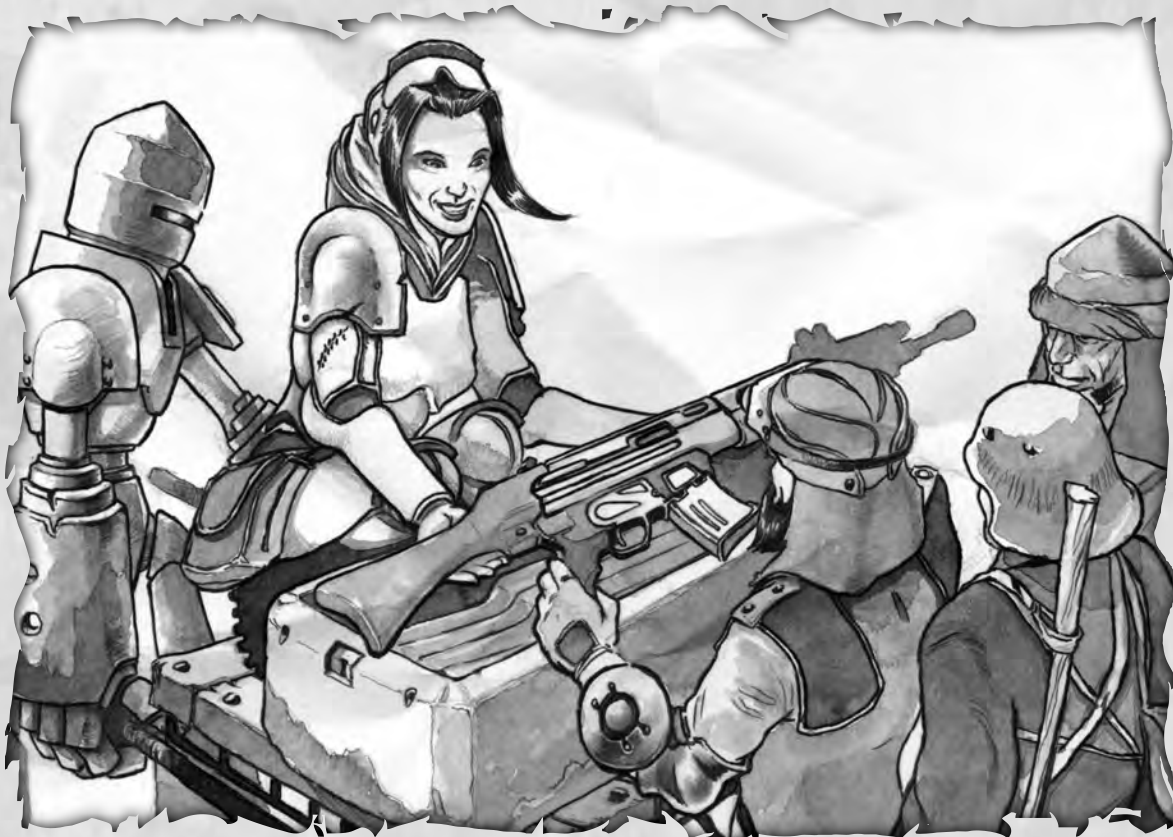
Daunca Merret is a survivor in a world where surviving is hard. Raised in a Seeker community, Merret saw her people's way of life destroyed when laser-armed Zoopremacists razed her home. Merret hid, surviving the massacre, but was forever changed. Watching her family and friends try to fight high-tech weapons with swords and axes, Merret swore she'd never limit herself in tools, weapons or tactics again, and that she'd survive, no matter what it took.

A band of the Knights of Genetic Purity found her, and she hid her mental powers in order to join them. She gave them the false name of Ibby, told her story of woe and offered her services as a musician to pass the long nights. At first seen as nothing but an entertainer, Merret used her secret powers to aid and back up-and-coming knights, and was soon seen as an important advisor and aide. But she made enemies within the Knights as well; she soon decided to betray the group to a band of the Iron Society, who paid her well to disable the Knight's security just before an attack. Merret did as she promised, but made sure she was gone by the time of the raid.

Once more calling herself Daunca, Merret took the technology gained from the Iron Society and used it to buy her way into the Restorationists. So far she's managed to get a safe position as a researcher, but inevitably her new friends will demand she risk herself in a raid to gain more tech. Daunca is already looking for a way out, either by selling out the Restorationists to a more powerful group, or simply by stealing enough rare technology to buy her way into a safer group. If she must, she'll go on a raid or two, but only if she's befriended enough other raiders to ensure they'll risk their lives for her.

GAINING AND LOSING ALLEGIANCES

Allegiances are based on high dedication and devotion, and shouldn't be gained or lost at the drop of a hat. The benefits and limitations of allegiances are minor compared to many of the feats, skills and



mutations that exist in the Gamma Age, but they're also powered entirely by loyalty and affiliation. For alliances to have real meaning, they need to be treated as important, almost sacred, beliefs. A player shouldn't give her character an allegiance because of its benefits, but instead seriously consider what is important enough that her character is willing to fight to the death to defend it. The allegiance benefits then become a bonus when the character is well played, helping the character survive the trouble his alliances get him in.

The simplest way to handle character alliances is to limit the number a character can have, and how often new alliances can be gained. The standard rules assume a character may have no more than three alliances, and may only select a new one when attaining a new level. Only a single new allegiance may be taken when gaining a new level under this system, though alliances may be dropped at any time. This system has the advantage of being quick and simple, and preventing players from constantly switching alliances to gain a stream of changing benefits. For games where alliances play only a minor role, this is likely the best option.

There are drawbacks to this system, despite its simplicity. Groups that wish to emphasize alliances

may find it awkward that a character can't take a new allegiance whenever it's appropriate for in-character reasons, based not on gaining a level but a change in the character's circumstances.

A player should always be allowed to drop alliances. It's unfair to force a player to keep a character dedicated to something the player no longer wishes to support. A GM need not allow a player to gain new alliances, and may extend the period an allegiance's limitations apply, but the motivation of a character should rest cleanly in the player's hands, and alliances are an important part of this.

It is always reasonable to limit a character to one allegiance from each category. A GM may allow a character to have multiple alliances of the same type if she wishes, but benefits from multiple alliances never stack. For example, a character may have a history that makes multiple community alliances logical, but he still only gains a +2 on action die totals, not +4. Of course the character gains this benefit if working for the good of either community, but only as long as working for one doesn't result in working against another. It's difficult to serve more than one master, and a GM should feel free to highlight this problem for characters who insist on trying.

ALLEGIANCES AS NARRATIVE

Some groups won't want to use game mechanics to define when characters drop or pick up allegiances, instead preferring to play through such decisions using a more narrative method. The basic rule for narrative decisions is that the player and GM must both agree it's appropriate before a character may change allegiances. A player may decide to drop an allegiance at any time, but the GM is free to continue to penalize the character with the limitations of the allegiance afterward. Some penalties, such as being mistrusted by groups opposed to the old allegiance, may last for years, while most others should fade after the character has gained a new level.

GMs may wish to allow a character who undergoes a major stress or change to completely switch her allegiances immediately. For example, a change of classes (by multiclassing or taking an advanced class) represents a change of focus and perception. This kind of change in worldview may well be accompanied by a switch of allegiances. Similarly a near-death experience (unconscious and bleeding at least 1 round without stabilizing), complete defeat (captured while failing at all goals) or total victory (permanently eliminating a major foe) can cause an epiphany that changes a character's outlook forever.

If the focus of an old allegiance ceases to exist, the character should be allowed to take a new, related allegiance immediately. For example, if a character has an allegiance to Bordlaint, and the town is utterly destroyed, it would be appropriate to immediately take a personal allegiance to displaced family from Bordlaint, an opposed allegiance against those who destroyed it, or an organizational allegiance to a group trying to help the refugees find a new home.

Similarly, a character who gains membership to a new community or alliance should be allowed to immediately take allegiance to that group, if she has fewer than three allegiances currently and doesn't already have an allegiance to another alliance or community. Acceptance can breed loyalty very quickly, so instant allegiance is reasonable. If the character opts not to take the new allegiance immediately, the GM should require her to act within the limits of the allegiance for several games before adding it. This is true of any new allegiance not spurred by a radical change of circumstances: The player should first prove his character is motivated by the allegiance, and then gain the benefits.

Sometimes, tough decisions must be made, and a character is forced to act against the best interests or guiding principles of her allegiances. This is not necessarily grounds for changing allegiances if it happens once, but if a character is constantly flying in the face of allegiances it's likely time to change them. This represents a gradual change of motivation; the GM may suggest the character is in a crisis of faith, similar to that suffered when abandoning a theological or philosophical allegiance. This is an opportunity to allow the player to change his character's allegiances without making it so easy that everyone wants to do it.

ALLEGIANCE GAME MECHANICS

Some groups prefer to trust game mechanics to help define when a character gains or loses allegiances. The advantage of this system is that it avoids disagreements between the player and GM regarding how a character really feels. Instead, die rolls decide if a character is truly, in his heart, loyal to a cause, or if he's moved past it. Because allegiances are a matter of determination and fidelity, the game mechanics for gaining and losing them are based on Will saves. A character with more willpower is more in control of his emotions and devotion, and can thus more easily switch allegiances.

A character cannot gain more than one allegiance each level, though a character may start with the full complement of three. To gain a new allegiance, the character must have been exposed to it; you can't take an allegiance to the Iron Society if you've never heard of it. A character cannot gain the benefits of allegiance to a group unless she is an accepted member of that group; no matter how loyal you are to the Iron Society, they won't give you extra trade goods if you're not a member. Gaining an allegiance requires a DC 15 Will save, which may only be attempted once per game session.

A character may drop an allegiance at any time, but may still suffer the limitations of the allegiance. External penalties (such as penalties on Charisma-based checks when interacting with those opposed to an old allegiance) remain in force for as long as the character's reputation associates him with his old group. Internal penalties last until the character has shaken the lingering doubts about changing his worldview. The character is allowed a DC 20 Will save once per game session. If successful, the character no longer suffers the internal penalties and the player is free to mark off the old allegiance.

A character cannot take an allegiance while he is suffering internal penalties for another allegiance of the same type. For example, a character who has a philosophical allegiance to good drops it, but fails his Will save. The character now suffers the penalty, a crisis of faith that doubles action point expenditures. Until he makes a successful DC 20 Will save, the character cannot take a new philosophical allegiance.

It is possible to combine the narrative and mechanical approaches to allegiance. In this case the narrative method governs until the GM and player have a disagreement. Once the two cannot come to terms, the game mechanics settle the issue. A GM may also forbid characters from gaining new allegiances unless they have undergone some change in perception, as discussed in the narrative section above.

MODIFYING ALLEGIANCE BENEFITS

Sometimes a GM has so clear an idea of how an allegiance should work she wants to alter the benefits gained by those who take it. The benefits listed with allegiances are examples, and though any change made should stay close to the standard benefit, there's lots of room for variation.

For example, the GM may decide characters with allegiance to the Healers do not receive a Wealth bonus, but instead are given a specific amount of medical gear. If the gear is close in value to what the character could have received using

her increased Wealth bonus this doesn't create a balance issue, and it does make more sense than assuming the Healers pass out knives and broken electronics to trade with. On the other hand it can create more bookkeeping, and cause different characters to receive differently valued material from the Healers, depending on what their base Wealth bonus was to begin with.

Action point or die roll bonuses can be granted in slightly different circumstances. A character with an allegiance to the philosophy of the Viragos might well gain the benefit of that allegiance whenever using an action point to help directly aid or save a woman, regardless of how often that happens per game session. Of course in this case the character cannot choose to take the normal benefit once per game, even if acting within the tenets of the philosophy. The old benefit is replaced by the new one, which is designed to customize the allegiance for a specific character's needs.

The existing allegiance benefits give strong guidance for the kind of bonuses a GM should assign. It's reasonable to change the circumstances under which the benefit can be used, or to what it may be applied, to make the allegiance more closely fit its subject. The important limiting factor is that these changes should not cause the benefit to come into play any more often over the long run, though it may make a significant change to a single game. As with any change to allegiances, if the players all clamor to take the new benefit, it's probably too good.

CRYPTIC ALLIANCES

As promised in the **Gamma World Player's Handbook**, here are many more cryptic alliances. Some are revisions of alliances from previous versions of the **Gamma World** game, while others are new groups never presented anywhere before. Though all these groups are widespread, most inhabitants of the Gamma Age won't encounter more than a few in a single lifetime. Few regions have more than a few of these alliances, and many communities aren't affiliated with any of them.

Each alliance write-up includes suggestions for the kind of materials those with allegiance to the group are given. There is also some guidance about how characters are likely to gain and lose allegiances for use with either the narrative or game-mechanical rules for allegiance changes, as well as what types of

allegiance other than organizational members of these groups might take. These are only guidelines, and GMs should use them as starting points for designing their own alliances and appropriate allegiances for them.

ARCHIVISTS

"Technology did not fail man. Man failed technology."

Like many alliances in the Gamma Age, the Archivists are dedicated to finding, restoring and maintaining as much Final Wars era technology as possible. Unlike others, the Archivists have no interest in using the technology they gather. Instead, they place these items in libraries, and maintain and preserve them without making any use of them. The Archivists never use anything more advanced than

muscle-powered machines, despite having access to vast collections of complex technology.

Many other groups find this behavior bizarre in the extreme, and assume the Archivists are ignorant fools who don't realize the use of the things they gather. In many cases this is true, as the Archivists include numerous poor, uneducated members who simply need something to believe in. The core movement of the Archivists, however, is an educated, reasoning council that is well aware of the value of the things they gather, and believe it is necessary they preserve them without ever using them.

To the Archivists, their duty is to make up for the hubris of their forefathers. Humanity was given the power to act as gods, and used it to create toys, fulfill fantasies, and ultimately destroy itself. The Archivists are aware that many of the tools of the Final Wars were self-aware, and that they were not treated with respect by their creators. Archivists make the leap that technology itself became aware, forming a kind of superconsciousness spread across all devices of advanced function, and that it was this technology-as-awareness that both destroyed the old civilization and prevented the world from being totally unraveled.

In this act, the Archivists believe, the technology superconsciousness destroyed itself, breaking into its component parts. However, if enough technology were to be restored or rebuilt, the superconsciousness would return, and in that moment judge biological life in all its forms. The Archivists believe that by having working technology that they don't use, they are both making amends for the excesses of their distant ancestors and proving that living creatures can refrain from abusing technology. They hope this will be sufficient to convince the superconsciousness not to destroy all life when it returns.

Typical Archivist libraries contain only a few broken bits of tech placed on desks and in alcove-like niches called cubicles. Nothing of value is ever kept in these small buildings, and raiders are free to enter and ransack the buildings in a useless search for working machines. The true treasures of the Archivists are kept in secure bunker museums, the locations of which are closely guarded secrets. Wandering Archivist monks called Heuretics visit the public libraries regularly, removing anything of true value and replacing it with useless junk. Though even Heuretics are forbidden from using most technologies, many are Nanosmiths, and are permitted to use their gifts to defend themselves and the treasures they carry. Heuretics also search

for lost tech in ruins or battlefields, and even steal it from other communities (though such agents always conceal their intents and allegiances, often taking the role of wandering madmen).

Archivists do best in communities with population levels 6–7. Such communities are large enough to protect their libraries and small enough to avoid difficulties from their low-tech lifestyle. Larger Archivist groups also suffer from internal dissent, as it is difficult to control very large fanatic groups without very strong leaders. Only one or two Archivist fortresses have populations over population level 8. Smaller Archivist groups must depend on secrecy to protect their stockpiles of technology, often concealing themselves as groups of Seekers or poor, uneducated communities with nothing of value.

Archivists make useful contacts and allies, as they are willing to buy broken tech for food, rare gems, or simple weapons. Very trusted allies may even be able to convince Archivists to repair broken devices in payment for other working technology, though some Archivists are never willing to encourage tech use. Because they are fanatical about their beliefs, Archivists make dangerous foes. Most large Archivist communities have a few high-tech weapons they will use in emergencies, and one or more Heuretic warrior-monks.

Splinter groups of Archivists, called Servants of the Eye, also exist. These groups have lost sight of the core mission of the Archivists, and instead see themselves as agents of the technological superconsciousness — which they believe exists now. Unlike typical Archivists, who see their actions as pragmatic gestures to defend the world, Servants are religious believers who see technology itself as magical. They also keep any tech they come across, but place it in shrines and temples covered with wires and gears to worship. These Servants of the Eye often fall under the control of Programmers, AIs or the Created, accepting them as saints in the service of the superconsciousness.

Characters may take an organizational allegiance to the Archivists after hearing a Heuretic preach, or after being exposed to particularly powerful ancient technology. Trade goods given to such characters are often simple things taken from defunct machines, such as wire, gears and bits of unbreakable synthetic material for use in simple tools.

BREEDERS

“Be fruitful and multiply. Now.”

Breeders are an unusual cult that equates advancement with high population numbers. They

point out, with some supporting evidence, that the more advanced societies of the past supported higher populations, both in terms of density and total population numbers. The Breeders believe this is proof that higher populations result in more advanced societies, and thus the secret to creating a stable and secure society is to raise the population as quickly as possible.

Though this logic escapes most other groups, the Breeders have had some success in areas other groups considered too hazardous to settle. By ignoring what a community can support and encouraging rapid childbirth, the Breeders have established small towns in areas with horrendous mortality rates. The Breeders claim this is because a larger total population means more total exceptional people, more motivation to expand horizons, and a larger pool of labor for community improvement projects. Most outside observers note that Breeder communities elsewhere have often suffered starvation, epidemics of disease and rioting, and their few successes in deadly territories hardly offset their atrocious track record.

Despite this, Breeders are convinced their course is sane and rational. The underlying philosophy of the Breeders argues that a few large, successful communities are worth more than dozens of smaller, struggling communities. They assume that some percentage of communities is doomed to fail no matter what. Any time one of their towns starves, or is ravaged by disease because of overpopulation and overcrowding, the Breeders shrug and claim that town was doomed anyway, claiming population was not the defining factor. Arguments about Malthusian limits and rational expansion fall on deaf ears. Breeders are taught at an early age that more is better, and little penetrates this indoctrination.

Breeders often bring improved health care and food supplies to towns, asking nothing in return for their gifts. As the health and nutrition of a population increases, the birthrate naturally increases. Some towns have claimed that the Breeders lace their gifts with fertility drugs, and the Breeders admit to supporting the use of such methods. A few of the Breeder-visited towns have grown powerful from their increased health and numbers, though only those with large areas of natural resources nearby.

Breeders also operate a few small communities they refer to as "nests." These protected towns are open to anyone willing to take part in the endless

breeding programs the communities run. Though some effort is made to provide health care for program members and protect the offspring until they are able to care for themselves, these are secondary concerns for the Breeders. The population is encouraged to grow quickly, with medals and rewards of food and supplies given to mothers who produce large numbers of children.

Nests are kept at a fairly stable population level 8, with excess population shipped to other communities. The most successful Breeder communities are massive population level 10 affairs, located in areas rich with natural resources (as well as predators that keep the population from growing further). Breeder communities that grow past their terrains' ability to support them can collapse from 6,000 members to less than 1,000 in a matter of weeks if starvation and disease set in.

Breeders' knowledge of medicine is second only to the Healers, making a Breeder settlement a good place for allies to hide out and convalesce. Their experience with diseases and plagues also makes them dangerous foes, as Breeders are willing to use "Typhoid Mary" attacks, where agents with fatal but subtle diseases are sent to spend time with foes, infecting and eventually killing them. If there isn't time for such attacks, Breeders resort to human waves, sending a large portion of their population in a single massive attack to overrun and exterminate foes.

In principle, Breeders wish to increase the population of all communities, but there is a definite anti-mutant prejudice within the organization. Many Breeders feel mutated bloodlines are likely to become sterile at some point, and put the whole Breeder program at risk. The most radical of these Breeder groups have been known to work with the Knights of Genetic Purity to sterilize non-human lines, and establish towns where mutant slave labor is used to care for pure-strain human children.

A character may wish to give the Breeders his allegiance if saved by one of their nests, or if he suffers the loss of one or more children. Characters with Breeder allegiances are given materials very similar to those gained by Healers: food concentrates, medical supplies and manuals on proper nutrition. What a Breeder is never given is anything preaching family planning or actual contraceptives.

BROTHERHOOD OF THOUGHT

"You think, therefore you are."

In a world filled with extremists, insular groups of survivors and suspicious townsfolk, the



Brotherhood of Thought strives to bring enlightenment. The Brotherhood doesn't care about the ultimate shape of the world to come, be it a new technological wonder or a return to simple lives of farming and crafting. All the Brotherhood wishes to ensure is that when that future arrives, all thinking creatures will welcome it together.

The Brotherhood is an outgrowth of older monastic traditions, and its members live lives of service and preaching. It was first formed by a man known as the Ashintin, who wrote the Book of Thought. In this tome, the Ashintin tried to answer questions regarding the nature of artificial intelligence, the spiritual place of soultech and the diversity of sentient life in all the forms it has grown into. The Ashintin never speaks of himself in these books, never says where his ideas come from or why he believes them to be important. What he does do is conclude that thought, the ability for thought and the quality of thought, must be the only benchmarks by which the value of any creature can be judged. Though no one knows where the Ashintin came from or how he died, copies of the book found their way into many communities and sparked a new religion.

Though different translations of the Book of Thought vary somewhat, they all come to two basic conclusions. First, any mind able to ponder its own consciousness is sentient, and thus a brother in the community of sapient creatures. Second, no thinking creature is more important than any other, and therefore no creature can claim its choices are more valid than any other's. This is one of the basic tenets of the Brotherhood, and it results in a chaotic mix of members, each doing what she believes the Book encourages. Since all these opinions are considered equally valid, the Brotherhood continues to splinter into factions with very different views.

The one universal among the factions is their acceptance of any creature who truly wishes to join. Many small monasteries exist where younger Brothers are taught and older ones retire. The rest of the Brothers spend their lives spreading the word of universal sentience as they feel best. Many travel in groups that include human, mutant and animal members — and even androids and AIs if any can be found. Since thought is a product of the mind, and the minds of animals, computers and men are different, Brothers believe they must travel in diverse groups in order to experience and explore diverse qualities of thought.

Most Brothers are pacifists, willing to resort to violence only to save another thinking being. Of course, many believe that hate groups such as the Zoopremacists, the Purists and the Iron Society are direct threats to the ideal of universal sentience, and work to destroy these groups by any means necessary. The most common tactic Brothers take to put down hate groups is to form a coalition of surrounding organizations and convince them to band together against their common foe. This allows the Brotherhood to bring groups together, even while working to destroy other thinking creatures. Alternatively, some bands of Brothers train "Censors," black-clad killers who use stealth, poison and sabotage to cripple and kill enemies of universal brotherhood.

Some Brothers are psionic, and believe their powers are the ultimate expression of the power of thought. This idea is heretical to other groups of the Brotherhood, for it suggests that some thoughts (those able to create psionic effects) are qualitatively superior to more common thoughts. Most members of the Brotherhood accept psionics as an important symbol of the power of thought, but reject it as sign of more advanced thinking.

Most members of the Brotherhood do not form exclusive communities, instead wandering in groups of 5 to 6 or settling in groups of 30 to 50 as part of larger communities. The rare Brotherhood strongholds most commonly settle at population levels of 4 or 5. Larger Brotherhood communities become so anarchy-ridden they lose Brotherhood unity, becoming generic societies with several Brotherhood factions within them.

The Brotherhood is open and welcoming to anyone who is not overtly violent or bigoted, making their communities good neutral-ground for opposing factions to meet peacefully when negotiating. Those who are seen as friends of unity can depend on the Brotherhood for advice and research, drawing on the broad range of knowledge and expertise found within the Brotherhood. Foes of the Brotherhood, in addition to risking a visit from the Censors, face a campaign of bad publicity spread by wandering Brotherhood members. Such maligned individuals find they are seen as small-minded and idiotic by anyone who has been visited by a Brother, making it difficult for them to find allies or maintain occupied lands.

It's impossible to pin down the all possible allegiances Brothers of Thought may take, as each feels her views and actions are as valid as any

other's. Allegiances to the philosophies of the universal brotherhood of sentient creatures and the generic ideals of "good" are more common than a group allegiance to the alliance. Similarly the trade goods a member might receive are wildly varied, though peaceful and functional items such as foodstuffs, medicines and harsh weather garb are most common. Characters who give up Brotherhood allegiances generally do so after ignoring the opinion of another creature, only to then suffer a terrible and avoidable fate. These characters see the folly of claiming that all views are equal; some even take an opposed allegiance against the Brotherhood.

CYCLERS

"You cannot improve the world. You can only improve yourself."

Unlike many alliances, Cyclers do not gather in large numbers, rule fortified towns, or keep their membership secret. Cyclers see all these things as pointless, and in some cases actually counterproductive. Instead, Cyclers wander in groups as small as a force of one seeking to improve themselves and serve as good examples. Many other cryptic alliances believe the Cyclers have some secret purpose or base. They don't. The most mysterious thing about Cyclers is that they are exactly what they claim to be.

The philosophy of Cyclers is that misery is created by expectations of how the world should be, and their conflict with how the world truly is. Since everything occurs in cycles — the seasons, the cycle of life, even the business cycle — all efforts to change the world to meet these expectations are doomed to failure. It is the nature of living things to strive for improvement, however, and thus creatures continue to fight to make a better world even when they know such efforts are useless. The Cyclers see this as the trap all civilizations have fallen into, and the end result is the cycle of history returning to barbarism.

Cyclers believe there is a better way. All expectations regarding the outer world must be abandoned as pointless. Instead, Cyclers focus on improving themselves. It is their belief that if all creatures strove only to make themselves better, the world would inevitably improve. This is not the goal of the Cyclers, however, for the improvement must not be desired in order for it to occur. All focus must be on self-improvement, but each Cycler must decide for himself what is needed for his own path

to a better being. All other concerns are not only unimportant, they actually cause harm. Trying to help someone for her sake creates misery, and thus ultimately harms that person.

This strange combination of moving toward a better world while thinking only of themselves causes Cyclers to act differently than most creatures in the Gamma Age. A Cycler might well defend a town, because it serves a useful purpose for him. He may even engage in a fight because he feels his own combat skills need improvement. A Cycler is willing to make friends and enjoy their company, but at the same time preaches to his friends that he can't care what happens to them, for their own good.

Anyone can become a Cycler, though a Cycler Master may well refuse to take a particular creature as a student. Most Cyclers travel extensively, seeking experiences to aid them in their quests of self-growth. Most ride two-wheeled personal vehicles that allow them to experience the countryside as they travel it. Cyclers have no ruling body or hard and fast rules for allowable behavior, and it's not unusual for two Cyclers to take opposite sides on an issue. Cyclers do accept the value of experience, however, and Cycler Grand Masters, those who have trained 25 or more other Cyclers, are respected and often obeyed. A council of Grand Masters meets every few decades, and makes advisory decisions regarding appropriate Cycler actions. The council is not a true ruling body, but most Cyclers heed its advice.

The easiest way to represent a Cycler's dedication is to take a self-allegiance. Of course a Cycler can also take a religious or philosophical allegiance, but this requires the GM and player to agree what constitutes action for self-improvement and what is an external concern. Some groups find this kind of debate a fascinating addition to roleplaying, while others are simply annoyed by it. The GM and player should carefully discuss their opinions of Cycler philosophy before using this method.

The Cycler organization is too spread out to be a useful organizational allegiance. Characters are drawn to this allegiance after undergoing a major trauma or tragedy, then hearing a Cycler discuss the idea of life without misery. Many who try the Cycler path eventually become disillusioned, though this is generally a gradual process that involves a long crisis of faith.

ELFIVERS

"God meant for humanity to fly."

Elfivers are a loose society of engineers, scientists and explorers who spread across the Gamma World, seeking to encourage powered flight and (where possible) space travel. They see the conquest of the sky and the vast space beyond as the most important goal any thinking creature can have. Most of their members are pure-strain humans, though they accept anyone with an interest in flight and the technical skills to learn its principles into their membership. Older Elfivers take two or three younger apprentices and teach them about aeronautics and flight. Surprisingly few AIs join the Elfivers, though a number work with them on specific design projects.

Elfivers don't care about political movements, personal freedoms or religious philosophies — just reclaiming the sky. They see flight as the first step to reclaiming the Moon, and eventually the whole solar system. To the Elfivers, the resources available in the Asteroid Belt, Mars and the moons of Jupiter represent the only chance to rebuild the world. They also believe that a society dedicated to exploring space can avoid the excesses that led to the Final Wars. The progression from powered flight to a greater, civilized society is inevitable to them, and because of this the Elfivers often accept any means as justified by their long-term goals. Elfivers also believe their conclusions are obvious — and anyone who disagrees with them just hasn't understood the argument.

Elfivers work with anyone who seems likely to advance their aims. When looking to convince a leader to reclaim an aerospace site or dedicate resources to aeronautic projects, Elfivers shape their arguments to fit the potential ally's needs. Military leaders are told planes are the ultimate high ground, and walled towns that balloons can spot enemies at a greater distance than a watchtower. Agricultural communities are encouraged to use gliders to look for new fertile fields, and scavenger groups are told they can cover territory more quickly in powered aircraft. The best Elfivers are actually able to provide designs geared for these purposes, but even those with limited skills are willing to adapt any flying design to any purpose if it gets one more craft airborne. If Elfivers feel that a group important to the future of flight is threatened, they respond with what force they can, often including armed 2-man dirigibles and scout gliders.

Rumors claim that Elfivers have secret dirigible bases, and rigid-frame helium airships they use to explore old ruin sites. The truth of these rumors is up to the GM, and depends in part on the desired overall level of technology (see **Gamma World Player's Handbook**, Chapter Six: The Gamma World Campaign). If true, the Elfivers guard the locations of these bases vigorously, revealing them only to the most trusted and capable of their members. Older Elfivers are sequestered in these bases, designing new aircraft and attempting to comprehend recovered aircraft from the old world. Many of these bases have strong links to the Restorationists, and Elfivers and Restorationists often work together on large-scale projects. If the GM decides Elfiver communities exist, they are around population level 3–4, large enough to employ numerous laborers and experts but small enough to remain hidden.

In many areas, Elfivers must work in secrecy, hiding their allegiances and ultimate goals. Areas strongly influenced by Seekers or Archivists, for example, do not welcome efforts to restore the technology of flight. Similarly, many more advanced groups feel flight is less important than weapons and armor, forcing Elfivers to conceal their activities from such groups as the Purists, Peace Brigade, Steel Foes and even Viragos. It's not unusual for Elfivers to pretend to be Archivists or Gears to conceal their activities and true purposes. Elfivers also often pose as Healers, claiming that some sites are toxic (giving them free access to the tech within), and passing off the canvas for balloons and oxygen tanks for high-altitude flight as medical tents and supplies.

A character aware of the Elfivers may be motivated to join them after seeing her first airship or taking her first powered flight. Few characters take an organizational allegiance to the group, as the Elfivers are too spread out to maintain contact regularly. Many instead take a philosophical allegiance to the goal of reclaiming powered flight for all sentient creatures. A character who does take an organizational allegiance may be given flight-related trade goods, including model planes, flight manuals and, rarely, even hang gliders.

GEARS

"Spring's busted. Line's clogged. We can fix it. Whatcha got to trade?"

Found scattered throughout the Gamma Age are long caravans of rag-tag vehicles. Some are

pulled by beasts, others powered by steam, solar, chemical and even nuclear energies. These are the mobile communities of the Gears, tight-knit groups of mechanics, engineers, traders and entertainers. Gear groups visit other communities, fixing broken machines, providing shows, games and fortune-telling experiences, and selling goods from far-off lands.

Gears are organized around the family unit, with the elder members of each family forming a ruling council. In most Gear groups, all internal matters — questions of where to take the caravan, how to handle discipline, who is allowed to join, what is taught to younger members — are ultimately the decision of the eldest female. All external matters — who is allowed to trade with the caravan and at what price, how the caravan is defended, and who is considered a trusted ally — are handled by the eldest male. In practice, these two (always called Granmar and Granthfa) make most of these decisions together, after taking council with other council members.

The family unit is also how jobs are divided. One family line is mechanics, while another is drivers, each passing their skills and tools from one generation to the next. Whenever two Gears get married, the council decides which family the new couple belongs to, and they both change to doing that family's tasks. Occasionally the union of two young Gears is forbidden by a family afraid to lose the talents of its younger members, and the council rarely interferes with such matters. A family with too few births may take in orphans, or in rare cases even kidnap children from communities they pass.

Most Gears are humans with few visible mutations, though there are notable exceptions. Gears recognize each other through secret words and signs, and anyone who can pass such tests is an accepted member of the community. It's not unknown for new bloodlines to be accepted in their entirety for doing some great service for a Gear caravan, and everything from thinking animals to AIs can be found claiming membership in one or another Gear caravan. Gears do not trust outsiders, but are equal in their distrust. It doesn't matter to a Gear if you're a Purist, Zoopremacist or sentient shade of blue: You're a Gear, a known ally or an outsider.

The most successful Gear groups have a large, armed and armored central vehicle, always called the Babushka. A Gear's Babushka is the most important vehicle of the caravan, providing

protection for all other vehicles. It is manned by the best mechanics and fighters in the group, and carries the young and wounded. Vital supplies, including fuel and rare parts, are stored within the Babushka or kept in vehicles near it. In some cases, the Babushka itself is the leader, a soultech vehicle that sees the biological Gears as its children, guiding generations with the benefit of its immortal wisdom.

The logical limit to a Gears community is the number of souls their caravan can transport. The smallest Gear groups are dependent on draft animals or fossil-fuel vehicles, and rarely grow above population level 2 (100 Gears max). Gear groups with solar, nuclear or other long-range vehicles, often including multi-car, train-like Babushkas, can grow as large as population level 4 (400 Gears); but such groups are rare. The family-style government of the Gears doesn't handle larger groups well, and any Gear caravan that grows to that size is likely to be looking for a second Babushka, to allow them to split into two caravans.

Communities who deal with Gears regularly tend to accept them, though grudgingly. Other groups tend to see Gear traders as thieves, their mechanics as lazy hacks and liars, and their entertainers as little more than beggars or whores. Though much of this attitude is mistrust and envy of a group both insular and mobile, it is not entirely unjustified. Gears do whatever they must to survive, and in lean times are willing to resort to crime if needed. Gears are not evil folk for the most part — they simply place the needs of their families and the caravan over those of outsiders.

Gears do not accept outsiders lightly, and most characters with a community allegiance to Gears are related by blood to a Gear member. Trusted allies and traders may be able to take an organizational allegiance to Gears without being family, but they must have done something spectacular to earn the rovers' trust. Characters with such an allegiance are well treated by all Gear groups, as they are taught secret phrases and gestures that identify them as trusted friends. These characters are given spare parts and small working engines (toys, really) as trade goods, and may also be given free repairs.

Gears prefer to flee enemies, when possible. Gears can fight viciously if they must, but prefer to avoid conflict where possible. A Gear caravan is most likely to turn and fight if an allied immobile community is threatened. This is rare, as Gears have few true allies, but they never leave a friend if they

can help it. Gears fight as they do everything else — using whatever is likely to work. Gears have been known to sabotage enemy vehicles; use Trojan Horse tactics; booby-trap vehicles of their own (with poisons and explosives), then leave them for enemies to find; or even just rally their vehicles into a makeshift circular fortress and shoot.

A character who tires of life as a wanderer could easily abandon a Gear community allegiance by moving into a more traditional home. An organizational allegiance is most likely to be lost if a character betrays a group of Gears, though some individuals might also grow disillusioned by the Gears' willingness to sacrifice outsiders for the good of the caravan.

INCARNITES

"We thank the waters, for providing the fish; and the fish, for providing their lives."

A small but devout religious group, the Incarnites are firm believers that the world is alive, and that there is an invisible world just as real as the one that can be found with the five senses. Incarnite cosmology assumes everything in the world — every object, idea, place, time and creature — has a spirit associated with it. Some are kind, gentle spirits that wish only to be respected, while others are malicious, hurtful spirits that desire pain and bloodshed. The most important spirits are those of nature (rivers, fields, storms) and those that inhabit old technology (Final Wars ruins and devices). The only path to happiness, Incarnites believe, is to live in harmony with all these spirits.

In order to achieve this harmony, Incarnites follow a lifestyle of contemplation of action, taboos and rituals. The rituals and taboos are often simple matters: rites enacted before beginning a new project; rituals to mark the change of seasons; taboos that forbid the eating of various (often poisonous) creatures. These ceremonies offer time for Incarnites to consider the consequences of their actions. In many cases the rituals have obvious, direct benefits for those who practice them. Rituals of cleansing (before eating or cooking; whenever dealing with blood, raw food or garbage; and whenever coming into contact with unknown objects) help keep Incarnites healthy and safe from contaminants. Other rituals have less obvious purposes, but provide Incarnites with calm and harmony. To Incarnites, the main function of such ceremonies is to appease the various spirits they must interact with daily, and show they respect even the spirits of things they must kill or destroy.

Incarnites believe shrines to honor various spirits are important, and most homes include at least one small icon to represent the spirits most honored there. Communities erect shrines to the most obvious nearby spirits, often revering those things that make their community possible (such as a sea and its fish), or the workings of an ancient technological device. Such shrines are maintained by Incarnite priests, who see themselves more as teachers than dictators of the spirits' will. Most Incarnite priests have other duties in the community as well, and gain their neighbors' respect because they take on the double duty of maintaining shrines without asking for recompense. Many Incarnites do offer extra food or assistance with difficult labors to their priests, out of this respect.

Incarnite dogma can be difficult to understand, especially since its wisest preachers often insist it must be learned, not taught. Ultimately, it rests on respect for all things, even those that seem not to deserve it. Communities with Incarnite populations respect their resources, enemies and each other, constantly taking a moment to consider how their actions could impact these things. As a result many Incarnite communities thrive, with carefully planned programs dealing with long-term problems and quick action taken to preserve anything put at immediate risk.

Incarnites who come across working soultech devices often worship them as manifest spirits, and in this regard act much like some groups of Archivists or Programmers. Sometimes these groups cohabit an area peacefully, though it is equally likely for them to come to blows over possession of a piece of working, thinking machinery, especially if the machinery expresses a preference to one of the groups. Some groups of Incarnites have reacted poorly to the similar beliefs of Archivists, and as a reaction reverted to an extremely formalized and ceremonial form of the basic Incarnite religion. These Incarnites may go so far as to require numerous cleansing baths and specific rituals just to go to bed each night.

Incarnites have great respect for psionics, and many of their communities are ruled by a small council of creatures with mental powers. Incarnites believe psionic powers allow a creature to come into direct contact with the spirit world, and that all psionic effects are requests granted by the inhabitants of that world. This does not mean the Incarnites roll over and obey any psionic who exhibits powers however, as evil spirits can grant

requests as well. Incarnites see nanosmiths as similarly gifted, but for some reason nanosmiths are rarer than psionics in their communities.

Incarnite communities tend to grow quickly, but level off at a population level of 7-8. Their dedication and focus on harmony allow them to grow well-designed, flexible communities that thrive under almost all conditions. Their insistence on working with the environment limits them, however, making it difficult to build extensive housing or grow large numbers of crops. Most Incarnite societies have strict population control laws, preventing them from growing beyond the territory's ability to support them easily. Larger cities must compromise their beliefs (often losing their strict Incarnite culture), and smaller towns are often limited by conditions so harsh the first focus is survival rather than balance. Small, secretive groups of Incarnites sometimes live in other communities, such as those of the Breeders and Restorationists, where the Incarnites work for social change.

Despite their focus on balance and harmony, Incarnites can be moved to violence. They defend themselves with intensity, taking time to ask their enemies' spirits for forgiveness after defeating them. They have also been known to move against a group they see as dangerously unbalanced, in a preemptive effort to restore harmony. Incarnites try to make surgical strikes, with dedicated warriors striking only what must be destroyed and leaving the rest. In many cases, this involves only destroying a single dangerous machine, or killing a leader or council rather than a whole society. Whenever possible, they use stealth and assassination to meet these goals, as a blade in the night does less collateral damage than open warfare. Incarnite groups who are regularly engaged in conflict have groups of assassins, called Shadow Men, who worship the spirit of death and kill any they see as a threat to their balanced society.

Anyone raised in an Incarnite community or cared for in one after being wounded may easily take an allegiance to the community, a specific Incarnite priest or the religion itself. A character with an allegiance to one of these but not the others may suffer conflicts of allegiance, as the best route for an Incarnite community may conflict with Incarnite beliefs. A character with an allegiance to both community or person and religion is unlikely to drop either allegiance unless something truly catastrophic happens to shake her faith.

WHAT DOES A SHRINE TO TIME LOOK LIKE?

Religious and philosophical art in the Gamma Age is a mix of classic images, repurposed icons, and new styles born of the Final Wars. Higher-tech groups lean toward icons that are obvious to an educated character (silhouette images of tools or animals, stick-figure people, a red circle with a bar through it, radiation symbols), but are meaningless to primitive groups. Similarly, icons used by low-tech groups are likely to be based on their religious or philosophical beliefs, such as dragons to indicate danger or the leaf of a healing plant to mark places of safety, making them obscure or incomprehensible to outsiders. Any Gamma Age society also has holdovers from before or during the Final Wars that may have been adopted, such as using the logo of an off-road vehicle automaker to label scouts.

When describing any temple, shrine or even secular memorial, a GM should feel free to mix metaphors, visually speaking. Images can come from classic symbology or dream interpretation, related common objects from the modern world, and any symbol that would be left over in large numbers from the previous age. A reference work on dream interpretation or mystic/religious symbols can be helpful for raw ideas.

For example, an Incarnite shrine dedicated to the concept of time is covered in images of circles with 12 evenly placed runes (similar to clock-faces, but also invoking the symbols of the Zodiac), skulls (representing ancestors, who are symbols of the past), and a chimera-like figure with the body of a lamb, the wings of a dragon, legs of a hare and head of a salamander. This figure, called the Chronocrator, is the Incarnite spirit of time. Each of its four animal types represents a season (spring, summer, autumn and fall, in order), representing the passage of time. Shrines with a more modern influence might include digital-style numbers, square windows and even calendars.

PEACE BRIGADE

“A society must be judged by its ability to defend itself.”

The Peace Brigade believes in the single tenet that civilization can only spring from security. All advances — social, technological, philosophical — require an area of stability for their development. The many threats of the current world make such stability rare, and thus squelch any chance for communities to develop and progress. The obvious answer to the Brigade is for all societies to place defense as the first priority, above such concerns as comfort, religious beliefs and previous agreements.

The Peace Brigade operates numerous, large, fortress cities throughout the world, all dedicated to protecting themselves and nearby client cities. Each client city is a walled community, required to send an annual tax to the fortress that helps maintain its defenses. Each client city also has a number of outpost communities, which in turn send taxes to the client city. The system works because the smaller outposts can depend on the larger forces of a client city or even a fortress to deal with massive threats, such as Steel Foe bands or Red Death cultists. The larger cities can afford to maintain these forces because they receive the annual taxes of the communities they protect.

The biggest Peace Brigade cities are population level 10, with as many as 20,000 citizens. These are some of the largest and most powerful cities found in the Gamma Age; and each controls a network of smaller cities, which in turn control numerous smaller towns. As a simplified rule, a Peace Brigade city controls two communities, which are two population levels lower. Thus a big population 10 city controls two population 8 cities, each of which controls two population 6 towns, and so on. The whole network acts as a small kingdom, with defense and expansion its two main concerns. If multiple population 10 cities are in contact, their combined networks form a small empire.

The Peace Brigade is not satisfied to protect its existing holdings, however. It is constantly expanding, sending out construction teams to help fortify and prepare smaller and increasingly distant communities. These teams offer their services to communities at a very low price, asking only that they be allowed to control decisions regarding the new defenses and that a small annual tax be paid back to the fortress. Many communities accept out of desperation, willing to take any risk to increase



their safety. Those that refuse are marked down for conquest later, with Peace Brigade armies eventually arriving to establish a defense program by force.

In either case, once construction of a town's defenses has begun, the safety of the community as a whole is the only acceptable consideration. Outlying neighborhoods may be declared indefensible and excluded from the Brigade's planning effort. Homes in kill zones or too near planned walls are destroyed for the good of the community. There is no appeals process; and as the Peace Brigade mans the new defenses as they are built, most towns have no hope of resisting by force. Towns being fortified are placed under martial law for the period of construction, which often lasts years.

Once a town has been properly readied, however, the Peace Brigade pulls out. In towns that accepted the Brigade's offer willingly, the original government is allowed to take control once more. Towns that had to be fortified at gunpoint are left in the hands of a ruling council friendly to the Brigade's aims, though still one drawn from the local populace. As long as the town meets its annual tax burden, the Brigade makes no further effort to control its government. Those who refuse to make their tax payments soon discover it is difficult to hold defenses against those who designed them.

The Peace Brigade also makes alliances with other groups, forming mutual defense pacts and coalitions of armies. They are especially fond of making such deals when dealing with "rogue nations." These are groups too powerful for the Brigade to destroy on its own and too volatile to leave in place, such as marauder groups, Zoopremacists and towns that have fought off the Brigade before. Any group which threatens to destabilize an area is considered a threat, and the Peace Brigade is willing to work with anyone to overcome such dangers. While these often include groups considered zealots

and madmen, it can also include groups of Seekers, Restorationists and even Healers who refuse to fortify a hospital.

Once a coalition has done its work, the Peace Brigade reconsiders what alliances are useful to them. It's not unusual for the Brigade to decide a one-time ally is now a dangerous threat, and form a new coalition to destroy it. Of course the Brigade as a whole has gained a reputation as untrustworthy as a result, but since individual fortress cities are run by independent governors, many are able to convince nearby governments that they can be trusted despite the reputation of the Brigade as a whole.

Individuals who have gained the Peace Brigade's trust can find sanctuary in its well-defended towns, as well as a good chance to buy and sell weapons and other goods. The Brigade is always in need of builders, architects and warriors, and often hires freelance mercenaries for specific projects. Those who oppose the Brigade also hire fighters, and a character who has faced off against Brigade troops a few times is likely to be labeled an Enemy of the Peace, and banned from Brigade-controlled cities.

The basic goals of the Brigade, to promote self-reliance and security, are clear and laudable enough to encourage many characters to take allegiances with the organization. Characters whose families were saved by Brigade efforts, or have seen firsthand what happens to communities that are not prepared to withstand attacks, make up the majority of Brigade loyalists. Characters with this alliance receive a wide variety of materials as trade goods, drawn from the taxes of outlying client cities. Characters often drop Brigade allegiances after seeing the excesses the group considers acceptable to accomplish its goals, or after growing disgusted with the Peace Brigade's willingness to break treaties and betray allies to gain greater regional stability.

PROGRAMMERS

"Avoid errors and mailer daemons. Seek downloads and compatibility."

The Programmers are a widespread group whose members seek out computers, AIs and all forms of artificial calculating power. They see in these things a spark of divinity, and worship them as elements of the supercomputer deity they believe created the universe. The Programmers treat computer operating systems as sacred languages and operation

manuals as books of prophecy. They are surprisingly well educated on computer theory, but see the sciences of computer construction and operation as rituals. To Programmers, the true motivating force behind all computational devices is the god-system, not binary.

Many Programmers cite as proof of a computational god the "sacred ratio" of phi, 1.618. This number holds mathematical meaning but also appears in many natural creatures and plants. This number appears as a ratio in many creatures, including the placement of a dolphin's eye, fins and tail along its body, the ratio of the spiral growth of many snail's shells, and the proportions of a pure-strain human's limbs and facial features. For all these unrelated items to use the same numerical measuring stick, Programmers argue, there must be a mathematical and thus computational order to the universe. Math is the language of a computer-god, and ratios and probability are holy tools. (For more information GMs should research the Golden Mean as well as the Fibonacci sequence.)

This world outlook often makes Programmers seem heartless to outsiders, as everything is treated as a calculation or subroutine. Individuals aren't important, only the function they play in the grand scheme of the supercomputer. According to Programmer myth, the supercomputer deity is currently suffering a malfunction, a kind of virus that prevents it from fulfilling its primary procedures, which would regulate the Gamma Age and return it to a state of greater normalcy. The Programmers are willing to take any risk, and cause any amount of damage, to gather enough computing power into one place to reboot the deity supercomputer. All other considerations are secondary.

Of course, not all Programmers are devout in their religious beliefs. Many see their religion as an easy method of indoctrinating the uneducated masses in basic mathematical concepts. As a rule of thumb, the more advanced a Programmer group is, the less it depends on religious trappings in its day-to-day operations. But when converting a group, either covertly from within or through overt force, the religious side of the Programmers is enforced on the population for at least a generation.

The Programmers accept anyone into their numbers, as long as the applicant can learn the basics of computer operation. Most are pure-strain humans, but this is because pure-strain

enclaves have the highest remaining technology level rather than any active prejudice. Programmers often keep their membership secret, fearing thieves and raiders will steal their precious computers. Large Programmer cults operate fortresses packed with thousands of broken bits of calculators and old self-aware toys, only a fraction of which still function.

Programmers have two basic types of strongholds: small redoubts that remain hidden, and larger strongholds. Their research redoubts are rarely larger than population level 2, needing to keep numbers low so supplies can be easily smuggled in and housing hidden. Some of these redoubts are located within cities run by those opposed to the Programmers, most often Archivists. Larger Programmer strongholds stabilize around population level 8, surviving with little arable land by carefully calculating the best use of resources.

Many of the most religious Programmer cults fall under the control of one or more AIs. These groups are known as Followers of the Voice, for usually they receive an AI's instructions through a speaker or similar listening device. Followers of the Voice often take control of Servants of the Eye shrines and temples, connecting the devices found there to their controlling computers and using the Servants as slave labor. Members of the Created often use Programmers as a front, sometimes controlling them through big, obvious computers full of flashing lights and whirring disks (which are little more than radios).

Programmers are not as fanatical about spreading their beliefs as many Gamma Age groups, making them a good bet for anyone who needs an unbiased opinion about mathematical or computational problems. They aren't as adept at general repairs as Gears or Restorationists, but have a better reputation than either group. When it comes to computer and AI repair, however, the Programmers are second to none.

A character may take an organizational allegiance to the Programmers, or may take a personal allegiance to a specific AI. Either way, characters most likely take such allegiances at character creation, or after a character sees the Programmers accomplish some amazing task at a computer's behest. A character may drop such an allegiance if exposed to the frailties of his ruling computer, suffering a crisis of faith until a new allegiance replaces his old driving motivation.

RESTORATIONISTS

"The sun has not yet set on civilization. It has dimmed, but will be bright once more."

The Restorationists are one of the more powerful and common of the cryptic alliances. They are also among the most mistrusted. The Restorationists don't accept that the Final Wars ended the age of a better world through technology, and intend to reclaim the glories and powers humanity held a few short generations ago. Their driving goals are to rebuild the best of the past civilizations, while learning from the mistakes that ended them.

The Restorations don't just wish to build a new future, they want to recreate the world as it was, only better. Though this rings hollow with many inhabitants of the Gamma Age, the Restorationists assure any who listen that it is not an impossible goal. The height of technology in the previous era could almost literally mold reality as its masters desired. The Restorationists firmly believe that if that technology could be rebuilt and controlled, it could rebuild cities, end plagues, cleanse irradiated lands and end the thousand other threats of the Gamma Age. The natural corollary of this belief is that no damage done in the quest to regain these powers is unacceptable. Anything done now can be fixed later, once the Restorationists have the needed tools. The only excesses the Restorations worry about are those that might destroy the organization before it gains the needed technologies.

Some of the most powerful and advanced enclaves still functioning are run by Restorationists, and many more depend on Restorationist technologies to keep things running. The Restorationists have a tech base as high as any group in the Gamma Age, though their abilities still fall well short of those possessed before the Final Wars. To maintain and advance this capacity, Restorationists regularly raid old ruins and explore wilderness areas, or pay mercenary companies to do so. Anything of a technological nature, even junk, can be sold to a Restorationist stronghold, though obviously functioning devices bring a much higher price. Restorationists don't ask where these things come from, and it's not unusual for them to buy artifacts stolen from Archivists or taken in a bloody raid.

Most Restorationists are pure-strain humans, though the organization has no official bias against mutants or non-human bloodlines. In many ways

the reverse is more common: Creatures other than pure-strain humans have little interest in restoring the civilizations of the past. Such creatures either didn't exist in that age, or were second-class citizens at best, so few have any desire to see the world return to that time. Many of the pro-animal and pro-mutant groups see the Restorationists as no better than the Purists, and treat Restorationist agents poorly.

It's obvious why the Restorationists do not get along with Archivists, Seekers, the Iron Society, the Ranks of the Fit, the Red Death, Steel Foes or Zoopremacists. What may be less immediately obvious is the reasoning behind the deep distrust between them and the Programmers and any AI, whether or not it is one of the Created. The Restorationists feel that renegade AIs, especially networks of AIs, were responsible for the Final Wars. In fact, they blame the vast numbers of non-human intelligences for all the errors of the last generation before the Wars.

As a result, Restorationists believe all computers must be programmed to obey humans in general and specific operators in particular. They also believe computers must be designed to do their best to act in humans' best interests, as the computers believe humans would define them. Though this leads to computers doing things they believe unwise because it is what they think the humans would want, the Restorationists consider this an acceptable risk to prevent computers from taking control. Only a few AIs in Restorationist hands have had such programming, with mixed results, but the organization's computer techs continue to develop more complex and effective control routines.

The Restorationists do have a few allies. The Elfivers certainly support most Restorationist goals, and the Healers frequently work with them to recreate medical technologies. Many groups of Trionicons and the Peace Brigade work with Restorationists on specific projects, but in general these organizations mistrust Restorationist desires to control everything they have a hand in building. More than one community has asked for Restorationist help, only to discover too late that the help comes with many strings attached.

Purists see Restorationists as natural allies, and the two groups often engage in arms-length collaborations. Most Restorationists see the Purists as idiot zealots, but their politics are less important than their ability to help Restorationists overcome

foes and gain access to Final Wars artifacts. Each Restorationist leader must make her own decision regarding these groups; many have refused to work with Purists, but most agree they are too valuable an asset to ignore.

Restorationist cities are usually population level 9. Their dependence on high tech allows them to make do with much less farming land than other groups, but they have a constant demand for power. This, combined with a limited supply of high tech, prevents their cities from reaching the size of Peace Brigade strongholds. Smaller Restorationist communities often make enemies faster than friends, and risk being eliminated by coalitions of their neighbors. A strong Restorationist leader can hold together a smaller town through constant vigilance, blackmail and extortion, but such towns often disappear quickly when their leaders fall.

Restorationists make strong allies and fearsome foes. They have a higher tech base, and a better ability to maintain it, than any other large group. For friends, they provide a market for high tech, repair facilities and often extensive creature comforts. To foes they present a serious threat, able to bring weapons of the Final Wars down on opposing cities. In both cases the limiting factor is a lack of stability. Restorationists change friends and opponents whenever it seems to move them closer to their ultimate goals, giving them a reputation as untrustworthy. This is coupled with the fact that they often run out of technological solutions without warning, often leaving allies stranded or enemies with a sudden reprieve.

Characters often start with allegiance to this organization or a community run by them if they were raised there. Characters saved by Restorationists may reasonably take an allegiance to them or a specific individual within the movement. Characters who have this allegiance can expect to receive scrap goods and spare parts as trading materials, items useful to high-tech groups to maintain their ancient machines. A character is most likely to end a Restorationist allegiance after seeing them deal with groups that create misery and fear, or after suffering at the hands of an old Final Wars trap.

RUIN RAIDERS

"Life is simple. Kill the monsters, take their stuff."

The Ruin Raiders are a loose association of adventurers and explorers dedicated to delving into the dangerous places of the world and returning

richer for it. The group runs a few survival schools in larger communities, but mostly are organized in “bands” of raiders with 3 to 8 members. The Raiders are often seen as mercenaries, though they generally only accept jobs to clear out old strongholds or eliminate specific dangerous creatures. They are seen as mad by many outside their circle, but also respected as courageous and skilled — as well as disposable — heroes.

The Ruin Raiders see life as a game, and their lives as nothing more than opportunities to rack up ever-larger “scores.” This belief is not literal: The Ruin Raiders are well aware that their lives are more than moments in someone’s passing entertainment. It is an analogy, a way of deadening the pain of the wasted world around them, seeking to cope with harsh realities by trivializing them. The Raiders are thrill-seekers, counting any dangerous activity as a “score” to be sought. Their desires to play the parts of wandering heroes are simply the “rules of the game,” a mechanism to force the Raiders to seek specific kinds of risks, rather than simply throwing themselves over waterfalls.

Ruin Raiders do not run towns or fill entire communities. They are elite bands of adventurers and explorers who view their calling as similar to that of a knightly order. They know their attitudes and actions are out of the ordinary, but see them as part of a code of living a life of danger that makes a difference in the world. They willingly take up the trappings of classic adventuring heroes, so anyone who comes across them knows they are more than just travelers.

The communities that support Raiders are often inclined toward a very deep traditionalism, resorting to older forms of address, organizing craftsmen by guild and generally depending on a feudal society, but they aren’t all Raiders. Common folks in Raider-heavy towns see them as a breed apart, more than slightly crazy but also useful to have around. Ruin Raiders are part army, part police force, and part local celebrities, giving children someone to look up to and aspire toward.

Most groups of Raiders pick their own members, training them “on the job” as they explore. The few schools run by the Raiders depend on aging technology to create false threats in pseudo-medieval environments. Some of these schools have actual facilities that run for miles underground, filled with holographic projectors, simple robot monsters and working (if badly designed) traps. Others depend on a few rooms that can be changed

FROM THEORY TO MANTRA

The Ruin Raider philosophy of interpreting everything in game terms has its roots in 20th and 21st century mathematics. The concepts of game theory proved fruitful in analyzing many kinds of behavior among human beings and even unthinking objects. Every successful analytical tool gives rise to some true believers who regard it as more than a tool — it becomes the key (or at least a key) to the hidden truths of the world. Life-gamers flourished before the Final Wars, and their shell-shocked surviving members became the first Ruin Raiders.

with similar tricks to take on a variety of appearances, and even cybernetic implants or dream-modification technology to create the virtual experience.

Though these technologies weren’t originally designed to be lethal, their degradation has removed many of their safety features. Further, many Raider schools augment the virtual threats with real creatures brought in from the wild. Training in these schools is often brief, with raw recruits thrust into a “ruin” to learn from experience. In some communities, such training sessions are viewed by the public as gladiatorial games.

Each band of Raiders has its own leader (generally called a Loremaster or Coordinator) who determines what jobs the band takes. The personal preferences of the Loremaster have a pronounced effect on the band, for only he can decide if a job to hunt down a mutant is a monster hunt, or an assassination unworthy of Raiders. In theory, Ruin Raiders only delve into dangerous territories (preferably subterranean ones), rescue kidnap victims, and kill dangerous monsters. These categories are quite broad of course, leading some Loremasters to happily accept jobs to hunt down and kill mutants alongside Purists, while others refuse such work as beneath them.

Ruin Raiders are direct in their dealings with others. A Loremaster makes friends where he can, using the military might of his band to protect those who are loyal and friendly to him and his. More than one small community has been saved from a marauding horror or band of scavengers by a group of Ruin Raiders, and such communities take great pains to keep the Raiders happy when they’re in town. Loremasters are similarly straightforward

when dealing with enemies, making strikes against teams of scouts and support facilities if a foe is too strong to oppose directly.

The Ruin Raiders are generally viewed as oddities in the Gamma Age. Only a character trained or raised in a community that accepts Raiders, or someone saved by a Raider at a young and impressionable age, is likely to have an allegiance to this organization. Trading goods for such characters often run to ornate jewelry and melee weapons, which the Raiders highly prize. Any serious exposure to an alternative way of life may be enough to change a character's worldview and lead to ending a Raiders allegiance.

SEEKERS

"If we can't do it ourselves, it shouldn't get done."

Seekers are communities of farmers and ranchers who seek to build a new world without depending on the technology of the old. They view technology as evil: It produces inherently flawed devices that encourage envy, pride, sloth and gluttony, and increase the power of greed, lust and wrath. Seekers believe the only path to a peaceful, safe society is one that forces all people to do their own labor, and be satisfied with what they can produce themselves.

Seeker communities are simple, but not primitive. They produce the food, clothing and materials they need to survive even harsh environments, and have the skills necessary to defend themselves. While they do not have advanced weapons, Seekers are able fighters with the tools of war they do allow themselves. Seekers are peaceful as a rule, never starting conflicts, but they defend their possessions, loved ones and way of life with zealous fervor.

Seekers distinguish between acceptable tools and banned machines with a benchmark they call "intuitive function." If a group of Seeker elders with no training in advanced technology feel the way a tool accomplishes its tasks is intuitively obvious, it is allowed. If the source of power, method of function or end result is not obvious and clear to the elders, the object is declared a machine and forbidden. Thus a serrated knife is acceptable, as it is clear that a sharp edge penetrates wood and meat more easily, but a chainsaw is not as it's not obvious where the power to spin the chain comes from.

Of course this definition is not hard and fast, and different Seeker communities draw the line at different levels of technology. Many allow windmills, water wheels, crossbows, bicycles, pendulum clocks and even pumps, while others



forbid anything more complex than a lever. Most take a stance between pedal-driven devices and clockwork, though the most successful Seeker communities are those that accept the highest level of technology. Torches, candles and even oil lanterns are generally acceptable, but fire must be started with flint and steel or even a friction bow, not any form of chemical reaction.

The most successful Seeker towns hover between population levels of 5–7. Larger Seeker groups often have siege engines such as ballista, onagers and trebuchets. While primitive, these devices can do a surprising amount of damage to high-tech vehicles, especially when throwing multi-ton rocks. Smaller Seeker communities can't afford to build, operate or maintain such weapons, and are vulnerable to high-tech raiders.

For obvious reasons Seekers do not allow AIs, robots, nanosmiths or cyborgs into their communities. Seekers accept anyone else of human stock, regardless of mutation, as long as they accept the Seeker way of life. Most Seekers also accept creatures of animal stock, not blaming them for the technology used to create them. A common subgroup of the Seekers, the New Dawn, feel uplifted and enhanced animals must be treated as second-class citizens at best; as products of banned technology, they are tainted.

Seekers do not wish to force their beliefs on others, and even allow some technology within their towns if carried by peaceful visitors. Seekers are happy to provide food, clothing and medical aid to friends if they can spare it, as long as their friends respect the Seeker way of life. They absolutely refuse to allow high-tech devices to be used for their benefit, however, and banish anyone who insists on doing so.

Many Seeker towns have strong ties to the Healers, who constantly struggle to convince the Seekers to accept some new medicine or treatment. Young Seekers are sometimes tempted away by the promises of wondrous technological toys, but most are content with the security and community of their Seeker homes.

When a cyborg or similar tech-rich individual wishes to join the Seekers, she must undergo a difficult series of tests. First, all advanced technology must be removed. The Seekers never have the means to do this themselves, but do have arms-length contacts with the Healers to allow such operations. If the individual dies during the operation, she is accepted as a martyred Seeker, and

buried with respect. If she survives, she must undergo some dangerous journey of purification, using the simplest of tools, to atone for having used advanced tech.

Characters generally take allegiance to a specific Seeker community, rather than to the movement as a whole. Those who do take an organizational allegiance generally gain simple tools as trade goods, as well as handcrafted goods. Most characters take a Seeker allegiance after seeing the ravages of technology, or gaining refuge in a Seeker community. It is most common to lose these allegiances after witnessing the low-tech Seekers suffer defeat by a more advanced foe, or discovering some terrible plague or famine could have been solved by a piece of advanced tech.

STEEL FOES

"The old world was destroyed for a reason. We're here to finish the job."

Steel Foes are a violent, radical offshoot of the Seekers. They believed it was not enough to shun machines, they must actively destroy them as well. When the mainstream Seekers rejected them, the splinter faction banded together and abandoned its community roots to become wandering marauders. They make little, stealing what they need, and use beasts of burden and captured slaves to overcome obstacles.

Steel Foes believe machines, especially intelligent machines, were the downfall of human civilization, and must be destroyed entirely. Bands of Steel Foes seek to demolish all advanced technology, and liberate or destroy its users. Like the Seekers, they use a definition of "intuitive function" to distinguish between acceptable tools and forbidden machines. Steel Foes also hate progress, and feel justified in destroying any facility dedicated to research, invention or progress, even if it does not yet violate their acceptable level of technology.

Steel Foes are the sworn enemies of Archivists, the Created, the Peace Brigade, Programmers and Restorationists. They have been known to work with Seekers, Purists and the Iron Society, though such coalitions never last long. The Steel Foes are too willing to work with anyone free of technology to suit other extremists and too violent for the Seekers. Steel Foes should logically be violently opposed to the Red Death, but in fact the two groups often pass each other without incident. Each sees in the other the potential for great destruction, and rarely feels the need to put a stop to such ravages.

Though Steel Foes do not operate their own settlements, they do gather in great convocations every few years. Each band of marauders may include as many as 200 warriors, many mounted on steeds, and up to 10 bands gather in a convocation. It is at these gatherings the Steel Foes tell tales of conquest, share information gathered, settle on new paths to raid, and trade goods and slaves. Rarely, all the bands of a convocation join forces to attack some major outpost of technology.

Steel Foes believe their jihad against technology is more important than their own lives, or even their immortal souls. Because of this, many are willing to use technology of a destructive nature, seeing it as a necessary evil to overcome the more hardened forms of advanced tech. A large Steel Foes band almost always includes a few “demonic devices,” weapons of mass destruction they save for armored technological targets. Though particularly religious groups of Foes seem to treat these objects with great veneration, guarding them and constantly praying around them, this is in fact an effort to limit the evil influence of the weapons. More pragmatic Steel Foes simply keep the weapons well hidden, but are always looking for additional weapons to add to their arsenal of tech-destroying tech.

Characters with an organizational allegiance to the Steel Foes likely join after suffering at the hands of a technology-heavy group, or from some leftover trap of the Final Wars. Trade goods gained from the Steel Foes are simple valuables, foodstuffs and rare metals. Characters abandon Steel Foe allegiances after having some major changes in worldview, such as losing loved ones or having near-death experiences.

TRIONICONS

“It begins with signal and ends with understanding.”

Trionicons, also known as Skalds, are a small but widely spread group of mailman monks who seek to establish safe and regular lines of communication among all communities of the Gamma Age. They believe the commandment of many religions to “spread the word” is not a specific call to preach one philosophy, but a general instruction to spread the ability to communicate. To this end, they carry written mail, teach literacy, built wired communications and, where possible, establish radio networks.

Trionicons take their name from Trionious, a monk who flourished immediately after the Final

Wars. He taught that communication is a foundational concept of the universe, the manifestation in matter and energy of the exchange that characterizes the Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To communicate is to renew the bonds between the damaged parts of a shattered world, and to make its healing possible. They lack any specific holy texts, instead seeing all written words as potentially prophetic because they are a form of communication. Most members of the order believe that all texts will become more significant as the work of communication continues, and information can flow in more complex patterns. This will allow currently isolated pieces to come together and convey a whole greater than the sum of the parts.

Despite their religious foundations, Trionicons act much more like a secular organization. The Trionicons have some of the best libraries in the Gamma Age, and they do not distinguish between fact and fiction when it comes to preservation and restoration. Though most of their time is spent establishing and maintaining current communication routes, the Trionicons also sideline as historians, attempting to communicate with the past. The monks are also compulsive journalers, seeing anything written as a potential communication to the future.

Though they are a peaceful society in general, uninterested in gaining power over a region or converting others to their way of life, Trionicons are not pacifists. Each monk is trained to defend himself and, more importantly, the lines of communication he is responsible for. Trionicons fight to the death for mail, to defend telegraph lines, and to protect transmitters and their power supplies. Most groups have found it easier to allow the Trionicons to run their mail and build signal towers than to fight the order of zealots. Tyrants, however, often find that once their people can communicate with the outside world they are unsatisfied with living under a boot heel.

What Trionicons lack is a strong central authority or much in the way of planning. The monks see their work as a holy quest, and believe that what they need will be provided when they need it. This strong faith carries them through difficult times, but it also leaves them unprepared when planning is crucial. Many groups try to work with Trionicons, especially Restorationists and the Peace Brigade, but find it difficult to deal with the frenetic level of disorganized activity the monks



consider normal. Such alliances are further weakened by the Trionicons' hatred of censorship. The monks believe the free flow of communication must be independent of political concerns, and to attempt to censor communication is heresy.

The few Trionicon strongholds that exist are called stations, and have between 200 and 400 monks (population level 4). These are almost always built around a broadcast device, such as a radio tower. Stations generally lack the resources to grow larger, and are dedicated only to maintaining their broadcast devices, so need only a limited population. Smaller stations cannot defend themselves from serious attack, but are sometimes found under the protection of a larger nearby society.

Most Trionicons take an allegiance to the philosophy of free, widespread communication rather than to the organization itself. Small groups of monks often work entirely independently from one another, and sometimes actually work at cross-purposes. One band might be trying to establish peaceful relations with the inhabitants of an ancient ruin in hopes of establishing a radio tower, while another group helps plan the inhabitants' destruction to protect a mail route.

Characters who take Trionicon allegiances often do so after some experience where tragedy could have been averted with better communications. Such allegiances are also taken after a character has visions, perhaps brought on by exhaustion or near-starvation. Characters with organizational allegiances to the Trionicons are given writing materials and grammar books as trade goods. Characters who end a Trionicon allegiance are often fed up with the randomness of the group, and may have witnessed the monks work against one another.

VIRAGOS

"We are the people in charge!"

The Viragos open their membership to creatures of any bloodline or breed, but only one gender: female. They blame male-dominated societies for the ravages of the Final Wars, and have no intention of allowing them to make things worse. The first Viragos built a single fortified town and sent emissaries to nearby communities, inviting any female who wished to join them in safety. The success of the first town caused many female humans, mutants and animal breeds to join, and soon new Virago communities sprang up.

Virago towns are run differently than most communities in the Gamma Age. They are carefully planned communities, with committees of concerned Viragos organizing all aspects of town life. Food preparation, commerce, defense, education, emergency planning and even entertainment are handled by committees, all of which answer to a ruling council. Disagreements are handled through discussion, with a strict process in place to adjudicate those that cannot be settled.

In theory all Virago positions are awarded on the basis of pure meritocracy among the women. In practice, the ruling council of a town makes most appointments to committees. The council itself is elected every few years by all women over the age of 13. The system has its failings, but Virago governments are among the more stable in the Gamma Age. Many raiding parties assume Virago towns will be poorly defended compared to more traditional communities, but Virago defenders quickly tear apart those who underestimate them.

Virago towns are open to males, but no positions of power or any decision-making authority are open to them. Men are second-class citizens at best, often prevented from owning property, speaking at trials, or holding important jobs. Viragos can be very fond of specific males and learn to trust exceptional individuals, but mistrust the gender as a group. The most tolerant Viragos are chosen to act outside their communities, where they can work with men and even operate in male-dominated societies. These traveling Viragos undertake much the same tasks as the agents of any Gamma Age stronghold, seeking weapons and relics, hunting down threats and making allies.

While Viragos do not hate men, it is fair to say they do not trust them. It is difficult for a Virago community to make strong coalitions with any other groups, as the Viragos always assume any male-run organization will eventually betray any treaty. This mistrust often leads to misunderstandings, leading the Viragos and once-allies to both claim the other breached some important trust. The wisest Viragos are aware of this mental blind spot, and work to correct suspicious thinking; but years of social reinforcement are difficult to overcome.

The same is true of Viragos' dealings with individuals. Any woman who is not a known threat is accepted into a Virago town and treated with respect. Viragos can offer a reasonable level of

medical care, and are always willing to consider trades. Women in trouble, no matter how serious, can depend on a Virago community to hide them. Male visitors, on the other hand, have a difficult time gaining any Virago's trust. They are almost always kept just outside town, and given less-than-great deals on trades and care. A male who comes in conflict with a Virago is assumed to be in the wrong by the rest of the community, and likely hunted down and killed.

Individuals without any particular gender, whether synthetic, mutant or some other sort of entity outside the male/female division, usually face skeptical wariness. They can't hold power in the community, since they're definitely not female, but they escape the harsh treatment dished out to men, since they're not definitely male.

Virago communities suffer more attacks and raids than others, as many groups see their female-dominated way of life as both wrong-headed and a potential threat. The well-organized Virago towns are population level 6 (801–1,600 total members). Larger communities often fall to male-led rebellions inspired by agitators from Virago-hating neighbors. Smaller groups sometimes survive if particularly well-defended or remote, but most with fewer than 800 citizens can't field enough warriors to keep them safe.

Though only women are full members of the Virago culture, any character can take allegiance to their organization, a specific community, or their women-first philosophy. It's far more common for women to take such allegiances, often after being saved or aided by a Virago or perhaps raised in a Virago community. Only a serious change of worldview is likely to give a character a good reason to drop a Virago allegiance.

ZOOPREMACISTS

"Down with Man! Down with Man!"

The Zoopremacists are often equated with the Ranks of the Fit and compared to the Iron Society and Purists. The first is understandable, but unfortunate. While the Ranks of the Fit are an organized group that accepts members of every race, the Zoopremacists are fanatical anarchists who build no lasting communities. Though the Zoopremacists themselves turn rabid at the suggestion of similarity to the Purists or Iron Society, their dogma of unthinking hatred does have more in common with those groups than Napoleon II's militant government.

Zoopremacists form “packs” of 12–30 creatures of animal stock and raid across the countryside. They do not accept that humans can be anything but the enemy, and consider animals who work with humans and humanoid mutants to be traitors. Even simple herd animals are torn apart if found working on a human farm. Thankfully each pack tends not to last long, for they make no effort to establish a safe base or prepare for the future. Some can survive by raiding the same towns over and over, but most eventually starve or are killed by mercenary defenders hired to guard their victims.

Occasionally a band of Zoopremacists finds an animal-stock community surrounded by foes, and may take a turn defending that community rather than simply killing humans. Such groups are often treated as heroes by the animal-stock mutants they protect, and seen as the worst kind of terrorists by those they hunt and kill. A few animal-mutant communities have grown strong with the help of Zoopremacist bands; but once the threat of extinction is gone, the Zoopremacists move on to better hunting grounds.

The death of a pack doesn’t always mean the death of all its members, however, and if even a single Zoopremacist survives a new pack is likely to rise in a few years. Experienced Zoopremacists carry the message of hatred and superiority to communities with large populations of poor animals. They encourage these impressionable

creatures to believe the world’s ills can be solved by killing all forms of humanity. Once a new pack is formed, the Zoopremacists return to raiding, spreading terror and suffering through human- and mutant-held lands. Zoopremacists with particularly bestial appearances have even been known to conceal themselves in herds of livestock or farm animals, poisoning farmers or starting stampedes.

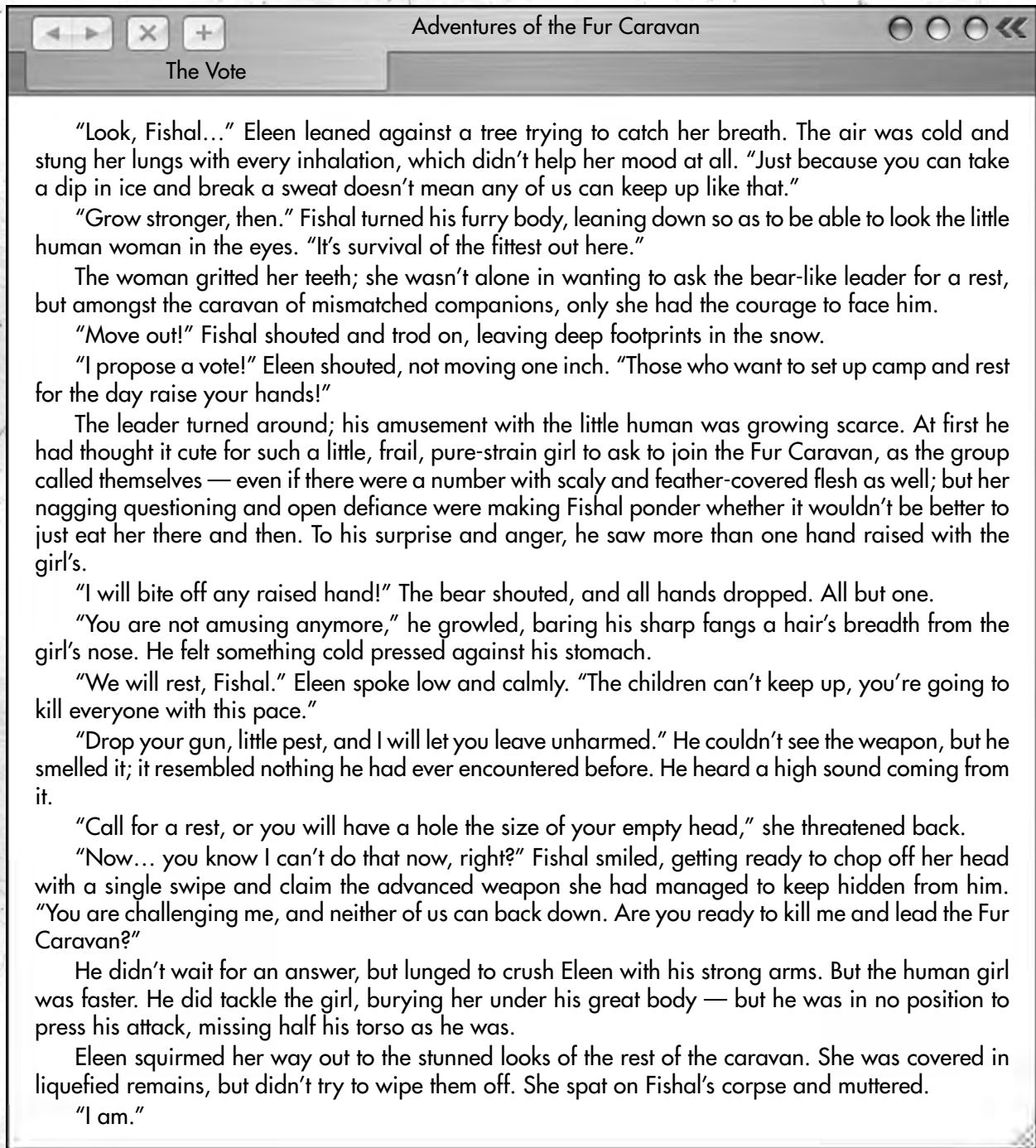
A few records suggest the Zoopremacists were originally far more organized, working to build societies where humans and mutants were enslaved rather than killed. These towns were always hidden deep in the wilderness, and were destroyed by any major army that came across them. Many Zoopremacist packs have books of questionable histories and philosophies that support their animal-first view, and these are believed to have been written in the older Zoopremacist cities. It is up to the GM if any of these strongholds still exists, but those that do are well hidden.

Rather than take an organizational allegiance to the Zoopremacists, many characters take an opposed allegiance targeting all forms of humanity. Those who do take organizational allegiances gain trade goods that can be used to make simple explosives and burning bottle-bombs. A character may take this allegiance after suffering some tragedy or trauma at a human’s hands. Many of the Zoopremacists’ members come from prisoners captured by the Purists or Iron Society.



CHAPTER TWO
LEADERSHIP

GAMMA WORLD CRYPTIC ALLIANCES AND UNKNOWN ENEMIES



CHAPTER TWO: LEADERSHIP

After the great upheavals of the Final Wars and their aftermath, the survivors were left in scattered chaos, ready to succumb to the harsh conditions the devastation left behind. Humanity is a rather stubborn species, however, and different communities began to pull together and carve niches in their new environments. The efforts of hundreds of survivors need guidance, and this is where strong leadership became a synonym for survival.

History refers to the achievements of leaders, not their followers; no matter how egalitarian any given community grows, the matter of who tells everyone what to do is bound to come up sooner or later. Groups of any size must have a leader in one way or another — that is, if they want to effectively face the countless challenges of the Gamma Age.

BASIC MECHANICS

Gamma World provides characters with ample opportunity to flex their leadership muscles, whether they want to or not. Crisis situations do not wait for democratic elections, and leaders rise to the fore as situations demand. All sorts of people (in the broadest sense) can be saddled with the burden of leading others and becoming an icon, someone looked up to and depended on to get others out of trouble.

NEW USES FOR OLD SKILLS

The following are new uses for existing skills; any character capable of using those skills can make use of the new applications, although having many ranks in them definitely helps.

BLUFF

Leading others successfully quite often involves lying to them, whether the leader is hiding his intentions to his traveling companions or to the whole of a community. A character uses the Bluff skill only when he positively *knows* that he is lying to the people following his orders or suggestions, or at least is not telling all that he knows about a situation. Subtler manipulation depends on the Diplomacy skill, although sometimes the lines are blurred.

- **Demagogy:** When addressing the members of a group or community, a character can address their immediate needs and desires to get them to believe what he wants them to, even if the proposed course of action may go against their own interests in the short run. When trying to influence PCs through falsehoods, the characters engage in opposed Bluff and Sense Motive checks as normal; but when addressing a group of NPCs, the would-be demagogue makes a Bluff check against a DC dependant on the group's attitude. A character can influence a group of 10 people per point of Charisma modifier without penalty; every 5 additional people beyond that limit increases the DC

by +1. The character may choose to limit the number of people he wants to affect with a single check, speaking to his target group for at least 5 minutes, after which he can target another group within the crowd. At the GM's option, using a form of mass communication can double or triple the number of people the character can affect with a single check.

The magnitude of the lie modifies the DC as described in *d20 Modern*, with demagogy that directly addresses the group's hopes and beliefs reducing the DC by -5, while outrageous lies can increase it by as much as +20.

Attitude	Means	Base Bluff DC
Helpful	The group wants to believe that what the character is saying is true or is of the same allegiance.	10
Friendly	The group generally trusts the character or is of a sympathetic allegiance.	15
Indifferent	The group has a divided opinion of the character's words.	20
Unfriendly	The group does not trust the character fully or is of an contrasting allegiance.	25
Hostile	The group is predisposed against the character's words or is of an opposed allegiance.	30

- **Fake Expertise:** People trust those who know what they are doing, or at least who *appear* to. A character can pretend to have a high bonus in a Computer Use, Craft or Knowledge skill without having any ranks in the skill at all. Since the character is just pretending, he cannot use Bluff to actually achieve anything or learn any useful information, but rather he can "fake it" just enough to pass as an expert in the field. This is useful when the character is asked

GAMMA WORLD CRYPTIC ALLIANCES AND UNKNOWN ENEMIES

to do something to prove himself, particularly when dealing with groups that depend on a meritocracy model for leadership. When the character wants to pretend he knows how to do something, he makes a Bluff check with a DC 5 points lower than the task's original DC. If successful, he can go through the motions convincingly, although he will not get any real result. Alternatively, if the character actually has ranks in the skill he is being asked to demonstrate, he can opt to make a Bluff check with a +2 synergy bonus from the other skill even if he does not have 5 ranks or more, or he can make a normal skill check with a +2 synergy bonus from the Bluff skill. The results of such a modified skill check are the same as a Bluff check: impressive, but otherwise insubstantial.

Lying is not always a bad thing. When the community is facing a disaster or a negative event, the simple fact of believing someone knows what he is doing is enough to bolster morale, and may even prompt cooperation in order to truly fulfill the task the character lied about.

Example: *Jar'kle is a member of the Flotsammers, a nomad community that sails slowly across coastal lines (flooded and pristine alike) gathering junk they find and keeping the sea lanes clear, while making a profit through selling the salvage. The community finds the remains of a*

patrol power boat, but has no idea how it works. Jar'kle walks with purpose onto the boat's deck and goes through the motions of activating it; he makes a Bluff check with a DC 15, as his friends and neighbors generally trust him. He achieves a result of 18; he makes them believe he knows what he's doing. When nothing happens, he declares that the machine must be broken.

- **Double-Talk:** Leaders are faced daily with tough questions from followers, and they must learn the art of giving responses without actually giving answers. With a successful Bluff check, opposed by a Sense Motive check or against a DC equal to the one for a demagoguery application, a character can speak with anyone and make her believe that they actually had a fruitful conversation, when in truth the character merely bent words and phrases to say nothing at all. Charismatic heroes with talents from the Fast Talk tree add their level as a bonus as normal.

DIPLOMACY

While Bluff is the art of outright lying, Diplomacy is subtler, focusing on compromise and negotiation. A character can make effective use of Diplomacy without uttering a single lie, or by weaving such a complex web of half-truths and deception as to make that into the truth. Leaders need Diplomacy to deal



CHAPTER TWO: LEADERSHIP

with their followers on a daily basis, whether they lead small groups of explorers or large communities.

- **Debate:** Most communities in the Gamma Age experience a healthy paranoia when strangers arrive in the town; and since survival is rarely assured for many of the townsfolk, some have an equally healthy suspicion of their own leaders, questioning the leaders' decisions if they seem unwise. For first contact with another group or for dealing with her own followers, a character can use the fine art of debate, revived by instinct and talent in the Gamma Age to address immediate realities rather than lofty philosophical concepts. Debating by using the Diplomacy skill consists of wearing down an opponent's resolve by rebuking his arguments one by one. It may not win the victor any friends, but it does give her the right to that title.

Debating is a long and drawn-out process, and it may be trying for the impatient. A debate is a series of opposed Diplomacy checks; each opponent begins with a number of "argument points" equal to her Will save bonus plus her Intelligence modifier. For every 5 points that the result of the winner's check exceeds the loser's, subtract one argument point from the loser's pool. If the debate is performed by roleplaying, particularly devastating arguments and evidence can give from a +2 to even a +10 bonus on the Diplomacy check. The first opponent to lose all of her argument points loses the debate, whether she was actually right or wrong.

Debates are not only formalized discussions between two leaders. These rules can apply to any exchange of words that involves one person swaying the opinion of another through carefully chosen arguments. This includes a doctor arguing the case for nanotech as a cure to a community that sees all Pre-War advanced technology as blasphemy, a sentient animal debating its own intelligence with a confused pure-strain human, and everything in between.

The GM adjudicates the result of the character's debate win (or loss). Unless some other result particularly suits the occasion, the loser's attitude toward the winner (as described under the Diplomacy skill, *d20 Modern*, Chapter 2: Skills) drops by one step, but he cooperates with or acquiesces to the winner. The attitude of any crowd watching the debate improves by one step toward the winner.

- **Sway Allegiance:** There are some allegiances that survive by proselytizing or evangelizing, actively recruiting new members into their ranks. The process of convincing others that one's philosophical leanings are the right ones

is a much more delicate task than simply debating with the intention to win. The proselytizer must convince others that they are wrong, and they must feel good about it. Parlaying with someone to sway his allegiance is useful for planting moles in a community or getting help in a hostile community. A character can sway another's loyalty toward her allegiance, or toward her own person (although this is much more difficult). The character can even sway the listener's leanings toward a *third* allegiance, provided she has not revealed that she does not follow it; people have a hard time shifting their beliefs toward something the person talking them over to it does not appear to believe. The DC for this check depends on the attitude the other person has toward the allegiance the character wishes to sway him away from.

Attitude	Means
Helpful	The person would do anything for his allegiance.
Friendly	The person is convinced that his allegiance is the better choice for him.
Indifferent	The person is loyal to his allegiance out of convenience, but would take a better option if it presented itself.
Unfriendly	The person is not fully convinced that he made the right choice by pledging his loyalty to his current allegiance.
Hostile	The person is loyal to his allegiance in name only.

To sway the allegiance of her target, the character must reduce his attitude toward his original allegiance to hostile either with an outrageously good check or by working him slowly by performing one check per day, although she must state her goal before making the check. Once the target's attitude toward his allegiance is hostile, the character can try to convince him to adopt another allegiance, inverting the process using the normal DCs for Diplomacy checks in *d20 Modern* to improve the target's attitude toward the new allegiance. To consider the proselytizing a success, the target must have a friendly attitude toward the new allegiance.

Initial Attitude	New Attitude				
	Helpful	Friendly	Indif.	Unf.	Hostile
Helpful	≤19	20	25	35	45
Friendly	≤4	5	15	25	35
Indifferent	—	≤0	1	15	25
Unfriendly	—	—	≤0	1	15

TABLE 2-1: RECRUIT FOLLOWERS

Leadership Score	Number of Ordinary Followers by Level					
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
11 or lower	—	—	—	—	—	—
12	5	—	—	—	—	—
13	6	—	—	—	—	—
14	8	—	—	—	—	—
15	10	1	—	—	—	—
16	15	1	—	—	—	—
17	20	2	1	—	—	—
18	25	2	1	—	—	—
19	30	3	1	1	—	—
20	35	3	1	1	—	—
21	40	4	2	1	1	—
22	50	5	3	2	1	—
23	60	6	3	2	1	1
24	75	7	4	2	2	1
25 or higher	90	9	5	3	2	1

• **Recruit Followers:** Any person in the Gamma Age with the right combination of charisma and glibness can convince others to follow her cause, swaying their allegiances in her direction. However, this allegiance does not equal obedience and service, merely an inherent trust in the character. Gaining a true follower is not so easy, for it means the character must maintain a helpful attitude in her follower at all times, representing a deeper commitment. A character can pay lackeys a periodic salary, but they are only henchmen; they are not bound to the character by strong ties and have their own agendas. A true follower obeys the character's orders and accompanies her deep inside radioactive areas or vaults protected by killer mutant octopi. To gain a follower, the character must improve the target's attitude to helpful and spend an action point. The action point does not provide a bonus on the Diplomacy check; it serves as a demonstration of the character's commitment to her new follower. The follower can be a heroic NPC, but he must be at least two levels lower than the character, and the character cannot have more than one heroic follower at any one time.

In addition to a heroic follower, a character may wish to gain ordinary followers (see *d20 Modern*, Chapter 8: Friends and Foes, "Supporting Characters," *Ordinaries*). Instead of sweet-talking a single target for recruitment, the character addresses a group or a crowd. For every 5 effective targets (or fraction thereof) for recruitment, the Diplomacy check DC increases by +2;

the character must spend 1 action point to recruit the group as followers once they all have a helpful attitude toward the character. (That's a single action point no matter how many recruits are in this particular bunch.)

Table 2-1: Recruit Followers indicates the limit to the number and power of ordinary followers a character can have, as measured by her leadership score: her character level + her Charisma modifier + her Reputation bonus. The character spends the necessary action point each time she recruits a group of followers, so she may be better off trying to recruit her personal army in one fell swoop than in many tries. All followers change their allegiance to the character once she successfully recruits them. However, followers are not automatically replaced; if the character loses followers by any means (death, another conversion of allegiance, etc.), she must replenish their number by recruiting more.

Once the character has followers, including her heroic lieutenant, she is more or less free to order them around as she wishes, maybe even creating her own community. Even if they keep obeying her orders, followers' attitudes may change over time, which may create dissent, rebellion and desertion.

For every questionable act that the character commits and that her followers find out about, she must make Diplomacy check (DC determined by the general attitude the followers adopt, depending on the character's deeds). If she fails this check, she loses 2d6 followers and the attitude of the rest is diminished by one step, although they remain her followers.

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Attitude	Means	Diplomacy check DC
Helpful	Followers trust their leader implicitly.	15
Friendly	Followers know their leader is fallible, but well-intentioned toward them.	20
Indifferent	Followers' loyalty is not strong; dissenters and deserters start popping up.	25
Unfriendly	Followers protest the leader's orders, but still follow them. There is a 20% chance every night that 1d4 followers will desert.	30
Hostile	The group is in open revolt, refusing orders and demanding reparations and/or explanations. There is a 40% chance every night that 1d6 followers will desert.	35

GATHER INFORMATION

In order to make sound decisions, a leader must have correct and useful information about those he is leading, whether he is a brutal dictator or the last incarnation of the Buddha. Successful use of the Gather Information skill requires interaction with large groups of people, and a leader is well advised to keep a finger on the pulse of his community by interacting with its members. (When dealing with small groups, Sense Motive is the appropriate skill to get a sense of the group's state of affairs, as discussed below.)

- **Gossip Mongering:** A Gather Information check involves spending some time with people, making them feel comfortable so that they spill the beans. A canny character can devote this same attention and casual conversation toward planting information. The character spends the evening (or other social time) interacting with people and makes a Gather Information check, opposed by the community's Knowledge (gossip) check, adding its Awareness modifier. If the character is successful, he has just introduced a rumor in the community's gossip mill, with effects to be determined by the GM.

- **Appraise Community:** A good leader knows the ins and outs of his community. A great leader knows about his neighbors, too. A chieftain can make a "diplomatic" visit to a neighbor, or the leader of a band of explorers can take a look at a town they are

visiting. Either can get an idea of what the community has available in terms of resources, products and defenses with a quick pass among its inhabitants. A character can make a normal Gather Information check in a couple of hours, with the normal DCs for general, specific, restricted and protected information and gain knowledge of one of the following items from the community's statistics per point of Wisdom bonus (minimum of 1): an ability score, a total skill bonus, a feat, the Wealth bonus, the community's philosophy, the minutiae of its government, one of its factions, or the benefits of allegiance. The character can add the community's Reputation bonus to his Gather Information check — after all, if the community is already famous, he already knows which questions to ask.

The character decides what information he wants to dig out, and the GM decides how obscure the information is. For example, a community with the Nanotech Usage feat may be very open about it (a general piece of information), or keep its secrets open only to a privileged few (a restricted or protected information) and claim their nanotech manipulation resources are some sort of magic.

Type of Information	Facts	DC
General	Skills or feats with obvious signs, overt factions, philosophy, government, community level	10
Specific	Ability scores, skills or feat with few obvious signs, obscure factions, benefits of allegiance, uncommon laws	15
Restricted	Ability scores, skills or feats kept secret, obscure laws, covert factions	20
Protected	Top secret feats, shadow government, cryptic alliances	25

INTIMIDATE

Some leaders prefer to rule through fear and bullying instead of through reason and trust. While the Intimidate skill comes in very handy when getting others to do her bidding, a real leader knows the right amount of pressure to apply to keep her followers on their toes... and her enemies as well.

- **Staredown:** Many leaders contend regularly with upstarts wishing to take their positions or followers daring to disobey them; often, either the

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leader or the challenger is not up to the amenities of a civilized debate. Before things come to blows and possible bloodshed, the leader can choose to stare the opponent down. Both opponents make opposed Intimidate checks, adding their Reputation bonuses. Simply put, whoever wins makes the other lose face.

In many tribal communities this is enough to make the loser forego the position of leader or, in the opposite case, to brave exile. Among more civilized people, a staredown loss merely imposes penalties to the loser's Charisma and on Charisma-related skill checks equal to the victor's Charisma modifier for a period of time, depending on how soon the community forgets about the challenge: 1d4 days if the loser has a Charisma 15+, 1d4 weeks if he has Charisma 10–14 and for 1d4 months if he has Charisma 9 or less. This is an event that can reduce the community's Strong Leadership factor.

• **Group Posturing:** When two groups of people meet, frictions are nothing out of the ordinary. Among many animals, the first thing the leaders of both groups do is try to get the others to leave. While interactions between sentients are more complicated than that, some basic principles of behavior still apply. By subtle demonstrations of the group's power, a leader can try to intimidate another group into leaving, or impress them enough that her group will have an advantage.

This is an opposed Intimidate check performed by the leaders of both groups. In the case of small groups, the leader adds the group's average character level as a bonus on her roll. In the case of communities, the leader adds the population level. The leader of a community rides out to meet approaching strangers in the company of her best warriors; even if the strangers are accepted after they lose a posturing contest, they may suffer a penalty to their Charisma-based checks equal to the victor's Charisma modifier, as they were cowed by the leader. Two war chiefs meet each other in the field of battle and start shouting obscenities with the weight of their armies behind them; the loser of such a contest will suffer a penalty on skill checks to give commands, as she believes the winner's side to be stronger than it may really be.

PERFORM

Artistic talent isn't connected to leadership obviously or directly; but loyalty is often the result of perception, and the Perform skill and its different specializations are all about playing with perceptions. A leader with ranks in Perform (storytelling, acting or stand-up) can use the skill for the following

applications of Bluff, though with a +2 DC penalty since Perform is not aimed directly at deception (as Bluff is). Perform (storytelling) is the form of performance used most often in this way in the Gamma Age, since it routinely includes narrative for instructional and inspirational purposes as well as for entertainment. Wherever Perform (storytelling) appears in lists in this chapter and the next, however, characters may substitute Perform (acting) or Perform (stand-up) and achieve the same results.

• **Oratory:** The character can give speeches with the best of them, addressing large crowds and inspiring them toward her own purposes. An inspiring speech can raise the spirits of a crowd or work them into almost any state of mind. This application uses the same table as the Diplomacy skill (see above) to work the mood of the audience, with each check taking at least 5 minutes. A crowd usually starts with an indifferent attitude, but the orator might need to brave a hostile audience if the situation demands it. Once the target public reaches a helpful attitude, they are in the mood the orator intended and can be made to follow certain courses of action or adopt certain opinions.

• **Spin:** The character is skilled in the manipulation of facts so that he gives them meanings to suit his purposes. While most people would consider making up justifications for an event to be a matter for careful analysis, delivering the spin requires panache and a talent for lying and presenting the best side of events; and a leader may find himself required to improvise when faced with facts and events that undermine his authority. Spin is an art form. Every time a leader faces an event that would diminish a positive factor of the Community Behavior Map (see *Gamma World Player's Handbook*, Chapter Four), he makes a Perform check with a DC determined by the severity of the event's impact on the factor (see below). The leader must make this check within a day of the event or its discovery, or it will have no effect.

Success on the Perform check reduces the impact by one level for every 5 points by which the check's result exceeds the event's DC. An event cannot be reduced below negligible; despite the character's positive spin the event did happen and has consequences.

Severity	DC
Critical	30
Major	25
Average	20
Minor	15
Negligible	10

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SENSE MOTIVE

Leaders of large groups use the Gather Information skill to keep tabs on the general mood of the people under their care; but when they lead groups of less than 20 people (or creatures), they are better served by using the Sense Motive skill — they do not need to ask around to ascertain their followers' moods when they can see for themselves.

- **Spot Team Weakness:** A leader can look at her own group or at any opposing group with no more than 20 members and get a clue about its strengths and weaknesses. She makes a Sense Motive check to gain information about any of the following subjects: the group's strongest/weakest fighter, the group's average character level, the group's real leader, the group's negotiator, or the group's most dangerous member (not necessarily the strongest fighter). The character can also spot the signs of dissent in her own group. The DC of the Sense Motive check is 10 + group's average character level – group's average Reputation bonus, although the leader gains a +4 circumstance bonus on her check when probing her own followers.

- **Measure Up:** After exchanging greetings and talking for a few moments, a character can take the measure of anyone she meets. The character makes a Sense Motive check, opposed by her target's Bluff or Diplomacy check. If the character succeeds she can choose to gain one of the following pieces of information: the target's class, level, general nature of FX abilities, or highest ability score; a general clue about the target's allegiance; or a +2 bonus on her Bluff or Diplomacy checks during the rest of the exchange.

INNATE TALENTS

Leadership is a talent that characters in the Gamma Age learn by necessity or are gifted with at birth. This aptitude expresses itself in the feats and talents a character may acquire throughout his life and personal growth. The different leadership types that follow are meant as guidelines to personality, societal outlook and character growth.

NATURAL LEADERSHIP

Natural leaders seem to be born for the role, even if they take it up reluctantly. They possess an inherent charm that attracts people to them, inspires trust and confidence and instills a sense of security. Natural leaders tend to be organizers and coordinators; they perhaps lack some of the skills required for particular tasks, but are quite capable of finding individuals with the required skills and putting together work forces capable of tackling any challenge. A natural leader

rallies her followers around her and is perceptive about their needs, weaknesses and strengths.

While Dedicated and Charismatic heroes are the most common natural leaders, there are many ways in which other heroes can become natural leaders.

The talent trees useful for a natural leader are:

- **Charm (Charismatic):** The leader can ingratiate herself with her followers and get favors out of them when direct orders would be too harsh.

- **Community Leadership (Charismatic):** The leader can channel her guidance to aid the whole of her community rather than just a few members at a time.

- **Empathic (Dedicated):** This tree makes sure that the leader always knows how any one of her followers is feeling about her decisions.

- **Leadership (Charismatic):** The leader is better able to coordinate the efforts of her followers.

- **Zeal (Dedicated):** The dedication of the leader toward her focus cause can be an inspiration for her followers. Heroic followers also find this talent tree useful.

The feats useful for a natural leader are:

- **Attentive:** The leader can better perceive the mood of her followers.

- **Confident:** The leader can better impress others and make defiant followers back down.

- **Frightful Presence:** The leader's natural talent is based on fear, not trust.

- **Renown:** The leader's fame can aid in her efforts to get her message across.

- **Trustworthy:** People generally trust the leader, making the job of giving orders easier.

CRISIS LEADERSHIP

When the going gets tough, words may not be enough to pull a community together; sometimes people need to see their leaders working alongside them toward survival or a better future. Crisis leaders gain attention as they show through their actions that they can lead — not because they are particularly smart or charismatic, but because they have what it takes to help the community survive during critical situations. Many of these leaders step down when the crisis is over, but they retain the admiration of the people they successfully led; they may be asked to remain in the position, or at least their opinion will weigh heavily in further leadership matters.

Strong and Tough heroes are more likely to become crisis leaders thanks to their focus on interacting with the physical world, but other characters may have what it takes to gain the admiration of a community.



The talent trees useful for a crisis leader are:

- **Defensive (Fast):** Ordinary people who find themselves in danger need a rescuer, and a hero with these talents has a better chance of surviving a cave-in or crossing a mine field to aid the endangered follower.
- **Extreme Effort (Strong):** When disaster strikes or the situation requires a feat of strength, the hero can save the day by applying these talents.
- **Strong as an Ox (Strong):** Characters capable of hard and sustained work will prove themselves to be reliable, one of the qualities people look for in a leader.
- **Unbreakable (Tough):** A crisis leader may find himself in a position where he cannot avoid danger, but must rather withstand it for the sake of his people. These talents make sure that he is harder to take down, remaining present for as long as possible to keep giving orders.

The feats useful for a crisis leader are:

- **Endurance:** The leader can inspire his followers by pushing ahead when they are ready to give out.
- **Great Fortitude:** The leader can better withstand the hardships of wilderness and disease, so that natural hazards do not deprive his people of his leadership.

- **Heroic Focus:** The leader can maintain his composure in any situation, his steadiness inspiring her followers to keep trying.

- **Heroic Surge:** When things get really bad, the community can count on its leader to be where and how he is needed the most.

- **Iron Will:** When a group is ready to break down and flee, the leader remains to face danger head-on.

EXPERT LEADERSHIP

With the collapse of civilization during the Final Wars, humanity (and AIs) lost much of the lore and expertise of advanced society. Much of the tools and knowledge vital to survival in some environments was gone, and with it, the peoples' chances of seeing another day. Expert leaders rose to the challenge, possessed of keen intellects or talents that allowed them to relearn or rediscover sciences and technologies. These individuals do not lead because they are good at talking people into following their commands but because they are good at what they do, and that expertise gives them all the authority they need.

Smart heroes are perfectly fit for the role of expert leaders, their knowledge and brains giving them the tools to understand the world of the Gamma Age in

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order to harness its power for the good of their followers. Other heroes must work very hard to reach such levels of expertise. A different kind of prowess involves combat, emphasizing smart tactics and strategy over raw power.

The talent trees useful for an expert leader are:

- **Melee Smash (Strong):** Being able to drop an enemy quickly is the mark of a good war leader, and it settles disputes quickly as well.

- **Strategy (Smart):** An undoubtedly useful talent, the leader can coordinate her followers at the same time that she outsmarts the opposition.

- **Research (Smart):** Not only can the leader be a true sage in a particular field, but she can also communicate with almost any sort of creature with a language that stumbles across the community.

- **Tech Savant (Smart):** In the times after the Final Wars, lost technology litters the landscape, and those who recognize the different tools for what they are gain the recognition and following of those who can't.

- **Insightful (Dedicated):** Whatever the task is, the leader can find inspiration to complete it.

The feats useful for an expert leader are:

- **Builder:** The leader can provide her community with housing, repair its technology and direct its efforts to build up their infrastructure.

- **Educated:** The leader possesses vast stores of knowledge about many things, knowledge she can put to use in the community's progress.

- **Paragon:** The leader is not merely good at what she does, she is *great*.

- **Systems Familiarity:** No matter what new scientific enigma she encounters, the character can solve it.

DUPLICITOUS LEADERSHIP

Some people covet authority so much that they will stoop to anything in order to acquire it. A duplicitous leader manages to cling to the position through guile, deception and intimidation. This doesn't make him a bad leader *per se*, but he will inevitably be unpopular with at least one of the factions in the community. The duplicitous leader's power is surely illegitimate, but it can also be highly effective, for he focuses his cunning against anything that threatens his interests; being the leader, sometimes his well-being is also the community's. Another common role for a duplicitous leader is the power behind the throne, where the true leader uses deception to prop up a chosen front man (or woman,

or synthetic, or whatever) whose strings he pulls, deflecting undue attention from his activities.

Charismatic heroes can trick others into following them, but they have no monopoly on the means of deceit. Strong heroes can bully their way to the top, and Smart ones can stage elaborate plots to end up in power.

The talent trees useful for a duplicitous leader are:

- **Ignore Hardness (Strong):** There is nothing scarier than a leader breaking a challenger's weapon in two.

- **Damage Reduction and Energy Resistance (Tough):** ... except perhaps a leader who shrugs off damage from that weapon.

- **Empathic (Dedicated):** By knowing what someone wants, the leader knows how to spice his deceptions.

- **Fast-Talk (Charismatic):** The leader can confuse anyone trying to turn the tables on him.

- **Charm (Charismatic):** The leader can beguile and cajole, diverting attention from his actions while lying through his teeth.

The feats useful for a duplicitous leader are:

- **Deceptive:** The leader's lies are more believable.

- **Frightful Presence:** Even when a challenger to his power gathers the courage to face the leader, her resolve shatters in his presence.

- **Low Profile:** A leader who rules from the shadows is even harder to challenge.

Example: Jar'kle is a Smart hero. He had a good eye for potential and became the best friend of Luuiz, who rose to become the Flotsammers' leader when he saved several rafts during a particularly strong storm. Luuiz is not very smart and would have given up leadership but for the wishes of all the people. Fortunately for him, his good friend Jar'kle is there to give him advice when he is confused about what to say to the community's elders, and it is Jar'kle's ideas that have brought some prosperity to the community. Jar'kle does not gain any recognition, but he has been able to reap some benefits from his role as the power behind Luuiz.

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH

Dealing with other intelligences is not a straightforward affair like dealing with machines... at least those that are not intelligent themselves. The vagaries of interaction between a leader and her

TABLE 2-2: CIRCUMSTANCE MODIFIERS

Circumstance	Modifier	To
Hideous mutation	+ Charisma modifier x2	Intimidate
Everyone in the group displays their weaponry threateningly	+2 per openly hostile member	Intimidate
Character received tips about a target's mannerisms	+2	Sense Motive
Character successfully analyzed the customs of a community	+2	Gather Information
Social blunder	-1 to -5	Further Charisma-based checks in that community for a week per penalty
Character in the group has a Craft or Knowledge skill sorely needed in the community (and displays it)	+1 per 5 ranks	Diplomacy
Character in group has Tech Familiarity with a piece of inoperative hardware in the community (and displays it)	+5	Diplomacy
Characters match a freak prophecy of salvation	+5	All Charisma-based checks
Characters match a freak prophecy of doom	-5	All Charisma-based checks
Characters kick-start a Pre-War machine that solves a community's woes or destroys one that posed a serious threat	+10	Diplomacy
Characters either destroy a vital Pre-War machine or kick-start one that brings chaos and destruction	Nothing. Characters are advised to run very fast.	—
Uplifting background music	+1 to +5	Perform (oratory)
Characters pay for more than one round of drinks	+5 to +10	Gather Information, Sense Motive after people are suitably drunk
Characters tout their findings from a vault the community considered sacred	-4 to -6	Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information
Leader causes the death of an ordinary follower	-4	All Charisma-based checks with his followers
Leader causes the death of a heroic follower	-6	All Charisma-based checks with his followers and recruiting checks
Leader forces follower to take a dip in area saturated in radiation, nanotech, or biocontamination to test the results	Reputation bonus	Penalty to Diplomacy with his followers; bonus to Intimidate with his followers.

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followers, and with the rest of the world, are not as easily defined and are difficult to reduce to a simple DC for a Charisma-based check. Likewise, a canny character may be perfectly aware of her own shortcomings and do something to compensate for them. More than any other die roll, social and leadership checks can be affected by circumstance modifiers that the characters can provoke consciously or suffer unwittingly.

Circumstance modifiers can come and go during the same situation — an ill-spoken phrase can change the attitude of a community from helpful to hostile in a second, a random act of kindness can saddle a

character with a servant for life, or a careless comment can convince a sentient car to give full access to the one who said it. The GM is largely responsible for assigning and adjudicating circumstance modifiers to the character's dealings with communities and followers, but players are within their rights to suggest that a modifier apply when they take pains to roleplaying a situation that could modify attitudes and opinions. Table 2–2: Circumstance Modifiers gives a few examples of situations that provoke such modifiers, with guidelines on the actual numbers and which skill checks they apply to.

STYLES OF LEADERSHIP

The world has changed since the Final Wars in more ways than anyone could ever imagine. With such changing conditions, it is no surprise that all sorts of organizations sprang up to cope with the bizarre environment created by rampaging contamination, marauding weaponry and not-so-dormant ruins. As the saying goes, each people gets the government it deserves; every group developed the style of leadership that best suited its circumstances, from such primitive forms as tribal eldership to more sophisticated methods as republican democracy or illustrated tyranny. The Gamma Age is rife with oddities humans never bargained for when they developed the technology of the Final Wars, and so there are even stranger types of leaders for equally strange societies.

HEROIC LEADERS

The struggle for survival, let alone reconstruction and prosperity, requires tremendous dedication from a leader, whether she is leading a ragtag team of Ruin Raiders or in charge of the welfare of a community of thousands. Most leaders of struggling groups and communities will be heroic characters, with ordinaries taking up leadership positions only when a community has a strong and stable enough foundation to shift the weight of guidance around.

THE STRONG LEADER

Strong leaders emerge in more primitive societies where strength of arms is a better measure of a character's capacity to lead, in part because of the community's bellicose leanings, but also because the rules of succession involve combat challenges or the communities' members need a beating or two to bring

them in line. The strong leader's style will depend a lot on his personal philosophy, but nevertheless it will be more focused on doing things than saying them. For the strong leader, actions speak louder than words, and he has the wherewithal to push his arguments across. Strong heroes make better leaders during crisis situations where the threat comes from a physical source, which can be a natural disaster that forces the community to evacuate, an attack by roving bandits or outright war with a neighboring community.

- **Strengths:** Strong heroes can lead by example, using their bare hands to change the world around them — an ability that remains unrivaled by any other class. With a simple demonstration of his prowess, the Strong hero can create situations that reinforce his status as the person most fit to lead. This most often translates into intimidation, a task at which the Strong hero is very effective.

- **Weaknesses:** Brawn can accomplish a lot in the harsh environment of the Gamma Age, but wits are important for rising above the muck of mere survival into thriving prosperity. The Strong hero is crippled when it comes to learning useful leadership skills such as Diplomacy or Sense Motive, and his focus on actions takes his attention away from subtler training. To compensate for this, a Strong hero who wishes to become a leader should acquire feats like Attentive or Trustworthy to bolster the few cross-class ranks he can buy. Choosing a leadership-oriented occupation can do wonders for the hero, as he would then get the necessary skills that his class does not include.

Example 1: Yorg is the leader of a small band of nomads. He won the position from the previous leader, an aging explorer who'd adopted the tribe as his own and was eventually chosen to guide them. Yorg never agreed

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much with the outsider's decisions, but the tribe respected the explorer too much to question him, and that cost them a few members on a failed hunting expedition. Fed up with the situation, Yorg challenged the leader and beat him quickly and fairly, then challenged anyone else to try to wrest the position from him. Yorg is pretty much aware of the areas in which he is lacking, but that is why he chose a few of his friends to help him with his decisions. Yorg leads the tribe on hunts and expeditions, but his friends finally convinced him not to take point during raids or in scouting teams, because even if he is the most fit to deal with threats they might encounter, a leader's first responsibility is to provide guidance for his people, and make sure he is alive to do it.

Example 2: Xilin was not exactly a good student at the Great and Illustrious Academy for the Arts, which was proudly rebuilt from a Pre-War religious center and outfitted with all sort of Final Wars-era technology. The community of monks and scholars had dedicated their lives to recovering and safeguarding the lore of the times gone by, and was taken aback when they had to face a raid from one of their neighboring communities. While she was not at the top of her class in science, Xilin had a knack for military studies and the activation and use of Pre-War and Final Wars era weaponry, so she broke into the Academy's arsenal during one of the raids and let loose against the attackers. When the dust cleared, she decided to demand that the deans and directors create a defense department... or she would create it herself. A couple of years later, Xilin is the Director of Defense, in charge of organizing armed resistance against potential invaders, equipping and training a security force, and outfitting research expeditions with able bodyguards.

Example 3: Cuz is an old town built high in the mountains; the ownership of the ruins of whatever Pre-War city it came from was disputed by several small communities of farmers, herders and traders — and at least one band of brigands. Meigei was born to one of the wealthiest communities, with resources including Pre-War assets like electricity and firearms. As a hardworking herdsman, Meigei understood the value of honest labor and was generally content with his lot in life. Then the earthquakes began hitting the ruins of Cuz. Unstable buildings collapsed, burying entire settlements beneath piles of ancient rubble. A particularly vicious quake set loose a pack of mutated predators, which added to the already dangerous environment of the city. Meigei was at the forefront of rescue teams, digging up his neighbors and erecting additional defenses, for the members of destroyed communities had little choice but to plead for sanctuary or raid for loot. Without really intending to, Meigei became his community's de facto leader, with everyone asking his



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opinion and advice. He still does his time in the grazing fields and the building or reconstruction of the community's infrastructure, but the rest of the time he goes around talking to people and telling them what to do.

THE FAST LEADER

Fast heroes tend toward mobility, and therefore make for poor leaders for stationary communities. A Fast hero does very well when she is leading a small, active group, such as bandits and raiders, or itinerant technicians. The Fast hero's authority draws on physical sources much like the Strong hero's, although she must rely on sidestepping any challenge to her position rather than hitting it head on. A Fast hero can be a very supportive leader; her natural agility allows her to dart among her companions, being everywhere at once and where she is most needed. Also like Strong heroes, a Fast hero shines in emergency situations; she can move around quickly and avoid danger to relay her orders promptly and with no loss of meaning, making sure that her followers or teammates are aware of her presence at all times.

- **Strengths:** The Fast hero's best asset is her ability to remain untouched and to move around freely. When a small team runs into combat, she can avoid attacks as she directs her companions. This mobility gives her a very good view of the field so she can get a better sense of how to move her people. As a leader, the Fast hero should take steps to remain visible to all of her followers and not give the impression that she dodges threats because she is afraid of being hit, but because she's simply damn good at it.

- **Weaknesses:** Fast heroes must work the hardest to become leaders, as their talents and abilities lend themselves more to solitary work than cooperation with groups. They have the tendency to leave others behind, and are better at sneaking around and performing delicate operations than they are at standing tall and shouting orders. Like Strong heroes, they must rely on their occupations to provide them with the class skills necessary for leadership. A Fast hero might carve out a role as an expert leader by specializing in Craft, or in some other task where her talents can be put to best use.

Example 1: *Rhurh is the best tracker in his pride, a group of telepathic cats that have lived in the remains of a small town from time immemorial. He hunts expertly and forages far and wide, returning home to speak of all that he sees and hears. So far, he has managed to keep the two-legs away from his territory by spotting them far from its true borders, and wastes no chance to boast about it. His exploits in confounding anyone who looks for the town*

won him his position as king (although he much prefers the term "god-emperor"), and he encourages the legend of his name by being hard to locate, fostering the rumors of his supernatural speed (not true), ability to travel between two points instantly (partially true), and his uncanny mental powers that bend humans and other tall ones to his bidding (quite true). His people are a very individualistic and autonomous folk, so he does not need to micromanage and hardly makes any decisions at all; but he is the one the others rely on to protect them from the two-legs, and who ultimately will get the blame when anything bad happens.

Example 2: *Marid in Shaka leads a small group of mercenaries called The Rain of Blades. He first joined as a tracker and scout, climbing through the ranks until he was the captain's second in command. The Rain of Blades specializes in close combat with archaic weapons, and thus touts its talent at slipping into enemy territory to dispose of targets quietly and ruthlessly. When the company was almost annihilated in an attempt to infiltrate and destroy a technocult's temple, Marid was the most senior officer left in the handful of survivors. He reworked the group's strategy and now does not allow it to grow beyond 10 members. He leads from point position with a reckless disregard for his own safety over that of his men (and women, and... others), an attitude that won him the hearts and loyalty of his followers. They take on smaller missions now, with Marid moving ahead as the scout he used to be. Because he gathers his own intelligence and risks his own skin, Marid feels safe in lying to his followers about the details of a mission, and has acquired a nice array of old technology that his followers know nothing about.*

Example 3: *Detritus is a sprawling graveyard of buildings and twisted metal, gigantic, skeletal fingers of steel pointing accusingly at a corrosion-colored sky. In this ferrous wasteland, no living thing can ever hope to subsist for very long — which suits the Tubecrack tribe just fine, as they think organics are a bunch of fragile weaklings anyway. Saved from ultimate destruction during the Final Wars by virtue of their underground storage facilities, this collection of motor vehicles developed a very nasty attitude, competing fiercely for spare parts found in the remains of the factories around their original home until they learned to operate the assembly robots that were left. Rec'line has held the title of leader of the tribe for the longest time, outrunning all competitors in the ritual challenge that consists of a midnight rally in the single avenue the tribe has cleared for such a purpose. With its choice of upgrades, Rec'line remains the hottest machine in town, and has led the Tubecracks in all the assaults on any organic would-be explorers, running them down beneath its wheels.*

THE TOUGH LEADER

With survival at the forefront of most peoples' minds in the Gamma Age, it is not surprising that Tough heroes assume positions of command at all levels of technological recovery. A Tough hero can carry a community forward through sheer perseverance, using his lasting power as an example of the tenacity that a community can muster when fighting for its very existence. Tough leaders can arise from any kind of community or in any kind of group, although they are more common from areas with harrowing conditions, where survival is the priority. Since Tough heroes are natural survivors, they take the lead in conditions that would take down weaker folk, standing right in harm's way to watch over their fellows.

- **Strengths:** Tough leaders are not exactly brainy, but they can endear themselves to others without actively trying simply by stepping into danger to save someone — although if they are of a violent bent, resisting attacks works great for intimidation. The hero's exemplary health also helps him acquire the benefits of nanotechnology and psionic powers more readily, even if controlling them is a different matter whatsoever.

- **Weaknesses:** Like the other two physical classes, the Tough hero suffers in the leadership skills department, and has only a small number of skill points with which to acquire them. Stacking up on character feats that affect these abilities and choosing occupations that grant them as class skills are also his best options for becoming a truly effective leader, spanning the whole spectrum of abilities required of him.

Example 1: *Bohma has a very hard job as her town's official swamp dipper — her name for her occupation, though the rest of the townsfolk call her "shaman." Every week, she travels deep into the swampland near the settlement to "talk with the spirits," but what she really does is consult with a small group of surviving databanks. The ancient AIs are practically senile from decades of isolation, powerlessness and immobility, stranded past a cloud of hostile nanounits, so when Bohma first stumbled upon their resting place after the epiphany of bonding with some nanos and fending off the rest, the intelligent libraries were more than happy to strike up a conversation. Bohma reluctantly visits them time and again, informing them of the daily goings on of her town and nearby communities, getting the wisdom of the ages in return. She has tried to explain to the others that she is just talking with rather nice — if a little eccentric — machines, and that her supposed powers are the product of Final Wars technology; but people defer to her with reverence, so she has resigned herself to accepting the mantle of her people's spiritual*

leader, just because the lethal environment guarding the AIs merely made her throw up her breakfast.

Example 2: *People who live past their seventies are as rare in the Gamma Age as they were in the Bronze Age. Karul is one of them. His body is covered by scars from frequent encounters with mutant beasts, and he still has all the right number of eyes, arms and legs on his body, not one fewer nor one extra. He does not hunt anymore, but his years of experience grant him the authority of a leader among his people. The few men and women who reach his age grow weak and fragile and are left to die in the snow, but not Karul; he can still keep up with the young hunters even if his sight is not what it used to be. His extraordinary resilience, youthful energy and the wisdom of a long life well lived make him the best thing that has happened to his tribe. His advice is always sound, and he can still survive the hardships that the nomads go through when making their way from each hunting ground to the next.*

Example 3: *Khele worked hard to gain the position of leader of her community, a new town where humans and mutants of all breeds worked together to better their chances of survival in the archipelago peeking from the center of the Living Sea. The waters surrounding the islands received the name because of the abundant life that they contained, from the small fish, algae and other things that the people of the archipelago ate, to the rest of the species that tried to eat them in return. Khele developed a hard carapace on her back after swimming for far too long in the Living Sea harvesting algae, but her mutation has served her well in resisting the rest of the sea's dangers, and she became the most accomplished swimmer on her island. Through hard work, she gained the loyalty of a few of her neighbors until she became the virtual leader of her island, which gave her the idea to unite the whole archipelago under her care. Since she could swim between the islands on her own without suffering too much harm, she became a local legend. Her reputation quickly earned her the position of adviser to all the chiefs of the different communities, until she called them together and convinced them that they were better off recognizing her authority openly.*

THE SMART LEADER

Through strategy and careful study, a smart leader can direct the efforts of the people under her command to their absolute best uses. Rational approaches work better for a Smart hero, who can tackle any problem with her prodigious intellect and devise the best course of action given her previous studies. Smart leaders rise to prominence in many situations, although they find a shorter route to power in communities that have old technology, or that are sufficiently sophisticated to give knowledge its due; otherwise, Smart heroes tend to fall

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into advisory positions, lending their expertise to stronger leaders. When she is in charge, a Smart hero prefers to acquire necessary information and analyze it before she reaches a decision; she directs the efforts of those under her to achieve the best result with the minimum effort and can be devilishly devious when dealing with strangers.

- **Strengths:** The leadership skills are not central to the Smart hero's concerns, but the number of skill points she gains, the largest of all the classes, means that she can spare a few. Her technical expertise means that she will most often gain power by expert leadership, because she is an undisputed authority in one or more fields of knowledge or craftsmanship. Because she can be fluent with many modes of communication, she can easily interact with other communities, visitors or other beings with a language, and she has a facility for applying her wits to a task.

- **Weaknesses:** The Smart hero has a diminished capacity to physically affect the world around her through her own efforts, so she tends to depend on technology to do her work for her. Her best strategies usually benefit only herself, and she tends to be a bit aloof to people who are not as intellectual as her. As with other classes, she can choose an appropriate occupation to grant her the class skills she needs to be a more effective leader, unlocking the great potential she has for learning the skill to its utmost limits.

Example 1: *Beil was a very smart child, asking all sorts of unanswerable questions to anyone who stopped long enough for him to formulate them. He was the nightmare of the city elders, so they were not sad to see him pack his belongings and leave when he reached young adulthood. That is, until he returned. He had merely gone on a prolonged field trip to study the layout of the shattered remains of the large city the community was part of. He returned astride a noisy Pre-War vehicle with a hundred and one ideas to improve the living conditions of the people. While no one listened at first, the people and the city elders had no choice but to take notice when he finished installing the solar panels on his old house, treating his neighbors to music from a scavenged music player. He said he knew what the odd structures around the community were, and how to get them to work again to generate electricity. A decade later, the community had grown and prospered; it finally gave Beil the recognition he was due, making him the first elected leader of the community with the elders relegated to an advisory role.*

Example 2: *Spitfire grew fond of its name during the time when its original owner took the time to clean it and maintain it properly. It learned much during its tenure as the sidearm of a brilliant military officer, and grew rather*

outraged by the fact that the Final Wars ended with the use of weapons of mass destruction, not with a contest of military strategy. It lay in the ruins of its owner's barracks for so long that it lost track of time, until a group of barbarians found it. Intrigued by what could have happened to the world above, Spitfire made its usefulness known to its finder, and traveled outside for the first time in ages. It was dismayed at the state of warfare in the Gamma Age, sharing space in its new owner's arsenal with a bloody axe! It decided to shape the barbarians into a new order, using the reverence they felt for it to give them tips on how real war is fought. Its vast databases on military history and all the experience it accumulated under its original owner have served the gun well; it has made its adopted tribe into the most powerful in the land, and it he is passed on from chieftain to chieftain (chosen by Spitfire itself of course), recognized as the true symbol of authority.

Example 3: *The competition among child prodigies in Shelter H-42 can be summed up in one word: vicious. Karla grew up in an environment where genius was expected, as the population is the result of a eugenics program. They are survivors of the Final Wars, who woke to a harsh new reality after their space transport failed to escape orbit and crashed back down on the surface. The genetically engineered people had to quickly learn to cope with the desolate environment, and built their first shelters from the hull of the ship. Two generations later, with the leaders arranging marriages to produce useful offspring, the children are growing better adapted to the world, a bit stronger and more resilient than their forebears, and less dependent on the failing technology that kept the community alive. However, power still goes to the smartest and most knowledgeable, and Karla has crushed many egos in her climb to the top — first of her class, then of her generation, and finally of the advisory council. She is a champion of debate, and goes to extremes to choose the most humiliating retort, making sure that once she takes an intellectual opponent down, he will not get back up.*

THE DEDICATED LEADER

If a person truly believes in what he is doing, that belief is infused into every action and word. Dedicated leaders exude their devotion toward their people, a dedication often returned in kind. What a Dedicated leader has to offer may not be technical expertise or encouraging words, but his very purposefulness and inspiration to others, plus a keen awareness of what is happening around him. A community that desperately wants something to believe in will often choose to follow a Dedicated leader, for he will understand that need and act accordingly, whether they are simple folk in search of a deity or a sophisticated society looking for purpose. Dedicated

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leaders govern their followers by listening and helping them reach their potentials. While not overly capable of doing things themselves during a crisis, they can keep calm in the most desperate situations and give out orders with a cool head, which in turn serves to inspire others to give their best efforts.

- **Strengths:** The Dedicated leader's main strength is his awareness and ability to understand what goes in the hearts and minds of others. He has the right kind of class skills to perform as a good leader, and a decent, if not abundant, amount of hit points. Because of his dedication and faith, he has more than one tool to succeed at whatever task he sets his mind to, and to help others do the same. These traits make the Dedicated hero a natural leader who is easy to respect and grow fond of, regardless of his occupation.

- **Weaknesses:** Dedicated heroes make very good leaders with few disadvantages for taking such a role. One of their few weaknesses as leaders is that they do not tend to be duplicitous — which may not be such a disadvantage after all. While they are very good at understanding the events of the world, they lack the tools to affect it directly; but just like physical classes can patch their leadership skills with an occupation, Dedicated heroes can come from a calling that provides them with the means to act upon their intuitions.

***Example 1:** Laura's grandfather always taught her to believe in herself, and that she did. The small city was one of the lucky ones, with very defensible borders, a comfortable array of old working technology and people who remembered how to use it and pass their knowledge on. As success stories go, Laura's is the kind to pass under the radar. Before anyone noticed, she was the personal assistant to the mayor, and nobody raised any question when the man retired and she took his place. People do not really remember if they had an election, but are sure they would have voted for her anyway if they did. Laura is just glad she practiced her telepathic abilities to the point that they were hardly noticeable, and she was very accomplished by the time she sneaked into working at the mayor's office, putting her intuitive understanding of what people wanted to hear to good use.*

***Example 2:** Faith can move mountains, or so the saying goes, but Ahlor takes it quite literally — he dreams of moving the big piece of rock that blocks a mountain pass through which, according to some old documents, lies a rich and fertile valley untouched by the ravages of the Final Wars. There is no other way across, and the rock is definitely mountain-sized. Ahlor spends hours staring at the pass and working in the fields, speaking daily of the riches to be found beyond the blocked pass. He has no real talent for craftsmanship or engineering, but his*

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ideas have caught the attention of a few treasure seekers who pass through the village, and have taken a shot at studying the pass. With every traveler who listens to him, Alhor gathers one more piece in what he knows will be the final solution. Half of his neighbors consider him to be insane, but the other half is rooting for him, and tend to do what he says as his unwavering faith kindles theirs.

Example 3: When a world turns upside down, the real heroes are those who put aside their own welfare so that they can take care of others, despite all the dangers they put themselves into. This is the case for Uma (or Unit for Medical Assistance), a child-shaped android whose main programming was for nursing. Reactivated during a freak electromagnetic storm, Uma awoke to find her hospital in ruins, her patients long dead and no doctor to tell her how to help people. So she took on the task of completing her medical databases on her own and abandoned her home to wander the charred surroundings. Knowing the frightening appearance that her decaying artificial flesh gave her, she stripped it all off and is now easily recognizable with her metallic body reflecting the light of the sun, moon and stars wherever she walks. She gathered a group of like-minded sentients, taught them all she knew of medicine and first aid and now travels with them, offering relief and medical training to the communities that welcome her eclectic group of wandering healers.

THE CHARISMATIC LEADER

The leader par excellence, the Charismatic hero has all she needs to gather people around her. She may not have the muscle to bully people around, the brains to organize them or even a vision to unite them, but they still flock to her, listen to what she has to say and leave feeling like they can achieve anything. A Charismatic hero is a natural leader, rising to the task in any kind of environment because of her ability to sway people to her side through of her natural magnetism, independent from the tricks and skills she may have learned in her life. Any sort of group or community can follow a Charismatic leader, the strength of her words and personality pushing them to comply with all she says. On her part, a Charismatic hero has many options available to order people around: She can inspire, beguile, convince or even fool people, her real intentions divorced from or linked to the welfare of those she commands.

• **Strengths:** When it comes to leadership, a Charismatic hero is all strengths. She has the innate ability to convince others to do what she wants, a very good number of skill points and all the class skills she needs to fulfill her leadership tasks. Her talents all tie into dealing with others — she can even affect

the actions of entire communities, cultivating their growth through sheer inspirational power. All the Charismatic hero needs to do is open her mouth, and people will follow.

• **Weaknesses:** When exercising her leadership, a Charismatic hero should keep behind cover, for she is not quite as durable as other heroes. She lacks the ability to back tough words with tough actions, so she can find herself in real danger if her bluff is called. Sense Motive, an important skill for a good leader, is absent from her class skills list, but that is easily remedied by choosing an occupation that provides it. The hero is advised to stock up on defensive equipment and long-range weapons; she might be a good politician and an inspirational speech giver, but she is not quite as good as a war chief.

Example 1: New Hope Biodome is very proud of its achievements at keeping the traditions of humanity alive. Spared the worst of the Final Wars because of its relative isolation in the thundra, its population of pure-strain humans and docile synths preserves Pre-War models of government, such as demagogic democracy. Ben Jacobson knows that in such a system, perception is stronger than reality, and he is a master of spin and propaganda. His rousing speeches motivate the citizens of New Hope toward supporting him, and he has created an image of trustworthiness and conceived a bold vision for the future of the biodome, extending to the future of the whole planet. He, like most of his compatriots, knows next to nothing about the conditions in the outside world, but his entire campaign revolves around rebuilding the world in New Hope's image. His empty promises may even have the unforeseen effect of spreading a little of the hope the biodome represents into the ravaged world.

Example 2: A Charismatic leader usually works in the spotlight, attracting attention and being as visible as possible. Ilaya knows that this could be overly dangerous for her health as leader of a resistance group in the old city of Mousetown, where mutant animals (predominantly rats and mice) rule over humans and the more humanoid mutants with an iron paw. Ilaya is actually a canine mutant herself, but the rodents are abusing their power; and she believes that all people, regardless of genus, can live and prosper together. Her organization includes humans and all sorts of mutants, including many animal breeds who also disagree with the way of things. She poses as an errand-girl in order to communicate her instructions to all the cells in the group, with some of her followers ignorant that the messenger is actually the source of their orders. She has a nose for spotting people sympathetic to her cause, and a natural charm for convincing them to

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join and cooperate to the eventual downfall of the mouse rulers.

Example 3: *Kodokyin never intended to become the leader of his small band of traveling entertainers. He was content with being the troupe's resident poet and composer, until he learned that they were only a front for an elite organization of spies and assassins for hire. Even then, he did not leave, though he undertook the training with some reluctance and never really excelled as an operative. However, his leader exploited his musical talent to convey hidden messages to sleeper agents concealed in the lyrics and verses of his compositions, until Kodokyin was the only other person besides the leader to know the location of every agent in the organization. When the leader was killed, the senior operatives gathered to choose a leader; Kodokyin was chosen not only because of his extensive and exclusive knowledge, but also because he was the only one that none of the commanders and junior agents had a problem with. Heeding the advice of his unwanted subordinates, Kodokyin conducts business as usual and with surprising success, nailing contracts through charm and guile that their previous leader would not have been able to acquire.*

THE ADVANCED LEADER

Characters with levels in advanced classes gain an edge in very specialized situations, as described by their new class abilities. As leaders, advanced characters perform based on their basic classes, with their areas of expertise weighing in only in situations where they apply.

- **Strengths:** Varies depending on the advanced class. The Leader is the obvious choice when it comes to leadership, as all his class abilities are geared toward leading followers through certain situations, or to making his authority felt. Others like the Cybercologist, the Prophet and the War Chief appeal to particular styles of leadership, allegiance or situations.

- **Weaknesses:** Survivors and Nanosmiths are too self-focused to be good leaders in the long term, but they can briefly serve as leaders if the situation demands. Cybercologists, Prophets and War Chiefs are in similar straits when not dealing with their areas of expertise (synthetics, religion and war, respectively) and can fumble the job so much that they are removed from their position by disgruntled followers.

Example 1: *When the Turbentine Gang attacked the community, Harrigan had no choice but to step out of retirement and go back to the frontlines where he used to lead his life. He is old, and his bones creak and groan with every movement he makes; but war was upon his adopted*

home, and his neighbors fell naturally behind him. Now he leads them in their meager but increasingly effective efforts to repel the gang that would exploit them.

Example 2: *Jarita had a lonely childhood, as many smart kids do even in the most enlightened societies. She loved to pick things up and take them apart, only to put them back together again with loving words of understanding. Her friends made fun of her because she talked with her dolls well past the age of playing with them, but her little quirks paid off when a man arrived to take over the town's leadership with a small squadron of combat robots. Nobody had the strength to oppose him, and his puppets were everywhere, so everyone had to accept the inevitable. All except Jarita, who knew deep inside that the robots did not like this job, but their programming left them no choice. Every day, Jarita took some time off from her duties to talk gently with one of the sentries. A couple of years later, when the time was right for the people to revolt, Jarita was in front of them, and more than half the robot army switched sides to support the only person capable of understanding their synthetic souls.*

Example 3: *Seldom is an inherited position filled by someone with the talent for it, but it was true of Prince Khail, heir to the self-appointed King of Hasbeentheen. Khail has nothing but contempt for the title of nobility that his father assumed when he brought the rag-tag assortment of nomads and refugees to the ruins of a Pre-War city, but he realizes that it is the title that the people are looking toward, and has no choice but to accept it. Resigned, he prepared himself fully; he found an old storeroom that stocked several books by a forgotten prophet by the name of Ogman, and Khail studied thoroughly, learning the finer points of leadership until he could spot trouble before it brewed. He also learned to trust his instincts and himself; when his father died and he ascended the makeshift throne, he put all he had learned to use, ushering a new era of prosperity to Hasbeentheen.*

LOYAL LEADERSHIP

Allegiance is an important part of the Gamma Age; it not only defines a character's general goals, but also gives her a solid support base, even if it is only the moral support provided by a significant other. The leader and her followers need not share allegiances. While devout followers will have their leader as their allegiance, this is only the case with very popular and inspiring leadership; and even harmonious teams where both leader and followers pursue the same ideals can function smoothly while the participants all have their own interpretations of their loyalty.

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The strength of leadership plays a major role in determining how allegiances interact in a relationship of authority, for an open-minded leader will allow his followers to express and follow different ideals, while an authoritarian one will move swiftly to crush such dissent.

Within the same group, a particular member may have to keep her allegiance to herself and manifest one the other members or the leader espouse to avoid any conflict, or risk being ejected from the safety of the group.

MATCHING ALLEGIANCE

A leader's work is cut out for him when his followers pursue the same general goals and have a devotion similar to his. A leader in such a position must still take precautions that his followers' zeal does not surpass his own, or that they do not deem him lacking in his loyalty toward their shared allegiance.

• **Community:** There are many different ways in which a leader devoted to his community can interact with followers with a similar dedication. The most obvious example is the community leader commanding his neighbors, but other instances include the captain of the guard (or chief of security as the case may be) and his underlings, a guild leader and the guild's rank and file, or even a valiant citizen who organizes a neighborhood watch. Both the

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• **External:** When the leader and followers share an external allegiance, then the leader is part of a larger chain of command rather than an authority in his own right. Followers may have both a personal allegiance to their commander on the scene and to the cause, group, or overall source of power. Followers of the individual who do not share his external allegiance follow him simply as an individual.

• **Object:** Treat this as a personal allegiance for both cases of matching or differing allegiances between leader and followers.

• **Opposed:** Treat this as an ideological allegiance for both cases of matching or differing allegiances between leader and followers.

• **Self:** A person devoted to himself is a poor leader, even if the followers have a personal allegiance to her. She is simply not interested in their well-being, and this will be noticed eventually. For obvious reasons groups where all members have an allegiance to self cannot have a leader, or they will accept one only grudgingly.



leader's and followers' zeal toward their community ensures that they all know why they are working together, and followers defer to their leader's authority only so far as his orders are aligned with the community's well-being. There are very rare and conflictive cases of a leader owing allegiance to a community with followers devoted to a different one; this most often happens during great crises where different communities pool their resources together.

- **Organization:** What works for a community usually works for an organization as well, except that the flow of authority and subservience occur within the broader, conceptual limits of the organization instead of physical borders. Most organizations have a chain of command that characters can fit into, with the position of leader and subordinate determined by the assigned chain of command. A leader can demand more obedience from her followers if she maintains the image that her orders are, by virtue of her higher position in the hierarchy, the will of the organization. Organizations cooperate more readily than communities, so it is not that uncommon to find a leader belonging to a particular organization, while her followers pledge their loyalty to another. As long as the leader's commands do not conflict with the interests of her followers' organization, she has nothing to worry about.

- **Personal:** The problem for a leader with a personal allegiance also possessed by his followers is that he is not really their leader, but merely a proxy of the person they are all loyal or dedicated to. He does not hold much power on his own, but derives it from the person they all follow, maybe because he has shown more devotion to that person or is simply deemed the most capable of leading the group. It is quite common to find a leader loyal to a person guiding others whose dedication lies toward different individuals. This becomes troublesome only when the various persons are threatened at the same time and the leader has a very hard time keeping the group together.

- **Theological or Philosophical:** Groups or communities that follow the same theological or philosophical ideal are not as uncommon as people would want them to be, for they tend to tread on the fanatical side. A religious or philosophical leader can draw her authority from a deeper understanding of the religion or school of thought, acting as a mentor and teacher to her followers. While a leader may follow one philosophy and his followers another, the relationship of command and obedience will not last long, with followers constantly questioning the leader's actions as interpreted by their differing allegiances.

COMMUNITY ALLEGIANCE

A leader whose allegiance lies toward a community can find herself managing followers whose main loyalties lies elsewhere, as the community's members have different interests and pursue different goals. Her best option is to appeal to community spirit: Working for the community will ultimately benefit all of his followers' different allegiances.

Whether fabricated or real, threats to the community tend to be common foes to all members of it, regardless of their personal allegiances. When such threats appear, the community pulls together as its members forge temporary alliances and put their dissenting views aside for the sake of protecting the community as a whole; but only those whose hearts lie in the community's defense will gain any allegiance benefit in doing so.

- **Followers with an Organization Allegiance:** These are the hardest followers to command, because they are beholden to a group whose agenda might collide or simply steer away from benefiting the community. Ties of friendship may do the trick, insofar as the followers are willing to go against their organization's wishes.

- **Followers with a Personal Allegiance:** If the person his followers are devoted to is part of the leader's community, it is not so hard to convince them to cooperate by simply stating that the good of the many encompasses the good of the few. Discipline is harder to maintain if the person who is the focus of a follower's attention is endangered, even more so if it is because of the leader's decisions.

- **Followers with a Theological or Philosophical Allegiance:** The goals of a community often coincide with those of a religious or philosophical belief, or at least they seldom conflict too much. When they do, the leader is in for some trouble, as a follower may refuse to do as she says because of his convictions. The leader needs a lot of diplomacy and understanding to get her point across, and should take time to learn at least the basics of the religion or philosophy her followers espouse — if not out of respect, at least because it will help her cajole a reluctant follower.

Example: Jar'kle is fiercely loyal to the Flotsammers, as is his buddy Luuiz. There are two groups operating within the nomadic band of sea scavengers that trouble its two leaders: the Incarnites and the Restorationists. The first operate openly, but as they put the will of the spirits before the needs of the community, Jar'kle has had to make Luuiz step in and order them to recover things that the cryptic allegiance claims are taboo. The Restorationists, on the other hand, operate secretly, but Jar'kle knows who

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they are. Their allegiance to their organization over the community has led to some problems where a valuable piece of salvage is stolen from the community's storage. However, they all pull together when they must deal with roving bands of pirates or storms, obeying Luuiz and Jar'kle in everything to defend themselves.

ORGANIZATION ALLEGIANCE

Belonging to an organization presents many opportunities for leadership, and a character who pledges loyalty to one may soon receive the position of leader as a reward for his efforts. Such leaders usually have the resources to hire their followers so that they don't need to worry about differences of belief. A wise leader will still make certain her followers' allegiances do not conflict too much with hers.

- **Followers with a Community Allegiance:** The leader should take some time to design her plans so that they bring some benefit, apparent or real, to the community her followers owe allegiance to, to ensure that they will be motivated by more than her commands. Lying works for a while, but not if she wants to keep the same followers for more than a couple of months. An organization may order its members to act against a community, in which case it is in a leader's best interest to recruit followers of a rival settlement.

- **Followers With a Personal Allegiance:** The goals of the organization come before those of any given individual, but if the person on the receiving end of a personal allegiance happens to be a member of the organization or (better yet) the leader himself, the team can work with perfect coordination, although the leader should be careful that his devotees work toward the goals of his own allegiance.

- **Followers with a Theological or Philosophical Allegiance:** The dynamics between a leader obedient to an organization and followers pledged to an ideal depend on the nature of both. Someone whose principles include being nice to strangers gladly follows a leader whose organization has similar tenets, while the believer in a religion of hatred and violence may have no qualms in obeying the representative of a ruthless group. If there are conflicts between an organization's goals and the strongly-held beliefs of potential followers, a leader should try to look elsewhere for recruits or be ready for several rounds of proselytizing and debate.

PERSONAL ALLEGIANCE

A leader willing to do anything for a particular person has problems projecting an aura of command

that would impress followers. Such personal devotion can easily turn into a bias, and followers will be resentful if their own well-being is put aside in favor of the leader's "favorite," and all their efforts aim at benefiting that person. While allegiance does not mean obedience, a leader must project an image of self-sufficiency that may crack when she goes out of her way to benefit a single person. If the focus of the leader's attention is among her followers, things can get much, much worse, as the rest of the following will not take kindly to such favoritism.

- **Followers with an Organization Allegiance:** The leader of an organization should have some ties with it, even if he pledged his allegiance to a person. In this relationship, the appearance of compliance works better than the real thing, so the leader must be careful to cultivate the image of allegiance. If he is loyal to a person within the organization, his followers will hardly be able to tell he does not have the same priorities as them.

- **Followers with a Community Allegiance:** People who look after a community are easier to deal with than those who follow an organization, at least in the eyes of a leader who cares more for a single person — especially if that person belongs to the community. In this case, the leader can convince herself to work toward the well-being of her followers' community if the person she looks out for would also benefit from such actions.

- **Followers with a Theological or Philosophical Allegiance:** There is only one case where a leader's personal allegiance will conflict with his followers' strong ideology, and that is where the object of his interests is defined as evil or undesirable by the religion or philosophy that the followers stick to. Otherwise, if the particular ideals of the religion or philosophy are not too disruptive, the relationship between the leader and those he commands will suffer little more conflict than normal.

IDEOLOGICAL ALLEGIANCE

When a leader is devoted to an ideology, be it religious or philosophical in nature, she will seek followers that match her convictions. This tendency makes it easier for her to get along with followers, as her screening process is much stricter and usually passes only those who are more likely to follow her orders, even if they are not as devout in the service of the ideals they have in common.

- **Followers with a Community Allegiance:** A leader's ideological tenets need not conflict with his followers' dedication to their community. As long as

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her words and deeds do not bring any harm or undue tensions to community life, the leader can expect a normal level of cooperation from his cohorts. If the ideology coincides or is even a vital part of the community's own ideology, the leader can expect enthusiastic following, even if his followers' priorities are slightly different than his.

- **Followers With an Organization Allegiance:**

The same rules for an ideological leader dealing with community-aligned followers work for those who serve an organization, except that the character will have to be more pragmatic in her dealings if the organization's tenets do not coincide with her own. A wise leader will not approach members of an organization she knows is opposed to her own views.

- **Followers with a Personal Allegiance:** The best way for a leader to handle a follower whose heart is on a person's well-being rather than on lofty ideals is to go to that person and convert her to his way of thinking. Even if the follower does not truly pledge his allegiance to the ideology, at least his focus of attention will keep him on the right track.

LEADERSHIP AND SMALL GROUPS

Every group of individuals is bound to have a leader: it is simply the nature of sentient creatures to have someone who coordinates their efforts and leads them to the completion of any task, and an adventuring party or explorer's band is no different. The difficulty in settling matters of leadership is that a party is often composed of clashing personalities and backgrounds, laden with conflicts of interest born from personal and cultural histories. The stereotypical pure-strain human would balk more than once when following the orders of a stereotypical mutant.

Like it or not, adventurers have to deal with these problems even when they are in the middle of a ruined factory laden with deadly traps — and the sooner any conflict is resolved, the better for everyone involved.

SELECTING A LEADER

Many adventurers would declare that their party has no leader, but they would be unwittingly lying. Even if she does not boss her companions around, there is bound to be a character who takes the initiative and who makes suggestions that others end up following because they simply make sense. That person is the leader.

Leadership is an agreement between leader and followers; the followers accept that the leader will

issue the orders and they will follow them, and the leader makes the compromise to look for the best way to benefit all members of the group. In party dynamics, this translates as a silent or open agreement that one adventurer will say something, and the others are bound to do what she says.

There are five kinds of authority that most groups accept in the Gamma Age, which apply to leaders of an organization as small as an adventuring group or as large as a thriving old town:

- **Traditional:** The leader's position was achieved because it has always been so, and that is the way things work. The adventurer may be a high-ranking officer in an army-sponsored strike team, putting her in command because her rank is higher in the power hierarchy. The followers accept this as part of the hierarchy they belong to. Examples: a sergeant in a long-standing security force in a military specialist town, the eldest child of the matriarch in a hereditary-based nomad community.

- **Charismatic:** People tend to follow leaders they like personally, and so charismatic adventurers have a greater chance on getting stuck with the role. Dedicated and Charismatic heroes usually have strong social skills, and therefore find themselves in positions of authority by popular consensus rather than because of personal goals. Examples: the leader of an impromptu religious cult, the guide in a band of visionary explorers.

- **Legal:** The members of a group agree to accept a leader's orders based on a structure of formal or informal rules, which can be as bureaucratic as a city that requires a leader to be appointed for every adventuring party that crosses its gates, or as simple as a vote of confidence by the group. Examples: a community of machines that follows strict guidelines on how to elect a leader and on that leader's behavior, the mayor of a new town with a paranoid fear of chaos and disorder and a detailed set of laws.

- **Oppressive:** The followers accept the leader's authority because they fear what would happen if they didn't. Oppressive leadership is an illegitimate source of authority which nonetheless works, although it requires constant maintenance in the form of displays of power (also known as bullying). Oppressive power accepts no dissent and bears a distinctive disregard for the followers' well-being. Examples: the bandit chief who killed his predecessor and fends off similar attempts, a dictator from the Ranks of the Fit.

- **Pragmatic:** A group may suffer from a rare case of common sense and defer leadership to the most

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qualified member, which need not be the most charismatic person in the world, nor the next in line for the throne for that matter. Pragmatic leadership is more frequent in small groups, where the talents of each member are more easily recognized by the whole of the community. Expert leadership from those with the most knowledge about something is a good model of pragmatic power. Examples: the most rugged and experienced adventurer in a band of explorers, the most senior craftsman in an artisan guild.

Whatever the method of choosing a leader, it is important that all, or at least most, of the party agrees to follow her commands. They need not do it unquestioningly, but hesitation and resistance in the middle of danger can spell disaster.

LEADING THE GROUP

The first thing that a leader must do when he officially assumes the role (or knows that he has it implicitly) is learn all that he can about his companion's abilities. It is not wise to assume that all mutants can fire lasers from their eyes, or that all tech-looking heroes can manipulate nanotechnology. It does not have to feel like an interrogation, but if the leader shows even a smattering of interest in what his companions can do, it cements the relationship not only as one between a leader and a follower, but also as one between friends.

For their parts, party members must agree to do as they are told. If they trust the adventurer they chose to be their leader, then they should trust his decisions as well. Some explaining from the leader would not hurt, but there are times when a party only has seconds to react.

LEADERSHIP MODELS

An adventuring party in the Gamma Age is nothing if not diverse and unpredictable. From the number of its members to the staggering diversity of genotypes and their variants, plus class distribution and FX powers, there is no set rule that can predict what a party will be like. However, the way they conduct internal party business can be classified, with each method having its advantages and disadvantages.

- **Single Leader:** A party entrusts all the authority to a single member. They all agree to follow her orders and trust in her judgment. Conducting business with a single person gives the group a face and makes it easier to identify it as an entity; the group benefits from the leader's reputation as much as the group's itself. The single leader must be capable and charismatic in order to rally the support of all his

companions. The problem with single-leader parties is that the no one is perfect, and a single error of judgment on the leader's part can bring disaster for the entire group.

- **Advised Leader:** An advised leader has similarly broad authority, with the difference that she and her party recognize her own shortcomings. Open debate is common when the situation allows it, with the leader listening to each piece of advice and choosing the one that makes the most sense to her. Everybody must abide by the leader's final decision; although she allows dissent and the occasional "I told you so" from her followers, once she reaches a conclusion, she expects everyone else to comply with it even if they do not necessarily agree. Combat and threats preclude any argument, however, with the entire group falling into line to obey the leader promptly because their safety may rest on how quickly they respond to her commands. The good side of this mode is that everybody has a say in how the group works and what path it takes, while still deferring authority to a single individual for prompt action. One of the pitfalls an advised leader can stumble into is to favor the advice of one companion over others regardless of the soundness of such advice, which can foster animosity among the group's numbers.

- **Rotating Leaders:** Few groups are trusting or insane enough to regularly switch leadership among their members. They can have a definite method such as "leader of the month," or a completely informal process where a leader retains his position for as long as he can manage to stay on the right path and bring prosperity and success. In such a model, everyone gets to play the part of the leader at some point; this allows the group to know who among them is more fit for the role when eventually adopting a more stable leadership model, and also makes the group's actions very hard to anticipate by outside observers. The problem is that allies cannot easily predict the group's actions either, and a good decision by a former leader can be scrapped or crippled by a less competent successor.

- **Situation Leaders:** This is a very comfortable model for groups who do agree to have a leader, but acknowledge the advantages and disadvantages of each member. Depending on the situation, a certain character assumes command because she is the best suited for that situation. A Strong hero leads the party in combat, while a hero with the aristocrat occupation expects her advice to be followed when they are all invited to a social gathering in a sophisticated community. Situation leaders are often chosen on the

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spot, but this requires that they know well each others' strengths and weaknesses and at one point decided that this would happen. The advantage of this model is that the party becomes flexible and readily adaptable to any situation, but the price is that they have no clear direction and there may be competition to determine who is best in a particular scenario.

• **Committee:** At the same time the best and the worst of all models, leadership by committee means that every member of the party has a voice and a vote. The party discusses a situation and its members vote on it, with the majority winning. While this model ensures that all companions feel that their opinion counts for something, decisions by committee can be bogged down by senseless debate, and the party's reaction time is severely slowed. Combat under committee leadership tends to be chaotic, with every party member doing what he thinks is most appropriate. If the group is fortunate enough to have good chemistry between its members and their talents complement each other, this works for their benefit; but if they have personal vendettas and incompatible characters, it could lead to disaster.

Example: With the passing of the years, the Flotsammers recognize that Jar'kle is behind many of the best strategies, and go directly to him for advice; but when it comes to dealing with disasters or fending off other groups, it is Luuiz who takes control, for his experience in combat and harsh situations. This is a situation leadership at work, and the Flotsammers work better as a group thanks to it.

DISPUTES

With a potentially explosive mix of personalities, it is no surprise to find dissent within adventuring parties that explodes into open disputes. It is the role of a leader to deal with disputes to everyone's satisfaction. A dispute among traveling companions can be as simple as to which direction to go or as complex as a mired discussion about differing philosophies.

A situation dispute arises when two or more characters have different ideas on what should be done in a specific situation. The leader should listen attentively to all the parties involved in the dispute and, based on their counsel, reach a decision that everyone must accept. Since part of bestowing the mantle of leader on a character includes trusting in her judgment, characters at odds with one another must follow the leader's decision. Because of the potential resentment this approach can provoke, the leader is best advised to find a middle ground between the two positions, but not if the compromise

would, in her eyes, result in adverse circumstances for the party.

Personal disputes are far more complicated when two or more members simply do not like each other and have a hard time working together. There are a thousand reasons as to why this can happen, so a leader must take care to know the goals and motivations of all her "subordinates" so she can reach a verdict. Sometimes, she must also acknowledge that letting tempers cool off is the best answer.

MANAGING A TEAM

The role of group leader is a full-time job that requires the adventurer in the position to be aware of what each member of his party is doing, and where. Even when the group is relaxing in a tranquil settlement after an expedition in terribly hazardous territory, the leader still has a certain responsibility for how his companions behave. He has to get them out of prison after a bar fight, for example, or answer to the authorities for the latest explosion caused by the resident psionic's feedback.

When the party is out traveling, the leader assigns specific tasks to each member; he keeps track of how long a scout has been away and roughly how many units the nanosmith has left, calling for rest when he judges that the weakest member cannot keep up anymore (barring emergencies that push the party into a forced march) or declaring a full stop and backtrack when he believes one or more in his party will not withstand ambient radiation or biological pollution in an area.

FX LEADERSHIP

In the Gamma Age, leadership can come from unorthodox sources, such as specific mutations or implants, cybernetics, nanotechnology or psionic powers. These very special abilities bend the established rules of leadership by changing the situation and powers of a character vying for leadership. In some communities or groups adhering to certain philosophies, a character does not necessarily need to activate her special abilities to end up as a leader; the mere fact that she has those powers can elevate her in status, depending on the communities or philosophies she encounters. Certain synthetics will follow an organic with cybernetic implants more easily than they would a "pure" character because they could believe the cybernetically enhanced person is better able to identify with machines. Likewise, a religion that states that psionic powers are a gift from God will elevate beings with such talents.



BIOTECH-ENHANCED LEADERSHIP

When a leader attains his position because of his mutations or biotechnological tools, he can argue that he is merely using his natural talents to fulfill expectations — even if such talents are grafted forcefully. The bioleader's talents lean toward chemically influencing others, such as with the Harmonious Pheromones mutation, which is a very insidious way of leading: a follower defers to him not because he truly believes in his leadership powers, but because her own body chemistry is telling her to do so.

CYBERNETICALLY ENHANCED LEADERSHIP

Cyberleaders must exert a different kind of force with their implants, and take care that they do not deplete their own batteries while they order people around. A subtle cyberleader opts for cerebral enhancements that will grant her greater innate talent for leadership, coupled with software that enhances her knowledge of and ability for leadership interactions. The more extreme cyberleaders go for synaptic control, overriding their followers' wills or listening in on their thoughts to gain insight on what to do or say to get them to act.

NANOTECH-ENHANCED LEADERSHIP

If it weren't for the cloud of sparkling nanomachines, a nanoleader would be able to exert his power with the same subtlety as a bioleader, and with much greater control. The more imaginative the nano user, the more dangerous the effects he can concoct, going beyond enhancing his natural charm toward creating subliminal imagery, psychotropic gasses, subsonic suggestions, and other wild effects. There are two specific effects of nanotechnology that got out of control when engineers tried to create more effective leaders: the Communal Drink and the Hive Plague (detailed in the FX section below). Initially a boon, contracting either nano effect can become a real curse over time.

PSIONIC LEADERSHIP

A more traditional manipulator among the possessors of special powers, a psionic character can bend the minds of others to her will, synchronizing her mind with theirs and forcing her orders on them. Telepathy is the only one of the more common powers that can achieve this, albeit for short commands; but psionic characters who invest time and practice can fine-tune their abilities in order to exert a subtler influence.

FX

One of humanity's traits is the constant search for power. On the eve of the Final Wars, the power-hungry developed new methods of gaining dominance over others, giving many people in positions of authority a greater handle on the manipulation and coercion of those below them. (All references to existing FX are to the **Gamma World Player's Handbook**, Chapter Three: FX.)

CELLULAR TRANSFORMATION

Experiments in creating servitor races led to the development of certain biotech implants that either forced obedience on the recipient, or enhanced a leader's capacity to give commands and have them followed. As if these advances had been installed in the collective gene pool, the radioactive fires and bio-soup of the atmosphere after the Final Wars started inducing mutations that mimicked those early manipulations.

THE VOICE

The subject grows additional vocal chords and gains much finer control over them; he is now able to introduce subsonic elements in his speech patterns.

Type: Positive (minor modification)

Effect: The character gains the ability to use his voice to change a target's mood and predisposition by applying subsonic sound. The character must choose to activate this power (activation is a free action). When he speaks, the character gains a +10 bonus on any Charisma-based check and can affect up to one target per character level. This effect works even against persons or creatures who do not speak the character's language, but does not work against synthetics, robots and other machines. Targets and other listeners have a chance to detect the use of this power by making a Listen check (DC equal to the character's Charisma-based check result). If taken as a major modification, The Voice also transmits encoded signals that scramble machines' processes, granting the bonus to interactions with synthetics, robots and other machines.

In addition to the normal effect, a character with this power can spend an action point and use his voice to push a course of action on a single target. The character suggests a course of action (limited to a sentence or two) that the target feels compelled to follow. The duration of the effect is 1 hour per character level or until the target finishes the

suggested task (whichever is shorter). The suggestion must be worded in such a manner as to make the action sound reasonable. A target is entitled to a Will saving throw against this effect (DC 10 + 1/2 character level + Charisma modifier), although a very reasonable suggestion can impose a penalty at the discretion of the GM.

Biotech: Implant

MANIPULATIVE GLANDS

Scientific curiosity and evolutionary whimsy developed a series of mutations that aided their possessors in gathering followers and performing as leaders of primitive packs of animals or more sophisticated (but equally vulnerable) humans. The mutant or artificial glands secrete special substances meant to dominate or influence others. These substances do not affect synthetics.

Type: Positive (varies)

Effect: When the Final Wars derailed the normal course of evolution and development, these glands coupled with different delivery methods. When acquiring this power as a mutation, roll on the following table to determine which delivery method the character develops. This determines whether the modification is minor or major (although the manipulative substance may also affect the degree of modification), and which form of biotech is needed to install the modification.

d10	Delivery Method	Modification	Biotech
1	Exuded	Major	Implant, graft
2-5	Bite	Minor	Implant
6-8	Stinger	Major	Implant, graft
9-10	Spit	Minor	Implant

- **Exuded:** The character exudes manipulative pheromones. This delivery method works like the Harmonious Pheromones modification in terms of range and targets. Exuded substances have a saving throw DC -2 lower than normal, as the manipulative substance is more diluted.

- **Bite:** The character grows sharp, hollow fangs, with a conduit to gland sacs in her throat. Her bite now inflicts 1d4 points of damage (at a minimum). She can opt to inject the manipulating substance when she inflicts at least 1 point of damage on a target. She can do this up to 5 times per day, after which the glands need 8 hours to refill.

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• **Stinger:** This works exactly like Stinger except that instead of poison, the stinger delivers one of the manipulation substances. The saving throw DC for stinger-delivered substances cannot go above 15. If the character already has a stinger, he can choose whether to deliver its normal poison or the manipulative substance except if the stinger is biotech, in which case this mutation will replace the implant or graft.

• **Spit:** The character can spit the substance in her glands up to 3 times per day, after which the glands take 8 hours to refill. The character makes a ranged touch attack against her intended target, with a range increment of 10 feet. The delivered substance deals no damage but must make contact with exposed skin, and cannot affect creatures with a natural armor bonus of +3 or higher. A critical hit on the attack roll means that the spit struck an exposed membrane such as eyes, nose or an open wound; the target suffers a -2 penalty on the saving throw, and even creatures with natural armor can be affected in this manner.

A single gland can only produce one kind of substance, but a character may grow or install several. If he does, he need not roll for a delivery method again, instead using the same as for the first glandular modification. If the delivery method has a daily limit, each gland has its own limit, independent of the others. Each substance requires its own saving throw, sometimes modified by the delivery method. A successful save indicates that the target is immune to the character's use of this power for 24 hours; the character may still attempt to use other glandular attacks against the target. Also, some substances are *always* major modifications, even if the delivery method is minor. If a character acquires this modification as a mutation, roll on the following table to determine which substance the gland produces. A substance effect can be based on the character's Charisma or Constitution, but once an ability is chosen it cannot be changed.

d10	Substance	Major Modification?
1-2	Alpha Factor	No
3-4	Fear	Yes
5-6	Territory Marker	No
7-9	Manipulative Venom	Yes
9-10	Subliminal acquiescence	No

• **Alpha Factor:** A character who produces this substance is, quite literally, a natural leader. A character who manifests this power has it as a pheromonal effect; but it is available for all delivery methods, in which case the substance's effects last

for 1 hour per two character levels. A victim affected by this substance must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 character level + ability modifier); if she fails, she will be predisposed to follow the character's orders, suffering a -4 penalty on all opposed checks and Will saves against the character. NPC attitudes will start at one step higher — this is not because they like the character, but because they subconsciously accept him as a leader (see *d20 Modern*, Chapter 2: Skills, "Skill Descriptions," *Diplomacy*).

• **Fear:** A target affected by this substance must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 character level + ability modifier). A target who fails the save is severely shaken, taking a -2 penalty on attack rolls, saves and skill checks for a number of rounds equal to 1d6 + the character's Charisma modifier. A target who has failed the saving throw cannot approach the character and must stay at least 10 feet away; she must make a Will save (same DC) to overcome her fear of the character.

• **Territory Marker:** This substance is only available through the exuded or spit delivery methods. The character can "mark" a location as hers using 1 spit charge to mark an area of up to 30 feet per side, although the character can shape it as she will. Animals instantly detect the smell and recognize the area as belonging to someone, and will avoid it instinctually. The effect on creatures without the scent quality is more subtle; they feel distinctly unwelcome within the marked area. Targets within a marked area must make Fortitude saves (DC 10 + 1/2 character level + ability modifier) or suffer a -2 penalty on attack and damage rolls, Will saves and Charisma-based checks against the mark's owner (actions against all other beings are unaffected). Targets suffer this effect while inside the marked area and for an additional 10 minutes per character level after leaving. The marking scent remains in the area for 2 hours per character level.

If the delivery method is exudation, the character has a very definite personal space. Anyone coming within 10 feet of her must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 character level + ability modifier) or suffer the above consequences. Optionally, the character can push the substance through her pores so that it covers an area equal to that described above. Doing so will suppress her personal aura for 4 hours, until her glands replenish themselves.

• **Manipulative Venom:** This potent, mind-affecting poison inflicts no damage but renders a victim open to suggestion and manipulation. The victim makes a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 character

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level + ability modifier); after a failed save, the victim automatically fails all Will saving throws and checks to oppose Charisma-based skills and abilities for 1 minute per character level. This substance is not available for exudation delivery.

- **Subliminal Acquiescence:** A less potent version of the manipulative poison, this substance merely makes the victim susceptible to manipulation. The target suffers a -2 penalty on Wisdom-based checks and saves when affected by the substance, with no saving throw allowed. This condition lasts for 10 minutes per character level.

Biotech: Varies

NANOTECHNOLOGY

Nanounits are recognized as the architects of physical effects, altering matter and energy to create subtle effects that change the behavior of people, animals and even machines. A character must have at least 5 ranks in Knowledge (behavioral sciences) to use these effects on sentient creatures; in Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) to use them on beasts, semi-intelligent plants and biotechnological soultech; and in Computer Use (artificial intelligence) to use them on soultech, robots and synthetic characters.

RESISTING NANOTECH

Unlike most of the effects created by nanotechnology, those that target the mind can be resisted. A mind-controlling nano effect allows its victim a Will or Fortitude saving throw based on its nature. The Difficulty Class of this save is the same as the nanotech control check DC.

A character can increase the save's DC in two ways: by fine-tuning the effect, therefore making it harder to enact, or directing nanounits to perform redundant tasks, strengthening the effect. With the first option, the character voluntarily increases the nanotech control DC, which will in turn increase the save's DC; he cannot increase the DC by more than +10 in this manner. With the second option, each extra nanounit that the character spends on the effect increases the DC by +2; and the character can spend a maximum number of extra nanos equal to his Intelligence modifier. Both methods of increasing the save DC stack with each other.

The following nanotech effects are divided in two: the Community Drink and the Hive Plague are hardwired effects, which means that the nanomachines

involved are preprogrammed and cannot be directed to do anything else. The second category includes the effects that any character can create.

COMMUNITY DRINK

The original intention of the creators of this nano cluster was to create a shared consciousness that would bring harmony to their community by helping its members empathize with each other almost automatically; it worked for a while, until people began hearing the thoughts they wanted to conceal from each other. The community eventually snapped because of mutual paranoia and distrust, shattered to the four winds and as far from each other as they could travel.

This nano cluster floats in bodies of water. On the up side, it automatically purifies the water that contains the cluster, making it drinkable and safe. If lying in a liquid other than water, the nanomachines *convert it* to water. On the down side, the nanos are lying in wait for anyone to imbibe them. Anyone who even takes a little sip from the Community Drink makes a nanotech contact roll, against DC 15 for characters with the Nanotech Attunement feat and DC 20 for those without it. If the contact roll succeeds, the character is now "infected" with the Community Drink.

All characters whose bodies are infected with the nano cluster's units are now connected telepathically with each other, with a range of 1 mile. The effect has its advantages, starting with the ability to communicate wordlessly with each other over a long range. With 1 action point, an infected character can use the result of another infected character's initiative check, Reflex save or skill check, provided they are collaborating on the same task and acting in the same round (the "lending" character must have ranks in the borrowed skill); and if infected characters are in the same encounter, none of them are ever considered to be flanked.

The real problem begins with the little fact that the infected characters *cannot* turn effect off. Their minds are always in contact. They automatically fail at all Bluff attempts and automatically succeed at all Sense Motive checks against another infected character. At the beginning of each combat round, all who fell victim to the Community Drink must roll a Will save against a DC equal to $(10 + 1/2 \text{ of highest infected character level})$. Those who fail are dazed for 1 round as the sudden influx of stimuli floods their consciences. When going to sleep, connected characters must make Will saves against the same DC; failure means that their dreams are plagued by foreign imagery, and they heal only half the number of hit points they would usually recover with a good night's sleep.

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Characters who already have the talent to manipulate nanounits can resist the Community Drink with an internal effect, and they can extend the courtesy to any infected companion (see sidebar). Once purged, the Community Drink becomes inert and cannot be reactivated. The nanounits work in delicate balance, and any attempt to alter them to get rid of the drawbacks while keeping the benefits will act as a purge.

A telepath can suppress the Community Drink's effects for 24 hours with a power activation roll. She can also try to shut it down completely if she has the improved telepathy power, raising the DC of the power activation roll by +5. A psionic character with psychic shield is immune to the Community Drink. In both cases, the nanounits will eventually shut down on their own from lack of interaction, and purge themselves from the victim's organism.

PURGE COMMUNITY DRINK

The character activates his own machines to find and destroy the nanounits from the Community Drink that prowl inside his body. The nanos cancel each other and turn into inert gray goo, which the character eliminates over the next couple of days.

Scope: Internal

Power: Major

Type: Destruction

Nano Cost: 11

DC: 16

Effect: The character stops benefiting and suffering from the effects of the Community Drink.

Game Mechanics: This is an internal (+2/1), major (+6/6) and destruction (+8/4) effect, for a total DC of 16 and a nano cost of 11. The character can direct this effect toward another character also infected by the Community Drink by giving the effect a non-combat external (+4/2) scope for a total DC of 18 and a nano cost of 12. In the case of getting rid of Hive Plague nanos, it is a combat external (+6/2) effect, with a total DC of 20 and a nano cost of 12.

THE HIVE PLAGUE

This nano cluster floats freely in the air and can be confused with an area rich in nanounits; however, there are no free nanos in the cloud, as they are all hardwired with the plague. Characters inside such an area make normal nanotech contact rolls; if the nanos bond with them, they contract the Hive Plague.

Characters already capable of manipulating nanos are in greater danger, for when they attempt a nano effect, or the moment they start replenishing their units from the ambience, they are in danger of having their own nanos become elements of the plague.

Characters suffering from this nano cluster receive all the benefits of the Community Drink and none of the drawbacks, at least for 1d6 days. After this period of grace ends, the disadvantages of the normal Community Drink kick in for 2d6 days. If the character hasn't rid herself of the nano cluster by the end of that period, the Hive Plague manifests. The nanos start flooding the character's mind with chaotic input, inflicting 2 points of Wisdom damage each time the character sleeps, slowly driving her insane. If the character's Wisdom score ever reaches 0, her mind is shattered completely and the nanos connect with other victims, possibly relaying their communications with free-floating Hive Plague clouds. This creates a frightening hive mind that all victims of the plague answer to. The victim becomes a part of a greater whole... a vicious greater whole. She attacks everything and everyone that she comes in contact with to the full extent of her ability, including talents, feats and any powers she may have. Every round in which an infected character is in combat, the GM rolls a 1d6. On a 1, the plague victim runs off in a random direction as if her life depended on it.

The only way to restore a plague victim is to first destroy the nanos in her body with another nano effect; this cuts her link with the Hive Plague's collective intelligence but still leaves her with a shattered mind. A lengthy period of rehabilitation follows, with a healer making Knowledge (behavioral sciences) checks each week against DC 20. Each success restores 1 point of Wisdom. When the afflicted character's Wisdom score improves to 3, she can start healing normally, recovering 1 Wisdom point per night of rest until she recovers completely.

SAP WILL

The character deploys a thin cloud of nanounits to bombard a victim with subsonics, infrared lights and microwaves to scramble his perceptions and tire his mind on the spot, so as to sap his willpower and mental resilience.

Scope: Combat external

Power: Moderate

Type: Destruction

Nano Cost: 10

DC: 17

Effect: The target suffers 1 point of Wisdom damage.



Game Mechanics: This is a combat external (+6/2), moderate (+3/4) and destruction (+8/4) effect, for a total DC of 16 and a nano cost of 11. The character can increase the ability damage by 1 (+2/3), or increase the effect's duration by 1 round (+2/2).

SUBLIMINAL MESSAGE

The character can say one thing while her nanounits transmit a completely different message hidden in the words. This effect is not telepathic; the nanos create a series of optical cues around the character that will give her words a different meaning.

Scope: Non-combat external

Power: Minor

Type: Creation

Nano Cost: 12

DC: 13

Effect: The target makes a Bluff check with a +5 nanotech bonus (DC 15). She can hide a message consisting of a simple sentence. For every 5 full points by which she beats the Bluff check DC, she can add a second sentence, but she cannot add more than 3 unless she extends the effect's duration. She may only direct the hidden message toward a single target.

Game Mechanics: This is a non-combat external (+4/2), minor (+1/2) and creation (+8/8) effect, for a total DC of 13 and a nano cost of 12. The character can raise the effect to moderate power (+3/4) in order to increase the number of sentences she can conceal between the lines. By making it into an area effect (+5/8), she can transmit the hidden message to all creatures that can see her and are within range.

BEHAVIORAL OVERRIDE

The nano user can induce an emotion in a target. The nanos will work this effect depending on the target and what the character knows about how its mind works (see the Knowledge and Computer Use prerequisites at the beginning of this section). For example, he could command the nanos to create a gas that stimulates a particular response in a creature's brain, or transmit a series of radio signals that overrides a machine's pseudo-emotional response.

Scope: Non-combat external

Power: Major

Type: Creation

Nano Cost: 16

DC: 16

Effect: The character can induce a particular feeling in a target for the duration of the effect, with the following sample effects:

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- **Despair:** The affected target suffers a -2 morale penalty on saving throws, attack rolls, ability checks, skill checks and weapon damage rolls. This emotion cancels an existing state of hope.

- **Fear:** The affected target flees from the character. This emotion cancels an existing state of rage.

- **Friendship:** The affected target reacts more positively toward others. Her attitude shifts to the next more favorable reaction (hostile to unfriendly, unfriendly to indifferent, indifferent to friendly, or friendly to helpful).

- **Hate:** The affected target reacts more negatively toward others. His attitude shifts to the next less favorable reaction (helpful to friendly, friendly to indifferent, indifferent to unfriendly or unfriendly to hostile).

- **Hope:** The affected target gains a +2 morale bonus on saving throws, attack rolls, ability checks, skill checks and weapon damage rolls. This emotion cancels an existing state of despair.

- **Rage:** The affected target gain a +2 morale bonus on Strength and Constitution scores, a +1 morale bonus on Will saves, and a -1 penalty to Defense. She is compelled to fight heedless of danger. This emotion cancels an existing state of fear.

Game Mechanics: This is a non-combat external (+4/2), major (+6/6) and creation (+6/8) effect, for a total DC of 16 and a nano cost of 16. A combat application of this effect would be harder to control (+6/2) for a total DC of 18. The character could also override the emotions of additional targets by increasing the area affected (+5/8) per 5-foot square.

PERSUASIVE VOICE

The user launches a cloud of nanos near the ears of a target; by producing subsonic noises, the nanos make the character's words sound more reasonable and truthful. The target must be able to understand the user for this effect to work.

Scope: Non-combat external

Power: Minor

Type: Creation

Nano Cost: 11

DC: 12

Effect: The character gains a +5 nanotech bonus on his next Charisma-based skill check.

Game Mechanics: This is a non-combat external (+4/2), minor (+2/1) and creation (+6/8) effect, for a total DC of 12 and a nano cost of 11. By taking this effect to the moderate level (+3/4), the character gains the bonus to *all* Charisma-based checks performed

within the duration; and he could also increase his Charisma score by 1 or more (+2/3 per increase) for added effect.

TEAM MONITORING

During a fight, the character can keep track of the condition of her companions.

Scope: Internal

Power: Moderate

Type: Perception

Nano Cost: 4

DC: 8

Effect: The character allows the nano user to track of the conditions of her companions during combat. The character is aware of their status: unharmed, wounded, disabled, staggered, unconscious, dying, dead and so forth.

Game Mechanics: This is an internal (+2/1), moderate (+4/2) and perception (+2/1) effect, for a total DC of 8 and a nano cost of 4. The character can increase the effect's duration if she believes combat will last longer than 6 rounds (+2/2 for each extra round) or extend her perceptions' range by 100 yards (+1/1) if an encounter will span a lot of territory, such as a hovercar chase.

CYBERNETICS

The advantage of cybernetics is that they are fully customizable at the moment of creation, even if they are neither as flexible as nanotechnology, nor as power-efficient as biotech implants. Humanity seized the power of hardtech machinery first; it became a tool of social and political power before humans found a way to insert it in their bodies to gain personal strength. It is no surprise that cyberware built with the purpose of supporting authority seems colder and more ruthless than other FX sources of authority, because it is in its nature to be so.

CYBERNETIC CONFORMITY INDUCER

While the cybernetic synapse control unit was the wet dream of many a dictator, it had very distinct disadvantages: It required a lot of concentration to use, and could only work on a few individuals at the same time. The cybernetic conformity inducer is a lesser (although in the opinion of some more useful) tool for keeping people in line. Rather than allowing direct control of a person, the inducer makes rather malicious changes in brain chemistry of a remote unit's host when it detects thought patterns concordant with disobedience and defiance, keyed to the user of the central conformity inducer.

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The user must have the central conformity inducer embedded in his brain, and it is compatible with and separate from a cybernetic synapse control unit. Conformity inducer remotes come with the central unit in packages of 20, and work exactly like the remote units of synapse control cyberware. A target cannot have both synapse control and conformity inducer remotes attached to her spine at the same time.

Effect: Most functions of the conformity inducer work in passive mode — that is, the user does not have to do anything to enjoy its effects. Recipients of the remote units (installed like synapse control remotes) are continually monitored for signs of defiance in their thought patterns, and suffer from throbbing headaches as they prepare to disobey. Since the remote unit does not care whether a task is performed or not (and really has no means to confirm it), the user can order a task that may take up months, and the remote will activate only when the target actively thinks about disobeying the order. The pain imposes a -5 penalty on the target for any Will save or skill check made to resist the orders of the user. Even if the target succeeds and disobeys, the remote will trigger an incredibly painful stimulus directly in the target's brain, causing the target to be dazed for 1d4 rounds, unable to take any action except defend herself. After the dazed effect, the remote induces fatigue for 4 hours, during which the target suffers a -2 penalty to Strength and Dexterity and is incapable of running or charging.

In addition to this effect, the remotes have a shock inducer that the user can trigger at will by making a Concentration check (DC 10 + half the target's level). The maximum range for this effect is 1 mile. The shock deals 1d6 points of electrical damage to the target and spends 1 charge from the cyberware. This effect has no application other than to satisfy the user's sadism and reinforce the advantages of obedience.

The user can remain keyed to a number of remote units equal to 10 times his Wisdom or Charisma modifier, whichever is higher (with a minimum of 10). In order to save energy, the user may turn off remotes at will, with the target none the wiser. Canny users of the conformity inducer relish the paranoia that targets feel as they wonder if their units are active or dormant — which has basically the same result of keeping the target from defying the user, this time through fear instead of cybernetic effects.

It is possible to fool the conformity inducer; the target can make a DC 15 Bluff or Perform (act) check



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to conceal her true intentions from the remote unit for 1 minute. Failure instantly triggers the dazed and fatigued effects. Removing a remote from its host has the same difficulty as removing a synapse control remote.

Initial/Maximum Charge: 4d6+6/30

Depletion Rate: 1/day per 10 installed remotes, 1/electric shock

Recharge: 20/2

VOICE FREQUENCY MODULATOR

This is the cyberware equivalent of The Voice mutation. A resonance box installed in the user's throat allows her to add sounds in frequencies higher and lower than most human ears can perceive.

Effect: The character can choose to add low or high frequency elements to her speech in order to impose different effects on the person she is speaking to. When she speaks, the character has a +10 bonus on any Charisma-based check to change someone's mood or attitude. Unlike the CT version, this cyberware cannot force a target to do something against his will, but it can create frequencies that interfere with his cognitive processes. The user makes a Charisma check against a DC equal to (10 + the target's Will save). If successful, the user can induce one of the following effects in the target for 1d4 rounds, each with a different charge depletion cost.

- **Paralysis:** The target is unable to order his body to move. After one round, the victim may make a Will save against a DC equal to (10 + 1/2 character level + Charisma bonus) each round until he can move or the effect ends. Synthetic characters and other machines are immune to this. This effect drains 3 charges from the cyberware.

- **Cognitive Impairment:** The target suffers a -4 penalty on all Intelligence- and Wisdom-based rolls. This effect drains 2 charges from the cyberware.

- **Dizziness:** The target is nauseated; he is unable to attack or do anything requiring attention or concentration. He receives a single move action per round. Synthetic characters and other machines are immune to this. This effect drains 1 charge from the cyberware.

- **Deafness:** The target's hearing is impaired by a sharp, directed sound wave; he can't hear and takes a -4 penalty on initiative checks. The character can't make Listen checks. This effect drains 2 charges from the cyberware.

At no cost at all, the character can increase the volume of her voice so that it can be heard clearly within 100 yards without needing to shout, and up to 1 mile by shouting.

Initial/Maximum Charge: 4d6+6/30

Depletion Rate: 1/use, varies for special features.

Recharge: 15/2

ADVANCED CEREBRAL ENHANCEMENT

Complex processors and cross-referenced databases were later innovations in cyberware which never proliferated before the Final Wars arrested all development, so these enhancements are incredibly rare. Smaller and more efficient circuitry combined with the most advanced storage technology to create true masterworks of cybernetic enhancement. Because of the incredible expense they must have commanded when money was worth something, most of the advanced cerebral enhancements were meant only for people in positions of power; it is not rare to find that the software installed enhances skills useful for command and leadership.

Effect: Like the normal cerebral enhancement cyberware, this implant increases the user's mental ability scores by +1, except that the advanced version offers this to a combination of *two* ability scores. A recipient of an advanced cerebral enhancement can increase Intelligence and Wisdom, Intelligence and Charisma, or Wisdom and Charisma. A character can combine this item with a normal cerebral enhancement, with its bonuses stacking together, but she cannot add any other piece of cyberware to her head — not a second advanced enhancement, night vision or enhanced hearing, much less a synapse control. Doing so will overload the cyberware and drain 6 charges per day from all cyberware instead of just 2, until the extra cyberware is removed from the head. Depending on the ability combination, the recipient can choose a special software suite that matches both enhanced abilities in the following table.

As per the normal version, if the enhancements run out of power, the character's abilities revert back to normal, and any skill bonuses are canceled until the enhancements can be recharged.

Initial/Maximum Charge: 3d6+7/25

Depletion Rate: 2/day

Recharge: 15/2

PSIONICS

Harnessing the power of the mind is ideal for would-be leaders. Many psionically enabled social climbers experimented during their forays into the psionic frequency in order to fine-tune their abilities to touch minds, eschewing invasive and overt methods of telepathy to develop subtler powers.

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Intelligence and Wisdom

- Behavioral pattern database: +2 on Knowledge (behavioral sciences) and Sense Motive
- Artificial intelligence personality assessment: +2 on Computer Use (artificial intelligence) and Sense Motive
- Organic intelligence personality assessment: +2 on Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) and Sense Motive

Charisma and Intelligence

- Soultech etiquette manual: +2 on Computer Use (artificial intelligence) and Diplomacy
- Debating processor: +2 on Knowledge (politics) and Diplomacy
- The Art of War: +2 on Knowledge (tactics) and Intimidate

Wisdom and Charisma

- Officer training manual: +2 on Intimidate and Sense Motive
- Immersive data extraction wizard: +2 on Gather Information and Sense Motive
- Deception Wizard: +2 on Bluff and Sense Motive

PSYCHOMANIPULATION

The character may not be able to read thoughts or gain direct control of others' wills, but she has little need to; her mind forces a psionic harmonization with others', bringing them in synch with her own point of view and making her extremely likeable. This ability is very subtle — there is no physical manifestation to alert anyone to its use. A psychomanipulator develops a very strong personality that can overbear others.

Level: Basic

Benefit: When the character activates this power, she envelops herself with an aura of sympathy that makes anyone approaching within 30 feet (plus 5 feet per point of Charisma modifier) shift one step in attitude for the better (hostile to unfriendly, unfriendly to indifferent, indifferent to friendly, or friendly to helpful). In addition, she gains an effective +2 increase to her Charisma score while the power is active.

PSYCHOMANIPULATION, ADVANCED

The character's presence is so powerful that it acquires an almost physical existence. She can overwhelm people's attitudes or focus her attention on a single target to overbear him with the weight of her personality.

Level: Advanced

Prerequisite: Improved Psychomanipulation

Benefit: Similar to Psychomanipulation, except that attitudes shift two steps upward (hostile to indifferent, unfriendly to friendly, indifferent and friendly to helpful) and the range extends to 100 yards. She receives a +6 bonus to Charisma while the power is active. If she focuses her attention on a single target within 60 feet, she can interrupt any action he is attempting by making a Charisma check against a DC equal to (10 + the target's Will save) (including the Charisma bonus granted by this power). An affected target feels queasy and nervous, terrified of incurring the disapproval of the character. If the character has not acted in the round, she can interrupt the target's actions and forego her turn or, if she is acting in her turn, she may stop the target from doing anything at all. The target loses all his remaining actions in the round if he is affected by the character's presence; he stops moving, cancels all powers and interrupts any action he might have been performing; he is not helpless, however, and may defend himself normally.

PSYCHOMANIPULATION, IMPROVED

The character's ability to influence the attitudes of others increases to the point that he can make friends from perfect strangers.

Level: Intermediate

Prerequisite: Psychomanipulation

Benefit: The character selects a target who can see him clearly and makes a Charisma check against a DC equal to (10 + the target's Will save) (including the Charisma bonus granted by this power). If the character fails by 10 or more, but the target realizes that something or someone was trying to affect her mind. If the character wins, the target regards him as a trusted friend and ally (treat the target's attitude as friendly). If the target is actively threatened or attacked by the character or his allies at any time the effect ends.

This power does not allow the character to control the affected target as if she were an automaton, but she perceives his words and actions in the most favorable way. He can try to give the target orders, but he must win an opposed Charisma check to convince her to do anything she wouldn't ordinarily do. (Retries are not allowed.) An affected target never obeys suicidal or obviously harmful orders, but she might be convinced that something very dangerous is worth doing. The character must speak the target's language to communicate his commands, or else be good at pantomiming.

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In addition, he gains an effective +4 increase to his Charisma score while the power is active.

GESTALT

Leadership does not come solely from the ability to have others obey orders, but also from the ability to ease others into working together. Upon gaining psionic capacities, a few natural-born leaders explored the possibility of connecting with friends and subordinates in order to mount an effective defense or act in perfect coordination and harmony. The gestalt power allows a psionic character to create a single psionic entity out of the minds of all the people he connects. This differs from a hive mind in that the members of the gestalt are not merely pawns of the collective intelligence, but vital components with individuality and personal initiative that enrich the whole.

Level: Basic

Benefit: Upon activating this power, the character can join a number of willing subjects equal to his level divided by 3 (rounded down). All characters so linked enjoy the highest bonus to initiative checks available among them, although they still need to roll for their actual place in the initiative order. Additionally, all characters in the gestalt may spend the action point allowed to them each round at any time; the bonus they gain as a result can be given to any member of the gestalt to be used once in that round. For example, Manu joins with Ferd, Alick and Berl in a gestalt. At the beginning of the round, Manu and Alick spend action points even though it is not their turn; Manu's player rolls a +4 bonus and Alick's rolls a +2, for a total of +6. The players decide to give a +2 bonus each to Ferd, Alick and Berl on whatever action they choose to use it for.

The character can maintain the gestalt up to a range of 100 yards per point of Charisma modifier and for as long as 10 minutes per point of Charisma modifier. Characters may leave the gestalt by succeeding at a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 character level + Charisma). Leaving the telepathic union unbalances the gestalt, canceling all unused bonuses for the round; and characters must roll new initiative checks at the beginning of the next round. The psionic character can remove anyone from the union at the end of each round with no harmful consequences to the gestalt.

GESTALT, ADVANCED

The cohesion among the members of the gestalt is complete, allowing them to act as one being with the strengths of all and the weaknesses of none.

Level: Advanced

Prerequisite: Improved Gestalt

Benefit: The number of people that the character can include in the Advanced Gestalt increases to match his character level. Participants in the gestalt get the same benefits as the Improved Gestalt; but the DC for the Will save to recover invested action points is 15 instead of 20; and characters may use an action point from the pool in the same round as a personal action point, with the resulting bonuses stacking together. When a character uses a special feat, talent or FX power with a point of origin originating from her, she can instead the point of origin anyone in the gestalt. This effect does not include cybernetic or CT attacks, but includes nanotechnology effects. Participants within line of sight of each other cannot be flanked, as they are aware at a subconscious level of all that the other members perceive; and once the first member of the gestalt acts, none are considered flat-footed anymore.

In addition, all the available actions for each character are pooled together, and are usable by any other character in the gestalt. For example, the gestalt shared by Manu, Ferd, Alick and Berl has four move actions and four standard actions. Manu relinquishes his standard action so that Ferd gains another attack (a standard action), while Alick relinquishes her move action so that Berl can get up from prone and still have a full attack action available.

The character can maintain the gestalt up to a range of 1 mile per point of Charisma modifier and for as long as 2 hours per point of Charisma modifier. Leaving the gestalt at this level of power has the same consequences as the basic power, but the DC for the Will save is +4 higher.

GESTALT, IMPROVED

The character opens his mind wider to the presence of his companions and links with them on a deeper level, allowing them to share their expertise with the greater whole.

Level: Intermediate

Prerequisite: Gestalt

Benefit: The character can now include a number of people in an Improved Gestalt equal to half his character level (round down). Instead of sharing bonus on initiative checks, characters share the highest initiative result rolled and act simultaneously. If order among them is important, the person with the highest initiative bonus acts first, breaking ties with the highest Dexterity modifier. Instead of rolling

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action points and sharing the resulting bonuses, characters may invest an action pool into the gestalt once per round. Any character included in the gestalt may draw an action point from the pool instead of spending one of her own. At the end of the gestalt, all participants of the gestalt roll a Will save (DC 20) for each action point invested, adding the Charisma

modifier of gestalt's creator as a morale bonus. Success means that they recover that action point.

The character can maintain the gestalt up to a range of 200 yards per point of Charisma modifier and for as long as 1 hour per point of Charisma modifier. Leaving the gestalt has the same consequences as the basic version of this power, but the DC for the Will save is +2 higher.

NEW MECHANICS

Leaders use many tools to achieve their ends; they start learning new tricks once they start practicing the fine art of command, be it formal or informal. They learn new occupations and develop new aptitudes — or sometimes they are even born with them.

OCCUPATIONS

While a basic class defines a character's raw talents, it is her occupation that directs that talent onto predetermined roads. The following occupations are available at character creation, all geared toward leadership roles. Bonus feats marked with an asterisk appear in the next section. The character must meet all prerequisites for bonus feats.

CULT LEADER

Either an expert swindler or inspired wacko, a cult leader gathers a flock around him to follow a faith he invented. Mostly. Hopefully.

Prerequisite: Charisma 13+, Age 25+.

Skills: Choose two of the following skills as permanent class skills. If a selected skill is already a class skill, the character receives a +1 competence bonus on checks using that skill.

Bluff, Hide, Intimidate, Knowledge (behavioral sciences, history, politics, theology and philosophy), Perform, Sense Motive.

Bonus Feat: Select one of the following: Attentive, Confident, Deceptive, Dodge, Educated, Evangelist*, Renown, Windfall.

Wealth Bonus Increase: +2.

OFFICER

The officer is a leader in a semi-organized or fully formal security force such as a town guard, a mercenary band or an army. Officers have official recognition of their authority.

Prerequisite: Intelligence 13+, Charisma 13+, Age 20+.

Skills: Choose one of the following skills as a permanent class skill. If a selected skill is already a

class skill, the character receives a +1 competence bonus on checks using that skill.

Climb, Demolitions, Diplomacy, Drive, Intimidate, Knowledge (behavioral sciences, tactics), Move Silently, Navigate, Survival, Swim.

Bonus Feat: Select two of the following: Alpha Dog*, Armor Proficiency (light), Armor Proficiency (medium), Armor Proficiency (heavy), Beta Dog*, Combat Martial Arts, Paragon or Personal Firearms Proficiency.

Wealth Bonus Increase: +3.

POLITICO

While not exactly rulers themselves, politicos are very active in the social arenas of communities. They are experts at brokering deals and getting things done, while not exactly knowing a trade well. This occupation includes council members, high-end bureaucrats, courtiers, etc.

Prerequisite: Intelligence 13+, Wisdom 13+, Age 25+.

Skills: Choose three of the following skills as permanent class skills. If a selected skill is already a class skill, the character receives a +1 competence bonus on checks using that skill.

Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Knowledge (behavioral sciences, business, gossip, history, politics), Profession (bureaucrat, management, business), Perform (act), Sense Motive, or add a new Speak Language.

Reputation Bonus Increase: +1.

Wealth Bonus Increase: +3.

NEW FEATS

ALPHA DOG

The character is a natural leader; when he gives commands, others are compelled to obey.

Prerequisites: Charisma 15+, Intimidate 9 ranks.

Benefit: When the character uses this feat against a single target of lower level who is not hostile or unfriendly toward him, the target must make a Will saving throw

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(DC 10 + 1/2 character level + Charisma modifier). A target who fails her save is cowed into submission and obeys a single, simple command from the character. This command has to be something reasonable that the target can perform without serious risk to her person or property (unless both characters are on the same side of a combat situation, in which certain risks are always expected). A successful save indicates that the opponent is immune to the character's use of this feat for 24 hours. This feat does not affect creatures with an Intelligence of 3 or lower. If the character has the Renown feat, the Will saving throw's DC increases by +5.

BETA DOG

As a lieutenant, the character gives off an image of competence and trustworthiness that makes any of her superiors trust her inherently.

Prerequisites: Charisma 13+, Systems Familiarity.

Benefit: When the character interacts with another character of higher ranking within her allegiance, she gains a +5 morale bonus on all Charisma-based checks.

BULLY

The character likes to push people around with threats and lies.

Benefit: The character gets a +2 bonus on all Bluff checks and Intimidate checks.

DEBATER

The character can perceive easily the ebbs and flows of a debate, and can counter them too.

Benefit: The character gets a +2 bonus on all Diplomacy checks and Sense Motive checks.

EVANGELIST

The beliefs of the character are so strong, and his arguments so persuasive, that he can sway the loyalties of others.

Prerequisites: Charisma 15+, Trustworthy.

Benefit: The character engages in a contest of wills with a target. The character must somehow bring the target's attitude toward his own allegiance to the helpful stage via Diplomacy checks, then spend an action point to convert the target to his allegiance.

Normal: The character must first destroy the target's attitude toward the target's own allegiance, then build up a new allegiance step by step from hostile to friendly.

Special: The Trustworthy feat grants the character a +2 bonus on Diplomacy checks. The character can use a special power to sway attitudes toward helpful instead of Diplomacy checks.

EXPERT PROSELYTIZING

The character can attack the foundations of another's beliefs and loyalties, undermining the strength drawn from them.

Benefit: The character must be able to talk with the target for at least 1 minute. She makes a Diplomacy check, and the result becomes the target's DC for a Will saving throw. If the target fails, he doubts his allegiance and does not enjoy its benefits for 10 minutes per point of Charisma modifier — or until the character does something that proves she was just messing with the target's head.

FAKE ALLEGIANCE

The character can pretend his loyalty lies where it does not.

Benefit: The character can make a Bluff or Perform (act) check (DC 10 + her own Reputation bonus) when first interacting with someone. If the check is successful, she can pretend to have any allegiance, provided that the allegiance in question does not require secret handshakes or visible markings like tattoos or clothing. The character can make a Disguise check for the latter.

Normal: Characters suffer a -2 penalty to Charisma-based checks when interacting with someone with an opposing allegiance.

INSIDER

There is no hidden information that the character cannot uncover eventually.

Benefit: The character gets a +2 bonus on all Gather Information checks and Sense Motive checks.

IRRESISTIBLE ARGUMENT

Words are deadly weapons coming from the character's mouth.

Prerequisites: Intimidate 4 ranks, Debater*.

Benefit: At the expense of one action point, the character can automatically win an opposed Diplomacy check (or other opposed roll) when engaged in a discussion. The target must make a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 character level + Charisma modifier); if he fails, he remains in stunned silence for 1d10 rounds and suffers a -2 morale penalty on all skill checks against the character, and on Charisma-based skill checks against anyone who witnessed his shame.

PREACHER

The words coming from the character's mouth are moving and inspiring when she sets her mind to it.

Benefit: The character gets a +2 bonus on all Diplomacy checks and Perform checks.



CHAPTER THREE
COMMUNITY
LIFE

Reentok slammed his sword down on the table and slumped into his seat. The flickering light from the candles only darkened the scowl on this face. "This had better be good, Kaithor," he snarled. "You should know that I'm supposed to be presiding over the opening of the combat exhibition."

Kaithor pushed his chair back and slowly got to his feet. "It is, Reentok," he said. "I wouldn't have called this elders' meeting if it wasn't an emergency." He looked around the table; the dim candlelight veiled the faces of his fellow councilors in shadows. Kaithor could only barely make out Kwen's piercing blue eyes, Plaulaink's scarred face and Teytkuy's steepled fingers. "It's Eegon. He's been sighted in the city again."

Teytkuy sucked in his breath and leaned forward. "Are you *sure*? The last time he appeared, Oohdorne was murdered."

Kaithor nodded, looking down at the floor. "That was what I thought too," he said. "I believed he was dead. There was no way that Eegon could have survived the drop over the falls. But several independent witnesses have seen him in the marketplace. People I trust."

Kwen shook her head. "It's not possible. I saw Eegon go over those falls myself. The river was in full flood at the time, and even solid tree trunks were dashed to splinters. One man could not have survived."

"Did anyone actually see his body?" Reentok said, folding his arms across his chest. "Perhaps he was more than he appeared, as many suggested. Plaulaink, I remember you saying that you didn't believe he was human."

"It was the way he moved when he fought," Plaulaink said. "It was unnaturally smooth. Kaithor, are your witnesses reliable?"

"Yes," Kaithor said. "One was Tirqau. He was heading home after the markets had closed and the guards had escorted the moneychangers back to their chambers. This figure caught Tirqau's eye and nodded, before disappearing into the crowd. Tirqau remembers Eegon like few others. He was one of those trying to catch him when the bridge over the falls collapsed. He said Eegon had changed, but that old, evil look was still in his eye."

Reentok leaned forward. "Changed? How?"

Kaithor sat down again. "He didn't say. He was too furious that the outcast had dared to come back to town after what happened last time."

Teytkuy leaned back in his chair and steepled his fingers in front of his mouth. "Perhaps you were right all along, Plau. Perhaps Eegon *is* a synthetic, after all. It would certainly explain how he managed to survive the fall."

Plaulaink nodded. "Perhaps," he said. "How he survived is irrelevant. If it was Eegon, then we can only expect another bloodbath. There'll be panic in the streets."

"We must deal with this immediately," Kwen said. "We need to find out what Eegon is doing back here and what his plans are."

"His arrival here couldn't have come at a worse time," Kaithor said. "With the spring carnival about to start, the city is full of visitors."

Reentok snorted. "What the hell makes you think the two are coincidental? He's here now *because* of the spring carnival. It's the perfect time for him to strike, to cause the most panic and the most damage." Reentok leaned forward, his amber eyes narrowed in the flickering candlelight. "Eegon wants only *one* thing. He wants control of this city, and he'll stop at nothing to get it."

EXPANDED COMMUNITIES

The Gamma World Player's Handbook introduced the concept of the community as a character-like entity. Those rules focus on small to medium-sized, relatively autonomous communities. This chapter expands on the earlier material, providing both players and GMs with a richer set of tools to work with.

NEW COMMUNITY FEATS

The following new feats expand the options available to a community. A community can use any of these at creation time — provided the feat's prerequisites can be met — or they can be selected when the community's population reaches a level where a new feat may be selected (either 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th or 10th level).

TABLE 3-1: MASTER COMMUNITY FEAT LIST

Feat	Prerequisite	Benefit
Archaic Engineering	Knowledge (Technology: Archaic) 4 ranks	Simple engineering, +1 Wealth
Archaic Vehicles	Archaic Engineering	Simple vehicles
Shipyards	Archaic Vehicles, Profession (Carpentry) 4 ranks, must be near water	Can make boats, +1 Reputation
Electricity Generation	Archaic Engineering	Can use electrical items
Pre-War Engineering	Archaic Engineering	Make & repair using more advanced materials, engines and electronics, +2 Wealth
Pre-War Electricity Generation	Electricity Generation, Pre-War Engineering	Cheaper, cleaner, less maintenance-intensive power.
Radio Transmitter	Pre-War Engineering, Pre-War Electricity Generation	Can transmit radio signals, +4 Reputation
Advanced Engineering	Pre-War Engineering, Knowledge (Technology: Advanced) 4 ranks	Make & repair all types of advanced technology, +3 Wealth
Advanced Vehicles	Advanced Engineering	Soultech vehicles
Fuel Production	Pre-War Engineering	Can create own fuel supply, +2 Wealth
Pre-War Vehicles	Pre-War Engineering	Powered vehicles
Airfield	Pre-War Vehicles, Fuel Production	Can operate aircraft, +3 Wealth
Archaic Farming	Non-nomad	Grows own food, +1 Wealth
Advanced Farming	Non-nomad, Archaic Farming, Pre-War Vehicles	Surplus food, +2 Wealth
Archaic Manufacturing	—	Make simple trade goods, +1 Wealth
Advanced Manufacturing	Non-nomad, Archaic Manufacturing, Craft (Chemical) 4 ranks	Advanced materials, automated production lines, +2 Wealth
Synthetic Repair	Advanced Manufacturing, Computer Use (Artificial Intelligence) 4 ranks, Craft (Electronic) 4 ranks, Knowledge (Technology: Advanced) 4 ranks	Can repair robots and synthetics, can help AIs, +2 Computer Use, +2 Craft (Electronic), +2 Reputation
Archaic Weaponsmithing	Knowledge (Technology: Archaic) 4 ranks, Repair 4 ranks	Can make simple weapons, +1 Wealth
Pre-War Weaponsmithing	Archaic Weaponsmithing, Knowledge (Technology: Pre-War) 4 ranks	Can make firearms, ammunition and explosives, +2 Wealth
Advanced Weaponsmithing	Pre-War Weaponsmithing, Knowledge (Technology: Advanced) 4 ranks	Can make advanced weapons (including lasers), +3 Wealth
Automated Defenses	Computer Use (Artificial Intelligence) 4 ranks, Knowledge (Technology: Advanced) 4 ranks, Pre-War Weaponsmithing	Automated weapons guard community

TABLE 3-1: MASTER COMMUNITY FEAT LIST (continued)

Feat	Prerequisite	Benefit
Basic Fortifications	Resilience 13+	+1 Defense
Moderate Fortifications	Basic Fortifications	+3 Defense
Heavy Fortifications	Moderate Fortifications	+6 Defense
Tower	Basic Fortifications	+2 on Spot checks
Biotech Usage	Knowledge (Technology: Biotech) 4 ranks	Can use biotech, +3 Wealth
Builder	—	+2 on any two Craft checks
Caves	—	+2 Resilience, +1 Wealth
Educated	—	+2 on any two Knowledge skills
Fertile	—	+2 Profession (Farming) or +2 Survival
Gearhead	—	+2 Computer Use, +2 Repair
High Tech Nomads	Nomadic community, Mobility 15+	Nomads can have Pre-War vehicles without other vehicle feats
Infamous	—	+3 Intimidate, +1 Reputation
Influential	Reputation 8+	+2 Diplomacy, +2 Intimidate
Library	—	+2 on all Knowledge skills
University	Library, four Knowledge skills 5 ranks+	+2 on all Knowledge skills (or +4 on two Knowledge skills), +2 Decipher Script, +2 Craft (Nanotech), +1 Reputation
Medical Expert	—	+2 Craft (Pharmaceutical), +2 Treat Injury
Nanotech Usage	Knowledge (Technology: Nanotech) 4 ranks	Can use nanotech
Food Synthesis	Nanotech Usage, Stockpile	Uses nanotech to make food
Psychic Advisors	—	+3 Diplomacy, +3 Gather Information
Psychic Shielding	—	+10 to resist psionic attacks
Renown	—	+3 Reputation
Rich Hunting	—	+2 Survival or +2 Profession (Fishing)
Ruins	—	+1 Wealth, +1 Reputation
Safe Harbor	Must be near water	+3 Wealth
Studios	—	+2 Decipher Script, +2 Research
Stockpile	—	3 months of supplies
Surgery	Treat Injury 4 ranks	No –4 penalty for performing surgery
Hospital	Medical Expert, Surgery	+2 Treat Injury, +2 Reputation
Wagon Train	Mobility 13+	+3 Wealth, +1 Reputation
Windfall	—	+3 Wealth, +1 Profession

AIRFIELD

A serviceable airstrip and hangar facilities, close to the community.

Prerequisite: Pre-War Vehicles, Fuel Production.

Benefits: Aircraft can use the community as a stopover point on cross-country flights. The community also becomes a major trade center, with cargo facilities nearby where aircraft can be loaded and unloaded, as well as bars and hotels for aircrew to stay at while they're

on the ground. The airfield provides a +3 increase to the community's Wealth bonus.

Signs: Large open fields — either grassed or paved — with aircraft parked nearby; hangars for more permanent shelter; facilities for loading and unloading cargo.

AUTOMATED DEFENSES

The community is protected by a computerized defense system.

Prerequisites: Computer Use (artificial intelligence) 4 ranks, Knowledge (technology: advanced) 4 ranks, Pre-War Weaponsmithing.

Benefits: Computerized weapon systems defend the community's perimeter. These guard the major approaches to the community, funneling would-be attackers into special killing grounds covered by high-tech weapons: Atk +15/+10 (2d12/19–20, machinegun nests). As the amount of area requiring coverage grows with increasing population, assume two emplacements per population level.

The ammunition for these guns needs to be replenished periodically, requiring the community to have either a large ammunition stockpile or a means of creating more. If the community also has the Nanotech Usage feat, then the weapons may be fitted with nanotech ammunition builders, at the GM's discretion.

Signs: Weapon pods automatically sweeping back and forth; sensor posts scanning for movement.

CAVES

A set of mostly unexplored caverns exists underneath, or close to, the community.

Benefits: Having a place for the population to hide in times of trouble provides a +2 bonus to the community's Resilience attribute, while the adventurers attracted by unexplored caverns provide a +1 Wealth bonus.

Signs: Rocky outcrops nearby with obvious cave entrances.

FERTILE

The community's farmlands are especially fertile, providing higher crop yields.

Benefit: The community gains a +2 bonus on Profession (farming) checks in civilized regions, or a +2 bonus on Survival (for the purposes of food gathering only) for wild regions.

Signs: Huge fields of natural or cultivated crops; extremely lush vegetation surrounding the community.

FORTIFICATIONS, BASIC

The community is protected by rudimentary fortifications, usually made from timber.

Prerequisite: Resilience 13+.

Benefit: The basic fortifications erected around the community provide a +1 bonus to Defense for defenders, provided the attackers are outside the perimeter.

Signs: Timber walls erected around a community; sharpened spikes to prevent — or at least slow — the approaches to the community.

FORTIFICATIONS, HEAVY

The community has constructed an elaborate stone fortress around its most important sections, allowing it to be sealed off from the outside. It usually consists of two stone walls with battlements around each one, and underground chambers to shelter civilians in times of trouble.

Prerequisites: Resilience 13+, Basic Fortifications, Moderate Fortifications.

Benefit: The more extensive fortifications provide a +6 bonus to Defense for the community's defenders, provided the attackers are outside the perimeter. This feat also provides an additional +2 to the community's Reputation bonus.

Signs: High stone ramparts, carefully designed killing zones, constant patrols of the walls and the surrounding countryside by the military.

FORTIFICATIONS, MODERATE

The community has built stronger fortifications, normally a stone wall with battlements to protect the buildings inside.

Prerequisites: Resilience 13+, Basic Fortifications.

Benefit: The more extensive fortifications provide a +3 bonus to Defense for defenders, provided the attackers are outside the perimeter.

Signs: Strong stone walls around the community; heavy timber gates that can be barred from the inside to block the entrance.

HIGH TECH NOMADS

The nomadic community uses Pre-War vehicles to move around.

Prerequisites: Nomadic community, Mobility 15+.

Benefit: The nomads own and maintain enough Pre-War style vehicles (cars, trucks, motorcycles, etc.) to be able to move their whole population more efficiently. This feat does *not* require the other vehicle feats, and requires that the nomads carry their fuel supply and spare parts with them.

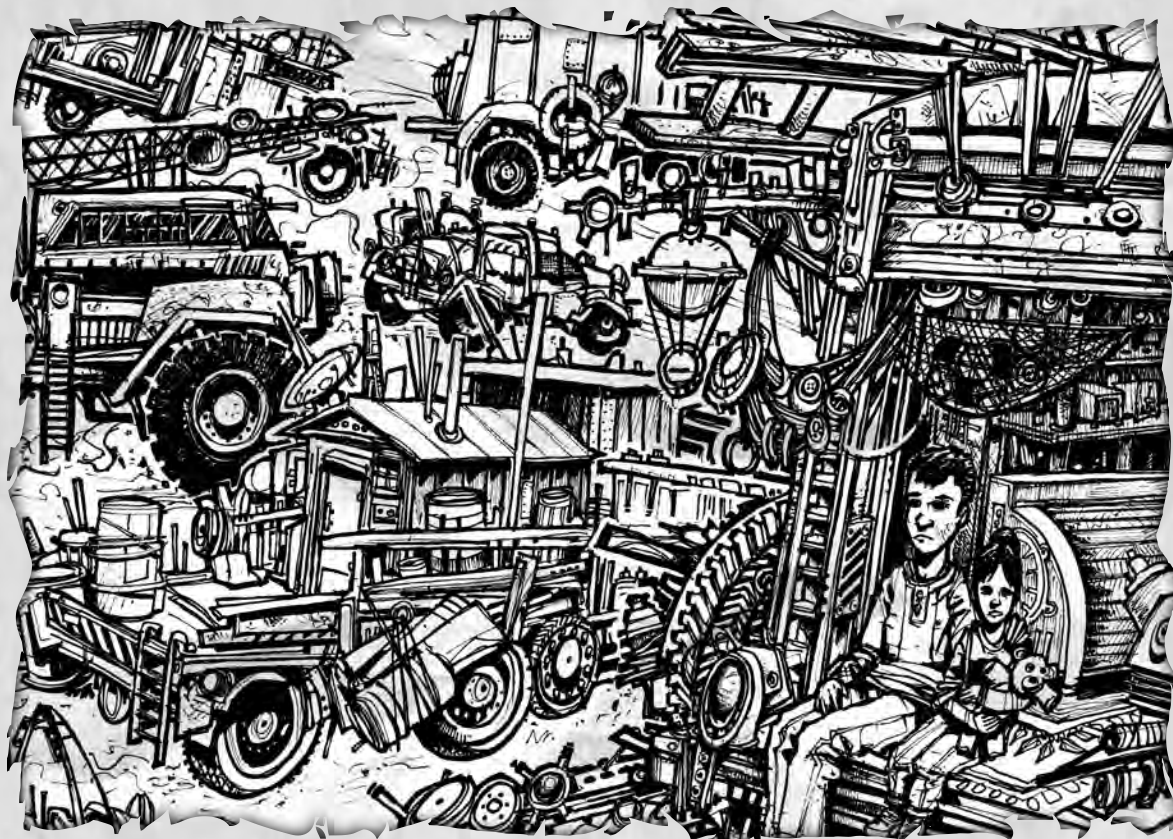
Signs: Enough vehicles to move the whole population; scouts scavenging for spare parts.

HOSPITAL

The community has a permanent medical facility for taking care of the sick and injured.

Prerequisites: Treat Injury 4 ranks, Medical Expert, Surgery.

Benefits: The community can take care of the sick in a clean, sterile environment. This provides



a +2 bonus on all Treat Injury checks. The hospital also increases the community's Reputation bonus by +2.

Signs: Medical staff constantly working near the hospital building; visitors bringing their sick and injured for treatment.

INFAMOUS

The community has gained a bad reputation, rightly or wrongly, causing others to fear or shun it.

Benefit: The community gains a +3 bonus on Intimidate skill checks. This feat also provides a +1 increase to the community's Reputation bonus.

Special: A community with the Infamous feat cannot also have the Renown feat.

Signs: Outsiders acting nervous when in town; community members are either shown a great deal of respect or openly shunned by other communities.

INFLUENTIAL

The community has a great deal of influence over its neighbors.

Prerequisite: Reputation bonus 8+.

Benefits: The community's opinion carries a lot of weight with its neighbors. The community gains a +2 competence bonus on all Diplomacy and Intimidate checks.

Signs: Envoys constantly heading to and from other communities; the constant presence of diplomats from other communities.

LIBRARY

The community has access to a large collection of books, computer disks and other written material.

Benefit: Community members gain a +2 circumstance bonus on all Knowledge skills when researching information in the library's archives.

Signs: A large room — or perhaps even a building — filled with books; scholars coming and going, gathering information to help with their personal research.

PSYCHIC ADVISORS

The community has several advisors with psionic abilities.

Benefits: The advisors are trained in information gathering and predicting the future. This gives the community a distinct advantage in negotiations with other communities, giving a +3 bonus on both Diplomacy and Gather Information checks.

Signs: Advisors constantly whispering in the ears of the community leaders; the community's ability to always stay one step ahead of its neighbors.

PSYCHIC SHIELDING

The community is protected from psychic probes and attacks.

Benefits: The community has a cadre of trained psychics who take turns shielding the whole community from psionic influence. The community gains a +10 bonus on checks and saves to resist psionic effects.

Signs: Psychics seated in a circle meditating; a sense that someone's watching over your shoulder constantly.

RADIO TRANSMITTER

The community has a working radio transmitter for communication.

Prerequisites: Pre-War Electricity Generation, Pre-War Engineering.

Benefits: The community has a working radio transmitter. It can be as simple as a Morse code navigation beacon, or as complex as a working radio station with sentient — human or otherwise — DJs. The radio transmitter also increases the community's Reputation score by +4.

Signs: Tall radio antenna mast; building full of humming transmitter equipment.

RICH HUNTING

The countryside surrounding the community is especially rich in game animals.

Benefit: The community gains a +2 bonus on Survival rolls for the purposes of hunting only. Alternatively, this feat could be interpreted as "Rich Fishing," in which case it provides a +2 bonus on Profession (fishing) instead.

Signs: Large herds of game animals nearby; hunters regularly returning with game.

RUINS

The community is built on or near some ruins, either of a city from before the Final Wars, or an ancient city from the distant past. The lure of the ruins brings adventurers in search of treasure and scholars in search of knowledge.

Benefits: The community gets a +1 increase to its Wealth bonus, and a +1 circumstance bonus on Knowledge (history) checks.

Signs: Unearthed ruins either in or near the community; adventurers talking about the ruins in taverns.

SAFE HARBOR

The community is lucky enough to have a place where sailing vessels can tie up safely.



Prerequisite: The community must be situated on a river, lake or sea.

Benefit: Sailing ships can tie up in a safe area, protected from the elements and safe from storms and rough seas. The community usually has cargo facilities nearby where the vessels can be loaded and unloaded, as well as bars and hotels for the sailors to stay at while they are in port. The port's facilities provide a +3 increase to the community's Wealth bonus.

Signs: Bays with narrow openings to the sea; well-constructed docks; warehouses for cargo storage; seedy harborside taverns.

SHIPYARD

The community has the skills and materials to build sailing vessels.

Prerequisites: Archaic Vehicles, Profession (carpentry) 4 ranks, plus the community must be situated on a river, lake or sea so the boats can be launched.

Benefit: The community can build and maintain a fleet of sailing vessels, or they can take on repair work for other communities as a means of gaining additional income. This feat also provides a +1 increase to the community's Reputation bonus.

Signs: Partially completed sailing ships near the water; large stocks of timber planking; equipment for heating and bending timber.

SYNTHETIC REPAIR

The community is trained in repairing and upgrading synthetics.

Prerequisites: Computer Use (artificial intelligence) 4 ranks, Craft (electronic) 4 ranks, Knowledge (technology: advanced) 4 ranks, Advanced Manufacturing.

Benefits: The community can repair robots and other synthetic creatures, as well as help sentient AIs adjust to life in the Gamma World. The community gains a +2 bonus on Computer Use and Craft (electronic) checks and +2 to its Reputation bonus.

Signs: Dozens of robots and other synthetics living around the community; workshops filled with spare parts.

TOWER

The community has erected a high watchtower to provide a better view of the surrounding countryside and allow greater warning of approaching forces.

Prerequisites: Basic Fortifications.

Benefit: The early warning provided by the tower provides an additional +2 on Spot skill checks made by community members manning the tower.

Signs: A tall tower standing on a prominent landscape feature.

UNIVERSITY

The community benefits from hosting a large learning institution, drawing students and academics from all over the land to study there. It usually also has an extensive technology research department.

Prerequisites: Four Knowledge skills with at least 5 ranks in each, Library.

Benefit: The community gains an additional +2 bonus on all Knowledge skills; alternatively pick only 2 Knowledge skills and receive an additional +4 bonus on each. It also provides a +2 bonus on Decipher Script and Craft (nanotech) skills, and a +1 increase to the community's Reputation bonus.

Signs: Large numbers of academics and students; large buildings with classrooms, laboratories, and museums.

WAGON TRAIN

The community has a collection of wagons and beasts of burden (or other vehicles) for hauling cargo.

Prerequisite: Mobility 13+.

Benefit: A community with a wagon train receives a +3 Wealth bonus. This feat also provides a +1 increase to the community's Reputation bonus.

Signs: Large numbers of wagons; corralled beasts of burden; wheelwrights making or fixing wagon wheels.

WEAPONSMITHING, ADVANCED

The community knows how to make advanced firearms, including lasers.

Prerequisites: Pre-War Weaponsmithing, Knowledge (technology: advanced) 4 ranks.

Benefits: The community has the skills and tools to make and repair advanced firearms. This includes being able to understand the soultech aspects of such weapons. It also increases the community's Wealth bonus by +3.

Signs: Community members carrying advanced firearms; traders having advanced weapons and ammunition for sale.

WEAPONSMITHING, ARCHAIC

The community knows how to make simple melee and ranged weapons.

Prerequisites: Knowledge (technology: archaic) 4 ranks, Repair 4 ranks.

Benefits: The community has the tools and skills needed to create or repair all simple and archaic melee and ranged weapons. This feat also increases the community's Wealth bonus by +1.

Signs: Weaponsmiths creating swords and spearheads; bowyers creating bows; traders with large stocks of simple and archaic weapons.

WEAPONSMITHING, PRE-WAR

The community knows how to make or repair firearms and explosives.

Prerequisites: Archaic Weaponsmithing, Knowledge (technology: Pre-War) 4 ranks.

Benefits: The community has the skills and tools to make firearms, ammunition and other explosives. This feat also increases the community's Wealth bonus by +2.

Signs: Community members carrying firearms; traders with weapons and ammunition for sale.

RANDOM COMMUNITY CREATION

Sometimes players and GMs have the luxury of being able to sit down and plan a community in lavish detail, carefully thinking through the different motivations of all of the factions and how they interact with one another.

But, there are also times when you simply don't have time for that. Something unexpected happened in play, the characters headed to the nearest community to resupply, and the GM has absolutely no idea what the community is like. These rules provide a means to quickly generate a new community in a fairly basic form, which should be enough to help get through to the end of the session. Sub-communities of a much larger town or city can also use these scores, without the pressure of having to determine everything manually (see the "Large Communities" section later in this chapter for details on larger communities).

However, this system is not designed to provide a fully fleshed-out community; instead, it will only give the GM the bare bones to work with in a hurry, and the result can be used as a framework to build on in the future. Full details, such as core philosophy, government type and factions should be created later (if they are needed).

These rules create communities of a single community type, following the rules in the **Gamma World Player's Handbook**. To create a larger conglomerate community, simply create several smaller suburbs using these rules and stitch them together as described later in this chapter.

STEP 1: DETERMINE THE COMMUNITY TYPE AND SIZE

In order to determine the type of the new community, roll 1d20 and consult the table below:

d20	Community Type
1-3	Nomad
4-8	Old Town
9-13	New Town
14-16	Specialist
17-20	Frontier Town

Next, roll 1d10 to determine the community's population level, unless the community type is nomad. In the latter case, only roll 1d4.

Example: Sue needs to create a community located in the ruins that her players spotted at the end of the last session. She first rolls 1d20 to determine the community type, and gets a 14 — a specialist community. She then rolls 1d10 and gets a 6 as the population level. She doesn't worry about what the community specializes in just yet; that will come later when she randomly determines the skills and feats.

STEP 2: DETERMINE THE COMMUNITY'S ATTRIBUTES

For each of the six community attributes (Force, Mobility, Resilience, Learning, Awareness and Command), roll 4d6 and drop the lowest die.

Alternatively, simply distribute the standard score package (15, 14, 13, 12, 10 and 8) among the six abilities.

Example: Sue decides to roll 4d6 for each attribute, as it's quick and doesn't require a lot of thought. She gets Force 11, Mobility 9, Resilience 15, Learning 14, Awareness 13 and Command 11.

STEP 3: DETERMINE THE COMMUNITY'S SKILLS

Having discovered the community's type, level and attributes, determine how many skills the community has by consulting the table below.

Type	Number of Skills To Choose
Nomad	6 + LER modifier
Old Town	4 + LER modifier
New Town	4 + LER modifier
Specialist	6 + LER modifier
Frontier Town	6 + LER modifier

Skills can either be chosen, or simply rolled using percentile dice on Table 3-2: Community Skills. Each skill is assigned a number of ranks equal to the community's population level + 3.

TABLE 3-2: COMMUNITY SKILLS

d%	Skill Name	Attribute
1–2	Computer Use (Data systems)	LER
3–4	Computer Use (Operation systems)	LER
5–6	Computer Use (Artificial intelligence)	LER
7–8	Computer Use (Biotech systems)	LER
9–10	Craft (Chemical)	LER
11–12	Craft (Electronic)	LER
13–14	Craft (Mechanical)	LER
15–16	Craft (Metalworking)	LER
17–18	Craft (Nanotech)	LER
19–20	Craft (Pharmaceuticals)	LER
21–22	Craft (Structural)	LER
23–24	Craft (Visual art)	LER
25–26	Craft (Writing)	LER
27–28	Decipher Script	LER
29–30	Diplomacy	COM
31–32	Gather Information	COM
33–34	Handle Animal	COM
35–36	Intimidate	COM
37–38	Knowledge (Art)	LER
39–40	Knowledge (Behavioral sciences)	LER
41–42	Knowledge (Business)	LER
43–44	Knowledge (Earth & life sciences)	LER
45–46	Knowledge (Gossip)	LER
47–48	Knowledge (History)	LER
49–50	Knowledge (Physical sciences)	LER
51–52	Knowledge (Politics)	LER
53–54	Knowledge (Streetwise)	LER
55–56	Knowledge (Tactics)	LER
57–58	Knowledge (Technology: Archaic)	LER
59–60	Knowledge (Technology: Pre-War)	LER
61–62	Knowledge (Technology: Advanced)	LER
63–64	Knowledge (Technology: Nanotech)	LER
65–66	Knowledge (Theology & Philosophy)	LER
67–68	Perform (Act)	COM
69–70	Perform (Dance)	COM
71–72	Perform (Percussion)	COM
73–74	Perform (Sing)	COM
75–76	Perform (Storytelling)	COM
77–78	Perform (Stringed instruments)	COM
79–80	Perform (Wind instruments)	COM
81–82	Profession	AWA
83–84	Repair	LER
85–86	Read/Write Language	None
87–88	Research	LER
89–90	Speak Language	None
91–92	Survival	AWA
93–94	Treat Injury	AWA
95–00	Roll Again	

Example: Sue needs to roll 8 different skill s— 6 for being a specialist community, and another 2 for the Learning bonus. The skills she gets are: Knowledge (politics), Profession, Knowledge (business), Computer Use (biotech systems), Craft (chemical), Computer Use (data systems), Craft (electronic), Knowledge (technology: nanotech), Treat Injury.

Because the population level is 6, Sue assigns each skill 9 ranks. With the attribute bonuses added in, Sue's community skills are: Computer Use (biotech systems) +11, Computer Use (data systems) +11, Craft (chemical) +11, Craft (electronic) + 11, Knowledge (business) +11, Knowledge (politics) +11, Knowledge (technology: nanotech) + 11, Profession + 10, and Treat Injury +10.

Given the skills, Sue's thinking that the community may have something to do with running and maintaining a fuel refinery.

STEP 4: DETERMINE FEATS

Each community has a number of feats determined by its community type and population level.

Type	Number of Feats
Nomad	3 + (population level/2)
Old Town	6 + (population level/2)
New Town	3 + (population level/2)
Specialist	4 + (population level/2)
Frontier Town	3 + (population level/2)

To determine a community's feats, roll percentile dice on Table 3-3: Community Feats. A community must be able to meet the prerequisites for all feats. If the community cannot meet the requirements for a given feat, roll again. Alternatively, if it is just missing some prerequisite feats, simply choose the missing ones if there are enough available feat slots remaining.

If the skills rolled suggest a community idea, feel free to simply choose appropriate feats to suit the growing concept.

Example: Sue needs to roll 7 feats for her new community (4 for being a specialist community, plus an additional 3, which is half the population level). With her first

TABLE 3-3: COMMUNITY FEATS

d%	Feat Name	d%	Feat Name
1-2	Advanced Engineering	51-52	Infamous
3-4	Advanced Farming	53-54	Influential
5-6	Advanced Manufacturing	55-56	Library
7-4	Advanced Vehicles	57-58	Medical Expert
9-4	Advanced Weaponsmithing	59-60	Moderate Fortifications
11-12	Airfield	61-62	Nanotech Usage
13-14	Ruins	63-64	Pre-War Electricity Generation
15-16	Archaic Farming	65-66	Pre-War Engineering
17-18	Archaic Engineering	67-68	Pre-War Vehicles
19-20	Archaic Manufacturing	69-70	Pre-War Weaponsmithing
21-22	Archaic Vehicles	71-72	Psychic Advisors
23-24	Archaic Weaponsmithing	73-74	Psychic Shielding
25-26	Automated Defenses	75-76	Radio Transmitter
27-28	Basic Fortifications	77-78	Renown
29-30	Biotech Usage	79-80	Rich Hunting
31-32	Builder	81-82	Safe Harbor
33-34	Caves	83-84	Shipyard
35-36	Educated	85-86	Studios
37-38	Electricity Generation	87-88	Stockpile
39-40	Fertile	89-90	Surgery
41-42	Food Synthesis	91-92	Synthetic Repair
43-44	Fuel Production	93-94	Tower
45-46	Gearhead	95-96	University
47-48	Heavy Fortifications	97-98	Wagon Train
49-50	Hospital	99-100	Windfall

roll, she gets 66 — *Pre-War Engineering*. Because it has *Archaic Engineering* as a prerequisite, she decides to take it straight away. The oil refinery concept is solidifying nicely.

She then rolls a 47 — *Heavy Fortifications*. Because of its prerequisites, she immediately takes *Basic Fortifications* and *Moderate Fortifications* as well.

Looking at the skills and feats she now has, Sue decides that her community — which she has christened “Oiltown” — needs some electricity to help round out its feat list. So instead of rolling, she simply takes *Electricity Generation* and *Fuel Production*.

STEP 5: DETERMINE TRAITS

Rather than determining the exact system of government and the core philosophy of the community, roll percentile dice twice on Table 3–4: *Community Traits* and use the results to determine how the population acts. An additional roll can be made for each population level that the community has, to determine a general trait for each of the community’s factions.

Some traits are direct opposites of other ones within the list. If rolling produces two traits that

TABLE 3-4: COMMUNITY TRAITS

d%	Trait	d%	Trait	d%	Trait
1	Academic	35	Feudal	69	Primitive
2	Advanced	36	Flamboyant	70	Pro-technology
3	Ambitious	37	Friendly	71	Puppet
4	Anarchic	38	Frugal	72	Puritanical
5	Anti-technology	39	Generous	73	Quarantined
6	Argumentative	40	Gossipy	74	Reckless
7	Blunt	41	Greedy	75	Recovering
8	Brutal	42	Hard-working	76	Relaxed
9	Bureaucratic	43	Hedonistic	77	Reliant
10	Caste-based	44	Hesitant	78	Religious
11	Close to nature	45	Hippy	79	Rich
12	Communications hub	46	Honest	80	Rural
13	Compassionate	47	Ideological	81	Segregated
14	Complacent	48	Immaculate	82	Self-sufficient
15	Conservative	49	Industrial	83	Shell-shocked
16	Conspiratorial	50	Inventive	84	Slavers
17	Controlling	51	Judgmental	85	Starved
18	Corrupt	52	Lazy	86	Sterile
19	Courageous	53	Machine (AI)-led	87	Strategic
20	Cryptic-alliance led	54	Manipulative	88	Strategically important
21	Curious	55	Matriarchal	89	Struggling
22	Dangerous	56	Meeting place	90	Terrified
23	Deceitful	57	Mercantile	91	Threatened
24	Deserted	58	Merciful	92	Trading post
25	Desperate	59	Militant	93	Traditional
26	Destructive	60	Neutral ground	94	Uncaring
27	Diplomatic	61	Officious	95	Unfriendly
28	Disorganized	62	Organized	96	Unkempt
29	Dull	63	Ostentatious	97	Unpredictable
30	Duplicitous	64	Overbearing	98	Violent
31	Enigmatic	65	Overcrowded	99	Wasteful
32	Environmentally conscious	66	Patriarchal	100	Xenophobic
33	Expansionist	67	Peaceful		
34	Expectant	68	Poor		

clash, simply re-roll the second trait until a more suitable one is obtained. Alternatively, see if it is possible to actually come up with a way that the community can have both conflicting traits at the same time.

When determining how the traits manifest in the community — what signs would show visitors that these traits are in effect — keep in mind the community's skills and feats, and see if they can also be woven into the description.

Use the traits as a basis for plot hooks that the characters can engage with, to pull them into the storyline. After all, what started out as a random encounter might fascinate the players enough to turn into a regular — if not permanent — part of the campaign.

Example: Sue rolls twice on Table 3–4 and gets a 48 and a 70 — *Immaculate* and *Pro-technology*. This fits nicely with her concept of a specialist community manning a surviving oil refinery. The community uses a lot of computer control, and keeps its heavily fortified facility immaculately clean to prevent accidents.

STEP 5: CALCULATE WEALTH & REPUTATION

The community's Wealth and Reputation bonuses should be calculated in accordance with the guidelines presented in the *Gamma World Player's Handbook*. Keep in mind the Wealth and Reputation bonuses provided by the new feats presented above.

Example: Lastly, Sue calculates the Wealth and Reputation bonuses for Oiltown. Her base Wealth score is +16 (6d4 for being a specialist community with a population level of 6). She then adds +5 (+1 for *Archaic Engineering*, +2 for *Pre-War Engineering* and +2 for *Fuel Production*) for a total Wealth bonus of +21.

Sue then calculates Oiltown's Reputation bonus: +2 for being a specialist community, +3 for having a population level of 6 and +2 for having *Heavy Fortifications*, for a total of +7.

OILTOWN

Community Type: Specialist

Population Level: 6 (1227 adults)

Force: 11 (+0)

Mobility: 9 (–1)

Resilience: 15 (+2)

Learning: 14 (+2)

Awareness: 13 (+1)

Command: 11 (+0)

Wealth Bonus: +21

Reputation Bonus: +7

Skills: Computer Use (biotech systems) +11, Computer Use (data systems) +11, Craft (chemical) +11, Craft (electronic) +11, Knowledge (business) +11, Knowledge (politics) +11, Knowledge (technology: nanotech) +11, Profession +10, Treat Injury +10

Feats: Archaic Engineering, Pre-War Engineering, Basic Fortifications, Moderate Fortifications, Heavy Fortifications, Electricity Generation, Fuel Production

Traits: Immaculate, Pro-Technology

LARGE COMMUNITIES

Large cities are rarely homogenous. They are almost invariably made up of a number of smaller communities in close proximity to one another, each with its own outlook and agenda. More often than not, these agendas can be wildly different: A rich area where the citizens have extravagant lifestyles can be right next to lower-class areas where people don't have enough food and the accommodations are squalid at best. But mostly, these combined communities exist to support one another, with different groups specializing in different things.

The community rules in the *Gamma World Player's Handbook* model small, isolated, largely self-sufficient communities. Once a population reaches the highest population level, there is no mechanical benefit for having a larger population.

However, by having a number of smaller communities living symbiotically in close proximity to one another, arbitrarily large townships or even cities can be constructed relatively easily. By combining different community types, townships with extremely complicated skill sets and relationships can be created, providing an extremely fertile backdrop for extended gaming.

BUILDING A BIGGER SETTLEMENT

Townships grow, almost organically at times. While everyone in the town might not have the same outlook on life, like-minded people tend to congregate together. When outsiders join, they sometimes find it hard to fit into the original population, so they form satellite communities on the outskirts. Over time, these newer groups form suburbs, and the town begins to spread out across the countryside and become a city.

A large Gamma Age town or city is simply made up from a collection of smaller communities, or

suburbs. Each suburb is modeled using the rules presented in Chapter Four: Home Sector and Beyond of the **Gamma World Player's Handbook**. All of them have their own core philosophies and agendas, and they use the close proximity of their neighbors to their own advantage whenever possible.

Not all of the communities need to be of the same type. In fact in many cases, it makes more sense for them to have different — even conflicting — types; the more conflict that exists between the neighbors, the greater the opportunity for adventuring within the township.

When the PCs are actually within the conglomerate community's boundaries, it makes sense to work on only the suburb that they happen to be in. However, if the PCs have not yet reached the outskirts of the town, then it is useful to have an aggregated set of statistics for the whole conglomerate, so that it can be treated as a single entity.

STEP 1: DETERMINING THE MIX

When creating a larger conglomerate community, the first thing to do is to decide how large the conglomerate is going to be and how many suburbs are needed to make it up. While the conglomerate's size can be as large as you like in terms of populations — cities with hundreds of thousands or even millions of people are certainly possible — the higher the total the population, the more work will be needed to create it and later administer it during play.

Example: Kristen decides to create a conglomerate community, with an old town, a specialist and a new town. The old town has a population level of 6 (about 1,200 people), the specialist community has a population level of 4 (250 people) and the new town has a population level of 5 (about 770 people).

STEP 2: CREATE THE SUBURBS

Each of the suburbs needs to be created separately, using the guidelines from Chapter Four of the **Gamma World Player's Handbook** or the random community creation rules presented earlier in this chapter. Each suburb will have a single community type and will have its own set of attributes, skills and feats.

One thing to consider is how the different types fit into the overall fabric of the conglomerate. For most community types, this is fairly simple. Nomads, however, are a special case; and careful consideration needs to be made to ensure that the nomad suburb makes sense. They could be a trade caravan using the conglomerate as a home base,



returning every month or so to stock up with trade goods before heading out on the trail again. Alternatively, they may be a roving military patrol, tasked with keeping the countryside free of marauders. If the conglomerate happens to be on the edge of a large body of water, then a nomad community may actually be a navy, either merchant or military.

When choosing the suburbs' skills and feats, try to get a reasonable spread across the whole spectrum. There should be some overlap between the different suburbs, but you can use distinct skill and feat sets to help define the boundaries between the different groups.

When devising the suburbs' central philosophies and factions, keep in mind that neighboring communities can heavily influence the way the community thinks and reacts. The central philosophies do not need to agree with one another, and some communities may actually have factions in common (a large organized crime outfit may actually have influence through several suburbs within the larger settlement).

While each of the suburbs is basically an independent entity, they all interlock together in the larger picture of the conglomerate. Don't be tempted to make all of the suburbs slight variations on the same theme. Design a subset of the suburbs to mutually support each other in some way. For example, a new town may well provide the food and protection for a specialist University community, which gives back all sorts technological benefits to the citizens of the new town. Also, deliberately design some suburbs that simply clash with one another on nearly every level. For example, one suburb may be an old town, walled up inside the ruins of an ancient city, clinging rigidly to the traditions of the past. Right outside the walls, a new group of refugees has set up a huge shanty town, hoping to share some of the riches that the old town's citizens enjoy.

Example: *Kristen decides that the conglomerate, which she calls Aimohry, is going to be involved in producing weapons. Kecler Gock, the old town, will do the manufacturing. Manaikementh, the specialist community, will take care of production schedules and ordering, while Giffink, her new town, mainly looks after itself, but occasionally helps with distribution.*

Rather than planning out everything in full detail, she uses the quick community generation system provided earlier to create the details for each of her suburbs.

KECLER COCK

Community Type: Old Town

Population Level: 6 (1,200 people)

Force: 15 (+2)

Mobility: 9 (-1)

Resilience: 13 (+1)

Learning: 10 (+0)

Awareness: 11 (+1)

Command: 11 (+1)

Wealth Bonus: +45

Reputation Bonus: +9

Skills: Craft (chemical) +9, Craft (nanotech) +9, Knowledge (technology: nanotech) +9, Repair +9

Feats: Archaic Weaponsmithing, Pre-War Weaponsmithing, Nanotech Usage, Psychic Shielding, Food Synthesis, Stockpile, Ruins, Renown, Caves

Traits: Dangerous, Gossipy

MANAIKEMENTH

Community Type: Specialist

Population Level: 4 (250 people)

Force: 9 (-1)

Mobility: 8 (-1)

Resilience: 12 (+1)

Learning: 17 (+3)

Awareness: 12 (+1)

Command: 14 (+2)

Wealth Bonus: +12

Reputation Bonus: +5

Skills: Computer Use (data systems) +10, Computer Use (operating systems) +10, Craft (mechanical) +10, Diplomacy +9, Gather Information +9, Knowledge (tactics) +10, Perform (wind instruments) +9, Perform (percussion) +9, Research +10

Feats: Archaic Engineering, Pre-War Engineering, Basic Fortifications, Electricity Generation, Tower, Stockpile

Traits: Mercantile, Strategic

GIFFINK

Community Type: New Town

Population Level: 5 (770 people)

Force: 15 (+2)

Mobility: 17 (+3)

Resilience: 8 (-1)

Learning: 11 (+0)

Awareness: 13 (+1)



Command: 15 (+2)

Wealth Bonus: +26

Reputation Bonus: +5

Skills: Knowledge (streetwise) +8, Perform (act) +10, Perform (storytelling) +10, Treat Injury +9

Feats: Archaic Engineering, Archaic Manufacturing, Archaic Vehicles, Infamous, Rich Hunting

Traits: Puppet, Segregated

STEP 3: COMBINING THE ATTRIBUTES

Larger communities have attributes like each of the smaller communities that make them up. However, unlike the small ones, they are not derived from the population level.

To find the attributes for the conglomerate, simply calculate the average of the corresponding attributes from all the suburbs. For example, to calculate the conglomerate's Force attribute, simply add up the values of the Force attributes of all the suburbs and then divide that total by the number of suburbs, rounding down. Repeat this for the other five attributes.

When determining the signs that correspond to the conglomerate's attributes, the conglomerate's attributes will not be evident in all areas of the city.

Instead, the attributes for the individual suburbs should be used, so that regions with attributes higher or lower than the conglomerates can be shown accordingly.

Example: Using the attributes of the individual suburbs, the Aimohry's combined attributes are:

Force: $(15 + 9 + 15) / 3 = 13$

Mobility: $(9 + 8 + 17) / 3 = 11$

Resilience: $(13 + 12 + 8) / 3 = 11$

Learning: $(10 + 17 + 11) / 3 = 12$

Awareness: $(11 + 12 + 13) / 3 = 12$

Command: $(11 + 14 + 15) / 3 = 13$

STEP 4: CALCULATING SKILL LEVELS

The conglomerate community as a whole has the skills of *all* of its citizens at its disposal. Some suburbs may have the same skills, while others may have completely different skill sets.

To determine the skill list for the conglomerate, make a list of all the different skills that all the suburbs possess. For each skill, the community can be assumed to have a number of ranks equal to the highest skill of the suburbs. For example, if three suburbs all had the Repair skill, one with 4 ranks, the second with 6 and the third with 5, then the conglomerate would have a total of 6 ranks in Repair.

However, to acknowledge the influence of the other communities, the conglomerate receives a +2 circumstance bonus for every suburb with that skill beyond the first. To continue with the above example, the conglomerate would receive a total +4 skill bonus on Repair because of the other two suburbs with the Repair skill. (For ease of bookkeeping, the circumstance bonus is recorded as part of the conglomerate's skill total.)

The conglomerate's skills use the attribute bonuses from the averaged attributes, not from the attributes of the suburb with the highest skill level. If the example conglomerate has an average Learning attribute value of 12, then the Repair skill would use the +1 bonus, giving the conglomerate a total Repair bonus of +11 (6 ranks, +1 LER bonus, +4 circumstance bonus).

A NOTE ON FEATS

The conglomerate simply has the feats that all its suburbs possess; it doesn't get any additional ones. Because of this, it's possible that a conglomerate may actually have the same feat multiple times. The effects for these feats stack only if it makes sense.

Some feats, such as Basic Fortifications, Moderate Fortifications and Heavy Fortifications, provide physical benefits that are only applicable to the particular suburb that has that feat. However, it is possible to extend those benefits to the whole conglomerate if desired. The effects of other feats, such as Electricity Generation, can be shared where it makes sense to do so (although in the case of Electricity Generation, power availability should be patchy outside the suburb that actually has the feat).

Example: *Aimohry's skill list is the combined list of the member communities. Each skill only uses the number of ranks from its suburb, not the suburb's attribute bonus. For the conglomerate, those come from Aimohry's combined attribute scores. So, the Aimohry's skill list, with the revised skill totals, is as follows:*

Computer Use (data systems) +7 +1 = +8

Computer Use (operating systems) +7 +1 = +8

Craft (chemical) +9 +1 = +10

Craft (mechanical) +7 +1 = +8

Craft (nanotech) +9 +1 = +10

Diplomacy +7 +1 = +8

Gather Information +7 +1 = +8

Knowledge (Streetwise) +8 +1 = +9

Knowledge (tactics) +7 +1 = +8

Knowledge (technology: nanotech) +9 +1 = +10

Perform (act) +8 +1 = +10

Perform (percussion) +7 +1 = +8

Perform (storytelling) +8 +1 = +9

Perform (wind instruments) +7 +1 = +8

Repair +9 +1 = +10

Research +7 +1 = +8

Treat Injury +8 +1 = +9

Its feat list is the combined list of all three suburbs.

Kirsten decides that the Kecler Gock, the old town, has access to Manaikementh's electricity, but Giffink, the new town, doesn't.

STEP 5: CHOOSING THE GOVERNMENT

Most large communities have some form of central government to help administer, enforce the laws and provide basic services. The exact form depends on the community.

In a democratic society, the people elect the government, with the largest suburbs providing the largest number of representatives. However, not all communities follow the democratic model. Some are dictatorships, run by a single individual through sheer force of personality and an iron fist. In other cases, the leaders of one of the suburbs dominate some communities, with the rest of the conglomerate following their lead.

Look over the discussion on the differing leadership styles in Chapter Two: Leadership for inspiration and choose an appropriate style for each suburb. Keep in mind that clashing styles provide an instant conflict that can drive the story.

Decide on the governmental model that the conglomerate has. It may be related to the goals and leadership of one or more of its suburbs, but it may also have nothing in common with them whatsoever. Again, conflict between the conglomerate's leadership style and the individual suburbs' leadership styles creates an instant plot hook that can draw the PCs deeper into the drama.

Example: *Kristen decides that Manaikementh is going to be Aimohry's dominant suburb. It makes the decisions for the whole town, occasionally taking information from the other two. This does cause some tensions between them, but with Manaikementh's stranglehold over the conglomerate's electricity supply, it manages to keep the upper hand.*

STEP 6: CHOOSING FACTIONS

In most cases, the factions that are active in a conglomerate community are actually the different

leaderships of the suburbs themselves. Each one will have its own set of goals; on a larger scale, they act just like the factions do at the suburb level.

However, as mentioned earlier, some factions may actually span the borders of several different suburbs within the larger conglomerate, becoming larger players than would normally be the case. Some examples of these sorts of factions are organized crime groups, gangs, religious groups or trade movements.

It's quite possible that not only do the factions in one suburb have agendas that run contrary to that suburb's main philosophy, they may also be in competition with other factions in other suburbs, or even other whole suburbs. People move between the suburbs for business and pleasure, so there will always be some cross-pollination of ideas. GMs should feel free to create complex, tangled lines of influence among the different organizations and groups in the different parts of the conglomerate.

Example: As Kristen is really only building Aimohry quickly, she decides to create only two factions for each suburb. For Manaikementh, she settles on the Restorationists (see Chapter One: Allegiance) as the dominant faction. They seek to recover the power the world possessed before the Final Wars, and acting through the city can advance that goal. She also decides to include the Archivists cryptic alliance (see Chapter One), who are interested in recovering more technology and using it for the benefit of the conglomerate.

For Kecler Gock, Kristen decides on using the Viragos (see Chapter One) as one of the factions. The group sees the male-dominated leadership of Manaikementh as the source of the conglomerate's problems, and they want to see it destroyed. They are also interested in recruiting some of the women in Giffink to their cause. For Kecler Gock's other faction, Kristen decides to make it a small group of Knights of Genetic Purity (see the **Gamma World Player's Handbook**, Chapter Six: The Gamma World Campaign, "Cryptic Alliances"). They have infiltrated the suburb and are looking to steal some of the weapons being made there to help with their fight against mutants.

Kristen then chooses the Seekers as the main faction in Giffink. They are under the thumb of Manaikementh, so having a group that opposes that suburb's pro-technology stance provides some opportunity for conflict. She also settles on the Breeders, who are interested in increasing the suburb's population, knowing that the weight of numbers will one day give them the upper hand (see Chapter One for details on both cryptic alliances).

STEP 7: CALCULATE WEALTH LEVEL

The conglomerate's Wealth bonus is just the average of the suburbs' Wealth bonuses. Add up the Wealth bonuses of all the suburbs, then divide by the number of suburbs, rounding the result down to the nearest whole number. This provides a measure of how much money the community as a whole has. There will be some suburbs that have Wealth bonuses that fall short of the average, and there will be some that may far exceed it.

GMs should feel free to actually adjust Wealth bonuses between the suburbs, taking from one suburb and giving to another. Larger communities, particularly cities, always have sections where the population is very rich and lives in idle opulence. These people always have the best food, their houses are well built and lavishly appointed and they have a lot of leisure time. Often, it's the people in the rich suburbs who own and operate the businesses in many other parts of the conglomerate.

At the other extreme are suburbs where the population lives in poverty. Their housing is poor or even non-existent, and disease is often rife. Crime and violence are usually accepted parts of life, with gangs fighting turf wars as the members try to hold on to the few material possessions they have.

Somewhere in the middle are the working and middle classes, who have a reasonable place to live, and who work to keep the whole conglomerate running. It's usual to find people have more specialized jobs as the city gets larger. It's also not unusual to have individuals such as poets, artists and actors earning a living; they have no practical contribution to the physical well-being of the population, but may well contribute to the conglomerate's social and spiritual well-being.

Example: Kristen isn't happy with the initial Wealth bonuses of the suburbs. The one with all the power, Manaikementh, has the lowest Wealth bonus. So, she decides to swap Manaikementh's and Giffink's Wealth bonuses, and also take half of Kecler Gock's as well. This gives Manaikementh a new Wealth bonus of +49, Kecler Gock a Wealth bonus of +22 and Giffink a Wealth bonus of +12.

She then calculates Aimohry's Wealth bonus, which is the average of the three scores or +27 $((22 + 49 + 12) / 3)$.

STEP 8: CALCULATE REPUTATION BONUS

The Reputation bonus for the conglomerate is based on the average Reputation bonus across all the

suburbs. Add the Reputation bonuses from all the suburbs together, then divide by the number of suburbs, rounding the result down to the nearest whole number.

However, the conglomerate gets a bonus to its Reputation equal to the number of suburbs that compose it. For example, if the conglomerate were made up of 6 suburbs (with reputation scores of +6, +7, +7, +3, +4 and +4), then its Reputation bonus would be +11 (an average of +5, with an additional +6 bonus from having 6 suburbs). The larger the conglomerate is, the more like people are to have heard of it.

Example: Aimohry's Reputation score is the average of its 3 suburbs, plus an additional +3 for the number of suburbs. The average is $(9 + 5 + 5) / 3 = 6$. So, with the additional +3 for the number of suburbs, Kristen's conglomerate has a Reputation bonus of +9.

STEP 9: SETTING UP THE COMMUNITY BEHAVIOR MAP

The Community Behavior Map (CBM) presented in the *Gamma World Player's Handbook* is designed to give GMs a system for creating community-based plots. The CBM is just as applicable to a conglomerate as it is to a small, isolated community.

Follow the guidelines in the *Gamma World Player's Handbook* for setting up the factor weightings and link weights. However, keep in mind that unless the conglomerate's government keeps a very tight rein on the population, then the weights for the Dissent and Outside Influence factors should be generally higher than the default starting values, and the link weights for leadership decisions should be lower than they otherwise would be.

Example: Kristen calculates the Community Behavior Map scores using the new stats for Aimohry as a whole. She decides to lower the starting point of Population Happiness, to reflect the pressure Manaikemeth places on the other two suburbs, but she raises the Prosperity and Greed factors to reflect the focus on making money. She also raises the Outside Influence factor weight, because Aimohry does a lot of trading with other communities.

So, Aimohry's CBM factor weights are:

Population Happiness: 35

Strong Leadership

Prosperity: 62

Population: 150

Resources: 135

Disaster: 0

Greed: 60

Dissent: 55

Outside Influence: 15

Influence on Others: 45

STEP 10: USING THE COMMUNITY BEHAVIOR MAP

There are two ways to use the CBM for the conglomerate: to generate events for the suburbs, and to replace the individual suburbs' Maps altogether.

From Conglomerate to Suburb

The CBM can work at any level, from a small group up to the largest cities. In some respects, the map is fractal in nature, repeating the same basic patterns no matter how far in or out the focus is.

A separate CBM can track what's happening in the conglomerate on a much broader scale than that offered by the ones drawn up for the individual suburbs. The events that affect a conglomerate will be on a much larger scale than the ones that affect a suburb. Events that affect the conglomerate might not actually affect all of the suburbs equally — some may not feel the effects of the event at all. Other events may impact one suburb in one way, and cause a completely different effect in another suburb.

When determining how an event on the conglomerate-scale map is distributed, the GM first needs to decide how the results of that effect will be divided up among the conglomerate's suburbs. If the effects are distributed evenly to all of the suburbs, then the event should be applied to the same node of the suburbs' maps with the same weighting.

However, not all events affect all suburbs in the same way. Some experience a change more directly than others. If this is the case, increase the event's weight change up to the next severity level before applying it to the suburb's CBM.

Some events on the conglomerate-scale map can have unexpected side effects. If one suburb receives a positive event, then some of the others who missed out could get jealous, leading to the introduction of events in their Dissent and Greed nodes. Alternatively, if one suburb suffers some sort of disaster, then the others could pitch in with supplies and labor, causing a negative event to hit their Resources nodes as they donate supplies to their neighbors.

The exact events and their results that flow from events on the overall map depend entirely on the conglomerate and its mix of suburbs. There are no hard and fast rules for determining it. Instead, GMs should use their discretion and apply whatever

set of events makes the most sense, and would cause the most interesting set of circumstances to arise within the conglomerate.

Example: A conglomerate has one suburb made up of a small number of extremely wealthy individuals who have most of the power and influence in the township. They own most of the businesses and hire many people from the surrounding suburbs. At least one of the other suburbs is made up of poorly fed, working class people who work long hours in the businesses owned by the rich, and get a basic wage as compensation for their labor.

For an event, the GM decides that the city has performed well in a recent trading mission, and decides to create an average positive Prosperity event, with a weight change of 13. According to the CBM, this feeds into the Resources node, the Population node, and the Influence on Others node. The increase in the Resources node causes a follow-on effect, with an increase in the Population Happiness node. However, if this all happens on the conglomerate's CBM, then it can be assumed that it is an average effect across the whole township.

If the GM then takes the events and looks at them in more detail, she might decide that the increase in Prosperity goes entirely to the rich suburb, because it was the output from their businesses that allowed the township to earn the extra income. This will have a much bigger effect on the Prosperity node in the rich suburb's map, with a corresponding increase in its Resources and Population Happiness.

On the other hand, the workers in the poor suburb might resent the fact that they did all the hard work to produce the goods that brought in all the extra money, but they don't get to enjoy the rewards. When they hear about the income flowing directly to the business owners, they may start to complain, or worse, strike. This can be represented by events being played in the Dissent or Greed nodes in the poor suburb's CBM.

Conglomerate Instead of Suburbs

On the other hand, the GM may feel that figuring out everything that happens within the conglomerate and then flowing the effects down into the individual suburbs' CBMs is simply too much work. In this case, simply use the one map for the whole conglomerate, rather than using them on separate levels. Assume that the events that impact the whole conglomerate are shared more or less evenly across all the suburbs. If the conglomerate experiences a burst of prosperity or suffers a disaster, then the effects are shared by all.

However, in some cases, it may be necessary to introduce secondary events into the CBM in order

to simulate the effects of events being felt more keenly by one suburb than the others. For example, for the example given above, once the Prosperity event has been brought into play from the favorable trade deal, it might be necessary to play an equally sized Greed event to simulate the profits flowing directly to the rich suburb, and the grumbling that would cause in the poorer suburbs.

Example: As Aimohry was only ever meant to be a quick encounter, Kristen decides that the CBM will replace the individual suburb Maps. If the PCs decide to spend a lot of time there, she may go to the lengths of creating individual maps for each of the suburbs.

THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Communities are much more than just places where the characters happen to live. They can provide an ongoing source of adventure for characters who get involved.

The most important question that anyone can ask about his or her community is "what can I do to help?" Being a part of a community does require a degree of self-sacrifice. Often, there are things that must be done that entail a certain amount of pain and discomfort.

In a game setting, it's probably not important for the PCs to be involved in the day-to-day drudge work that goes into making a community function normally, unless they choose to make the routine costs of authority a focus for the campaign. Tasks like cooking, cleaning, farming and general maintenance are rarely the stuff that epic adventures are made from.

But for the community rules to work as they were intended, both players and GMs need to work with a slightly different mindset, one they may not be used to.

LEARNING TO READ THE SIGNS

Playing a character who is an active member of a community can be wildly different from playing a character in a traditional fantasy game. In many fantasy scenarios, the GM spells out in black and white what the objective of the game is and the players take whatever actions are needed to achieve those mission goals. Quite often, the goals that the characters are aiming for have to do with making themselves richer or more powerful in some way, through the direct consequences of their actions. In many respects, it is a selfish style of gaming, where the focus is always on the characters and what they are going to get out of putting themselves in harm's way.

In an older, traditional sense of the word, *heroes* are people who put their own lives and ambitions on the line for the good of someone else. While they may start out with selfish motivations, at the end of the day, they realize they are part of something bigger and are willing sacrifice their own goals — and sometimes their lives — in order to make life better for others. By giving of themselves, they open themselves up to potentially bigger rewards in the long term, as counterintuitive as that may seem.

To get the most out of community play, it's important to realize that there will be times where the good of others in the community must come first. The PCs may have to head out into hostile territory to find the spare parts needed to make some vital machine work again. They may have to pass up an opportunity for personal riches and reward in order to make sure that other people's lives are enriched and protected.

The best way to do this is to be proactive with dealing with the events that impact the community. The CBM sets out a framework for the GM to track the reactions the community's population has to certain events. If those events are left unattended, then there is the very real danger that the situation could destroy the community. The destruction could be either in a physical sense, with people being killed or injured, or the community's buildings and possessions being damaged or destroyed; or it may be in an emotional or spiritual one, where the members of the community turn on one another, which can lead to fighting, or other, more clandestine trouble.

To get the most out of the CBM, players need to be aware of the signs of the events that the GM describes. If the GM is using the events properly, players won't be told that a new event has entered play. Instead, some signs of the event will appear in play, and the characters must take action to change the effects that event has on their community.

Actively getting involved is the key to successfully using the CBM. The characters must interpret the signs the GM describes and then to take action based on their interpretation of those signs. Players may or may not guess the event based on the signs that are described, but their decisions will put into play events or counter-events that can change the state of the community. If the actions the characters take bring about some positive change for the community such as preventing a disaster, or at least recovering from one quickly, then the GM should reward the characters. On the other hand, if

their actions — or inaction — cause damage to the community, then they will probably find life a little harder for a while until they manage to change the minds of the other community members.

The CBM also allows for players to become proactive in the direction the campaign takes. Because the events that drive the map may come from any source, players should feel free — after consultation with the GM, of course — to set in play a string of events intended to change the community in some fashion. As active participants in their community, characters have as much right to start a chain of events as they do to react to one. When working on new events, discuss the actual event with the GM, and determine a series of signs that would show that event in the game universe. These events can be about absolutely anything. Characters may hear a rumor about some Pre-War technology cache, and decide to start an event chain to raise support for an expedition to go and recover it, or decide to either support or undermine the community's leadership in some way.

The CBM is designed to provide another avenue for players to use to explore the Gamma World. With some creative thinking, it should be able to provide hours of interesting adventures.

SHOW, DON'T TELL

For a GM, putting an event into the Community Behavior Map should be more than just a mechanical action. Each event is a story seed, something that can drive the campaign forward or even change its direction entirely; and these events can be enough to power a whole campaign for a long time.

But the key to effective use of the CBM and the events that fuel it is the way those events are presented to the players. One golden rule for fiction is "show, don't tell." Fiction is always more enjoyable when the characters in the story do something, rather than just being told about it. It's much easier to visualize what's happening, and it allows the reader to sympathize more with what the characters in the story are experiencing.

GMs can use the same technique when describing situations to the players, especially when describing events in the CBM. The *Gamma World Player's Handbook* presents examples of signs to use in describing places and events. These signs are manifestations in the game world, rather than an out-of-character explanation of what the widget or event actually is. When using the CBM to drive the campaign forward, these signs become invaluable tools for working with the event.

The players should never be told exactly what event they are dealing with. Instead, they should have the event's signs described to them — sometimes in brief, sometimes in intricate detail — and allowed to make up their own minds about what the signs truly mean. This gives them the power to react to those signs accordingly.

It doesn't matter if they interpret the signs incorrectly. If they try to reduce the severity of an event and misinterpret the signs, then the original event will still hit with its full force. However, the actions the PCs take should be turned into another event, which can have other effects on the CBM.

When running the campaign, give the players some room to start event chains based on their actions. If they are consistently behaving in a certain way, turn that behavior into an event and feed it into the map and see what comes of it. Also allow the players to suggest events they would like to initiate, and work with them to come up with the game-world signs. Don't be afraid to give the players some space to come up with their own initiatives. By relinquishing some control over the course of the campaign, the GM sheds some of the usual load and gains a whole new source of inspiration. Listening to and including the players' desires helps to shape the campaign to suit the things that they want to do, which only increases everyone's enjoyment of the game.

It's important to put a relatively even mix of positive and negative events into the map. If only bad things ever happen to the community, then the players will probably become discouraged and won't be interested in playing anymore. Likewise, if only good things ever occur, the players won't be faced with any real tension in the game and play will be boring. A good mixture keeps the game play interesting for everyone, and offers the right amount of tension and release.

When selecting events to put into the Map, aim for ones that give the PCs a real chance to become intimately involved in the action. A good campaign should center on the actions of the PCs, *not* on the actions of the NPCs. Describe the signs of the event to the players and leave their characters' reactions up to them. If they choose to do something about it, then create counter-events that encapsulate their actions and play those. If they fail to take heed of the signs, play the original event and have NPCs castigate the characters for not doing anything about it. The NPCs' reactions can also generate secondary events that may have implications for the PCs later on in the campaign.

UNDERSTANDING EVENTS

While the CBM provides a means of figuring out what the result of an event is, knowing how to create events and how severe to make them is something of an art form. Constantly playing the same events with the same severity levels makes the game feel dull and predictable. Although the CBM's links are static, the events that pass through them do change, both in the order that they're played and the severity of the effects that they cause.

NEGLECTIBLE EVENTS

On first inspection, negligible events don't seem to be a whole lot of use. Most of the time they're going to be in play simply as a follow-on event caused by a connected node's factor weight changing.

But their usefulness to a GM shouldn't be underestimated. Although they don't actually have much of an impact on the community as a whole, a series of related negligible events can be extremely useful to foreshadow interesting developments that are going to come into play later in the campaign.

For example, a negligible event for the Disaster node might be the discovery of a mouse in the grain storage facility. By itself, this isn't particularly interesting, and it shouldn't tax the PCs too much to deal with it. But if the GM presents it in conjunction with a series of other events that indicate that climatic conditions are ripe for a rodent plague, then the PCs can actually work toward setting up the counter-events early on to reduce the plague's severity long before it actually hits.

Negligible events are also useful for hinting at things going on in the community that PCs might not otherwise know about. They are particularly useful for hinting at the machinations of factions or cryptic alliances that are covertly active within the community. Events like minor thefts, strange discoveries of minor tech items in odd places or figures being seen skulking around at night can give the GM a way to start showing the PCs that something is amiss. If two or more cryptic alliances are working within the community, then negligible events from each can appear to come from one place — or more than the real number of alliances — making the game richer for the players. Play a whole series of seemingly unrelated negligible events as clues that lead up to the impact of something really big.

Example: *Phil, the GM, decides that the Knights of Genetic Purity want to establish a cell in the community of Soasaike. So, he describes a lone figure arriving in the town from out of the wastelands. He plays this as a negligible event in the Outside Influence*

factor. A couple of days of game time later, he plays another negligible event in the Outside Influence factor, describing it as the stranger buying drinks for some of the town's bums. Phil also wants to hint at an impending disaster, a cloud of plant-eating nanites being swept across the landscape by the wind. So, he describes some minor damage to Soasaike's wheat crop, and plays a negligible event into the Disaster factor.

MINOR EVENTS

Minor events are usually the small things that happen on a day-to-day basis in the community which are interesting, but don't actually change life in the community much. The birth of a child could easily be a minor Population event to many communities.

Although they have more of an effect than negligible events, it doesn't take a lot of effort on the PCs part to sort out the results of minor events, or to help reduce the effect to nothing. However, a string of related minor events in quick succession can threaten to overwhelm the PCs simply because they cannot be everywhere at once. For example, if the community was in the middle of hosting a spring carnival, then a series of events such as needing to impress the visiting leader (Strong Leadership), dealing with a minor theft from the markets (Greed), stopping the visitors from spreading malicious rumors about the leadership (Outside Influence) and fixing the broken engine part that the visitors actually came to collect (Disaster) should keep the PCs extremely busy for several days.

Minor events can also make good aftershocks in the wake of a major or critical event. These sorts of spinoff events should clearly relate to the big event. If the community was hit by a nanite storm, then aftershocks could include running out of fresh water, sanitation problems, loss of morale and so on. It takes a while for a community to settle down again after experiencing something earth-shattering, and using a series of minor events that eventually taper off in severity and frequency can help the community get back on the road to normality again.

Example: *The Knights of Genetic Purity's agent has been busy spreading his message. Phil describes an attack on a visiting mutant by one of Soasaike's human members, playing a minor event into the Outside Influence factor. Phil also decides that one of the farmers realizes what the strange damage to his wheat fields was caused by and takes it to Soasaike's leaders. They ignore him, so the farmer causes a stir in the field, accusing the leadership of blindness to danger.*



In terms of the CBM, he plays it as a minor event into the Dissent factor. The PCs listen to the disgruntled farmer and analyze the damaged wheat. Their research is a success, and they realize it comes from wind-borne nanites. Phil plays this as a minor counter-event in the Disaster factor, lowering its level.

AVERAGE EVENTS

Average events are just what the name suggests: suitable typical challenges. Circumstances change in the community, and someone needs to take some sort of action to deal with them. An average event could be a talking point among the community members. While it may not affect everyone in the community, most people will hear about it through the grapevine, unless someone makes a deliberate effort to keep it quiet.

GMs should use a string of related average events together to form the main backbone of a story arc for the PCs. This allows the PCs to respond to a number of different crises without being overwhelmed by the course of events. When preparing a story arc, plan out a string of average events mixed with several minor and negligible events to weave in background ideas, leading up to a related major event as a climax.

The PCs should be able to deal with most average events by themselves. The events should, however, at least pose a challenge to the PCs, calling for some thought to handle effectively. GMs should also aim to create events that use the whole spectrum of the PCs' skills and feats, and often put them into a situation where they are forced to compromise on something in order to get a successful resolution.

Example: Phil feels it's time to have the Knights of Genetic Purity reveal themselves in Soasaike. The bums that the mysterious stranger converted to the cause lynch a sick mutant who was in town for treatment. Phil plays this as an average event into the Outside Influence factor. Word of the impending nanite storm starts to spread through Soasaike, and some of the community members start to stock up on basic supplies. Phil simulates this as an average event into the Greed factor.

MAJOR EVENTS

When a major event strikes, it's big news for everyone in the community. It's going to have an effect on most or all of the population in some way. It may mean that everyone has to help pitch in to help deal with the effects, or it may mean that the benefit that the community receives touches everyone, at least in an indirect way. Major events should not be played on a regular basis; instead, they should serve as high points in the campaign, things that the players will

remember for a long time afterwards. Even positive major events have the ability to destabilize a community; while the initial result may be extremely positive, it can trigger all sorts of bickering and infighting among the community members.

Major events, like critical events, should never occur in a vacuum. There should be a string of events that help foreshadow the arrival of the major event, and a string of subsequent events of differing severities that plot out the aftermath.

Example: After the town banishes the bums for lynching the mutant, they join up with the Knights of Genetic Purity's main attack force a few miles away. The Knights see this as a sign that Soasaike is populated by mutant lovers and launch a military assault on the town. Phil plays this as a major event into the Disaster factor.

CRITICAL EVENTS

The nuclear weapons of the event table, critical events are ones that can literally reshape the course of a community's destiny. As such, they shouldn't be used very often. For a normal community, a critical event may only happen once every year or two of game time and should really only be used as the climax for a story arc.

Most critical events have a negative effect on the community. These events are so big, they normally swamp the community's ability to cope with them effectively if they are not properly prepared for. Dealing with a critical event *demands* that the whole community work together. They should *never* be something that the PCs can take on by themselves. Instead, the PCs may need to rely on their interpersonal skills to cajole or intimidate people into helping just as much as they will need to rely on their active skills such as Repair, or their combat abilities.

However, critical events *can* have a positive effect on a community. A small community that only has primitive tools and vehicles that stumbles across a cache of working soultech vehicles would certainly experience a critical Prosperity event.

Critical events should *never* happen in isolation. While there may be little warning of the event before it strikes, the critical event should always trigger a series of smaller events that allow the community to come to grips with their change of circumstances.

Example: As if the Knights of Genetic Purity's attack wasn't bade enough, Phil decides it's time for the nanite storm to hit Soasaike. He describes a massive cloud of purple, swirling dust descending on the community's crops, eating the wheat in a blaze of light. To simulate this, he plays a critical event into the Disaster factor.

Chances are, Soasaike is pretty much ruined by this stage.

UNUSUAL COMMUNITIES

The community rules presented in the **Gamma World Player's Handbook** imply that the community's population is made up of more or less normal people living in a mostly democratic political environment, who all have an interest in improving — or at least maintaining — their community. Not all communities are like that.

AQUATIC COMMUNITIES

Not all communities are found on dry land. With the genetic modifications before the Final Wars and the impact of mutations in their aftermath, some communities are now found *below* the waterline. For the most part, living under the water is much like living above the surface, although there are a number of subtle differences, particularly when dealing with air-breathers.

Not all communities under the water are mutants who developed gills and then retreated beneath the surface. Since the 20th century, humans have been working closely with creatures like dolphins and whales, which possess an intelligence level close to that of humans. When humanity gained the ability to manipulate genetic structures with ease, dolphins were among the very first creatures uplifted to sentience. Pods of these intelligent mammals now swim the world's oceans, undersea nomads who occasionally trade with the surface dwellers when it suits them.

In other cases, mutants and other uplifted creatures form permanent settlements beneath the surface. Some choose to live among the flooded ruins of ancient cities, scavenging whatever technology and riches they can find. Others reject the remnants of the Old World completely, thinking that the reason the world is in poor shape is because of what the air-breathers did to it. These groups often make their homes in natural underwater cave systems, while others make their own shelters, some even growing mutant strains of coral and shaping it to suit their needs.

Many species living beneath the waters lack hands or other forms of dexterous manipulators; fins or flippers are far more common, as they help with movement underneath the water. Consequently, many underwater communities use only fairly primitive tools if they use them at all. This is not to say that they shun tool use, however. Tools that can be adapted to their special needs, or even machines that can survive extended periods of complete immersion (especially undersea robots), are often highly prized.

Contact with air-breathing communities can sometimes be problematic, especially if the water-dwellers cannot venture out of the water for any length of time. Contact is usually done through special envoys who venture into the other realm, taking a small piece of their own environment with them — water tanks or pools in the case of the water-breathers, and scuba gear or artificial gills for the surface-dwellers. Communication between the two groups is often achieved by writing, although sometimes some technological translators or even telepathy is used to make contact simpler.

DESIGNING AN AQUATIC COMMUNITY

Aquatic communities are predominately nomadic, with schools or pods of individuals traveling around to take advantage of the myriad forms of life beneath the waves. The skills and feats of such a community should reflect their lack of a permanent home, as well as the difficulty of hauling possessions around underwater.

For communities that have a more-or-less permanent location, this restriction can be relaxed. Such underwater communities are much like their counterparts on the surface. Any differences between the two are purely cosmetic.

However, one major drawback of an underwater community is the difficulty of defending it against attack. Communities on the surface usually only have to defend against attackers at ground level, unless the aggressors are lucky enough to have some sort of aircraft. Underwater, it is always possible to come down on top of the community, as well as approaching it from the side.

SIGNS

The signs of an underwater community depend very much on the nature of the community itself. For the purely nomadic schools and pods, the signs would be a highly developed social structure when observing the behavior of the community members, and the fact that they may be carrying or towing possessions with them. The community members may not even be humanoid; groups descended from dolphins, whales, sharks, seals or penguins would be more likely to be recognized as an active community than a group of humanoid mutants.

Signs for permanent based communities would be similar to the ones for surface communities, including permanent structures with some form of defenses, pens for keeping livestock, storehouses for food, and acres of crops under cultivation.

HIVE MIND COMMUNITIES

Perhaps the most alien of the communities are the hive minds. Most communities are made up of a group of individuals, each with its own distinct personality and quirks. Hive minds are different. Each member contributes to the overall intelligence of the community, but has little in the way of free will or individual expression.

Hive-minded communities are normally based around a central intelligence of some sort. This is an individual more gifted than most of the other community members. Like a queen bee in a beehive, this individual directs the day-to-day operation of the community and does all the long-term planning.

These communities are usually strictly caste-based. At the top are the brains. Protecting the brains and the rest of the community are the warriors, who are often specially bred for their fighting ability. At the bottom of the ladder are the workers. These are the most numerous members of the community, although they also appear to be the least intelligent.

To most humans, hive-minded communities usually appear to be made of mindless workers performing drudge tasks with singular determination. It's only when outsiders examine the working of the community as a whole that the intelligence becomes obvious, the menial tasks performed by the workers fitting into an overall strategy.

Many hive-minded communities are biological, descending in some fashion from the Earth's millions of insect species. However, some are completely machine-based. From the late 20th century, distributed computing became a hot research topic, and dozens of systems were designed to share the processing load among dozens of computers. Throughout the early 21st century, distributed computing had evolved so that the processes that ran on an individual computer would contribute to the overall working of the system, without being an irreplaceable part of it. With the introduction of true artificial intelligence, these distributed programs became true hive minds.

Many hive minds can be mistaken for simple non-verbal communities, as hive minds often communicate through non-verbal means. The main difference is that the inhabitants of non-verbal communities are all individuals, capable of thinking independently, while a hive mind's population all forms part of a large collective intelligence.

DESIGNING A HIVE MIND

The most important thing about a hive mind is that all the community members form part of the collective intelligence. This usually means that all community members are of the same species, or are all computer-based in some way. A hive-mind community can be of any size and type, although they would rarely make up an entire conglomerate. They may, however, form part of a conglomerate; a self-aware computing network living within the boundaries of another community would be a perfect example of this.

One thing that *does* set hive minds apart from other communities is the lack of factions. Because every individual within the community forms an integral part of the collective intelligence, there is no difference of opinion between community members. For a hive mind, the concept of different factions vying for control of the community simply doesn't enter the picture.

SIGNS

Signs of a hive mind include an obviously distinct class system, with usually only the workers and the warriors normally seen; interactions with an individual member of the community might prove frustrating, as the individual would appear to know nothing, especially when cut off from the community; community members who work as a team with little or no communication between them.

MILITARY COMMUNITIES

While the Final Wars were not entirely the result of military action, much of the downfall of civilization can be blamed on military action, and the use of weapons of mass destruction in both the strategic and tactical theaters. In the three generations since society collapsed, the military as a concept has mostly fallen by the wayside. But there remain isolated pockets where military law still holds, and communities still act as though the War continues. Some communities are only replicas of the Pre-War military, formed by people trying to emulate knowledge gathered from books and other recorded media. Others, particularly pure-strain human groups, are direct descendants of the original units, and they continue to operate as though the War is still on.

Military communities are among the most rigidly organized groups in the Gamma Age. They are usually strictly caste-based, with the non-commissioned ranks having the highest

populations, while the officers are responsible for leading the troops and managing the community's day-to-day running. At the top of the hierarchy are the generals, who have worked their way up through the officer ranks until they reach a point where they are in charge of the strategic decisions that the community has to make.

Most military communities are strongly oriented toward taking and holding strategic objectives and defending them against their enemies. They often have the best weapons and armor available, and spend thousands of hours a year drilling to ensure the troops remain at peak efficiency for combat.

Not all military communities are violent or aggressive. Some stick to their last remaining orders which were to hold a particular location until reinforcements arrive. Over time, they have entrenched themselves, setting up what would appear on the surface to be another regular community if it weren't for the strictly enforced discipline.

One thing that all military communities have in common is a strong sense of tradition and ceremony. Most units can trace their history back to major conflicts in the past, although most can only go as far back as the haze of the Final Wars. Regardless, ceremonial drills and parades to commemorate fallen comrades-in-arms take place at regular intervals throughout the year. They also share a strong sense of discipline, where superiors expect their orders to be carried out without question. Failure to do so usually results in punishment for the guilty parties, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

DESIGNING A MILITARY COMMUNITY

Military groups are perhaps the most diverse of the specialized communities, in that there are any number of ways that they can be designed. For a small community, representing just a single unit, a conglomerate with two groups representing the officers and the non-commissioned ranks would probably be the best approach. For much larger groups, such as a whole army with infantry, cavalry and logistics units, a split along functional lines would be preferable.

Regardless of the way the community is designed, all of them have strong Force and Command scores, and skills and feats geared more toward some form of combat operations. Most have

a higher level of technology use than many other communities; feats such as Basic, Moderate and Heavy Fortifications would be commonplace. Most military groups have stores of supplies for maintaining lengthy military operations, so Stockpile would be a good feat. If the military unit has naval or air assets, then they should also have the Safe Harbor or Airfield feats respectively.

SIGNS

Signs of a military community would include: the population wears uniforms of some sort; obvious chains of command; physical buildings and equipment have some form of identification stenciled on them; regular drill parades and combat readiness training exercises. The physical location of the community would also be fortified in some way, with armed patrols ensuring that security is maintained.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNITIES

While most communities use some form of spoken language to communicate, there are some that rely on non-verbal forms of communication. For some, telepathy or pheromones provide their means of communication, while others, particularly those made up of machines or artificial intelligences, rely on data transfer via wireless links or even old landlines.

Communities that completely lack any form of verbal communication should be exceptionally rare. Nevertheless, they do exist. Brutorz herds, for example, rely on telepathy for communication. Some intelligent machines were either never capable of communicating with humans — there was nothing more annoying than a talking toaster — or their communications circuitry has been removed to repair some other construct that was deemed to be more important.

It's important to remember that non-verbal communities are *not* non-communicative. They do have a means of communicating with one another, often in extremely complex and rich ways. In most cases, it is possible for outsiders to learn to translate these forms of communication into a verbal language, although the digital signals of a computer mind may require another machine to do the translation. Occasionally, as in the case of pheromones, it may be impossible for an outsider to learn the language at all.

Non-verbal groups can exist as whole communities, as with Brutorz herds, but they may

also exist as a suburb in a conglomerate, or even just as a faction in a smaller community.

DESIGNING A NON-VERBAL COMMUNITY

The most important factor when designing a non-verbal community is deciding how the community is going to communicate with one another. Do they rely on some other form of language such as a sign language, or do they rely entirely on signal transfer in some form (telepathy, pheromones, radio waves, etc).

Apart from that, non-verbal communities will follow the normal community generation rules.

SIGNS

The most obvious sign that a community is non-verbal is that community members can cooperate intelligently on tasks without speaking. While some species may use sign language or mime, or more animalistic sounds for communication, in some cases, individuals may suddenly start paying attention to other community members for no apparent reason.

SLAVING COMMUNITIES

Some inhabitants of the Gamma World lack the ability to control their own destinies. Instead, their lives are dictated by the whims of others, who view them as little more than animals or simple property. Where slavery is an important part of the community's way of life, the power resides with a small group, who use force and threats to keep a much larger section of the population under strict control.

Life in a slaver community is one of marked differences. For those in power, life is often luxurious. They have no need to deal with mundane tasks such as physical labor, cleaning, repairs or tending crops. This leaves them free to concentrate on pursuits that they may not have otherwise been able to enjoy. To these people, slaves are little more than property and should certainly not be considered to be human.

This attitude is much more prevalent than one might think. Genetic tinkering before the Final Wars raised dozens of animal species to full sentience, and the constant waves of mutagens in the Wars' aftermath have created many more. Until humanity learned to manipulate DNA sequences and change what nature had created by itself, humans were the only sentient species on the planet; many humans never really learned to adjust after things changed. They still view uplifted



creatures as animals, albeit clever ones, that can be harnessed and trained the same way that they were before the Final Wars. While some communities would find the idea of keeping human slaves as completely abhorrent, they have no trouble with having captive Badders to do their dirty work.

Robots and other sentient machines present similar moral complications. Humans are often incapable of seeing a machine that their ancestors created as having a desire for self-determination. A machine is simply a tool to get the job done, despite the fact that that very same machine may have developed thoughts and emotions on its own.

At the other extreme are the communities where the humans are the slaves, being held captive by some of the creatures that they help to create. Many uplifted creatures are often violently opposed to humans, so capturing them and using them as slaves would often be an acceptable solution to killing them outright.

Life for the slaves is often one of extreme physical hardship and suffering. The ruling class usually treats them with contempt and forces them to perform all manner of tasks considered too dull or too dangerous for the ruling class to do themselves. Other masters do treat their captives more like servants, rewarding them for good performance, using positive reinforcement as a means of getting the best performance. But regardless of the treatment, the slaves are still not permitted to come and go as they please, or in many cases allowed to make anything more than the most basic decisions for themselves.

DESIGNING A SLAVING COMMUNITY

Slaving communities should almost always be conglomerates, with the ruling class being smaller but much more powerful. The dominant group in a master/slave relationship holds its position through the implied threat of punishment, whether physical (through the use of violence, torture or even executions) or emotional (through isolation from the rest of the community, or through the withholding of privileges). Such groups should have high Force and Command attribute scores, and would probably have access to high-tech weaponry.

The dominant group's CBM should have a high score in the Influence on Others factor, to signify the control over the slave community. This control can be augmented using any of the methods described in the External Allegiance section of Chapter One.

The slave "suburbs" have much lower attribute scores, particularly Command. While there are usually more slaves than masters, they come to believe that thinking for themselves and trying to run their own lives is pointless. The skills and feats that the community has should be tailored toward the physical labor needed to keep a community functioning properly, rather than toward academic pursuits.

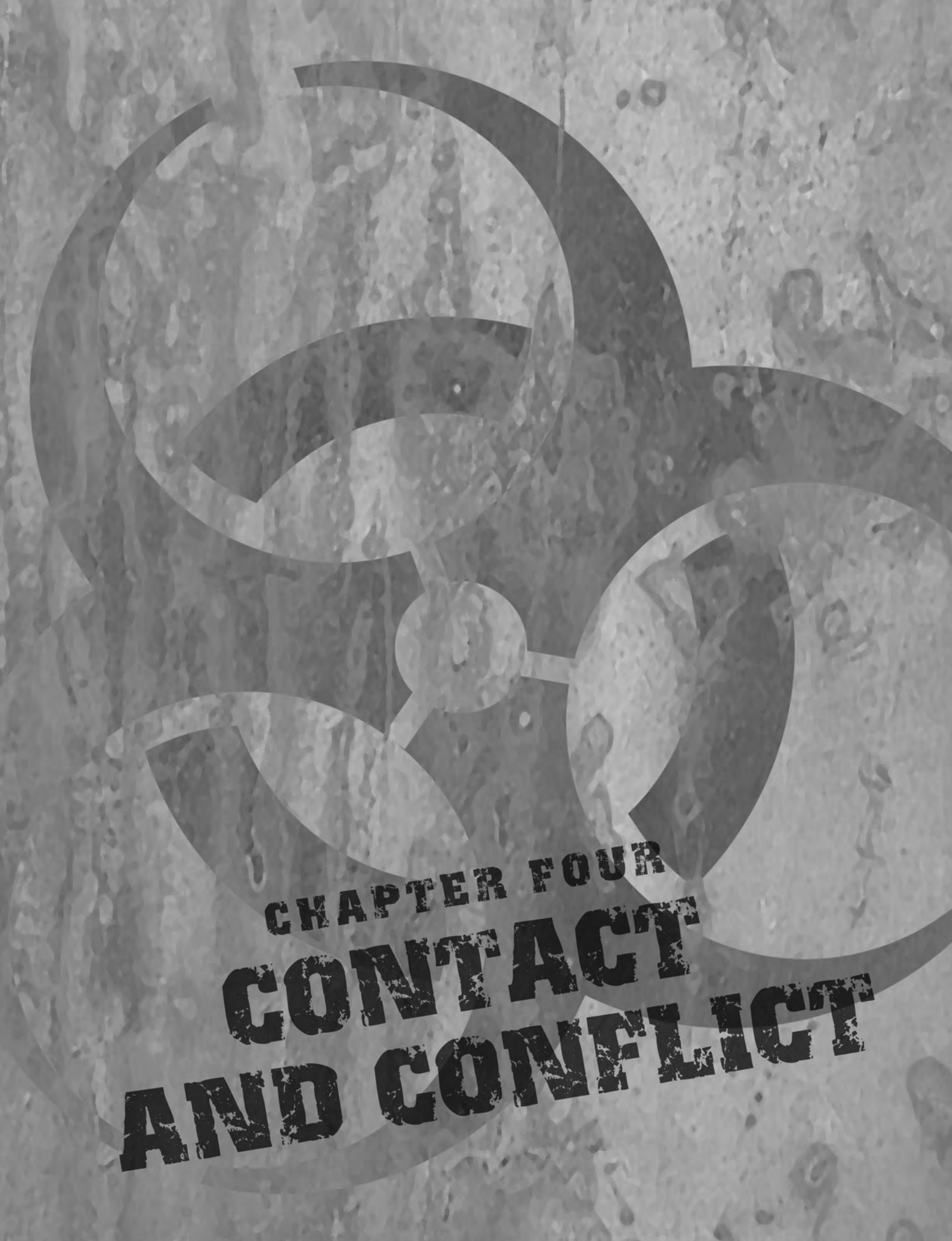
Individual slave characters should always have an external allegiance (see Chapter One for details), as they are being forced to have an allegiance to a community against their will. The slave community as a whole would have high score in the Outside Influence factor, and a low score in the Influence on Others factor, to show their place underneath the dominant community.

SOCIAL FACTORS AND ROLEPLAYING

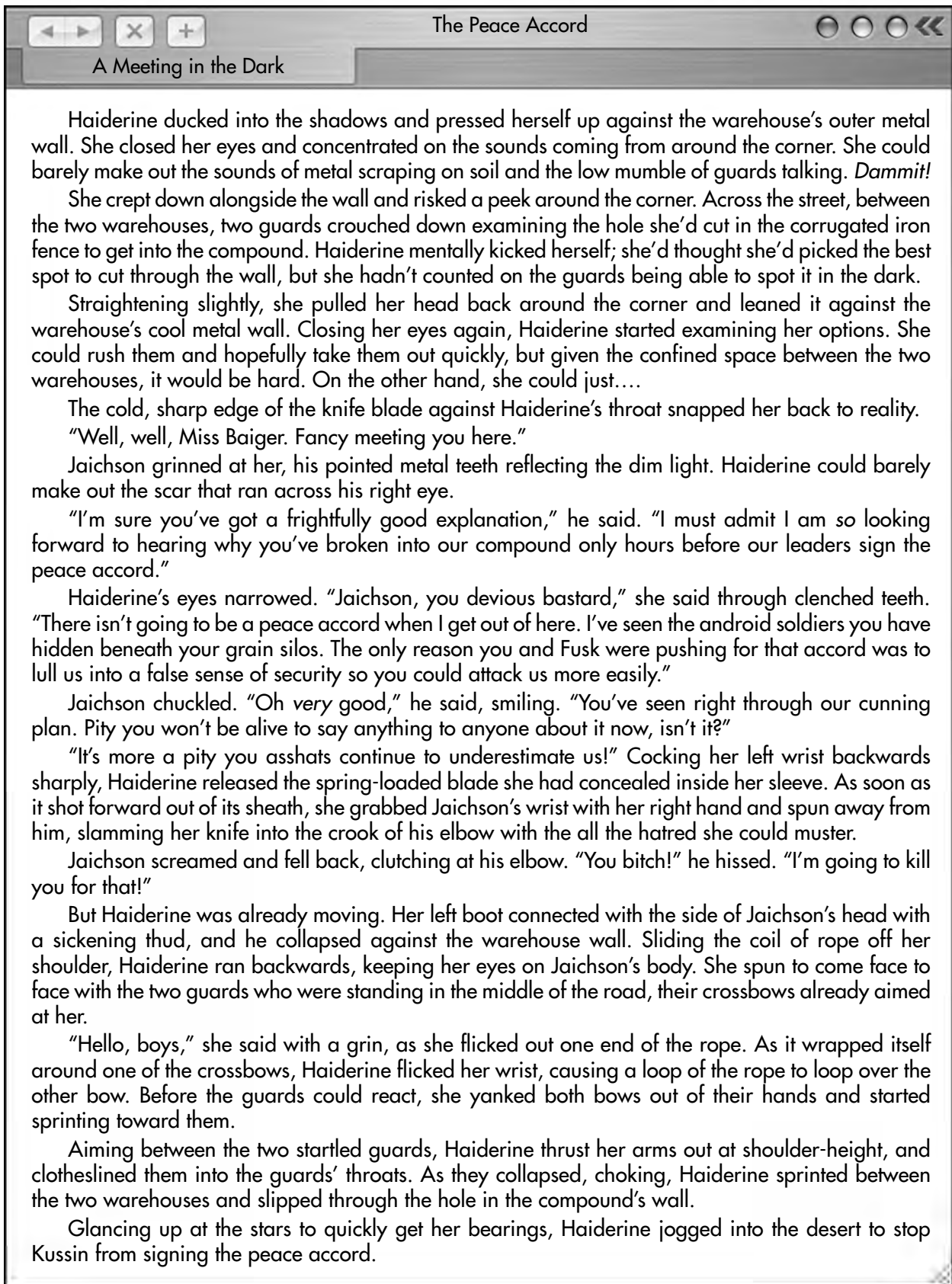
GMs and players should exercise caution when including a slaving community in their game. Many people find the concept of slaving to be abhorrent, and the idea of playing a game where such philosophies exist may be deeply distressing. If this is the case, then slaving communities should be used only as enemies, *if* they are used at all. Part of the PCs' mission could be to undermine the ruling class of such a community and to lead the slaves out of bondage and into a free life, like a post-apocalyptic Moses.

SIGNS

A sign of a community using slaves would be an obvious ruling class, with all sorts of privileges and access to better food and technology. There would also be an obvious, downtrodden working class, which may or may not be forced to work under coercion.



CHAPTER FOUR
CONTACT
AND CONFLICT



Communities usually do not exist in complete isolation. Few of them are fully self-sufficient, making them reliant on other communities to make up the shortfall in some way. Some communities take the peaceful approach, establishing diplomatic and trade ties with other groups. Others use more violent tactics, attacking communities that have the supplies they need and taking them by force. Then there is the middle ground where relations between groups start off cordially, but degenerate over time to bickering or outright conflict.

When two communities interact with one another, they necessarily exert influence over each other's

populations. This clash of ideas can often benefit each group as they learn new approaches to dealing with common problems. It is also sometimes destructive as foreign ideas can corrupt the thinking of the community members, causing them to lose sight of the community's core philosophy and focus on other things.

This chapter deals with the relationships between different communities. It provides ideas on how one community can learn about another's strengths and weaknesses. It also discusses how they can relate to one another both in peacetime and war.

CONTACT

When two communities meet each other, they do not instantly learn everything there is to know about the other group. It takes time and effort to understand the other population's mindset, learning who the important players are and what the people are trying to achieve.

LOCATING A COMMUNITY

Before contact can be established, one community must learn that the other actually exists. It may be as simple as being told about the other settlement, perhaps by travelers passing through; if the PCs are traveling cross-country, a neighboring community may provide them with information.

This word-of-mouth information is often the most useful, as it can provide an insight into who the main players in the target community are without the need for direct contact. However, the drawback is that the information the PCs uncover may be inaccurate: out of date, or colored by the information source's biases. In order to get some sort of indicator of how biased the information is, the PCs can make DC 20 Sense Motive checks (see the table below for modifiers). If successful, they realize that the information may be tainted in some way.

Ease of Verification	Sense Motive DC Modifier
Dozens of alternate sources	-10
Several alternate sources	-5
Source is friendly	-5
Source is hostile	+5
Few alternate sources	+5
No alternate sources	+10

The other way to learn about the existence of a community is to find signs of habitation during cross-

country travels. It might be as simple as coming over a hill and finding cultivated fields and farm animals, or seeing smoke rising from chimneys. It may also be subtler, such as carefully disguised territory markers, or the spoor from patrols that are ensuring that the community's lands remain free from intruders. The GM should decide on what physical signs that the PCs encounter based on the attributes, skills and feats of the actual target community.

Sign	Spot DC
Trash	10
Vehicle tracks	10
Buried trash	15
Footprints	15
Territory markers	15
Disguised territory markers	20
Motion sensors	25

DIRECT VS. STEALTHY APPROACH

Once the target community is located, there are two main ways to go about learning more about them: direct or stealthy. The direct approach requires that both groups are aware of one another and can communicate openly. The stealthy approach is used when one group wants to learn about the other without revealing (too much of) themselves in return.

It is possible to mix the two styles to some extent, using the direct approach to get the other community to open up and the stealthy to observe and manipulate the other into revealing more of themselves than they intended to.

THE DIRECT APPROACH

The quickest and easiest way to get access into a locked room is to knock on the door and have the

people inside admit you. It's no different for communities. Often the best way to learn all about another community is simply to approach them and ask questions. Being open and honest with another group is often a good way to establish trust and open communication channels.

The direct approach works best for non-violent communities. Most peaceful groups are more than willing to meet new people and to learn news from other places. In fact, having visitors is often a special occasion for many communities, as it helps break up the monotony of everyday life. If the community is more paranoid, they may not be willing to open their doors to strangers, believing — sometimes correctly — that the outsiders are only interested in harming or exploiting them in some way.

But information flows in more than one direction. The community welcoming the visitors can learn from them if community members pay attention to what the visitors say and do. Astute observers can follow the lines of questions that the visitors ask to determine what the visitors are interested in, and can in return ask questions of their own to learn more.

The direct approach is almost always the one taken by traders. It makes little sense to use a covert approach to a community if you have something to sell them. Instead, it makes much more sense to arrive with as much pomp and ceremony as possible and try to convince them that they are interested in buying whatever it is you're selling. In return, a merchant can learn the sorts of things that the community wants and needs, which can go a long way to revealing important facts about the community.

When taking the direct approach to learning about another community, PCs can use their Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Intimidate and Sense Motive skills, using the rules in Chapter 2: Skills of the *d20 Modern* core rulebook. The rules presented in Chapter Two of this book are also applicable. PCs can use their personal Reputation bonuses (as described in *d20 Modern*), or their community's Reputation bonus (as described in Chapter Four of the **Gamma World Player's Handbook**) to help influence NPC members of the target community.

Example: *Meeleni comes to Bordlaint seeking medical treatment for her father, who is desperately ill. Rather than waste time with a stealthy approach to the community, she travels right up the ramp to the first of the tree houses and announces herself. Using her Diplomacy skill, she reassures the locals that she means them no harm and that she is looking for the hospital.*

Example: *Eentony needs to get some information from a rival community where there is a price on his head. He*

doesn't trust anyone around him to do the job for him, so he disguises himself as a wandering hobo and approaches the township. Using his Bluff skill, he convinces the guards that he is a harmless traveler and gains entry, allowing him to learn what he needs to.

THE STEALTHY APPROACH

While the direct approach can provide the PCs with a lot of information about a community relatively quickly, there are sometime good reasons why such an approach may not be advisable. If the target settlement has a reputation for brutality or bad treatment of visitors, another community may wish to learn whatever it can without putting itself at risk. They may also decide that a covert approach can gather important information that could be useful when the more direct approach is made later on. Alternatively, if the community is trying to conquer another group, then it's vital to gather as much intelligence about them as possible before launching an attack.

The stealthy approach relies primarily on observation of the target community, without any sort of direct interaction. By observing what the community does on a daily basis — where they go, what activities they engage in, where their storehouses are, how big the population is and so on — important information can be gathered which can make a big difference overall.

The stealthy approach can also involve deliberate probing of the target community in order to determine weaknesses and levels of readiness. This can take the form of attacks on isolated people, livestock or facilities or triggering emergencies; or it may simply be a simple matter of sneaking into and examining the target community without being seen.

The stealthy approach lacks the social interaction of the direct approach. It cannot usually provide information about who the leader is, what style of government the community has, how many factions the community has and who their leaders are (unless of course these things are displayed in public so that they may be observed, or the PCs physically sneak into the community to scout around and eavesdrop on conversations).

When using the stealthy approach, skills such as Disguise, Investigate, Listen, Move Silently, Perform (act), Search and Spot are all useful for the PCs to try, using the guidelines in *d20 Modern*.

Example: *Max wants to learn more about the community of nomad hunters he's spotted camped out down by the watering hole. Rather than approach them, he camouflages himself on top of a nearby hill and carefully watches the activities in the campsite using his Spot skill.*

Example: Haiderine suspects that Jaichson is tricking the leader of her community into a false sense of security by offering him a truce. Rather than do nothing, she decides to learn more about her rival community by infiltrating it and searching through some of the buildings after dark. After managing to sneak past several of the town's patrols, she breaks into one of the warehouses and starts searching for proof of her suspicions.

LEARNING MORE

Regardless of the approach the PCs choose, they must still understand what it is that they see and hear in and around the target community.

For the target community's most obvious aspects such as physical buildings, fields and vehicles being used out in the open, no roll is necessary. The GM can simply describe the signs that are associated with the community's attributes, skills and feats to the players and let them figure out what each of the signs corresponds to.

For more subtle things such as the makeup of different community factions or the factor weightings in a node in the Community Behavior Map, the PCs need to succeed at an appropriate skill check.

In order to determine information about the target community's social aspects, the PCs must make a successful check with the appropriate skill. A list of

SHOW, DON'T TELL

When giving information about the target community to the players, it's much better to use the same "show, don't tell" principle described in Chapter Three. When the players are learning about the target community's capabilities, don't just provide them with the community's sheet.

Each of the attributes and feats has a list of suggested signs associated with it. These are provided to give GMs some ideas about how the various elements manifest in the game world. By describing these signs, the players get some indication of what their characters see, smell and hear in and around the target community. For most things, the signs are relatively unambiguous and the players should be accurately able to figure out what the signs correspond to.

However, if the players make a mistake in their evaluations, let them go and just play out the consequences. The Gamma World is rarely a predictable place.

situations, the skills needed and the DCs required are provided below. If more than one skill is listed, then the GM should decide which is appropriate for any given situation.



Determine the real power brokers in a community (Diplomacy, Gather Information or Knowledge (behavioral sciences))

DC to accomplish: 20

Critical Error DC: 15–

Success: The PCs understand who holds the power in the community.

Error: The PCs may try to negotiate with the wrong people, which may do them harm in the long run.

Determining the power brokers takes time, normally at least a week. If the PCs exceed the DC by more than 5, they can shorten the length of time needed by 1 day per point above 25 (to a minimum of 1 day).

Understand a community's military capability (Knowledge (tactics))

DC to accomplish: 25

Critical Error DC: 15–

Success: The PCs understand how the community's defenses are organized and spot any weaknesses.

Error: The PCs overestimate or underestimate the community's defensive capabilities. They may also fail to spot a weakness, or incorrectly identify a weakness that may turn out to be a deliberate trap.

Understanding the community's military capability takes time, normally at least a week. If the PCs exceed the DC by more than 5, they can shorten the length of time needed by 1 day per point above 25 (to a minimum of 1 day).

Figuring out the factions (Gather Information, Knowledge (behavioral sciences), or Knowledge (gossip))

DC to accomplish: 25

Critical Error DC: 20–

Success: The PCs identify one of the community's factions.

Error: The PCs fail to identify the faction or its membership, or they may even fail to recognize it as a faction at all.

Notes: A separate roll must be made for each faction.

Figuring out a community's factions takes time, normally a week per faction if they are open about their existence, or 4 weeks per faction if they act covertly. If the PCs exceed the DC by more than 5, they can shorten the length of time needed by 1 day per point above 30 (to a minimum of 1 day).

Figuring out a node's weighting factor (Gather Information or Knowledge (behavioral sciences))

DC to accomplish: 30

Critical Error DC: 25–

Success: The PCs successfully discover one of the community's factor weightings.

Error: The PCs have no idea about the factor weighting, or they get an inaccurate picture of it.

Notes: A separate roll must be made for each node in the Community Behavior Map. GMs should not provide the actual numerical value, but should describe the general level in terms of the signs that it would have in the game universe.

Determining a community's factor weightings requires a week or more per factor. If the PCs exceed the DC by more 5 five, they can shorten the length of time needed by 1 day per point above 35 (to a minimum of 1 day).

PEACE

For the most part, relationships between different communities are usually friendly, or at least polite. Although those individuals with direct experience of the Final Wars have almost all passed away, the signs of the conflict remain as grim reminders to the living of the futility of war. Few want to waste the energy they've invested in starting to rebuild civilization by throwing it all away on another major conflict.

The reasons that communities stay in touch with one another are as varied as the communities themselves. The communication level between them also depends on the level of trust between the two communities. The

greater the level of trust, the more mutually beneficial the relationship between the two will be.

Relationships don't always remain cordial though. Although most communities try to coexist peacefully and to each other's mutual benefit, there are times when relationships can become strained over some simple point of contention. At times like these, it takes some deft political maneuvering to prevent outright hostilities from erupting.

This section provides details on the ways that communities can influence each other during peacetime and the sorts of activities involved.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

The most common reason that communities interact with one another is for trade. Not every community can produce everything its members need to live comfortably. They may simply not have the raw materials, the skills or the technology to produce or maintain everything that they need. Usually though, other communities can make up the shortfall, and through some sort of trade agreement a mutually beneficial arrangement can be made.

There are two broad categories of trade. The first is strategic trade, where appointed representatives of one community are given the authority to negotiate with another community for some commodity. The second is a more direct form of trade, where members of one community sell their goods directly to the population of another.

Strategic trade normally takes place between two communities with strong diplomatic ties. One community appoints a delegation and sends it to the other community in order to secure a beneficial trade agreement. Depending on the circumstances, the agreement might be a one-time deal, or it might represent a much longer-term arrangement, where supplies between the communities would flow back and forth on a regular basis.

The actual tactics used by the delegation depend very much on the community it comes from and how strong the community's bargaining position is. In cases where the negotiations are kept (mostly) honest, then the delegation will rely mainly on their diplomacy skills to negotiate the contract terms. If one side is trying to deliberately mislead the other in some fashion — usually for short-term gain — then the envoys will make use of Bluff, including the tactics described in Chapter Two. If the envoys rely on threats to get the most beneficial trade agreement, then their facility with Intimidate will be critical.

Trade delegations are a perfect way for the PCs to have an influence over their community's well-being. If the PCs are the ones entrusted with obtaining the best deal for their community, then they will have to rely on their wits and skill during the negotiations.

The more direct trade style usually happens when some form of caravan arrives at another community and the populations of the two communities mingle and trade directly with one another. When this sort of trade occurs, it usually turns into a semi-official holiday for the community being visited. The townsfolk haggle for the things that they need personally, or simply for trinkets that they like. This latter style is often how

the flotsam from the times before the Final Wars finds its way into the hands of the current generation.

This is also the sort of trade that happens when lone scavengers or small groups arrive at a community to sell off items they have recovered in their adventures. This is particularly relevant for PCs who spend their time rummaging through the wreckage of the Old World looking for items they can sell to turn a profit.

GAME RULES

Negotiating a trade agreement requires a successful Diplomacy, Bluff or Intimidate check. The delegates can also use their personal Reputation bonuses or their community's Reputation bonus. The actual DC required depends on the corresponding skills of the other community. Negotiations should be made as a series of opposed skill checks, where the appropriate skill from one community is pitted against the corresponding skill from the other.

The community's Reputation bonuses can also be used to help influence the result of the negotiations (see Chapter Four: Home Sector and Beyond of the **Gamma World Player's Handbook** for more details). If one of the communities has the Infamous feat, it gets a +2 bonus on checks to influence the other.

Trade also has an effect on the Community Behavior Map. Strategic trade affects the whole community, so trade negotiations create events that act on the community's Resources and Prosperity factors. Successful negotiations have a positive effect, while failed negotiations cause a fall in the factor weights.

Personal trade has a much smaller effect on the community's overall Resources factor. Instead, it influences the Population Happiness node, as the individual population members get new goods to make their lives better. However, this sort of trade should also cause increases in the Greed, Dissent and Outside Influence factor weights, which can have long-term destabilizing effects on the community.

COMMUNICATION

Getting news from one community to another is vitally important if the communities are working together for a common goal. However, since the Final Wars, advanced communication methods like radio and satellite phones are normally no longer available (or their operation is especially patchy in the rare cases where they *are* available).

The Pony Express was a feature of the old American West that has naturally restarted since civilization collapsed. Without high-tech means of

communicating, communities often use dispatch runners or riders to carry news and other important communiqués. In some cases, whole nomadic communities have learned to make a living ferrying news and information from one community to another.

Community members nearly always welcome news from the outside world. Dispatch riders are often plied with food and drink, and questioned mercilessly for stories and gossip from other communities. Many people stay fairly close to their homes, tending to their farms or scavenging in the nearby ruins. Because of the dangers, few make the often-hazardous journeys between communities, so any stories of the world beyond the immediate horizon are highly prized. Some dispatch riders have become quite adept at turning their anecdotes into actual performances, regaling the locals with stories, songs and poems about the things they've seen.

WHEN THEY JUST DON'T WANT TO TALK

Not all communities are interested in talking with outsiders about what's going on in the outside world. Some of the common reasons why a community may not want to talk with outsiders are:

- They're xenophobic and fight off outsiders as soon as they appear (the community would radically oppose any form of event that would raise its Outside Influence factor).
- The PCs (or the messenger) look like they belong to the community's enemy, or they are of a race that community members despise (for example, when a Purist community is approached by a mutant).
- The community has just been attacked by marauders and they are paranoid about a repeat attack.
- The community has never encountered anyone from the outside and they have no idea *how* to react.
- The people believe so deeply in their own ideology that they are incapable of even understanding an outside viewpoint (this is particularly the case in deeply religious communities, who may go so far as to try to convert the messenger to their own beliefs).
- The community is expecting bad news, so its members aren't interested in hearing what the messenger has to say — even if the news has nothing to do with their expectations.

These are only some of the possible reasons. GMs who are creative with reasons why the community doesn't want to listen to news from the outside world can create a group that sticks in the players' minds for a long time.

In the Gamma World, most communication between communities is either delivered verbally by the messenger, or it is committed to paper. Although some communities still have working recording technology from before the Wars, the recipients often lack the capability to play the messages back, forcing reliance on the older methods.

Because the leaking of important messages about trade or defense could prove disastrous in the wrong hands, many communities have teams of trained cryptographers who secure the content of communications from prying eyes. Some use advanced Pre-War computers, while others rely either on mechanical encryption devices or even manual encryption. Encrypting dispatches is a task that often falls to a community's synthetic members, whose computerized brains are far more efficient at handling the complex mathematical equations used for encryption and decryption.

Not all encrypted communication is between separate communities. Some more advanced communities provide their envoys with special portable encryption devices to allow them to carefully prepare messages to send back to their homes, and for the community leaders to send sensitive messages back out to their envoys. These secure messages are particularly important when the envoys are negotiating trade or defense agreements, allowing the community leaders to have a much greater influence over the outcome.

While most communities treat dispatch riders with respect and provide them with safe passage, there are some that stop at nothing to steal messages meant for other communities, and then use that information for its own advantage. These communities often put great emphasis on having specialized groups for breaking the codes and ciphers of others, as well as maintaining electronic eavesdropping equipment for plucking whatever signals they can from the ether. Some are not above selling the secrets they discover to others, leaking sensitive information as a means of increasing their own wealth.

GAME RULES

Communications to and from a community can radically change the population's mindset. This means that communications become events that affect the Community Behavior Map. If a dispatch rider arrives bringing good news, it creates an event that drives up the Population Happiness factor weight. Conversely, if the news is bad, it may cause a sharp drop in the Happiness weight, or it may cause an increase in the Dissent or Greed factors instead.

News from the outside can sometimes also lead to an increase in Outside Influence as the population

adopts ideas that may not align with the community's core philosophy. At such times, the community's leaders need to work harder to keep the population focused on what's important. How they do that depends on the type of leader; a Strong leader may simply bully his population into forgetting about the message, while a Charismatic leader may give a rousing speech that gets her people's passion fired up behind their own community again. For more details on leadership styles, see Chapter Two.

CLAN GATHERINGS

Even though many communities keep to themselves for most of the year, there are times when the population wants contact with people other than the ones they see every day. This is especially true for smaller communities, where the whole population may only be several dozen people. For most of these people, life is dominated by the work necessary for survival, be it hunting, gathering, tending crops or simply tending to the community's upkeep. There is little in the way of time for recreation or travel.

Some of these communities therefore take time out every year to gather together for fun and fellowship. Such gatherings usually take place in mid-summer, after the crops have been planted, but before they are ready for harvest. In areas with exotic climates or unusual staple crops, the major gatherings occur at whatever time of the year provides the best combination of relatively free days for preparation and festival and relatively tolerable weather. One community usually plays host to the rest, preparing camping grounds and enough extra supplies to cover the increase in population.

For the most part, these gatherings are one long party, with different groups coming together mostly to relax and renew old friendships. There is often a semi-serious side to the gatherings, as the different communities compete with one another in a huge variety of competitions, all trying to win status over the others. These competitions range from physical sporting or hunting skills, through handiwork or agriculture, right through to entertainment and knowledge.

For many young adults (however measured by their species and culture), these gatherings provide opportunities to look outside their own communities for suitable mates. Romances quickly spring up as the younger members (and sly older members) meet and try to impress someone special in the hope of forming long-term relationships. The gatherings are also a time to renew kinship ties between the different communities, catching up with relatives who have moved away and finding out what they have been doing in the past year.

Many gatherings have a religious element to them, as the combined population gives thanks for the past year and spiritually prepares for the upcoming harvest and long winter. The spiritual leaders spend most of their time discussing matters of importance to the combined groups and the ways they can best deal with the needs of their respective populations.

Community leaders use the gatherings as a chance for face-to-face negotiations, and to discuss matters of a strategic nature. Trade and defense matters are often common topics, with new potential threats being shared and ideas on how to deal with them formulated. The leaders also discuss problems they may have had in the past year, share their solutions and discuss possible alternatives that can be tried once the gatherings break up.

For the PCs, clan gatherings provide an opportunity to roleplay some fun times, with lots of character interaction. Normally, they will let their hair down and just relax — although whenever groups of people get together in large numbers, there is always the potential for mischief or outright intrigue that the PCs could be charged with investigating and sorting out.

GAME RULES

Clan gatherings have the greatest impact on the Community Behavior Map of the host community. It will have a massive spike in its Population factor weight, and a corresponding drain on its Resources factor. On the other hand, populations almost always look forward to such gatherings, so there will be a sharp rise in the Population Happiness factor weight.

With the massive intermingling of the different populations, a temporary conglomerate community forms. The different communities interact heavily with one another, and dozens of events will have an impact on some or all of them. Events targeting the Dissent and Greed factors are commonplace, as are changes to a community's Outside Influence and Influence on Others factors.

Example: Eentony and Faithrai are racing against each other in the final heat of the Spring Fair annual cross-country race. Traditionally used to determine the best courier, the race's outcome carries a lot of prestige — not only for the winner, but also for his community. Near the end of the race, Eentony trips, letting Faithrai streak past him for the win. Her community is able to claim with pride they have the best message runner, and so a minor Influence on Others event is played into its Community Behavior Map. Eentony's community, on the other hand, has to suffer the jibes of the victors, and so plays a minor Outside Influence event instead.



While the festivities are going on, rumors circulate throughout the Spring Fair that Maittok's marauders are coming. A minor riot breaks out, as people start grabbing supplies from the markets and heading for the safety of the caves in the hills. To model this, the GM plays a negligible Greed event and an average (negative) Population Happiness event.

DIPLOMACY

As long as communities disagree, there's always the need for diplomats. These special envoys understand the will of their community leaders and have a solid grasp of their home communities' views and politics. Some travel to other communities and negotiate on a wide range of topics, while others take up the post of ambassador, settling permanently in another community to represent their hometowns.

It usually falls to the diplomats to negotiate some sort of compromise over any area in which the two communities have some sort of interaction. While often these talks focus on matters of trade (as discussed above), discussions can cover literally any subject that the two communities may need to discuss. These can be resource issues such as common territory or water usage, or assistance on technical or even domestic political matters.

Some diplomats are occasionally called upon to mediate disputes between two or more other communities. The presence of a neutral party can often go a long way to breaking political deadlocks, bringing both parties to the negotiating table. In many cases, these mediation sessions are all that stands in the way of the two communities' progress to outright war, which could have severe ramifications for communities who might not be involved in the dispute directly but who might be dragged into the fight through treaties or simple proximity to the trouble.

Ambassadors are often called upon to explain the actions of their communities to the leaders of the community where they are stationed. It's the diplomat's task to soothe any ruffled feathers and prevent her community from becoming embroiled in controversy or even conflict. This is often a touchy area, and diplomats must rely on all their personal charm and negotiating abilities to prevent far-reaching problems for their communities.

No matter what talks entail, they nearly always have a strategic focus, with the aim of establishing a long-term result. There may be tactical discussions to defuse an initially volatile situation, but these are usually followed by sessions to determine the long-term ramifications and to establish measures to prevent such situations from happening again.

In any community with multiple active factions, ambassadors and visiting diplomats can expect some lobbying from every group with a claim on (or just an interest in) authority. The diplomats often encourage such interaction, as it can give them an insight into the community that they may not get from official channels. It also provides another means for diplomats to exert influence over the community, by feeding the factions propaganda designed to undermine the community's leadership.

Diplomatic missions are ideal for charismatic PCs, as it gives them a chance to directly interact with another group on behalf of their own community. Alternatively, the PCs could be attached to the diplomatic mission, and be tasked with gathering information about factions and providing intelligence about what's really happening in the other population, to give their diplomats a stronger bargaining position.

The role of the diplomat is not necessarily a permanent one. Some communities do have permanently appointed diplomats trained to negotiate on their behalf — particularly highly religious or political communities — but at other times, *anyone* who has knowledge of the particular situation and who is in the right place may act as a diplomat. This makes it possible for the PCs to act in this role if the need arises.

GAME RULES

Diplomatic missions nearly always generate events that affect the Community Behavior Map's five political factors: Strong Leadership, Influence on Others, Outside Influence, Dissent and — to a lesser extent — Population Happiness. Because of the predominately strategic natures of the talks, the events generated should normally be of at least average severity, although particularly important decisions may create major or even critical events.

DEFENSE TREATIES

A single community has a limited territory, but it can sometimes be hard-pressed to keep it safe from all outside intrusions. As a result, many communities prefer to form defense pacts with their close neighbors to ensure their mutual protection. Many of these defense treaties draw borders around the combined territories of all the signatory communities, assigning each of them a portion of this shared perimeter to patrol and keep safe. The land inside the border is only lightly patrolled, the assumption being that most intruders will not be able to penetrate that far into the territory's interior.

Because the mutual defense of a region requires that forces from all member communities act together, joint training exercises are regularly held to ensure that forces are kept at peak performance. War games help

ensure that all the troops know what they need to do in times of crisis, and improve the cooperation, communication levels and trust between units from the different communities. A common military force often leads to other follow-on effects, namely the sharing of skills and technology between the different parent communities. This is to ensure that all forces in the alliance are similarly equipped, allowing maximum effectiveness if forces from one community are called on to help with the defense of another.

Other roles that the military units may perform are guard duty for trade caravans traveling through the region or on longer missions to other regions; protection of visiting dignitaries; and helping rid the region of mutant and animal troubles.

Sometimes military units split off to form specialist communities with strong links back to their original communities. Soldiers regularly spend time with their families and friends, returning to their barracks when their leave is finished.

Military units often spend some of their time helping their parent communities with physical labor, particularly in times of crisis. Troops are often mobilized to help shore up damage from disasters, or to help prepare the community to minimize the damage if the signs of the impending disaster provide enough warning. Some units are also tasked with helping maintain the peace in other communities *outside* the alliance, usually as a result of diplomatic intervention.

Joint military units provide opportunities for more combat-oriented PCs to help assist directly in the protection of their homes. They also provide a level of training and camaraderie that is sometimes difficult to find outside a military unit.

CHARACTERS FROM DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES

A defense treaty is one way to allow the characters to come from different communities, rather than having them be members of a single settlement. If each one comes from a different place, they can still function together as a group because of the overarching terms of the treaty. The GM can easily inject tension into the game by having each member community have different goals, which may or may not be compatible with those of the other member settlements.

GAME RULES

Military treaties have the most impact by reducing the severity of events that hit the Community Behavior Map's Disaster factor. More indirectly, the extra

protection they provide increases a community's Population Happiness and Prosperity factors, because the civilian population can concentrate on running the community's day-to-day business without worrying about dropping everything to pick up arms in defense of their community.

An effective military force often has a positive effect on a community's Reputation; any community that is part of a military alliance gets a +1 Reputation bonus.

ESPIONAGE

Just because two communities have diplomatic ties with one another doesn't mean that they tell each other everything. Humans are both greedy and suspicious. Other sentients, such as synthetics and the raised species, were created by humans and are suffer from many of the same failings. If they think they will gain from *not* telling someone something, then they'll keep that information to themselves. But secrets have a way of leaking out; people let slip what they know, or they hedge around particular subjects enough to let others know that there is something going on. By recruiting agents to keep their eyes and ears open and pass on interesting snippets of information, communities can keep track of what others are doing.

A successful espionage operation depends on locating individuals within another community who are willing to effectively betray their home groups to help out another group. The individuals who do this have a myriad of reasons for it; they may be disillusioned with the community's core philosophy and want to undermine the current leaders. They may simply be greedy and betray the community for money, power or some other material possession. They may be blackmailed into it somehow, with threats of physical violence against them or their loved ones, or threats to expose them to the rest of the community in some way.

Regardless of the means, all agents have basically the same job: To acquire sensitive information and pass it to an outside party who wouldn't normally have access to it. This is normally an ongoing process, with the agents passing on a stream of secrets over time. Their controllers may request specific information of interest, or they may be simply happy to get whatever information the agents deem important enough to send across.

The controlling community needs to work hard to prevent giving its agent away. Because the information they receive is normally supposed to be secret, using it overtly would tip off the other

community that information was somehow leaked. The community controlling the agents has to be extremely careful to balance the protection of its intelligence assets against using sensitive information to its best advantage.

Many controllers look to infiltrate a community faction that doesn't currently hold supreme power, as they are more likely to find people who disagree with the community's leadership. However, such agents may not be particularly well placed within the target community. They can however provide information on who in the community *does* know the sort of thing that the controlling community is interested in learning, and ways that those individuals can be recruited to the cause.

Agents occasionally orchestrate events to suit the controlling community's needs. They may be asked to plant bugs, or to sabotage important equipment or crops. They may simply be asked to leave a gate unlocked or unguarded at a particular time so that others may have access to areas they may not normally have. In the most extreme cases, the agents may be required to directly bribe, blackmail or even kill members of their own communities.

PCs can find a role in espionage operations as either the agents for another community or as the controllers, guiding their agents to achieve the aims of their home community.

GAME RULES

Espionage, like diplomacy, affects the five main political factors in the Community Behavior Map. Creating a new agent in a community increases the Outside Influence factor. Having that agent attempt to influence the community normally increases the Dissent factor (although sometimes the controlling community may actually want to stabilize the existing leadership for their own ends, so the agent's actions may decrease the Dissent factor's importance).

Greed and Disaster are also important factors that espionage operations can affect. The agents may get greedy for money, goods or even someone's time. Sabotage events may either hamper or destroy a community's long-term viability.

GMs can also use the Social Investigation rules from the **Gamma World Game Master's Guide** (see Chapter Five: The Rules of the Game, "Social Investigation") as typical tasks for an espionage mission, particularly the Identify Community Benefit, Identify Leaders and Identify Suppressed Group tasks. This information is particularly useful if the PCs are looking to subvert the community in some way.

WAR

When two or more communities disagree on something, tensions can quickly escalate to the point where physical violence erupts. The results are often disastrous for at least one of the communities; people die, leaving loved ones grieving and the community's buildings and land are often damaged or even destroyed. Recovering from a conflict may take months or years, if it is even possible at all.

For many in the Gamma World, armed conflict is simply part of life. Some communities live the warrior's creed, taking what they need by force and leaving a trail of death and destruction behind them. For others, they fight to preserve what they have and what they believe in.

ALLEGIANCES AND LEADERSHIP STYLES

For those fighting a battle, their allegiances can be of vital importance. If a character is allied with either a group, a community or even an object, and whatever she has an allegiance to is attacked (or captured, in the case of an object), then the character has a reason to go to war and can use her allegiance bonus to help her. Similarly, a character who has an opposed allegiance against the enemy (see Chapter One) can use the bonus gained to help inflict as much damage as possible.

Leadership styles (see Chapter Two) can also make a huge difference in combat. A competent leader can help keep his troops focused on the task at hand and prevent them from panicking. Strong, Tough and Dedicated leaders are the most prevalent leaders of combat units. Fast heroes can often be found leading commando groups, and Smart leaders can often be running the rear echelon support functions. Charismatic heroes often stay with their communities, urging them to fight for the good of all the population.

GUERRILLA TACTICS

The simplest form of combat is guerilla warfare. Well-suited to a poorly equipped but courageous and zealous side, it is often seen in lands where a larger occupational force has taken control. The guerillas fight those in control, trying to destabilize the enemy until the guerillas' political aims can be met.

Guerilla units are often much smaller in size than the opposing forces. They usually lack proper training and equipment, improvising weapons if they have to. This does *not* mean they are powerless; guerilla warfare has proven itself time and again down through history.

Guerillas normally live in or near the places they are fighting for. They can blend in with the population, giving them a huge advantage when they are not actively fighting. Not being able to identify the enemy causes enormous headaches for an invading force trying to stop the guerillas. Often, the invaders try to suppress the indigenous population, which in turn responds by protecting and aiding the guerillas.

Terror tactics are one of the hallmarks of a guerilla campaign. Guerillas use booby traps and bombs to their fullest potential, making the occupation difficult for the invaders. Even something as simple as a food tin can hide a bomb that can either kill or maim an invader. In fights, particularly if the guerillas have decent ranged weapons, they lay in ambush for the enemy, strike hard at an opportune moment, then pull out before they can be captured.

The large-scale aim of guerilla warfare is not to defeat the enemy militarily. Most invaders have more soldiers, better equipment and better training than the guerillas, and could overwhelm the guerilla force in regular combat. Instead, guerilla warfare's aim is to make the occupation of the invaded land prohibitively expensive for the invaders.

Attacking the troops and their supplies weakens the invaders (particularly if the guerillas are able to steal the supplies for their own use), forcing them to bring in more soldiers and supplies if they hope to maintain control. Over time, the cost of this constant harassing can easily become too expensive for the invaders, who are forced to withdraw.

Propaganda is an important weapon in the guerilla's arsenal. Because they are part of the civilian population, it's easy for the guerillas to mingle with the population and keep them focused on resisting the invaders. The guerillas normally try to remind people how much better life was before the invaders came, ensuring that they continue to support the fighters who are working to force the invaders to leave using more physical means. The invaders, on the other hand, try to convince the people that if they submit to the new authority, their lives will be better off and that no one will get hurt.

With the massive diversification of sentient species since the Final Wars, many conflicts are often fought along species lines. Guerilla tactics are just as important in these conflicts, although the actual form of the attacks might be different depending on the enemy's needs and habits. For example, a group of humans attacking a group of synthetics might prefer to EMP weapons to disrupt their computer brains.

In the Gamma World, PCs could easily be on either side. If they are part of the guerilla force, they need to find ways to harass the enemy and get away without taking casualties, as well as to maintain the support of the locals. If they are part of the occupation force, their job is to root out and crush the guerilla cells, as well as to convince the locals that the new regime provides much better standards of living, and that giving the guerillas up would make them all much happier and safer.

GAME RULES

Guerilla warfare targets the Dissent, Resources, Strong Leadership and Disaster factors of the Community Behavior Map. If you assume invaders control the subjugated communities, the guerillas are trying to create as much havoc as they can, increasing the amount of dissent in the population and reducing the power of the leadership. Bombs and ambushes are positive events in the Disaster factor, while raids on supply lines reduce the community's Resources factor.

Alternatively, if the community is still under its own leadership, then the invaders would have a very strong grip over the population through the Outside Influence factor. The guerillas would then be aiming to strengthen their own leadership and reduce or eliminate the outside influence.

BLITZKRIEG

A tactic perfected long before the Final Wars, a blitzkrieg attack is one where the invaders throw massive numbers of troops and weapons at a target community and simply shock it into submission before it can react properly. If the attackers execute their offensive properly, the invaded population is thoroughly demoralized by the attacker's swiftness and brutality and will surrender before they are completely crushed.

A successful blitzkrieg attack usually requires either an advantage in numbers or an advantage in technology, or both. If the attackers have numbers on their side, but a lower technology level, they can gain the upper hand by overwhelming the defenders. However, the drawback of this approach is that high casualties are often sustained, particularly when attacking well-fortified defenses.

If the attackers have the advantage of high-tech weapons and equipment, particularly either Pre-War or advanced tech, then they can often achieve the same effect as a much larger force of primitively armed warriors. This is normally because the advanced weaponry allows the troops to engage the enemy at a distance and their heavy weapons can do massive amounts of damage with a single shot.

Blitzkrieg attacks are always swift; delay dooms this sort of warfare. The attackers move rapidly through the enemy's territory, securing land as quickly as possible. The aim is to prevent the defender's messengers from leaking out ahead of the advancing forces, thereby maintaining the element of surprise. Consequently, forces involved in these attacks almost always have some form of transportation available to move the troops and heavy weapons into the combat zone as quickly as possible.

However, blitzkrieg attacks do have a high cost. Supplies of food, water and ammunition need to be able to keep up with the attackers; and the further the combat spreads from the home community, the harder these attacks are to maintain. While the attackers can sometimes use captured supplies, this approach may not always be possible, particularly if the defenders use a scorched earth policy to deny their supplies to the enemy.

These attacks are normally just the first wave of a larger assault. The blitzkrieg stage usually smashes a hole through the enemy's defenses, or completely overwhelms it in the case of a smaller target. Second-echelon forces secure the territory and establish supply lines that allow the frontline forces to push even deeper into the enemy's territory.

A blitzkrieg attack is never sustained for a long period of time, particularly if the aim is to actually conquer the lands. After the attack's initial shock is over, the attackers need to change tactics and instead settle in to occupy the territory they have taken. This means keeping the territory's population happy with the occupying forces, or ruthlessly suppressing any form of resistance.

Even if the initial attack was successful, the enemy can quickly regroup and counterattack, trying to regain some of their lost territory. This can either be in the form of regular forces mounting their own blitzkrieg attacks, or it may come from guerilla attacks harassing the occupational forces.

GAME RULES

Blitzkrieg attacks normally always come in the form of a critical event for a target community. This can be a positive event in the Disaster or the Outside Influence factors, although it could also be expressed as a massive negative event in the Strong Leadership factor.

If the attack is not expressed as a Disaster event, then secondary Disaster events should be introduced into the Community Behavior Map to represent the damage caused in the attack and the massive changes wrought on the community's way of life.

For an attacking community, running a blitzkrieg campaign requires a huge investment of troops and resources. This is a major negative Resources event



for the attacking community, and an average negative Population event (signifying the mobilization and departure of the troops).

SUPPLY INTERDICTION

Regardless of the conflict's size or nature, without fresh supplies the fight simply cannot continue. Throughout history, wars have either been won or lost based on the combatants' logistical support. The more efficiently supplies can be dispersed to the frontline troops, the longer they are able to keep up the fight.

At the most basic level, soldiers need fresh food and water to survive. While they may be able to live off the land to some extent, it often falls to their home community to keep the supplies flowing. When soldiers rely on animals for transport, the amount of food and water required increases dramatically. Using Pre-War vehicles introduces the need for fuel, and advanced weapons need ammunition if they are actually to be useful.

When devising plans, clever strategists look not only for territory they can take from the enemy, but also for supply lines they can take and defend against determined resistance. At the same time, they try to determine where the enemy's supplies are kept, and those dumps become important targets to be taken.

By denying the enemy the supplies they need, the war can be shortened quickly.

If one side is using nanotechnology to create food or weapons, then the enemy's interdiction mission may revolve around finding a way to neutralize or disable the nanites, shutting them down to prevent the enemy from benefiting from them. Finding a way to stop the enemy from gaining an advantage from nanotechnology may even be enough to halt the attack completely.

When two communities attack each other, one group often ends up besieging the other. In the strictest sense, a siege is little more than a logistical exercise. If the defenders have enough food, water, ammunition and reinforcements before they lock the gates, they can usually outlast the attackers unless the defenses are breached. On the other hand, the attackers are not only trying to breach the community's defenses, they are also trying to starve the defenders to the point where they are too weak to continue the fight.

Small guerilla units are often incredibly effective in supply interdiction. Squads of 5 or 10 individuals can sneak behind enemy lines to help prevent the supplies from reaching the frontline troops. It doesn't matter if they steal the supplies for their own use, or they simply destroy them so that the enemy can't benefit from them

either. In many cases, the supplies do not necessarily have to be completely destroyed. Poisoning an army's water supply not only makes the water unusable, it also has the side effect of killing the enemy or at the very least making them far less effective in combat. By contaminating fuel supplies, extra damage can be done to the enemy's vehicles, making them useless.

In some respects, communication channels are another form of supply line, one that carries sensitive information from the commanders to the frontline troops and back again. Disrupting the enemy's ability to communicate is often as important as preventing physical supplies from reaching the troops, as the lack of fresh tactical information usually leads to bad decisions and ultimately to the army's defeat. However, communications channels, like physical logistical trains, do not necessarily need to be destroyed. By contaminating the enemy's communications with misinformation, the enemy can be led into traps, or diverted away from areas of strategic importance at critical times.

As supply line interdiction is one of the most important tasks in any conflict, it provides a perfect opportunity for PCs to play an important part in the conflict, particularly if combined with guerilla tactics.

COMBINING THE COMBAT TYPES

Wars are rarely fought using only one style of combat. A typical effective strategy begins with a blitzkrieg attack to shock the enemy into surrender, while guerilla forces harass the enemy to deny them access to their supplies. In fact, special forces units were specifically designed to carry out guerilla warfare operations behind enemy lines, and were typically tasked with disrupting or destroying supply and communication lines.

In the Gamma World, things have changed little. Strategies from before the Final Wars work just as well now that the world has collapsed.

GAME RULES

Having supplies either stolen or destroyed directly effects a community's Resources factor. As the community begins to run out of supplies, they become more desperate, which normally triggers increases in Greed and Dissent, and often dramatic decreases in Population Happiness and Prosperity.

RITUALIZED COMBAT

Some communities actually *did* learn something from the Final Wars. The planet was nearly destroyed because of humanity's folly in not paying attention to the creations

and monsters unleashed in foolish, unreflective creative fits. Some communities in the Gamma World believe that combat is only perpetuating the mistakes of the past, and they want nothing to do with it.

However, they do recognize the fact that some disputes simply cannot be solved using diplomacy. Often the show of martial capability is enough to prevent tensions from escalating any further.

Some more peaceful communities approach this problem in a variety of creative ways. Some try to ban warfare altogether, pretending it doesn't exist. This approach rarely works for any length of time, and such communities are often attacked and overrun by others who do not share their peaceful tendencies.

Other groups instead use forms of ritualized combat to settle disputes. These are all highly controlled, with strict rules of engagement that either prevent or minimize collateral damage to non-combatants.

For some communities, these combats can be as simple as some form of sporting event, albeit often extremely violent ones. For others, the combats may be real, but they are fought with non-deadly or sometimes even simulated weapons. In some extremely rare cases, where both sides still have access to Pre-War era computing technology, the battles may not even be fought physically. Instead, computer simulations using virtual realities may take their place, with the results of the combats treated as though they took place in the real world.

Ritualized combats may also form part of the community's social life. Gladiatorial combats in public arenas not only provide a means of settling martial disputes between communities, they also provide a brutal form of public entertainment. These combats are often no-holds-barred affairs, with almost no rules, as long as the combat starts and ends inside the arena. These fights can sometimes be used within a community to settle arguments between individuals, or to allow two or more communities to determine the outcome of a conflict.

NON-RITUAL GLADIATORIAL COMBATS

Some more brutal communities enjoy blood sports like gladiatorial combats. They use slaves, synthetics or captured creatures in death matches purely for entertainment and gambling. Some communities where slavery isn't practiced still have gladiator fights, using highly trained champions who love a good fight.

Such gladiatorial combats provide combat-oriented PCs with a chance to build a big reputation, provided they don't mind putting their lives on the line in the name of sport.

Regardless of the combat's actual form, both sides of the conflict need to agree on the victory conditions and to stop when such conditions are met. This often requires some form of adjudication, to ensure that both sides play fair and that the results of the conflict are agreed upon and binding. In some cases, specialized communities have developed to act as neutral referees, ensuring that the rules of combat are adhered to and that the result is binding. These special communities sometimes situate themselves in well-known locations, and warring parties will come to them to fight. In other cases, the adjudicators are nomadic and will travel to the different hotspots to ensure that disputes are settled quickly and efficiently, without causing undue hardship on the civilian populations.

Another form of ritualized combat is war games, which provide an opportunity for communities that are otherwise at peace with one another to practice their combat skills, before they are needed for real. These games are often treated as though they are real combat, except that all exchanges between troops are non-lethal and damage is either assessed by a referee or through some objectively obvious means like paintballs. War games are often a regular feature between communities who share a defense treaty, to ensure the troops remain at their peak performance.

GAME RULES

Ritualized combats have much the same effect on the Community Behavior Map as other forms of combat, simply because the community accepts that the ritual as a substitute for the real thing. However, because the combats are carefully controlled, the effects' severity is greatly reduced, and should rarely if ever rise above average severity. Depending on the community's commitment to this sort of engagement as a way of settling disputes, social effects may be multiplied while purely physical ones are diminished in matching degree, such as twice the normal change to the Population Happiness factor and half the normal change to the Prosperity and Resources nodes. This reflects the reality of psychological gain or loss without the consumption or destruction of much of the community's physical assets.

THE AFTERMATH

Regardless of the form that the fighting takes, combat rarely occurs for its own sake. There are normally clearly defined strategic objectives laid out before the initial attacks are launched; once these objectives are achieved or become clearly out of reach, leaders call for a cease-fire.

Combat is a hideously expensive undertaking for any community, regardless of whether the community

wins or loses. It has a high material cost and often places a huge strain on a community's Resources factor. If the fighting drags on for too long, the community may have to withdraw their forces from the field because they are simply unable to support them.

There is also an extremely high personal cost for the population. People are killed and injured during the fighting, which can have a huge detrimental effect on the community's long-term viability. A lengthy campaign can kill an entire generation, making it difficult if not impossible for the community to increase its population through childbearing. Combatants are usually the fittest and most physically able members of the community. If too many of them are killed in the fighting, then the community simply might not have enough people to carry out all the tasks necessary for survival.

To prevent things from reaching these drastic levels, the side well on its way to losing may offer to surrender instead of fighting to the death. Alternatively, the side with the upper hand may offer to cease combat if the enemy unconditionally surrenders to them immediately. While this does result in a loss of face for the surrendering side, it often means the difference between the community surviving in at least some form and being destroyed completely. There are too many reminders almost everywhere of the costs of total warfare to make fighting to the bitter end appealing to anyone but the most fanatical cryptic alliances and comparably extreme groups.

Once the combat ceases, the need to repair the damage begins. Fighting almost always causes collateral damage to the community or its surrounds. If the community is to survive, this damage will need to be repaired. The resources expended during the fighting need to be rebuilt. The community also needs to heal the emotional scars that combat causes, regardless of whether it won or lost, and commemorate the dead as its culture demands while treating those who were injured but survived.

Communities often change leaders once the war is over, particularly if the community lost the fighting. This causes a huge amount of turmoil within the population, with the different factions in the community jockeying for position to gain control of the community's political arena. If the community surrendered, then the enemy will often appoint new leaders from their own ranks, or at least select leaders who are sympathetic to the occupying forces.

A victorious population has celebrations to commemorate the victory and to laud the combatants for their hard work. The losers normally have ceremonies to mourn the dead and meetings to determine how to rebuild.

Regardless of whether the PCs are on the winning or the losing side, they can have a part to play in rebuilding their home community. With some skillful political maneuvering, they may even be able to improve their positions within the population.

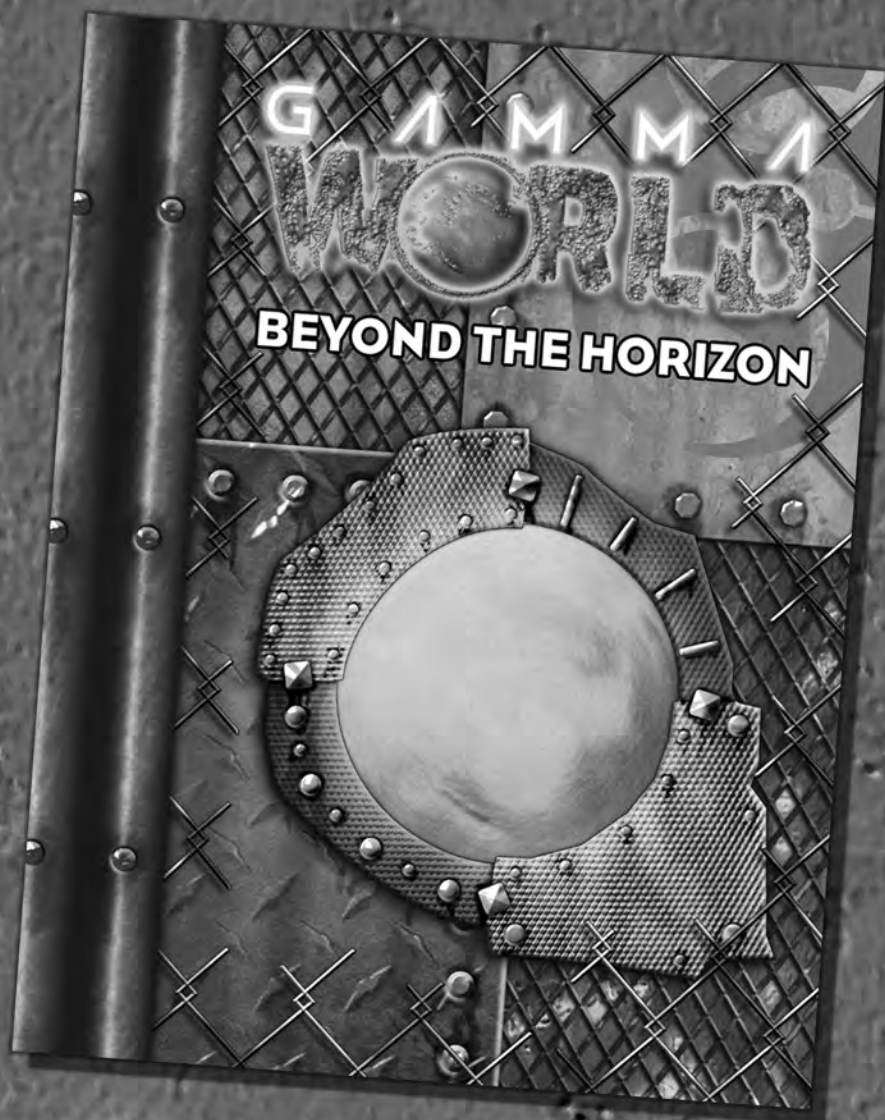
GAME RULES

Once the dust begins to settle, the communities involved need to begin rebuilding. For the winners, the celebrations normally cause increases in the Population Happiness and Prosperity factors. The losers face a massive negative hit to the Strong Leadership and Population Happiness factors, and increases in the Dissent and Outside Influence factors.

The news of a war often spreads quickly, as does the news of the cease-fire. The winning side will initially gain a bonus to its Reputation, ranging from +1d4 for a minor skirmish to +1d12 for a massively decisive victory. The losing side's Reputation bonus will take a corresponding reduction.

However, these Reputation bonuses can change once significant events from the conflict become more widely known. For example, if the winners performed ethnic cleansing on the losers, when word gets out the community may either lose some points from its Reputation bonus, or it may even pick up the Infamous feat.

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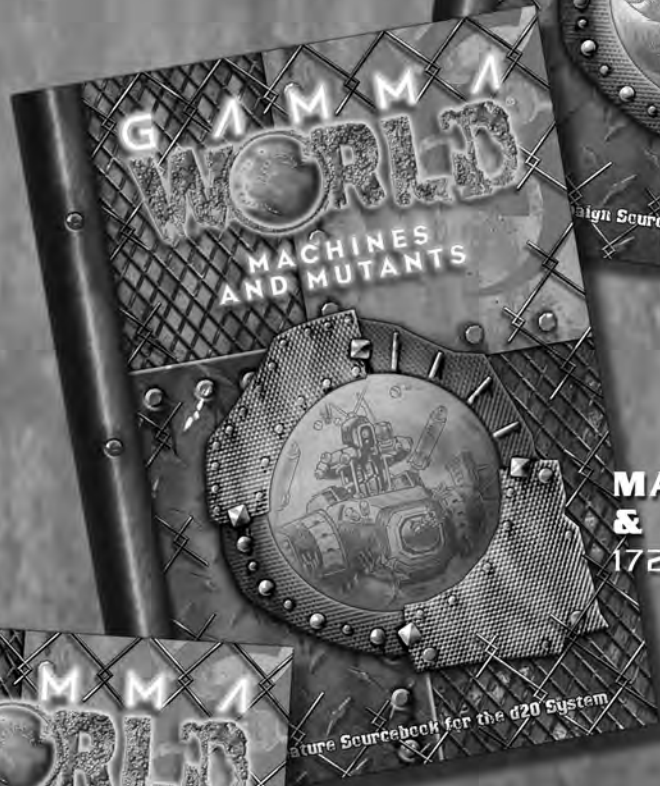
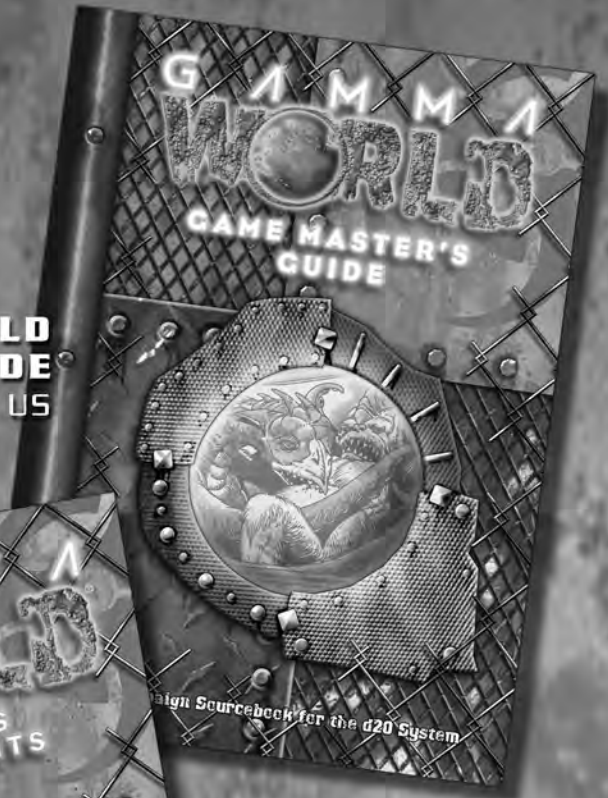
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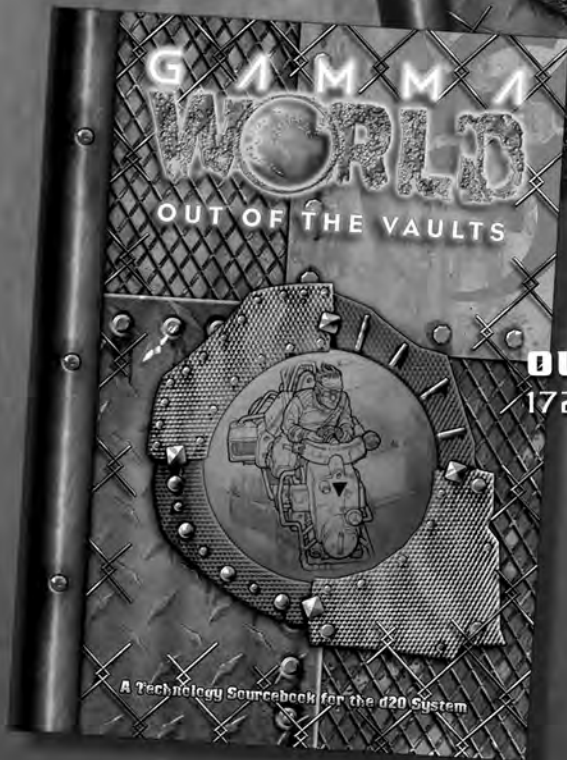
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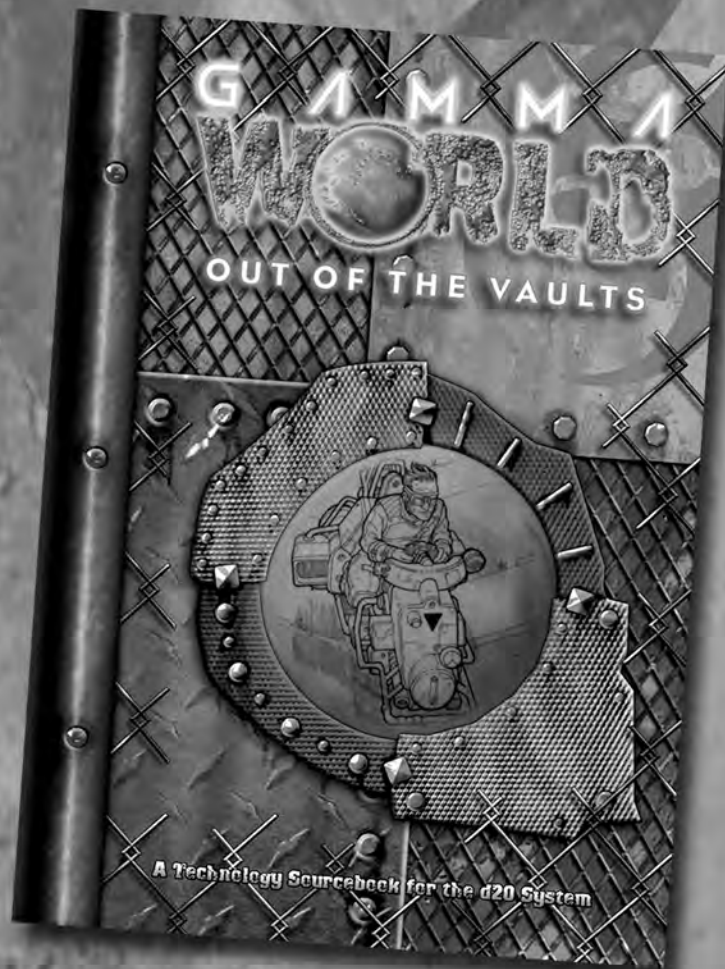
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