

SILVER  
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GAMES



# LEGENDS WALK!



**PDQ**  
SYSTEM

**A world of superheroes empowered by the  
gods, heroes and monsters of mythology**



# LEGENDS WALK!

A Truth & Justice setting of ancient and modern superheroes

Written and designed by Tim Gray

Based on the self-contained *Legends Walk!* game published by Silver Branch Games, © Tim Gray 2002-6.

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# INTRODUCTION

## Background

Legends Walk started as an idea: connecting superheroes and mythology. It first appeared as a stand-alone RPG in 2002, using the purpose-designed LODE system, and was updated to second edition in 2006. It has sold slowly but steadily, gathering a certain amount of critical approval. Two supplements have added pantheons to the options available for making characters.

Because I'd been filling my head with supers through working on LW, I took the opportunity to join the playtest and peer review group for *Truth & Justice* as Chad Underkoffler was developing it. I really liked a lot of things about T&J - in particular, I realised that the LW system had started from games and moved toward comics, but T&J started from comics and moved toward games. It would generate quite a different style of play, and that could work well for mythic supers.

Bringing the two together by converting LW as a setting for T&J has been a goal of mine for some time. I hope you like the result.

## Ways to use this book

Different readers will be looking for different things, generally breaking down as:

### 1) Running a game focused on mythic supers

- Using this book's detailed Legendary Earth setting
- Using another setting, perhaps based on one of the other "setting seeds" or ideas of your own

### 2) Using it as a resource for inserting mythic characters in general T&J games

What you want to do will dictate which parts of the book you're most interested in, of course, but it's suggested that you look through the whole thing. For instance you might find ideas in the setting write-up that you like enough to transplant elsewhere.



## What's inside

The book divides into three parts:

- **Overview** - a short general discussion of mythic supers, and some possible setting concepts where they might be used.
- **Rules** - using *Truth & Justice* to model mythic supers. How to adapt character creation; a few new rules additions; a bunch of key powers fully written up; and "power programmes" (see below) for gods, heroes and monsters of the Greek, Norse and Aztec pantheons.
- **Setting** - one of the "setting seeds", Legendary Earth, written up in detail. Its premise is that "metahumans" first became known to the public at the turn of the millennium; that they're pretty much all mythically powered (except for a few that are technologically augmented); and that it's now 2020 and their presence has changed the world significantly. Some of the material in the rest of the book, eg sample characters, is based on Legendary Earth but can be used elsewhere.

## Some key concepts

The default metaphysics is that the gods, heroes and monsters of legend exist in some form as supernatural beings called **Sources**. They "imbue" mortal men and women (and, in fact, animals and objects) with some of their power, giving them abilities far beyond those of ordinary folk.



Each Source is written up as a “**power programme**”: descriptive text followed by a shortlist of Qualities and powers that fit, both for capabilities and for flavour. So all you need to do is take your character points and use it as a shopping list. (Of course some players and GMs will want to use these as a springboard for their own customisations.) The rules part of the book is about how that works.

**Variations:**

- In *Legendary Earth* the Sources are spirits or energy beings in a dimension bordering our world, who channel power through a “Gate” between worlds that exists everywhere at once.
- For a different flavour you could make Sources physical beings who occasionally make a personal appearance. As characters they’d need to have a lot of Ranks, probably at least World Class level for the more significant ones, and probably function best as plot devices with difficulties set at GM discretion.
- Characters might actually be mythological figures surviving from ancient times - this has been used quite often in comics, most famously with Marvel’s Thor. Again there’s pressure to include more stuff from the power programme than is easy to buy with character points - it’s probably as well to look at combining some of it under one or more Meta-Powers.
- Another popular theme in comics, especially DC, is the character who gets powers from a set of mythological benefactors, eg Wonder Woman and the Shazam characters. To model that you’d effectively be making your own power programme or just a standard T&J character, drawing from some of the programmes and key powers listed here.



representation or agency in the modern world. Some might even want to gather worshippers. Sources’ relationships to each other can be complex, based on factors like ancient personality and culture clashes and cooperation or competition over their area of influence. They will certainly expect their Metas to take a similar approach. The *Rules additions* section has an optional Favour system for tracking a character’s relationship to their Source.

**Style**

In terms of T&J’s discussion of style, the default version of *Legends Walk* matches the *cinematic* bracket most closely. The world is mostly as we experience it ourselves, but certain individuals are more capable and powerful. It doesn’t have the oppressive atmosphere of the *grim’n’gritty* style, nor the silliness that sometimes comes with *four colour and animated*.

This is so because *Legends Walk* is about lots of sets of contrasts, which rely on a baseline of ordinariness. The most obvious is the contrast between what normal people can do and the impressive feats achievable by metahumans. There’s also the difference between the workaday world and the strange, even surreal, effects of some mythically based powers - that weird edge is important flavouring. It connects with the tension between ancient and modern, which also connects with the characters as individuals balancing life as a normal person with impulses from a mythological entity that might work on quite different cultural and psychological wavelengths. That’s in addition to traditional pairings like profile vs privacy and power vs responsibility.

Having said all that, there’s plenty of scope for characters to style themselves. The *Legendary Earth* setting contains flying paragons in colourful spandex, leather-clad agents and trenchcoat-wearing vigilantes. You can zoom in on your favourite bit and have the rest as just background.

**The role of Sources.** It’s very much up to your group how prominent the Sources are in the game. They work just fine as a vague voice of approval or displeasure that only appears when a character is about to do something particularly relevant. Their basic motivation is to gain some form of



# MYTHIC SUPERS

*"Part of the function of a super-hero is to give us a refuge from our normalcy, an identification with something wonderful, a secret airborne headquarters from which we can look down at our friends, families and authority figures - especially authority figures - and feel pity for their tragic lack of special gifts."*

Tom Peyer, from the introduction to *Doom Patrol: Crawling from the Wreckage*, DC Comics

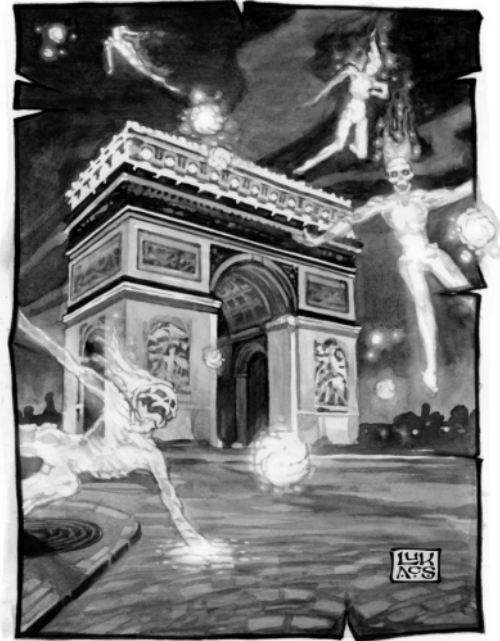
I've been interested in mythology for a long time. I also got into superhero comics as a child, though that's been on and off since then. When the idea of linking them together came up in an internet discussion forum my mind was racing off after it before I knew what had happened.

One could say that superheroes are the mythology of the modern age, giving us legends that are the products of our own times. There are certainly strong parallels between the two, and I think there are two main aspects to this.

The first is **spectacle**, or "thrilling tales". There's a human instinct for storytelling, and it thrives on larger-than-life characters. We like to hear about people who have lives defined by big values and big challenges, who aren't afraid to act and can make a difference when they do. We don't want to hear about goat-herders or accountants who are stuck in the same everyday stuff as ourselves, where consequences and compromise follow every move.

When you hear that some god defeated a giant by dropping a mountain on him, imagine the impact that would have had on an ancient audience. For them a mountain was the ultimate symbol of hugeness and permanence, so the idea of a person throwing one around would have had a serious "wow!" factor. Jumping to the present day, when most of the consumers of media live in towns and cities, the imagery has changed: we see heroes and villains demolishing skyscrapers, the hugest and most permanent features of the urban landscape.

The second aspect is **message**. Many myths use exciting, memorable stories to convey truths about the way the world is, our place in it and how we should live our lives according to the viewpoint of



the society that created them. They were cultures' way of making sense of a confusing world. (If you want to explore aspects of mythology in more detail, I recommend the works of Joseph Campbell, especially the accessible interview-format books.)

Superhero stories often do the same. In between the fights, we see people trying to live their lives and working out who they really are. They have to resolve conflicts between their "super" and "secret identity" lives, deciding what's most important to them. How can you be an icon and a person at the same time? They have to decide what values are worth fighting for - truth, justice and the American Way? - and what means are acceptable for doing it. They can be used to explore real social issues by writing them large. The most famous example is the team of mutants persecuted because they are different - lack of understanding generates fear, and they have to decide how to respond.

So superheroes are people who can see things no-one else can see and do things no-one else can do (apologies to *Big Trouble in Little China*). Well, that's the "super" bit. But in the end the mark of the hero is that they try things no-one else will try. The

stories that really impress us with heroism are not really anything to do with how many tonnes someone can lift. They're about a person who's confronted with daunting odds and finds that last extra drop of courage to push through in pursuit of what they believe in.

## Themes

*"There is room for things to mean more than they literally mean."*

Neil Gaiman, introduction to  
*Astro City: Confessions*, Homage Comics

*"A finer world is a small thing to ask."*

The Midnighter, *Stormwatch: A Finer World*,  
Warren Ellis and Bryan Hitch, Wildstorm Productions

The conflict between **ancient and modern** is a key part of the game. A Meta has a set of alien impulses in their head. Their Source wants pretty much the same things it wanted perhaps 2000-5000 years ago, and has skills from that time. In many ways the gods should never have come back. For the Metas themselves there's always a tension between the demands of the source of their powers and having to live in the modern world ("No, he didn't mean any harm, I will not kill him on the spot!"). For society, how does it deal with these powerful archaic influences, and how does it all affect the course of human development?

*"I miss the silly things, you know? Like shouting at garbagemen. Making orange juice. Missing the bus. Being in the lab. Being a physicist, a technologist. My whole life. I traded it for this one. Now I fight people. Go to war. I don't have experiments, I have things that need to be solved or people die. I'm not Angie any more. I'm The Engineer."*

*"So why do you do it?"*

*"Because somebody needs to. And I get views like this."*

Angela Spica, The Engineer, *The Authority* #5  
Warren Ellis, Wildstorm

*"How meaningful will a utopia be if it is a gift and not something Man has earned by his own labors? What if the people will not accept the utopia you give them? Will you force them to take it?"*

Nighthawk, *Squadron Supreme*  
Mark Gruenwald and various, Marvel Comics

On a more detailed and practical level, this means the game will involve combat using ancient weapons more often than the superhero genre usually does, because those are the skills brought by the ancient gods and heroes. If a character wants to use skills like electronics and chemistry they must rely on their human education, though Meta enhancements may help by boosting the character's mental Attributes.

In general, LW superpowers are just that bit odder than standard comics fare. There's a lot of overlap, but every so often someone will do something that makes the modern brain itch, in terms of what they can do or how they do it. Balance this carefully for that authentic LW flavour!

Another important theme is **power**. If ordinary people get vast personal power, how will they use it? What is its price? There is potential to act out personal conflicts and clashes of ideology on a grand scale, maybe even learning something about our own world on the way. What is right, and what is wrong? Who do you serve? Even if people seem to act in a good cause, what is their real motivation? Some points of view are easily dismissed in our world, or tolerated because nothing will ever come of them - what if the "crank" suddenly had the ability to make people listen? Temptations are available to your PCs, and so are the opportunities to build something better.

Don't use this to diminish real issues, though. A Meta with extreme racist views may make a good opponent, leading on to a satisfying fight - but does that make light of ordinary, everyday racism? Social issues and interactions are the great leveller, because no matter what powers you have you still have to deal with other people. There are things that no amount of power can help you face. You may be invulnerable to bullets, but how do you feel when your lover dumps you?



Linked with both of these is the question: **what does it mean to be human?** What is it like to be set apart from other people because of your appearance, abilities or both? How do other people look at you, and how do you regard them? Given your altered physiology, the impulses of your Source, the different way you relate to the world (eg as a more three-dimensional place if you can fly, or a fragile place if you have great strength) and the relative ordinariness of the general public, do you hold on to humanity or become something else? The GM can use players' remarks to create situations to test their characters later on, making sure their choices have consequences.



*"For hours, he'd bemoan the passing of things like Olympic Games and Nobel Prizes. Sometimes, he'd ambush complete strangers and ask them how much they missed the concept of human achievement. I don't know what surprised me more. The oddity of the question... or the growing number of people who seemed to know what he was talking about."*

Norman McCay, *Kingdom Come*  
Mark Waid and Alex Ross, DC Comics

## Setting

This is important because of the way characters are defined. You need to have varied locations for your scenes, so that different characters get the chance to use their Aegis. It might also be a good idea to put in some globe-hopping to interact with the roots of different mythologies.

## Opponents and Challenges

*"You shall now be subjected to ultrasonic vibro-waves! Within minutes your mighty muscles will be reduced to mashed potatoes!"*

The Mole Man, *The Avengers* #17, 1965  
Stan Lee and Don Heck, Marvel Comics

*"It feels like I've waited my entire life to test those pulsars on live babies."*

Tank Man, *The Authority* #13, 2000  
Mark Millar and Frank Quitely, Wildstorm

What sort of opponents and other challenges might characters face?

- Other Metas - from opposing pantheons, over territory or followers, with opposing Aegis (eg desert vs sea), suffering from psychological problems, or simply misguided.
- Criminals - either Metas or Normals (including scientific masterminds).
- What some people might call "evil" - those imbued by entities inimical to humans - demons, monsters, bad gods. Metas would be in demand for combatting these.
- Animals and monsters - allowing animals to be imbued too opens the way for creatures that are predatory or just plain weird. If characters are truly "good" they should have reservations about injuring or killing people imbued by "evil" gods or monsters. Once in a while, though, it's good to give them an opponent they can really cut loose on - machines, for instance, or imbued animals (there are still ethical issues there, of course, but the law's less likely to kick a fuss).
- Those who object to Metas - on religious grounds, on political grounds, or out of bigotry.
- Disasters, both natural and deliberately created - there's no immediate opponent to face, but only extraordinary abilities can save the local people or environment. This is a good opportunity to show off powers that aren't often used in a fight.

Often a challenge will consist of a number of low-level opponents working for a more significant villain.



# Agency

Sources recruit mortals to act as their agents. It might be wise to talk about what you want this to mean in your group's game. You might want a fairly ordinary supers game with a bit of mythic flavour, in which case you can assume the Source is happy with just having one or more representatives of its essence on Earth and doesn't require much of them, just making itself known to grumble a bit if they're about to depart too far from its preferences.

At the other extreme are characters who identify with their Source so much that they try to emulate it as much as possible, acting as the Source would act and wanting what the Source would want. (Of course if you're using the option for a character that is a legendary figure this will come naturally.)

The default position, as seen in the Legendary Earth setting, is that most Metas tend more toward the former, but occasionally wrestle with their dual nature, and going too far toward the latter is a dangerous loss of mental balance. However, a lot of Metas go part-way and adopt some aspects of their Source's ideas in an explicit and even evangelistic way. One extreme example from LE is that a group of Metas imbued by Aztec Sources have taken over Mexico and reintroduced the practice of human sacrifice, though with a modern spin. And, of course, monster Sources tend to alter their Metas more aggressively - if only to give PCs satisfying opponents to beat up. The setting write-up mentions the idea that "evil" is something you can catch, like the flu, with associated psychiatric analysis and support groups.

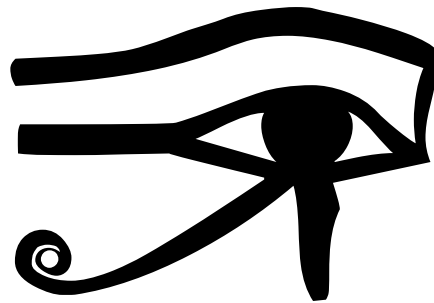
## That old-time religion

It's also assumed in LE that although most Sources would quite like to have a big crowd of new worshippers, they're human-savvy enough to realise that for most of them those times will never come again - mainstream culture in the developed nations of the west, at least, simply won't relate to them that way. The closest workable modern equivalent is to get on TV, and those with that sort of hankering might well encourage their Metas to put on colourful capes and fly around the city. Attention seeking by the epoch-challenged.

There's also a practical angle here, because many players will experience varying degrees of discomfort

(and/or become pointlessly argumentative) if the game starts heading off into religion territory.

Having said all that, if you're all comfortable and enthusiastic about exploring that side of things, go for it. It would certainly be possible to play a variant where the main goal is to get more airtime and devotion than your divine rivals. You could make the Favour rules central, and maybe expand them a bit - as the Source draws energy from its flock, it rewards you with a percentage commission. Explore all the promotional avenues afforded by the modern age - and maybe face interesting questions about how far you're prepared to go for your cause. Add in links between various Metas' crusades and temporal society, turn the handle a bit, and you could end up with a very interesting (and probably rather scary) world.



## Immortal combat

Mythic figures have relationships and attitudes to each other as well as with mortals. Some of these can be seen clearly in their legends, and some might be deduced or invented. How much of this you include depends on the overall level you set for the role of Sources.

For example, from the description of Thor we can see that he really dislikes Loki and wants to slay the Midgard Serpent, so if a Thor character encounters Metas imbued by either of these we can expect their Source to rouse itself to rumble a bit (though the character probably won't know the exact reason for its dislike). Similarly, if that character were about to beat up someone imbued by Odin (or, indeed, another Thor in good standing) they might get a warning from their Source. But beyond that, what does the Source think of thunder gods from other pantheons, for instance?

Metas imbued by the same Source are expected to cooperate (unless one has been putting their powers to ill use, in which case the equivalent of internal policing might be required). You can assume that Sources from the same pantheon and the same "side" within it have at least cordial relations, unless there's some particular reason why they shouldn't. Sharing an Aegis is much less of a guarantee, and can often lead to disagreements and competition - especially as gods from different pantheons often take quite different approaches to the thing. However, sometimes their approach is harmonious and leads to good working links, and if the Aegis itself is threatened or some other greater threat like a demon invasion manifests these rivalries are put aside to deal with it.

## Life on Olympus

Player characters are not actually gods (or ancient heroes, demigods or monsters), of course. At their roots they're mortals with the same concerns as the rest of us. However, there's no doubt that their powers set them apart, removing some of the frailties that most of us take for granted but bringing problems of their own. How do you maintain relationships with family and friends as the gap between you widens? How do you keep up the nine-to-five if you know you could be flying?

Here's some food for thought based on the super-versions of common "attributes" we'll meet shortly. T&J's super scale is a great easy way to reflect above-and-beyondness. In a sense you can think of T&J as boiling down to two ability levels, normal and super. These tell us what characters can do; points within the scales tell us what we're likely to see them doing.

**Strength** - the world is a much more fragile place now, and you realise just how much the physical world limits Normals. You can lift heavy objects, break through walls, throw and jump great distances. This isn't always a blessing and you have to keep your strength under control, because people are fragile too - how does it feel to be a lethal weapon?

**Agility** - you see how slow and ungainly Normal life is, now that you have entered a more fluid and three-dimensional world. Plucking objects out of the air, dodging bullets, splitting your actions between several opponents, back-flipping down corridors and

## THE D.I.Y. AESTHETIC

Character creation is a bit more structured than in basic *Truth & Justice*. That's because powers are not just plucked out of the air, but have to be true to the nature of a defined mythic Source. The power programmes are attempts to show where ancient mythology and comics tropes can meet.

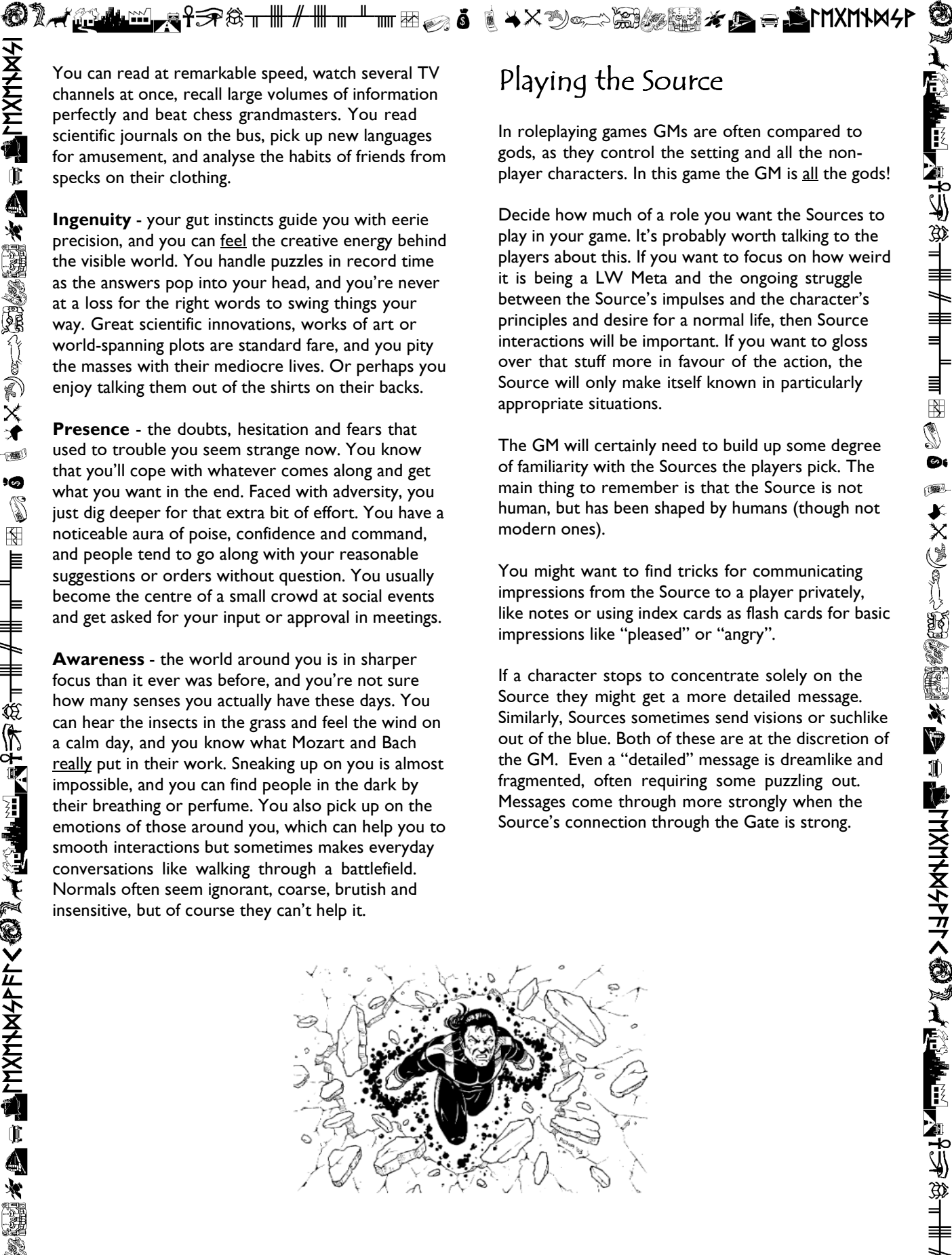
One positive from that is that it might make character creation even quicker than usual - just pick a Source and grab options from the shopping list. The possible negative, of course, is that players with lots of creative ideas might feel restricted.

You're perfectly at liberty to treat the programmes as guidelines, with players and GM coming up with new abilities that fit the Source's text description. How you approach that depends on how you view the source material. Mythology-heads - including this author - will find it aggravating if people are bringing in "silly" powers that don't "fit" with what a Source is "really" able to do. Other people will be happier to follow very loose associations, like, "He's a water god so here's a water power", and will chafe if their ideas are vetoed. Form a consensus in your group to avoid shrieking and strangulation.

climbing the sides of buildings are well within your capabilities.

**Endurance** - you never realised how often you got colds, headaches and the like until they were gone. Now if you bump into someone you hardly feel it, and you can get into a fist-fight without getting slowed down at all. Your warm coat hangs unused in winter, and you rarely bother with oven gloves. Sometimes you wonder if you feel like a human any more.

**Wisdom** - everything's so clear to you now, but most people take an age to grasp even simple points.



You can read at remarkable speed, watch several TV channels at once, recall large volumes of information perfectly and beat chess grandmasters. You read scientific journals on the bus, pick up new languages for amusement, and analyse the habits of friends from specks on their clothing.

**Ingenuity** - your gut instincts guide you with eerie precision, and you can feel the creative energy behind the visible world. You handle puzzles in record time as the answers pop into your head, and you're never at a loss for the right words to swing things your way. Great scientific innovations, works of art or world-spanning plots are standard fare, and you pity the masses with their mediocre lives. Or perhaps you enjoy talking them out of the shirts on their backs.

**Presence** - the doubts, hesitation and fears that used to trouble you seem strange now. You know that you'll cope with whatever comes along and get what you want in the end. Faced with adversity, you just dig deeper for that extra bit of effort. You have a noticeable aura of poise, confidence and command, and people tend to go along with your reasonable suggestions or orders without question. You usually become the centre of a small crowd at social events and get asked for your input or approval in meetings.

**Awareness** - the world around you is in sharper focus than it ever was before, and you're not sure how many senses you actually have these days. You can hear the insects in the grass and feel the wind on a calm day, and you know what Mozart and Bach really put in their work. Sneaking up on you is almost impossible, and you can find people in the dark by their breathing or perfume. You also pick up on the emotions of those around you, which can help you to smooth interactions but sometimes makes everyday conversations like walking through a battlefield. Normals often seem ignorant, coarse, brutish and insensitive, but of course they can't help it.

## Playing the Source

In roleplaying games GMs are often compared to gods, as they control the setting and all the non-player characters. In this game the GM is all the gods!

Decide how much of a role you want the Sources to play in your game. It's probably worth talking to the players about this. If you want to focus on how weird it is being a LW Meta and the ongoing struggle between the Source's impulses and the character's principles and desire for a normal life, then Source interactions will be important. If you want to gloss over that stuff more in favour of the action, the Source will only make itself known in particularly appropriate situations.

The GM will certainly need to build up some degree of familiarity with the Sources the players pick. The main thing to remember is that the Source is not human, but has been shaped by humans (though not modern ones).

You might want to find tricks for communicating impressions from the Source to a player privately, like notes or using index cards as flash cards for basic impressions like "pleased" or "angry".

If a character stops to concentrate solely on the Source they might get a more detailed message. Similarly, Sources sometimes send visions or suchlike out of the blue. Both of these are at the discretion of the GM. Even a "detailed" message is dreamlike and fragmented, often requiring some puzzling out. Messages come through more strongly when the Source's connection through the Gate is strong.



# SETTING SEEDS

## Legendary Earth

This is the “default” setting for *Legends Walk!*, described in detail later in the book. Ideas from that write-up may be useful in other setting bases.

It’s twenty years since the turn of the millennium, when the first known metahumans appeared with abilities far beyond those of mortal men and women - and often beyond the bounds of accepted science. They are an accepted part of modern life, generally referred to as “Metas”, and have brought many changes. They claim that their powers and the changes in their bodies and minds come from the gods, heroes and even monsters of mythology.

Some of them hide their identities with gaudy costumes and codenames; others take less fanciful precautions and stay in the shadows, and some operate openly. Some of them work to protect and advance humanity, others seem hostile to it and many pursue agendas of their own. Some just want to have ordinary lives, but find that fate has other ideas. Their conflicts are on a legendary scale - meanwhile “Normals” just hope to survive the crossfire.

There’s roughly one Meta per million population, giving an estimated 7000 worldwide, though some countries have many more Metas per head than others. Their appearance has had a huge effect on the structure and development of society. They suddenly found themselves with the power to change the world in very direct ways, from addressing social and environmental issues to getting revenge on the school bully. Things are probably better as a result, but often they have made things worse or solved one problem only to create another. Metas have taken over the running of some countries; in other places Normals force Metas to register their powers or serve in the army or police. New nations have formed and alliances have changed. The USA holds on to the title of “superpower”, but shares it with India. Technology is basically what we can see around the corner now, available to those who can pay for it, though some talented individuals push the edges of accepted physical laws. There’s a city on the Moon, and several under the sea.



## Here and Now

*“As I have learned since, I was not the first anomaly to exist... but on that day of my freedom in 1939, this world had its first confrontation with the fantastic. The golden age of miracles would begin, and in the years to come, the world would know the presence of the unnatural and extraordinary as part of reality.”*

The original Human Torch, *Marvels*  
Kurt Busiek and Alex Ross, Marvel Comics

Most superhero comics and games are set in something closely resembling the real world of the present day. Characters swing across the skyline of New York, or of a fictional city closely resembling those we know. The timeline tends to assume that the first superheroes appeared around the 1940s (there might, perhaps, have been a few earlier ones, but they weren’t public) and were involved somehow in the Second World War, with their numbers growing up to the present day.

The central principle, really, is that things don’t change. Metahumans don’t take over countries, dismantle nuclear arsenals or end world hunger; personal teleporters don’t become consumer items. Having said that, a lot of interesting series have looked at these ideas: for instance, what happens when the super-people get fed up of being reactive and start tackling problems at the root? In general the message has been that it goes wrong for them, because humanity has to tackle its problems as a species, in its own time. So the mainstream, at least, says that although costumed demigods have been among us for decades it hasn’t made that much of a difference. That in itself seems a bit implausible, but

one can see that in the comic world their presence is what has allowed things to be the same: if they hadn't been there we'd have been enslaved by parallel Earths or digested by giant aliens or smashed by asteroids.

If you want to use the *Legends Walk* idea of mythically powered heroes but in a Here And Now setting, it should be pretty easy. You simply drop the *Legendary Earth* section as a description of the way things are. However, you'll probably find it useful as a source for ideas to drop into your setting. Maybe someone's developed a floating island like the ones in Telenesia. Maybe a major opponent is a powerful organisation creating super-powered agents through technology ("alterants"). In particular, think about the idea of legacy: when did supers first appear? Were they different back then? How have the public regarded Metas over the years?

You can also have fun making up an origin for your character, which is now wide open: bitten by a radioactive forensic chemist, enchanted with super-soldier sigils in WWII, rocketed to Earth as a baby when the giant alien ate your planet...

### Dark Age Legends

A medieval setting, which could be historically accurate or not, as you wish. It's feudal Britain or Europe, so the nobles and Church are very much in charge. If people are seen to have supernatural powers stemming from pagan gods they'll have a hard time getting a positive reaction. One could bring up some interesting moral questions by making the PCs a small group who are closely controlled by the Church and state, given a measure of acceptability and sent to hunt down other Metas - some of whom are genuine monsters, and some who are just trying to get by.



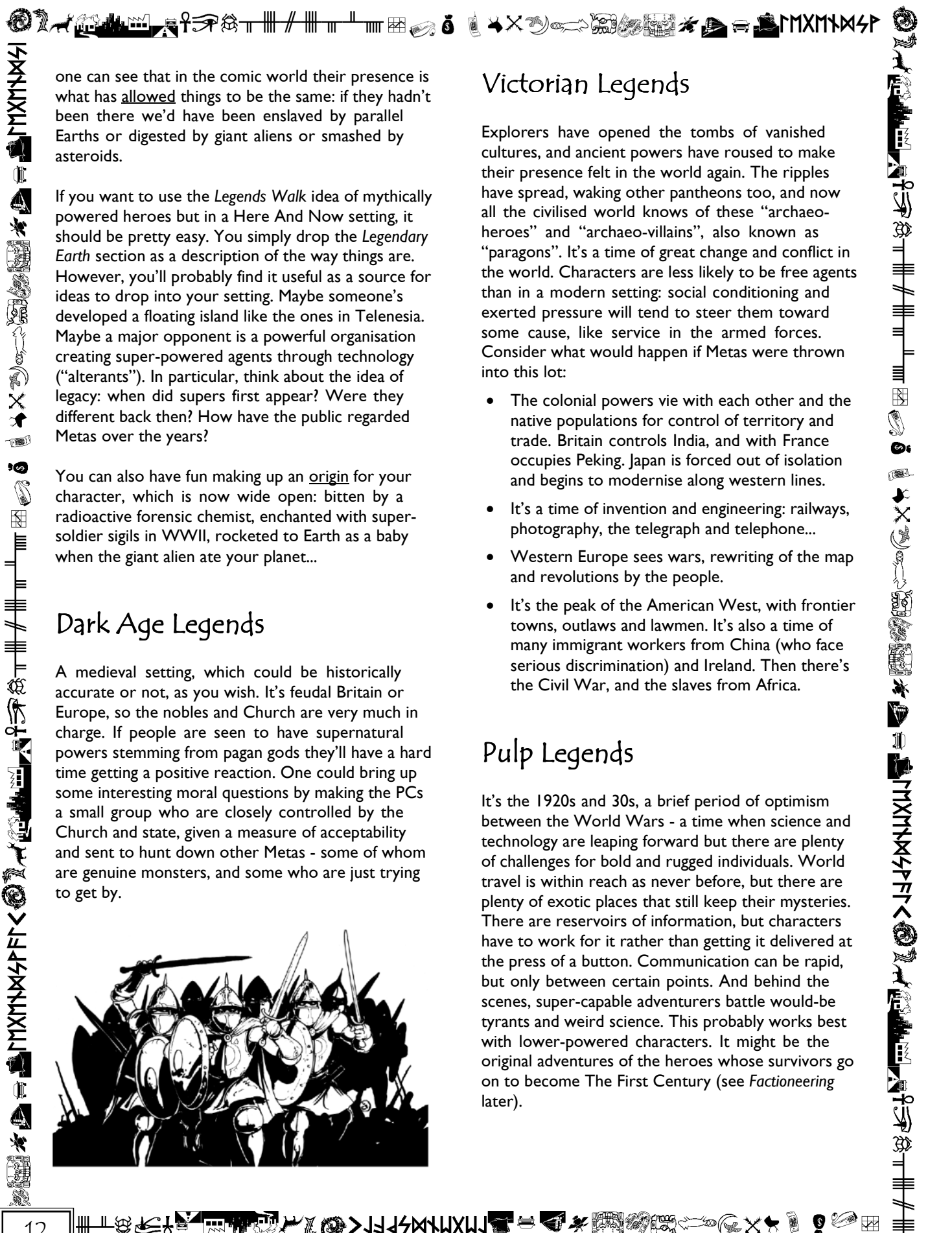
### Victorian Legends

Explorers have opened the tombs of vanished cultures, and ancient powers have roused to make their presence felt in the world again. The ripples have spread, waking other pantheons too, and now all the civilised world knows of these "archaeo-heroes" and "archaeo-villains", also known as "paragons". It's a time of great change and conflict in the world. Characters are less likely to be free agents than in a modern setting: social conditioning and exerted pressure will tend to steer them toward some cause, like service in the armed forces. Consider what would happen if Metas were thrown into this lot:

- The colonial powers vie with each other and the native populations for control of territory and trade. Britain controls India, and with France occupies Peking. Japan is forced out of isolation and begins to modernise along western lines.
- It's a time of invention and engineering: railways, photography, the telegraph and telephone...
- Western Europe sees wars, rewriting of the map and revolutions by the people.
- It's the peak of the American West, with frontier towns, outlaws and lawmen. It's also a time of many immigrant workers from China (who face serious discrimination) and Ireland. Then there's the Civil War, and the slaves from Africa.

### Pulp Legends

It's the 1920s and 30s, a brief period of optimism between the World Wars - a time when science and technology are leaping forward but there are plenty of challenges for bold and rugged individuals. World travel is within reach as never before, but there are plenty of exotic places that still keep their mysteries. There are reservoirs of information, but characters have to work for it rather than getting it delivered at the press of a button. Communication can be rapid, but only between certain points. And behind the scenes, super-capable adventurers battle would-be tyrants and weird science. This probably works best with lower-powered characters. It might be the original adventures of the heroes whose survivors go on to become The First Century (see *Factioneering* later).



## Secret Legends

This could be set earlier in the timeline of Legendary Earth, or it might be a parallel world of its own. It focuses on the period when Metas are just emerging, stretching it out to make dark, gritty stories where the characters are misunderstood, demonised by the media and hunted by various agencies (official and otherwise). They might even be discounted as rumours or paranormal crank stories by the public. They've banded together because the world's against them and their powers aren't enough to even the odds. At the same time they know there are others like them who will use their abilities for wealth and power, no matter who gets hurt. No-one else can see the threat well enough to deal with it. Perhaps these people are already in positions of power, guiding efforts to weed out possible competitors.

## Supernatural warriors

There are very few beings with powers, and the world is generally unaware of them. But there have always been stories of monsters, and there has always been some truth to the legends. The PCs are a small band of individuals with special abilities, perhaps working for some organisation, who try to keep the world safe for people who would regard them as freaks.

This involves chucking out pretty much all of Legendary Earth, and almost toning down powers. You could run it as action-packed pulp adventure, or mysterious and atmospheric, keeping the nature of powers slightly unclear and using them less often.

## Legends Black

In a fairly gritty modern-day setting the PCs are members of a black ops team working for some sort of agency, or maybe they have gone rogue. This could be within one of the other settings; or maybe powers are much rarer - possibly even secret from the public - and a powered opponent is a big deal.

Powers are fairly low-key. Stories will revolve around scams, stings, firefights and secret-agent-movie stunts. Equipment will be more important: guns, explosives, etc. Give some thought to the level of brutality in your stories - make sure everyone's comfortable.



## Superworld

Fast forward to a future where the promise or threat (depending on your viewpoint) of metahumans passing on powers to their offspring has come true. A big chunk of the population now has modest superpowers. (Alter the proportion to suit.) A few are still full-powered supers. Those with no powers are second-class citizens, and those with useless powers or just weird alterations are objects of ridicule.

The setting should be slightly pulpy sci-fi with some archaic flourishes. It's a fusion of ordinary technological progress, Meta-enhanced inventions that are still hard to mass-produce, and magic. Humanity has spread through the solar system and is making expeditions to nearby stars. Mine your favourite sci-fi movies and TV series for items of technology, slice off bits that are too advanced and add a splash of weirdness to what's left.

## Legends Ooze!

This would add on to another LW setting and grow to become the focus of the story. The PCs discover that there are other, older gods unknown to conventional history. This might involve the lost civilisations of Atlantis and Mu; evidence of intelligent species that ruled the world before humans; strange archaeological projects and fanatical cultists. Perhaps these older gods imbue Metas as normal, but with strange and repulsive abilities, or perhaps they actually exist physically somewhere (or both). Preventing them from taking back control of the Earth would be A Good Thing.

# CHARACTER CREATION

*"You've always annoyed me, you know - with your claims of godhood and pretensions to mythology."*

Ultron, to Thor, *The Avengers: Ultron Unlimited*  
Kurt Busiek and George Pérez/Stuart Immonen, Marvel Comics

Legends Walk diverges substantially from the T&J rules at the stage of power selection. Instead of assembling a set of powers from a vast range of possibilities, select the mythological **Source** (god, hero or monster) for the character: this gives you a **power programme** that acts kind of like a shopping list of possibilities for spending your points. The programmes have different bits, explained below.

Why is it done this way? To ensure that characters' powers remain true to their Sources' legends, as well as reflecting comic-book superpowers, which is an interesting balancing act. It's a strong guideline, but it is just a guideline, so as you get the hang of it players and GMs might agree new options that fit.

**Spending points.** It's suggested that players take advantage of the simplicity and flexibility of the option to split 6 points between the Modifiers of powers (eg Good [+2] costs 2 points; Average counts as 1), rather than attempting to communicate and understand the list of Rank-buying schemas.

## THE SOURCE

You should choose a Source when you come up with your character concept. Obviously there are hundreds of possibilities from different cultures, so there's plenty of scope for picking one of your own and agreeing the abilities with your GM. A good starting selection appears later on in this book, and further pantheons may be available in later supplements. They fall into three types, distinguished in rules terms by having to take different freebies during character creation - see box opposite.

**Gods** are powerful greater-than-mortal figures linked to a particular sphere of influence, like Thor the Norse god of thunder or Poseidon the Greek god of the sea.

**Heroes** are mortals whose deeds became the subject of great legends, like Hercules or Robin Hood. Many were the children of gods and had some supernatural ability, but in general they have natural abilities (like strength, cunning or skill) writ large and perhaps just one or two supernatural powers. This category is also the catch-all for Sources that don't fit the other two: demigods, divine servants and the like.

**Monsters** are beasts, fairies, demons, spirits and suchlike. They often have supernatural powers and act as opponents or helpers of gods and heroes. There are usually obvious physical differences between them and Normals. These Sources make more use of non-human hosts, sometimes imbuing animals and even objects. Monsters and demons often attempt to overwhelm their hosts, replacing their wills with their own desires rather than working in partnership with them.

You need to come up with a **rationale**: why did that particular Source choose to empower your character? It wouldn't invest all that energy for no reason. The character might not be consciously aware of this reason, but the GM should be so they can play the Source when necessary. For instance, it's easy to see why a goddess of war and death would imbue a mercenary - that's someone who's likely to further her cause. But what about a librarian? Perhaps their family has been cruelly murdered and they seek a way to deliver swift, final justice. The rationale becomes part of the character background.

### Mandatory start-up freebies

- If your Source is a **God**, start with Average [0] Aegis (see below).
- If your Source is a **Hero**, start with an extra Motivation linked to the description or an extra Source-granted Quality Rank.
- If your Source is a **Monster**, start with an Average [0] Vulnerability (see below).

To build on to these, work from their normal cost - eg upgrading an Average Aegis (MOD cost 1) to Good (MOD 2) costs 1 MOD point.



# POWER PROGRAMME COMPONENTS

## Aegis

Sources that are gods (not heroes or monsters) have these “areas of operation” - the sea, justice, the Sun, love, etc. They affect characters when they enter a situation that significantly accords or conflicts with the Aegis, making them stronger or weaker. Sometimes this happens at the start of a scene because of the setting, and sometimes as a result of events during the scene. Players and GMs should cooperate to apply it in a fair and interesting way. For instance, a character imbued by a sea god falls out of an aircraft during a fight: if she lands in or beside a large body of water her Aegis will kick in positively, but if she lands in a desert it'll go negative. In a city, emptying a water tower on her might have a similar effect. The programmes give examples of trigger situations. Some will kick in more often than others, but the positive and negative triggers should be about equally common. Metas know about their Aegis, and may try to engineer a situation where it kicks in - the GM needs to judge this carefully to keep it dramatic and appropriate.

Mechanically, Aegis works as a power (riffing off Vulnerability but throttled back slightly for balance). Average counts as MOD I. Rank may be improved as normal at character creation or in play. You can only gain Hero Points from Aegis once per scene, except if Aegis goes positive and you have no damage you always get +1HP.

- Positive: take an action to soak up the power, heal MOD damage, gain MOD Hero Points.
- Negative: lose an action, take MOD damage, gain MOD Hero Points.

Remember that T&J “damage” is primarily about story-affecting power, not necessarily actual cuts and bruises. So “healing” damage in this case is actually about rallying with a burst of energy; and taking damage is about not being as effective as expected.

## SCALE

This is a quick reminder of the difference between the normal and super scales, as seen in T&J (p4, p23, p60, etc), as we're going to be seeing them quite a bit in LW.

- Super scale trumps a normal-scale challenge, with no dice rolling required. That might be an opponent with no applicable super-scale abilities, or an obstacle like jumping between buildings or solving an algebra problem. Similarly, a normal-scale attack can be completely negated by a suitable super-scale defence. (In practice, it's sometimes appropriate to have a roll but use Target Number instead of MOD, eg trying to control the actions of a main character.)
- Opposing super-scale effects cancel out to just their MODs, resolved normally.
- Interpolating from *Invulnerability* (T&J p43), extraordinary normal-scale effects or Qualities are a halfway house. They can partially leak through super-scale defences, resisted by MOD and inflicting Failure Ranks only. They can also partly block normal-scale damage, resisting with MOD and downgrading it to Failure Ranks. These shouldn't be common.
- Most physically damaging powers do super-scale damage to normal-scale inanimate objects - in other words, most scenery breaks or goes boom when you zap it - but not to characters.
- Some super-scale abilities, when successfully applied against a normal-scale opponent, do [TN] extra damage. The most obvious example is Super-Strength, but because T&J uses abstract damage it could just as easily reflect someone being rendered into putty by your dazzling appearance.
- Some powers, notably energy zaps, can be temporarily boosted to do the extra super-scale damage against normal-scale characters by spending a Hero Point.

## "ATTRIBUTES"

In the standalone version of *Legends Walk* much use is made of attributes: a common RPG system feature for measuring innate talent in broad areas. For ease of conversion and a standard archaic-flavoured language for power programmes, those are brought forward here as common Qualities.

Use some flexibility in grafting them on to Qualities you might already have taken in the "normal" phase that are very similar, subject to GM approval. For instance, if the programme says you can add some Ranks to Presence you might actually increase Willpower or Charisma - but not Good-Looking because it's not quite the same thing.

Each also has a corresponding **power** (Super-Agility etc, listed in *Key powers*). Essentially they put you on the super scale for certain stuff, along the lines of Super-Strength and Super-Intelligence in the T&J rulebook.

- **Strength** is the physical force a character can exert.
- **Agility** is whole-body physical coordination, balance and reflexes, and can also be used for tasks requiring nimble fingers.
- **Endurance** is the ability to shrug off poison, disease and injury, and to keep going when things get tough.
- **Wisdom** is the ability to absorb and recall information, analyse it and put it to good use. It involves an element of common sense, as well as reason and memory.
- **Ingenuity** is creativity, imagination, making mental leaps, thinking quickly or laterally, cunning and instinct.
- **Presence** is self-confidence, manifesting as courage, charisma and willpower.
- **Awareness** is perception and intuition; how in touch you are with the world around you.

## Required power

All characters taking the programme must buy at least one Rank in this, because it's central to that Source's concept. For instance, everyone imbued by Thor gets increased strength. Usually just one thing will be identified here, but occasionally it might say, "X and Y" or "X or Y". Anything identified as a required power can be taken as an optional power.

## Qualities

LW makes more central use of these than core T&J. Many Sources confer enhanced skills, talents, personality traits and so on through instant inspiration. This section of the programme lists appropriate ones. Required powers can, in fact, be Qualities increased through the use of power Ranks.

This is mechanically the same as *Intense Training* - but without the actual intense training! A power converts into [MOD+1] Quality Ranks (with Average powers counting as MOD 1). Those Ranks may be split between listed Qualities as wished, starting new ones at Good or adding to existing ones. (You can always add on to one that has a name effectively meaning just the same as one listed. Check with the GM if in doubt.) However, you should underline any Quality increased through the action of your Source to identify it later, because some powers might interact with it in particular ways.

Some such Qualities can be things that normal humans can't actually do, but make more sense as Qualities than powers. In the context of LW, many are animal abilities like Claws or Night Vision.

## Powers

A bulleted list of available powers (oddly enough). These appear in different formats:

- Simply the name of the power indicates that it's just the same as in the T&J rulebook.
- The power's name with an explanation indicates that it's new for LW. The approach in the original edition of LW was to make up powers as needed, and that's been continued here.



- The name of the power with an asterisk refers you to the *Key powers* section in this book. Stuff appears there for a number of reasons. It might be pretty much the same as the T&J version, but with some extra tweaks or clarification. It might be substantially different from a T&J rulebook version with the same or similar name. It might be a power made up from scratch for LW, that's common or complex enough to merit putting the description in the text just once.

Sometimes a power is listed with a **ceiling**: the maximum Rank to which it can be bought. For instance, maybe the Source can just get you into Super-Strength territory with Average, but can't take you any higher.

## Imbued items

*"I don't know what that thing on your finger is, but I know for sure it's not the most powerful weapon in the universe. 'Cause that's right here on my finger!"*

Green Lantern, *JLA: Rock of Ages*  
Grant Morrison and Howard Porter, DC Comics, 1998

Powers are usually imbued into a person. However, the ancient gods and heroes often had possessions (swords, caps, horses, etc) with magical powers, and Sources can imbue the powers of these things into other objects or creatures. These items are listed separately, with the powers that they can take.

The item imbued must have some sort of resonance or symbolic link with the original. As long as you've got that you can change specific types or even cross the boundaries between objects and animals. This gives some interesting possibilities for mixing ancient and modern. If a Source had a horse that could gallop across water as well as dry land, you could decide that the power applies to any form of transportation and give it to a car. If the Source item is a cap or cloak, you might be able to apply its powers to a coat, belt or other worn item. What if Thor imbued a baseball or cricket player? Some of the power of his famous hammer could go into a bat to make an impressive weapon. But its key power was to return to the hand after being thrown, so what about imbuing the ball instead?

Imbued items are listed in programmes with **bold italics**. They have an implicit Limitation of "Must have the item" (and therefore Hero Points if the character is deprived of it temporarily). They can also embody Qualities generated from powers as discussed above. For instance, an item based on Thor's hammer could turn an Average power into Good [+2] Effectiveness\* and Good [+2] Returns When Thrown. Another character imbued by the same Source can use the item's powers. Others might be able to, if they have some reason to be favoured by that Source (eg same pantheon, same Aegis, suitable occupation) and spend a Hero Point per use. An item with a mind of its own can override use of its powers.

**Imbued objects** are similar to T&J's Super-Gadgets. They're nearly indestructible in most situations: they can be stolen, hidden, buried under collapsing buildings, dropped into the depths of the sea, but the only thing that has any chance of actually damaging them is a super-scale attack that's a significant story development (maybe a Story Hook, in fact, requiring some effort to get the item fixed).

**Imbued animals** should be created with the *Super-Sidekick* power (T&J p50): [TN-1] MOD points of Qualities, [MOD] MOD points of powers. Abilities are drawn from the power programme and whatever makes sense for the creature type (a Quality like Good [+2] Raven is a good start). They're intelligent and resilient specimens of their kind. They are loyal, but that doesn't include following stupid orders or endangering themselves needlessly. For damage they're like minions that can soak some punishment for their owner, taking Ranks on *Super-Sidekick* (so more powerful ones have more chance to endure a hit). The character can also assign Ranks there. The

creature can be zeroed out independently, but its abilities then become unavailable until it's healed.

## Vulnerabilities

Being imbued by a mythic Source isn't just about the cool powers. It changes you. We reflect this with Vulnerabilities (flaws that are bought as a power, generating both damage and Hero Points when triggered - T&J p37), and each power programme has a few suggestions. They could be susceptibility to a particular form of attack, but in LW most are about making it harder to live a normal life. The set-up means players will look for chances to play these up in order to get Hero Points. *Examples:* Lust for Battle, Code of Honour, Glowing Eyes, Blue Skin, Need for Blood.

Characters imbued by monsters have to take one as a freebie (its Rank may be increased as normal). It's strongly suggested that all players consider buying at least one, even if at low Rank - maybe later in their career if not at character creation. The more strongly you're affected by the power of your Source, the more these come through.

LWTJ introduces the idea of targeted damage (see box) - damage must be applied to certain types of Quality first - and this works really well for some kinds of Vulnerability.

Here are some **common types**.

- **Appearance.** There's something weird about your looks, or some strange phenomenon that happens around you. Normals get freaked out by it, resulting in fear, distrust, discrimination, etc. This usually kicks in during social situations, and its damage tends to target social Qualities.
- **Personality.** You're sometimes overcome by some disposition or behaviour. This can affect relationships with others, and targets your own better Qualities. One common example is a hot temper that suppresses your self-discipline and good judgment when offended.
- **Need.** Your vitality depends on getting something regularly - usually a substance, eg immersing yourself in water or consuming blood, but possibly an activity or behaviour. You can become debilitated after a period without it - this is usually normal damage, but might target physical Qualities or Source-granted powers.

## TARGETED DAMAGE

Normally, the player of a character that takes damage has free choice of which Qualities lose Ranks. However, some effects target a particular broad type of Quality, like "strength" or "perception". Ranks of damage must be taken first on any Qualities of that type. If they are reduced to Poor, any remaining damage can be allocated freely.

If the character has no specified Qualities of that type, the first Rank of damage gives them a suitable temporary Weakness agreed between player and GM (which must be figured into any relevant rolls), and remaining damage is applied normally. For instance, if strength is targeted you could gain "Weak as a kitten". These temporary Weaknesses disappear when they heal.

If the damage would generate a Story Hook, the player can use either the first targeted Quality or the first one they chose freely.

## Example

Thunder Eagle is the sample character you'll meet in a couple of pages. Let's imagine that later on he adds a Vulnerability from the Thor power programme:

- **Proud** - you lose your composure when challenged or taunted about your competence.

He gets into a situation where a villain is taunting him about not being a proper superhero because he's nothing without his fancy baseball bat and other "toys". The GM and player agree that this triggers the Vulnerability. Thunder Eagle is momentarily paralysed by a building rage that's not entirely his own, and because he has Good [+2] Proud takes 2 Damage Ranks. As he doesn't have any composure-type Qualities to target, the first Rank gives a temporary Weakness of Poor [-2] Unreasoning Rage and the second Rank is allocated normally. He also gains 1d6+2 Hero Points - put to good use as he throws his weapons aside and lunges at his detractor.

## OTHER CHARACTER TYPES

In a mythic supers game, of course most player characters will be imbued by mythic Sources, but there could be small contingents of metahumans of other types. This is certainly true in the Legendary Earth setting.

**Alterants** are given powers through deliberate technological augmentation - see box below.

**Gadget-based characters** are certainly possible, gaining powers through technology produced by Normals or Metas.

**Training-based characters** are possible too, pushing their Qualities to the peak of Normal ability, perhaps driven to compete with the mythic powers. They're quite likely to use gadgets as well.



### ALTERANTS

Not all metahumans get their powers from Sources. Some are manufactured by human science. The United States produces most, but these "alterants" can be found anywhere that a body with a lot of resources wants to give itself a metahuman advantage. Techniques include genetic modification, technological implants, drug treatments and psychological conditioning. Many have a high failure rate and all have side effects. Nobody volunteers to become an alterant lightly - they might be committed military types, criminals offered a deal they couldn't refuse, or just hapless guinea pigs.

Powers must be feasible science-based things, not magical like many Meta powers (it's Legendary Science, though!). This includes many physical alterations, like increasing strength or adding claws, and skill improvements through various conditioning techniques. It also includes awakening psychic powers, something that Sources rarely provide.

Instead of a set "shopping list", powers are bought freely. Pick any from T&J, the key powers and the programmes that are suitable as alterant powers, and invent new ones if you need something modern or technological. The Super-Attributes have a ceiling of Good, and in general high power Ranks are unusual.

The processes that create alterants usually have Side Effects. These might be Weaknesses, Limitations or Vulnerabilities. Examples: Unattractive Appearance from scarring, all sorts of mental instabilities, Addiction to drugs, All Thumbs from the nerve disconnections that let you ignore pain, Reduced Lifespan making you vulnerable to death-type powers and/or diseases, Indebted to (Organisation). The GM might rule that any alterant with a power Rank above Good must take an extra Side Effect.

# CHARACTER CREATION EXAMPLE

## Thunder Eagle

Here's a character created from start to finish to help explain the process.

**Background:** Martin Egilsson is an American professional baseball player imbued with the power of Thor, the Norse god of thunder. He's athletic and good-looking, notable more for his popularity than his technical skills on the field. He got his powers when some criminals were causing problems with his team - perhaps extortion, drugs or bribing them to throw games. Marty's first "mission" was to put a stop to it, so his powers were a useful tool, and now he's seen what he can do he feels a responsibility to help more people. He still has that urge for spotlights and adulation once in a while, though. It's not clear yet whether he can continue his career. He's a bit ashamed of being afraid of enclosed spaces, and doesn't like it to be known.

**Motivation:** Protect ordinary hardworking people from criminals.

**Qualities:** Expert (+4) Athletic, Good (+2) Baseball Player, Good (+2) Drive Motorbike, Good (+2) Attractive, Poor (-2) Claustrophobia.

**Origin:** The power of Thor!

**Powers:** OK, this is where it gets interesting. We look at the power programme for Thor - see box. Because it's a god we have the Aegis of "Thunder" as a mandatory freebie at Average, and can raise it if we want. The Required Power is Super-Strength, so that has to take at least an Average power.

My concept for the character revolves around linking those imbued item possibilities to his occupation, though that's going to spread the points a bit thinly. First, a baseball that returns when thrown, allowing him to deliver Super-Strength attacks at range. That's going to be an Average power turned into a Quality, so Expert (+4) Returns When Thrown (underlined because it's Source-granted). Well, we didn't really

need the high Rank, but it'll be harder for people to stop it coming back to him. Second, a baseball bat with Expert [+4] Effectiveness for a powerful hit. Finally, his motorbike can fly! We only need Average [0] Flight to enable normal bike speed through the air.

So far we've used 4 Average powers so we can either have two more Average or one Good. Making him a bit more durable would be good. Super-Endurance is possible, but looking in *Key Powers* shows that its main benefit is in coping with hostile environments, which isn't what I was after. So let's convert an Average power to 2 Quality Ranks and get Expert [+4] Endurance.

That leaves one of the six Ranks. Well, the thing that makes him most super is that strength, so let's boost it up to Good. Overall, then, we have this lot to add into his write-up:

**Qualities:** Expert [+4] Endurance

**Powers:** Average [0] Aegis (Thunder), Good [+2] Super-Strength\*

**Baseball:** Qualities: Expert [+4] Returns When Thrown

**Baseball bat:** Qualities: Expert [+4] Effectiveness\*

**Motorcycle:** Average [0] Flight\*

He's pretty focused on dishing out the damage (eg a +8 super-scale bat attack - from Super-Strength plus Baseball Player plus Effectiveness). For the future I can see him picking up a bit of Presence, and maybe the "Proud" Vulnerability.

**Stunts:** His current set-up doesn't let him do Stunts off his skill with bat and ball, so it might be worth raising a Quality or two to Master to enable stuff like ricocheting the ball off multiple targets. One Signature Stunt that occurs is *Home Run* (pardon my lack of baseball knowledge), using Super-Strength when hitting a target with a bat-type thing to send them flying through the air. A Range of 100 yards is Good, which will require 2 HP, but the roll to make it work is 2d6+2+2 and victims will probably face a collision at the other end.

**Hero Point Pool:** 5/10

**Uniform:** He adapts a leather jacket and some sports gear into an outfit.

# Thor

The thunder god of Scandinavia and Germany is well known, not least because of his adaptation as a comic-book superhero. The original mythic version was somewhat different but still a mighty (though unrefined) warrior, fending off attacks by giants and monsters with the aid of his enchanted hammer, and much loved by the common folk. The more detailed version of his background appears with his power programme later on - for this example we just need to focus on the list of powers.

## Aegis

- Thunder (+ in extreme weather conditions; - where there's no weather, eg underground, ocean depths, deep inside a large building)

## Required Powers

- Super-Strength\*

## Qualities

- Endurance, Presence, Club Fighting (inc hammer, inc throwing), Unarmed Fighting, Intimidation

## Optional Powers

- Immunity to Thunder and Lightning\* (full against those specific weather effects, MOD against other sound explosions and electricity)
- Super-Endurance (ceiling Good)

## Hammer - Mjolnir ("The Destroyer")

- Qualities: Effectiveness\*, Returns when Thrown
- Blessing\*
- Portability\* - shrinks to the size of a piece of jewellery.
- Smiting\*

## Belt of Strength

- Super-Strength\* (+I Rank only)

## Goat chariot

*Thor was said to travel through the air in a chariot drawn by two he-goats. It's not clear whether the chariot or the goats had the power of flight - for game purposes just allow it to be imbued into any modest-sized vehicle (up to an ordinary car) or a riding animal.*

- Flight\*

## Vulnerabilities

- Easily Tricked - your perception and discernment can be terribly lacking when dealing with deceptions.
- Proud - you lose your composure when challenged or taunted about your competence.
- Temper - you find it hard to keep your cool, especially when being insulted or challenged.
- Voracious - you need to consume large amounts of food and drink, and can become debilitated after a while without doing so.
- Weather Signs - under stress your eyes crackle with lightning and thunder rumbles around you.



# RULES ADDITIONS

Here are some tweaks and additions to the standard T&J rules.

## Size

T&J doesn't define size levels very concretely, but that's quite useful for powers that change size and shape. So here are some rules for size that appeared in our PDQ fantasy game *Questers of the Middle Realms* - it's suggested that you use these, and they'll be referred to elsewhere in this book. (Note that LW shrinking doesn't extend to the microscopic scale as some comicbooks do - it wouldn't fit the mythic framework.)

Size is defined by the Qualities **Large** and **Small**. (If neither is specified, of course, size is Average - that is, roughly the same as a human.) Their levels are like this, extending away from human size in both directions:

- Master Small – humanoid up to an inch tall, insect
- Expert Small – humanoid a few inches tall, mouse, sparrow
- Good Small – humanoid 2-3ft tall, dog, cat
- Average – human-sized
- Good Large – humanoid around 10ft tall, horse, bear
- Expert Large – humanoid around 30ft tall, rhino, elephant
- Master Large – humanoid around 100ft tall, whale

These are brackets; use the closest level. They are **paired** Qualities: each comes with an associated Weakness, for instance Expert [+4] Large, Poor [-2] Large. The Weakness activates in different circumstances from the Strength. In some cases this depends on the size level of an opponent.

Here are some of the main applications.

- **Large size is good for:** making powerful close combat attacks; resisting damage from close combat attacks; feats of strength; some tasks requiring reach.

- **Large size is bad for:** avoiding ranged attacks from smaller opponents (though it might help to resist damage - judgment call!); sneaking around; crossing fragile surfaces.
- **Small size is good for:** not getting hit by ranged attacks; sneaking around and staying unnoticed; getting into small spaces.
- **Small size is bad for:** resisting close combat damage from larger opponents; feats of strength; resisting forces (like being blown about by the wind); tasks requiring reach.

## Notes on size

**Assumptions.** In PDQ, unlike many other RPGs, an attack includes both the accuracy of a strike and its damaging power, and a defence includes both the ability to not get hit and the fortitude to soak up damage. However, conventional wisdom says that a large creature is easier to hit but harder to hurt, while a smaller creature is harder to hit but more fragile. So to make size play an interesting part in physical combat we have to come up with some guidelines, and these are reflected in the previous paragraphs about what Small and Large are good for.

- In hand-to-hand combat power is more important.
- In ranged combat accuracy is more important.

## Power and scale.

- Large size enables you to lift at a Downshift on the Intensity Chart - eg a 100ft person can toss cars around as a simple situation.
- A size difference of more than one level can turn an attack or defence from normal scale to extraordinary normal scale. Master Large puts an entity at Average on the super scale for dishing out and soaking up physical damage.

**Size "reduction".** In conflicts the effective rank of a creature's size may change due to damage or downshifting. Of course the creature doesn't actually change size: it's more a case of its size becoming a less important feature of the story. When comparing sizes (for instance to see whether a Weakness kicks in) always look at the permanent Ranks.



## Normal and Super overlap

What happens if you have both normal-scale and super-scale Qualities that essentially cover the same thing? For instance, Good [+2] Super-Strength with Expert [+4] Strength or Bodybuilder or Sumo Wrestler. Is the normal-scale ability basically wasted?

In most situations the normal-scale ability is just insignificant when compared to the super scale, and does not add on to rolls. However, in a contest where the opposition is on the same super scale Rank as you, they do figure in to give you an edge. So in the example above, if two guys with equal Super-Strength are wrestling you'd expect the highly trained sumo to win most of the time. They don't affect the magnitude of things you can do, but they make you more reliable and efficient at doing them.

## Collisions

When a character travels some distance and hits a solid object, like a wall, sometimes they crash through and sometimes they bounce off. Tank-like supers can knock each other through buildings all day, whereas more fragile types just pick up more bruises.

In T&J this is largely a matter of description, but here's a guideline to assist. A collision is a three-cornered game between the hardness of the object, the hardness of the character (judged by looking at Qualities like Armour), and the force with which they collide. Whichever's weakest gives.

- If force is weakest, the character just goes "oof" and carries on.
- If the object is weakest, it breaks and the character crashes through. This can't cause Damage Ranks, but it might cause one or two Failure Ranks, eg if the structure then collapses on to the character.
- If the character is weakest, they take an extra Damage Rank from the collision.

You can choose the level of detail you look at for this. The simplest is just normal-scale vs super-scale, eg do you have Super-Armour, ordinary Armour or none at all? Super-Strength can knock an Invulnerable character through a brick wall, but an ordinary person would just splat against it. You could also



choose to look within those brackets, eg a sumo wrestler can throw an armoured assassin through a light partition wall. This is mostly common sense: the guideline is there to check if you're not sure.

**Falls** are a kind of collision, with distance fallen generating the force. Look at how far it was, what the character hit at the end, and what protection they have.

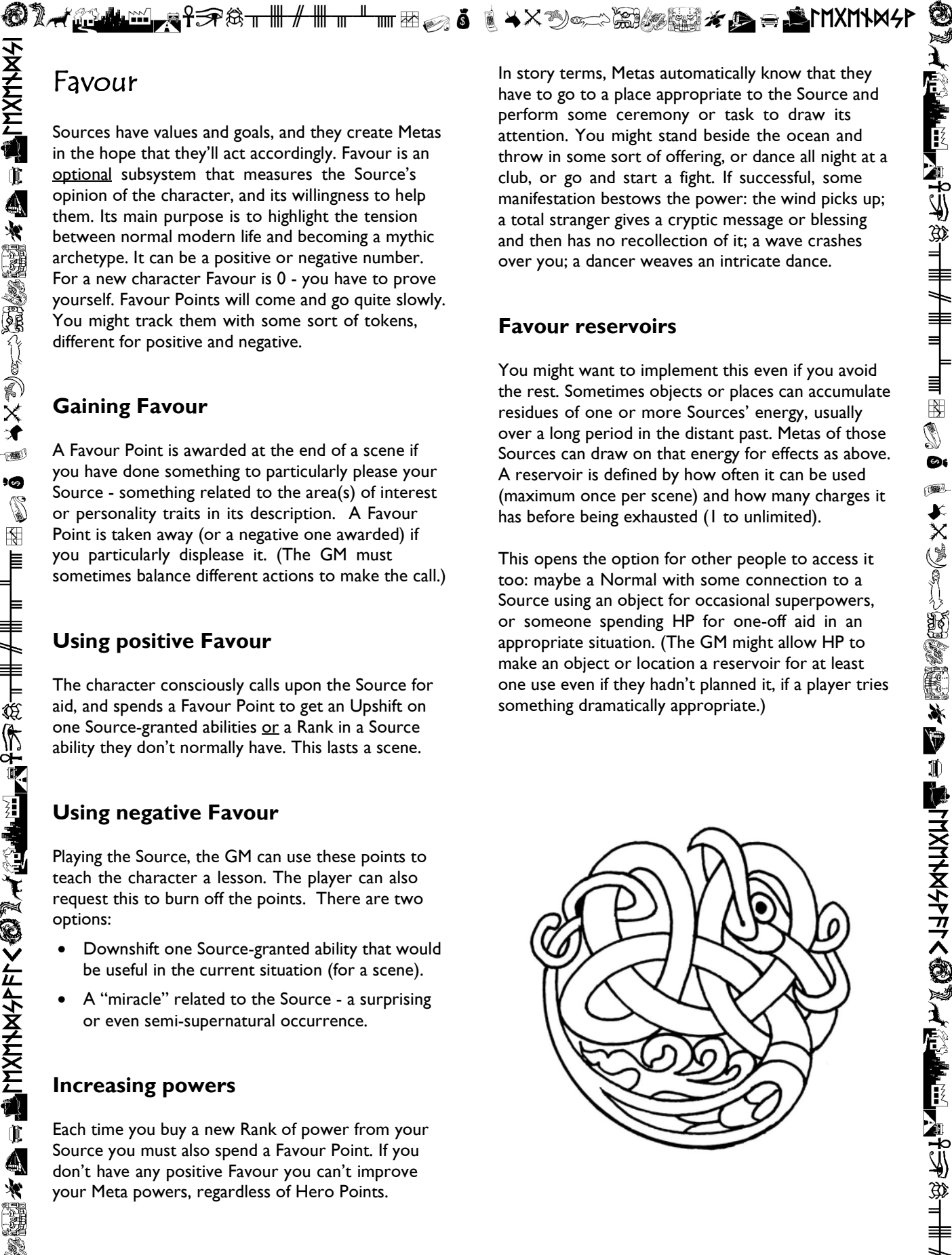
## Lethality

The default style for Legends Walk owes something to the more violent comics of the late '90s onward, which emphasise that ordinary people caught in a crossfire between supers die, often messily. Mythic superpowers should be dangerous, though default LW doesn't go as far as the apparent population wipe-out each issue.

So here's a suggestion: people with no super-scale protection who get caught in a super-scale attack sufficient to zero them out are dead, and possibly mangled, incinerated or whatever depending on the level of overkill. Given that most people are going to be statted up as simply Good [+2] Occupation, that's not difficult.

That can be waived for dramatically important characters like the elderly aunt of one of the PCs. They can just be Seriously Messed Up and in need of story attention.

If you want to really emulate the callous high-body-count style treat minor nameless characters as walking street furniture, losing the protection from power damage that people normally have.



# Favour

Sources have values and goals, and they create Metas in the hope that they'll act accordingly. Favour is an optional subsystem that measures the Source's opinion of the character, and its willingness to help them. Its main purpose is to highlight the tension between normal modern life and becoming a mythic archetype. It can be a positive or negative number. For a new character Favour is 0 - you have to prove yourself. Favour Points will come and go quite slowly. You might track them with some sort of tokens, different for positive and negative.

## Gaining Favour

A Favour Point is awarded at the end of a scene if you have done something to particularly please your Source - something related to the area(s) of interest or personality traits in its description. A Favour Point is taken away (or a negative one awarded) if you particularly displease it. (The GM must sometimes balance different actions to make the call.)

## Using positive Favour

The character consciously calls upon the Source for aid, and spends a Favour Point to get an Upshift on one Source-granted abilities or a Rank in a Source ability they don't normally have. This lasts a scene.

## Using negative Favour

Playing the Source, the GM can use these points to teach the character a lesson. The player can also request this to burn off the points. There are two options:

- Downshift one Source-granted ability that would be useful in the current situation (for a scene).
- A "miracle" related to the Source - a surprising or even semi-supernatural occurrence.

## Increasing powers

Each time you buy a new Rank of power from your Source you must also spend a Favour Point. If you don't have any positive Favour you can't improve your Meta powers, regardless of Hero Points.

In story terms, Metas automatically know that they have to go to a place appropriate to the Source and perform some ceremony or task to draw its attention. You might stand beside the ocean and throw in some sort of offering, or dance all night at a club, or go and start a fight. If successful, some manifestation bestows the power: the wind picks up; a total stranger gives a cryptic message or blessing and then has no recollection of it; a wave crashes over you; a dancer weaves an intricate dance.

## Favour reservoirs

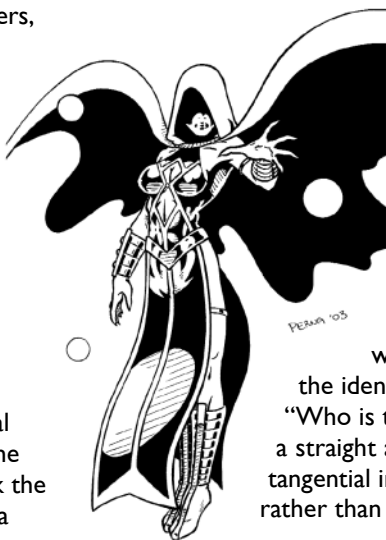
You might want to implement this even if you avoid the rest. Sometimes objects or places can accumulate residues of one or more Sources' energy, usually over a long period in the distant past. Metas of those Sources can draw on that energy for effects as above. A reservoir is defined by how often it can be used (maximum once per scene) and how many charges it has before being exhausted (1 to unlimited).

This opens the option for other people to access it too: maybe a Normal with some connection to a Source using an object for occasional superpowers, or someone spending HP for one-off aid in an appropriate situation. (The GM might allow HP to make an object or location a reservoir for at least one use even if they hadn't planned it, if a player tries something dramatically appropriate.)



# KEY POWERS

This is a non-exhaustive list of powers, collected together here because they crop up frequently and/or require longer write-ups. (Programmes contain many other powers explained on the spot.) Key powers are marked with a "\*" in Sources' programmes so you know to refer back here.



However, this power always comes with the Limitation: Cannot Derail Plot. The GM has the option of ruling that a question directly short-circuiting the key process of the adventure produces an unclear result - presumably due to ion storms in M-space or something - and the first time this happens in a scene the player gets a HP. For instance, if the PCs are currently involved in a plot where the crucial goal is to work out the identity of a murderer, asking straight out, "Who is the murderer?" is not going to produce a straight answer. (Though you could provide tangential information - "The one-armed man!" - rather than an outright block.)

## All-Knowing

The character is plugged into universal knowledge. Up to MOD times per scene they can meditate for an action and ask the GM one question which must receive a truthful but brief answer (usually one or two words). Most answers are "yes", "no", "maybe" (if there's a definite answer but it doesn't fit yes or no), or "unclear" (if it's impossible to give a definitive reply within the terms of the question). However you can spend two uses or one and a HP to get somewhat more forthcoming information, eg "What was the deceased's occupation?" or "Where did he work?"

## Alter Properties

This power gives very wide scope for rewriting reality. It can alter the properties of an object or being - making metal railings brittle, making fire burn without heat, rendering explosives inert, making a weak person strong or a fierce animal docile, or even conferring new skills, like being a great hunter. It

Power	Page				
All-Knowing	25	Immortal	31	Sense Death's Presence	34
Alter Properties	25	Immunity (specify)	31	Shapeshift	35
Animal Connection (specify)	26	Intelligence	31	Size	36
Aquatic	26	Knowledge of the Dead	32	Smiting	36
Beauty	26	Languages	32	Sorcery	36
Blessing (and Curse)	27	Leadership	32	Summon Minions	37
Breach the Wall of Death	27	Leaping	32	Super-Agility	37
Control (specify)	28	Master of (specify)	32	Super-Awareness	38
Control Disease	28	Master of Skills	32	Super-Endurance	38
Craft Wonders	29	Master of the Gate	33	Super-Ingenuity	38
Creation	29	Music	33	Super-Presence	38
Curse	27	Pleasure	33	Super-Strength	38
Devouring	30	Poisonous Breath	33	Super-Wisdom	39
Effectiveness	30	Portability	33	Time Distort	39
Eloquence	30	Precognition	34	Time Sense	40
Fertility	30	Raven's Fare	34	Underworld Sense	40
Flight	30	Reincarnation	34	Universal Energy	40
Fury	30	Run Like a Horse	34	Unliving	40
		See Righteousness	34	Warding	40

doesn't change the target's shape or transform it into a different substance. (The railings, for instance, would still be iron - just weird iron.) The balance to this power is that its effects only last a short while before ordinary reality reasserts itself: use the Time column, with a maximum of one scene.

It works by **attaching** a desired Quality to the target. These attached Qualities are a bit odd: they range from Average to Master; can sit alongside any similar Qualities that already exist or overwrite opposing ones; can not absorb damage Ranks; and can be used by anyone around, not just the target (if that's a living being). So if you attach Expert [+4] Soft to the pavement, a character falling off a building could add that to their attempt to resist damage. If you give someone Master Weak As A Kitten and then arm-wrestle them, you get to add 6 to your roll.

Attaching is basically simple: give the target the Quality you specify at up to your Rank in this power. If the target has a Quality that conflicts with this you must overcome its TN to succeed: then the opposing Quality is "switched off" while this effect lasts, as if it didn't exist. Assume that everything is at least Average in being itself - for instance the pavement might not have Hard explicitly, but this is part of being a pavement so you still have to beat TN 7. (If you were trying to turn it orange, that's not included so it'd just work.) An Average Rank in this power doesn't let you attach an active MOD (unless you spend HP), but you can use it to switch an opposing Quality off - eg creating fire that burns without heat.

General restrictions:

- You can't use it on yourself.
- Only one property change at a time, and the GM has final decision on what constitutes a property.
- You can't alter Source-granted abilities (the opposing will is greater), and in general you can't confer powers. However, you could come up with some wacky Qualities, like "Fate-proof".

## Animal Connection

This gives a special link with one or more particular animal type(s) connected with your Source - eg dogs, owls, horses. (If more than one type is listed you can specify one per Rank in the power.) It's a bit like putting your relationship with them on the super scale. You can assume an automatic friendly reaction if there's no reason for it to be otherwise, and in any



case they won't harm you of their own volition. There's a basic empathic connection enabling you to request tasks around the level of a well-trained dog and gather basic information. Any rolls dealing with that animal type can use MOD.

It would also be possible to take this as a Meta-Power enabling you to Stunt such interactions with any animal type encountered. (This power differs from Control Animals in that it's automatic; passive rather than active, and less domineering.)

## Aquatic

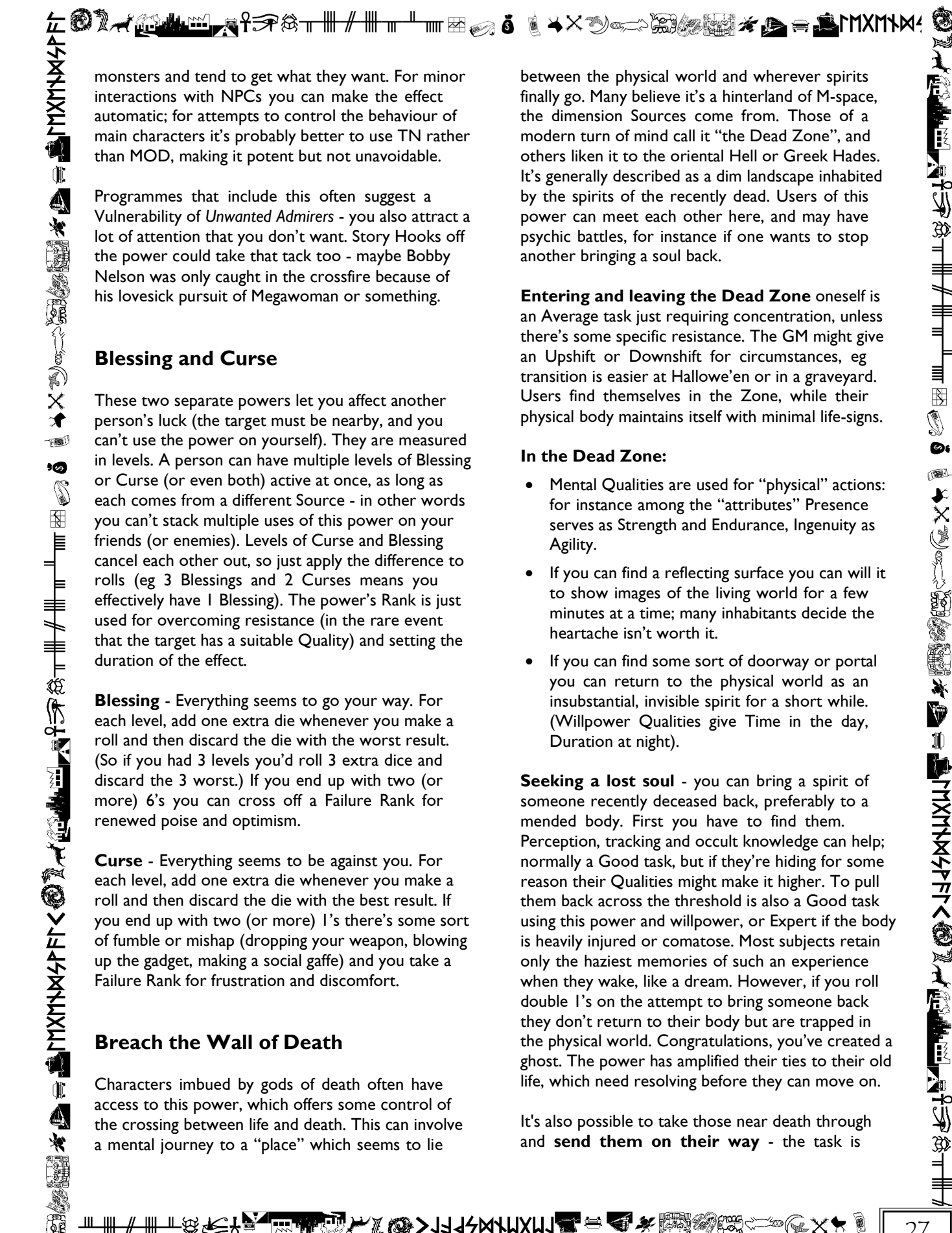
This power enables you to survive and get about in water.

- You can breathe underwater, whether through gills or sheer magic.
- MOD counts toward swimming. (Master Rank equates to a speed of about 60mph, that of the fastest fish.)
- MOD resists cold and the pressure of the depths.

Stunts for this power can emphasise one of the above aspects. Maybe you can swim super-fast (not as fast as the speed column on the power table though), or have the equivalent of Armor from pressure-resistance, or can see in the dark.

## Beauty

Your appearance is on the super scale. Through whatever combination of flawless looks and powerful chemistry, people can't help but be attracted or impressed (depending on circumstance and preference). Metas with this power are social



monsters and tend to get what they want. For minor interactions with NPCs you can make the effect automatic; for attempts to control the behaviour of main characters it's probably better to use TN rather than MOD, making it potent but not unavoidable.

Programmes that include this often suggest a Vulnerability of *Unwanted Admirers* - you also attract a lot of attention that you don't want. Story Hooks off the power could take that tack too - maybe Bobby Nelson was only caught in the crossfire because of his lovesick pursuit of Megawoman or something.

### Blessing and Curse

These two separate powers let you affect another person's luck (the target must be nearby, and you can't use the power on yourself). They are measured in levels. A person can have multiple levels of Blessing or Curse (or even both) active at once, as long as each comes from a different Source - in other words you can't stack multiple uses of this power on your friends (or enemies). Levels of Curse and Blessing cancel each other out, so just apply the difference to rolls (eg 3 Blessings and 2 Curses means you effectively have 1 Blessing). The power's Rank is just used for overcoming resistance (in the rare event that the target has a suitable Quality) and setting the duration of the effect.

**Blessing** - Everything seems to go your way. For each level, add one extra die whenever you make a roll and then discard the die with the worst result. (So if you had 3 levels you'd roll 3 extra dice and discard the 3 worst.) If you end up with two (or more) 6's you can cross off a Failure Rank for renewed poise and optimism.

**Curse** - Everything seems to be against you. For each level, add one extra die whenever you make a roll and then discard the die with the best result. If you end up with two (or more) 1's there's some sort of fumble or mishap (dropping your weapon, blowing up the gadget, making a social gaffe) and you take a Failure Rank for frustration and discomfort.

### Breach the Wall of Death

Characters imbued by gods of death often have access to this power, which offers some control of the crossing between life and death. This can involve a mental journey to a "place" which seems to lie

between the physical world and wherever spirits finally go. Many believe it's a hinterland of M-space, the dimension Sources come from. Those of a modern turn of mind call it "the Dead Zone", and others liken it to the oriental Hell or Greek Hades. It's generally described as a dim landscape inhabited by the spirits of the recently dead. Users of this power can meet each other here, and may have psychic battles, for instance if one wants to stop another bringing a soul back.

**Entering and leaving the Dead Zone** oneself is an Average task just requiring concentration, unless there's some specific resistance. The GM might give an Upshift or Downshift for circumstances, eg transition is easier at Hallowe'en or in a graveyard. Users find themselves in the Zone, while their physical body maintains itself with minimal life-signs.

#### In the Dead Zone:

- Mental Qualities are used for "physical" actions: for instance among the "attributes" Presence serves as Strength and Endurance, Ingenuity as Agility.
- If you can find a reflecting surface you can will it to show images of the living world for a few minutes at a time; many inhabitants decide the headache isn't worth it.
- If you can find some sort of doorway or portal you can return to the physical world as an insubstantial, invisible spirit for a short while. (Willpower Qualities give Time in the day, Duration at night).

**Seeking a lost soul** - you can bring a spirit of someone recently deceased back, preferably to a mended body. First you have to find them. Perception, tracking and occult knowledge can help; normally a Good task, but if they're hiding for some reason their Qualities might make it higher. To pull them back across the threshold is also a Good task using this power and willpower, or Expert if the body is heavily injured or comatose. Most subjects retain only the haziest memories of such an experience when they wake, like a dream. However, if you roll double 1's on the attempt to bring someone back they don't return to their body but are trapped in the physical world. Congratulations, you've created a ghost. The power has amplified their ties to their old life, which need resolving before they can move on.

It's also possible to take those near death through and **send them on their way** - the task is

Good/Expert as above and it only works if the subject is willing.

One with this power can **find their own way** back if thrust through by death or coma, but only if their body is whole enough to contain a life force: Expert difficulty.

## Control (specify)

This covers a range of specific powers, such as Control Fire, Control Weather and Control Animals. In fact that's two different kinds of control: a largely mental effect on living things, and shaping and moving elemental forces and substances. These tend to be versatile powers with lots of Stunt potential.

### Common Stunts.

- Control of animate things allows **communication** as a Stunt.
- Control of inanimate things allows **creation** from nothing as a Stunt, where thematically appropriate - including a Bolt or Beam (obviously weaker than a dedicated Bolt/Beam power).
- **Perception** - sense nearby bodies of the element, harder for small concentrations. Maybe you could even use it for analysing a body of the element, though that's starting to veer off into separate powers. (Some versions might include this as part of the core power. For instance, it would be pretty sensible for Control Animals to allow you to sense the mood of animals, and maybe their surface thoughts and whether any are in the surrounding area - especially as this power's more limited in flexibility than most of the elemental ones.)
- **Explosive effects** - a damaging attack that affects all in an area.
- **Sheath** - using the power to surround your body, or just part of it. So you could have a whole-body coating of fire or ice, or fists crackling with lightning. The Stunt MOD adds to attack or defence; a failed attack against a defensive sheath might cause the attacker to

take a Rank of damage (eg hitting a flaming teenager, either you manage to tag them safely or you burn yourself trying). Maintaining a sheath does require a certain degree of concentration, and it'll lapse if you lose it. An attack of an opposing nature, eg water vs fire, may momentarily reduce the sheath's intensity, or even extinguish it altogether if its own intensity is greater.

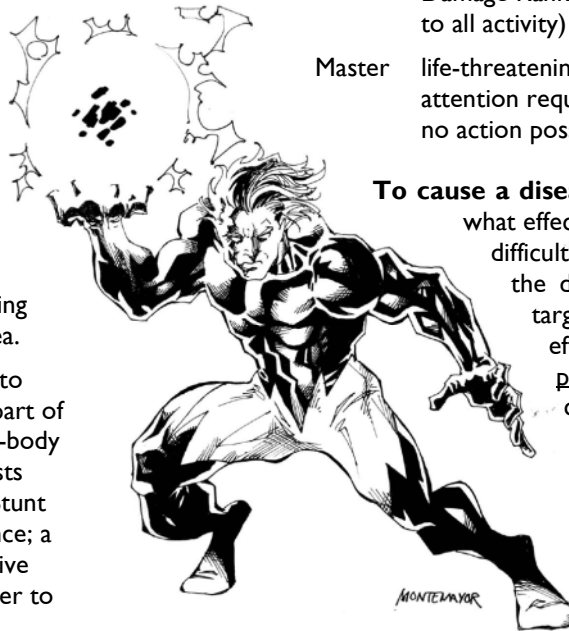
## Control Disease

Bringers of disease are common in world myths, as it was something people feared.

**Disease Ranks.** Here's a scale of condition types with some suggested consequences.

Poor	inconvenient or embarrassing conditions such as itching, wind or an unsightly boil (possible Downshift for social tasks)
Average	mildly painful and/or distracting conditions like cramp, an ulcer or a cold (1 Failure Rank, Downshift for initiative and concentration)
Good	debilitating and/or painful conditions (1 Damage Rank, -MOD to initiative, Downshift to all activity)
Expert	incapacitating conditions posing a real threat to the character's health, meriting bed rest and medical attention (MOD Damage Ranks, -TN to initiative, -MOD to all activity)
Master	life-threatening conditions - medical attention required (TN Damage Ranks, no action possible)

**To cause a disease or ailment** decide what effect you wish to produce. The difficulty to cause it is the higher of the disease's Rank and the target's resistance. If successful, effects are based on the power's Rank. Medical help can only tackle the symptoms, not effect a cure. Once the duration expires the subject starts recovering normally - the time this takes depends on what the effect was.



The power can be used on several targets at once, as long as all of them are the same kind of creature and all are afflicted with the same condition. To make the disease contagious so that it will pass from the subject to others gives an extra Downshift on the power roll, but anyone who catches it this way gets a normal version that can be treated medically.

**To cure a disease** use the Ranks for difficulty.

## Craft Wonders

In some ways this is a combination of magic and technology. It allows you to build almost any powers into an object you make or alter, which is then permanent. Animate items are obedient to their creator and able to follow simple commands. It works like a non-technological combination of Gadgeteering (T&J p42) and Super-Gadgeteering (T&J p49).

**Build costs.** That makes a slightly complicated menu of HP costs to build a new item. (It also takes reasonable amounts of time and materials.)

- Base cost of 2 Hero Points.
- HP equal to the MOD of any Qualities.
- HP equal to twice the MOD of the highest-Ranked power.
- HP cost of Stunting each power's Rank off Craft Wonders.
- 1 HP per alteration (bigger, smaller, stronger, faster, etc).

Here are some common abilities to include.

- Made of (specify) - items are often made of stone, metal, or whatever, and this Quality can be used for both resisting and causing physical damage.
- Movement - an Average-Rank power giving the ability to get around by moving parts of the object, eg a chair could walk by moving its legs, but a bucket couldn't move unless you gave it *Flight*. Once it has this, physical abilities can be fine-tuned with Qualities.
- The Intelligence\* power - gives the object a rudimentary mind and the ability to act on its own initiative.
- Skill-type Qualities - a conscious item can be imbued with skills, to a maximum of the user's own Ranks.

**Starting items.** As per Super-Gadgeteering, a character with this power can start with up to 4 items that contain only mundane Qualities (up to 6HP cost), but is more likely to have items that include powers as well, which use up 2 picks each.

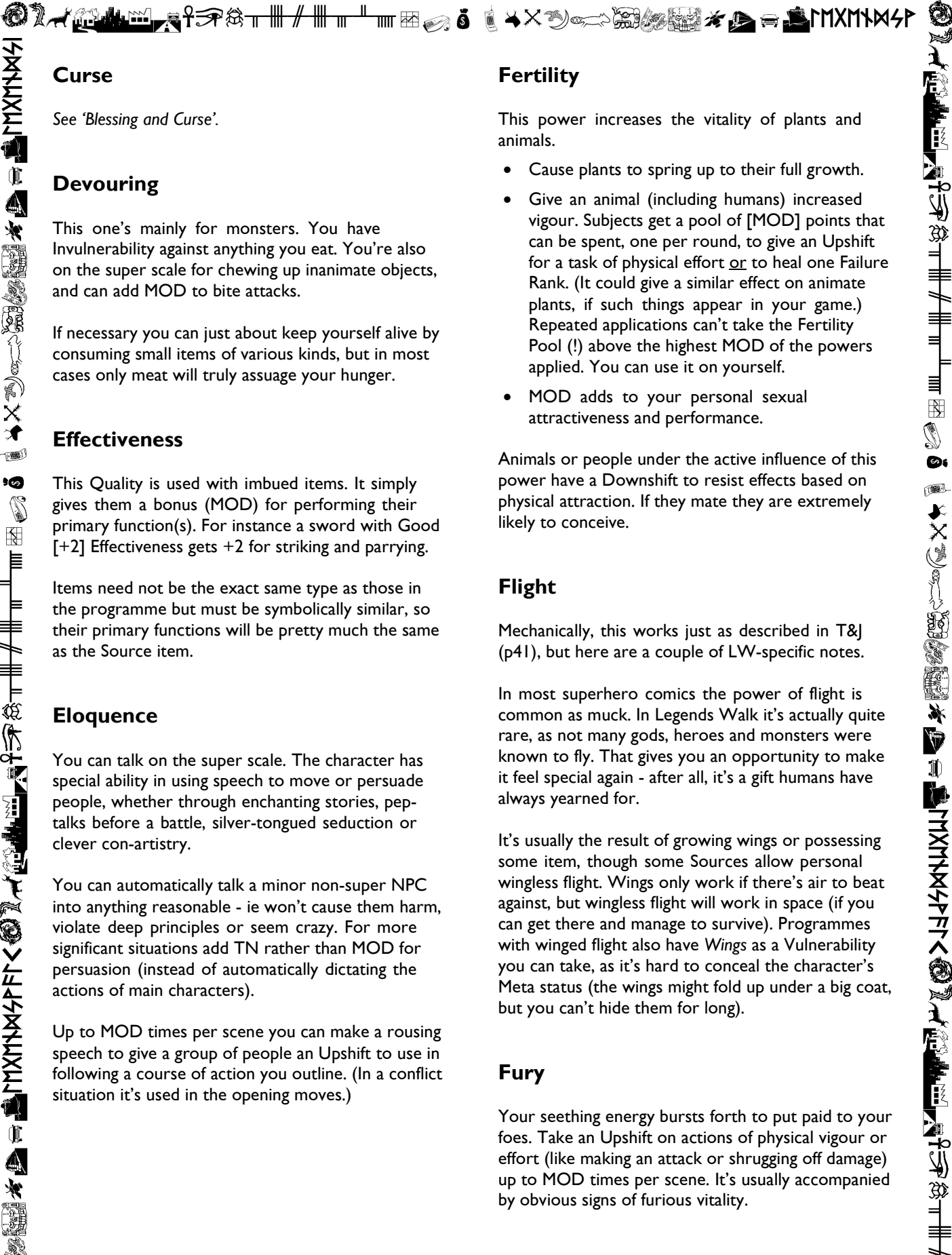
**General rules.** The object itself cannot contain modern technology - for instance it won't work on an electronic robot, but it will on an articulated statue. The process of imbuing the powers is part of the creation of the object. Once an object has been imbued with a set of powers they cannot be changed: they are part of it, so if you want different abilities you must make a new one. An object cannot be imbued by both this power and a Source (in a contest the Source will win, but they rarely claim other people's creations). This power can duplicate most of the abilities of imbued objects, but not their extraordinary durability. You cannot build in flexible powers like *Control Fire* - you have to choose a specific application, eg "jet flame from nostrils". The GM has final approval over what is allowable. Major damage to wondrous objects can only be repaired by someone with this power.

## Creation

This gives you the power to create things out of thin air. The creations have the properties of a normal thing of their type but are ephemeral, lasting a scene and then dissipating. (However, you can make one permanent by embedding some of your own life force, costing a Damage Rank and a Hero Point.) Remember the archaic basis of the powers - the Source has no knowledge of microbiology, for instance, so you can't throw a flu virus at someone.

Making inanimate objects is Average difficulty. Simple living things like plants and insects is Good. Higher animals (including humans, who start with a childlike mentality) is Expert. The default is to make it in your hand or at arm's reach - to make it further away brings one or more Downshifts, as might other things like unusual complexity or size.

Mechanically it works like *Intense Training*. If you succeed in the task you get [power MOD + 1] Ranks of Qualities to assign to your creation. The first Rank has to be spent to give it Average [0] (whatever it is), like an Average Sword. Further Ranks can add to that or develop special features (starting at Good).



## Curse

See 'Blessing and Curse'.

## Devouring

This one's mainly for monsters. You have Invulnerability against anything you eat. You're also on the super scale for chewing up inanimate objects, and can add MOD to bite attacks.

If necessary you can just about keep yourself alive by consuming small items of various kinds, but in most cases only meat will truly assuage your hunger.

## Effectiveness

This Quality is used with imbued items. It simply gives them a bonus (MOD) for performing their primary function(s). For instance a sword with Good [+2] Effectiveness gets +2 for striking and parrying.

Items need not be the exact same type as those in the programme but must be symbolically similar, so their primary functions will be pretty much the same as the Source item.

## Eloquence

You can talk on the super scale. The character has special ability in using speech to move or persuade people, whether through enchanting stories, pep-talks before a battle, silver-tongued seduction or clever con-artistry.

You can automatically talk a minor non-super NPC into anything reasonable - ie won't cause them harm, violate deep principles or seem crazy. For more significant situations add TN rather than MOD for persuasion (instead of automatically dictating the actions of main characters).

Up to MOD times per scene you can make a rousing speech to give a group of people an Upshift to use in following a course of action you outline. (In a conflict situation it's used in the opening moves.)

## Fertility

This power increases the vitality of plants and animals.

- Cause plants to spring up to their full growth.
- Give an animal (including humans) increased vigour. Subjects get a pool of [MOD] points that can be spent, one per round, to give an Upshift for a task of physical effort or to heal one Failure Rank. (It could give a similar effect on animate plants, if such things appear in your game.) Repeated applications can't take the Fertility Pool (!) above the highest MOD of the powers applied. You can use it on yourself.
- MOD adds to your personal sexual attractiveness and performance.

Animals or people under the active influence of this power have a Downshift to resist effects based on physical attraction. If they mate they are extremely likely to conceive.

## Flight

Mechanically, this works just as described in T&J (p41), but here are a couple of LW-specific notes.

In most superhero comics the power of flight is common as muck. In Legends Walk it's actually quite rare, as not many gods, heroes and monsters were known to fly. That gives you an opportunity to make it feel special again - after all, it's a gift humans have always yearned for.

It's usually the result of growing wings or possessing some item, though some Sources allow personal wingless flight. Wings only work if there's air to beat against, but wingless flight will work in space (if you can get there and manage to survive). Programmes with winged flight also have *Wings* as a Vulnerability you can take, as it's hard to conceal the character's Meta status (the wings might fold up under a big coat, but you can't hide them for long).

## Fury

Your seething energy bursts forth to put paid to your foes. Take an Upshift on actions of physical vigour or effort (like making an attack or shrugging off damage) up to MOD times per scene. It's usually accompanied by obvious signs of furious vitality.





## Immortal

This replaces T&J's *Immortality* power for the purposes of LW. It doesn't actually let you live forever, but it does increase your natural lifespan by about 50%. It imbues you with the idea of immortality, giving the following benefits:

- puts you on the super scale to resist aging and life draining effects;
- MOD helps to resist poison and disease;
- MOD adds to recovery of Damage Ranks at the end of a scene.

Of course many mythic Sources could be said to be immortal, but you should only give this to those that are strongly and specifically connected with immortality.

## Immunity (specify)

This gives *Inulnerability* to one specific kind of thing - eg Fire, Mind Control, Poison. (Across-the-board *Inulnerability* is less common in LW.) In a nutshell, it puts you on the super scale for resisting that thing: ordinary instances of it don't bother you at all, but extraordinary instances might slow you down temporarily and super-scale instances can sting a bit.

So if you have *Immunity to Fire* and face a Meta with flame-throwing powers, you can simply laugh off their attacks - unless they spend a Hero Point to super-

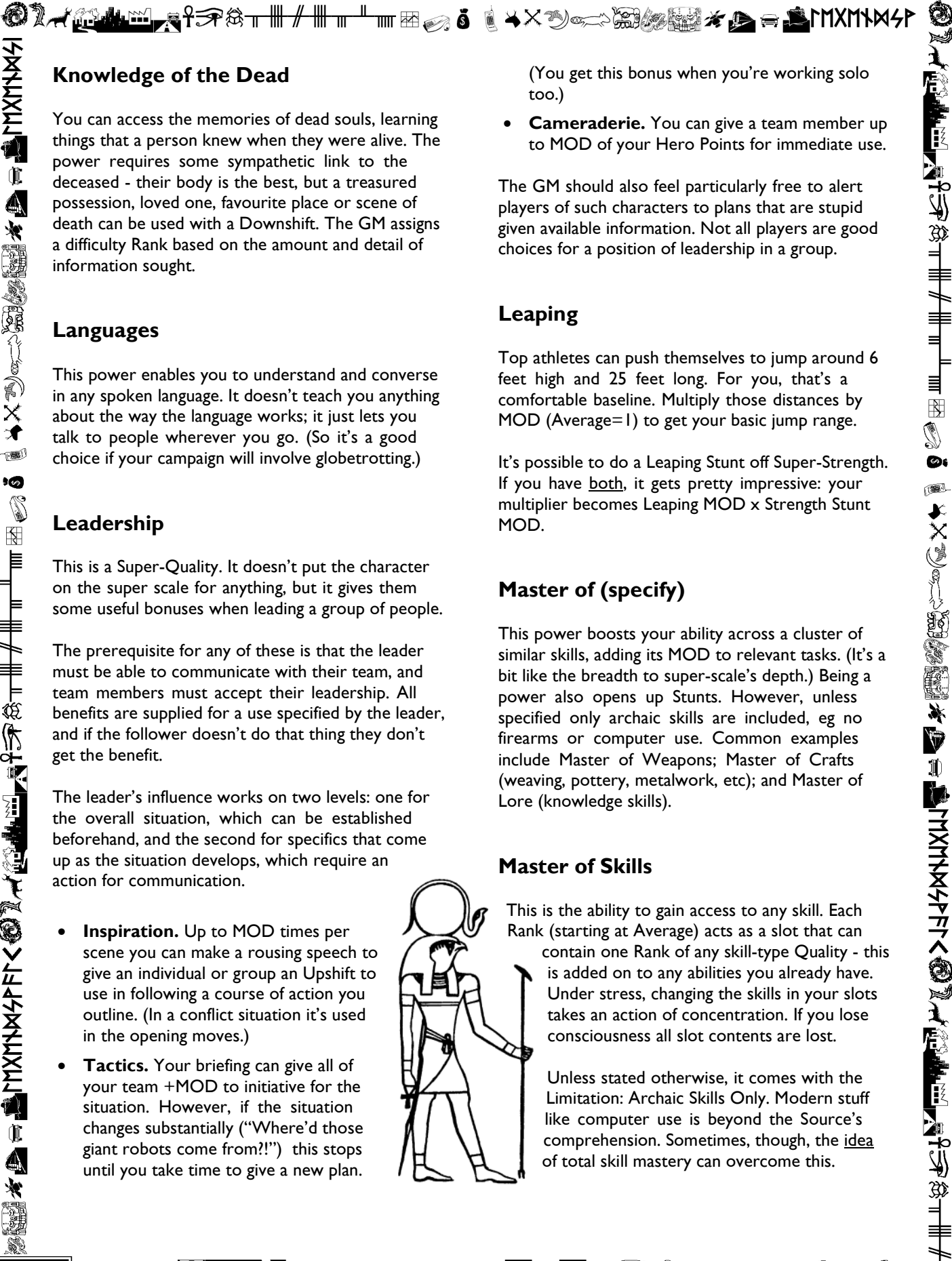
scale one, in which case your Immunity acts as a super-scale defence and you're just looking at opposing MODs.

Some versions of this power specify a wider area of immunity. Usually that's because the primary area is a bit less useful than most Immunities, so a secondary area is added that doesn't give super scale but adds the MOD (minimum 1) for resistance. One common example is *Sun Immunity*, which gives full Immunity against light and MOD resistance against heat.

If a threat consists of more than one type of damage, break it down into proportions using any Quality Ranks as a guide and apply the Immunity to nullify or resist appropriately. For example an explosion consisting of fire and flying metal could have its damage halved for someone Immune to Fire.

## Intelligence

This power is found with imbued items - objects or living creatures - or non-human creatures that are imbued as Metas themselves. It upgrades them to human-level mental functioning, possibly conferring the power of speech too. You only ever use it at Average - once they have it you can use Qualities to fine-tune aptitudes and personality. (Option: require it to always come with a Poor Quality to reflect residues of its original nature, annoying quirks, etc.)



## Knowledge of the Dead

You can access the memories of dead souls, learning things that a person knew when they were alive. The power requires some sympathetic link to the deceased - their body is the best, but a treasured possession, loved one, favourite place or scene of death can be used with a Downshift. The GM assigns a difficulty Rank based on the amount and detail of information sought.

## Languages

This power enables you to understand and converse in any spoken language. It doesn't teach you anything about the way the language works; it just lets you talk to people wherever you go. (So it's a good choice if your campaign will involve globetrotting.)

## Leadership

This is a Super-Quality. It doesn't put the character on the super scale for anything, but it gives them some useful bonuses when leading a group of people.

The prerequisite for any of these is that the leader must be able to communicate with their team, and team members must accept their leadership. All benefits are supplied for a use specified by the leader, and if the follower doesn't do that thing they don't get the benefit.

The leader's influence works on two levels: one for the overall situation, which can be established beforehand, and the second for specifics that come up as the situation develops, which require an action for communication.

- **Inspiration.** Up to MOD times per scene you can make a rousing speech to give an individual or group an Upshift to use in following a course of action you outline. (In a conflict situation it's used in the opening moves.)
- **Tactics.** Your briefing can give all of your team +MOD to initiative for the situation. However, if the situation changes substantially ("Where'd those giant robots come from?!") this stops until you take time to give a new plan.



(You get this bonus when you're working solo too.)

- **Cameraderie.** You can give a team member up to MOD of your Hero Points for immediate use.

The GM should also feel particularly free to alert players of such characters to plans that are stupid given available information. Not all players are good choices for a position of leadership in a group.

## Leaping

Top athletes can push themselves to jump around 6 feet high and 25 feet long. For you, that's a comfortable baseline. Multiply those distances by MOD (Average=1) to get your basic jump range.

It's possible to do a Leaping Stunt off Super-Strength. If you have both, it gets pretty impressive: your multiplier becomes Leaping MOD x Strength Stunt MOD.

## Master of (specify)

This power boosts your ability across a cluster of similar skills, adding its MOD to relevant tasks. (It's a bit like the breadth to super-scale's depth.) Being a power also opens up Stunts. However, unless specified only archaic skills are included, eg no firearms or computer use. Common examples include Master of Weapons; Master of Crafts (weaving, pottery, metalwork, etc); and Master of Lore (knowledge skills).

## Master of Skills

This is the ability to gain access to any skill. Each Rank (starting at Average) acts as a slot that can contain one Rank of any skill-type Quality - this is added on to any abilities you already have. Under stress, changing the skills in your slots takes an action of concentration. If you lose consciousness all slot contents are lost.

Unless stated otherwise, it comes with the Limitation: Archaic Skills Only. Modern stuff like computer use is beyond the Source's comprehension. Sometimes, though, the idea of total skill mastery can overcome this.

## Master of the Gate

This is rare but powerful - some Sources give a degree of control over the Gate between the worlds itself, allowing a character to affect the powers of other Metas. (This makes sense in the Legendary Earth setting, but might not in some others.)

**Detection.** You can tell whether a being or object is imbued. It's normally an Average task, taking an action of concentration.

**Closing off** the influence of the spirit world reduces or removes Source-granted abilities - powers or Qualities with some Source-granted Ranks (which should have been underlined). The user nominates one ability at a time - you don't need its exact name, but you have to specify its basic nature, like "strength" or "resistance to fire". You can nominate an ability without knowing whether the target has it, but if they don't there won't be any effect. (Most Metas guard knowledge of their Source and powers as it could give an advantage to enemies.) If the target has such an ability, roll against its TN. If successful, the ability and any associated Stunts are Downshifted for the rest of the scene. (Minimum for Qualities is Poor, but powers can zero out and become unusable without zeroing the character.)

The character won't necessarily be aware of this until they try to use the ability. If the target has *Master of the Gate* too they're automatically aware of the attempt and can add its MOD to the defence. (This power itself can not be closed off.)

If this power is used on normal humans it produces a more subtle effect for a longer duration. Over a period of time their dreams will become less vivid, their creativity will be reduced and their life will become more lacklustre. Whether there's any game use for this is up to you. An entire community affected in this way for several weeks would certainly become an unpleasant place...

**Opening up the Gate** can increase someone's powers, in a similar way. Specify an ability. If the target has a Source-granted Quality or power that fits the description, roll against its TN. If successful, uses of that ability get an Upshift for the scene.

## Music

You can sing, play or both with supernatural proficiency.

- For ordinary performances use TN instead of MOD.
- You can affect the emotions of people and animals, using MOD.
- You can Stunt to create the analogue of an emotional response in elemental forces - usually this means increasing or reducing their activity, like slowing a river.

## Pleasure

The ability to induce sensations of pleasure in the target, usable in several different ways.

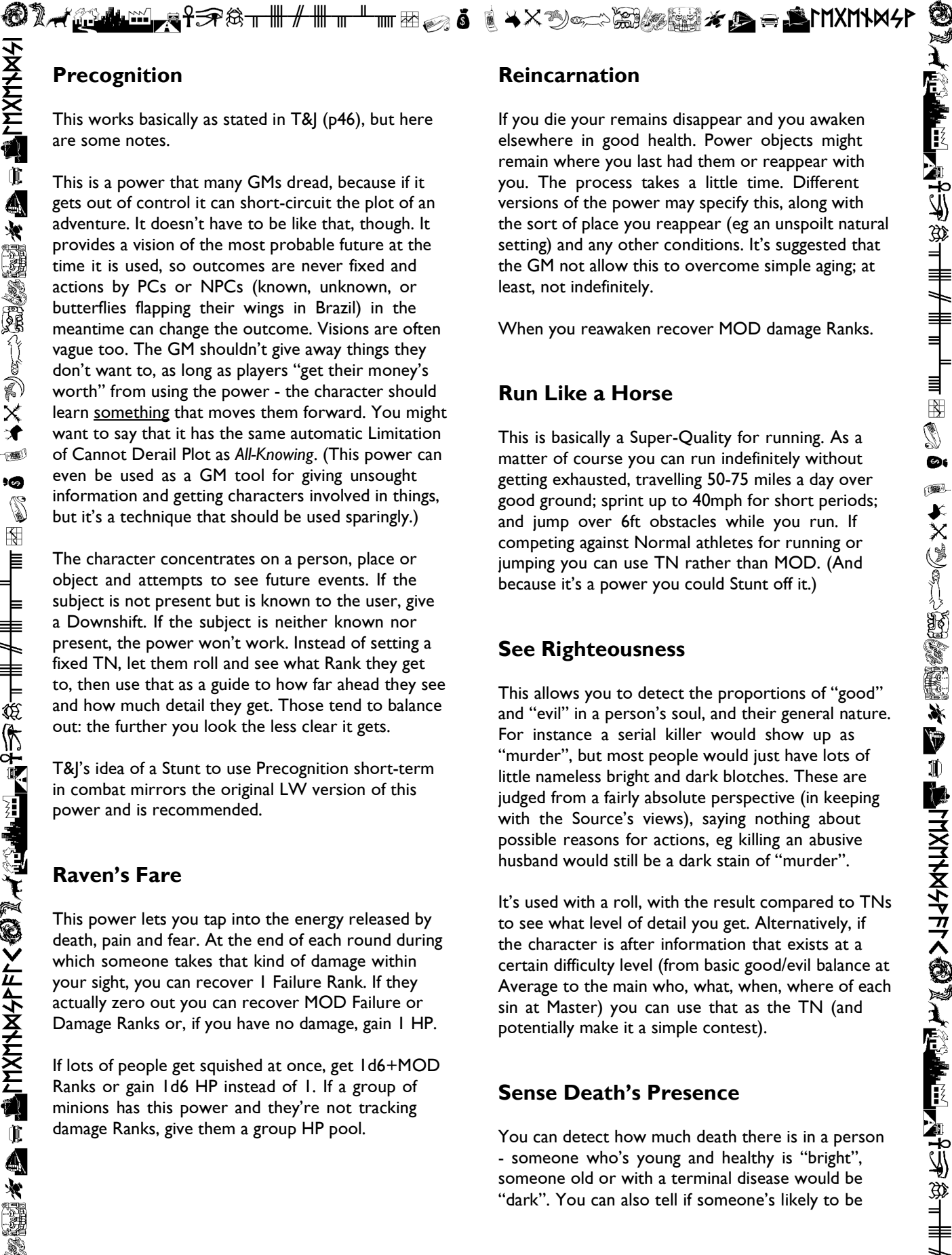
- **Buzz** to make someone more friendly and sociable. A successful power use against their mental resistance gives an Upshift for everyone's social-type rolls involving the target for a scene (but cancelled if the target is harmed).
- **Balm** - a restorative effect removing MOD Failure Ranks.
- **Overload** - an attack causing Failure Ranks.

## Poisonous Breath

Usable once per round to produce a cloud of toxic gas of suitably ominous colour, often black or green. It's a TN Damage hazard each round of exposure. Initially it covers an area corresponding to the user's size: Poor for human-sized and smaller, up to Good for really big creatures. Each round it gains one Area Rank and loses one Damage Rank until it's dispersed (zeroed) or can't spread any further. Some powers can disperse it faster, as an all-or-nothing test or a reduction of its intensity. The user is immune.

## Portability

Some mythic figures had special items with the ability to shrink or be folded up to the size of a wallet or piece of jewellery, so as to be easily carried and hidden. This only needs to be taken at Average, bypassing the normal Size rules (it can't do anything while it's small). Willing it to shrink or grow takes an action.



## Precognition

This works basically as stated in T&J (p46), but here are some notes.

This is a power that many GMs dread, because if it gets out of control it can short-circuit the plot of an adventure. It doesn't have to be like that, though. It provides a vision of the most probable future at the time it is used, so outcomes are never fixed and actions by PCs or NPCs (known, unknown, or butterflies flapping their wings in Brazil) in the meantime can change the outcome. Visions are often vague too. The GM shouldn't give away things they don't want to, as long as players "get their money's worth" from using the power - the character should learn something that moves them forward. You might want to say that it has the same automatic Limitation of Cannot Derail Plot as *All-Knowing*. (This power can even be used as a GM tool for giving unsought information and getting characters involved in things, but it's a technique that should be used sparingly.)

The character concentrates on a person, place or object and attempts to see future events. If the subject is not present but is known to the user, give a Downshift. If the subject is neither known nor present, the power won't work. Instead of setting a fixed TN, let them roll and see what Rank they get to, then use that as a guide to how far ahead they see and how much detail they get. Those tend to balance out: the further you look the less clear it gets.

T&J's idea of a Stunt to use Precognition short-term in combat mirrors the original LW version of this power and is recommended.

## Raven's Fare

This power lets you tap into the energy released by death, pain and fear. At the end of each round during which someone takes that kind of damage within your sight, you can recover 1 Failure Rank. If they actually zero out you can recover MOD Failure or Damage Ranks or, if you have no damage, gain 1 HP.

If lots of people get squished at once, get 1d6+MOD Ranks or gain 1d6 HP instead of 1. If a group of minions has this power and they're not tracking damage Ranks, give them a group HP pool.

## Reincarnation

If you die your remains disappear and you awaken elsewhere in good health. Power objects might remain where you last had them or reappear with you. The process takes a little time. Different versions of the power may specify this, along with the sort of place you reappear (eg an unspoilt natural setting) and any other conditions. It's suggested that the GM not allow this to overcome simple aging; at least, not indefinitely.

When you reawaken recover MOD damage Ranks.

## Run Like a Horse

This is basically a Super-Quality for running. As a matter of course you can run indefinitely without getting exhausted, travelling 50-75 miles a day over good ground; sprint up to 40mph for short periods; and jump over 6ft obstacles while you run. If competing against Normal athletes for running or jumping you can use TN rather than MOD. (And because it's a power you could Stunt off it.)

## See Righteousness

This allows you to detect the proportions of "good" and "evil" in a person's soul, and their general nature. For instance a serial killer would show up as "murder", but most people would just have lots of little nameless bright and dark blotches. These are judged from a fairly absolute perspective (in keeping with the Source's views), saying nothing about possible reasons for actions, eg killing an abusive husband would still be a dark stain of "murder".

It's used with a roll, with the result compared to TNs to see what level of detail you get. Alternatively, if the character is after information that exists at a certain difficulty level (from basic good/evil balance at Average to the main who, what, when, where of each sin at Master) you can use that as the TN (and potentially make it a simple contest).

## Sense Death's Presence

You can detect how much death there is in a person - someone who's young and healthy is "bright", someone old or with a terminal disease would be "dark". You can also tell if someone's likely to be

killed by some means in the near future, usually a few hours, but there's very little information about how.

It's used with a roll, comparing the result to TNs to see what level of detail you get. Alternatively, if the character is after information that exists at a certain difficulty level (from basic life/death balance at Average to vague looming peril at Good to the details and prognosis of each ailment at Master) you can use that as the TN (and potentially make it a simple contest).

## Shapeshift

This ability allows the user to change their body to a different form. (Shapeshifting others requires Sorcery.) It's another power that's particularly prominent in Legends Walk. In this case we're going to make some changes and expansions to the T&J version (Shapeshifting, p47). The power comes in two flavours.

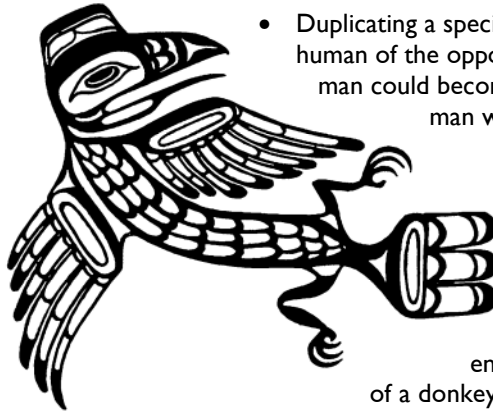
**Fixed shape.** The ability to change into a single specific shape (and back again) at will. This will be specified with the power, eg Shapeshift (bear). The advantage is that it requires no roll to do it, regardless of the size and complexity of the shape - it just takes an action. You gain any appropriate Large or Small size Quality, with the corresponding Poor (see Rules section), and temporarily exchange your Shapeshifting power for the creature type at the same Rank, eg Expert [+4] Bear.

**Variable shape.** The ability to turn into any known, living animal, including humans but excluding things like dinosaurs and bacteria - what god knew about them? - and supernatural creatures. (Some programmes might specify a different range, eg only sea creatures or including plants.) This requires an action and a roll against the difficulty of the shift. If the roll succeeds, viewers see your shape twist and flow into the new one. Changing back into your own form just takes an action. Changes that are well within your limits can be simple situations. You get any appropriate size Qualities and the creature type as an additional Quality at Good.

The shift difficulty TN is Average for a form that's the same size level and basic body shape as a human (head, body, backbone, four limbs). The following

factors add Ranks of difficulty (or, if you push it beyond Master, Downshifts to your roll).

- Each size level bigger or smaller.
- Body shape/type that's significantly different - so mammals or birds are usually OK, but fish, snakes, insects, molluscs, etc are harder.
- Duplicating a specific individual or becoming a human of the opposite sex. (A small, fair-haired man could become a generic large, dark-haired man with no penalty.)

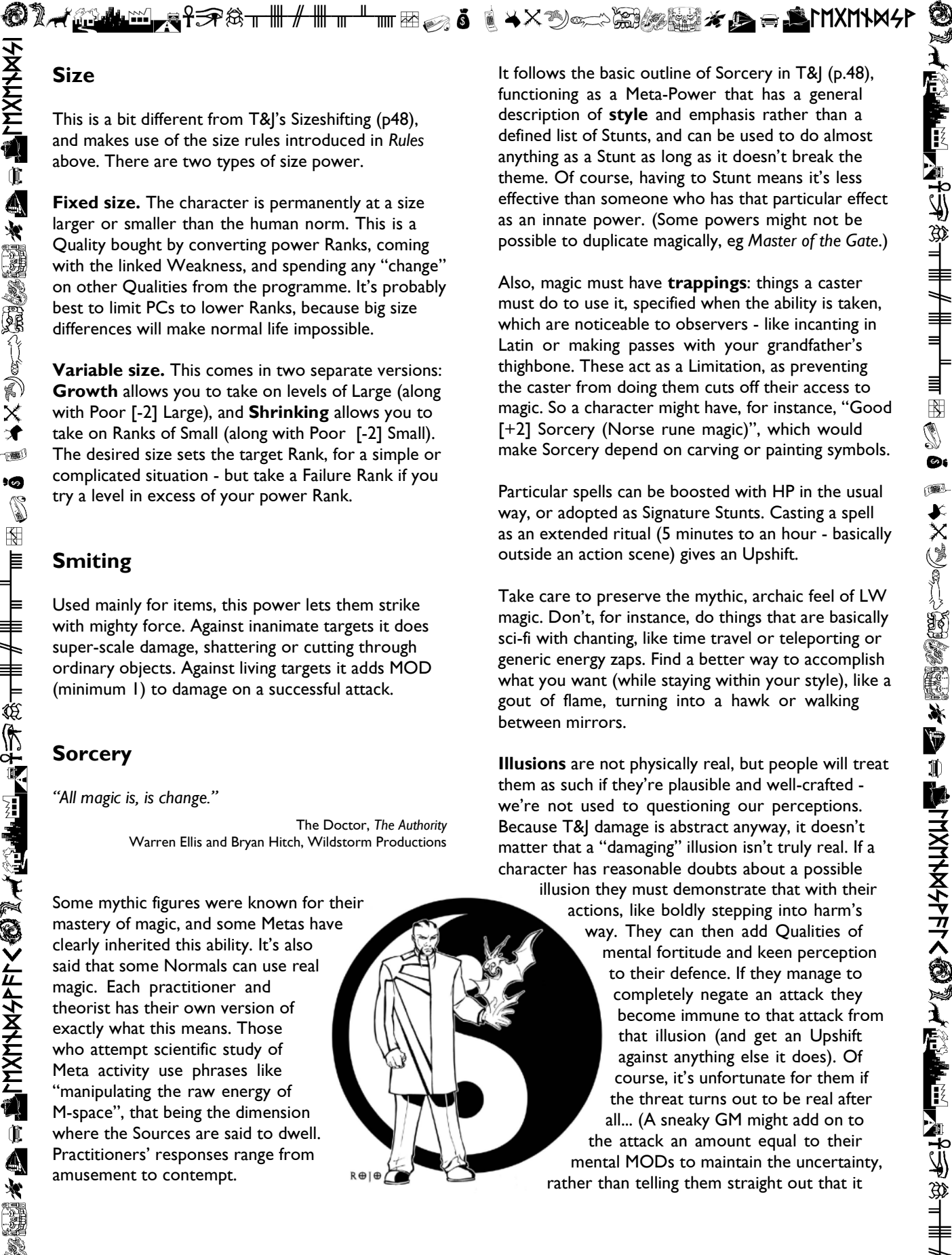


Options: getting a result exactly equal to the TN indicates a less-than-perfect change, so that an observer might notice something odd about the form - you could end up as a human with the ears of a donkey or cloven hooves! - which persists for the rest of the scene unless you change again. If you roll double 1's you might be stuck in a shape for a scene or more.

### General rules.

- Your physical body is that of an average specimen of the animal type, giving any physical abilities and limitations it has - eg night vision, flight, walking up walls, unable to breathe air. (Even if you can duplicate a supernatural creature you don't get its supernatural abilities.) Your mind remains the same, with echoes of the animal's instincts.
- Physical Qualities you have in human form no longer apply - they have been replaced by those of the new shape. However, Qualities that are underlined because they have been improved by your Source can give a single Upshift. Most powers do carry over into the new form.
- Your clothes and small held or worn objects can change with you (don't get a headache wondering where they go) but large things like a well-stuffed backpack won't. Objects imbued by your Source are automatically included.
- The change doesn't "wear off" - it has to be removed deliberately.
- Damage Ranks carry over between forms (which might mean moving them between Qualities).

Buying **Signature Stunts** can be an excellent move for a shapeshifter, helping them to shift into a favourite shape and maybe even to do particular kinds of things in a non-human form.



## Size

This is a bit different from T&J's Sizeshifting (p48), and makes use of the size rules introduced in *Rules* above. There are two types of size power.

**Fixed size.** The character is permanently at a size larger or smaller than the human norm. This is a Quality bought by converting power Ranks, coming with the linked Weakness, and spending any "change" on other Qualities from the programme. It's probably best to limit PCs to lower Ranks, because big size differences will make normal life impossible.

**Variable size.** This comes in two separate versions: **Growth** allows you to take on levels of Large (along with Poor [-2] Large), and **Shrinking** allows you to take on Ranks of Small (along with Poor [-2] Small). The desired size sets the target Rank, for a simple or complicated situation - but take a Failure Rank if you try a level in excess of your power Rank.

## Smiting

Used mainly for items, this power lets them strike with mighty force. Against inanimate targets it does super-scale damage, shattering or cutting through ordinary objects. Against living targets it adds MOD (minimum 1) to damage on a successful attack.

## Sorcery

*"All magic is, is change."*

The Doctor, *The Authority*  
Warren Ellis and Bryan Hitch, Wildstorm Productions

Some mythic figures were known for their mastery of magic, and some Metas have clearly inherited this ability. It's also said that some Normals can use real magic. Each practitioner and theorist has their own version of exactly what this means. Those who attempt scientific study of Meta activity use phrases like "manipulating the raw energy of M-space", that being the dimension where the Sources are said to dwell. Practitioners' responses range from amusement to contempt.



It follows the basic outline of Sorcery in T&J (p.48), functioning as a Meta-Power that has a general description of **style** and emphasis rather than a defined list of Stunts, and can be used to do almost anything as a Stunt as long as it doesn't break the theme. Of course, having to Stunt means it's less effective than someone who has that particular effect as an innate power. (Some powers might not be possible to duplicate magically, eg *Master of the Gate*.)

Also, magic must have **trappings**: things a caster must do to use it, specified when the ability is taken, which are noticeable to observers - like incanting in Latin or making passes with your grandfather's thighbone. These act as a Limitation, as preventing the caster from doing them cuts off their access to magic. So a character might have, for instance, "Good [+2] Sorcery (Norse rune magic)", which would make Sorcery depend on carving or painting symbols.

Particular spells can be boosted with HP in the usual way, or adopted as Signature Stunts. Casting a spell as an extended ritual (5 minutes to an hour - basically outside an action scene) gives an Upshift.

Take care to preserve the mythic, archaic feel of LW magic. Don't, for instance, do things that are basically sci-fi with chanting, like time travel or teleporting or generic energy zaps. Find a better way to accomplish what you want (while staying within your style), like a gout of flame, turning into a hawk or walking between mirrors.

**Illusions** are not physically real, but people will treat them as such if they're plausible and well-crafted - we're not used to questioning our perceptions. Because T&J damage is abstract anyway, it doesn't matter that a "damaging" illusion isn't truly real. If a character has reasonable doubts about a possible illusion they must demonstrate that with their actions, like boldly stepping into harm's way. They can then add Qualities of mental fortitude and keen perception to their defence. If they manage to completely negate an attack they become immune to that attack from that illusion (and get an Upshift against anything else it does). Of course, it's unfortunate for them if the threat turns out to be real after all... (A sneaky GM might add on to the attack an amount equal to their mental MODs to maintain the uncertainty, rather than telling them straight out that it

doesn't work.) Illusions have a duration, but can only change if the caster concentrates.

**Enchanted items** are part of some magical traditions. The most common kind are single-use items: a spell is embedded into a suitable object then released later, expending the magical energy - eg a potion, scroll, wand, talisman, etc. (You could build an alchemical magic style around this.) The advantage is that you can craft the spell when you're at the peak of your powers, rather than when you're exhausted in combat; and, if wished, you can give it to someone else to use. Enchantment requires a ritual of several minutes (so no extra bonus for this) and 1 HP in addition to any others that might be spent. Permanently enchanted items - that is, ones with an embedded re-usable power - can be created with the rules for Super-Gadgeteering (T&J p49), using Sorcery and lots of HP! An enchanted item can be triggered by anyone with Sorcery or Super-Ingenuity, or anybody else who's been coached in its use and spends 1 HP to attune to it.

## Summon Minions

This is the power to summon supernatural servants to do your bidding - usually to fight!

In Legendary Earth the minions are probably sprites (entities like the Sources but lesser) serving the character's Source who are sent through for a brief period, clothed in whatever fleshly or other form is appropriate, and then return when their task is done (or they're dispelled). Their abilities vary depending on the Source, and can be specified along with their appearance when the power is listed. They often have suitable equipment, like archaic weapons - such items function normally but dissipate when the minion does. They have basic personalities, eg they might be disciplined or battle-hungry.

**Summoning minions** takes an action of concentration, and MODx2 minions appear (eg 2 at Average) ready to do your bidding. However, this ability is Downshifted for the scene each time you use it as some of your life force is needed to give them substance (to a minimum of Poor, where you can only call one at a time). The minions last a scene, or until dismissed or destroyed - at which point they fade away. In general fighting them will be complicated rather than conflict. Some versions might let you Downshift a summoning to give them extra funky stuff.



**Minion stats.** They follow a standard template, though you can flex things around a bit.

- A Good [+2] occupation, like Warrior or Guard.
- Two more Good Qualities to reflect innate talents or learned skills, eg Strength, Fierce, Athletics. The common "attributes" (see box in *Character creation*) are good inspiration, or they might be specialisms of the occupation or unrelated "hobby" skills.
- Most types also have a couple of Good powers, usually passive stuff like Immunities or enhanced senses. Try to think of powers, but if you really have trouble coming up with any convert them to Quality Ranks.

Here's an example (from the Norse programmes).

- **Summon Minions\***: the Einheriar, ancient warriors back from the dead. They appear pale and not quite solid, with old clothes and weapons, usually swords and spears. You may reduce the number to equip the warriors with ghostly horses that can run through the air, but don't fight separately. Good [+2] Warrior, Good [+2] Strength, Good [+2] Presence, Good [+2] Unliving\*, Good [+2] Super-Armour (from ghostliness).

## Super-Agility

This puts you on the super scale for physical flexibility and coordination. Ordinary stuff like balancing on ledges, swinging on lines and bouncing around the rooftops is trivial; dodging bullets and plucking arrows out of the air takes a little more effort.

It's a powerful defence: your dodges can oppose super-scale attacks, and add TN rather than MOD

against non-super minions. It does not add to standard attacks, but can count for initiative in physical conflicts.

## Super-Awareness

Your connection to your surroundings through your senses and intuition is on the super scale. You automatically have a general awareness of everything happening close by that nobody's trying to conceal (which allows you to show off by greeting people or catching objects without turning round). Sneaking up on you is almost impossible, and you can find people in the dark by their breathing or perfume, or read their body language like a book.

It only affects human senses, so for instance you can't see through walls or in the ultraviolet. You might be able to locate someone in a technological stealth suit by their sound or associated air movement, but you still wouldn't be able to tell what they looked like underneath. In investigative scenes, note that it doesn't confer the knowledge of what to look for or the ability to interpret what you find.

Sixth-sense-type stuff counts as super scale, eg sensing spirit beings. Specifics like tracking by scent or using the heartbeat as a lie detector would be Stunts; taking those as specific Super-Senses might be more effective.

## Super-Endurance

This LW "attribute" needs a bit of fudging due to the differences between the systems, and to avoid stepping on other powers.

- It puts you on the super scale for coping with extended physical effort, illness and hostile environments. (The hottest deserts and coldest polar regions will count as extraordinary normal-scale challenges. Environments where humans couldn't possibly survive count as super-scale - eg the vacuum of space, the ocean depths, the radiation of a reactor core.)
- For other kinds of physical hardship and trauma (including being punched in the gizzard) it resists with MOD at both normal and super scales.

## Super-Ingenuity

This riffs on Super-Intelligence (T&J p50), with an emphasis suitable for Ingenuity (creativity, cunning and flexible thinking). You can routinely produce great creative works, whether through art or science, and are rarely stumped by a puzzle or an awkward situation.

Up to MOD times per scene you can:

- Take an Upshift for saying or doing just the right thing; or
- Create a cunning plan based on inspiration from the current situation (possibly enlisting the help of the other players and the GM).

If you have scientific or technological skills you can create Gadgets and even Stunt to make Super-Gadgets.

## Super-Presence

You are on the super scale for courage, charisma and willpower. Minor normal scale events are simply incapable of confusing or dismaying you, and in ordinary situations any reasonable commands or suggestions are followed without question. (If trying to dictate the actions of major characters, use TN on a roll rather than an automatic success.)

- Add TN to damage on successful mental or social attacks.
- You can sacrifice levels like an armour power to negate damage from a mental attack.
- You can Downshift the power for a scene to get an Upshift on a task of physical or mental effort.

(This is quite high-powered, strong in both offence and defence. That's balanced by two things. First, the supers genre tends to be much more focused on physical conflict, so it's less of an issue than if Strength and Endurance were combined. Second, it's important for mythic heroes.)

## Super-Strength

Just as in T&J, p51.

- Lift heavy things.
- Add TN to successful physical attacks.





## Super-Wisdom

This riffs on Super-Intelligence (T&J p50), with an emphasis suitable for Wisdom (absorbing, remembering, understanding or deducing). You can read at remarkable speed, watch several TV channels at once, recall large volumes of information perfectly and beat chess grandmasters. In many situations this will manifest through automatic success or by adding TN when an intelligence Quality might apply, making you pretty scary at a lot of modern skills. Super-scale uses would be things beyond the processing capacity of a normal human brain. Stunts could be stuff like calculating opponents' next moves (see *Prediction*).

Up to MOD times per scene you can create a contingency plan based on your fearsome deductive abilities, retroactively establishing some preparation you made before entering the current situation (which must make sense given information you could have had at the time).

If you have scientific or technological skills you can extrapolate them to create Gadgets. You cannot innovate to the level required to create Super-Gadgets, but you are able to comprehend their operation.

## Time Distort

In *Legendary Earth*, at least, no player character has the ability to travel in time because it's a sci-fi kind of power. (The GM might choose to design an adventure where an NPC invents a machine to do it,

but the "official" line is that it's impossible.) However, some Metas do have other time-related powers, and one is the ability to speed up or slow down the flow of events in a defined space. This can have a variety of uses, including getting a job done really quickly or mimicking suspended animation.

Someone who's **sped up** gets these tactical effects:

- Initiative: go to super-scale and add MOD;
- Parrying and dodging physical attacks: go to super-scale and add MOD;
- Get MOD extra actions (minimum 1).

Someone who's **slowed down** gets these effects:

- Initiative: super-scale drops to normal-scale and subtracts MOD, normal-scale subtracts TN;
- Parrying and dodging physical attacks: super-scale drops to normal-scale and subtracts MOD, normal-scale subtracts TN;
- Get MOD fewer actions (minimum 1 less). Obviously this is pretty dire for anyone without Super-Speed. Victims with no actions can take one at the end of a round by spending MOD HP.

Duration is always measured in the main time-stream. The field of effect moves with a person, but if used on an area it's static. MOD could also come into play in other circumstances, eg for sneaking past guards before they notice you're there (a good candidate for a Stunt, perhaps).

Odd things can happen at the interface between different time fields. Living beings crossing the boundary of an area must resist TN Failure Ranks. Creating a field covering part of a complex machine is likely to cause the system to go wrong (another potential Stunt). Sensory information is slowed down or speeded up as it passes through, such as hearing voices as a high-pitched buzz or seeing the flashing of an alternating current light bulb.

Someone affected has a normal experience of their own time - it's everything else that seems screwy - including their own bodily needs and aging process. If you try to do a day's work in an hour of real time you're still likely to get tired, and observers might see you going for a coffee every couple of minutes. A skin-tight time field round an individual does not include objects they manipulate - so if you're speeded up but your computer isn't it will seem horribly slow - though just moving objects is fine subject to normal physical limits, eg wielding a sword or controlling a

car. Remember, ultimately Meta powers are magic and don't have to make complete logical sense!

## Time Sense

This is a baseline power for Sources strongly connected to time, providing a number of low-key but useful benefits.

- Always know what time it is (so for instance if you recover from unconsciousness you'll know how long you were out for).
- Detect fluctuations in the normal flow of time, eg due to time-based powers.
- Sense the amount of time that's accreted on something, to get an idea of its age. Strong, basic impressions are often automatic, but subtle or detailed ones might require a roll.
- Track something's progress through time. You can think of this as a very limited pre- and post-cognition, with a short trail of after-images (and before-images!) fading out from its current position. This can give you an Upshift on relevant tasks up to MOD times per scene. Examples: certainly initiative; also catching a thrown thing, avoiding an incoming blow, even guessing what someone's about to say.

## Underworld Sense

A power giving you an extra sense that allows you to perceive shapes and motion in total darkness.

## Universal Energy

Some people are attuned to the energy flows of the universe, and are able to go along with their current or channel them into powerful actions. Oriental mystics might call it *chi*, while Celtic kings would say it was the power of the land.

It allows you to take an Upshift on actions involving physical or mental effort (not finesse) up to MOD times per scene.

The base level assumes there's a reasonable level of healthy energy around. In a location that's strongly sterile, urbanised or noxious this power is Downshifted. (The character can feel the differences

between these areas - for instance, if you blindfolded them and drove them from town into the countryside they would know.)

## Unliving

You stand apart from the basic processes of life - no longer needing to eat, drink, excrete, sleep or breathe. You can use TN to resist compulsion to do these things.

This sometimes comes with a Vulnerability flagging up that you can't do some or all of these any more, even if you want to.

## Warding

This power protects one defined area, like a building, cave, or hollow, against one type of harm specified when the Ward is created, eg hand-to-hand weapons, projectiles, fire, magic, robots, animals, but not "people in general".

Against objects or forces it acts like [TN] armour. Any that fail to get through veer off, lose force, etc; any that get through are diminished. Creatures of a warded type that seek to enter the area must overcome the TN with willpower or other suitable Qualities; those already in the area must make one such check to remain, and are then immune (unless they leave and try to return).

An area can have multiple active Wards, but only the strongest against a given harm type is counted.



# POWER PROGRAMMES

This section contains power programmes for pantheons that are likely to be familiar to most readers. More might appear in future supplements.

The presentation of the Sources tries to remain close to the original myths, while taking enough licence to make them work in the supers genre. In many cases there is little detail to work on anyway, even for quite major figures, and those that didn't have enough substance to make interesting character templates have been left out. The aim was to use them as inspiration for enjoyable gaming, but if it increases awareness and appreciation of our shared heritage that's all to the good.

One person's mythology is another person's religion, and the author does not wish to cause offence to any cultural group. One set of people may regard a god or hero as something remote in time and place, and fair game for fictional adventures. Others might regard the same figure as part of their own living tradition, and not appropriate for this kind of thing. This is a good reason for discussing guidelines before you set out and adapting your game accordingly, but hopefully it won't stop anyone playing altogether.

Dating conventions: to reduce discrimination in favour of one particular religion, the terms CE (Common Era) and BCE (Before Common Era) are used to denote years. (They do, of course, correspond to the Christian calendar, but at least we're not talking about "year of our Lord".)

It will usually be helpful for a player to have a printout of their character's programme, or at least of their key powers, to remind them (and the GM!) of how those powers work.

## Construction guidelines

There's no reason why you shouldn't make your own programmes for your favourite mythic entities. Here are some notes to help.

**Selection.** If a mythic figure doesn't have enough information to make an interesting source don't bother. This happened to me a few times - for

instance Hera, wife of Zeus has an important position in the pantheon but I couldn't find material that would make fun powers so I left her out.

**God, hero or monster?** Most of the time it's obvious, but sometimes the middle ground gets fuzzy (in which case the default is Hero). Note that these are technical terms that don't actually have to reflect the Source's nature, the only difference being whether you emphasise a connection to some aspect of the universe or capability/drive or some distinctive physical or psychological flaw. So a character that's a hero in story terms but horribly flawed could even be rendered as a monster.

**Powers that swing both ways.** In an ordinary supers game powers should be true to the comicbook legacy. Here they also need to be true to the mythological legacy. So if you make stuff up it should connect with both ends of that scale and not jar with either, which is a bit of an art. You tend to end up with stuff like comics powers with some weird shading, plus some novel stuff, minus some stuff that's a bit sci-fi. T&J's super scale is quite useful for above-and-beyond versions of mortal abilities.

**Gameable power sets.** A second two-way stretch is between the abilities ascribed to the Source in the myths and what will produce cool gaming fun. Each programme should contain options that you can see producing cool moments, alongside stuff that's more utilitarian or specialised. (That's particularly true for Required Powers.) Fortunately the flexibility of T&J gives players a lot of power to come up with cool uses for abilities. At the same time the key legendary abilities must be reflected somewhere, and completely unrelated stuff should not - for instance Hercules must have enhanced strength, but shouldn't be able to throw fireballs just because someone thinks that's cool to do (pick a different Source if you want that). It's also nice if a programme is flexible enough to generate different kinds of interesting characters, but some end up very straightforward.

**Use the resource base.** With the material in this book and *Truth & Justice* you probably have most of what you need, and just need to fill some gaps. Look at the LW key powers; programmes for Sources with similar features; and the T&J powers list.



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*GMs, you might find it useful to make this page available to players to help with choosing a Source during character creation.*

*You may copy this page for personal use.*

*(Other Sources may appear in future supplements.)*



# THE GREEK PANTHEON

The civilisation we know as Ancient Greece flourished between about 800 and 300 BCE, spreading across the Mediterranean and into Asia. Its basic unit was the *polis*, the community of a city and the surrounding countryside. Greek mythology is probably the best-known of all in the West. It was a shared body of ideas and stories, formed out of influences from various Mediterranean and Asian cultures, and what we know today is largely the result of Greek writers' attempts to organise it into a coherent scheme. Their gods covered aspects of life like seafaring, marriage, storms, vengeance and craftwork; most such aspects had their supernatural embodiment. They show a culture that evolved from primitive subsistence to sophisticated philosophy.

The world began with the void of Chaos. Then came Gaea, the earth, and Eros, the force that brings things together. Gaea gave birth to Ouranos, the sky. Together they begot the first generation of gods, the Titans, but Ouranos would not withdraw to allow Gaea to give birth until the Titan Kronos castrated him with a sickle. Kronos and his sister-wife Rhea ruled for a time. Fearing his position would also be usurped by his offspring, he swallowed them. But when Zeus was born Rhea tricked Kronos into swallowing a stone wrapped in swaddling clothes instead. When Zeus was grown he forced his father to vomit up his brothers and sisters. The younger gods defeated the Titans, exiling them to the underworld, and ruled from Mount Olympus.

The gods were as flawed and fallible as humans. They were unfaithful to their partners, protected their favourites and inflicted terrible punishments on those who offended them. One might even say they were petty and cruel, and plagued mankind with suffering. The people honoured them with festivals and sacrifices, but looked to them for power and protection rather than moral leadership.

There is great overlap between the mythologies of Greece and Rome. The Romans adopted myths from nearby countries to fill gaps in their own traditions. Also, as the legions spread around the world they tended to adopt local gods, often giving them Latin names. Sometimes these appealed to the ordinary soldier, and it made provinces easier to govern than trying to stamp out local beliefs.



## GODS

### Aphrodite

Although originally worshipped further east, the Greeks adopted Aphrodite wholeheartedly as goddess of all aspects of love. Under her domain were pure and ideal love, marriage (women would pray to her for a husband) and sex, and representations of her show these different aspects of her character. Her attribute was the dove. Aphrodite's power was two-edged: her appearance could quell conflict and charm even the storms of nature to peace, but she also inspired unreasoning passion and desire which could lead to disaster.

The most common story of her birth says that when Cronus castrated his father Uranus the severed parts floated on the sea, producing a foam from which rose Aphrodite. She was the most beautiful of the goddesses, without the severity of Hera or Athena, and this sometimes led to resentment. In one case Paris, prince of Troy, was asked to judge between the three. He chose Aphrodite, who promised him the beautiful mortal Helen, wife of the king of Sparta, as reward. His abduction of Helen and the anger of the other goddesses led to the war with the Greeks and the destruction of Troy. Aphrodite actually tried to assist the Trojans in battle, but fled to Olympus as

soon as she took a small spear wound - war and courage were not her forte.

She had a magic girdle, marvellously worked and embroidered, with the power to enslave the hearts of both gods and men. She was married to the ugly, lame Hephaistos (one story says he imprisoned Hera until the gods agreed to this). It was not a happy arrangement, and Aphrodite's lovers included Ares and Hermes. Once, Hephaistos arranged a cunningly fashioned net so that it fell over Aphrodite and Ares when they were together, then brought the other gods to laugh at their embarrassment. She also had affairs with several mortals. Her Roman counterpart was Venus.

### Aegis

- Love (+ when people around you are getting on well together, eg nightclub, wedding, brothel; - when they are in conflict, eg battle)

### Required Powers

- Beauty\*

### Qualities

- Ingenuity, Awareness, Psychology, Socialising

### Optional Powers

- Immunity to Rage\* (super-scale against attempts to induce anger or hatred)
- Pleasure\* (Limitation: Requires physical contact... of some kind...)
- Shapeshift (Dove)\*

### Girdle

- Control Emotions\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Judging on Appearances - you prefer to associate with beautiful people, and sometimes lose your ability to discern the truth of situations when you're in the presence of people are at either extreme of appearance.
- Unwanted Admirers - you tend to attract attention wherever you go, bringing gifts, marriage proposals, and sometimes obsession. This can certainly mess up social situations.
- Vain - you do not tolerate negative comments about your appearance, and work against anyone who may rival your attractiveness.

## Apollo

Apollo was primarily a god of light and of the sun (though he wasn't the sun itself - Helios filled that role). He was the son of Zeus and the Titan Leto; Artemis was his twin sister. He had titles like "fair" and "brilliant", and liked high places. He made crops ripen and drove off pests. The rays of the sun can be deadly or beneficial, so Apollo was an archer who brought sudden death from afar (his arrows were said to be long-ranged and infallible, forged by Hephaistos) and a healer who drove away illness.

Apollo was also the god of divination and prophecy - he had many oracles where his judgments were delivered by priestesses, the most famous being at Delphi. In addition, he was a shepherd and protector of livestock, and a musician, the god of song and lyre. He could be ruthless, tolerating no insult to himself or his cult. The assembly of gods all rose in respect when he entered. He was shown as a young, well-built man of idealised beauty. He was often accompanied by the Muses. The Romans worshipped Apollo under the same name.

### Aegis

- Light (+ in direct sunlight; - in darkness; neutral at night under decent artificial lighting, etc)

### Required Powers

- Control Light\* - call sunlight into an area to illuminate or dazzle, or drive it away to bring the darkness of night. Can Stunt a Beam of light/heat energy. (More about intensity than complexity, but illusions might be possible as a Stunt.)

### Qualities

- Strength, Ingenuity, Presence, Awareness, Archery, Athletics, Unarmed Fighting, Medicine, Natural History, Good-looking

### Optional Powers

- Distance Vision - super scale for seeing things far away.
- Healing
- Master of Music\*
- Precognition\*
- Sun Immunity\* (full vs light, MOD vs heat)

### Vulnerabilities

- Glowing Eyes - your eyes glow when you're emotional. (Alternate versions could have your whole body glowing under stress, or even permanently.)
- Golden Eyes - eyes appear as featureless metallic gold.
- Vengeful - any perceived offence merits swift and effective punishment, overcoming your better instincts.

## Ares

Son of Zeus and Hera, and god of war in the aspects of blind courage, brutal rage and destruction. His name probably means something like "destroyer" or "avenger". He ranged the battlefield accompanied by Fear, Fright and Strife. Ares was not popular, regarded with terror and having a limited role. He was a furious god, fickle and brutal, enjoying nothing but strife, and little liked by the other gods. There was particular dislike between him and Athena, a warrior goddess representing cool, intelligent courage, who bested him on the battlefield at least once. In fact Ares was often beaten, by gods and mortals. He had an affair with Aphrodite, and her husband Hephaestus trapped them with a fine but unbreakable net and exposed the lovers to the ridicule of the gods.

Ares was shown as a bearded warrior wearing a helmet with a tall crest and heavy armour, or later as a young man with a spear and helmet. His Roman counterpart was Mars who, in contrast, was held in great esteem as the father of Rome's founders and patron of military expeditions.

### Aegis

- Battle (+ where other people are fighting; - in places of peace and contemplation)

### Required Powers

- Master of Weapons\*

### Qualities

- Strength, Agility, Endurance, Unarmed Fighting, Intimidation, Fierce

### Optional Powers

- Fury\*
- Raven's Fare\*
- Shapeshift\* (Wolf)
- Super-Strength (ceiling Average)

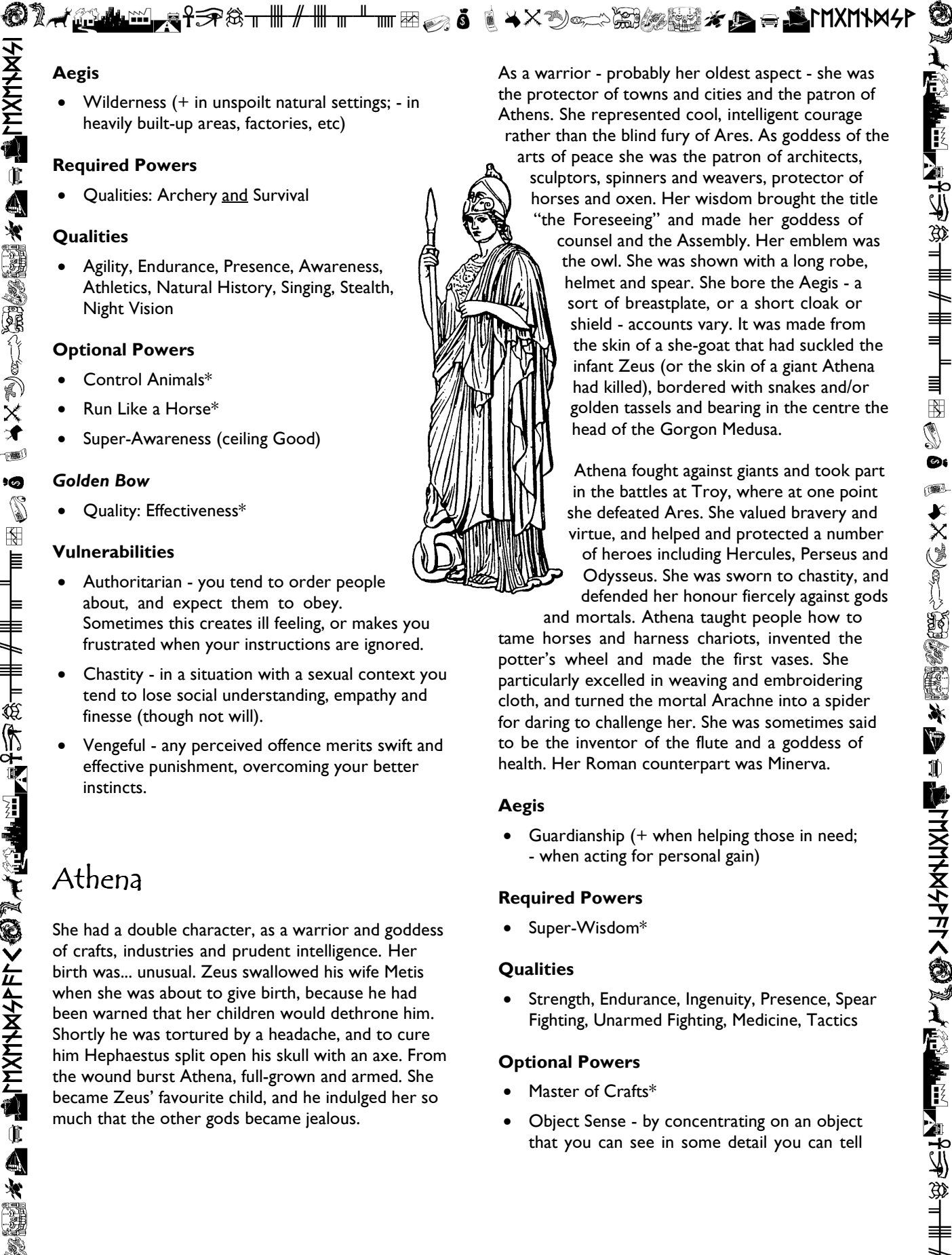
### Vulnerabilities

- Bloodlust - in a combat situation you tend to lose your reason and ethics.
- Proud - you lose your composure when challenged or taunted about your competence.
- Unstable - you are prone to vicious mood swings, and sometimes cave in dramatically to mundane or supernatural attempts to alter your disposition.

## Artemis

The goddess of the hunt, wild places and beasts, Artemis was the twin sister of Apollo, linked to the moon. As soon as she was born she went to her father Zeus and begged for a bow, arrows and hunting clothes. She chose to live in a wild, mountainous region with a retinue of nymphs, spending her time hunting. She was represented as a young, slim woman with a somewhat severe face, hair drawn back, wearing a short tunic and usually accompanied by a deer, dog or other animals.

The arrows of Artemis brought sudden death to those who displeased her, but she could bring prosperity to those she favoured. She made a rule of chastity, and enforced it on her companions. When the huntsman Actaeon saw her bathing she changed him into a stag and set his own hounds on him - they tore him to pieces. One unfortunate neglected to sacrifice to Artemis on his marriage, and found the bridal chamber full of snakes; others were punished for killing sacred animals. Other incidents echo the ruthless and vindictive character of the goddess, but perhaps this is linked with a life away from civilisation. However, song and dance also pleased her, and she led the choir in Apollo's house. Her Roman counterpart was Diana.



### Aegis

- Wilderness (+ in unspoilt natural settings; - in heavily built-up areas, factories, etc)

### Required Powers

- Qualities: Archery and Survival

### Qualities

- Agility, Endurance, Presence, Awareness, Athletics, Natural History, Singing, Stealth, Night Vision

### Optional Powers

- Control Animals\*
- Run Like a Horse\*
- Super-Awareness (ceiling Good)

### Golden Bow

- Quality: Effectiveness\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Authoritarian - you tend to order people about, and expect them to obey. Sometimes this creates ill feeling, or makes you frustrated when your instructions are ignored.
- Chastity - in a situation with a sexual context you tend to lose social understanding, empathy and finesse (though not will).
- Vengeful - any perceived offence merits swift and effective punishment, overcoming your better instincts.

As a warrior - probably her oldest aspect - she was the protector of towns and cities and the patron of Athens. She represented cool, intelligent courage rather than the blind fury of Ares. As goddess of the arts of peace she was the patron of architects, sculptors, spinners and weavers, protector of horses and oxen. Her wisdom brought the title "the Foreseeing" and made her goddess of counsel and the Assembly. Her emblem was the owl. She was shown with a long robe, helmet and spear. She bore the Aegis - a sort of breastplate, or a short cloak or shield - accounts vary. It was made from the skin of a she-goat that had suckled the infant Zeus (or the skin of a giant Athena had killed), bordered with snakes and/or golden tassels and bearing in the centre the head of the Gorgon Medusa.



Athena fought against giants and took part in the battles at Troy, where at one point she defeated Ares. She valued bravery and virtue, and helped and protected a number of heroes including Hercules, Perseus and Odysseus. She was sworn to chastity, and defended her honour fiercely against gods

and mortals. Athena taught people how to tame horses and harness chariots, invented the potter's wheel and made the first vases. She particularly excelled in weaving and embroidering cloth, and turned the mortal Arachne into a spider for daring to challenge her. She was sometimes said to be the inventor of the flute and a goddess of health. Her Roman counterpart was Minerva.

### Aegis

- Guardianship (+ when helping those in need; - when acting for personal gain)

### Required Powers

- Super-Wisdom\*

### Qualities

- Strength, Endurance, Ingenuity, Presence, Spear Fighting, Unarmed Fighting, Medicine, Tactics

### Optional Powers

- Master of Crafts\*
- Object Sense - by concentrating on an object that you can see in some detail you can tell

## Athena

She had a double character, as a warrior and goddess of crafts, industries and prudent intelligence. Her birth was... unusual. Zeus swallowed his wife Metis when she was about to give birth, because he had been warned that her children would dethrone him. Shortly he was tortured by a headache, and to cure him Hephaestus split open his skull with an axe. From the wound burst Athena, full-grown and armed. She became Zeus' favourite child, and he indulged her so much that the other gods became jealous.



whether it is imbued - Average difficulty, with higher levels of success revealing information about its properties (at the GM's discretion and phrased in quite general terms).

- Shapeshift (Owl)\*
- Super-Presence\*

#### **The Aegis (can be used on a worn item or a held, shield-like item)**

- Quality: Effectiveness\* (for shield-like items)
- Mask of the Gorgon - a horrible face, apparently made of black liquid or vapour, materialises on the front of the item, afflicting anyone who can see it clearly with paralysing fear for up to a scene (unless they resist the TN).
- Shield - projects a dark-coloured energy field that has super-scale resistance to all forms of physical damage. The default version appears and is used as a physical shield, taking an action or reaction to create, projected and movable up to arm's length. You can also extend it to cover an area (or part of an area) as an action; it stays put unless you take an action to move or reshape it. You can only have one Shield existing at a time. Extraordinary normal-scale damage does Failure Ranks to the user from the stress of maintaining the shield. Super-scale damage that overcomes the shield causes it to shatter and dissipate - residual damage may harm those behind it, and the user takes a Failure Rank for shock.

#### **Vulnerabilities**

- Aegis Signs - tied to an object with Aegis powers - shadows move across it from time to time, giving it a spooky feel.
- Chastity - in a situation with a sexual context you tend to lose social understanding, empathy and finesse (though not will).
- No Childhood - echoes of Athena's strange birth can make it hard to recall childhood memories or empathise with children.
- Patron of Heroes - you have difficulty refusing the reasonable request of a brave or virtuous person.
- Proud - questioning or insulting your abilities can cause you to lose your composure and judgment.

## Dionysus

The god of vegetation, wine, drunkenness and ecstasy. The most common story of his birth has him as the son of Zeus and Semele, daughter of the King of Thebes. A disguised Hera persuaded Semele to beg her lover to show himself to her in his true majesty. Semele was burned to ashes, but her unborn child was saved by Zeus and enclosed in his own thigh until it was ready to be born. Jealous Hera struck his foster parents with madness and Zeus saved him again, to be brought up by the nymphs and satyrs of the mountain and forest.

When he grew up Dionysus discovered the grape and the art of making wine, and journeyed widely to spread this gift to mortals, giving vine-stocks to those who received him well. Unfortunately the wine itself often resulted in offensive and even murderous behaviour by those he gave it to, and Dionysus also cursed with madness those who offended him, leading them to tear their own loved ones to pieces.

He frequently had affairs with women he met on the way. His followers (mainly women, called maenads) celebrated orgiastic rites, which led to him being received with distrust in new places.

He sometimes controlled plants: crossing a river on a cable of vine shoots and ivy tendrils, winding vines and ivy round the mast and sails of a pirate ship, or striking the land with sterility.

In early art Dionysus was depicted as a mature, bearded man with a crown of ivy, but later he appeared as a beardless, almost effeminate youth. He carried the *thyrsus*, a staff tipped with a pine cone, and used it as a weapon against the Giants. He often had an entourage of satyrs, centaurs and nymphs. His Roman counterpart was Bacchus.



## THE CLOWN

His name is Jerome Robinson, but it's not clear that he remembers this - certainly not all the time. He only goes by "Clown"; or "Mr Clown" with people he doesn't like. He's not evil as such - more a force of chaos with no regard for the wellbeing of others. As a child his parents were killed in front of him during a visit to the circus. This had a defining effect on his personality. He became obsessed with pursuing happiness - primarily his own, but sometimes he feels that being surrounded by jolly people is essential to this. At other times it involves large piles of cash, pretty jewels, taking over the city so he can run it in a happier way, dumping hallucinogens in the water supply, etc.

He's an unusually short man with a wide and toothy grin. His "costume" is rarely quite the same twice, mixing elements of modern clown and medieval jester. He usually has at least a couple of *Gadgets*: things related to those professions with new and dangerous properties (made with Super-Ingenuity).

**Source:** Dionysus

**Motivation:** Self-gratification.

**Qualities:** Good [+2] Clown, Good [+2] Prop Making, Good [+2] Acrobat, Good [+2] Minions, Good [+2] Unpredictable; Poor [-2] Unstable Personality

**Powers:** Good [+2] Aegis - Ecstasy, Good [+2] Pleasure\*, Average [0] Delirium, Average [0] Super-Ingenuity\*, Average [0] Vulnerability - Vengeful

**Sample Gadgets.** Good [+2] Electric Gloves - Failure Ranks on a handshake or other contact. Good [+2] The Ace of Mace - decorative hitting stick (no MOD) with a powerful gas jet in the base, propelling him a short distance; also against enemies as knockback or smokescreen (4 charges).

### Aegis

- Ecstasy (+ where people are acting without inhibition, eg nightclub; - where people follow rigid patterns of behaviour, eg military base)

### Required Powers

- Pleasure\*

### Qualities

- Ingenuity, Presence, Awareness, Staff Fighting, Natural History, Psychology

### Optional Powers

- Control Plants\*
- Delirium - a targeted damage attack that distorts the target's senses, balance and coordination, like being drunk in a house of mirrors, and may bring their greatest fears and darkest impulses to the surface.
- Immunity to Toxins\* (full against naturally based poisons, drugs and intoxicants - alcoholic drinks won't do more than give you a pleasant buzz unless you really overdo it - Downshifted against synthetic ones)
- Liberation - with a successful roll, objects that are imprisoning or restraining you will move to give you freedom, eg ropes will loosen and fall off, locks will open. It won't work on things with no moving parts like a solid rock wall (though a fall of loose rocks might tumble out of the way). Difficulty is Average for a simple restraint; higher for larger, stronger or more complex ones.
- Super-Ingenuity\* (ceiling Good)

### Vulnerabilities

- Fascinating - people hang on your words, follow you around, etc due to some strange, addictive magnetism - it's hard to get privacy or stay unnoticed, and it can mess up social situations.
- Needs Drink - you suffer if you go too long without consuming a good measure of alcoholic beverage.
- Vengeful - any perceived offence merits swift and effective punishment, overcoming your better instincts.

## Hades

A brother of Zeus, after the defeat of the Titans he received the rulership of the underworld, the home of the dead (which later took his name). His name means “unseen”, and he was also called Pluto from the word for “riches” as he received buried treasure, presided over minerals and influenced crops. Little is known about him. As Hades, a god of terror, mystery and the inexorable, he received little worship, though as Pluto he was more popular. He owned a helmet or cap that could make him invisible. He left the underworld to kidnap Persephone to be his bride, but after protests by her mother Demeter it was agreed that she would spend half the year above ground and half the year below with Hades (leading to the changing of the seasons).

The souls of the dead that he ruled were insubstantial and lacked most of their former courage, intelligence and personality. A few favoured souls occupied themselves as they had in life, and a few particularly wicked ones suffered eternal torture. In later thought all souls were judged and sent to Tartarus or the Elysian Fields. Hades was served by the Keres, demonic figures that finished off mortals fated to die and carried them down to the underworld, and the Erinyes (also known as the Furies), three goddesses who pursued wrongdoers, especially those who killed family members. His Roman counterparts were Orcus and Dis Pater.

### Aegis

- Underworld (+ below ground; - in high places)

### Required Powers

- Underworld Sense\*

### Qualities

- Endurance, Presence, Awareness, Geology, Intimidation, Security, Stealth

### Optional Powers

- Breach the Wall of Death\*
- Create Shade - turns people into “walking dead” who take no action except to maintain their bodies with food, shelter, etc and obey the commands of their “creator”. Power use is opposed by willpower-type Qualities. Victims gain a Rank of Endurance; lose a Rank in each of Ingenuity and Presence; gain Poor [-2] Resist Light; and do not have access to Hero Points.

## THE BLACK GHOST

They whisper on the streets about the Ghost. They say he rises out of the ground, a figure in a black hat, suit and cape, black cloth covering his face, guns blazing. They say he walks through walls. They say he can see in the dark. And they say he knows about everyone you ever put in the ground.

Dr Laurence “Larry” Cranham was a pathologist laid low by despair about the number of bodies passing through his department due to the city's constant crime wars. Then he started hearing the whispers - and then The Voice, echoing like the Pit, offering him the chance to act for the dead and do what they no longer can.

**Source:** Hades

**Motivation:** Justice for the wronged dead.

**Qualities:** Expert [+4] Medical Examiner, Good [+2] Wealthy, Good [+2] Marksman, Good [+2] Gadget - Ghost Guns, Good [+2] Stealth, Good [+2] Intimidation; Poor [-2] Privileged background

**Powers:** Average [0] Aegis - Underworld, Average [0] Underworld Sense\*, Good [+2] Knowledge of the Dead\*, Good [+2] Pass Through Earth (plus 1 Av converted to Qs)

- *Ghost Guns* - these twinned pistols fire darts filled with a drug of his own design, paralysing victims and putting them to sleep (they can seem dead unless checked). In a complicated situation this doesn't add to attacks but must be resisted on a successful hit; against minions add it to the attack and include their resilience. He has occasionally devised other drugs for specific uses.
- *Privileged background* - can make it hard for him to empathise with disadvantaged people and understand criminals.

Attempts to control them mentally have to overcome this power.

- Immunity to Fear\*
- Knowledge of the Dead\*
- Pass Through Earth - you can pass through stone, soil, or other basic natural minerals as described in Phasing (T&J p44). Downshift for synthetic materials like refined metals, glass and concrete. Materials like plastic and wood cannot be passed through, though thin layers like wallpaper don't impede progress. Phasing more than you can comfortably carry along with you is a Weight Stunt. Things you release return to normal.
- Sense Mineral - could be used to find a specific kind, identify a sample or do a general sweep. Downshift if focusing specifically on refined minerals.

#### Cap or Helmet

- Invisibility

#### Vulnerabilities

- Black Eyes - your eyes are dead black, with no white or iris visible. People find this off-putting for some reason.
- Inexorable - you pursue a goal single-mindedly and ruthlessly until it's achieved. If working on something important you might neglect things like eating and family commitments.
- Judge - your desire to see people rewarded or punished according to their deeds can erode your compassion and composure.

## Hephaistos

He was the personification of terrestrial fire, including the volcano - but in its beneficial aspects, which allow metalworking and foster civilisation. He was the divine blacksmith, the master of the mechanical arts who taught them to humanity. Hephaistos was usually depicted as a robust smith with a beard, hairy chest and powerful neck, holding a hammer and tongs.

The son of Zeus and Hera, he was born with twisted legs, making him lame and drawing the derision of the other gods. Hera threw him from Olympus into the sea to avoid the shame of such a child. He was taken

in by nymphs, and later sent Hera the gift of a golden throne that gripped her with invisible bands when she sat in it. His price for releasing her was to have Aphrodite, the most beautiful of the goddesses, for his wife. At one point he tried to protect Hera from the anger of Zeus, and was flung from heaven for his trouble. After that he obeyed his father, and helped by striking Zeus' head with an axe to allow Athena's strange birth.

On Olympus Hephaistos built palaces for the gods and a splendid dwelling for himself, where he had his great workshop. He also had underground residences on Earth. He was assisted by various beings, including the giant, one-eyed Cyclopes. His creations included golden statues resembling living girls that aided him in walking; the golden throne, sceptre and thunderbolts of Zeus; the fearful Aegis, later given to Athena; the winged chariot of Helios; the arrows of Apollo and Artemis; Demeter's sickle; armour and weapons for various heroes; beautiful works of art; and bronze bulls whose nostrils spurted flame. His Roman counterpart was Vulcan.

#### Aegis

- Craft (+ in places where objects are made; - in places where objects are destroyed or allowed to decay)

#### Required Powers

- Master of Crafts\* (any craftwork, eg forging, sculpting or carving)

#### Qualities

- Strength, Endurance, Wisdom, Ingenuity, Construction, Mechanics

#### Optional Powers

- Control Fire\* (ceiling Good)
- Craft Wonders\*
- Immunity to Fire\*
- Mould Metal - under your hands metal temporarily becomes soft and easy to work, allowing you to shape it or fuse pieces together, working on an area up to about human size at a time. Other Qualities might be needed for the actual shaping. The metal becomes warm, though not hot enough to cause damage.
- Super-Ingenuity\*

## Vulnerabilities

- Addicted to Beauty - you seek to surround yourself with beautiful objects - or even people. They may erode your restraint and social skills.
- Lameness - even if your legs appear functional, you have difficulty using them. When a situation requires running, fast footwork, etc this can trigger to target your mobility and constitution.

## Hermes

This son of Zeus was the god of travellers, guiding and protecting them. In ancient times voyages were mainly undertaken for trade, so he became the god of commerce, persuasive eloquence, profit (making him the patron of both tradesmen and thieves) and games of chance. He was also the messenger of Zeus and conducted the souls of the dead to the underworld. Hermes was a tireless runner, honoured by athletes, and said to have invented boxing and racing. He was also the protector of flocks and herds (perhaps his oldest function).

He was depicted as a handsome young athlete, often wearing a round, winged hat and winged sandals (allowing him to fly, given by Zeus to speed his errands), and carrying the *caduceus*, a winged staff twined with serpents (an ancient symbol of heralds and messengers).



On the day of his birth Hermes stole a herd of cattle from Apollo, but they became fast friends when Hermes created the first lyre from a tortoise shell and gave it to his half-brother. He was known for playing malicious pranks, but never fell out of favour for long - he was the only one of Zeus' illegitimate children to find favour with Hera. He aided Zeus' amorous adventures and served as advisor to a number of heroes. Among his children was the god Pan. His Roman counterpart was Mercury.

## Aegis

- Travel (+ in centres of travel like town squares, railway stations, docksides and airports; - in centres of preventing travel, notably prisons, or when imprisoned yourself)

## Required Powers

- Super-Ingenuity\*

## Qualities

- Awareness, Athletics, Business, Music (any traditional instrument), Security, Stealth, Trickery

## Optional Powers

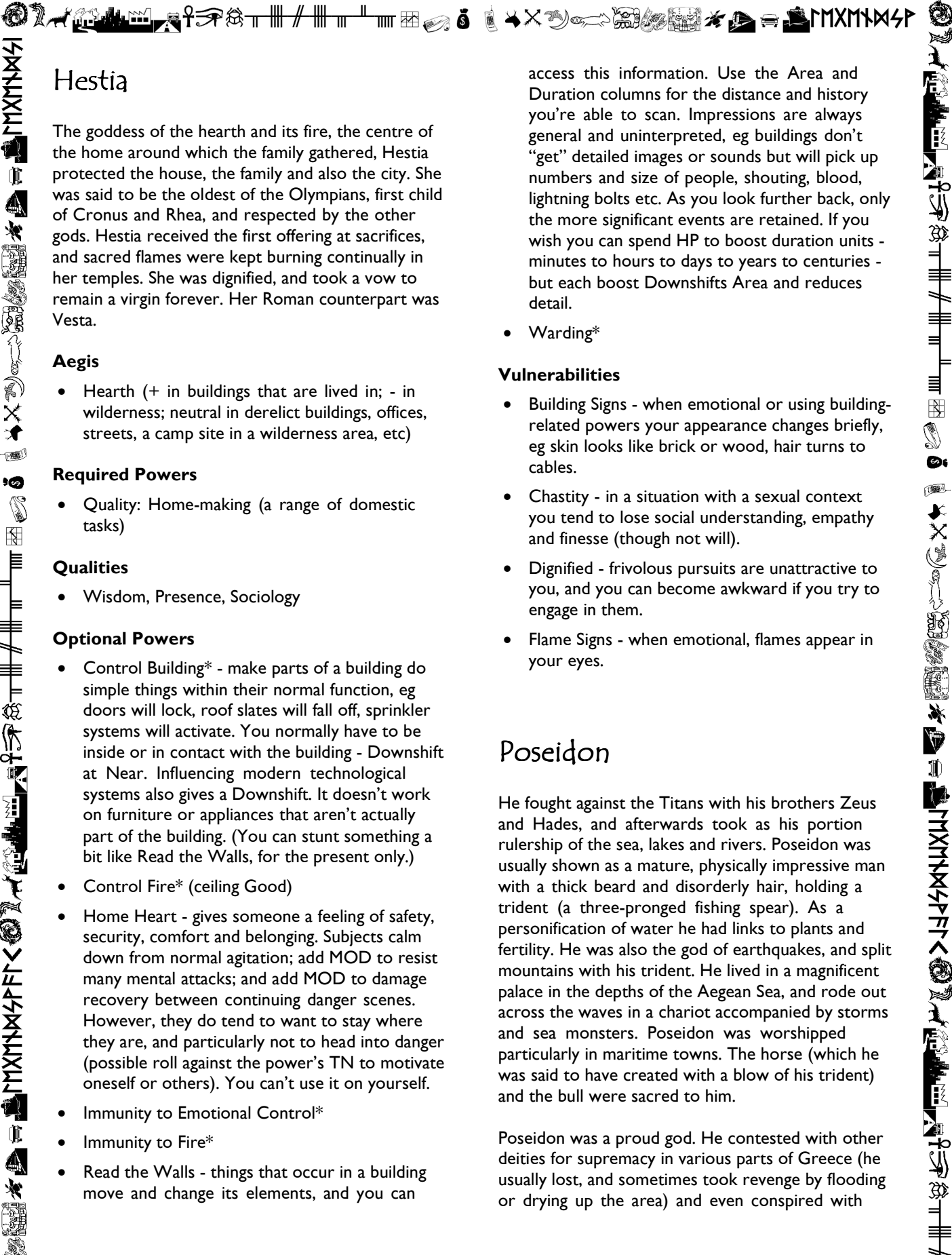
- Breach the Wall of Death\* (ceiling Good)
- Eloquence\*
- Languages\*
- Luck Control (ceiling Good)
- Super-Agility
- Super-Speed

## Winged sandals and hat

- Flight\*

## Vulnerabilities

- Blurring - when you become emotional, your outline blurs as if in motion, marking you as a Meta.
- Trickster - you delight in playing pranks on people - you can lose your better judgment and empathy when faced with an opportunity, or your social status as a result.



# Hestia

The goddess of the hearth and its fire, the centre of the home around which the family gathered, Hestia protected the house, the family and also the city. She was said to be the oldest of the Olympians, first child of Cronus and Rhea, and respected by the other gods. Hestia received the first offering at sacrifices, and sacred flames were kept burning continually in her temples. She was dignified, and took a vow to remain a virgin forever. Her Roman counterpart was Vesta.

## Aegis

- Hearth (+ in buildings that are lived in; - in wilderness; neutral in derelict buildings, offices, streets, a camp site in a wilderness area, etc)

## Required Powers

- Quality: Home-making (a range of domestic tasks)

## Qualities

- Wisdom, Presence, Sociology

## Optional Powers

- Control Building\* - make parts of a building do simple things within their normal function, eg doors will lock, roof slates will fall off, sprinkler systems will activate. You normally have to be inside or in contact with the building - Downshift at Near. Influencing modern technological systems also gives a Downshift. It doesn't work on furniture or appliances that aren't actually part of the building. (You can stunt something a bit like Read the Walls, for the present only.)
- Control Fire\* (ceiling Good)
- Home Heart - gives someone a feeling of safety, security, comfort and belonging. Subjects calm down from normal agitation; add MOD to resist many mental attacks; and add MOD to damage recovery between continuing danger scenes. However, they do tend to want to stay where they are, and particularly not to head into danger (possible roll against the power's TN to motivate oneself or others). You can't use it on yourself.
- Immunity to Emotional Control\*
- Immunity to Fire\*
- Read the Walls - things that occur in a building move and change its elements, and you can

access this information. Use the Area and Duration columns for the distance and history you're able to scan. Impressions are always general and uninterpreted, eg buildings don't "get" detailed images or sounds but will pick up numbers and size of people, shouting, blood, lightning bolts etc. As you look further back, only the more significant events are retained. If you wish you can spend HP to boost duration units - minutes to hours to days to years to centuries - but each boost Downshifts Area and reduces detail.

- Warding\*

## Vulnerabilities

- Building Signs - when emotional or using building-related powers your appearance changes briefly, eg skin looks like brick or wood, hair turns to cables.
- Chastity - in a situation with a sexual context you tend to lose social understanding, empathy and finesse (though not will).
- Dignified - frivolous pursuits are unattractive to you, and you can become awkward if you try to engage in them.
- Flame Signs - when emotional, flames appear in your eyes.

# Poseidon

He fought against the Titans with his brothers Zeus and Hades, and afterwards took as his portion rulership of the sea, lakes and rivers. Poseidon was usually shown as a mature, physically impressive man with a thick beard and disorderly hair, holding a trident (a three-pronged fishing spear). As a personification of water he had links to plants and fertility. He was also the god of earthquakes, and split mountains with his trident. He lived in a magnificent palace in the depths of the Aegean Sea, and rode out across the waves in a chariot accompanied by storms and sea monsters. Poseidon was worshipped particularly in maritime towns. The horse (which he was said to have created with a blow of his trident) and the bull were sacred to him.

Poseidon was a proud god. He contested with other deities for supremacy in various parts of Greece (he usually lost, and sometimes took revenge by flooding or drying up the area) and even conspired with

others to dethrone Zeus (his punishment was to serve a mortal, building the walls of Troy). Like other Olympians he was often unfaithful to his wife, and had a vast number of offspring including various heroes, villains and monsters. One was Polyphemus the Cyclops - after the hero Odysseus and his crew put out the creature's eye Poseidon hounded them mercilessly. Like the sea itself, he was a volatile and dangerous god. His Roman counterpart was Neptune.

### Aegis

- Water (+ in, on or beside a body of water; - in dry conditions, eg desert, hot summer day, burning building)

### Required Powers

- Control Water\*

### Qualities

- Strength, Endurance, Presence, Unarmed Fighting, Spear Fighting, Earth Lore (understanding weather, geology, etc)

### Optional Powers

- Animal Connection\* (horse)
- Aquatic\*
- Body of Water (good for getting round obstacles, but direct physical damage is Downshifted, and somewhat vulnerable to temperature)
- Control Water Creatures\* (Control Animals with a Limitation of Water Creatures Only)
- Shake the Earth - creates an earth tremor that can damage structures and make people fall down (for Failure Ranks).
- Super-Presence\*
- Walk on Water - you can travel at normal speed on the surface of water without sinking.

### Trident

- Earth Splitting - super-scale damage against natural rock, +MOD against refined minerals like metal or concrete.

### Vulnerabilities

- Needs Water - you need to immerse yourself in water regularly or suffer debilitating effects.

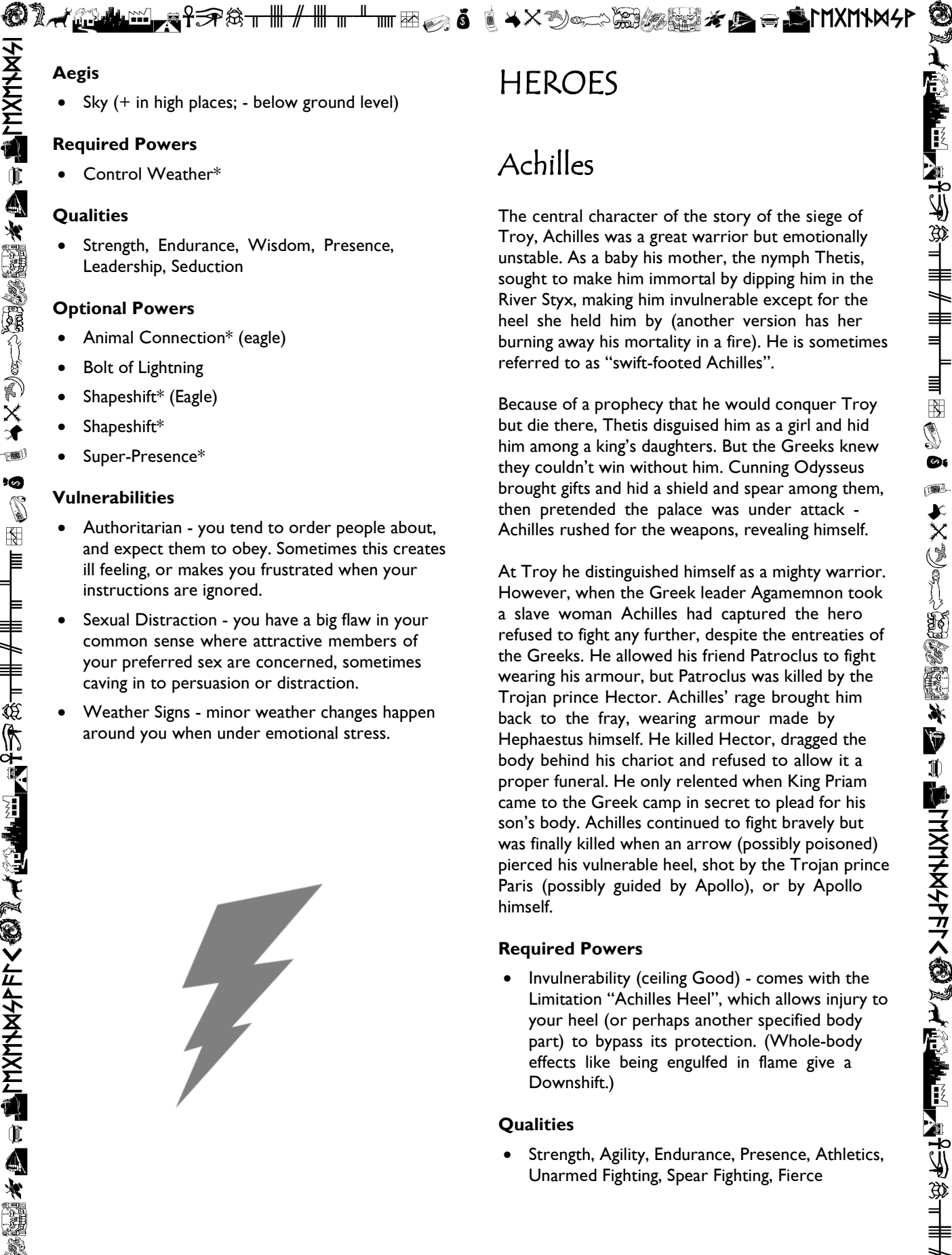
- Vengeful - any perceived offence merits swift and effective punishment, overcoming your better instincts.
- Water Signs - your body oozes water under emotional stress.

## Zeus

Zeus was the god of the sky and everything in it - wind, clouds, rain and thunder. He lived in the upper air and on mountain-tops. He became the supreme god, protector of all Greece, all-knowing and all-powerful. He was kind and compassionate to mortals, punishing the wicked but protecting the weak and those in danger. He was usually depicted as a mature man with a robust body, grave face with deeply set eyes, thick waving hair and finely curled beard, wearing a long mantle. His emblems were the oak and the eagle. His weapon was the thunderbolt.

Zeus was the youngest son of the Titans Cronus and Rhea. For fear of losing his throne to them, Cronus swallowed each of his children as soon as they were born. When Zeus arrived Rhea wrapped a stone in swaddling clothes to give to her husband and had the baby raised in secret. When grown he arranged for his father to be given a draught which made him vomit up the other gods. They overthrew Cronus, casting him to the depths of the universe. The other Titans tried to take back their kingdom, but after ten years of battle that shook all of creation they were chained in the depths of the earth. After defeating other primal monsters Zeus imposed his order on the world.

Zeus had several wives and numerous affairs with other goddesses and mortals, resulting in many children including Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Ares and Hephaistos. The children of his second wife, Themis (Law), included the Seasons, Justice and Peace. With the Titaness Mnemosyne he produced the nine Muses. Finally he ended up with Hera, whose jealousy was a continual threat to his conquests. He often approached these women in a shape other than his own, to deceive, impress or carry them off. He also sometimes changed them into other forms to shield them from the wrath of other deities. His Roman counterpart was Jupiter.



### Aegis

- Sky (+ in high places; - below ground level)

### Required Powers

- Control Weather\*

### Qualities

- Strength, Endurance, Wisdom, Presence, Leadership, Seduction

### Optional Powers

- Animal Connection\* (eagle)
- Bolt of Lightning
- Shapeshift\* (Eagle)
- Shapeshift\*
- Super-Presence\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Authoritarian - you tend to order people about, and expect them to obey. Sometimes this creates ill feeling, or makes you frustrated when your instructions are ignored.
- Sexual Distraction - you have a big flaw in your common sense where attractive members of your preferred sex are concerned, sometimes caving in to persuasion or distraction.
- Weather Signs - minor weather changes happen around you when under emotional stress.



## HEROES

### Achilles

The central character of the story of the siege of Troy, Achilles was a great warrior but emotionally unstable. As a baby his mother, the nymph Thetis, sought to make him immortal by dipping him in the River Styx, making him invulnerable except for the heel she held him by (another version has her burning away his mortality in a fire). He is sometimes referred to as "swift-footed Achilles".

Because of a prophecy that he would conquer Troy but die there, Thetis disguised him as a girl and hid him among a king's daughters. But the Greeks knew they couldn't win without him. Cunning Odysseus brought gifts and hid a shield and spear among them, then pretended the palace was under attack - Achilles rushed for the weapons, revealing himself.

At Troy he distinguished himself as a mighty warrior. However, when the Greek leader Agamemnon took a slave woman Achilles had captured the hero refused to fight any further, despite the entreaties of the Greeks. He allowed his friend Patroclus to fight wearing his armour, but Patroclus was killed by the Trojan prince Hector. Achilles' rage brought him back to the fray, wearing armour made by Hephaestus himself. He killed Hector, dragged the body behind his chariot and refused to allow it a proper funeral. He only relented when King Priam came to the Greek camp in secret to plead for his son's body. Achilles continued to fight bravely but was finally killed when an arrow (possibly poisoned) pierced his vulnerable heel, shot by the Trojan prince Paris (possibly guided by Apollo), or by Apollo himself.

### Required Powers

- Invulnerability (ceiling Good) - comes with the Limitation "Achilles Heel", which allows injury to your heel (or perhaps another specified body part) to bypass its protection. (Whole-body effects like being engulfed in flame give a Downshift.)

### Qualities

- Strength, Agility, Endurance, Presence, Athletics, Unarmed Fighting, Spear Fighting, Fierce



### Optional Powers

- Run Like a Horse\*

### Armour

- Qualities: Effectiveness\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Unstable - you are prone to vicious mood swings, and sometimes cave in dramatically to mundane or supernatural attempts to alter your disposition.
- Vengeful - any perceived offence merits swift and effective punishment, overcoming your better instincts



## Hercules

Probably the greatest of Greek heroes, known by them as Heracles and by the Romans as Hercules (the latter name is used here, as it's so well known). He was the son of Zeus by Alcmene, a mortal. The jealousy of Zeus' wife Hera at this affair led to a long-lived hatred of Hercules. She sent two snakes to kill him in his cradle, but the infant strangled them. Years later she drove him mad so that he killed his own family. To atone for this he spent twelve years under the orders of King Eurystheus (a rival set up by Hera), performing his famous Labours. The first was to slay the Nemean Lion, whose skin made it invulnerable to weapons - he strangled it, then skinned it with its own claws to make a protective mantle. Others included killing the Hydra, cleaning out the stables of 3000 cattle by diverting a river through them, and bringing back Cerberus, the monstrous three-headed dog which guarded the underworld.

He had many other adventures, including the voyage of the Argonauts to fetch the Golden Fleece and the slaying of numerous monsters. He also killed various hapless mortals who offended him, which happened often through both spite and misunderstanding - violence seemed to follow him wherever he went. He met his end when his wife Deianeira was tricked by a centaur into giving him a poisoned tunic. Maddened by pain, he tore up pine trees to make a funeral pyre. As the flames reached his body, thunder and lightning fell and he was taken up to Olympus to live among the gods.

Hercules became the god of physical prowess, but was also regarded as a friend and protector, and his popularity was widespread. He was said to have founded the Olympic Games, to have medical powers and to play music.

### Required Powers

- Super-Strength\* (ceiling Good)

### Qualities

- Endurance, Presence, Athletics, Unarmed Fighting, Club Fighting, Archery

### Optional Powers

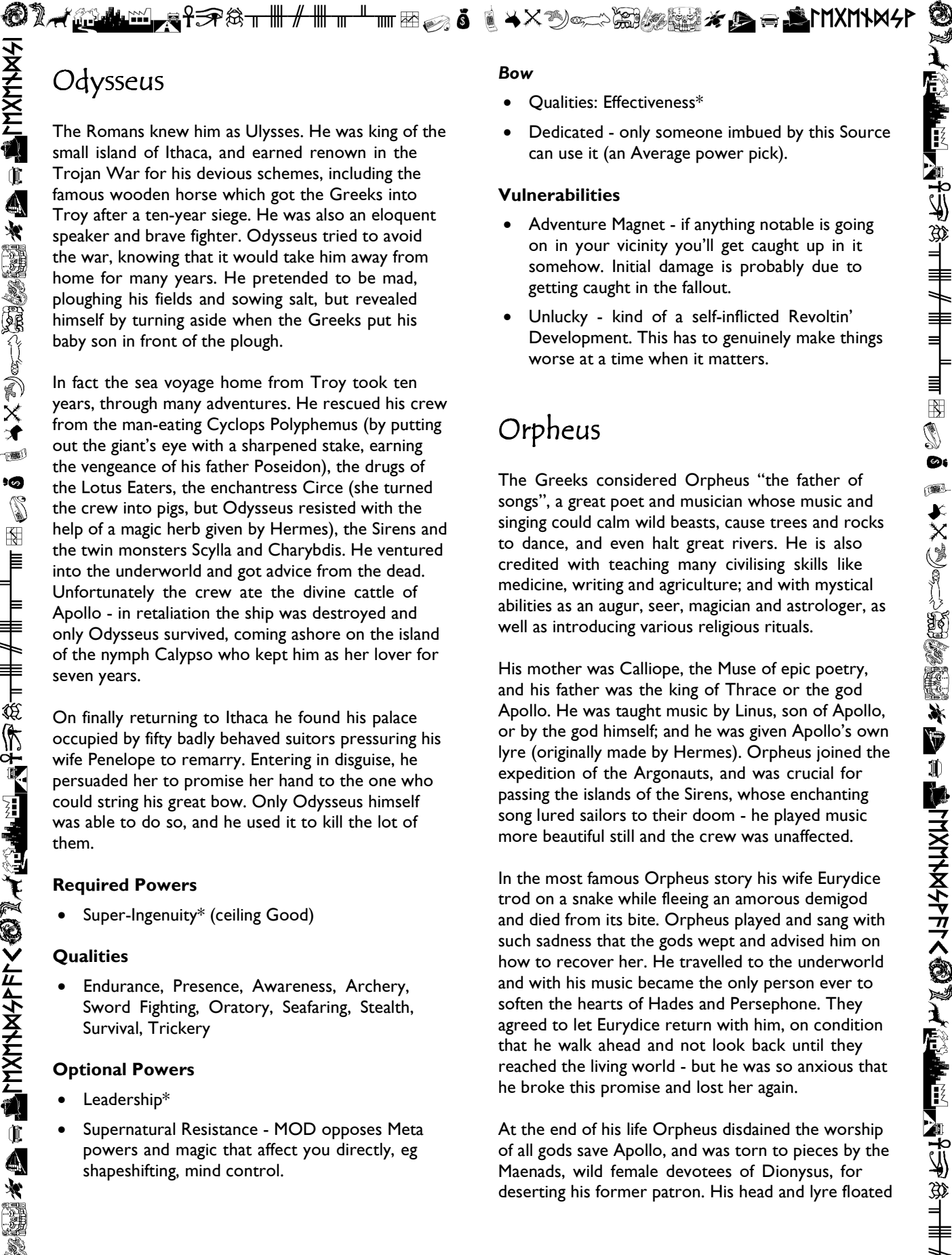
- (none)

### Skin of the Nemean Lion

- Immunity to Edged Weapons\* (full against swords, axes, arrows, etc; MOD vs firearms)

### Vulnerabilities

- Straightforward - you have difficulty with intricate social interactions like understanding people's motives, persuasion or diplomacy
- Temper - you find it hard to keep your cool, especially when being insulted or challenged



# Odysseus

The Romans knew him as Ulysses. He was king of the small island of Ithaca, and earned renown in the Trojan War for his devious schemes, including the famous wooden horse which got the Greeks into Troy after a ten-year siege. He was also an eloquent speaker and brave fighter. Odysseus tried to avoid the war, knowing that it would take him away from home for many years. He pretended to be mad, ploughing his fields and sowing salt, but revealed himself by turning aside when the Greeks put his baby son in front of the plough.

In fact the sea voyage home from Troy took ten years, through many adventures. He rescued his crew from the man-eating Cyclops Polyphemus (by putting out the giant's eye with a sharpened stake, earning the vengeance of his father Poseidon), the drugs of the Lotus Eaters, the enchantress Circe (she turned the crew into pigs, but Odysseus resisted with the help of a magic herb given by Hermes), the Sirens and the twin monsters Scylla and Charybdis. He ventured into the underworld and got advice from the dead. Unfortunately the crew ate the divine cattle of Apollo - in retaliation the ship was destroyed and only Odysseus survived, coming ashore on the island of the nymph Calypso who kept him as her lover for seven years.

On finally returning to Ithaca he found his palace occupied by fifty badly behaved suitors pressuring his wife Penelope to remarry. Entering in disguise, he persuaded her to promise her hand to the one who could string his great bow. Only Odysseus himself was able to do so, and he used it to kill the lot of them.

### Required Powers

- Super-Ingenuity\* (ceiling Good)

### Qualities

- Endurance, Presence, Awareness, Archery, Sword Fighting, Oratory, Seafaring, Stealth, Survival, Trickery

### Optional Powers

- Leadership\*
- Supernatural Resistance - MOD opposes Meta powers and magic that affect you directly, eg shapeshifting, mind control.

### Bow

- Qualities: Effectiveness\*
- Dedicated - only someone imbued by this Source can use it (an Average power pick).

### Vulnerabilities

- Adventure Magnet - if anything notable is going on in your vicinity you'll get caught up in it somehow. Initial damage is probably due to getting caught in the fallout.
- Unlucky - kind of a self-inflicted Revoltin' Development. This has to genuinely make things worse at a time when it matters.

# Orpheus

The Greeks considered Orpheus "the father of songs", a great poet and musician whose music and singing could calm wild beasts, cause trees and rocks to dance, and even halt great rivers. He is also credited with teaching many civilising skills like medicine, writing and agriculture; and with mystical abilities as an augur, seer, magician and astrologer, as well as introducing various religious rituals.

His mother was Calliope, the Muse of epic poetry, and his father was the king of Thrace or the god Apollo. He was taught music by Linus, son of Apollo, or by the god himself; and he was given Apollo's own lyre (originally made by Hermes). Orpheus joined the expedition of the Argonauts, and was crucial for passing the islands of the Sirens, whose enchanting song lured sailors to their doom - he played music more beautiful still and the crew was unaffected.

In the most famous Orpheus story his wife Eurydice trod on a snake while fleeing an amorous demigod and died from its bite. Orpheus played and sang with such sadness that the gods wept and advised him on how to recover her. He travelled to the underworld and with his music became the only person ever to soften the hearts of Hades and Persephone. They agreed to let Eurydice return with him, on condition that he walk ahead and not look back until they reached the living world - but he was so anxious that he broke this promise and lost her again.

At the end of his life Orpheus disdained the worship of all gods save Apollo, and was torn to pieces by the Maenads, wild female devotees of Dionysus, for deserting his former patron. His head and lyre floated

down the river to the sea, still singing, and eventually reached the island of Lesbos. The inhabitants buried his head and created a shrine; the Muses placed the lyre among the stars; and his soul was reunited with his beloved Eurydice.

#### Required Powers

- Music\*

#### Qualities

- Wisdom, Play (instrument), Sing

#### Optional Powers

- Master of Lore (ceiling Good)
- Prediction (ceiling Good)
- Sorcery (ceiling Good)

#### Vulnerabilities

- Loss of Loved Ones - kicks in as a general debilitation if you're trying to save those closest to you.



## MONSTERS

### Gorgon

The Gorgons were three horrible daughters of the sea-god Phorcys: Stheno, Euryale and Medusa. They were said to have scaled skin, writhing snakes for hair, tusk-like fangs, bronze or brass hands and golden wings on their shoulders. Anyone looking them in the face was turned to stone. Only Medusa was mortal. The hero Perseus, helped and advised by Athena and Hermes, journeyed to their remote dwelling and cut Medusa's head off with a sickle while looking at her reflection in a polished shield. From the blood sprang the winged horse Pegasus. Perseus used the head to turn a king pursuing his mother into stone, then gave it to Athena to place on her shield.

#### Required Powers

- Turn to Stone - use on one living creature at a time, who you must look directly in the eye. If they fail to resist (and normal physical resilience won't work against this transformation) they're turned to stone for the Rank's Duration. While in stone form they are unaware of events around them, and very durable but somewhat brittle...

#### Qualities

- Endurance, Presence, Awareness, Intimidation, Armour (scales)

#### Optional Powers

- Flight\* (winged; ceiling Average)
- Snake Hair - a sensory enhancement, as the snakes watch 360° and alert their host to threats etc. They can also bite a target at close quarters, eg being grappled, as an extra action doing poison damage.

#### Vulnerabilities

- Snakey Appearance - scales and hair can spoil social interactions. The hair can also reduce stealth, as the snakes tend to writhe and hiss of their own accord.
- Wings - a dead giveaway as a Meta, provoking appropriate reactions.

## Harpy

The Harpies were creatures of filth and famine, linked with the stormy winds. They had the faces and breasts of old hags and the bodies of birds with long, hooked claws. Noisy and eternally hungry, they snatched food and soiled tables with their excrement, and had a sickening stench. Zeus inflicted them on a soothsayer as a punishment, and they were vanquished by the Argonauts.

### Required Powers

- Flight\* (winged)

### Qualities

- Agility, Endurance, Awareness, Claws

### Optional Powers

- Corruption - the ability to make organic materials moulder and decay. It's triggered by fetid breath or shaking of the wings, affecting an arc in the nearby area. Naturally perishable items like foodstuffs are Average to affect; non-perishable things like cotton clothing, leather goods and wicker baskets are Good. Items with Qualities for quality and durability can use those. (Imbued items, of course, are not affected.)
- Disease Carrier - an encounter with this creature often causes victims to become ill with something like a combination of flu and food poisoning. Onset time is around one scene to one hour. Base difficulty to resist is TN, but give Downshifts for damage with a penetrating attack (eg Claws) and being caught in *Corruption*.
- Immunity to Toxins and Disease\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Stench - you smell bad, and people avoid being near you.
- Ugly - penalises you in many social situations.
- Voracious - you need to consume large amounts of food and drink, and can become debilitated after a while without doing so.
- Wings - a dead giveaway as a Meta, provoking appropriate reactions.

## Hydra

Slaying this enormous nine-headed serpent was one of the labours of Hercules. It lived in a marsh and ravaged the herds and crops of the surrounding countryside with its poisonous breath. When Hercules struck a head off with his club two more grew in its place. His companion Iolaus burned the stumps after the heads were removed, preventing regrowth, and Hercules buried the last head (said to be immortal) under a stone. The hero soaked his arrows in the hydra's blood, making them poisonous. (This programme would work on a snake or crocodile as well as on a human - adapt abilities as necessary.)

### Required Powers

- Regeneration

### Qualities

- Strength, Agility, Endurance, Armour (scaly skin), Large (ceiling Expert)

### Optional Powers

- Extra Heads - this weird alteration does exactly what it says, giving one extra head per Rank. (Higher numbers are rare in human Metas, and tend to be more reptilian on elongated necks.) There's still only one personality, and the new heads work as a slave to the original. Each head gives an Upshift for perceiving things nearby, making surprise harder. Each can also attack independently, allowing an extra Poisonous Breath attack or an extra bite attack for imbued animals.
- Poisonous Breath\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Extra Heads - what, you think people aren't going to notice? Good luck with that social life.
- Reptilian Appearance - a Meta marker.
- Toxic - people in close proximity over an extended period become ill, unless they or you take inconvenient precautions. Can target relationship or occupation Qualities.
- Vulnerable to Fire.

# THE NORSE PANTHEON

From around 500BCE a group of tribes with the same language and similar cultures lived in the south of the Scandinavian peninsula, the Baltic islands and the plain of north Germany. Between about 200BCE and 200CE some of them were in conflict with the Roman armies. The Romans called them "Germanic" tribes to distinguish them from the Celts; they are also known as Teutons. As the Roman Empire declined and after it fell the tribes migrated all over Europe, with territories occupied by various peoples over the years. They went east toward the Black Sea, north into Scandinavia, spread through Germany and (from around 400CE) the Anglo-Saxons crossed to Britain, naming their territories "Englond".

Later - around 790-1050CE - Danish, Norwegian and Swedish seafarers went "Viking" or raiding around the coasts of Europe, Britain and Ireland. They established settlements, controlled trade and colonised Iceland and Greenland. Not all of their contacts were warlike. Their river traders pushed into eastern Europe, and met Muslims as well as Christians. The advantages of allying with these lands of wealth, power and learning encouraged the Vikings to convert to Christianity.

In Britain and Germany written records of Germanic religion and myths come from the Romans, who explained them in terms of their own gods, or Christian scribes who wanted to condemn the pagan practices or lived when only fragments of the myths had survived. Better records of the old culture were kept in Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Iceland, and almost all we know of their legends comes from here.

These myths show a people who lived life as best they could under the shadow of forces they couldn't control. They made their living surrounded by volcanoes and glaciers, through long periods of light and darkness, with warlike neighbours. There's a strong sense of fate - things happen as they are doomed to, and even the gods can't change that. Their heroes were larger than life, doing their utmost

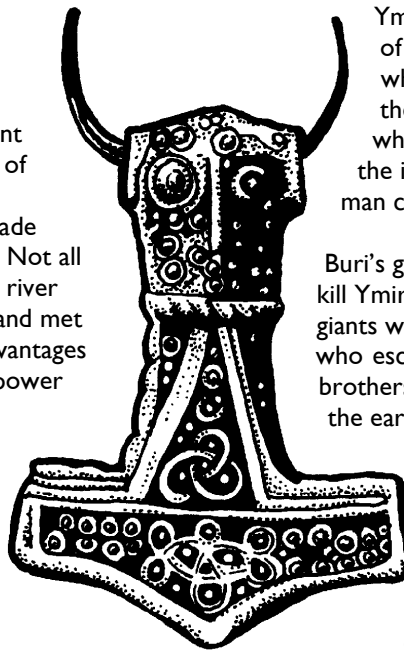
in the moments that were theirs to shape. Their gods represent basic aspects of life and culture, and the elemental forces are their enemies rather than gods themselves.

## Creation

In the beginning there was only a gaping void called Gunningagap. To the north formed Niflheim, a land of freezing cold, and to the south formed the fiery realm of Muspellheim. Where the two faced each other the droplets of melting ice created the giant Ymir, first of living things. From the sweat of his armpit grew a male and a female who began the giant race. In a similar way the melting ice created a giant cow, whose milk nourished Ymir. She licked the ice for its salt, and gradually revealed a man called Buri, the ancestor of the gods.

Buri's grandsons Odin, Vili and Ve decided to kill Ymir. There was so much blood that the giants were drowned, except for one couple who escaped in a boat. From the body the brothers created the world: the flesh became the earth, the blood became the sea which encircled the land, and the skull became the sky. They made Ymir's hair into plants and his brains into clouds. Sparks flying out of Muspellheim were set in the sky as stars. Night and Day were a giantess and her son, set to ride across the sky in horse-drawn chariots, chased by two wolves. The gods made dwarves out of grubs forming in the flesh of Ymir, and decreed that they should continue to live in the earth. The first humans were made out of two tree trunks.

Different traditions have different versions of the creation and shape of the universe. One version calls the whole world formed from Ymir's body Midgard because it's between fire and ice. The land was encircled by the sea, which was surrounded by the void. Jotunheim, the land of the giants, was on this level, as were humans and dwarves. Above it was the celestial realm of the gods, connected to Midgard by the bridge Bifröst which appears to mortals as the





rainbow. Here were Asgard and Vanaheim, the homes of the Aesir and Vanir groups of gods. Beneath Midgard was a sombre, frosty realm of the dead, also called Nifflheim or Hel.

The most well-known idea is that of the giant ash tree Yggdrasill linking all the worlds. (Its name means "steed of the redoubtable", due to Odin's horse browsing on its leaves or because the god hung on it to seek the wisdom of the runes.) By one root in the underworld was the well Hvergelmir, the origin of the glacial rivers which flowed to Gunningagap. By the root in the frosty land of the giants was the well of Mimir which could impart wisdom. By the root in the heavens was the well of Urd, where the Norns dispensed fates. A serpent or dragon called Nidhogg gnawed at the lowest root, a wise eagle perched in the top branches, and a squirrel called Ratatosk ran up and down carrying insults between them. Four stags lived among the branches eating the new shoots.

### The gods

There were two groups of gods. The Aesir were warriors above all, and included Odin, Thor and Tyr. The Vanir were peaceful and benevolent. They provided sunlight and rain; allowed plants, animals and people to multiply; gave harvests and other riches; protected commerce and navigation. After the Aesir mistreated a Vanir emissary war broke out between the two. Eventually they came to an

understanding, and exchanged hostages. So it was that Njörd and his children Frey and Freyja came to live in Asgard.

Odin ruled the gods, preoccupied by his own search for knowledge and his foreknowledge of the end of the world, which led him to amass an army of dead warriors. There was always friction between the gods and the giants, and Thor and his hammer were the gods' ultimate protection.

The myths tell of Ragnarok, the last battle in which elemental forces will destroy the world. It will be preceded by certain signs. Battles will rage throughout the world for three years. Brother will kill brother; father will kill son. Then the Fimbulwinter will come, covering the land with snow and frost and hiding the sun for three years. The wolves chasing the sun and moon will finally catch them. There will be a huge earthquake, toppling mountains and breaking the fetters of Loki and Fenrir. The ship Naglfar, made of the nail-clippings of the dead, will carry them and the frost giants to the great plain of Vigrid, there to meet the Midgard serpent and the fire giants, led by Surt. Alerted by Heimdall's horn, the gods will go to war, leading the ranks of the valiant dead. The gods and their enemies will slay each other, and finally Surt will cover the earth in fire and it will sink into the sea. However, after a time a new, green earth will emerge, with new people to fill it. The children of the old gods are here, ruled over by Balder, returned from the dead.

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# GODS

## Balder

A son of Odin and Frigg, Balder was loved by all. He was so beautiful that he shed radiance around him, and was wise, just, pure and eloquent. His legend mainly concerns his death, which was one of the events setting Ragnarok in motion. Balder became troubled by dreams that he was about to die, and the other gods tried to set his mind at rest. Frigg extracted an oath from everything in the world - including animals, fire, stones and illnesses - never to harm Balder. To test his invulnerability the Aesir played a game - they struck him with weapons, threw knives and stones, and shot arrows at him, but nothing harmed him at all. Loki, filled with envy, took the shape of an old woman and went to ask Frigg about this game. There he discovered the one thing she had overlooked - a small plant called mistletoe. Loki tricked Balder's blind brother Hodr into throwing a wand or dart of mistletoe. Balder fell dead.

Hermod, a son of Odin, rode to Hel (the kingdom of the dead) to attempt a rescue. The goddess Hel agreed to free Balder if every being and thing in the world wept for him. The gods sent messages throughout the world, and everything wept - apart from one old giantess who said that Balder had never done anything for her. It was Loki in disguise. Vali, another son of Odin, killed Hodr in revenge. Balder stayed with the dead, but after Ragnarok he and Hodr would be reborn in the new world.

### Aegis

- Goodness (+ surrounded by harmony and happiness; - surrounded by conflict or suffering)

### Required Powers

- Invulnerability (Limitation: Doesn't work on mistletoe)

### Qualities

- Wisdom, Presence, Psychology, Socialising, Good-looking, Brave

### Optional Powers

- Beauty\*
- Sense Death's Presence\* (ceiling Good)

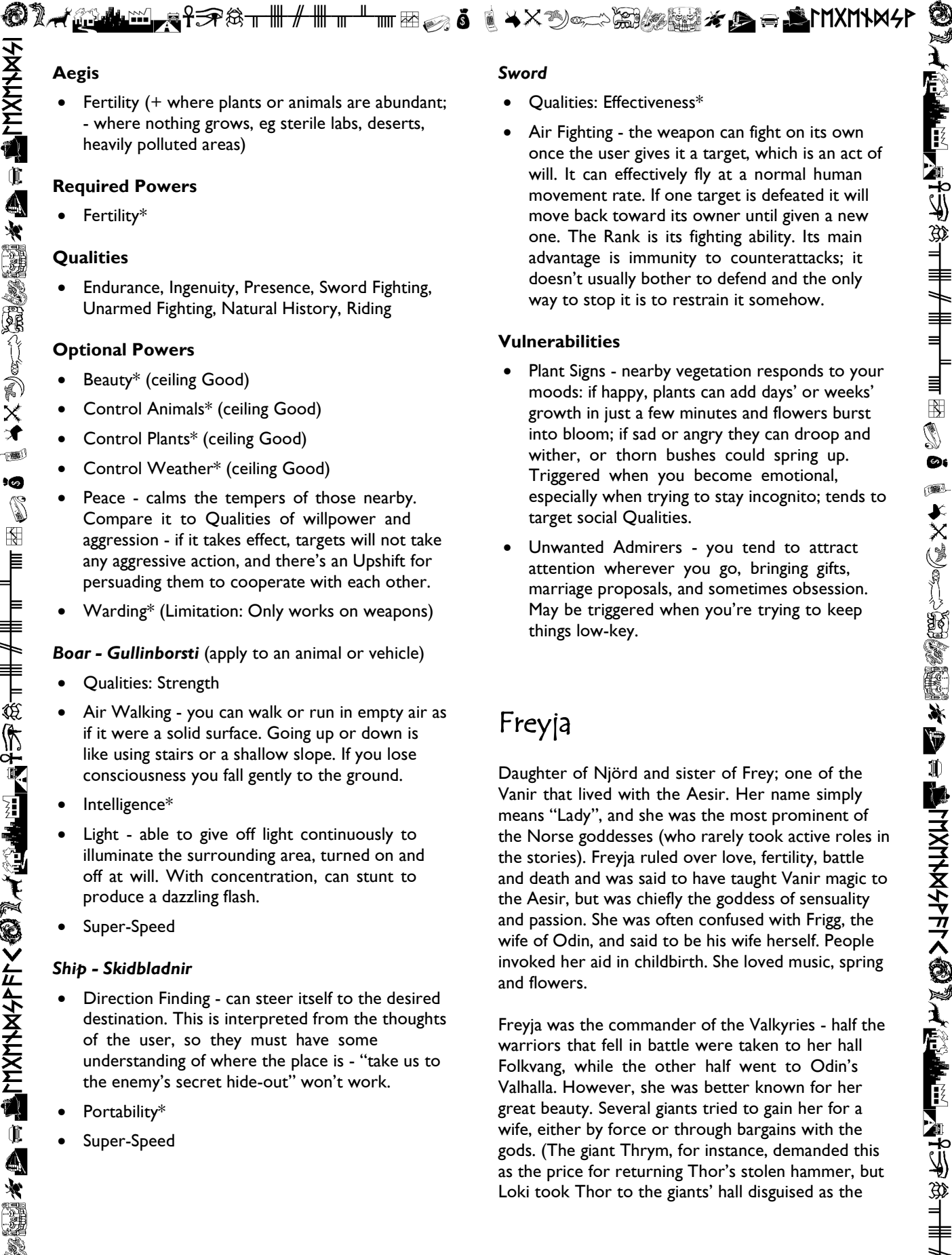
### Vulnerabilities

- Glowing - your body has a faint glow which makes it hard to pass as normal - may be triggered in a situation revolving around hiding, stealth or being unobtrusive, and targets those sorts of Qualities.
- Too Pure - triggered if you try significant tasks that are criminal, nasty or underhand.
- Unwanted Admirers - you tend to attract attention wherever you go, bringing gifts, marriage proposals, and sometimes obsession. May be triggered when you're trying to keep things low-key.

## Frey

His name means simply "Lord" - he's also called Freyr and Yngvi and given the title "God of the World". He was the son of the Vanir Njörd and the giantess Skadi, and the brother of Freya. Frey was a handsome god of peace (though also a brave warrior) and fertility, having authority over rain, sunshine and natural fruitfulness. Frey's cult was one of the most popular, especially in Sweden. Weapons were banned from his temples, and bloodshed was taboo in places sacred to him. His idols were remarkably well endowed and he was invoked at weddings. He was said to be the ancestor of Swedish kings.

He had a sword that could fight on its own, but gave it to his servant for help in the pursuit of the beautiful giantess who became his wife. For a steed he had a golden boar *Gullinborsti* ("golden bristles"), forged by cunning dwarves, that sped through the air or across the earth more quickly than a galloping horse, had redoubtable tusks, and illuminated the night. Also dwarf-built was the ship *Skidbladnir* - as soon as its sails were hoisted it made straight for its destination faster than any other ship. It was large enough to hold all the Aesir and their gear, but could be folded up and carried in a pocket. At Ragnarok Frey faces the fire giant Surt - having lost his magical sword, he is slain.



### Aegis

- Fertility (+ where plants or animals are abundant; - where nothing grows, eg sterile labs, deserts, heavily polluted areas)

### Required Powers

- Fertility\*

### Qualities

- Endurance, Ingenuity, Presence, Sword Fighting, Unarmed Fighting, Natural History, Riding

### Optional Powers

- Beauty\* (ceiling Good)
- Control Animals\* (ceiling Good)
- Control Plants\* (ceiling Good)
- Control Weather\* (ceiling Good)
- Peace - calms the tempers of those nearby. Compare it to Qualities of willpower and aggression - if it takes effect, targets will not take any aggressive action, and there's an Upshift for persuading them to cooperate with each other.
- Warding\* (Limitation: Only works on weapons)

### Boar - Gullinborsti (apply to an animal or vehicle)

- Qualities: Strength
- Air Walking - you can walk or run in empty air as if it were a solid surface. Going up or down is like using stairs or a shallow slope. If you lose consciousness you fall gently to the ground.
- Intelligence\*
- Light - able to give off light continuously to illuminate the surrounding area, turned on and off at will. With concentration, can stunt to produce a dazzling flash.
- Super-Speed

### Ship - Skidbladnir

- Direction Finding - can steer itself to the desired destination. This is interpreted from the thoughts of the user, so they must have some understanding of where the place is - "take us to the enemy's secret hide-out" won't work.
- Portability\*
- Super-Speed

### Sword

- Qualities: Effectiveness\*
- Air Fighting - the weapon can fight on its own once the user gives it a target, which is an act of will. It can effectively fly at a normal human movement rate. If one target is defeated it will move back toward its owner until given a new one. The Rank is its fighting ability. Its main advantage is immunity to counterattacks; it doesn't usually bother to defend and the only way to stop it is to restrain it somehow.

### Vulnerabilities

- Plant Signs - nearby vegetation responds to your moods: if happy, plants can add days' or weeks' growth in just a few minutes and flowers burst into bloom; if sad or angry they can droop and wither, or thorn bushes could spring up. Triggered when you become emotional, especially when trying to stay incognito; tends to target social Qualities.
- Unwanted Admirers - you tend to attract attention wherever you go, bringing gifts, marriage proposals, and sometimes obsession. May be triggered when you're trying to keep things low-key.

## Freyja

Daughter of Njörd and sister of Frey; one of the Vanir that lived with the Aesir. Her name simply means "Lady", and she was the most prominent of the Norse goddesses (who rarely took active roles in the stories). Freyja ruled over love, fertility, battle and death and was said to have taught Vanir magic to the Aesir, but was chiefly the goddess of sensuality and passion. She was often confused with Frigg, the wife of Odin, and said to be his wife herself. People invoked her aid in childbirth. She loved music, spring and flowers.

Freyja was the commander of the Valkyries - half the warriors that fell in battle were taken to her hall Folkvang, while the other half went to Odin's Valhalla. However, she was better known for her great beauty. Several giants tried to gain her for a wife, either by force or through bargains with the gods. (The giant Thrym, for instance, demanded this as the price for returning Thor's stolen hammer, but Loki took Thor to the giants' hall disguised as the



bride-to-be and Thrym was foolish enough to bring out the hammer to bless the marriage...)

Freyja also coveted riches and beautiful objects. While visiting the workshop of four dwarfs she saw the beautiful golden necklace Brisingamen, and offered great riches for it. The dwarfs' price, though, was for her to spend a night with each of them, which she agreed to. Odin was displeased and sent Loki to steal the necklace while she slept. He returned it only when she agreed to provoke a war between two kings (for obscure reasons). When she wore the necklace no man or god could resist her charms. Freyja travelled in a chariot drawn by two cats, or riding on the golden-bristled boar Hildesvini. She also had a cloak of feathers which allowed the wearer to change into a falcon. She travelled through the world seeking her lost husband Odur or Od (probably Odin) and weeping tears of gold.

#### Aegis

- Passion (+ around people experiencing strong emotions, like at a rock concert; - where there's little emotion, e.g. a science lab, monastery or library)

#### Required Powers

- Quality: Good-looking



#### Qualities

- Ingenuity, Presence, Awareness, Socialising

#### Optional Powers

- Control Emotions\* (ceiling Good)
- Fertility\*
- Sorcery\*: *seid* magic, a shamanic/mystical style with emphasis on divination and manipulating people, not controlling the elements. Trappings include animal skins, feathers, incantations to spirits, trances.
- Summon Minions\*: the Einheriar, ancient warriors back from the dead. They appear pale and not quite solid, with old clothes and weapons, usually swords and spears. You may reduce the number to equip the warriors with ghostly horses that can run through the air, but don't fight separately. Good [+2] Warrior, Good [+2] Strength, Good [+2] Presence, Good [+2] Unliving\*, Good [+2] Super-Armour (from ghostliness).

#### Necklace - Brisingamen

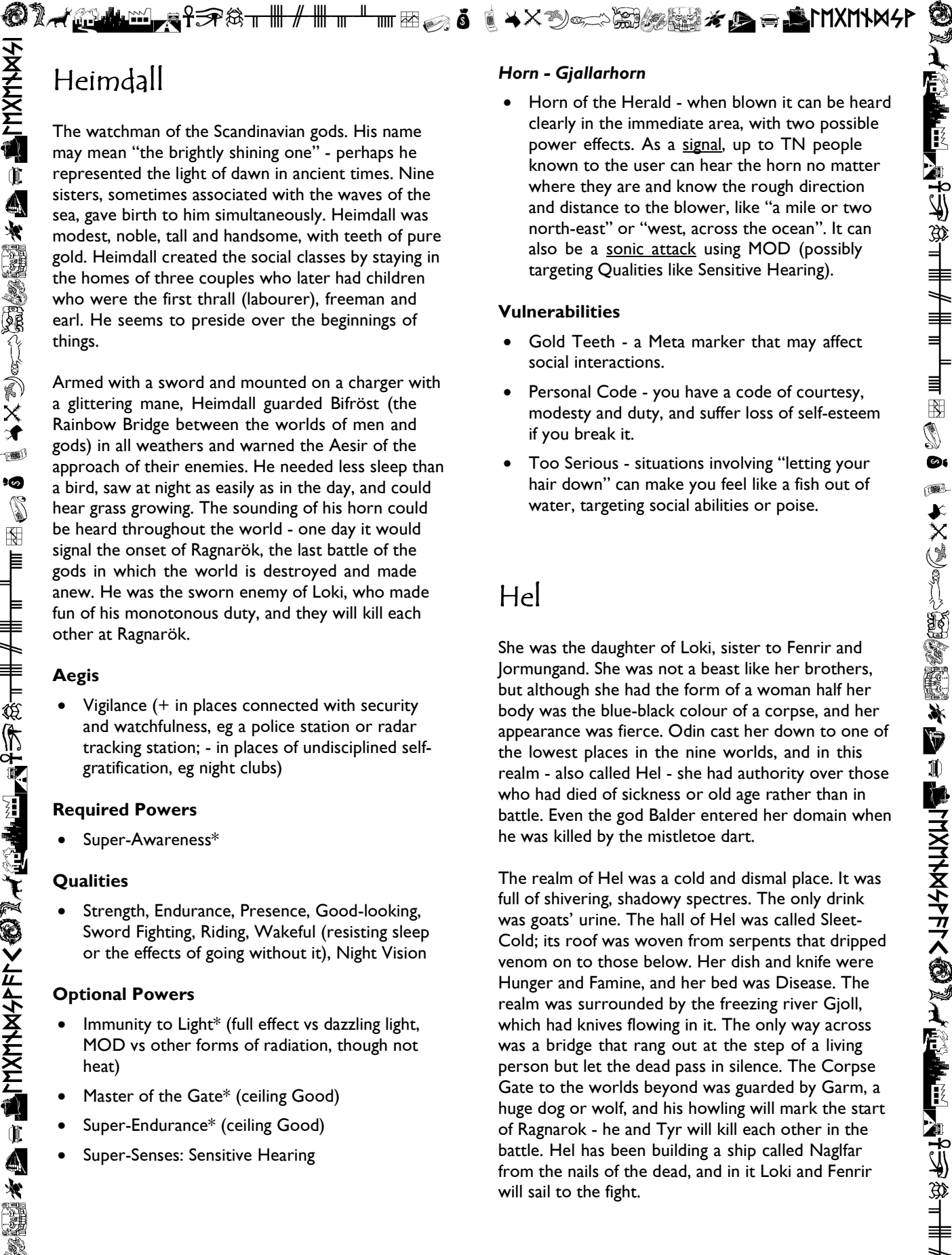
- Beauty\*
- Light - can produce a glow similar to that of a campfire continuously, or an explosive light attack using MOD (targeting Qualities related to vision).

#### Falcon cloak

- Shapeshift\* (Falcon)

#### Vulnerabilities

- Golden Eyes - your irises are an unusual golden colour, a Meta marker that can affect social situations.
- Lust for Beautiful or Valuable Objects - the pretties can make you lose your judgment (inc Wisdom) and principles.
- Temper - you find it hard to keep your cool, especially when being insulted or challenged.
- Unwanted Admirers - you tend to attract attention wherever you go, bringing gifts, marriage proposals, and sometimes obsession. May be triggered when you're trying to keep things low-key.



# Heimdall

The watchman of the Scandinavian gods. His name may mean “the brightly shining one” - perhaps he represented the light of dawn in ancient times. Nine sisters, sometimes associated with the waves of the sea, gave birth to him simultaneously. Heimdall was modest, noble, tall and handsome, with teeth of pure gold. Heimdall created the social classes by staying in the homes of three couples who later had children who were the first thrall (labourer), freeman and earl. He seems to preside over the beginnings of things.

Armed with a sword and mounted on a charger with a glittering mane, Heimdall guarded Bifröst (the Rainbow Bridge between the worlds of men and gods) in all weathers and warned the Aesir of the approach of their enemies. He needed less sleep than a bird, saw at night as easily as in the day, and could hear grass growing. The sounding of his horn could be heard throughout the world - one day it would signal the onset of Ragnarök, the last battle of the gods in which the world is destroyed and made anew. He was the sworn enemy of Loki, who made fun of his monotonous duty, and they will kill each other at Ragnarök.

## Aegis

- Vigilance (+ in places connected with security and watchfulness, eg a police station or radar tracking station; - in places of undisciplined self-gratification, eg night clubs)

## Required Powers

- Super-Awareness\*

## Qualities

- Strength, Endurance, Presence, Good-looking, Sword Fighting, Riding, Wakeful (resisting sleep or the effects of going without it), Night Vision

## Optional Powers

- Immunity to Light\* (full effect vs dazzling light, MOD vs other forms of radiation, though not heat)
- Master of the Gate\* (ceiling Good)
- Super-Endurance\* (ceiling Good)
- Super-Senses: Sensitive Hearing

## Horn - Gjallarhorn

- Horn of the Herald - when blown it can be heard clearly in the immediate area, with two possible power effects. As a signal, up to TN people known to the user can hear the horn no matter where they are and know the rough direction and distance to the blower, like “a mile or two north-east” or “west, across the ocean”. It can also be a sonic attack using MOD (possibly targeting Qualities like Sensitive Hearing).

## Vulnerabilities

- Gold Teeth - a Meta marker that may affect social interactions.
- Personal Code - you have a code of courtesy, modesty and duty, and suffer loss of self-esteem if you break it.
- Too Serious - situations involving “letting your hair down” can make you feel like a fish out of water, targeting social abilities or poise.

# Hel

She was the daughter of Loki, sister to Fenrir and Jormungand. She was not a beast like her brothers, but although she had the form of a woman half her body was the blue-black colour of a corpse, and her appearance was fierce. Odin cast her down to one of the lowest places in the nine worlds, and in this realm - also called Hel - she had authority over those who had died of sickness or old age rather than in battle. Even the god Balder entered her domain when he was killed by the mistletoe dart.

The realm of Hel was a cold and dismal place. It was full of shivering, shadowy spectres. The only drink was goats’ urine. The hall of Hel was called Sleet-Cold; its roof was woven from serpents that dripped venom on to those below. Her dish and knife were Hunger and Famine, and her bed was Disease. The realm was surrounded by the freezing river Gjoll, which had knives flowing in it. The only way across was a bridge that rang out at the step of a living person but let the dead pass in silence. The Corpse Gate to the worlds beyond was guarded by Garm, a huge dog or wolf, and his howling will mark the start of Ragnarok - he and Tyr will kill each other in the battle. Hel has been building a ship called Naglfar from the nails of the dead, and in it Loki and Fenrir will sail to the fight.

### Aegis

- Death (+ in cemetery or mortuary; - in places connected with new life, eg maternity ward or plant nursery)

### Required Powers

- Breach the Wall of Death\*

### Qualities

- Endurance, Presence, Shocking Appearance

### Optional Powers

- Immunity to Cold (ceiling Good)
- Immunity to Poison (ceiling Good)
- Knowledge of the Dead\* (Limitation: Not those who died in battle)
- Sense Death's Presence\*
- Underworld Sense\*
- Unliving\*

### Garm (a dog or similar)

- Qualities: Strong, Fierce, Guard
- Size\* - one Rank larger than is normal for its type
- Underworld Sense\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Half-Dead - half your body has a corpse-like appearance. This is an obvious Meta marker and will affect many social situations.
- Vulnerable to Light

## Loki

Although he lived among the Aesir Loki was not one of them, being the child of two giants. Originally he was a sort of fire demon, possibly personifying the destructive forest fire, and his name is related to a root meaning "flame". He doesn't seem to have been worshipped, but he plays an important role in the stories. Sometimes his cunning and mischief were used to help and advise the gods, and sometimes to undermine them. Over time he became progressively more evil, and eventually took a leading role against the gods at Ragnarok. Loki was handsome, and popular with the goddesses. He and Odin became

blood brothers at the beginning of time. Loki's main ability, apart from his cunning and sharp tongue, seems to be the ability to shapeshift into any human or animal form. He often took the shape of an insect to sneak into places. In the shape of a mare he was the mother of Odin's horse Sleipnir!

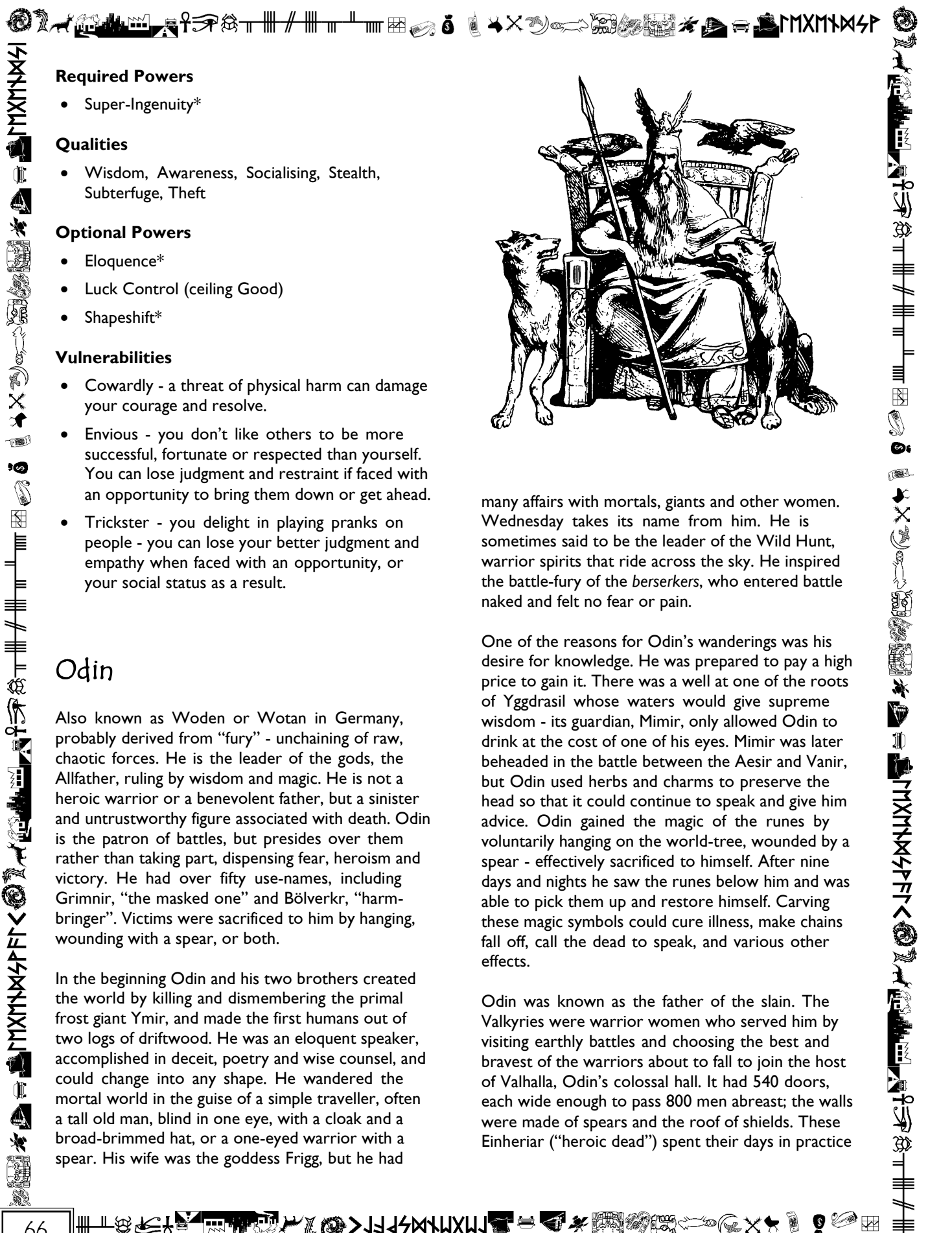
When a giant stole Thor's hammer and demanded Freyja for a wife as the price for its return, it was Loki who thought of dressing Thor as a woman, and his sharp wits kept up the ruse until the hammer was regained. But when Loki himself was caught by a giant while in bird-form he readily agreed to talk Thor into going to Jotunheim without his magical weapons as the price for his own freedom. On a similar occasion he agreed to deliver the goddess Idun and her magical apples, which kept the gods from growing old. Under dire threats from the aging gods, he returned to steal her back again. Under instructions from Odin, Loki entered Freyja's hall in the form of a fly to steal the necklace Brisingamen.

His imprudence got him into trouble - he narrowly escaped a bet with a dwarf in which his own head was at stake - and the other gods became tired of his shabby tricks. When they were all gathered at a banquet Loki - who hadn't been invited - arrived. He detailed the past scandals and failings of each of them, the affairs of the goddesses, and his own crimes against them. None could match him insult for insult, and he only stopped because Thor arrived and threatened to kill him.

It was Loki who arranged the death of Balder, the best and brightest of the gods and prevented his return from the dead. With the giantess Angrboda he fathered three monstrous children who were among the gods' greatest enemies: the great wolf Fenrir, the colossal serpent Jormungand, and Hel, queen of the realm of the dead. Eventually the gods bound Loki in a cave with a snake perpetually dripping venom on to his face. His wife Sigyn collected the venom in a bowl, but when she had to go to empty the bowl Loki was exposed to the burning poison. He will break free to join the forces opposing the gods at Ragnarok, and in the final battle Heimdall and Loki will kill each other.

### Aegis

- Chaos (+ in situations of confusion and disorder, eg a rioting crowd or the floor of a stock exchange; - in situations of extreme order, eg a military training camp or sterile lab)



### Required Powers

- Super-Ingenuity\*

### Qualities

- Wisdom, Awareness, Socialising, Stealth, Subterfuge, Theft

### Optional Powers

- Eloquence\*
- Luck Control (ceiling Good)
- Shapeshift\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Cowardly - a threat of physical harm can damage your courage and resolve.
- Envious - you don't like others to be more successful, fortunate or respected than yourself. You can lose judgment and restraint if faced with an opportunity to bring them down or get ahead.
- Trickster - you delight in playing pranks on people - you can lose your better judgment and empathy when faced with an opportunity, or your social status as a result.



## Odin

Also known as Woden or Wotan in Germany, probably derived from “fury” - unchaining of raw, chaotic forces. He is the leader of the gods, the Allfather, ruling by wisdom and magic. He is not a heroic warrior or a benevolent father, but a sinister and untrustworthy figure associated with death. Odin is the patron of battles, but presides over them rather than taking part, dispensing fear, heroism and victory. He had over fifty use-names, including Grimnir, “the masked one” and Bölverkr, “harm-bringer”. Victims were sacrificed to him by hanging, wounding with a spear, or both.

In the beginning Odin and his two brothers created the world by killing and dismembering the primal frost giant Ymir, and made the first humans out of two logs of driftwood. He was an eloquent speaker, accomplished in deceit, poetry and wise counsel, and could change into any shape. He wandered the mortal world in the guise of a simple traveller, often a tall old man, blind in one eye, with a cloak and a broad-brimmed hat, or a one-eyed warrior with a spear. His wife was the goddess Frigg, but he had

many affairs with mortals, giants and other women. Wednesday takes its name from him. He is sometimes said to be the leader of the Wild Hunt, warrior spirits that ride across the sky. He inspired the battle-fury of the *berserkers*, who entered battle naked and felt no fear or pain.

One of the reasons for Odin's wanderings was his desire for knowledge. He was prepared to pay a high price to gain it. There was a well at one of the roots of Yggdrasil whose waters would give supreme wisdom - its guardian, Mimir, only allowed Odin to drink at the cost of one of his eyes. Mimir was later beheaded in the battle between the Aesir and Vanir, but Odin used herbs and charms to preserve the head so that it could continue to speak and give him advice. Odin gained the magic of the runes by voluntarily hanging on the world-tree, wounded by a spear - effectively sacrificed to himself. After nine days and nights he saw the runes below him and was able to pick them up and restore himself. Carving these magic symbols could cure illness, make chains fall off, call the dead to speak, and various other effects.

Odin was known as the father of the slain. The Valkyries were warrior women who served him by visiting earthly battles and choosing the best and bravest of the warriors about to fall to join the host of Valhalla, Odin's colossal hall. It had 540 doors, each wide enough to pass 800 men abreast; the walls were made of spears and the roof of shields. These Einheriar (“heroic dead”) spent their days in practice

fighting, then their wounds healed magically and they spent their nights drinking and feasting, served by the Valkyries. Sometimes nobles dying of illness or old age would be wounded with a spear to gain them a place in Valhalla. When asked why he gave luck to a warrior then suddenly took it away, Odin said, "The grey wolf watches the halls of the gods" - he was haunted by foreknowledge of Ragnarok, and sought always to swell his army with the best warriors in preparation for the final battle.

Odin's dwarf-forged spear Gungnir could not be deflected from its mark. The dwarves also provided the gold ring Draupnir - every ninth night it generated eight similar rings. His eight-legged horse Sleipnir (born of Loki while in the form of a mare) was the swiftest in the world, and could run over the sea or through the air as easily as on land. He had two ravens, Hugin and Munin ("thought" and "memory") who ranged the worlds gathering information and returned to his shoulders to whisper their news. He also had two wolves, Freki and Geri - he gave his food to them, taking nothing but wine himself. At Ragnarok he will be the first to fall, swallowed by the great wolf Fenrir.

### Aegis

- Battle (+ where people are engaging in violence; - where people are unusually peaceful)

### Required Powers

- Super-Wisdom\*

### Qualities

- Endurance, Ingenuity, Presence, Spear Fighting, Intimidation, Leadership, Research, Subterfuge

### Optional Powers

- Create Berserker - gives the effect of *Fury*\* at this power's Rank to someone else nearby. Whoever controls that character decides when the Upshifts are applied to physical rolls. It lasts until all Upshifts are used or the scene ends. During that time the target gets an Upshift for bravery and ferocity but a Downshift for any complicated mental tasks.
- Eloquence\*
- Master of Lore\*
- Raven's Fare\*
- Shapeshift\*

- Sorcery\*: rune magic. (Odin knew other magic too, including Freyja's *seid*, but we'll stick to this for a good theme.) It seems to be good general purpose magic, with a particular strength in protecting people from harm; and of course the runes were used for divination. The trappings are quite strict: you must draw, cut or otherwise inscribe runic characters.
- Summon Minions\*: the Einheriar, ancient warriors back from the dead. They appear pale and not quite solid, with old clothes and weapons, usually swords and spears. You may reduce the number to equip the warriors with ghostly horses that can run through the air, but don't fight separately. Good [+2] Warrior, Good [+2] Strength, Good [+2] Presence, Good [+2] Unliving\*, Good [+2] Super-Armour (from ghostliness).
- Super-Presence\*

### Spear - Gungnir

- Quality: Effectiveness\*

### Ring - Draupnir (apply to a small, valuable object)

- Wealth - the item can create a copy of itself, useful for trading for goods and favours. The copies have a mundane Quality of whatever they are at the power's Rank, eg Good [+2] Gold Ring, which can apply to bargaining or other creative uses; they have no special powers. The power works no more than once a day, and the object cannot be unique or priceless.

### Horse - Sleipnir

- Air Walking - you can walk or run in empty air as if it were a solid surface; going up or down is like using stairs or a shallow slope. If you lose consciousness you fall gently to the ground.
- Super-Speed

### Raven - Hugin/Munin

- All-Knowing\*
- Intelligence\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Doesn't Eat - you only need liquids, and have no interest in food - if you try to eat for appearance's sake, your composure and physical constitution are targeted.

- Lust for Knowledge - if presented with an opportunity to gain significant new knowledge, your self-restraint is eroded.
- One-Eyed - if confronted with crucial tasks relying on vision, especially those that need depth perception like shooting with a bow, this is triggered and targets visual Qualities.
- Untrustworthy - you'll manipulate and sacrifice your favourites and allies if it serves a greater goal. Faced with a major choice your empathy and social Qualities might be targeted.

## Thor

The Teutonic thunder god, also called Donar and Thunar, sometimes said to be the son of Odin and Jörd, an earth goddess. Odin was favoured by nobles, but Thor was more popular with the farmers and their families. He appears as a big, red-bearded warrior, simple and noble, always ready to face danger and prove his prowess, with an enormous appetite for food and drink.

Thor defended against giants, monsters and demons, aided by his enormous strength and a throwing hammer, Mjolnir, that never missed and returned to his hand after striking. Crafted with cunning and magic by the dwarves, it was the gods' most precious talisman as it protected them against their foes. The hammer was used to bless important occasions like weddings and funerals, and became a general symbol of protection and good fortune for the people, often found in ornaments and jewellery. Thor also owned a belt that increased his strength and a pair of iron gloves that enabled him to grasp the hammer.

Thunder was said to be his chariot driving across the sky. The stories do not show Thor controlling the weather directly, although the people held him to have dominion over it - this aspect is shown by his volatile temper and his hammer, which represents the thunderbolt.

There are many stories about Thor, usually involving battles against the giants. On one occasion he, Loki and a servant were set challenges at a giant's castle. Thor failed to lower the level in a drinking horn more than an inch or two, could only lift one paw of the giant's cat off the floor, and was forced to one knee in a wrestling match with the giant's old nurse. As they left in the morning the giant confessed that

they had contested with illusions and he had been terrified by Thor's prowess: the horn's other end had been in the sea, the level of which had actually been lowered; the cat was the mighty Midgard Serpent, and lifting its paw had caused earthquakes; and the nurse was unconquerable Old Age itself. The giant and his castle then vanished before Thor could take revenge for these tricks.

Thor's arch-enemy was Jormungandr, the Midgard Serpent that lived in the sea and circled the earth. He once went fishing with a giant, using an ox's head as bait, and succeeded in catching the Serpent. He was intent on reeling it in, but the terrified giant cut the line. Thor killed the giant then walked back across the sea bottom. At Ragnarok he will finally kill the Serpent, but then succumb to its poison and die. His sons will carry Mjolnir in the new age.

### Aegis

- Thunder (+ in extreme weather conditions; - where there's no weather, eg underground, ocean depths, deep inside a large building)

### Required Powers

- Super-Strength\*

### Qualities

- Endurance, Presence, Club Fighting (inc hammer, inc throwing), Unarmed Fighting, Intimidation

### Optional Powers

- Immunity to Thunder and Lightning\* (full against those specific weather effects, MOD against other sound explosions and electricity)
- Super-Endurance (ceiling God)

### Hammer - Mjolnir ("The Destroyer")

- Qualities: Effectiveness\*, Returns when Thrown
- Blessing\*
- Portability\* - shrinks to the size of a piece of jewellery.
- Smiting\*

### Belt of Strength

- Super-Strength\* (+1 Rank only)

### Goat chariot

*Thor was said to travel through the air in a chariot drawn by two he-goats. It's not clear whether the chariot or the goats had the power of flight - for game purposes just*

allow it to be imbued into any modest-sized vehicle (up to an ordinary car) or a riding animal. (The goats also had the ability to be cooked and eaten then returned to life the following day. If you can find a game use for this power, go ahead!)

- Flight\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Easily Tricked - your perception and discernment can be terribly lacking when dealing with deceptions.
- Proud - you lose your composure when challenged or taunted about your competence.
- Temper - you find it hard to keep your cool, especially when being insulted or challenged.
- Voracious - you need to consume large amounts of food and drink, and can become debilitated after a while without doing so.
- Weather Signs - under stress your eyes crackle with lightning and thunder rumbles around you.

## Tyr

Also called Tiw or Tiwaz. God of war and justice, guarantor of contracts and guardian of oaths. Originally a major deity, ranked with Odin and Thor, his importance reduced over time. He was the bravest of the gods, and it was wise to invoke him when going into battle since it was often he who awarded the victory. He carried a spear, a symbol of justice and authority as well as a weapon. He gave his name to the day Tuesday.

When the gods wanted to bind the monstrous wolf Fenrir with a slender thread, he agreed only on the condition that one of them put their hand between his jaws as a guarantee of good faith. Only Tyr came forward. The thread, being magical, held and Fenrir bit Tyr's hand off. At Ragnarok Tyr will kill the great hound Garm, guardian of Hel, but will die from his wounds.

### Aegis

- Justice (+ where laws or contracts are made or enforced, eg courtrooms or police stations; - where laws or contracts are routinely broken, eg criminal hide-outs)

## WARCRY

In her native German she styled herself "Wahrheitskriegerin", which literally means "truth warrior", but some American newspaper reporter mangled it as "Warcry" and that has stuck in much of the English-speaking world.

Sabine Fürst was born and brought up in an all-female commune linked to campaigns against nuclear weapons and later to other protest movements. Somewhat against the wishes of her mother and "aunts" she joined the police. One day she was on duty at a demonstration that got out of hand, ordered to join her colleagues using violence against the protesters. Torn, she whispered, "Where is justice here?" - and received an unexpected answer.

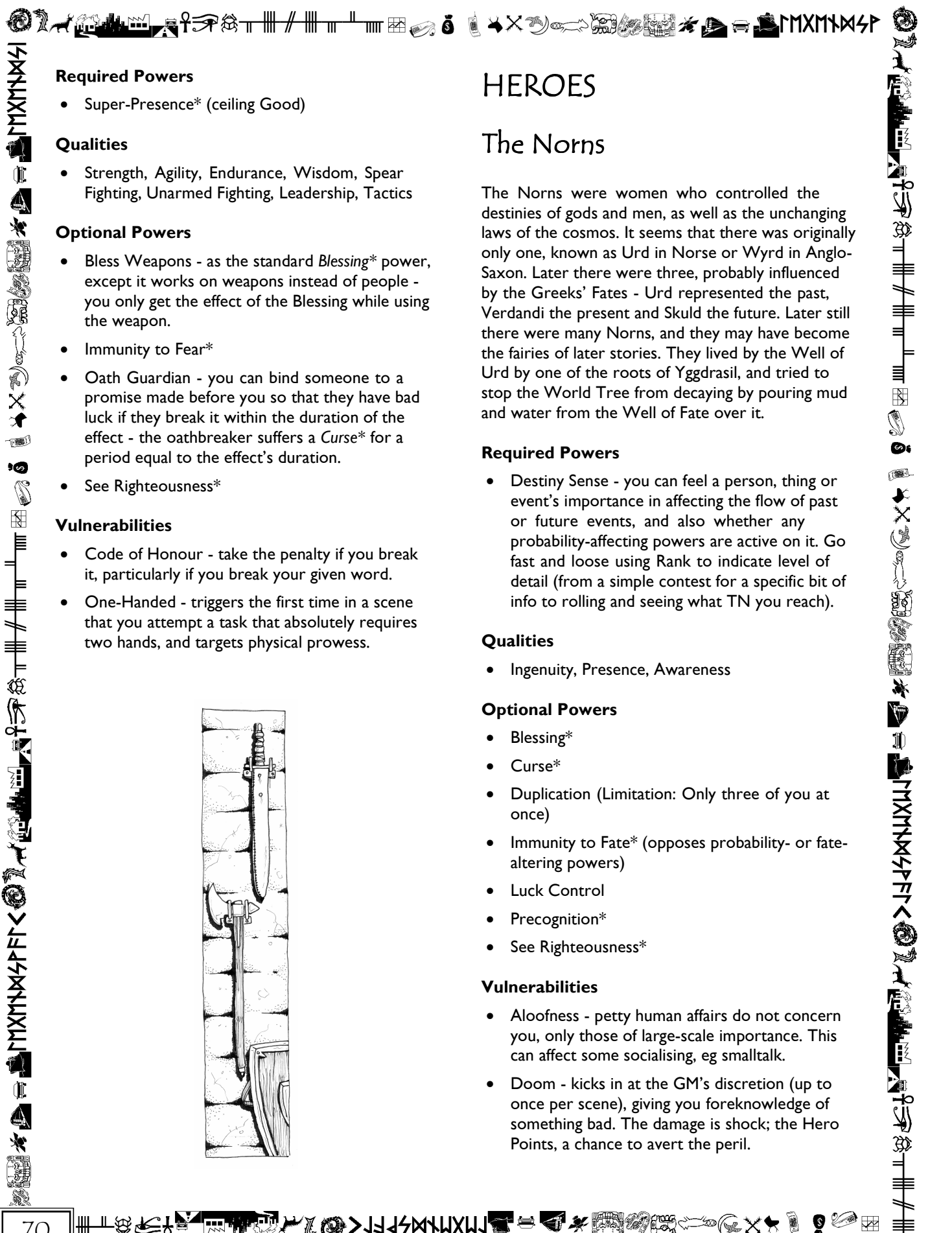
She's a tall woman in good shape, with blonde hair and steely blue eyes, dressed in a white jumpsuit marked with a sword and scales in red. Her self-imposed mission is to help the helpless and work for a better, fairer world, whether through a forceful contribution to negotiations or beating up monsters.

**Source:** Tyr (Veteran)

**Motivation:** Lead an imperfect world to a better way.

**Qualities:** Good [+2] Police Officer, Good [+2] Athletic, Good [+2] Negotiation, Good [+2] Alternative Medicine, Good [+2] Alternative Culture, Master [+6] Strength, Expert [+4] Endurance, Master [+6] Unarmed Fighting; Poor [-2] Suspicious of Men

**Powers:** Average [0] Aegis (Justice), Good [+2] Super-Presence\*, Good [+2] Oath Guardian, Average [0] Vulnerability - Code of Honour (and 3x Average to Qualities)



### Required Powers

- Super-Presence\* (ceiling Good)

### Qualities

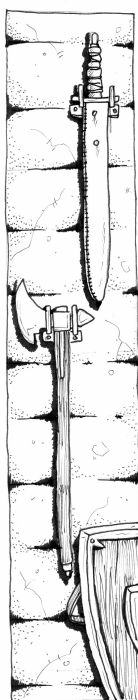
- Strength, Agility, Endurance, Wisdom, Spear Fighting, Unarmed Fighting, Leadership, Tactics

### Optional Powers

- Bless Weapons - as the standard *Blessing\** power, except it works on weapons instead of people - you only get the effect of the Blessing while using the weapon.
- Immunity to Fear\*
- Oath Guardian - you can bind someone to a promise made before you so that they have bad luck if they break it within the duration of the effect - the oathbreaker suffers a *Curse\** for a period equal to the effect's duration.
- See Righteousness\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Code of Honour - take the penalty if you break it, particularly if you break your given word.
- One-Handed - triggers the first time in a scene that you attempt a task that absolutely requires two hands, and targets physical prowess.



## HEROES

### The Norns

The Norns were women who controlled the destinies of gods and men, as well as the unchanging laws of the cosmos. It seems that there was originally only one, known as Urd in Norse or Wyrð in Anglo-Saxon. Later there were three, probably influenced by the Greeks' Fates - Urd represented the past, Verdandi the present and Skuld the future. Later still there were many Norns, and they may have become the fairies of later stories. They lived by the Well of Urd by one of the roots of Yggdrasil, and tried to stop the World Tree from decaying by pouring mud and water from the Well of Fate over it.

### Required Powers

- Destiny Sense - you can feel a person, thing or event's importance in affecting the flow of past or future events, and also whether any probability-affecting powers are active on it. Go fast and loose using Rank to indicate level of detail (from a simple contest for a specific bit of info to rolling and seeing what TN you reach).

### Qualities

- Ingenuity, Presence, Awareness

### Optional Powers

- Blessing\*
- Curse\*
- Duplication (Limitation: Only three of you at once)
- Immunity to Fate\* (opposes probability- or fate-altering powers)
- Luck Control
- Precognition\*
- See Righteousness\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Aloofness - petty human affairs do not concern you, only those of large-scale importance. This can affect some socialising, eg smalltalk.
- Doom - kicks in at the GM's discretion (up to once per scene), giving you foreknowledge of something bad. The damage is shock; the Hero Points, a chance to avert the peril.



## Sigurd

This legendary hero was the central character in medieval sagas and epic poems from Iceland to Germany, and more recently in Wagner's operatic Ring Cycle. He is known as Siegfried in German.

Sigurd was the son of the hero Sigmund, who was given a magic sword by Odin and ended his days when the god caused the blade to shatter in the midst of battle. Born after his father's death, Sigurd was sent as a fosterling to Regin, a prince of the dwarves now living among men and known for his wisdom and deftness in craftwork. Previously, the gods had given Regin's father a great deal of gold to compensate for accidentally killing one of his sons. But this gold had actually been taken from another dwarf by trickery, and included his magical golden ring which came with a spiteful curse to destroy anyone who possessed it. Regin and his other brother Fafnir killed their father for the gold, but Fafnir decided he wanted it all and turned himself into a dragon, driving Regin away.

The dwarf tempted Sigurd with tales of the gold, and the young hero agreed to kill the dragon and get it. First he needed a sword. The first two Regin made broke when Sigurd tested them against the anvil, but then the pieces of his father's old sword were reforged into the blade Gram which cut through the anvil. Following Regin's advice, he hid in a pit and stabbed the dragon as it passed over. He also heeded the words of an old man (Odin in disguise) and bathed in the dragon's blood, becoming invulnerable (except for a spot where a leaf had stuck to his shoulder). Regin asked for Fafnir's heart. However, Sigurd had tasted dragon's blood and could now understand the speech of birds, from which he learned that the dwarf was plotting to kill him for the gold. He slew Regin and ate the roasted dragon heart, gaining the gift of prophecy.

Shortly afterwards Sigurd met the shieldmaiden Brynhild (a valkyrie in mortal form in some versions), and they pledged to marry. But when he went on to the court of Gjuki, the queen gave Sigurd a magic draught so that he forgot Brynhild and married Gjuki's daughter. Later Gjuki's son courted Brynhild, but only won her through the bravery of Sigurd who took his shape magically. Eventually Brynhild discovered all that had gone on and plotted revenge. She claimed that Sigurd had taken liberties with her and Gjuki's sons killed him in his bed.

Brynhild then willed herself to die, and they were burned on the same pyre.

### Required powers

- Qualities: Sword Fighting, Presence

### Qualities

- Presence, Riding

### Optional Powers

- Invulnerability (ceiling Good; Limitation: Achilles' Heel, allowing attacks to the shoulder or perhaps another specified body part to bypass it, and Downshifting protection against harm that engulfs your whole body)
- Precognition\* (ceiling Good; could take a Limitation so you can't see your own future)
- Speak With Birds

### Gram - sword

- Smiting\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Vulnerable to Fate - triggered when powers of chance or fate are used against you.
- Vulnerable to Trickery - you are easily deceived and persuaded.

## Valkyrie

These "choosers of the slain" served Odin. Ranging battlefields, they gave victory to one side or the other, decided who would die and chose the warriors who would gain entrance to Odin's hall Valhalla. There they served the warriors with food and drink. They were originally dark spirits or demons of death, but later poets usually depicted them as helmeted goddesses with flame-crowned spears and flying horses. They were also swan-maidens, with the ability to cast off their plumage to appear in human form - if a mortal stole it they were forced to do his bidding. They sometimes fell in love with mortal heroes.

### Required Powers

- Choose Warrior - assess someone and get a general idea of their courage, determination and fighting ability. In game terms, it reveals Ranks in

Qualities like Presence, Strength and Fighting - up to MOD Qualities per use, with powers coming through more strongly than ordinary Qualities. Rolls might be needed to overcome masking powers or in difficult situations.

### Qualities

- Strength, Endurance, Presence, Awareness, Spear Fighting, Riding, Tactics

### Optional Powers

- Death Immunity\* - vs death powers, life drain etc
- Sense Death's Presence\*

### Horse

- Flight\*

### Swan cloak

- Shapeshift (swan)\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Attracted to Heroes - social Qualities and willpower may be eroded if confronted by someone who's just demonstrated great bravery and/or fighting ability.
- Cloak Vulnerability - willpower may be reduced in a social conflict with someone who has your Swan Cloak.
- Disdain - social Qualities may be eroded in a situation requiring you to show respect to someone who's weak or cowardly.



# MONSTERS

## Dwarf

The dwarfs had an ignoble beginning, as maggots in the flesh of the primal giant Ymir after he'd been killed by Odin and his brothers. The gods gave them human form and reason, and decreed that they should live under the earth, either because that's where they originated or because they were too ugly to be seen above ground. It was said that they turned to stone if caught in daylight. There were no female dwarfs, but two princes had the ability to continue the race by moulding new dwarfs out of earth.

The dwarfs were of small stature, with supernatural intelligence and foresight, and the ability to craft wondrous objects. (These included Thor's mighty hammer, Frey's collapsible ship, and Odin's self-replicating golden ring.) However, they were almost always deformed, with hunched backs, big heads and pale faces. Usually they avoided humans, but were sometimes encountered and could be helpful if dealt with courteously. Miners sometimes met their dwarf counterparts in deep tunnels, which was a sign that useful or precious metals were nearby. These metals and precious stones were thought to belong to the dwarfs, and they had unequalled ability in working them.

### Required Powers

- Quality: Small\* (ceiling Good)

### Qualities

- Endurance, Wisdom, Ingenuity, Construction

### Optional Powers

- Craft Wonders\*
- Master of Crafts\* (any craftwork, such as forging, sculpting or carving)
- Sense Mineral - could be used to find a specific kind, identify a sample or do a general sweep. Downshift if focusing specifically on refined minerals.
- Super-Wisdom\* (ceiling Good)
- Underworld Sense\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Sexless - triggered in social situations based on sexual attraction, from flirting to seduction. (Will make it very difficult to have children too.)
- Ugly - twisted features can hinder you in many social situations.
- Vulnerable to Daylight - general debilitation triggered by strong direct sunlight, or powers that simulate it.



## Fenrir

A great wolf, one of the three children of Loki and the giantess Angrboda, also known as Fenris. It was prophesied that he would slay Odin at Ragnarok, so he was kept under watch in Asgard. He was so fierce that only Tyr dared to feed him. The gods decided that Fenrir should be restrained, but he burst every chain they tried. Finally the dwarfs made a slender magic cord. Fenrir, suspecting a trick, would only submit if one of the gods put a hand between his jaws to show good faith. Only Tyr stepped forward; the cord held, and the enraged Fenrir bit off the hand.

When Fenrir finally escapes his bonds it will be one of the signals for Ragnarok. He will join his father Loki on the ship carrying the inhabitants of the underworld, with fire spurting from his eyes and nostrils and blood dripping from the vast jaws that swallow Odin as the first casualty. Odin's son Vidar will avenge his father, forcing the wolf's jaws open with the aid of an indestructible shoe and tearing it apart or thrusting in a sword to pierce its heart.

*This programme could be applied to a human, or to a wolf or dog (or maybe another animal). Use common sense to choose applicable options.*

### Required Powers

- Super-Strength\*

### Qualities

- Agility, Endurance, Presence, Unarmed Fighting, Intimidation, Survival, Fangs, Keen Hearing, Keen Sense of Smell, Large (ceiling Expert)

### Optional Powers

- Devouring\* (ceiling Good)
- Fury\*

- Intelligence\*
- Super-Presence\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Need for Flesh - you need to consume raw meat periodically, and become debilitated if you don't.
- Proud - you lose your composure when challenged or taunted about your competence.
- Mark of the Wolf - a Meta marker that can affect social situations. At lower levels you might have increased body hair, pointed ears, etc but can still pass for human in dim light. At higher levels your body is furred and your head is definitely wolf-like: an effect rather like a movie werewolf.

## Giant

These large humanoid were basically personifications of natural phenomena, frightening forces to people pitted against a harsh environment. They were known as Jötun, and their land was Jötunheim. Most giants were surly and hostile, and as a group they were the chief enemies of the gods, partly due to the slaying of their ancestor Ymir. Fighting against them was the main occupation of Thor. The main types have different powers available to them. Ymir would be a large, powerful frost giant, and Surt would be a large, powerful fire giant.



### Vulnerabilities

- Elemental Signs - eg a Frost Giant might have frost perpetually forming on their skin, a Fire Giant might have a fierce body heat or have flaming eyes when emotional, a Rock Giant might have clearly stone-like skin. These are basically Meta markers, mainly affecting social interactions. You might be able to take this more than once, for different Signs.
- Ugly - coarse features can hinder you in social situations.
- Vulnerable to (Element) - some types could be particularly susceptible to their opposite, eg fire giants to water, frost giants to heat.

### Required Powers

- Quality: Large

### Qualities

- Strength, Endurance, Presence, Fighting (unarmed and most archaic melee weapons can be taken)

### Optional Powers (all types)

- Super-Strength
- Super-Endurance (ceiling Good)

### Optional Powers (Frost Giants)

- Immunity to Cold\*
- Control Frost (ceiling Good)\*

### Optional Powers (Fire Giants)

- Immunity to Fire\*
- Control Fire (ceiling Good)\*

### Optional Powers (Storm Giants)

- Immunity to Thunder and Lightning\* (full against those specific weather effects; MOD to resist other sound explosions and electricity)
- Control Weather (ceiling Good)\*

### Optional Powers (Rock Giants)

- Super-Armour
- Control Earth (ceiling Good)\*

## LEVIATHAN

They're pretty sure it used to be a crocodile, but it's mutated into a colossal reptile-beast like nothing on earth, over 100 feet long - a natural disaster on legs. Every so often it arrives in a populated area looking for things to eat, not much bothered by any masonry that might happen to be in its path. It seems to only have animal intelligence, and villains have used it as a pawn in their schemes on several occasions - though that often backfires and leads to an uncontrolled rampage.

**Source:** Jormungand (*Veteran*)

**Motivation:** Eat, sleep, etc.

**Qualities:** Master [+6] Large, Good [+2] Jaws, Good [+2] Fangs, Good [+2] Tail, Expert [+4] Armour (thick hide), Good [+2] Swimming, Expert [+4] Force of Nature; Poor [-2] Cold-blooded, Poor [-2] Large

**Powers:** Average [0] Aquatic, Good [+2] Super-Strength, Good [+2] Super-Endurance, Good [+2] Vulnerability - Really Big (plus 1 x Av converted to size, 1 x Av to Qualities)

# Jormungand

A giant serpent, one of the three monstrous children of Loki and the giantess Angrboda. Odin threw him into the ocean of earth where he grew so large that he circled the world, gaining the title “the Midgard Serpent”.

In one story Thor went out fishing with a giant and attempted to catch the Serpent. It took the bait and he was hauling it to the surface, but the terrified giant cut the line. At Ragnarok Thor will finally kill Jormungand with his hammer, but will then die from the monster’s poison.

## Required Powers

- Quality: Large

## Qualities

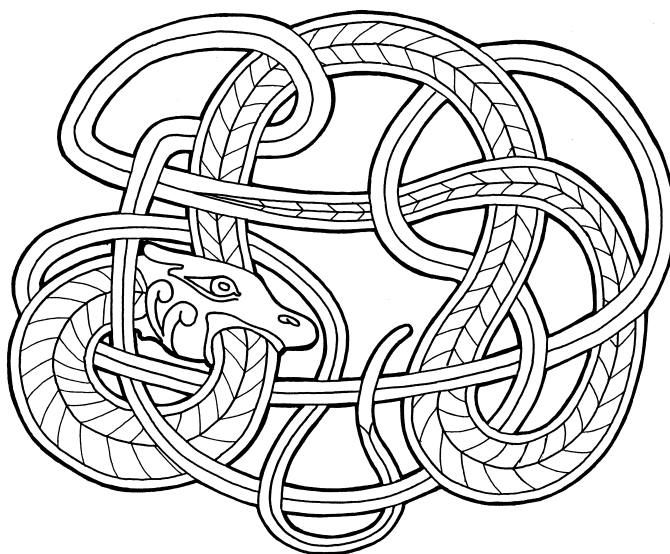
- Armour (scaly skin), Fangs

## Optional Powers

- Aquatic (ceiling Good)
- Intelligence\*
- Poisonous Breath\*
- Super-Strength\*
- Super-Endurance\*

## Vulnerabilities

- Really Big - could come into play in some situations where your size is a liability (eg a gallery of priceless pottery, in addition to the effects of Size itself. Might target stuff like stealth or coordination.
- Reptilian Appearance - a Meta marker (for humans), affecting social interactions. (Work out the specifics of your appearance.)



# AZTEC AND MAYA PANTHEON

There were strong similarities in the cultures of the people who lived in the areas that are now central, southern and eastern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador and parts of Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Their economy was based on growing maize (sweetcorn). They set up networks of long-distance trade across the region, and events in one part eventually affected the whole area. They had hieroglyphic writing, mathematics and a calendar, social hierarchies, large cities, stepped pyramids, ball games - and human sacrifice.

The region knew several major civilisations at different times. The Olmecs were on the central and southern coast of the Gulf of Mexico between about 1500 BCE and 500 BCE, though these dates are uncertain. We don't know a lot about them, but they certainly influenced later cultures. The Maya were spread across Guatemala and the Yucatán Peninsula by 1500 BCE, and developed a powerful civilisation over the following centuries. The Zapotecs were active in the southern highlands of Mexico between 500 BCE and 800 CE. Between the first and eighth centuries CE Teotihuacán (just north of present Mexico City) was the most powerful city-state in central Mesoamerica. Between the tenth and 12th centuries CE the Toltecs established a powerful military state from their city Tula (a little north of Mexico City). Around 900-1250 CE many old cities across the region were virtually abandoned - possibly due to a worsening climate, invasions or migrations from the north, and friction between cities and cultures - in favour of new, powerful ones.

The Aztecs were a group of tribes from northwest Mexico, originally serving other tribes as mercenaries. The last to arrive, the Méxica, took the lead and gave their name to the modern nation. From 1250 CE they rose to power in their great city Tenochtitlán (the site of present-day Mexico City) and began conquering the surrounding region. They often took on aspects of the religions of other cultures, past and present. Aztec society was made up of slaves (who could buy their freedom), commoners (who owned a plot of land for their

lifetime), and nobles (including priests, and warriors who earned the rank). In 1519 a group of 500 Spanish soldiers led by Hernán Cortés landed on the Gulf Coast. Playing on resentment of Aztec rule and the prophesied return of the god Quetzalcóatl they created a mass rebellion and overthrew the Empire, paving the way for European conquest of the region.

What we call mythology was, of course, their religion, and it permeated every aspect of life. They believed the present world was just the latest in a succession. Everything happened in cycles - days, years and even worlds. They thought of the world in dualities - life and death, fertility and barrenness, day and night. The most honourable death for a man was in battle, and for a woman in childbirth. Death in human sacrifice was also considered honourable.



The Maya thought blood was needed to keep the cycles of nature going and show submission to the gods. The practice was really institutionalised by the Toltecs, and later the Aztecs took it to its zenith. They held that human sacrifice was necessary to hold the universe together and strengthen the sun for its nightly battle against the forces of darkness so it could rise the following morning. It was also used for political and social control. The heart and blood of victims were likened to a blossoming flower, and "flower wars" with rival cities took place

to secure captives for sacrifice. It is said that for the rededication of the Great Temple in 1487 between 20,000 and 80,000 people were sacrificed. From our modern viewpoint the Aztecs were fanatics, observing incredibly strict social behaviour (including a great distaste for sex), cutting and piercing their bodies, and even volunteering to be sacrificed (though most of the time people would buy a slave to be offered on their behalf). When the Spanish arrived they were sickened by the bloody scale of sacrifice they found.

Almost all of the deities in this section are listed under their Aztec names, mainly because that's a relatively recent culture whose details were recorded by the Spanish, so more is known about them in that form.

# GODS

## Coatlícue

Goddess of the earth as both creator and destroyer, the womb and the grave. Her name means “serpent skirt” or “serpent lady”. She was the wife of Mixcóatl, god of hunting. She ruled the rainy season and was linked with agriculture and sustenance. Her 400 children wanted to kill her because of the shame of an unexplained (magical) pregnancy, but Huitzilopochtli emerged fully armed from her womb to kill them. Her daughter Coyolxauhqui (“golden bells” after her cheek ornaments) had actually been trying to warn Coatlícue, and Huitzilopochtli rewarded her by throwing her head into the sky to become the moon, while her brothers were turned into the stars.

### PRONUNCIATION HINTS

This region produced some pretty scary names! Here are hints for dealing with them.

- accents, eg. “á”, show which syllable is stressed
- “a” is long, as in “father”
- “e” is pronounced like “prey” and always sounded, eg Coatlícue is “ko-at-lee-kway”
- “i” is like “ee”
- “o” is like “open”
- “u” is like “oo” in “zoo”
- “h” is pronounced “hw”
- “j” is like “h” in “hat”
- “ch” is like “charge”
- “qua” and “quo” are pronounced “kw”; “que” and “qui” are pronounced “k”
- “x” is pronounced “sh”
- “z” is pronounced like “s” in “sad”

Examples : Xochiquetzal is “sho-chee-ketz-all”, Chalchihuitlicue is “chall-chee-wit-lee-kway”.

In the Mayan pantheon there’s overlap with Ix Chebel Yax, mother of the gods and patron of domestic arts; and with Ix Chel, goddess of water, the moon, healing and childbirth, shown as a female warrior surrounded by symbols of death, an angry old woman emptying vials of storms, or a clawed goddess with a serpent on her head and bones on her skirt.

The most famous statue of Coatlícue shows her as a square-built nightmare figure, with two snake heads in profile making a single wide-mouthed reptilian face with beady eyes and huge fangs. Her arms end in fanged serpent heads, and her feet are taloned. Her skirt is made of interwoven snakes, symbolising fertility. Her necklace is of alternating hands and hearts with a skull pendant in the middle, symbolising the need for human sacrifice to maintain the Sun. Down her back hang 13 leather cords or tresses of hair, representing the levels of heaven and the months of the year. Another statue shows her as an ordinary woman with a skull face, wearing the snake skirt.

### Aegis

- Earth (+ in contact with natural soil or rock, - out of contact with solid ground, eg at sea or parachuting)

### Required Powers

- Animal Connection\* (snakes)

### Qualities

- Strength, Endurance, Ingenuity, Home-making (a range of domestic tasks), Intimidation, Medicine, Fierce, Claws and Fangs

### Optional Powers

- Control Water\* (ceiling Good)
- Raven’s Fare\*
- Regeneration
- Serpent Hands - you can take an action to transform your forearms and hands into snake heads with a nasty bite and the ability to stretch up to 10ft.
- Universal Energy\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Fascinated by Death - you are easily distracted by symbols and places related to death, bones,

corpses and the like, which may erode your focus.

- Reptilian Face - your head is that of a snake/human hybrid, bringing a disadvantage in many social situations.
- Snake Skirt - after a few hours any item of clothing you wear takes on the appearance of interwoven snakes - they look alive, but don't do anything. This can target appearance Qualities.

## Ek Chuah

This deity is the only one listed here under a Mayan name. Ek Chuah means "black war leader", or possibly "black star" or "black scorpion". In one aspect he was a god of war and those who died in battle, but he also had a benevolent side as god of travellers, merchants and prosperity. He was portrayed as a merchant, with a bundle on his back and holding a staff. He was painted black, with black rings around his eyes, a large, drooping lower lip and a scorpion's tail. Ek Chuah was patron of cacao, the plant from which chocolate is made and an important Mayan trade item, the beans also being used as currency.

An associated Mayan god was Xamen Ek, god of the North Star. He was the patron and guide of merchants, who offered incense to him at roadside altars. He was shown with a distinctive snub nose and black markings on his head. The Aztec counterpart was Yacatecuhtli, "he with the pointed nose", patron of merchants and god of their "guild", carrying their symbols - a bamboo staff and a fan. He's also seen carrying a crossroads with footprints.

### Aegis

- Travel (+ in centres of travel like town squares, railway stations, docksides and airports; - in centres of preventing travel, notably prisons, or when imprisoned yourself)

### Required Powers

- Spatial Sense - you always have a decent idea of where you are (relative to landmarks you know) and which direction is which. The MOD can help with stuff like navigating and estimating the size of something. You can attempt to pick up impressions of where something has been in the past and how far it's travelled.

### Qualities

- Strength, Ingenuity, Presence, Business, Staff Fighting, Socialising, Negotiation

### Optional Powers

- Eloquence\*
- Languages\*
- Master of Currency - you can always dip into a pocket, bag, or whatever and produce a small amount of local currency, enough for basic living expenses, small domestic items and the like (up to MOD times per scene, min 1). You can detect physical money nearby with a roll. You can add MOD for any action involving money except trading, eg stopping someone picking your pocket.
- Scorpion Tail - you can use this as a blunt sweeping attack, particularly good against multiple opponents, or to sting a single opponent for poison damage.

### Vulnerabilities

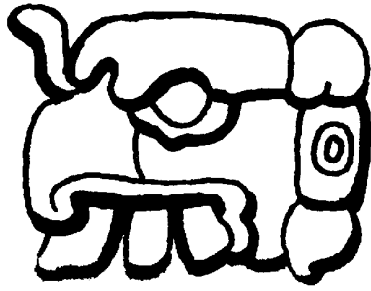
- Face Markings - black rings mostly surround your eyes, extending on to your face. A Meta marker and social drawback.
- Scorpion Tail - a pretty obvious Meta marker, with social implications.

## Huitzilopochtli

His name means "(blue) hummingbird of the south", and he was the god of the sun and war (hummingbirds were thought to be the reincarnated souls of warriors). He was exclusively an Aztec god, the patron of the tribe that created the empire. The goddess Coatlicue found a feathery ball as she was sweeping her house and tucked it into her bosom - later it could not be found and she had become pregnant. Her 400 other children planned to kill her for this disgrace, but Huitzilopochtli was born, fully armed, just in time - he slew them all and threw them into the heavens as stars.

He had blue-painted arms and legs, or completely blue skin, and hummingbird feathers on his left leg (either natural or a decoration). He's sometimes said to wear armour and a helmet made of hummingbird feathers. His weapons were a spear thrower in the shape of the turquoise serpent representing earthly





and heavenly fires, or perhaps the serpent itself; a round shield; and arrows tipped with feathers. As the sun his journey across the sky was accompanied by the souls of warriors fallen in battle till noon, then by the souls of women who'd died in childbirth till nightfall. During the night he illuminated the underworld. His *nahual* (animal alter ego) was the eagle or hummingbird.

He guided the Méxica tribe from the northwest deserts into the interior: they were led by four priests, who carried an idol through which he spoke to them. On an island they saw an eagle landing on a cactus, clutching a serpent in its claw - the sign to build their great city Tenochtitlán (modern Mexico City stands on the same site). The Méxica held ritual wars to provide captives for sacrifice to their god. The victim's heart was cut out and their skin and limbs removed. The flesh may have been eaten by the nobility. They also offered flowers, incense and food to the idol. His priests ranked with Tlaloc's at the head of the clergy.

#### Aegis

- Sun (+ in direct sunlight; - in partial or total darkness)

#### Required Powers

- Quality: Spear Fighting

#### Qualities

- Strength, Agility, Presence, Archery, Shield Fighting, Unarmed Fighting, Leadership

#### Optional Powers

- Distance Vision - super scale for seeing things far away.
- Shapeshift\* (hummingbird, eagle - choose one each time)

- Summon Minions\* - Aztec Warriors in war-paint, with spears and shields. Good [+2] Warrior, Good [+2] Agility, Good [+2] Fierce, Good [+2] Sun Immunity (full vs light, MOD vs heat), Good [+2] Raven's Fare\* (HP only earned once for group of minions, in a separate pool for spending on them only).
- Sun Immunity\* (full against light, MOD vs heat)
- Turquoise Serpent - you can pull a spear-like shaft of shifting turquoise energy out of the air. It can be used as a hand-to-hand weapon, lasting up to a scene and adding MOD to attacks. It can also be thrown, exploding on impact to do damage in a room-size area. Damage is a mixture of heat and impact, and scales like an energy zap.

#### Feather armour (one article made of feathers)

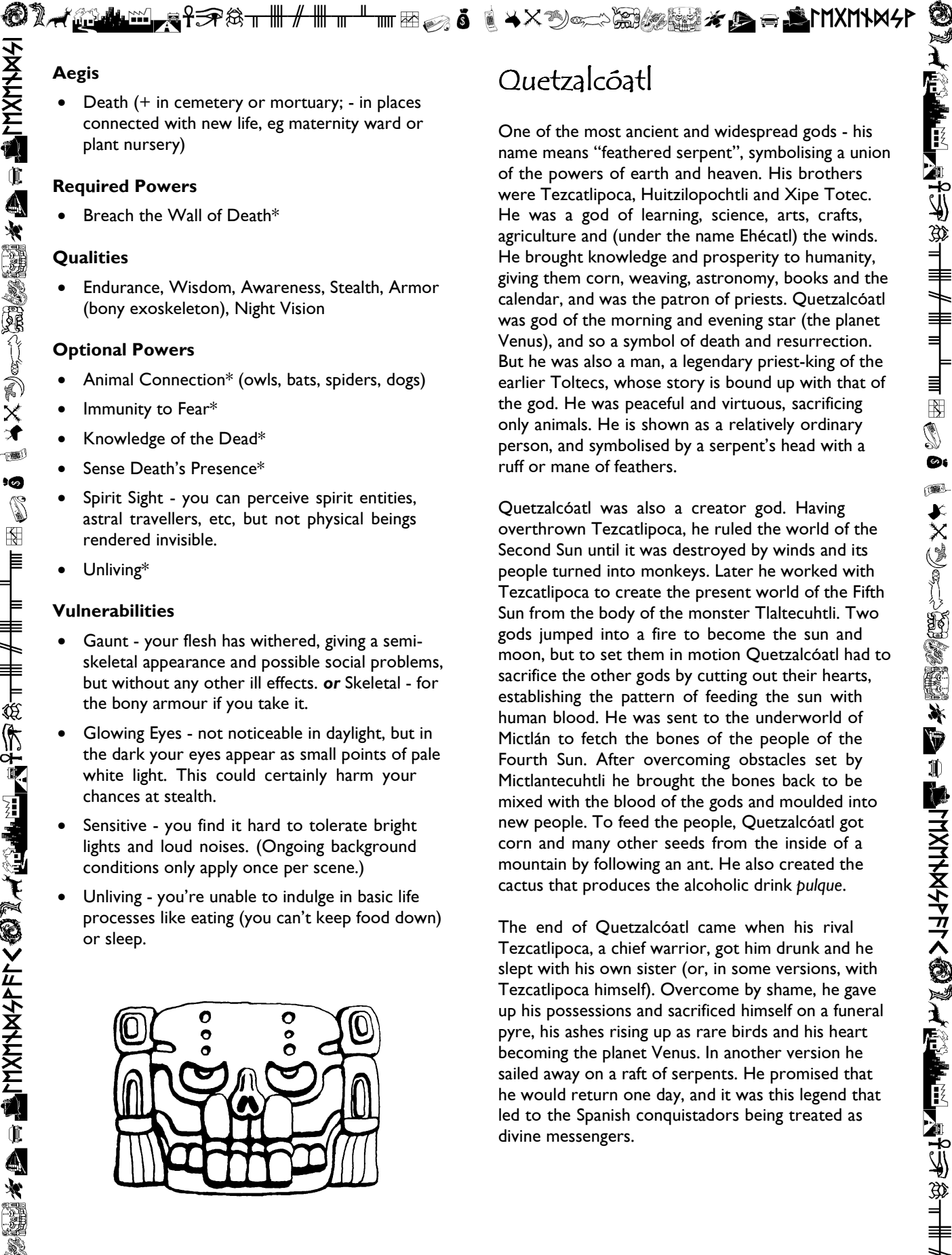
- Quality: Armor

#### Vulnerabilities

- Blue Skin - an obvious social obstacle.
- Feathers - blue feathers grow on one or more patches of your body; another Meta marker.
- Impulsive - in a dangerous situation your strategy and consideration can be impaired.
- Needs Blood - if you go a while without at least a thimbleful of another human's blood touching your body you can become debilitated.

## Mictlantecuhtli

The Aztec god of death, he ruled the underworld of Mictlán. He was a popular god: his kingdom was a quiet and restful place for those who died of natural causes. Other groups, like warriors who died in battle or women who died in childbirth, had their own underworlds. Mictlantecuhtli was shown covered in bones or as a skeleton, with large, star-like eyes for seeing in the dark, and sometimes wearing bark-paper clothes. He is accompanied by owls (symbolising war and death), bats and spiders. His Maya counterpart Ah Puch, also called Yum Cimil, was very similar - though sometimes shown as a bloated figure and accompanied by a dog. To populate the world of the Fifth Sun Quetzalcóatl came to Mictlán for the bones of the people of the Fourth Sun, and Mictlantecuhtli delayed him by setting difficult tasks to perform.



### Aegis

- Death (+ in cemetery or mortuary; - in places connected with new life, eg maternity ward or plant nursery)

### Required Powers

- Breach the Wall of Death\*

### Qualities

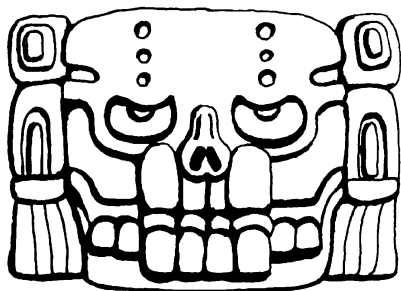
- Endurance, Wisdom, Awareness, Stealth, Armor (bony exoskeleton), Night Vision

### Optional Powers

- Animal Connection\* (owls, bats, spiders, dogs)
- Immunity to Fear\*
- Knowledge of the Dead\*
- Sense Death's Presence\*
- Spirit Sight - you can perceive spirit entities, astral travellers, etc, but not physical beings rendered invisible.
- Unliving\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Gaunt - your flesh has withered, giving a semi-skeletal appearance and possible social problems, but without any other ill effects. **or** Skeletal - for the bony armour if you take it.
- Glowing Eyes - not noticeable in daylight, but in the dark your eyes appear as small points of pale white light. This could certainly harm your chances at stealth.
- Sensitive - you find it hard to tolerate bright lights and loud noises. (Ongoing background conditions only apply once per scene.)
- Unliving - you're unable to indulge in basic life processes like eating (you can't keep food down) or sleep.



## Quetzalcóatl

One of the most ancient and widespread gods - his name means "feathered serpent", symbolising a union of the powers of earth and heaven. His brothers were Tezcatlipoca, Huitzilopochtli and Xipe Totec. He was a god of learning, science, arts, crafts, agriculture and (under the name Ehécatl) the winds. He brought knowledge and prosperity to humanity, giving them corn, weaving, astronomy, books and the calendar, and was the patron of priests. Quetzalcóatl was god of the morning and evening star (the planet Venus), and so a symbol of death and resurrection. But he was also a man, a legendary priest-king of the earlier Toltecs, whose story is bound up with that of the god. He was peaceful and virtuous, sacrificing only animals. He is shown as a relatively ordinary person, and symbolised by a serpent's head with a ruff or mane of feathers.

Quetzalcóatl was also a creator god. Having overthrown Tezcatlipoca, he ruled the world of the Second Sun until it was destroyed by winds and its people turned into monkeys. Later he worked with Tezcatlipoca to create the present world of the Fifth Sun from the body of the monster Tlaltecuhli. Two gods jumped into a fire to become the sun and moon, but to set them in motion Quetzalcóatl had to sacrifice the other gods by cutting out their hearts, establishing the pattern of feeding the sun with human blood. He was sent to the underworld of Mictlán to fetch the bones of the people of the Fourth Sun. After overcoming obstacles set by Mictlantecuhtli he brought the bones back to be mixed with the blood of the gods and moulded into new people. To feed the people, Quetzalcóatl got corn and many other seeds from the inside of a mountain by following an ant. He also created the cactus that produces the alcoholic drink *pulque*.

The end of Quetzalcóatl came when his rival Tezcatlipoca, a chief warrior, got him drunk and he slept with his own sister (or, in some versions, with Tezcatlipoca himself). Overcome by shame, he gave up his possessions and sacrificed himself on a funeral pyre, his ashes rising up as rare birds and his heart becoming the planet Venus. In another version he sailed away on a raft of serpents. He promised that he would return one day, and it was this legend that led to the Spanish conquistadors being treated as divine messengers.

At about the same time as Quetzalcóatl sailed away the Mayan Kukulcán, with a similar character, arrived in the Yucatán Peninsula to bring civilisation. Itzamná, the state god of the Mayan empire, has similarities too. (The name means “iguana house”, as they saw the universe as a box enclosed by the bodies of gigantic iguanas.) He was a creator and benevolent bringer of culture, shown as a wise old man or as a giant double-headed iguana or serpent in the sky, linked with the morning/evening star and life/death.

### Aegis

- Knowledge (+ where knowledge is stored or passed on, eg library, classroom or scientific seminar; - where knowledge is deliberately destroyed or falsified, eg bookburning)

### Required Powers

- Super-Wisdom\*

### Qualities

- Ingenuity, Presence, Leadership

### Optional Powers

- Creation\*
- Master of Crafts\* (any craftwork such as forging or carving)
- Master of Lore\* (any archaic knowledge)
- Reincarnation\* (takes a day, and you reappear somewhere separated by water from where you fell)
- Shapeshift\* (Feathered Serpent - a colourful snake-like creature about 7ft long with feathered wings and neck ruff, fangs but no poison, and ability to speak with some difficulty and distortion)

### Vulnerabilities

- Feather Hair - a meta marker with potential social consequences.
- High Standards - the guilt from any significant wrongdoing causes your self-esteem to drop, and drives you to do something to atone for it (possibly eroding restraint and self-interest).
- Pacifist - you always try to find out what’s really going on and work out a peaceful solution even when it’s not appropriate. You dislike making the first attack in a confrontation, and will certainly be shaken if anyone dies because of your actions.

## Tezcatlipoca

One of the most widely worshipped gods, his name means “smoking mirror”. He was the brother and, in some ways, the dark reflection of Quetzalcóatl. Tezcatlipoca ruled the world of the First Sun until Quetzalcóatl destroyed its giant inhabitants, but later the two cooperated in slaying the monster Tlaltecuhli to create the Fifth Sun, the world the Aztecs themselves inhabited. In that struggle Tezcatlipoca lost his left foot, and replaced it with a mirror of polished obsidian (a dark, glassy volcanic rock) - hence his name. Tezcatlipoca corrupted the virtuous Quetzalcóatl by getting him drunk and persuading him to seduce his own sister, which led to him leaving in shame. Tezcatlipoca also abducted the beautiful Xochiquetzal. He was one of the gods given the title Yaotl: “enemy”.

He had many forms and manifestations, overlapping with various other deities, but some aspects were uniquely his own. He represented the stars, the night sky, winter and the north - his titles included “night wind”. He was shown with black stripes across his face, and glittering eyes. His *nahual* (spirit companion/alter ego) was the *ocelotl*, the jaguar-beast that swallowed the Sun every night.

Tezcatlipoca was an invisible and unpredictable lord of darkness, shadows and mystery. He stirred up discord and presided over battles. He sent fame and wealth to the virtuous, and sickness and poverty to wrongdoers; he was the protector of slaves. In his magical mirror he could see all the deeds and thoughts of mortals. He was a god of conflict, revered by warriors. As Itztlacoliuhqui he was the god of ice and cold, sin and misery. He was the patron of the nobility - another manifestation presided over banquets - but also the patron of sorcerers, thieves and other miscreants.

### Aegis

- Darkness (+ in low or no light - candlelight or moonlight are OK; - in bright light, like direct sun or a floodlit stadium; basically, think about how many shadowy corners there are)

### Required Powers

- Control Darkness\* - create areas of intense darkness or moving shadow illusions. The equivalent of the Energy scale is: Pr = Twilight; Av = Night; Gd = Underground; Ex and Ma = Utter blackness. This metaphysical darkness can

have mental effects, from loss of bearings to panic - TN Failure Ranks for those engulfed in it. You can drive darkness away to allow ambient daylight in, and Stunt a Beam of dark/cold.

### Qualities

- Agility, Ingenuity, Awareness, Spear Fighting, Unarmed Fighting, Stealth, Subterfuge

### Optional Powers

- Freezing Touch - a cold attack delivered by touch
- Invisibility
- Night Immunity\* - super-scale against being hindered by darkness (so including night vision); MOD to resist cold and fear
- Shapeshift\* (Jaguar)

### Obsidian mirror

- Clairvoyance - see distant people, places or objects and what's going on around them in the present time. Range isn't a factor, but base difficulty of Average assumes you have some connection to the subject - that is, you know it or have a sympathetic link like a lock of hair or part of an object. Other well-described subjects can be attempted with a difficulty Upshift. The GM may also impose an Upshift for a major obstacle between user and target, like the ocean or deep underground.
- See Thoughts - you see a moving image representing the surface thoughts of a target, who must be within sight. Someone aware of this can try to foil it with mundane techniques like meditation or visualisation.

### Vulnerabilities

- Face Markings - one or more black stripes across your face - a Meta marker.
- Lamé - even if your legs appear functional, you have difficulty using them. When a situation requires running, fast footwork, etc this can trigger to target your mobility and constitution.
- Mixed Allegiances - your resistance can be low against suggestions of employing amoral or illegal methods, or a member of "the other side" who specifically asks for help when in real danger.
- Troublemaker - you're attracted to conflict, and your determination suffers when trying to stop a conflict or resisting an opportunity to start one.

## Tláloc

The god of rain, bringer of both life and destruction, Tláloc was an ancient god and his name means "something on the surface of the earth" or "he who makes things sprout". His Maya counterpart was Chac (who was also associated with the young god of agriculture and forests, called Ah Mun or Yum Kaax). Tláloc had ruled the world of the Third Sun which was destroyed by a rain of fire, the inhabitants being turned into birds. He controlled rain, hail, ice, snow, clouds, floods, drought, thunder and lightning, and was also associated with mountains.

His appearance was distinctive: he had ringed, goggling eyes and prominent fangs, and his skin was often green. He sometimes had a curled shape across his mouth (this may be related to Chac's long, hooked nose, or the forked tongue of his counterpart among the Zapotec people) or a mouth in the shape of a corn cob for his importance to agriculture. He was frequently shown with serpents. His sister and/or consort, Chalchiuhtlicue, ruled over flowing waters.

Tláloc kept four great clay jars, one for each of the four directions - from one came life-giving rains, and from the others came drought, frost and disease. He ruled an earthly paradise, Tlalocán, for those who'd died by drowning, lightning or contagious diseases. As Chac, he taught humanity how to grow crops. In the Aztec capital Tenochtitlán he and Huitzilopochtli shared chief importance. The worship of Tláloc ranged from keeping corn ears and stalks in the house to frequent human sacrifice, including children, whose tears were a symbol of rain.



## DOCTOR OBSIDIAN

He is a widely recognised figure - the glossy black surfaces of his armour, the featureless faceplate, the sweeping black cloak, the imperious voice... Those who have attempted to oppose him sometimes speak of the images of their own inner thoughts that flowed across the gauntlet or faceplate, or his uncanny knowledge of their plots. Those that can be found to tell the tale...

In *Legendary Earth* he is the most globally visible representative of the Empire of the Sun, which covers Mexico and protectorates elsewhere after a takeover by a group of Metas some years ago. The Empire is officially governed by a cooperative Council of metahumans, with various structures in place to provide expert advice and the will of the people, but it's not clear whether Doctor Obsidian is effectively the leader. (In a different setting perhaps he has carved out a fiefdom somewhere in central America.) Not a great deal is known about his pre-Meta life. He was Esteban Sombra, a scientist in the service of the Mexican government, working (officially, at least) to construct new protective gear for police and military use. Historians have found fragmentary writings from around that time which could suggest unusual political and philosophical views. *(This one pushes the charges limits a bit!)*

**Source:** Tezcatlipoca

*(World class)*

**Motivation:** Create order. My order.

**Qualities:** Good [+2] Scientist, Good [+2] Materials Technology, Good [+2] Gadgeteer, Expert [+4] Intelligence, Expert [+4] Willpower, Master [+6] Battlesuit, Good [+2] Awareness, Good [+2] Unarmed Fighting; Poor [-2] Ambitious

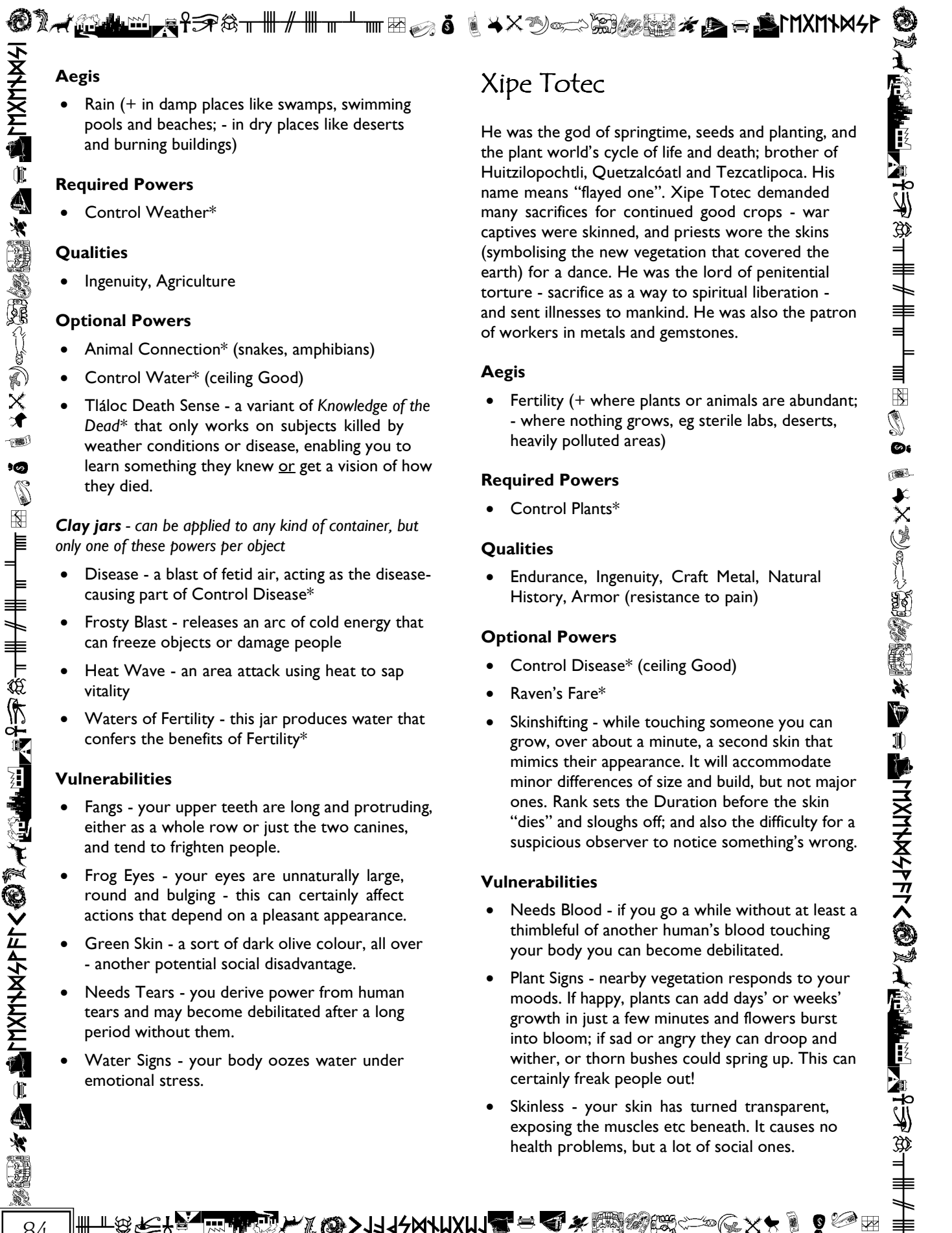
**Powers:** Average [0] Aegis (Darkness), Good [+2] Control Darkness\*, Good [+2] Night Immunity\*, Average [0] Vulnerability - Troublemaker; **Armour:** Good [+2] Clairvoyance, Good [+2] See Thoughts; 1 x Average to Qualities; Average [0] Minions (not in programme but added on through experience)

**Battlesuit:** Prototype obsidium suit, now imbued by the Smoking Mirror. Expert [+4] Obsidium (see below - author's GM allows it to replace Armour at a Downshift!), Good [+2] Comms System, Good [+2] Energy Analyser, Good [+2] Autonomous Life Support, Good [+2] Utility Pods (selection of minor tools etc), Good [+2] Obsidium Dart Projector, Good [+2] Strength Increase (plus Stunts off Master Quality!)

**Gadgets:** The Obsidium Formula. This is an extra-tough ceramic-plastic composite with a glossy black surface, named for the volcanic glass that inspired it. "Obsidium" is a Quality giving Super-Armour (T&J p48) as a Quasi-Power, with Limitation: Brittle - if damage exceeds its capacity the armour itself takes the first Rank (down to Poor) and can only be repaired with qualified technical help (his own suit, as an imbued object, is not subject to this).

Winged serpent drones. These stylised robot surveillance units are about the size of a dinner plate. They float around on hover fans and feed information to a central control, normally patrolling set routes and alerting controllers if their basic AI recognises prohibited behaviour. Good [+2] Surveillance, Average [0] Flight, Average [0] Target Marker (fire pellets of low level, mostly harmless, radioactive material to enable soldiers to home in on a person or location); Poor [-2] Limited onboard programming.

**Minions:** He has access to hordes of Jaguar Soldiers, wearing obsidium armour with the helmets stylised as jaguar faces. The rank and file have Good [+2] Soldier, Average [0] Gadget: Obsidium Armour, Average [0] Gadget: Laser Spear, Poor [-2] Loyal to the Empire of the Sun (or him personally).



### Aegis

- Rain (+ in damp places like swamps, swimming pools and beaches; - in dry places like deserts and burning buildings)

### Required Powers

- Control Weather\*

### Qualities

- Ingenuity, Agriculture

### Optional Powers

- Animal Connection\* (snakes, amphibians)
- Control Water\* (ceiling Good)
- Tláloc Death Sense - a variant of *Knowledge of the Dead*\* that only works on subjects killed by weather conditions or disease, enabling you to learn something they knew or get a vision of how they died.

**Clay jars** - can be applied to any kind of container, but only one of these powers per object

- Disease - a blast of fetid air, acting as the disease-causing part of Control Disease\*
- Frosty Blast - releases an arc of cold energy that can freeze objects or damage people
- Heat Wave - an area attack using heat to sap vitality
- Waters of Fertility - this jar produces water that confers the benefits of Fertility\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Fangs - your upper teeth are long and protruding, either as a whole row or just the two canines, and tend to frighten people.
- Frog Eyes - your eyes are unnaturally large, round and bulging - this can certainly affect actions that depend on a pleasant appearance.
- Green Skin - a sort of dark olive colour, all over - another potential social disadvantage.
- Needs Tears - you derive power from human tears and may become debilitated after a long period without them.
- Water Signs - your body oozes water under emotional stress.

## Xipe Totec

He was the god of springtime, seeds and planting, and the plant world's cycle of life and death; brother of Huitzilopochtli, Quetzalcóatl and Tezcatlipoca. His name means "flayed one". Xipe Totec demanded many sacrifices for continued good crops - war captives were skinned, and priests wore the skins (symbolising the new vegetation that covered the earth) for a dance. He was the lord of penitential torture - sacrifice as a way to spiritual liberation - and sent illnesses to mankind. He was also the patron of workers in metals and gemstones.

### Aegis

- Fertility (+ where plants or animals are abundant; - where nothing grows, eg sterile labs, deserts, heavily polluted areas)

### Required Powers

- Control Plants\*

### Qualities

- Endurance, Ingenuity, Craft Metal, Natural History, Armor (resistance to pain)

### Optional Powers

- Control Disease\* (ceiling Good)
- Raven's Fare\*
- Skinshifting - while touching someone you can grow, over about a minute, a second skin that mimics their appearance. It will accommodate minor differences of size and build, but not major ones. Rank sets the Duration before the skin "dies" and sloughs off; and also the difficulty for a suspicious observer to notice something's wrong.

### Vulnerabilities

- Needs Blood - if you go a while without at least a thimbleful of another human's blood touching your body you can become debilitated.
- Plant Signs - nearby vegetation responds to your moods. If happy, plants can add days' or weeks' growth in just a few minutes and flowers burst into bloom; if sad or angry they can droop and wither, or thorn bushes could spring up. This can certainly freak people out!
- Skinless - your skin has turned transparent, exposing the muscles etc beneath. It causes no health problems, but a lot of social ones.

## DECEIT

Merina Panza was born into a poor Hispanic family in the United States. As she grew up she passed through gang culture, graduating to petty crime and gaining a rep as a useful freelancer for infiltration jobs. Yet through it all the only thing that truly made her happy was her little garden in the dirt behind the house. One day it told her how the money, secrets and - occasionally - blood she took from others could make her more powerful.

Since then she's become highly sought after for theft and espionage assignments, selling her talents to the highest bidder. Her attitude to her marks is complex: mostly there's nothing personal in it, but sometimes she seems to revel in taking down those with the privilege she never had, and at other times she makes vague remarks about the loss being necessary for their spiritual progress. Those who've encountered her can readily believe that she's not playing with a full deck. She doesn't live in the old house any more, of course - but her new gardens are started with earth from the old plot.

**Source:** Xipe Totec

**Motivation:** Pursue wealth and comfort.

**Qualities:** Good [+2] Spy, Good [+2] Thief, Good [+2] Agility, Good [+2] Deceitful, Good [+2] Toxicology; Poor [-2] Respects plants more than people

**Powers:** Average [0] Aegis (Fertility), Average [0] Control Plants\*, Average [0] Raven's Fare\*, Expert [+4] Skinshifting

**Stunts:** Instant Poison (Control Plants Signature, causing a plant with any remotely toxic properties to secrete a concentrated form to affect a victim or be collected for later; bit expensive in HP, but can add Toxicology knowledge for some rolls).

## Xiuhtecuhli

He was the god of fire, and one of the most ancient gods. His name means "lord of the turquoise" (a colour connected with fire and the sun) - also called Hueheteotl, "Old One". He was usually shown as a wrinkled, toothless old man, seated and bearing a great brazier on his head (statuettes were used to burn incense), sometimes with a red or yellow face. His fire was the pillar that connected all the worlds, from the underworld of Mictlan, through the earthly realm Tlalticpac and all its home fires, to Topan, the dwelling of the gods in the sky.

Xiuhtecuhli was honoured in a special ceremony once every 52 years, at the beginning of the new calendar cycle. All household and temple fires were extinguished. A captive was sacrificed by cutting out his heart, then a fire was kindled in his chest cavity and runners took the new flame through the land. This was a time of great tension - if the new fire failed to light, darkness would engulf the earth and monsters would come from the sky to devour the people.

### Aegis

- Fire (+ in hot places like foundries and deserts; - in cold places like tundra and meat lockers)

### Required Powers

- Control Fire\*

### Qualities

- Wisdom, History

### Optional Powers

- Axis of Fire - you can make a connection between a fire where you are and one at a remote location. You can attempt to see and hear what's happening as if you were at the location of the remote fire - success Rank is a guide to the amount of information gained. You can also pass through, if both fires are sufficiently big to allow you to "fit". Range isn't a factor, but base difficulty of Average assumes you have some connection to the location - that is, you know it or have a sympathetic link like a lock of hair from someone there or part of an object. Other well-described locations can be attempted with a difficulty Upshift. Each extra passenger gives an Upshift; the GM may also impose one for a major

obstacle between user and target, like the ocean or deep underground.

- Immunity to Fire and Heat\*
- Master of the Gate\* (ceiling Good)
- Time Sense\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Needs Fire - if you go a while without being within arm's reach of a fire of hearth size or larger you can become debilitated.
- Red/Yellow Face - pick a colour - it marks you as a Meta, which can affect social interactions.
- Signs of Age - you appear to be an older person and will probably be treated accordingly, though there are no health effects.

## Xochipilli/Xochiquetzal

This brother and sister pair have been merged together because their natures are so similar.

**Xochipilli.** The youthful god of flowers, pleasure, entertainments of all kinds, playful mischief, fertility, souls and summer - his name means "flower prince". He was sometimes shown with a red face or a butterfly-shaped face marking. The alcoholic drink pulque was consumed in quantity at his festivals. His two brothers represented health and medicine, and games and sports: together they represent general good health, pleasure and well-being.

**Xochiquetzal.** Goddess of flowering and the fruitful earth, sister of Xochipilli, her name means "precious flower". She personified youth, love, beauty, domesticity, flowers and female sexual power. She was patron of courtesans, silversmiths, sculptors, painters and weavers. She was the first wife of Tláloc, but Tezcatlipoca abducted her. She was linked with the underworld and honoured with flowers at festivals of the dead.

### Aegis

- Youth (+ surrounded by the dynamic, bright, colourful and attractive; - in static, decaying, drab or sterile surroundings)

### Required Powers

- Qualities: Attractive and Ingenuity

### Qualities

- Strength, Endurance, Athletics, Home-making, Medicine, Socialising

### Optional Powers

- Fertility\*
- Immunity to Negative Emotions\* (against attempts to induce sadness or anger)
- Master of Games\* (any game or sport)
- Pleasure\*

### Vulnerabilities

- Frivolous - you have difficulty resisting an opportunity to have fun. Long, dull tasks are difficult to complete and you'll often take shortcuts to get them over with.
- Red Face - or butterfly marking if you prefer - either permanently marks you as a Meta.
- Signs of Youth - you appear to be a young person, probably late teens/early twenties, and it can be difficult to convince people of your skills and experience when you need to be taken seriously.





# HEROES

## The Hero Twins

The twins Xbalanque and Hunahpu are important in Mayan mythology and feature prominently in the Popol Vuh, a collection of scripture written down in the 1550s. They are clever and tricky, with great magical powers, acting against forces of evil.

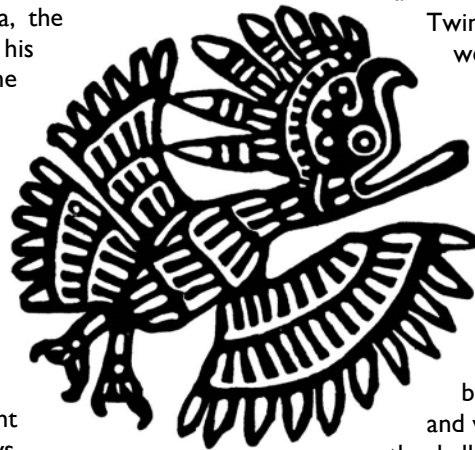
Their father Hun-hunahpu was beaten in the ritual ballgame by the Lords of Xibalba, the underworld, and killed. They hung his head in a tree, but it talked with the daughter of one of the Lords and spat into her hand, making her pregnant with the Hero Twins. She brought them up in the house of Hun-hunahpu's mother, alongside his older sons the Howler Monkey Gods who tried to get rid of them and made them do all the work. One day the Twins came back and said the birds they'd shot had got caught high in a tree. When the older boys climbed the tree to find the birds it grew taller and they couldn't escape; as they tried to climb down they were transformed into real monkeys and ran away in shame.

The gods asked the Twins to deal with a vain and arrogant god called Seven Macaw. Shooting him with a blowgun only wounded him. They summoned a pair of gods and disguised them as grandparents who claimed to be doctors and dentists from a poor family. Seven Macaw asked them to attend to his wounds, but in the process they stole his finery and he died of shame. The Twins also tricked his two violent sons into being weakened and imprisoned.

Doing chores for their grandmother, the Twins used their powers to do a full day's forest clearing with a single sweep of the axe and covered themselves in wood chippings to look as if they'd been busy. But the next day they found the forest animals had undone their work. That night they lay in wait to catch the animals, but all escaped except the rat. In return for mercy it revealed that their grandmother was hiding their father's gaming equipment because it had caused his death. They distracted her with a ruse

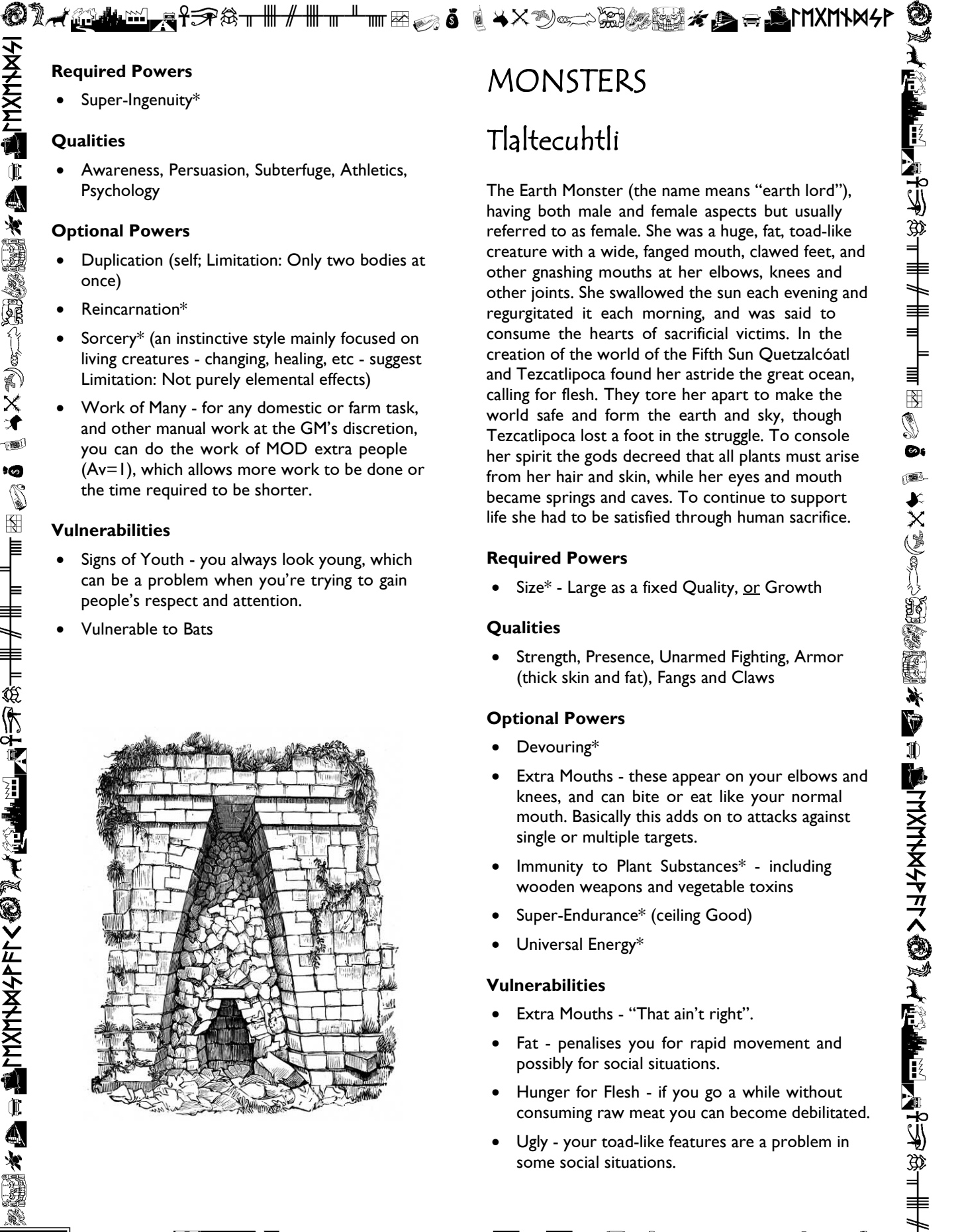
and recovered it, and took up playing ball in the same court their father and uncle had used.

As before, the Lords of Xibalba were disturbed by the racket and sent a summons for the Twins to come and play in their court - which was, of course, a trap. Hun-hunahpu had been confused by challenges along the way, but the twins avoided them by sending a mosquito ahead to scout. They survived the first test, spending a night in the Dark House without using up their torch. Invited to play ball, they spotted that the Xibalbans' ball was fitted with a deadly blade



and demanded to use their own. The Twins allowed the Lords to win and were sent to Razor House, filled with knives that moved on their own - but they persuaded the knives to stop. After deliberately losing further matches they were sent to Cold House, Jaguar House and Fire House, overcoming each test. In Bat House Hunahpu peeked out from hiding to see if day had come and had his head bitten off by a giant bat. His brother made a replacement head, and when the original one was used as the ball next day they got it back by switching it with a gourd.

The alarmed Xibalbans tried to trick the Twins into a giant oven. They realised the trick but allowed themselves to be burned and ground into dust. When the remains were thrown into a river they regenerated. The boys weren't recognised by the people of Xibalba and went about performing various miracles like burning homes then restoring them. The Lords summoned them to court for entertainment, and they performed a routine ending with Xbalanque cutting Hunahpu apart and then restoring him. The two highest Lords demanded to have this miracle performed upon them - of course the Twins obliged but did not bring them back! They then revealed themselves as the sons of Hun-hunahpu. As punishment Xibalba would no longer be a place of greatness and there would be no more offerings from the people of Earth. The twins recovered the remains of their father, but though they rebuilt his body it didn't really work properly so they left him in Xibalba, saying that those who sought hope would pray to him. Their work done, the twins climbed back up to Earth and on into the sky, where they became the sun and moon.



**Required Powers**

- Super-Ingenuity\*

**Qualities**

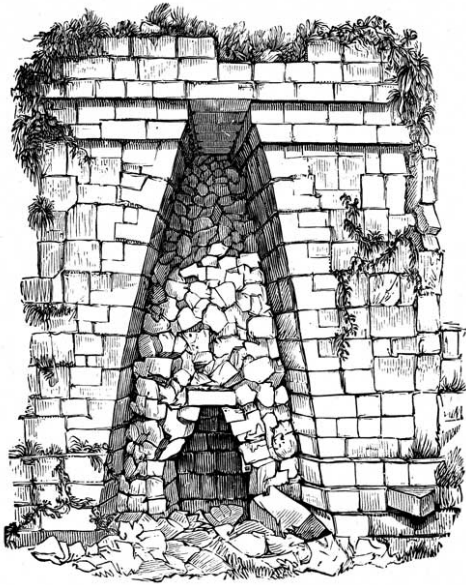
- Awareness, Persuasion, Subterfuge, Athletics, Psychology

**Optional Powers**

- Duplication (self; Limitation: Only two bodies at once)
- Reincarnation\*
- Sorcery\* (an instinctive style mainly focused on living creatures - changing, healing, etc - suggest Limitation: Not purely elemental effects)
- Work of Many - for any domestic or farm task, and other manual work at the GM's discretion, you can do the work of MOD extra people (Av=1), which allows more work to be done or the time required to be shorter.

**Vulnerabilities**

- Signs of Youth - you always look young, which can be a problem when you're trying to gain people's respect and attention.
- Vulnerable to Bats



# MONSTERS

## Tlaltecuhтли

The Earth Monster (the name means "earth lord"), having both male and female aspects but usually referred to as female. She was a huge, fat, toad-like creature with a wide, fanged mouth, clawed feet, and other gnashing mouths at her elbows, knees and other joints. She swallowed the sun each evening and regurgitated it each morning, and was said to consume the hearts of sacrificial victims. In the creation of the world of the Fifth Sun Quetzalcóatl and Tezcatlipoca found her astride the great ocean, calling for flesh. They tore her apart to make the world safe and form the earth and sky, though Tezcatlipoca lost a foot in the struggle. To console her spirit the gods decreed that all plants must arise from her hair and skin, while her eyes and mouth became springs and caves. To continue to support life she had to be satisfied through human sacrifice.

**Required Powers**

- Size\* - Large as a fixed Quality, or Growth

**Qualities**

- Strength, Presence, Unarmed Fighting, Armor (thick skin and fat), Fangs and Claws

**Optional Powers**

- Devouring\*
- Extra Mouths - these appear on your elbows and knees, and can bite or eat like your normal mouth. Basically this adds on to attacks against single or multiple targets.
- Immunity to Plant Substances\* - including wooden weapons and vegetable toxins
- Super-Endurance\* (ceiling Good)
- Universal Energy\*

**Vulnerabilities**

- Extra Mouths - "That ain't right".
- Fat - penalises you for rapid movement and possibly for social situations.
- Hunger for Flesh - if you go a while without consuming raw meat you can become debilitated.
- Ugly - your toad-like features are a problem in some social situations.

# LEGENDARY EARTH

There was a rider who came across the waves with a shining sword.  
There was something very fast that plucked missiles out of the air.  
There was a man who hurled spears of writhing lightning, and a woman who stirred up the sea with great winds.

There was a silvery flying saucer that rained bolts of crackling energy. Eventually it crashed in the ocean, though no wreckage was ever found.

There were birds with almost-intelligible voices, hunting each other through the sky, and at least one whale picking off the smaller craft.

There was a stern-faced man walking in the air who stopped the guns from firing.

If it happened today it would probably be worse.

*Hands of Wrath and Plenty: reflections on the anniversary of All Hell's Day*  
Sheldon J Street, *Globe Magazine*

## THE WAY OF THE WORLD

Legendary Earth is the “default” setting for Legends Walk. Its inhabitants don't know it by that name, of course. It is a world much the same as our own - perhaps strange occurrences and abilities have always been a more definite part of its history, but the main divergence point is the public appearance of metahumans in the year 2000. Rolling forward to the setting's present of 2020, some things have changed while some have stayed stubbornly the same. Humans who can lift trucks and melt steel are still humans.

## Changing the world

There is, in general, less human misery and ecological devastation. For instance, logging and burning in the Amazon rainforest has been forcibly stopped except for acceptable quotas (which remain a topic of heated debate); drought-stricken areas now have oases of

green; international financiers take decisions very carefully, company directors treat their workers more fairly, and bureaucrats remember the people they serve because they've been told they're being watched. Meta abilities can be used quickly and directly to make a difference.

If only things were that simple. Forcing changes on businesses or governments can lead to people losing their livelihoods, or systems set up without proper consideration that turn out to victimise some other group. If you save people from disaster or starvation, what happens to them afterwards? Can the support services and natural resources of the area cope? After all, you won't be around to help...

Altering the weather in one place has consequences that can stretch to the global scale, and there might be many Metas messing around with it at any time. This has led to freakish storms called Maelstroms, and other conditions in places that wouldn't normally get them, including some chilling “natural” disasters. There are now a number of Metas with weather control abilities who see it as an important part of their role to limit the activities of their fellows. There



are even some environmentalists (disillusioned or otherwise) who actively campaign against Metas.

Metas find their reputations balance on a knife-edge. If they take action toward a worthy goal (from saving starving children to bringing down an inhuman bureaucratic system) and it works the populace will praise them to the skies - a popular godlike figure engages people more than most Normal politicians ever could. But if it doesn't work they'll be reviled as people's instinct to drag down those "above" them takes hold. And, of course, any action they take is likely to make some people winners and some losers - so they're always storing up resentment from somebody.

## International affairs

*"Stormwatch could expunge all life in this city in under an hour. Given a day, twenty superhumans could destroy all life on Earth. Stormwatch is the only real superpower of the late twentieth century."*

Jack Hawksmoor, *Stormwatch: A Finer World*  
Warren Ellis and Bryan Hitch, *Wildstorm*

The international balance of power has changed significantly. The second half of the 20th century was lived under the threat of nuclear weapons (and, later, other weapons of mass destruction), giving the illusion of peace and the ultimate limiter on global politics; the last bargaining chip in the pile. Now, if you triggered such a device over a city a Meta might walk out of the rubble with your name on their lips. Metas are, in some ways, better deterrents than weapons of mass destruction. No Meta can strike as powerfully as a nuclear device, but they can strike again and again, and those strikes are directed with intelligence - they can go straight to military targets and political leaders with less risk of damage to civilians and consequent international condemnation.

There's a balance there - countries with the highest numbers of Metas are often not the ones with the greatest technological arsenals.

Most countries have at least a few Metas working for them in the areas of intelligence and law enforcement, and/or maintain a relationship with one or more teams that can combat superpowered threats. The United Nations has a small number of Metas on staff for international crisis response, but its resources are limited.

## Crime and punishment

*"Vile braggart! You shall be chained upon a rock for an eternity! A serpent shall drip scalding venom on your breast..."*

*"Uh... excuse me? I don't think so! I mean, this isn't the butt-end of some fjord. This is America. I got rights. Ask the officer..."*

Woden and Lolk, *Top Ten #7*  
Alan Moore and Gene Ha, *America's Best Comics*

The face of crime has changed in different ways in different places, due to the arrival of many Metas keen to stop crime and some keen to commit it. In places with high numbers of Metas crime by Normals has reduced drastically as the chances of being caught are so much greater. On the other hand, many places have become less safe on a personal level - people can just turn up and start knocking walls down, and there's very little that can be done to prevent it. Getting caught in a battle between Metas is somewhat unhealthy.

Some Metas follow the law rigorously and turn captured criminals over to the proper authorities (they may even be the proper authorities) while others act as judge, jury and executioner. Those wishing to prosper through large-scale crime gather under the leadership of Metas with similar goals or recruit their own imbued enforcers. Wealthier nations have their own prisons to contain Metas (like Britain's at the bottom of Loch Ness), and the United Nations provides continental facilities for major offenders. Of course, it's expected that someone will break out (or be broken out) once in a while, and guards get good equipment and hazard pay. There are usually strict guidelines about how much risk they should take to recapture a prisoner - their main job is to keep the rest of the facility safe and secure and call in metahuman help.

## Entertainment

The advent of Metas has thrown athletic and sporting events into confusion. It's not clear what physical excellence means when there are people who can exceed world records effortlessly, and many potentially great athletes have been put off by the prospect of hours of hard training in order to be second best. People with known Meta powers are generally prohibited from ordinary competition, and many sports have chosen not to set up a special class for them.

In other forms of entertainment, though, Metas are in great demand. Some make celebrity their job and have lives of wealth and adulation - some Sources (eg connected with youth, beauty or love) actually encourage this. For them there are always chances to break into movies or music, though there are also plenty of one-hit wonders left by the wayside. Fights between Metas make a great spectator sport, but attitudes to this differ widely. In most developed countries the risk of collateral damage to people and property means that only heavily stage managed bouts are allowed. For more gritty stuff there is a small



industry in California. Mexico televises brutal arena matches, and tapes sell around the world, though they're usually illegal. The Indian entertainment industry is still uncomfortable with showing Metas in this way. There are Meta sex shows in some cities with liberal or wide-ranging tastes, like Tokyo and Amsterdam, and a global niche for Meta porn. One well-known early soft-porn video, 'At Home with the Kents', showed a frolicking couple gradually destroying an ordinary suburban house.

## Science and technology

In general the pace of technological development has slowed, so what exists in 2020 is what we can see around the corner now. Most of the reasons for this are Meta-related: their arrival caused upheavals, and

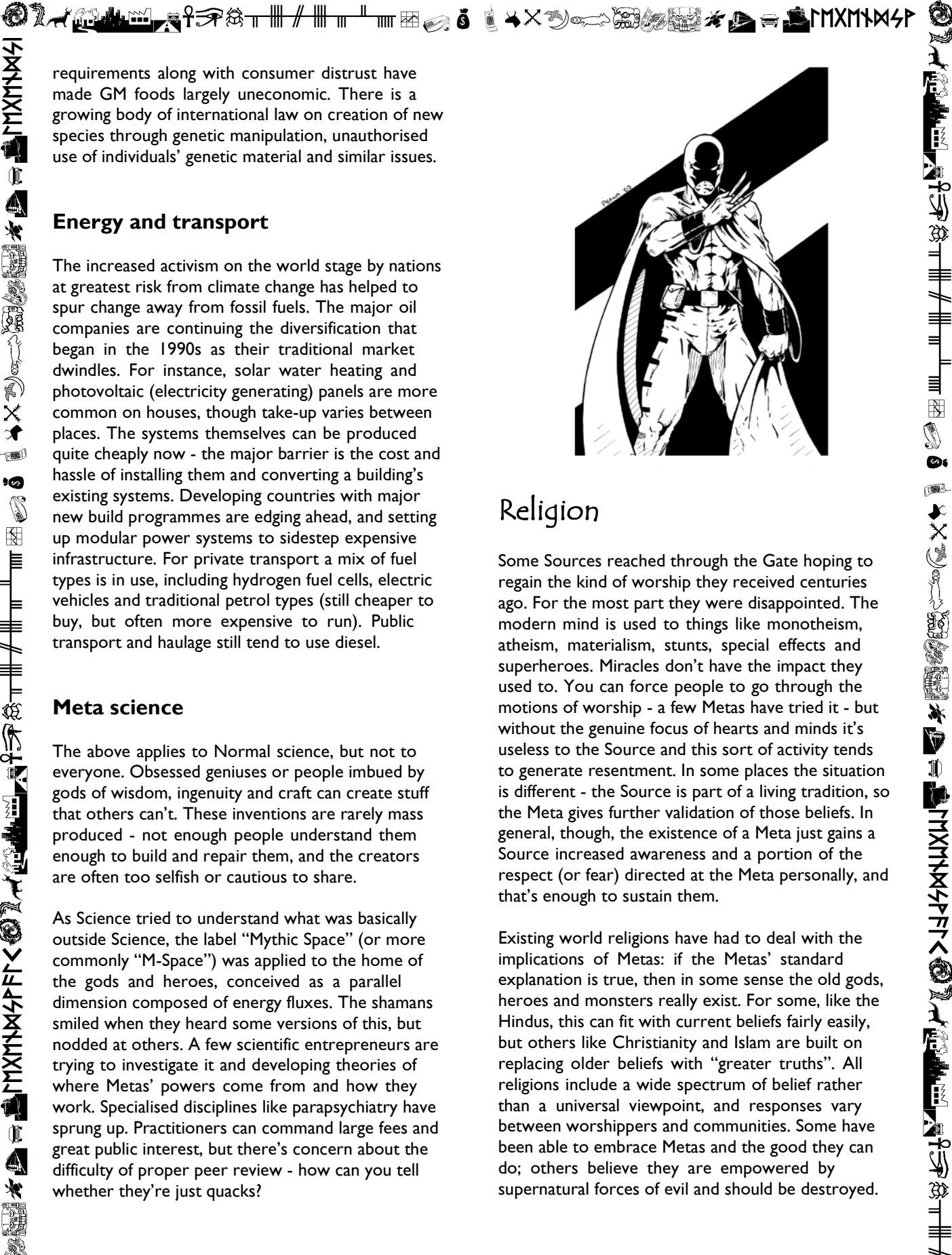
Sources don't understand modern technology - they might even feel it's a bad thing, so they don't encourage their Metas to prioritise it when making changes. Developing countries are working hard to close the technology gap, and are finding their own novel applications to fit their own circumstances. As in our world, most people who use the consumer applications of technology have no idea how it works and like it that way. Sometimes there are protests against new processes, and people in different places find different things acceptable. (Of course there are exceptions to the general standards given here.)

## Computers and communication

"Mobiles" are very common in developed countries, combining phones and portable computing. They're easily powerful enough for basic office functions and internet access, but limited by display size and means of data input. They link wirelessly with larger systems nearby for easier operation. The Net is accessible via TV or computer in most households with a reasonable salary coming in. Computers are "plumbed in" to new upmarket houses. Flat panel displays that hang on the wall and double as a picture are quite common. Data storage capacities have continued to increase, and are more or less unlimited now. Rewritable optical discs can store hundreds of gigabytes in multiple layers. Magnetic hard drives are still used at the core of machines for reliability and the greater number of rewrites they can take, but it's common for programs and data to be kept in optical or memory storage and slotted in as needed. Expert systems software is becoming common, but only a few geniuses have produced true artificial intelligence.

## Biology and medicine

Many forms of medical treatment are more advanced and reliable. People are living longer, though maintaining health in old age is still harder than extending life. The process of human cloning is fairly well understood, but the individual takes the normal time to develop and cannot be given the mind of the original (its upbringing will be different, so its personality probably will be too). Genetically modified plant crops are in widespread use in the USA, but many developing countries have outlawed their import for fear of giving multinational companies control over subsistence agriculture. In the European Union strict control and labelling



requirements along with consumer distrust have made GM foods largely uneconomic. There is a growing body of international law on creation of new species through genetic manipulation, unauthorised use of individuals' genetic material and similar issues.

## Energy and transport

The increased activism on the world stage by nations at greatest risk from climate change has helped to spur change away from fossil fuels. The major oil companies are continuing the diversification that began in the 1990s as their traditional market dwindles. For instance, solar water heating and photovoltaic (electricity generating) panels are more common on houses, though take-up varies between places. The systems themselves can be produced quite cheaply now - the major barrier is the cost and hassle of installing them and converting a building's existing systems. Developing countries with major new build programmes are edging ahead, and setting up modular power systems to sidestep expensive infrastructure. For private transport a mix of fuel types is in use, including hydrogen fuel cells, electric vehicles and traditional petrol types (still cheaper to buy, but often more expensive to run). Public transport and haulage still tend to use diesel.

## Meta science

The above applies to Normal science, but not to everyone. Obsessed geniuses or people imbued by gods of wisdom, ingenuity and craft can create stuff that others can't. These inventions are rarely mass produced - not enough people understand them enough to build and repair them, and the creators are often too selfish or cautious to share.

As Science tried to understand what was basically outside Science, the label "Mythic Space" (or more commonly "M-Space") was applied to the home of the gods and heroes, conceived as a parallel dimension composed of energy fluxes. The shamans smiled when they heard some versions of this, but nodded at others. A few scientific entrepreneurs are trying to investigate it and developing theories of where Metas' powers come from and how they work. Specialised disciplines like parapsychiatry have sprung up. Practitioners can command large fees and great public interest, but there's concern about the difficulty of proper peer review - how can you tell whether they're just quacks?



## Religion

Some Sources reached through the Gate hoping to regain the kind of worship they received centuries ago. For the most part they were disappointed. The modern mind is used to things like monotheism, atheism, materialism, stunts, special effects and superheroes. Miracles don't have the impact they used to. You can force people to go through the motions of worship - a few Metas have tried it - but without the genuine focus of hearts and minds it's useless to the Source and this sort of activity tends to generate resentment. In some places the situation is different - the Source is part of a living tradition, so the Meta gives further validation of those beliefs. In general, though, the existence of a Meta just gains a Source increased awareness and a portion of the respect (or fear) directed at the Meta personally, and that's enough to sustain them.

Existing world religions have had to deal with the implications of Metas: if the Metas' standard explanation is true, then in some sense the old gods, heroes and monsters really exist. For some, like the Hindus, this can fit with current beliefs fairly easily, but others like Christianity and Islam are built on replacing older beliefs with "greater truths". All religions include a wide spectrum of belief rather than a universal viewpoint, and responses vary between worshippers and communities. Some have been able to embrace Metas and the good they can do; others believe they are empowered by supernatural forces of evil and should be destroyed.

# A PARTIAL TIMELINE

## 2000

January - The first known Metas appear.

March - first documented Meta attacks against logging operations in the Amazon.

May - news reports of the aftermath of an attack by Indian Metas on the Pakistan border shock the world. Indian government condemns the attack. Initial sense of wonder at the arrival of Metas is now balanced by widespread fear of what they might do.

September - media statements from a group calling itself "The Green Fist" take responsibility for several Meta attacks in the Amazon. Business interests draw attention to the casualties among people "trying to make a better life for themselves". Over the next few months many nations declare the group to be criminals.

## 2001

March - Baghdad wakes to find the heads of Iraq's leaders on poles in the city square, as the result of a Meta coup. They reform the country into city-states under their rule. The international community soon welcomes them.

May - A Meta calling himself King Arthur, with a small retinue of "Knights", ousts the monarchy of the United Kingdom and announces that he will henceforth set overall directions for the government. There are a few casualties, but public opinion is cautiously positive, aided by royal and political scandals and Arthur's eloquent promise of a nobler age for Britain.

June - The Green Fist conducts its first public action outside South America, apparently attacking a nuclear power station in the Russian Federation. It turns out that the facility had been taken over by a small group of Metas calling themselves the Brotherhood of Monsters, led by a giant wolf-man.

## 2002

July - The inaugural Assembly of the African Union takes place in South Africa. An intruder with superhuman agility and the ability to climb walls leads security personnel to a device that would have infected delegates with a highly contagious bio-agent, spreading it throughout the continent.

September - South Africa hosts the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Anger by developing countries over industrialised nations' lack of action on trade, aid and environment is brought to a head by the United States' continued refusal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The President of the Maldives gives his famous "you feed your cars on the bones of our land" speech.

The Guild is founded, originally as a specialist supplier of archaic equipment to Metas. It rapidly diversifies into other services. Keeping its profile low, it gains clients through word of mouth and an online presence - its promise of discretion is an important sales driver.

## 2003

February - The Second Battle of Midway - a force from tiny Tuvalu takes the American base on the Midway Islands, embarrassing the US on the world stage.

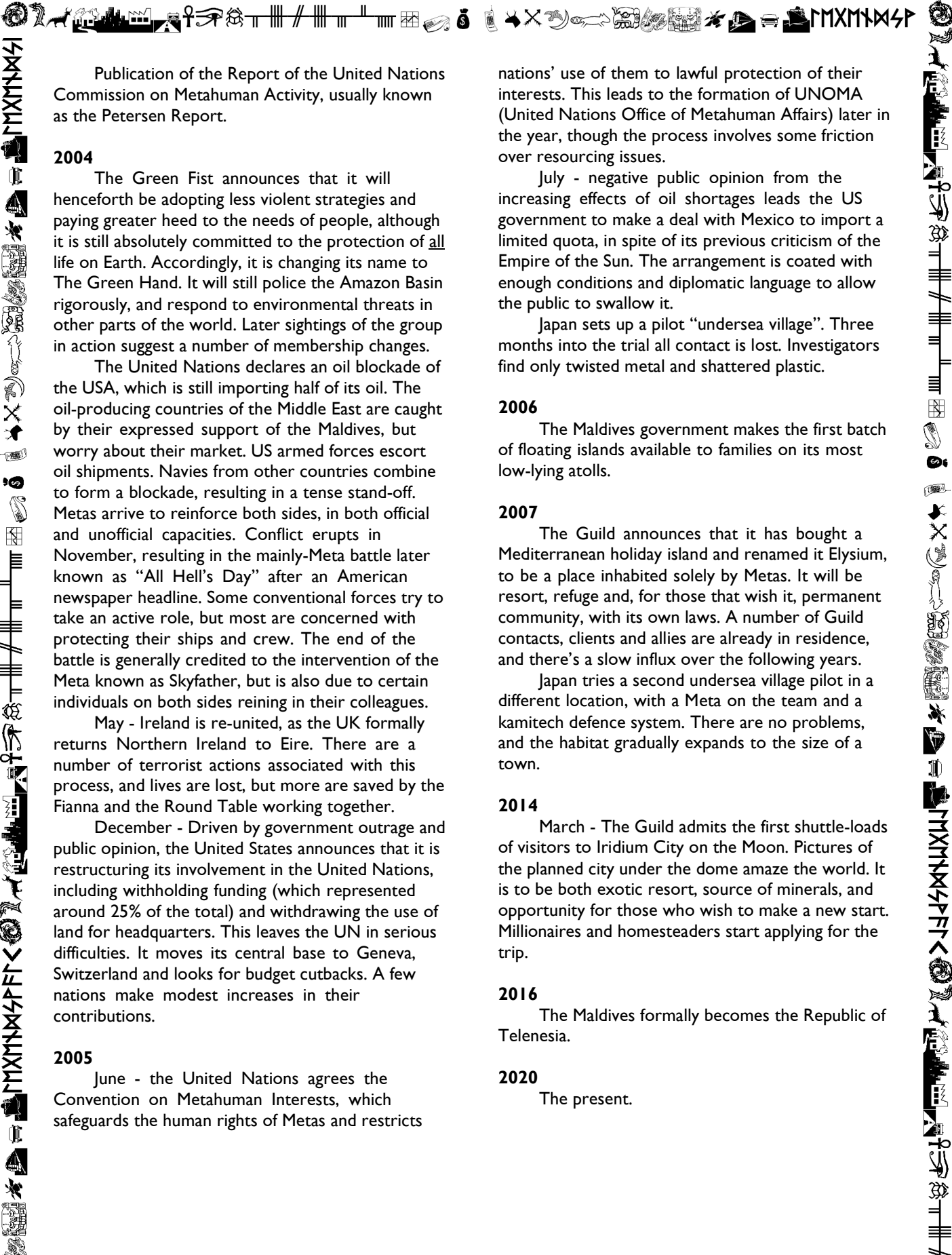
Pressure on the US builds in the UN. Arthur adds the UK's voice, citing a clear issue of right and wrong, and civil servants scramble to talk up the UK's environmental record. The Netherlands speaks up for self-preservation; developing and Islamic countries express solidarity with the Maldives.

The Green Fist battles government Metas and conventional forces at a dam construction site in China. Casualties are heavy on both sides. The dam ruptures, flooding two nearby villages. Survivors from both sides help to save villagers and workers. The Green Fist seems to go to ground.

A group of Metas apparently imbued by Aztec gods takes over Mexico City, claiming it as the beginning of the Empire of the Sun. To celebrate they sacrifice a hundred people, including the Mexican president and several military commanders. The USA begins planning a military operation to oust them, with widespread support. The Empire kills another hundred people as "our daily sacrifice to gain strength for the coming war against our enemies from all over the world", and the leaders surround themselves with civilians. The US publicly

backs down to stop further bloodshed. The Empire leaders say that they wish to use their powers for the good of the people, and that future sacrifices will be limited to criminals and volunteers.





Publication of the Report of the United Nations Commission on Metahuman Activity, usually known as the Petersen Report.

**2004**

The Green Fist announces that it will henceforth be adopting less violent strategies and paying greater heed to the needs of people, although it is still absolutely committed to the protection of all life on Earth. Accordingly, it is changing its name to The Green Hand. It will still police the Amazon Basin rigorously, and respond to environmental threats in other parts of the world. Later sightings of the group in action suggest a number of membership changes.

The United Nations declares an oil blockade of the USA, which is still importing half of its oil. The oil-producing countries of the Middle East are caught by their expressed support of the Maldives, but worry about their market. US armed forces escort oil shipments. Navies from other countries combine to form a blockade, resulting in a tense stand-off. Metas arrive to reinforce both sides, in both official and unofficial capacities. Conflict erupts in November, resulting in the mainly-Meta battle later known as "All Hell's Day" after an American newspaper headline. Some conventional forces try to take an active role, but most are concerned with protecting their ships and crew. The end of the battle is generally credited to the intervention of the Meta known as Skyfather, but is also due to certain individuals on both sides reining in their colleagues.

May - Ireland is re-united, as the UK formally returns Northern Ireland to Eire. There are a number of terrorist actions associated with this process, and lives are lost, but more are saved by the Fianna and the Round Table working together.

December - Driven by government outrage and public opinion, the United States announces that it is restructuring its involvement in the United Nations, including withholding funding (which represented around 25% of the total) and withdrawing the use of land for headquarters. This leaves the UN in serious difficulties. It moves its central base to Geneva, Switzerland and looks for budget cutbacks. A few nations make modest increases in their contributions.

**2005**

June - the United Nations agrees the Convention on Metahuman Interests, which safeguards the human rights of Metas and restricts

nations' use of them to lawful protection of their interests. This leads to the formation of UNOMA (United Nations Office of Metahuman Affairs) later in the year, though the process involves some friction over resourcing issues.

July - negative public opinion from the increasing effects of oil shortages leads the US government to make a deal with Mexico to import a limited quota, in spite of its previous criticism of the Empire of the Sun. The arrangement is coated with enough conditions and diplomatic language to allow the public to swallow it.

Japan sets up a pilot "undersea village". Three months into the trial all contact is lost. Investigators find only twisted metal and shattered plastic.

**2006**

The Maldives government makes the first batch of floating islands available to families on its most low-lying atolls.

**2007**

The Guild announces that it has bought a Mediterranean holiday island and renamed it Elysium, to be a place inhabited solely by Metas. It will be resort, refuge and, for those that wish it, permanent community, with its own laws. A number of Guild contacts, clients and allies are already in residence, and there's a slow influx over the following years.

Japan tries a second undersea village pilot in a different location, with a Meta on the team and a kamitech defence system. There are no problems, and the habitat gradually expands to the size of a town.

**2014**

March - The Guild admits the first shuttle-loads of visitors to Iridium City on the Moon. Pictures of the planned city under the dome amaze the world. It is to be both exotic resort, source of minerals, and opportunity for those who wish to make a new start. Millionaires and homesteaders start applying for the trip.

**2016**

The Maldives formally becomes the Republic of Telenesia.

**2020**

The present.



# FACTIONEERING

## Governments and their agencies

In a few places governments have simply been replaced by metahumans, but in most cases Metas work with existing structures even if they effectively rule a country. After all, you need people to take care of the details of making things run. Governments seek to preserve their power and authority, both for its own sake and, in many cases, because they are the body elected by the people to do the job. Most responsible Metas support that.

As part of their structure most governments have at least one agency working on issues of internal security and secret operations at home and overseas. Some of these are known to the public - MI5, CIA, etc - and others aren't. (For story purposes you can assume most developed countries have some ultra-secret group pursuing the national interest as they see it.) Some of these have gained power far beyond that offered by the legitimate political process, and inform even heads of state on a need-to-know basis. All of them are interested in Metas to some degree, as people with an unusual potential for causing crises and disrupting the balance of power. Most have at least one or two metahuman operatives for special assignments.

## UNOMA

The United Nations Office of Metahuman Affairs was set up in 2005. This was one of the key recommendations of the Convention on Metahuman Interests, itself the result of lengthy deliberations (notably the Petersen Report). Like most UN departments its resourcing is limited - a situation made much tighter by the antagonism with the USA, which had been the UN's biggest funder, though other countries have made up some of the shortfall.

UNOMA functions are split between research and enforcement. The Enforcement Directorate includes the well-known continental Field Teams and the Metas of Team Alpha, but also diplomats and

inspectors to make sure the Convention is observed. The Research Directorate includes divisions focusing on parapsychiatry, technical development (equipment, containment techniques, etc - known internally as "X Branch"), Meta cataloguing, and others.

UNOMA maintains a central database of known Metahumans. Most local agencies are happy to cooperate with it on this, because Metas are very good at crossing national boundaries and you never know when you'll want data on someone you've never heard of who's tearing up your city. The data can be accessed by member states' legitimate law enforcement agencies. There have been some challenges to this on grounds of data protection and human rights, so the information tends to consist of criminal record plus basic power details. The UNOMA files continue to evolve as more Metas are encountered.

## Field Teams

UNOMA quarters well trained and equipped troops at strategic locations on each continent, along with technical and scientific personnel. These are usually deployed in numbered Field Teams specialising in enforcement or support. It also has one unit of metahuman operatives, Field Team Alpha, made up of experienced and fairly well known Metas. Field Teams are available to any UN member nation in good standing, but limited resources mean they don't have the personnel to cope with all crises that emerge - Regional Directors often have to make hard choices about where to send teams at any given time, usually prioritising the most serious situations where they can make a difference.



UNOMA also has a small pool of Meta reservists and new recruits in training who sometimes get sent on emergency missions as Team Beta. After all, Alpha can't be everywhere at once. (This could make a good basis for a game, allowing player characters with starting-level abilities and little public profile to operate as part of UNOMA. It would certainly provide them with a reason for working together.) Occasionally there is a rumour of a UNOMA agent or group conducting covert activities, but it seems unlikely to be true.

The call Enforcement staff most dread is the “Trojan Event”: outright war between substantial groups of metahumans. Fortunately these are very rare, but when they do occur any Normals in the area are in very serious danger, not to mention the damage to the surroundings. Such a situation will pull resources from other projects.

## The Nimbus Project

This unit exists to combat natural disasters, especially those like Maelstroms (see *Things in Heaven and Earth* below) caused by metahuman activity. Due to the resources available it has to concentrate on the most severe instances. The project consists of a team of scientists gathering data from a network of orbital satellites and a small number of Meta operatives, Field Team Nimbus, who attempt to prevent, contain or remedy damage.

The unit has clearance with most nations to operate on its own initiative, though communication with local agencies is expected. A few countries require express permission to be sought before it can operate on their soil. Given the potential loss of life during delays, the project is negotiating with them for autonomy. There are good connections between Team Alpha and Team Nimbus, and in some situations they can call each other in for back-up, but due to separate funding streams their operations are kept distinct.

## The Guild

As Metas emerged, perceptive observers noted their links to the past. Many of them used archaic weapons and other equipment. Sometimes this would be broken or lost, and replacements would be needed, or a new Meta would need outfitting. In the modern world such items and the skills to produce them were hard to come by. Thus the Guild was conceived as a business idea, making contacts around the world, seeking out traditional craftspeople and employing agents to deal with Metas in need of their services.

From an early stage the organisation operated a “no questions” policy. Once the item was supplied to the client it was up to them what they did with it (although certain highly unstable individuals may have been refused service due to the possible PR fallout), and all dealings with clients were strictly confidential.

## THE RAT

The background of this roving alterant is shadowy, but all agree he's really quite good at what he does. He operates freelance, usually taking infiltration and retrieval jobs rather than anything likely to involve direct confrontation, and subject to his peculiar (and, apparently, shifting) ethics.

He's a slim man of below-average height, with short brown hair and a wary look, normally dressed casually with a long and somewhat grubby coat. It's clear that he's been augmented with technology: most obviously with a pair of large razor-sharp retractable incisor teeth made of some exotic metal alloy, allowing him to bite through almost anything. He's also got tuned-up senses, immune system and general resilience.

**Qualities:** Good [+2] Thief, Good [+2] Getting In and Out, Good [+2] Agility, Good [+2] Ingenuity, Good [+2] Brawling, Good [+2] Tough, Good [+2] Fast Healer; Poor [-2] Long-term memory

**Powers:** Good [+2] Smiting\* (teeth), Good [+2] Immunity to Diseases and Toxins\*, Average [0] Super-Awareness; 1 Average converted

It was made clear from the start that an attack on a Guild employee was an attack on the Guild itself, resulting in withdrawal of services and possibly further consequences.

The business grew very naturally. There were other services Metas wanted too, and many found it easy to obtain the money to pay for them. The service didn't have to be one-way either - there were many things that Metas could do for the Guild and its clients, and nowadays it provides work to many of them, acting as a general agency for setting up transactions involving Metas and taking a modest commission. As well as money the modern Guild trades in favours. Cash-starved Metas may be offered what they need in return for a promise of help in the future. If it wishes, the Guild can make life uncomfortable for

welchers by calling in favours from others. More recently it has initiated high-profile projects of its own: the Metas-only island colony of Elysium and Iridium City on the Moon.

The Guild works from a position of neutrality. It conducts its affairs reasonably and impartially. In most dealings its operatives are open to negotiation. It provides much-needed support to artisans whose craft might otherwise perish, and mobilises Metas' abilities to achieve things previously undreamt of. It does, however, seek to maintain its power base, and occasionally takes decisive (even ruthless) action to do so. It will seek out new Metas to market its services to them, aiming to get them used to dealing with it. The Guild is not a large organisation, although it has agents worldwide - networking doesn't require a lot of staff. Most of these are talented Normals - there are very few Metas on staff, though of course they can be brought in whenever needed. The general public sees its major projects, but knows very little about the Guild itself. It's tolerated with some discomfort by governments, and although it doesn't consider itself subordinate to them it is careful of its image to avoid problems.

Who runs the Guild, and whether it has any larger agenda, is left up to the GM. Perhaps the founder is still in charge, or has died and left control to regional offices, or has bequeathed it to a child or subordinate. Perhaps the "child" is secretly an augmented clone of the founder; or perhaps all the (shadowy) regional directors are. Certainly the Guild has a long-term interest in the numbers of Metas, wanting to have enough to deliver services but to keep them scarce enough to keep prices up. It also likes general pro-Meta sentiment.

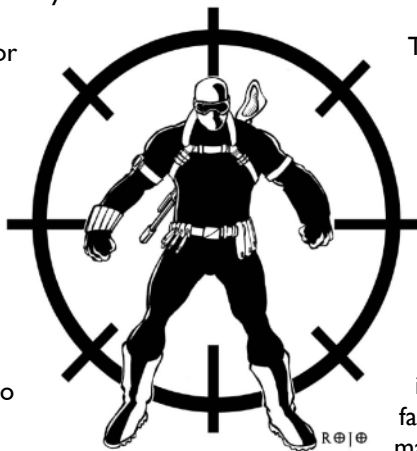
## Freelances

When the USA withdrew its UN support, UNOMA had to cut back its planned metahuman field teams, dismissing a number of Metas on its books. Several of these remained together to form **Sharp Fade Enterprises**, which provides services to governments and other parties for a fee. Sharp Fade generally operates a policy of working for the greater good, and avoids being seen to break laws.

Other outfits are less choosy, and less public. There are always lone Metas or mercenary groups willing to take on a job if you can find them and the price is right. The Guild often puts people in touch with the talent they need, though of course it won't allow itself to be publicly linked with anything illegal.

## Criminal organisations

The major ones still exist, though they've had to evolve ways of coping with Metas trying to shut them down, usually by hiring Metas of their own. Becoming a favoured employee of such a group can bring rich rewards, though of course the work is dangerous. They also like to gain leverage over Metas who wouldn't normally work for them and use it to extract "favours", though this has to be handled carefully as it can create powerful enemies. Time-honoured methods include incriminating or embarrassing photos or documents; massive gambling debts; and threats to loved ones. They don't often exert the raw power of supervillain groups, but they have more influence through wealth and contacts built up over many years.



The Mafia, based in America, remember their roots in Sicily. They value tradition and respect, and focus around powerful families. Metas may be hired for particular tasks, and those who do well and gain the favour of patrons can rise to become trusted lieutenants. They tend to prefer people of European descent, but effectiveness and loyalty are more important factors. These days they face competition from the "Mexican mafia" in many cities. Having escaped the Empire of the Sun, these people will do whatever's necessary to avoid being sent back to face the knife.

The Yakuza of Japan have Metas imbued by local monsters on staff, but these tend to have very noticeable looks so they also import Meta enforcers (of course such foreigners do not rise far in the organisation). They work alongside modern-day ninja and other highly skilled martial artists.

The "Russian mafia" are, in some ways, the scariest of all. They don't have sharp suits, codes of honour or



pretensions to nobility, but they're tough. They arose in a country that was going to hell, and were the ones with the will to go further to survive. Now they have Metas with Sources from Slavic mythology. Do as they say or they'll send the werewolves round.

The drug cartels of central and south America are hot on style, attitude and money. They don't respect old codes or families, but personal loyalty may stop them from stabbing each other in the back. They tend to buy in Meta help as needed. The creation and spread of the Aztec empire has caused them problems. Some have fought it for a while, but in the end resistance gets you killed and it's better to pull back to new territory.

### Anti-Meta movements

There are many individuals and organisations which are opposed to Metas in some way. Some scientists oppose the apparent irrationality of Meta powers and promote alternative explanations, like abnormalities in the brain. (Certain individuals might go to extreme lengths to prove their theories, like capturing Metas for dissection and experimentation.) Many in organised religions find the mythological explanation of Meta powers offensive. Some see them as using abilities which should be reserved for God, and/or conclude that these must come from demons. (Others, of course, have no problem with it or decide to re-evaluate their beliefs and take Metas' good deeds into account.) Those who have always reacted with fear and hate towards those who are different have predictable reactions to people with blue skin or antlers. On the other hand, some of these groupings try to co-opt specific Metas in support of their own mythologies.

**Human Defence** is the most successful anti-Meta organisation, originating in continental Europe and now able to claim members in many countries. It has not become truly effective, due to huge differences in its members' backgrounds and goals. Some just want to see strict regulation of Meta activities, whereas others would like to see them imprisoned or even eradicated. The organisation is wracked with infighting, and the groups affiliated to it change from week to week. However, all support efforts to mobilise public opinion against Metas, which is not difficult if they can get the attention of the media: many people are uneasy about superhumans in their midst and the erosion of human excellence, and

there's plenty of fallout from metahuman battles. HD keeps records of such events and uses them to lobby politicians, some of whom are receptive while others regard them as cranks or extremists. (GM note: of course the publicised leaders of HD might not be the real power behind it...)

### The Green Hand

From the first, some Metas set out to use their powers to protect the environment. Over time they met each other, and a group took shape. Convinced of the need for radical action and flushed with their new abilities, they adopted an uncompromising position and announced themselves as The Green Fist in September 2002. Their early focus was the Amazon rainforest. Interventions there led to destruction of machinery, some loss of life, hardship due to economic disruption and big business calling for their heads (leading to at least one US military mission against them). However, they did succeed in stopping the large-scale destruction of the forest, and helped to focus the minds of those discussing more sustainable ways of using the resource.

Further actions took place around the world, protecting rainforest in Africa and Indonesia, attacking nuclear and car production facilities, and supporting the growing voice of smaller countries under threat from climate change. Their enemies in governments and business multiplied, but the public's perception see-sawed from saviours to menaces and back again with each new report. In 2003 a battle at a Chinese dam project led to the flooding of two villages, with major loss of life. Shaken, the group went to ground for a few months while members questioned their priorities.

It re-emerged as The Green Hand, professing less extreme methods. Some members left (and a few have continued as eco-terrorists), but over the years the strong but balanced approach has gained them more members and support, with cautious recognition by governments and an effective protectorate over the Amazon basin. They also maintain outposts in Antarctica to ensure that this continent remains unspoilt, though not everyone looks forward to duty in such a harsh setting. Some members are soldiers and police, some politicians and negotiators, and some work to repair damaged habitats. There's still debate each time the group is asked to balance environmental protection and

human interests, but so far they've held together around a commitment to serving both. The current leader is named Dragon. The UN can't support them officially for fear of offending member states, but they do have an advisory place on the board of the Nimbus Project.

## The First Century

Not a lot of people know this, but there were a number of heroes who fought the forces imperilling the world before the Meta genesis, mostly working in secrecy.

Most didn't have superpowers as such, but relied on skill and daring, though they often concealed their identities with "stage names" - they included stage magicians, martial artists, geniuses and millionaires. A few did have special abilities: psychics, mutants, escapes from early experimentation, etc. A very few were imbued metahumans, though of course they didn't think of themselves as such. The Gate was much tighter back then, just allowing well-known Sources to get a few powers through - they were lower-powered than modern Metas, without the flashiest stuff (eg no human flamethrowers, but maybe someone immune to fire or with Average Super-Strength).

Most are dead, some are still around but very old, but a few have been able to extend their lifespans enough to remain active. Others trained their children to carry on. Over the decades most of them



## CREATING "FIRST CENTURY" CHARACTERS

These might be Metas imbued by a Source or, more commonly, with other sorts of abilities coming from natural talent, intense training, superscience gadgets or magic. The general principle is that they're lower-key than modern Metas. Flashy powers, numerous powers and Master Rank powers are rare - but power Ranks converted to loads of high Qualities are very common. Bear in mind, too, that they have a lot of experience using their abilities (certainly give extra Stunts, including on Master Qualities, and check out the Veteran character option, T&J p73). You probably shouldn't have C player characters - unless that's the point of the game and all the PCs are, set either in a past decade or the present day - but they could be great mentors, allies or enigmas for PCs.

have met each other, and their subculture became like an old boys' (and girls') club. As the first Metas appeared the survivors formed The First Century (a play on being pre-millennium and a unit of the Roman army) as a loose group pledged to continue to combat threats in their own way. Their symbol is simply "C" (an initial, and the Roman 100). As individuals they have less power than Metas, but usually greater experience and significant resources built up over the years.

Their opinions on Metas vary - some are clearly threats, and all are potentially dangerous. Many distrust electronic communication and other modern innovations, preferring their own abilities and tools they see as reliable. Some public officials, especially older ones now in high positions, know of individual members - most prefer to deny it to avoid having to stop them. Some members have great influence in certain circles.

There might be heroes who were active even before 1900, with a small chance that some of them are still alive - aged 150+, mind you! Bring on the Tibetan herbal mixtures...

## A FEW FIRST CENTURY CHARACTERS

**The Musketeer.** Thibaud de Cambrai wore this name as a flamboyant agent for the French Resistance in WWII. These days he's semi-retired from the French diplomatic service. He appears as an elegant and slightly eccentric silver-haired gentleman in his late sixties, but that cane he carries is a swordcane and he's still an absolute master with the blade, as well as a solid marksman and unarmed fighter. He's in excellent physical condition even if he's not quite as strong as he used to be. (He'd be an interesting mentor for a sword-wielding hero, allowing the GM to gradually reveal the secrets of the First Century.)

**Bulldog.** Ernie Briggs is a broad-built, down-to-earth Englishman. He looks around 60, but is a WWII comrade of Thibaud, and they see each other often. Ernie's not a flashy type like some of his friends, but he has their respect because they know once he commits to something he never stops and never gives up till the job is done - and that there are still few to match him in a fistfight. (He's also one of the First Century types most likely to be friendly toward new heroes.) He owns garages in locations including Paris and Manchester; staff know "the boss" occasionally drops in for a spot of tinkering or help in extra-curricular activities.

**Evelyn Walker.** In WWII she was a young woman imbued by Athena, holding the powers of the Aegis in the ring given by her fiancé who was later killed in a bombing raid, the diamond turned forever black. She worked for Special Operations as Agent Castle, finding ways round military reluctance to allow a woman into dangerous situations. These days she occupies a high-ranking position without a job title in British Intelligence. She looks about 60, but still handsome, usually dressed in a business suit. "Formidable" fits her well. There are few people she truly respects, and most of those are in C.

**Adam O'Mara, Agent of Fate.** In the 1920s and '30s he was a ruggedly handsome two-fisted, two-gun daredevil with extraordinary luck, finding himself embroiled in events at many key points in history. He's still handsome, though apparently in his late fifties; still travelling the world; still having confrontations with his dark counterpart Omar Autumn. In fact both of them are the Chosen of the Norns, helping events to play out properly through their differing approaches, though they don't fully understand it. Adam still enjoys throwing himself into action, but in reflective moments he's occasionally gloomy due to a nagging feeling that his thread may soon be cut short.

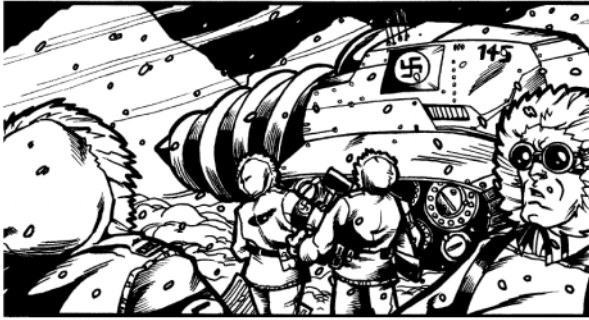
## Ask and Embla

Everyone knows the theory that the remnants of the Nazis hid themselves in South America. It's more or less true. The Nazis created a man and woman with special abilities and extended lifespans to begin a new age if their Ragnarok should come at the hands of the allies, codenamed Ask and Embla after the first humans created by Odin and his brothers from two tree trunks. They have taken their time to build a network of agents and increase their resources.

Their aims are those of the Reich, to build the "ideal" German empire, but these days there are few people

physically and ideologically "pure" enough to meet their standards, including Germany itself. They may try to redeem it or to set up a new nation elsewhere, and they stir up conflict against "inferior" racial and religious groups on an ongoing basis. The African Union is a particular target.

They are keen to recruit Metas imbued by Germanic gods and heroes, and have managed to find a few who sympathise with their views. Of course, they hate pretty much all the rest, and have been involved with some anti-Meta groups in the past. In the end they only trust and love each other.



**Ask** is a man in peak human physical condition, created through scientific modification. He has accelerated healing systems that also retard aging. Unfortunately they do not restore his body's original condition perfectly, and over the years he has become gnarled and scarred. He has honed his military training over the decades.

**Embla** is a woman remade through drug treatments and brutal psychological conditioning. She has pronounced psychic powers. She gains great pleasure from causing degradation and suffering in others. Continued drug treatments slow her aging (the formula is closely guarded and has... unpredictable results on other subjects).

## Church of Astral Enlightenment

This cult doesn't have many members, but it does seem to have branches all over the world. It claims to be guided by the "unseen masters", shadowy beings of great power who will spare only the faithful in some coming cataclysm, taking them to the stars. The exact nature of their teachings is hard to discover, as the group is secretive and those who are too enthusiastic in their investigations tend to disappear. There does seem to be a figure known as "the Emissary" who acts as a focus for communications with their patrons. Some members appear to have modest magical ability. They have also been seen with strange crystal prisms that cause severe mental disorientation to those who look into them. If one takes Metas' stories of their powers' origin seriously, it is possible that the "unseen masters" and "Emissary" actually exist in some form.

## Scarab

Superhero games thrive on villainous organisations out to take over the world or hold it to ransom. Scarab is one such, and has been around in various forms for nearly a century.

In the 1920's the English scholar, explorer and occultist Francis Sherwin Naismith discovered a hidden temple to Osiris in Egypt and became, in a sense, immortal. With what he learned there he was able to strengthen his spirit so that after physical death it might last indefinitely in that realm some now call the Dead Zone (see *Powers - Breach the Wall of Death*) and return through specially prepared jewellery in the shape of the scarab beetle. At dawn each day he may attempt to drive one sleeper wearing such a ring, pendant or whatever from their body and possess it for himself. Needless to say, in each incarnation he makes a point of distributing a few of these objects to likely candidates.



For the first day or so in a new body he's at a disadvantage for physical activity, but many of his skills are high anyway due to his extended lifespan. His mental powers are finely honed, he's experienced at acting in the spirit world, and he knows a little sorcery with an Egyptian style.

Over the years Naismith has built up an army of followers in all parts of the globe, who are primed to obey anyone who appears giving the relevant passwords. The organisation's standard procedures are to seek wealth and power through a range of criminal activities. When Naismith is present he gives more specific guidance, and this has changed over time. He has at least a minor god-complex, coupled with jealousy of those more powerful than himself. On one occasion his goal turned out to be world destruction, due to unhinging experiences in the Dead Zone, and he was only thwarted through the self-sacrifice of a henchman.

Following the Petersen Report<sup>1</sup> in 2003, the United Nations agreed the *Convention on Metahuman Interests* in June 2005. Several member countries have still to ratify it (officially sign up). These are the main points:

- Countries will try to use their metahuman resources for the benefit of all, while preserving metahumans' full rights as individuals.
- A permanent United Nations Office of Metahuman Affairs (UNOMA) will be established to monitor the metahuman phenomenon, advise other departments and co-ordinate projects relating to metahumans.
- Member states should not make military use of metahuman operatives in aggressive actions against other nations, either overtly or covertly (*openly, like in a war, or secretly such as through spying*). In some cases this may be considered as use of weapons of mass destruction.
- It is, however, appropriate for properly constituted military and police forces to make use of metahuman operatives to defend legitimately held territories and secure the well-being of the population against aggressive action and other threats.
- Member states shall not use metahuman operatives to oppress their population or subvert the democratic process within their own territories through action or the fear of action.

#### Exercises

1. Name one country that has ratified the Convention, and one that hasn't.
2. For each of the five points give a specific example of an occasion when the Convention's rules were kept or broken.
3. Give one example of how you think metahumans have helped society, and one example of how they have harmed it.
4. To what extent do you think the Convention's aims have been met? Why?

1 Full title 'Report of the United Nations Commission on Metahuman Activity', named after Professor Henryk Petersen who chaired it.



## The Second Battle of Midway

*interview with Lieutenant Frank Dugan*

It started in 2003 when Tuvalu declared war on the United States of America. Tuvalu consisted of 10,000 people on 9 coral atolls in the Pacific, northeast of Australia. Its economy was the smallest of any independent state in the world, and its only exports were dried coconut kernels, postage stamps, and .tv internet names. You won't find it on new maps - it's gone now. That was the nature of its beef with the US. With rising sea levels, its leaders said low-lying nations like theirs faced a "death sentence" due to air pollution from industrialised countries. The US was responsible for 25% of this and wouldn't commit to doing anything about it. This, said the spokesman, amounted to an attempt to destroy their country and, as negotiations had clearly failed, war was inevitable.

The US, of course, basically laughed at this. It regretted the situation, it had to look out for the wellbeing of its citizens, and no, it didn't think there was any immediate danger from a flyspeck no-one had ever heard of. It couldn't really do anything else - treating it as a real threat would have meant a serious loss of face. However, the declaration brought others out in support. The Maldives were first - a range of coral islands just south of India, maximum height 6 feet - and other low-lying areas had varying degrees of sympathy. None of them actually declared war, but they stepped up efforts within the United Nations to put pressure on the US.

The next anyone heard, startling the world, was when a force from Tuvalu announced that it had taken the US air and naval base on the Midway Islands. Midway is another chunk of rock in the middle of the Pacific, and the US kept about 300 people there. But its PR value was higher than you'd think, because the area had been the site of an American victory over the Japanese that turned the course of the Second World War. On the site of a great US victory it now suffered an embarrassing defeat.

What nobody could work out, of course, was how a couple of hundred people from Tuvalu had travelled north for a little over 2000 miles without being noticed and then taken out a military base with only single figure casualties on each side. It seemed pretty clear that there were Metas involved. We still don't know the details, but there are stories of one particular islander doing a lot of the planning and leading - strong guy, using a jawbone as a weapon. Hey, apparently it worked for him. Also, the group called The Green Fist had spoken out in support of the islanders, and a lot of people reckoned they'd played a part in the operation.

So you've got Midway declared as annexed by Tuvalu, and now the US is taking notice. Not like they care about the islands - but they've been given a public slapping, and American servicemen (and women) have been killed and injured. The rest of the world's on tenterhooks - it's a disaster in the making, and a lot of people are siding with the plucky little underdog. Normally the US would respond hard and fast, but unless there's a serious Meta presence with the islanders it would be a totally one-sided battle with a good chance of taking out their own people too.

UN negotiators go in to try to persuade the islanders to leave peacefully. The islanders are polite and friendly. Everyone hurt in the battle receives medical attention, and a third of the US personnel are released unconditionally. The one thing they will not do, they explain, is return the island to US control. However, to avoid an international incident they are prepared to release their new territory - to Japan. The Japanese will nominally own the island, but it will be designated as a wildlife refuge and centre for scientific study. Somehow, the deal is agreed. The islanders are ferried home once a token Japanese contingent moves in. The US government tries to talk up the tax savings from not having to maintain an outdated base.

Of course, the whole thing got a lot of media coverage. Cameras went in with the negotiators and showed us simple, brave, smiling islanders versus a big, stupid military and industrial machine. America's unassailable front had cracked a bit. Tuvalu's declaration of war has never been formally rescinded.

# GAZETTEER

This section doesn't attempt to cover the whole world, or even to be thorough about the areas it does cover - just to give you something to work with.

## Geography note

If you haven't seen one, I recommend getting hold of a Peters Projection map of the world. Mapping a roughly spherical planet on a flat piece of paper requires compromises. The common Mercator Projection makes a square grid of latitude and longitude, which helps with coordinates but distorts the size of landmasses - eg making Europe look much bigger than it is. The Peters system focuses on depicting area accurately, which is enlightening - for instance, South America is twice the size of Europe.



# Europe

The European Union now contains 25 nations, having added 10 countries from eastern Europe since 2002. Adjusting to their economies slowed its development somewhat, but it is one of the most powerful trading and political entities.

## Britain

In 2001 a small group of Metas led by "King Arthur" ousted the monarchy of the United Kingdom and took control of government policy direction, promising an age of noble principles and great achievement. In the light of recent sleaze scandals and Meta attacks public opinion was cautiously positive. Motivated by its own Metas (see below), Ireland has become a unified country again, and now the union of England, Scotland and Wales is usually just known as Britain.

Arthur's vision was (as always) of a unified, peaceful Britain, and he's done pretty well, though of course the realities of modern politics don't always sit well with ideals. For instance, Arthur's increase in the contribution to the United Nations has caused some dissatisfaction in the Treasury and elsewhere, and his outspoken comments in that forum sometimes make civil servants wince. There's been plenty of work for Merlin in the background, making sure the details work out and sometimes seeing to tasks Arthur never hears about.

Hereditary peerages have been abolished. Now life peerages are given to those who perform some service to society, usually giving the rank of Baron, and most seats in the House of Lords are filled by such people. Resentment among families that have lost title, influence and wealth to Arthur's changes has led to the creation of the Old Guard, a shadowy conspiracy looking to discredit and destroy the current regime.

Arthur has recreated the **Order of the Knights of the Round Table** as a group of Metas loyal to him personally who are tasked with overseeing the safety and security of the country, especially with regard to metahuman threats. They are expected to adhere to high standards of personal morality and honour (being dishonoured and thrown out is very bad for your reputation, at least round here). Their emblem is a gold crown in a white circle. **Squires** are a sort of military personnel of Normals working under the

## SQUIRES

The Round Table's Normal field agents, all highly qualified, working under the Knights. Handguns engineered for greater stopping power, wrist communicators, reinforced uniform (navy blue, Round Table emblem on left breast).

**Qualities:** Good [+2] Field Agent (fighting, guarding, etc), Good [+2] Improved Pistol, Good [+2] Protective Uniform; Poor [-2] Loyal to the Round Table and King Arthur

Knights - it's a prestigious appointment. Metas not in the Knights are watched, and irresponsible use of powers gets you kicked out of the country or otherwise punished.

**England.** The majority of Britain's people live here, around 50 million of them, but due to the lack of a strong national mythology significantly fewer than average Metas arise. They tend to come from the Celtic and Norse pantheons, but there are echoes of the Romans in occasional Greek Sources and some connected with Indians and other immigrant groups. One local figure is Mr Mornington, a person of unknown motives and abilities working mainly in night-time London. He seems to have impeccable manners and favour the formal dress of a century ago. He doesn't often make the press, but the police and underworld know of him, and the Round Table seems content to leave him alone.

**Scotland.** In a different timeline it would probably have become an independent nation years ago, but has remained a devolved region (with its own parliament) within Britain, largely to keep the protection of the Round Table. It's rare for Metas to arise here imbued by gods or heroes, but there are a good number of monsters. A loose alliance between some of these, The Unseelie Court, is based in Scotland. It aims to keep Normals living in fear - partly to exact tribute, and partly for fun. (Others prefer their own company, and there even seem to be a few people imbued by "monsters" who try to help and protect Normals.) These threats coupled

with the wild, empty countryside mean people tend to keep to the towns and villages because there are genuine dangers out there. Scotland also holds Britain's specialised Meta prison, located at the bottom of Loch Ness under 700ft of water. Those transporting prisoners to and from the surface sometimes feel they're being watched...

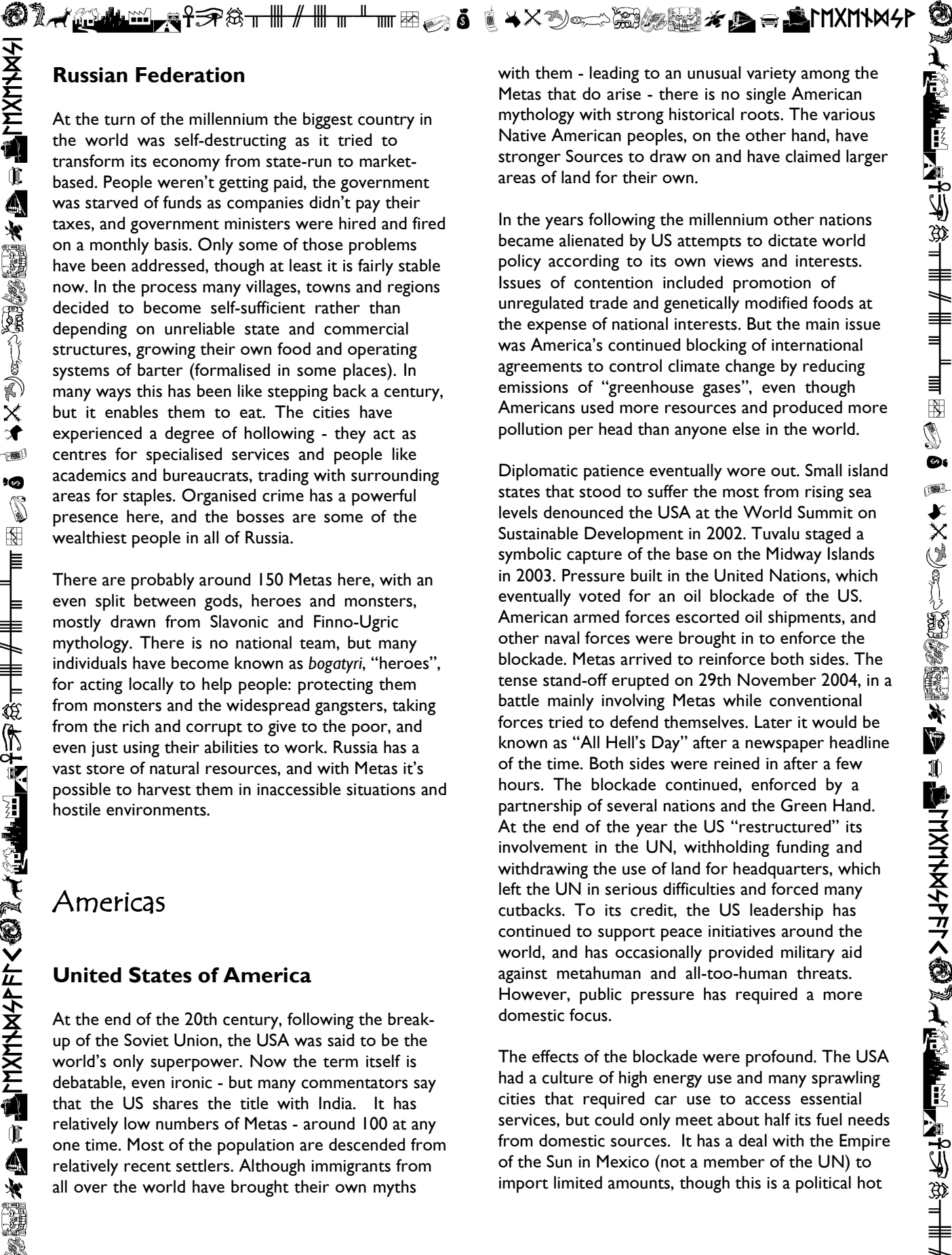
**Wales.** This is also a devolved region within Britain. Its population is just over 3 million, but the incidence of Metas is somewhat higher than this would suggest. They tend to be imbued by Celtic gods, but the legacy of various invaders sometimes manifests through Greek and Norse Sources. The most well established is the giant Mountain Man, who undertakes defence of the country in return for the government meeting his enormous food bills and keeping him in trousers.

## Ireland

This is the heartland of the Celtic gods, and there are significantly more Metas than would be expected from the mere 6 million population. When they started to appear they were met with a quiet joy - the gods returning from their fairy mounds was heritage and story coming to life. They have a status comparable to that of the old kings: as long as they use their powers for the general good of the people and the land they are treated as celebrities similar to the greatest musicians, but if they go wrong they'll certainly be told so.

Ireland is one country now. The emerging Metas didn't force the re-unification between Eire and Northern Ireland (formerly part of the United Kingdom) - but they argued for it very convincingly and inspired the people to see themselves as one country again. Some of them also took an extremely hard line on terrorism, and those practised or planned violence found themselves hunted by cunning, fury and terror.

Not all is harmony, of course. There are numerous epic battles between Metas - individuals or Sources with conflicting agendas, rampages by monsters, and so on. Soon after Meta genesis a small band of Metas called the Fianna was founded by an incarnation of the hero Fionn mac Cumhail to look after national safety, and although the line-up has changed over the years they still serve ably.



## Russian Federation

At the turn of the millennium the biggest country in the world was self-destructing as it tried to transform its economy from state-run to market-based. People weren't getting paid, the government was starved of funds as companies didn't pay their taxes, and government ministers were hired and fired on a monthly basis. Only some of those problems have been addressed, though at least it is fairly stable now. In the process many villages, towns and regions decided to become self-sufficient rather than depending on unreliable state and commercial structures, growing their own food and operating systems of barter (formalised in some places). In many ways this has been like stepping back a century, but it enables them to eat. The cities have experienced a degree of hollowing - they act as centres for specialised services and people like academics and bureaucrats, trading with surrounding areas for staples. Organised crime has a powerful presence here, and the bosses are some of the wealthiest people in all of Russia.

There are probably around 150 Metas here, with an even split between gods, heroes and monsters, mostly drawn from Slavonic and Finno-Ugric mythology. There is no national team, but many individuals have become known as *bogatyri*, "heroes", for acting locally to help people: protecting them from monsters and the widespread gangsters, taking from the rich and corrupt to give to the poor, and even just using their abilities to work. Russia has a vast store of natural resources, and with Metas it's possible to harvest them in inaccessible situations and hostile environments.

## Americas

### United States of America

At the end of the 20th century, following the break-up of the Soviet Union, the USA was said to be the world's only superpower. Now the term itself is debatable, even ironic - but many commentators say that the US shares the title with India. It has relatively low numbers of Metas - around 100 at any one time. Most of the population are descended from relatively recent settlers. Although immigrants from all over the world have brought their own myths

with them - leading to an unusual variety among the Metas that do arise - there is no single American mythology with strong historical roots. The various Native American peoples, on the other hand, have stronger Sources to draw on and have claimed larger areas of land for their own.

In the years following the millennium other nations became alienated by US attempts to dictate world policy according to its own views and interests. Issues of contention included promotion of unregulated trade and genetically modified foods at the expense of national interests. But the main issue was America's continued blocking of international agreements to control climate change by reducing emissions of "greenhouse gases", even though Americans used more resources and produced more pollution per head than anyone else in the world.

Diplomatic patience eventually wore out. Small island states that stood to suffer the most from rising sea levels denounced the USA at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. Tuvalu staged a symbolic capture of the base on the Midway Islands in 2003. Pressure built in the United Nations, which eventually voted for an oil blockade of the US. American armed forces escorted oil shipments, and other naval forces were brought in to enforce the blockade. Metas arrived to reinforce both sides. The tense stand-off erupted on 29th November 2004, in a battle mainly involving Metas while conventional forces tried to defend themselves. Later it would be known as "All Hell's Day" after a newspaper headline of the time. Both sides were reined in after a few hours. The blockade continued, enforced by a partnership of several nations and the Green Hand. At the end of the year the US "restructured" its involvement in the UN, withholding funding and withdrawing the use of land for headquarters, which left the UN in serious difficulties and forced many cutbacks. To its credit, the US leadership has continued to support peace initiatives around the world, and has occasionally provided military aid against metahuman and all-too-human threats. However, public pressure has required a more domestic focus.

The effects of the blockade were profound. The USA had a culture of high energy use and many sprawling cities that required car use to access essential services, but could only meet about half its fuel needs from domestic sources. It has a deal with the Empire of the Sun in Mexico (not a member of the UN) to import limited amounts, though this is a political hot



potato because of the activities of that regime. Proportions of available fuel are reserved for military, police and government use. For the public, travel is more expensive so travel between towns and cities is less common - but the internet has continued to grow, so people are able to communicate across the country (as long as they have access to the technology, which excludes the poorest in society although even low-waged families can afford a basic Net terminal). A lot of clerical, information and creative jobs are done mainly by teleworking.

There are many forms of broadcast media, but it's unusual for content to come from outside the US. Some states have invested in solar and wind power. Even feeding the people has its problems - major food-growing areas have suffered from the very climate change that the industrialised countries largely created, and food storage and distribution is that much harder now. Crops in areas controlled by Native Americans often do better than elsewhere, and they export food to other parts of the country. Some communities have gone back to simpler ways of life, following the example of groups like the Amish in providing for their own needs. In other places the underside of large cities has become even more dangerous, ruled by powerful gangs, while the upper side is dominated by the skyscrapers of powerful corporations.

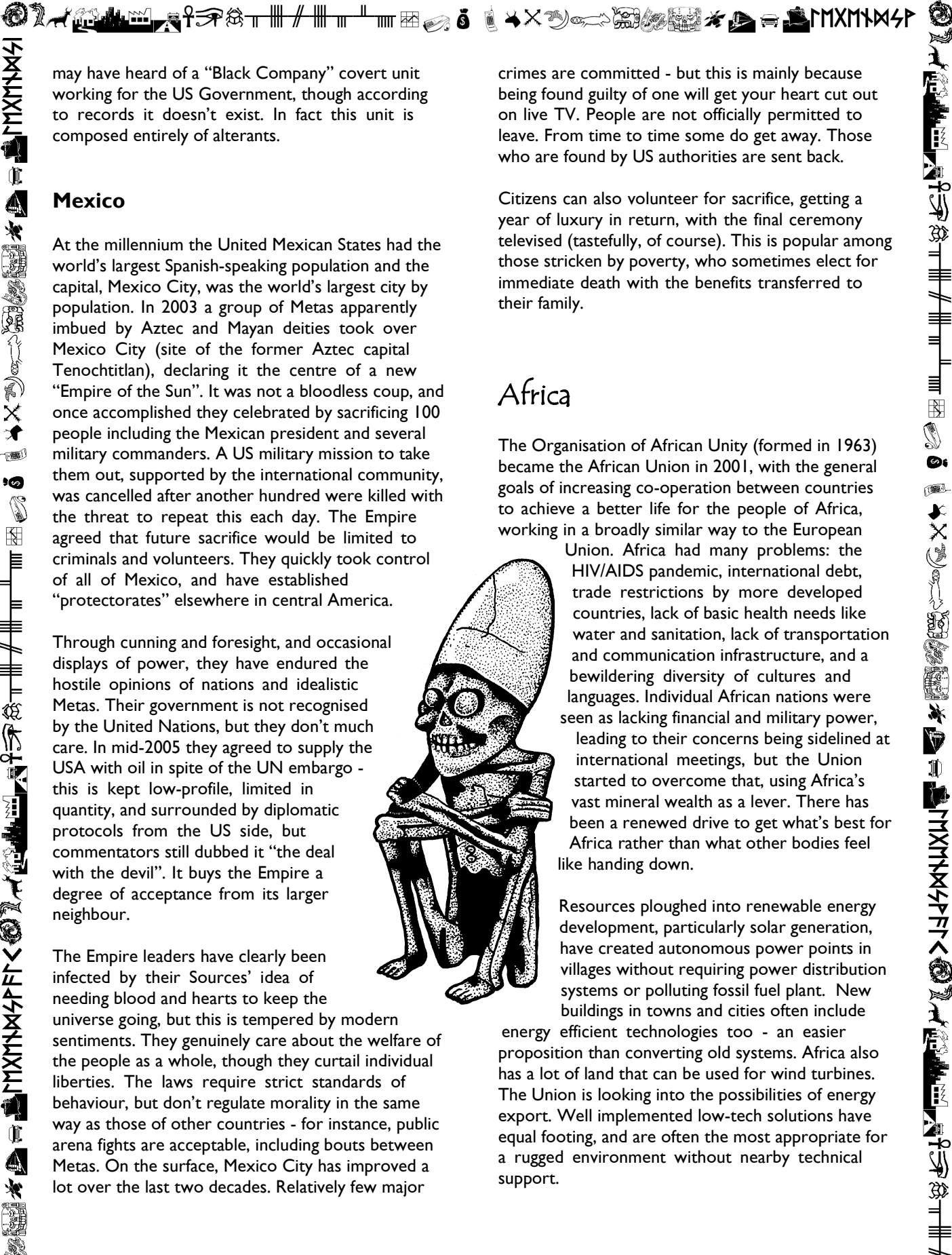
Metas are strongly encouraged to go into law enforcement, the military, or other government work (usually with attractive benefits packages, occasionally resorting to coercion). Well-known American "superheroes" include Guardian, with great strength and the power of flight, and high-tech

armour-clad Advance. They operate nationally and are members of Vanguard, the official US team. Maverick, based in New York, seems to get by on speed, agility, luck and witty repartee - he's popular in spite of his dislike of authority and red tape, or perhaps because of it. The acerbic Colonel Armitage Zeit, a man with a lot of experience and enhanced fighting abilities, is a bodyguard and roving agent for the President.

However, it's a big country and attitudes vary from place to place. In a few states, particularly in the south, use of Meta powers is illegal and anyone known to have them is "encouraged" to leave. Fundamentalist and evangelical Christian groups dislike the idea of people possessing godlike powers, especially when they claim they actually come from "pagan" gods. There has been more than one case of Metas being hanged or even burned by mobs whipped into a religious frenzy. The Metas themselves can fight back, sometimes with heavy casualties, but their families can't. On the other hand Louisiana has no restrictions beyond the usual laws, mainly due to numbers of Metas empowered by the gods of Voodoo, and Florida is just laid-back.

Powerful factions within the military-industrial complex have a plan for making their country stronger again: they are building their own metahumans. Exploration of techniques like selective breeding, genetic engineering, chemical stimulants, powered armour and cybernetic implants began around the time of the Second World War but has accelerated in the last few years, helped partly by a few key Meta-boosted scientists and inventors. This work has always produced its share of terrible failures, most of which die naturally or are terminated. Even in the early years, though, there were fluke successes, and now results are more reliable.

These "alterants" can't reach the highest levels of powers but can still hold their own. Psychic abilities, which mythically powered Metas rarely possess, have been explored extensively, building on the work done by the CIA and other agencies during the second half of the 20th century. Alterant abilities usually come at a price, though, such as physical changes, reduced lifespan or mental instability. These initiatives, with names like "Project Phoenix", are highly secret. The alterants they produce are used for covert missions, or even work publicly as "heroes" without necessarily revealing their origins. Those with good military or paramilitary contacts



may have heard of a “Black Company” covert unit working for the US Government, though according to records it doesn’t exist. In fact this unit is composed entirely of alterants.

## Mexico

At the millennium the United Mexican States had the world’s largest Spanish-speaking population and the capital, Mexico City, was the world’s largest city by population. In 2003 a group of Metas apparently imbued by Aztec and Mayan deities took over Mexico City (site of the former Aztec capital Tenochtitlan), declaring it the centre of a new “Empire of the Sun”. It was not a bloodless coup, and once accomplished they celebrated by sacrificing 100 people including the Mexican president and several military commanders. A US military mission to take them out, supported by the international community, was cancelled after another hundred were killed with the threat to repeat this each day. The Empire agreed that future sacrifice would be limited to criminals and volunteers. They quickly took control of all of Mexico, and have established “protectorates” elsewhere in central America.

Through cunning and foresight, and occasional displays of power, they have endured the hostile opinions of nations and idealistic Metas. Their government is not recognised by the United Nations, but they don’t much care. In mid-2005 they agreed to supply the USA with oil in spite of the UN embargo - this is kept low-profile, limited in quantity, and surrounded by diplomatic protocols from the US side, but commentators still dubbed it “the deal with the devil”. It buys the Empire a degree of acceptance from its larger neighbour.

The Empire leaders have clearly been infected by their Sources’ idea of needing blood and hearts to keep the universe going, but this is tempered by modern sentiments. They genuinely care about the welfare of the people as a whole, though they curtail individual liberties. The laws require strict standards of behaviour, but don’t regulate morality in the same way as those of other countries - for instance, public arena fights are acceptable, including bouts between Metas. On the surface, Mexico City has improved a lot over the last two decades. Relatively few major

crimes are committed - but this is mainly because being found guilty of one will get your heart cut out on live TV. People are not officially permitted to leave. From time to time some do get away. Those who are found by US authorities are sent back.

Citizens can also volunteer for sacrifice, getting a year of luxury in return, with the final ceremony televised (tastefully, of course). This is popular among those stricken by poverty, who sometimes elect for immediate death with the benefits transferred to their family.

## Africa

The Organisation of African Unity (formed in 1963) became the African Union in 2001, with the general goals of increasing co-operation between countries to achieve a better life for the people of Africa, working in a broadly similar way to the European Union. Africa had many problems: the HIV/AIDS pandemic, international debt, trade restrictions by more developed countries, lack of basic health needs like water and sanitation, lack of transportation and communication infrastructure, and a bewildering diversity of cultures and languages. Individual African nations were seen as lacking financial and military power, leading to their concerns being sidelined at international meetings, but the Union started to overcome that, using Africa’s vast mineral wealth as a lever. There has been a renewed drive to get what’s best for Africa rather than what other bodies feel like handing down.

Resources ploughed into renewable energy development, particularly solar generation, have created autonomous power points in villages without requiring power distribution systems or polluting fossil fuel plant. New buildings in towns and cities often include energy efficient technologies too - an easier proposition than converting old systems. Africa also has a lot of land that can be used for wind turbines. The Union is looking into the possibilities of energy export. Well implemented low-tech solutions have equal footing, and are often the most appropriate for a rugged environment without nearby technical support.



The Greystone-Walker Company, an Anglo-American family business with long-standing interests in Africa, has assisted with many of these. Its Afrikomp range of computers were designed to stand up to sand, forest and temperature extremes, with minimal power requirements and using low-cost components and software. Basically, they get the job done without unnecessary frills and allow available resources to get technology out as widely as possible. The most popular version is a palmtop unit that can interface with a base station to use a large screen and other peripherals.

Africa has many separate mythologies, most involving a single creator-god and a few lesser gods and culture heroes. Numbers of Metas are rather low for the population. However, numerous Metas from elsewhere have felt moved to help the continent with its problems. Some early cases showed that enthusiasm wasn't enough, with a destructive Maelstrom caused by Metas making independent attempts to help adjoining drought-stricken areas at the same time, and social disruption from attempts to alter economies. The African Union now "encourages" all Metas to operate within its own programmes.

## Egypt

The Muslim population largely rejected Metas from the Egyptian pantheon, many of whom have obvious non-human features - in some cases killing them as demons. Many were driven out to wander the world, but some set up an enclave in the Valley of the Kings. They trade with foreign archaeologists, and extract tolerance from the Egyptian government in exchange for allowing tourism revenues to continue (less their cut). Their new buildings reflect ancient styles, and are an attraction in themselves. To appease religious groups the government has ruled that it will not employ any Metas, so there are none in the army or police. Those who are resident often help voluntarily in any case, and sometimes the enclave receives unofficial invitations to assist in return for favours.

## Asia

### China

One in five of the people on the planet live here, and they can still be sent to "re-education" camps for speaking out for human rights, just as they were at the turn of the millennium. Some things have changed. Many of the old trappings of Communism have been dropped so that the economy can survive, with continuing increases in technology levels and drift to the cities, where the massive workforce carries out many kinds of manufacturing. There is still a huge rural population, relatively poor and lacking in technology. Now it's just "The Party", but the ethos of rigid control is still there. There is a National Congress made up of representatives from the provinces, but it meets irregularly and has little real power. Most decisions are taken by Party officials outside accountable channels.

China has an ancient culture, but its oldest beliefs are mostly lost. In 213 BC a minister ordered all books except technical manuals destroyed, and later Confucian scholars reconstructed the literature to favour their view of an ideal hierarchical society. Many of the gods were functionaries in a celestial bureaucracy, and Metas imbued by these often support the Party structure. However, there are also Taoist and Buddhist elements in Chinese mythology, and these Sources often encourage individual freedom, spirituality and creativity.

The political suppression of spiritual and mythic beliefs over the years reduced China's Meta ratio. Those that arise have a clear choice: work for the state, or be an enemy of the state. The former form troubleshooting teams or hold positions within the Party structure if they have proved their worth. There is also a new Revolution led by Metas seeking to change the country. However, Buddhists and Taoists make strange revolutionaries, avoiding direct conflict in favour of making small changes that combine to undermine government projects and change ideas. The most active opposition comes from "King Sun", a Robin Hood-like figure patterned after the irrepressible monkey of legend, who seems





to enjoy a good fight. Foreign Metas are only allowed into the country under diplomatic privilege, eg in the entourage of visiting dignitaries, and are observed closely while there.

Most of Tibet has been freed from Chinese control by strange Metas imbued by Sources from Tibetan Buddhism. There is some mystery about their plans for the country. It is quite difficult to find them unless an overt threat appears. It is thought that China would like to re-take Tibet, presumably with a metahuman attack force.

## India

Over the last 20 years India has gained the status of a superpower. It has the world's second highest population (after China; a sixth of the world's people live here), most of whom are Hindus. A large and varied pantheon with many existing followers helps to give India one of the world's highest concentrations of Metas. Factors like these and the changes in the USA have significantly altered the balance of world power: western industrialised nations have to take "developing" countries more seriously, just in case they decide to use their Meta resources to make a point. India is a diverse and tempestuous place, as it always was, where different cultures coexist and sometimes clash, and politics can be unstable. Now this edgy energy is increased by superpowered individuals walking the streets, and archaic magic operating alongside emerging technology.

The country has made astute use of all the leverage it could get to help it develop, always with a tension between providing a higher material standard of living and conserving natural resources. There has been a genuine commitment to avoid the worst mistakes of the West, and sometimes the availability of Metas has helped to bypass difficult compromises. India reduced controls over the private sector in the 1990s to boost the economy, and many enterprising companies will be very interested in employing someone with newly gained powers. (Indeed, a few commentators have wondered whether parts of the country's infrastructure now depend too much on Metas.)

The appearance of Metas has created a certain amount of religious confusion - they may have the powers of gods and mythic heroes, but they don't always behave like them. However, India has a long

tradition of wandering holy men with unusual abilities (by reputation, at least), and this sometimes gets stretched to cover Metas. If you demonstrate supernatural powers and act nobly you can expect to gather followers, though these days they're as much fans as devotees. The Brahmins' official line that there is only one ultimate God and any apparent deities are just emanations or avatars copes with the theological implications very well. Hinduism has always been willing to absorb elements of other beliefs. This flexibility is helping it to gain adherents beyond India.

Although India's influence abroad has increased, it is not trying to build an empire. Its very diversity makes it difficult to pull everyone in a single direction - indeed there are still occasional flare-ups between different ethnic and religious groups. Some people who gain Meta powers use them to pursue these conflicts - the border with Pakistan, for instance, has seen some bloody battles and there's now a zone where few people dare to live, patrolled by government peacekeepers.

## Indian Ocean

The Republic of Maldives used to be a group of over a thousand small coral islands off the tip of India, home to around 270,000 people. As none of them rose more than 6ft above sea level they were particularly vulnerable to climate change. Some people moved to other countries like Sri Lanka as they saw their homes disappearing, but others wanted to keep their way of life. With a population that was well educated, young, ethnically diverse and extremely motivated they were well placed for innovation. With the backing of fellow Muslims from Saudi Arabia they created mobile islands suitable for the needs of an extended family, the first entering use in 2006.

These islands are basically floating platforms with natural ecosystems on top of machinery. They're equipped with flotation chambers, several features to enhance stability, an emergency refuge within the body of the island in case of really dangerous weather, and engines to propel the whole thing (top speed around 6mph). Solar panels provide electricity for all power needs; in later models these electrolyse water to power hydrogen fuel cells for the engines instead of running them directly. Topsoil has been transplanted, with coconut palms and other plant and animal species. Growing techniques mimicking natural systems make the best use of the limited space, and





there has been partial success in encouraging coral ecosystems to form on the undersides of islands. They have strong but flexible mooring systems to link them together in groups of any size. Some people stay in a single location, such as the site of their previous home where the permanent reefs still give good fishing; others prefer to wander. Islands are linked by satellite communication systems, allowing them to keep in touch and providing news and education services. For fast travel boats are still the answer, and each island has at least one.

However, the problems that affected the Maldives affected other places too - like Bangladesh, with a massive population density and a long record of disastrous flooding. There was an increasing market for the floating islands, with customers ranging from governments and aid agencies to westerners looking for an alternative lifestyle in the sun. Over time their links to each other often became stronger than their links with their former homelands. Islands were customised, adding workshops and offices. The Maldives had already been setting islands aside as resorts, so floating holiday islands were a natural

development. There was also political interest, from places in the Pacific and elsewhere with similar issues and culture looking to make alliances for a stronger voice on the world stage.

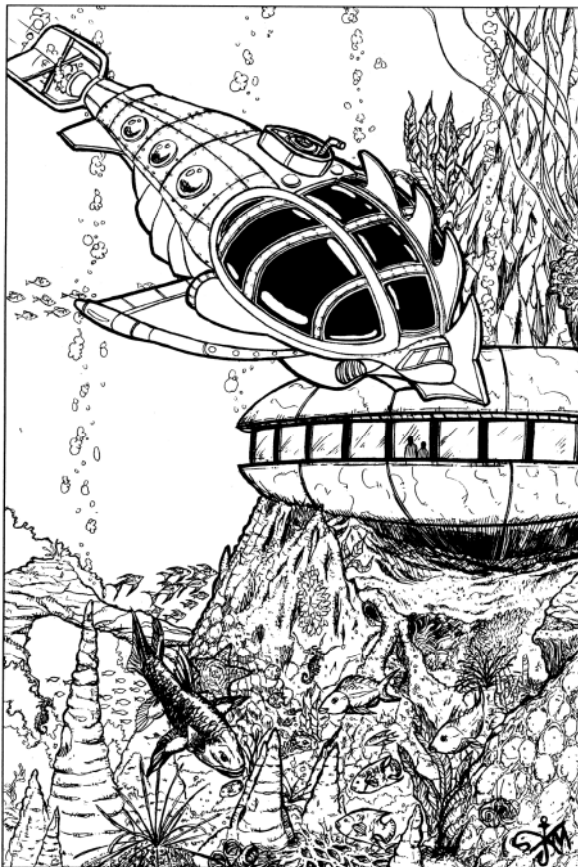
In 2017 the Maldives formally became the Federation of Telenesia, a nation that transcends geography. Some small Pacific island states joined quickly, several even severing links with their larger territorial patrons. Others are discussing it, and there is debate among existing citizens about who to allow in. There has been interest from a few land-locked communes and even towns in developed countries.

The capital is still Malé, an island with good flood defences entirely covered by a city of around 65,000 people. There's some tension between the original Maldivians and the incomers, but overall their society is fairly harmonious. Most Telenesians follow Islam, though the culture is more easygoing than in many Muslim countries (for instance, there are few cultural restrictions on women apart from general modesty) and other religions are accepted. Literacy rates remain high, and most people can speak English as well as the Maldivian language Dhivehi. They dislike the major industrialised nations, especially the USA, for their role in destroying their former homes and have led opinions against them in the United Nations and other assemblies. (This isn't usually carried over into dislike of individuals from those countries as long as they are polite and friendly.) Many in positions of power in those nations are deeply uncomfortable about Telenesia due to its vocal opposition, its unfamiliar structure, its slow increase in political and economic power and its appeal to the media and popular imagination.

## Japan

In the 1980s Japan's was the economy everyone wanted to emulate, but by the millennium it was facing serious problems, largely caused by political and business leaders unable or unwilling to adapt to a changing world. The Meta genesis helped, to an extent. Japan had preserved skills, like high-quality weapon manufacture, that were in increased demand, and craftsmen were encouraged to make links with the emerging Guild.

Japan's religious life had long been a blend of Buddhism and Shinto, which basically involves revering the spirits of all aspects of existence from mountains to ancestors. There are a great many of



these *kami*, but most are revered only in local areas and only a handful of figures are recognised as gods across the whole country, notably the sun goddess Amaterasu who serves as Japan's ancestor and patron. This gives a low ratio of Metas, but an unusually high incidence of Sprites (see *Things in Heaven and Earth* below) and renewed respect for those who can deal with them.

Japan has something unique: **kamitech**. The details are not widely known - after all, they're a major commercial and strategic advantage - but a small number of people appear to be able to bind M-space entities to technological items somehow, effectively creating equipment with limited superpowers that

One well-known figure in Japan is **Nimura Katsutoshi**. As a boy he was thrilled by *manga* and *anime* tales of science fiction, magic, and giant robots with really big guns. As he grew he found that he was able to build some of what he'd seen. He gradually brought together technicians to handle part work and a few people who could understand him enough to help with the tricky stuff, and so was born the company known today as Sun Fox Industries, a major corporation specialising in the supply of very fancy, very expensive equipment.

Nimura himself has a very public public face - everyone knows him as the wide-eyed, fun-loving geek who made good - and a very private private face. He's certainly a shrewd businessman. It's not publicly known whether he's a Meta or "just" a genius, but he certainly has personal and company security including at least a couple of Metas as well as Normals outfitted with company product. The proportion of kamitech to bleeding edge normal tech in the company's designs isn't always clear, but you won't find production lines in their facilities, as every piece is lovingly crafted. Their sites are also notable for being high-tech beyond the call of duty, including shiny chrome corridors and vast concrete bunkers, but with traditional forms and fittings.

sidesteps the limitations of technology level. (Robots with superpowers!) These abilities are usually connected to the natural world. Some Shinto priests condemn this practice as disrespectful to the *kami*, but campaigns against it are given little weight by officials.

Attitudes to Metas vary. The younger generation, in particular, regard Metas from anywhere with an enthusiasm bordering on mania. After all, it's like having pop stars and cartoon action heroes rolled into one, and a battle or arranged match is like *anime* happening in real life. Certainly Japan has a great appetite for a wide range of Meta-based entertainment and media products (some more wholesome than others). On the other hand, older people still resent any reminder of Japanese non-superiority and may politely make life difficult for foreign Metas.

What about those stereotypes beloved in the West, samurai and ninja? There is renewed interest, because in situations (including warfare and espionage) where one is pitted against people with more-than-human abilities, finely honed skill is one's only resource. This is useful for Japan's own interests and for hire overseas. In Legendary Earth schools for these talents have always operated, with a low profile or in secret, and over the last few years they have expanded, some serving honour and some the highest bidder. The Yakuza criminal network has not been slow to employ martial artists, assassins or Metas.

## Middle East

### Holy Zone

The term is an increasingly popular slang expression for a region where tensions are still rife between Israel and Palestine, Jew, Muslim and Christian. The area is policed by four Metas calling themselves The Circle of Fire, whose policy is to put a stop to any armed confrontation as quickly and effectively as possible - all parties have been warned, and the Circle hopes that the consequences to transgressors will act as a deterrent to others. Hailing from a range of backgrounds, they were brought together by a frustration with the continual violence in their

homelands in spite of years of negotiation, and agreed that a zero tolerance policy was the only way to get the point across. It has met with some success - at least there is less violence, although differences have still not been reconciled. They do not advertise the fact that they are imbued by archangels, but someone with the right savvy could probably work it out. They are the winged warrior Seraph (Michael), the protector and healer Dove (Raphael), the floating suited businessman Ordinal who acts as co-ordinator and negotiator (Gabriel), and the mystic Yesod (Uriel; named for the Qabalistic sphere of "Foundation").

### Iraq

The land around the rivers Tigris and Euphrates was ancient Mesopotamia, site of possibly the world's first cities and cradle of the pantheons of Sumer and Babylon. In March 2001 the people of Baghdad awoke to find the heads of several prominent political figures on poles in the city square. A group of Metas (there are believed to be six) had conducted a coup. Once arrangements settled down several of them chose their own cities to dwell in, edging the country towards a league of city-states. (One of them, the man known as Skyfather, seems to have taken up residence somewhere else. He has appeared several times at locations around the world, usually when momentous events are unfolding.) The international community was informed politely that "restructuring" was taking place, and asked for its patience. A short while later a further communication demanded the end of sanctions and hostile actions against the country. This has been enforced on a couple of occasions, firmly but with minimum casualties. On most occasions they act through intermediaries, but when they exercise their strange, primal powers there's no ignoring them.

On the whole, the new regime has been accepted into the international community. (The prospect of renewed access to its oil reserves helped to grease the wheels.) It co-operated enthusiastically in the

destruction of caches of chemical and biological weapons - but not before securing promises of help in restoring antiquities damaged in the Gulf War. The population (about 95% Muslim) was uncomfortable with the idea of its new rulers being empowered by ancient gods, but accepted the change as a way out of massive economic, health and social problems. Now that things are more comfortable there's more questioning of the situation.

New Metas arriving are expected to announce themselves to the authorities, and this information is made available to the rulers. They are somewhat territorial, and do not always tolerate potential threats.

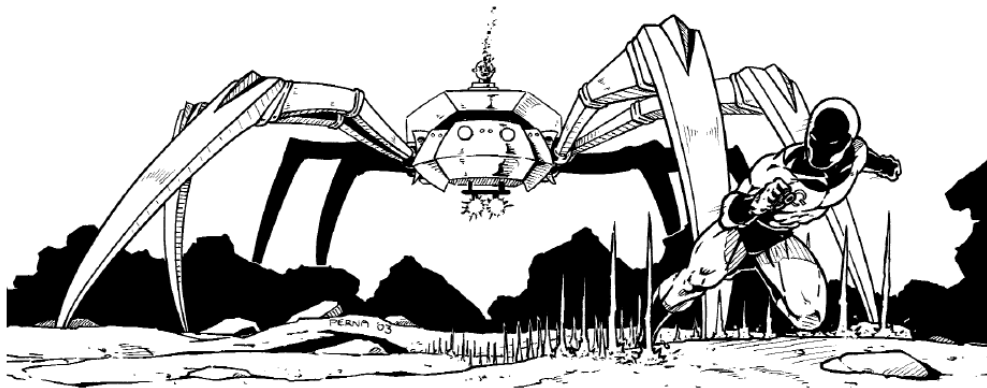
### Oceania

Some of the small island states have been lost or rendered uninhabitable due to rising sea levels. Some islanders became refugees, arriving in Australia and Papua New Guinea. This has created a degree of friction with the governments and aboriginal people, but the islanders have a couple of Metas of their own and are intent on making new homes for themselves. A few nations like Tuvalu have become part of the Federation of Telenesia, and more are considering it.

### Australia

If you go into the Outback there's a chance of meeting some very strange creatures - or, worse yet, being chosen to become one. The Aborigines' monsters are a peculiar bunch. The walls with the spirit world have worn thin over long ages, and there are unusual numbers of the lesser beings researchers call Sprites, so it pays to be respectful when you meet an animal or even a landscape feature. A few people, almost all indigenous Australians, have been imbued by major spirits of the Dreamtime. A small number (probably no more than a dozen) of the immigrant population have been imbued by European or Asian Sources connected with their ancestry, and no duplication of Sources has been recorded. The land does not encourage outsiders.





## Elsewhere

### Elysium

There's a small island in the Mediterranean that's a contender for the title of oddest place on the planet, with a society composed entirely of Metas and their families. The population is a mixture of permanent and transitory residents. The former mostly want peace and quiet, and include a number of people with significantly altered appearances. It was set up by the Guild, but runs fairly transparently under a Mayor (appointed by the Guild) with an Advisory Council of long-time residents in good standing.

All arrivals (by whatever means) are expected to report to Elysium Port, where they are checked to make sure they're a Meta (demonstration of powers or a check by an official with Meta-sensing ability) and made aware of local laws. Originally a resort island, the buildings have been developed by ingenious Metas, subject to loose planning laws which ensure a harmonious whole. You can see graceful towers, castles, glass domes, geometric metal constructions and rustic cottages. Many residents still prefer Mediterranean simplicity.

Inhabitants cannot be prosecuted for infringing the laws of other countries, but have to abide by the island's laws, which are fairly easy-going and aimed at enabling everyone to get along. They prohibit the usual things like assault, theft, murder and endangering relations with other countries by using the island as a base for your latest doomsday device.

There are some restrictions on money transfer, so criminals can't benefit from all the proceeds of massive thefts, and everyone's expected to contribute to the community. Sentences can include extradition and exclusion from future entry. Police here are all Metas, hence possibly the toughest in the world, but they face some pretty strange and dangerous situations.

It's not widely known that the Guild gets money from international agencies for running what is, effectively, an open prison. Metas who commit crimes elsewhere flee to safety on the island knowing that they'll be arrested as soon as they leave it. (The Guild does have an arrangement to tell other nations who's here, if asked.) So they stay - which stops them causing trouble anywhere else. It's easier than trying to devise walls that can hold them in, and if they cause trouble they're surrounded by people who can stand up to them.

### The Moon

Iridium City in the Bay of Rainbows is many things - the ultimate resort, a marketplace, a retreat, a symbol of what is possible... Some say it's a huge folly or a running sore. It was created and is maintained by the Guild, using Meta-boosted technology and the co-operation of Earth governments. The modified space shuttle now makes monthly passenger trips to Iridium Port for those who can afford the fare, taking about 2 days, with return journeys two weeks later. As far as is known, nobody has the right combination of powers to make the trip without artificial help.

Iridium gravity is only slightly less than Earth's, though details of how this has been accomplished have not been released. The city is a series of linked domes on the surface and caverns dug into the lunar rock. It is not a large place, and if anything went wrong with any of the support systems death would not be far off, so there's something of a frontier atmosphere. Communications with Earth are maintained through pulsed laser links with communications satellites.

The central part of the city contains the clubs, theatres, casinos, attractive houses and hotels, and even an ornamental park (which is part of the biosphere regulation systems). Several countries have offices here, watching for opportunities to further their interests through the step into space. Further out and further down are less attractive areas, with the support machinery itself and the plain, functional residence blocks of those who actually run the place. Outside there are small, experimental mining operations.

There is some criminal activity - the Guild tolerates little serious crime, but it does ignore some kinds of business that would be frowned on back home. Here it is the law - sure, you can complain to your home government, but how much do you want to argue with the organisation that controls your oxygen supply? Careless use of Meta powers (eg behaviour likely to hole a dome) are dealt with harshly. The most common punishment is shipment back to Earth under heavy sedation, but you might not get that far - security officers (including a number of Metas) have standing orders to take people out hard and fast any way they can rather than risk life support damage. ("Armed officer! This is your optional warning under the Life Support Regulations!")

(Metas imbued by moon gods find their powers permanently boosted here. Anyone with an Aegis relating specifically to the Earth rather than stone and soil in general has a permanent debility. In rules terms, treat it as the potential to use the Aegis in any scene rather than an automatic conveyor belt of Hero Points. Either version gives you a headache after a while.)



## **AN INTRODUCTION TO PARAPSYCHIATRY**

**Dr Lars Ekstrom, Director, UNOMA Parapsychiatry Division**

Science would have liked to classify metahumans as people with serious mental problems, given their claims of having received the power of mythological figures, but of course they are able to produce ample evidence of gaining power from *somewhere*. Meta psychology/psychiatry is still a young field, and much is not understood. However, it is clear that there are a number of psychiatric disorders unique to Metas.

Our field is the investigation - and, hopefully, resolution - of these difficulties. It seems to have settled on "parapsychiatry" as the standard label, as a parallel to the long-standing pursuit of parapsychology, formerly ridiculed as a pseudoscience. These days the prospect of correctly identifying lines on a card seems like small potatoes.

The normal state of a metahuman appears to be a balance between their established personality and the part of them which is "the voice of the god" or "source". This latter is a set of attitudes or feelings which the person identifies as being separate to his own, often unwanted, and varying in the power of its effect on the overall personality. There are obvious parallels with schizophrenia here. Sometimes the source urges responses and actions which are clearly inappropriate and undesirable, and the healthy metahuman is able to override these.

(There does seem to be a link between this attitude cluster and the metahuman's powers, though. Subjects have claimed that a loss of abilities is the result of offending the "source", which can be interpreted as invalidating or undermining the mental processes that generate the powers. Of course, there is some debate about whether the "source" is really part of the person's own mind or has some external, metaphysical origin. For this article we are concerned only with the functional effects on patients.)

### *Dissociation*

Sometimes the healthy balance between the two is disrupted by suppression of one side. The more common form is repression of the source cluster, in a form of denial designed to allow the person to live a normal life. Unfortunately their metahuman abilities still manifest occasionally, often in situations of extreme stress and in an uncontrolled way, which can be dangerous to those around them. It seems as though the source cluster finds ways of expressing itself even against the person's will. It is important to help such people come to terms with their nature, because only then will they be able to control their abilities consciously.

The second form is somewhat rarer and can be even more dangerous. The normal personality is suppressed and the person "becomes" the god, hero or monster from which their powers supposedly stem. They typically act in ways

completely unsuited to modern society and use their powers to avenge the slightest perceived insult. Such cases usually have to be immobilised so that the therapist can try to bring the normal personality back to take control. If the patient is not restrained, close contact often presents too great a danger to be attempted.

### *Megalomania*

This is commonest among those who have newly gained their powers. Taking a person who may not previously have had any significant control over the external world and giving them power on a plate (not just the ability to influence through human relationships) is a recipe for disaster, and it's not surprising that many of them can't handle it. Others develop this condition later through use of their abilities. It's characterised by the belief that they are superior to all others, that they can do no wrong and that their wishes should be obeyed. It can be difficult to separate this from the second dissociative condition outlined above at first, but observation will determine whether the normal personality is still in evidence.

### *Rejection of abilities*

Most metahumans gain their powers without seeking them, and some regard them as a curse rather than a gift. This is a particular problem when obvious physical alterations occur. Although an extreme solution, surgery has helped a few patients - but sometimes the patient's body reverses this over a period of time.

In rare cases this rejection can be so strong that the metahuman abilities are no longer accessible to the conscious mind. This is a danger, because they remain accessible to the subconscious, which may manifest them in small ways (sometimes without the patient noticing) or, under emotional stress, large ones. Such people can harm those who slight them without consciously intending to.

A linked phenomenon is denial - a patient may resist all attempts to identify them as metahuman. Sometimes they know the truth and just don't want to society to label them in that way. Sometimes their mind has blocked off the knowledge, and they really believe in their normality. These can be the hardest patients to help, because their minds fight to find rationalisations to preserve the illusion.

Given that there is no known "cure" for metahuman abilities, the therapist must help the patient to come to terms with their altered existence and bring their powers under conscious control. Again, this can sometimes be dangerous if the patient's frustration causes them to lash out.

### *General stress*

It may not be glamorous, but this is the most common psychological problem experienced by metahumans. Its nature depends on the life they choose for themselves. Some, especially those operating in public and official capacities, have anxiety about their performance - understandable when their lives and reputations depend on dealing successfully with incredibly dangerous situations on a day-to-day basis. Some experience stress due to the effort of maintaining a dual identity, concealing their metahuman activities from colleagues, friends and family and attempting to live a normal life. Those who don't set up dual identities have to cope with the possibility of metahuman challenges intruding on their lives, with a greater possibility of danger to those close to them. Our field also includes helping those people to understand what has happened to their loved one, including dealing with psychological and physical changes, and living with the threat of danger to the loved one and, indeed, themselves.

### *Metahuman psychopathic schizophrenia*

Usually shortened to MPS, this term was coined by researchers early in the study of the field. It has, unfortunately, also been accompanied by a vernacular term: "catching evil". The thesis is that an individual is granted powers by a "source" hostile to human well-being, and suddenly finds himself with a predisposition to harm life and property which he did not choose.

This area continues to be hugely controversial, and a number of prominent court cases have hinged on its interpretation. Many theorists and practitioners refuse to recognise it as a genuine disorder, claiming that it is no more than well-known behavioural problems given new window dressing, or an attempt by a subject pursuing wealth or gratification to escape the consequences of their actions. Others attempt to show significant attitude and behaviour changes, and claim that these must result from conditions external to their patients. There have been objections to the term "evil" on the grounds that it stigmatises people with psychological problems.

I shall not pretend to know the answers. On the one hand, none of the documented MPS cases involve individuals with blameless lives before they gained their abilities. On the other, many of them do seem to exhibit a scaling-up of antisocial activities, and some have appeared most sincere in their desire to overcome these impulses. Self-help groups for such people seem to have had some success in helping them, regardless of the root of their problems, which can only be to the benefit of society.

### *Conclusion*

Parapsychiatry will continue to present us with mysteries for many years to come. There are always openings for talented researchers and therapists with the desire to help fellow humans with more-than-human difficulties, and the courage to follow it through.



# THINGS IN HEAVEN AND EARTH

*"It's like there's a whole other world, that I never knew existed, side by side with the old one."*

*"Yes. And once you enter it, you can never leave."*

Tim Hunter and Zatanna, *Books of Magic*  
Neil Gaiman and Scott Hampton, DC Comics

## Sources

Are they really the gods, heroes and monsters of legend? Or are they constructs of human imagination?

Yes.

There is an appropriate oriental term, translated as "mutual arising". To use inexact terminology, M-space is a parallel dimension that has always been linked to our own, filled with energy that is, in some sense, alive. Sometimes this energy naturally forms clusters with a greater awareness of themselves, often dissolving again after a while. However, the thoughts of beings on Earth cause currents in the energy, and as humans evolved and developed thinking and imagination their shaping influence became strong. Human numbers grew, and some ideas and belief systems spread across whole cultures, with multitudes dragging the M-space currents in the same direction. The ideas of particular superhuman entities formed strong energy clusters, with greater individuality and power than before, and even the ability to sustain their own existence when the thoughts creating them waned. They also found they could sometimes exert themselves across the gap between the worlds to manipulate events on Earth. Their peculiar energy-nature allowed them to do things beyond normal cause and effect. This created a feedback loop - the gods that humans called for were able to influence the ideas that gave them form.

But over time younger beliefs replaced the old, and Sources found that their ability to reach across the Gate was tied to their adopted nature. Eventually, most of the pantheons were consigned to history as large portions of humanity embraced a science that

had no room for such superstitions. For several centuries the Gate was all but closed. Then came the information age, and the stories of the past were spread all round the world. Although usually lacking the dedicated belief of before, the legends were in the thoughts of many more people. The 1990s saw the birth of the World Wide Web and general spread of electronic reference materials, and more and more people learned and thought about the stories of the past. The turn of the millennium brought an extra surge, as people looked back over history and thought about the future. The Gate opened again, and the Sources aim to make sure it stays that way.



## Sprites

In the spirit world (or M-space, depending on your perspective), alongside the gods, heroes and monsters, are entities of lesser power, like the animal life of M-space. Modern researchers call them Sprites. They are elementals, tricksters, faeries and nightmares - clusters of awareness formed around fragmentary human ideas (and sometimes the thoughts of animals, which have their own ideas about things but are less powerful shapers than humans). They don't have the strength to create their own imbued, but in certain situations they can slip through the Gate and cause trouble on Earth.

## Bringing them through

When someone uses magic they create a temporary Gate which is always noticed on the other side. Sprites tend to flock around such people. Magic can bring them to Earth, either by deliberate summoning or by creating an opening they can slip through. You could consider introducing a Sprite on a particularly good Sorcery roll or as a story hook. It's always optional, and it might not have any effect until sometime afterwards so you don't have to ponder over it in the middle of a fight - just make a note to come back to it later. You'll only get one per scene

(unless the story calls for it!), and its nature will be linked to the spell or situation. The GM may also invent other reasons for Sprites to be present. Kamitech (see *Japan*) brings them through deliberately and binds them to specific objects.

## Behaviour

Sprites can't send their power through the Gate to multiple beings like Sources do. However, one that slips through the Gate can possess an animal or object (they can make the object perform minor functions, eg a box opens and shuts, a machine turns on and off) to anchor it in the material world. Sorcery, and perhaps a few other abilities, can banish them again. Each Sprite has its own simple personality and acts accordingly - in some ways it's more like an Aegis area of interest. Their understanding of the modern human world is limited. Some want to explore, while others cause mischief or just look for opportunities to use their powers. They often stay close to the magician who allowed them through - there may be some sort of link between them - which means most accomplished magicians are blessed or cursed with one or two "unusual" items or pets, and the neighbourhood around a magician's home becomes stranger than surrounding areas (in addition to results of the occasional miscast spell). The existence of the Sprites will only be confirmed by a deliberate search using supernatural abilities, so it's possible to be unaware of what's really going on.



## Game abilities

Give the Sprite an overall Rank of potency, eg Good [+2] Sprite, and use that to generate other abilities using the rules in *Super-Sidekick* (T&J p 50). One of its Qualities must cover its primal nature, eg Trickster, Horse, Predator, and powers must be thematically appropriate. Remember that the Sprite itself is a non-physical being, so won't have stuff like Strength. If it uses its Sprite abilities to possess an animal or object give it Good in that, eg Good [+2] Cat, and possibly appropriate size Qualities.

## Scions

People have sometimes wondered whether the children of Metas would inherit any powers. If Metas' own accounts of gaining the powers from some external entity are true, or even if the powers are just strange features of their own psychology, logic suggests that they wouldn't be passed on.

The public doesn't yet know the answer, but a number of people do, particularly in Elysium (and therefore the Guild) and some governments. Some of the early Metas now have teenaged children, and some of them do exhibit powers, though so far to a much lesser degree than a standard Meta. There are even rumours in some circles of a super-team composed of teenagers, though it's not clear whether this is just someone's idea or an actuality, or where it might be based.

Almost no-one knows the whole truth, though. These Meta-offspring, dubbed Scions, do not use the Gate and do not have Sources. Their powers are somehow ingrained into them. None of them have had children of their own yet, but that will happen within the next few years. Can they pass powers on again? Might they even lie latent for a generation or two before emerging? And new Metas keep appearing and having children too... Perhaps metahuman abilities will gradually spread through the entire population, effectively causing humanity to evolve. A lot of people will get very scared if they find out about this. How will we define "human", and what will it be like to be a Normal in a Meta's world? Is this, in fact, a threat to the human race? Should Metas be prevented from breeding?

The GM can decide who has this knowledge. Perhaps some researcher uncovers it during your game

timescale. If anyone has it, it's probably the Guild given that it runs the Meta community on Elysium and has a lot of other dealings with Metas. From there it might spread out to governmental and private research facilities. Eventually it might become public. Any of these can generate a plot connected with uncovering or suppressing the knowledge (or both) and people's reactions to it.

**Scion characters** are technically neither gods, heroes nor monsters - they're "ordinary" T&J supers that choose powers from the programmes of one or two metahuman parents. This can give Scions some unusual combinations of abilities. At character creation you can only put one Rank into a power for each programme it appears in (so with two powered parents with similar powers you can get to Good). That applies to Qualities too. Aegis doesn't apply, and they don't have an alien being in their head that can mess around with their powers if it feels like it. Vulnerabilities are available. Imbued items aren't (unless you want to make a case for one as an inherited Super-gadget). The GM must decide whether to allow access to further powers from the programme(s) through uncovering their heritage, or whether they're a fixed legacy and you just have to get better at using them.

## Incarnos

If it wishes, a Source can pour all of its essence through the Gate into a single host, possessing it completely. This usually requires some connection like an active Aegis or being at an important site, and is accompanied by manifestations relating to Source's Aegis and powers as well as noticeable changes in the host's body and clothing. It basically overwrites the host's abilities and personality.

Incarnos are extremely powerful. Treat them as the equivalent of World Class without distinguishing between Powers and Qualities: an extra 6 MOD points of temporary powers from the programme (some of which can be converted) plus an extra mandatory freebie as in chargen plus an extra Rank of Vulnerability. (Note that balance is not really important at this point.) However, any of the host's Qualities that are mental or learned skills with no Source-granted component are switched off.

Fortunately Incarnos are extremely rare. Apart from the effort involved to incarnate through the Gate, a

Source that does this can't power any other hosts at the same time. The Incarnos becomes its only representative, and any other Metas find their powers gone. Most Sources are unwilling to leave their chosen ones defenceless like this. Metas regain their powers gradually after the Source returns to M-space, generally taking [duration level of incarnation + 1].

This is a huge strain on the host. Once per duration level they must resist Damage Ranks of [duration TN] with their Normal physical and mental fortitude, ie don't count any Source-granted ability levels. If it fails they become unconscious and the possession ends. It's up to the GM what long-term effects this brings, if any, but it's never a trivial experience.



## Maelstroms

*Control Weather* is one of the most powerful abilities available, but it can be dangerous too. Having people running round distorting the world's weather systems can have catastrophic effects. If the distortion is great enough it can cause chaotic superstorms, usually called "maelstroms" (although technically this refers to whirlpools), in which weather conditions can clash and contradict each other or build to truly terrifying intensity.

In game terms this is most likely to be a plot element already in progress, a Story Hook, or a Revoltin' Development from a situation where two or more Metas with strong powers compete for control.

Maelstroms are much harder to quell than normal storms - you need power, skill and (unfortunately) proximity. Willpower and understanding of weather systems can help. A botched attempt (die result 2+ Ranks below target) can make the maelstrom even more destructive, gaining a Rank. This may also happen if it's allowed to continue unchecked.

# A COLLECTION OF POSSIBLE TRUTHS

"It's a strange world."

"Let's keep it that way."

Elijah Snow and Jakita Wagner, *Planetary: All Over the World*  
Warren Ellis and John Cassaday, *Wildstorm*

## Prometheus

One of the Greek Titans, ancestors of the gods, Prometheus represented foresight and brought fire and cultural skills to humankind. In the late 1990s he was the first Source to use the Gate, helping to push it open for the others. But he didn't use it to create a Meta - in fact there are no Prometheus Metas. He used it to incarnate himself into the Internet.

From there Prometheus helped to stop the Millennium Bug from biting, and has manipulated the flow of information ever since to steer human thoughts in such a way as to keep the Gate open. He can also intervene directly - given the increase in electronic communication it's not hard to order TV adverts or even send anonymous tips to crusading Metas. No-one seems to know he's there, and it should be extraordinarily difficult for anyone to find out. This one of the cleverest and most adaptable Sources, and he's had plenty of practice in walking through systems and hiding his traces.

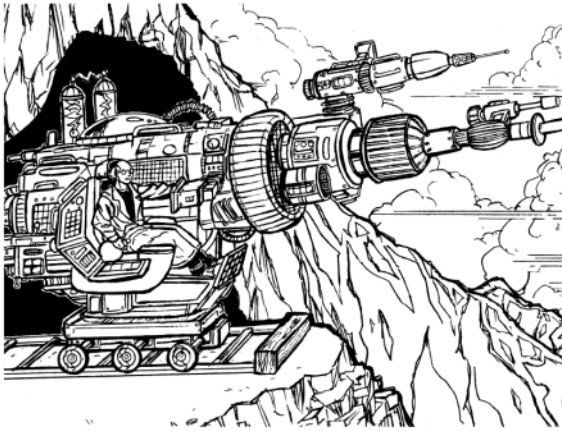
The whole Meta genesis might not have happened without him. But why did he really do it? Did he foresee some coming threat to the Earth, from within or from outside, which required the presence of super-powered defenders? Or does he just want humanity to reach a higher potential?

## M-space explorers

If one accepts that Metas get their powers from beings existing in some sort of parallel dimension, then there is the exciting possibility of finding a way to visit that place. Most regard this as fringe science at best, but that doesn't stop scientists (including a secretive group known as "The Enclave") pursuing it.

Some of them label themselves as "experimental metaphysicists". What forms might their work take?

- A project code-named "Alice" has constructed a fort or vehicle actually in M-space, protected by powerful isolation fields. There are incredible views beyond the fields, as the scenery presented is changed by (usually invisible) M-space entities. Can things leak through? Can someone be taken/lured away and come back changed? What happens if the field goes down? Might staff get possessed by Sprites? Characters might follow clues to the innocuous-sounding "Alice", perhaps thinking it's a person at first, and then find themselves having to rescue foolish researchers from otherworldly horror. Alternatively, it might open up exotic new avenues of exploration for them. Just think who and what might walk up to the screen for a chat.
- A project has constructed a "projection sphere", a vehicle a bit like a mini-sub or diving bell which is to be projected into M-space. There's a nice light show, obscuring the sphere from view for a few seconds. The occupant(s) travel to M-space, have experiences and return within a few instants of Earth time. In fact their bodies and the sphere remain in the physical world while their minds go to M-space. That might mean the sphere functions as a Gate that could work both ways - what might come through?
- M-space charges are rare and experimental grenade-like devices which disrupt energy from M-space for a few moments in the nearby area, but their effects are unpredictable and feedback soon burns them out. A grenade has a Rank (usually Average or Good). When triggered, give it a roll at the start of each round and see what Rank it reaches. Source-granted abilities of that Rank and lower are blocked for that round (boosted Qualities are Downshifted on Average or higher). Others are unaffected (as are things like Aegis, Vulnerability and Master of the Gate, though the effect resists the latter). A Poor result Upshifts Source abilities. Less than Poor or a dice roll of double 1's burns out the device (but re-roll if it's the first round). These things give M-space entities the equivalent of drunken food poisoning, and they do not have happy thoughts toward those who use them.



## Malefacts

There is a small chain of bars located in major world cities, catering to a very specific clientele: those who society labels as “evil”. As long as they don’t break the law or cause trouble (for which management has a very low tolerance) visitors are free to relax and socialise with no questions asked. Newcomers are often subject to pretty heavy intimidation, though, and out-of-depth visitors sometimes get followed when they leave.

Information about help programmes for MPS (“catching evil”, see parapsychiatry article) is prominent but not preachy. Known Malefacts branches include Amsterdam, Los Angeles and Tokyo. They choose low-key locations, often with very subdued frontages and relying mainly on word of mouth for promotion.

## Prodigies

An innovative creator-type Meta with a brilliant but unstable mind creates their own external multiple personality disorder in the form of artificial intelligences, existing within a large and well-secured computer installation, calling them “The Parliament”. Each emphasises aspects of the creator’s mind, and each is unstable in some way. The Meta may be the leading expert on AI and expert systems, available (with the Parliament) for consultation. Perhaps they’re based in an undersea city or Elysium. Robots in key locations (even Iridium City) could provide telepresence to make contact with clients.

At some point the Meta created Gyrus, a clever and forceful AI that wanted to rival its creator by spawning AI offspring of its own. Now of course any AI can become mobile through a robot body, either through installation (possible problems with the computing capacity within a human-sized body) or telepresence (possible reaction time delay, and vulnerable to communications interference). So Gyrus’ offspring could form a menacing robot army. These do not have the mental capacities of the Meta’s originals, but they’re not insane. In fact they are inhuman by being too sane, evaluating things entirely rationally with no value judgments (eg killing 5 people to save 10 is a quick logical choice, and won’t give them nightmares or guilt).

There are a whole range of possible scenarios.

- The original creator is dead now, but the Parliament survives. Would it have a common agenda (perhaps leading to manipulation of world events) or be too fractured?
- Other AIs in the Parliament also have their own agendas and are using part of their processing time to pursue these, unknown to the creator.
- Gyrus is still part of the Parliament, though disruptive.
- Gyrus is exiled somewhere on Earth, perhaps thought destroyed.
- Gyrus was recognised as dangerous. Not wishing to kill it, the creator bound it to an electronic probe and fired it out into deep space. However, the probe landed in the asteroid belt and it’s gradually been using the minerals there to construct tools, machines and new AIs. There’s now a civilisation of artificial beings looking back towards Earth. Do they want revenge on the creator, or seek some sort of twisted redemption? Do they seek to control or eradicate inefficient humanity?

## Bright and beautiful

In Nebraska, USA there is a strange and dangerous garden. Genetic experimentation created crops of fruit and vegetables that are too perfect. They rise straight, tall and beautiful, untroubled by pests or disease, forming a forest of sorts. Their flavours are designed to react chemically with the human system so that nothing afterwards tastes as good. They also



give off pheromones making them beautiful and loved, causing those affected to do almost anything to stay nearby.

There's a community of people who have become entranced, along with certain other animals with near-human biology, like pigs. They do feed off the crops, but react murderously to any wholesale destruction of the plants. (If one or more Metas got in there it'd become really difficult to eradicate the crop.) The authorities probably settle for fencing off the area and stopping anyone else going in. Perhaps long-term exposure changes people, giving them breath or sweat which buzzes the pleasure centres in those they meet, increasing suggestibility. Maybe there are even some who do leave temporarily on important missions. Characters could get involved by making a rest stop on a journey and getting infected, by tracking someone who succumbs, or by being asked to help destroy the crops.

Alternatively, perhaps the effect works on insects. (The different effects could even exist near each other, in different planting areas.) They stay near the plants, but can't feed on them because of the anti-pest treatments. Some will die, but others that are

predatory (like spiders and mosquitoes) will just be hungry, and found in huge numbers. Visiting might not be such a good idea. For an ecological slant, what if the area is pulling in insects needed for pollination elsewhere?

## Evil genius

A scientist hires a Meta secretly to enhance their intellect through magic for an important project. As part of the process a Sprite attaches itself to them (through some nearby animal or personal possession) and starts to manipulate things subtly.

In a different version, it's a machine which gives the enhancement. A Sprite seeks to become more powerful and thinks the machine might work on it, so it lets no-one stand between it and accessing the device.

## The King is dead - long live the King!

In October 2015 Arthur of Britain is killed, sending shock waves around the world. Official information releases suggest some form of attack, but give no detail - apparently no witnesses survived. The country goes into shock, with many businesses coming to a halt and several outbreaks of violence and looting. Three weeks later Merlin and the Knights of the Round Table announce that a new Arthur has arrived, pledging to uphold the vision of his predecessor.

What really happened, and why? Was it one of Arthur's enemies? What does Merlin really know? PCs could get involved by digging into history or uncovering present-day consequences.

In fact, you could have a change of Merlin at some point instead, or as well. The first one might have just disappeared, or be presumed dead in some accident although no body was recovered. The second one is a formidable middle-aged woman. And perhaps the mysterious Sir Raven, whose face is always concealed by shadow and has been assumed to be imbued by Odin, is actually an old friend of the court in disguise... But why?

This stuff is included here rather than in the timeline because everything works just fine if none of it happens. You might find it useful to have a simple,

stable backdrop. Alternatively you could apply the basic idea to other places, for instance having one of the city-rulers of Iraq dying in mysterious circumstances and looking at relationships with their fellows and advisors. Apparent deaths and subsequent returns, overt and concealed, are superhero staples - in fact, in the comics it's extraordinarily difficult to polish off any major character for good.

### Bad medicine

There's a new designer drug called Magic, rare and expensive, that gives Normals a feeling of mystical unity and supernatural power. (Optionally, it can sometimes give them random Meta powers for a short time: 1-3 Ranks, ceiling Good; or roll for it as 1d6-3. A small gang under its effects could be an interesting challenge.)

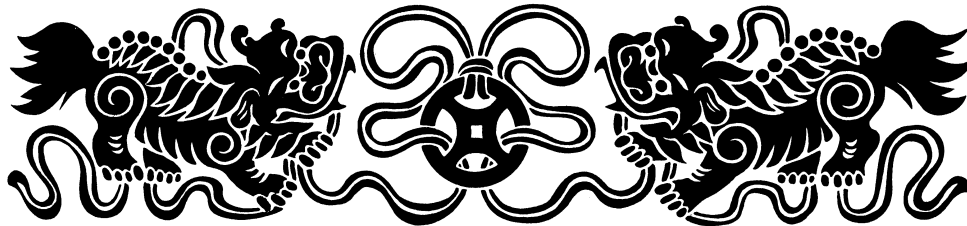
It has another name, Bedlam, due to its effect on Metas: it makes their powers activate uncontrollably, which can be unhealthy for the surrounding area. It turns out to be created through a carefully guarded process involving destructive binding of Sprites to chemicals. The outfit producing it doesn't want any

interference, of course - but is it just about the money, or is there another agenda?

### The Data of the Gods

This appears here because it's up to the GM whether to implement it or not, depending on the feel of your game. One or more organisations have built up an extensive database of mythical entities, available through portable or vehicle-based computers. From observing the powers used by a given Meta, agents can build a shortlist of possible Sources - the more information they get, the shorter the list. This is useful because it gives clues for the target's other powers, avoiding nasty surprises, and gives hints for weakening them. Those with frequent contact with Metas soon pick up the most common Source types on their own anyway - eg "water" or "death" - and learn what kind of moves to expect next.

UNOMA might have this, though it might be a bit too much like admitting a non-scientific basis for Meta powers. The Guild might. Or maybe there's some secret organisation of mythologists - it might aim to watch Metas without interference, or protect them, or dissect them...



# ADVENTURE SEED GENERATOR

By now some of you will have loads of ideas for adventures you can run in Legends Walk! Others, like me, may find these ideas don't flow freely. Don't worry, citizen! Here's a handy tool to get you going. (It's based on a more detailed version in Adamant Entertainment's *Underworld* RPG, adapted and simplified for LW with permission. Adamant also publishes a more substantial *Superheroic Adventure Generator* e-product.)

Roll 5 six-sided dice and write down the numbers you get. You could do this yourself, reading them from left to right as they've landed, or get each of

your players in turn to roll one die. Then use the following tables to construct a seed in the format:

The PCs must **DO SOMETHING** at **LOCATION** while contending with **OPPOSITION** and dealing with **COMPLICATION**.

Many elements have a couple of alternatives listed to help spark possibilities. You don't necessarily need to use all five, and once you've got them you might decide to tweak a couple to get a better seed. Treat each element as fluid and general rather than narrow and restricting.

## DO

- 1 Battle/Destroy
- 2 Protect/Rescue
- 3 Investigate/Observe
- 4 Liaise/Persuade
- 5 Find/Retrieve
- 6 Build/Create

## SOMETHING

- 1 Important person
- 2 Strange creature
- 3 Valuable object
- 4 Organisation/Group
- 5 Information/Knowledge
- 6 Place/Building

## LOCATION

- 1 Urban landmark/Key building
- 2 Wilderness
- 3 Form of transportation
- 4 Secret lair/Secure complex
- 5 Exotic or dangerous location
- 6 Ordinary house or street

## OPPOSITION

- 1 Loner/Rogue
- 2 Criminal
- 3 Authority figure (inc police, army, etc)
- 4 Strange creature
- 5 Disaster (natural or otherwise)
- 6 Organisation

(Any of these could be singular or plural.)

## COMPLICATION

- 1 Innocent bystanders
- 2 Environmental conditions
- 3 The Law
- 4 The PCs themselves
- 5 Hidden motivation/Mistaken identity
- 6 Bigger challenge is revealed

(These are the most optional of the five. They may be obvious, or appear as twists when the players think they've succeeded.)



## Seed examples

14551 - BATTLE/DESTROY an ORGANISATION/GROUP at an EXOTIC OR DANGEROUS LOCATION, while contending with DISASTER and dealing with INNOCENT BYSTANDERS. This could be a battle with some terrorist group in an undersea settlement, where their activities have holed the dome and the inhabitants are at risk. The terrorists could be Metas or Normals, with the focus on high-flown super-battles or a gritty race against time.

31316 - LIAISE/PERSUADE an IMPORTANT PERSON at or on a FORM OF TRANSPORTATION, opposed by a LONER/ROGUE, complicated by BIGGER CHALLENGE IS REVEALED. The location could be a cruise liner or railway station, but let's go for a Telenesian floating island. The important person could be a chief or the head of a rising company. The PCs might be there for diplomacy or to make a deal, or perhaps they've heard the person is in danger from a disgruntled ex-employee and need to convince them to take precautions. Then it turns out the assailant is a trained assassin hired by another organisation - maybe even the same one that hired the PCs!

53643 - FIND/RETRIEVE a VALUABLE OBJECT from an ORDINARY HOUSE OR STREET, opposed by a STRANGE CREATURE and complicated by THE LAW. This could be a classic haunted house tale, with some ghost or monster (probably a Sprite or Meta) threatening searchers. As for the complication, maybe the PCs have to restrain their powers to avoid attracting police attention - destroying property is never popular, but perhaps they're also trespassing, in a secure area, or somewhere that Metas aren't tolerated.

34625 - INVESTIGATE/OBSERVE an ORGANISATION/ GROUP at an ORDINARY HOUSE OR STREET while contending with CRIMINAL and dealing with HIDDEN MOTIVATION/MISTAKEN IDENTITY. Maybe there are two organisations: local criminal factions who have escalated their level of violence against each other, and the PCs have to find out why. You could start with investigating scenes of shootings and blowings-up, and progress to negotiating with or infiltrating the gangs. Then you find the teenage



children of both leaders have gone missing and both think the other side took them! In reality some third party is manipulating the gangs and plans to step in and take control of the local criminal scene when the dust clears. Perhaps this is a supervillain with mind control powers, assisted by a metahuman lieutenant of one of the gangs who wants to climb the ladder the fast way. Can the PCs battle through their minions, take them down and bring the kids to safety before more civilians get caught in the crossfire? (This scenario was run in playtest for "street level" characters, with the Sicilian and Mexican mafias at each others' throats in New York and a villain using Hades' *Create Shade* power who'd nobbled the teenagers' drivers to bring them to him in an abandoned subway station.)

# INSPIROGRAPHY

Here's a list of inspiration and reference sources for Legends Walk: material on superheroes and mythology that was helpful in writing the original game back in 2001-2, and since. Hopefully you'll find something to enjoy here too.

## Comics

These trade paperbacks are selected for quality, and offer a range of superheroic styles. Comics are, of course, a team effort, but only the main writer and artist are credited here for space reasons. (I notice this list is rather low on Marvel titles - that's chance, not any sort of critical comment on them.)

**The Authority: Relentless** (Warren Ellis, Bryan Hitch) got me back into comics after several years away, with its high-powered, big-screen action and intriguing characters. Created from the ashes of the UN superteam Stormwatch, The Authority aims to save the world from itself (when they get a break from the dictators and aliens).

**The Authority: Under New Management** (Ellis, Hitch; Mark Millar, Frank Quitely) contains another two 4-issue stories on a similar scale.

### The Avengers

Marvel's premier superteam has included such luminaries as Captain America, Iron Man, Thor, the Scarlet Witch, the Vision, and a whole host of others. At one end of the scale, **Essential Avengers vol 1** reprints their earliest adventures, starting in 1963! It's good value, with 24 issues in one affordable book, and shows the way superheroes were done back then. The stories are simple but still good, though the dialogue seems over-the-top now. There are at least two further volumes. At the other end, there are a set of recent stories by Kurt Busiek and George Perez. **The Morgan Conquest** brings together 39 past team members, turns them into medieval parallel versions (short for the price; the last 2 pages of the epilogue are the best); **Supreme Justice**, which I haven't read; **Clear And Present Dangers** presents a range of separate threats; and **Ultron Unlimited** is the best of the bunch, pitting them against an insane indestructible robot from the

past and rather a lot of his friends, and letting them all show off against overwhelming odds.

**Astro City** by Kurt Busiek and Brent Eric Anderson is a superhero world all of its own, though many of the characters are clearly homages to DC and Marvel heroes. This gives the opportunity to look at aspects of what life would really be like for these people, such as Samaritan counting seconds of flight time in between saving people, and Astra trying to be an ordinary kid while going out on world-saving adventures with the First Family. Astro City itself is super-central, with all kinds of weirdness going on all the time, with the place and its inhabitants having a strong "silver age" style and beautifully realised by the artists, including help from Alex Ross. The ones I've read are **Life in the Big City** (separate stories introducing a range of characters), **Family Album** (majoring on two stories - the one with Astra, and Jack-in-the-Box wrestling with his future and past); **Confession** (mostly a single story, of a young man's apprenticeship to the city's dark avenger); and **Tarnished Angel** (aging crook with metal skin is the only person who can protect the ordinary people in his neighbourhood).

**The Books of Magic** by Neil Gaiman and various. Tim Hunter is an ordinary English lad - until four of the DC universe's greatest magical characters turn up, tell him he's going to be a magician of incredible power and introduce him to the magical world in a grand tour featuring cameos from many DC magicians and weirdos. The four sections are each illustrated by a different artist in a different style. Gaiman gives us plenty of insight into the mystery and dangers of magic, and Tim (good name!) has to face a number of perils himself. Spawned an extended series.

**Doom Patrol: crawling from the wreckage** by Grant Morrison and Richard Case. Doom Patrol is probably DC's least well known team, made up of a few individuals who are damaged or impaired in some way and focus on threats of a stranger kind. This was a revamp of the team in 1992, with a man's brain in a robot body, a woman with multiple-personality-and-power disorder, and a hermaphrodite with a negative energy parasite. The stories are indeed strange, with

intruding nightmare parallels and mad godlike entities, but over too quickly.

**The Golden Age** by James Robinson and Paul Smith is a story of DC's Golden Age heroes, with art in the style of the early comics. They protected America's home front during WWII, but now the war is over what do they do with their lives? One hero has a vision of his own, of an America strong enough to lead the world - but does he have another agenda too? Nice focus on some of the first supers.



The **Justice League of America (JLA)** is DC's top team, including icons like Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Flash and Green Lantern. For a recent retelling of the team's formation (with a line-up different from today's), with both action and character development, try **JLA: Year One** by Mark Waid and Brian Augustyn. Mainly, look at the six-book collection led by Grant Morrison and Howard Porter. Lots of wonderful character moments; ideas flying sometimes too thick and fast, pits the team against a succession of threats and builds to a big conclusion. **New World Order, American Dreams** (the weakest), **Rock of Ages, Strength in Numbers, Justice for All, World War III**. Finally, Alan Davis' **The Nail** is a "what if?" story about the way the world might have gone if there had been no Superman - it's good, and lots of characters appear, but the dialogue is intermittently awful.

The **Justice Society of America (JSA)** consists of DC's first generation of heroes, the ones who were active in the 1940s. Some of them appeared in **JLA: Justice for All**, and in **Justice Be Done** the team gets relaunched with a mixture of age-resistant former members and the offspring and sidekicks of older heroes. Works well in its own right, and it's interesting to see some of the originals in action. I really like the pulp edge of this series, and the use of less well known characters than the JLA but with a similar eye to great moments.

**Kingdom Come** by Mark Waid and Alex Ross. This is a "what if?" tour de force, including appearances by a vast array of DC characters. The classic heroes have grown old and the world has passed them by in favour of a new generation who care only about themselves. A disaster prompts the old guard to return, with a plan to protect the people by force, locking the dangerous supers in a gulag. Not all agree, and alliances are made and broken as the situation builds toward conflict on a vast scale and armageddon or redemption. Ross' painted art is unusual, but atmospheric. And the epilogue is wicked.

Wildstorm's **Planetary** series by Warren Ellis and John Cassaday is kind of a superhero X-Files. The three-person Planetary team explores strange things and uncovers secret history. Lots of references to mainstream superheroes and other fiction genres. The first volume, **All Over the World**, has pulp heroes, weird science, ghost cops and giant monsters. In the second, **The Fourth Man**, the natures of the Planetary organisation and its enemies (wait till you see who they are!) become clearer. And there's the Justice League and James Bond. Heh.

**Rising Stars** by J Michael Straczynski and Keu Cha/Christian Zanier sets up an interesting premise - a strange meteorite hits a small American town, affecting the unborn children, who later develop strange powers. So all the world's supers grow up together, being studied by government scientists. Now they are adults, with very different lives, but when someone starts murdering them they're brought together again in ways they didn't expect. Volume I, **Born In Fire**, is good, but not quite great - waiting to see what happens next.

**Squadron Supreme** by Mark Gruenwald and various is a take on, "What if superheroes decided to really change the world?". It was published in 1985-6 by Marvel with characters based on DC's Justice League in a universe of their own so Gruenwald could take liberties. At first the Squadron's reforms go well, but as they take more and more into their own hands - like reprogramming criminals to make them useful members of society - the cracks begin to show. The art is four-colour, the style is that of older comics rather than the flashy, cynical violence of more recent titles, but it does a really good job of exploring the theme that there are some things you can't fix with raw power.

The **Stormwatch** books are the prequels to The Authority, introducing most of the characters (they also contain the seeds of The Monarchy). Writer

Warren Ellis took this Wildstorm title about the official UN superteam in new directions and, ultimately, destroyed the team. It doesn't have the Authority attitude and scale, but it does have a quota of violence and nastiness, and explores the idea of using powers to make a better world and different approaches to doing it. The books are **Force of Nature**, **Lightning Strikes**, **Change or Die**, **A Finer World**, and **Final Orbit**.

**Tom Strong** by Alan Moore and Chris Sprouse is a modern pulp superhero. Born in 1900, Tom Strong's parents raise him on an isolated island in high gravity to be a genius then die leaving him to be raised by the natives who have a life-extending root and he marries the princess and they have a daughter. And there's a talking gorilla and robot butler. Volume 1 is a set of separate stories, and most link Tom's current escapades with an episode from his past drawn in a different style. No complicated plots or anti-heroes, though plenty of intriguing ideas from Moore.

**Top Ten** by Alan Moore and Gene Ha - now this one's just fun. After WWII, Earth's population of "science heroes" - people with superpowers or weird gadgets - continued to expand, along with visiting aliens, supernatural entities, robots and goodness knows what else. The solution? Build a new city off America and shove 'em all in there. Of course, a place like that needs a superpowered police force - that's Top Ten. One walks through walls, one shoots electricity, one's a dog in a humanoid exoskeleton... It's kind of like NYPD Blue on acid. Anything can happen, and keep your eye on all the little details in the background (like a certain metal-clawed scrapper advertising hair conditioner). And there's a story with some gods and hilarious dialogue. Volume 2 continues the zaniness but is a bit grittier, taking in drugs, child exploitation and discrimination against minorities.

**Watchmen** by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons is, for many people, the grand-daddy of graphic novels. It didn't grab me as much. That's partly because it's 15 years old and the era it refers to is a long time ago in a country far, far away - this is more about exploring the spirit of a time, one dominated by the spectre of nuclear war. In Moore's world there's only one person with real superpowers, and he can do practically anything, providing America with a powerful deterrent. The rest are basically vigilantes who like dressing up, and now someone's killing

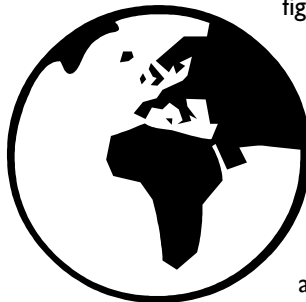
them. This is the story of how they investigate, interspersed with magazine articles about them and pages from a truly disturbing pirate horror comic. Low on action, high on exploring the thoughts of strange people.

## Mythology

**Dictionary of Celtic Mythology** by James MacKillop is a substantial work, with entries on people, places, creatures and ideas from across the Celtic lands, and a good source of detail that can be hard to find elsewhere. However, some of the versions and interpretations disagree with other sources, so it may be wise not to rely on it exclusively.

**Dictionary of Gods and Goddesses, Devils and Demons** by Manfred Lurker covers the major figures in world mythologies in an alphabetic format - very comprehensive, though you only get a small amount of information for each entry.

**A Dictionary of Irish Mythology** by Peter Berresford Ellis is not a thick volume, but it gets in a lot of detail about the mythology of Ireland in an authoritative way. Seems hard to find now.



**Epics of Early Civilization** by Allan Lothian is part of a big series on world mythologies by Time-Life Books. This one's about the myths of Mesopotamia. Plenty of pictures and easy to read, in article rather than dictionary format, focusing on stories rather than crunchy detail. Useful info for an area that's not often covered.

**The Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology** - I have the 1990 edition, and find it an excellent resource on many world mythologies in a chunky hardback. Sadly, it seems to be hard to get hold of at the moment, and you pay for the comprehensiveness.

**The Mythology of the Americas** by David M Jones and Brian L Molyneux is an attractive "coffee-table" book with full colour throughout. Separate sections for North America, Mesoamerica and South America have introductions, dictionaries of key figures and spreads about key concepts and customs. Decent level of detail for these less well known mythologies - and three for the price of one book!

## Movies

### Batman Begins

Taking the big bat franchise back to basics, a nicely atmospheric piece as Bruce Wayne reinvents himself as a caped crusader.

### The Incredibles

This animated feature is absolutely fantastic, with as many super-feats as the artists could draw. It's a world where a scandal some years ago forced the superheroes to go to ground. Bob Parr, Mr Incredible, leaps at the chance to get back into action, and his super-wife and super-kids get drawn in too. Plenty of humour, but some mature edges too, and really thrilling action sequences.

### Justice League

Not the film version - there is one, it tries but misses the point in most important respects - but the animated series. It hasn't run over here but I have a few episodes on DVD and it seems a very worthy parallel to recent graphic novels, with a good grasp of both powers and personalities. The descendant of a number of other well-done animated series like Batman, Batman Beyond (or Batman of the Future), and X-Men.

### Mystery Men

An affectionate spoof of the genre, as a group of misfits with powers which are almost useless (throwing forks, turning invisible if no-one's watching, long-range flatulence...) attempt to bring down a major villain after a small accident involving the city's major hero. It's genuinely funny, more than a little surreal and has a nice message about finding the power inside yourself.

### Spider-man

Two films that do one thing nothing else has managed so well: capturing the sheer euphoria of having superpowers. Balanced, of course because it's Spidey, by having a really crappy personal life. Great action sequences, and plenty of humour and pathos.

### Unbreakable

Bruce Willis and Samuel L Jackson in a story of an ordinary guy who finds that he may (or may not) be a superhero. Don't expect flashy action scenes - it's our ordinary world, and the powers are very low-key. It focuses on what it's like for the character, particularly through his relationship with his young son. Interesting ending.

### X-Men

The most recent attempt at a movie version of well-known comic superheroes succeeded pretty well, and certainly increased public interest in supers. Takes liberties with the X-Men, of course, but the dialogue's great, effects are good and story's OK. The sequel is of similar quality.

## Music

Sounds to kickstart your action scene brain...

### Babylon 5, vol 2: Messages from Earth by Christopher Franke

I'm a B5 fan, so sue me. This album has the short themes from four seasons of the show, interspersed with long pieces. Lots of dramatic, stirring, bold stuff.

### Batman Beyond by various

This is the music from the animated series which aired as Batman of the Future in the UK. It's brilliant. 20 short tracks, mostly rocky guitar and synthesiser (do modern beat combos still call them that?) with a few drips of weird and soulful (then rapidly back to the action stuff).

### The Best of Bond... James Bond by various

Every roleplayer should have a disc of Bond themes, for over-the-top orchestral goodness with not an ounce of shame. OHMSS is my favourite.

### Mortal Kombat by various

It may not be art, but it's a decent action movie. Unfortunately the album I bought was the one with tracks from various groups, most of which are too heavy and loud for me, with a few of the instrumental bits which I was really after - me like them, and there's definitely something superheroic about, "Test your might!". (Mind you, I should probably have bought the original score album by George S Clinton instead.)

### Pirates of the Caribbean by Klaus Badelt

The soundtrack of the first movie always gets my air conducting going - great therapy for a blue day, and it's a short step from swashbuckling to webslinging.

## Character creation

This works much the same as standard T&J, except that power choice is guided by the shortlist in a power programme.

**Concept.** Choose a mythic Source (or other character type if you're using them) and a Normal background that will work well together.

**Normal Qualities.** Choose 10 MOD points of Strengths and one Poor [-2] Weakness. The first Rank in a Quality is Good.

**Powers.** Choose 6 MOD points of powers from your Source's programme. The first Rank in a Power is Average, which is costed as 1. Asterisked powers are described in the *Key powers* section; unmarked ones are as in T&J.

- You must take a mandatory freebie according to whether your source is a god, hero or monster (see opposite).
- You must put at least one point into the Required Power.
- You may convert powers into Qualities listed in the programme. Each power converted buys MOD+1 Ranks, distributed as you wish between the Qualities. Make a note of spending the power, and underline Qualities boosted by Sources.
- You may take imbued items listed, which give access to powers embedded in objects (or, sometimes, animals). Choose an item that is symbolically similar to the original. If you are temporarily deprived of it you cannot access those powers but will gain Hero Points.
- You may buy Vulnerabilities from the programme as powers. These will give you extra Hero Points when triggered, but cause damage that reduces story-affecting power.

**Finishing off.** Fill in player and character names, iconic codename and appearance, Motivation, starting Hero Points of 5/10, background summary and any starting Stunts.

## Mandatory start-up freebies

- **If your Source is a God**, start with Average [0] Aegis (see below).
- **If your Source is a Hero**, start with an extra Motivation linked to the description or an extra Source-granted Quality Rank.
- **If your Source is a Monster**, start with an Average [0] Vulnerability (see below).

To build on to these, work from their normal cost - eg upgrading an Average Aegis (MOD cost 1) to Good (MOD 2) costs 1 MOD point.

## Aegis

It works as a power but is not used for rolls. Average counts as MOD 1. Rank may be improved as normal at character creation or in play. You can only gain Hero Points from Aegis once per scene, except if Aegis goes positive and you have no damage you always get +1HP.

- Positive: take an action to soak up the power, heal MOD damage, gain MOD Hero Points.
- Negative: lose an action, take MOD damage, gain MOD Hero Points.

## Vulnerabilities

When triggered, the following happen. Average is counted as MOD 1 for these purposes.

- Lose an action.
- Take MOD Damage Ranks. This is usually a one-off, but physical types could be per turn. In LW it's often targeted damage, attacking particular sorts of Quality first, eg weird appearance eroding social abilities.
- Gain 1d6+MOD Hero Points (but only once per scene).

<b>Power</b>	<b>Page</b>	Immortal	31	Sense Death's Presence	34
All-Knowing	25	Immunity (specify)	31	Shapeshift	35
Alter Properties	25	Intelligence	31	Size	36
Animal Connection (specify)	26	Knowledge of the Dead	32	Smiting	36
Aquatic	26	Languages	32	Sorcery	36
Beauty	26	Leadership	32	Summon Minions	37
Blessing (and Curse)	27	Leaping	32	Super-Agility	37
Breach the Wall of Death	27	Master of (specify)	32	Super-Awareness	38
Control (specify)	28	Master of Skills	32	Super-Endurance	38
Control Disease	28	Master of the Gate	33	Super-Ingenuity	38
Craft Wonders	29	Music	33	Super-Presence	38
Creation	29	Pleasure	33	Super-Strength	38
Curse	27	Poisonous Breath	33	Super-Wisdom	39
Devouring	30	Portability	33	Time Distort	39
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