VURT

THE TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME

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from the Cypher System Rulebook by Monte Cook
Including excerpts by Monte Cook.

RAVENDESK GAMES

CYPHER SYSTEM

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago I dreamed of feathers.

Welcome to the Univurt.
A place where fantasies can come true, as long as you're willing to pay the price.
A place where borders are made of mist.
A place where doors lead to the interior of the skull
A place where swarms of blurbflies hover, spreading messages of hope and despair.
A place where the vurt gangs, the cops and the corporations fight for control of the people's desires.
A place where the Game Cat holds the key to the code to the map to the treasure.
A place where the barriers of the skin are broken down, where all modes of being are fully operational, where dogmen and shadowgirls lie in wait, and where the next portal might just be the one that leads to paradise...

Open all channels. Connect to everything. Enjoy the game.

Jeff Noon, 2017

WELCOME TO MANCHESTER

CHAPTER 2

EXTRACTED FROM THE LOOKING GLASS WARS BY R.B. TSHIMOSA

There is now little doubt that one of the most important discoveries of the last century was the ability to record dreams onto a replayable medium, a bio-magnetic tape coated with Phantasm liquid. This liberation of the psyche, in its most advanced form, became known as Vurt. Through the gates of Vurt the people could re-visit their own dreams, or, more dangerously, visit another person's dream, a stranger's dream.

It is generally accepted that this 'doorway between reality and dream' was first opened by the amorphologist 'Miss Hobart,' but the actual origins of the Vurt and the method by which human beings travelled there (via 'dream-feathers' which were placed into the mouth) will always be shrouded in mystery.

Much of this frustrating lack of knowledge stems from the nature of the Vurt itself, because the 'world of dreams' very quickly achieved a life of its own. The early people of Earth were, in the main, ignorant of this aspect of the invention. It was this 'self-dreaming' attribute of the Vurt world that eventually led to that series of battles we now call the Looking Glass Wars. This book will attempt a dispassionate overview of the terrible wars between the dream and reality, a conflict in which both parties would suffer terrible losses before an eventual victor was declared.
All the great theories of warfare can be reduced to a manifestation of greed. Thus it was that the creatures of the dream, as they grew more powerful, started to despise and look down upon the original dreamers, whom they called the mere 'storytellers' of planet Earth. Indeed, the creatures of the dream now saw their fantastic realm as a separate world, Planet Vurt. The 'Vurtuals' longed for independence.

One particularly weak point in the barrier between dream and reality existed in the psychic air that surrounded Manchester, a rain-drenched city to the north-west of Singland (which was known in those primitive days by the name 'England'). It was in this fabled city that the incident now called the Pollination took place. This is generally believed to be one of the earliest skirmishes in the Looking Glass Wars…

-Pollen, Jeff Noon

You look confused. I don't blame you, kittling, Manchester takes some getting used to. I arrived here as a young man, back in the early days. They laughed at the way I dressed, at how I spoke. They still do, but I perfected my Mancunian accent and I've lived here so long at this point that I may as well be a native. I was here before the City Wall was complete—before Manchester seceded and declared itself a city-state.

If you've just arrived you won't recall the bizarre days of the Fecundity-10 disaster, when humans, dogs, robots, and even the dead began to produce offspring in all the glorious colors of the rainbow. You might only have heard about Takshaka's reign of terror as Chief of Police, or the deadly Pollen outbreak that dug so many graves and then blanketed them in flowers.

Then, there is the Vurt. We're all oh so addicted to it. With Vurt feathers in our mouths we plunge into the wilderness of our dreams and seldom awaken. We've got feathers in our pockets, in our cars, in our beds. Used up, they cover the carpeting and litter the filthy, crowded streets. We're mad for them, and getting madder all the time.

I tasted some of the earliest Vurt feathers, the originals—Blue Lullaby, Honey Suckers, Godhead, Thermo Fish—anything I could get my grimy hands on. I was a featherhead and damn proud of it. My friends and I wanted to follow in the steps of the great Game Cat, our patron saint of Vurt feathers. We read every issue of his magazine, scoured the city for illegal, bootleg dreams, avoiding the MPD like the plague.

Now I understand that those baby-blue, mainstream dreams are for sheep, baby. I don't bother with them. I go for darker more nutritious dreams, where real knowledge is waiting to be devoured.

The Vurt world is a real place, and the deeper you go the more of yourself you are exposing to danger. There are black feathers that can kill you, leaving your rotting body back in the real world. There are Yellow feathers so deep that you might just disappear in them, or lock your mind in an endless loop with no hope of return to the real world.

You look scared. You should be, kittling.

You may or may not have a deep love for Vurt feathers like I do. Sure, everyone but Dodos do feathers. I don't mean recreational use. I mean deep love, pushing you to leave the real world entirely and spend eternity in the Vurt world, exploring the ever expanding land of dreams and nightmares. That's how I feel. Every day is spent escaping without ever leaving my couch. Pardon me, my settee. I find no joy in anything except taking my feathers. That sounds sad, perhaps, but you don't see what I see, you must delve deeper into how it's all connected, appreciate how mathemagick has allowed us to create temporary gateways into a real place. mathemagick is undeniable. Even in our limited understanding, it has changed how we view our very existence. It allowed us to create the first feathers that would lead us into the group-dreaming experience we all take for granted now.

Kittling? Oh, that's something the Game Cat always says, and we featherheads love our Game Cat parlance. His reviews are still released weekly, and I haven't missed an issue in over 30 years. The Game Cat is a guru. Although no one has seen him in decades, his wisdom has saved countless lives of travellers navigating the Vurt world. If you haven't read Game Cat before, I highly recommend it.

We all do Vurt feathers because it's an escape. Let's be honest, kittling. Life is a shit-show—the overcrowding is only getting worse, everyone is feeling cagey and genetics have divided us even farther. 31 modes of being fighting it out, 31 flavors of mixed genetics. Everyone fighting. Robomanshads against vurtdogs against pure humans. Everyone is divided, the streets have never been more dangerous. Manchester, the most populated place on earth, is a bloody tinderbox.

Manchester is the largest megacity on the planet. No one saw that coming, believe me. This is now the center of the real world's economy, the dominant culture, and the origin of everything that has come to define this first half of the 21st century. Construction hasn't stopped in 30 years. The higher our skyscrapers reach, the less we see those rare patches of Mancunian sunlight.

It still rains as much as ever, and a downpour is about the only thing that momentarily clears the skies of those damned blurbflies and their invasive, incessant advertising jingles. There are parts of the Manchester City highway system where the cars are stopped forever, hopelessly locked in a cold jam of metal that will soon be paved over. They're compensated, of course. Tourists from all over pack our restaurants and hotels, and still the locals complain.

There are simply too many people in Manchester. Mancunians are rats in a cage, frogs in a slow-boil pot. There's no space anymore! It's no wonder we're reverting to tribalism in many ways. These days there are countless anti-dogman, anti-robovurt, anti-shadowvurtdog groups. Whatever you are, there's a group out there on the streets of Manchester that hates you for it. Some have it much worse than others, and that fuels the flames. Everyone hates almost everyone else. Angry addicts smoke Haze, snort Choke, and slam Fetish. Teeth grind up mouthfuls of Cortex Jammers, veins are filled with Cherry Stoner. The undernourished and overweight chew through mountains of Whoompy's burgers, kill Ultra-Garlic infused curries from Pop-A-Damn!, swallow gallons of brightly colored Enola Cola. As our species continues to evolve, we're killing ourselves as fast as we can. The megacorps bribe the City councils, The Royal Palace in New Centerton is embroiled in scandal after scandal; Mancunians have lost almost all faith in civic institutions.

There are still thousands of squatters living outside the City Walls in Limbo. Hope is a rarity. Wages are dropping for the first time in years, but the number of new construction projects has jumped exponentially. The Manchester Police Department is still accused of being run by dragons, and their level of militarization has reached the ridiculous. We are pushed to a boiling point. Revolution is bubbling up. Better be prepared when it hits.

Wow, sorry to unload on you like that, but it's best you know. In a megacity with over 50 million people, it's palpable; you can feel the lives, stacked one on top of another. Privacy is nearly nonexistent, there are millions of eyes in the sky, buzzing blurbflies recording and transmitting. Most reputable dance clubs require some type of genetic-level scan to ensure safety. We've long ago traded our civil liberties for the illusion of safety. Some thought that seceding and declaring independence would solve the problems of inept governance. Yet it only intensified the divisions between the newly drawn district and borough lines. Neighbourhoods were renamed, based on archaic parish lines and other arbitrary traditions. What was once the city of Manchester was now the borough of Centre, bordered on all sides by other boroughs. Most of the megacity is controlled by gangs or private security forces on the street level, and Manchester PD controls the rest.

Outside the great Wall of Manchester is Limbo, the shadowy moorlands where the non-viables mostly live in squalor. And in the Royal Palace, King Jazir Malik still reigns, guarded close by the Yeoman Warders. Conflict of interest only begins to scratch the surface of what he is being accused of. I don't know how you feel about having a democratically elected king running a city-state, but it feels regressive to me. If the mounting number of strikes and protests are an indicator of his hold on power, his days may be numbered. He may have helped lead the post-Pollen reconstruction, but he also became the wealthiest person on the planet in the meantime. He is the creator of Vaz, and still the CEO of Vaz International, even after years of calls for him to step down. We all know where this is going, kittling. Best protect your neck.

It's not all gloom and doom, though, I promise. You'll find the best food, the best music and technology, all of what makes the real world glitter and shine. Most Vurt feathers are crafted here, and it's estimated that 95% of the Vurt-stars you interact with when you take your feathers are Mancunian residents of our fair megacity. It's their images that are woven into the dreamtrips you experience when entering the Vurt world through a feather. Most feathers are still made right here in Old Man—concept to completion, then it's off to local and global distribution. And it all started here. The whole world is hooked on Vurt feathers, our addiction connects us all.

Have you done any really good feathers? I don't mean the weekly baby blue event series like Co-Operation Street or Questing Beast, I mean really good feathers? Not over the counter legal Blues and Pinks, those are for suckers. I mean Illegal Black and Yellow trips that lead into the parts of the Vurt world where you can bring in certain things with you; where you can feel every bit of pain and pleasure as if it was your own physical body back in the real world. That is the only way to truly experience the Vurt world in my opinion, but as I said, I am a self-proclaimed featherhead. You can die or get trapped in these Vurt feathers with bits of Black and Yellow woven into the trip. Par for the course, kittling. You want to stick to Vurt trips where you appear as a thermofish and swim the Seas of Pitch? You can't get hurt in those Blues, you simply play the game. Maybe you are into the safe pink feather trips that are sold at your local ShimmyPlex? Something classic with Cinders O'Juniper, something familiar. Those won't kill you, although some of the music is pretty dated.

Those of us who want to follow the steps of the Game Cat usually don't waste our time. Game Cat said Queen Hobart is asleep and must remain that way. Game Cat says going deeper means going higher.

> Everybody knew about Hobart, but nobody knew anything. Just the hundreds of rumours that surrounded the name: Hobart invented Vurt. Hobart is alive, Hobart is dead. Hobart is a man, a woman, a child, an alien. Some have called her Queen Hobart, and they have worshipped her. To others Hobart is a dream or a myth, or just a good story that somebody made up, so good that it stuck around, became truth. Nobody knew anything...
>
> -Vurt, Jeff Noon

CHAPTER 3

HOW TO PLAY VURT THE RPG

You're ready to start playing Vurt: The Tabletop Roleplaying Game! This chapter will provide a brief outline of the Cypher System rules that the game uses to make the world of Manchester both accessible and dynamic. Once you have a basic understanding of how the game is played, you can then refer to Chapter 11: Rules of the Game for an in-depth explanation with lots of examples and detail.

Chances are good that you've played a roleplaying game before, or are at least familiar with the concept, but here's a brief overview. A tabletop roleplaying game is a storytelling experience where you are the protagonist and you track the experiences and condition of your character on a character sheet. One player, the Game Master (GM), describes some events or a scene. You and other players each play the role of the Player Character (PC) you've invented. The party's actions determine what happens next.

When it's time for your player character to perform a task, or to determine how uncertain events unfold, a twenty-sided die (d20) is rolled to determine the result of your actions. Whenever an unspecified roll is asked

TASK DIFFICULTY

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

for a d20 is what you roll.

When your character performs a task, the Game Master sets the difficulty of the task, on a scale of 1 to 10 and you roll the d20 to see if the task is completed successfully. The number that you need to roll is called the target number, and is *always three times the difficulty of the task*. That means that if the task has a difficulty of 4, the target number that you need to roll is 12. To succeed you must roll the target number or higher. See the Task Difficulty table (page 132) for guidance on how this works.

The difficulty of any task can be reduced by your PC having applicable character skills, favorable circumstances, or the use of equipment. If you have one of these advantages, the difficulty of the task can be reduced by one or more levels, thus lowering the target number that you need to roll on the d20. This is called "reducing the difficulty by one step," or more.

A skill is something that your character is good at. It can be experience or capability in a physical area, such as running or throwing, or it can represent academic knowledge like history or engineering. There are two degrees of skill a character can possess: trained or specialized. If your character is trained in something, it means that the difficulty of tasks in this area are reduced by one step. If your character is specialized, the difficulty of these tasks is reduced by 2 steps. Skills alone can never reduce the difficulty of a task more than 2 steps.

For example, let's say that your character is specialized in jumping and the Game Master has determined that a jump between rooftops is a difficulty 4 task. The target number would be 12 in this case (3 times the difficulty), but since you're specialized, the difficulty of the task is reduced by two steps, to difficulty 2 and a target number of 6. That has a huge effect on your chances of completing the jump successfully!

If you have the help of a companion or a particularly helpful piece of equipment, these can also reduce the difficulty of a task in the same way. These advantages are called assets, and each asset reduces the difficulty of a task by one step. Just like skills, assets can never reduce the difficulty of a task by more than 2 steps. Assets will save your ass.

The final way that the difficulty of a task can be reduced is by applying Effort. Effort is exactly what it sounds like—trying really hard. Each level of Effort that you apply to the task reduces the difficulty of the task by one step. Read up about Effort in Chapter 11: Rules of the Game.

Skill, page 18
Effort, page 15

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

If you can decrease a task's difficulty to 0, you automatically succeed and you don't need to make a

GLOSSARY

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

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

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

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

Player: The player runs a player character in the game.

Session: A single play experience. Usually lasts a few hours. Sometimes an entire adventure can be accomplished in a session. More often one adventure is played over the course of multiple sessions.

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

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

Character: Anything that can act in the game. Although this includes PCs and human NPCS, it also technically includes creatures, aliens, artificial intelligence, Vurt beings, and so on. The word "creature" is usually synonymous.

roll at all.

This process of determining and changing the difficulty of a task, then rolling the d20, is the core of how you play the Vurt RPG.

COMBAT

Attacking enemies and defending against their attacks is handled in exactly the same way as non-combat tasks. This means that you don't need to learn any new mechanics for combat. When your PC attacks an enemy, the difficulty of the attack task is equal to the level of the enemy. So to shoot or punch a level 2 bad guy is a difficulty 2 task, with a target number of 6. The difficulty can be reduced by 1 step or more in exactly the way we just learned in the previous section. If you are trained in boxing, for example, reduce the difficulty of punching the bad guy by one step, and so on.

Defending against the attacks of enemies is handled the same way. Evading the attack of a level 2 enemy is a difficulty 2 task with a target number of 6. The higher the level of the enemy, the more difficult it is to evade their attacks.

Permanent damage, page 158

Regardless of whether you or the enemy is attacking, you are the one who rolls the d20. This is a very good thing because it means that there is only one mechanic to learn, regardless of what is happening.

If you make a successful attack, or fail an attempt to evade an enemy's attack, then damage is dealt. The amount of damage is determined by the weapon that is used, so no dice are needed to determine the damage. Weapons are divided into 3 categories, each dealing a specific amount of damage.

Light weapons deal 4 points of damage and include knives, clubs, and very small caliber pistols. Don't look down your nose at light weapons, though. A smack in the face with a cricket bat or getting stabbed with a knife are extremely bad things and can have a serious, even deadly effect on your PC.

Medium weapons deal 8 points of damage and include larger bladed weapons, medium caliber firearms or especially nasty clubs. A single strike with a medium weapon is likely to mean lasting damage to your PC.

Lasting damage, page 141

Heavy weapons deal 12 points of damage and include shotguns, especially deadly melee weapons like large blades or a sledge hammer—high powered firearms like sniper rifles are usually heavy weapons. Getting hit with a heavy weapon almost always causes lasting damage and can even cause permanent damage!

BONUSES

Sometimes a particular piece of equipment or weapon has a bonus. Rather than reducing the difficulty of a task by one step, a bonus adds to the result of the die roll. So if you have a light weapon that grants +1 to melee attacks, add 1 to the result of your d20 roll when you make a melee attack. These bonuses stack.

If the PC has bonuses totalling +3, don't add 3 to the roll result; treat the bonuses as an asset. Since *assets can reduce task difficulty by no more than 2 steps*, this keeps PCs from gaining an unrealistic advantage from the use of items. So, you never add more than +2 to a die roll—you grant an asset to the task attempt instead.

SPECIAL ROLLS

Sometimes when you're rolling to complete a task, you get an especially high (or low) result. When you succeed at a task by rolling a "natural" 19 or 20 (meaning

that the d20 actually shows that number) you have performed the task with particular skill or grace and are granted an additional effect to the attempt.

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

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

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

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

RANGE AND SPEED

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

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

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

Long distance is anything greater than short distance but less than 100 feet (30m) or so. Beyond that range, distances are always specified—500 feet (150m), a mile (2km) and so on.

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

Vurt feathers, page 166

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

Chapter 4: Creating Your Character, page 14

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

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

For example, if the PCs are fighting a group of street thugs, any character can likely attack any thug in the general melee—they're all within immediate range. Exact positions aren't important. Creatures in a fight are always moving, shifting, and jostling anyway. However, if one thug stayed back to fire their pistol, a character might have to use their entire action to move the short distance required to attack that enemy. It doesn't matter if the enemy is 20 feet (6m) or 40 feet (12m) away—it's simply considered a short distance. It does matter if they're more than 50 feet (15m) away because that distance would require a long move.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Experience points, page 154

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

GM Intrusion, page 134

Alternatively, the player can choose to avoid the GM intrusion. If the player makes this choice they do not get the 2 XP and must spend 1 XP that they already have. This represents the PC performing a deft recovery or maneuver that avoids the complication that was about to arise. If the player has no XP to spend, the GM intrusion cannot be avoided.

The GM can also give player XP between sessions as a reward for making discoveries during an adventure. Discoveries are interesting facts, wondrous secrets, answers to mysteries, or solutions to problems (such as finding where the kidnappers are keeping their victim, or negotiating a truce between two warring gangs). You can also gain XP from completing Vurt feathers and gaining the knowledge that is hidden there. You don't earn XP for killing enemies or overcoming standard challenges in the course of play. Discovery is the soul of the Cypher System.

Experience points are used primarily for character advancement (for details, see Chapter 4: Creating Your Character), but a player can also spend 1 XP to reroll any die roll and take the better for the two rolls.

CYPHERS

Cyphers are abilities that have a single use. A character can carry cyphers and use them during the game. Cyphers may be drugs, disposable tools, items redeemable for money, single use weapons like explosives, ready-to-use computer hacks, Vurt feathers that grant you special abilities, and so on.

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

OTHER DICE

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

YOUR CHARACTER

Your character sheet records the capabilities, XP, equipment and Cyphers of your PC as you play the game. You will add and remove points from various fields as you perform actions or take damage from injuries. The specifics of how to use and manage these details is covered in Chapter 11: Rules of the Game.

You will find that the details of your character are only a small part of what makes a roleplaying game fun. The real fun is in playing the role, that is, the personality, backstory, and mannerisms of the PC you've created. In this way, even traits that make encounters more difficult, like having a problem with authority in a police interview, or a paralyzing fear of small spaces can make the game memorable and fun. When you play Vurt the RPG you are no longer you: you are your character, so allow yourself to get lost in the role!

PART 1

CHARACTER CREATION

CHAPTER 4: CREATING YOUR CHARACTER 14

CHAPTER 5: MODE DESCRIPTOR 20

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CHAPTER 4

CREATING YOUR CHARACTER

> WE'RE ALL OUT THERE, SOMEWHERE, WAITING TO HAPPEN.
>
> - Jeff Noon

This chapter explains how to create characters to play in Vurt: The Tabletop Roleplaying Game. This involves a series of decisions, each of which will help you decide what kind of character you want to play. The process involves understanding the values of three game statistics and choosing three aspects that determine your character's capabilities.

CHARACTER STATS

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

MIGHT

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

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

SPEED

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

INTELLECT

This stat determines how smart, knowledgeable, and charismatic your character is. It includes intelligence, wisdom, education, reasoning, wit, willpower, and charm. Intellect governs solving puzzles, remembering facts, telling convincing lies, and using mental powers (such as Shadow powers). Characters interested in communicating and learning effectively will likely stress their Intellect stat.

POOL, EDGE, AND EFFORT

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

POOL

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

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

EDGE

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

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

Your Edge can be different for each stat. For example, you could have a Might Edge of 1, a Speed Edge of 1, and an Intellect Edge of 0. You'll always have an Edge of at least 1 in one stat. Your Edge for a stat reduces the cost of spending points from that stat Pool, but not from other Pools.

Your Might Edge reduces the cost of spending points from your Might Pool, but it doesn't affect your Speed Pool or Intellect Pool. Once a stat's Edge reaches 3, you can apply one level of Effort for free. A character who has a low Might Pool but a high Might Edge has the potential to perform Might actions consistently better than a character who has a Might Edge of 0. The high Edge will let them reduce the cost of spending points from the Pool, which means they'll have more points available to spend on applying Effort.

EFFORT

When your character really needs to accomplish a task, you can apply Effort. For a beginning character, applying Effort requires spending 3 points from the stat Pool appropriate to the action. Thus, if your character tries to dodge an incoming attack (a Speed roll) and wants to increase the chance for success, you can apply Effort by spending 3 points from your Speed Pool. Effort lowers the difficulty of the task by one step. This is called applying one level of Effort. You don't have to apply Effort if you don't want to. If you choose to apply Effort to a task, you must do it before you attempt the roll—you can't roll first and then decide to apply Effort if you rolled poorly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

EFFORT AND DAMAGE

Instead of applying Effort to reduce the difficulty of your attack, you can apply Effort to increase the amount of damage you inflict with an attack. For each level of Effort you apply in this way, you inflict 3 additional points of damage. This works for any kind of attack that inflicts damage, whether a punch, a bullet, a mental Shadow attack, or something else.

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

MULTIPLE USES OF EFFORT AND EDGE

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

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

STAT EXAMPLES

A beginning character finds themselves in a fight with an crazed robocrusty. They swing their cricket bat at the robo, which is a level 2 creature and thus has a target number of 6. The character jumps up onto the hood of a car and strikes downward, and the GM rules that this helpful tactic is an asset that decreases the difficulty by one step (to difficulty 1). That lowers the target number to 3. Attacking with a cricket bat is a Might action; the character has a Might Pool of 11 and a Might Edge of 0. Before making the roll, they decide to apply a level of Effort to decrease the difficulty of the attack. That costs 3 points from their Might Pool, reducing the Pool to 8. But they appear to be points well spent. Applying the Effort lowers the difficulty from 1 to 0, so no roll is needed—the attack automatically succeeds and the cricket bat connects with the robocrusty.

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

CHARACTER TIERS AND BENEFITS

Every character starts the game at the first tier. Tier is a measurement of power, toughness, and ability. Characters can advance up to the sixth tier. As your character advances to higher tiers, you gain more abilities, increase your Effort, and can improve a stat's Edge or increase a stat.

Generally speaking, even first-tier characters are already quite capable. It's safe to assume that they've already got some experience under their belt. This is not a "zero to hero" progression, but rather an instance of competent people refining and honing their capabilities and knowledge.

Unlike many other tabletop RPGs, advancing to higher tiers is not really the main goal, but rather a

representation of how characters progress in a story.

To progress to the next tier, characters earn experience points (XP) by going on adventures and discovering new things—the system is about discovery and exploration as much as or more than anything else! Experience points have many uses, and one use is to purchase character benefits. After your character purchases four character benefits, he or she advances to the next tier. Each benefit costs 4 XP, and you can purchase them in any order, but you must purchase one of each kind of benefit (and then advance to the next tier) before you can purchase the same benefit again. The four character benefits are as follows:

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

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

Extra Effort: Your Effort score increases by 1.

Skills: You become trained in one skill of your choice, other than attacks or defense. As described more fully in Chapter 11: Rules of the Game, a character trained in a skill treats the difficulty of a related task as one step lower than normal. The skill you choose for this benefit can be anything you wish, such as climbing, jumping, persuading, or sneaking. You can also choose to be knowledgeable in a certain area of study, such as electronics or history. You can even choose a skill based on your character's special abilities. For example, if your character has Shadow powers and can make an Intellect roll to blast an enemy with mental force, you can become trained in using that ability, treating its difficulty as one step lower than normal. If you choose a skill that you are already trained in, you become specialized in that skill, reducing the difficulty of related tasks by two steps instead of one.

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

- Reduce the cost for wearing armor. This option lowers the Speed cost for wearing armor by 1.
- Add 2 to your recovery rolls.
- Select a new type-based ability from your tier or a lower tier.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTOR, TYPE, AND FOCUS

To create your character, you build a simple statement that describes the character using the following construction: "I am a [adjective] [noun] who [verb]."

For example, you might say, "I am a roboman warrior who Disturbs the Peace." Or "I am a dogshadow explorer who Controls Blurbs." In this sentence, the adjective is called your mode descriptor. The noun is your character type. The verb is called your focus.

Type, page 44
Focus, page 66

Your mode descriptor represents your character essentially at the genetic level. In some roleplaying games it might be defined as your race, but it takes on a far more expansive meaning among the kaleidoscopic forms of life to be played and encountered in Vurt: The Tabletop Roleplaying Game. It can have an enormous effect on most social interactions, both positive and negative. Unless your GM says otherwise, you can choose from any of the 31 character descriptions in Chapter 5: Mode Descriptor.

Your character type is roughly equivalent to character class in other roleplaying games; it determines your character's place in the world and relationship with other people in the setting. You can choose from four character types—warriors, explorers, speakers, and mathemagicians. These types are explored in more detail in Chapter 6: Character Type.

Warrior, page 59
Explorer, page 44
Speaker, page 55
Mathemagician, page 48

Focus is what your character does best. Focus gives your character specificity and provides interesting new abilities for your character to exploit throughout your adventures. Your focus also helps you understand how you relate with the other player characters in your group. The 28 character foci are described in Chapter 7: Character Focus.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Character types and foci grant PCs special abilities at each new tier. Using these abilities usually costs points from your stat Pools; the cost is listed in parentheses after the ability name. Your Edge in the appropriate stat can reduce the cost of the ability, but remember that you can apply Edge only once per action.

For example, let's say a warrior with a Might Edge of 2 wants to use her Bash ability, which costs 1 Might point. She also wants to increase the damage from the attack by using a level of Effort, which costs 3 Might points. The total cost for her action is 2 points from her Might Pool (1 point for Bash, plus 3 points for using Effort, minus 2 points from her Edge).

Bash, page 60

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

Many special abilities grant a character the option to perform an action that they couldn't normally do, such as attacking multiple foes at once or accelerating a character's normal recovery time. Using one of these abilities is an action unto itself, and the end of the ability's description says "Action" to remind you. It also might provide more information about when or how you perform the action. Some special abilities allow you to perform a familiar action—one that you can already do—in a different way. For example, an ability might let you wear heavy armor, reduce the difficulty of Speed defense rolls, or add 2 points of

Mode descriptor, page 20

damage to your weapon's standard damage. These abilities are called enablers. Using one of these abilities is not considered an action. Enablers either function constantly (such as being able to wear heavy armor, which isn't an action) or happen as part of another action (such as adding extra damage to your weapon's standard damage, which happens as part of your attack action). If a special ability is an enabler, the end of the ability description says "Enabler" to remind you.

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

SKILLS

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

Vurt: The Tabletop Roleplaying Game has no definitive list of skills. However, the following list offers some ideas:

Astronomy
Balancing
Biology
BlurbFly Repair
Botany
Carrying
Climbing
Computers
Deceiving
Disguise
Escaping
Electronics
Geography
Hacking
Healing
History
Identifying
Initiative
Intimidation
Jumping
Lockpicking
Machinery
Manchester History
Musickology
Pharmacology
Perception
Persuasion
Philosophy
Physics
Pickpocketing
Piloting
Repairing
Riding
Smashing
Sneaking
Stealth
Swimming
Vurtology

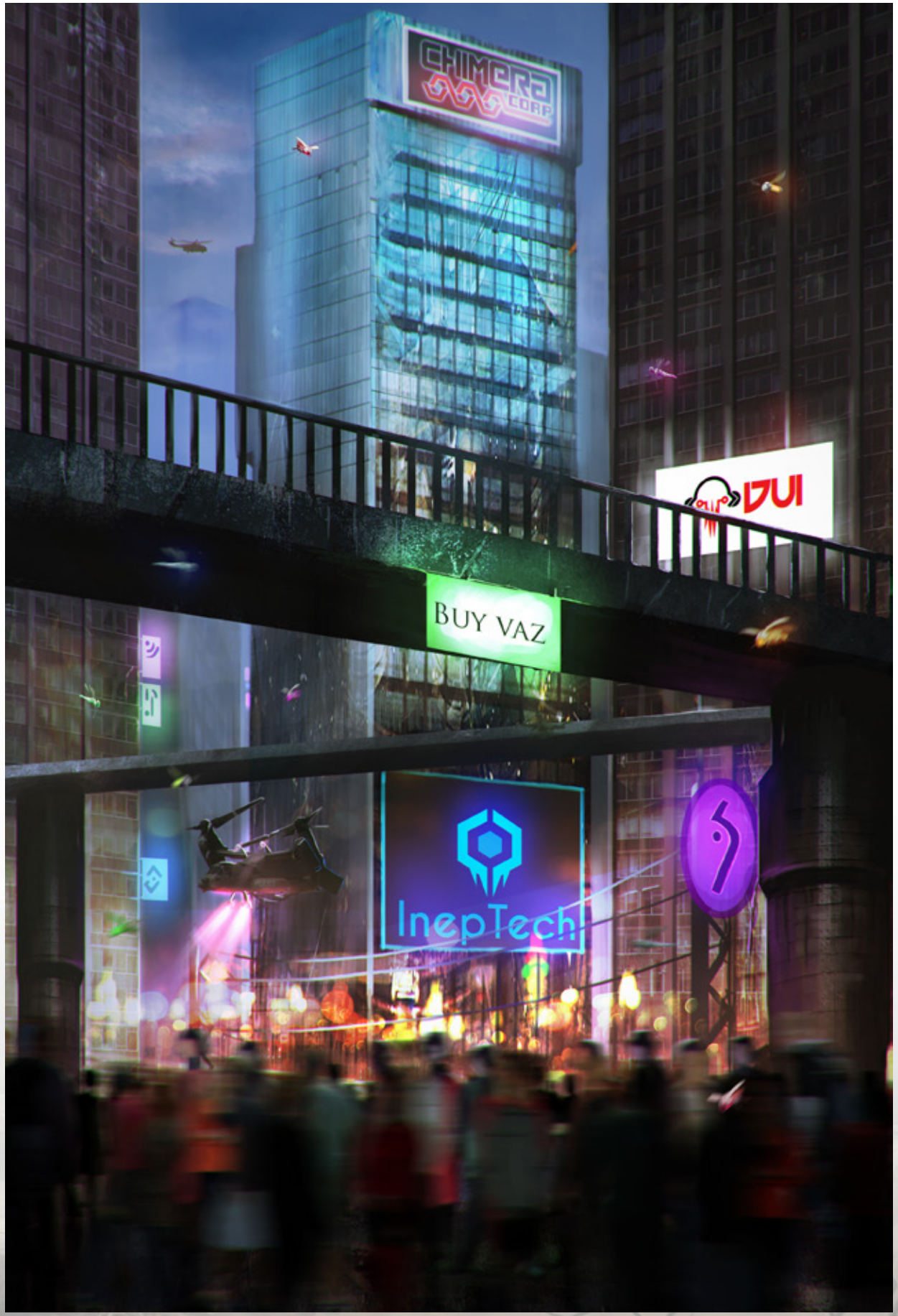
You could choose a skill that incorporates more than one of these areas (interacting, for example, might include deceiving, intimidation, and persuasion) or that is a more specific version of one (sneaking may extend to hiding when you're not in motion). You could also make up more general, professional skills, such as chef, security guard, or salesperson.

If you want to choose a skill that's not on this list, it's probably best to run it past the GM first, but in general, the most important aspect is to choose skills that are appropriate to your character. Remember that if you gain a skill that you're already trained in, you become specialized in that skill. For example, if you're trained in lying and later gain an ability that grants you a skill with all social interactions, you become specialized in lying and trained in all other types of interactions. However, being trained three times in a skill is no better than being trained twice (in other words, specialized is as good as it gets). And keep in mind that because skill descriptions can be nebulous, determining whether you're trained or specialized might take some thinking.

Only skills gained through character type abilities or other rare instances allow you to become skilled with attack or defense tasks. If you gain a special ability through your type, your focus, or some other aspect of your character, you can choose it in place of a skill and become trained or specialized in that ability. For example, if you have the Quantum Lance special ability, when it's time to choose a skill to be trained in, you can select Quantum Lance as your skill. That would reduce the difficulty every time you used it. Each ability you have counts as a separate skill for this purpose. You can't select "all Shadow powers" or "all mathemagick" as one skill and become trained or specialized in such a broad category.

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

Quantum Lance, page 50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CHAPTER 5

MODE DESCRIPTOR

In an attempt to cure the infertility epidemic known as The Black Air of Thanatos, an unknown pharmaceutical company developed Fecundity 10, a virally-delivered fertility drug engineered to promote human breeding again. The drug worked, but with cataclysmic side effects. Fecundity 10 caused a pandemic of nymphomania and while fertility was restored to the wombs of the world, what they carried were the offspring of whatever bizarre copulations had taken place. Humans reproduced with robots, dogs, dreams, and even the dead, resulting in speciation the likes of which the world had never seen.

It is nonetheless an era of exciting new physiologies, where the terms species and race are rarely used. Rather than belonging to a handful of races, people now belong to one of 31 different modes.

In the aftermath of Fecundity 10, the concept of genetics has been necessarily expanded to include the fundamental essences at the core of each mode of being—most of which remain only vaguely understood. The machinations at the molecular level of a being who is both human and machine, joined with the ineffable stuff of dreams or death itself, cannot be accurately described with a single word. Where once coils of DNA stored in the nucleus of a person's cells determined everything they might become, robotic organelles, shadowplasm, and dream materials have granted access to a treasure trove of capabilities in each of us.

Consequently, your character's mode descriptor in the Vurt RPG indicates not only their genetic makeup, but also the the traits and aptitudes they were born with. It is the adjective of the sentence "I am an adjective noun who verbs."

Mode descriptors offer a one-time package of extra abilities, skills or modifications to your stat Pools. Not all character modifications offered will help PCs out. For example, some mode descriptors have *inabilities*—tasks that a character isn't good at. You can think of inabilities as *negative* skills—instead of being one step better at that kind of task, you're one step worse. If you become skilled at a task that you have an inability

GAME CAT SAYS:

There are only five pure modes of being. And all are equal in value. To be pure is good, it leads to a good life. But who wants a good life? Only the lonely. And so therefore we have the five levels of being. And each layer is better than the one before. The deeper, the sweeter, the more completer.
First level is the purest level. Where all things are separate and so very unsexy. There are only five pure states and their names are Dog, Human, Robo, Shadow, and Vurt.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

with, they cancel out. Remember that characters are defined as much by what they're not good at as by what they are good at.

In addition to these features, the mode descriptor grants access to mode special abilities which lie dormant within the PCs nature.

The mode you choose may have a significant effect on the way your character is perceived by certain individuals, in some cases even forcing them to hide their true nature in order to survive. When combined with the special abilities it may grant, your character's mode is something that may very well affect the way they approach most situations.

This section describes each of the 31 modes of being that exist in the Vurt RPG. Player should choose one of them for their character.

Every PC is genetically made up of one or more of the five pure modes of being: dog, human, robo, Shadow and Vurt. The interbreeding between them has created several generations of offspring—lots and lots of offspring, increasing the population of the real world dramatically in the last half century.

While the five pure modes can interbreed and keep mixing up the gene pool, it only works to a certain point. There are no beings in the real world with all five modes of being running through their veins. If they've got four of the five possible genetic modes, successful procreation simply does not occur, even through non-traditional means. These rare people will not pass on their genes, but that's likely the least of their problems.

PURE HUMAN

Pure humans have been the real world's dominant mode of being for the past six thousand years. But everything has changed for you lot in the last 75 years. Now others are interbreeding, invading, creating more modes of being, and pure humans have become rare. There may be a part of you that resents these *newer* modes because of their many strange and useful abilities. Stories of the days before the Vurt have become exaggerated over time; others may be entirely apocryphal. But your kind still survive, still the most socially accepted, with a long history as the world's dominant species. But, like the citizens of Rome in its twilight, you've found yourself overwhelmed by xeno, and are now just one of 31 modal iterations. Pure humans are far from happy about losing their place at the top of the totem pole.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability from the human special abilities listed on page 42.

Sociable: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're trained in all tasks involving positive or pleasant social interaction when dealing with other pure humans.

Contact: You have a contact who helps you based entirely on your being a pure human. This contact is either a cop or the manager of a small business.

Inability: The difficulty of any drug-related willpower test is increased by one step. Pure humans have never been known for their willpower.

Additional Equipment: One free black cab ride ticket. Seems like pure humans have an easier time hailing cabs.

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

1. While sky-high on Haze, you and one of the other PCs hatched a plan to go about gathering a few others to join in your current adventure.
2. One of the other PCs paid off a justifiably angry bouncer at the Slithy Tove before you got your head smashed in, and now you are returning the favor by helping them with the task at hand.
3. There's a reward involved and you need the money

Mode special abilities, page 41

to buy the latest special limited side-episode of the Questing Beast feather series. Everyone else knows what's happening already—it's driving you mad.

4. You got the other PCs drunk on Fetish and then convinced them to join you in your latest adventure. Now they're in, whether they like it or not.

PURE DOG

Pure dogs like you spent the first phase of domestication as man's most loyal friend, subject to the whims of the human race. The recent genetic revolution caused by Fecundity 10 gave most of you canines a bit of a boost—not necessarily intelligence, but a very basic sense of self-awareness. Dogs still love chasing sticks, but thoughts like "*Why* am I chasing this stick?" have begun to occur to you. Dogs don't talk or read or follow conversations fully, but your ability to sense the real world in the way you do grants a natural advantage when running at top speed into a fight or away from danger. Three-word trains of thoughts are about the best a dog can hope to retain. Chase that stick! Find those bones! Run, dog, run!

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability from the Dog Special Abilities listed on page 41.

Dog Bite: Your bite is a light weapon (4 damage).

Actions, Not Words: +2 to your Might Pool, and +3 to your Speed Pool.

Unwise: -4 to your Intellect Pool.

Weak Intellect: The difficulty of all Intellect-based tasks are increased by one step.

Skill: You're trained in detection and other tasks facilitated by a canine's heightened senses.

Skill: Choose one of the following skills: running, jumping, or digging.

Skill: You're trained in Intellect defense actions.

Inability: Every subspecies of dog has it's shortcomings, choose one of the following:

- You have dalmatian in you and are almost completely deaf. Increase the difficulty of hearing based perception tasks by 2 steps.
- You are a mix of small breeds. -2 to strength Pool. Your dog bite does only 2 points of damage.
- You are large and a bit clumsy. Increase the difficulty of all athletic tasks by 1 step.

Inability: You cannot use any items or cyphers that require hands to activate, but you can carry them if you wear a harness.

Woofer: Characters who are part dog can understand your sounds as if you were speaking normally, but non-dog modes cannot understand you at all.

Additional Equipment: A dog collar or pack harness.

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

1. Your beloved, lifelong owner is one of the PCs and you wouldn't have it any other way. They take care of your recurring bouts of nanofleas and you appreciate that more than they'll ever know.
2. Your new owner is one of the PCs and you fear him/her. It might be because they remind you of your previous bad owner, or perhaps you have good reason. You've been ordered to follow along in this current adventure.
3. You have always been on your own, now you want to follow someone around for a while and get better food and shelter. These PCs seem like a reasonably agreeable lot.
4. Since getting hit by that VazInt lorry on the A-99, your memories are spotty at best. You just wandered into this adventure, you don't know any of these people, but you'll see where it goes. What have you got to lose?

PURE SHADOW

As a pure Shadow, you are the physical embodiment of death itself—a dark and mysterious figure. To a passing observer you appear to be human, but careful examination may reveal you to be something else. You are cold and pale, having no pulse or warmth of body. You are nearly always silent, but if you choose, you can speak directly into another person's mind. With enough practice, you might learn to become shapeless and ethereal, able to pass silently through small openings like a mist, or sharpen your telepathic abilities into something controlling or deadly.

When confronted with death, most will cower, flee or fight. If you are discovered to be a pure Shadow you will inevitably be hunted by those who want to destroy you. To these people you're an abomination, a devil, demon, vampire, spectre: an intrinsic evil to be persecuted ruthlessly. For this reason, keeping your nature secret is so integral to your survival that even the members of your group may not know that you are pure Shadow.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability from the Shadow special abilities listed on page 43.

Open Mind: +4 to your Intellect Pool.

Telepathic: All pure Shadows are able to communicate telepathically with any character within medium range.

Cold Flesh: Your flesh is cold and elastic. Reduce all incoming damage by 3 points, unless it has properties of heat (such as flame pistols), Shadow ,or ultraviolet. Enabler.

Skill: You're called pure Shadow for a reason. You're specialized in stealth tasks involving hiding and sneaking.

Inability: Most find your deathly visage very unnerving. The difficulty of any task involving pleasant social interaction is increased by two steps.

Inability: Your movements are odd. The difficulty of any task involving running or quick movements including defense actions is increased by one step.

Inability: The shadow of death is easy to detect, making you a clear target for mental attacks. Defense actions against mental attacks are increased in difficulty by one step.

Hated: Beings like you are usually forced to keep your identity a secret or live under constant guard. Living openly as a pure Shadow is not an option, you're too rare to live regularly. Hunters are a constant threat, so every move you make is potentially lethal. You and the GM should work out the details.

Additional Equipment: None.

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

1. You have no memory of anything other than your name. One of the PCs might be able to help you remember your past; at least, you hope they might be able to.
2. While in the middle of a huge crowd at the Gotherswick MegaPlex food court, you were hired telepathically by an anonymous person to join the PCs. You're curious about the adventure and even more curious about the mysterious telepath who hired you.
3. You've had your run-ins with anti-Shadow fanatics in the past (most seem to be psychotic egomaniacs dressed like some poor man's version of Van Helsing or one of the Ghostbusters). These wingnuts have put a price on your head, you need backup.
4. One of the PCs knows you are a pure Shadow and is acting as your protector. The rest of the PCs think you are a shadowman, and you'd prefer to keep it that way.

PURE ROBO

Pure robos are different than robots—they are sentient and have the ability to reproduce. You may prefer the term "autogen," but it seems like everyone still says "robo." The first robos became sentient in the early 2000s, and their ability to procreate was a result of the Fecundity 10 disaster. Unless you are one of the old, first-generation autogens, you were not built, you were born. You are a living creature and your thoughts are processed through your CTPU (Central Thought Processing Unit). You are alive.

The majority of robos are humanoid—possessing two arms and two legs—but there are pure robos of all shapes and sizes. Chances are, you communicate verbally and can ingest most food, drink, and drugs. You do not need to sleep, ever. That gives you much more time to ponder what it is to be an autogen. pure robos are notorious for their self-regard.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability from the robo special abilities listed on page 43.

Smart: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Everlast: Pure robos do not need to sleep, eat, or breathe.

Skill: You're trained in all mental defense actions.

Skill: You're trained in all tasks involving electronics or computers.

Contact: You have a contact who can repair you in case of a major emergency. You gain an extra 1 hour recovery roll, if you visit this person.

Inability: The difficulty of any task involving deception is increased by one step. Perfidiousness just isn't in your pure robo nature.

Not Made for Dreaming: Nothing could be more anathema to pure robos than the Vurt world, and you find it very frustrating. *While in the Vurt world* the difficulty of all tasks are increased by one step.

Additional Equipment: Simple tool kit.

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

1. You were just born and are testing out your body. You're a proud autogen, and want this group of PCs to realize the superiority of your mode of being.
2. Back in the day, one of the PCs used to run with your Toytown crew.
3. One of the PCs seems to need your help more than they think they do. If they were pure robo like you are, they'd have come to the same conclusion, but not everyone is lucky enough to be born an Autogen.
4. At some point, you must've accessed some sensitive inpho, because a corporation has targeted you for "retirement." You joined the group so they could watch your back.

PURE VURT

You are out of place in the real world. Even if you were born here as the offspring of pure Vurt parents, you are drawn to and feel at home in the Vurt. What are you doing here? real world gravity and physics feel wrong. In the Vurt world, you'd be more graceful, more aware; there you have natural advantages surviving the dangers within a Vurt feather.

Pure Vurt flesh, page 369

But here in the real world, it's not safe for you anywhere. Your pure Vurt flesh is one of the most valuable substances on the streets. Known as "Live Drug," it can be ingested for an extremely dangerous and powerful high. Beware: This brings about a lot of unwanted and often lethal attention from junkies and Vurt-nappers. You spend most of your time either in hiding or actively running for your life—to be a pure Vurt is to be hunted.

You may appear very similar to beings with human, robo, dog or Shadow genetics, and pass in more easily in society with only your yellow-flecked eyes to give you away. Or, you might resemble an amorphous, tentacled slug, unable to see or communicate verbally with others. More likely, you are a combination of the two, appearing human only if you cunningly conceal some alien physiology.

If you were born in the real world, you have probably found a way to keep your true identity a secret. But, if you're one of the unfortunates who suddenly found themselves swapped into the real world, you're likely not going to last long without friends to protect and conceal you.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability from the Vurt special abilities listed on page 42.

Not of This World: You are physically out of place in the real world. *While in the real world*, the difficulty of all tasks are increased by one step. While in the Vurt world the difficulty of all tasks are decreased by one step.

Fish Out of Water: Choose Might, Speed or Intellect. When you apply Effort to tasks based on your selection, you must spend 1 extra point from that Pool.

Vurt Flesh Regeneration: When suffering lasting damage, divide the healing time in half. A lasting damage effect that would normally take 8 days to heal only takes 4 days for you. Permanent damage, even a severed limb, is completely healed after only 24 hours.

Outcast: Choose one of the following:

- You are alien in appearance. *While in the real world*, normal social interaction is impossible.
- A part of your body is alien in appearance, but can be concealed. *While in the real world*, normal social interaction is impossible when it is revealed.
- You are non-alien in appearance, only the yellow flecks in your eyes give you away.

Hated: Beings like you are usually forced to keep your identity a secret or live under constant guard. Living openly as a pure Vurt is not an option; you're too rare, your flesh itself too coveted for you to live with the relative freedom others enjoy. Hunters and live drug/Vurt-flesh junkies are a constant threat, every move you make is potentially lethal. Most pure Vurts are absolutely alien in appearance and this makes you a bright target in a megacity like Manchester. You and the GM should work out the details.

Additional Equipment: None

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

1. Swapped! You have no idea what is happening. One minute, you're happily living your life in the Vurt world, the next minute you're in the real world.
2. One of the PCs is protecting you from harm but harvesting small bits of your flesh. Since you're able to regenerate, you permit it, but it's becoming unbearable.
3. One of the PCs seems to be your best chance of getting back to the Vurt world. All you want is to get home, and never spend another moment in the real world. This place is a bloody nightmare!
4. You had a vision or feeling that told you to join up and stick with this new group. Most of them smell like Boomer and Napalm Filter smoke, but you put up with it.

DOGMAN

You're a genetic combination of canine and human genes, although how that manifests itself varies greatly. You may have a hairy, twisted human body with

four paws on the floor and a very human head. Or maybe the furry paws and tail of a dog and the rest human. If you're lucky, you're an attractively subtle mix that the dogboys like to call "werewolf chic." However those genes split, your nature and personality reflect your two halves as well. Both humans and dogs are often loyal to a fault: tenacious, resilient, hard as nails. Dogmen are the most ubiquitous mode in the real world, covering the globe with the most diverse and beautiful display of modern remixed genetics. Having up to five to eight offspring at once with a five month gestation period has helped accelerate dogman numbers. Dogmen have a long line of respected role models like Das UberDog, Dingo Tush, Acid Lassie, Coyote, Zero Clegg, the list goes on. You love being a dogman. It's a dogman's world, the rest of you lot are just living in our yard!

GAME CAT SAYS:

SECOND LEVEL is the next step. It happens because the modes want to have sex, with other modes, different modes, otherness modes. Except they don't always use Vaz, so these babies get born: second level creatures. Or sometimes the modes get grafted together. There are many ways to change. Whatever, second level beings go one better in the knowledge stakes. There are ten second level beings and their names are dogman, robodog, dogshadow, vurtdog, roboman, shadowman, vurtman, roboshad, robovurt, and shadowvurt. Chances are you, the reader, are a Second level being of some kind.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the human or dog special abilities listed on pages 41 and 42.

Uberdog: Dogs can take a beating. +1 to Armor.

Healthy: You get +1 to your recovery rolls.

Loyal to a Fault: If you have pledged your word to something or someone, you're genetically motivated sense of loyalty makes any contrary action very difficult. The difficulty of any disloyal action is increased by two steps

Dog of the Hair: Choose one of the following:

- Dog Bite: Your bite is a light weapon (4 damage) but the difficulty of any communication with non-dog modes is increased by two steps.
- Four on the Floor: You are trained in running and tracking, but you are unable to use any items or cyphers that require hands to activate. (However, you may carry them in a pack.)
- Werewolf chic: You are an proportional mix of human and dog features. The difficulty of all tasks involving social interaction is reduced by one step. The cost of clothing and armor is increased by 50%.

Additional Equipment: None

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

1. You're acting as a bodyguard for one of the other PCs. You expect to be paid promptly at the beginning of each week, in the form of your favorite drug of choice.
2. One of the PCs is your sibling or lifelong childhood friend and they convinced you to accompany them on this adventure. You're already regretting your decision, you should've trusted your dog-side instincts. This is beginning to look like a shite-show.
3. A genetically charged sense of loyalty pushes you to obey one of the PCs (choose one). You may still have your pride, but you can't help wanting to follow their orders.
4. Everyone has an addiction, and you need money to feed yours. After what you saw this group do to that group of lost tourists in Crumpsall, you're confident they have the

ONE NIGHT AT SORROWFALL

I remembered upon waking, her eyes and her skin: eyes so golden, speckled with black, and her skin fully feathered. The moon glowed within her, drawn down from the sky. At sorrowfall she kissed me goodbye and then flew away over the mouth of the river, the tower blocks rising like snakes to catch at any dreams that might fall from her body as she passed overhead. I never saw her again, neither awake nor dreaming. Yet that night will always guide me, even now when many moons and many more feathers have faded, and the final dream awaits me.

- Jeff Noon

nuts and guts to get quid fast, dogdamn the consequences.

ROBODOG

Part robo, part dog, your two natures are juxtaposed. Your raw canine instincts are processed by your programming, giving you access to enhanced reflexes and intelligence far beyond that of a pure dog. Yes, you are loyal, but the common assumption that robodogs are gullible may or may not be true. Once you've made an enemy, there is no force stronger than your focused robodog ferocity. Your physiology is a mix of dog and machine, in any of a thousand configurations.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the robo or dog special abilities listed on pages 41 and 43.

Skill: You're trained in all initiative actions.

Skill: You're trained in all perception actions.

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

Inability: Choose one of the following:

- No Thumbs: You are unable to use any items or cyphers that require hands to activate. (However, you may carry them in a pack.)
- Your mouth is a terrifying piece of machinery. The difficulty of all positive social interactions is increased by one step.

- You are only marginally smarter than a pure dog. Where a Pure thinks in three-word concepts, you can manage about five. The difficulty of all Intellect-based tasks are increased by one step.

Additional Equipment: Either teeth, claws, shock nodes, or something else; some part of your robodog body is a light melee weapon (4 damage).

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

1. You quite literally bumped into this group of PCs while following your nose towards a curry stand and now you feel like following them, whether they like it or not.
2. One of the PCs is also a huge fan of your all-time favorite Vurt feather, Blue Bayou. The two of you have spent countless hours sharing the dream in Blue Bayou, searching for hints, tricks and shortcuts.
3. Pick one PC—they are the best hope of helping you find or track down a target. You have a long-term mission of your own that involves locating a particular person, but you're not going to tell any of these PCs anything about that. As far as they know, you're on this adventure for cash.
4. One of the PCs found you half-dead in a dumpster behind the Bradford Vurturama. Even though you initially refused help, they persisted and helped repair you back to health. Loyal to a fault, now you're returning the favor.

DOGSHADOW

Part dog, part Shadow, a dogshadow trusts no one, and unlike their other dog "cousins," they are not known for loyalty or a sense of community. It is very rare for a dogshadow to enjoy the company of its fellow dogshadows—they are the lone wolves of the dog bloodline. The world has done its utmost to train you into a pessimist, without any sense of nostalgia for those that gave birth to your sorry, smokey, dogshadow arse. You may look like a gaunt, shadowy hound, or a pale, mysterious dogman, your Shadow hidden from view. In any case, your physical form makes people uneasy. Dogshadows do not normally make any sound, though some have learned to concentrate and communicate verbally.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the dog or Shadow special abilities listed on pages 41 and 43.

Suspicious: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: Dogshadows are known for being able to blend into the darkness. You're trained in stealth tasks involving hiding and sneaking.

Skill: You're trained in all tasks involving discerning the truth and recognizing falsehoods and disguises.

Inability: Your own mistrust of others or perhaps

your appearance makes cordial communication awkward. The difficulty of any task involving pleasant social interaction is increased by one step.

Shadow Chaser: Choose two of the following:

- No Thumbs: You are unable to use any items or cyphers that require hands to activate. (However, you may carry them in a pack.)
- Dog Bite: Your bite is a light weapon (4 damage) but the difficulty of any verbal communication with non-dog modes is increased by two steps.
- Reach out with your shadow and telepathically connect to the mind of a single willing, intelligent being within medium range. You can both send and receive telepathic messages for 10 minutes. Action to initiate.

Additional Equipment: None

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

1. Dogshadows like you almost always avoid people, finding them to be a waste of your time, but this particular person is different. Like it or not, one of the PCs is the closest thing you have to a friend.
2. One of the PCs has information that you can sell for a large amount of quid, and you will stick near them at least until you get it.
3. There's strength in numbers, and you need protection from a group of Scalliewaggers you disrespected in Rusholme last week. You thought you saw one of them following you home from the Vurt-U-Want last night—you better not go out alone anymore.
4. Pure, unadulterated loneliness has driven you to go against your instincts and find some comfort in numbers. You met one of the PCs in the Concorde ShimmyPlex in Burnage, and after some group feather action, they told you about the current adventure—it sounds rewarding.

VURTDOG

You're part dog and part Vurt being. You likely look more like a Lovecraftian beast than a dog, but who knows? Whatever you do, you do it hard and fast. Your real world dog instincts ground you and keep your mind focused on the present, but your Vurt side allows your natural abilities to blossom and mutate into odd new things. A vurtdog lives with the weirdness that comes with arguably the two most opposite modes in terms of mind type. Vurtdogs have notoriously poor short-term memory.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the Vurt or dog special abilities listed on pages 41 and 42.

Slippery: +2 to your Speed Pool.

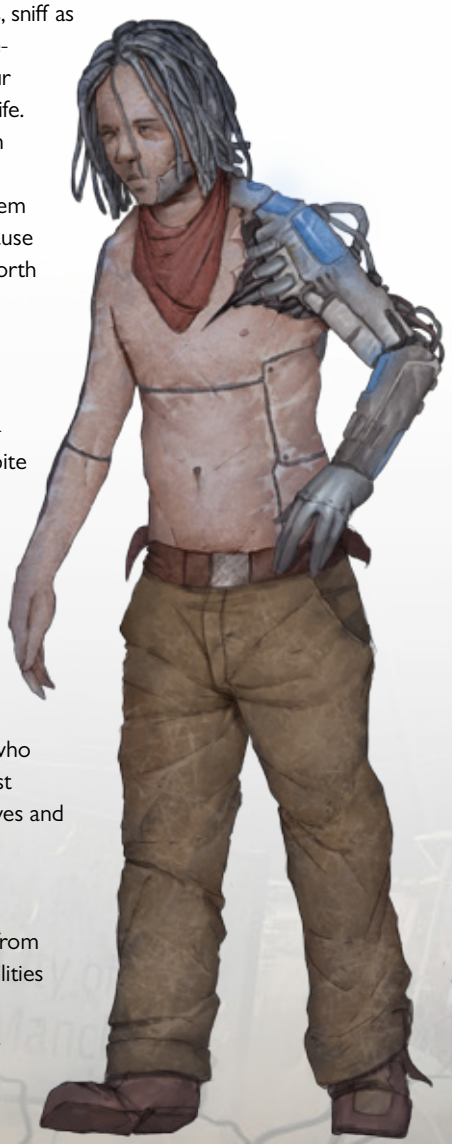
Skill: Vurtdogs are trained in running.

Icky Factor: Many feel an instinctive aversion to vurtdogs. You are trained in all tasks involving intimidation, but the difficulty of all tasks involving positive social interaction are increased by one step.

Vurt Bloodhound: The Vurt world is full of scents and sounds that seem to explode in your nose and ears and your dog instincts feel sharper there. While in the Vurt world you are trained in all tracking and hunting tasks.

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

1. Your short-term memory problems are likely responsible for you not knowing why you are traveling with this group. Do they even like you? Do you like them? Better play it cool, for now.
2. One of the PCs reminds you of someone you knew growing up in Cheetum. But who? Until you find out, your stubborn canine nature pushes you to keep sniffing around until you find out, even if it means joining them on a dangerous adventure.
3. Traveling with one of the PCs just feels right. You believe Dingo Tush said it best in his hit song, Dead Dog Walking, "Trust your gut, pups, sniff as if your nose grinds like you're stone-cold. Trust your gut, pups, trust your guts, pups." That song guides your life.
4. One of the PCs also grew up in Ardwick and knows many of the same people you do. You trust them and you're on this adventure because they convinced you it'd be well worth your while.



ROBOMAN

Merging both robo and human physiologies, robomen are the third-largest mode in the real world. Despite their numbers, they exist uneasily on the continuum between the communities of those born pure human and those of other origins. Though this subject is a major source of strife within the community, all seem to agree that robomen are often very quick-thinking and inventive beings who are responsible for many of the latest technologies that the real world craves and consumes.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the robo or human special abilities listed on pages 42 and 43.

Smart: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: Your reflexes are augmented. You are trained in melee defense.

Firewall: The difficulty of defense actions against mental attacks is reduced by one step.

Complications: Not only do you need rest, you may need repairs. All your recovery rolls are -1.

Contact: You have a trusted contact who often supplies you with tools or computer technology for half the going rate.

Additional Equipment: Simple tool kit.

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

1. You are on a personal mission and one of the PCs is involved as well.
2. One of the PCs knows how to get their hands on a new piece of tech that you are very interested in. The current adventure you're on with them should allow you to get your hands on it at last.
3. You are experimenting some new drugs that your dealer is making in-house. You're being paid (in drugs) to see what side effects might occur while in combat situations. Rolling with this group should give you the opportunity to test it out.
4. You feel compelled to follow one of the PCs. You don't know where this compulsion comes from—is it somehow part of your programming?

SHADOWMAN

You're part Shadow and part human, known for depressive episodes. You may have disturbances in thinking and often feel a sense of dread and/or ennui. Distortions of perception and impairment in social functioning are just part of life for you and have often resulted in poor decisions and life choices. However, this state of mind allows for certain advantages. Other people are usually open books to you. You may have a knack for reading a person's tells, those subtle movements that convey an individual's mood and disposition. Or you may receive information in a more direct way, feeling a person's emotions as if they were tangible things. Perhaps you have tapped into some of your innate Shadow powers like telepathy or mental attacks. Often artistic and empathic to a fault, your shadowman mind is both your best friend and your worst enemy.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the Shadow or human special abilities listed on pages 42 and 43.

Open Mind: +4 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You are trained in stealth tasks involving hiding and sneaking.

Skill: You're trained in tasks involving empathy, such as sensing emotions and discerning dispositions.

Inability: Shadowmen are well known to have a very difficult time with addiction. The difficulty of all drug-related willpower tests is increased by one step.

Inability: The shadow of death is easy to detect, making you a clear target for mental attacks. Defense actions against mental attacks are increased in difficulty by one step.

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

1. Your regular Choke dealer was arrested by the MPD and you're totally out! Luckily, one of the PCs seems to have a connection to a new hookup.
2. Due to your sympathy for U-Type shadowmen (see below), some suspect that you have a U-Type parent, but you don't. One of the PCs has known you for years and easily convinces others that you're telling the truth.
3. Choose a PC: They somehow make you feel warm inside and it's addicting.
4. Just being around one of the PCs keeps you calm, and better able to focus on things other than your addiction.

U-TYPE SHADOWMAN

You suffer from U-Type Syndrome, Fecundity 10's most terrifying side effect. Most say that U-Type shadowmen are proof that even love should have limits. Derogatorily called Zombies or NVLs (Non-Viable Life Forms), U-Type shadowmen have their origin in the mad times after Fecundity 10, when living humans or Shadows had sexual intercourse with the dead. The horrible truth of your mode's origins is the reason

that, until very recently U-Types were forcibly exiled to outlying areas of urban centers (such as Limbo outside Manchester). It's possible that you came up in one of these places, where you spent years working at the impossible task—getting official entry paperwork for the city proper.

Your appearance is nightmarish—flesh rotting off your body as fast as your living system can attempt to regenerate it. The result: you appear as the rotting dead, complete with areas of exposed bone, missing bits and even the occasional outbreak of maggots, though you may try to pick them out.

U-Types are feared and despised by most; total exclusion from regular society profoundly affects the way you relate to others. Fits of rage mixed with bouts of melancholy are normal for someone hated and mistreated their entire lives.

You gain the following characteristics:
Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the Shadow or human special abilities listed on pages 42 and 43.

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

Skill: Most find your undead appearance terrifying. You're trained in intimidation and other fear-based interactions.

Skill: You're trained in tasks involving sensing other emotions, and discerning dispositions.

Unstoppable: When you are impaired on the damage track, you function as if you were hale. While you are debilitated, you function as if you were impaired. In other words, you don't suffer the effects of being debilitated. You still die if all your stat Pools are 0.

Inability: You are revolting to most people. The difficulty to all tasks involving pleasant social interaction with non U-types is increased by two steps.

Rotting Flesh: You may only make two recovery rolls per day. You lose your 1-round and ten-minute recovery rolls.

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

1. Your predominantly U-Type neighborhood/enclave has gone drug-dry and one of the PCs has a sweet connection.
2. One of the PCs seems to feel strongly about equal rights for U-types.
3. Choose a PC: They're rumored to have participated in anti-Zombie rallies and activities in the past. You haven't decided yet what to do, but for now, you'll follow them.
4. One of the PCs smells absolutely wonderful.

VURTMAN

Vurtmen are often difficult to distinguish from pure humans, their Vurt genetics usually dominating the mind more than the body. You're also known for your unusual self-confidence and seemingly mystical understanding of "the path" that people need to walk. As such, you'll often find that cult leaders, palm readers, and gurus have a bit of the Vurt embedded in their genetics. Whatever you choose to do, you're kind of a trippy character. From a very young age, you vurtmen have been taught to hide your Vurt side, in order to advance in a society that inherently distrusts anyone with Vurt genetics. Despite this, vurtmen often find themselves in leadership positions.

Limbo, page 200

You gain the following characteristics:
Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the Vurt or Human special abilities listed on page 42.

Meditative: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Charismatic: You are very intense. You are trained in all tasks involving persuasion.

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

Inability: Your intensity is often odd or unnerving, making small talk awkward. The difficulty of tasks involving casual social interaction is increased by one step.

Inability: When shit goes down, you're often caught off guard, in a contemplative state. The difficulty of all initiative tasks is increased by one step.

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

The Damage Track, page 141

1. In a Vurt dream long ago, you met a golden-eyed

Recovery rolls, page 142

girl whom you never saw again. You have never stopped searching for her.
2. During a particularly verbose Jammer-trip, you divulged a secret to one of the PCs. You are nervous that they will let it slip if unattended, so you're sticking close.
3.This group is always bragging about all the drugs and feathers they can score. You've decided to

follow them around and see what you can get your hands on.

4. You and one of the PCs are total featherheads, willing to take any feather, anytime, anywhere. This mission seems like a good way to turn up a few new dreams..

ROBOSHAD

No two modes are more structurally at odds than robo and Shadow, but the union of the two almost always results in a being with an otherworldly grace. Your mechanical workings grant you agility and precision, which you harness with the stillness and deathly poise of your Shadow essence. While pure robos do not require sleep, Shadows may need quite a bit, and this conflicting mix of Shadow and robo always results in severe insomnia. Your body may be mostly mechanical with your Shadow self hidden inside, all Shadow flesh with nanomachines regulating and modifying your biological form, or something in between.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the robo or Shadow special abilities listed on page 43.

Agile: +2 to your Speed Pool.

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

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

Complications: Not only do you need rest, you may need repairs. All your recovery rolls are -1.

Insomnia: You may not use your 10 hour recovery roll.

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

1. Some annoying inexplicable intuition compels you to join this group.
2. You have taken the ThermoFish feather more times than you can count, and so has one of the PCs. The two of you talk ThermoFish and consider yourselves experts.
3. You overheard one of the PCs talking about an opportunity you'd like to take advantage of.
4. Your long-term addiction to Cortex Jammers has made you feel hollow. One of these PCs has spoken about a particular drug that should fill the void, and you're determined to give it a go.

ROBOVURT

There's wisdom that comes with having a short lifespan—it affects your entire outlook. A biological incompatibility between your two natures dictates that you (like all robovurts) will live only a short while, and while your robo parts may be salvaged, perhaps even reused, the part of you that is Vurt will be gone forever. To you, life is known as "the Quick-Time." But like the flame that burns half as long, yours burns very bright. Somehow, in your mechanical bits, the digital echoes of your parents' experiences have been passed on to you, granting you skills you didn't have to learn. You hope to add to this knowledge before your number is up. Life is short, you want every moment to count.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the robo or Vurt special abilities listed on pages 42 and 43.

Smart: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Mayfly: Roll 1d6+10. The remainder of your short, robovurt lifespan holds only enough time for this many adventures. When you complete the last one, your body shuts down and you die.

Skill: You're trained in three knowledge-based skills of your choice.

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

Inability: No time to waste! The difficulty of any task involving charm or persuasion is increased by one step.

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

1. You must keep one of the PCs safe from harm—you've pledged your word to a member of their family.
2. One of the PCs has information you want, and you will stick near them at least until you get it. You also both share a love for the same Manchester Vurt-Ball team, and you find yourselves talking for hours about Vurty; the greatest sport ever.
3. You are searching for a way to increase your life expectancy. You hope this mission will turn up some clues.
4. You want to do something significant with your brief existence, and one of the PCs seems to share a similar goal.

SHADOWVURT

Your body is a product of the world of dreams and the Shadow of death. Vurt and Shadow are the two modes entirely not of the real world and you feel it, every day. Most shadowvurts must struggle to contain the deep well of angst which grows from this knowledge, which is why so many of you are drawn to counterculture or the underworld. Mental illness affects shadowvurts at a significantly higher than average rate, often resulting in erratic behavioral patterns, which may further drive them from mainstream society. In any case, you are drawn to the Vurt world and to dark, macabre things, which threaten to consume you if you delve too deep. Even if you are able to control them, these internal furies manifest themselves in self destructive behaviors.

Cortex Jammers, page 363

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the Shadow or Vurt special abilities listed on pages 42 and 43.

Versatile: +2 to your Speed Pool and +1 to your Intellect Pool.

Well of Angst: Choose one of the following:

Self Flagellating: For you, the real world is suffering, and only by hurting yourself can you regain control. You may only use your 1-round and ten-minute recovery rolls only by scratching or cutting yourself, in secret. You get -1 to recovery rolls made in this way.

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

Skill: You are trained in two knowledge based skills of your choice.

Vurtful Dodger: The physics of the Vurt world feel more natural to you than the real world. *While in the Vurt world* the difficulty of all defense tasks are reduced by one step.

Dreams of Death: Damage sustained while in (normally safe) blue and pink feathers affect your character in the real world. Every time you feather up you're in physical danger

Go Deep: *While in the Vurt world* you have a hard time disconnecting and return to the real world. The difficulty of jerking out of a feather is increased by one step.

Jerking out, page 170

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

1. You have the nearly impossible goal of swapping yourself and staying in the Vurt world forever and this group of PCs might help you.
2. One of the PCs makes you feel comforted somehow, and you want to remain as close as possible to them.
3. You and one of the other PCs both have a decent-sized collection of antique Game Cat magazines. With the money you make on this adventure, you're going to combine your quid with them and buy a valuable signed issue #8.
4. You are attracted to one of the other PCs in a way that not even you can understand. Platonic or otherwise.

GAME CAT SAYS:

But you just want to have sex, right? Which delivers the next level, the third level, of which there are ten modes also; robodogman, shadowmandog, dogmanvurt, robodogshadow, robovurtdog, shadowvurtdog, robomanshad, robomanvurt, shadowmanvurt, and roboshadowvurt. These are the middle beings, where most creatures get stuck; they just haven't got the spirit to go beyond.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

SHADOWMANVURT

Now we're getting weird, kittlings. The mix of Shadow, human and Vurt beings lead to very unique results, both physically and mentally. Two of your three genetic modes originate outside the realm of the real world, which creates an angst that leads many shadowmanvurts toward counterculture. The mixture of human and Vurt brings about a natural confidence, while the mixture of Shadow and human produces more of a natural independence. While you're probably socially adept, it may be a façade, concealing inner turmoil. Legendary rockstar Janus Fontaine was a shadowmanvurt.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the Shadow, human or Vurt special abilities listed on pages 42 and 43.

Personable: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Charismatic: You are trained in all tasks involving persuasion.

The Natural: You can attempt one task in which you have no training as if you were trained. This ability refreshes every time you make a recovery roll, but the uses don't accumulate.

The Bachelor: You don't take very good care of yourself. -1 to all recovery rolls.

Inability: Shadowmanvurts are well known to have a very difficult time with addiction. The difficulty of all drug-related willpower tests is increased by one step.

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

1. You owe money to a member of the Tameside Parkas streetgang and need to repay them—fast.
2. You're acting as a bodyguard for one of the other PCs who is being harassed. You're on this adventure to protect them from this person.
3. You were given instructions by your fixer to join this group of PCs. But your fixer is also known to give out bad advice when they're on one of their week-long Cortex Jammer binges.
4. You actually enjoy the company of this group. It might be the seventh glass of Fetish talking right now, but dammit, you really like these PCs.

ROBODOGMAN

It is well know in big media circles that robodogmen play very well across all audiences right now. Lucky you! Widely considered to be the most aesthetically pleasing of the

modes, your mode is totally en vogue right now. Thanks to this widespread appeal, you can move easily from group to group, making you perfect for the urban environment. Most people who meet you want to shake your paw/hand.

Identical Vurt-star triplets the Ellipsisters are robodogmen, and everyone copies their style.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the robo, dog or human special abilities listed on pages 41, 42 and 43.

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

Skill: You are trained in a physical, noncombat skill of your choice.

Skill: You're trained in all tasks involving interacting with real world animals (including pure dogs).

Inability: You're often focused more on yourself than what's going on around you. The difficulty of tasks involving perception are increased by one step.

Additional Equipment: You have a piece of jewelry that is an expensive item. People often give you gifts or try to impress you.

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

1. One of the PCs seems totally unimpressed by you being a robodogman, and that is intriguing to you. You think your mode of being is simply wonderful and you'll show them why.
2. One of the PCs reminds you of a good friend you lost in a stabbing in front of the White Lion club in Withington. You could have saved that friend if you hadn't been so wasted on Boomer. You're not going to make that mistake again.
3. There's safety in numbers and you need safety right now, thanks to that worrying stalker you've got.
4. You owe too much money to return to your old life in Shakespeare Luxury Estates; running with this dangerous new group is your way to rebel.

SHADOWMANDOG

Shadow, human and dog mix together to create one of the most imposing modes of being—the sort that might make someone stop short if they turned a corner and there you were. You're built for speed, both mental and physical, and you know it. Perhaps that's why shadowmandogs make such good cops. You're highly competent and don't give a rat's arse if people realize it or not. You're not out to make friends, because well-behaved people seldom make history.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the Shadow, human or dog special abilities listed on pages 41, 42 and 43.

Versatile: +2 to your Speed Pool and +1 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're trained in initiative actions.

Skill: You're trained in running actions.

Type-A: You're trained in intimidation tasks, but when trying to persuade people politely, the difficulty is increased by one step.

Inability: You're something of a Neo-Luddite. The difficulty of tasks involving anything high-tech is increased by one step.

Contact: You have a contact who owes you one big favor. This contact is just a quick call away. You and the GM can work out the details.

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

1. You convinced one of the PCs that joining the group would be in their best interest. In other words, you're strong-arming them into this adventure and are making sure

they stick with you.
2. One of the PCs is going to help you with your own goal once you help them with the current adventure. They've lied before though, so you're ready to leave if necessary.
3. There's safety in numbers and you're currently in need of backup due to a local threat.
4. You had a reoccurring dream that convinced you to join the current group.

DOGMANVURT

Both physical and intuitive, you are comfortable living moment to moment. There is a sense of placement in the scheme of things, perhaps due to the Vurt in you, that makes you feel like you'll be alright, no matter what. You may participate in the rat-race—working a regular job and saving up for someplace nice to retire, but if so, you are aware of the fact that you needn't be bothered. This insouciance belies a tough-as-nails disposition and is likely the reason dogmanvurts often live in tribal communities on the fringe of polite society. Most of the nomad communities and Cargo Cults are thought to be composed largely of dogmanvurts, though there is no real data to support this.

You gain the following characteristics:
Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the dog, human or vurt special abilities listed on pages 42 and 43.

Quick: +2 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: It doesn't take much to get your blood up. You're trained in Speed defense actions.

Skill: You're trained in tasks involving obtaining information from an individual.

Contact: You have a contact who is a fellow dogmanvurt. This contact can either be from your dogmanvurt tribe or not, it's up to you.

Inability: You've got a short attention span. The difficulty of any task that takes longer than five minutes is increased in difficulty by one step.

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

1. Your blasé attitude toward things others find important is shared with one of the PCs. You enjoy hanging around with them, for now.
2. This group seems to be after the same things you are: good drugs.
3. Choose a PC: Your fixer told you to keep an eye on this person to make sure they're really going to split the earnings evenly.
4. One of the PCs is also looking for the current location of a legendary, nameless underground club that changes venue every evening. It's all you've been able to think about, you're both obsessed with finding it.

ROBODOGSHADOW

You're a complex being, capable of great loyalty and valor as well as well as terrible wrath and vengefulness. While you may be torn between these forces, once you make up your mind you act with a rock-ribbed sense of purpose. You may spend much of your time in your own head, obsessing about your behavior, a quality which has allowed you to be manipulated in the past. It's possible that you've been into a dark place by these betrayals, from time to time, or that you've become wary of trusting people, or letting them become too close. As such, you may have few friends but those lucky few are damn fortunate to have you when the chips are down. Woe to the fool that disrespects a friend of yours.

You gain the following characteristics:
Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the robo, dog or Shadow special abilities listed on pages 41 and 43.

Fast: +3 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You're trained in all initiative actions.

Skill: You're trained in running.

Inability: The difficulty of any task involving decep-

tion is increased by one step. It just doesn't come naturally to you.

Inability: Once you let someone in, you are generous with your trust. The difficulty of any task that involves seeing through deceptions or determining someone's secret motive is increased by one step.

Additional Equipment: None

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

1. You and one of the PCs both went in together on a Randomino scheme in the past. You both lost a lot of money and you still blame them for what happened.
2. One of the PCs fascinates you greatly. They look so familiar; perhaps they remind you of some VurtStar or famous personality you can't seem to remember the name of at the moment.
3. You and one of the PCs both were romantically involved with the same foxy dogman who requested that you take part in the PC's adventure as a personal favor.
4. The PCs are a treasure trove full of delicious data.

ROBOVURTDOG

You're a proud robovurtdog; your mode is known to have a certain physical resiliency and endurance that surprises many. While not known for your speed, robovurtdogs like you make up for it in total drive and inner strength. Even those robovurtdogs with a small frame seem to have the ability to outlast other modes much larger when in combat. Your brains function a bit differently than the other modes as well; while you lot are not known for your academic accomplishments in society, your non-linear points of view have often proven indispensable.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the robo, Vurt or dog special abilities listed on pages 41, 42 and 43.

Resilient: +1 to Armor

Resistant: +2 to your Might Pool and +1 to your Intellect Pool.

Quick Recovery: Your second recovery roll (usually requiring ten minutes) is only a single action, just like the first roll. Enabler.

Skill: You're trained in Might defense tasks.

Inability: You get easily flustered. The difficulty of any task involving knowledge or figuring out problems or puzzles is increased by one step.

Inability: You have an issue with Shadows. Whenever you try to resist a Shadow-based mental attack, the difficulty is increased by one step.

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

1. The other PCs are going to a location you've only heard about in the Newsvurts, a place you have always wanted to see but haven't had the guts to check out alone.
2. One of the PCs knows you from a previous job that ended very badly, but they still called you in on this mission. You half expect a trap, but you're still here, aren't you?
3. On several occasions, you've either bought or sold Choke to one of the PCs. You both consider yourselves Choke aficionados and have taken your love for this drug to another level.
4. You are in a friendly competition with one of the other PCs over who can beat up the most sleeping homeless robocrusties. No one said you two were good people!

Choke, page 363

SHADOWVURTDOG

One of the rarest modes in the real world, the shadowvurtdogs have a nasty reputation to either live up to or overcome. The combination of Shadow and Vurt is already taxing, but with the addition of dog genetics, things begin to happen inside your brain that you may not fully understand. There seems to be no middle ground for you—one moment you're in ecstasy, the next, despair. This can be addressed through meditation or drugs, but part of you enjoys the euphoria of these swings. It's perhaps an oversimplification, but your mental state is like a dog being thrown countless sticks in opposite directions. The moment you get close enough to one stick, the other seems too delicious not to chase.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the Shadow, Vurt or Dog special abilities listed on pages 41, 42 and 43.

Energetic: +2 to your Speed Pool.

Bold: You're trained in all tasks that involve overcoming or ignoring the effects of fear or intimidation.

Skill: You're trained in initiative.

Easy Dreamer: *While in the Vurt world* your inner strength really comes out. The difficulty of all Might related tasks are decreased by one step.

Inability: Mood swings suck. The difficulty of any task involving social interaction is increased by one step.

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

1. You've become obsessed with some aspect of this group's current mission, and for whatever reason, it has become a driving force for you.
2. One of the PCs stupidly doubted your worth on this adventure—now you're here to show that daft apeth what a real shadowvurtdog can do.
3. You're here with these people because you're (in)fa-

mous for your ruthless method of combat. The group knows of your reputation and hired you to assist.

4. You honestly can't remember when you've had so much fun running with a crew. These PCs are as mad as you are!

ROBOMANSHAD

You robomanshads are the ones no one wants as an enemy. *Ever*. Some say that the simple mix of robo and human is sweet, and that adding something else to that mix makes it sour. Like Shadow. You like that. There's a certain deep-seated anger that is recognizable in almost all robomanshads. No matter how friendly your robo programming is, or how well-adjusted and ideal your childhood, your mode tends to have a hatred of the other modes and usually stick together. Strong tribal ties make certain robomanshad neighborhoods off-limits to other modes who want to survive. You like that too. You've been described as territorial and driven to the point of rage. You ain't bovvered. Your mode is considered to be the most unapproachable of all modes. Now add the fact that obtaining employment as a young robomanshad is nearly impossible, and you have yet another reason for the anger at the inequality to grow. Robomanshads that live outside their tribal communities are shunned by everyone, including their own. There's little light at the end of the Robomanshad tunnel, kittlings. But having most fear you on sight sometimes has its advantages.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the robo, human or Shadow special abilities listed on pages 42 and 43.

Skill: You're trained in Speed defense actions.

Skill: You're trained in any tasks involving intimidation, threats, or inflicting pain through torture. Yikes!

Contact: You have one other robomanshad contact who you trust like a sibling.

Inability: The whole world seems to hate you. The difficulty of any task involving social interaction is increased by one step.

Disastrolabe: *While in the Vurt world* you have a hard time finding your bearings, so all tasks involving navigation in the Vurt world are increased by one step.

Additional Equipment: You start with an additional medium melee weapon.

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

1. One of the PCs seems to share your deep hatred of pure Vurts. Neither of you are comfortable with anyone who has Vurt genetics.
2. One of the PCs has a peculiar way of making you feel almost happy at times.
3. This group is on an adventure that overlaps with your own personal goals.
4. Back in the dark days following the Pollen Outbreak, you and one of the other PCs took part in the Didsbury riots. Both of you deny this, and claim that the riots were perpetrated by those irresponsible tossers from Northenden.

ROBOMANVURT

Robo processing meets Human ingenuity combined with otherworldly grace. You are most likely the smartest mode in the room. Confident and inquisitive, the way you think is the main difference; your humanity feels augmented by Vurt sensitivity and robo processing. When in the real world, you generally function quite well both physically and mentally. The downside (you knew there'd be a downside) is that when you're inside a Vurt feather, the robo part of your genetics slows you down and causes intense frustration. You may avoid going into the Vurt, unless you absolutely have to. This irony isn't

lost on you. You feel the genetic pull of the Vurt, but just aren't sure that you fit in the Vurt world.

You gain the following characteristics:
Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the robo, human or Vurt special abilities listed on pages 42 and 43.

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

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

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

Inability: You're not the outdoorsy type. The difficulty of all climbing, running, jumping, and swimming tasks is increased by one step.

Inability: You're not a very good liar. The difficulty of any task involving deception is increased by one step.

Disastrolabe: *While in the Vurt world* you have a hard time finding your bearings, so all tasks involving navigation in the Vurt world are increased by one step.

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

1. You're trying to train your mind to function better in the Vurt world, and this group seems feather-bound.
2. One of the PCs is your feather-mentor and always seem to get their hands on the best bootlegs. You've had some crazy times together over the years and wherever they go, you go.
3. These PCs are no joke. You feel like this adventure is a way for you to prove yourself and earn your place on future missions.
4. One of the PCs has promised you something secret (maybe embarrassing) in exchange for your assistance.

ROBOSHADOWVURT

When robo mixes with Shadow and Vurt, no one wins. Others often look on your ultra-rare mode with a combination of pity and disdain. Dueling thought processes often unravel trains of thoughts at the proverbial station. You know what you want to say, but usually cannot communicate clearly with others, including fellow roboshadowvurts. This may lead to a lonely existence, but in recent years, there's been a push to incorporate roboshadowvurts into society, tapping into your natural but confounding abilities. One would think that real world robo processing power would tame the other two genetic parts into functioning well, but this is seldom the case. Most roboshadowvurts like you find it very difficult to communicate, but can understand what is being communicated to you perfectly. However, when you are in a feather, you communicate well and have a natural physical grace that is almost unrivaled.

You gain the following characteristics:
Choose one tier 1 special ability, from either the robo, Shadow or Vurt special abilities listed on pages 42 and 43.

Actions, Not Words: +2 to your Might Pool and +1 to your Speed Pool.

Home, Sweet Home: *While in the Vurt world* the difficulty of all Intellect-based tasks is reduced by one step.

Skills: You are trained in two non-physical skills of your choice.

Inability: You're tongue-tied in the real world. The difficulty of any task involving communication in the real world is increased by one step.

Inability: Your senses are slightly out of tune with the organic world. The difficulty of tasks that involve your sense of smell or taste are increased by one step.

Contact: You have a contact with amazing access to high tech weapons or equipment, but you don't get a discount.

Additional Equipment: You start with an additional medium melee weapon.

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

1. One of the PCs understands you better than most, and helps you communicate with others. Without their help, you're less likely to venture outside of your stash-pad.
2. The group has hired you to for your extraordinary Vurt world abilities. Everyone wants to take feathers with you—you're a natural.
3. The PCs are on a mission that you feel morally or emotionally compelled to join. It feels good to be doing something you believe in!
4. Do roboshadowvurts dream? Yes, they do, and your recurring dream has lead you to this group of PCs.

GAME CAT SAYS:

Except of course, some few just can't stop having sex. Which gives birth to the FOURTH LEVEL, of which there are only five modes, each missing only one element, and their names are; Flake, Dunce, Squid, Spanner, and Float. Hey, what did you want? More big mouthfuls. Fourth level beings are deep beauties, and I should know, because the Cat is one. Which kind? Hey, what is this, gift week? You'll be asking who Hobart is next. I know, I'm a tease. That's how I make my living.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

DUNCE (VURTSHADOWDOGMAN)

Your brain is a glorious mess, pulled in four directions at all times by four distinct voices who whisper

constantly and give you conflicting advice—but you'd feel lonely without them. Your mind is never quiet or calm and you experience reality on a very different level. You've likely never met another Dunce, and feel isolated in the world. Perhaps you feel envious of others and their ability to experience the simple pleasures of life, and wonder what it would be like to be able to function without doubting the reality of what's before you. You are aware that you seem dangerous and delusional, but it's what pushes you forward and gives you godlike glimpses into reality that others will never experience.

Dodos, page 82

The term "4th level being" is simply referring to the mixture of modes, not a game mechanic.

You gain the following characteristics:
Choose three additional tier 1 special abilities, from either the Vurt, Shadow, dog or human special abilities listed on pages 41, 42 and 43.

Well Read: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're *specialized* in all tasks involving intimidation.

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

Inability: Others rarely trust you or like you. The difficulty of pleasant social interactions is increased by two steps.

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

Hunted: There are those who believe that beings like you hold the secrets to a massive evolutionary leap. The powers that be are hunting beings like you for nefarious purposes. Hunters are a constant threat and every move you make is potentially lethal. You and the GM should work out the details.

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

1. Your companions do not know that you are a Dunce. Discuss the details with the GM.
2. Truth be told, you hang around one of the PCs because they have a smooth voice that reminds you of a young Frank Scenario (before he got hooked on Choke and involved in the House of Chances scandal).
3. You had a vision that this adventure would lead to some truly important reward, something more than just money. It's been years since you've felt this compelled to follow your dreams—it must be something of value.

FLAKE (ROBOSHADOWDOGMAN)

Flake is a name given to a rare being like you; robo, Shadow, dog and human (four of the five possible modes) are mixed in your veins, though your outward appearance doesn't give you away. All Flakes are genetic Dodos, unable to access the Vurt world through feathers or regular means. This separates your mode even further from other extremely rare modes who can at least find comfort in feathers. You've never met another Flake, there are simply too few of you in existance. The prime minister of Australia, known only as "The Wizard," is a Flake and the only openly 4th level being in the world.

You gain the following characteristics:
Choose three additional tier 1 special abilities, from either the robo, Shadow, dog or human special abilities listed on pages 41, 42 and 43.

Open Mind: +4 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're in constant danger from bounty hunters, which makes you sharp. You're trained in tasks involving perception.

Vurtophobe: You have a deep-seated fear and hatred of any being with Vurt genetics. If you become aware of the presence of a being with even the smallest amount of Vurt genetics within short range, it will automatically trigger your fight or flight reaction. The GM can use GM intrusion that directs your next action without awarding XP. You can still pay 1 XP to refuse the intrusion. The GM's influence is the manifestation of your uncontrollable hatred and fear and might ruin just about any social interaction. (For example, you may run screaming or attack a Vurt being without provocation.)

Dodo: You cannot travel into the Vurt world via feathers.

Inability: Others rarely trust you or like you. The

difficulty of pleasant social interactions is increased by two steps.

Hunted: There are those who believe that beings like you hold the secrets to a massive evolutionary leap. Powers that be are hunting beings like you for nefarious purposes. Hunters are a constant threat and every move you make is potentially lethal. You and the GM should work out the details.

Retainer: You start out with a level 2 servant or protector of some sort, either paid or volunteer. This person lives to serve and protect you. You and the GM should work out the details.

Additional Equipment: You start with an XtroVurt machine that allows you to observe your companions when they are travelling in the Vurt world without you.

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

1. The bounty on your head has reached legendary status at this point, you're on the top of many hit lists for hunters, and this group of PCs might be trustworthy.
2. One of the PCs knows your true identity—everyone else is told that you are just a mix of three genetics, not four. Discuss the details with the GM.
3. Observing this group on this adventure should further your studies into the use of feathers. As a Dodo, you've never experienced the Vurt world, but perhaps a genius such as yourself might someday solve this problem.

FLOAT (ROBOSHADOWVURTMAN)

You are a being with the mixed genetics of of robo, Shadow, Vurt and human. You Floats are known for an overwhelming intellect that makes you often unable to connect with anyone else. Communication with other beings is maddening, as you cannot grasp what it is like to have four of the five modes swirling inside your mind like a mental tornado. You're also not a big fan of those with dog genetics, their method of communication generally the most confusing to decipher (and they smell bad). You feel most comfortable by yourself, but will work with others when you need to. You've never met another Float, and you don't ever expect to.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose three additional tier 1 special abilities, from either the robo, Shadow, Vurt or human special abilities listed on pages 42 and 43.

Sneaky: +4 to your Speed Pool.

Open Mind: +4 to your Intellect Pool.

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

Home, Sweet Home: *While in the Vurt world* the difficulty of all Speed based tasks is reduced by one step.

Inability: They just don't understand a mind as powerful as yours, and that is maddening. The difficulty of any task involving pleasant social interaction is increased by one step.

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

XtroVurt machine, page 107

Hunted: There are those who believe that beings like you hold the secrets to a massive evolutionary leap. Powers that be are hunting beings like you for nefarious purposes. Hunters are a constant threat and every move you make is potentially lethal. You and the GM should work out the details.

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

1. One of the PCs intrigues you, which is rare. You feel like being physically close to them gives your tired mind something to focus on, something simple and distracting.
2. You're on a personal mission to spread your knowledge all over the real world and these PCs can be your first disciples. This adventure is going to go down in history as the initial steps in your ascension to greatness.
3. The other PCs are unaware that you are a Float—you pass for a mode with only two or three different genetic modes mixed in, not four. Discuss the details with the GM.

SPANNER (ROBOSHADOWVURTDOG)

Too. Many. Voices. Inside. There has yet to be a documented case of a Spanner able to communicate other than telepathically. If there are others like you, they're likely unable to hold it together, confused beyond belief. Having no human in them, you Spanners show a major distrust of all other modes, and for good reason: You are, by far, the most hunted of the modes, the most prone to being caught and killed. But not you. You're going to prove them all wrong and show them that despite your constant uphill battle to hang on to your sanity, you will not only survive, but thrive. You believe that even the powerful voices in your head will be silenced someday as long as you keep your focus, keep your mouth shut, and keep your eye on the prize.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose three additional tier 1 special abilities, from either the robo, Shadow, Vurt or dog special abili-

ties listed on pages 41, 42 and 43.

Actions, Not Words: +2 to your Might Pool and +1 to your Speed Pool.

Well Read: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Home, Sweet Home: *While in the Vurt world* the difficulty of all Speed based tasks is reduced by one step.

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

Voices: You fight a constant battle to silence the voices in your head and know that keeping your mouth shut is the only way. Whenever you speak, you are unable to control what comes out of your mouth and appear to others to be raving mad. When you are in the presence of a major discovery or subjected to great stress (such as a serious physical threat), the GM can use GM intrusion that directs your next action without awarding XP. You can still pay 1 XP to refuse the intrusion. The GM's influence is the manifestation of your "condition" and what you end up saying is often deeply disturbing to anyone who hears you. (For example, if a cop interrogates you, the stress might cause you to open your mouth and start screaming uncontrollably about death and taxes.)

Doom: *While in the Vurt world*, Spanners feel a sense of doom. Resisting the effects of any fear or intimidation in the Vurt world is increased by one step.

Inability: You cannot communicate with *anyone* in the real world effectively. The difficulty of any task involving communication is increased by three steps. Yes, *three*.

Hunted: There are those who believe that beings like you hold the secrets to a massive evolutionary leap. Powers that be are hunting beings like you for nefarious purposes. Hunters are a constant threat and every move you make is potentially lethal. You and the GM should work out the details.

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

1. You need to tell one of the PCs something important, something that might just save their life, but are unable to communicate effectively. Perhaps if you follow them into the Vurt world, you can relay this warning in time.
2. This group isn't trying to kill you, and that's refreshing. You've spent the last few years being chased by fanatical hunters.
3. You do not tell any of the other PCs that you are Spanner. However, you'll need a good excuse for your inability to communicate. Discuss the details with the GM.

Ford Comet, page 122

SQUID (ROBOVURTDOGMAN)

Some Squids are said to almost resemble the ancient Greek titans or Sumerian gods; quasi-human forms with mysterious powers, changing shape at will and confusing all around them with their formless brilliance. You know that the terrifying beauty of your physical form is too much for most to bear. To you, it's proof that you are here to be worshipped and/or feared, that everything you do is part of a bigger cosmic plan. Maybe you see yourself as the perfect end result of evolution, the pinnacle of genetics. You feel that this world is your playground, that society will someday accept and perhaps even deify you. Unfortunately, for the time being, you're likely forced to wear a disguise that covers your beauty. It feels almost sacrilegious not to share your near-perfection with the world, and you hate the fact that you're not free to do what you want. Someday you'll make them all pay, but in the meantime, you will do what you have to do.

You gain the following characteristics:

Choose three additional tier 1 special abilities, from either the robo, Vurt, dog or human special abilities listed on pages 41, 42 and 43.

Mighty: +4 to your Might Pool.

Open Mind: +4 to your Intellect Pool.

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

Godlike: Your visage may be terrifying. You are specialized in tasks involving persuasion, but only when you reveal yourself to be a Squid.

Home, Sweet Home: *While in the Vurt world* the difficulty of all Speed based tasks is reduced by one step.

Inability: This world appear to be filled with lesser beings. The difficulty of all communication tasks is increased in difficulty by two steps.

Alien Appearance: There is simply no way that your ever-shifting physical form will pass as one of the other modes. This causes terror in most that see you. Concealing yourself under a disguise might be possible, but difficult.

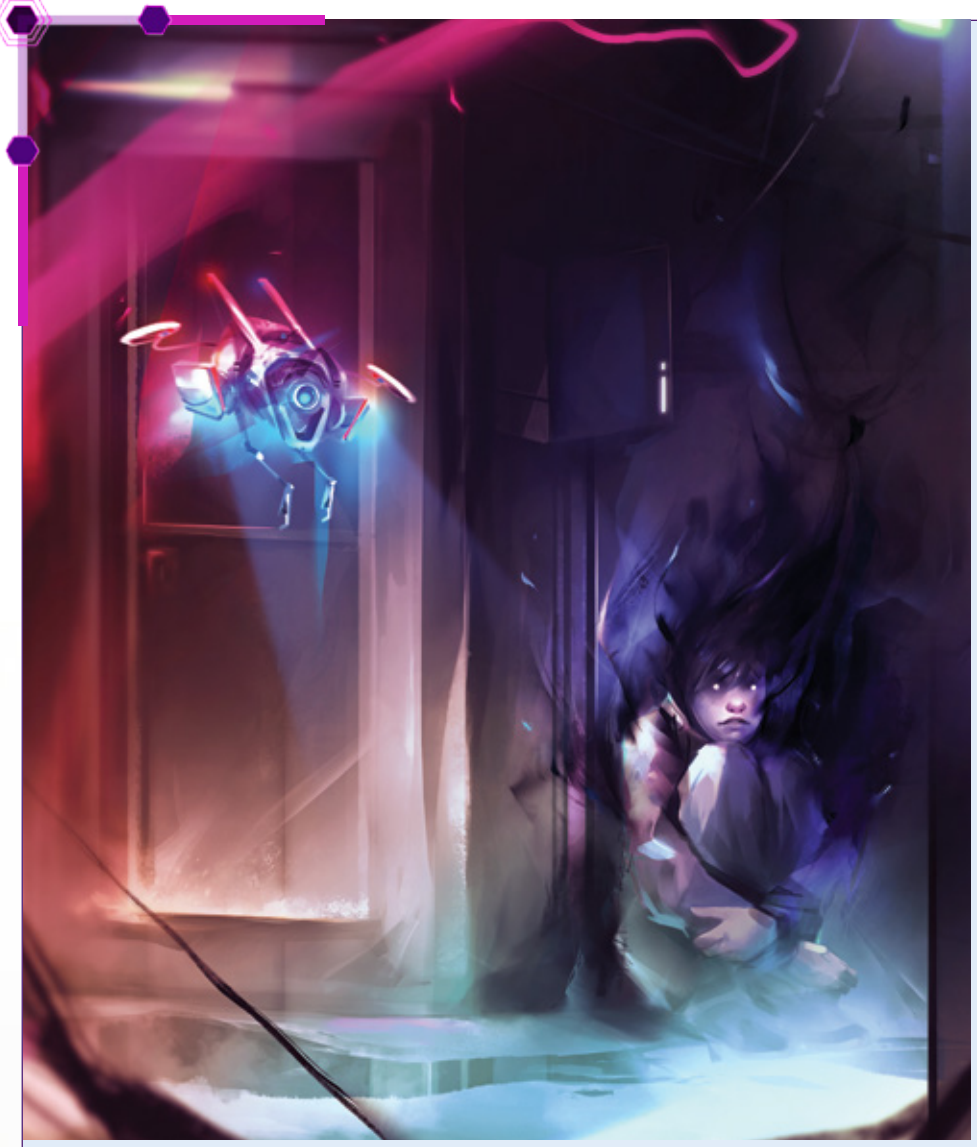
Hunted: There are those who believe that beings like you hold the secrets to a massive evolutionary leap. Powers that be are hunting beings like you for nefarious purposes. Hunters are a constant threat and every move you make is potentially lethal. You and the GM should work out the details.

Driver: You start out with a level 2 servant or protector who drives you from place to place so that you will not be seen. They worship you like a god and would drink poison for you. You and the GM should work out the details.

Additional Equipment: You start with a Ford Comet.

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

1. Since the last group of followers/worshippers you had were all recently gunned down by the MPD, you've identified this group as candidates for your new disciples.



2. You're fascinated by how repulsive all these other, lower modes of being are. This group is especially ugly and you can't seem to stop staring at their hideousness.

3 You have managed, with difficulty, to conceal your Squid nature from the PCs. But one has found out and is threatening to tell unless you join this adventure.

MODE SPECIAL ABILITIES

DOG SPECIAL ABILITIES

Tier 1: (choose one)

Dog Sense: You have an uncanny ability to sense when things aren't right and can snap to an alert state quickly. You are trained in Initiative. If you are already trained, you become specialized. Enabler.

Dog Bite: Your bite is a light weapon (4 damage) but normal speech is impeded. The difficulty of verbal communication tasks with non-dog modes is increased by one step. You may only select this ability during character creation.

Tier 2: (choose one)

Ferocious When Cornered: When you are impaired, you fight with desperate savagery. Melee attacks inflict one additional point of damage and you have an asset when resisting intimidation. Enabler.

Unstoppable: When you are impaired on the damage track, you function as if you were hale. While you are debilitated, you function as if you were impaired. In other words, you don't suffer the effects of being debilitated. You still die if all your stat Pools are 0. Enabler.

Tier 3: (choose one)

Escape Artist: There may be a trace of Jack Russell in you. You have two assets for any task related to escaping. Enabler.

Bloodhound (2 intellect points): Using your sense of smell, you can track a creature or object. The PC must have an object which bears the scent of the quarry (e.g. a scrap of clothing, or an object from the person's car or home). On a successful difficulty 2 Intellect task you can track your quarry to a distance of 1 mile. If the trail is longer than 1 mile, the PC must spend 1 Intellect point and make another difficulty 2 Intellect check to stay on the scent. The difficulty of Intellect tasks increases by one step for every day the trail fades (i.e. tracking an NPC who got away from a combat with your PC is a difficulty 2 task, tracking an NPC from the site of a combat that took place yesterday is a difficulty 3 task, and so on). Action to initiate.

Tier 4: (choose one)

Howl: Because of your high reputation in the dog world and your general affect, you are able to call upon the resources and help of other dogs. The PC can get a small amount of quick cash, find an untraceable pistol to purchase, or even rally a small group of nearby dogs to support them in an encounter. This ability can be used

once per play session. Enabler.
Mad Dog (3 Might points): You go into a frenzy so fearsome that an opponent within immediate range is intimidated. For one round, the difficulty of any tasks the target attempts are increased in difficulty by two steps. Action.

HUMAN SPECIAL ABILITIES

Tier 1: (choose one)

Socially Acceptable: Humans are inherently sycophantic and some people just love that. You have an asset in bureaucratic or pleasant social interactions. Enabler.
Drip Feed Account: Where other modes seem always to find red tape when applying for public assistance, humans are met with less resistance. Once per day the player may access a drip feed terminal, and on a result of 1-3 on a 1d6, receive £50 of public assistance. This account does not deactivate after one use, like the cypher Drip-Feed Card—it's a functioning account registered to the PC. Enabler.

Tier 2: (choose one)

Human Creativity: You have an asset in crafting tests. Enabler.
Pharmafinity: Thanks to three generations bathed in antidepressants, humanity has developed an impressive resilience to drug side effects. Any lasting damage sustained as a side effect of a drug or a poison is cut in half. For example, if the PC takes Cortex Jammers, the weakened effect would only last for one hour rather than two. Enabler.

Tier 3: (choose one)

Making a Call: Because of your mainstream respectability or influence, you can obtain the name or location of a low level connection who may have the resources your group needs. It's up to you to make the introduction and obtain the services needed (this may require a conversation, money, or even completing a mission for the NPC). This ability can be used once per play session. Enabler.
Allure: You are trained in seduction. Additionally, all tasks attempted inside a pink feather are reduced in difficulty by one step. Enabler.

Tier 4: (choose one)

Knowing Someone: You know a person in a position of some authority (such as a police lieutenant or a gang leader), and can obtain an occasional meeting with them. Your relationship provides an asset for interactions with this connection, but they do not necessarily owe you any favors. For example, if you know Constable Usher of the Greater Manchester Police Department, the Lieutenant isn't going to arrest a rival on your behalf, but may be convinced to have a constable look into your report of illegal activity. This ability can be used once per adventure. Action.
Touch of Vurt: You have inadvertently absorbed a touch of the Vurt in your blood, possibly from the sting or bite of a Vurt creature. Choose a tier 1 special ability from the Vurt special abilities. Enabler.
Touch of Robo: The PC has obtained a cybernetic implant. Choose a tier 1 special ability from the robo special abilities. Enabler.

VURT SPECIAL ABILITIES

Tier 1: (choose one)

Sense Vurt Nature (Intellect 1): You can pick up waves of Vurt, like a radio antenna. If you concentrate on a person within short range for one round, you will know if they are part or pure Vurt. If you are attacked before the start of your next turn, the attempt will fail. Action.
Vurt Flesh Resilience: Vurt flesh is elastic and heals quickly. You get +1 to all recovery rolls. Enabler.

Tier 2: (choose one)

Accelerated Healing: You may choose to deduct one day from the remaining healing time of all lasting damage effects in the place of any recovery roll. This means that a PC could heal 4 days of lasting damage effects in 24 hours if they choose to forgo any pool point recovery. Enabler.
Mask Vurt Nature: You are able to project a perception of yourself into the minds of nearby entities, tricking them into not noticing your obvious Vurt characteristics. This ability is automatic and defensive in nature, and serves only to camouflage you to the casual observer. You receive an asset when attempting to hide your Vurt nature. Ineffective against Dodos. Enabler.

Tier 3: (choose one)

Edge Riding (4 Intellect): Without taking a feather, you can enter the Vurt dream of any character within immediate range. If you do, you are immediately inside the Vurt with them. Action.
Tap In: You get a precognitive sense of what is to come in The Vurt. Each level of Tap In counts as an asset toward all tasks, combat, and noncombat in the Vurt. You may select this ability twice.

Tier 4: (choose one)

Move Sideways (6 Intellect): Open a door from one Vurt feather into another, by connecting related Vurt world environments. The door between Vurt feathers remains open for the duration of the trip. You cannot jerk out after you cross into this new feather, and if you or anyone with you dies before returning to the initial Vurt feather, they die in the real world, as their consciousness cannot find it's way back to the body. Action.
Vurt Flesh Regeneration: When suffering lasting damage, divide the healing time in half. A lasting damage effect that would normally take eight days to heal only takes four days for you. Permanent damage, even a

severed limb, is completely healed after only 24 hours. Enabler.

ROBO SPECIAL ABILITIES

Tier 1: (choose one)

Utility Suite: You have a retractable toolkit built into your body, including an uplink port that enables connection to any computer system as well as the use of a neural link system. It provides an asset in all simple mechanical or electronics tasks. Enabler.

Ballistic Skin: You have replaced your standard skin plastics with a layer of ballistic weave providing +1 Armor rating. Enabler.

Tier 2: (choose one)

Built-in Weapon: You have installed a retractable light weapon (4 damage). This can be a melee or ranged weapon. It is fully concealed and can only be discovered by body scan. Upgrade may be selected twice.

Targeting Optics: A heads-up display automatically highlights targets in your field of view, providing an asset to ranged attacks. Enabler.

Tier 3: (choose one)

Hardened: Your body is coated in a layer of transparent insulation. You have +6 Armor rating vs. fire, acid, and electricty, and you can operate in a total vacuum. Enabler.

Expanded Memory: Your memory storage is extensive, allowing recall of any details, including conversations within earshot, going back 30 days. Enabler.

Tier 4: (choose one)

Wired Reflexes: Your latest software upgrade has dramatically reduced loading times. You have an asset for initiative checks and melee defense actions. Enabler.

Combat armoring: You have installed a layer of flexible VPC armor under your skin for additional protection. +4 to Armor rating, encumbrance as Medium armor.

SHADOW SPECIAL ABILITIES

Tier 1: (choose one)

Show Shadow (1 Might point): Your body produces smoke from every orifice, which you can control to partially mask yourself in darkness, reducing the difficulty of all tests to hide in shadows or dim light by one level for ten minutes. Action to initiate.

Simple Communication (1 Intellect point): Each time this special ability is chosen you may select one of the following:

- Reach out with your shadow and telepathically connect to the mind of a single willing, intelligent being within medium range. You can both send and receive telepathic messages for ten minutes. Action to initiate.
- With concentration you're able to communicate verbally for ten minutes. Action to initiate.

Tier 2: (choose one)

Disorient Foe (1 Intellect point): Focus your Shadow on an enemy's mind, causing disorientation. For one round any action attempted by the target is increased in difficulty by one step, including defense actions. Action.

Read Mind (2 Intellect points). You can read the surface thoughts of a creature within short range, even if the target doesn't want you to. You must be able to see your target. Once you have established contact, you can read the target's thoughts for up to one minute. If you also have the Mind Reading ability from your type or another source, you can use this ability at long range, and you don't need to be able to see the target (but you do have to know that the target is within range). Action to initiate.

Tier 3: (choose one)

Mind Punch (3+ Intellect points): You blast waves of mental force into the minds of up to three targets within short range (make an Intellect roll against each target). This burst inflicts 4 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor). For each 2 additional Intellect points you spend, you can make an Intellect attack roll against an additional target. Action.

Partially There (3 Might points): For ten minutes your flesh is partially ethereal. Reduce the damage of all physical attacks by half. Flame pistols or attacks with Shadow, heat or ultraviolet properties deal normal damage. Action to initiate.

Tier 4: (choose one)

Turn to Smoke (4 Might points): You can completely change into Shadow form for three rounds. While in this state you can pass through a keyhole, under a door, float up and over a barrier 5m high and you are impervious to all physical attacks or influence (except those with Shadow, heat, or ultraviolet properties). While Turn to Smoke is active, you cannot make any physical attacks or actions, but you can move, speak or use your Shadow. For example, you can use Mind Punch while Turn to Smoke is active, but you cannot perform a melee attack or open a door. Activating this ability causes all clothing and items to drop to the ground. Turn to Smoke cannot be used by any character whose body contains substantial mechanical parts.

Shadow Fuck (4 Intellect points): On a successful attack roll, you pour your Shadow into another person, totally dominating and bombarding their mind. While Shadow Fuck is active they are completely unable to perform any actions or movement, and take light Intellect damage (4 damage) at the end of the round. The effect can be maintained in subsequent rounds for free (no intellect cost), but the attack roll required to hold the effect is increased in difficulty by one level for each consecutive round. A successful attack against the PC will break the effect, and prevent the Shadow Fuck damage to the target during that round. Action.

CHAPTER 6

CHARACTER TYPE

BECAUSE SOMETIMES YOU'VE GOT TO DO THE BEST YOU CAN, IN ORDER TO COME OUT SMILING, JUST BY A LITTLE BIT.

- Jeff Noon

Character type is the core of your player character, the part that has nothing to do with their genetics or their job. The type is the foundation upon which your whole character is built—the deep, driving force that informs how a PC approaches challenges and deals with their reality. It's the noun of the sentence "I am an adjective noun who verbs."

You can choose from four character types: explorer, mathemagician, speaker, and warrior. Your choice will determine the starting stats, bonuses, and special abilities that you will use in your many adventures. Do you problem solve through diplomacy, or manipulation? Do you prefer to depend on your physical training or weapons? Maybe you're inclined to turn to secretive mathemagickal solutions that many others find unnatural. Perhaps you always base your next move on the experiences you've survived while trying to quench your insatiable curiosity. What's your angle? Direct combat? Social means? Manipulating the environment, or some combination of all of these methods?

Fear not, kittlings, choosing a type does not trap you into just one style of play. You'll be able to customize your player character a great deal more as you continue through the character creation process.

Ready? Take a deep breath—it's time to get this party started! Go on, make this first choice.

Explorer? Mathemagician? Speaker? Warrior?

What will you be?

EXPLORER

You are an explorer, a person of action and ability, driven by curiosity and the thrill of facing the unknown. You travel to dark and dangerous places, and feel compelled to discover strange new things. You might shine brightest in the Vurt world, gathering delicious knowledge. Or perhaps you're one of those crazed Mancs who knows every twist and turn of your favorite districts and boroughs, keeping track of everything that goes on around you, eyes peeled, ears open, proverbial nose to the ground. You're physical but also most likely experienced and well-read. You may be an adventurer, mystery seeker, athlete, explorer, drifter, detective, scholar, investigative reporter, field scientist, or some combination of all of the above. The strongest single motivation for all explorers is curiosity.

Individual Role: Although explorers can be academics or well-studied, they are first and foremost interested in action. They face grave dangers and terrible obstacles as a routine part of life. Most have a keen interest in exploring the Vurt world.

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

Societal Role: Not all explorers are featherheads obsessed with exploring the Vurt world or out traips-

ing through dangerous and unknown neighborhoods. Sometimes an explorer is a teacher, a scientist, a detective, or an investigative reporter. In any event, an explorer bravely faces new challenges and gathers knowledge to share with others.

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

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

EXPLORER STAT POOLS

Stat	Pool Starting Value
Might	10
Speed	9
Intellect	9

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

FIRST-TIER EXPLORER

First-tier explorers have the following:

Effort: Your Effort is 1.

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

Cypher Grasp: You can go into the Vurt world with two cyphers at a time.

Practiced With Light and Medium Weapons: You can use light and medium weapons without penalty. If you wield a heavy weapon, increase the difficulty of the attack by one step. Enabler.

Starting Equipment: Appropriate clothing a light melee weapon of your choice, 2 cyphers, plus £200.

Special Abilities: Choose three special abilities described below, or from the special abilities of your chosen Mode on pages 41-43. You can't choose the same special ability more than once unless its description says otherwise.

Block (3 Speed points): You automatically block the next melee attack made against you within the next minute. Action to initiate.

Danger Sense (1 Speed point): The difficulty of your initiative roll is reduced by one step. Enabler.

Decipher (1 Intellect point): If you spend one minute examining a piece of writing or code in a language you do not understand, you can make an Intellect roll of difficulty 3 (or higher, based on the complexity of the language or code) to get the gist of the message. Action to initiate.

Endurance: Any duration dealing with physical actions is either doubled or halved, whichever is better for you. For example, if the typical person can hold their breath for thirty seconds, you can hold it for one minute. If the typical person can march for four hours without stopping, you can do so for eight hours. In terms of harmful effects, if a poison paralyzes its victims for one minute, you are paralyzed for thirty seconds. The minimum duration is always one round. Enabler.

Extra Edge: You have a Might Edge of 1 and a Speed Edge of 1.

Fleet of Foot: If you succeed at a difficulty 2 Speed roll to run, you can move a short distance and take an action in the same round. Enabler.

Knowledge Skills: You are trained in two skills in which you are not already trained. Choose two areas of knowledge such as real world history, geography,

Roll	Background
1	You were a star athlete. You're still in great shape, and train everyday to keep fit.
2	Your brother is a well-known club DJ whose Limbic Splitter skills are legendary.
3	You have made a number of discoveries in your explorations, but not all opportunities to capitalize on them have panned out yet.
4	You were a cop, but you gave it up after encountering corruption on the force.
5	Your parents traveled extensively, so you spent much of your young life exploring exotic places.
6	You're well-respected for your tireless assistance in rebuilding your neighborhood after the Pollen Outbreak.
7	You received assistance from a secretive organization, which paid for your schooling. Now they seem to want a lot more from you.
8	You went to a prestigious university on an athletic scholarship, but you excelled in class as well as on the field.
9	Your best friend from your youth is now an influential member of the local government.
10	You used to be a teacher. Your students remember you fondly.
11	You worked as a small-time criminal operative until you were caught and served some time in jail, after which you tried to go straight.
12	Your greatest discovery to date was stolen by your archrival.
13	You belong to an exclusive organization of explorers whose existence is not widely known.
14	You were kidnapped as a small child under mysterious circumstances, although you were recovered safely. The case still has some notoriety.
15	You were almost ruined by your addiction to Randomino gambling, and now you are a recovering addict.
16	While exploring a remote location, you saw something strange you've never been able to explain.
17	You work at a small pub or restaurant where you overhear a lot of shady shit.
18	You published a book about some of your exploits and discoveries, and it has achieved some acclaim.
19	Your sister owns a Vurt-U-Want franchise and gives you a hefty discount.
20	One of your parents was a cop. You're familiar with how the system works.

Vurt feathers, botany, and so on. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose two different skills. Enabler.

Muscles of Iron (2 Might points): For the next ten minutes, the difficulty of all Might-based actions other than attack rolls that you attempt is reduced by one step. Enabler.

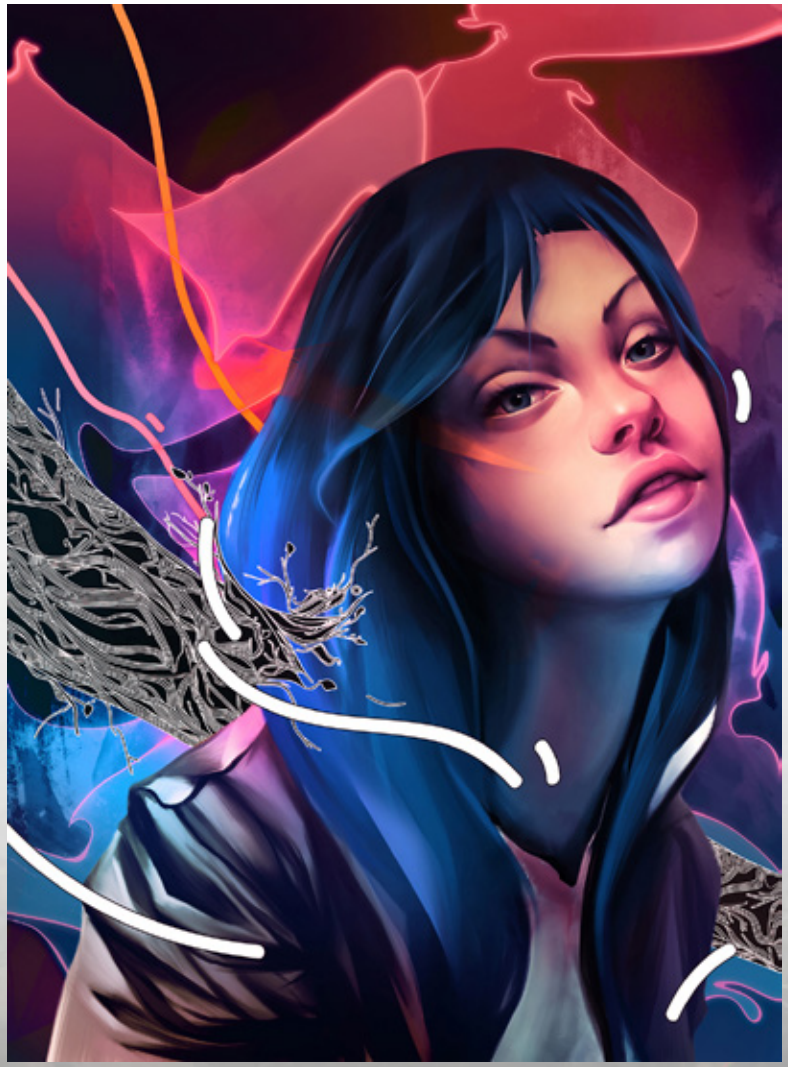
No Need for Weapons: When you make an unarmed attack (such as a punch or kick), it counts as a light weapon, dealing 4 points of damage instead of just 2. Enabler.

Physical Skills: You are trained in two skills in which you're not already trained. Choose two of the following: balancing, climbing, jumping, running, or swimming. You can select this ability multiple times; however, you may not select the same skill twice in a row. Enabler.

Practiced in Armor: You can wear armor for long periods of time without tiring and can compensate for slowed reactions due to encumbrance. You reduce the Speed cost for wearing armor by 1. You start the game with a light armor vest (+2 Armor). Enabler.

Encumbrance, page 139

Practiced With All Weapons: You can use any weapon. Enabler.



Surging Confidence (1 Might point): When you use an action to make your first recovery roll of the day, you immediately gain another action. Enabler.

Trained Without Armor: You are trained in Speed defense actions when not wearing armor. Enabler.

SECOND-TIER EXPLORER

Choose four of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from your tier 2 (or from a lower tier) mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Enable Others: You can use the helping rules to provide a benefit to another character attempting a physical task. This requires no action on your part. Enabler.

Escape (2 Speed points): You can slip your restraints, squeeze through the bars, break the grip of a creature holding you, or otherwise get loose from whatever is holding you in place. Action.

Eye for Detail (2 Intellect points): When you spend five minutes or so thoroughly exploring an area no larger than a typical room, you can ask one question about the area, and the GM must answer you truthfully. You cannot use this ability more than one time per area per 24 hours. Enabler.

Hand to Eye (2 Speed points): This ability provides an asset to any tasks involving manual dexterity, such as pickpocketing, lockpicking, games involving agility, and so on. Each use lasts up to a minute; a new use (to switch tasks) replaces the previous use. Action to initiate.

Investigative Skills: You are trained in two skills in which you are not already trained. Choose two of the following: identifying, perception, lockpicking, assessing danger, or tinkering with devices. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose two different skills. Enabler.

Quick Recovery: Your second recovery roll (usually requiring ten minutes) is only a single action, just like the first roll. Enabler.

Range Increase: Ranges for you increase by one step. Immediate becomes short, short becomes long, and long becomes 200 ft (60 m). Enabler.

Skill With Defense: Choose one type of defense task in which you are not already trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are trained in defense tasks of that type. You can select this ability up to three times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of defense task. Enabler.

Stand Watch (2 Intellect points): While standing watch (mostly remaining in place for an extended period of time), you unfailingly remain awake and alert for up to eight hours. During this time, you are trained in perception tasks as well as stealth tasks to conceal

yourself from those who might approach. Action to initiate.

Travel Skills: You are trained in two skills in which you are not already trained. Choose two of the following: running, riding, piloting, driving, or navigation checks within one specific city district. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose two different skills. Enabler.

Wreck: Using two hands, you wield a weapon or a tool with a powerful swing. (If fighting unarmed, this attack is made with both fists or both feet together.) When using this as an attack, you take a –1 penalty to the attack roll, and you inflict 3 additional points of damage. When attempting to damage an object or barrier, you are trained in the task. Action.

THIRD-TIER EXPLORER

Choose three of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from your tier 3 (or from a lower tier) mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Controlled Fall: If you fall while you are able to use actions and within reach of a vertical surface, you can attempt to slow your fall. Make a Speed roll with a difficulty of 1 for every 20 ft (6 m) you fall. On a success, you take half damage from the fall. If you reduce the difficulty to 0, you take no damage. Enabler.

Experienced With Armor: The cost reduction from your Practiced in Armor ability improves. You now reduce the Speed cost by 2. Enabler.

Improved Cypher Grasp: You can take up to three cyphers into the Vurt world at a time.

Ignore the Pain: You do not feel the detrimental effects of being impaired on the damage track, and when you are debilitated, you ignore those effects and experience the effects normally associated with being impaired instead. (Dead is still dead.) Enabler.

Resilience: You have +1 to Armor against any kind of physical damage, even damage that normally ignores Armor. Enabler.

Run and Fight (4 Might points): You can move a short distance and initiate a melee attack that inflicts 2 additional points of damage. Action.

Seize Opportunity (4 Speed points): If you succeed on a Speed defense roll to resist an attack, you gain an action. You can use it immediately even if you have already taken a turn in the round. If you use this action to attack, the difficulty of your attack is reduced by one step. You don't take an action during the next round. Enabler.

Skill With Attacks: Choose one type of attack in which you are not already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler.

Stone Breaker: Your attacks against objects inflict 4 additional points of damage when you use a melee weapon that you wield in two hands. Enabler.

Think Your Way Out: Using your wits, you are able to find alternative solutions to problems. When you wish it, you can use points from your Intellect Pool rather than your Might Pool or Speed Pool on any non-combat action. Enabler.

Wrest From Chance: If you roll a natural 1 on a d20, you can reroll the die. If you reroll, you avoid a GM intrusion—unless you roll a second natural 1—and might succeed on your task. Once you use this ability, it is not available again until after you make a ten-hour recovery roll. Enabler.

FOURTH-TIER EXPLORER

Choose two of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from your tier 4 (or from a lower tier) mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Informed Force: Your attacks deal 1 additional point of damage. Enabler.

Expert: Instead of rolling a d20, you can choose to automatically succeed on a task you're trained in. The task must be difficulty 4 or lower, and it can't be an attack roll or a defense roll. Enabler.

Increased Effects: You treat rolls of natural 19 as rolls of natural 20 for either Might actions or Speed actions (your choice when you gain this ability). This allows you to gain a major effect on a natural 19 or 20. Enabler.

Read the Signs (4 Intellect points): You examine an area and learn precise, useful details about the past (if any exist). You can ask the GM up to four questions about the immediate area; each requires its own roll. Action.

Runner: Your standard movement distance becomes long. Enabler.

Tough As Nails: When you are impaired or debilitated on the damage track, the difficulty of Might-based tasks and defense rolls you attempt is decreased by one step. If you also have Ignore the Pain, make a difficulty 1 Might defense roll when you reach 0 points in all three of your Pools to immediately regain 1 Might point and avoid dying. Each time you attempt to save yourself with this ability before your next ten-hour recovery roll, the difficulty increases by one step. Enabler.

FIFTH-TIER EXPLORER

Choose three of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from any of your mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Superior Cypher Grasp: You can go into the Vurt world with four cyphers at a time. Enabler.

Iron Monkey (5 Might points): You attempt a difficulty 4 Might action to jump high into the air as part of your melee attack. If you succeed, your attack inflicts 3 additional points of damage and knocks down the foe. If you fail, you still make your normal attack roll, but you don't inflict the extra damage or knock down the opponent. Action.

Mastery With Defense: Choose one type of defense task in which you are trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are specialized in defense tasks of that type. You can select this ability up to three times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of defense task. Enabler.

Parry (5 Speed points): You can deflect incoming attacks quickly. For the next ten rounds, the difficulty of all Speed defense rolls is reduced by one step. Enabler.

Physically Gifted: Any time you spend points from your Might Pool or Speed Pool on an action for any reason, if you roll a 1 on the associated die, you reroll, always taking the second result (even if it's another 1). Enabler.

Take Command (3 Intellect points): You issue a specific command to another character. If that character chooses to listen, the difficulty of any attack he attempts is reduced by one step, and a hit deals 3 additional points of damage. If your command is to perform a task other than an attack, the difficulty of the task is reduced by two steps. Action.

Vigilant (5 Might points): When you would normally be dazed or stunned, you are not dazed or stunned. Enabler.

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SIXTH-TIER EXPLORER

Choose three of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from any of your mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Again and Again (8 Speed points): You can take an additional action in a round in which you have already acted. Enabler.

Greater Skill With Attacks: Choose one type of attack, even one in which you are already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. If you're already trained in that type of attack, you instead are specialized in that type of attack. Enabler.

Mastery With Armor: The cost reduction from your Practiced in Armor ability improves. When you wear any armor, you reduce the armor's Speed cost to 0. If you select this ability and you already have the Experienced With Armor ability, replace Experienced With Armor with a different third-tier ability because Mastery With Armor is better. Enabler.

Spin Attack (5 Speed points): You stand still and make melee attacks against up to five foes within reach, all as part of the same action in one round. Make a separate attack roll for each foe. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply to one action. For example, if your Effort is 6, you can apply a total of 6 levels of effort between all attacks. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to all of these attacks. Action.

Size Up (4 Intellect points): You take a moment to evaluate another creature on several levels. This is a level 2 Intellect task. If you are successful, for the next minute you gain a variety of benefits to actions taken against the target. You gain an asset to all Might-based tasks (including attacks and defenses), +2 to both your Might Edge and Speed Edge, and 2 additional points of damage on all successful melee attacks. Action to initiate.

MATHEMAGICIAN

Reality is a gorgeous, swirling eddy of numbers. You master powers or abilities outside the normal experience, understanding, and sometimes the beliefs of others. This might appear to others to be magical or supernatural in nature, but mathemagick is real, requiring years of study and an intense affinity for the beauty of numbers.

Individual Role: mathemagicians are usually thoughtful, intelligent types. They often think carefully before acting and rely heavily on their knowledge and mathemagickal experience.

Group Role: mathemagicians are not powerful in straightforward combat, although they often wield abilities that provide excellent combat support, both offensively and defensively. They sometimes possess abilities that facilitate overcoming challenges. For example, if the group must get through a locked door, an mathemagician might be able to destroy it or cause it to break down on a molecular level, allowing passage to the other side.

Societal Role: mathemagicians are rare and generally misunderstood. They often are forced to keep their natural abilities hidden.

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

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

MATHEMAGICIAN STAT POOLS

Stat	Pool Starting Value
Might	7
Speed	9
Intellect	12

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

FIRST-TIER MATHEMAGICIAN

First-tier mathemagicians have the following:

Effort: Your Effort is 1.

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

Improved Cypher Grasp: You can go into the Vurt world with three cyphers at a time.

Starting Equipment: You start with clothing, 3 cyphers, and £300 in ready money.

Special Abilities: Choose three special abilities described below, or from the special abilities of your chosen mode on pages 41-43. You can't choose the same special ability more than once unless its description says otherwise.

Decoherence (2 Intellect points): You run through a quick calculation which introduces some questionable variables and modifies how a willing creature or person within short range appears to enemies. For two rounds, the position of the target seems unclear, twitching like a glitching hologram might, granting an asset on Speed defense rolls until the effect wears off. Action to initiate.

Kinetic: The mathemagician is able to use Intellect in the place of Speed or Might when applying levels of Effort. Enabler.

Frame Warp (2 Intellect points): By concentrating, you create a vortex of twisted spacetime around you, manipulating the distance between you and a point within long range, allowing you to move a long distance without making a Speed roll. If you suffer damage during your action (for example, if an enemy has delayed an attack action, or you trigger a trap) the effect is disrupted and your movement ends after a short distance. Action.

Hedge Maths (1 Intellect point): You can use mathemagick to create small effects—temporarily change the color or basic appearance of a small object, cause small objects to float through the air, mend a broken object, and so on. You can't use hedge magic to harm another creature or object. Action.

Mathemagickal Training: You have broadened your studies into many fields of mathemagick, allowing you to better identify the properties of any mathemagickal effect or object. You are trained in tasks involving identifying or understanding mathemagickal effects. Enabler.

Roll	Background
1	Your former mentor is a well respected professor at a University here in Manchester, but they do not approve of your new mathemagickal studies and powers.
2	You studied in a school infamous for its dark, brooding instructors and graduates.
3	You learned your abilities entirely from book, on your own. Other Mathemagicians respect and admire your natural talents and potential.
4	You saved the life of a powerful person. They remain indebted to you.
5	One of your parents was a powerful mathemagician and you have a reputation to live up to.
6	You owe money to a number of people and don't have the funds to pay your debts.
7	You failed disgracefully at your initial studies with your teacher and now proceed on your own.
8	You learned your skills faster than your teachers had ever seen before and this has caused quite a bit of jealousy among those you studied with.
9	You killed a well-known criminal in self-defense, earning the respect of many and the enmity of a dangerous few.
10	You trained as a warrior, but your mathemagickal predilections eventually led you down a different path. Your former comrades don't understand you, but they respect you.
11	While studying to be an mathemagician, you worked as a technician/number-cruncher for a small corporation, making friends with your coworkers and impressing your superiors.
12	Your family owns a small pharmaceutical corporation known locally for its good drugs and fair prices.
13	You trained for a time with a group of influential Mathemagicians, and they still look upon you with fondness.
14	You grew up next door to a famous Vurt-star and remain friends with the family.
15	A mathemagickal formula you once found and activated went horribly awry. The locals remember you as a dangerous and foolhardy individual.
16	As a child prodigy, your mathemagickal abilities blossomed and those in the field regarded you as a wunderkind. Everyone else regarded you as an oddball at best.
17	People you meet seem put off by the way you constantly mutter mathemagickal formulae to yourself.
18	Your best friend is also an mathemagician. You both share discoveries and secrets readily.
19	You know a local pub owner very well. Since you give them so much business, they offer you discounts and special treatment.
20	You belong to a secretive mathemagickal society/club that gathers monthly to talk numbers.

Force Point (1 Intellect point): Mathemagickal missile! You create a small, but focused gravitational distortion attack at a point within short range. Any enemy or object targeted suffers 4 points of damage. Armor reduces this damage normally. Action.

Practiced With Light Weapons: You can use light weapons without penalty. If you wield a medium weapon, increase the difficulty of the attack by one step. If you wield a heavy weapon, increase it by two

steps. You also start with one light weapon of your choice. Enabler.

Push (2 Intellect points): Using only your mind, you push a creature or object an immediate distance in any direction you wish. You must be able to see the target, which must be your size or smaller, must not be affixed to anything, and must be within short range. The push is quick, and the force is too crude to be manipulated. For example, you can't use this to flip a switch or close a door. Action.

Resonance Field (1 Intellect point): Faint lines, graphs, theorem and equations form a tracery over your entire body and emit faint light. The effect lasts for one minute. Whenevera a creature within immediate range makes an attack against you, the mathemagickal pattern energizes to block the attack. You can make an Intellect defense roll in place of the defense roll you would normally make. If you do so and you get a minor effect, the creature attacking you takes 1 point of damage. If you get a major effect, the creature attacking you takes 4 points of damage. Action to initiate.

Scan (2 Intellect points): You scan an area equal in size to a three meter cube, including all objects or creatures within that area. The area must be within short range. Scanning a creature or object always reveals its level (a measure of how powerful, dangerous, or difficult it is). You also learn whatever facts the GM feels are pertinent about the matter and energy in that area. For example, you might learn that a lock box contains a device made of metal and electronics. You might learn that a glass cylinder is full of poisonous gas, and that its metal stand has an electrical field running through it that connects to a metal mesh in the floor. You might learn that the person standing before you is actually a genetic robodogshadow.

However, this ability doesn't tell you what the information means. Thus, in the first example, you don't know what the metal electronic device does. In the second, you don't know if stepping on the floor causes the cylinder to release the gas. In the third, you would have no way of knowing if the robodogshadow can tap into their Shadow genetics to use Shadow powers. Scans, like looks, can be deceiving. Many materials and energy fields prevent or resist scanning. Action.

Charge Object (2 Intellect points): You create an electron accumulation on a metal object, which discharges when brought in contact with another material. A living creature in contact with the object will be dealt 2 damage from the electrical discharge. This effect can be added to a melee weapon that has metallic components. Action.

Shatter (2 Intellect points): You use mathemagick to disrupt the nuclear attractive forces of an object's matter at the atomic level, causing it to detonate. The object you choose must be within long range and must be a small, mundane item composed of homogeneous matter (such as a glass window, a wooden tabletop, a stone, and so on). The object explodes in an immediate radius, dealing 1 point of damage to all creatures and objects in the area. Because this is an area attack, adding Effort to increase your damage works differently than it does for single-target attacks: for each level of Effort applied in this way, the explosion deals 2 additional points of damage to each target, and even if you fail your attack roll, all targets in the area still take 1 point of damage. Action.

Ward: You create a shield of energy around you at all times that helps deflect attacks. You gain +1 to Armor. Enabler.

SECOND-TIER MATHEMAGICIAN

Choose two of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from your tier 2 (or from a lower tier) mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Adaptation (2+ Intellect points): You adapt to a hostile environment for 24 hours. As a result, you can breathe safely, the temperature doesn't kill you (though it might be extremely uncomfortable or debilitating), crushing gravity doesn't incapacitate or harm you (though, again, you might be seriously hindered), and so on. In extreme environments, the GM might increase the cost of activating this ability to a maximum cost of 10 Intellect points. Roughly speaking, the cost should equal the amount of damage you would sustain in a given round. For example, if you enter a hostile environment (like a room filled with noxious gas) that would normally deal 6 points of damage per round, using Adaptation to avoid that damage costs 6 points. You can protect other creatures in addition to yourself, but each additional creature costs the same number of Intellect points as it costs to protect you. Thus, if it costs 6 points to protect yourself, it costs 12 more to protect two other people. This ability never protects against quick, instantaneous threats, such as an attack with a weapon or a sudden explosion of fire. Action to initiate.

Quantum Lance (2 Intellect points): You create an agitation of the molecules in the shape of a thin beam, originating at your hand. Any material contacted by this beam is superheated, inflicting 5 points of damage to a single living target in immediate range. The beam is even more effective against immobile, nonliving targets, creating a 1 ft slice through any material that is level 6 or lower. The material can be up to 1 ft thick. Action.

Z-Point Burst (4 Intellect points): At a point within short range, you create an explosion of energy, which affects an immediate area. You must be able to see the location where you intend to center the explosion. The blast inflicts 2 points of damage to all creatures or objects within the area. Because this is

an area attack, adding Effort to increase your damage works differently than it does for single-target attacks: for each level of Effort applied in this way, the explosion deals 2 additional points of damage to each target, and even if you fail your attack roll, all targets in the area still take 1 point of damage. Action.

Hover (2 Intellect points): Mathemagickal electromagnetic manipulation allows you to float slowly into the air. If you concentrate, you can control your movement to remain motionless in the air or float up to a short distance as your action; otherwise, you drift with the wind or with any momentum you have gained. This effect lasts for up to one minute. Action to initiate.

Particle Wave Nature (2 Intellect points): You feel that you understand the true nature of your substance on an atomic level. You may choose to subtract any amount of incoming damage from your Intellect pool. Once activated, the ability remains active until the end of the encounter. Action to initiate.

Statistical Inference (2 Intellect points): Instantly surveying the situation with your mathemagickal brain allows you to strike two foes with a single melee attack. Make separate attack rolls for each foe, but both attacks count as a single action in a single round. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to both of these attacks. Action.

Reveal (2+ Intellect points): Your mathemagick focuses and refracts light to adjust a creature's eyesight so that it can see normally in areas of dim light and darkness. You can affect one willing creature within immediate range for one hour. Instead of applying Effort to decrease the difficulty, you can use it to affect more targets; each level of Effort applied affects two additional targets. You must touch additional targets to affect them. Action to initiate.

Stasis (3 Intellect points): You surround a foe of your size or smaller with swirling waves of mathemagickal energy, keeping it from moving or acting for one minute, as if frozen solid. You must be able to see the target, and it must be within short range. While in stasis, the target is impervious to harm, cannot be moved, and is immune to all effects. Action.

THIRD-TIER MATHEMAGICIAN

Choose two of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from your tier 3 (or from a lower tier) mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Superior Cypher Grasp: You can go into the Vurt world with four cyphers at a time. Enabler.

Barrier (3+ Intellect points): You create an opaque, stationary barrier of glowing blue mathemagickal energy within immediate range. The barrier is 10 ft square (3 m) square and of negligible thickness. It is a level 2 barrier and lasts for ten minutes. It can be placed anywhere it fits, whether against a solid object (including the ground) or floating in the air. Each level of Effort you apply strengthens the barrier by one level. For example, applying two levels of Effort creates a level 4 barrier. Action.

Countermeasures (4 Intellect points): You immediately end one ongoing mathemagickal effect within immediate range. Alternatively, you can use this as a defense action to cancel any incoming mathemagickal ability targeted at you, or you can cancel any mathemagickally affected device or the effect of any mathemagickal device for 1d6 rounds. You must touch the effect or device to cancel it. Action.

Energy Protection (3+ Intellect points): Choose a specific type of energy (such as thermal, sonic, electricity, and so on). You gain +10 to Armor against damage from that type of energy for ten minutes. Alternatively, you gain +1 to Armor against damage from that energy for 24 hours. Instead of applying Effort to decrease the difficulty of this ability, you can use it to protect more targets; each level of Effort applied affects up to two additional targets. You must touch additional targets to protect them. Action to initiate.

Thermodynamic Manipulation (4 Intellect points): Using mathemagick to speed up or slow down air molecules, you cause a target within short range to become either very hot or very cold (your choice). The target suffers 3 points of ambient damage (ignores Armor) each round for up to three rounds, although a new roll is required each round to continue to affect the target. Action to initiate.

Simulation (4 Intellect points): By applying number-breeding nymphomation to game theory models, you are able to create an elaborate simulation, which can calculate the probability of events that may transpire at a particular location, called the destiny matrix point. The simulation progresses over a period of 24 hours, in your head. At any time while the simulation is active, you may recalculate the probability of events at the destiny matrix point, and gain a description (as detailed as any security camera) of the events taking place there. The PC may observe the events taking place at the matrix point as often as desired during the simulation period. Action to create; action to check.

Targeting Eye: You are able to estimate the effects of many variables which may affect your abilities. You are trained in any physical ranged attack that is a special ability or comes from a cypher. Enabler.

FOURTH-TIER MATHEMAGICIAN

Choose one of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from your tier 4 (or from a lower tier) mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Dark Energy Field (5 Intellect points): Choose a point on the ground within long range. Within short range of that point, gravity is apparently reversed, causing all objects and characters to slowly float upward at a rate of 6 ft per round. Ranged and melee attacks are made normally, but any movement at all requires an action to initiate and something to push or pull. Movement in a downward direction or clinging to something fixed to the ground requires a Might based climbing task. If any action is attempted while climbing downward or clinging in this way, increase the difficulty of the next climbing task by one step. The effect lasts for two rounds, but can be extended by one round for each level of Effort applied.

Gravitational Lensing (4 Intellect points): By creating a curvature in the space around your body, your appearance distorts and becomes transparent for ten minutes. While in this light-refracting cloaked state, you are specialized in stealth and Speed defense tasks. This effect ends if you do something to reveal your presence or position—attacking, using an ability, moving a large object, and so on. If this occurs, you can regain the remaining cloaking effect by taking an action to concentrate on your mathemagickal calculations to regain transparency and hide your position. Action to initiate or reinitiate.

Accretion Cloud (5 Intellect points): Pebbles, dirt, rubbish and debris rise into the air around you to form a swirling cloud. The cloud extends out to immediate range, moves with you, and lasts for one minute. When it ends, all the materials fall to the ground. The cloud makes it harder for other creatures to attack you, giving you an asset on Speed defense rolls. In addition, while the cloud is around you, you can use an action to whip the material so that it abrades everything within immediate range, dealing 2 points of damage to each creature and object in the area. Action to initiate.

Temporal Glitch (6 Intellect points): You focus your attention on a creature or character for one round. At a single point before the start of your next turn, you may reorder the interconnected shells of time, resulting in one-second "hiccup." While you remain focused, any single action attempted by the target (including attack or defend actions) may be reattempted with the level of difficulty reduced by one step. Action to initiate.

Projection (4 Intellect points): You project an image of yourself to any location you have seen or previously visited. Distance does not matter as long as the location is on the same world as you (Vurt world or real world). The projection copies your appearance, movements, and any sounds you make for the next ten minutes. Anyone present at the location can see and hear you as if you were there. However, you do not perceive through your projection. Action to initiate.

Rapid Processing (6 Intellect points): You or a target you touch experiences a higher level of mental and physical reaction time for about a minute. During that period, the difficulty of all Speed tasks (including Speed defense rolls) is reduced by one step. In addition, the target can take one extra action at any time before the ability's duration expires. Action.

Recalculum Vitae (6 Intellect points): This mathemagickal process coaxes damaged cells and living systems into repairing at a vastly accelerated rate. You can restore points to a target's Might Pool or Speed Pool in one of two ways: either the chosen Pool regains up to 6 points, or it is restored to a total value of 12. You make this decision when you initiate this ability. Points are restored at a rate of 1 point each round. You must maintain contact with the target the whole time. In no case can this ability raise a Pool higher than its normal maximum. Action.

Reshape (5 Intellect points): You reshape matter within short range in an area no larger than a one-meter cube. If you spend only one action on this ability, the changes you make are crude at best. If you spend at least ten minutes and succeed at an appropriate crafting task (with a difficulty at least one step higher than normal, due to the circumstances), you can make complex changes to the material. You can't change the nature of the material, only its shape. Thus, you can make a hole in a wall or floor, or you can seal one up. You can fashion a rudimentary sword from a large piece of metal. You can break or repair a chain. With multiple uses of this ability, you could bring about large changes, making a bridge, a wall, or a similar structure. Action.

Slay (6 Intellect points): You gather disrupting mathemagickal energy in your fingertip and touch a creature. If the target is an NPC or a creature of level 3 or lower, it dies. If the target is a PC of any tier, they move down one step on the damage track. Action.

Wormhole (6 Intellect points): You create a mathemagickal portal. The shortcut manifests as a hole in large enough to accommodate you and creatures of your size or smaller. One side of the portal appears anywhere within immediate range, and the other side opens at a spot you choose anywhere within long range. Any character or object moving into one side exits from the other. The portal remains open for one minute or until you use an action to close it. Action to initiate.

FIFTH-TIER MATHEMAGICIAN

Choose two of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from any of your mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Absorb Energy (7 Intellect points): You touch an object and absorb its energy, if any. If you touch a

cypher, you render it useless. If you touch another kind of powered machine or device, the GM determines whether its power is fully drained. In any case, you absorb energy from the object touched and regain 1d10 Intellect points. If this would give you more Intellect than your Pool's maximum, the extra points are lost, and you must make a Might defense roll with a difficulty equal to the number of extra points you absorbed. If you fail the roll, you take 5 points of damage and are unable to act for one round.

You can use this ability as a defense action when you're the target of an incoming energy-based attack. Doing so cancels the incoming attack, and you absorb the energy as if it were a device. Action.

Concussion (7 Intellect points): You cause a pulse of concussive force that radiates from a point you choose within long range. The mathemagickal pulse extends up to short range in all directions, dealing 5 points of damage to everything in the area. Even if you fail the attack roll, targets in the area take 1 point of damage. Action.

Cosmic Horror (5+ Intellect points): *The horror, the horror...* You have discovered the key to a powerful mathemagickal problem that reveals how insignificant we all are in the violent, uncaring whirlpool of obliterating chaos. Just repeating this long numerical solution out loud creates an aura of doom, fear, and utter hopelessness to all within earshot. Any sentient being that can hear and understand you is stricken with a powerful dread and a desire to flee. If a creature does not move away, the difficulty of all tasks, attacks, and defenses it attempts while within the aura is increased by one step. After 24 hours, the answer is no longer correct, and its mathemagickal properties are lost. The duration of the aura is extended by one day per level of Effort applied. This only works if you are able to verbally communicate the long string of numbers out loud, as many times during the 24 hour period as desired. Action to initiate.

Superposition (7 Intellect points): Think inside/outside the box! You split your consciousness into two parts. For one minute, you can take two actions on each of your turns, but only one of them can be to use a special ability. Action.

Accelerate Decay (7 Intellect points): With a touch, you disintegrate one non living object that is smaller than you and whose level is less than or equal to your tier. If the GM considers it appropriate to the circumstances, you can disintegrate a portion of an object (the total volume of which is smaller than you) rather than the entire thing. Action.

Knowing the Unknown (6 Intellect points): Tapping into a source of information beyond yourself, you can ask the GM one question and get a general answer. The GM assigns a level to the question, so the more obscure the answer, the more difficult the task. Generally, knowledge that you could find by looking somewhere other than your current location is level 1, and obscure knowledge of the past is level 7. Gaining knowledge of the future is impossible. Action.

Total Cypher Grasp: You can go into the Vurt world with five cyphers at a time. Enabler.

Fold Space (6+ Intellect points): You instantaneously teleport yourself to any location that you have seen or been to, no matter the distance, as long as it is within the same world as you (Vurt world or real world). Instead of applying Effort to decrease the difficulty, you can apply Effort to bring other people with you; each level of Effort affects up to three additional targets. You must touch additional targets to teleport them. Action.

Spectral Analysis: You can see in complete darkness up to 50 ft (15 m) as if it were dim light. You recognize holograms, disguises, optical illusions, sound mimicry, and other such tricks (for all senses) for what they are. Enabler.

SIXTH-TIER MATHEMAGICIAN

Choose one of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from any of your mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Weather Modification (10 Intellect points): You change the weather in your general region. If performed indoors this creates minor effects, such as mist, mild temperature changes, and so on. If performed outside, you can create rain, fog, snow, wind, or any other kind of normal (not extreme) weather. The weather modding change lasts for a natural length of time, so a storm might last for an hour, fog for two or three hours, and snow for a few hours (or for ten minutes if it's out of season). For the first ten minutes after activating this ability, you can create more dramatic and specific effects, such as lightning strikes, giant hailstones, twisters, hurricane-force winds, and so on. These effects must occur within 1,000 ft (305 m) of your location. You must spend your turn concentrating to create an effect or to maintain it in a new round. These effects inflict 6 points of damage each round. Action.

Quake (10 Intellect points): You trigger an earthquake centered on a spot you can see within 1,000 ft (305 m). The ground within 250 ft (76 m) of that spot heaves and shakes for five minutes, causing widespread damage to structures and terrain in the area. Non-reinforced buildings made of wood, stone, or brick collapse; walls topple; cliffs crumble; ceilings cave in; some areas of ground rise up, and other areas sink. Creatures inside collapsed buildings or beneath a crumbling cliff or falling wall are subject to a crush (3 points of damage) or a huge crush (6 points of damage) and may have to dig themselves free, as the GM decides. Furthermore, the force of the quake is sufficient to knock creatures to the ground and prevent them from standing until the shaking stops. Action to initiate.

Move Mountains (9 Intellect points): You exert a tremendous amount of physical force within 250 ft (76 m) of you. You can push up to 10 tons (9 t) of material up to 50 ft (15 m). This force can collapse buildings, redirect small rivers, or perform other dramatic effects. Action.

Edge Rider (8+ Intellect points): You instanta-

THE ORIGIN OF MATHEMAGICK AS WE KNOW IT:

In the summer of 1949, as England began its long recovery from the war, a government inspector was sent to a junior school in one of the outlying districts of Manchester. The inspector's name was Benjamin Marlow. A second-year class at the school had produced some rather interesting results in the recent exams, and it was Marlow's appointment to investigate for any fraudulent behaviour in the schoolchildren. Cheating, in other words.

The class was known as 2c. There were twenty-eight children in the class: sixteen boys and twelve girls, average age, eight years old. Their teacher's name was Miss Geraldine Sayer. In the recent exams the class had performed normally in all subjects but one. The more than interesting anomaly was mathematics. In this subject, all but one of the children had scored marks above 78 per cent. Such excellence was deemed unacceptable. When interviewed, the children could only point to Miss Sayer. The way they said the name, to Marlow's ears, sounded very much like 'Messiah'. When interviewed, Miss Sayer broke down in tears and started to roll around the classroom floor. She was covered in chalk dust. Marlow reports that she was speaking gibberish; 'speaking in tongues' is how he describes it, referring to old pagan rituals. He could make out only one phrase – 'Play to win!' – which she repeated, over and over. 'Play to win, my children! Play to win!'

Two weeks later she was removed from her post, and the following week Benjamin Marlow took early retirement.

–from *Nymphomation* by Jeff Noon.

neously transmit yourself from the real world to the Vurt world or vice versa. You must know that the destination exists; the GM will decide if you have enough information to confirm its existence and what level of difficulty is required to reach it. Instead of applying Effort to decrease the difficulty, you can apply Effort to bring other people with you; each level of Effort affects up to three additional targets. You must touch additional targets to transmit them. Action.

Force Swap (7 Intellect points): You manipulate gravitational forces to create a cavity in the shadowy barrier that separates the real world and the Vurt world. A targeted creature vanishes into this place and is replaced by a number of dreamsnakes equal to the level of the creature. The dreamsnakes attack the nearest character each round until the effect ends. After one minute, the snakes vanish and the target character reappears in a state of abject terror. For the next hour, all tasks the target attempts are increased in difficulty by two steps.

Usurp Cypher: You destroy one cypher that you bear and gain its power, which then functions for you continuously. The cypher must have an effect that is not instantaneous. You can choose a cypher when you gain this ability, or you can wait and make the choice later. However, once you usurp a cypher's power, you cannot later switch to a different cypher—the ability works only once. Action to initiate.

SPEAKER

Words. Speakers like you earn their quid in all sorts of ways, but it always comes down to your ability with words. You might be a negotiator, manipulator, mediator, Vurt-star, DJ, advocate, barrister, entertainer, dealer, or psychologist. One way or another, you're able to clearly communicate and make the words work for you. You talk your way past challenges and out of jams, and you often get others to do what you want.

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

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

Societal Role: Speakers are frequently leaders, con artists or fixers.

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

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

SPEAKER STAT POOLS

Stat	Pool Starting Value
Might	8
Speed	9
Intellect	11

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

FIRST-TIER SPEAKER

First-tier speakers have the following:

Effort: Your Effort is 1.

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

Cypher Grasp: You can go into the Vurt world with two cyphers at a time.

Practiced With Light Weapons: You can use light weapons without penalty. If you wield a medium weapon, increase the difficulty of the attack by one step. If you wield a heavy weapon, increase it by two steps. You also start with one light weapon of your choice. Enabler.

Starting Equipment: Appropriate clothing, a light weapon of your choice, 2 cyphers and £300.

Special Abilities: Choose three special abilities described below, or from the special abilities of your chosen mode on pages 41-43. You can't choose the same special ability more than once unless its description says otherwise.

Aggression (2 Intellect points): Your words twist the mind of a character within short range who is able to understand you, unlocking their more primitive instincts. As a result, they gain an asset on their Might-based attack rolls for one minute. Action to initiate.

Encouragement (1 Intellect point): While you maintain this ability through ongoing inspiring oration, your allies within short range modify the difficulty of one of the following task types (your choice) by one step to their benefit: defense tasks, attack tasks, or tasks related to any skill that you are trained or specialized in. Action.

Enthrall (1 Intellect point): While talking, you grab and keep another person's attention. If your target is a creature that can't understand you, you mesmerize them through calming sounds or song. For as long as you do nothing but speak/make sounds (you can't even move), your target takes no actions other than to defend themselves, even over multiple rounds. If they are attacked, the effect ends. Action.

Scrounge (3 Intellect points): In the place of your ten-hour recovery roll, you may collect any ready money and go on a scrounging mission to find ammunition. Ammo is quite expensive and (technically) illegal in Manchester. Roll a d20 to determine how many rounds of standard ammunition you were able to locate through your shady network of ammo dealers. You must pay the going rate for the ammunition.

Fast Talk (1 Intellect point): When speaking with an intelligent creature who can understand you and isn't hostile, you convince them to give you some specific information in the next round; perhaps a name, address, or other details. The information you get out of them must be agreed upon by the GM; it should not put the creature or its allies in obvious danger or be wildly out of character. Action.

Roll	Background
1	One of your parents was a famous DJ in their youth and hoped you would excel in the same medium.
2	When you were a teenager, one of your siblings went missing and is presumed dead. The shock rent your family, and it's something you've never gotten over.
3	You were inducted into a secret society that claims to fight for the equal rights of all modes of being (including U-Types).
4	One of your parents is a hopeless Vurt feather abuser. They are still alive, but no longer function in society and cause you nothing but heartache and shame.
5	You have no memory of anything that happened to you before the age of 18.
6	Your grandparents adopted and raised you far from urban centers like Manchester. You like to think the instruction they gave you prepared you for anything.
7	As an orphan, you had a difficult childhood, and your entry into adulthood was challenging.
8	You grew up in extreme poverty, among criminals. You still have some connections with the old neighborhood.
9	You served as an envoy for a powerful and influential businessperson in the past, and they still look upon you with favor.
10	You have an annoying rival who always seems to get in your way or foil your plans.
11	You've worked yourself into the position of spokesperson for an organization or company of some importance.
12	Your neighbors were murdered, and the mystery remains unsolved.
13	You have traveled extensively, and during that time you accumulated quite a collection of strange souvenirs.
14	Your childhood sweetheart ended up with your best friend (now your ex-best friend).
15	You are a proud part of a hate group that detests a particular mode of being (such as robomen, vurtshadows, pure Vurts, etc.).
16	You're part owner of a local pub, where you also have access to buying and selling drugs everyone wants.
17	You once ran a con that cheated important people out of money, and they want revenge.
18	In your youth, you used to be a Vurt actor, and some recognize and remember you fondly.
19	You are in a close romantic relationship with a cop.
20	Someone out there tries to pose as you, using your identity, often for nefarious ends. You've never met the culprit, but you'd certainly like to.

Interaction Skills: You are trained in two skills in which you are not already trained. Choose two of the following: deceiving, persuading, performing, public speaking, seeing through deception, or intimidating. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose two different skills. Enabler.

Practiced With Light and Medium Weapons: You can use light and medium weapons without penalty. If you wield a heavy weapon, increase the difficulty of the attack by one step. Enabler.

Spin Identity (2+ Intellect points): You convince all intelligent creatures who can see, hear, and understand you that you are someone or something other than who you actually are. You don't impersonate a specific individual known to the victim. Instead, you convince the victim that you are someone they do not know belonging to a certain category of people. A disguise isn't necessary, but a good disguise will almost certainly be an asset to the roll involved. If you attempt to convince more than one creature, the Intellect cost increases by 1 point per additional victim. Fooled creatures remain so for up to an hour, unless your actions or other circumstances reveal your true identity earlier. Action.

Overawe (2+ Intellect points): With a terrifying barrage of words and body language, you convince one intelligent target of level 3 or lower that you are its worst nightmare. The target must be within short range and be able to understand you. For as long as you continue your posturing and intimidation, the target is paralyzed with fear, runs away, or takes some other action appropriate to the circumstances. Instead of applying Effort to decrease the difficulty of the roll, you can apply Effort to increase the maximum level of the target. Thus, to terrorize a level 5 target (two levels above the normal limit), you must apply two levels of Effort. Action.

Understanding (2 Intellect points): You observe or study a creature or object. The next time you interact with it, the difficulty of the related task is reduced by one step. Action.

SECOND-TIER SPEAKER

Choose two of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from your tier 2 (or from a lower tier) mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Ear for It: After hearing an accent, dialect, or slang spoken for just a few minutes, you can speak it perfectly for brief encounters. If you continue to use this lingo regularly, your skills improve rapidly, to the point where you can convince anyone that this is your native lingo. Sometimes, using the perfect lingo can provide an asset to interaction checks. Enabler.

Impart Ideal (3 Intellect points): After interacting for at least one minute with a creature who can hear and understand you, you can attempt to temporarily impart an ideal to it that you could not otherwise convince it to adopt. An ideal is different than a specific suggestion or command; an ideal is an overarching value such as "all life is sacred," "U-Types deserve equal rights," "Pure is Poor" and so on. An ideal influences a creature's behavior but doesn't control it. The imparted ideal lasts for as long as befits the situation, but usually at least a few hours. The ideal is jeopardized if someone friendly to the creature spends a minute or more bringing it back to its senses. Action.

Practiced in Armor: You can wear armor for long periods of time without tiring and can compensate for slowed reactions due to encumbrance. You reduce the Speed cost for wearing armor by 1. You start the game with a light armor vest (+2 Armor). Enabler.

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Skills: You are trained in one task of your choosing (other than attacks or defense). If you choose a task you're already trained in, you become specialized in that task. You can't choose a task you're already specialized in.

Pep Talk (3 Intellect points): By seeming to know exactly what to say, your words enhance the normal recovery rate of a character within short range who is able to understand you. When they makes a recovery roll, they must spend only half the normal amount of time required to do so (minimum one action). Action.

Unexpected Betrayal: Within a round or two of successfully using Enthrall, Fast Talk, or a similar ability on a target within short range, the difficulty of the first attack you make on that target is decreased by two steps. Once you use Unexpected Betrayal on a target, the difficulty of using your abilities or attempting simple persuasion on that target is permanently increased by two steps. Enabler.

THIRD-TIER SPEAKER

Choose three of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from your tier 3 (or from a lower tier) mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Accelerate (4+ Intellect points): Your words imbue a character within immediate range (who is able to understand you) with a sense of purpose, accelerating them so that they gain an asset on initiative tasks and Speed defense rolls for ten minutes. Instead of applying Effort to decrease the difficulty, you can use it to affect more targets; each level of Effort affects one additional target. You must speak to additional targets to accelerate them, one target per round. Action per target to initiate.

Blend In (4 Intellect points): When you blend in, creatures still see you, but they attach no importance

to your presence for about a minute. While blending in, you are specialized in stealth and Speed defense tasks. This effect ends if you do something to reveal your presence or position—attacking, using an ability, moving a large object, and so on. If this occurs, you can regain the remaining period of effect by taking an action to focus on seeming innocuous and as if you belong. Action to initiate or reinitiate.

Discerning Mind: You have +3 to Armor against damaging attacks and damaging effects that target your mind and Intellect. The difficulty of defense rolls you make against attacks that attempt to confuse, persuade, frighten, or otherwise influence you is decreased by one step. Enabler.

Improved Cypher Grasp: You can take up to three cyphers into the Vurt world at a time.

Grand Deception (3 Intellect points): You convince an intelligent creature (that can understand you and isn't hostile) of something that is wildly and obviously untrue. Action.

Interrogate (4 Intellect points): You glean information from a creature within short range, even if it doesn't want you to. You must be able to see the target. Once you have established contact, you can temporarily break the target's will and force them to answer your questions truthfully. This lasts for one minute, afterwhich that particular interrogation technique loses efficacy. If you or the target moves out of range, the connection is broken. Action to initiate.

Oratory (4 Intellect points): When speaking with a group of intelligent creatures that can understand you and aren't hostile, you convince them to take one reasonable action in the next round. A reasonable action must be agreed upon by the GM; it should not put the creatures or their allies in obvious danger or be wildly out of character. Action.

Telling (2 Intellect points): This ability provides an asset to any tasks attempting to deceive, persuade, or intimidate. Each use lasts up to a minute; a new use (to switch tasks) replaces the previous use. Action to initiate.

FOURTH-TIER SPEAKER

Choose two of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from your tier 2 (or from a lower tier) mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Anticipate Attack (4 Intellect points): You can sense when and how creatures attacking you will make their attacks. The difficulty of Speed defense rolls is reduced by one step for one minute. Action.

Confounding Banter (4 Intellect points): You spew a stream of nonsense to distract a foe within immediate range. On a successful Intellect roll, the difficulty of your defense roll against the creature's next attack before the end of the next round is reduced by one step. Action.

Feint (2 Speed points): If you spend one action creating a misdirection or diversion, in the next round you can take advantage of your foe's lowered defenses. Make a melee attack against that enemy; the difficulty of the attack is decreased by one step, and a hit inflicts 4 additional points of damage. Action.

Heightened Skills: You are trained in two tasks of your choosing (other than attacks or defense). If you choose a task you're already trained in, you instead become specialized in that task. You can't choose a task you're already specialized in.

Psychosis (4 Intellect points): Your words inflict a destructive psychosis in the mind of a target within long range that can understand you, dealing 6 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) per round. The psychosis can be dispersed if a target spends an action doing nothing but calming and centering itself. Action to initiate.

Quick Wits: When performing a task that would normally require spending points from your Intellect Pool, you can spend points from your Speed Pool instead. Enabler.

Read the Signs (4 Intellect points): You examine an area and learn precise, useful details about the past (if any exist). You can ask the GM up to four questions about the immediate area; each requires its own roll. Action.

Suggestion (4 Intellect points): You suggest an action to another creature (level 2 or lower) within immediate range. If the action doesn't seem completely at odds with the creature's nature, it follows your suggestion for up to a minute. Instead of applying Effort to decrease the difficulty, you can apply it to increase the maximum level of the target by 1. When the effect ends, the creature remembers following the suggestion, but believes that it chose to do so willingly. Action to initiate.

FIFTH-TIER SPEAKER

Choose three of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from any of your mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Superior Cypher Grasp: You can go into the Vurt world with four cyphers at a time. Enabler.

Experienced With Armor: The cost reduction from your Practiced in Armor ability improves. You now reduce the Speed cost by 2. Enabler.

Flee (6 Intellect points): All non-allies within short distance who can hear your dreadful, intimidating words flee from you at top speed for one minute.

Font of Inspiration: With your approval, characters within immediate range can use an action to gain

inspiration from your presence; the difficulty of one action they take in the following round is reduced by one step. This inspiration costs each affected character 2 Intellect points. Once this ability is used, others can't gain inspiration from you again until after you make a recovery roll. Enabler.

Speak Up (5+ Intellect points): Manc's got talent! Your words, gestures, or performance techniques shine; all those observing you within a long distance are deeply affected and all that can hear and understand you feel an urge to react. Perhaps you're a charismatic leader with a microphone and your stirring speech hits them on a profound level, or maybe you are a DJ, mad-scratching on your Limbic Splitter, filling the club with beats too deep to ignore. As long as you keep it up, and they can see/hear you, you got them where you want them. The difficulty of all tasks, attacks, and defenses they attempt are increased by one step. And it'll stick with them, too. The duration of this effect lasts a full day and is extended by one additional day per level of Effort applied. Action to initiate.

Skill With Attacks: Choose one type of attack in which you are not already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler.

Stimulate (6 Intellect points): Your words encourage a target you touch who can understand you. The difficulty of the next action it takes is decreased by three steps. Action.

SIXTH-TIER SPEAKER

Choose two of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from any of your mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Battle Management (4 Intellect points): As long as you spend your action each round giving orders or advice, the difficulty of attack and defense actions by your allies within short range is decreased by one step. Action.

Inspiring Success (6 Intellect points): When you succeed on a roll to perform a task related to the stat that you choose upon selecting this ability, and you applied at least one level of Effort, you may choose another character within short range. That PC has an asset on the next task they attempt using that stat on their next turn. Enabler.

Gaslight (7+ Intellect points): You know exactly what phrase, threat, or speech to make to plant the seeds of paranoia. This level 1 target must be able to hear and understand you. Your carefully selected words affect their deep perception of structured reality, turning their own thoughts against itself and driving them madder than a hatter. Within 1d20 hours, this phrase will trigger a psychotic break in an intelligent creature within short range. The effect takes 1d20 hours to fully manifest, but once it does they are very susceptible to your suggestions in this state. Simple commands from you are most often heeded, even if it goes against their basic survival instincts. Instead of applying Effort to decrease the difficulty of the attack, you can apply Effort to increase the maximum level of the target. Thus, to Gaslight a level 5 target (four levels above the normal limit), you must apply four levels of Effort. Action to initiate.

Rephrase Reality (7 Intellect points): Scramble time! With just a few words, you psychologically manipulate a target into questioning their own memory of whatever they may have just seen or heard in the last 30 seconds. This level 1 target must be able to hear and understand you. The target is very open to your suggestions in this state and can be easily prodded to scramble up to the last 30 seconds of what they've just observed, leaving them frustrated and/or groggy—only indecipherable flashes of images remain. If you use this ability against the same target a second time, they will immediately experience deep, debilitating confusion, pushed beyond the brink. Instead of applying Effort to decrease the difficulty of the attack, you can apply Effort to increase the maximum level of the target. Rephrasing Reality for a level 5 target (four levels above the normal limit), you must apply four levels of Effort. Action.

WARRIOR

You've got the heart of a dragon, the eye of the tiger, and the courage of a lion. As a warrior you may be a street fighter, cop, watchman, detective, guard, athlete, security officer, tank, Vurtball player, mercenary, bruiser, thug, bouncer or just an all-around badass. Even if you don't show it, you got it. A good ally to have in a fight, you likely know how to use weapons and defend yourself. Even you wouldn't mess with you.

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

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

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

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

Background Connection: Your type helps determine the connection you have to the setting. Roll a d20 on the table below or simply choose one you like to determine a specific fact about your background that provides a connection to the rest of the world. You can also create your own background connection.

WARRIOR STAT POOLS

Stat	Pool Starting Value
Might	10
Speed	10
Intellect	8

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

FIRST-TIER WARRIOR

First-tier warriors have the following:

Effort: Your Effort is 1.

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

Cypher Grasp: You can go into the Vurt world with two cyphers at a time.

Practiced With All Weapons: You can use any weapon. Enabler.

Starting Equipment: Appropriate clothing and two melee weapons of your choice. You also start with 2 cyphers and £200 in ready money.

Special Abilities: Choose three special abilities described below, or from the special abilities of your chosen mode on pages 41-43. You can't choose the same special ability more than once unless its description says otherwise.

Bash (1 Might point): This is a pummeling melee attack. Your attack inflicts 1 less point of damage than normal, but dazes your target for one round, during which time the difficulty of all tasks it performs is increased by one step. Action.

Control the Field (1 Might point): This melee attack inflicts 1 less point of damage than normal, but regardless of whether you hit the target, you maneuver it into a position you desire within immediate range. Action.

Extra Edge: Your warrior nature grants you an Edge of 1 in both Speed and Might, rather than one or the other.

No Need for Weapons: When you make an unarmed attack (such as a punch or kick), it counts as a light weapon, dealing 4 points of damage instead of just 2. Enabler.

Overwatch (1 Intellect point): You use a ranged weapon to target a limited area (such as a doorway, a hallway, or alleyway) and make an attack

Roll	Background
1	You were in a street gang and have friends who still run with the gang.
2	You were the bodyguard of a wealthy person who accused you of theft. You left their service in disgrace.
3	You were the bouncer in a local bar for a while, and the patrons there remember you.
4	You trained with a highly respected mentor. They regard you well, but they also have many enemies.
5	You owe money to a number of people and don't have the funds to pay your debts.
6	You have no formal training. Your abilities come to you naturally (or unnaturally).
7	You spent time on the streets and even were incarcerated for a while.
8	You were training to be a cop or private security guard, but decided you didn't want to take orders.
9	You served as a bodyguard to a powerful criminal who now owes you their life.
10	You were once a police officer. Everyone knows you, but their opinions of you vary.
11	Your older sibling is an infamous character who has been disgraced.
12	You served as a guard for someone who traveled extensively. You know a smattering of people in many locations.
13	Your best friend is a teacher or scholar. They are a great source of knowledge.
14	You and a friend both indulge in the same type of drug. The two of you get together weekly to chat and get lit.
15	A relative is a pink feather crafter and you can get into the Shimmy-Plex they work at for free.
16	Your blurbfly mechanic friend sometimes calls on you to help find components. They pay you well.
17	You once fought a neighborhood thug and won, making you a small-time celebrity at a local pub.
18	A person you grew up with is now a cop in the MPD.
19	You saved the lives of a family when their apartment caught fire. They're indebted to you, and their neighbors regard you as a hero.
20	Your old mentor/trainer still expects you to come back and clean up after classes, but when you do, they occasionally share interesting rumors.

against the next viable target to enter that area. This works like a wait action, but you also negate any benefit the target would have from cover, position, surprise, range, illumination, or visibility. Further, you inflict 1 additional point of damage with the attack. You can remain on overwatch as long as you wish, within reason. Action.

Physical Skills: You are trained in two skills in which you are not already trained. Choose two of the following: balancing, climbing, jumping, running, or swimming. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose two different skills. Enabler.

Pierce (1 Speed point): This is a well-aimed, penetrating ranged attack. You make an attack and inflict 1 additional point of damage. Action.

Practiced in Armor: You can wear armor for long periods of time without tiring and can compensate for slowed reactions due to encumbrance. You reduce the Speed cost for wearing armor by 1. You start the game with a light armor vest (+2 Armor). Enabler.

Quick Draw (2 Speed points): After making a ranged attack with a light weapon, you may draw a second light weapon and make another ranged attack against the same target or a different one. Action.

Swipe (1 Speed point): This is a quick, agile melee attack. Your attack inflicts 1 less point of damage than normal but dazes your target for one round, during which time the difficulty of all tasks it performs is modified by one step to its detriment. Action.

Thrust (1 Might point): This is a powerful melee stab. You make an attack and inflict 1 additional point of damage if your weapon has a sharp edge or point. Action.

Trained Without Armor: You are trained in Speed defense actions when not wearing armor. Enabler.

SECOND-TIER WARRIOR

Choose two of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from your tier 2 (or from a lower tier) mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Chop (2 Might points): This is a heavy, powerful slice with a bladed weapon, probably overhand. You must grip your weapon with two hands to chop. When making this attack, you take a –1 penalty to the attack roll, and you inflict 3 additional points of damage. Action.

Crush (2 Might points): This is a powerful pummeling attack with a bashing weapon, probably overhand. You must grip your weapon with two hands to crush. (If fighting unarmed, this attack is made with both fists or both feet together.) When making this attack, you take a –1 penalty to the attack roll, and you inflict 3 additional points of damage. Action.

Mighty Blow (2 Might points): You strike two

foes with a single melee attack. Make separate attack rolls for each foe, but both attacks count as a single action in a single round. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to both of these attacks. Action.

Reload (1 Speed point): When using a weapon that normally requires an action to reload, such as a firearm, you can reload and fire (or fire and reload) in the same action. Enabler.

Skill With Attacks: Choose one type of attack in which you are not already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. You can select this ability multiple times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of attack. Enabler.

Skill With Defense: Choose one type of defense task in which you are not already trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are trained in defense tasks of that type. You can select this ability up to three times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of defense task. Enabler.

Successive Attack (2 Speed points): If you take down a foe, you can immediately make another attack on that same turn against a new foe within your reach. The second attack is part of the same action. You can use this ability with melee attacks and ranged attacks. Enabler

THIRD-TIER WARRIOR

Choose three of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from your tier 3 (or from a lower tier) mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

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Remember that at higher tiers, you can choose special abilities from lower tiers. This is sometimes the best way to ensure that you have exactly the character you want. This is particularly true with abilities that grant skills, which can usually be taken multiple times. Defense tasks are when a player makes a roll to keep something undesirable from happening to their PC. The type of defense task matters when using Effort.

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

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

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

Deadly Aim (3 Speed points): For the next minute, all ranged attacks you make inflict 2 additional points of damage. Action to initiate.

Experienced With Armor: The cost reduction from your Practiced in Armor ability improves. You now reduce the Speed cost for wearing armor by 2. Enabler.

Improved Cypher Grasp: You can now go into the Vurt world with three cyphers at a time. Enabler.

Fury (3 Might points): For the next minute, all melee attacks you make inflict 2 additional points of damage. Action to initiate.

Lunge (2 Might points): This ability requires you to extend yourself for a powerful stab or smash. The awkward lunge increases the difficulty of the attack roll by one step. If your attack is successful, it inflicts 4 additional points of damage. Action.

Parting Blow: If a target you attacked on your last turn with a melee attack uses their action to move out of immediate range, you gain an action to attack them as a parting blow, even if you have already taken a turn in the round. Enabler.

Seize the Moment (4+ Speed points): If you succeed on a Speed defense roll to resist an attack, you gain an action. You can use the action immediately even if you have already taken a turn in the round. You don't take an action during the next round, unless you apply a level of Effort when you use Seize the Moment. Enabler.

Slice (2 Speed points): This is a quick attack with a bladed or pointed weapon that is hard to defend against. The difficulty of the attack roll is decreased by one step. If the attack is successful, it deals 1 less point of damage than normal. Action.

Controlled Burst (2 Speed points): When making a burst attack with a burst-fire weapon, the difficulty of the attack roll is decreased by one step. If the attack is successful, each round deals 1 less point of damage than normal. Action.

Trick Shot (2 Speed points): As part of the same action, you make a ranged attack against two targets that are within immediate range of each other. Make a separate attack roll against each target. The difficulty of each attack roll is increased by one step. Action.

FOURTH-TIER WARRIOR

Choose two of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from your tier 4 (or from a lower tier) mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Capable Warrior: Your attacks deal 1 additional point of damage. Enabler.

Experienced Defender: When wearing armor, you gain +1 to Armor. Enabler.

Feint (2 Speed points): If you spend one action creating a misdirection or diversion, in the next round you can take advantage of your opponent's lowered defenses. Make a melee attack roll against that oppo-

nent. The difficulty of the roll is decreased by one step. If your attack is successful, it inflicts 4 additional points of damage. Action.

Minor to Major: You treat rolls of natural 19 as rolls of natural 20 for Might attack rolls or Speed attack rolls (choose one or the other when you select this ability). Enabler.

Momentum: If you use an action to move, your next attack made using a melee weapon before the end of the next round inflicts 2 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Opening Gambit (4 Might points): Your melee attack shreds the defenses of a target. Any energy-based defenses it has (such as a mathemagickal ward) are negated for 1d6 +1 rounds. If the target has no energy-based defenses, its Armor is reduced by 2 for one minute. If it has no energy-based defenses or Armor, the difficulty of all attacks made against the target is lowered by one step for one minute. Action.

Snipe (2 Speed points): If you spend one action aiming, the next round you can make a precise ranged attack. The difficulty of the attack roll is decreased by one step. If your attack is successful, it inflicts 4 additional points of damage. Action.

Tough As Nails: When you are impaired or debilitated on the damage track, the difficulty of Might-based tasks and defense rolls you attempt is decreased by one step. If you also have Ignore the Pain, make a difficulty 1 Might defense roll when you reach 0 points in all three of your Pools to immediately regain 1 Might point and avoid dying. Each time you attempt to save yourself with this ability before your next ten-hour rest, the difficulty increases by one step. Enabler.

FIFTH-TIER WARRIOR

Choose three of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from any of your mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Superior Cypher Grasp: You can go into the Vurt world with four cyphers at a time. Enabler.

Threefer (3 Speed points): If a weapon has the ability to fire rapid shots without reloading (such as a semi-auto or burst-fire firearm), you can fire your weapon at up to three targets (all next to one another) at once. Make a separate attack roll against each target. The difficulty of each attack is increased by one step. Action.

Greater Skill With Attacks: Choose one type of attack, even one in which you are already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. If you're already trained in that type of attack, you instead are specialized in that type of attack. Enabler.

Improved Success: When you roll a 17 or higher on an attack roll that deals damage, you deal 1 additional point of damage. For instance, if you roll a natural 18, which normally deals 2 extra points of damage, you deal 3 extra points instead. If you roll a natural 20 and choose to deal damage instead of achieve a special major effect, you deal 5 extra points of damage. Enabler.

Iron Monkey (5 Might points): You attempt a difficulty 4 Might action to jump high into the air as part of your melee attack. If you succeed, your attack inflicts 3 additional points of damage and knocks the foe down. If you fail, you still make your normal attack roll, but you don't inflict the extra damage or knock down the opponent if you hit. Action.

Mastery With Armor: The cost reduction from your Practiced in Armor ability improves. When you wear any armor, you reduce the armor's Speed cost

Ignore the Pain, page 47

to 0. If you select this ability and you already have the Experienced With Armor ability, replace Experienced With Armor with a different third-tier ability because Mastery With Armor is better. Enabler.

Mastery With Defense: Choose one type of defense task in which you are trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are specialized in defense tasks of that type. You can select this ability up to three times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of defense task. Enabler.

Parry (5 Speed points): You can deflect incoming attacks quickly. For the next ten rounds, the difficulty of all Speed defense rolls is reduced by one step. Enabler.

SIXTH-TIER WARRIOR

Choose two of the abilities described below (or from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier abilities with a different one from a lower tier. You may also choose from any of your mode special abilities, listed on pages 41-43.

Finishing Blow (5 Might points): If your foe is prone, stunned, or somehow helpless or incapacitated when you strike, you inflict 8 additional points of damage on a successful hit. Enabler.

Magnificent Moment: If you make an attack or attempt a task with the immediate action you gain by using Seize the Moment, the difficulty is reduced by one step. Enabler.

Fiver (5 Speed points): You stand still and make ranged attacks against up to five foes within range, all as part of the same action in one round. Make a separate attack roll for each foe. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to all of these attacks. Action.

Slayer (3 Might points): When you successfully strike a foe of level 5 or lower, make another roll (using whichever stat you used to attack). If you succeed on the second roll, you kill the target outright. If you use this ability against a PC of any tier and you succeed on the second roll, the character moves down one step on the damage track. Enabler.

Spin Attack (5 Speed points): You stand your ground and make melee attacks against up to five foes within reach, all as part of the same action in one round. Make a separate attack roll for each foe. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to all of these attacks. Action.

Weapon and Body (5 Speed points): After making a melee weapon or ranged weapon attack, you follow up with a punch or kick as an additional attack, all as part of the same action in one round. The two attacks can be directed at different foes. Make a separate attack roll for each attack. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to both attacks, unless it is tied specifically to your weapon. Action.

FURTHER CUSTOMIZATION OF CHARACTER TYPES

The rules in this section can be used by the GM to tailor a type to better fit a particular adventure or campaign, or by a player and a GM to tweak a character to fit a concept.

MODIFYING TYPE ASPECTS

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

Stat Pools: Each character type has a starting stat Pool value. A player can exchange points between their Pools on a one-for-one basis. For example, they can trade 2 points of Might for 2 points of Speed. However, no starting stat Pool should be higher than 20. Edge: A player can start with an Edge of 1 in whichever stat they wish.

Practiced With Weapons: Some types have static first-tier abilities that grant them practice with certain weapons. Warriors have Practiced With All Weapons, explorers have Practiced With Light and Medium Weapons, and speakers and mathemagicians have Practiced With Light Weapons. Any one of these abilities can be sacrificed to gain training in one skill of the player's choice.

DRAWBACKS AND PENALTIES

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

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

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

Inabilities: Inabilities can be thought of as negative skills. They make one type of task harder by increasing the difficulty by one step. If a character chooses to take an inability, they gain a skill of their choice. Normally, a character can have only one inability unless the additional inability comes from another source (such as a descriptor or a disease or disability arising from actions or conditions in the game).

THE CHARMS OF SLEEPWAKING

Now then, to say the dream was past its sell-by date was to do a serious disservice to sell-by dates, to selling things in general, and to the whole concept of linear time as measured out in dates passing by in a regular fashion on a calendar. I mean the barbs were falling off this feather even as Thomas Boundaryman Junior raised it to his lips. If he'd bothered to count - which he didn't, not being a counting kind of guy - there were maybe ten or twelve barbs remaining. And most of those broke off inside his mouth. But he was desperate. Thomas was seven, eight or nine ways desperate to dream. We've all been there right, youth-wise, rolling a smoke from the stubs of last night's party? Well this was like that, only tenfold worse. Those barbs went down his throat. Thomas choked, he coughed, he near vomited. But he kept faith to the words his dear old dearly departed daddy had taught him: 'There ain't never no dream not worth dreaming.' And disregarding the double or even triple negative, that's one hell of a true (or false) statement. And you know that thing the Game Cat says about not ingesting direct? Well this was direct ingestation to the max. OK, so you wouldn't think nine or ten or eleven single barbs would do that much damage, right? Think again. Because Thomas Boundaryman Junior is not at his best right this moment, in fact he's on his dregs, he's scuppered, he's holding the broken remains of a long-term love affair like a nest of needles in his dreamaholic heart. So everything is magnified, the good and the bad, and this was most definitely the bad. So all was set for a moon-shot landing on the fires of Mars. Except for one thing: TBJ wasn't yet fully awake, he was wandering bleary-eyed around the hypnogogic limboland between sleep and wakefulness, and the bare remnants of last night's Vurt trips were still travelling, slowly, slowly, slowly through his system. So last night's dream mixed with the few new barbs he swallowed, they blended in his body and between them produced a new hybrid feather. Now we all know the Game Cat's warning about mixing dreams together, right? But sometimes you have a take a chance to join the dance, and Thomas did just that, he started dancing around the living room, through into the bathroom, the bedroom, out onto the balcony. Back again, out the front door, downstairs. He's awake, he's asleep, he's both simultaneously: he's a dreamwalker. Or a sleepwaker, as they're sometimes called. He's one of those sad lonely cases we all laugh out loud at when we see them on the street with their half-closed eyes and their strange behaviours. Usually they wake up fully only to find themselves sitting on a park bench miles from home, or travelling on a bus towards Middlesbrough, or taking their clothes off in the market square. It's one of the embarrassments of the golden dreaming age in which we live. And yet. And yet, and yet, and yet. Sometimes the weirdest things happen when Dream meets Reality and they take each other by the hand. It goes like this: usually dreamwalkers walk and dream alone, living inside their own world entirely, but this time just by chance, Thomas Boundaryman Junior met another walker. It was a chance in a million, really, but if any city was going to allow such a thing, this was the one. It happened in the park, where the two people met, Thomas and Norah. They met and danced together still locked in their own individual dreams, and danced some more and came closer in their embraces until their mouths met and their tongues touched and traces of each other's dream passed from one to the other and mingled and then at last they awoke each at the same time, and saw each other in the flesh, for real, so real, and their eyes sparkled at the sight of the other, at the journey they had both taken, strangers until now, to get this close to each other. Away they go, watch them: Thomas and Norah, their dance continues.

- Jeff Noon

CHAPTER 7

CHARACTER FOCUS

SOME THINGS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN OTHERS, AND IF THAT MAKES ME BAD, THEN LET IT STAND.

- Jeff Noon, Vurt

Focus is what your character does, what moves them and pushes them to do what they do. This is where your PC is rounded out, where suggestions are given for possible appearance, quirks or mannerisms, and perhaps even indications for a specific career or guiding inspiration in life. It's all here in the foci. However, you are creating the character *you* want, so if you have a clear idea of how to round your PC out, you may decide to take it in a different direction. You do what you gotta do. Follow your heart. Reach for those stars. Breathe life. Play god.

When you choose your character focus, you'll also get to choose a special connection to one or more of your fellow PCs, as well as a first-tier ability, and maybe some some equipment to start you off right. We recommended that no two PCs in a group have the same focus, but again, it's your game, kittling. You call the shots.

Each time you progress to the next tier, your focus grants you more abilities and benefits. Each focus also offers minor effect and major effect suggestions to the GM and the player to help make those high rolls exciting. There are also suggestions for **GM Intrusions** that quickly make any challenge a bit more, well, challenging.

GM Intrusions, page 134

Each tier's benefit is labeled either Action or Enabler. *An action requires that the character take an action to use it, and an enabler does not.* Most special combat moves are actions. Abilities that improve or modify another action, or abilities that are that are passive and do not require an action to use are generally Enablers. Since they do not require an action, you can use an Enabler in the same turn that you perform another action.

Remember, each tier's benefits are independent of and cumulative with benefits from other tiers (unless indicated otherwise). So if your first-tier ability grants you +1 to Armor and your fourth-tier ability also grants you +1 to Armor, when you reach fourth tier, you have a total of +2 to Armor. Stack that up! You'll need it, guaranteed.

Your choice of focus will give you some clues to what possible jobs you might have done in the past or how you're employed at the moment. Or not. You don't need to have a steady job to survive in Manchester, but it often helps to have some quid coming in so you can afford your feathers, food and rent. For a selection of common jobs, legal or otherwise, see the job list at the end of this chapter on page 96. Jobs aren't mandatory, however—and sitting on your arse is perfectly acceptable in Manchester.

Your focus will dictate much of how your character lives their day-to-day life; using (or wasting) their talents and experience. Choose wisely, kittling—this is the final step in character creation. Your PC's personality and inner drive will be apparent to you by the end of this

third and final step.

At this point, you'll have already chosen the **descriptor** and **type**; the *adjective* and *noun* of the Cypher System's defining *"I am an adjective noun who verbs"* construction. Now, all you have left is the verb.

So far, you might have decided on a roboman warrior, or a dogshadow mathemagician, maybe a pure human speaker. But what does your PC *do*? What's main reason your PC gets out of bed and keeps on keepin' on? Choose the perfect focus for your PC. No time to waste! Sleep is for the dead!

Choose your Focus from the following:

1. Can't Be Mithered
2. Controls Blurbs
3. Craves the Fix
4. Delves Deeper
5. Disturbs the Peace
6. Goes Mad-Dog
7. Has Done Time
8. Hits the Jam
9. Hyperprocesses
10. Is a Lab Rat
11. Is a Lucky Bleeder
12. Is Idolized
13. Keeps it Raw
14. Keeps the Faith
15. Liquidates
16. Lives Life as a Dodo
17. Makes It Their Problem
18. Never Jerks Out
19. Plays To Win
20. Plugs In
21. Runs the Ginnels
22. Scraps like a Scally
23. Shows Them All
24. Takes the Reins
25. Tops Gears
26. Tracks Marks
27. Works for the City
28. Works the Room

CAN'T BE MITHERED

You likely haven't left your messy room in months, getting all your fast-food meals and legal feathers delivered to your window by blurbfly. For you, an ideal day is spent sitting or lying down, high as a kite, feathered-up on the dub side with no major responsibilities. How you ended up with such low ambition has much to do with the way you were raised. You know you were spoiled rotten. Even if you happened to grow up poor, you got what you wanted with little or no effort on your part. You ain't bovvered, boy.

Your appearance is likely slovenly and dated. Maybe you're rocking the same spit-stained trackies you've been wearing for the last decade. Even if your personal hygiene is acceptable, your sense of style is not. But who gives a shit? You'll find enough scratch for rent, food, drugs and yummy feathers. If not, you might actually have to leave your room and venture outside—your worst nightmare.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. You recently got in deep trouble with the cops or a powerful corporation, and while being interrogated, you gave the PC's name. They don't know it yet, but they're in real danger.
- Pick one other PC. You've let them down so many times in the past that they don't believe in you anymore. For some reason, that bothers you, so you're going to prove you're not worthless.
- Pick two other PCs. You owe both of these PCs a lot of money, and now is the time to pay it off.
- Pick one other PC. This is the only person who knows what you really did with that three-armed robomanshad in the Turdsville Shimmy-Plex in last summer.

Additional Equipment: You have a Drip feed card. *Drip feed Card, page 363*

Minor Effect Suggestion: You draw on your experience watching others and reduce the difficulty of your next action by one step.

Major Effect Suggestion: You can take an extra action. You can use this action only to guard.

GM Intrusions: The outside world is a scary place. You suddenly realize that the only thing you want right now is to return to your stash pad or some safe place to be alone, away from other people and their problems. The urge is getting uncontrollable; for the next minute, any task other than running home to hide is going to be very difficult.

TIER 1

Picking It Up. Choose any two non combat skills. Without really trying, you have picked up enough knowledge to excel. You are trained in those skills. Enabler.

TIER 2

Cat Naps. Your ten-minute recovery roll takes you only one round. Enabler.

TIER 3

Loosey Goosey (3 Intellect points). You can reroll any of your Might, Speed, or Intellect defense rolls and take the better of the two results. Action.

TIER 4

You Ain't Bovvered. You are trained in Intellect defense tasks. Enabler.

Picking It Up. Choose any two noncombat skills. Without really trying, you've picked up enough knowledge to excel. You're trained in those skills. Enabler.

TIER 5

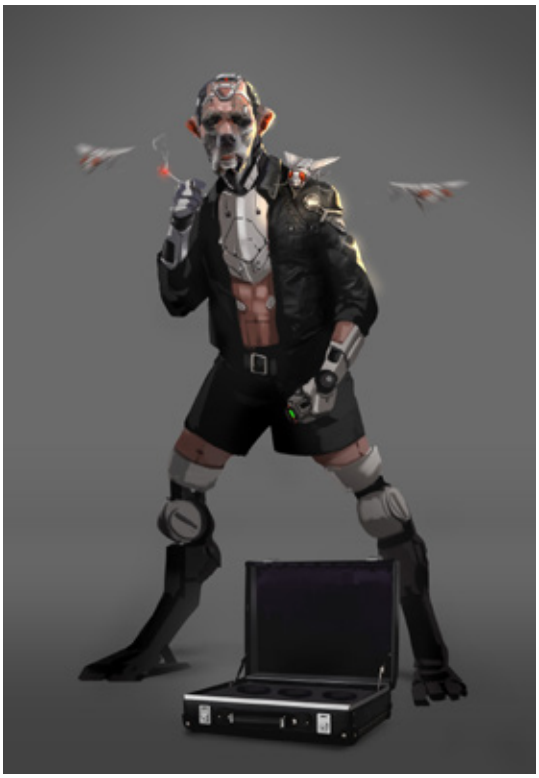
Nothing but Defend. If you do nothing on your turn but defend, you're specialized in all defense tasks for that one round. Enabler.

TIER 6

Getting Rounded. You get 5 points to divide between your Intellect Pool and your Might Pool however you wish. Enabler.

Guard Up. You're trained in Might defense, Speed defense, or Intellect defense (your choice). If you're already trained in that type of defense, you are specialized. Enabler.

CONTROLS BLURBS



You're an admin. A master of blurbflies. An engimologist. Your love for these tiny biomechanical creatures is evident. You've likely spent your life studying their intricate control systems and varying morphologies.

Admins like you are much more than technicians or mechanics. Blurbs (also known as "bugs") are living creatures, delicate and unique. One cannot control them well without understanding what drives them. There is nothing more satisfying to you than constructing a small life, a tiny friend or guardian that lives to serve. You take pride in your obsession.

Admins are notoriously absentminded; their odd appearances are often void of style. If you have hair, it's a mess. You likely choose your outfits based on pile proximity to your blurbfly workbench.

All that time you spent trying to figure out the inner workings of a blurbfly came at the expense of parties, going out to restaurants, and basic social interaction with your fellow Mancunian. Let's put it this way: You know every detail of the latest MechanInsect model, but forget your own birthday.

You may have a small group of friends that put up with your annoying idiosyncrasies, but even they seem embarrassed by your behavior at times.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. The two of you are obsessed with the history of engimology and have studied King Jaz and his journey from tinkering teenager to the undisputed master of Blurbs. You both know almost every public detail about him.
- Pick one other PC. You think they'd make an excellent admin, and offer advice to them on Blurbs. They may or may not be willing to learn, but you likely won't notice.
- Pick one other PC. They once disrespectfully swatted one of your blurbflies away. You may not have said anything about it, but it still bothers you. Passive aggression wins again!
- Pick one other PC. Like you, they also grew up in the Ardwick district of Manchester and you know many of the same people.

Additional Equipment: A level 2 blurbfly (with no modules attached), spare blurbfly parts, simple blurbfly repair kit.

Minor Effect Suggestion: Enemy's actions are one step more difficult on its next turn. You've got your eyes in the sky.

Vying for control, page 111

Major Effect Suggestion: Gain an extra blurbfly action. You're getting better and better at controlling your blurbs!

GM Intrusions: Even the most dependable blurbs can malfunction. It's annoying and probably doesn't last too long, but it reflects poorly on your ability to control your blurbs. Downed blurbs like these sometimes require your attention to get them up in the air again.

TIER 1

Control I. You can control one blurbfly at a time. Enabler.

Blurbfly Tinkerer. You're trained in blurbfly construction and maintenance. Enabler.

Blurbfly Builder. If you don't have any blurbflies in your possession, you can spend ten hours to cobble together a level 1 blurbfly with no modules attached. Enabler.

TIER 2

Control II. You can control 2 blurbflies at a time. Enabler.

Assert Control (2+ Intellect points). If you focus on one blurbfly that you don't already control (level 2 or below), you can attempt to take active control over it for one minute, commanding it to do simple tasks on your behalf while you concentrate. Instead of applying Effort to decrease the difficulty of the task, you can apply Effort to increase the maximum level of the blurbfly you can control. Thus, to affect a level 4 target (two levels above the normal limit), you must apply two levels of Effort. Action.

Vying for control of a blurbfly with an enemy admin is an Intellect test.

TIER 3

Control III. You can control three blurbflies at a time. Enabler.

Slave (Intellect 2). You can slave any number of blurbflies that you control to emulate the actions of a single bug. This will allow you to send multiple bugs

to perform a single action. For example, if you want to use your action to attack with a blurbfly, you can send two or more bugs instead of one. Action (may be performed in addition to another blurbfly action).
B**lurbfly Improvement.** You are specialized in blurbfly crafting and maintenance. Enabler.
Blurbfly Builder. If you have fewer than three blurbflies in your collection, you can spend ten hours to cobble together a level 2 blurbfly with no modules attached.

TIER 4
Control IV. You can control four blurbflies at a time.
Bug Shield (3 Intellect). Command your bugs to swarm around you and intercept incoming attacks. If any attack is made against you while you have bugs commanded to Shield, a bug will automatically intercept the attack and absorb the damage. Action to initiate.
Blurbfly Upgrade. Choose one of the following (no materials or skill checks are required):
- Upgrade the motivator of one of your blurbflies by one level.
- Apply a chassis hack to one of your blurbflies.
- Replace any two installed modules in your swarm with two others of similar value (the originals are lost).

TIER 5
Control V. You can control five blurbflies at a time.
Blurb Swarm. You can either choose another blurbfly Upgrade from tier 4 (applied to any owned blurbfly) or you can take Blurb Swarm. If you take Blurb Swarm, you build up to four level 2 blurbflies and add them to your collection.

TIER 6
Control VI. You can control six blurbflies at a time.
Blurbfly Evolution. You can choose another blurbfly upgrade from tier 4 to apply to any of your blurbflies, or you can take Blurbfly Evolution. If you take Blurbfly Evolution and have fewer than six blurbflies in your collection, you can spend ten hours to cobble together a level 3 blurbfly with no modules attached.

CRAVES THE FIX

If it alters the mind or the mood, you're into it. Drugs are your world. As far as you're concerned, every moment spent sober is a moment wasted. You've done them all: Jammers, Fetish, Haze, Boomer, you name it. Looking back, you've even seemed to enjoy your past overdoses. You sick puppy. Sometimes you feel strong. Very strong. You do some amazing things when the adrenaline kicks in. But most of the time you're just looking to get your mitts on some good drugs. That's the driving force. Your day-to-day.

Most others underestimate you, thinking that a junkie couldn't possibly be trustworthy or intelligent. It often bothers you, but you're too effed up to change anything. Your disheveled appearance doesn't help your case, either. You likely have puke stains on your grimy clothes, maybe you're missing most of your teeth. Most with your extensive drug history can't hide the tics or other effects of long-term use. You may slur words, grind your teeth, or nod off mid-sentence.
There's really no hiding your past as an amped pillbug, a blitzed pharmahead, a shit-stained mess. But you know what you're talking about when it comes to drugs. Who needs long-term memory anyway?

Connection: Choose one of the following.
- Pick one other PC. United by drugs! Both you and this person can recite most Game Cat reviews verbatim.
- Pick one other PC. They once saved your life during one of your many overdoses.
- Pick one other PC. You both have taken the same infamous bootleg Blue Bayou feather that devastated the featherheads of Rusholme a few years back and have mild brain damage and anger issues. You support each other when things get dodgey
- Pick one other PC. You suspect they are holding a specific street drug that you want. They may deny it, but you feel like they have some, and want it all for themselves.

Hack, page 113

Additional Equipment: You start with 2 Cortex Jammers.

Cortex Jammers, page 363

Minor Effect Suggestion: The target is also dazed for one round, during which time the difficulty of all tasks it performs is modified by one step to its detriment.

Major Effect Suggestion: You destroy a piece of equipment worn or held by your opponent.

GM Intrusions: Sometimes the urge to get lit comes at the most inopportune times. But right now, all you want is to search your pockets for any and all drug cyphers and take them all at once, damn the consequences. You'll regret it later, and the effects of mixing pharma might mess you up, but you crave the fix and won't be talked out of it.

Remember that in the Vurt RPG, cypher limits are not a hard and fast rule in the real world. It is only in the Vurt world that a character's cypher limit cannot be exceeded under any circumstances.

TIER 1
Pharma Pro. You can identify all common drugs and know the effects of each. Enabler
Wound Tender. You are trained in healing. Enabler.

TIER 2
Tolerance. Any lasting negative effects applied by drugs last only half as long as normal. For example, if a drug causes increased difficulty of Intellect tasks for one hour, it will only last 30 minutes for you. The duration of Vurt lag effects is also cut in half.

Vurt lag, page 170

Whimpy Burglar. You are trained in one of the following tasks (choose one): breaking things, climbing, jumping, or running. You likely picked this up after years of "borrowing" from friends and family. Enabler.

Dazed, page 143

TIER 3

Cadge a Fix (3 Intellect points): In the place of your ten hour recovery roll, you may collect any ready money and go on a scrounging mission to find drugs. Ask the GM what drug cypher you were able to score. You must pay the full going rate. Action.

Damage track, page 141

Tweaked. If you are under the influence of one or more drugs (cyphers), you inflict 1 additional point of damage each time you strike with your standard attack. Enabler.

TIER 4

Shady Bastard (3 Intellect points). You use lies and trickery against a foe that can understand you. If successful, the foe is stunned for one round and cannot act, and they're dazed in the following round, during which time the difficulty of its tasks is increased by one step.

TIER 5

Unstoppable: When you're impaired on the damage track, you function as if you were hale. While you're debilitated, you function as if you were impaired. In other words, you don't suffer the effects of being debilitated. You still die if all your stat Pools are 0. Enabler.

Making friends seems nearly impossible at times, as you don't really trust anyone. You likely dress in a way that doesn't draw attention; perhaps dark colors and layers. You have scars that reveal how many fights you've been a part of, and might have a black eye or some other injury you're recovering from. But you'll hold it all together and keep on with your personal mission, even if no one else understands. Dig deeper! Find the connections! Never stop!

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. This person knows more than they're letting on, and you're going to find out what they know.
- Pick two other PCs. You suspect that they are working undercover and are keeping a close eye on them.
- Pick one other PC. They have an item that you recognize from someone/somewhere else, and this proves they're hiding something.
- Pick two other PCs. You feel that they are not telling you the whole truth about their connection to each other, and this bothers you.

Additional Equipment: You carry a small but powerful LED torch (flashlight) and an A-Z Book cypher of one district of your choice.

Minor Effect Suggestion: Enemy's actions are one step more difficult on its next turn. It pays to pay attention. The more you know…

Major Effect Suggestion: The target is also stunned and loses their next turn.

GM Intrusions: You're always dwelling on your conspiracy theories, but it usually leaves you with no answers, just more questions and a headache. But when a real epiphany strikes, when you can connect some of the dots and make some sense of the chaos, it brings you to your knees and makes it nearly impossible to do anything other than laugh and/or weep.

TIER 1

Stealth. You are lithe and quiet. You know how to alter your position, your stance, and your clothing to best suit your surroundings. All this combines to give you an asset for stealth-related tasks. Enabler.

TIER 6

Dusted. You add 5 points to your Might Pool, and you inflict 2 additional point of damage with melee attacks. Enabler.

DELVES DEEPER

Collector, cartographer, conspiracy theorist. You're an archetypal treasure hunter, scavenger, and finder of lost things. Most around you find your focus to be misguided, and you've been called wingnut more than once. If at any time you want to look for trouble, you'll easily find it.

You've also gotten into more physical altercations than most, so your ability to take damage and keep moving is well honed. Experience has made you fairly paranoid; you're often investigating conspiracies or looking for connections where none exist. You know that most of your theories are dead ends and that you come across as jumpy.

Flight Not Fight. If you use your action only to move, the difficulty of all Speed defense tasks is reduced by one step. Enabler.

TIER 2

Room Raider. You are trained in searching, listening, climbing, balancing, and jumping tasks. You have so much practice at this point, it's finally coming in handy. Enabler.

Eyes Adjusted. Your sharp eyes reduce the negative effects of dim light. You can see in very dim light as if it were dim light, and in total darkness as if it were very dim light. Enabler.

TIER 3

Slippery Kipper. You're trained in escaping from bonds, fitting in tight spaces, and other contortionist tasks. Thanks to your experience, you're also trained in Speed defense tasks while wearing light armor or no armor. Enabler.

TIER 4

Resilient. In your explorations of dark places, you've been exposed to all sorts of terrible things and are developing a general resistance. You gain +1 to Armor and are trained in Might defense tasks. Enabler.

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TIER 5

Dark Explorer. You ignore penalties for any action (including fighting) in very dim light or in cramped spaces. Combined with your Eyes Adjusted ability, you can act without penalty even in total darkness. You are also trained in sneaking tasks while in dim or no light. Enabler.

Callused. You gain an additional +1 to Armor.

TIER 6

Ultramaxed Out. You gain 5 additional points to each of your three stat Pools, but at the cost of lasting damage. No way around it, your training has taken its toll. Roll on the lasting damage table, page 142. Enabler.

DISTURBS THE PEACE

Hooligan? No. You're a die-hard fan, and stand up for your fellow supporter, but you're no hooligan! You live and die for your Vurtball team. Maybe you bleed red for Man-United or blue for Man-City. You've been to every match since you can remember and have been called hooligan on more than one occasion. You know how to sneak weapons into situations where you'll need them, and how to read a crowd. Other fanatical Vurtball fans who root for your team are your brothers and sisters, and those who root for the opposing team are your nemeses. When not experiencing "Vurty" matches, you're talking about it and training to defend yourself in tight quarters. Truth be told, a stadium brawl is one of your favorite things.

You wear your team colors from head to toe, and probably have dozens of team tattoos. You most likely wear an official uniform on game days in solidarity with your squad. These colors don't run! Honor matters! Honor and a Millwall brick or a shiv in the gut of those divs when things get close. Your team is the best, and all those that disagree can stuff it.

The supporters of the rival team? Yeah, mate. *They're* all a bunch of daft hooligans.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. They also share a love for your favorite team, and they enjoy constantly discussing stats and details as much as you do.
- Pick one other PC. You've heard rumors that they're fans of your rival team, and you're ready to defend your Vurtball squad's honor if need be.
- Pick one other PC. They are related to (or know well) a famous Vurtball player on your favorite team. This means that they should be able to answer any and all questions you might have.
- Pick one other PC. They're not fans of your favorite Vurtball team, but you feel like you may have a chance to make them a fan like you are.

Additional Equipment: You start with a ticket for the upcoming Vurtball match and a Millwall brick.

Minor Effect Suggestion: The target is intimidated and flees as its next action.

Major Effect Suggestion: You get a free, no-action recovery roll.

GM Intrusions: You brought it on yourself, hooligan. Thanks to your many run-ins with the cops, they seem to hassle you every time you cross paths or get tagged by an inpho beam. They just spotted you. Run!

TIER 1

Match Day Fever. If your team is playing in a Vurtball match today, you get +1 armor and +1 melee damage for the entire day. Your team likely plays in a match every three to five days. Discuss the schedule with the GM. Enabler.

TIER 2

Dual Melee Wield. You can use two light melee weapons at the same time, making two separate attacks on your turn as a single action. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action, but because you make separate attacks, your opponent's Armor applies to both. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to both attacks, unless it's specifically tied to one of the weapons. Enabler.

TIER 3

Rally (3 Might points). You inspire your comrades with a fervent maneuver! Make an attack that is reduced by one level of difficulty and deals 1 additional point of damage. Additionally any PC within short range gets an asset on their next attack or defense action.

Scalper (3 Intellect points). By taking an hour to ask around, you're able to score the group tickets to any event that sells admission, at the regular price. These might be for a sports match, concert, nightclub or similar event. If the event is invitation only, the GM will decide if you are able to scalp an invite.

TIER 4

Knock Out (5 Might points). You make a melee attack that inflicts no damage. Instead, if the attack hits, make a second Might-based roll. If successful, a foe of level 3 or lower is knocked unconscious for one minute. By applying levels of effort to the Might-based roll, you can increase the level of the enemy you can knock out. For example, if you want to knock out a level 5 enemy, you would need to use two levels of effort. Action.

TIER 5

Attack and Attack Again. Rather than granting additional damage or a minor or major effect, a natural 17 or higher on your attack roll allows you the option of immediately making another attack. Enabler.

TIER 6

Brick Wall (6 Might points). In the place of a regular attack, the PC can choose to guard an immediate area until the beginning of their next turn. If any enemy enters this space during that time, the PC may immediately make an attack, up to a total of six enemies. In addition to dealing damage, any successful attack repels the enemy, forcing them back from melee range. All attacks count as part of a single action, so the PC is still limited by the total amount of Effort that may be applied. Action.

IS A LAB RAT

You're tinkering at all times, engrossed in something mechanical or electronic. If it can be taken apart, you'll do it; curious to a fault. Most of your free time is spent experimenting and constructing small devices that actually work as you intended. You're methodical when it comes to details and numbers, but social situations are often difficult for you. You'd rather be working on your machines than talking to others, but you need to make a living. For you, heaven would be a state-of-the-art laboratory with no one else in it.

Your appearance is likely that of an absentminded recluse. Maybe your your shirt is on inside out, or you realize you've forgotten to wear socks today. The way you look is the last thing on your mind.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. They don't respect your knowledge and talents, even though you've saved their arse countless times. For some reason, you feel you need to prove yourself to them.
2. Pick one other PC. When you get flustered, this is the person that calms you down.
3. Pick one other PC. They've paid for quite a bit of your equipment and supplies in the past, and you're determined to make their investment worthwhile.
4. Pick one other PC. As youths, you used to work together repairing projectors and sound systems at the local ShimmyPlex.

A Shimmy-Plex is a place for group feather fun.

Additional Equipment: A field-science kit containing pipettes, tweezers, baggies, vials and chemical substances, for collecting and analyzing samples.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You learn one additional piece of information in your analysis.

Major Effect Suggestion: You gain some temporary insight into how your opponents are fighting. During this time, the difficulty of all tasks they perform is modified by one step to their detriment.

GM Intrusions: Working with electricity and complex machinery is second nature to you, you haven't had a major electric shock in a long time. But your luck just ran out. Something you've been tinkering with, maybe something in your pockets just zapped your ass to the ground for a bit and made your hair stand on end. You feel like you're going to vomit. In fact, you have no choice, here it comes...

TIER 1

Lab Analysis (3 Intellect points). You analyze the site of a mysterious incident, the scene of a crime, or a series of unexplained phenomena, and maybe learn a surprising amount of information about the perpetrators, the participants, or force(s) responsible. To do so you must collect samples from the scene. Samples are paint or wood scrapings, dirt, photographs of the area, hair, an entire corpse, and so on. With samples in hand, you can discover up to three pertinent pieces of information about the scene, possibly clearing up a lesser mystery and pointing the way to solving a greater one. For example, discovering that a victim was killed not by a fall, as seems immediately obvious, but rather by electrocution, is a difficulty 3 task for you. The GM will decide what you learn and what level of difficulty is needed to learn it.

The difficulty of the task is modified by one step in your favor if you take the time to transport the samples to a permanent lab (if you have access to one), as opposed to conducting the analysis with your field science kit. Action to initiate, 2d20 minutes to complete

Scientist: You are trained in one area of scientific knowledge of your choice. Enabler.

TIER 2

Modify Device (4 Intellect points). You jury-rig a piece of mechanical or electrical equipment to make it function above its rated specs for a very limited time. To do so, you must use spare parts equal to an expensive item, have a field-science kit (or a permanent lab, if you have access to one), and succeed at a difficulty 3

Intellect-based task. When complete, using the device modifies all tasks performed in conjunction with the device by one step in the user's favor, until the modification inevitably breaks. For example, you could overclock a computer so research tasks using it are completed sooner, modify an espresso maker so that each cup of coffee made with it is better, modify a car's engine so that it runs faster or its steering handles better, and so on. Each time the modified device is used, roll a d20. On a result of 1-5 the modification breaks following this use. Action to initiate, one hour to complete.

TIER 3

MacGyver Moment (4 Intellect points). Something in the environment catches your eye—a way to manipulate an object in the groups favor, like kicking the winch lever to drop a load of cargo from above. Whatever it is, this distraction allows another member of the group to take an additional immediate action, which they can take out of turn. Action.

TIER 4

Extensive Training. You are specialized in one area of knowledge of your choice. Enabler.

Skeptical. You are trained in Intellect defense tasks. Enabler.

TIER 5

Research Breakthrough (5 Intellect points). Your research leads to a breakthrough, and you imbue an object with a truly amazing property, though you can use the item only once. To do so, you must buy spare parts equivalent to an expensive item, have a field-science kit (or a permanent lab, if you have access to one), and succeed at a difficulty 4 Intellect-based roll to create a random cypher of up to level 2. The GM decides the nature of the cypher you create. Attempting to create a specific cypher increases the difficulty by two steps.. Action to initiate, one hour to complete.

TIER 6

Reengineer Cypher (12 Intellect points). You can do truly amazing things in the lab. This takes ten hours of uninterrupted tinkering and materials equal to the cost of an expensive item. You can create a copy of one cypher in your possession, improving it by two levels, up to the listed max level of the cypher.

GOES MAD-DOG

You know that you're a liability to any team that takes you on, and this has been proven time and time again in your past. You are someone who Goes Mad-Dog in a fight, and that makes you a danger to friend and foe alike; there is no talking you down. But you can unleash your inner berserker and use whatever means it takes to win a fight. For those with dog genetics, this comes naturally. For the other modes of being with no dog in them, this berserker mentality is a result of training or programming. Or madness. Or all of the above.

You likely have a difficult time keeping your temper under control, and might wear rugged clothing that you know will get dirty or ripped up in a fight. If you do care about your outward appearance, it's probably something that makes you look (even more) like a bad ass; face tats, scarification, maybe a leather jacket reinforced with a few strategically placed strips of steel plating. Whatever it takes to let those around you know that you ain't to be fucked with.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. They seem to be able to calm you better than most others when you get out of hand.
- Pick one other PC. They also have a problem with their temper, and the two of you often fight.
- Pick one other PC. You and this person share a deep love for the music of Dingo Tush, you both have seen him play live dozens of times.
- Pick one other PC. You used to date their sibling, and it ended ugly. It's a touchy subject that the two of you no longer speak about.

Minor Effect Suggestion: Your foe finds your appearance/attitude so threatening that they spend the subsequent round unable to do anything other than defend.

Major Effect Suggestion: Your foe is terrified of your badass battle rage and uses their next two actions to flee.

GM Intrusions: When you are in one of your fits of rage, you find it hard to discern friend and foe; that means that friendly-fire situations are bound to happen.

TIER 1

Frenzy (1 Intellect point). When you wish, while in combat, you can enter a state of frenzy. While in this state, you can't use points from your Intellect Pool, but you gain +1 to your Might Edge and your Speed Edge. This effect lasts for as long as you wish, but ends if no combat is taking place within range of your senses. Enabler.

TIER 2

Good Whiskers (2 Might points). Once per day you may absorb the damage from a single melee attack, reducing the damage taken to 1 point. Armor may not be used to reduce this single point of damage.

Mobile Fighter. You are trained in climbing and jumping tasks. Enabler.

TIER 3

Power Strike (3+ Might points). If you successfully attack a target, you knock it prone in addition to inflicting damage. The target must be your size or smaller. You can knock down a target larger than you if you apply a level of Effort to do so (rather than to decrease

the difficulty of the attack). Enabler.
Straight Edge. When you are sober (not under the effects of any drug), you are trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

TIER 4
Greater Frenzy (4 Intellect points). When you wish, while in combat, you can enter a state of greater frenzy. While in this state, you can't use points from your Intellect Pool, but you gain +2 to your Might Edge and your Speed Edge. This effect lasts for as long as you wish, but ends if no combat is taking place within range of your senses. You can use this ability or your first-tier Frenzy ability, but you can't use both at the same time. Enabler.

TIER 5
Attack and Attack Again. Rather than granting additional damage or a minor or major effect, a natural 17 or higher on your attack roll allows you the option of immediately making another attack. Enabler.

TIER 6
Tough and Fast. You gain 6 additional points to your Might Pool and 6 additional points to your Speed Pool. Enabler.

HAS DONE TIME

In the past, you were held captive for some time. Perhaps you were incarcerated in the infamous Strangeways prison, maybe you were held hostage, ransomed, or tortured like a cat tied to a stake.

The experience has made you very skittish and these days you always keep one eye on the exit. You are extremely dexterous, and pride yourself on being able to remove yourself from situations and locations when necessary. You refuse to be locked up again, and train your body and mind to give you the tools needed to survive outside.

Your personality has changed since you got out—you tend to be quiet and observant, dressing in clothes that don't draw attention and allow for a speedy escape if need be. You likely work out on a daily basis to stay fit and keep yourself on high alert at all times.

Connection: Choose one of the following.
- Pick one other PC. They did time with you in the past. Neither of you will talk about it.
- Pick one other PC. You worked together before your problems with the law. They remember how fun you used to be, and often recount stories of the good old days to cheer you up.
- Pick one other PC. You did a job together that resulted in your incarceration. They escaped.
- Pick one other PC. When you were incarcerated, you heard a lot of disturbing and conflicting stories about them. You don't know what to think now, but you don't trust them.

Additional Equipment: Dark-colored clothing, gloves and balaclava.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You restore 2 points to your Speed Pool.

Major Effect Suggestion: You can take a second action this round.

GM Intrusions: There are times when the long-term effects of your incarceration come back to haunt you. Terrible memories flood back and overwhelm you, and sometimes this happens at the most inopportune times, like when you go into the fetal position during combat.

TIER 1
Strange Ways. You gain 3 additional points to your Speed Pool. You're no longer being fed incarceration feathers, or pacing a small cell; you're feeling better every day. Enabler.
Slippery Kipper. You're trained in escaping from bonds, fitting in tight spaces, and other contortionist tasks. Thanks to your experience, you also are trained in Speed defense tasks while wearing light armor or no armor. Enabler.

TIER 2
White Rabbit. You are trained in climbing and jumping. You also reduce the damage from a fall by 5 points. Some of your old talents seem to be returning. Enabler.

TIER 3
Even Stranger Ways. You gain 1 to your Speed Edge. Each day spent outside of a prison makes you feel stronger and more balanced. Enabler.
Hard to Touch. You are trained in Speed defense tasks. Inside, you learned to act quickly and avoid fights. Your state of high alert just got a lot higher. Enabler.
Tough Nut. You are trained in resisting intimidation and/or interrogation. You learned how to hold your mud, keep your mouth shut, and avoid snitch-stitches. Enabler.

TIER 4
Quick Strike (4 Speed points). You make a melee attack with such speed that it is hard for your foe to defend against, and it knocks him off balance. The difficulty of making the attack is decreased by two steps, and the foe, if struck, is dazed so that for the next round, the difficulty of his tasks is increased by one step. Action.

TIER 5
The Strangest of Ways. You gain 5 additional points to your Speed Pool. You've spent enough time outside prison to feel almost normal again. Physically, you're now back to your pre-incarceration form. Better, in fact. Enabler.

TIER 6
Escape Plan. When you kill a foe, you can attempt a sneaking action to immediately hide from anyone around, assuming that a suitable hiding place is nearby. Enabler.

HITS THE JAM

You likely grind your teeth almost constantly, pace the room, fidget, crack your knuckles, and tap your foot on the floor compulsively. Your drug of choice is (or was) Cortex Jammers. Or something speedy.

If you're living life at twice the velocity, then time is passing half as slowly, right? It makes sense to you.

Right? Right. The mood swings are constant, but predictable.

You used to be a friendly person—now you're simply too amped up to be very social. You have a balance of intelligence and street smarts, but your personality makes most regular above-board jobs impossible to hold down for long. You're walking wasted potential. You usually look tired, uncomfortable, and unapproachable. It's possible you are wearing the same outfit you've been wearing all week. You may smell a bit ripe, but there's time for bathing later.

Right now, it's time to take apart this crazy device you found, maybe see how quickly you can put it back together again. It's all about motion, movement, speed—and insomnia. Let's pull another 24, mix the caps up with some Enola Cola and wham, bam, Stan's yer uncle, we're off to the races. Sleep is for the dead!

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. You're pretty sure you saw this person talking to a cop, and you suspect they might be working undercover.
- Pick one other PC. They paid for your medical bills after that unfortunate "accident" you caused at the Vurturama store. You owe them.
- Pick one other PC. They knew you before you got heavy into drugs and you can feel their judgment.
- Pick one other PC. They seem to know more about your past than they should and this terrifies you.

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Additional Equipment: 1d6 doses of Cortex Jammers.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You can immediately attempt to hide after this action.

Major Effect Suggestion: You get a +2 bonus to Speed defense rolls for one round.

GM Intrusions: Mixing drugs can result in some very devastating side effects. You've spent so much time under the influence and now your tolerance is making it harder and harder to glean the useful effects of certain drugs. Maybe the next dose of your favorite drug might not work when you want it to.

TIER 1

Curiouser. You are trained in cryptography, perception, deception, and hacking. Enabler.

TIER 2

Speed Bump. Now your mind and your body are racing. You gain 5 additional points to your Speed Pool. Enabler.

Hard to Hit. You are trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

TIER 3

Speed Burst (4 Speed points). You can take two separate actions in this round. In the following round, the difficulty of all actions is increased by one step. You cannot use this ability two rounds in a row. Action.

TIER 4

More Speed, Scotty. You gain 5 additional points to your Speed Pool. Wow-weeee! Feelin' it now! Enabler.

TIER 5

The Two-fer (4 Speed points). You can take two separate actions in this round. In the following round, the difficulty of all actions is increased by one step. You cannot use this ability two rounds in a row. Action.

TIER 6

Warp Speed. Every time you succeed at a Speed defense task, you can make an immediate attack against your foe. Your attack must be the same type (melee weapon, ranged weapon, or unarmed) as the attack you defend against. If you don't have an appropriate type of weapon ready, you can't use this ability—Cortex Jammers are a helluva drug. Enabler.

HYPERPROCESSES

A little robo brings out the best in you. That is, you've got a piece of hardware in your head that's a step above even the best commercially available upgrades. You might have picked it up when you worked as a analyst for one of the big megacorps, or from an underground pop-up clinic in Toytown. Maybe you're pure robo and were just *born better*. In any case, this is one-of-a-kind technology.

Whether this is an upgrade plugged into your robo CTPU or a chip implanted into your organic brain, you

process inpho at an unbelievable rate. Quick reaction times, accelerated learning, augmented memory storage—you're only just discovering what you're capable of.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. Their slowness is infuriating to you, and you lose patience with them regularly.
- Pick one other PC. You suspect that they envy your abilities and talents, and sometimes show off in front of them.
- Pick one other PC. You owe them more money than you could hope to repay, so you have decided to pay off your debt by protecting them to the best of your ability.
- Pick one other PC. They have said things in the past that lead you to believe they are working undercover for either the Manchester PD or some other investigative group.

Additional Equipment: A neural implant or hardware upgrade that allows you to process information at a much higher rate.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You foresee your enemy's moves so well that the difficulty of your Speed defense rolls for the next round is decreased by one step.

Major Effect Suggestion: Processing surge! On your next action, you can use points from your Intellect Pool rather than your Might or Speed Pools.

GM Intrusions: You're known for your dependable, calculated assessment of any situation, but something is wrong here and it feels like everything is descending into chaos and your brain can't handle all that disorganized madness. You may be right most of the time, but this time, your predictions are incorrect and it's going to bite you back. You find yourself very disoriented.

TIER 1

Mechanical Assistance. You gain 4 additional points to your Intellect Pool through the use of implants and nanoscale processing devices. Enabler.

Stored Memories: You are trained in one area of knowledge (history, geography, astronomy, and so on) of your choice. Enabler.

TIER 2

Augmented Movement. You are trained in climbing and jumping. Enabler.

Safe Fall. You reduce the damage from a fall by 5 points. Enabler.

TIER 3

Action Processor (4 Intellect points). Drawing upon stored information and the ability to process incoming data at amazing speeds, you're trained in one physical task of your choice for ten minutes. For example, you can choose running, climbing, swimming, Speed defense, or attacks with a specific weapon. Action to initiate.

TIER 4

Processing Power. You gain 2 additional points to your Intellect Pool and +1 to your Intellect Edge. Enabler.

More Stored Memories: You are trained in one area of knowledge (history, geography, astronomy, and so on) of your choice. Enabler.

TIER 5

Prediction (5 Intellect points). Based on all the variables you perceive, you can predict the next two minutes. This has the following effects:

- For two minutes, the difficulty of your defense rolls is reduced by one step.
- You have the ability to sense danger. For two minutes, you can predict the actions of those around you. You are trained in seeing through deceptions and attempts to betray you as well as avoiding traps and ambushes.
- You know what people are probably thinking and what they will say before they say it. You're trained in all skills involving interaction and deception. Action.

TIER 6

Reboot. Once per day, you may take an action to recover 1d6+6 points to your Intellect Pool. Any extra points are lost and cannot be applied to other Pools. Bonuses to your normal recovery rolls do not apply. Action.

Enhancement. Any time you use Effort on an Intellect action, add one of the following enhancements to the action (your choice): Enabler.

- +2 to the roll
- +2 to damage
- Automatic minor effect

IS A LUCKY BLEEDER

You hear the music in statistics, the poetry of probabilities and feel the ecstasy of prediction. Numbers don't lie, and the real world is full of delicious mathematical opportunities for someone who can manipulate chance through true mathematics. How you harness this gift is up to you. Perhaps you don't believe in luck, but realize that discernible patterns can be found even within chaos. With enough research and training, you can do things that amaze those around you.

You're a slick master of mathematical deduction, but this takes great focus. You usually can block out most distractions while computing your chances, but it's not easy.

You likely have a personal style that others find confusing. Maybe you wear trackies under a Rocker jacket, or maybe you have half your head shaved. Whatever it is, your unique appearance causes others to talk.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. Something about them that

bothers you, distracts you easily with even the slightest word or subtle action.
- Pick two other PCs. They both realize that you seem to be luckier than the average person and you sense that they don't trust you. You will prove yourself to them.
- Pick one other PC. You know how jealous they are of your good fortune, and don't trust them.
- Pick one other PC. The two of you used to be in a street gang together, but have either given it up, or the gang is no longer in existence. You trust this person with your life.

Additional Equipment: You carry a good-luck charm. You make your own luck, but what's the harm in a little superstition?

Minor Effect Suggestion: Luckily, you move out of the way at just the right time and add +2 to Armor.

Major Effect Suggestion: A very lucky chain of events knocks your target prone, where they are also stunned and lose their next turn.

GM Intrusions: Envy is a bitch. Your recent good fortune has drawn some negative attention and you'll likely have to defend yourself or your actions before it ends up in bloodshed.

TIER 1
Arithmophiliac. +3 Intellect pool, +1 Speed pool. You are trained in most computational devices because you love the numbers and they love you back. Enabler.

TIER 2
LaserBrains. While maintaining intense concentration on a separate action, you can also perform a physical action at the same time. This does not allow you to take an additional action on your turn, rather it allows you to sustain the effect of a prior action while taking a subsequent, physical action. The physical action may not be another special ability. Enabler.

TIER 3
Tracer Cost. Trajectorial computations save lives. You can use this ability on anyone's turn. GM must tell you the basic trajectory of a projectile or melee attack of your choosing before the start of your turn. Action.

TIER 4
Graphemist. +1 Intellect pool. Once the numbers in your head began to sing with color, your computations became more effective, now you seem to predict your opponent's' moves in battle. GM must tell you the basic trajectory of any projectiles or melee attacks before the start of your turn. Enabler.

TIER 5
Suicidal King. Games of chance are no longer a mystery to you. If you lose from here on out, you're doing it on purpose—or you are playing against a fellow numberphile. Yes, there are others like you out there! Keep it close! Enabler.

TIER 6
Numberless. You can divide your active mental state for superhuman computational focus. -2 difficulty for any mental task that involves numbers or patterns. While in this state, you can conduct physical actions as normal. Action.

IS IDOLIZED

Some celebrities are known for their talent, while others are simply known for being known. However the spotlight found you, you're a celebrity now, and people love you—often a little too much. You can't go anywhere publicly without people recognizing you, approaching you, or pointing at you from afar. Whenever you do anything, whether it's going to a Vurtball game, strolling along the river Irwell, or going out clubbing at the Slithy Tove, it quickly becomes a major event.

The real world is filled with hundreds of gossip shows that can be accessed from any Personal Data Feather. Any move you make in public is broadcast to millions, as well as any and all embarassing mistakes. You change your appearance and style often, both out of personal taste and necessity. Once they all realize it's you behind those oversized sunglasses, all bets are off. In private, you dress normally; in

public, your style is probably specifically orchestrated to highlight sponsored clothing and accessories.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. They knew you before your fame, and have a lot of unflattering stories from the past.
- Pick one other PC. You know that your celebrity status impresses them, and use this to your advantage.
- Pick one other PC. You secretly feel intimidated by them, either because they possess a similar talent, or have some other quality that could lead to fame like yours.
- Pick one other PC. This is the only person you seem to feel totally comfortable around. You can be yourself without all the pressure.

Additional Equipment: One expensive item that can be easily sold.

Minor Effect Suggestion: Your foe realizes who you are and leaves themselves open; the difficulty of your next attack is reduced by one step.

Major Effect Suggestion: Nearby strangers recognize you, scream your name, and run to get your autograph, shielding you from enemy attacks for a couple of rounds.

GM Intrusions: Sometimes your obsessed fans can go too far and you might suddenly find yourself being followed by a dangerous person who has decided they want to show you their dark side.

TIER 1

Entourage. Your entourage (five level 1 twenty-somethings) accompanies you wherever you go unless you purposefully disband it for a particular outing. You can ask them to deliver things for you, run messages, pick up your dry cleaning—pretty much whatever you want, within reason. They can also run interference if you're trying to avoid someone, help hide you from media attention, muscle you through a crowd, and so on. On the other hand, if a situation becomes physically violent, they retreat to safety. Enabler.

Talent. You're trained in one of the following areas: music, a particular style of art, a particular sport, crafting wonderful things, or some related area that led to your celebrity. You may also choose to have no particular Talent other than being a celebrity. Enabler.

TIER 2

Perks of Stardom. You're adept at claiming the rewards that fame can generate. When you're recognized, you can be seated at any restaurant, be let into any government building, be invited to any show or sports event (even if they're sold out), get a seat at a private function of any sort, or get into any club, no matter how exclusive. When dealing with someone who can't or won't immediately give in to your desire, you gain an asset on all tasks related to persuasion if that person recognizes you or is convinced that you're a celebrity even if they don't recognize you. Enabler.

TIER 3

Devoted Groupie. You gain a level 3 groupie who is completely devoted to you and follows you wherever you go (probably someone in your entourage makes this transition). You and the GM must work out the details. You'll probably make rolls for your groupie when they take actions. A groupie in combat usually doesn't make separate attacks but instead helps you with yours. On your action, if the groupie is next to you, they serve as an asset for one attack you make on your turn. If you lose your groupie for any reason, you gain a new one after at least two weeks pass. Enabler.

TIER 4

Captivate With Starshine. For as long as you speak, you keep the attention of all level 2 or lower NPCs who can hear you. If you also have the Enthrall ability, you can similarly captivate all level 3 NPCs. Action to initiate.

Capable Groupie. Your groupie increases to level 4. You like the attention, but it's getting creepy. Enabler.

TIER 5

Do You Know Who I Am? (3 Intellect points). Acting only as someone who is famous and used to privilege can, you verbally harangue a living foe who can hear you so forcefully that it is unable to take any action, including making attacks, for one round. Whether you succeed or fail, the difficulty of the next action the target takes after your attempt is modified by one step to its detriment. Action.

TIER 6

Transcend the Script (5 Intellect points). Whether they are lines you wrote, acted, reported on, or otherwise incorporated into your talent, you compose an oratory on the fly that is so wonderful that even you believe it. For each ally who hears it (and you, too), the difficulty of a task attempted within the next hour is decreased by two steps.

Zealous Groupie. Your groupie increases to level 5. Be careful, at this point the line between love and hate is fuzzy. Enabler.

KEEPS IT RAW

You likely don't use firearms or weapons. You feel like your body is a weapon. Perhaps you're part robo and have augmented reaction time, or maybe you're part Shadow and have a natural ability to strike and move quickly. Wherever your martial advantage may come from, you take great pride in not using weapons. It's gotten you in trouble in the past—there have been many times when a gun may have worked more quickly than the way you operate. But you're a purist, and to be honest, a bit masochistic.

Pride is what drives you, your martial art or other unarmed fighting style is sacred to you, and your appearance is influenced by it. Free-flowing robes or loose fitting garments might allow you to move quickly in a fight, but you must also be stylish. You're concerned with how others see you and base your self-worth around it. If you don't already have a nickname of some sort, it's probable that you fancy yourself worthy of a flattering one.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. They don't believe in your abilities and think that your hand-to-hand approach is dangerous. You'll show them!
- Pick one other PC. You've told them the real reason behind your need to prove yourself to others, and you already regret telling them such intimate information.
- Pick one other PC. They're fans of Manchester United and you're die-hard Manchester City fan (or vice versa). What used to be lighthearted razzing has become confrontational and it's likely to end in violence.
- Pick one other PC. They owe you money, but also know a secret about you. This means that you're likely never getting paid, or at least not anytime soon.

Minor Effect Suggestion: Your opponent is so impressed by your kick-ass moves that they are dazed, during which time the difficulty of all tasks they perform is increased by one step.

Major Effect Suggestion: You strike your target in a limb, making that limb useless for the next minute.

GM Intrusions: Your pride and refusal to use weapons is going to cost you this time around. An opponent has figured out that you are one of those people that thinks a well-placed kick is better than a well-placed bullet, and now they're going to turn the tables on your arse.

TIER 1

Unarmed Killing Machine. You inflict 2 additional points of damage with unarmed attacks. Enabler.

Flesh of Stone: You have +1 to Armor if you do not wear physical armor. Enabler.

TIER 2

Ghost Kitty. You're trained in climbing and jumping. Your movements are as sleek and mysterious as a ghost cat. Enabler.

Fighting Style: You're trained in unarmed attacks. You choose which style/discipline that you've spent ample time training for. Enabler.

TIER 3

Moving Like Water (3 Speed points). You spin and move so that your defense and attacks are aided by your fluid motion. For one minute, the difficulty of your attacks and Speed defense rolls is decreased by one step. Enabler.

TIER 4

Deflect Attacks (4 Speed points). For one minute, you automatically deflect or dodge any ranged projectile attacks. However, during this time, the difficulty of all other actions is increased by one step in any round in which you are attacked by ranged projectiles. Action to initiate.

TIER 5

Stunning Attack (4 Might points). You hit your foe in just the right spot, stunning him so that he loses his next action. This attack inflicts no damage. Action.

TIER 6

Master of Style. You're specialized in unarmed attacks. If you're already specialized in unarmed attacks, you deal 2 additional points of damage with unarmed attacks instead. Enabler.

KEEPS THE FAITH

A very recent mind-expanding spiritual experience has changed you forever. Things all seem to make more sense now—you have a larger purpose, and are part of a larger plan. Maybe you had a Black or Yellow feather experience that hit you with a fuckton of knowledge at once, blowing your mind with a glimpse into the depths of the Vurt world. Or you believe you heard the sleepy voice of Queen Hobart herself, urging you to keep climbing the rungs of consciousness. Maybe you had a vision of the Game Cat, Miss Sayer, John Barleycorn, Takshaka, or some other legendary figure of Vurt history. You've been told to start your transition out of the real world. To experience pain. Experience pleasure. Transform. Evolve. Fight. Love. Explore.

To those around you, your newfound evangelism seems like hippy-dippy nonsense. They likely tune you out after the first few words, but you keep on keepin' on. These days you dress oddly, opting for jewelry, face paint and tats that show your devotion to your quest for true feather knowledge; getting well feathered up on the dubside.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. They might actually understand some of what you're saying about the true nature of the univurt. You feel less judged by this person and that's refreshing.
- Pick one other PC. They knew you before you had your recent mind-expanding experience, and are concerned about your current mental health.
- Pick one other PC. With the right Vurt feather, they might be able to expand their mind as well, and join you in your quest for spreading the word. It's unlikely, but still worth a shot.
- Pick one other PC. Even though they say they don't believe the truth you're speaking, you feel that they

do, and are simply too frightened to speak up. You'll help them.

Additional Equipment: You begin with a deadly black Knowledge Feather of the GM's choosing.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You gain a +1 bonus to Speed defense rolls for one round.

Major Effect Suggestion: You gain a +2 bonus to Speed defense rolls for one round.

GM Intrusions: What if it's all in your head? What if the clarity you thought you had is simply madness? What if you're in a dream, not knowing the dream is real? Questions like these assail your consciousness and you're likely useless until you calm your mind down a bit.

TIER 1

Quick Block. If you use a light or medium weapon, the difficulty of your Speed defense actions is decreased by one step. Enabler.

Bit-o-Knowledge. One subject intrigues you more than others. You're trained in one area of knowledge of your choosing. Enabler.

TIER 2

Pumping It Up. You're in the best physical shape of your life. You gain +1 to Armor, 3 additional points to your Might Pool, and 3 additional points to your Speed Pool. Enabler.

TIER 3

More Knowledge. You've always been a quick study, now it's paying off. You're trained in two more areas of knowledge of your choosing. Enabler.

Nutjob. Your fanatical rants have swelled to epic proportions and once you get going, it gets ugly. You're trained in all forms of intimidation. Enabler.

TIER 4

Blind Defense (4 Intellect points). By closing your eyes and embracing the chaos, you make a move too random to be anticipated, and attempt to redirect a physical melee attack that would otherwise hit you. When you do, the misdirected attack hits another creature you choose within immediate range of both you and the attacking foe. This ability is a difficulty 2 Intellect task. Enabler.

TIER 5

Take One For the Team. If you use a light or medium weapon, you can block attacks made against an ally near you. Choose one creature within immediate range. You decrease the difficulty of that creature's Speed defense actions by one step. You can't use Quick Block while using Take One For the Team. Enabler.

TIER 6

Newfound Strength. When attempting a Might-related task, you can roll (and spend points) as if it were an Speed action instead. If you apply Effort to this task, you can spend points from your Speed Pool instead of your Might Pool (in which case you also use your Speed Edge instead of your Might Edge). Enabler.

Lotus Eater. You are no longer phased by the opinions of others and spend your time in an odd, active state of bliss. During rests, your positive demeanor puts friends and allies at ease so much that they gain +1 to their recovery rolls. Enabler.

LIQUIDATES

Whether you like it or not, you have a real talent for ending lives. Perhaps you're one of those who traces it back to Hashashin, Ninja, or Sicarii heritage. Everyone who gets close to you realizes this terrible truth sooner or later, and it affects the way they treat you. Even your closest friends, if you have any, are also scared of you. *You're* scared of you. You never feel safe, nothing seems

to quiet that gnawing feeling of dread. Only death will bring peace. That's part of the reason you've made murder your business. Sometimes you envy those you dispatch. Guilt is something you've been able to repress so that you can do your job.

Dark clothing is a must. Nothing that might trip you up or make noise, no jewelry or attention-grabbing items; nothing memorable. You feel safer when you're able to blend into the crowd. If you have a weapon, it's well hidden, and you always sit facing the exit.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. They're the child of one of your former trainers/mentors. You've known each other for many years.
- Pick one other PC. Only this person knows how many people you've killed, and you're starting to suspect that they might get you into trouble someday.
- Pick one other PC. You did a job together that resulted in their incarceration. You escaped.
- Pick one other PC. You know of a contract hit that has been placed on them by a local gang.

Minor Effect Suggestion: No one but the foe notices that you make the attack.

Major Effect Suggestion: You can take a second action this round.

GM Intrusions: Something has just reminded you of your first murder and for some reason, this time the memory is accompanied with intense feelings of guilt. You may need a round or two to collect yourself and return to your comfortable sociopathy.

TIER 1

Surprise Attack. If you attack from a hidden vantage, with surprise, or before an opponent has acted, the difficulty of your attack is reduced by one step. On a successful hit with this surprise attack, you inflict 2 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Flight Not Fight. If you use your action only to move, the difficulty of all Speed defense tasks is reduced by one step. Enabler.

TIER 2

Quick Death (2 Speed points). You know how to kill quickly. When you hit with a melee or ranged attack, you deal 4 additional points of damage. You can't make this attack in two consecutive rounds. Action.

TIER 3

Breathe Deep (3 Speed points). You steady your breathing and concentrate on your training. For one minute, the difficulty of your attacks and Speed defense rolls is decreased by one step. Enabler.

Trained Assassin. You are trained in stealth and disguise tasks. Enabler.

TIER 4

Better Surprise Attack. When you use Surprise Attack, the difficulty of your attack is reduced by two steps instead of one, and you deal 4 additional points of damage instead of 2. Enabler.

TIER 5

Slayer (5 Speed points). With a swift and sudden attack, you strike a foe in a vital spot. If the target is level 3 or lower, they're killed outright. Action.

TIER 6

Burst of Action (6 Speed points). You can take two separate actions this round.

Enabler.

FROM THE DIARY OF A DODO:

I was born with the curse of the Unbeknownst, which meant that I was never able to dream. Imagine, a life of unpopulated sleep, in the days when the whole world was addicted to Vurt feathers, the shared dream. The state of Unbeknowing is a genetic lack; six percent of the populace would always suffer from this inability. The ones who could dream called us the Dodos, the flightless birds.

-Pollen, Jeff Noon

LIVES LIFE AS A DODO

You are one of the flightless, a Dodo. Your life experience is different than 94% of the rest of the real world who can travel to the Vurt world via Vurt feathers. You've likely spent a lot of time figuring out how to fit into a society that pities you. There are even fanatics out there that feel that Dodos should be eradicated, that they are not as evolved and must be put down. This constant threat may be why you can defend yourself well and are hard to surprise. Dodos are known for going through life with their eyes wide open, shunned by most. Perhaps it's the isolationism that comes with the unbeknowing nature you possess.

Maybe others don't know that you're a Dodo, and you avoid situations that would reveal your identity. You're a great asset to any gang of featherheads who need babysitting—erm, guarding—while they veg out on the floors, trippin' balls on the latest feather, minds in the Vurt world. They say that the only place a Dodo feels at home is in Auz. That's sounding better to you every day, especially considering the lovely rainy-piss Manchester weather we're always having. Maybe it's time to hop on a boat once and for all and live with your own kind.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. They don't know that you're a Dodo and you'd like to keep it that way for as long as possible, for, you know, reasons.
- Pick one other PC. You feel like having them nearby

lessens the likelihood that an anti-Dodo fanatic might want to mess with you.
- Pick one other PC. They understand you better than most, and this is because you suspect (or know) that they have a member of their family that is a Dodo.
- Pick one other PC. You suspect that they know you're eventually headed to Australia to live with the other Dodos, but are keeping it a secret.

Minor Effect Suggestion: When fighting multiple foes, you knock one into another, putting both off balance. As a result, treat both foes as one level lower for one round.

Major Effect Suggestion: You regain 2 points to your Might Pool.

GM Intrusions: If you've been hiding your identity as a Dodo, here's where the cat is let out of the bag. If your flightless status is not a secret, then now is the time that the ever present depression kicks into overdrive and your sense of social isolation renders you temporarily useless.

TIER 1

Careful Investigation. Living in the real world all the time has made you observant. You can spend points from your Might Pool, Speed Pool, or Intellect Pool to apply levels of Effort to any Intellect-based task. Enabler.

Shifty Sherlock. Finding the clues is the first step in solving a mystery. You are trained in perception. Enabler.

TIER 2

Brave the Elements. You resist heat, cold, and similar extremes. You have a special +2 bonus to Armor against ambient damage or other damage that would normally ignore Armor. You've been left out in the cold before, you're used to it. Enabler.

TIER 3

Eyes Peeled. Without the distraction of feathers, your real world knowledge is impressive. You're trained in two areas of knowledge of your choosing (as long as they are not physical actions or combat related) or specialized in one area. Enabler.

Phenomenal Reflexes. You gain 5 additional points to your Speed Pool. You have more time during the day to exercise; while all the others are doing feathers, you've been training.

TIER 4

Draw Conclusion (3 Intellect points). After careful observation and investigation (questioning one or more NPCs on a topic, searching an area or a file, and so on) lasting a few minutes, you can learn a pertinent fact. This ability is a difficulty 3 Intellect task. Each additional time you use this ability, the task difficulty increases by one step. The difficulty returns to 3 after you rest for ten hours. Action.

TIER 5

Nothing but Defend. If you do nothing on your turn but defend, you're specialized in all defense tasks for that one round. Action.

TIER 6

Seize the Initiative (5 Intellect points). Within one minute of successfully using your Draw Conclusion ability, you can take one additional, immediate action, which you can take out of turn. After using this ability, you can't use it again until after your next ten-hour recovery roll. Enabler.

MAKES IT THEIR PROBLEM

The weak and helpless don't live long on the streets of Manchester. You've got a soft spot for these soft types and always seem to be sticking up for someone. You're usually the one who can't keep quiet when you see someone getting pushed around and just has to make it your problem.

You've been battered more than a few times for sticking your nose into other people's business, but each time you've earned a friend, a favor, or a memento for stepping in when nobody else would. You wear your scars and bruises like a badge of courage, and you've gained the reputation for being a scrapper.

Connection: Choose one of the following.
- Pick one other PC. This person is a personal project for you, as you feel they need all the protection they can get, even if they don't realize it.
- Pick one other PC. They saved your arse on more than one occasion and you feel obligated to return the favor.
- Pick one other PC. You've known this person most of your life and everyone (including the PC) assumes that you are good friends. They have no idea how much you despise the PC for constantly acting in a way that requires defending.
- Pick one other PC. You once fought over someone you both were romantically involved with, and it actually brought you closer.

Additional Equipment: You have a light armor jacket.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You can draw an attack without having to use an action at any point before the end of the next round.

Draw an attack , page 150

Major Effect Suggestion: You can take an extra action. You can use this action only to guard.

GM Intrusions: Maybe the person or group you're defending doesn't appreciate the way you are protecting them. Perhaps you find yourself trying to put yourself in harm's way for someone who doesn't deserve it or is making it even more difficult.

TIER 1

Courageous. You're trained in Intellect defense tasks and initiative tasks. Enabler.

Tough Nut. You know how to hide your fear as well as how to inspire it in others. You're trained in resisting intimidation and/or interrogation. Enabler.
Warding Shield. You have +1 to Armor while you are guarding. Enabler.

TIER 2
Devoted Defender (2 Intellect points). Choose one character you can see. That character becomes your ward. You are trained in all tasks involving finding, healing, interacting with, and protecting your ward. You can have only one ward at a time. Action to initiate.
Astute. You are trained in tasks to discern other's motives and to ascertain their general nature. You have a knack for sensing whether or not someone is truly innocent. Enabler.

TIER 3
True Guardian (2 Might points). When you stand guard as your action, you decrease the difficulty of all defense tasks by one step for characters you choose that are adjacent to you. This lasts until the end of your next turn. Enabler.

TIER 4
Combat Challenge. You are trained in intimidation tasks and in Intellect tasks made to draw an attack. Enabler.
Willing Sacrifice. When you take an attack for another character, the attack does not deal 1 additional point of damage. Enabler.

TIER 5
Drive Back (4 Might points). When you deal damage with an attack, you can drive the creature away from your companions. Until the end of the next round, all characters other than you have an asset on Speed defense rolls made to resist attacks from this creature. Enabler.

TIER 6
True Defender (6 Intellect points). This ability functions as your Devoted Defender ability, except the benefit applies to up to three characters you choose. If you choose just one character, you become specialized in the tasks described under the Devoted Defender ability. Action to initiate.

NEVER JERKS OUT

Jerking out, page 170

Jerking out is giving up. Giving in. You'll be dogdamned if you ever jerk out like a coward. Your pride is what makes you you. Those around you have no doubt that you'll fight until you drop and that your hot-headed bravado is very useful in certain situations. You've scared off many potential combatants; something that fills you with mixed emotions. On one hand, avoiding a fight means you survive unscathed. On the other hand, you miss out on the sweet feeling of knuckle-to-chin contact.

You know how to take a punch and seem to endure pain better than most. In a fight, you're often the last one standing. This is a big source of pride for you and likely a major factor in how you make your cash. Not just a punching bag with a high pain threshold, you're smart and experienced. People like you shine brightest in the latter stages of a fight when everyone else is huffing and puffing on their backs. And you make sure you look good while kicking ass. In the Vurt world, you have a strict no-jerk out policy that has pushed you to your limits on multiple occasions. But you're still here, aren't you?

Maybe you dress like a mod, sporting a tailored suit and skinny tie, delighting in the moral panic you seem to arouse in society with your bravado. You're saving up for a scooter if you don't already have one, and probably have quite a few friends who share your love for Vespas and Lambies. Or you might be a Rocker, sporting antique leather jackets and hair grease, working on your new Triumph motorcycle. Whatever your style you feel is your own, you own it. Subtlety is not your thing.

Your confidence often comes across as arrogance, but you just don't care. You know what you're talking about and know how to survive; either others follow your lead in battle or they're left behind. Remember your number one rule: No. Jerking. Out.

Connection: Choose one of the following.
- Pick one other PC. You feel that they look down on you, and you're going to show them that you ain't bovvered.
- Pick one other PC. They knew you long before you jumped on the "mod-wagon," and have pictures of you sporting some embarrassing styles. Maybe you used to wear trackies or have droid-locks, something you'd never be caught dead in these days.
- Pick one other PC. They share your love for motor scooters and jazz. You two will never run out of things to talk about.
- Pick one other PC. You find yourself drawn to this person because they remind you of someone from your past.

Additional Equipment: Your own private stash of pharma (choose 2 drug cyphers that block pain or heal Might). These are hidden nearby, but once you remove it, the hiding spot is discovered.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You restore 2 points to your Might Pool. Bold moves and risk taking keep you pumped up.

Major Effect Suggestion: The difficulty of your next action is decreased by two steps.

GM Intrusions: A past injury you sustained comes back with a vengeance. Back spasms, shoulder dislocation, even just a bum knee that causes you to

limp temporarily—all of these are fair game.

TIER 1

Beetle's Rule. You live life on hardcore mode and have two iron clad rules. 1: Never go into a Vurt feather alone. 2: Never jerk out, no matter what. One of your companions may still jerk out and cause you to drop the dream. Many say that it will lead you to an early grave, but you are dead set on this policy. In exchange, your fearlessness allows you to bravely fight creatures while in the Vurt world, doing +1 damage with every successful attack. Enabler.

Rapid Recovery. Your ten-minute recovery roll only requires a single action, so that your first two recovery rolls take one action, the third takes one hour, and the fourth takes ten hours. Enabler.

TIER 2

Ignore the Pain. You ignore the impaired condition of the damage track and treat the debilitated condition as impaired. Enabler.

TIER 3

Hidden Reserves. When you make a one-action recovery roll, you also gain 1 to your Might Edge and Speed Edge for ten minutes thereafter. Enabler.

Mighty. You gain 5 additional points to your Might Pool. Your inner drive is pushing you to new levels of physical fitness. Enabler.

TIER 4

Everlast. If you've been in combat for five full rounds, the difficulty of all tasks in the remainder of that combat is decreased by one step, and you deal 1 additional point of damage per attack. Enabler.

TIER 5

Using the Environment (4 Intellect points). You identify a feature or opportunity in the combat environment that can be exploited to your advantage in a fight. For the rest of the combat encounter, the difficulty of attack rolls and Speed defense rolls is decreased by one step. The effect is lost if the fight moves into another area. Action to initiate.

TIER 6

Not Dead Yet. When you would normally die, you instead fall unconscious for one round and then awaken. You immediately gain 1d6 + 6 points to restore your stat Pools and are treated as if debilitated (which for you is like being impaired, thanks to your Ignore the Pain ability) until you rest for ten hours. If you die again before you take your ten-hour recovery roll, you are truly dead. Enabler.

PLAYS TO WIN

You know how the system works and where its weak points are. You're a master exploiter, finder of loopholes

and greaser of palms. At some point, you made friends with someone who works for the City, or maybe a cop, someone in "the establishment." They showed you the ropes and clued you into how things really get done in a megacity. A person like you knows which names to drop in order to open doors. There is also a time to keep keep it close, and not draw too much attention to oneself. That's a lesson you're still struggling to learn.

You might dress slightly above your economic status, always out to impress others and show off who you know. Your hygiene is impeccable, each hair/whisker/wire/wisp/tentacle trimmed to perfection.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. You have taken many feathers together over the years and trust each other implicitly.
- Pick one other PC. They used to work for the City or maybe they were a cop. This inside knowledge is something you want to learn about.
- Pick one other PC. They owe you a favor that you doubt they'll ever repay. You make sure they don't forget it.
- Pick one other PC. You both are huge Janus Fontaine fans, and know the lyrics to every song.

Additional Equipment: An A-Z map (cypher) of any

district you choose, A burner PDF (Personal Data Feather) and several changes of high-end clothes..

Mech suit , page 339

Minor Effect Suggestion: The target can't believe what you just said and is dazed and unable to take actions for a round as it tries to reconcile your statement with reality.

Major Effect Suggestion: You spot a weakness that gives you a +1 to all attack rolls next round.

GM Intrusions: Your control-freak nature snaps you out of the moment entirely, diverting your focus for just long enough to cause you some real trouble. Maybe it's something you notice that you compulsively obsess about; perhaps it's just the rage that comes with feeling stifled and out of control. You'll struggle to repress the overwhelming fidgety feeling.

TIER 1

Bureaucracy 101. You're trained in tasks related to persuasion, deception, and detecting the falsehoods of others. Enabler.

Legal Beagle. You're trained in the law of the land. If you don't know the answer to a question of law, you know where and how to research it . Enabler.

TIER 2

Impersonation. You can subtly change your features and alter your voice dramatically. This is an asset for any attempts at disguising your identity. Enabler.

Sense Attitudes: You are trained in sensing lies and whether a person is likely does) believe your lies.

An uplink port enables the character to connect to any computer system and is required for the use of a neural link system.

TIER 3

Able Assistance. When you help someone with a task related to research or codified knowledge, you always reduce the difficulty of the task by one step regardless of your own skill at that task. Enabler.

Cracked Case. You gain +1 to your Intellect Edge. You feel more confident in applying effort to tasks that use your brain.

TIER 4

Noid. Your sharp senses have saved your arse more than once before. You are trained in all defense tasks.

TIER 5

Skillful. You are trained in two of the following skills: persuasion, deception, intimidation, research, knowledge in one area, or seeing through deception. If you choose a skill in which you're already trained, you become specialized in that skill instead. Enabler.

TIER 6

A Brilliant Mind. You add 5 points to your Intellect Pool.

Lazy Protege. You're showing someone the ropes, just as your mentor did for you. You gain a level 4 follower who is lazy but trustworthy. Enabler.

PLUGS IN

From the most veteran elite Nu-XCab driver all the way down to the weekend DIY mech suit enthusiast, the real world is full of motorheads who live for their ride. Focused and dedicated, they get to know their machines intimately, racing top speed towards that death's edge thrill that plugging in brings. It really is the only way to get around. Be the vehicle. Feel the road—or the sky.

You have a physical port/plug of some kind on your body. This uplink port enables you to connect to any computer system and facilitates the use of a neural link system. You might keep it hidden from others under your form-fitting clothing.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. They remind you of a person from your past that stirs up overly competitive feelings and the illogical sense of proving your piloting skills to them.
- Pick one other PC. You both share a love for neural-link racing and/or mech suit fighting.
- Pick one other PC. They remind you of a childhood friend who died young. You feel protective of them.
- Pick one other PC. Both of you lost loved ones and family members in the infamous Riot of Baguley during the Pollen Outbreak.

Additional Equipment: Fire-retardant coveralls and a physical uplink port for neural link systems.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You add +2 to Armor.

Major Effect Suggestion: You can take an extra action. You can use this action only to guard.

GM Intrusions: Gripping the wheel on the road and gripping the spanner in the shop have caused some long term damage to the joints in your hand. Shooting pains immediately turn your fingers into useless digits, and if you're holding something, you'll likely drop it. It surprises you every time it happens, but thankfully it only lasts a short amount of time.

TIER 1

Pit Crew. +2 Intellect, +2 Speed.

Speed Racer. You are trained in all driving tasks.

Adventuresome Link. You're trained in piloting any vehicle (or mech suit) that uses a neural link system, which you access using the physical port/plug on your body. If you are not part Robo, then this neural link port was surgically implanted and is technically cybernetic.

TIER 2

Believe it, Ripley (3 Speed points). When performing a driving task in a vehicle (or mech suit) with a Neural Interface, you may perform an additional non-driving action, such as shooting, in the same turn. Yes, please. Action.

TIER 3

Pull Up, Goose! Within reason, you can eject (relatively) safely from a moving vehicle or mech suit without using an action. You can use this ability on anyone's turn. Enabler.

White Knuckles. Gripping the wheel, guiding the mech suit, pumping the brakes—it's a workout! You gain 3 additional points to your Might Pool. Enabler.

TIER 4

Shake-n-Bake (1 Intellect point). You seem to be able to predict an opponent's movements while inside any vehicle (or mech suit) with a neural link. GM will tell you mechanical intentions of opponent's vehicles or machinery before the start of your turn. Action.

Crankshaft Yanker. You're skilled in piloting any vehicle with a neural link system. You're riding free like a psychomaniac. Enabler.

TIER 5

Overrider. You can override basic functions of other vehicles or mech suits. Take one action to assume control of an enemy vehicle (up to 3 turns). Level 2 intellect roll to continue control each round. Action.

TIER 6

Max Overdriver (3 Speed points). Blocking out everything else, your mind becomes one with your vehicle or mech suit, allowing for a -1 difficulty for any task while piloting. And you can conduct two actions in a round while in this state of mind. You have become your vehicle. Your mind is your engine is your mind. Action.

RUNS THE GINNELS

This is Manchester, THIS. IS. SINGLAND! Fuck the lot of ya daft wankers! Tell them all what's what. Best protect your neck, tuck your chains and put your Blurbs on hush mode. You're about to get outsider blood on your trackies.

Thief. Burglar. Pickpocket. Scally. You have been called a lot of negative things, and you may very well deserve every bit of grief you've received. You know what you've done, and you have your regrets like everyone else. You weren't raised with much to call your own, and now you're intent on making sure you have enough hidden away in your little hidey-hole. You likely know a specific district or two of Manchester very well, and find navigating the streets to be easy-peasy. You got mates to back you up, in case anyone thinks of giving you shite for saying something like *easy peasy*.

Here in Manchester, we call alleyways "ginnels" and you run those well. If you're familiar with a place, you also likely know what's going on. Who does what where? You know. How does a ginnel rat like you make money? Much like an angler fish or a trapdoor spider. Draw them in quickly. Stick to the shadows. Strike. Get paid.

Tourists buzz around Old Man all day, right? There are some outsider people who end up in the wrong place at the wrong time. Your place. So, you take what's rightfully yours, mate. They deserve a beating—this is your turf, innit? This is your district, your borough, your city, innit?

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. As youths in Chorlton, you used to run around together in the same gang.
- Pick one other PC. You both went to primary school together in Whalley Range, and know many of the same people.
- Pick one other PC. Growing up together in Rusholme, you shared a lot of experiences, including taking your first Vurt feather together.
- Pick one other PC. They also come from Crumpsall, and they once dated one of your siblings.

Additional Equipment: You start with a simple lockpick kit, and an A-Z map (cypher) of any district you choose. You also have a hidey-hole somewhere in that district that's a two-foot square safe spot to stash whatever you need to stash.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You can immediately attempt to hide after this action.

Major Effect Suggestion: You can immediately take a second action during this turn.

GM Intrusions: Your memory, which is often spotty at best, has just unearthed some repressed memories of a terrible moment you'd almost forgotten. As the waves of shame hit you, everything you do seems to be at half speed, your brain reeling from emotional overload.

TIER 1

Dirty Thief. You are trained in stealth, pickpocketing, and lockpicking tasks. You should be ashamed of yourself. Enabler.

TIER 2

Underworld Contacts. You know many people in a variety of communities who engage in illegal activities. These people are not necessarily your friends and might not be trustworthy, but they recognize you as a peer. You and the GM should work out the details of two new underworld contacts you've just made. Enabler.

TIER 3

Pull a Fast One (3 Intellect points). When you're running a con, picking a pocket, fooling or tricking a dupe, sneaking something by a guard, and so on, you treat the task as if it were one level lower. Have you no shame? Enabler.

TIER 4

Catburglar. You are trained in climbing, escaping from bonds, slipping through narrow places, and other contortionist moves. Of course you are. Probably for perfectly innocent reasons, right? Enabler.

TIER 5

Dirty Fighter (2 Speed points). You distract, blind, annoy, hamper, or otherwise interfere with a foe, hindering his attack and defense rolls for one minute. As a result, the difficulty of your defense rolls and attack rolls against the foe is reduced by one step. You have no honor. Action.

TIER 6

Gutter Rat (4 Intellect points). While in a city, you find or create a significant shortcut, secret entrance, or emergency escape route where it looked like none existed. You dirty rat. You and the GM should work out the details. Action.

SCRAPS LIKE A SCALLY

People that enter combat with a code of ethics are the most vulnerable. You grew up in an area of Manchester where the teenage survival rate was under fifty percent. You have more friends planted in the ground than on the street, and if you still have family members, it's likely you don't get along well. You like your Napalm Filter cigarettes, your cheap piss beer, and you and your mates have no qualms about robbing anyone daft enough to enter your territory.

Your attitude is what defines you, and you proudly sport your trackies, trainers and cap. You also know your home district like the back of your hand, and have no trouble navigating from location to location. Once out of your home turf, you're likely to draw the wrong kind of attention.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. The two of you are still connected with a small local gang that robs punters in broad daylight.
- Pick one other PC. They also come from Rochdale, and grew up too quickly in a borough well known for its crime and poverty.
- Pick two other PCs. The three of you worked as a group on a mission long ago, but you had a falling out.
- Pick one other PC. This character seems to anticipate your next move before you even begin it. When they collaborate with you on the same task or fight the same foe, you gain +1 to any die rolls.

Additional Equipment: You have a light weapon that is easily hidden.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You manage to make your foe trip and fall prone.

Major Effect Suggestion: You tangle something around your foe's legs, and he not only falls down but also loses his next turn.

GM Intrusions: If you are out of your comfort zone (namely your home district), you're prone to moments of uncertainty that affect you on a profound level. You hate not knowing where everything is located, and if you have to stop for a moment or two to shake the feeling of terror, you do. Sometimes, however, this happens at the most inopportune times, like mid-sentence or even mid-combat.

TIER 1

Taking Advantage. When your foe is weakened, dazed, stunned, moved down the damage track, or disadvantaged in some other way, the difficulty of your attacks against that foe is decreased by one step beyond any other modifications due to the disadvantage. Enabler.

Dirty Liar. You are trained in all forms of deception. You untrustworthy bastard. Enabler.

TIER 2

Eye Gouge (2 Speed points). You go for your opponent's eyes. The difficulty of the attack is increased by one step, but if you hit, the creature has trouble seeing for the next hour. During this time, the difficulty of the creature's tasks that rely on sight (which is most tasks) is increased by one step. Fucking cheap shot, bruv. Action.

TIER 3

Spot Weakness. If a creature that you can see has a special weakness, such as a vulnerability to fire, a negative modification to perception, or so on, you know what it is. (Ask and the GM will tell you.) Enabler.

Et tu, Brute?. Any time you convince a foe that you are not a threat and then suddenly attack it (without provocation), the attack deals 4 additional points of damage. You slimy shite! Enabler.

TIER 4

Mind Games (3 Intellect points). You use lies and trickery against a foe that can understand you. If successful, the foe is stunned for one round and cannot act, and it is dazed in the following round, during which time the difficulty of its tasks is increased by one step.

Tooth and Nail. If, during a melee combat, you are willing to literally bite and claw at a foe in addition to attacking with your normal weapon, you inflict 1 additional point of damage each time you strike with your standard attack. Some creatures might not be subject to this, and attempting to bite some creatures might be dangerous. Enabler.

TIER 5

Using the Environment (4 Intellect points). You find some way to use the environment to your advantage in a fight. For the next ten minutes, the difficulty of attack rolls and Speed defense rolls is decreased by one step. The name of the game is survival. Action to initiate.

TIER 6

Call in Favor (4 Intellect points). A fellow scally from your home turf shows up within 10 minutes, carrying a cricket bat and knife. This ability is a difficulty 3 Intellect task. Each additional time you use this ability, the difficulty increases by one step. The difficulty returns to 3 after you rest for ten hours. Action.

SHOWS THEM ALL

You're even stronger than you look, and take great pride in your strength. You have extensive combat training and are skilled at moving around with armor. Free time is spent working out, in a constant state of bulking up. Performance-enhancing drugs are almost certainly part of the equation, and you simply don't give a shit what the negative long-term effects are.

You're also prone to taking dares and risky bets when it comes to proving your strength. It's very important to you that others know just how powerful you are. Depending on the situation, all your posturing might lead to trouble, but you're prepared. You probably dress like a badass, wearing layers of dark stylish clothing to better hide your armor. Maybe your black Rocker jacket has the collar flipped up, or your face is covered with scars. Whatever the case may be, you have a certain "do not approach" quality that others find unnerving.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. You trained for a short while with this person, and want to prove that you've continued to excel.
- Pick one other PC. This is someone who has seen you cry; showing weakness like that has made you even more determined to prove your strength to them.
- Pick one other PC. They owe you a small amount of money and you're going to stick around until they pay you off or you're rich enough not to care any more.
- Pick one other PC. You met them on the dance floor of the Slithy Tove, back when you used to go out and do fun things. You want to prove to them that you're still fun.

Additional Equipment: You have light or medium armor of your choice.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You add +2 to Armor.

Major Effect Suggestion: You regain 2 points to your Might Pool.

GM Intrusions: A bizarre sense of competition takes over and you feel the uncontrollable urge to prove your superiority in some physical way. Even though you know you're likely to hurt yourself, you take the chance.

TIER 1

Practiced in Armor. You can wear armor for long periods of time without tiring and can compensate for slowed reactions from wearing armor. You can wear any kind of armor. You reduce the Speed cost for wearing armor by 1. You start the game with a type of light or medium armor of your choice. Enabler.

TIER 2

Resist the Elements. You resist heat, cold, and similar extremes. You have a special +2 bonus to Armor against ambient damage or other damage that would normally ignore Armor.

TIER 3

Unmovable (3 Might points). You avoid being knocked down, pushed back, or moved against your will as long as you are upright and able to take actions. Enabler.

Mighty. You gain 5 additional points to your Might Pool. Enabler.

TIER 4

Living Wall (3 Might points). You specify a confined area—such as an open doorway, a hallway, or a space between two trees—where you stand. For the next ten minutes, if anyone attempts to enter or pass through that area and you don't wish it, you make an automatic attack against them. If you hit, not only do you inflict damage, but they must also stop their movement. Enabler.

TIER 5

Nothing but Defend. If you do nothing on your turn but defend, you are specialized in all defense tasks for that one round. Action.

Tough and Fast. You gain 6 additional points to your Might Pool and 6 additional points to your Speed Pool. Enabler.

TIER 6

And-One (4 Speed points). In a round after successfully striking a foe with a melee weapon, you can opt to automatically deal standard damage to the foe with that same weapon without any modifiers (4 points for a light weapon, 8 points for a medium weapon, or 12 points for a heavy weapon). Action.

TAKES THE REINS

You have a natural ability to inspire and lead others. In the past, you've found yourself in trouble after following others; now you're determined to command the situation and stay out of harm's way. You look up to those who use their charisma and intelligence to make bold decisions.

You do not like to be alone for any period of time, and seek out the company of others, mostly those who you feel would listen to you and follow your lead. When you are by yourself, you become anxious and lost. Around other people, you feel that you shine.

Your style is far from subtle and you likely wear bright colors and talk loudly. Your confidence is evident even before you open your mouth. You swagger into rooms and inspire confidence with your forceful personality.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. They don't respect your alpha status and need to be reminded who's boss.
- Pick one other PC. They're fans of a rival Vurtball team and the two of you often get into heated arguments.
- Pick one other PC. You see this person as a protégé of sorts, and want to teach them what you know.
- Pick one other PC. They know you better than anyone else. You feel comfortable talking to them about pretty much anything.

Minor Effect Suggestion: The next time you attempt to command, captivate, or otherwise influence the same enemy, the difficulty of the task is decreased by one step.

Major Effect Suggestion: The foe is influenced, captivated, or otherwise affected by your ability for twice as long as normal.

GM Intrusions: You're addicted to something. Hell, we all are. But your addiction, even if it was in the past, rears its ugly head at the worst possible moment. Flashbacks, cold sweats, maybe just remembering the way you once were under the influence is enough to stop you in your tracks for a bit. As a natural leader, it's likely that you don't want to show this weakness in front of others.

TIER 1

Natural Charisma. You're trained in all social interactions, whether they involve charm, learning a person's secrets, or intimidating others. Enabler.

Good Advice (1 Intellect point). You have a clear mind for determining the best way to proceed. When you give another character a suggestion involving his next action, the character is trained in that action for one round. Action.

TIER 2

Follower. You gain a level 2 NPC follower who is completely devoted to you. You and the GM must work out the details of the follower. You'll probably make rolls for your follower when he takes actions. A follower in combat usually doesn't make separate attacks, but helps you with yours. On your action, if the follower is next to you, he serves as an asset for one attack you make on your turn. If the follower dies, you gain a new one after at least two weeks and proper recruitment. Enabler.

TIER 3

Command (3 Intellect points). Through sheer force of will and charisma, you issue a simple command to a single living creature, which attempts to carry out your command as its next action. The creature must be within short range and be able to understand you. The command can't inflict direct harm on the creature or its allies, so "Commit suicide" won't work, but "Flee" might. In addition, the command can require the creature to take only one action, so "Unlock the door" might work, but "Unlock the door and run through it" won't. Action.

Capable Follower. Your first follower increases to level 3. Enabler.

TIER 4

Captivate or Inspire. You can use this ability in one of two ways. Either your words keep the attention of all NPCs that hear them for as long as you speak, or your words inspire all NPCs (of your choosing) that hear them to function as if they were one level higher for the next hour. Action.

Very Capable Follower. Your first follower increases to level 4. Enabler.

TIER 5

Band of Followers. You gain six level 2 NPC followers who are completely devoted to you. (They are in addition to the follower you gained at second tier.) You and the GM must work out the details of these followers. If a follower dies, you gain a new one after at least two weeks and proper recruitment. Enabler.

Ford Comet, page 122

TIER 6

Mind of a Leader (6 Intellect points). When you develop a plan that involves your followers, you can ask the GM one very general question about what is likely to happen if you carry out the plan, and you will get a simple, brief answer. Action.

Capable Followers. Your first follower increases to level 5. Each of your level 2 followers increases to level 3. Enabler.

TOPS GEARS

You love automobiles with a passion. Your earliest memories revolve around engines and motor oil. Your knowledge in this area is impressive, and should allow you to find numerous jobs and make enough quid to pay your rent each month. There are millions of cars on Manchester's clogged roads, and there's always something in need of repair, or someone in need of a driver. You're well known for your obsession with cars, lorries, and motorcycles. Being a genius behind the wheel doesn't necessarily mean you always know where you're going, but if you're given a point A and a point B, chances are you'll do it quicker and safer than anyone else on the road. There's also illegal street racing when you want to make some cash.

The style for most gearheads like yourself hasn't changed much in the last 30 years: Leather jackets, white lace racing gloves, and Vaz. Lots and lots of Vaz—in your hair, on your hands, everywhere. Maybe you're one of those Mancs who hangs fuzzy dice from the rear-view and chain-smokes their Napalm Filter cigarettes. There's probably tons of dirt and grease under your fingernails (if you have fingernails) and you might smell of petrol. You're riding free like a psychomaniac. You got a vehicular legacy to uphold, bruv.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. You went on a major drug bender with them and both of you are lucky to have survived.
- Pick one other PC. They don't know much of anything about engines or vehicles, and you want them to learn.
- Pick one other PC. The two of you bet on Robodog races or Vurtball matches, and they owe you quite a bit of money at this point.
- Pick one other PC. Their parent(s) were friends with your parent(s) and grew up together in the same neighborhood. In a way, you and this PC act like siblings, including constantly bickering.

Additional Equipment: You have access to a stolen vehicle (Ford Comet). Remember that with so many eyes in the sky, a stolen vehicle is a dangerous ride. Avoid the cops!

Minor Effect Suggestion: You can drive an additional 50 ft (15m) this round.

Major Effect Suggestion: You can take an immediate extra action related to driving a vehicle.

GM Intrusions: Since you spend so much time in a messy shop working on vehicles, you're prone to losing items. Maybe what you thought was in your pocket is no longer in your pocket. Don't you just hate it when that happens?

TIER 1

Driver. You are trained in all tasks related to driving a car, truck, or motorcycle, including mechanical repair tasks. Enabler.

Driving on the Edge. You can take a shot with light or medium ranged weapon and attempt driving tasks as a single action, Enabler.

TIER 2

Access Onboard (3 Intellect points). You attempt to take control of the onboard computer and can access all prior data (where the vehicle has been) as well as optimizing the navigation system, adding +1 to all navigation rolls. Action.

Stare Them Down. The mental strength you've built up racing over the years is significant. You're trained in Intellect defense tasks.

TIER 3

Greasy Monkey You are specialized in all tasks related to driving a car, truck or motorcycle, including mechanical repair tasks.

TIER 4

Sharp Eyed. Years of driving have sharpened your sense of direction. You're trained in all tasks involving perception and navigation. Enabler.

Road Reflexes. You add 3 points to your Speed Pool. Enabler.

TIER 5

Ram-Man. When you use a vehicle as a weapon, you inflict 5 additional points of damage. Enabler.

TIER 6

Trick Driver. When driving car, lorry, or motorcycle, your Might Edge, Speed Edge and Intellect Edge increase by 1. When you make a recovery roll while driving the same, you recover an additional 5 points. When you attempt a driving task or an extreme trick—such as jumping a ravine or other vehicle, spinning in the air,

landing safely on another vehicle, and so on—the difficulty of the task is reduced by one step. Enabler.

TRACKS MARKS

Perhaps you are a tracker, a bounty hunter, a skiptracer. There are a lot of people who need to find other people. You don't ask questions, you just do your damn job, pay your rent, and drown your sorrows in your drug of choice. Truth be told, these days you prefer the jobs that only involve surveillance and don't end up in physical altercations. There are times when you get the dead-or-alive request, forcing you to make the choice. Those are the worst. You've turned down those in the past—it really has to be worth it.

There is simply no reason to dress like everyone else. You don't really blend into the crowd unless it's necessary. You feel one can do your job, express your sense of style, and not look like a git. Your favorite article of clothing is probably your jacket, which represents a symbol of your individuality, and your belief in personal freedom. You're truly wild at heart.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. You both are huge Manchester City Vurtball fans, and have been to countless matches together over the years.
- Pick one other PC. You both spent time working on the same canal boat on the River Irwell, and consider it to be the best learning experience of your lives.
- Pick one other PC. Back in your bounty hunter days (which may or may not be over), you were hired to track down someone close to them.
- Pick one other PC. You've noticed that it's almost impossible to track them, but you're determined to figure out a way.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You can attempt an intimidating task to cause your foe to immediately surrender.

Major Effect Suggestion: Your foe pauses, terrified by your prowess, and takes no action on his turn.

GM Intrusions: Your stress-related digestive problems that have plagued you most of your adult life flare up. From acid reflux to sudden cramps, you've never felt it quite this bad, and this couldn't happen at a worse time.

TIER 1

Tracker. You're trained in following and identifying tracks. Enabler.

Stalker. You're trained in all types of movement tasks (including climbing, swimming, jumping, and balancing). Enabler.

TIER 2

Used to Armor. When wearing light, medium or heavy armor, you gain +1 to Armor. You've had to defend yourself quite a bit by now. If you're lucky, you have your hate-slogans embroidered into your jacket or vest. Enabler.

Sprint and Grab (2 Speed points). You can run a short distance and make a melee attack to grab a foe of your size or smaller. A successful attack means you grab the foe and bring them to a halt if they were moving (this can be treated as a tackle, if appropriate). Action.

TIER 3

Quarry (2 Intellect points). Choose a quarry (a single individual creature that you can see). You are trained in all tasks involving following, understanding, interacting with, or fighting that creature. You can have only one quarry at a time. Action to initiate.

TIER 4

Surprise Attack. If you attack from a hidden vantage, with surprise, or before your opponent has acted, the difficulty of your attack is decreased by one step. On a successful hit, you inflict 2 additional points of damage. Enabler.

TIER 5

Hunter's Drive (5 Intellect points). Through force of will, when you wish it, you grant yourself greater prowess in the hunt for ten minutes. During this time, the difficulty of all tasks involving your quarry, including attacks, is decreased by one step. Your quarry is the creature you selected with your third-tier ability. Enabler.

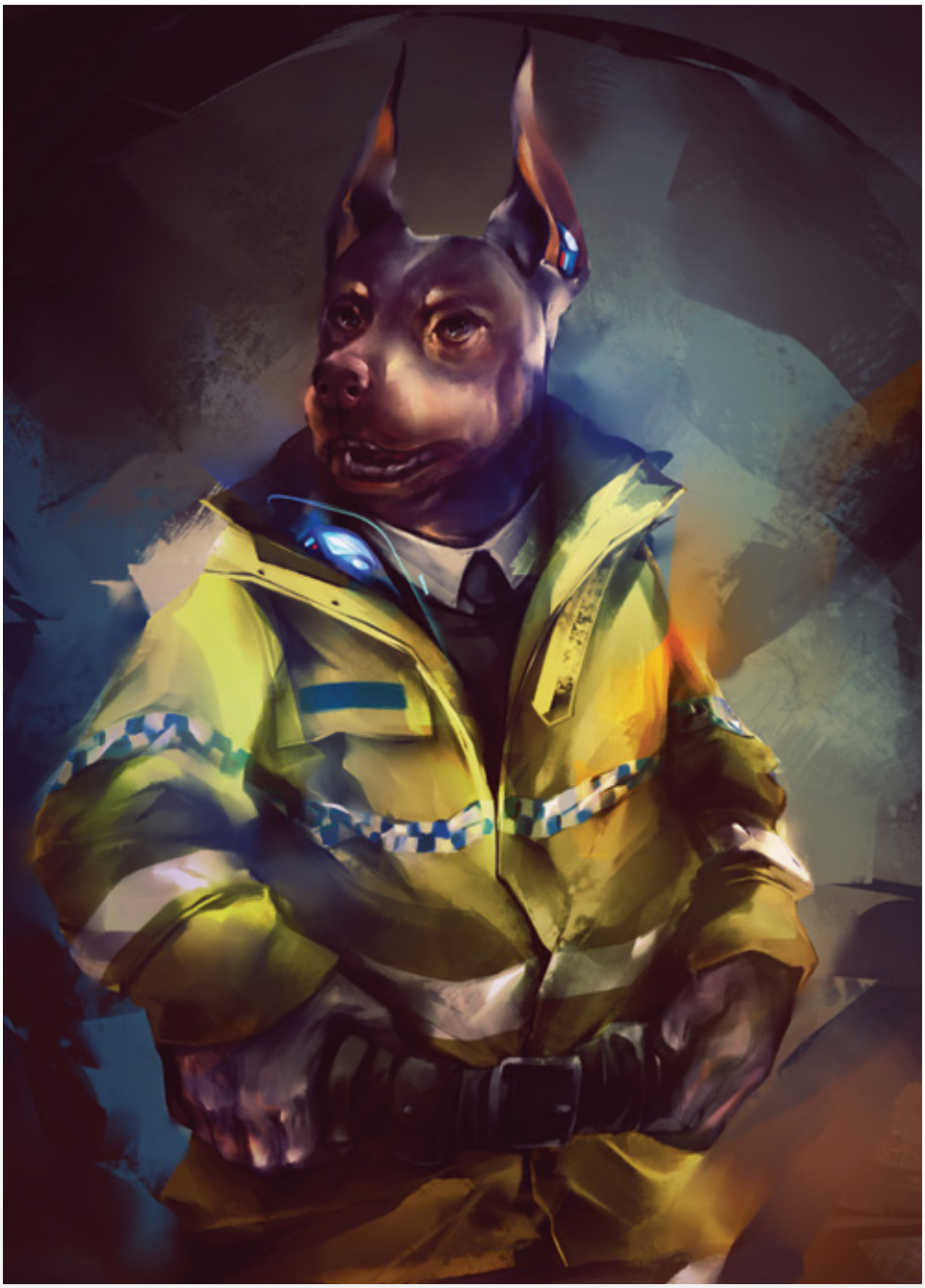
TIER 6

Multiple Quarry (6 Intellect points). This ability functions like the third-tier Quarry ability except that you can select up to three creatures as quarry. You must be able to see all three creatures when you initiate this ability. Your Hunter's Drive ability applies to all three creatures. Action to initiate.

WORKS FOR THE CITY

Perhaps you're a cop, or work as an investigator in the Manchester Civil Serpent Dept. Now you work for the largest megacity on the planet. You've been trained in the use of firearms and crowd-control practices, and you have a license to carry—a very rare privilege. As long as you're on duty, you're in total control. Then there are those of you who work as City Council or Town Council members, you overprivileged gits. You have all the same access to firearms and permits that the cops have, but you have the added bonus of access to official modes of transportation within Manchester City limits. You lucky bastards most often use helicopters or other short distance air-travel vehicles. One way or another, working for the City gives you plenty of advantages.

The City of Manchester employs hundreds of thousands of people, with low turnover. However, when the weekend rolls around, you all know how to really pack those parties in, going to clubs and events, staying



up for days at a time. If you have some "off the books" business to conduct, you know how to make that happen quietly.

You're very proud of your position, and wear your uniform or flash your credentials as much as possible. You like the respect you get for being official.

Connection: Choose one of the following connections.

- Pick one other PC. They worked for the City of Manchester as well, and share your frustration at needless bureaucracy.
- Pick one other PC. When working at the City, you have seen their personnel files and know much of their past.
- Pick one other PC. You both grew up in West Didsbury together, and you know that their older sibling now works with the civil *serpents*.
- Pick one other PC. You have served them official papers in the past, and you know they likely hate you for it.

Additional Equipment: A fully loaded light or medium firearm.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You learn something completely unexpected but useful.

Major Effect Suggestion: You can immediately take a second action during this turn.

GM Intrusions: Working for the City means that you know a lot of people and a lot of people know you. This isn't always a good thing. You were just spotted doing something that is likely to harm your reputation or cause problems with the job.

TIER 1

Firearmed. You inflict 1 additional point of damage with guns. Enabler.

Practiced With Guns: You are practiced with using guns and suffer no penalty when using one. Enabler.

Transportation Vouchers: Once per day you may hire a black cab ride and the city of Manchester foots the bill. Enabler.

TIER 2

Well Connected. You know people who get things done—respected people in positions of authority, small business owners, gang members and criminals. These people are not necessarily your friends and might not be trustworthy, but a number of them owe you a favors. You and the GM should work out the details of your contacts. Enabler.

TIER 3

Officious. When posing as an official of some kind, reduce the difficulty of the deception task by one step. For example, if you attempt to convince the doorman that you are a health inspector, here to inspect the pub kitchen, the task will be less difficult. Enabler.

TIER 4

Promotion (4 Intellect points). Thanks to an increase in job grade, you are able to negotiate aerial transportation for your group, once per day. It's not easy to arrange, but the VTOL will arrive within 10 minutes to pick you up. Enabler.

Pandemion VTOL, page 128

TIER 5

Work the Friendship (4 Intellect points). You know just what to say to draw a little extra effort from an ally. This grants one creature you choose within short range an additional, immediate action, which it can take out of turn. The creature uses the action you give it however it wishes. Action.

TIER 6

Call in a Favor (4 Intellect points). A guard, doctor, technician, or hired thug in the employ of or allied with an enemy is secretly your ally or owes you a favor. When you call in the favor, the target does what he can to help you out of a specific fix (unties you, slips you a knife, leaves a cell door unlocked) in a way that minimizes his risk of revealing his divided loyalties to his employer or other allies. This ability is a difficulty 3 Intellect task. Each additional time you use this ability, the difficulty increases by one step. The difficulty returns to 3 after you rest for ten hours. Action.

WORKS THE ROOM

Larger than life, you live in the moment. You are an entertainer: a DJ, a musician, a revolutionary poet, a master bullshit artist, or something similar. You perform for the benefit of others. Naturally charismatic and talented, you have also studied to master your art. You know all the old lyrics, progressions, stories and you're skilled at creating new ones, too. You are pure charisma.

There is a part of you they don't see. A part of you that's too precious to share with most people, a vulnerability. Perhaps even you don't know how to put this into words, but it feels like your ability to charismatically work the room leaves you feeling empty, removed. Feeling alone in a crowd is just something you've learned to accept.

You probably dress with flair, sporting limited-edition fashions and footwear. When you wear something unusual, people think it works on you.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

- Pick one other PC. This character is your worst critic. Your abilities to help or inspire others—they ain't buyin' it.
- Pick one other PC. They seem to really enjoy your attempts to entertain, and this brings out the performer in you. It's up to that character whether the appreciation is real or if they're just being polite.
- Pick one other PC. They're so inspired and put at ease by your work that when you use Levity, they gain +2 to their recovery roll (instead of +1).
- Pick one other PC. This person knows the secret to one of your favorite forms of entertainment. You worry constantly that they will steal or reveal it.

Additional Equipment: You start with an instrument or tool with which to perform. For example, a DJ would start with a Limbic Splitter.

DJ machines: Limbic Splitter, page 106

Minor Effect Suggestion: You captivate the target, who remains captivated as long as you focus all your attention on keeping them that way.

Major Effect Suggestion: The target is forever favorably disposed

> Some bad things you've got to do, just to speed up life, in the face of death.
>
> -Vurt, Jeff Noon

toward you.

GM Intrusions: *(*cue beatboxing) The effect you expect to affect your target just won't get to the step they'd consider a threat ♪ Your charisma's so dismal your words fail to sizzle ♪ The wordplay you flaunted wasn't wanted by a longshot ♪*

TIER 1
Levity. Through wit, charm, humor, and grace, you're trained in all social interactions other than those involving coercion or intimidation. During rests, you put friends and comrades so much at ease that they gain +1 to their recovery rolls. Enabler.

TIER 2
Inspiration. Through stories, songs, art, or other forms of entertainment, you inspire your friends. After spending 24 hours with you, once per day each of your friends can decrease the difficulty of a task by one step. This benefit is ongoing while you remain in the friend's company. It ends if you leave, but it resumes if you return to the friend's company for longer than that. You must spend another 24 hours together to reactivate the benefit. Enabler.

TIER 3
Knowledge. Your tracks and tales contain truth. You are trained in two areas of knowledge of your choosing. Enabler.

TIER 4
Calm (3 Intellect points.) Through jokes, song, or other art you prevent a living foe from attacking anyone or anything for one round. Action.

TIER 5
Able Assistance. When you help someone with a task, you always reduce the difficulty of the task by one step regardless of your own skill at that task. Enabler.

TIER 6
Master Entertainer. Your Inspiration ability works more effectively, allowing your friends to decrease the difficulty of a task by two steps rather than one step. Enabler.

JOBS

Keep in mind that your PC will need a place to rest their head, food to eat, and some way to pay for it. For example, if you choose "Runs the Ginnels" as your character focus, you're likely employed as a drug dealer, street hustler or hired muscle. If you choose "Is Idolized," you might decide that you're an overpaid Vurt star who acts in a popular feather series. The details of your next paycheck (if there is one) should be worked out with the GM to ensure game balance. Keep in mind that more money doesn't always mean an easier life. The more you're walking around with, the more likely you are to draw the wrong kind of attention.

The following are just a few suggestions for how a player might get their cash in Manchester:

Bounty hunter, fanatic, manipulator, city politician, barrister (lawyer), admin-for-hire (blurb controller), dream-weaver (feather crafter), freelance pharmacist, Vurt conquestor, collector, Vurt cartographer, fixer, face, guru, artist, DJ, journalist, guide, diplomat, Vurt star, enforcer, mercenary, security officer, vigilante, cop, freelance programmer (hacker), private investigator, MPD detective, cab driver, athlete, specialist, spy, interrogator/telepath, occultist, drifter, hermit, inventor, sage, driver, pilot, mechanic, construction mech suit operator), factory worker, cashier, teacher.

The standard employment situation in Manchester is different than most other places in the real world. Here, if you want a low paying job, you can apply through the City Council Employment Division and you'll likely be behind a desk or in a cubicle within 24 hours. There are only a handful of things that might get in the way; perhaps you have an arrest record, or happen to be a pure Vurt, pure Shadow or U-Type shadowman.

PART 2

EQUIPPING YOUR CHARACTER

CHAPTER 8: EQUIPMENT 98

CHAPTER 9: BLURBFLIES 110

CHAPTER 10: VEHICLES 118

CHAPTER 8

EQUIPMENT

MONEY

Spending money to purchase equipment or supplies is something that is likely to happen in most adventures. While much of the loot that characters will be collecting will be cyphers, crafting components, and other oddities, money is a part of the world too.

For simplicity's sake, most things that are for sale are divided into price categories, each with a standard cost: Inexpensive, Moderately Priced, Expensive, Very Expensive and Exorbitant. For the most part, players will be concerned with inexpensive and moderately priced Items. Each category costs the same amount, so there is no need to be concerned about the difference between a shot of Boomer and a Whoompy's Burger; they're both inexpensive items, and so they cost the same. Note that certain items which do not fall easily into these categories will have a specific price listed in their description.

Category	Examples of items	Cost
Inexpensive Item	A meal, pack of smokes, a single bullet	£10
Moderately Priced Item	A simple tool set, switchblade, the latest blue feather	£100
Expensive Item	Antique pistol, light armor	£1,000
Very Expensive Item	A flame pistol, heavy ranged weapon, designer or heavy armor	£10,000
Exorbitant Item	Luxury car or flat	£100,000

The table below shows the categories and their cost.

The currency of Manchester is the Singlish Pound (£), still commonly referred to as "quid."

> If you've played other Cypher System games, you may notice that the value of items, Armor ratings and weapon damage have been increased from the default Cypher System quantities. For this near-future, hi tech setting, these values are more realistic.

ARMOR

Any character who plans to regularly get involved in combat should consider wearing some kind of armor. Armor comes in many forms, from a tough leather biker jacket to a designer jumper made with high-tech layered polymers that can stop small caliber bullets. A robo may even have hard plates installed under the skin or an altered surface that resists fire.

Any armor that you wear adds to your ***Armor rating***, which is subtracted from the incoming damage. Wearable armor comes in three categories: Light (+2 Armor rating); Medium (+4 Armor rating); and Heavy (+6 Armor rating). Whenever damage is sustained in combat, subtract the PC's Armor value from the damage. For example, if the character is shot with a small caliber pistol (4 points of damage), and has an Armor rating of 2, the character will only suffer 2 points of damage from the attack.

Armor rating, page 99

Type of armor	Armor rating
Light armor	+2
Medium armor	+4
Heavy armor	+6

Typically, the heavier the armor, the more noticeable it is to the people around you. Light armor might not be evident to the untrained eye, but medium armor often indicates that a character means business and will draw attention. While not against the law, medium armor will often draw unwanted attention from cops or other authorities. Heavy armor is a statement, the sort of thing that will part a crowd and cause police or security to draw weapons.

Some pieces of armor provide additional protection, or less effective protection depending on the situation. When a particular armor's description states that it's "less effective" in a certain situation which means that it provides one less point of Armor rating against damage sustained in the ways specified by the description. For example, an anti-stab vest is a piece of light armor which provides good protection against melee attacks, but is less effective against firearms. This means that if the wearer is stabbed, it provides +2 Armor, but when shot by a firearm, it only grants +1 Armor.

Depending on the type of armor that the PC is wearing, mobility may be affected by the weight of the material. For specifics on encumbrance and detailed rules about using armor, refer to Chapter 11: Rules of the Game.

LIGHT ARMOR

Light armor is by far the most common armor you will see on the street. A sturdy vintage biker's jacket or an anti-stab vest are commonly used armors, but expensive ballistic fabrics can also make light armor indistinguishable from normal clothing.

Anti-stab vest. This vest, designed to be worn under the clothes, provides good protection against melee attacks but is less effective against firearms. This article is thin and flexible enough to be worn under another piece of armor, such as SPeCTek™ Ballistic Clothing.

Leather Biker Jacket. Motorcycle leather is hardened and designed to absorb impact from collisions, all the while making you a badass Rocker. Very useful in a melee fight, but less effective against bullets.

SPECTEK ™ (STRUCTURED POLYMER COMPOSITE)

At the end of the 20th century, traditional projectile weapons had proliferated to the point that body armor became a necessity for anyone planning to walk farther than the nearest bus stop. It was at this time that structured polymer composite fabric was developed offering the ballistic protection of a bulletproof vest in a material as light as a promotional windbreaker. SPeCTek™ became the choice in high-end streetwear, available in the latest styles.

VPC™ (VISCOELASTIC POLYMER CORE)

In response to the widespread usage of SPeCTek™ light armor, arms manufacturers stepped up the lethality of their game by developing "flame tech," superheated rounds that wreak havoc on the gel polymer layers of SPeCTek armors.

Enter VPC, a fat, flexible layer of elastic gel encased in SPeCTek™ fabric that provides reasonable protection even against flame tech firearms, and is still relatively inconspicuous in a modern street environment. Branded as CORE™ Defensive Clothing, VPC is available to the person with means.

Light Armor Vest. This vest is designed to be worn under the clothes and provides decent protection against most firearms. However, any impact may leave a nasty bruise—or worse. This article may be worn under another piece of cloth-weight armor, such as SPeCTek™ Ballistic Clothing.

Light Dermal Plating. As a pure robo (or part robo) these lightweight, flexible plates can be installed to provide light armor protection. These are similar to the plates used in military combat armor, but much thinner to allow for free movement and minimal deformity.

Riot Shield. Usually only found in the hands of MPD riot police, these portable walls have occasionally found their way into the hands of ordinary citizens, usually by scavenging them from the aftermath of riots. Open possession of one by a civilian will guarantee that they will at least be questioned, if not arrested. Modern technology has produced a shield that is as strong as steel, while remaining completely transparent. When in use, the difficulty of defense actions is decreased by two steps and the difficulty of attack actions is increased by two steps. When a defense roll is failed, the shield provides +2 Armor rating in addition to any worn armor. Additionally, the PC may only move

Encumbrance, page 139

Chapter 11: Rules of the Game, page 130

an immediate distance during any round in which the shield is in use.

SPeCTek™ ballistic clothing. Structured Polymer Composite is a thin, lightweight ballistic fabric which is designed to be indistinguishable from normal clothing. It's expensive but available in all the latest fashions. There is no Speed penalty for wearing this armor.

MEDIUM ARMOR

CORE™ Jacket. A bulky jacket composed of a SPeCTek™ Ballistic Fabric outer layer, over Viscoelastic Polymer Core (VPC). These armors are favored by police and security forces because they provide a balance between mobility and defense. Though they are sold in a variety of styles, a person wearing CORE™ is relatively easy to spot.

VPC motorcycle jacket. Modern motorcycle wear often includes a VPC core for maximum protection. This makes them stiff and less casual in appearance than a vintage leather jacket, but as great in a fight as they are in a crash.

Medium Dermal Plating. The same material as light dermal plating, these flexible plates are installed under a robo's skin to provide greater protection at the cost of mobility. These are easy to identify, as they cause a fair amount of deformity under the skin.

HEAVY ARMOR

Ballistic Combat Armor. This armor is composed of thick plates and is designed for an open combat environment. Used by the MPD's Urban Warfare Unit and private security forces, this isn't the sort of thing you wear on the street unless you're on your way to a siege. Needless to say, civilian use of this armor doesn't fly with the cops.

VPC Action Jacket. These articles are designed with a double layer of SPeKTek fabric and thicker Viscoelastic Polymer Core, triple stitched, flame retardant, and can reduce damage from a medium caliber round to mere bruising. Usually worn by stunt drivers or combat recon units.

Heavy Dermal Plating. This thick plating, installed on the body of a character with robo genetics, is a frightening sight. Generally, the person sporting this armor is your worst nightmare.

Nearly twenty years ago, the Royal City Council and the Manchester Police Department set forth a zero-tolerance policy regarding the possession of firearms. For the regular Manc-on-the-street, the days of flashing guns willy-nilly are effectively over.

WEAPONS

In a world where the populations of certain cities have swollen a thousandfold, there is plenty of danger and aggression to go around. Most characters will carry a weapon of some kind if they don't have an innate defense, like sharp teeth or mathemagickal equations.

Nowadays, firearms are pretty rare. But that doesn't mean that the streets of Manchester are even remotely safe. Getting jumped by a gang of knife-wielding shadowvurt ruffians or getting punched by a large robodogman Choke addict wearing brass knuckles can incapacitate or kill you just as quickly as a bullet. Because the police often won't show up to stop your garden variety beatdown, many might argue that a stick is a better implement of murder than a gun.

Not everyone can effectively use every weapon—some amount of practice or training is required. Some character types begin the game "practiced with" certain types of weapons, meaning that they have the basic skills to use those weapons without penalty. PCs that are not practiced with the weapon, the difficulty of attack actions using it are increased. For a PC not practiced in the use of any weapons, attacks with light weapons are increased in difficulty by one step, attacks with medium weapons are increased in difficulty by two steps, and attacks with heavy weapons are increased in difficulty by three steps.

If you're familiar with other Cypher System games, you should take note that in the Vurt RPG, light weapons are not automatically easier to use due to their small size. That's because in this game, the term "light weapon" applies to a number of implements that are neither especially small nor easy to use. If a particular weapon reduces the difficulty of attack actions when in use, it will say so in the description of the weapon.

Weapons are divided into three general types:

Light weapons. Short-bladed knives, sticks, brass knuckles, cricket bats, small pistols—light weapons are by far the most prevalent street weapons because they are generally easier to conceal or disguise. Light weapons inflict 4 points of damage.

Medium weapons are devastating combat weapons, designed to dole out serious hurt. A large or specially engineered blade, a bat with nails pounded through it, a medium caliber handgun—one good hit with a medium weapon is enough to cause serious injury to the average person. With tougher customers, medium weapons are sometimes exactly the advantage you need. Medium weapons inflict 8 points of damage.

Heavy weapons are serious game-enders. A sledge hammer or sword, a powerful combat rifle, or a 12-gauge shotgun—heavy weapons are usually very difficult to conceal and pretty much pointless to try and explain to the cops. Cop or not, anyone who sees you coming with a heavy weapon is likely to assume you're coming in hot and will act accordingly. Heavy weapons inflict 12 points of damage.

Type of Weapon	Damage inflicted
Light	4 points of damage
Medium	8 points of damage
Heavy	12 points of damage

MELEE WEAPONS

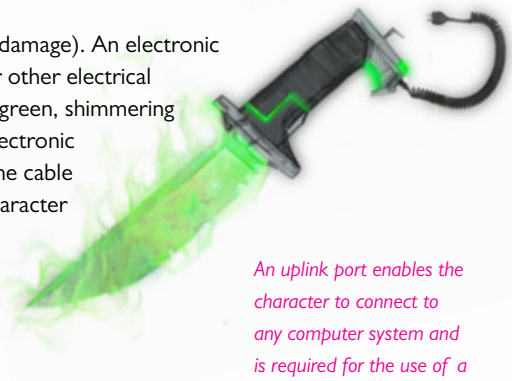
More often than not (in Manchester at least) tussles involve knives, bats, pipes, brass knuckles or other melee-type weapons. More complex melee weapons such as electronic knives, shock batons, and high-tech blades are also readily available for the right price, and lethal in the right hands. Melee weapons must be held with one or more hands and are only effective at immediate range.

Bandy Stick (light damage). Normally used in the sport of Bandy, the Bandy stick is sometimes also used as a cudgel. Alternatively, by increasing the difficulty of the melee attack by one step, the hooked business-end of a Bandy stick can also be used to trip an opponent. On a successful hit, the opponent is pulled off their feet or struck down to one knee, requiring them to use an action if they want to stand up. Tripping in this manner does not deal damage by itself, but if the enemy happens to be on the edge of a building or narrow catwalk, it could be very bad indeed.

Brass Knuckles (light damage). For nearly 200 years, there's been little reason to improve on the design of brass knuckles. Easily concealable and downright unpleasant when applied to the face.

Cudgel. (light damage). A regulation cricket bat, a wooden shillelagh, or a metal pipe coated in rubber, the cudgel is a classic ass kicker and is still common on the streets. Usually the weapon is a length that can be held or hung inside a jacket.

Electronic Knife (medium damage). An electronic knife that plugs into an outlet or other electrical source, charging the blade with green, shimmering flames. When unplugged, the electronic knife deals only light damage. The cable stretches to ten feet, but any character who is part robo and has an uplink port can power the electronic knife for short periods of time using their onboard power supply.



An uplink port enables the character to connect to any computer system and is required for the use of a neural link system.

Improvised Melee Weapons (various damage). Anything can be a weapon in the right hands. A cast-iron pan, a tire iron or a nearby rock are all examples of improvised weapons. The damage inflicted by an improvised weapon should be determined by the GM.

Katana (heavy damage). This is a replica of an ancient Japanese sword designed to slice through limbs and sever heads from bodies. You will be very conspicuous carrying one of these.

Knife (light damage). Knives come in all shapes and sizes. Switchblades, Bowie knives, throwing knives, you name it, someone is trying to stick it into someone.

Millwall Brick (light damage). A tabloid newspaper (often a Game Cat magazine), rolled and folded into a crude cudgel. This weapon can be soaked in liquid to give it more impact. Sometimes a rock, pen, or pencil is folded inside to create a spike. An old-school favorite among Vurtball hooligans as they're easy to create and smuggle.

Mono-Blade (medium damage). Mono-blades are translucent, plastic blades, nanite-sharpened to the point that they cut through pretty much anything. They're fragile and deform easily.

Nail Bat (medium damage). When you pound nails through your bat or bolt circular sawblades to it, you've taken street violence to the next level. Known as a nail bat, these weapons are often found in the hands of street gangs in areas where the cops don't go.

Shiv (light damage). Shivs are homemade knives—a

FLAME TECH VS ANTIQUE FIREARMS

Flame tech is the cutting edge of modern firearms. When a standard bullet travels the length of a flame weapon, it is rapidly heated to the point of malleability. The red-hot round burns through armor and cover, granting exceptional bullet penetration. This is the top choice for anyone looking for maximum effectiveness in a fight.

All non-flame projectile weapons are generally referred to as antiques as they are less effective against modern armor technologies like VPC. Antique guns are still more common than flame tech firearms due to their prohibitive cost. These old guns are often wrapped in PottyTape™ and covered in crude repairs. Still, to an unarmored person, even a small-caliber antique gun can be deadly, and is likely to change the timbre of any negotiation.

shard of glass with a cloth-tape handle, a sharpened toothbrush, or a bone carved to a deadly point. May be undetectable to metal detectors. With each successful attack, roll a d6. On a result of a 1 or a 2, the shiv breaks after dealing damage and becomes useless.

Sledge (heavy damage). This massive, heavy maul is difficult to wield in combat, but is capable of dealing terrific amounts of damage. Probably stolen from a nearby construction site.

Burst fire, page 147

Stun Stick (3 points of damage). Upon a successful hit, this short baton delivers a light electric shock to the target, increasing the difficulty of any Speed based action attempted in the next round by one step. The small voltage discharge allows for repeated use as it passively recharges.

Trench Knife (light damage) A relic from a bygone war, many of these nasty weapons still survive to this day. Essentially a cross between brass knuckles and a stiletto, this weapon was once issued to British soldiers. Trench knives do not have a slashing edge, but their sharpened point, minimal blade profile, and sure-handed finger grip make these blades particularly well-suited to punch through armor. Trench knives ignore 2 points of Armor rating when at least one level of Effort is applied to a stabbing attack.

RANGED WEAPONS:

A ranged weapon is any weapon that attacks from a distance. Thrown objects and guns are the most common examples of ranged weapons.

Firearms are highly illegal in Manchester. Therefore, they are very difficult and expensive to acquire. Back alleys and black markets still trade in the antique weapons of the 20th century, but even more coveted and pricey are high-tech flame weapons, which were invented to counter advanced armors. Attacks made with flame weapons ignore 2 points of Armor rating, which effectively neutralizes the most common street armors.

The vast majority of firearms fire once per attack action, and carry a ten-round magazine. Burst-fire weapons fire three or more times per attack action and carry a 30-round magazine. For simplicity sake, this means that most ranged weapons can fire ten times before needing to be reloaded.

By default, every firearm, be it a revolver, shotgun, or assault rifle, requires an action to reload. Furthermore, characters should be wary of burning through ammunition as it is expensive and difficult to acquire.

Unless stated otherwise, pistols, and submachine guns are effective within short range, and rifles are effective within long range.

3D-printed Liberator (medium damage). This homemade, plastic handgun has an internal magazine of six .45 caliber bullets. Furthermore, this weapon is infamous for exploding in the user's hand. Each time it is fired, the chance of a catastrophic backfire increases. With each shot, the player rolls a 1d6:

1st shot: will not explode (no need to roll)

2nd shot: explodes on a result of 1, dealing light damage to the user

3rd shot: explodes on a result of 1-2, dealing light damage to the user.

4th shot: explodes on a result of 1-3, dealing light

damage to the user.

5th shot: explodes on a result of 1-4 dealing light damage to the user.

6th shot: explodes on a result of 1-5 dealing light damage to the user.

Reloading requires dismantling the weapon and reassembling it (a difficulty 3 Intellect check), at which point the backfire table starts over.

It's worth mentioning that when you acquire a Liberator, there is no real guarantee that it has not been fired at least once already. Be warned.

Antique .22 caliber Revolver (light damage). This small handgun is reliable and easy to conceal. It doesn't do a lot of damage and isn't likely to make much of an impression when it's waved around, but getting popped with this thing is enough to make anyone question their last few decisions. Six shots.

Antique Webley .455 caliber Revolver (medium damage). Great-great-great-grandad beat back the Huns with this pistol, and the only reason you might have it is that it has been in your family since before pistols were illegal for civilians. Take care of it, and it may last your family another hundred years. Six shots.

Antique Pump-Action Shotgun (heavy damage). Even with the invention of superior modern weaponry, few tools can create the sheer devastation of a three-inch, 440 grain 12-gauge shotgun slug. Even the most heavily armored combatant will get defensive when the "street howitzer" makes an appearance. Of course, it's as difficult to conceal as it is to stare down. Short range. Between four and eight shots depending on model.

Darts (2 damage). Darts & ale in a pub go together like bangers and mash. Singlish pub life wouldn't be the same without them. Specially weighted darts, in the hands of a skilled thrower, can be quite effective in combat. While they don't do much damage, they do allow someone to soften up an opponent from a distance before closing in for melee. Accuracy greatly approves their effectiveness—a dart in the leg is an annoyance, but a dart in the eyeball is a battle-stopper. A minor effect for a dart attack ignores armor, while a major effect ignores armor and might mean a hit in the eye, throat, or other vulnerable spot, possibly blinding or stunning the target (GM's discretion). As they say on the streets: Sharp darts spitting masters, spitting darts faster, shut up I'm the driver, you're the passenger.

Gadfly Machine Pistol (light damage). A spray-and-pray favorite, this 9mm pistol fires non-flame rounds, but is far from an antique. Ceramics and cutting-edge polymers make up the bulk of this weapon's furniture, but at its core are cheap, stamped metal parts. This affordable weapon therefore features the high rate of fire and noise that brash street punks crave, without the extra punch (or price tag) of modern flame weapons. This weapon has two fire modes, semi-automatic and three-round burst.

Fire modes, page 147

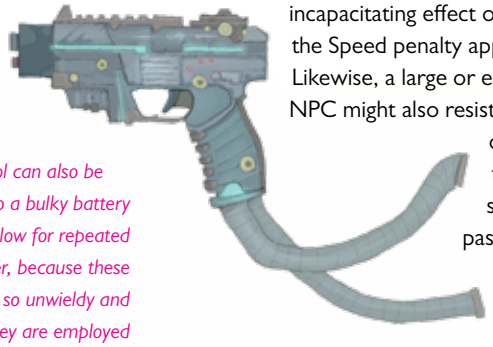
Improvised Thrown Weapon (various damage). Any object can be thrown at an opponent as an improvised ranged weapon. While relative damage for such weapons is at the discretion of the GM, improvised thrown weapons that cause heavy damage are limited to the immediate range.

Manticore Submachine Gun (medium damage). This flame weapon is most often seen in the hands of police assault teams or corporate mercenaries. While more expensive than a machine pistol, this weapon's size allows for greater control and accuracy, and offers better concealability than a full-sized rifle. While only effective at short range, the blend of firepower and compact maneuverability make these weapons ideal for urban combat. This weapons has two fire modes, three-round burst and full auto. Ignores two points of armor rating.

Monitor Flame Battle Rifle (heavy damage). Generally only encountered on a battlefield, the Monitor is a nightmare for any defending or attacking force. It is effective both at close and long range. Rare and absurdly expensive, only the most well-funded groups have access to this bad boy. This rifle has three fire modes: semi-automatic, three-round burst or full auto. The difficulty of burst-fire attacks is increased by two steps if the weapon is not braced or mounted. Ignores 2 points of Armor rating.

Stunner Pistol (2 damage). Only effective within short range, a stunner delivers a large electric shock to the target, stunning them for 1d6 rounds. Additionally, for the next hour, the difficulty of all Speed-based tasks is increased by one step. A PC target can attempt a difficulty 6 Might task to resist the incapacitating effect of the stunner, but the Speed penalty applies regardless. Likewise, a large or especially strong NPC might also resist the incapacitation of the stunner, but this is unusual. The stunner recharges passively and requires no ammunition. It can only be fired twice per combat encounter.

Special damage: Stunned, page 143



A stunner pistol can also be plugged into a bulky battery pack to allow for repeated use. However, because these batteries are so unwieldy and expensive, they are employed almost exclusively by riot police.

Riot Stunner (2 damage). This weapon is usually found in the hands of MPD officers during a riot. Only effective within short range, the riot stunner delivers a large electric shock to the target, stunning them for 1d6 rounds and increasing the difficulty of Speed based tasks for one hour. Additionally, any creatures within immediate range of the target may also be affected (make a separate roll for each target). The weapon is unwieldy and requires a much larger power pack, making it impractical for prolonged personal carry. The stunner recharges passively and so requires no ammunition. It can only be fired twice per combat encounter.

Vorpal 10mm Flame (medium damage). The Vorpal 10mm Flame is the most popular new flame pistol on the market. It isn't cheap, but is the gold standard for all well-funded security outfits. Because it's compatible with a wide range of mods, it is the standard sidearm for elite government or corporate ops units. Ignores 2 points of Armor rating.

Vulcan Machine Pistol (medium damage). This 10mm flame weapon is a selective-fire weapon that is favored by corporate bodyguards and well-heeled criminals, but is usually outside the financial grasp of the average Mancunian. Top of the line materials keep most of this weapon cool enough to function during burst fire, but the barrel has been known to burn through holsters, clothing, and flesh if it is holstered too soon after prolonged burst fire. Anything that touches the front of the weapon after five or more burst fires will suffer a burn for 2 points of damage, unless the weapon is allowed to cool for five minutes. Ignores two points of armor rating.

White Feather Flame Sniper Rifle (medium damage). Named for a legendary sniper, this rifle allows you to reach out and touch someone with extreme prejudice. Normally found only in the hands of the military or specialized police personnel, this 10mm semiautomatic flame weapon comes with a scope and a collapsible stock. It has a normal effective range of 500 feet (150 m), but it's less effective at close or point-blank range (increases difficulty of immediate and short range shots by two steps). This extremely specialized rifle has a smaller five-round magazine, and is usually far

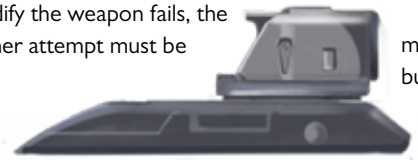
Note that extremely long-range shots can be made by increasing the task difficulty. This is how shots can be made from 3000 feet (900 m) or more. However, in Manchester it's highly unlikely to find an unobstructed line of sight that is more than a few hundred feet. See Modifying the Range of Weapons, page 161 for more details.

beyond the price range of anyone except government agencies. Ignores 2 points of armor rating.

WEAPON UPGRADES:

Weapon attachments and modifications (mods) are additional or replacement components which change the way a weapon functions. Some are easily attached, requiring only an action to apply, like a screw-on silencer. Others require tools or expertise to apply, such as internal components that allow burst fire. Typically, attachments do not require a roll to add to a weapon.

Unless otherwise stated, installing a weapon mod is a difficulty 4 Intellect task and requires a firearm repair kit and an hour of uninterrupted work on a steady surface. If the attempt to modify the weapon fails, the weapon is unusable and another attempt must be made at the modifications.



ATTACHMENTS

Torch: A torch (flashlight) attachment casts a focused beam of LED light wherever the weapon is aimed. This attachment cancels the penalties to attacks made in dim light or darkness, but makes the player easier to target. Defense actions made by the PC when using the light are increased in difficulty by one step. Snap-on torches require an action to attach to the weapon, and do not require tools.

Holo Sight: This attachment creates a viewing window and holographic reticle, through which the attacker can focus more accurately on targets. Provides an asset to immediate or short range shots to which the player applies at least one level of Effort. Sights can be attached without a skill check, but require the use of a simple tool set and take about 10 minutes.

Assault Frame: This attachment turns a standard pistol into a tiny assault weapon, adding a foregrip and short shoulder stock to almost any semi-automatic pistol. This frame also allows the pistol to feed from two magazines at once, effectively doubling the ammunition capacity. The downside is that the bulky frame and top-feed second magazine make the pistol nearly impossible to holster or conceal. Adds +1 to attack rolls. Loading each magazine requires a separate action (will fire with only one magazine).

Scopes: This attachment is a magnifier that allows the shooter to pinpoint targets at longer ranges. Scopes come in a variety of sizes and ranges, often specifically matched to a weapon model. Scopes provide an asset to long or extreme range shots in which the player applies at least one level of effort to aim. Scopes can be attached without a skill check, but require a simple tool set and about 10 minutes.

Silencers: A silencer is a metal cylinder which muffles the report of a gunshot. This attachment makes your shots undetectable by normal ears at a distance farther than short range. Some firearms have specially designed silencers that provide even more effective sound dampening when paired with the proper weapon. Requires an action to attach or remove.

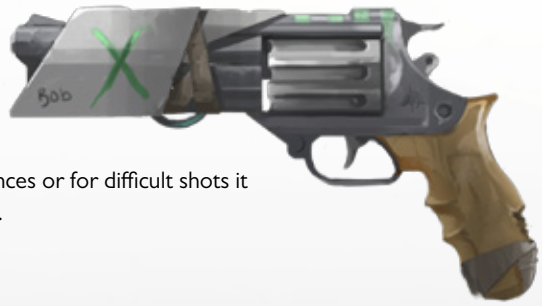
MODIFICATIONS

Auto-eject mechanism. A firearm with an auto-eject mechanism does not require an action to reload.

Auto Targeter. An auto targeting system is cutting-edge tech that identifies targets in the weapon's sights and attempts to align the weapon with the target using built in gyros. The auto targeter is activated using the verbal command "Aim."

This tactile aid serves as an asset when making a ranged attack at any distance, but requires one combat round to acquire the target. After the target is marked, the asset remains until the gun is pointed away from the target. As long as the PC does not change targets, the weapon can be fired during the round that the auto-targeter is acquiring.

Burst-fire receiver. This modification enables a firearm to fire three rounds in a single attack action. When making a burst-fire attack, the player makes a single roll for the attack action. Each subsequent bullet after the first suffers a penalty to accuracy. See page 147 for specific details.



Burst-fire can be devastating at short range, but at longer distances or for difficult shots it may be a waste of ammo.

GEAR

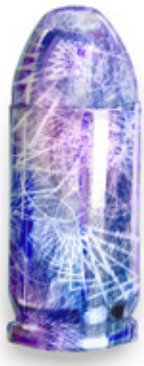
AMMUNITION

Most ranged weapons, and even some melee weapons, use ammunition. Bullets are expensive and almost as hard to obtain as the firearm itself, so be frugal with your shots! A single round is an inexpensive item, and are often sold individually. In cities other than Manchester, they may be cheaper, easier to find, and perhaps even legally sold over the counter.

Standard Rounds. Bullets are specific to a particular caliber of weapon. The weapon determines the damage that is dealt. Standard rounds are the least expensive ammunition.

AP Rounds. Armor-piercing rounds are usually composed of a combination of tungsten alloys, steel, iron, brass, bronze, beryllium copper, or depleted

uranium. While they don't deal extra damage by themselves, AP rounds ignore one point of the target's Armor rating. If this ammunition is fired from a flame weapon, the armor reducing effect of the flame weapon will be negated and only one point of Armor rating will be ignored.



Explosive Rounds. Each explosive round carries a small charge that detonates on impact. The explosion itself isn't huge—it deals 1 additional point of damage to the target, but it wreaks havoc on cover and armor. Each round that strikes the target permanently reduces the effectiveness of worn armor by 1 point. It also reduces the effectiveness of light cover, eventually destroying it.

Fractal Bullet. A fractal bullet is fired like any other bullet, but on a successful hit, the target suffers additional damage that alters the molecular structure of any organic material into brilliant, crystalline fractals. This additional fractal damage is always permanent. After normal weapon damage is applied, 2 points are permanently removed from the target's Might pool (if it is a PC) and causes fractal scarring.

TOOLS

Lockpicks, auto mechanic's tools, a blurbfly toolset or a Limbic Splitter—there are tools for many different tasks. Depending on the task at hand, a set of tools might make an impossible task possible, or a difficult task more likely to succeed. Every set of tools comes in either a standard or deluxe variety.

Blurbflies, page 110

Certain tasks require a specific toolset in order to attempt, like changing a blurbfly's configuration, or repairing a car. These tasks can be performed using a simple version of the appropriate toolset. If a deluxe, or specialized set of tools is handy, the PC receives an asset for the task, lowering the difficulty of the task by one step. Occasionally, a toolset may provide an asset for a task that does not specifically require one to attempt. In this case, a basic toolset provides one asset, and a deluxe or specialized toolset provides two assets. For example, if the PC has been handcuffed to the plumbing in a bathroom, a tool is not required to make an attempt to escape—an attempt can be made to bend and tear the pipe from the sink, using the PCs Might. However, if the character has a set of auto mechanics tools within reach, they provide an asset for the attempt, reducing the task difficulty by one step as the character uses a wrench to remove the pipe. If the tools available are deluxe, power tools, the PC would receive 2 assets, reducing the difficulty by an additional step, as the character grinds, cuts, or unbolts the plumbing with greater efficiency.

This section describes a number of different toolsets that the characters can collect in their travels, but these are not the only tools that can be used. Makeshift tools, like a sturdy lever used to pry loose some plumbing, can be improvised by the players at any time, and if the GM agrees that it will work, an asset is provided. Furthermore, players can create their own toolsets, specifically designed to assist in certain, frequently attempted tasks. The GM will decide if the tools the player wants to design will actually help, and may ask for a crafting roll in order to successfully create the toolset.

Blurbfly Toolset. Blurbflies have tiny components (though they're not always, strictly speaking, mechanical). A blurbfly cannot be repaired or modified without a blurbfly toolset.

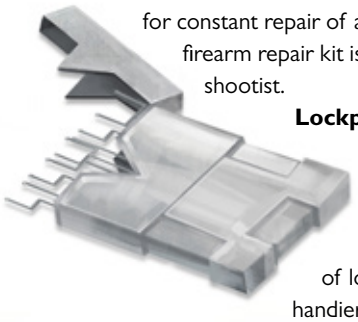
Chemset. If you're looking to craft or modify your drugs, or to mix up a weaponized form of anything, a chemset is a must have.

DJ Machines. Sure, there are other instruments out there, but as far as most Mancunians are concerned, the only musical instruments that get a crowd going are based on DJ equipment. Devices like the Limbic Splitter and the DopeJacker have been around for over 30 years, and while the tech has changed a bit, it's still based on retro vinyl scratching, spinning, and electro-thumping. Who wants to listen to an MC without a backup beat? Almost all the famous musicians and performers over the last few decades have been backed up by this technology that can be felt on an atomic level, invading bodies with beats, whipping the dancing crowds into a crush. Since the old days of Das Uberdog, Dingo Tush, MC Inky and Janus Fontaine, music genres have evolved, but still remain based in the bass. Portable Limbic Splitters have just come on the scene, allowing for DJ battles to pour out onto the street

in an explosion of creative sonic warfare.

Dream Viewer. When a dream canister is loaded into this device, a stored dream can be viewed and edited. It is commonly used to review extracted dream material and in the process of making Vurt feathers. The Shimmyographer is the most well-known and expensive model.

Firearm repair kit. Due to the large number of modifications available and the necessity for constant repair of antique firearms, a firearm repair kit is a must have for any shootist.



Lockpicks. Yes, there are still non-digital, old-school tumbler locks out there, and having a set of lockpicks comes in handier than you'd expect. Add a bit of Door Vaz® to your tools and you've got all you need to get in or out of most situations.

Mechanical Toolset. A generic set of mechanical tools that fits most any mechanical device, be it a vehicle or the basin in the loo.

First Aid Kit. A set of tools and medical supplies that provides an asset to a healing task.

Nanodot Tracker. This tracking device is smaller than a grain of rice and produces a trackable signal which can be detected up to two miles away, even in the densest parts of the city. The battery lasts for 24 hours. These are sold individually and come with a disposable, handheld remote which provides the directional information.

NewsVurt. These blue feathers serve the same function as newspapers. For around the same cost, a Featherhead can tune in to one of these recurring dreams where they can passively watch a display of the day's or week's events, hosted by a few Vurt news anchors. Lucid versions of these broadcasts also exist, allowing a feather user to listen to the news while they conduct their daily lives. Each feather is created for a specific news cycle, and will cream after use.

PDF (Personal Data Feather). A reusable lucid feather that acts as a communication and information storage device. Most people have one on them at all times, allowing them to make calls to other PDFs, store inpho, link to a feather address, request an Xcab or search reviews to find out which local pub has the best fish and chips. Each PDF links to a tiny, private space within the Vurt world and gives the user the power to execute a handful of useful functions within it. Contacts are created by rubbing PDFs together for two seconds, which allows each PDF to store the Vurt address of the other. When the PDF is placed in the character's mouth, a menu will appear before them, allowing them to access the following functions.

> **Simple PDF:** Allows unlimited use of the Call, Message and Link functions.
> **Deluxe PDF:** Allows unlimited use of all PDF functions.
> **Disposable PDF:** Also known as a "Burner," this PDF allows the use of the Call, Message and Link functions and creams after a single use. Anyone attempting to remain untraceable would be wise to keep a couple of these handy.

When a PDF is placed in the user's mouth, a command menu will appear indicating any of the following functions that can be performed:

CALL. Place a feather-phone call to a stored contact.

MESSAGE. Send a verbal message to a contact.

LINK. Taken together with certain feathers, the PDF can link the paired feather to a known feather address, granting access to that specific Vurt.

SAVE. Save complex inpho or messages for yourself.

INPHO. Allows user to obtain inpho from the Manchester Public Library database. Useful for news, history or general inpho, the database is occasionally out of date.

There are three types of PDF widely available for sale:

Scattermask. At first glance this appears to be a high-tech piece of breathing technology. Close examination reveals that the scattermask is just a cheap, disposable facemask, the elastic band held in place by staples. For a single encounter the wearer is protected against any breathable substance, after which time the cheap mask will fail and start to leak.

Terminal. A console used for accessing computer systems and hacking.

GeneMachine®. Let's face it, since the introduction of Fecundity-10, no one can be 100% sure what their genetic background might actually be. Think you're pure human, but you have one grandpa that likes to scratch his ears with his foot? Are you a dogman through and through, but you sometimes get strange urges in the Vurt, like a stranger calling you home? This test is for you. It's a simple self-administered test utilizing polymerase chain reaction that can trace your genetic heritage back seven generations. Even if you're only 1/128th Vurt, now you'll know!

Xtrovurt™ machine. A device that allows a Dodo to see what's happening inside a companion's Vurt Feather trip. Like watching an antique film with grainy images and dark, fuzzy periphery, this is nowhere near an immersive experience. Purely a visual relay of information, no sound, smells or touch are available to the viewer. But for those poor Dodos unable to travel into the Vurt World, it's as good as it gets.

Dream canisters contain stored dream material in it's raw, unaltered form.

Door Vaz, page 374

When a Vurt feather is used, it's color changes to cream and it is no longer useable. "Creamed" and discarded feathers litter the streets like Napalm Filters.

Lucid feathers, page 171

Each Vurt trip leads to a specific Vurt world location called a feather address.

FASHION

The fashion of the day depends entirely on where you are in the world. In Manchester, what blends in, intimidates, or shows a slick style is different from neighborhood to neighborhood. In other words, look the part or expect some grief. The players and the GM should be aware that if the characters are wearing a particular style, it may become an asset or a disadvantage in certain situations, like trying to negotiate with a local gang or the police.

SERVICES

Homes and Holes

Finding a place to lay low, rest, take your feather trips, or tinker with items is something every character needs to think about. Sure, you can just slump against an old dumpster and sleep, but there's no security for your belongings and no safe place to concentrate on tasks.

Holes are the least expensive places a character can find to lay low. They're free, city-registered holes drilled into the ground in out-of-traffic places where mendicants often ply their trades. Four people can sit or sleep in a single hole, but there isn't room to do much else. These locations are monitored by the Royal City Council, not particularly safe, and likely already house some indigent person.

The cypher Driip feed card is another way to access drip feed funds. See page 363 for more details.

Flea-bags are cheap motels that rent by the night for £10. In these places, pretty much any illicit behavior can take place without drawing attention. The exceptions are gunshots, loud screams for help, or any obvious sign that the room is being destroyed. Usually, these behaviors will draw some hired muscle or worse, the police.

Flats (aka Stash-Pads) are rented out by the month or the week. In a flat, it's generally safe to leave extra equipment and loot lying around without concern for theft. Of course, if someone has learned the location of your stash-pad and has any reason to suspect it would be in their best interest to break in, that might not be the case. The cost of a month's rent depends on the apartment, its amenities and the neighborhood where it is located. Refer to the housing cost table below for some sample prices. A flat can be inherited, given as a reward for major services rendered, purchased outright if the PC has enough money, or provided as a long-term benefit during character advancement.

Long-term benefits, page 156

**The cost of purchasing accommodations outright is equal to 100 times the monthly rent*

DRIP FEED

A drip feed account is a city-funded public assistance account. By accessing a drip feed terminal, the character can attempt to collect a few quid each day. A drip feed account registered to the PC does not expire. Instead, there is a chance the account will dispense money and a chance that it will not. The account only deactivates under special circumstances, like becoming the subject of an active police manhunt, drawing the negative attention of the company that operates the terminals (Maple Falls Investments, page 185), or otherwise earning the attention of powerful and connected individuals.

A registered drip feed account is granted as a Human Mode special ability (see page 42 for details and amount dispensed). However, access to regular drip feed could be awarded as a part of an adventure if the GM decides it makes sense to do so.

Because they dispense money, drip feed terminals are dangerous places, often being watched by thugs waiting to relieve you of your cash. Upscale districts and neighborhoods do not have drip feed terminals.

HOUSING COST

Type of accommodation	Cost
Hole	Free
Fleabag	£ 10
Decent hotel	£ 100 / night
Luxury hotel	£ 1,000 / night
Run-down flat	£ 1,000 / month
Luxury flat	£ 10,000 / month
Slum neighborhood	1x rate
Average neighborhood	2x rate
Nice neighborhood	5x rate
Special facility (e.g. hot tub, soundproof room)	£ 100 / month

BLACK CABS

The iconic black cab is still a common sight in the gridlock of Manchester's streets. For the traveler looking to get from here to there with a minimum of government observation, black cabs are the way to go. Simple A-to-B rides within the same district are often as cheap as £10, depending on the circumstances, but the cost of longer or more "interesting" trips will have to be negotiated with the driver.

If you're lucky, and for the right price, you can occasionally score a little contraband from the driver, or information on hard-to-locate illicit services. It's not uncommon for cabbies to deliver goods as a side bit, no questions asked, and some even pass outside The City Wall through secret means.

GUIDES

Getting around on foot in the city can be difficult or even impossible, depending on where you're headed. You can often convince a local to guide you to a location within a district, or even to another district for a fee. Ten quid will usually convince a street crusty to lead you to your destination, but then there's no guarantee that they're not leading you to the wrong

place on purpose, either to extort some extra change or even lead you into a trap.

The services of a guide will grant the party an asset for a single navigation check, but opens the group to the possibility of a GM Intrusion.

Xcab Service	Price
Non-combat transit fee	£100 per city district
Additional passengers	£10 per person
Defensive driving fee	£100
Combat pickup fee	£200

NU-XCABS

An Xcab is more than just a fully armored car service.

Every Xcab driver is programmed to know the most direct route to any location in Manchester. A live navigation system is implanted directly into each driver's brain. Movement through the City is displayed through a dynamic glowing blue map tattooed on their shaved head—showing location and fare in real time. Xcab drivers are required to have their memories wiped before getting behind the wheel of an Xcab in order to allow the navigation system to work and ensure their loyalty to their company, Nu-X. These Xcab rides are costly and require passenger registration and PDF (Personal Data Feather) linking in order to provide speedy pickups.

MEDICAL INSURANCE

The NHS (National Health Service) is 100% free. That said, there's no dependable ambulance service, the wait times may be days long, and occasionally you'll go in for a fracture and come out with an appendectomy. Private health coverage, including personal ambulance service, combat medic package, and the like is available for personal or registered group packages.

A typical PDF-linked private ambulance service with trauma care runs about £10,000 per month and does not include the cost of any implants, prosthetics or follow up visits.

ARMOR

Light Armor	
Anti-Stab Vest	Expensive
Leather Biker Jacket	Expensive
Light Dermal Plating	Very Expensive (including installation)
Light Armor Jacket	Expensive
Riot Shield	Expensive
SPECTek Ballistic Clothing	Very Expensive
Medium Armor	
CORE™ Jacket	Very Expensive
Medium Dermal Plating	Very Expensive
VPC Motorcycle Jacket	Expensive
Heavy Armor	
Ballistic Combat Armor	Very Expensive
Heavy Dermal Plating	Exorbitant
VPC Action Jacket	Very Expensive

WEAPON UPGRADES

Attachments	
Torch	Inexpensive
Holosight	Expensive
Scope	Expensive
Silencer	Expensive
Modifications	
Auto-Eject Mechanism	Expensive
Auto Targeter	Expensive
Burst-Fire Receiver	Expensive

WEAPONS

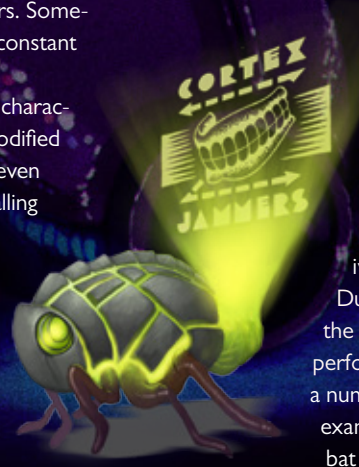
Melee Weapons	
Bandy Stick	Inexpensive
Brass Knuckles	Inexpensive
Cudgel	Inexpensive
Electronic Knife	Expensive
Knife	Moderately priced
Mono-Blade	Expensive
Stun Stick	Expensive
Ranged Weapons	
3d-printed Liberator	Expensive
Antique Pistol	Expensive to Very Expensive
Antique Shotgun	Very Expensive
Flame Pistol	Very Expensive
Flame Machine Pistol	Very Expensive
Flame Battle Rifle	Very Expensive
Stunner Pistol	Expensive
Riot Stunner	Expensive
Flame Sniper Rifle	Very Expensive

CHAPTER 9

BLURBFLIES

In Manchester, advertising has become an invasive and everpresent feature of the world. Adverts are spoken, projected, and injected into every scene and situation, even into people's dreams. Blurbflies are the most intrusive form of advertising you will encounter in the city—tiny robotic insects that swarm and buzz all over the skies and streets of Manchester. They hover outside of cafes chirruping and singing advertisements for snacks and drinks. They fly alongside car windows crying the services of auto shops or the latest tech upgrade. Blurbflies crawl on hand railings projecting holographic logos, and leap across pathways when you walk, trailing jingles and glowing letters. Sometimes called *bugs* or *blurbs*, they're a constant presence and nuisance.

However, in the hands of the right character, blurbs can be manipulated and modified to perform functions that are useful, even critical to an adventurer's life. By installing high-powered optics, specialized sensors, ballistic speakers, injectors, EMP discharge capacitors or other high-tech mods, a simple blurbfly can be turned into a powerful tool. They can be used for scouting, hacking, combat, or even as an aid in social situations. A person who controls blurbflies is known as an "admin." These characters should always be on the lookout for new parts for their ever-evolving personal bug swarm, as a good upgrade can open up new ways to tackle an obstacle. Even for a character that is not an admin, disposable bugs can be employed that grant temporary advantages.



Most of the time, the character making use of the mechanics in the following sections will be an admin, but the same mechanics apply when a character is using a disposable bug, or has somehow gained temporary control of one through the use of a cypher.

BLURBFLY ACTIONS

By using an action, the PC can direct a controlled blurbfly to perform a simple action. The blurb may be directed to fly to a position within its allowed range, to attack or perform an action allowed by installed equipment. Once the command has been given, the blurb is the one performing the action, not the player. This means that though the player makes the rolls on behalf of the assigned bug, the PC cannot use Effort or skills to affect the difficulty of the assigned task.

Defense tasks are performed reflexively by the blurbfly.

Due to their diminutive size and agility, the difficulty of all Speed based actions performed by a blurbfly are reduced by a number of steps equal to its level. For example, if a level 4 enemy swings a cricket bat at a level 2 blurbfly, the difficulty of the defense action the blurb must perform is reduced by 2 steps, and becomes a difficulty 2 task. Because this advantage is due to its small size, it's up to the player and the GM to determine if reducing the difficulty of a blurbfly's action doesn't make sense in a given situation. Certain chassis' or bug hacks (see page

113) can affect the size of this agility advantage. For example, a very light chassis offers a slightly greater agility advantage, and a very heavy chassis offers a reduced agility advantage because of it's weight, as shown on the Blurbfly Chassis table on page 113.

BLURBFLY COMBAT

During combat an admin can use an action to command a blurbfly under their control to attack. Their blurb will move to and harass the targeted enemy, attacking once per round until a new command is given. If the admin has their attention directed elsewhere (such as in melee combat, or while issuing a command to a another bug) the blurbfly will dodge attacks normally and perform attacks automatically once assigned. If a blurb is configured to do damage to an enemy, an attack roll must be made each round to determine if the attack is successful.

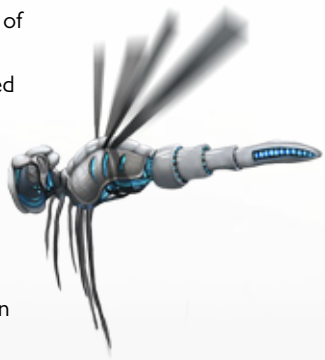
In addition to any damage that a blurb might inflict with an attached modification, an enemy that is under attack by a blurbfly is **harassed**, *granting +1 to any roll made against that enemy for each harassing bug*. (Remember that if three bugs are harassing a target, count it as an asset, rather than +3 to your rolls.) No roll is required to harass an enemy.

No more than three bugs can harass a single enemy. If more than three are commanded to attack one target, only three of the bugs will attack during a single combat round.

A blurbfly that is not modified to deliver damage (with a stinger, for example) is still a distraction and harasses the enemy, granting +1 to rolls against the enemy.

Vying for control of a blurbfly with another admin is an Intellect-based contest. The PC makes an Intellect check, the difficulty of which is determined by the level of the enemy admin. Most often, this will happen when the PC attempts to take control of a bug that is actively controlled by an NPC.

DAMAGE TO BLURBFLIES



Blurbflies are delicate creatures. The amount of damage one can sustain is determined by the weight of its chassis. When a blurb is damaged in combat, subtract points from its health. When the its health is reduced to zero, the player must roll to see if it is completely destroyed, or if it is merely broken and can be repaired. The chance that the bug will be destroyed is also determined by the bug's chassis type. Refer to the Blurbfly Destruction Table below.

BLURBFLY REPAIR

If a blurbfly sustains damage or is broken but not destroyed, a character may attempt to repair it. This requires an Intellect task, the use of a blurbfly toolkit, and a workspace. The difficulty of the task is determined by the level of the blurb and all repairs take about an hour. If the repair attempt is successful, it is returned to full health and is fully functional.

BLURBFLY DESTRUCTION TABLE

Chassis	Roll a d6 to determine result
Very Light (2 health)	Destroyed on a result of 3 or higher
Light (4 health)	Destroyed on a result of 4 or higher
Heavy (6 health)	Destroyed on a result of 5 or higher
Very Heavy (8 health)	Destroyed on a result of 6
If, as a result of your roll, your BlurbFly is destroyed, it is unrepairable. All components and modules are lost permanently.	

BLURBFLY MODIFICATION

Blurbflies can be fitted with modules that can make them perform new and better tasks (see below).

Modifying your blurb is an Intellect task and requires the use of a blurbfly toolkit and a workspace, such as a desk. Additionally, the PC must have a module to install. The effect of this modification depends on the specific module that is installed.

By installing combinations of modules, you can create a blurb that can inject an enemy with poison in combat, or deliver a blinding flash to enemies. Some might buzz in, activate a cypher, and drop it in the vicinity of an enemy. A hacking blurb might carry a food hack to a terminal and cook it into a computer system. There are many blurbfly modules and even more combinations for your admin characters to make use of.

A food hack is a special type of computer system hack reselbling a culinary recipe with bits of code as ingredients. Having a simmering helping of Inpho Josh in your karahi terminal will steam you right through that secuirty!

Blurbfly modules are manufactured by many companies and are available in a range of prices and varying degrees of quality.

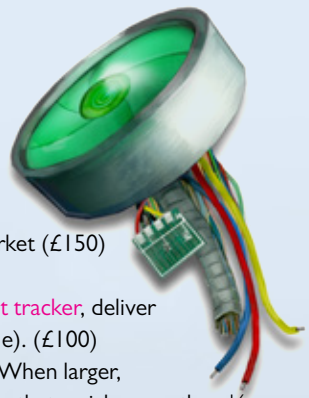
Modifying blurbflies is very delicate work, much like working on a 19th-century pocketwatch. The components are nearly microscopic and very sensitive, so replacing or installing a module is a level 4 task which takes about one hour. A failed attempt to modify your bug means the existing module is non-functional and the new one is not installed. Another attempt can be made but requires at least one level of effort (see retrying after a failure, page 134) and takes another hour.

BLURBFLY UPGRADES

If you want to make more fundamental changes to your bug, you can attempt to dismantle and reassemble it using different base components. This requires a blurbfly maintenance check based on the level of the blurb. Unlike installing or changing modules, upgrading affects the level of your bug, the distance it can move in a combat round, or it's durability.

Every blurbfly is composed of two upgradeable parts, the motivator and the chassis. The motivator is the assorted internal parts that determine agility, processing power, and power supply. The level of the installed motivator sets the level of the blurb, as it is the component that will determine its ability to perform most actions. It also houses the basic sensor suite that allows for the detection of terrain and simple targeting. The sensor suite is useful for simple recon; that is, a blurb can be used to see that there is a 6 foot (2 m) wall with two beings on the other side of it, but it will not be able to tell the admin that the wall is made of thin

EXAMPLES OF BLURBFLY MODULES



Optics. Transmits a visual feed to the admin when within control range.

Speakers. Allows the broadcasting of audio, including sonic jingles. Examples:

Sonic jingle, page 370

Dogstarrr FE21 "Spin-Doctor" -1 to the level of any jingle due to cheap materials (£10)

Dogstarrr FF7 "Tang Bang" ballistic driver. Dogstarrr's frontline model (£100)

Das Uber Industries DU-655SC "Pitbull" ballistic driver. The most popular driver on the market (£150)

Das Uber Industries DU-780SA "Visser" ballistic driver. +1 to the level of all jingles (£1000)

Stinger. A hollow needle that stings a target for 1 damage. Can be used to plant a nanodot tracker, deliver substances from a carried cypher, draw blood or fluid (requires an empty *cypher pod* module). (£100)

Nanodot tracker, page 107

Cypher pod. A mounting point that grants the ability to carry and activate small cyphers. When larger, heavier cyphers are carried, movement speed is halved until the cypher is dropped. Cyphers that weigh more than ½ pound (0.5 kg) or are larger than a tennis ball cannot be carried at all, except by specially modified (usually very heavy) bugs. (£100)

Aerosolizer. A vent designed to disburse a gas cloud. Can be used to release gas from a carried cypher (liquid or gas) or to negate the effects of an existing gas cloud (an empty vial must be loaded into a cypher pod). (£200)

I/O proboscis. A flexible wire appendage that universally interfaces with input/output ports. Can be used to upload some cyphers or download data. (£200)

Electrical Discharge Condenser (EDC). A self-contained power source that discharges electricity.

Brighton-Brighter 3B rapid charge EDC. Deals 2 electrical damage, can be used once per encounter (10 minute recharge time). (£400)

Brighton-Brighter 4B magload EDC. Deals 2 electrical damage, uses a three-round micro-battery magazine and can fire once per round. When the magazine charge is empty, it must recharge fully before the EDC can discharge again; this takes one hour. (£1000)

Stealth module. A spoofing mechanism that renders the blurbfly invisible to any form of sensor detection. Provides 2 assets in attempts to avoid normal means of detection (visual, sound). (£1000)

Combat flash module. A cartridge based micro-flash bomb which ejects a tiny magnesium-ammonium perchlorate explosive, producing a small but powerful burst of light and sound, with just enough intensity to stun a character when detonated in front of them. Blast radius of about 2 feet (61 cm). (£1000)

BLURBFLY CHASSIS STATS

Chassis	Health	Module Nodes	Flight Range	Walking Range	Agility Bonus
Very Light	2 health	1	Long	Short	Difficulty of agility checks reduced by bug level +1
Light	4 health	2	Long	Short	Difficulty of agility tasks reduced by bug level
Heavy	6 health	3	Short	Immediate	Difficulty of agility tasks reduced by bug level
Very Heavy	8 health	4	Short	Immediate	Difficulty of agility checks reduced by bug level -1

plywood and the beings are large dog-boys holding shotguns. This level of recon requires the use of modules.

The chassis is the physical structure that houses the other parts and determines the number of health points the blurbfly has, as well as the likelihood that it will be repairable (and not destroyed outright) when reduced to zero health. Chassis come in four classes, see the Blurbfly Chassis Stats table.

Additionally the chassis houses the bug's propulsion such as the legs or wings as well as the module nodes that determine how many blurbfly modules can be installed.

The combination of the chassis, motivator and the selected modules installed is sometimes referred to as the blurbfly's *build*.

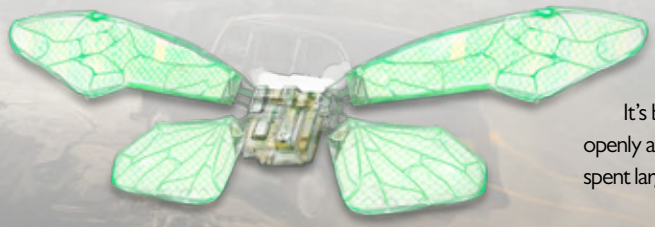
Motivators and Chassis may be purchased separately from a UrBlurb store, located in most districts. The price depends on the level of the motivator, or the type of the chassis. Motivators are commercially available up to level 4.

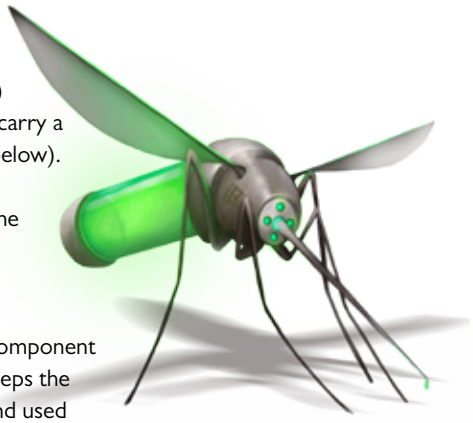
Motivator level	Price	Chassis type	Price
1	£100	Very light	£100
2	£200	Light	£100
3	£500	Heavy	£300
4	£1000	Very heavy	£500

BLURBFLY HACKING

Sometimes a blurbfly mechanic might want to create an even more specific build, changing the individual features of a motivator or chassis. This is called blurbfly hacking or bug hacking.

Hacks are custom modifications to the chassis or motivator, usually performed by a skilled blurb mechanic. For example, if you wanted to increase the range of your bug to make it more versatile in combat, you could replace the actual propulsion component of the chassis with another of your own design. In this case you might remove the wings of your Mecha Mk 1, replacing them with a modified set that enables the blurb to move 200 feet (60 m) in a single round. Hacks generally carry a penalty in another category (see below). If the player wants to invent their own hack, it's up to the GM and the player to agree on the effects and the difficulty of the hack.





Hacking a blurbfly chassis is a difficulty 6 Intellect task. Once a component has been successfully hacked, it keeps the modified stats, even if removed and used to craft another blurb.

RETAIL MODELS

The commercial blurbfly market is dominated by two main companies, whose ready-to-fly blurbs are sold in UrBlurb stores in most city districts. Motivators, chassis, modules and tookits can also be purchased separately there for an admin's upgrade projects. It's not uncommon for an admin to modify and hack their bugs so thoroughly that they're composed almost completely of custom parts. Some elite or very well-connected admins utilize blurbflies designed specially for military or intelligence agencies. This type of bug often contains unknown and classified components—the holy grail for any admin.

UrBlurb, page 189

CREATING BLURBS

There are two ways to produce a blurb. The most common (and most cost effective) is to build an adult model using basic components. Upon activation, they spring to life and do what they're programmed to do.

Far more exotic and expensive is the method that utilizes *blurbworms*. Serious engimologists often raise blurbworms as pets; these tiny metallic grubs must be fed with jingles and adverts until they metamorphosize into adult blurbs. The process is costly and takes a great deal of time, but the blurbs that are brought to life in this fashion are usually superior in every way.

LEGALITY

It's been 20 years since the days when weaponized bugs openly attacked each other over advertising space. Companies spent large amounts of money researching and upgrading their

blurbflies to compete until tight controls were put in place to discourage this type of dangerous marketing. Today, any company or individual who is caught producing or controlling a bug that can cause significant physical harm is fined heavily. That doesn't mean that weaponized blurbs don't exist—it simply means that they don't officially exist. The skies over Manchester are twice as congested as they were when the laws were imposed, but the days of Whoompy Burger Blurbs shooting down MacDizzy Burger Blurbs are over. There are more insidious ways to bring down the competition.

In addition to simply building and launching more blurbs than your competitor, subscription hormones are a legal way for corporations to have their swarms win the day. As long as they affect only the functions of other blurbs and are otherwise harmless, they are legal. New subscription hormones are released every year, but quickly become obsolete. Occasionally one is deemed dangerous to civilians and banned by the city council.

Subscription hormones, page 372

BLURBFLY HACKS

Type of hack	Improvement	Penalty
Propulsion	Flight range is increased by one increment.	-1 health due to larger propulsion parts
Propulsion	Walking range increased from immediate to short	-1 health due to larger propulsion parts
Sensor	Upgraded sensor suite (detection of specific materials, satellite uplink for extreme range control, etc)	-2 health due to sensitive parts
Sensor	Feather link. Vurt interface wetware in the place of the basic sensor suite. The bug can act as a conduit for PC consciousness when linked via a Viewing Feather. This hack enables an admin to give control of a bug to another character—possibly a hacker or someone with intimate knowledge of the environment—to gain an advantage in a given situation.	No normal targeting and detection sensors (useless for most automated functions, including combat)
Chassis	Reinforced chassis. +2 health	Agility tasks are increased in difficulty by one step.
Chassis	Extra module node	Agility tasks are increased in difficulty by one step
Chassis	One fewer module node	Agility tasks are decreased in difficulty by one step

Viewing Feather, page 367

DINO'S PERSONAL BLURB SWARM

An example of an experienced admin's blurbfly collection.

Mecha Mk3 Infiltrator "Lockhart"
Motivator: Level 3
Chassis: Heavy
Health: 5
Walking range: Immediate
Flight range: Long
Control range: 100m
Nodes: 3
- High-powered optics
- I/O proboscis
- Cypher Pod

Hack: high volume rotors (increased range, -1 health)

Mecha Mk2 Squito "Stabby"
Motivator: Level 3
Chassis: Light
Health: 3
Walking range: immediate
Flight range: Long
Control range: 100m
Nodes: 2
- Stinger
- Cypher Pod (usually for a drug)

Hack: High BPM wing hack (negates cypher pod movement penalty, -1 health

Dino's VurtBug
Motivator: Level 2
Chassis: Light
Health: 4
Walking range: n/a
Flight range: Long
Control range: ½ mile
Nodes: 1
- Standard Optics

Hack: Feather Link

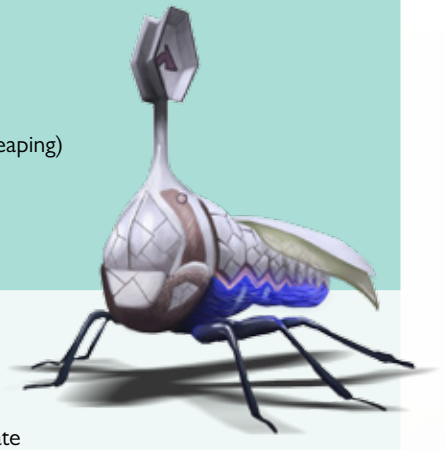
3x MechanInsect Mk 2: Squito
Motivator: Level 2
Chassis: Light
Health: 4
Walking range: Immediate
Flight range: Long
Control Range: 100m
Nodes: 2
- Stinger
- Brighton-Brighter 4B magload EDC

RETAIL BLURBFLY MODELS

MechanInsect (often referred to as "Mecha" is the premium-quality manufacturer of blurbflies that are available to public markets. In every new generation of bug models released to the public, MechanInsect is leading the pack in terms of quality and innovation. While boutique engimoligists always produce the highest-quality bugs, they're not sold on the massive public market. Mechaninsect also produces classified models under contract with certain security corporations

AAA#1 is a producer of cheap, knock-off blurbflies. Pretty much every model released is a lower-quality copy of a MechanInsect bug. Even the company logo is a copy of MechanInsect's design. That said, AAA#1 offers an affordable alternative to expensive, MechanInsect and boutique models, making them particularly attractive to admins who often send bugs on one-way missions. Most admins have a AAA#1 blurb handy for situations like this.

MechanInsect Mk 1: Gnat Motivator: Level 1 Chassis: Very Light Health: 2 Walking Range: Short Flight Range: Long Control Range: 100m Nodes: 1 Price: £250	**AAA#1: Flea** Motivator: Level 1 Chassis: Very Light Health: 2 Walking range: short (leaping) Flight range: n/a Control range: 75m Nodes: 1 Price: £200
MechanInsect Mk 2: Squito Motivator: Level 1 Chassis: Light Health: 4 Walking range: Immediate Flight range: Long Control Range: 100m Nodes: 2 Price: £300	**AAA#1: Ignat** Motivator: Level 1 Chassis: Light Health: 3 Walking range: Immediate Flight range: Long Control range: 75m Nodes: 1 + Integrated Dogstarrr "Spin-Doctor" Speaker (jingles are -1 level due to cheap manufacturing) Price: £175
MechanInsect Mk 3: Coleopter Motivator: Level 2 Chassis: Heavy Health: 6 Walking range: Immediate Flight range: Short Control range: 100m Nodes: 3 Price: £700	**AAA#1: coach-horse** Motivator: Level 2 Chassis: Light Health: 4 Walking range: Short Flight range: n/a Control Range: 100m Nodes: 3 Price: £500
MechanInsect Mk 4: Busy Bee Motivator: Level 3 Chassis: Very Heavy Health: 8 Walking range: Immediate Flight range: Short Control range: 100m Nodes: 4 Price: £1,500	**AAA#1: Centipod** Motivator: Level 2 Chassis: Heavy Health: 5 Walking range: Short Flight range: n/a Control range: 75m Nodes: 4 Price: £700



WHEREVER IN THE SKULL YOU MAY TRAVEL

Dino is a dogman. Actually, he's more man than dog, much more, but with enough tooth and claw available when battle's required, and just enough quiver at the nostrils to know which way the scent paths are running. So really he should know that currently they're running him into trouble of the deep dark kind. He shouldn't be here. He shouldn't be standing on the roof of block 7H of Bottle Town in the hope of finding an escape route from his loneliness and grief.

His companion this fine spring evening is none other than Curly Jane, famed hacker and circuit bender, owner of the finest collection of bootleg silver feathers this side of the Game Cat's secret cubbyhole. Curly Jane is an excellent shadowgirl, exactly half and half, and a loner by nature. For she has one serious defect: corporeal entities made her nervous. And dog-men, as the saying goes, have corporeality to burn. Even Dino has enough to make her feel nauseous. So Curly isn't exactly loving this rooftop rendezvous, but since the deal with the black-market flights went belly-up and the funds are close to zero, here she is, grubbing where she can for funds. Hence, this evening's entertainment.

Now Curly Jane is so named on account of the single wisp of smoke that escapes her body day and night, a thin trail curling upwards from the top of her head. Apparently, Jane's mother had bumped her there when a baby, and in consequence her fontanelle never completely fused. With the smoke rising up like that, her head looks like a chimney. But for God's sake don't ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever say to Curly's face that her head looks like a chimney. Five people at the least have said so, and let's just say they won't be sucking any good feathers any time soon. 'Nuff divulged. OK, to the gist...

"This will serve me well?" Dino asks. "This is gonna work, right?" There's no response. The dogman tries again. "You're absolutely certain this blurb fly will find what I'm looking for?"

"Oh, there are no absolutes," Curly replies. "Not in the dream world, Why, even Siggy Freud could've told you that, God bless his ever-circling subconscious, lost as it is somewhere in the unknown Vurtscape." She grins. Her upstream of smoke shapes itself momentarily into a question mark above her short raven-hued hair. "Now this will break every known privacy dreaming law, so be it on your own head." Dino gives his assent and Curtly Jane hands him a black feather, black with silver speckles. He looks at it up close and sees the map of the city caught in the flights, constantly shifting from street to street, building to building. He feels dizzy just looking at it. "Indulge, indulge," Curly Jane whispers. Dino does just that, tickling the tip of his tongue with the offering and he's gone immediately, no introductions, no menus, no foyer, no dreamlock: blacked-out solid, comatose, sleeping on his feet, gently swaying, losing himself.

Curly smiles again. She's been training insects from the get-go: breeding, growing, grafting, hacking. The whole shebang. She's got feather-gen coming out of her fingertips. She is, as far as she knows, the first fleshworld administrator (outlaw

division) to ever put a dream inside a blurb. And this particular creature is a beauty beyond compare, caught from the sky in a roof trap, tranquilised, sliced open, gene-spliced, jacked up to the nines with black and silvery mapping components of Curly Jane's own design, stitched up again, and then trained for weeks in the attic of her house. Now she stands on the lip of the roof, waiting for the wind to rise. Now she steadies herself for the moment of launch, the old 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, willing the creature to lift off of its own accord, willing the wings into flight. *Wing and a prayer, baby. Wing and a sodding prayer!* Now. Let loose!

Flutter. The moon above hanging silver, perfect, waiting. Flutter, flutter. The blurb sent sailing on the wind currents between the tower blocks. There it flies, there it glides. Now powered by its tiny engines, the two wings moving up and down, up and down repeatedly. The blurb's new travels begin. And Dino? Dino is dreaming alongside. Above the city he flies with the blurb, inhabiting the dream of flight perfectly. Below him the buildings lie in darkness or light, the roads stitching the land with yellow and red, the billboards flickering with celebrity dreamers and their latest chosen pathways to bliss. Dino soars! Dino glides! Dino hovers and drops and surges and loops, as the blurbfly soars and glides and hovers and drops and surges and loops through the night. With the blurb's power to help him, Dino sees every dream currently being dreamed: he sees them as droplets of light of different hues, all the varied combinations, a multicoloured tapestry. He howls with delight, still standing there on the rooftop, his arms outstretched, moving like imagined wings. Crazy Jane looks on, monitoring the blurb's progress via a shadow link. The three of them—blurb, mandog and shadowgirl—are momentarily combined into one glorious being. And now Dino sees what he needs to see, far below, a glimmer of colour, a pink and green droplet of light marking the spot where a certain feather is being undertaken. He knows that colour so well, those markings, the terrible addiction it can bring; he saw it so many times in the last weeks of his wife's life. He descends, guiding the blurbfly easily now, down, down, until he stops and hovers outside the third floor window of a block of flats. He looks through.

And there she is. At last. Alone with her friends, a ragged gang of addicts, each one lost on their own journey. Eyes closed, bodies twitching, fingers clenched on armrests and tabletops. Herself. His only child. Magenta. One more sorry dreamer in this vast city of dreamers. Dino looks on, his heart breaking. This far, this close. One pane of glass away, a whole dreamflight away. Seen through the blurb's lenses, the whole room is filled with the pink and green desires his daughter is currently sailing through. Dino's hand reaches out to touch the glass, as though such a thing were even possible. Under his orders, the blurb bangs again and again at the window. Dino feels the pulse, the shadow of his guide, trying to pull him back. But the goal lies ahead. He directs the creature to its task, over and over, until the poor little mechanism is smashed, body crumpled, antennae bent, wings skewed, lenses blind.

It falls.

In an instant Dino is standing on the rooftop next to Curly Jane, her twist of smoke still rising from her skull, moonwards. She's angry, and he has to pay twice over for the cost of the blurb. "Did you at least find what you were seeking?" He shakes his head. "I'm not sure." The city wavers in his sight as he looks out from the rooftop. This sky, this starlit array where the dreams float by in so many colours, always out of reach. Until it's too late.

Two days later Dino is waiting outside the building. The remains of the blurb fly are scattered on the pavement at his feet, a few bits of wire and gloop, all that's left after the scavengers have had their way. The place looks different from ground level, in daylight; less rundown than he expected. Still, he can't believe she's living in this way, with such people. Upmarket dreamers, hooked on the latest illicit thrill. Dino stands in the doorwell. He contemplates ringing the bell, hoping for an answer, a welcome. Instead, he walks across the street to the shadow of a bus shelter. One bus after another passes by, taking the hours with them; passengers get off and on, living their normal everyday lives. And still he sits and waits, as dusk falls. At last, gone eight o'clock, the door of the house opens and a woman steps out. It's her. It's Magenta. His daughter. More than nine years have passed since he last saw her. Nine years...

Dino crosses the street. For one moment he doubts the reality of his surroundings, as though he were still trapped inside a dream. The cars and the people around him blur slightly, edged with coloured light. They seem to have no more substance than cut-out paper figures. The illusion persists until he's close enough for her to notice him, for her head to turn, her eyes to register his face. To recognise him. She smiles. The crooked grin he remembers from her childhood. And with a great inwards rush of energy and noise, the world becomes real once more, solid, made of stone, brick, tarmac, metal, plastic, and flesh: her hand in his, clasped.

- Jeff Noon

CHAPTER 10

VEHICLES

Manchester is approximately 1300 square miles (3,400 km²), so having a vehicle is often a benefit to the group. Granted, thanks to congestion, construction, and constantly changing cityscape, a vehicle is not guaranteed to get you from point A to point B any faster, but there are other advantages. One nice thing about rolling in your own stash-van is having a mobile place to keep your loot, to nod out and take feathers, or maybe just to move about unseen. Depending on what your characters are into, the right vehicle can be a very useful addition to the crew.

Most vehicles are upgradeable, so if you are looking to focus your time and quid on giving your wheels a little something extra, you can specialize your ride and make it perfect for chases, shootouts, or even recon. The following sections will describe a number of vehicles that might be found for sale in Manchester, as well as the rules for modifying them to your liking with a selection of common upgrades. Depending how how the players choose to modify their vehicles, they may draw undue attention from the police or local gangs, or maybe the character's extra flashy rig grants them some respect from the street.

Remember that anything you'd like to imagine for your vehicle might be possible, even if it's not described in this chapter. GMs and players can discuss any imagined upgrades or modifications and come to an agreement as to availability, effect, and price.

VEHICLE STATS

Each vehicle has a series of stats that tell you everything you need to know when utilizing the vehicle in an encounter.

Capacity. This states how many characters can fit into the vehicle, including the driver.

Level. The level of the vehicle is used to modify the difficulty of certain driving checks including chases, escapes, and vehicle-on-vehicle combat. The higher the level, the faster and more maneuverable the vehicle.

Health. This is the durability of a vehicle—how much damage it can take before being destroyed. This will be very important when it comes to vehicle combat, and has a lot to do with how you drive.

Armor. Vehicles can be armored, just like a character. This value reduces incoming vehicle damage (see below) by a number of points equal to the Armor rating.

Vehicle Damage. Vehicles deal large amounts of damage when they are used as a weapon. Two numbers are shown under Vehicle Damage: "10/30" for example. The first number is *minor* damage and the second indicates *major* damage. This is discussed in greater detail in the following section.

Price. This is the basic value of the vehicle, in perfect working condition. The GM may decide to increase or decrease the price of the vehicle depending on the situation. For example, if the group is trying to buy a vehicle from someone who is not inclined to sell it, or if the vehicle has been upgraded from the standard model, the cost may be much higher. If the vehicle is in poor condition (missing some health points already), it may sell for less.

Stock/Optional Features. Some vehicles come with or can be fitted with special upgrades. *Stock features* are features that are installed by the manufacturer. *Optional features* may be added to the vehicle by the manufacturer for the price listed in parentheses.

VEHICLE DAMAGE

When a vehicle takes damage, be it from another vehicle, or attacks from weapons, the damage suffered is removed from the vehicle's health, exactly as it would

from an NPC. When the vehicle is reduced to 0 health, the vehicle is destroyed permanently.

Vehicles can deal *minor* and *major* damage. An example of minor vehicle damage is when two vehicles bump each other in a chase, or swipe a person or object indirectly. Major vehicle damage is dealt when the entire mass of the vehicle is thrown into a target, such as a head-on collision, sliding into an object at high speed, or a "T-bone."

When a vehicle deals damage in these ways, damage is also received from the target. For example, when a car swerves to tap another vehicle in a chase, minor vehicle damage is dealt to the target, but the target also deals *it's* minor vehicle damage in return. So, when driving a Vespa with 20 vehicle health, a side swipe against a lorry would be suicide, as the lorry's swipe damage in return will destroy the tiny Vespa.

When a vehicle deals damage to an object, consider if the object is moveable or immoveable. If an immoveable object, such as a wall or solid barricade, is dealt damage by the vehicle, the same damage is dealt directly back to the vehicle. Striking a less substantial object such as a mobile curry stand or a person deals less damage in return.

VEHICLE ARMOR

Vehicle Armor works in exactly the same way that armor worn by a character does. The Armor rating that a vehicle has is subtracted from any incoming damage. For example, a Ford Comet comes stock with 3 armor due to its heavily constructed body. This car can absorb up to 3 points of damage and take only scratches to the paint job. This includes a side-swipe (minor damage) from a small vehicle like Vespa or a Mini. In this way, vehicle armor can enable even a small vehicle to deal damage and survive the encounter.

VEHICLE REPAIRS

Unlike a character, who can make a recovery roll and regain pool points, a vehicle must be repaired in order to restore vehicle health lost due to damage. This can be accomplished either by paying a repair shop or mechanic to fix the damage, or by attempting to perform the repairs yourself.

The cost of hiring a mechanic or auto shop to restore health to your vehicle is £50 per point to be restored. For example, if your black cab suffered 9 points of damage in a chase, it would cost £450 to repair. On the other hand, if you had suffered 48 points of damage (considerable damage) it would cost a whopping £2,400. Auto shop repairs always take 24 hours.

When attempting to repair vehicle damage yourself, the extent of the damage determines the difficulty of the repair task. The task is Intellect based, with one level of difficulty for each 10 points of damage, rounded up. For example, if a vehicle has suffered 23 points of damage, it would require a difficulty 3 Intellect check to fully repair the damage.

A vehicle repair attempt takes 10 hours. However, if the difficulty of the repair task seems too high, the repairs can broken into multiple, easier attempts, each taking 10 hours to complete. For example, the 23 points of damage in the previous example can also be repaired with a difficulty 2 check (the first 20 points of health),

and a difficulty 1 check (the remaining 3 health), over two 10 hour periods. It is considerably less expensive to repair a vehicle yourself—it only costs £10 per point of damage, for the cost of parts. A set of mechanical tools is required to attempt vehicle repairs.

A failed repair attempt means that the damage is not repaired and the check must be made again, requiring another 10-hour period of work. Remember that when re-attempting a failed check, at least one level of effort must to be applied to the test.

VEHICLE UPGRADES

Vehicle improvements come in two varieties. Accessories, which grant minor improvements to the vehicle and are relatively easy to install, and vehicle modifications, which are more significant improvements which have greater effects on the way the vehicle functions. Modifications are more difficult to install.

The prices shown include the cost installation by a professional, but the PCs can also choose to install the upgrade themselves. This will save money (subtract 25% from the listed price), but will require an Intellect task to successfully install. To install an accessory, the player must succeed at a difficulty 3 Intellect based task. To install a modification, the player must succeed at a difficulty 5 Intellect based task. All upgrades require 10 hours to install.

ACCESSORIES

PDF Link (£500). This accessory allows a player to remotely communicate with the vehicle's computer from any location by using their Personal Data Feather (PDF). When accessing the vehicle via PDF, the PC can discover:

- **Vehicle Location**—the PC can always find the vehicle, as long as the PDF link is intact.
- **Diagnose Vehicle**—tells the PC exactly what is wrong with the vehicle, if anything, and list any new hardware installed (provides an asset to repair tasks).
- **Communicate with A.I. System**—if that modification is installed (see below).

An uplink port allows a character to connect to any computer system and is required for the use of a neural link system.

Off-road tires (£200 per tire). These tires have massive treads giving you an traction when driving on surfaces other than pavement. *Gain +1 to driving rolls when driving off-road.*

R Compound Tires (£200 per tire). These tires are soft and almost completely slick, allowing for maximum adherence to the road in dry conditions. The downside is that they are horrible in wet driving conditions. *Gain +1 to driving rolls on dry streets and -1 to driving rolls on wet streets.*

Fuel Tuner (£400). This small computer is easy to install and modifies the way that the vehicle's engine breathes and burns fuel. Your vehicle will be noticeably snappier when accelerating. *+1 to all driving rolls.*

Armored glass (£1,000). These replacement windows are composed of layered composites that can stop or hinder bullets. *Gain +6 Armor against attacks that would penetrate the glass.*

Mandel Tires (£1,000 per tire). These kaleidoscopic-colored tires employ a fractal-particulate surface, meaning that the amount of surface area that can adhere to the road is almost infinite. These tires can enable intrepid drivers to maintain vehicle control on steep slopes and other even surfaces where other tires would lose all traction. On well-paved asphalt, they leave a faint multicolored trail, making them easily trackable. In off-road conditions, they tend to pick up and accumulate debris from the ground they pass over, easily caking them with detritus and nullifying their enhanced grip. *Gain +2 to driving rolls on paved streets and -1 to driving rolls when off road.*

Vaz® Injector (£1,000). An easy-to-install aftermarket accessory, Vaz Injectors deliver a squirt of Vaz directly into a running engine, temporarily increasing performance. Care must be taken when using a Vaz Injector, as repeated overuse makes the engine exceed its mechanical limits, causing permanent damage to the drivetrain. *When activated, provides +1 to any driving roll. Each subsequent use (within the same encounter) causes 5 points of vehicle damage.*

Light Vehicle Armor (£2,000). These protective plates are installed in the vehicle's interior and can protect against a moderate amount of damage, including collisions and handheld weapon attacks. The added weight is noticeable when driving, however. *Gain +8 vehicle Armor and -1 to all driving rolls.*

Fuzzy Dice (£10). Makes operator of a vehicle seem to be more cool.

MODIFICATIONS

Neural Link System (£2,000). Connect directly to your vehicle's onboard computer system and really feel the road. Player must have an uplink port on their body. *Grants an asset to all driving checks when driver is plugged-in.*

Suspension upgrade (£2,000). This upgraded suspension kit is designed to reduce energy loss during acceleration and cornering. *Gain +1 to all driving rolls.*

Supercharger (£5,000). A supercharger forces air into the engine, dramatically increasing the power of a vehicle. This can only be done once to any vehicle. *Increase the level of the vehicle by one, can be stacked with engine upgrade.*

Medium Vehicle Armor (£10,000). These substantial, sturdy plates are bolted to the outside of the vehicle and can absorb a considerable amount of impact. The weight of the armor makes a vehicle noticeably sluggish. Also, everyone can see your vehicle is rigged for combat, something that the cops usually don't approve of. *Gain +20 vehicle Armor, but reduce the level of the vehicle by one.*

Heavy Vehicle Armor (£50,000). Designed for heavy vehicle combat, these layered plates are bolted to the outside of the vehicle making it pretty much indestructable. Usually installed only on dedicated combat vehicles, this type of armoring is illegal for average citi-

zens and is guaranteed to cause serious alarm to anyone watching you roll up. The major downside is that the massive weight of the armor will render most vehicles incapable of maneuvering. *Gain +40 vehicle Armor, but reduce the vehicle level by two.*

Onboard Artificial Intelligence System (£100,000). This modification adds a powerful, onboard intelligent computer to a vehicle that coordinates the mechanical functions of a vehicle with the habits and preferences of its driver. An artificial intelligence in your vehicle can perform automated driving functions, but has very limited navigation and problem-solving abilities. For example, you might say "pull up out front in five minutes," but you would be very foolish to ask it to keep watch for the police. During a vehicular chase, the vehicle can drive itself, allowing the character to perform other actions, but any driving skills or abilities will not be applied to the driving tasks.

Engine replacement (cost equal to 50% of vehicle's retail price). This modification involves removing the engine of the vehicle and replacing it with a larger, more powerful one. This can only be done once to any vehicle, but the results are impressive. *Increase the level of the vehicle by one, can be stacked with supercharger upgrade.*

RETAIL MODELS

VESPA

There's nothing like wending your way through the autumn leaves on your customized modern scooter. Vespas and other scooters are essential mod gear, from vintage models of the 1950s to the contemporary models of today. Modification is essential, as no self-respecting Mod would be seen driving a stock scooter. While scooters are not as fast or as powerful as larger motorcycles, they are much more agile and easier to deal with in crowded Manchester streets (and easier on the wallet, as well). Perfect for the absolute beginner.

Capacity: 2	Armor: 0
Level: 3	Vehicle Damage: 6/20
Health: 20	Price: £5,000

TRIUMPH

The classic British "iron horse," Triumph motorcycles have been regulation issue for movie stars, Rockers, and generally cool kids since Brando's 1950 Thunderbird 6T in *The Wild One*. Triumph's bikes and technology in general may have come a long way since then, but the quintessential feel of riding a motorcycle is still the same. Motorcycles are superior to most sports cars when it comes to city driving: their swift acceleration and maneuverability through tight urban corridors makes them ideal for weekend cruising as well as quick getaways. Leather jacket and rebellious Rocker attitude aren't required, but are certainly recommended.

Capacity: 2	Armor: 0
Level: 7	Vehicle Damage: 6/20
Health: 20	Price: £10,000

When an onboard AI is driving itself during a chase, the player rolls the driving actions on behalf of the car. The difficulty is still based on the level of the enemy driver (modified by the difference in vehicle levels), but any driving skills or assets based on the PC and not the car do not apply to the roll.
See page 152 for more detail on vehicular chases.

MINI

Minis come in a variety of makes and models, from the original 1959 BMC 2-door, through the Mini Moke dune buggy and the sporty BMW Minis of the early 21st century. What they all have in common is their quintessential British stylings and their classic compact form. *The* British car of the 1960s, the various Minis are still beloved the world over, especially in urban areas where smaller cars are easier to manage in crowded streets. Easy on the eyes and on the billfold, Minis and their modern descendants remain in high demand.

Capacity: 4	Armor: 0
Level: 3	Vehicle Damage: 10/50
Health: 50	Price: £20,000

FORD COMET

The most common car on the roads of Manchester, the classic stylings of the Ford Comet are popular with Brits who like a little bit of Yankee flair in their automobiles. Originally a descendant of the Ford Falcon, Ford's first compact car, the Comet was a sportier step between the compact and the full-sized sedan. At the turn of the century the entire line was relaunched as Ford opened a production factory in Liverpool. Ford decided to go back to the original Comet design and they've been rolling off the factory line ever since. 2-door and 4-door models are made, with the 2-door being the most popular.

Capacity: 4	Armor: 3
Level: 3	Vehicle Damage: 30/70
Health: 120	Price: £20,000

PLASTIC PIG

A cheap, mass-produced, fiberglass-body car designed for densely-populated city use, the "Plastic Pig," or "PP," has been a common sight on Manchester's roads since the early 2000s. The three-wheeled design allowed it to be classified as a motorcycle, meaning that even young people and those without a full driver's license could legally operate one. Several major car companies produce their own version of the same basic model; none are too happy with the "PP" nickname. Easy to maintain, these vehicles are popular today, especially in the poorer districts. The lower-income Vurtball fans of Manchester United have an affinity for yellow or red Plastic Pigs, and cover them with team stickers and custom paintjobs. Go United!

Capacity: 3	Armor: 0
Level: 2	Vehicle Damage: 10/40
Health: 40	Price: £10,000

LORRY

Freight must move, and lorries move freight. Whether hauling cargo across the wasteland or delivering goods along an urban route, lorries are everywhere in Singland. They are usually more compact than conventional Yankee trucks. Lorries are employed for every purpose imaginable. Mobile dance party or mobile living quarters, a lorry can be whatever you want it to be. Also, they're excellent for running over things. Or so we've heard. Their ubiquity can also be helpful for larger parties; a group travelling in a lorry may be less likely to be noticed.

Capacity: 3 (in cab), 10 (in back)	Armor: 0
Level: 3	Vehicle Damage: 30/80
Health: 200	Price: £75,000

BLACK CAB

The black cabs used to dominate the streets of Singland, as iconic as Beefeaters or bobbies. Nowadays with the advent of Xcabs (see below), these independently-owned stalwart black workhorses are mostly seen plying their trade in lower-income areas. Many are modified to compete more effectively with Xcabs, but most customers prefer them specifically because they're less traceable, with no digital travel records or onboard A.I. capabilities. If you want to do something quietly, hail a black cab. Don't forget to tip your driver for excellent service!

Capacity: 5	Armor: 10
Level: 4	Vehicle Damage: 10/60
Health: 60	Price: £30,000

Nu-XCAB™

Sleek, modern, armed and armored—Nu-Xcabs offer a safer alternative to personal transportation, albeit regulated and traceable. Nu-Xcabs and their drivers are deeply connected via neural link. Drivers are little more than tools of the cab companies, barely-autonomous extensions of the map and the dispatch. Through an agreement with the City of Manchester, all Nu-Xcabs (sometimes still referred to as "Xcabs") are licensed for defensive urban combat. Some drivers are even licensed to carry handheld firearms. If you're in a life-threatening situation and really need to get out fast, call a Nu-Xcab. Worry about the bill later.

Capacity: 5	Armor: 20
Level: 6	Vehicle Damage: 10/50
Health: 50	Price: n/a

Stock features:

Auto-fire turret (heavy damage). Programmed to automatically retaliate against any attack (only operates in defense of the Nu-Xcab and its client). Does not require a character to operate and cannot be manually fired.

Onboard Artificial Intelligence System, PDF Link and Neural Link System.

VURT-U-WANT VAN

A rolling Vurt-U-Want, these feather-vending vans bring joy and escape to those who can't be bothered to leave their neighborhoods in order to score a dream. Much like a Mr. Whippy™ ice cream van, these rolling shops cruise through neighborhoods selling feathers, shadowed by a swarm of blurbflies hawking the latest trips from the various Vurt feather studios. Officially, Vurt-U-Want vans can only carry legal Blues and Pinks, though drivers have been known to stock other, less commercially available feathers, some decent pharma, and sometimes inside inpho. Be ready to slip the driver a few quid for it, though. Vurt-U-Want vans are also licensed to have armor and come standard with a range of other security features. Speakers that blast the Vurt-U-Want theme song come standard, but can be turned off. That jingle really gets stuck in your head.

Capacity: 6	Armor: 8
Level: 2	Vehicle Damage: 10/70
Health: 70	Price: £100,000

Stock features:

Safe Storage. Steel slide-out panels with locking lids, perfect for storage of feathers, and is easily modifiable for weapon and item storage. They also make quite a smashing display.

Zap-O-Matic™ security doors. When active, a failed attempt to force or lockpick the vehicle doors results in an electrical discharge which deals 4 damage.

STASH VAN

The classic, easy-to-maintain, easy-to-push microbus never goes out of style, and remains the vehicle of choice for everyone from hopped-up crusties to ironic drippies. This classic, roomy model hasn't changed in over 75 years, and is still produced down south in Brighton. Whether you need transportation for the whole crew, or a mobile crash-pad, the micro bus will get you where you need to be—just don't plan on getting there early.

Capacity: 6	Armor: 0
Level: 2	Vehicle Damage: 10/30
Health: 30	Price: £1,000

U.D.M.

Sporting the latest in style and technology, this luxury sport sedan is truly the Ultimate Driving Machine. 20 years ago, the megacorp Vaz International® bought Jaguar®, repurposing factories down south to produce the next generation of A.I.-capable self-driving cars. Vaz Int. put together a development team consisting entirely of pure robos and tasked them with creating the ideal driving experience. They created a global hit—and to this day each new model outsells the last. Even though it basically doubles the price tag, more than half of all UDMs purchased come equipped with a preprogrammed onboard A.I. While a fully self-driving experience is possible, many customers buy the UDM to experience the power of one of the fastest automobiles on the road. Grip that wheel and hit the jam, this lovely does 0-60 in two and a quarter.

Capacity: 5	Armor: 0
Level: 8	Vehicle Damage: 15/50
Health: 90	Price: £100,000
Optional features: **Onboard Artificial Intelligence System.** **Neural Link**	

HOVERCOUPE

Hover technology, still relatively new, is not as efficient or practical as a set of wheels. However, the personal social status gained by owning a first-generation hovercar has made them popular enough to be seen on quite a few Manchester motorways. Advanced hover tech means that it only takes a relatively small amount of power to deliver quite a bit of speed to these sporty coupes. This makes hover vehicles ideal for speedy personal transport, but also means that hover vehicles have very little traction or power for towing or pushing. Hover cars will ride in the same smooth fashion over any terrain, and can elevate up to 15 feet off the ground to clear obstacles or heavy traffic, though they move very slowly when doing so. Most of the major auto producers now have a model available for a huge price. Vaz International® has just launched a stretched-model hovercoup that seats eight comfortably.

Capacity: 2	Armor: 0
Level: 7	Vehicle Damage: 15/40
Health: 40	Price: £200,000

LAND RAVER

The Land Raver has been a fixture of Northern Singland for years, both on and off the road. Whether slogging through mud on the lonely moors or inching through traffic on a crowded motorway, the original sport utility vehicle has maintained its reputation as a reliable, boxy workhorse for town and country, military and civilian alike. The more recent models have neural link capabilities, and those drivers that like to Plug In agree that Land Ravers are their car of choice. Seats six comfortably, and the new DUI sound systems make these cars a mobile party.

Plugs In, page 86

Capacity: 6	Armor: 0
Level: 5	Vehicle Damage: 20/60
Health: 100	Price: £50,000
Optional features: **Neural Link**	

LANCELOT

While assault vehicles are not commonly seen on the streets of Manchester, several government agencies and powerful corporate entities do have access to them. The Lancelot is a hardened vehicle, armored against small arms fire and provide decent protection from IEDs and landmines. In its basic configuration, the cab carries two people, and the personnel carrier module can carry a squad of up to eight soldiers and heavy gear. Other configurations replace the personnel module with communications stations, ambulance modules, etc. The Lancelot features several modular weapons mounts and a unique gearing and balance system for the drivetrain: it can continue to function, for limited distances, even if one wheel has been blown off. There is no worry about weapon licensing or city ordinances for these vehicles, as they are not legal for the public to buy or operate. The Manchester Police Dept. deploys Lancelots as part of the heavily armed Urban Warfare Unit and during riot control situations.

Capacity: 8	Armor: 40
Level: 5	Vehicle Damage: 40/80
Health: 200	Price: n/a
Optional features: **Manual-fire flame turret (heavy damage).** May be fitted with an exposed gunnery position on the roof. Requires a character to operate the weapon. **Gas dispersal module.** Vehicle can discharge a cloud of gas, encompassing anything in front of the vehicle within short range.	

TETHRA MECH SUIT

The Tethra Mech suit system is a versatile platform for many different applications. The most common versions of these machines are by far the unarmed, unarmored construction vehicles. Industrial mech suits are used in materials handling, construction, and demolition, and their maneuverability and versatility has greatly improved the efficiency of the modern workforce.

Armed and armored walking robots can turn a single person into a squad, combining the firepower of an armored car with the maneuverability to operate where standard vehicles cannot. They're not as fast as wheeled vehicles, but their ability to take the fight to the enemy is unparalleled. While a few of these armored behemoths defend well-funded corporate headquarters, most armed mech suits are police vehicles, equipped with a combination of lethal and non-lethal weaponry. In addition to a neural link, mech suits require specialized training: all non-trained drivers operate at one step greater difficulty. Non-trained drivers attempting to target weapons while piloting will also suffer one step greater difficulty to fire weapons, and will need to successfully complete a piloting task (Intellect, level 3) to to stay upright, not crash into struts, etc.

Capacity: 1	Armor: 0 or 20
Level: 2 (slow)	Vehicle Damage: 20/50
Health: 150	Price: n/a
Stock features: **Neural Link System.**	
Optional features: **Industrial Model:** Lifting forks, jackhammers, grappling claws, trenching saws, etc. (heavy melee damage, at GM's discretion) **Combat Model:** **Manual-fire Twin Weapons (heavy damage x2).** Standard lethal armament. A successful attack action by pilot generates two hits per single target. **Manual-fire Twin Riot Stunners (2 damage, special)** Standard non-lethal armament for crowd control. These weapons are configured for area effect: one attack roll targets a 10-foot wide by 5-foot deep area (see "Riot Stunner," page 104 for full effects). **Armor:** Armed mech suits usually carry 20 points of armor.	

POLICE PATROL CAR

In the past, police patrol cars were the lightning-fast first response to crime or civil disturbance. In the perpetually gridlocked Mancunian streets of today, however, police patrol cars often function more like slightly mobile call boxes: providing cover, communication, and temporary incarceration space for cops on the beat. That's not to say that police patrol cars don't have the potential to blow the doors off of almost anything else on the open road, if they can ever find a bit of open road. While well armored, patrol vehicles are not armed, though they can carry a dazzling array of armament for the officers inside.

Capacity: 2 (in front), 3 (in back)	Armor: 20 (40 when ramming)
Level: 8	Vehicle Damage: 15/50
Health: 90	Price: £100,000
Stock features: **Searchlight** **Suspension Upgrade:** +1 to dice roll for all driving tasks **Reinforced front bumper (ram)** Treat as additional 20 armor points for any head-on collisions **Advanced Communications Package: V**oice, inpho, Vurt-based and radio systems keep officers connected at all times. **Neural Link System.**	

PANDION VTOL

As the megacity of Manchester began to expand vertically, conventional helicopters became obsolete. The danger of open-rotor collisions while navigating the glass and steel urban canyons was too great, and ducted fan-in-wing craft replaced the older technology. Fan-in-wing designs are a bit more forgiving of light collisions with buildings, allowing MPD pilots to fly lower to the action between skyscrapers. As police technology went, so followed others, and now helicopters have been almost universally replaced by ducted-fan vehicles. Civilian Pandions are generally neither armored nor armed, though a few corporate security firms are authorized to do so.

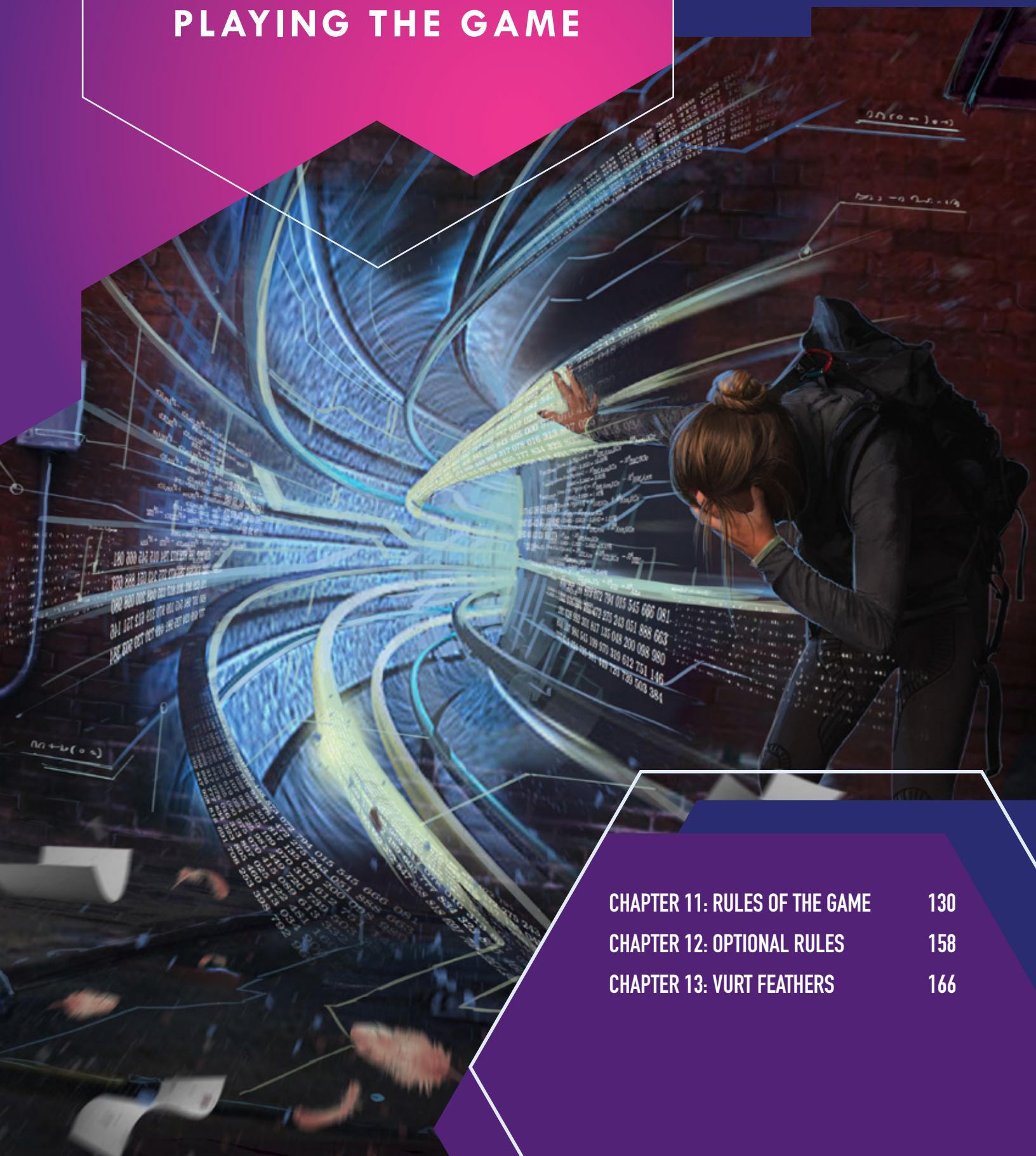
Capacity: 2 (in front), 8 (in back)	Armor: 0
Level: 7	Vehicle Damage: 15/40
Health: 50	Price:£2,000,000

Stock features:
Searchlight
Advanced Radar: Three-dimensional active radar mapping, system warns pilot of potential collision via neural link.
Neural Link System.

Optional features:
Armor (20 points)
Manual-fire Door-Mounted Weapon (heavy damage, x3). Non-flame, burst-fire. Standard lethal armament. Must be operated manually by a character other than the pilot.
Manual-fire Door-Mounted Riot Stunners (see Riot Stunner, page 104) Standard non-lethal armament for crowd control. Must be operated manually by a character other than the pilot.
Shadow-box Carrier (4 Shadow-Boxes) Up to four shadow-boxes can be mounted on the belly of each copter, launch initiated by pilot via neural link.

PART 3

PLAYING THE GAME



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CHAPTER 11

RULES OF THE GAME

Cypher System games are played in the joint imagination of all the players, including the GM. The GM sets the scene, the players state what their characters attempt to do, and the GM determines what happens next. The rules and the dice help make the game run smoothly, but it's the people, not the rules or the dice, that direct the action and determine the story—and the fun. If a rule gets in the way or detracts from the game, the players and the GM should work together to change it.

This is how you play the Cypher System:

The player says what they want to do. This is the character action.

The GM determines if that action is routine (and therefore no roll is needed) or if there is a chance of failure.

If there is a chance of failure, the GM determines which stat the task uses (Might, Speed or Intellect) and the task's difficulty—how hard it will be on a scale from 1 (really easy) to 10 (basically impossible).

The player and the GM determine if anything about the character (such as training, equipment, special abilities or various actions) can modify the difficulty up or down by one or more steps. If these modifications reduce the difficulty to less than 1, the action is routine (and therefore works with no roll needed).

If the action still isn't routine, the GM uses its difficulty to determine the target number—how high the player must roll to succeed at the action (see the Task Difficulty Chart on page 132). The GM doesn't have to tell the player what the target number is, but can provide a hint, especially if the character would reasonably know if the action was easy, average, difficult, or impossible.

The player rolls a d20. If the roll is equal to or higher than the target number, the character succeeds.

That's it! That's how to do anything, whether it's climbing up a drainpipe, shooting a flame pistol at a moving target or convincing a bouncer to let you into a nightclub. Even if you ignored all the other rules, you could still play the Cypher System with just this information. The key features here are: character actions, determining task difficulty, and determining modifications.

TAKING ACTION

Each character gets one turn each round. A character can do one thing during their turn—an action. All actions fall into one of three categories: Might, Speed or Intellect (just like the three stats). Many actions require die rolls—rolling a d20.

Every action performs a task, and every task has a difficulty that determines what number a character must reach or surpass with a die roll to succeed.

Most tasks have a difficulty of 0, which mean the character succeeds automatically. For example, walking across a room, opening a door and throwing a stone into a nearby bucket are all actions, but none of them requires a roll. Actions that are usually difficult or that become difficult due to the situation (such as shooting at a target through a swarm of advertising blurbflies) have a higher difficulty. These actions usually require a roll.

Some actions require a minimum expenditure of Might, Speed, or Intellect points. If a character cannot

KEY CONCEPTS

Action: Anything a character does that is significant—punch an enemy, leap between rooftops, activate a device, use a special power, and so on. Each character can take one action in a round.

Character: Any creature in the game capable of acting, whether it is a player (PC) run by a player or a nonplayer character (NPC) run by the game master (GM). In Vurt: the RPG, even bizarre creatures, computers and beings from another dimension can be characters.

Difficulty: A measure of how easy it is to accomplish a task. Difficulty is rated on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). Alternating the difficulty to make a task harder is referred to as increasing the difficulty. Altering it to make a task easier is referred to as reducing or decreasing the difficulty. All changes in difficulty are measured in steps. Difficulty often equates directly with level, so opening a level 3 locked door probably has a difficulty of 3.

Effort: Spending points from a stat Pool to reduce the difficulty of a task. A PC decides whether or not to apply Effort on a turn, before the roll is made. NPCs never apply Effort.

Level: A way to measure the strength, difficulty, power, or challenge of something in the game. Everything in the game has a level. NPCs and objects have levels that determine the difficulty of any task related to them. For example, an opponent's level determines how hard it is to hit or avoid in combat. A door's level indicates how hard it is to break down. A lock's level determines how hard it is to pick. Levels are related on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). PC tiers are a little like levels, but they go only from 1 to 6 and mechanically work very differently than levels—for example, a PC's tier does not determine a task's difficulty.

Roll: A d20 roll made by a PC to determine whether an action is successful. Although the game occasionally uses other dice, when the text simply refers to "a roll" it always means a d20 roll.

Round: A length of time about five to ten seconds long. There are about ten rounds in a minute. When it's really important to track precise time, use rounds. Basically, it's the length of time to take an action in the game, but since everyone more or less acts simultaneously, all characters get to take an action each round.

Stat: One of the three defining characteristics for PCs: Might, Speed, or Intellect. Each stat has two values: Pool and Edge. You Pool represents you raw, innate ability, and you Edge represents knowing how to use what you have. Each stat Pool can increase or decrease over the course of play—for example, you can lose points from you Might Pool when struck by an opponent, spend points from you Intellect Pool to activate a special ability, or rest to recover points in your Speed Pool after a long day of marching. Anything that damages a stat, restores a stat, or boosts or penalizes a stat affects the stat's Pool.

Task: Any action that a PC attempts. The GM determines the difficulty of the task. In general, a task is something that you do and an action is you performing that task, but in most cases they mean the same thing.

Turn: The part of the round when a creature takes its actions. For example, in a combat round, a warrior takes an action on their turn, a mathemagician takes an action on their turn and an enemy takes an action on their turn. Some abilities or effects last only while a creature takes its turn or end when a creature takes its next turn.

spend the minimum number of points needed to complete the action, they automatically fail at the task.

DETERMINING TASK STAT

Every task relates to one of a character's three stats: Might, Speed, or Intellect. Physical activities that require strength, power, or endurance relate to Might. Physical activities that require agility, flexibility, or fast reflexes relate to Speed. Mental activities that require force of will, memory, or mental power relate to Intellect. This means you can generalize tasks into three categories: Might tasks, Speed tasks, and Intellect tasks. You can also generalize rolls into three categories: Might rolls, Speed rolls, and Intellect rolls.

The category of the task or roll determines what kind of Effort you can apply to the roll and may determine how a character's other abilities affect the roll. For example, a mathemagician may be better at Intellect rolls due to an ability, and a Warrior may have a similar ability for Speed rolls.

DETERMINING TASK DIFFICULTY

The most frequent thing a GM does during the game—and probably the most important—is setting a task's difficulty. To make the job easier, use the Task Difficulty table (on the following page), which associates difficulty rating with a descriptive name, a target number, and general guidance about the difficulty.

Every difficulty from 1 to 10 has a target number associated with it. The target number is easy to remember: it's always three times the difficulty. The target number is the minimum number a player needs to roll on a d20 to succeed at the task. Moving up or down on the table is called increasing or decreasing the difficulty, which is measured in steps.

For example reducing a difficulty 5 task to a difficulty 4 task is "reducing the difficulty by one step." Most modifiers affect the difficulty rather than the player's roll. This has two consequences:

Low target numbers such as 3 or 6, which would be boring in most games that use a d20, are not boring the

TASK DIFFICULTY

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

Cypher System. For example, if you need to roll a 6 or higher, you still have a 25% chance to fail.

GM Intrusion, page 134

The upper levels of difficulty (7, 8, 9, and 10) are all but impossible because the target numbers are 21 or higher, which you can't roll on a d20. However, it's common for PCs to have abilities or equipment that reduce the difficulty of a task and thus lower the target number to something they can roll on a d20.

A character's tier does not determine a task's level. Things don't get more difficult just because a character's tier increases—the world doesn't instantly become a more difficult place. Fourth-tier characters don't deal only with level 4 creatures or difficulty 4 tasks (although a fourth-tier character probably has a better shot at success than a first-tier character does). Just because something is level 4 doesn't necessarily mean it's meant only for fourth-tier characters. Similarly, depending on the situation, a fifth-tier character could find a difficulty 2 task just as challenging as a second-tier character des.

Therefore, when setting the difficulty of a task, the GM should rate the task on its own merits, not on the power of the characters.

MODIFYING THE DIFFICULTY

After the GM sets the difficulty for a task, the player can try to modify it for their character. Any such modification applies only to this particular attempt at the task. In other words, rewiring an electronic door lock normally might be difficulty 6, but since the character doing the work is skilled in such tasks, has the right tools, and has another character assisting them, the difficulty in this instance might be much lower. That's why it's important for the GM to set a task's difficulty without taking the character into account. The character comes in at this step.

By using skills and assets, working together, and—perhaps most important—applying Effort, a character can decrease a task's difficulty by multiple steps to make it easier. Rather than adding bonuses to the player's roll, reducing the difficulty lowers the target number. If the player reduces the difficulty of the task to 0, no roll is needed; success is automatic. (An exception is if the GM decides to use a GM intrusion on the task, in which case the player would have to make a roll at the original difficulty.)

There are three basic ways in which a character can decrease the difficulty of a task: skills, assets, and Effort. Each of them decreases the difficulty by at least one step—never in smaller increments.

SKILLS

Characters may be skilled at performing a specific task. A skill can vary from character to character. For example, one character might be skilled at trickery, and a third might be skilled in all interpersonal interactions. The first level of being skilled is called being trained, and it decreases the difficulty of that task by one step. More rarely, a character can be incredibly skilled at performing a task. This is called being specialized, and it decreases the difficulty of a task by two steps instead of one. Skills can never decrease a task by more than two steps; being trained and specialized in a skill decreases the difficulty by only two steps, not three.

ASSETS

An asset is anything that helps a character with a task, such as having a really good crowbar when trying to force open a door or being in a rainstorm when trying to put out a fire. Appropriate assets vary from task to task. The perfect set of lockpicks might help when opening a door, but it won't make a dance performance much better. An asset usually reduces a task's difficulty by one step. Assets can never decrease the difficulty by more than two steps.

EFFORT

A player can apply Effort to decrease the difficulty of a task. To do this, the player spends points from the stat

Pool that's most appropriate to the task. For example, applying Effort to push a stalled car to the side of the road requires a player to spend points from their character's Might Pool; applying Effort to calculate a deadly mathemagickal equation requires points from the player's Intellect pool. For every level of Effort spent on a task, the task's difficulty decreases by one step. It costs 3 points from a stat Pool to apply one level of Effort, and it costs 2 additional points for every level thereafter (so it costs 5 points for two levels of Effort, 7 points for three levels of Effort, and so on). A character must spend point from the same stat Pool as the type of task or roll—Might points for a Might roll, Speed points for a Speed roll, or Intellect points for an Intellect roll.

Every character has a maximum level of Effort they can apply to a single task.

ROLLING THE DIE

To determine success or failure, a player rolls a die (always a d20). If the result is equal to or higher than the target number, the character succeeds at the task. Most of the time, that's the end of it—nothing else needs to be done. Occasionally, a character might apply a small modifier to the roll. If the PC has a +2 bonus when attempting specific actions, they add 2 to the number rolled. However, the original roll matters if it's a special roll.

If a character applies a modifier to the die roll, it's possible to get a result of 21 or higher, in which case they can attempt a task with a target number above 20. But if there is no possibility for success—if not even rolling a natural 20 (meaning the d20 shows that number) is sufficient to accomplish the task—then no die roll is made. Otherwise, characters would have a chance to succeed at everything, even impossible or ridiculous tasks, such as destroying a tank by throwing a glass bottle at it.

> Tasks which are absurd in the real world can sometimes be possible in the Vurt. So while climbing moonbeams or throwing elephants may be impossible in the real world, inside a Vurt such fantasies can become real, so don't be afraid to try absurd things if you're so inclined!

If a character's modifiers add up to +3, treat them as an asset instead. In other words, instead of adding a +3 bonus to the roll, reduce the difficulty of the task by one step. For example, if a warrior has a +1 bonus to attack rolls from a minor effect, a +1 bonus to attack rolls from a special weapon quality, and a +1 bonus to attack rolls from a special ability, do not add 3 to their attack roll—instead, reduce the difficulty of the attack by one step. So if the player attacks a level 3 enemy, the roll is normally made against difficulty 3, meaning a target number of 9. But, thanks to the asset, the roll is made against difficulty 2, meaning that the target number is 6.

Treating a stack of these bonuses as an asset is an important distinction when stacking skills and assets to decrease the difficulty of an action, especially since reducing the difficulty to 0 or lower means no roll is needed. Remember that no more than 2 assets can be used to reduce the difficulty of a single roll. This keeps the difficulty of the game in balance.

THE PLAYER ALWAYS ROLLS

In the Cypher System, players always drive the action. That means they make all the die rolls. If a PC leaps out of a moving vehicle, the player rolls to see if the action is a success. If a PC searches for a hidden panel, the player rolls to determine if anything if anything is found. If a rockslide falls on a PC, the player rolls to try to get out of the way. If a PC and and NPC arm wrestle, the player rolls, and the NPC's level determines the target number. If a PC attacks an enemy, the player rolls to see if the attack hits. If an enemy attacks the PC, the player rolls to see if the PC dodges the attack.

As shown by the last two examples, the player rolls whether the PC is attacking or defending. Thus, something that improves defenses might help or hinder the player's rolls. For example, if a PC uses a low wall to gain cover from incoming gunfire, the wall decreases the difficulty of the player's defense rolls. If an enemy uses the wall to gain cover from the PC's attacks, it increases the difficulty of the player's attack roll.

The great thing about this mechanic is that it dramatically reduces the number of stats that are required when engaged in conflicts with NPCs, allowing you to focus on the narrative, rather than the math.

SPECIAL ROLLS

If a character rolls a natural 1, 17, 18, 19, or 20 (meaning the d20 shows that number), special rules come into play. These are explained in more detail in the following sections.

1: Intrusion. The GM makes a free intrusion (see below) and doesn't award experience points (XP) for it.

17: Damage Bonus. If the roll was a damage-dealing attack, it deals 1 additional point of damage.

18: Damage Bonus. If the roll was a damage-dealing attack, it deals 2 additional points of damage.

19: Minor Effect. If the roll was a damage-dealing attack, it deals 3 additional points of damage. If the roll was something other than an attack, the PC gets a minor effect in addition to the normal result of the task.

20: Major Effect. If the roll was a damage-dealing attack, it deals 4 additional points of damage. If the roll was something other than an attack, the PC gets a major effect in addition to the normal result of the task. If the PC spent points from a stat Pool on the action, the point cost for the action decreases to 0, meaning the character regains those points as if they did not spend them at all.

GM INTRUSION

A GM intrusion occurs when the player rolls a natural 1 on the d20 when attempting a task, or at special times at the GM's discretion.

GM intrusion is explained in more detail in chapter 17, but essentially it means that something occurs to complicate the character's life. The character hasn't necessarily fumbled or done anything wrong (although they may have). It could just be that that task presents an unexpected difficulty or something unrelated affects the current situation.

For GM intrusion on a defense roll, a roll of 1 might mean that the PC takes 2 additional points of damage from the attack, indicating that the opponent got in a lucky blow.

MINOR EFFECT

A minor effect happens when a player rolls a natural 19. Most of the time, a minor effect is slightly beneficial to the PC, but not overwhelming.

A climber shimmies up a drainpipe a little faster. A repaired car engine runs just a little smoother. A character jumping down from a wall lands on their feet. Either the GM or the player can come up with a possible minor effect that fits the situation, but both must agree on what it should be.

Don't waste a lot of time thinking of a minor effect if nothing appropriate suggests itself. Sometimes, in cases where only success or failure matters, it's okay to have no minor effect. Keep the game moving at an exciting pace.

In combat, the easiest and most straightforward minor effect is dealing 3 additional points of damage with an attack. The following are other common minor effects for combat:

Strike a specific body part: The attacker strikes a specific spot on the defender's body. The GM rules what special effect results, if any. For example, hitting a creature's tentacle that's wrapped around an ally might make it easier for the ally to escape. Hitting an enemy in the eye might blind it for one round. Hitting a creature in it's one vulnerable spot might ignore Armor.

Knock Back: The enemy is knocked or forced back a few feet. Most of the time, this doesn't matter much, but if the fight takes place on a ledge or next to a vat of chemicals, the effect can be significant.

Move Past: The character can move a short distance at the end of the attack. This effect is useful to get past an enemy guarding a door, for example.

Distract: For one round, the difficulty of all tasks the enemy attempts is modified by one step to its detriment.

Usually, the GM just has the desired minor effect occur. For example, rolling a 19 against a relatively weak enemy means it's knocked off the the cliff. The effect makes the round more exciting, but the defeat of a minor creature has no significant impact on the story. Other times, the GM might rule that an additional roll is needed to achieve the effect—the special roll only gives the PC the opportunity for a minor effect. This mostly happens when the desired effect is very unlikely, such as pushing a 20-ton combat vehicle off a cliff. If the player just wants to deal 3 additional points of damage as the minor effect, no extra roll is needed.

MAJOR EFFECT

A major effect happens when a player rolls a natural 20. Most of the time, a major effect is quite beneficial to the character. A climber shimmies up a drainpipe in half the time. A jumper lands so deftly that those nearby are impressed and intimidated. A defender makes a free attack on their enemy.

Either the GM or the player can come up with a possible major effect that fits the situation, but both must agree on what it should be. As with minor effects, don't spend a lot of time agonizing over the details of a major effect. In cases where only success or failure matters, a major effect might offer the character a one-time asset (a modification of one step) to use the next time they attempt a similar action. When nothing else seems appropriate, the GM can simply grant the PC an additional action on their turn that same round.

In combat, the easiest and most straightforward major effect is dealing 4 additional points of damage with an attack. The following are other common major effects for combat:

Knock Down: The enemy is knocked prone. They can get up on their turn if they wish.

Disarm: The enemy drops one object that they are holding.

Stun: The enemy loses their next action.

Impair: For the rest of the combat, the difficulty of all tasks the enemy attempts is modified by one step to its detriment.

As with minor effects, usually the GM just has the desired major effect occur, but sometimes can require an extra roll if the major effect is unusual or unlikely.

RETRYING AFTER FAILURE

If a character fails a task (whether it's climbing a wall, picking a lock, trying to figure out a mysterious device, or something else) they can attempt it again, but must apply at least one level of Effort when retrying that task. A retry is a new action, not part of the same action that failed, and it takes the same amount of time as the first attempt did.

Sometimes the GM might rule that retries are impossible. Perhaps a character has one chance to convince the leader of a group of gangers not to attack, and after that, no amount of talking will stop them.

This rule doesn't apply to something like attacking a foe in combat because combat is always fluid and changing. Each round's situation is new, not a repeat of a previous situation, so a missed attack cannot be retried.

INITIAL COST

The GM can assign a point cost to a task just for trying it. Called an initial cost, it's simply an indication that the task is particularly taxing. For example, let's say a character wants to try a Might action to open a heavy cellar door that is partially rusted shut. The GM says that forcing the door open is a difficulty 5 task, and there's an initial cost of 3 Might points simply to try. This initial cost is in addition to any point the character chooses to spend on the roll (such as when applying Effort), and the initial cost points do not affect the difficulty of the task. In other words, the character must spend 3 Might points to attempt the task at all, but that doesn't help them open the door. If the PC wanted to apply Effort to lower the difficulty, they'd have to spend more points from their Might Pool.

Edge helps with the initial cost of a task, just as it does with any expenditure from a character's Pool. In the previous example, if the character had a MIght Edge of 2, they would have to spend only 1 point (3 points minus 2 from their Might Edge) for the initial cost to attempt the task. If the player also applied a level of Effort to open the door the Edge could not be used again—Edge applies only once per action—so using the Effort would cost the full 3 points. Thus the player would spend a total of 4 points (1 for the initial cost plus 3 for the Effort) from their Might Pool.

The rationale of the initial cost rule is that even in the Cypher System, where things like Effort can help a character succeed on an action, logic still suggests that some actions are very difficult and taxing, particularly for some PCs.

DISTANCE

Distance is simplified into three basic categories: immediate, short, and long.

Immediate distance from a character is within reach or within a few steps; if a character stands in a small room, everything in the room is within immediate distance. At most, immediate distance is 10 ft (3 m). Immediate distance is sometimes referred to as close, or even point-blank, particularly when referring to ranges.

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

Long distance is anything greater than short distance but less than 100 ft (30 m) or so. Beyond that range, distances are always specified—500 ft (152 m), 1 mile (2 km), and so on.

All weapons and special abilities use these terms for ranges. For example, all melee weapons have immediate range—they are close-combat weapons, and you can use them to attack anyone within immediate distance. A thrown knife (and most other thrown weapons) has short range. A small handgun also has short range. A rifle has long range.

A character can move an immediate distance as part of another action. In other words, the PC can take a few steps to the light switch and flip it on, lunge across a small room and attack an enemy with a knife, or move a couple of meters and fire a gun from behind cover.

A short distance may be moved as an entire action for a turn. A PC can also try to move a long distance as an entire action, but may need to roll to determine if they come up short, slip, tumble or fall from moving so quickly.

GMs and players don't need to determine exact distances. For example, if the PCs are fighting a group of Torchers from Bottletown, any character can likely attack any enemy in the general melee—they're all within immediate range. However, if one Torcher stays back to fire a pistol, a character might have to use an entire action to move the short distance required to attack that enemy. It doesn't matter if the Torcher is 20 ft (6 m) or 40 ft (12 m) away—it's simply considered short distance. It does matter if the Torcher is more than 50 ft (15 m) away because that distance would require a long move.

TRAVEL IN MANCHESTER

Manchester has become the largest city in the world. Not only has the city grown outwards, it has become

TIMEKEEPING

Action	Time Usually Required
Crossing a city district	About 60 minutes
Moving from one significant location in a city district to another	About 60 minutes
Walking a mile over easy terrain (clean upscale areas)	About 30 minutes
Walking a mile over rough terrain (slums, Limbo)	About 60 minutes
Walking a mile over difficult terrain (garbage dump, rooftops)	About 90 minutes
Sneaking into a guarded location	About 15 minutes
Observing a new location to get salient details	About 15 minutes
Having an in-depth discussion	About 10 minutes
Resting after a fight or other strenuous activity	About 10 minutes
Resting and having a quick meal	About 30 minutes
Shopping for supplies in a market or store	About 1 hour
Meeting with an important contact	About 30 minutes
Referencing a book or data store	About 30 minutes
Searching a room for hidden things	30 minutes to 1 hour
Searching for cyphers or other valuables amid a lot of stuff	About 1 hour
Identifying and understanding a cypher	15 minutes to 30 minutes
Identifying and understanding an artifact	15 minutes to 3 hours
Repairing a device (assuming parts and tools available)	1 hour to 1 day

a maze in which the streets of the old city have become clogged with shantytowns, new paths have been carved through neighborhoods, and from year to year the map changes and Manchester becomes more dense and complex of a system. Though your PC was likely a born Mancunian and might die there, traveling from the neighborhood of your birth to a Vurt-U-Want in the next district may be as difficult a proposition as finding your hotel your first time in Chroma, Italia. Manchester is just too large and complex to know by heart.

Fortunately, there are many tools to help people get from point A to point B. A battered old road atlas which has been marked and notated and changed hands a dozen times is one way to find the path to your destination (see A-Z Book, page, 361). A guide who knows one small section of the city like the back of their hand may be available for hire or trade. If you've got the cash (a lot of cash), a ride in a Nu-Xcab will get you anywhere in the city, fast and bulletproof, thanks to their cutting-edge car tech and a continuously updated model of the entire city burned into their head.

City district, page 211

When traveling, one member of the group must make a navigation roll for each city district that is traveled in. For example to travel to another location in the same district, make one navigation roll. If the target location is in an adjacent district, make two navigation rolls.

Navigation rolls are level 4 Intellect checks and effort can be applied to it like any other check to reduce the difficulty. If the navigation roll is success, the group reaches the destination without incident. However, a failed roll means that the group runs into some complication on the way. You can think of this complication as a GM intrusion, but no XP is awarded to the group. After dealing with the complication, (assuming that the result of the encounter doesn't dictate otherwise) the group arrives at the destination. You can refer to page 293 for some examples of complications the group may encounter.

If the group is traveling in a vehicle navigation rolls are made normally, and the same complications arise. Some complications, like a small group of thugs, may be easy to handle if you're in a vehicle. On the other hand, encountering an unruly crowd might be more of a problem in a vehicle than it would be on foot.

TIMEKEEPING

Generally, keep time the same way that you normally would, using minutes, hours, days and weeks. Thus, if the characters walk across five city districts in Manchester, five hours pass, even though the journey can be described in only a few seconds at the game table. Precision timekeeping is rarely important. Most of the time, saying things like "that takes about an hour" works fine.

This is true even when a special ability has a specific duration. In an encounter, a duration of "one minute" is mostly the same as saying "the rest of the encounter." You don't have to track each round that ticks by if you don't want to. Likewise, an ability that lasts for ten minutes can safely be considered the length of an in-depth conversation, the time it takes to quickly explore a small area, or the time it takes to rest after a strenuous activity.

When it comes to exploring the Vurt, time passes differently than it does in the real world. Hours may pass

in the dream, while in the real world, only moments have gone by. It will be up to the GM and the Feather description to determine how time moves in the Vurt.

ENCOUNTERS, ROUNDS AND INITIATIVE

Sometimes in the course of the game, the GM or players will refer to an encounter. Encounters are not so much measurements of time as they are events or instances in which something happens, like a scene in a movie or a chapter in a book. An encounter might be a fight with an enemy, a dramatic crossing between rooftops, or a stressful negotiation with the Greater Manchester Police. It's useful to use the word when referring to a specific scene, as in "My Might Pool is low after that encounter with those gangers last night."

A round is about five to ten seconds. The length of time is variable because sometimes one round might be a bit longer than another. You don't need to measure time more precisely than that. You can estimate that on average there are about ten rounds in a minute. In a round, everyone—each character and NPC—gets to take one action.

To determine who goes first, second, and so on in a round, each player makes a Speed roll called an initiative roll. Most of the time, it's only important to know which characters act before the NPCs. On an initiative roll, a character who rolls higher than an NPC's target number takes action before the NPC does. As with all target numbers, an NPC's initiative roll target number is three times the NPC's level. Many times, the GM will have all NPCs take their actions at the same time, using the highest target number from among all the NPCs. Using this method, any characters who rolled higher than the target number act first, then all the NPCs act, and finally any characters who rolled lower than the target number act.

The order in which the characters act usually isn't important. If the players want to go in a precise order, they can act in initiative order (highest to lowest), by going around the table, by going oldest to youngest and so on.

For example, Alex, Lee and Logan's characters are in combat with two level 2 security guards. The GM has the players make Speed rolls to determine initiative. Alex rolls an 8, Logan rolls a 15 and Lee rolls a 4. The target number for a level 2 creature is 6, so each round Alex and Logan act before the guards, then the guards act, and finally Lee acts. It doesn't matter whether Alex acts before or after Logan, as long as they think it's fair.

After everyone—all PCs and NPCs—engaged in the combat has had a turn, the round ends and a new round begins. In all rounds after the first, everyone acts in the same order as they did in the first round. The characters cycle through this order until the logical end of the encounter (the end of the fight or the completion of the event) or until the GM asks them to make new initiative rolls. The GM can call for new initiative rolls at the beginning of any new round when conditions drastically change. For example, if the NPCs gain reinforcements, the environment changes (perhaps the lights go out), the terrain changes (maybe part of the balcony collapses under the PCs), or something similar occurs, the GM can call for new initiative rolls.

Since the action moves as a cycle, anything that lasts for a round ends where it started in the cycle. If Susan uses an ability on an opponent that hinders its defenses for one round, the next effect lasts until Susan acts on her next turn.

Faster Initiative (Optional Rule): To make an encounter move faster, if at least one character rolls high enough to beat the target number of the NPCs, all the characters act before the NPCs. If nobody rolls high enough to beat the target number of the NPCs, all the characters act after the NPCs. On the characters' turn, go clockwise around the table. If you're playing using an online video chat or virtual table, start with the leftmost player and move right; repeat.

ACTIONS

Anything that your character does in a round is an action. It's easiest to think of an action as a single thing that you can do in five to ten seconds. For example, if you use your flame pistol to shoot at an approaching shadowcop, that's one action. So is running for cover behind a stack of barrels, prying open a stuck door, using mathemagic to create a barrier, or activating a cypher (even if it's stored in your pack).

Opening a door and attacking a security guard on the other side are two actions. It's more a matter of focus than time. Drawing your electronic knife and attacking an enemy is all one action. Putting away your rifle and pushing a heavy bookcase to block a door are two actions because each requires a different train of thought.

If the action you want to accomplish is not within reach, you can move a little bit. Essentially, you can move up to an immediate distance to perform your action. For example, you can move an immediate distance and attack an enemy, open a door and move an immediate distance into the hallway beyond, or grab your hurt friend lying on the ground and pull them back a few steps. This movement can occur before or after your action, so you can move to a door and open it, or you can open a door and move through it.

The most common actions are

- Attack
- Activate a special ability (one that isn't an attack)
- Move
- Wait
- Defend
- Do something else

ACTION: ATTACK

An attack is anything that you do to someone that they don't want you to do. Slashing an enemy with an elec-

tronic knife is an attack, blasting an enemy with a shotgun, or sending a blurbfly to administer a toxic injection are also attacks. An attack almost always requires a roll to see if you hit or otherwise affect your target.

In the simplest kind of attack, such as a PC trying to stab a thug with a knife, the player rolls and compares the result against the opponent's target number. If the roll is equal to or greater than the target number, the attack hits. Just as with any kind of task, the GM might modify the difficulty based on the situation, and the player might have a bonus to the roll or might try to lower the difficulty using skills, assets or Effort.

A less straightforward attack might be a special ability that stuns an enemy with a mental blast. However, it's handled the same way: the player makes a roll against the opponent's target number. Similarly, an attempt to tackle an enemy and wrestle it to the ground is still just a roll against the enemy's target number.

Attacks are sometimes categorized as "melee" attacks, meaning that you hurt or affect something within immediate reach with a handheld object, or "ranged" attacks, meaning that you hurt or affect something at a distance.

Melee attacks can be Might or Speed actions—player's choice. Physical ranged attacks (such as pistols and thrown weapons) are almost always Speed actions, but those that come from special abilities are probably Intellect actions. Effects that require touching the target require a melee attack.

If the attack misses, the power is not wasted, and you can try again each round as your action until you hit the target, use another ability, or take a different action that requires you to use your hands. These attempts in later rounds count as different actions, so you don't have to keep track of how much Effort you used when you activated the ability or how you used Edge. For example, let's say that in the first round of combat, you activate a special ability that requires you to touch your enemy, use Effort to reduce the difficulty of the attack roll, and miss your foe. In the second round of combat, you can try attacking again and use Effort to reduce the difficulty of the attack roll.

The GM and the players are encouraged to describe every attack with flavor and flair. One attack roll might be a stab to the enemy's arm, A miss might be the PC's knife slamming into the wall. Combatants lunge, block, duck, spin, leap, and make all kinds of movements that should keep combat visually interesting and compelling. Chapter 17 has much more guidance in this regard.

Common elements that affect the difficulty of a combat task are cover, range, and darkness. The rules for these and other modifiers are explained in the Attack Modifiers and Special Situations section (p. 143).

DAMAGE

When an attack strikes a character, it usually means the character takes damage.

An attack against a PC subtracts points from one

of the character's stat Pools—usually the Might Pool. Whenever an attack simply says it deals "damage" without specifying the type, it means Might damage, which is by far the most common type. Intellect damage, which is usually the result of a mental attack, is always labeled as Intellect damage. Speed damage is often a physical attack, but attacks that deal Speed damage are fairly rare.

Damage is always a specific amount determined by the attack. For example, a slash with a knife or a shot from a small .22 caliber pistol deals 4 points of damage. There are often ways for the attacker to increase the damage. For example, a PC can apply Effort to deal 3 additional points of damage, and rolling a natural 17 on the attack roll deals 1 additional point of damage.

Note: What happens to your character when taking damage usually does not end with the simple loss of points—especially when using weapons like firearms.

NPCs have a different mechanic for taking damage. See the section "Damage and NPCs" below.

Damage category	Damage dealt	Weapon examples
Unarmed damage	2 points	Fists, BlurbFly attack
Light damage	4 points	Knife, small caliber firearm
Medium damage	8 points	Nail-bat, Mid caliber firearm
Heavy damage	12 points	Large caliber firearm

ARMOR

Pieces of equipment and special abilities protect characters from damage by giving them Armor. Each time a character takes damage, subtract their Armor value from the damage before reducing the stat Pool or health. For example, if a warrior with 4 Armor is hit by a gunshot that deals 8 points of damage, only 4 points of damage are actually suffered (8 minus 4 from the Armor). If Armor reduces the incoming damage to 0 or lower, the character takes no damage from the attack. For example, the warrior's 4 armor protects from all physical attacks that deal 4 or fewer points of damage.

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

The most common way to get Armor is to wear physical armor, such as a leather jacket, an article of clothing composed of structured polymer composites, or by installing ballistic plating if you're part robo. All physical armor comes in one of three categories: light, medium, or heavy. Light armor gives the wearer +2 Armor rating, medium armor gives +4 Armor rating, and heavy armor gives +6 Armor rating. However, certain armors may have different exact values. In these cases, they will still be categorized as light, medium or heavy armor for the purposes of encumbrance or applicable abilities.

Beyond this basic rating, a piece of armor can provide greater or weaker protection from certain kinds of damage. For example, an electrically insulated, light armor vest might provide an additional point of Armor against shock damage, or a leather jacket might provide inferior protection against bullets. If an armor's description states that it is "more effective" or "less effective" against certain types of attacks, simply increase or decrease the Armor rating by one point when that type of damage is sustained. This makes it easier to create interesting armor types without thinking too much about the numbers during your adventures. For example, a vintage leather biker jacket is light armor (2 Armor rating) but is described as "less effective" against bullets. This means that if the PC is hit by a bullet wearing this particular armor, it provides only 1 Armor rating, instead of the normal 2 Armor rating for light armor.

Generally, only one layer of wearable armor may be used at any time. A bulletproof jacket and heavy combat armor cannot be combined, but the protection of a piece of worn armor can be combined with Armor granted by special abilities, built-in plating and so on. If a robodogman has chosen Ballistic Skin as a mode special ability, they have +1 Armor rating. If they then put on a light armor jacket, which also grants +2 Armor, their Armor rating is now +3. The exception is certain armors specifically designed to be worn under the clothes, such as an anti-stab vest. If an armor is thin enough to be combined with another armor layer, it will say so in the item description. In this situation, the encumbrance penalty from both armors are counted.

Some types of damage ignore physical armor. Attacks that specifically deal Speed damage or Intellect damage ignore Armor; the creature takes the listed amount of damage without any reduction from Armor. Ambient damage (see below) usually ignores Armor as well.

ENCUMBRANCE

Wearing armor makes performing certain tasks more difficult. For each level of Effort applied to a Speed task, the armor increases the cost, depending on its weight. Light armor increases Effort cost by 1 point, medium armor by 2 points, and heavy armor increases effort cost by 3 points, per level. For example, if the PC is wearing a medium armor coat and wants to apply 2 levels of effort to an attempt to throw a knife, the cost is 9 points from their Speed pool, rather than 5 (3 for the first level of Effort, 2 for the second level, and 2 points for *each level* due to wearing medium armor). Normal Speed tasks that you do not apply levels of Effort to are unaffected by armor.

Generally the Cypher System does not bother creating specific rules for managing the weight of a PCs equip-

ment. This Speed penalty when applying levels of Effort is a good way to introduce encumbrance in a more general sense, if you would like to do that in your games. For example, if it seems like a PC is carrying an unrealistic amount of equipment, or something especially unwieldy, applying an additional point or two of Speed penalty is a simple way to show the effect.

AMBIENT DAMAGE

Some kinds of damage aren't direct attacks against a creature, but they indirectly affect everything in the area. Most of these are environmental effects such as winter cold, high temperatures, or background radiation. Damage from these kinds of sources is called ambient damage. Physical armor usually doesn't protect against ambient damage, though a well-insulated suit of armor can protect against cold weather.

DAMAGE FROM HAZARDS

Attacks aren't the only way to inflict damage on a character. Experiences such as falling from a great height, being burned in a fire, and spending time in severe weather also deal damage. Although no list of potential hazards could be comprehensive, the Damage From Hazards table below includes common examples.

DAMAGE FROM HAZARDS

Source	Damage	Notes
Falling	1 point per 10 feet (3m) fallen (ambient damage)	---
Minor fire	3 points per round (ambient damage)	Torch
Major fire	6 points per round (ambient damage)	Engulfed in flames; molten metal
Acid splash	2 points per round (ambient damage)	---
Acid bath	6 points per round (ambient damage)	Immersed in acid
Cold	1 point per round (ambient damage)	Below freezing temperatures
Severe cold	3 points per round (ambient damage)	Liquid nitrogen
Shock	1 point per round (ambient damage)	Often involves losing next action
Crush	3 points	Object or creature falls on character
Huge crush	6 points	Roof collapse; cave-in
Collision	6 points	Large, fast object strikes character

DAMAGE AND NPCs

NPCs don't have stat Pools. Instead, they have a characteristic called health. When an NPC takes damage of any kind, the amount is subtracted from its health. Unless described otherwise, an NPC's health is always equal to its target number. Some NPCs might have special reactions to or defenses against attacks that would normally deal Speed damage or Intellect damage, but unless the NPC's description specifically explains this, assume that all damage is subtracted from the NPC's health.

When an NPC or enemy's health is reduced to less than half their full health value, the NPC is injured and all checks against that NPC are reduced in difficulty by one step. If an NPC's health is reduced to 1 remaining point, that NPC is incapacitated—they are knocked out of combat and unable to perform any actions other than pained speech. At this point, the player can choose to render the enemy unconscious with a blow to the head, or kill them with any form of damage. It is also the perfect opportunity for an interrogation. When an NPC reaches 0 health, it is dead.

Because that players will not usually know how much health an enemy has, incapacitating them isn't a simple prospect, but one that requires some intuition based on the enemy's state. Switching to unarmed attacks or other less deadly attacks once the enemy is visibly injured is a good idea if you're trying to avoid killing them. Alternatively, an intimidation check might convince them to give up the fight. Of course, this depends on the enemy and the situation. In any case, if an NPC is injured, count it as an asset for intimidation tasks.

Objects are like NPCs: they have health instead of stat Pools. When an object reaches 0 health, it is broken or otherwise destroyed.

THE EFFECTS OF TAKING DAMAGE

As previously mentioned, damage from most sources is applied to a character's Might Pool. Otherwise, stat damage always reduces the Pool of the stat it affects.

If damage reduces a character's stat Pool to 0, any further damage to that stat (including excess damage from the attack that reduced the stat to 0) is applied to Pools in this order:

Might (unless the Pool is 0)
Speed (unless the Pool is 0)
Intellect

Even if the damage is applied to another stat Pool, it still counts as its original type for the purpose of Armor and special abilities that affect damage. For example, if a character with 2 armor is reduced to 0 Might and then is hit by an electric knife for 4 damage, it still counts as Might damage, so the Armor reduced the damage to 2 points, which is then applied to the Speed Pool; it doesn't ignore Armor like Speed damage normally would.

In addition to taking damage from their Might Pool, Speed Pool or Intellect Pool, PCs also have a damage track. The damage track has four states (from best to worst): hale, impaired, debilitated, and dead. When one of a PC's stat Pools reaches 0, they move one step down the damage track. Thus, a hale PC becomes impaired, or if already impaired, becomes debilitated. If a debilitated PC is moved down the damage track, they are dead.

Some effects can immediately shift a PC one or more

steps on the damage track. These include drugs and poisons, DNA-altering attacks, and massive traumas (such as falls from very great heights, being run over by a speeding vehicle, and so one, as determined by the GM).

Some attacks like an Injector blurbfly's sting or a speaker's Enthrall, have effects other than damage to a stat Pool or shifting the PC on the damage track. These attacks can cause unconsciousness, paralysis, and so on.

THE DAMAGE TRACK

Hale is the normal state for a character: All three stat pools are at 1 or higher and the PC has no penalties from harmful conditions. When one of a hale PCs stat pools is reduced to 0, the PC becomes impaired. Note that even if all pools are reduced to just one point, the PC is still considered hale.

Impaired is a wounded or injured state. In this state a player applying effort must spend one extra point per effort level. For example one level of effort costs 4 points instead of 3, and two levels of effort costs 7 instead of 5. Once impaired, major and minor effects no longer occur when rolling and extra damage is limited to 1 additional point for all rolls of 17 and above. When one an impaired PCs stat pools are reduced to 0, the PC becomes debilitated.

> A PC who is impaired for some special reason like gas or electrical stun can become debilitated when only one stat pool is reduced to 0. In this situation, once the temporary effect wears off or is removed, the player moves up the damage track to impaired. When the empty stat pool is returned to 1 or more points by resting, the player is moved up the damage track and becomes hale again.

Debilitated PCs are critically injured. A debilitated character may not take any actions other than to move (likely crawl) no more than an immediate distance each turn. If a debilitated character has a speed pool of 0, they are unable to move at all.

When a stat pool of a debilitated player is reduced to 0 that character is dead.

Dead is dead.

Damage sustained which does not move a character down the damage track (i.e. when a pool is not made empty by the damage from an attack) is considered superficial damage and doesn't affect the character, other than by the loss of points from the Pool. If the attack was from a gun, this would be like a graze, or shock from a hit deflected by armor. If the attack was a knife attack, it would be a cut, or a bruising blow from the hilt rather than the blade.

Any damage that moves the character down the damage track (i.e. when a Pool is reduced to zero by an attack), lasting damage should be applied (see below). In this case the attack would be a deep cut, a stab wound or a penetrating bullet wound. If a blunt weapon was used, this could mean cracked ribs, a broken bone, or especially nasty bruising.

LASTING DAMAGE EFFECTS

Lasting Damage most often occurs when a PC is moved down the damage track. Imagine that you've been shot with a .25 caliber pistol (4 damage) and your Might pool is reduced to 0. Your PC is now impaired, one hand clamped over the bullet wound while they return fire and stumble for cover. Is a ten-minute rest likely to return them to full functioning? Definitely not! In a situation like this, there will be a lasting damage effect.

When a PC is damaged and moved down the damage track, the GM tells the player to add a lasting damage effect to the PC's character sheet. This is a negative effect which does not go away, even when the player becomes hale again, and remains even when when all the charac-

ter's pools are once again full. This kind of damage takes days or even weeks to heal, without the aid of special cyphers or abilities.

The number of days until the lasting damage effect is removed is equal to two times the amount of damage sustained. For example, if a PC is shot by a flame pistol for 8 damage, reducing their Might pool to 0 and moving them down the damage track, they become impaired, but also receive a lasting damage effect that lasts for 16 days (8 damage, times 2). After a recovery roll or two, the PC will often no longer be impaired (see Restoring the Damage Track page 143), but the lasting damage effect remains. The player should keep track of each day that passes so that the effect can be removed when the healing period has been satisfied.

Lasting damage can be healed more quickly with uninterrupted rest. For each day of total inactivity, remove two days from the remaining healing time instead of one. Additionally, certain cyphers, artifacts, and abilities can reduce (or increase!) the remaining healing time for lasting damage effects. Cyphers that affect healing time will have specifics in the item description. By combining cyphers and a period of total rest (perhaps between game sessions) serious injury can be healed very quickly.

The specific effect of the injury depends on how the damage was sustained. Being stabbed in the side may make it very difficult to perform athletic tasks until fully healed, but a blow to the head, or a psychic attack from a roboshad is more likely to cause problems with balance, memory, or other cognitive capabilities. Refer to the table below for a few common effects.

LASTING DAMAGE EFFECTS

Damage Type	Description	Other Effect
Might	Broken arm	Useless arm
Might	Broken/Dislocated Jaw	Difficulty of any task involving verbal communication or positive social interaction increased by 2 steps
Might	Minor Muscle or Tissue damage	Difficulty of all physical tasks increased by one step
Might	Deep tissue damage	Difficulty of all tasks increased by one step
Might	Serious muscle damage	Difficulty of all tasks increase by two steps
Might	Torn ligament	Move at half speed; short move is no more than 25 ft (8 m); long move is no more than 50 ft (15 m)
Speed	Broken leg	Cannot move without assistance
Speed	Sprained ankle	Move at half speed; short move is no more than 25 ft (8 m); long move is no more than 50 ft (15 m)
Speed	Ataxia	Difficulty of all physical tasks increased by one step
Speed	Circulatory Shock	Difficulty of all physical tasks increased by two steps
Speed	Seizures	Whenever a 9, 10, or 11 is rolled on any task (or at GM's discretion) the PC loses their next turn
Speed	Lactic Acidosis	-1 to all Speed rolls
Intellect	Delirium Tremens	Sweating and shaking, difficulty of all Speed tasks and social interactions increased by one step
Intellect	Malaise	-1 to all Intellect rolls
Intellect	Concussion	Difficulty of Intellect actions increased by one step
Intellect	Double vision	Difficulty of all vision based tasks increased by one step
Intellect	Frazzled	Difficulty of all concentration-based tasks increased by one level
Intellect	Migraine headache	Difficulty of tasks involving sustained focus or concentration are increased by one step

When characters who are pure or part robo rest to recover lasting damage, that time is spent tinkering with self repairs. If no rest is taken, the character is assumed to fiddle with repairs in spare moments during the adventure.

RECOVERING POINTS IN A POOL (RECOVERY ROLLS)

You may recover points which have been lost or spent from a Pool by resting. Pools may be restored to their full point value, but not more. Any extra points after all pools are full are ignored. A character is allowed four recovery rolls in a 24-hour period. These represent the recovery gained from catching your breath for a few moments, right up to a full night's sleep.

When you rest, you may make a recovery roll. To do this, roll a d6 and add your tier. The result is how many points are restored. The player may apply the restored points to their pools in whatever way they choose.

The first time you rest in a day, it only takes a few seconds to catch your breath. You may rest this way in the middle of an encounter and it takes one round.

The second time you rest each day, you must rest for ten minutes to make a recovery roll. The third time you rest each day, you must rest for one hour to make a recovery roll. The fourth time you rest each day, you must rest for ten hours to make a recovery roll (usually, this occurs when you stop for the day to eat and sleep). After that much rest, it's assumed to be a new day, so the next time you rest, it takes only a few seconds. The next rest takes ten minutes, then one hour, and so on, in a cycle.

If you haven't rested yet that day and you take a lot of damage in a fight, you could rest a few seconds (regain-

ing 1d6 points + 1 point per tier) and then immediately rest for ten minutes (regaining another 1d6 points + 1 point per tier). Thus, in one full day of doing nothing but resting, you could recover 4d6 points + 4 points per tier. Each character chooses when to make recovery rolls. If a party of five explorers rests for ten minutes because two members want to make recovery rolls, the other characters don't have to make rolls at that time. Later in the day, those three can decide to rest for ten minutes and make recovery rolls.

Recovery Roll	Rest Time Needed
First recovery roll	One action
Second recovery roll	Ten minutes
Third recovery roll	One hour
Fourth recovery roll	Ten hours

RESTORING THE DAMAGE TRACK

Using points from a recovery roll to raise a stat Pool from 0 to 1 or higher also automatically moves the character up one step on the damage track.

If all of a PC's stat Pools are above 0 and the character has taken special damage and moved down the damage track, they can use a recovery roll to move up one step on the damage track instead of recovering points. For example, a character who is debilitated from a hit with a cell-disrupting biotech device can rest and move up to impaired rather than recover points in a Pool.

SPECIAL DAMAGE

In the course of playing the game, characters face all manner of threats and dangers that can harm them in a variety of ways, only some of which are easily represented by points of damage.

Dazed and Stunned: Characters can be dazed when struck hard on the head, exposed to extremely loud sounds, or affected by a mental attack. When this happens, for the duration of the daze effect (usually one round), the difficulty of all tasks attempted by the character increases by one step. Similar but more severe attacks can stun characters. Stunned characters lose their turn (but can still defend against attacks normally).

Poison and Disease: When characters encounter poison—whether the venom of a dreamsnake, rat poison slipped into a burrito, cyanide dissolved in a draught of Boomer, or an attack from an injector blurbfly—they make a Might defense roll to resist it. Failure to resist can result in points of damage, moving down the damage track, or a specific effect such as paralysis, unconsciousness, disability, or something stranger. For example, some poisons affect the brain, making it impossible to say certain words, take certain actions, resist certain effects, or recover points to a stat Pool.

Diseases work like poisons, but their effect occurs every day, so the victim must make a Might defense roll each day or suffer the effects. Disease effects are as varied as poisons: points of damage, moving down the damage track, disability, and so on. Many diseases inflict damage that cannot be restored through conventional means.

Paralysis: Paralytic effects cause a character to drop to the ground, unable to move. Unless otherwise specified, the character can still take actions that require no physical movement.

Other Effect: Other special effects can render a character blind or deaf, unable to stand without falling over, or unable to breathe. A character might suffer genetic reorganization or memory loss, have false memories implanted or be forced into a Vurt dream against their will by a Strangeways Feather. Each special effect must be handled on a case-by-case basis. The GM adjudicates how the character is affected and how the condition can be alleviated (if possible).

Strangeways Feather, page 217

NPCs AND SPECIAL DAMAGE

The GM always has final say over what special damage will affect an NPC. Human NPCs usually react like characters, but nonhuman creatures might react very differently. For example a tiny bit of gene-reorganizing poison might have major effects on a human or dog character, but might have no effect on a pure robo.

If an NPC is susceptible to special damage that would shift a character down the damage track, that damage usually renders the NPC unconscious or dead. Alternatively, the GM could apply the debilitated condition to the NPC, with the same effect as it would have on a PC.

ATTACK MODIFIERS AND SPECIAL SITUATIONS

In combat situations, many modifiers might come into play. Although the GM is at liberty to assess whatever modifiers they feel are appropriate to the situation (that's the GM's role in the game), the following suggestions and guidelines might make that easier. Often the modifier is applied as a step in difficulty. So, if a situation hinders attacks, that means if a PC attacks an NPC, the difficulty of the attack roll is increased by one step, and if an NPC attacks a PC, the difficulty of the defense roll is decreased by one step. This is because players make all rolls, whether they are attacking or defending—NPCs never make attack or defense rolls.

When in doubt, if it seems like it should be harder to attack in a situation, the difficulty of the attack rolls increase by one step. If it seems like attacks should gain an advantage or be easier in some way, the difficulty of the defense rolls increase by one step.

COVER

If a significant portion of a character's body is behind something sturdy, attacks are modified by one step in the defender's favor.

If a character's entire body is behind something sturdy, no attack can be made against them, unless the attack

can go through the cover. For example, if a character hides behind a thin wooden screen and an enemy shoots the screen with a rifle that can penetrate the wood, the character can be attacked. However, because the attacker can't see the character clearly, this still counts as cover and all attacks are modified by one step in the defender's favor.

POSITION

Sometimes where a character stands gives an advantage or a disadvantage.

Prone Target: In melee or for ranged attacks within short range, a prone target is easier to hit (modified by one step in the attacker's favor). For ranged attacks at greater than short range, a prone target is harder to hit (modified by one step in the defender's favor).

Higher Ground: In either ranged or melee combat, an opponent on higher ground gets the advantage (modified by one step in their favor.)

SURPRISE

When a target isn't aware of an incoming attack, the attacker has an advantage. A ranged sniper in a hidden position, an invisible assailant, or the first salvo in a successful ambush are all modified by two steps in the attacker's favor. For the attacker to gain this advantage, however, the defender must have no idea that the attack is coming.

If the defender isn't sure of the attacker's location but is still on guard, the attack is modified one step in the attacker's favor.

If the defender isn't sure of the attacker's location but is still on guard, the attack is modified one step in the attacker's favour.

RANGE

In melee, you can attack an enemy who is next to you (adjacent) or within reach (immediate range). Since immediate range covers the area you can reach by moving a few steps, a single PC who is engaged in melee combat with multiple enemies can usually reach most or all of them with a melee attack. If the group of enemies is very large, the GM may decide that some of them are out of reach.

The majority of ranged attacks have only two ranges: short range and long range. Short range is generally less than 50 ft (15 m) or so. Long range is generally from 50 ft (15 m) to about 100 ft (30 m). Greater precision than that isn't important in the Cypher System. If anything is longer than long range, the exact range is usually spelled out, such as with an rifle that is accurate at 500 ft or an item that can communicate up to one mile away. Melee weapons are usable only at immediate range. Unless stated otherwise, pistols are short range weapons and rifles are long range weapons.

Thus, the game has three measurements of distance: immediate, short, and long. These apply to movement as well (see page 135). A few special cases—point-blank range and extreme range— modify an attack's chance to successfully hit.

Point-Blank Range: If a character uses a ranged weapon against a target within immediate range, the attack is modified by one step in the attacker's favor. However, if the target is engaging the attacker in melee combat, the difficulty of the attack is modified by one step in the defender's favor. The GM is tasked with determining when to apply this penalty, based on the situation. For example, if the target of the attack has just moved into immediate range of the attacker and intends

to strike with the butt of a weapon on their next turn, the penalty would apply, even though no melee attack has yet been made.

Extreme Range: Targets just at the limit of a weapon's range are at extreme range. Attacks against such targets are modified by one step in the defender's favor.

ILLUMINATION

What characters can see (and how well they can see) is a huge factor in combat.

Dim Light: Dim light is approximately the amount of light on a night with a bright full moon, the illumination from a handheld torch, or the ambient light from nearby skyscrapers. Dim light allows you to see out to short range. Targets in dim light are harder to hit. Attacks against such targets are modified by one step in the defender's favor. Attackers trained in low-light spotting negate this modifier.

Very Dim Light: Very dim light is approximately the amount of light on a starry night with no visible moon, in an alley at night with no bright buildings nearby or the glow of a control panel. Very dim light allows you to see clearly only within immediate range and perceive vague shapes within short range. Targets in very dim light are harder to hit. Attacks against targets within immediate range are modified by one step in the defender's favor, and attacks against those within short range are modified by two steps in the defender's favor. Attackers specialized in low-light spotting modify these difficulties by two steps in their favor.

Darkness: Darkness is an area with no illumination at all, such as a moonless night with cloud cover, or a room with no lights. Targets in complete darkness are nearly impossible to hit. If an attacker can use other senses (such as hearing) to get an idea of where the opponent might be, attacks against such targets are modified by four steps in the defender's favor. Otherwise, attacks in complete darkness fail without the need for a roll unless the player spends 1 XP to make a lucky shot or the GM uses GM intrusion. Attackers trained in low-light spotting modify this difficulty by one step in their favor. Attackers specialized in low-light spotting modify this difficulty by two steps in their favor.

VISIBILITY

Similar to illumination, factors that obscure vision also affect combat.

Mist: A target in mist is similar to one in dim light. Ranged attacks against such targets are modified by one step in the defender's favor. Particularly dense mist makes ranged attacks nearly impossible (treat as darkness), and even melee attacks become difficult (modify by one step in the defender's favor).

Hiding Target: A target in dense foliage, behind a screen, or crawling amid the rubble in a ruin is hard to hit because they are hard to see. Ranged attacks against such targets are modified by one step in the defender's favor.

Invisible Target: If an attacker can use other senses (such as hearing) to get an idea of where the opponent might be, attacks against such targets are modified by four steps in the defender's favor. Otherwise, attacks against an invisible creature fail without the need for a roll, unless the player spends 1 XP to make a lucky shot or the GM uses GM intrusion.

WATER

Being in shallow water can make it hard to move, but it doesn't affect combat. Being in deep water can make things difficult, and being underwater entirely can seem as different as being on another world (or in the Vurt).

Deep Water: Being in water up to your chest (or equivalent thereof) hinders your ability to attack. Attacks made in such conditions are modified by one step in the defender's favor. Aquatic creatures ignore this modifier.

Underwater Melee Combat: For non-aquatic creatures, being completely underwater makes attacking very difficult. Melee attacks with slashing or bashing weapons are modified by two steps in the defender's favor. Attacks with stabbing weapons are modified by one step in the defender's favor. Aquatic creatures ignore the penalties for underwater melee combat.

Underwater Ranged Combat: As with melee combat, non-aquatic creatures have difficulty fighting underwater. Some ranged attacks are impossible underwater—you can't throw things, fire a bow or a crossbow, or use a blowgun. Many antique firearms also do not work underwater. Attacks with weapons that do work underwater are modified by one step in the defender's favor. Ranges underwater are reduced by one category; long-range weapons work only to short range, and short-range weapons work only to immediate range.

Cooperative actions, page 150

MOVING TARGETS

Moving targets are harder to hit, and moving attackers have a difficult time as well.

Target is moving: Attackers trying to hit an enemy who is moving very fast are penalized. (An enemy moving very fast is one who is doing nothing but running, mounted on a moving creature, riding on a vehicle or moving conveyance, and so on.) Attacks are modified by one step in the defender's favor.

Attacker is Moving: An attacker trying to make an attack while moving under its own power (walking, running, swimming, and so on) takes no penalties. An attacker mounted on a moving creature or vehicle has some difficulty; its attacks are modified by one step in the defender's favor. An attacker trained in riding or driving ignores this penalty.

Attacker is Jostled: Being jostled, such as while standing on a listing ship or a vibrating platform, makes attacking difficult. Such attacks are modified by one step in the defender's favor. Conceivably, training could offset this disadvantage. For example, characters trained in sailing would ignore penalties for being on a ship. As an optional rule, you can consider the PC jostled after they are hit by certain kinds of attacks (see Disorientation From Damage p. 159).

SPECIAL SITUATION: COMBAT BETWEEN NPCs

When an NPC ally of the PCs attacks another NPC, the GM can designate a player to roll and handle it like a PC attacking. Often, the choice is obvious. For example, a character who has a trained attack animal should roll when their pet attacks enemies. If an NPC ally accompanying the party leaps into the fray, that ally's favorite PC makes the rolls. NPCs cannot apply Effort. Of course, it's perfectly fitting (and easier) to have the NPC ally use the cooperative action rules to aid a PC instead of making direct attacks, or to compare the levels of two NPCs (higher wins).

SPECIAL SITUATION: COMBAT BETWEEN PCs

When one PC attacks another PC, the attacking character makes an attack roll, and the other character makes a defense roll, adding any appropriate modifiers. If the attacking PC has a skill, ability, asset, or other effect that would decrease the attack's difficulty if it were made against an NPC, the character adds 3 to the roll for each step reduction (+3 for one step, +6 for two steps and so on). If the attacker's final result is higher, the attack hits. If the defender's result is higher, the attack misses. Damage is resolved normally. The GM mediates all special effects.

SPECIAL SITUATION: AREA ATTACKS

Sometimes, an attack or effect affects an area rather than a single target. For example, a grenade or a landslide can potentially harm or affect everyone in the area.

In an area attack, all PCs in the area make appropriate defense rolls against the attack to determine its effect on them. If there are any NPCs in the area, the attacker makes a single attack roll against all of them (one roll, not

one per NPC) and compares it to the target number of each NPC. If the roll is equal to or greater than the target number of a particular NPC, the attack hits that NPC.

Some area attacks always deal at least a minimum amount of damage, even if the attacks miss or if a PC makes a successful defense roll.

For example, consider a character who uses Shatter to attack six gang members (level 2; target number 6) and their leader (level 4; target number 12). The PC applies Effort to increase the damage and rolls an 11 for the attack roll. This hits the six gang members, but not the leader, so the ability deals 3 points of damage to each of the gang members. The description of Shatter says that applying Effort to increase the damage also means that targets take 1 point of damage if the PC fails the attack roll, so the leader takes 1 point of damage. In terms of what happens in the story, the gang members are caught flat-footed when the the PC's Shatter ability causes one of their knives to detonate, but the leader ducks and shields herself from the blast. Despite the leader's quick moves, the blast is so intense that a few bits of metal slice her.

SPECIAL SITUATION: BURST-FIRE

Weapons which are equipped with a burst fire mode are capable of firing multiple bullets each time the trigger is pulled. While this allows a chance to land multiple hits in a single combat round, the likelihood to hit the target is decreased with each subsequent shot after the first.

When making a burst fire attack, the target number is determined normally. However, because the bullets are released with a single pull of the trigger, the player rolls only once to determine the outcome of the entire burst. To account for the rapidly decreasing accuracy of each shot, each subsequent bullet fired after the first suffers -3 to the roll result.

For example: Dag is shooting a pistol equipped with three-round burst mode. He is attacking a level 3 enemy at short range, who is sprinting for cover. The difficulty of the attack action is 3, plus 1 level because the target is moving fast. That means the target number for this attack is 12. The player rolls a d20 and gets a 13. Because the result receives an additional -3 for each bullet after the first, the result of 13 becomes 13, 10 and 7 for the three bullets, respectively. In this case, only the first round hits the target. If the player had chosen for Dag to use a level of Effort when making the attack, the target number would have been 9, so in that case, two rounds would have hit the target.

SPECIAL SITUATION: ATTACKING OBJECTS

Attacking an object is rarely a matter of hitting it. Sure, you can hit the broad side of a barn, but can you damage it? Attacking inanimate objects with a melee weapon is a Might action. Objects have levels and thus target numbers. An object's target number also serves as its health to determine whether it is destroyed. You track the object's health just as you would with an NPC.

Hard objects, such as those made of stone, have 2 Armor. Very hard objects, such as those made of metal, have 4 Armor. Extremely hard objects, such as those made of an advanced metal alloy, have 6 Armor. Armor subtracts from every attack's damage.

FIRE MODES

Some weapons can switch between fire modes, like semiautomatic, three-round burst, and full auto. Semiautomatic means that only one attack may be made per round, three-round burst fires 3 bullets with each trigger pull, and full auto means that that the PC can fire as many rounds as desired in a single burst, until the weapon is out of ammunition. For any number of bullets fired as part of a single burst, the rules are the same, with each bullet receiving an additional -3 to the die result.

ACTION: ACTIVATE A SPECIAL ABILITY

Special abilities are granted by foci or provided by cyphers or other devices. If a special ability affects another character in any kind of unwanted manner, it's handled as an attack. This is true even if the ability is normally not considered an attack. For example, if a character wants to heal a companion with an injector, but for some reason the companion does not want to be healed, the attempt is handled like an attack.

Many special abilities do not affect other characters in an unwanted manner and so no attack is required. For example, if a mathemagician activates a defensive power, granting a boost to armor, no attack roll is required. However, the same character using a power to manipulate an object using mathemagic may need to roll to see if the attempt was successful. This depends on the specific ability being used and the situation.

If the character spends points to apply Effort on an ability attempt, they may want to roll anyway for the chance at a major effect which could reduce the cost of the action.

ACTION: MOVE

As part of another action, a character can adjust their position—taking a step or two backwards while using an ability, sliding over in combat to take on a different opponent and help a friend, pushing through a just-opened door, and so on. This is considered an immediate distance, and a character can move this far as part of another action.

In a combat situation, if a character is in a large melee, most combatants are considered to be within immediate distance and therefore within melee attack reach. If the GM rules that the PC or a specific enemy is farther away, either because the melee is very large, or because the enemy has moved away from the heart of the combat, then the NPC is considered to be a short distance away—usually less than 50 ft (15 m).

If the character needs to move more than an immediate distance, the entire action can be used to move a short distance. This means the PC does nothing but move up to 50 ft (15 m). Typically, this kind of movement is a difficulty 0 action; the PC just moves instead of taking another action.

A character can try to move a long distance—100 ft (30 m)—in one round, but this is a Speed task with a difficulty of 4. As with any action, skills, assets or Effort can be used to decrease the difficulty. A successful roll means the character moved the distance safely. Failure means that, at some point during the move, they stop or stumble (the GM determines where this happens).

The Torchers, page 196

A character can also try to make a short move and take another relatively simple action, such as making an attack. As with the attempt to make a long move, this is a Speed task with a difficulty of 4, and failure means that the character stops at some point, slips, stumbles or somehow gets held up.

Vehicle chases, page 152

LONG-TERM MOVEMENT

When talking about movement in terms of traveling rather than round-by-round action, refer back to the Travel in Manchester section on page 135.

MOVEMENT MODIFIERS

Different environments affect movement in different ways.

Rough Terrain: A surface that is covered in loose stones or other material, uneven or with unsure footing, unsteady, or a surface that requires movement across a narrow space such as a cramped corridor or a slender ledge. Stairs are also considered rough terrain. Rough terrain does not slow normal movement on a round-by-round basis, but it increases the difficulty of a move roll by one step. Rough terrain cuts long-term movement rates in half.

Difficult Terrain: Difficult terrain is an area filled with challenging obstacles—water up to waist height, a very steep slope, an especially narrow ledge, slippery ice, a foot or more of snow, a space so small that one must crawl through it, and so on. Difficult terrain is just like rough terrain, but it also halves movement on a round-by-round basis. This means that a short move is about 25 ft (8 m), and a long move is about 50 ft (15 m). Difficult terrain reduces long-term movement to a third of its normal rate.

Water: Deep water, in which a character is mostly or entirely submerged, is just like rough terrain except that it also quarters movement. This means that a short move is about 12 ft (4 m), and a long move is about 25 ft (8 m). Characters trained in swimming halve their movement while in deep water.

Shadow Fuck, page 43

SPECIAL SITUATION: CHASE

When a PC is chasing an NPC or vice versa, the player should attempt a Speed action, with the difficulty based on the NPC's level. If the roll is a success, the NPC is caught, or the PC gets away if they are the one being chased. In terms of the story, this one-roll mechanic can be the result of a long chase over many rounds.

Alternatively, if the GM wants to play out a long chase, the character can make a series of rolls equal to the level of the NPC, to finish the pursuit successfully. If the number of successes ever exceeds the number of failures during the series of rolls, the PC fails the chase. For example, if the PC is being chased through Bottletown by a level 3 Torcher thug, three Speed rolls must be made to determine the outcome of the chase. If the first roll is a success and the second is a failure, the PC will need to roll successfully on the third roll, or the number of failures will be greater than the number of successes and the thug will catch the character.

The GM should describe each roll with flavor, explaining how the Torcher thug gains ground or the character gains a lead with a burst of speed or by deftly maneuvering an obstacle. If the player fails a roll, maybe a crowd of crusties is thronging around a Drip Feed terminal clamoring for punies and the player gets slowed down in the crush. Vehicle chases are handled similarly.

ACTION: WAIT

You can wait to react to another character's action. You decide what action will trigger your action, and if the triggering action happens, you get to take your action first (unless going first wouldn't make sense, such as attacking an enemy before they come into view). For example, if a corporate rent-a-cop threatens you with a stun baton, you can decide to wait, stating "If he attacks me, I'm going to draw my flame pistol and shoot." On the rent-a-cop's turn, he moves to swing the baton, so you draw and shoot your flame pistol before he is able to make his attack.

ACTION: DEFEND

Defending is a special action that only PCs can do, and only in response to being attacked. In other words, an NPC uses its action to attack, which forces an PC to make a defense roll. This is handled like any other kind of action, with circumstances, skill, assets, and Effort all potentially coming into play. Defending is a special kind of action in that it does not happen on the PC's turn. It's never an action that a player decides to take; it's always a reaction to an attack. A PC can take a defense action when attacked (on the attacking NPC's turn) and still take another action on their own turn.

The type of defense roll depends on the type of attack. If a foe attacks a character with an axe, Speed can be used to duck or block it with a held object. If a character is struck by a poisoned dart, a Might action can be used to resist the poison's effects. If a Shadow attempts to Shadow Fuck the PC, dominating their mind, Intellect is used to fend off the intrusion.

Sometimes an attack provokes two defense actions. For example the poisoned dart first must be dodged with a Speed action, and if it strikes the PC, a Might action must be taken to resist the poison's effect.

If a character does not know an attack is coming, usually a defense roll can still be made, but no modifiers can be added (like using Effort or a skill to reduce the roll's difficulty, or using something as a shield). If the attacker is right next to the PC, the GM might rule that the surprise attack simply hits with no defense action allowed.

A character can always choose to forgo a defense action, in which case the attacks automatically hits.

Some abilities may allow you to do something special as a defense action.

ACTION: DO SOMETHING ELSE

Players can try anything they can think of, although that doesn't mean anything is possible. The GM sets the difficulty—that's the GM's primary role in the game. Still, guided by the bounds of logic, players and GMs will find all manner of actions and options that aren't covered by a rule. That's a good thing.

Players should not feel constrained by the game mechanics when taking actions. Skills are not required to attempt an action. Someone who's never picked a lock can still try. The GM might assign a negative step modifier to the difficulty, but the character can still attempt the action.

Thus, players and GMs can return to the beginning of this chapter and look at the most basic expression of the rules. A player wants to take an action. The GM decides, on a scale of 1 to 10, how difficult that task is and what stat it uses. The player determines whether there is anything they have that might modify the difficulty and considered whether to apply Effort. Once the final determination is made, the player makes a roll to see if the PC succeeds. It's as easy as that.

As further guidance, the following are some of the more common actions a player might take.

CLIMBING

When a character climbs, the GM sets a difficulty based on the surface being climbed. If the character succeeds at the roll, the movement rules are used as though they were moving normally, but through difficult terrain: it raises the difficulty of a move roll by one step and halves movement. Unusual circumstances, such as climbing while under fire (or while on fire!) pose additional step penalties. Being skilled in climbing reduces the difficulty of this task.

GUARDING

In combat situations, a character can stand guard as an action. No attacks are made, but defense tasks are reduced in difficulty by one step. Furthermore, if an NPC tries to get by the character, or take an action that the character is guarding against, a Speed action can be made (based on the level of the NPC) with the difficulty decreased by one step. Success means that the NPC is prevented from taking the action on its turn. This is useful for blocking a doorway, guarding an injured or occupied friend, and so forth.

If an NPC is standing guard, use the same procedure, but to get past the guard the PC attempts a Speed action with the difficulty increased by one step. For example, if a target is being defended by a level 3 bodyguard, the bodyguard will use its action to guard the target. If a PC wants to attack the target, they must first succeed at a level 4 difficulty Speed task to get past the guard. A successful roll means that the PC can attack the target normally.

CLIMBING DIFFICULTY

Difficulty	Surface
2	Surface with lots of handholds
3	Stone wall or similar surface (a few handholds)
4	Crumbling or slippery surface
5	Smooth stone wall or similar surface
6	Metal wall or similar surface
8	The underside of a horizontal, rock overhang (or climber is upside down)
10	Glass wall or similar surface

HEALING

You can administer aid through bandaging and other succor, attempting to heal each patient once per day. This healing restores points to a stat Pool of your choice. Decide how many points you want to heal, and then make an Intellect action with a difficulty equal to that number. For example if you want to heal someone for 3 points, that's a difficulty 3 task with a target number of 9. Being skilled in healing reduces the difficulty. A PC can use the rules for retrying a task if the attempt fails, but can only achieve one success per day.

Retrying a task after failure, page 134

INTERACTING WITH OTHER CREATURES

The level of the creature determines the target number, just as with combat. Thus, bribing a guard works much like punching or affecting them with an ability. This is true of persuading or intimidating someone, calming a wild beast, or anything of the kind. Interaction is an Intellect task. Being skilled in persuasion, intimidation, bribery, deception, animal handling, or something of that nature can decrease the difficulty of the task, if appropriate. Interacting usually requires a common language or some other way to communicate. Learning new languages is the same as learning a new skill.

JUMPING

Decide how far you want to jump, and that sets the difficulty of your Might roll. For a standing jump, subtract 4 from the distance (in feet) to determine the difficulty of the jump. For example, jumping 10 ft (3 m) has a difficulty of 6.

If you run an immediate distance before jumping, it counts as an asset, reducing the difficulty of the jump by one step.

If you run a short distance before jumping, divide the jump distance (in feet) by 2 and then subtract 4 to de-

COOPERATIVE ACTIONS

There are many ways multiple characters can work together. None of these options, however, can be used at the same time by the same characters.

Helping: If a character attempts a task and gets help from another character who is trained or specialized in that task, the acting PC gets the benefit of the helping PC. The helping character uses their action to provide this help. If the helper does not have training or specialization in that task, or if the acting character is already as trained or specialized as the helper, the acting character instead gets a +1 bonus to the roll. For example, if Graham is trying to climb a steep incline but has no skill at climbing, and Susan (who is trained in climbing) spends her turn helping him, the difficulty of Graham's climb in decreased by one step. If Graham were also trained in climbing, or if neither character were, he would gain a +1 bonus to the roll instead. A character with an inability in a task cannot help another PC with that task—the character with the inability provides no benefit in that situation.

Complementary Action: If a character attempts an action, and a second character skilled in that type of action attempts a complementary action, both actions gain a +2 bonus to the roll. For example, if Graham tries to convince a club bouncer to allow him to enter and Susan is trained in persuasion, she can use a complementary—but different—action in the situation to gain the +2 bonus. She might try to supplement Graham's words with a flattering lie about the bouncer (a deception action), a display of knowledge about the neighborhood (a geography action), or a direct threat to the bouncer (an intimidation action). Complementary actions work in combat as well. If Graham attacks an enemy using Pierce (a warrior ability) and Susan also has the ability to make Pierce attacks, she can attack the same enemy using any other kind of attack, such as Bash, and get a +2 bonus. And she gives Graham a +2 bonus as well.

The players involved should work out the complementary actions together and describe them to the GM.

Distraction: When a character uses their turn to distract an enemy, the difficulty of that enemy's attacks is modified by one step to its detriment for one round. Multiple characters distracting an enemy have no greater effect than a single character doing so—an enemy is either distracted or not.

Draw the Attack: By shouting taunts or getting in the way a PC can try to provoke the attack of an NPC who is attacking someone else.

In most cases, this action succeeds without a roll—the opponent attacks the prominent PC instead of her companions. In other cases, such as with intelligent or determined enemies, the prominent character must use an Intellect action to draw the attack. If she succeeds, the difficulty of her defense tasks is modified by one step to her detriment.

Two characters attempting to draw an attack at the same time cancel each other out.

Take the Attack: A character can use her action to throw herself in front of an attack to save a nearby comrade. The attack automatically succeeds against her, and it deals 1 additional point of damage. A character cannot willingly take more than one attack each round in this way.

The Old One-Two-Three: If three or more characters attack the same enemy, each character gains a +1 bonus to the attack.

High and Low: If one character makes a melee attack against an enemy and another character makes a ranged attack against that same enemy, they can coordinate their actions. As a result, if both attacks damage the enemy, the difficulty of the enemy's next attack is modified by one step to its detriment.

Covering Fire: A character using a ranged attack or ability can aim near an enemy but narrowly miss on purpose, making an attack that inflicts no damage but harasses and frightens the enemy. If the attack is successful, it deals no damage, but the difficulty of the enemy's next attack is modified by one step to its detriment.

termine the difficulty of the jump. Because you're running an immediate distance (and then some), you also count your running as an asset. For example, jumping a distance of 20 ft (6 m) with a short running start has a difficulty of 5 (20 ft divided by 2 is 10, minus 4 is 6, minus 1 for running an immediate distance). Being skilled in jumping reduces the difficulty.

For a vertical jump, the distance you clear (in feet) is equal to the difficulty of the jumping task. If you run an immediate distance, it counts as an asset, reducing the difficulty of the jump by one step.

LOOKING OR LISTENING

Generally, the GM will describe any sight or sound that's not purposefully difficult to detect. But if you want to look for a hidden enemy, search for a secret panel, or listen for something sneaking up on you, make an Intellect roll. If it's a creature, its level determines the difficulty of your roll. If it's something else, the GM determines the difficulty of your roll. Being skilled in perception reduces the difficulty of this task.

MOVING A HEAVY OBJECT

You can push or pull something very heavy and move it an immediate distance as your action.

The weight of the object determines the difficulty of the Might roll to move it; every 50 lbs (25 kg) increases the difficulty by one step. So moving something that weighs 160 lbs (75 kg) is difficulty 3, and moving something that weighs 450 lbs (200 kg) is difficulty 8. If you can reduce the difficulty of the task to 0, you can move a heavy object up to a short distance as your action. Being skilled in carrying or pushing reduces the difficulty of the task.

An example of this is carrying or dragging an un-

JUMP DISTANCE

TYPE OF JUMP

Difficulty	Standing	Immediate Run*	Short Run*	Vertical*
0	4 ft. (1.2 m)	5 ft (1.5 m)	10 ft. (3 m)	0 ft.
1	5 ft (1.5 m)	6 ft. (1.8m)	12 ft. (3.7 m)	1 ft. (30 cm)
2	6 ft. (1.8m)	7 ft. (2.1 m)	14 ft. (4.3 m)	2 ft. (60 cm)
3	7 ft. (2.1 m)	8 ft. (2.4 m)	16 ft. (4.9 m)	3 ft. (90 cm)
4	8 ft. (2.4 m)	9 ft. (2.7 m)	18 ft. (5.5 m)	4 ft. (1.2 m)
5	9 ft. (2.7 m)	10 ft. (3 m)	20 ft. (6.1 m)	5 ft (1.5 m)
6	10 ft. (3 m)	11 ft. (3.4 m)	22 ft. (6.7 m)	6 ft. (1.8m)
7	11 ft. (3.4 m)	12 ft. (3.7 m)	24 ft (7.3 m)	7 ft. (2.1 m)
8	12 ft. (3.7 m)	13 ft. (4 m)	26 ft. (7.9 m)	8 ft. (2.4 m)
9	13 ft. (4 m)	14 ft. (4.3 m)	28 ft. (8.5 m)	9 ft. (2.7 m)
10	14 ft. (4.3 m)	15 ft. (4.6m)	30 ft. (9.1 m)	10 ft. (3 m)

*If you are trained in jumping, move one row down to determine your distance, If you are specialized in jumping, move two rows down to determine your distance.

conscious companion to cover. If your downed friend weighs 220 lbs (about 100 kg) it's a difficulty 4 task to move them an immediate distance in a combat round. If the the PC is specialized in carrying and uses 2 levels of Effort, the task is reduced to 0 and the PC can move the downed companion a short distance in a combat round, without having to make a roll, probably by throwing them over a shoulder and carrying them. A heroic moment!

OPERATING OR DISABLING A DEVICE, OR PICKING A LOCK

When attempting to figure out how a device works, the level of the device usually determines the difficulty of the Intellect roll. Unless a device is very complex, the GM will often rule that once you figure it out, no roll is needed to operate it except under special circumstances. So if the PCs figure out how to use a hovercraft, they can operate it. If they are attacked, they might need to roll to ensure that they don't crash the platform into a wall while trying to avoid being hit.

Disabling a device or picking a lock usually requires rolls. These actions often involve special tools and assume that the character is not trying to destroy the device or lock. (A PC who is attempting to destroy it probably should make a Might roll to smash it rather than a Speed or Intellect roll requiring patience and know-how.)

In exactly the same way, a PC can attempt to hack into or operate a computer system by making an Intellect roll, with the difficulty determined by the level of the computer system. In each case, being skilled in operating devices, computer systems, or picking locks reduces the difficulty of the task.

SNEAKING and STEALTH

The difficulty of sneaking by a creature is determined by its level. Sneaking is a Speed roll. Moving at half speed reduces the difficulty by one step. Appropriate camouflage or other gear may count as an asset and decrease the difficulty, as well as dim lighting conditions and having plenty of things to hide behind. Being skilled in sneaking reduces the difficulty of this task.

Attacks made from a hidden position or against unaware targets are called surprise attacks. (See page 82 for specifics.)

Stealth comes up in situations other than just sneaking and hiding in the shadows. Carrying a concealed weapon, dropping a tracking device into an NPC's pocket, and clinging to the ceiling as a guard patrol takes a break right beneath you are different kinds of stealth tasks. A player may want their character to blend into a crowded room at a party, or plant a hidden camera on an office shelf. Different stealth tasks will use different stats, depending on the nature of the action. Here are a few examples:

Other Kinds of Stealth Tasks	Type of Stealth Roll
Concealing a camera, microphone or tracker	Intellect
Blending in or hiding yourself in plain sight	Intellect
Picking someone's pocket	Speed
Sleight of hand or "palming" objects	Speed
Clinging silently to a pipe while guards pass	Might
Holding your breath underwater, or swimming to avoid detection	Might

When establishing the difficulty of any stealth task that involves actively hiding an item from an NPC, the NPC level sets the difficulty. For example, if you are hiding the spy camera in the office of a level 4 NPC, the difficulty of the task is level 4. If the stealth involves personal endurance, rather than craft or agility, the GM will have to determine how difficult the task should be. Clinging to the ceiling above a passing guard patrol is likely a level 2 task. But if they stop to share a Napalm Filter right beneath you, even a strong person may have difficulty holding on. In this case a difficulty 3 or 4 task might be in order, depending on the length of the cigarette break.

Beyond the type of stealth being attempted, there are the specifics of the task, which can further modify the difficulty of a stealth task. If the camera you're attempting to hide is a particularly tiny model, reduce the difficulty of the Intellect task by one step. If it's an older, relatively bulky model, increase the difficulty of the check. Likewise, if you are attempting to hide a small weapon under your coat, such as a knife or a .22 caliber pistol, reduce the difficulty by one step. If the weapon is a sawed-off shotgun, increase the difficulty of the task by one level.

SWIMMING

If you're simply swimming from one place to another, such as across a calm river or a lake, use the standard movement rules, noting the fact that your character is in deep water. Being skilled in swimming decreases the difficulty. However, sometimes, special circumstances require a Might roll to make progress while swimming, such as when trying to avoid a current or swimming for a long period of time.

UNDERSTANDING, IDENTIFYING, OR REMEMBERING

When characters try to identify or figure out how to use a device, the level of the device determines the difficulty. When attempting to remember something or understand an idea, the GM determines the difficulty. Being skilled in the appropriate area (geography, history, Vurt knowledge, local knowledge, and so on) reduces the difficulty of this task.

Difficulty	Maneuver
0	Common knowledge
1	Simple knowledge
3	Something a scholar probably knows
5	Something even a scholar might not know
7	Knowledge very few people possess
10	Completely lost knowledge

Chase, page 148

DRIVING AND PILOTING

If you're driving, riding a motorcycle or a creature trained to be a mount, you don't need to make a roll to do something routine such as going from point A to point B. However, staying mounted during a fight or doing something tricky with a vehicle requires a Speed roll to succeed. A saddle or other appropriate gear is an asset and reduces the difficulty by one step. Being skilled in riding, driving, or piloting reduces the difficulty.

DRIVING OR PILOTING TASK DIFFICULTY

Difficulty	Maneuver
0	Riding or driving
1	Riding or driving in combat or a difficult situation
3	Riding or driving when you take damage
4	Mounting a moving vehicle
4	Making an abrupt turn when moving very fast
4	Getting a vehicle to move twice as fast as normal for one round
5	Coaxing a mount to move twice as fast or jump twice as far as normal for one round.
5	Making a long jump with a vehicle not intended to go airborne (such as a car) and remaining in control

Vehicles move just like creatures. Each has a movement rate, which indicates how far it can move in a round. During each turn that a PC is driving or piloting a vehicle, a Speed task must be performed to maintain control of the vehicle. Usually this is a routine task that doesn't require a die roll. However, if the PC performs an action other than driving the vehicle, the difficulty of the next Speed task increases by one step. In other words, driving down the road normally is difficulty 0. Spending an action to retrieve a backpack from the back seat means that in the following round the driver attempts a difficulty 1 task. If the driver decides during the next round to fish a gun out of the backpack, the Speed task in the following round will be difficulty 2, and so on.

Failing a driving or riding check means that you've crashed your vehicle or fallen from your mount. It's up to the GM to decide how bad the accident is, e.g. laying down your motorcycle vs crashing it into a parked car, or hitting some trash cans and lurching to a halt, vs totaling your car.

VEHICULAR CHASES

During a vehicle chase, the PC performs Speed tasks each turn, but rather than determining whether or not the PC maintains control of the vehicle, success or failure determines the outcome of the pursuit.

Just like in a regular chase, the PC attempts a series of Speed tasks based on the level of the NPC. If the number of failures exceeds the number of successes at any point, the NPC catches up to the PC, or escapes if the PC was in pursuit. Because not all vehicles are the same,

On Driving Under the Influence

The Beetle was shouting through his window; 'Fucking Wankers! Get a car!' He was driving like an insect; not thinking, just reacting. The guy was high, Cortex Jammers. You know how a fly flies? At top speed always, and yet dodging obstacles instantaneously? That was how the Beetle drove. They say don't jam and drive, but we had total belief in the master. He was jammed right out of fear, and that was beautiful."

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

the vehicle level must be taken into account. This is done by modifying the difficulty of the Speed tasks by the difference between the vehicle levels. For example, if the PC is driving a level 3 car and is attempting to escape from a level 5 car, increase the difficulty of the Speed tasks by two levels when resolving the chase.

Customizations to your car can also have an effect on the chase. Certain vehicle upgrades, such as racing suspension, better tires, or a supercharger can grant a bonus to driving rolls. Don't forget that cyphers like a Baby Driver Feather or Cortex Jammers can also provide advantages in a car chase.

If the PCs are fleeing an opponent and succeed at the chase, they simply get away and the NPC vehicle is left behind. But what happens when the PCs are chasing another vehicle and are successful in the chase, or if the PCs fail in an attempt to flee another vehicle? The GM decides what happens when the chase is resolved. The simplest choice is that one or the other car is driven off the road, or is forced to stop. But if the GM wants to create a longer or more detailed driving encounter, the interaction may turn to vehicular combat (see below).

VEHICULAR COMBAT

Combat between characters in vehicles is just like any other combat situation. The combatants probably have cover and are moving fast, making attacks more difficult.

Another kind of vehicular combat takes place when vehicles are used as weapons. When one vehicle catches up to another as the result of a vehicle chase, drivers can choose to attack using their vehicle as a weapon. Vehicle attacks are Speed tasks: the difficulty is based on the level of the NPC. A successful vehicle attack means that the target sustains vehicle damage. Generally, when a driver's car suffers vehicle damage from an attack like this, the difficulty of the Speed task required to maintain control of the vehicle in the next round is increased by one or more steps. Alternatively, the GM can decide that a successful vehicle attack causes the target to be forced off the road (i.e. forced to stop or slow down). Depending on the situation this may mean the the target is knocked out of the encounter, or it may mean that they fall behind and are able to give chase again.

Chases involving multiple vehicles
Sometimes the group will be in a vehicular chase involving multiple other vehicles. If you're fleeing or chasing multiple cars with the same stats, you can treat both cars as one, and resolve the chase normally. But what if you race past a cop car and they join in? In this case, you're likely dealing with NPC drivers of different levels and cars of different levels. Resolving a more complex chase like this is actually quite simple. Each round the PC makes attempts a single Speed task just like in a chase against one vehicle, but success or failure is figured separately for each of the chasing vehicles. Failing the chase against one vehicle but not the other can result in some interesting and exciting encounters, especially when vehicular combat is involved.

Vehicle upgrades, page 120

Baby Driver, page 366

If a successful attack or other damage reduces a vehicle to 0 health, it is destroyed or otherwise permanently disabled. It's up to the GM to say whether the vehicle explodes, careens into a ditch, or lurches to a halt in a belch of black smoke.

SPECIAL: GAINING INSIGHT

Sometimes GMs like to keep lots of mystery in their games and present the players with many unknowns. This can be fun and it's realistic—there's always some unknown factor in any situation that can creep up and cause trouble. Trouble is good because it makes things more interesting. These unknown factors are usually best portrayed as GM intrusions.

However, when a master thief plans to break into a vault and steal the jewels, it's safe to assume that they would not go in without some knowledge of the environment. They would know something about what kind of alarm system is in place, what kind of locks are used on the perimeter, and are familiar with the pattern of the guard patrols. This isn't guesswork. The thief knows these things for certain and it is part of the break-in plan. It's what separates the master thief from a bumbling criminal.

Cover, page 143

Vehicle damage, page 118

Similarly, the PCs are competent individuals—sometime even experts—and such people can make decisions and devise plans with confidence. Yet players often find this difficult for two reasons. First, while their characters might be world-class con artists, infiltration specialists, or demolition experts, the players are not. Secondly, they're hindered by all the previously mentioned unknowns.

This is why PCs can gain Insights to help them. A char-

acter that is thinking about a plan, doing research, gathering information, casing a job, or scouting ahead, can spend 3 Intellect points and one action to gain a single bit of special knowledge from the GM that can be counted on with certainty. Insights are always presented as absolutes and once established, they should never be changed unless it is through the direct and deliberate intervention of the PCs. For example, let's say the PCs gain an Insight that the gate guard secretly drinks on the job and is wasted and unattentive by midnight, every night. If the PCs steal the guard's flask of whiskey before he has a chance to get drunk, that guard will not be drunk that night and the Insight has been invalidated. The situation changed because the PCs changed it deliberately. Thus, they know for certain, ahead of time, that the Insight has become invalid.

Insights are never an end in themselves—they're a means to an end. If the whole point of an adventure is to identify a murderer, the characters can't get an Insight to learn the killer's identity. They could, however, use Insights to help them along. For example, they might learn that the murderer is left-handed, or that the accountant is definitely not the murderer.

Ultimately, the GM decides each Insight's revelation, so there's no chance that the PCs will gain too much information (if such a thing is even possible). But GMs are very strongly encouraged to give valuable Insight if the characters look for one (by spending Intellect points and an action), even if it must be made up on the spot. Doing so allows the players to make intelligent plans and feel confident and—more importantly—competent.

GM-INSTIGATED INSIGHTS

Sometimes, the GM can flag a potential Insight to a player in a given area. Usually, this is something the GM has specifically designated ahead of time for this purpose. After the PCs have explored an area and are ready to leave, the GM might say, "There's an Insight to be had here." This kind of Insight can't be gained by spending Intellect points. Instead, if the character wants to follow up on the GM's comment, they can spend 2 XP as if buying a short-term benefit. No player is required to make this expenditure.

Short-term benefit, page 156

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Experience points (XP) are the currency by which players gain benefits for their characters. Common ways to earn XP are by gaining knowledge, winning feathers, or due to GM intrusions. Sometimes experience points are earned during a game session, and sometimes they're earned between sessions. In a typical session, a player might earn 2 to 4 XP, and between sessions perhaps another 2 XP (on average). The exact amounts depend on the events of the session and the discoveries made.

It's worth mentioning that, unlike many other rule systems, the Cypher System does not award XP for defeating enemies in combat. Rather, experience is gained by advancing the story, uncovering secrets, and navigating particularly sticky situations (such as GM intrusion).

GM INTRUSION

At any time, the GM can introduce an unexpected complication for a character. This is the moment in the story when a situation is about to suddenly go sideways, or the player teeters on the brink of falling into a sticky situation. When this intrusion happens, the GM must give that character 2 XP. That player, in turn, must immediately give one of those XP to another player and justify the gift (perhaps the other player had a good idea, told a joke, or performed an action that saved a life).

Often the GM intrudes when a player attempts an action that should be an automatic success. However, the GM is free to intrude at other times. As a general rule, the GM should intrude at least once each session, but no more than once or twice each session, per character.

Anytime the GM intrudes the player can spend 1 XP to avoid the intrusion, though that also means missing out on the 2 XP. If the player has no XP to spend, the GM Intrusion cannot be avoided.

If a player rolls a 1 on a die, the GM can intrude without granting any XP.

Example 1: The PCs are in a chase, running from a feather deal that went bad. In the middle of the encounter, the GM informs the players that the PC in the lead just rounded a corner and came face-to-face with a police checkpoint. The moment seems to hang in the air for a heartbeat. At this point, the player has the option to accept 2 XP, give one to a companion and deal with the cops. They would have to talk or even fight their way out of this tight spot. Instead, the player decides to spend 1 XP to avoid the situation. The GM explains that the PC doubles back lightning quick and ducks between two buildings before the cops take notice. The chase with the feather dealer continues.

Example 2: The PC is inching across a narrow ledge. Two security guards are stationed 4 m below, completely unaware of the character. The character is trained in climbing and uses a level of Effort to reduce the difficulty of this task from 2 to 0. The GM intrudes by saying that a patch of slick birdshit causes the PC to lose their footing so the character must roll anyway. As with any level 2 difficulty task, the target number is 6. The PC attempts the roll as normal and gains 2 XP because the GM intruded, giving 1 XP to another player.

GAINING KNOWLEDGE

At the heart of every Vurt story is the quest for knowledge. Practically speaking, an adventure will lead the characters to some significant piece of knowledge, whether they were seeking it or not. That knowledge may be the purpose of the mission they were on, or it could open up new avenues of exploration. It may be valuable information to be leveraged much later. But in any case, discovery is at the core of our game world.

Knowledge is gained when the players learn that agents of Chimera Corp. are behind the rash of abductions which the PCs have been investigating, or when the group

discovers that there's a network of street-level dreamweavers sharing violent illegal dreams to produce a series of deadly bootleg black feathers and they score one of these Blacks. Finally, the very best knowledge is found by taking feathers and winning the dream.

XP for gaining knowledge or making significant discoveries is awarded between game sessions, usually at the conclusion of a session.

Winning the Dream: When the group wins a feather, XP is awarded to each member of the group depending on the level and color of the feather. See Chapter 13: Vurt feathers for the specific XP values of feathers. The GM can also set the value of a feather that is integral to the adventure, based on its difficulty or significance to the plot. For example if an adventure includes a feather trip which is mostly scripted and doesn't involve much gameplay, they GM may choose to award no XP or less than the standard amount in that instance.

Miscellaneous Knowledge: Various other knowledge or discoveries might grant 1 XP to each PC involved.

GM AWARDS

Sometimes a group will have an adventure that doesn't deal primarily with knowledge or finding things. In this case, it's a good idea for the GM to award XP for accomplishing other tasks. A goal or mission is worth 1 to 4 XP for each PC involved, depending on the difficulty and the length of the work. As a general rule, a mission should be worth at least 1 XP per game session involved in accomplishing it. For example saving someone who has been kidnapped by a nearby street gang, either by force, negotiation or trickery, might be worth 1 XP for each character.

Travelling to Frontier Town, outside the Manchester City wall to deliver a package to a contact of dubious repute, might be worth 2 XP. On the other hand, if the players can afford a smuggler to take them all the way there in a vehicle, the mission might only be worth 1 XP per character. Thus, GM awards are based not only on the task, but on the PCs and their capabilities as well.

However, that doesn't mean the characters should earn fewer XP if they make a lot of lucky rolls or devise a clever plan to overcome obstacles. Being lucky or smart doesn't make a difficult challenge less difficult—it just means the PCs succeed more easily.

PLAYER DRIVER AWARDS

Players can create their own missions by setting goals for their characters. If they succeed, they earn XP just as if they were sent on the mission by an NPC. For example, if the characters decide on their own to get accepted into a gang (no easy task), that's a goal—and a mission.

Sometimes character goals are more personal. If a PC vows to avenge the death of a brother, that's still a mission. These kinds of goals that are important to a character's background should be set at or near the

Frontier Town, page 201

KNOWLEDGE & DISCOVERY

While GM intrusion is interesting, the game also has a more conventional method of awarding XP between sessions. But it has nothing to do with killing monsters.

That's weird for a lot of players. Defeating opponents in battle is the core way you earn XP in many games. But not in the Cypher System. The game is based on the premise of awarding players experience points for advancing or expanding the story in a meaningful way.

Experience points are the reward pellets they get for pushing the button—on, wait, no, that's for rats in a lab. Well, same principle: give the players XP for doing certain things, and those things are what they'll do.

In the Cypher System, those things are gaining knowledge and making discoveries.

outset of the game. When completed, a character goal should be worth at least 1 XP (and perhaps as much as 4 XP). This encourages players to develop their characters' backgrounds and build in opportunities for action in the future. Doing so makes the background more than just backstory or flavor—it becomes something that can propel the campaign forward.

SPENDING EXPERIENCE POINTS

Experience points are meant to be used. Hoarding them is not a good idea; if a player accumulates more than 10 XP the GM can require that player to spend some of them.

Generally, experience points can be spent in four ways: immediate benefits, short and medium-term benefits, long-term benefits, and character advancement.

IMMEDIATE BENEFITS

The most straightforward way for a player to use XP is to reroll any roll in the game— even one that they didn't make. This costs 1 XP per reroll, and the player chooses the best result. They can continue to spend XP on rerolls, but this can quickly become an expensive proposition. It's a fine way to try to prevent disaster, but it's not a good idea to use a lot of XP to reroll a single action over and over.

A player can also spend 1 XP to avoid a GM intrusion.

A-Z Book, page 361

SHORT- AND MEDIUM-TERM BENEFITS

By spending 2 XP, a character can gain a skill—or, more rarely, an ability—that provides a short-term benefit. Let's say a character notices that the terminals in the facility they are infiltrating are very similar to those at the Whoompy's Burger where they used to work. The player spends 2 XP and, as a result, the PC is trained in operating (and breaking into) these computers. This is just like being trained in computer use or hacking, but it applies only to computers found in that particular location. The skill is extremely useful in the facility, but nowhere else.

Medium-term benefits are usually story-based. For example, a character can spend 2 XP while climbing through mountains and say that the PC has experience with climbing in regions like these, or perhaps the player pays 2 XP after the PC has been climbing for a while and says the they've gotten a feel for climbing there. Either way, from now on, the PC is trained in climbing in those mountains. This helps the character now and any time they return to climb in that area, but they are not trained in climbing everywhere.

This method allows a character to get immediate training in a skill for half the normal cost. (Normally, it costs 4 XP to become trained in a skill.) It's also a way to gain a new skill even if the PC has already gained a new skill as a step toward attaining the next tier.

In rare cases, a GM might allow a character to spend 2 XP to gain an entirely new ability—such as a device, a special ability, or a special mathemagickal equation—for a short time, usually no longer than the course of one scenario. The player and the GM should agree on a story-based explanation for the benefit. Perhaps the ability has a specific, rare requirement, such as a tool, a battery, a drug, or some kind of treatment. For example, a character who wants to track down a bunch of NPCs in a city district might spend 2 XP for a "black book" of local contacts to provide them with leads, or an A-Z Book of the district to aid in navigation —the item might only be useful a few times before the information is exhausted. Again, the story and the logic of the situation dictate the parameters.

LONG-TERM BENEFITS

In many ways, the long-term benefits a PC can gain by spending XP are a means of integrating the mechanics

PROGRESSING TO A NEW TIER

Tiers in the Cypher System aren't entirely like levels in other roleplaying games. In the Cypher System, gaining tiers is not the player's only goal or the only measure of achievement. Starting (first-tier) characters are already competent, and there are only six tiers. Character advancement has a power curve, but it's only steep enough to keep things interesting. In other words, gaining levels is cool and fun, but it's not the only path to success or power. If you spend all you XP on immediate, short- and medium-term benefits, you would be different from someone who spends their points on long-term benefits, but you would not be behind that character, so to speak.

The general idea is that most characters will spend half their XP on tier advancement and long-term benefits, and the rest on immediate and short-term benefits (which are used during gameplay). Some groups might decide that XP earned during a game is to be used on immediate and short-term benefits (gameplay uses), and XP awarded at the conclusion of a session for gaining knowledge and making discoveries is to be spent on character advancement (long-term uses).

Ultimately, the idea is to make experience points into tools that the players and the GM can use to shape the story and the characters, not just a bookkeeping hassle.

of the game with the story. Players can codify things that happen to their characters by talking to the GM and spending 3 XP. For example, a character may spend a long time helping the police in an investigation. The player talks with the GM and suggests that they want the experience to have a lasting effect on the character. The player spends 3 XP and gains familiarity with police interactions.

Some things that a PC can acquire as a long-term benefit are story-based. In the course of play, the character might gain a friend (a contact) or set up a stash pad (a home). These benefits are probably not the result of spending XP. The new contact comes to the PC and starts the relationship. The home is granted as a reward for service to an NPC, or perhaps the character inherits the home from a friend or relative.

Things that affect the character abilities, such as a familiarity with a particular subject, are different. They likely require XP and time, money, and so on.

Long-term benefits can include the following:

Familiarity: The character gains a +1 bonus to rolls involving one kind of task. (This can be purchased, when appropriate, for 3 XP)

Contact: The character gains a long-term NPC contact of importance—someone who will help with information, equipment, or physical tasks. For example, if the group has completed a mission by driving off an abusive competitor for a small business owner, the PC might earn the friendship of the owner's nephew, who is a local boxing champion. The player and GM should work out the details of the relationship.

Home: The PC acquires a full-time residence. This can be an apartment, an old canal boat hidden under a bridge on the River Irwell, or an RV parked in the corner of a junkyard. It should be a secure place where the PC can leave belongings and sleep soundly. If the group wants to share the XP cost, three characters could spend 1 XP each and acquire the place together.

Title or job: The PC is granted a position of importance or authority. It might come with responsibilities, prestige, and rewards, or it might be an honorary title.

Wealth: The PC comes into a considerable amount of money, whether it's from a winning Super Randomino, an inheritance, or a gift. It might be enough to buy a home or a title, but that's not really the point. The main benefit is that the PC no longer needs to worry about the cost of simple equipment, lodging, food, and so on. This wealth could be a set amount, perhaps £500, or it could bestow the ability to ignore minor costs, as decided by the player and the GM.

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

Progressing to the next tier involves four stages. By spending 4 XP on each of the stages, a PC can advance to the next tier and gains all the type and focus benefits of that tier. A PC can only spend XP on each of these stages once per tier. In other words, a PC must buy all four stages and advance to the next tier before they can buy the same stage again.

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

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

Extra Effort: Your Effort score increases by 1.

Skills: You become trained in one skill of your choice, other than attacks or defense. If you choose a skill that you're already trained in, you become specialized in that skill.

Other Options: Players have the option to substitute one of the previous four stages with one of the following special options. Three of the four required stages must be from the list above in order to advance to the next tier. The special options are as follows:

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

Add 2 to your recovery rolls.

A SONG FOR MISS HOBART

All deep dark the afterdream, all happy spark the moon tonight. All feathery in your cradle let you lie, all mirrored in your eyes the sky. All in pink your desires might be, all tattered your waking life. All darkness be the light. All bonded by the night, let flow. All misty in your skull parade, let glow. All sleepy be your body now, all tender be the dawn. All ever full of flight be your wings, all ever written large your heart. All heavy be the roots, all blossoming the blades. All golden in the pollen clouds let you sing, all ever. All forever, all is ever, and forever and all forever in the nevermind, let shine.

- Jeff Noon

Super Randomino, page 372

CHAPTER 12

OPTIONAL RULES

It's very common in a roleplaying game for the GM and the players to come up with house rules that tailor the game to their liking. Often this means adding complexity or simplifying rules to better adapt them to your play style. You should *always* feel free to modify the game as you see fit! Split the DNA of the rules, modify and remix them until they're freaky, brutal, or absurd. As they say in Manchester, *"Open all channels. Connect to everything!"*

Here are a few optional rules that you might prefer to use.

INFREQUENT LASTING DAMAGE

In this corebook, we present lasting damage as a common consequence of taking damage. This means that entering into a combat situation is something that should be done with caution and concern by the players. When a PC is moved down the damage track as a result of a pool being reduced to 0, we recommend adding a lasting damage effect. This makes the game rather challenging and realistic.

However, if you favor adventures that are action-heavy or if your players regularly dive into conflict looking for a fight, this mechanic might deter them from playing their characters the way they like, or worse, get them killed. If this is ruining the fun of the game, simply *throw it out!!*

If you choose to apply lasting damage effects only in extreme circumstances, such as when a character is nearly killed or survives catastrophic damage, you'll have an adventure where players can jump in guns blazing, take lots of damage, but be back at full fighting force after a few recovery rolls. Combat will still be very punishing, but when it's over, it's over.

PERMANENT DAMAGE

Permanent damage is a damage effect that never heals, even if the PCs stat pools are full and they are hale. When to apply permanent damage is up to the GM, but is advisable in situations where a player takes catastrophic damage or special damage. For example, if a player is blasted by a shotgun at close range and is reduced from hale to debilitated in a single shot, it's not unlikely that they'll be suffering the effects of this

PERMANENT DAMAGE

Damage Type	Description	Other Effect
Might	Severed hand or arm	Self-explanatory
Speed	Permanent limp	Move at half speed; short move is no more than 25 feet (8m); long move is no more than 50 feet (15m)
Speed	Severed leg	Cannot move without assistance
Intellect	Missing eye	Difficulty of most or all physical actions is increased by one step
Intellect	Blindness	Character acts as if always in complete darkness
Intellect	Deafness	Character cannot hear.

injury forever. Or if a PC survives a fall from the top of a building, it's reasonable to imagine that they may become crippled in some way. See the Permanent Damage Table for some example effects.

LASTING OR PERMANENT DAMAGE INSTEAD OF DEATH

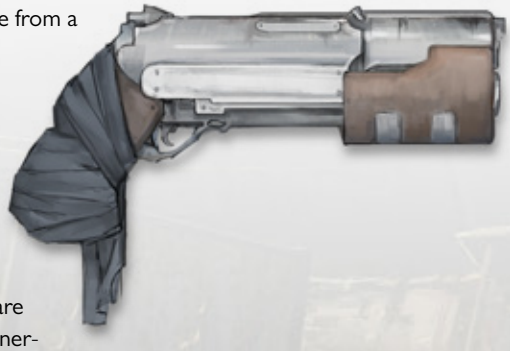
Sometimes the GM may want to intervene and spare a character from death. If a PC winds up at the point of death, the GM can elect to apply serious injury and allow them to survive. For example, when a player is sliced with an electronic knife in combat and is reduced to 0 pool points, the character might wake up in a hospital bed and discover that they're missing a hand.

DISORIENTATION FROM DAMAGE

In real life, getting punched in the face has a considerable effect on the next few seconds of your life. If you want to go the extra mile and make combat really realistic, you can choose to apply momentary disorientation whenever damage is sustained. That means that any action (including attack or defense) attempted in a round following one where the character took damage is increased in difficulty by one step. Apply this to both PCs and NPCs alike.

You can go even further and say that any firearm attacks that deal at least 4 points of damage cause the target to fall to the ground. Remember that the PC is also allowed to move an immediate distance in addition to their action, so a PC who has just been shot can move to a nearby cover while getting up, to avoid that Full Metal Jacket-type combat nightmare. This mechanic really drives home the need for players to approach shootouts with extreme caution!

If a PC is trained in melee defense, cancel the disorientation suffered from melee attacks. If the PC is specialized in melee defense, they only fall after suffering 5 or more damage from a firearm attack.



SHODDY ANTIQUE FIREARMS

As described in the Chapter 8, antique firearms, while far inferior to flame tech weapons, are still the most common type found on the street. They are much less expensive, and are generally a patchwork of repaired parts. To add a level of complexity to the game, make antique firearms highly prone to jam or break, and introduce regular weapon repairs to the game.

When firing an antique weapon, rolling a natural 1 on the d20 means that the weapon breaks and is non-

Attacking objects, page 147

functional until repaired. A result of 2 or 3 means that the weapon jams and and action must be taken to clear the jam before it can be fired again. In both cases an intellect check must be made to restore the weapon to working condition.

If a 1 was rolled and the weapon broke, the PC must spend one hour and attempt a difficulty 2 Intellect task to return it to working order. A simple toolkit is required to attempt the repair. On a successful roll, the weapon is repaired and can be used normally. If a 2 or 3 was rolled, and the weapon has jammed, the PC must spend 1 round and a perform a difficulty 1 Intellect task to clear the jam.

TRADING DAMAGE FOR EFFECT

You can decrease the amount of damage you inflict in combat in exchange for a special effect that is usually attained only on a roll of 19 or 20. To determine the amount of damage you must sacrifice from a single attack, consult the following table, and add the amount for the desired effect to the enemy's level. For example, if you want to impair a level 5 enemy, you'd have to sacrifice 12 points of damage from an attack (7 plus 5). The player can wait to determine if the attack hits before deciding whether to trade damage for an effect.

Damage Reduction	Effect
2	Hinder/Distract
4	Specific body part
6	Knock back
6	Move past
6	Strike held object
8	Knock down
11	Disarm
11	Impair
15	Stun

Hinder/Distract: For one round, the difficulty of the opponent's actions is increased by one step.

Specific Body Part: The attacker strikes a specific spot on the defender's body. The GM decides what special effect, if any results. For example, hitting a Vurtdog's tentacle that's wrapped around your ally's leg might make it easier for the ally to escape. Hitting an enemy in the eye might blind it for one round. Hitting a creature in its one vulnerable spot might ignore Armor.

Knock Back: The enemy is knocked or forced back a few feet. Most of the time, this effect doesn't matter much, but if the fight takes place on a catwalk high over a construction site, the effect can be significant.

Move Past: The character can make a short move at the end of the attack. This effect is useful to get past an enemy guarding a door, for example.

Strike Held Object: Instead of striking the enemy, you strike what the enemy is holding. To determine the results, refer to the rules for attacking objects.

Knock Down: The enemy is knocked prone. They can get up on their turn if they wish.

Disarm: The opponent drops one object that they're holding.

Impair: For the rest of the combat, the difficulty of all tasks attempted by the enemy is modified by one step to its detriment.

Stun: The opponent loses their next turn.

MODIFYING ABILITIES ON THE FLY

Sometimes, a player can use a special ability in a way that goes beyond its normal bounds. When a player asks "Hey, can I use X ability to do Y?" you can decide to make it work by modifying how the task is performed.

If the PC is a mathemagician and wants to increase the range or area of a special ability, you can simply make the special ability cost more Intellect points, to demonstrate that the PC has concentrated extra hard on the action. You can spend 1 additional Intellect point to change the range by one step—either from short to long, or from long to 200 ft (60 m). You can't increase a range beyond 200 ft by spending more points. Any intellect ability that has a duration (anything more than a single action in a single round) usually lasts one minute, ten minutes or one hour. By spending 1 additional point of intellect, you can increase the duration by one step. Durations cannot be increased by more than one step.

A player can make a special roll to modify the range, area, or other aspects of an ability. The roll is always modified by the stat it's normally based on. The GM sets the difficulty for the roll based on the degree of modification. Like any roll, the player can use Effort, skill, and assets to reduce the difficulty. Generally, the difficulty falls into one of three categories:

- **Impossible** (modifying an ability to accomplish an effect that has nothing to do with its description or intent).
- **Formidable** (modifying an ability to do something similar to the description or intent, but changing its nature).
- **Difficult** (modifying an ability to do something within the spirit and general idea of the ability).

For example, say the mathemagician has the Hover ability and wants to modify its use in the middle of an encounter. If they wanted to use it to blast someone with fire, that's an impossible task (difficulty 10) because fire has nothing to do with the ability.

To use it offensively within the general description of the ability, they might try to make an enemy fly up and hit its head on the ceiling. However, turning an ability that is not offensive into an attack changes its nature, making the task formidable (difficulty 7).

To make a friend hover in the place of the PC, that's within the spirit and general idea of the ability. That's difficult (difficulty 4) but not unreasonable.

MODIFYING THE RANGE OF WEAPONS

If a character wants to attack an enemy outside the range of the weapon they are using, it can be done by increasing the difficulty of the attack by two steps, per range increase. For example a short range weapon can be used to hit a target at long range with a difficulty increase of 2 steps, or a target up to 200 ft (60 m) with a difficulty increase of 4 steps. Likewise, a long-range weapon can be used to hit a target at up to 200 ft by increasing the difficulty of the attack by 2 steps, or a target at up to 500 ft (150 m) by increasing the difficulty of the attack by 4 steps. In this same way, hitting a level 2 enemy with a pistol at a range of 1,000 ft (300 m) is a level 10 difficulty attack (2 plus 8).

CHOOSING TO ROLL

Sometimes, a player may choose to roll the dice, even when a check is not required. Because a result of 17 through 20 grants extra damage or reduced point cost, it may be worth the chance. Of course, this puts the player at risk of rolling a 1 and triggering a GM intrusion which may indicate a complication or outright failure.

OPTIONAL MAJOR EFFECT

When a player's roll would grant a major effect, instead of taking the effect, they can choose to roll a d6 and add the result to the initial roll. This option makes it possible to succeed at tasks with target numbers greater than 20 without decreasing the difficulty. The GM may choose to apply this optional effect only as specific times (such as at a desperate moment), to keep the game more realistic, or always allow it, if the group has more fun attempting the impossible!

WEAPON DISTINCTIONS

Weapons have only a few distinctions—they are light, medium, or heavy, and they are melee or ranged. However, you can also add the following distinctions.

Slashing: Weapons with sharp edges, like swords and axes, are slashing weapons. On a successful hit, they inflict 1 additional point of damage against an unarmored enemy but 1 less damage against an armored enemy. The claws of a creature might be considered to be slashing weapons.

Stabbing: Weapons with a point, such as knives or a crossbow, are stabbing weapons. When an attacker using one rolls a 17 or higher on a successful attack, the weapon inflicts 1 additional point of damage beyond any bonus damage normally granted by the roll. However, if a 5 or below is rolled, the weapons inflicts 1 less damage as the weapon glances off or grazes the enemy. A dog bite is a stabbing weapon.

Crushing: Blunt weapons such as clubs and hammers are crushing weapons, effective against even well-armored enemies. Crushing weapons ignore 1 point of Armor, but they inflict 1 less point of damage against unarmored enemies. The powerful bashes of a massive serpent in the Vurt might be considered a crushing weapon.

Reaching: A reaching weapon is a long melee weapon, such as a spear or a whip that can attack enemies at a bit of a distance. Someone with a reaching weapon can hold attackers at bay (unless they also have a reaching weapon). Attacks against someone with a reaching weapon are modified by one step in the defender's favor. In certain situations, such as close-quarters fighting, a reaching weapon might be hindered (the welder's attack difficulty is increased by one step), or using such a weapon might be impossible. The attacks of a very large creature or one with long arms might be considered reaching weapons.

USING MINIATURES

Many RPG players like to use miniatures or tokens to help visualize the action during play sessions. These days, online tabletop apps are also common, which allow you to play online instead of organizing in-person games. If you are interested in using minis or tokens, here are a few helpful tips.

You don't need minis for everything. One of the ways that minis can really gum up a game is when the players are so focused on the pieces that they forget they're using their imagination first! It's not always fun to try and use minis like board game pieces, moving each one in turn, down the hallway. Instead, try using them to show the formation your players are exploring in, if there is one, then leaving them alone until another situation arises that involves the positioning of the characters. When we use minis, we usually don't bother with them until a combat situation occurs.

It's okay to estimate distance. Because the Cypher System is so streamlined, the exact number of feet between pieces isn't really that important. Fun and cinematic combat scenes can be represented without measuring distances at all. It's easy to see the difference between Immediate, short, and long ranges on a table.

Don't bother with the grid. If you prefer to be exacting in your distances, the simplicity of the range mechanics makes this easy too. Measure out and cut three lengths of string to represent the ranges: 2 in (5 cm), 10 in (25 cm), and 20 in (51 cm). Anything inside the length of the two-inch string is in immediate range and so melee attacks can be made. Immediate range is also a common radius for area of effect attacks such as grenade explosions. The 10-inch string is short range, so pistol attacks and short movements are measured with this. The 20-inch string represents long range and can be used to determine the range of long range attacks or long movement. If you're playing on an online desktop, there's usually a ruler tool that allows you to do this easily with your mouse.

Show the landscape. When you're using minis to show the action, it's usually important to show the features of the terrain, such as a stack of crates, or the edge of the roof. It creates a really exciting scene when you can see a pitched melee battle move slowly toward the ledge of the skyscraper roof! We often use a books, scraps of paper, toys, and even the occasional glass of whiskey to show the features of the landscape. (*Alexander, quit moving your whiskey! That's supposed to be the satellite dish!*) Also, a roll of butcher paper or a whiteboard is a great tool for drawing scenes.

Focus on the story! First and last, don't forget that the story and your imagination are what makes the world. If you find that you're focusing too much on the minis, the players will start to look there to see what's in the world. Remember that the minis are there as a guide for tracking relative distances, not a crutch for drawing a scene. Even if you like to create elaborate and detailed miniature settings with pieces that show everything, make the descriptions and storytelling the focus of the scene. That's the heart of a tabletop RPG.

OPTIONAL XP RULES

Starting with XP. Sometimes the GM may allow a character to start an adventure with some XP to spend. There are two examples of times when this is appropriate. Firstly, when a new character is being introduced to the party. This may happen after a PC is killed and a player starts a new character, or when a player has missed sessions or starts late in a campaign. Secondly, if a player introduces a storyline based on their character, it may make sense to allow the PC special skills and knowledge that is specific to their history. For example, if the group is going to a PC's home turf in another city, the GM might award XP to the character to spend on short or long-term benefits in that area.

Skills from backgrounds. If a player creates a rich and interesting backstory for their PC, it might just imply that the character is trained in a certain skill. Should you allow the player to have an additional skill beyond the ones granted in normal character creation? The decision is up to the GM, but we say yes! Just make sure that the skill is something that doesn't give them too much of an advantage in normal play. For example, "My character grew up in a monastery and trained as a kung-fu master!" should not allow the PC to be trained in attack or defense, but rather in martial arts history or meditation. These are skills that can help create a rich story, but don't introduce the PC with an unfair advantage.

Alternatively, you could allow the player to select an

extra skill, and give them an XP deficit, which means that the next XP granted will be spent immediately to pay for the skill.

Finally, you can allow the player to give their character a disadvantage that balances the benefit of some extra XP to shape their character.

These disadvantages are worth an advance of 4 to 6 XP:

- No matter what the PC says or does, People (and animals) find the them extremely unlikeable. Any social interaction with them is treated as if it were one step more difficult than normal. Further, the GM should make a default assumption that all people treat the character with contempt and distaste as a baseline.
- The character has a permanent injury that acts up from time to time. At least once per play session, the injury causes the difficulty of all Speed tasks to be increased by one step.
- The character has some other problem that causes problems from time to time. It could be drug addiction, ungovernable rage or something else, but once per session it causes a problem for the player.
- The character is wanted by the law. This can cause a lot of challenges in the development of the story.

These disadvantages are worth an advance of 12 to 20 XP:

- The character is wanted by the law and actively pursued by multiple NPCs. This isn't just a matter of keeping a low profile, rather NPCs will show up at the worst possible times and attempt to kill or arrest the PC.
- The character has a serious permanent injury, such as blindness, deafness or a physical disability. Take a look at the permanent damage chart on page 158 for some examples.

Special GM Intrusion XP. In order to avoid characters advancing through tiers at different rates, the GM can determine that experience earned from GM intrusions is only useable for short, medium or long-term benefits, and not for stat and character advancement. Remember though that tier advancement isn't the sum of what makes a character effective, and the enemies and challenges in the game are not supposed to be based primarily on player tier. This rule is also useful to encourage to spend their XP in ways that drive the development of the story and not just leveling up.

DRUG ADDICTION

Many of the cyphers in this game are drugs. While negative effects are figured into these items, you may find yourself wanting to feature the ravages of addiction in a more substantial way in your adventures.

A great way to do this is to keep a simple tally of the number of drugs that have been used in a 24-hour period. When the tally reaches three, the PC receives one level of drug addiction.

Whenever an addicted PC (one who has any addiction levels) obtains a drug cypher, they must immediately perform a Might-based willpower task equal to the level of addiction. If they fail the check, they must immediately consume the cypher, regardless of the situation.

Additionally, as the level of drug addiction increases, so do the negative side effects that the player must cope with. Use the following table to determine the effect. They are cumulative: Each effect stacks on top of the previous addiction-level penalty as well as on the negative effects of the specific drug cypher.

1. **Out of it.** PC receives -1 to all Intellect rolls.
2. **Sluggish.** PC receives -1 to all Speed rolls.
3. **Obvious**. Increase difficulty of all social interaction tasks by one step.
4. **Can't sleep.** PC cannot take 10-hour recovery rolls.
5. **Can't sit still.** PC cannot take one-hour recovery rolls.
6. **Freak.** The difficulty of all social interaction tasks are increased by an additional step.
7. **The DTs.** PC suffers from delirium tremens when not under the effects of a drug cypher
8. **Manic.** PC cannot take 10-minute recovery rolls.
9. **Uncanny.** When under the effects of a drug cypher, the difficulty of all tasks are reduced by one step.
10. **Godlike.** PC cannot take 1 action recovery rolls. The penalties from addiction levels 1 through 3 are removed. Additionally, the difficulty of all social interaction and speed based tasks are reduced by two steps.

Lasting Damage: Delerium tremens, page 142

Getting clean (i.e. reducing PCs level of addiction) requires not taking any drugs for a period of time and then succeeding at Might-based willpower test. The number of days a PC must abstain from taking drugs and the difficulty of the willpower test is equal to their current addiction level. For example, if Dino the dog-man has an addiction level of 3, he must refrain from using any drugs (willingly or unwillingly) for three days. At the end of the third day, he must succeed at a difficulty 3 Might-based willpower test, at which point his addiction level will be reduced to 2. If he fails the Might test, his addiction level stays at 3 until the end of the following day, when he can try the willpower test again.

The level of addiction can increase to a maximum of 10, at which point it is likely that the player will soon be dead from an inability to restore Pool points. However, Manchester is full of glorious success stories where individuals have lived seemingly forever with absolutely radiant drug habits.

THE MECHANISMS OF EXCHANGE

The real world and the Vurt world are in constant equilibrium, each containing a proportional amount of "worth." What this means is that when anything passes

completely from one world into the other, material of proportional worth spontaneously swaps into its place. There is an equation, built around a numerical constant (0.267125) called "Hobart's Constant" (H) which explains the equilibrium: R=V+/- H. This concept is commonly referred to as "the mechanisms of exchange."

In order to employ this metaphysical concept into your game sessions, the GM must make sure that whenever something is taken from, or left inside a Vurt dream, material of equal worth takes its place. Worth is determined by the level of the item, which you should refer to as "Hobart Value." For example, if a PC finds a level 3 clove of ultragarlic inside a Vurt dream and brings it back into the real world, an object of equivalent value is spontaneously swapped into the Vurt. The GM can choose any cypher or object to vanish from the PCs inventory into the Vurt world, so long as it has the same or similar level.

If the PC has used or abandoned cyphers or objects in the dream and subsequently attempts to bring something out, the GM should compare the Hobart Value of the things removed to the things left behind. If more Hobart Value is being brought into the real world, something must be lost to the Vurt. If more was left in the Vurt, something is going to be brought into the real world to balance the equation.

EXCHANGE MECHANISMS

Sometimes we lose precious things. Friends and colleagues, fellow travellers in the Vurt, sometimes we lose them; even lovers we sometimes lose. And get bad things in exchange; aliens, objects, snakes, and sometimes even death. Things we don't want. This is part of the deal, part of the game deal; all things, in all worlds, must be kept in balance. Kittlings often ask, who decides on the swappings? Now then, some say it's all accidental; that some poor Vurt thing finds himself too close to a door, at too crucial a time, just when something real is being lost. Whoosh! Swap time! Others say that some kind of overseer is working the MECHANISMS OF EXCHANGE, deciding the fate of innocents. The Cat can only tease at this, because of the big secrets involved, and because of the levels between you, the reader, and me, the Game Cat. Hey, listen; I've struggled to get where I am today; why should I give you the easy route? Get working, kittlings! Reach up higher. Work the Vurt.

Just remember Hobart's rule; R = V ± H, where H is Hobart's constant. In the common tongue; any given worth of reality can only be swapped for the equivalent worth of Vurtuality, plus or minus 0.267125 of the original worth. Yes my kittlings, it's not about weight or volume or surface area. It's about worth. How much the lost ones count, in the grand scheme of things. You can only swap back those that add up to something, within Hobart's constant. Like for like, give or take 0.267125.

We have prostrated ourselves at the feet of goddess Vurt, and we must accept the sacrifice. You'll want them back of course, your lost and lonely ones. You'll cry out for them, all through the dark and empty nights. Swapback can be made, but the way is full of knives, glued-up doors, pathways of glass. Only the strong can make it happen. Listen up. Be careful. Be very, very careful. You have been warned.

This comes from the heart.

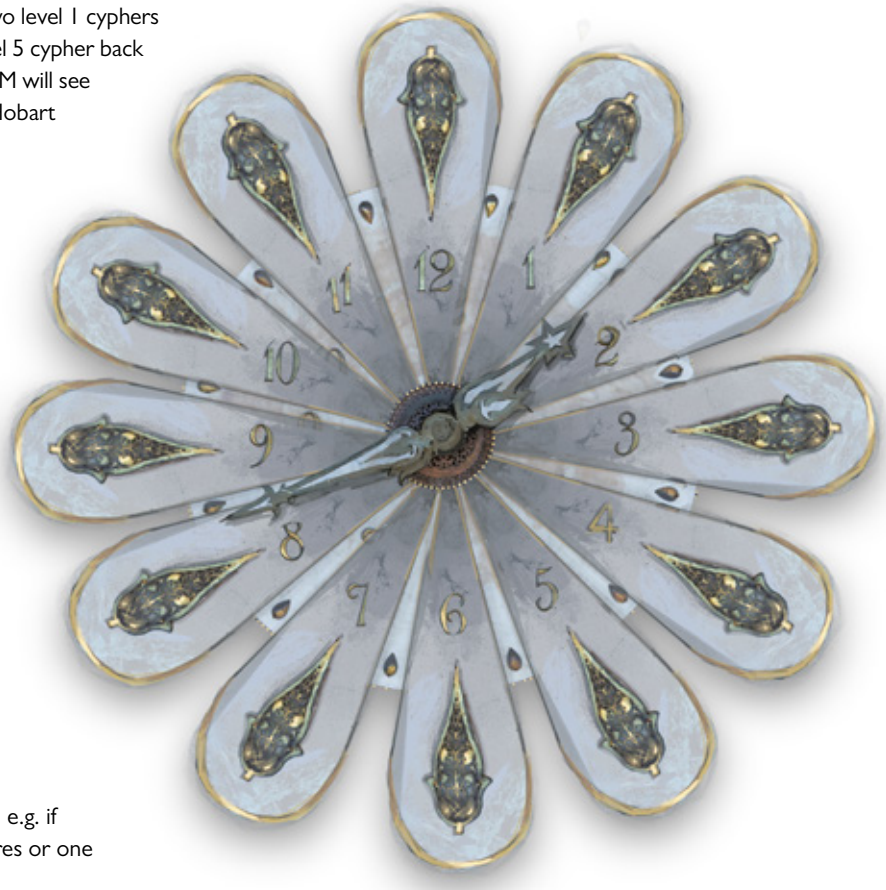
-Vurt, Jeff Noon

For example, say that Bella uses two level 1 cyphers inside a feather and then brings a level 5 cypher back into the real world. In this case the GM will see that the player has left things with a Hobart Value of 2 in the Vurt and removed things with a Hobart Value of 5. A Hobart Value of 3 is "owed" to the Vurt in order to have equilibrium. The GM should choose a level 3 item or cypher from the PC's inventory to be lost into the Vurt.

When the mechanisms of exchange require that something comes out of the Vurt and into the real world, it is usually something bad. Generally this means hostile Vurt creatures like dreamsnakes, shadowcats, and shadowslugs. When this happens, the object or creatures from the Vurt materialize an immediate distance from the PC or the group, and are generally angry or terrified. The GM decides how many creatures appear, e.g. if there should be three level 2 creatures or one level 6 creature.

Remember that PCs will often be weakened or suffering from Vurt lag, so swapping things out of the Vurt can be very dangerous!

As a feather trip unfolds, the GM should keep a secret tally of what has been used or left in the Vurt world and compare it to what the group brings out. Experienced players will try to do similarly to avoid consequences from the mechanisms of exchange, but that doesn't mean they won't miss something!



Vurt Lag, page 170

MISKEL

In order to enable the players to score loot inside Vurt dreams, non-cypher items which have worth can be collected and used to trade for useful objects inside the Vurt. These items are called Miskel and are oddities of strange significance within the Vurt. An example of a Miskel might be the weird smelly charm that the dogwoman traveler pressed into the character's hand in an encounter, or a tarot card that has some esoteric meaning.

When using the optional rules for the mechanisms of exchange, the GM should introduce Miskel into the game world. They can be purchased in the bazaar, found in the trash by a character who senses their Vurtness or even brought out of the Vurt itself. Miskel have cash value in the real world, thanks to the existence of Cargo Cults and collectors of such weird objects.

Miskel have levels just like cyphers, but serve no purpose other than for trade and exchange within the Vurt.

EXAMPLE MISKEL

Camera Obscura. (1D6+1) An ancient vid-screen camera that always shows pictures from an impossible perspective.

The Fool Card. (1D6+3) A largish tarot card depicting a bipedal dogboy dancing toward the edge of a cliff. A small robodog is capering anxiously and nipping at his heels.

Kubrik's Rube. (1d6+1) A small battery-powered plush cowboy with a pull string. Each pull results in a different pseudo-philosophical phrase. Guaranteed. The phrases it plays are usually in the form of really bad, xenophobic advice. This is more of a novelty—only a true halfwit would follow its life advice.

Interactive Madonna Poster. (1d6+1) While interactive posters come in a variety of themes and specific people, the original Interactive Madonna bestseller is the name that stuck. Even 30 years later, people still love their interactive posters. Subjects in the posters move, repeat simple phrases, and usually sing or play music. The classic copies can be valuable.

Flower clock: (1d6) With each passing moment, a petal falls from the flower, disappearing as it floats to the ground. A petal grows in its place with a slight *tick tick* sound. Can be programmed to play custom songs on the hour. There are numerous models, but the classic daisy, nasturtium, and dahlia models still sell best.

Cargo Cults, page 192

CHAPTER 13

VURT FEATHERS

WHAT ARE FEATHERS?

Humans of the 20th century were glued to their screens. TV shows, videogames, sports, porn, cable news, sappy commercials, holiday specials, summer blockbusters, series, sequels, prequels—society was utterly absorbed, a captive audience.

Vurt feathers have transformed the way we entertain ourselves, how we occupy our minutes and hours. In Manchester (and the rest of the world) the invention of Vurt feathers saw the world's alleys and garbage dumps filled with discarded video screens. We no longer use screens to escape, those days are long gone. We all crave feathers now. A feather is a portal to a world where anything that can be dreamed can be experienced directly, and society is completely, hopelessly addicted to them.

Everyone, with the exception of those tragic Dodos, uses feathers every day. In live sporting events, fans use viewing feathers to experience the perspective of their favorite Vurtball star. In the car people use feathers to help them find their way home from work. Others use Pinks in bed to look like famous Vurt stars and indulge themselves with every imaginable pleasure.

When a Vurt feather is inserted into the mouth, millions of tiny barbed neuromatocysts attach to the back of the throat and connect the feather to the nervous system of the user. A dream which has been meticulously edited and encoded into the feather is injected into the dreamer and allows them to project into the Vurt world.

Unlike "virtual reality" of the late 20th century, the dreamer is *actually* there in the Vurt world and can interact with the dream. Depending on the dream that was encoded into the feather, the dreamer can enjoy a very controlled and safe, recreational experience, or a raw, dangerous plunge into the untamed Vurt. The color of a feather indicates the nature of the Vurt dream that it is linked to. feathers are either blue, pink, black, yellow, or some combination of these colors.

Vurt feathers are cyphers, and just like other cyphers, a feather's level is determined by rolling a 1d6. Completing a feather is called *winning* and rewards the dreamer with some XP and sometimes important inpho that can help advance a larger objective in their adventures.

ON TAKING VURT FEATHERS...

The Tapewormer feather was halfway down my throat and I could feel the waves approaching over the music's swelling main theme, intercut with the credits. But then the waves were moving backwards, taking the music with them, so I was getting the fade, and then the hit of each note, and I was in there somewhere, losing the sense of trouble, the sense of now...I gave the feather one last push and then I was gone, wave deep, swimming the surf back home, as the main theme and the credits dropped away...

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

BLUE FEATHERS

Blue feathers are the most widely available color of feather. They're produced by massive feather corporations and manufactured in large quantities as entertainment for the masses. The most popular blue feather dreams are released as serials, such as the popular Questing Beast series, and are advertised everywhere. Ads for the latest episode of Balloon Quixote or Questing Beast appear on billboards, blurbfly projection, are blasted over loud speakers and are hawked by vendors all over Manchester. Blue feathers are completely safe and intended for consumption by all ages, which is why hardcore featherheads often refer to them as "Baby Blues." They are 100% legal.

When the PCs enter a blue feather, make a note of the number of points in each pool. When the characters exit the feather, all pools return to the original values. Thus, all damage that is sustained while inside a blue feather is temporary. However, any recovery rolls that were made during the dream are counted normally.

The description of each blue feather will dictate exactly what equipment and abilities (if any) the group has at their disposal. When the PCs take a blue feather, they effectively become someone else for the duration of the dream. Unless specifically stated in the feather description, no items, cyphers, or special abilities can be used in the dream. Characters may jerk out of a blue feather at will.

The introduction of a blue feather will usually state clearly what is required to win the feather. Usually this requires the dreamer to defeat some foe, collect a specific item or items, or solve a riddle. The amount of XP awarded for winning a Blue is determined by its level: 1 XP for a level 1-3 feather, or 2 XP for a level 4-6 feather.

PINK FEATHERS

Pinks are pornographic dreams. Like blue feathers, they are mass produced and widely available. One of the most popular ways to experience pink feathers is in a Pink Shimmy-Plex, where theaters of dreamers will share pink feather dreams. Naturally, Body Vaz® is doled out in liberal quantities from hand dispensers in every aisle. Pinks are immersive experiences, sometimes noble and artistic, sometimes dark and trashy, but always a delight for the senses. They are 100% legal.

Pink feathers are completely safe. When the group enters a Pink, make note of the PCs pool amounts and return them to these values when the dream is done.

Equipment and special abilities are described in each feather's description, and unless stated otherwise, the characters cannot use the equipment or abilities from their character sheet. Characters may jerk out of a pink feather at will.

The introduction of a pink feather will usually state exactly what is required in order to win. The win conditions usually requires completing an erotic encounter or adventure but not in every case. Some feathers are Pinks because of the characters and setting that is experienced. The amount of XP awarded for winning a Pink is determined by its level: 1 XP for a level 1-3 feather, or 2 XP for a level 4-6 feather.

BLACK FEATHERS

Black feathers are very different from Pinks and Blues. They contain nightmares, violence, madness, and sometimes death. Bootleg editions of popular Blues, black-market serials or one-off dreams, black feathers come in many flavors. While some black feathers may be violent nightmares, others may be more intense bootlegs of popular Blues, in which the danger is real and the reward is greater. The adventures experienced inside a Black are completely real and affect the dreamers physically, dealing damage and possibly even killing them. However, increased stakes means increased reward. Featherheads are always on the lookout for the latest black feather. They are highly illegal.

Unless specifically stated otherwise in the feather description, when entering a black feather PCs appear exactly as they do in the real world. Their equipment and special abilities can be used normally, but the number of cyphers that can be taken into the feather is limited by the cypher limit shown on the PCs character sheet. Generally, the player may choose which cyphers to take, but the GM may also determine if specific cyphers are allowed or not.

In a black feather, damage taken in the dream affects the body of the PC in the real world. If the players die in the dream, they die in the real world. Jerking out of a Black is an Intellect task equal to the level of the feather.

Unlike most blue and pink feathers, how to win a Black is not always clearly stated. Often the group will have to figure out how to win the dream as they go. However, sometimes the goal is clearly stated in the introduction. The amount of XP awarded for winning a Black is determined by its level: 3 XP for a level 1-3 feather, or 4 XP for a level 4-6 feather.

ON DEATH AND FEATHERS...

Some of us die, not in the living world, but in the dream world. Amounts to the same thing. Death is always the same. There are some dreams you never wake up from.

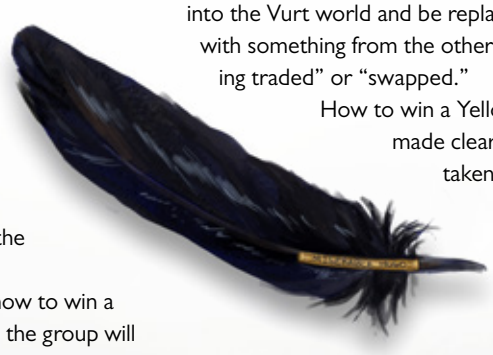
-Vurt, Jeff Noon

YELLOW FEATHERS

Yellow feathers are the most dangerous and the most coveted of all Vurt feathers. The secrets and dangers in a Yellow are far greater than those encountered in other feathers and the stakes are higher. In a Yellow, you either win the dream or die trying. Featherheads are out there searching for the ultimate dream and will delve into a Yellow the first chance they get, searching for that sweet, sweet knowledge. Yellow feathers are the most illegal of feathers and are found in all echelons of society, from the darkest alleyway to the high-rise penthouse.

Unless specifically stated otherwise in the feather description, when entering a yellow feather PCs appear exactly as they do in the real world. Their equipment and special abilities can be used normally, but the number of cyphers that can be taken into the feather is limited by the cypher limit shown on the PCs character sheet. Generally, the player may choose which cyphers to take, but the GM may also determine if specific cyphers are allowed or not.

In a yellow feather, damage taken in the dream affects the body of the PC in the real world. If the character dies in the dream, they die in the real world. Characters cannot jerk out of a yellow feather under any circumstances. Once you're in, you're in, so *play to win*! Inside a Yellow, the characters can not only die, but can also become trapped inside the Vurt. When this happens, the character's physical body can vanish into the Vurt world and be replaced in the real world with something from the other side. This is called "being traded" or "swapped."



How to win a Yellow is almost never made clear when the feather is taken. The amount of XP awarded for winning a Yellow is determined by its level: 5 XP for a level 1-3 feather, or 6 XP for a level 4-6 feather.

HYBRID FEATHERS

As we have established, a dreamer cannot be harmed inside a Blue or Pink, but Blacks and Yellows have dangerous, even deadly, rules. When the PCs enter a hybrid feather, the rules that define what players can and can't do (and what the Vurt can do to them) may change on the fly. A hybrid feather has a combination of any or all of the four feather colors, which you can think of as regions. Since distance and direction don't have the same meaning as they do in the real world, "regions" naturally has a much more general meaning in this context that isn't necessarily geographical.

Take a blue-black hybrid, for example. There's a region of the dream which is Blue, and in that region the dream is safe and harmless, just like in any blue feather. However, since it's a hybrid including Black, there's a darker, more deadly element of the dream where

the PCs can be hurt or killed. This may be a different location within the dream, a Vurt being which is out of place in the setting, or even a concept which changes the stakes of the game.

The transition from one color region to another is not always the same. A dreamer may encounter a jet-black door, positively humming with deadly significance, which leads to the Black part of the dream, or they may be enjoying a relaxing paddle down a Blue stream and suddenly find that the dream has gone from Blue to Black. In fact, there may be no indication whatsoever that the rules have changed. For example, a blue-black hybrid may include a hundred whimsical creatures to battle without repercussion and just one who is twisted in a way that makes it dangerous or deadly. A particular topic of discussion between characters or action could change the nature of the dream, drawing something dangerous into a scene, or in a hybrid Yellow, an action could cut off escape from the dream, trapping the group in a Yellow region to win or die. A hybrid feather can have virtually any structure whatsoever, provided that it observes one rule: Winning always happens in the most dangerous part.

The path to winning a hybrid feather always leads to the deepest part of the dream. That is to say, if a hybrid feather has Black in it, winning will take you the place where you can be hurt or killed. If the feather has both Black and Yellow, winning will undoubtedly require entering a part of the dream from with there is no turning back. The XP awarded for winning a hybrid feather is determined by the most dangerous color. For example, a Blue-Pink hybrid will grant 1 or 2 XP, a hybrid containing Black will award 3 or 4 XP and a hybrid with Yellow in it will award 5 or 6 XP.

SILVER FEATHERS

Silver feathers, also called *operator feathers*, are extremely rare and powerful tools that can affect the nature of reality within a Vurt environment. The existence of silver feathers is still the subject of debate, with many maintaining that they do not in fact exist. Others have argued that the invention of PDF feathers is proof that they do.

Silver feathers are used like an editing tool, allowing the operator to make changes to the dream. These commands alter the material of the dream and so the use of a Silver is potentially hazardous, both to the user and to the metaphysical stuff of the univurt. For this reason, it's fortunate that Silvers are only found in the possession of nearly mythic characters, such as the Game Cat or Sniffing General.

It is possible that the characters may encounter a silver feather in their adventures, but likely only as a part of a tier 6 adventure and then it is unlikely that they will actually come to use it themselves.

BLUE: PCs are safe inside blue feathers; there's no danger of death or getting stuck forever. Jerking out does not require a roll. Legal.
PINK: PCs are safe inside pink feathers; there's no danger of death or getting stuck forever. Jerking out does not require a roll. Legal.
BLACK: PCs can be hurt and die inside a black feather. Jerking out is an Intellect-based task equal to the level of the feather. Illegal.
YELLOW: PCs can die inside a yellow feather. It's impossible to jerk out once inside; it's win or become stuck forever. Illegal.
HYBRID: If a hybrid feather has any Black in it, PCs can die inside. If a hybrid feather has any Yellow in it, the PCs can die inside and there's no way to jerk out back to the safety of the real world; it's win or die. Blue/Pink combos are legal.

DOWN TO ZERO

Fortunately, there are more good dreams than bad. It makes life worth living. But it's the bad ones that we remember, right? The crazy flights when we think the entire univurt is plotting against us with every terror and torture it can muster, all aimed at our poor dreaming soul. But listen, it's good to know that no matter horrible we're feeling right now, there's always someone else suffering a worse fate.

So here's the scale of dreams, in ever worsening order: bad dream; nightmare (levels 1 to 5); hypnogogic lock; flightmare; vapour trance; flicker state; eternal damnation; internal damnation; a weekend in Severance; skull trap; Boschville; Escher Town; Dali Moon; Planet Karlo; the Shivers; the Otherwise; the Blurs; and the Lost Temple of Electrostatic Demons.

But much the worse kind of dream is the noughtmare. Where nothing happens. Nothing at all. Not for hours. And hours. And hours. And hours. Just blank white space and the dreamer standing there in the middle of it all, waiting, waiting, waiting...

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

CYPHER LIMIT

It's very difficult to remain connected to real world things while in the Vurt. Have you ever been asked your phone number in a dream? You might be unable to recall it, but easily be able to feel your keys in your right pocket. A character's cypher limit is their ability to call upon real world objects while inside a feather. Just like the car keys in your pocket an experienced dreamer is able to incorporate a certain number of cyphers into their consciousness, allowing them to make use of them inside the Vurt. As a character gains experience, they are able to increase their cypher limit. If cyphers are permitted inside a feather, the PC can choose a number of cyphers up to their cypher limit to bring into the dream with them.

While dreaming the PC cannot under any circumstances have more cyphers than their cypher limit in their possession. Dropped or discarded cyphers are

lost into the Vurt and cannot be picked back up. Similar to dropping things while standing in a fast-moving stream, the objects are swept away on the dream current, to become part of some other dream.

JERKING OUT

Malaise, page 142

Sometimes a dream gets too dangerous or difficult. If the PC needs to escape the Vurt feather, they can attempt to jerk out and return to the real world. If the feather they're experiencing is a Blue or a Pink, no roll is required. These dreams are designed to be easy, and not too deep.

A Black on the other hand, is so deep that the dreamer has to come to grips with the idea that they're actually in the Vurt in order to jerk out. In a black feather or hybrid feather containing Black, jerking out is an Intellect-based task equal to the level of the feather. As with any task, a failed attempt may be repeated if a level of Effort is applied.

Jerking out of a Yellow feather is not possible under any circumstances. In these dreams, winning the game is the only way out.

ON RETURNING TO THE REAL WORLD...

Sudden jerk! Backwards! Ghost grabbing me, under the armpits, jerking me into reality and then the real world breaking open. A locked door being axed open. Me screaming backwards, into the clock-face. Two fingers of time grabbing me, the hour and the minute hands...The chair receiving my body like a corpse. Blood seeping back into the closing wounds on the wall. The room a scream of pain. A glass vase, containing flowers picked by Brid, in shatters, broken by the jerk. A voice calling from the mirror on the wall...

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

VURT LAG

Sometimes, when coming out of a particularly immersive dream, the PCs will suffer from Vurt lag. Vurt lag is like a dream hangover, during which the PC feels disconnected, sleepy, exhausted, has a headache, or any number of temporary conditions. The GM can choose what effect Vurt lag has on the group when exiting a feather, but malaise is a common side effect. The duration of Vurt lag depends on the nature of the dream, ranging from a few minutes for a particularly immersive Baby Blue, to the rest of your life if you've been trapped in a Curious Yellow for five years. It's not uncommon for the effects of Vurt lag to be treated chemically, or often by plunging right into the next dream.

DYING IN THE VURT

What happens when all your stat pools are reduced to zero inside a Vurt feather? As mentioned earlier, blue and pink feathers are totally safe, meaning you cannot be hurt while dreaming. However, your dream self can still die, so to speak, inside a dream. While in a Blue or a Pink, if any member of your group suffers damage that reduces all their pools to zero, everyone automatically jerks out and the dream is lost. All PCs pools are the same as when the entered the dream.

In a black feather, the stakes are real and injury sustained in the dream is suffered by your body in the real world. Though you can attempt to jerk out if things get too sketchy, when you die inside a black feather, you die in the real world. If a PC dies inside a Black, the surviving members of the party automatically jerk out. Any points lost from stat pools in the dream, remain lost in the real world.

Inside a Yellow feathers, the game is life or death. You cannot jerk out, and when you die in the dream you die

GAME CAT SAYS:

ENGLISH VOODOO (HYBRID)

There is a dream out there, of a nation's second rise; when the dragon is slain and the good queen awakens from her coma-sleep, to a land capable of giving breath to her. The followers of ENGLISH VOODOO worship the new queen. The queen is the keeper of our dreams. Through her portals you can see a paradise of change, where trees are green, birds do sing, and the trains run on time. Also, lots of sex; that special kind, with a delicious English thump.

The Voodoo is a Knowledge Feather. It leads to other worlds. It cannot be bought, only given. You wanna go down there? Into the English Voodoo? Fine. And beyond? Fine, very fine. Just take precautions. That wet trip is a demon-path of bliss and pain, equal amounts. Be careful. Be very, very careful. Those sugar walls will squeeze you to the bone. Cat knows. Cat has been there. And lived. Just. You want to see the scars?

Well yes, I guess you do.

Status: Black, with sexy Pink, and with glints of Yellow. It's got some doors in it, through to the Yellow worlds. Step softly, traveller, don't get yourself swapped.

Not unless you want to be.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

in the real world as well. When a member of the group dies inside a Yellow, the rest of the party stays in the dream until they each win the game, or die trying.

Additionally, failing to overcome the challenges or riddles in a Yellow can result in your mind being trapped in a loop—your body left comatose in the real world. Yellow feathers take you so deep into the Vurt world that the dreamer's attachment to the real world becomes tenuous. So close to the looking glass, with winning or death on the line, there is an even more horrifying, third option: you cross completely into the Vurt world and are never seen again. This is called being *traded*.

LUCID AND SEMI-LUCID FEATHERS

Feathers can affect characters in different ways. While taking some feathers may sometimes whisk the dreamer away to the Vurt world to experience the tastes and textures of the dream, lucid feathers allow the PC to perceive both the real world and the Vurt world at the same time. These experiences are similar to augmented reality, in which you can navigate the real world normally, but elements of the Vurt will be present. Some of the most popular pink and blue feathers are lucids.

HOW DREAMERS ARE CONNECTED

Feathers are intended to be shared. It's a common tenet of featherheads worldwide that *no one goes in alone*, so when the group obtains a feather, they'll generally go in together. Ten seconds after a feather is inserted into a character's mouth, its color changes to cream and it becomes useless. Anyone who uses the feather within that ten-second period joins the same Vurt dream and shares the experience.

There are other ways to interact within feathers other than taking the feather together. Taking a feather allows the users access to a *specific* dream that actually exists in the Vurt world. If a character in another location takes an identical feather on the other side of town, they will access a seemingly identical dream, but they will be alone. This is because the dream world is specific to the feather that takes you there. However, multiple feathers can be linked to the same Vurt environment, and when in the dream, characters taking the same feather, even in different real world locations, can encounter each other in the Vurt.

For black or Yellow feathers, the ability to link multiple feathers to the same Vurt has some disturbing implications. Even more frightening, there are ways that the feather you are in can be accessed from a totally different part of the Vurt world. This is normally accomplished by hacking, mathemagick, or powerful Vurt abilities.

Another way people can connect is via a PDF (Personal Data Feather), which allows people to make a call in the real world, similar to a phone call. Essentially, the caller's PDF accesses a discrete area of the Vurt and transmits the Vurt address to the call recipient, so the individuals can interact.

PDF, page 107

BOOTLEG DREAMS

The vast majority of feathers in the world contain mainstream, commercial dreams. These Vurts are crafted for the masses—as addictive as they are easy to play. As with anything, there is always someone out there trying to make things sweeter. A bootleg dream is what you get when some enterprising Dreamweaver re-edits a commercial dream to create an unofficial Vurt feather. Usually these are hybrids or Blacks, but Pink bootlegs based on popular Blues are not uncommon. In fact, King Pillowsnore of the Questing Beast series is the subject of over 100 different bootleg Pinks, by various Dreamweavers. Bootleg dreams are highly illegal due to the strict laws involving copyrighting of dreams.

There are two kinds of feather that do not cream after use: silver feathers, known as Operator feathers and PDFs.

GAME CAT SAYS:

BOOTLEG DREAMS (YELLOW)

Sneak preview. I'm getting word of a new theatre. Hasn't got a name yet. Working title is Bootleg Dreams. I've met the hero figure. His name is Scratch, and he tells a well wicked story. The names have been changed, to protect the guilty. This is how it starts: Wendy comes out of the all-night Vurt-U-Want, clutching a bag of goodies. You're a member of this gang of young hip malcontents. They call themselves the CRASH DRIVERS, so that's what I'm calling this new feather trip. The hero's name is Scratch, and this is one Yellow shining journey. Golden Yellow. Boy, have you got problems! First off your sister, Shona, has been caught in Metaland, swapped for a lump of lard alien.

Your job is to get this Shona back to base Earth. Of course that's virtually impossible; nobody's managed it before. Still you can't stop trying anyway, because of the deep love. Then there's the fact that the evil shecop Moloch is after you. For putting scratches in her face, no less. Your best friend, The Weevil, isn't helping, with his constant desire for the gutter. He wants to drag you right down next to him, keep you there, in the dirtiness. It's a hard life, and most probably you're going to die in this crazy Yellow. Be very, very careful. This ride is not for the weak. It's a psycho. A bit like real life.

Well maybe not quite that bad.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

SECURITY AND STORAGE IN THE VURT

Knowledge is arguably the most valuable commodity in the world. Naturally, in Manchester, the most valuable knowledge is hidden inside feathers. The average person can use a PDF to store personal information and knowledge, but a company or someone of some means will often use more deadly methods to protect their valuable secrets. Securivurts are dreams that are created specifically to protect inpho, and are accessible from a number of identical feathers, all linked to the same Vurt address. Depending on the value of the knowledge hidden there, there may be one or many feathers coded to the Securivurt. Any dreamweaver worth their salt keeps a secret record of Vurt addresses used in Securivurts they have created, but will rarely part with the information as their reputation as a dreamweaver is on the line.

METAVURTS

What happens if you're inside a Vurt feather and you *take another Vurt feather?* If it sounds kind of crazy, that's because it is. The act of taking one feather inside another feather is referred to as *going Meta*, and more often than not, those who do it are never seen again.

Each Vurt environment is a dream, with its own set of rules that determine its reality. More importantly, each Vurt that you enter via feather has *it's own ways out*, which is almost always through one end or the other. That is, you can either win the game, or you can try and jerk out the way you came.

When you take a feather inside another feather, you'll be driven even further from the real world and find yourself in both Vurts at the same time—you'll be in a Metavurt. What this means for you, the dreamer, is that the two dreams effectively become one, and the way back (i.e. jerking out) is no longer an option. You now must win the game or die trying.

The feather you were originally playing still exists for you, the puzzles and challenges still exist, the final task must still be confronted in order to win. But it's as if the first dream has been plunged into the second dream, changing the landscape, introducing new beings and transforming others. The metavurt is an amalgam—a blend of both Vurts.

Why someone would go Meta? Every situation is different and each person who has tried must have had their own reasons, but one thing is for sure: nobody does it lightly.

Like yellow feathers, Metavurts are so deep that being traded bodily into the Vurt is a very real danger.

PART 4

THE SETTING

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CHAPTER 14

THE REAL WORLD

THE MEGACITY OF MANCHESTER

Manchester! The most populated city on the planet. The new center of the real world. The envy of the modern era. All hail Old Man, may the river Irwell flow forever!

It wasn't always like this.

These days everyone wants to talk like a Manc, do business with a Manc, dress like a Manc. Getting in and out of the megacity requires dozens of official permits. Those already living in Manchester truly have no reason to leave. Every year, the skyscrapers grow higher and higher, the traffic slower and slower. To sate wanderlust, most Mancunians need only buy a Vurt feather. More than two-thirds of the population has never traveled outside Manchester; even travelling from borough to borough is a rarity.

In Manchester, life comes to you.

CITY GOVERNMENT

The great megacity of Manchester is an independent city-state, no longer beholden to the nation of Singland, the United Kingdom, or Europe. The economy of Manchester is the largest and strongest in the world, eclipsing former global superpowers over the last several decades. By some estimates, almost a third of the real world's combined wealth is here. Let that sink in for a bit, kittling. That's economic dominance.

65 million people live in this fair megacity, stretching 30 miles from north to south, and nearly 45 miles from east to west. With more skyscrapers than any city in the world, we're squeezed in together at an average of 50,000 residents per square mile. The skies are clogged with blurbflies, the roads clogged with traffic and we're still growing, growing, growing. Unfortunately, the division between rich and poor is also growing every day.

The Manchester City government consists of a centralized Royal City Council and king that oversee 15 local government Borough Councils. Each borough is made up of dozens of small districts, each with their own District Council. Both Borough and Districts Councils have their own elected members which are (theoretically) supported by the Royal City Council from the Royal Palace in New Centerton.

The democratic process is thoroughly broken and even the most minor of officials are burrowed like ticks into the superstructure of Manchester's government. Jobs are awarded with a wink and a nod by corrupt council members or greedy department heads and nobody—*nobody*—is holding their job because of the fine work they do or their dedication to bettering the lives of their constituents. It's not even clear who's in charge of most agencies. If there once was a city district that managed itself efficiently and with care, it's been gerrymandered out of existence so that some civil serpent can be free from supervision.

Meanwhile, the separation between District Council member and the common Mancunian is growing wider. Those elected to local District Councils are supposed to represent their constituents and fight for their right to equal resources, but most are preoccupied with climbing the bureaucratic ladder and making the leap up to Borough Council.

Seats on one of the fifteen Borough Councils are coveted and come with a private security detail and

more of a pay bump than should be legal. The more connected the official, the better the perks.

Presiding selfishly over the graft and cronyism of Manchester's enormous bulk is the Royal City Council, which is little more than a rubber stamp for the King—immediately approving any policy he suggests in exchange for a scratch behind the ear. The average citizen has little regard for these over-privileged bureaucrats. Still, the Royal Council wields tremendous power, possibly enough to dethrone the king himself. But since he personally appoints every seat on the council, there's little chance of a coup.

Royal City Counselors keep opulent quarters in New Centerton, near the palace, and are often seen at the city's most luxurious dining establishments or boarding their personal air transports. In a city where traffic in some areas is down to 3 mph average, this perk is not to be underestimated.

Finally, there is the CEO of Vaz® International and thrice-elected King of Manchester, King Jaz. Nobody can say for sure who is casting the votes in this elective monarchy, and though there has been no contender for the crown, pundits have suggested that the king won't be giving up the throne for anything short of an uprising. In the face of declining popularity and increased civil unrest, the monarchy is positioning itself for a fight.

TRANSPORTATION

Flights in and out of the City of Manchester are only made through the three tightly-controlled International airports. Airport security is handled by a private company, K4RL1, through a lucrative contract with the megacorp, Vaz International®. The Manchester PD has no jurisdiction whatsoever on airport grounds—a major beef-bone of contention between the Royal Palace and the MPD.

There hasn't been a major terrorist incident at the airports in nearly four years. Most people feel safe traveling by air, and accept the long lines and invasive security measures of K4RL1's robodog-only security unit as part of this safety. Recently, as part of a cost-saving effort, the number of active K4RL1 robodogs on airport grounds has been reduced by 75%; many see this as the perfect opportunity for mayhem.

Well over 25 million people a year come through these three airports as tourists. 25 million quid-carrying travelers, billfolds full of sweet cash—all are welcomed to the world's largest megacity.

Though there are dozens of train lines entering the city from all directions; overland travel within city limits can be extremely slow and difficult. Municipal railcars are so exhaustively inpho beamed and searched by MPD shadowboxes, most locals don't bother with them. Nu-Xcabs and black cabs are the only good alternative to going on foot, which is no picnic.

Construction projects are approved by the City Council at the rate of 25 an hour, which has transformed Manchester streets into an ever-changing maze of detours and dead ends. The map changes daily and is so fluid that people can get lost in their own neighborhoods. It is fortunate that the permit offices are only open from half-past one to three o'clock, two days a week, otherwise the city would be rubble.

The city is constantly being twisted and tangled in an effort to fit even more people on top of each other.

The now defunct underground network—which was an attempt to complete and expand the abandoned Picc-Vic line project—has been converted into subsidized housing for city employees. The tunnels connect several unfinished underground stations including Victoria and Piccadilly, but there are accounts of people stumbling across access points and connecting passages in the sub structures of old buildings. When one of these passages is discovered the city promptly sees that they are filled in or sealed up.

EDUCATION

Our formal education system has been replaced with in-home feather sessions where accredited instructors meet their students in the Vurt world for class. Many corporate training program requirements, exams and certifications are earned the same way. There are also lucid Blue Community Uni classes for those who need to combine studying and holding down a job.

Ironically, libraries have become one of the most popular tourist attractions in Manchester; printed books and maps are mainly a thing of the past. There are still large university campuses in Manchester and elsewhere, but most have become too exclusive for all but the very brightest and best connected.

Bookstores are now so trendy one often needs to make a reservation weeks in advance. Everyone wants to see books for themselves, first-hand; to experience the way our ancestors absorbed information. The lucid blue feather tours take visitors through the basic plotlines of some of the best-loved classics in the collection. The irony is not lost on bookstore librarians. Tourists make up the bulk of the ticket sales, but cultured Mancs often make the bookstore their go-to place for dates.

The Royal Palace in New Centerton has the real world's largest and most valuable collection of books. The first printings of *Alice's Adventure's in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* are held here, the only known surviving copies. An attempt to steal these books was recently thwarted by the palace's elite guard, the Royal Yeoman Warders, who beat the intruder beyond recognition, leaving only a stain on the marble floor. Security is beyond tight in the Palace, who knows what that poor idiot was thinking.

Royal Yeoman Warders, page 218

LAW ENFORCMENT

THE MANCHESTER POLICE

Following Manchester's declaration of city-statehood, they police department was upgraded to account for the absence of Singlish soldiery. The Manchester Police Department is now the real world's best-equipped and highest-funded security force.

The MPD is infamous for its intimidation and regional dominance. Miles away in the Singlish Channel, there are submarines under the command of the MPD that run joint military exercises with London. The MPD has a long reach and isn't afraid to flex its muscles around the globe.

On the streets of Manchester, the majority of the people fear any and all interactions with them, and for good reason. 30 years ago it was discovered that the dragon Takshaka, Kingsnake of the Nagas, was the acting Chief of Police. An actual Vurt being running the force!

After a major reshuffling, a new, transparent era was promised, but the public trust was betrayed again in the fiasco surrounding the MPD's involvement and handling of the Pollen Outbreak, coupled with an all-out mode war with the dogmen.

In the year following the second economic Vurt boom, funding for megacity security doubled, tripled, quadrupled, quintupled. Fiscal transparency was and is effectively nonexistent, and the distribution of MPD resources across the megacity is uneven at best.

There are large numbers of shadowcops on the force. These elite MPD officers with Shadow genetics are reportedly looking to splinter off into their own group. Most shadowcops are roboshads with the ability to use inpho-beams or use their own Shadow powers to interrogate suspects on a much deeper level. It's gone to their heads and they consider themselves to be a higher caliber than the "Flesh cops" that don't have access to the Shadow powers that come with Shadow genetics.

Approximately two-thirds of the shadowcops are bipedal; the rest are housed in hovering shadowboxes. MPD shadowcops don't fuck around.

ON SHADOWCOPS...

Everybody was afraid of the shadowcops. There was this rumour going around that they could beam right into your brains, reading your thoughts there, just like a shadowgirl could do. Not true. They were just roboshads; taking in only what their beams could see, which was only the everyday surfaces. Don't believe the hype; shadowcops ain't got soul.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

Still, there are few good apples in this barrel of bad. The good ones. Those rare folk who know that the system is far from perfect, but that whining about it is useless. Many want to be part of something with a larger purpose, to help those who actually need it. They may also want to beat the piss out of civilians that use violence to take what they want. Those in the MPD mete out justice with impunity. Perks of the job—take 'em where you can get 'em, mate.

Truth is that after a very short while with the MPD, most cops simply can't be bothered. There are good folks on the force, but these days there simply aren't enough Inspector Sybils or Constable Ushers on the force to make much of a difference.

The MPD is always going through some kind of reor-

ganization or restructuring to deal with scandal.

Former Chief Lassard is currently in Strangeways prison after being charged with embezzlement and abuse of power. His second in command, Simon Addisu, has just been promoted to Police Chief Constable. The new Chief Addisu's anti-Royal City Council stance is already crystal clear. He has recently made personal remarks about King Jaz, goading him into a public confrontation.

Few have hope that things will change with Chief Addisu at the helm; he has a reputation as a real hard arse. He also has alleged ties to the Vurt dragon Smok Wawelski, which makes everyone who lived through the Chief Takshaka years very nervous. The last thing Manchester needs is another Vurt dragon running the MPD.

At the end of the day, the MPD is the best-equipped security force on the planet, and still has a hell of a time enforcing the laws in the real world's most populous megacity.

The Manchester Police Department is responsible for the safety and security of 65 million people who live within the city walls. By recent edict, all Mancunians are entitled to an equal amount of City resources when it comes to security. No one believes this for a minute, it's total bollocks.

Things are looking worse and worse for those trying to maintain order and unity within the force itself, and divisions are becoming more apparent. The shadowcops are openly hostile towards their fleshcop counterparts, and those who supported the disgraced former chief are getting heavy helpings of payback. Most worrying perhaps is the new MPD administration's anti-City Council stance, a direct threat to King Jaz and his hold on power.

We were all supposed to learn from the mistakes made decades ago during the Takshaka years, yet Manchester now appears headed inexorably toward civil war. King Jaz's Royal City Council vs. the Manchester Police, with millions of Mancs caught in the middle.

PRIVATE SECURITY

While the MPD may be the main law enforcement entity in the megacity, they are by no means the only security force with licensed lethal weapons. Large portions of Manchester are left to their own devices, considered to be no-go areas by the cops. Often, street gangs fill the vacuum and enforce hate-group ideologies, fighting with others as they try and purge the neighborhood of whomever they consider undesirable. Others may organize a local security force of hired guns to hang onto power—many of these mercenary groups are willing to work for whichever side pays them the most quid.

Then there are the numerous corporate-controlled areas of Manchester. Most large companies have licensed private security forces that are more than able to handle any threat to their corporate interests.

The area around Chimera Corp buildings and business interests in the Sharston district of Centre is a good example of extremely vigilant private security. There are reports that flying mech suits called "guardian angels" have been spotted on the rooftops. If the swarms of security drones don't kill you, a 100-story knee drop by a 4-ton mech suit will. The Manchester PD considers this area a big no-go. You should too.

CORPORATIONS

Megacorporations run the City of Manchester, any who tells you otherwise is hawking something. Even the Royal City Council survives off the licensing fees, tariffs, and kickbacks that come from the megacorps. Even our king is still the CEO of his own megacorp, Vaz International, one of the largest corporations in history.

Modern Manchester is fed by investments from all over the real world; a hot, bubbling stream of revenue to be tapped, diverted, rerouted, reinvested, swallowed, and spit back out. Big numbers can be sexy, kittling, and our Old Man is full of money.

A megacorp is defined as a business in good standing that employs over 100,000 and accounts for the the equivalent of one percent of the entire planet's combined GEP (gross economic product). Well over

half of the real world's megacorps base their corporate headquarters in Manchester.

The following is a list of just a few of the main players in Manchester's enormous economy, including megacorps and smaller, local corporations and companies. We're the largest economy in the real world—the golden eye of the global economic hurricane. If it's popular in the real world, it's likely coming from Manchester.

Hail Manchester! May the Mersey overflow with quid forever! Prosperous Manchester, the birthplace of Vaz®, of Vurt, and of blurbflies—every megacorp's dream home!

AAA#1

This is a relatively new corporation that was set up with money from anonymous former American investors to compete with MechanInsect. AAA#1 are the new kids on the block in the ever-growing field of blurbfly development and construction. Their bugs are cheap, noticeably lower quality, and often based on existing designs from competitors. Even the AAA#1 logo is a ripoff of MechanInsect's logo. There's no shame in business with those Yanks, it seems.

Even though the company is currently losing money, they intend to make enough of an impact that their brand will keep them afloat. The funds that keeps the lights on at the moment are all coming from abroad—the corporate headquarters in the city-state of Lost Angeles. There are no AAA#1 HQs in Manchester, it's all done remotely via PDF conferences.

There are some smaller partner-factories in Manchester, and a not-so-top-secret design center, but the bulk of the AAA#1 blurbfly production is done in the Southern megacities of London and Brighton. On the continent, AAA#1 production is based in Chroma, Italia.

No one is quite sure who is bankrolling what seems to be a failing global business model, but the quarterly reports somehow show profit. AAA#1 is trying to expand and become a major player in the real world blurbfly industry, product quality be damned.

AJATA

This is the defense corporation that manufactures shadowboxes for the MPD. They also specialize in modifying and weaponizing existing Shadow tech innovations. The folks at AJATA live by their company motto: *"Jumping off the shoulders of giants."*

Shadowboxes, page 294

AJATA megacorp employees often spout the company mission statements at parties, and consider most of their time away from the desk to be wasted—unless perhaps there is a way to bring up work in conversation. Most if not all employees of AJATA are hardworking and don't appreciate it when others call them "Kool-Aiders" or "AJATA-heads."

Headquartered in (and under) the Vale Royal Abbey in the New Tlön borough, AJATA is one of the most successful megacorps in Manchester and the largest exporter of weapons in the world. AJATA holds a large number of defense contracts for the supply of law enforcement hardware in cities across Singland; the factories never seem run out of work orders. Many of their high-security production facilities are located in the cities of Leeds, London, and Brighton.

AmériCo

One of the real world's largest megacorps, and the largest megacorp based entirely outside of Manchester, this economic giant controls much of the legal feather import/export/distribution for North, South, and Central America.

The CEO of AmeriCo, roboman Eduardo Gutierrez, recently suffered a severe elextroke that left him in a coma and his second-in-command and closest advisor in charge of operations. While this news is well known, one relevant piece of information that hasn't leaked from the corporate watercooler is that the advisor is actually the pure Vurt being and great feathered serpent of the Vurt, Kukulkan.

So what, you say? Well, some of you may feel comfortable having a 2000-year-old demon—excuse me, *dragon*—calling shots in one of the largest economic markets in the real world. I won't tell you how I feel, you probably have picked up on my feelings towards Pure Vurt dragons by now. Any of us who lived through Manchester's Chief Takshaka years can tell you how that usually pans out. Doing business with AmeriCo now means dealing with dragons. My advice is just say no. Look, let's get back to facts, not opinion, okay? Moving on…

AutoBuzz

Yawn. A small Vurt feather production company which has been around since the first Vurt boom. Though they had a few hits in their early years, today they have only a small fanbase of cultish followers who love that they have refused to place advurts in their Feathers, other than a few of their own house ads.

While Chimera Corp has expressed an interest in purchasing the company to absorb their small corner of

the Vurt market, AutoBuzz management is determined to revitalize and adapt to the modern market or die trying.

Branch Division

This megacorp is perhaps one of the most secretive and enigmatic in the real world. Branch Division is an industry leader when it comes to security drone design and production, but they are also heavily involved in construction of housing developments and Shadow tech R&D. Much of the materials used for Xtrovurt™ machines are manufactured in their Congleton factories.

Branch Division is also part-owner of Brighton-Brighter as well as the corporate sponsors of the Manchester United Vurtball Club. They seem to have their fingers in a lot of pies, and even after almost two decades of intense scrutiny and pushback from other corporate entities, they still show up clean on paper.

That's likely the result of their unparalleled PR department, operated by a team known as the Cobralinguists. Occasionally hired out to other companies to clean up messes and make everything seem like business as usual, the Cobralinguists have helped us forget more things than we should remember. Wait. **What?**

Brighton-Brighter

A large electrical and nuclear power megacorp based in Brighton. The sprawling factory complex resembles a huge, multi-level steel bridge that connects the megacity of Brighton with the offshore platforms used for manufacturing. Through the help of their new parent corporation, Branch Division, they have secured the exclusive contracts to provide electrical power for the megacities of Brighton, London, and Dublin.

Construction has just begun on a reactor in the Malikton borough of Manchester, providing jobs for thousands but raising concerns over the environmental impact in one of Manchester's last remaining undeveloped spaces, the "Pennies" mountains. The Royal City Council has just lifted decades-old development restrictions.

They are not particularly well-liked by the common Manc, as the Brighton-Brighter's hiring practices often favor unskilled labor and nepotism over experience. However, now that the Branch Division's private PR firm, the Cobralinguists, are handling BB's new advert campaigns, sentiment is changing. It's amazing what a few thousand blurbflies can do to alter public perception.

Burbletron 3000

Burbletron! Wind it up, and ask away! Fun at parties! Have fun, but don't touch the red button! For three decades, this relatively small company has been producing the controversial children's toy with its infamous, potentially lethal self-destruct setting. Victims are paid out handsomely, but up to 100 deaths a year are attributed to these toys in Manchester alone. You can buy a Burbletron almost anywhere. It's never one of the best selling toys, but it always seems to be available on the shelves of Monstermart or Vurt-U-Want or other local store.

Campbell-Darwin Enterprises

This genetic R&D group was set up through a large government grant after the Fecundity-10 incident. The company was originally tasked with researching the epidemic and developing safeguards to ensure that it never happened again. Soon, the scope of the project widened and the mostly roboman engineering division was discovering new ways to map the genomes of the 31 modes of being. The data collected has been invaluable, and has led to breakthroughs in other industries and schools of knowledge.

The issue that Campbell-Darwin seems to be struggling with lately is internal security. Outside entities are said to be attempting a total shutdown of the company's private PDF system, which has already been proven to be compromised. Their most sensitive data is housed in black Securvurt, but they have yet to upgrade their system. There are reports that a rogue anarchistic edge rider has hacked in sideways from another feather and is threatening to expose everything. Whether or not this most recent rumor has merit, everyone at the megacorp is aware how vulnerable they are, and how many bad secrets are at risk of being leaked.

Celeborg Company

Introduced with the now ubiquitous catchphrase "Please make love safely," Celeborg Company were

the first to offer robotic recreations of celebrities. Their initial models sold well: Marilyn Monroe, David Beckham, and Morrissey being the most popular. Although there were no Autogen/robo genetics involved, the level of sophistication was impressive, and the Celeborg models' AI capabilities were game-changers.

Unfortunately, greed trumped safety, and in order to meet production schedules, several major design flaws were not addressed. The downfall came after the proliferation of the lethal disease caused by the Celeborg virus that thrives in certain human-robo environments. Later investigations prove that the unique biotechnical virus came from a bad batch of Celeborg-RoboVaz. The total number of casualties is disputed, ranging from 100 - 1000 cases that resulted in death. Vaz International, the suppliers of the raw RoboVaz, was found to be innocent. The initial error and cover-up was traced back to the lead design team.

Those responsible disappeared before the MPD could make any arrests. Now, years later, without the involvement of their former management, the company has redirected their focus to producing robotics-related materials and tools for other companies. There are persistent rumors that the corporation is preparing for a public "reboot," backed by money from Branch Division.

Chimera Corp

This megacorp is the single biggest Vurt feather producer, as well as the oldest and most respected. While other competitors have had their share of viruses and production-side issues, Chimera Corp has remained seemingly immune. In the 30-plus years that they've been in business, they have yet to miss an announced delivery date.

Think of all the classic Chimera trips you've taken over the years. It's likely that your first Vurt feather was a Chimera product. Classics like *GodHead* are still being re-released by Chimera, they are the gold standard in the Vurt feather industry.

They do have a bit of a reputation as being paranoid with internal security and secrecy regarding their unique dream weaving methods, but that is to be expected. Chimera Corp is one of the largest and most lucrative megacorps in the real world, consistently in the top five.

Up until recently, the megacorp's relationship with the Royal City Council has been good, but something has happened to cause a shift in policy. Those in the know are talking about an imminent major Royal City-run investigation aimed at removing Chimera's megacorporation status—which would be the economic equivalent of declaring war. Maybe they weren't wrong to be so paranoid?

Corny-Pasty

Order a savory, tofu-based cornish pasty from nearly anywhere in Manchester via PDF, 24/7. Corny-Pasty brand blurbflies will arrive with your piping-hot order

within 30 minutes or it's free. Most popular dishes include the tofu and potatoes, the tofu and Stilton, tofu and apple, tofu and tofu, and tofu and minted peas—all wrapped up tight in a delicious, golden brown crust.

Due to the ongoing investigation by the department of health and safety, Corny-Pasty is currently restricted from using real meat in their menu. It's a major scandal; hired barristers are having a field day filing countersuits at the Palace court but for now, all Corny-Pasties must not contain any animal products of any kind, vat-grown or otherwise. Rumor has it that the company's recent decision to switch meat suppliers from Lovett's to another is what triggered the investigation. For now, the company is adapting.

Corny-Pasty delivery blurbflies are strong—perhaps too strong; they've been known to malfunction in spectacular fashion, causing several injuries over the years. But what's a megacorp to do? Those pasties are heavy!

Cratchit Inc.

Cratchit is one of the dozens of shady companies controlling the sweatshop-style clothing manufacturing sector of Manchester that uses shady robo labor. They are currently being investigated by several pro-equality barrister corps. The hardest part is trying to figure out who is responsible, then bringing them down before they change names and set up elsewhere in the megacity. Cratchit is notorious.

The company's practice of taking advantage of autogen's physiology is well known; pure robos have the ability to work in harsh temperatures, they have no need for sleep, and they can, in theory, continue working indefinitely. While this is physically possible, it causes severe, adverse reactions to the mental health of anyone, robo or otherwise. Pure robos are not machines, they're genetic Autogens. They have a mind. They have the same rights as you or I. And Cratchit Inc. knows what it's doing is wrong.

Let's face it. You ain't bovvered. Who cares, right? You're still going to buy that spiffy new DUI brand jacket, and never think about who stitched it together.

CubaZoa Networks

A pro-Vurt being media corporation that is far from popular outside their target market. This is a propaganda network, plain and simple; even those with Vurt genetics usually realize this. After decades of being discriminated against or even killed, the enthusiastic people at CubaZoa Networks are shaping their own narrative, refusing to have history misrepresent or vilify those with Vurt genetics.

They have recently branched out into Vurt feather production, creating polemic trips full of slant and slander. Although these are harmless Blues, none have been approved as legal Vurt feathers. All sales are considered illegal and possession of a Cubazoa feather is a crime. They're not even worth it, it's just a bunch of shouting and slogans.

The MPD is often raiding the dozens of small satellite offices all over the megacity, but the signal never stays silent for long. The most recent Vurt feather series "The REAL Mr. Millions" has proven that they can make money and promote their agenda. Roughly half of all money made is directed right back into guerilla-style marketing—blurbfly swarms equipped with invasive sonic jingles, pop-up graffiti projects, and Limbic Splitter hacking at popular clubs.

Das Uber Industries (DUI)

A modern media giant unlike no other. DUI was founded 30 years ago by Das Uberdog and Dingo Tush; their Turdsville crew

became the global trendsetters in music and fashion. You've seen the logo in storefronts and on blurbfly wings, on the hoods of sports cars and the Vurtball shirts of your favorite players. The brand advertising shows up in seemingly random, inappropriate places until you realize that—*boom!* The DUI marketing department has done it again and they're branched out into a new area. DUI even sells the popular Eau de Chien, a wet-dog-scented cologne that no one really likes but everyone buys and wears just to seem wiz.

The megacorp makes silly amounts of money, and has never experienced a fiscal quarter that hasn't beaten the sales number of the previous. A very young Das Uber once publically vowed to "make the world his shitting place," and he's been true to his word.

Both Das Uber and Dingo Tush may be very old dogmen now, and they may not see eye to eye, but they remain united in making cash. The classic red *uber-D* tracksuit has never gone out of style, everyone still wants to look like a Big Dog. Like the company motto tells you: *"You wanna hang with the big dogs, you can't be pissing like a puppy."*

DogStarrr

Another media giant, DogStarrr was once known as Collie Hurst Inc, a small tech company backed by money from the already rich and famous DJ/Vurt-stars Acid Lassie and DJ Djinn, both extremely innovative engineers in their own right. Over 30 years ago, their startup company released the original Limbic Splitter Sound system, and the way people experienced music changed entirely. Collie Hurst Inc was soon sold to Vaz International, making the two young founders instant billionaires. The megacorp was renamed Dogstarrr.

Neither Acid Lassie nor the estate of the late DJ Djinn have any connection to the megacorp in its current form. Dogstarrr still produces Limbic Splitter systems, but they have been falling behind competitively, and it's only a matter of time before another company steps in and does what they do, only cheaper. Their parent megacorp, Vaz International, is said to be floating the idea of a public sale of Dogstarrr, unhappy with their lack of growth.

DTK

No one knows what DTK stands for, it remains a company secret. In fact, much of DTK's business dealings seem to be secretive, and all employees are made to sign non-disclosure agreements. What do they do? Finance? Transportation? City services? None? All of the above? Who knows?

There are too many questions to answer when it comes to DTK. The corporation is based in a 60-story, windowless building in the New Tlön borough, surrounded by their own private security force of lethal drones. The residents in the area are tight-lipped about what goes on; the MPD and most other city services are nowhere to be seen. There are rumors that DTK employees are forced to wear invasive monitoring equipment at all times.

Electric Bill's delivery

Place a PDF order for the best fish and chips with mashed peas in Manchester. Bill's blurbflies make deliveries 24/7 and are guaranteed to deliver your pub-grub safely. All entree items come with a free pint of lukewarm ale, Enola Cola or NuSpook. The most popular menu items include the Full Singlish, Scratchy-pork pies, Quicky-Chicky baskets, The Loud Man's lunch, Pickled-peanut-egg-crisps and the ever-popular Haze-infused Bangers n' Hash.

The founder is a well-known former Vurt-star, a Welsh robovurt known as Electric Bill. He still makes appearances at certain locations around the city wearing his signature leisure suit and oversize sunglasses, always happy to promote his business with a smile.

Their new NTTHH (Northern-tea-time-happy-hour) delivery schedule means 50% off everything between 5pm to 6pm. It's proving to be extremely popular, with more local delivery locations opening every day. *You've had your dinner, now it's time for tea! Count on Bill's!*

Game Cat Entertainment

Celebrating its 35th year of publication, Game Cat magazine has been the go-to place for reviews on feathers and other Vurt-related news.

The Game Cat is our guide to the Vurt world—a guru of dreams. His reviews have been our main insight into how we all view feathers in general. We owe so much to the Game Cat, more than we'll ever realize. His constant voice has been the soundtrack to our city from the time of the first feather. Game Cat magazine has been published weekly for decades, and is still available in hardcopy paper form for the hip purists out there.

Game Cat weekly Lucid Blue Review feathers are available at any Vurt-U-Want or Vurturama, but most

Mancs have a subscription, and receive a new Blue every Friday morning via blurbfly or drone delivery. All Game Cat Entertainment publications and products must be bought using cash. Yep, actual real-world lovelies! Subscriptions can be pre-paid for in cash at any Vurt-U-Want, Vurturama or Game Cat-brand kiosks located all over the megacity.

Businesswise, the company is a total mystery. All these years later, no one has seen the Game Cat himself. No one has seen Sniffing General, the vice president of the corporation. And no one has ever laid eyes on "Queen" Celia Hobart, that most most famous of amorphologists, inventor of the first Vurt feather and presumptive source of the publication's funds. Some very talented and anonymous mathemagician has created one of the real world's most impregnable antivirus featherwalls to make sure that no one can trace where the money comes from—or where it goes.

Investigations go nowhere: the Royal City Council seems to regard this company as untouchable. It's no secret that Manchester's own King Jazir Malik is an avid reader and fan. Conspiracy theorists are often trying to prove connections between King Jaz and the legendary Celia Hobart. Believe what you want—I've heard all the stories, and no one has any proof yet.

GIMBLE INC.

Gimble Inc.

This small Vurt feather production and publishing company is the latest up-and-comer in the big feather production market. Many of Gimble Inc. brand feathers have been modeled after Chimera Corporation feathers or other well-known classics. Just recently they've moved into producing original material, to very mixed reviews. Game Cat magazine called the company's latest feather "a sour, sophomoric waste."

Outsourcing most of their production team, they do not yet have a central HQ in Manchester, and have yet to appoint a CEO. No one knows the identities of Gimble Inc's feather crafters, especially these new wunderkind creators they seem to be employing. But people talk, as always, and say that recent kidnappings of some talented feather crafters are connected to the company's stepped-up production quality. Maybe they'll even get a good Game Cat review!

Gimble Incorporated is currently a well-known brand name thanks to a successful PR blitz, outsourced to the PR geniuses of Branch Division's own Cobralinguists. You gotta spend money to make money, right? At the moment, they have the attention of the public and they're trying to capitalize on it.

Global Mew

Consistently voted one of the most-hated megacorps in Manchester, these dumb gits are clearly only concerned with quid, not quality. They're desperately trying to rebrand themselves after a recent disastrous feather virus outbreak that came from one of their most popular feather series: "The Wrath of Con." The virus was contained before anyone was killed, but many are still feeling the nausea and dizziness associated with the virus.

They once made a lot of money with their narrative blue feathers, but most of the public are still avoiding Global Mew feathers and products. It's been a costly PR nightmare; the company has recently purchased 1,000 new blurbflies and supposedly sent in an order for 1,000 more. The skies of Manchester are peppered with competing messages about what really happened during the viral outbreak. News blurbs claim the virus could have killed people, while Global Mew blurbflies claim that nothing actually happened. Alternative facts for the win.

A recent jump in Manchester's illegal dreamsnake population is blamed on the faulty Global Mew feathers. Game Cat himself warned against anyone taking that trip—it's a shame that there were some faithless featherheads who refused to heed his advice. Listen to the Cat and avoid Global Mew like a plague poet.

Dreamsnake, page 304

GloboRai Networks

They are the most popular developers and producers of narrative blue feathers. 30 years ago, the company's first feather, *Hacienda Blue*, became a global hit. Ever since, they have been one of the most popular feather producers, with hit follow-up Blues like *Mister Bickle's Neighbourhood, Irrational Velvet* and the appropriately named pink feather for the food porn addicts: *Fancy-a-bite-of-Inchovy-pie?* Recently, the company's reputation has taken a hit with their decision to overuse product placement in the reprints of their classic feathers.

Some are noting a shift in the company's recent feather narratives, much more anti-Shadow and anti-dogman. Most Vurt feather companies stay out of politics, and for good reason. It seems that the new administrators at GloboRai feel otherwise.

InepTech

This is a fairly new Nanogerm company focused on R&D. Employees must sign an extensive company policy acceptance form designed to keep secrets, well, *secret*. They are separated physically from each other at work and all communication is recorded.

InepTech does produce actual technology and products such as itch-free NanoFleas and some innovative blurbfly designs, but the megacorp is not nearly as profitable as it could be. For the number of great minds working in their downtown New Centerton building, their output doesn't match—unless most of what they are working on is never meant to see the light of day.

K4RL1

The tightly-controlled Manchester International airports are the sole responsibility of this private security corporation. They are very much at odds with the Manchester Police Department, which no longer has any power on airport grounds and is far from happy about it. The K4RL1 corporation wouldn't survive a minute without the protection and bankrolling of Vaz International, the megacorp headed by the king.

They do have some amazing technology at their disposal, and most Mancs approve of the new airport security. K4RL1's robodog-only unit is known all over the world as the "dogs at the gates" or sometimes simply "Cerberus."

The show of force has proven to be an effective scare tactic, as the three Manchester International Airports are considered the safest in the real world, with the most thorough scrutiny and screening processes. The recent money-saving decision from the Royal City Council that calls for a 75% reduction in force seems like a very bad idea to most.

Kowanabi Capital

This well-known Japanese megacorp manufactures and operates the new guidance systems for Nu-X cab, providing all vehicle related modifications and upgrades. Many of the non-Xcab vehicle guidance systems in the real world also come from Kowanabi Capital. They're the most expensive, but the best.

They also make Vurt feathers. Ten years ago, the megacorp diversified and attempted to get into the feather business. They produced just one feather called E.K.Man but production costs skyrocketed and it had to either be scrapped or finished privately. A small investment group stepped up and the rest is history.

The final product was a masterpiece. The E.K.Man feather was a huge success, and made billions for Kowanabi Capital's new feather division, headed by the private investment group's co-CEOs who finished the project, the droidlocked twins Emi and Yumi. They have not been seen in public in 10 years—not since their first and only interview with Gumbo YaYa where they promoted the groundbreaking feather. Supposedly they still live in Trafford, surrounded by private Kowanabi Capital security.

It was recently discovered that part of that investment group's private finishing funds have been traced back to a secret deal with King Jaz's Vaz International megacorp. It showed that all permits and Royal City license fees had been waived. What would have taken a non-connected company years to achieve happened seemingly overnight for Kowanabi Capital.

This has created a firestorm of corporate controversy, costing the megacorp quite a few large automotive industry clients, and heaping yet another scandal onto the Royal Palace. This is a great concern to the Kowanabi shareholders, and has fueled rumors that the megacorp may soon be forced to split into two. If anything embodies Mancunian politics and conflicts of interests, it's the shady rise of Kowanabi Capital.

K-Prop Corp

This megacorp was once based in the megacity of Seoul, but have moved their headquarters to Manchester. From sonic jingles to sonic warfare, K-Prop manufacturers utilize a proprietary method that results in even more jingle clarity and optimized performance. As a result, K-Prop is one of the fastest-growing megacorps in the real world.

It's a well-known fact that the reclusive and brilliant CEO of K-Prop Corp, Ojin Geo, is a "Squid"—a mixture of Shadow, Vurt, dog, and human. Many of the recent advances in the field of Musickology have come directly from this person who is rumored to be awake 24/7, have two separate brains, and a dozen ears.

Squids like Ojin Geo remain in protective hiding as do most rare beings with a four-way genetic modal mix. Too many hateful fanatics out there would love to get their modist hands on someone like him; living, breathing proof that a four-way split does not preclude anyone from being a successful, contributing member

of society.

Limbo Lorries, LLC

Getting about outside the Great Wall of Manchester unnoticed can be a nightmare! But with 4x4 Limbo Lorries, you can get yourself to Liverpool, London, or Leeds in one lovely piece. Their prices are non-negotiable and are also subject to sharp increases based on what they have to deal with out in the great wasteland of Limbo. Limbo Lorries charge by both weight and by the hour. It costs a lot to move things overland across Limbo. A secure transportation company like this is always in high demand.

Limbo Lorry drivers are prohibited from carrying firearms or weaponizing their vehicles, but are expected to traverse one of the most dangerous places around. The company obviously has not paid the right Council members off: The MPD doesn't let them get away with anything, inpho-beaming every inch of each LL vehicle to make certain there is no contraband on board. However, it's a well-known fact that most drivers hired by the company are heavily trained in unarmed and melee-style combat. Many are former (or current) mercenaries from all over the real world. It's a tough job, but Limbo Lorries, LLC is willing to do it!

Lovett Foods of London

Formerly Todd-Lovett Meats of London, this company was founded almost 250 years ago by the great Benjamin Barker and has remained one of the most successful in the meat industry ever since. Most of us know the catchy theme song which hasn't changed a single note in two and half centuries; from street to stage to radio to television to blurbflies, we all recognize the classic jingle: *"See how you'll polish them off! You'll Love it! You'll Love it!"*

It's not just Whoompy's Burgers that gets all their meat and ingredients from Lovett's; many food markets in Manchester are filled with Lovett Foods of London products, a tradition for over 250 years! *Lovett's meat. It's heavenly!*

Maple Falls Investments

Manchester's public assistance drip feed program has a loophole that allows for collection of someone's monthly benefits within the first six months after been reported missing. That's where Maple Falls Investments comes in—and cleans up!

Hiring expendable Mancs with little to lose, MFI sends these e-tagged punters into the most dangerous areas to collect the money from drip feed terminals and return to the MFI offices with the cash. In a city with a quarter-billion people, death and disappearance are lucrative businesses.

MFI even has a sub-division dedicated to tracking down and killing those temp employees that try to short-change the drip feed terminal drops or abscond with the cash delivery. These guys are awful and don't care who knows it. *MFI: The bottom line is the bottom line.*

MechanInsect

Blurbfly tech has come a long way since the days of King Jaz's youth. Newer models with more and more capabilities are being produced all the time. MechanInsect is one of the leaders of this self-proclaimed "blurb revolution." Their models are sturdy and known for their high quality and beautiful designs. Often copied by others in the industry, MechanInsect continues releasing the most cutting-edge blurbfly models and upgrades.

The megacorp's 100-story headquarters in Salford is a modern marvel, covered entirely with small, durable interlocking iridescent panels shaped like butterfly wings. MechanInsect is one of the top corporations in the real world, seeing especially tremendous growth over the last year under their new CEO, Daisy Love. Rumors about secret meetings and agreements with the Royal City Council are flying. Some are even saying that King Jaz himself knows Ms. Love and is involved with easing restrictions and taxes on the megacorp to give MechanInsect an edge. Nothing can be proven; it's all most likely unfounded chatter.

Monstermart

The poorly-decorated stores that sell packaged food and other essentials. There are other similar food and drug chain stores, but Monstermart is still the largest and most ubiquitous. The locations are well guarded by their own private security force, but are not licensed to carry firearms or other lethal forms of protection.

Up until very recently, prices had always been reasonable. Now most Mancs are starting to feel

the steep price hikes and no one is happy about it. The number of private security personnel at all Monstermart locations has been doubled. There are well over 100 locations in all of Manchester.

Naga Infinity

Pop in your PDF and browse from a large menu of delectable Indian and Pakistani dishes. Naga Infinity delivers to most districts in Manchester, day or night. Your order will arrive at your door or window within 30 minutes or it's free. Naga Infinity's specialized delivery blurbflies are built to carry large amounts of weight without spilling a drop of your precious meal. Most popular dishes include the *Widowmaker, Phall of the House of Uttapam, Tea Cozy Curry, Fiery Kachori* and *Reaper Vindaloo.*

Naga Infinity is always good, top-quality food. While most of the other basic delivery places in Manchester are not known for authenticity, few say that about Naga Infinity. They may have catchy new names for their dishes, but don't be fooled—all are based in centuries of rich culture and knowledge of the spices. Many of the cooks at Naga Infinity are octogenarians hired to oversee each location, well-paid and respected.

My only advice: When they ask you "how spicy?" don't try to be a hero like Prince Utanka. Medium is the new hot.

NovoAnno

"Novo anno" means "new year;" a clean slate with noble resolutions, looking towards the future, not the past. *NovoAnno! A New Year for Manchester!* That's what the advurts tell you to focus on.

NovoAnno was formerly known as AnnoDomino, the infamous megacorp that almost destroyed Manchester with its greed and negligence. We all learned a big lesson from the House of Chances' Randomino Drawings of nearly 40 years ago. Or should have, at least.

In the days before Vurt feathers, the good people of Manchester were hooked on a city-wide Randomino lottery with a televised weekly drawing. It was supposed to be fair. Randominos with constantly changing pips would settle on a number just as the winning combination was announced. The used-up losing AnnoDomino brand Randominoes were discarded everywhere, the streets were littered with them. If we only knew back then what we know now, the real world would be a very different place.

After all the megacorp did, you'd think they'd have been run out of the city forever. But total rebranding is possible these days, even for a company reviled by so many and responsible for so much damage. Beg forgiveness for your sins to the public, then bribe the shit out of them, change your name a bit and viola! They'll absolve you of almost anything.

The Lottery is back! AnnoDomino is gone forever, now it's NovoAnno! Their new drawings are daily and for lower stakes than before. Modern Randominoes are now guaranteed safe and reusable. It's been 40 years! What could possibly go wrong? Right?

Nunatek

This small company is heavily involved in Shadow tech R&D. Many of the best feather-crafting machines utilize the core components that Nunatek produces. The company is owned by an investment group that has ties to the North American megacorp, AmériCo. Nunatek has a small number of offices in various buildings all over Manchester, but no main HQ.

The CEO of Nunatek has recently died, and the company is trying to recruit some very big names to replace her. Supposedly, money is no object—they're looking for the best. Where are they getting the billions in investment capital? Who knows. If you want to dig deeper, be my guest.

NU-X

Once we had Xcab, now it's Nu-Xcab! It's only been a few decades since the corporation's rebranding, yet it seems we've virtually forgotten their scandalous negligence and criminal activity: Most young Mancs don't hesitate to hitch a ride with an Xcab, no hesitation.

All Xcab drivers are still head-shaved, chipped, glow-tattooed and hooked into their vehicles via neural link. If anyone knows the ways around the traffic and danger of Manchester, it's an Xcab driver. They have "the knowledge" and it shows through, glowing blue, in real time on their skulls.

Those technical problems from 20 years ago

ON XCABS...

Xcabs were latter-day self-styled Knights of the Road, and there were a thousand rumours surrounding them. Coyote's street-smarts told him that most of the rumours were true. For example, that the drivers were drained of all previous life-knowledge, fixed up with robo implants and a complex knowledge of the streets. That the overall system was run by some nebulous cab-creature... That the cabs had guns mounted on the front, just next to the headlights. That the drivers were in some way prescient, they knew you wanted a taxi even before you knew it yourself.

-Pollen, Jeff Noon

have all been addressed, according to Nu-X official spokespeople. The Kowanabi guidance systems operate with totally different hardware, all traces of the failed Colombus system have been scrapped. But no one seems to remember those days, it's like we've all forgotten what they did, how much they have been involved in this city's recent history.

Whatever. Change the channel, right? Xcabs are everywhere again. Most Mancs still call them Xcabs, but by law, they are technically labeled as *Nu*-Xcabs. It's estimated that a fifth of the vehicles on the roads of Manchester are Xcabs, and Nu-X is one of the largest job providers in the city.

Oneiro-Quills
This is still quite a small Vurt feather production and publishing company, and will likely remain small. They don't specialize in anything—they take what they can get and try to turn a profit. Where they get their material is anyone's guess. Their feathers are usually much cheaper than anything from Gimble Inc. or Chimera Corp. Game Cat magazine recently called Oneiro-Quills "Turd-polishing bollocks-washers, the worst feather-crafters of the year." What little momentum they may have dissipated with that well-deserved review.

The amount of in-feather advurts is pathetic, but they offer an advurt-free version for ten times the price of the standard feather. Tired of complaints, many Vurt-U-Wants and Vurturamas no longer accept Oneiro-Quills orders. If O-Q continues as they are, they may not be around by this time next year.

Pharma-Logico
A small 24/7 store that sells all manner of legal drugs, napalm filter cigarettes, beverages, and snack items. The security at Pharma-Logico is pretty high end, with an onsite admin controlling multiple weaponized blurbflies. The employees of Pharma-Logico are also said to be able to give helpful advice on where to find the illegal goodies—slip 'em some quid or summat.

Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru
All *Pop-A-Damn!* locations are simple, rectangular, particleboard structures that look like they're temporary. There's a basic sign and LED lighting that declare "OPEN 24/7." Each walk-through has a small window where you order and pay, followed by a small window where you get your food. Their "Go-Go Aloo Gobi" and "Five Alarm Palak Paneer" are world famous.

There have been no *Pop-A-Damn!*-related overdose deaths in nearly five years. Some credit the official public information campaign that warns people of the risks associated with too much amphetamine-laced food. However, most believe that the overdoses are still occurring at the same alarming rate but are no longer being reported as such, taking some heat off the franchise. You can still order a "Wide-Awake Vindaloo," but now you have to sign a waiver with every purchase. Eat responsibly.

RoboChef Barney Enterprises
A real-world legend! Voted the best chef in the real world more times than anyone in history. Chef Barney is considered a culinary genius—there's no one else who combines the experience of gastronomic ecstasy with Lucid Blue Vurt feathers. Many users say that they can no longer enjoy regular food unless it's augmented by a Chef Barney Blue.

Ironically, it's reported that Barney himself is a Dodo, unable to ever experience his own Vurt feather creations without the help of an XtroVurt™ machine. No one complains, we all just wait for the next big Chef Barney feather and buy it by the bucket.

XtroVurt™ machine, page 107

The latest and most popular in the Chef Barney series is an immersive Blue where the users join the old roboman on a vurtual tour through the area surrounding Chroma, gathering ingredients for olive-oil infused ghost-cat milk gelato. Chef Barney is imagined in-feather wearing his signature white apron and chef hat, looking great for his age, showing no signs of slowing down anytime soon.

Shadowtown
This chain of poorly-lit stores sells Shadow tech devices and drones. Many security hacks and robo upgrade implants are Shadow tech, as are the varying sizes and styles of programmable security drones.

The locations are well guarded by private security drones and mostly cater to beings with robo and shadow genetics. It's common knowledge that a being with Vurt genetics is not welcome here, and they have the right to refuse service. There are only a few dozen locations in all of Manchester; their prices are high, but they cater to the rich and powerful Mancs who know what they want.

Silvershell Inc.
This food company has been a Mancunian favorite for over 50 years. Simple, dependable comfort food for the casual or full-time shut-in. Packed with vitamin D! MungryMan self-hearting dinners are the flagship product of this company, but they have been branching out recently into beverages. Fill that heart meter to the brim! I hear their new Avocado-Boba soda is not bad. *"Self-heating & self-hearting: Be yourself with Silvershell..."*

Slick City
The company motto hasn't changed in 30 years, nor has the store decor. Slick City is perhaps the most notable former American import, and Vurt-U-Want's closest competitor in the global Vurt feather retail market. Employees all wear the signature Slick City cowboy hats and sheriff stars.

These stores are open 24/7 and sell individually packaged feathers, mostly Lucid Blues and Pinks. Unlike Vurt-U-Want, Slick City is unable to sell anything from Chimera Corp due to licensing issues. However, the availability of many Vurt feathers is often better at Slick City. They even have a few types of feathers that are proprietary and can only be found there. Some snooty featherheads love Slick City and won't step foot into a Vurt-U-Want.

You want it, we got it. No high too far. Robos? No problem!

Speakeasy

Speakeasy is the real world's most prestigious producer of Haze, a plant that is expertly processed for smoking. The megacorp is one of Manchester's largest legal non-pharma drug manufacturers and produces arguably the most popular brand of Haze in history. They have their extravagant headquarters in the New Centerton district of Centre but also have smaller processing labs all over the megacity.

All Vurturama and Slick City stores carry Speakeasy Haze, but due to licensing issues, it is no longer sold at Vurt-U-Want. While a Manc certainly has their choice when it comes to Haze, most aficionados and connoisseurs will only smoke Speakeasy Haze, as there really is no substitute.

Be a good neighbour—speak easy.

Spook

The beverage megacorp is still attempting to rebrand itself after both the S.O.L.A.C.E. and Introvurt scandals of nearly 30 years ago. Their latest quasi-potable product is called NuSpook, which has been chemically altered so that flavor combinations don't result in addiction, injury, or death. The original flavors of Spook haven't changed: strawberry, orange, lemon, apple, cola and elderberry. It still tastes just as treacle-sweet, and mixing and matching the flavors by twisting the top is just as popular as it ever was.

It seems that Spook is back after a long time at the bottom of the addictive fizzy beverage industry. If it were not for a huge influx of money from the Royal Palace, Spook would not be around today, as their gargantuan annual legal fees and obligations still exceed their profit. Spook is also currently paying out the families of the nearly 200 people that were affected by the in-utero advertising known as Introvert. Though the company has filed an appeal to the civil suit, it's a long-shot. Not even the cozy corporate relationship with the Royal Palace and City Council can do much for them. Few Mancs feel any pity for this company, but it doesn't stop them from buying NuSpook by the barrel.

ON THE INTROVURT SCANDAL...

It was meant to be the next wave of advertising; get them hooked in the womb. I don't pretend to know the details, something to do with feeding the DNA with subliminal messages. They targeted poor people, of course, and promised no side effects. Of course, now we know better, but those two hundred kids have to live with it for the rest of their lives. Introverts; interior adverts, I think it stood for. The original idea was that they would just promote the product, you know, word of mouth being the best advert of them all. Remember how Nesbit almost got us hooked? Then it went wrong; the hook was too deep, too sharp. The product took over.

-Pixel Juice, Jeff Noon

Susti-tek

The megacorp is fairly successful, one of the leading Robo CTPU makers and innovators. Their most recent projects have been focused on incorporating Shadow tech and adding many more mathemagicians to their design teams. Very little is known about this fairly new megacorp, and their administrators and upper management teams seem to change every week.

Based in Rochdale, Susti-tek's main factory is located in the lower half of their 100-story, heavily fortified domino-style skyscraper. The upper half are offices and administrative living quarters.

Unlimited Dream Co. (UDC)

Comfortable classics. Every single one of their feather series are predictable, feel-good sitcom-style Blues where the temperature is 78 degrees and everything smells like fabric softener and mashed potatoes. Nothing surprising, nothing groundbreaking. Just the soothing predictability one can expect from the 40-year-old plotlines of UDC-brand feathers.

This megacorp was one of the first companies to to fully develop their Vurt feathers in-house, allowing them to move very quickly from concept to packaged product. The weavers of UDC began creating ongoing series of narrative Blue feathes; once a month at first, then weekly. Other feather production companies followed suit, most notably Chimera Corp, who based a lot of their series structures on the original UDC classics. Nowadays, most take the existence of

longform feather series for granted.

The late founder of UDC was a reclusive Vurtman entrepreneur known as Shady Mallard, a soft-spoken genius who rebuilt the factory in Chorlton Park, Centre and started his dream company. Unlimited Dream Co. is nowhere near as big or profitable as it once was, but its original factories still crank out the weeklies for their dedicated fan base.

While the company is trying to remain relevant and reach a younger demographic, it doesn't seem to be working. The most recent advert campaign has been ridiculed by most in the media, seen as sappy and condescending. Right now, it's not cool to be seen taking UDC feathers in public; it's mostly a private, guilty pleasure for the customers who like the predictable laugh-tracked corners of the Vurt world. The average age of a feather-user for a UDC product is 60.

UrBlurb Shop

A chain of stores that sells B.L.U.R.B. components and materials. Many local admins hang out at UrBlurb shops, loudly debating chassis upgrades and customized sonic jingle efficacy. If it has to do with blurbflies, it's likely found here. And that which can't be found here can be often be located by an employee—for a price, of course.

Vaz International

Founded by a very young Jazir Malik, Vaz International quickly became one of the top five earning megacorps in the real world, and has stayed at the top ever since. Originally, the small company was created to produce "Vaz®, the universal lubricant." Vaz Int. quickly grew and diversified, investing heavily in the transportation, security, and construction industries. Much like its flagship product, Vaz®, the megacorp has slipped into most nooks and crannies of the corporate world.

There are also rumors that Vaz Int. has plans for a space tourism division, intending to charge enormously for short low-orbit cruises. Perhaps there is something to the story, perhaps not, but it has caused several other large megacorps to scramble and begin organizing space tourism divisions of their own. Imagine taking a feather while weightless, accessing the Vurt world from space. Stay tuned for details—anything is possible with Vaz International.

The everything, everywhere megacorp!

Vurturama

These feather stores come in two forms: Basic Vurturama and Vurturama Plus.

Basic Vururamas locations are often just small kiosks that only sell cheap blue and pink feathers. Most are fully automated and only accept prepaid cards.

Vurturama Plus locations are higher-end mini marts that sell feathers, food, and drugs. Employees are knowledgeable, but very hesitant to talk about anything illegal. Their prices are higher and they are usually located in the wealthier and safer neighborhoods.

Vurt-U-Want

"Find What-U-Want at Vurt-U-Want!" This is the real world's largest Vurt feather retailer. They carry all the latest legal blue and pink feathers, all the best legal pharma, as well as all the Vaz®, Napalm Filter cigarettes, sugary snacks and beverages a Manc could want. Vurt-U-Wants are all over Manchester; most districts have several. They sell legal feathers 24/7 and the employees are known to be able to point you in the direction of the illegal Black and Yellow feathers they're not supposed to know about.

Quality and cleanliness also depend greatly on the district and time of day. On one side, you have clean and well-lit Vurt-U-Wants, full of friendly Mancs-behind-the-counter. The Vurt-U-Wants in New Centerton have gold-plated countertops and "feather-tenders" who advise customers which trips they may dig most. It's a lovely experience.

On the other end of the stick you have Vurt-U-Wants that are small and dingy; flickering LEDs half-illuminating old-ass feathers, used Body-Vaz and ginnel-vomit. Ask me another time about my recent North Crumpsall Vurt-U-Want experience. Epic doesn't begin to describe the level of filth.

Security for all Vurt-U-Want locations is now done by official MechanInsect Scoop-model blurbflies that flutter near the entrances, flashing warning and making their all-seeing presence known. The employees at the counter operate behind bulletproof glass and some managers also carry permitted weapons.

Whoompy's Burgers

For half a century, Whoompy's has been a staple of the fast fooders. It's cheap. Really cheap. The price, the quality—all cheap! These heart-burning gastro-disaster restaurants are mostly automated now with a single manager on duty, just in case. There are some sit-down locations, however, which have come back in style after the company tried to rebrand itself. It still looks like shit, but employs more Mancunians as food servers.

These restaurants are franchise-owned, so

the level of service and cleanliness varies greatly. Whoompy's Burgers are usually located in lower-income neighborhoods or neighborhoods with higher concentrations of MPD officers. As a self-serving security measure, all employees of the Manchester Police Department receive a 50% discount. Few gang members would choose to rob a restaurant full of MPD officers.

Those cops that hang around Whoompy's Burgers, both on and off-duty, have earned their nickname "Burger-Cops." Anyone who eats regularly at Whoompy's tends to have a certain mild aroma that is released through their pores/vents. It's been described best as toasted plastic. Woo-Woo-Whoompy's!

Windsor Inc.

Down south in London, Singland's former royal family still resides in Buckingham Palace. Everything has been restructured to reflect their new status as a corporation. Once London lost its economic and cultural place at the top, major reforms were enacted in order to compete with their Northern megacity neighbors. London's budget was overhauled and much of its treasure, including the crown jewels, were sold off to pay for rapid expansion into a powerful megacity. Most income generated from Windsor Inc. goes directly into city construction projects and social services that are aimed at reclaiming the economic throne of Singland.

Londoners are survivors, and they have no intention of allowing Manchester to remain at the top. As London's largest and most influential megacorp, Windsor Inc. has the reputation of short-selling stock and manipulating import/export taxes, all with the goal to compete with the big "Old Man" to the North. So far, it's worked quite well; last year Windsor Inc. saw the largest spike in growth of any megacorp in the real world, an unprecedented economic leap up the ladder into the top ten.

Yank Inc.

A corporation that specializes in pink feather production. The feather trips themselves are crafted by outside companies and individuals on a contract basis. The most recent publications of *Plumper Stumper* and *StankYanker* are said to be groundbreaking. Yank's Pinks have made the annual "Top Ten Pinks" in Game Cat magazine for ten years running.

Their factories are still located in Yankton district of Centre, but there has been talk of moving company HQ out of Manchester entirely; perhaps down south to London or Brighton. That would be an unprecedented move for any company to consider. Most companies in the real world want in, not out. They must have some plan in place that the rest of us aren't privy to. Maybe some secret deals with the City Councils of London or Brighton? Who knows? Those Yanks can be slippery.

YaYa Entertainment

This is now a multimedia empire, thanks to their CEO, Joe Crocus. 15 years ago, Crocus used his considerable wealth to buy control of the popular but financially shaky radio network called Gumbo YaYa Enterprises. Within months, the company had diversified and expanded, hiring several thousand employees all over the globe. Now there are YaYa-brand Vurt feathers, YaYa brand DJ systems, YaYa brand candy, soft drinks, and shampoo. YaYa is even the main sponsor of the Manchester United Vurtball team. Almost anywhere you go in Manchester, you're bound to see something with the YaYa brand name on it—all thanks to Crocus.

Gumbo YaYa, the renowned pirate-radio DJ and founder of the company is now a very old man. These days, Gumbo appears in public for the occasional photo-op or awards ceremony, spending most of his time in his top-floor penthouse apartment in the Shakespeare Luxury Estates in Tameside.

While some in the business community feel that the ties between YaYa and the Royal City Council are too close, they have little legal recourse. It's common knowledge: YaYa CEO Joe Crocus knew Jazir Malik well before either of them became billionaires, and the two friends were able to bypass many of the infamous permitting issues that plague the bureaucracy of The Royal City Council. In Manchester, you are who you know.

Today, YaYa Entertainment is one of the most powerful media megacorps in the real world, but they haven't released anything new in almost two years, putting the megacorp's future in jeopardy if they don't come up with something extraordinary. Crocus says that all the R&D is going to pay off, that YaYa has something they've developed that will change the real world.

THE GANGS OF MANCHESTER

Crime has been rising steadily for years. As the established street gangs expand and fight over territory, the up-and-coming gangs are filling in the gaps. Most gangs are centered around a xenophobic ideology, with a vulnerable scapegoat mode or group. You can say "hate group" if you want, but it's more nuanced than that. With so many different modes of being, tribalism grows stronger as it becomes more fractured.

Thirty years ago, there were dozens of pure human hate groups that fought against dozens of dogman or robo groups. Hell, even Das Uberdog and Dingo Tush were Turdsville gang members back in the day. It's a big part of our history, like it or not.

Now we have hundreds of small groups that might be centered around "robodogman pride" or "anti-Shadow hate." With 31 possible modes of being spread out unevenly across the rungs of the social ladder, Mancunians are feeling increasingly more divided. Nowhere is this more evident than Manchester, the gang and hate-group capital of the real world.

Some gangs began as hooligan fan clubs for Vurtball teams or their favorite feather companies. Others were created and actively recruited by corporations or councils that wanted to eradicate another existing gang or competitor. Then there are the old gangs of Manchester that managed to survive, clinging onto hatred through the generations.

Many gangs make their money by selling illegal drugs and feathers and extorting the local residents and business owners. Smuggling people and items in and out of the city is also very lucrative; there seem to be no shortage of government or corporate weasels who can be paid to look the other way.

The following are just a few examples of the thousands of gangs, cults and hate groups that overpopulate Manchester. Remember, divisions run deep—multiple generations of hooligan mentality has taken a toll on the Singlish psyche.

45th Generation Romans

Another Southern gang gone Manc. One of London's most well-known gangs, the 45th Generation Romans have been a major player in the illegal trafficking of goods from London to Manchester.

Much of their 200 mile journey is done overland through Limbo; queues of hiking gang members with backpacks, all poorly armed in the most dangerous part of Singland. It's said that the survival rate for gang members making one of these mule trips is about 50%. These Southern geezers still keep moving goods between the megacities, undaunted.

Those that survive the trip to Manchester with a load are set up to stay illegally, which is why most join up and make the dangerous journey in the first place. Those hiding out here are usually involved in organized crime and extortion of the local business owners and residents. No one likes these arseholes. They don't (yet) have a home turf to defend, so they just pop up all over the city, from Rusholme in Centre to the Wall Gates of Oldham. Most dress up in the popular Southern Singlish gang style: oversized leather jackets, London Vurtball team shirts and sunglasses at night.

8Gens

Pronounced *Octo-gens*, this gang is quickly gaining a reputation for extreme violence. Those without robo genetics are barred from this hate group. Most members do not need to sleep, and those that do take enough Jammers to keep things wakey-wakey.

A lot of invasive hacking crimes are traced back to this group, which consistently denies any and all involvement. They are very, very well armed, with access to the latest tech, especially in the area of sonic warfare.

The 8Gens run most of the security for ToyTown, Centre, but have been trying to set up satellite communities around Manchester. Those 8Gens with Autogen (pure robo) genetics have already started to divide off and move to districts like New Platting, Cheetham and Crumpsal. These "pure" 8Gens also run security in these new communities, and must have some secret connection to the local cops, who seem to stay out of their way. Those 8Gen gang members with mixed robo genetics—the non-pure—are not being promoted, and this is causing a lot of internal strife.

Bullyfailers

In Manchester, there are actually anti-hate-hate groups that find ways to dole out some fancy street justice.

Bullyfailers sometimes show up, out of nowhere, and beat the shite out of anti-modists wearing anti-hate armbands. It's a confusing, reactionary ideology that draws the most hardcore pieces of shite in the city. Bullyfailers have been around for decades, but no outsider has yet been able to identify the organization's leaders or power structure.

They seem to pop up most often in the Tameside and Centre boroughs, dressed in their signature 100-year-old tweed suits and wingtip shoes. Those chaps and lasses look dapper in bowler hats as they kick some anti-hate-group arse—funny how no one seems to report their activities or identities to the authorities, one would almost think they've paid the MPD off.

BuzzCoughs

This Bolton-based neighborhood watch is not affiliated with any official organization, and their blatant display of loaded firearms during patrols is disturbing. Many dress entirely in black, and wear the antique Union Jack flag as a cape. They bark about Manchester being for Mancunians only, wanting NVL (non-viable life form) death camps, and other xenophobic drivel.

Tourists and non-native residents have the most to fear from this pro-Manc hate gang. Most of us see the BuzzCoughs for what they are—dangerous crackpot wingnut fringe-clowns with unlicensed weapons and rage issues.

Cargo Cult

This Malikton-based group is a cult, no doubt about it. Most members wear long robes and shave their heads, searching the dustbins and trash piles for items to attach to their "Ram-Z spirit armor." They live to collect Miskel and worship their constantly growing number of odd electric gods. At the heart of their ideology is recycling, ecology, exploration, and personal growth; they are not known for pushing their beliefs on those that are not willing to listen.

Miskel, page 165

Those in power live in hiding under the mountains of trash in the borough trash dumps of Malikton. To become a Cargo Cult member, there are many tasks that must be completed, many ceremonial displays of allegiance. Once you're in, you're in for life—those initiated members that try to distance themselves will find themselves hunted by fellow members. The Cargo Cult does not allow members to go back on their vows. Arming every member with a ceremonial machete upon initiation is one way to make sure no one forgets.

Chelseamen

The hooligan superfans of the Chelsea Vurtball club in London are known all over the real world as one of the most violent groups around. Back when London declared city-state status and incorporated Chelsea, street protests turned lethal. The most bloody clashes took place in Southwest London, and the hooligan gangs that once centered around Vurtball now found themselves flush with new members: armed, angry young people with nowhere to go.

Up here in Manchester, this imported street gang now has more local members than back in their home borough of Chelsea, 200 miles to the southeast. The Chelseamen ideology is based on region; they feel that Manchester and its residents are spoiled and should once again be under the control of London. This hasn't made them many friends in their new home.

The dreaded "Chelsea Grin" is the preferred punishment for the business owners and residents of Congleton who won't pay the ever-rising protection fees. This gang has also openly called for war against the MPD, a move that many see as absolute madness. Perhaps their days are numbered? Hunker down, Congleton!

Drat Pack

This mixed-mode street gang once ran much of the territory in the Cheetham district of Centre, but has been steadily losing control over the years to the network of gangs known as the Syanka. The Drat Pack's glory days are long gone, now they simply react to threats and dream of a day when Cheetham is back under proud Singlish control. They are considered a radical nationalist hate gang, longing for the reunification of Singland.

Their membership is diverse, consisting of members from many of the 31 modes of being. Usually dressed up in their slick Mod suits atop their Vespa scooters, the Drat Pack looks classy as they zip down the streets and ginnels of Cheetham, blasting old Frank Scenario tunes from their personal blurbflies.

Drat Pack gang members seem to have no problem with someone's genetics, but they do have a problem with non-native Mancunians, especially Eastern Europeans. They tolerate Southern gangs from London or Brighton better than most, regarding them as misguided Singlish brethren.

Droylsden Dolls

A mostly roboman "community organization" that operates in Tameside. They currently have a cease-fire agreement with the other main Tameside underworld contender, the Parkas. Both groups are deep into money laundering and extortion, and have found that the best way to maintain control is to work together. Or at least not kill each other on sight.

For now, the truce is holding; the area around Shakespeare Luxury estates is a no-go for members of the Droylsden Dolls. The area around the foothills of the Pennies is a no-go for the Parkas. Who says gangs can't work together for their own common good?

Electric Circus

One of the oldest gangs in Manchester, their members are still mostly pure human. The current gang is a combination of two former local pure human gangs, and

they are quickly gaining a heavy reputation for harassing outsiders and rolling tourists.

The gang members seem to be without a leader at the moment, which has led to several incidents of senseless violence that might have been otherwise avoided. The MPD is making an example out of the electric Circus, arresting dozens of gang members at a time, proclaiming that they are disturbing the peace. Most of the time, they are, the daft scallies.

The gang once was heavily involved in illegal pharma, but has moved their focus onto robbing and extorting the Rovers who float through their home-turf districts of Moss Side and Rusholme. Picking a fight with the Rovers is almost certainly going to lead to the gang's destruction. The days of the Electric Circus are numbered. Believe.

Glass-City Rollers

Ignorant outsiders initially have a hard time believing the horror stories about this group. Who would expect that a gang on roller skates wearing 60-year-old polyester leisure suits would be so dangerous? Most think it's an odd joke. Those living in the Oldham area don't think it's a joke.

Originally from Glasgow, this street gang now has more members in Manchester than anywhere else. The ideology is very simple: Pure is poor. Glass-City Rollers are all mixed-mode beings, and feel that those without mixed genetics are an abomination. Many are armed with electro-knives and terrorize the streets of Manchester top-speed on their skates. The famous "Glasgow smile" is a favorite punishment for business owners who won't pay the ever-rising protection fees. Smile, darn ya, smile!

Globus

Part gang, part cult, the members of this group are mostly genetic Dodos, unable to take Vurt feathers like everyone else. Those members that are able to ingest feathers have vowed to never again take flight and enter the Vurt world. If it's Vurt-related, they're likely against it.

Pushed by both envy and xenophobia, Globus is desperately trying to expand. Manchester has a few Globus groups in the South and East side of the city, mainly Congleton and Malikton. Outside Manchester, the group's reach is impressive; it's said that Liverpool, Leeds, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Cardiff, and Dublin all have sizable Globus groups. There are rumors that this cult is being funded by the fanatical followers of The Wizard in Auz, but no one has solid proof. It's quite possible, though; Globus members do share the same fervent anti-Vurt ideology and willingness to die for their beliefs.

HOA

Thirty years ago, a group of ten little scallies decided to become a gang. They wore long black parkas, even in the summer, and before long, they were controlling the run-down area of Tameside known as the Shakespeare Estates.

Now, those same 10 kids who were the founding members of the Parkas have grown up to be the business moguls of the "HOA," a redevelopment corporation that built the Shakespeare Luxury Estates and made billions. They still wear long parkas, but now they have designer clothing underneath and a small army of Parka gang bodyguards. No one fucks with the HOA.

ON DODOS...

We now know that the inability to dream is a genetic thing; a certain lost linkage in the double helix. And the fear of those that are the dream is inborn and inescapable. The reaction of an Unbeknownst to a Vurt creature is the same as that of a mouse to a cat. It operates at the same level of reality, down deep in the body's origins.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

Lives Life as a Dodo, page 82

The Wizard of Auz, page 353

IssUE V55.16178

YaYa
ENTERTAINMENT NEWSBLURB

MODS & ROCKERS, Part 1 of 1

Blurbs from the Editor

My loyal YaYa readers-

Mods? Rockers? What's going on? Here's the scoop:

Almost a century ago, back when they still called it all England, before the modes of being began to mix, the youth still battled each other on the streets as they do today. Starting in the early 1960s, two distinct types of culture came to prominence: the Mods and the Rockers.

Mods were so named because of their primary love for modern jazz. Typical Mods wore tailored Italian clothes and rode Italian scooters to the most swinging urban hot spots. Music tastes amongst Mods eventually broadened to include soul, R&B, and ska. Most Mods just wanted to look good riding their Vespas around town, living in the moment.

Rockers were primarily young motorcycle enthusiasts who loved 1950s rock and roll. Black leather jackets & greasy pompadours easily identified them, and the heart of every Rocker rumbled on two wheels. A Rocker's true place is atop their Triumph, surrounded by other cool Rockers.

Mods & Rockers frequently came into conflict and the two groups were demonized by the authorities because of their frequent clashes. By the late 1960s, conflicts between the two groups died down, as many high-profile rock bands adopted Mod styles, general musical tastes changed, and youth cultures diverged further.

The early skinhead movement was originally a working-class offshoot of Mod culture (before the political and racial associations the movement knows today), while the Teddy Boy movement came from a kind of amalgamation between the Mods' flair for fashion and the Rockers' love of 1950s rock and roll.

Once the modes of being started mixing, the ideas of racial purity and pure human identity were turned on their head. Nationalism, skin color, orientation, even gender is no longer a defining factor. There have been several distinct revivals of both Mod and Rocker subculture all over Singland; In modern Manchester, the styles have returned in a big way, heavily influencing music and culture once again. It's common to see a group of stylish robodogman Mods zipping around on vespas or a pair of shadowvurt Rockers loitering in front of a Vurt-U-Want. Just as long as they all aren't in the same place at the same time, there should be no problem.

As always, keep those heads up and those noses clean, Manchester.

OG Brits

A violent gang centered around a deep hatred of any pure human. Based in Bottletown, they are trying to expand their territory south into Rusholme. The OG Brit's rivals are the Torchers, the original gang that ran BottleTown. For decades, the two gangs have been killing each other off, fighting over corners covered scraps of broken glass.

OG Brits are Rockers, most of the them ride tricked-out Triumph motorcycles, looking for Mods to harass. All have the same full facial tattoos of the Union Jack. Leather jackets, Napalm filter cigarettes, pompadours vazzed to perfection—these Rockers are riding free!

Parkas

The Parkas run security for Shakespeare Luxury Estates in Tameside, and are known to be ruthless when dealing with undesirables. Gang members all wear long puffy parka jackets, rain or shine, and have enough quid coming in to keep their numbers strong. Many carry highly illegal flame pistols and some are rumored to have fractal bullets.

Seems the law doesn't apply to the Parkas on the Estates. They report directly to the powerful HOA, the legal part of the organization, and loyally guard their interests. The MPD is actually barred from entering most of the Parkas territory; the HOA has paid to make it a no-go.

Residents who live in the Shakespeare Luxury Estates are extremely wealthy, and normally have no reason to fear the gang. The Parkas are there to keep them safe. However, on the rare occasion when an estate resident is unable to pay the exorbitant monthly HOA dues, the Parkas come knocking. Hard.

Poor-Boys

A dogman-only hate group, known for their violent past. They're easily identified by the "Poor-Boy look": leather collars, dark sunglasses at all times, covered head to paws in dogman pride tattoos. Likely smelling like dog piss. There's no mistaking a Poor-Boy.

The newer generation is trying to integrate more than the old guard did, which is causing a lot of infighting and instability. Lethal fights between Poor-Boy gang members is becoming a common occurrence. They run the Salford district of Manchester, and have for more than 20 years.

Up until recently, there was an unspoken gang rule that the MechanInsect HQ building in Salford was off-limits. It seems the young Poor-Boys are going rogue, organizing recent muggings of high-level employees on MechanInsect company property. This is effectively a call for war against a megacorp that manufactures tens of thousands of weaponized blurbflies. Maybe not such a good idea?

PreGents

These daft scallies are a public nuisance in the Ardwick District. It's considered stylish for PreGent gang members to get droidlocks, attaching themselves to their ideal combat buddy. The confidence that comes with sharing hair with a fellow badass makes the PreGents a real hazard for outsiders and locals alike.

Rada-Da

An odd cult that is relatively new to Manchester, the members of this group are involved in community projects and other above-the-board activities. They don't really inspire trust, mostly derision. Rada-Da members often dress in loose fitting clothing, henna-marking themselves all over in ancient Yoruba and Voudun symbols. There is no specific mode of being or group restrictions, all genetics are welcome in Rada-da.

The members subsist entirely on a thick almond syrup that they make themselves, based on an old orgeat recipe. No one in the group drinks alcohol or takes any drugs other than Vurt feathers; they keep themselves clear-headed and prepare the way for what they believe to be the Vurt dragon Osumare's eventual takeover of the real world. They're quite mad, all of them. Makes one wonder what's really in that almond syrup they drink.

Rovers

While this large group is not really a gang, they're a considerable threat if pushed. These travelers come from outside the Wall, usually on canal boats, setting up Rover Faires to sell both legal and illegal items. Honestly, most Mancs don't like them. Since they are not residents of the megacity, these Rovers have very few rights and almost no legal recourse for any legitimate problems they may have within the City Walls.

However, while most Mancs will happily trash-talk a Rover, a huge percentage of the population gets their

Black, Yellow and Hybrid feathers from them. We need them to get our fix; Vurt-U-Want, Vurturama and Slick City stores can't sell illegal feathers.

The Rovers are not based in a particular area, but can always be found in the canal boats that slowly drift down the waterways of the Irk, Mersey, Irwell, and other rivers and canals of Manchester. Their boats, carts, and wagons are filled with other illegal goodies too—you just need to know who to ask. Rovers look out for each other, so I strongly suggest showing some respect.

Rude-Boys

They are a fairly well established gang in Rusholme that now finds themselves overrun from the North by the Torchers and the Og Brits of BottleTown. The good old days of the Rude-Boys are long gone. They're just reacting now, and losing control. Rude-Boy neighborhood clout is running way low, and the gang members feel cornered.

Rude-Boys once had the unofficial backing of the MPD, and were often able to go about their criminal activities in Rusholme unchecked. But things have changed, and now the encroaching Torchers are the local MPD favorites, leaving the Rude-Boy gang in a very precarious position. They've burned a lot of bridges over the decades and now it seems that everyone is against them.

Scallywaggers

Clad in their signature matching trackies and heavy dog-collar chains, Scallywaggers stick to the shadowy ginnels and filthy clubs of Rochdale and North Centre.

This dogman-only gang was an offshoot of the original Poor-Boy gang of Salford, but split due to ideological differences. Half ended up in Rochdale where they agreed to combine with the local dogman-only group called the Barlow Hall Boys. The group has been terrorizing Rochdale and North Centre ever since.

The Scallywaggers number in the hundreds at this point. All Scallywagger gang members must be a genetic mix of both dog and human—no other mode of being is acceptable. No exceptions. These are some of the most gruesome knee-breakers and curb-stompers of Manchester, marking their territory—literally.

SoulBoy Consortium

This Ardwick-based group was once just a small collection of local gangs with strong anti-cop sentiment in common. These days, they're a community organization and head many local social programs aimed at making life better for those in Ardwick. After a decade of work, the local section of the River Medlock is extremely clean, and many of the SoulBoy Consortium members volunteer to keep it that way.

Some accuse the group of harboring cop-killers and extremists, but those that know them usually defend their actions. In Ardwick, the locals are very supportive, and feel that without the SoulBoy Consortium, they'd be overrun by gangs like the PreGents, or worse...

Syanka

This is actually a collection of several different gangs who fight over territory in the infamous districts of the Wigan borough. Syanka members usually wear matching track suits and sport flashy gold chains.

For the last few decades, Eastern Europeans with Shadow genetics, mainly from the former Balkans, have not been welcome in their home countries. They immigrated to Manchester, buying large amounts of low-income properties, settling down in Wigan. Clashes with established local gangs have led to dozens of gruesome murders and a sense of lawlessness. The Syanka is taking over Wigan, one district at a time.

These gang members are organized, and have their own patrols. They are most at odds with the shadowcops, who make it a point to go into Wigan on a daily basis to hassle and control what they see as a growing threat.

While the bloodshed the Syanka gang members are responsible for is considerable, there is a sense of community and social justice among them that most native-born Mancunians never get to experience. Their goal is actually a noble one—the gangs of the Syanka dream of a real world where pure shadow beings can walk the streets safely, protected by laws and integrated into society.

Torchers

The Torchers hold down the BottleTown district of Centre, and control much of the crime in surrounding area as well. They're expanding their turf south into Rusholme now, and losing dozens of gang members every day in the bloody conflict. They take pride in being the original gang of BottleTown, and many have shadow, human and/or robo genetic mixes. Most Torchers tend to be anti-dogman, but are focusing their hatred mostly on rival gang members these days.

The MPD has been looking the other way with this group for decades, often allowing them access to weapons and information that might give them the edge over other local gangs. The enemy of my enemy is my friend, or summat. All Torchers dress in black or grey and most are very well armed.

True Resurrected

A small, odd cult that seems to be gaining popularity with disenfranchised pure human youths. Based in Centre's Rusholme district, this group has just recently started to make moves and assert some dominance. Little is known about their message or agenda, but they're likely to make them known soon. Some brave souls should look into this further.

Ultraists

Part graffiti art crew, part neighborhood enforcers, the Ultraists have taken over the former Astro-City Exhibition Museum in Congleton. The mixed-mode gang uses it as their base of operations, as well as renting out space to refugees and other undesirables. The museum is generally a no-go for the cops. Although they don't like each other, the cops and the Ultraists have a very interesting and shady relationship that has become increasingly evident.

MANCUNIAN CULTURE

Manchester is the center of the real world. There are more immigrants here than anywhere else, as well as more hate groups than anywhere else. Three or four generations ago, humans simply fought among other humans, usually based on nationality; antiquated, man-made, temporary geographical borders. Looking back on it all, it seems so ridiculous.

There are still a few groups that identify with this old nationalism, but modern identity is more microscopic; more cellular. With 31 modes of being now separating us even further, the divisions we've created are now more often based on DNA; how mixed your blood is, what modes of being you have in your genes.

Your Mancunian great-grandfathers might have had a problem with skin color or gender. Your grandfathers may have had issues with sexual orientation or nation of origin. Then all of that went out the window with Fecundity-10. The barriers broke and interbreeding of the modes became the new norm. It's likely that your father's youth was spent grappling with new groups to hate, new districts lines to accept, new scapegoats to identify, and new ideas of beauty, purity and purpose.

What's racism compared with modism? Same basic premise, although much bigger and more diverse. We've always had gangs. We've always had cagey enclaves in ethnically divided neighborhoods. The Manchester we once knew is no more. Accepting that simple fact is the key to being able to move on as an inclusive society. But I consider myself an optimistic realist, and I know that my anything-goes ideology is not a popular one.

We have much to be proud of, but much, much more to atone for. But we all have to deal with it, kittling. All of us. There's no way around it. Xenophobia is as much a part of Manchester as the River Irwell, and often just as turgid and choppy.

VURTBALL

It's easy to find an immersive blue feather for the next Vurtball match. Just Vaz up, drop in and find yourself on the pitch as your favorite player. What they see, you see. Fans swear that it's the only way to experience the sport. Immersive Blue Vurtball feathers are an intense

ON VURTBALL...

The sun was heating up the pitch as the crowd waited for kick off. An evening match with no need for floodlights. The brass band was playing homage to the King. This is the land that I love, and here I'll stay...until my dying day. Golden music shimmering over the manicured grass, which was so finely genetically controlled, it was the green of ripe apples, so tangy you could taste the pitch on the roof of your mouth. Even so, flowers were growing through the grass, and the whine of the pitch-cutting machines was another song on that day, their blades clogged up with thick stems.

Supporters all around me, plying their blue-and-white feathers with Vaz, hoping for a good game. The feathers had numbers on them, each corresponding to a player.

Interactive Vurtball. Where you can play the game inside your chosen player. The left back defender is the cheapest feather; the centre forward the dearest.

-Pollen, Jeff Noon

experience that may be too much for the casual Vurtball fan.

The Lucid Blue Vurtball feathers put you in the game as a viewer; one of the dozens of camera-equipped blurbflies that flit through the air between the action. With a Lucid Vurtball feather trip, you're mostly conscious still, grounded in the real world. You have the added comfort of not tiring out your legs and being able eating a Whoompy burger or two during the game.

Down on the actual pitch, the game is played by overpaid athletes from all over the real world. Vurtball players technically hail from all the different modes of being, but it seems that there is a very large percentage of robomen, dogshadows, and robodogshadow players in the sport of Vurtball. Some large teams are even single mode, like Chroma's all roboman squad, or Cao Paulo's all-dogshadow squad. Do certain modes share a proclivity for the sport? Are there genetic advantages? Or does this all have more to do with my own modist-influenced views? Ah, Vurtball, the great unifier and divider.

Performance enhancement is encouraged. Life is short. Sleep is for the dead. If it isn't full contact, it's not sport. Lives are lost. Such is Vurtball.

After the city of Manchester incorporated everything around it and became the economic center of the real world, only Manchester United and Manchester City received the funding it took to transform regular footie into the pinnacle of Vurt-laced first-person immersive evolution of sport. Proving to be wildly successful, other large teams around the real world followed. Now each of the 15 boroughs of Manchester have their own clubs with official team and player feathers. Vurtball has never been more popular. There's talk about making the district-level games available via Immersive or Lucid Blues, but politics within the RWVA (real world Vurtball Association) keeps anything from happening.

You looking to engage in some hooliganism? Within the stadium grounds for both Manchester United and Manchester City, the MPD has no jurisdiction. Both

City Vurtball clubs are expected to provide their own private security for the games. Most matches end up being 75% local fans, 25% terrified visiting team supporters, barely protected by a very inept army of stadium quadcopter drones.

Oh you wacky Mancs. Hatred for your fellow sport-loving Mancunian has heated up considerably, but it's been this way for 150 years. We used to call it football. Now we get feathered-up for Vurtball. But the passion, the die-for-it mentality never changed; through all the turmoil and near apocalyptic Pollen outbreaks, the booms the busts... this loyal fear and loathing never faltered.

The old farts at the pub tell us that it's always been Manchester United vs. Manchester City, but it's only gotten worse. Some of us stay indoors on big game days, just in case. Sometimes the fights are almost as interesting to watch as the matches themselves.

Bolton, Wigan, Stockport, Oldham, Rochdale, Bury, Salford, and the others boroughs have their own club rivalries, offering even more opportunity to fight your fellow Manc over a score. District-level clubs are just recently starting to gain popularity as they make deals with Chimera Corp, Vaz Int. or one of the other big sponsors.

Elsewhere in the real world there are the official teams of other great megacities such as Chroma or Cao Paulo. Supporters of outside teams come prepared to defend themselves, win or lose. Stadium matches at this level can be lethal, even "friendlies" often end up very unfriendly. When it comes times for the real world Cup, both city-states and countries are eligible. There are other well-loved sports in the real world including cricket, rugby, bandy, and baseball, but none nearly as globally popular as Vurtball.

GEOGRAPHY OF THE MEGACITY

RIVERS

Much of Manchester's waterways are jam-packed with a slow-moving current of bustling marketplaces where anyone could walk from boat to boat without much fear of falling in the cold water. The moving canal boat market is known to have cheap prices from vendors known as Rovers who know how to score almost anything; a floating, ever-moving marketplace where you often need a connection to know where to look before what you want floats on by. These Rovers are actually several different nomadic groups that consist mostly of dogman and robodog travelers.

All canal boats are legally required to be roped tightly together for safety, and a city-wide law states that non-residents may not disembark at any time. Nothing in the law stops residents from boarding and disembarking, however. Hello, hello! Loopholes are lovely.

Like a never-ending stream of goodies at a revolving sushi bar, the canal system of waterways in Manchester is a dependable source of interesting and hard-to-get items. Most boats come in from the South and West side of the city, on the rivers Irk, Irwell, and Mersey, where single-use temporary entrance permits are given to inspected boats. They're tethered to the others and drift slowly through the city until they reach the North and East exits and disembark outside the Wall in Limbo.

A (very) temporary, unauthorized event called a Rover Faire is where a Manc can go to find some good black market items and Miskel. If an area is quietly selected for a Faire, the Rovers on the canal boats will all disembark at the designated river station and lay out blankets, set up carts and even wagons. A temporary bazaar on the banks of a crowded river.

Miskel, page 165

While the MPD is required by law to disrupt this illegal activity and arrest all involved, they rarely do. There are so many parts of Manchester that are a no-go for the MPD, and resources have been maxed out, so these "Quick Faires" are not a priority. Most last a few hours, and seem to pack up and jump back on the canal boats just as the cops show up. It's fairly easy to find a Rover Faire by asking around.

There are some Faires that are set up in the very worst parts of the megacity where the cops will never go. These "no-go Rover Faires" are often where someone goes to find firearms, sonic grenades, or other highly illegal items. These places draw hordes of criminals who wait in the ginnels like trapdoor spiders. My advice is to avoid them entirely.

Rovers are a very diverse group. They're not a specific mode of being or culture; rather, they share a common nomadic way of life. Most are not permitted Manchester residents and many may never want to be. There are

thriving communities of Rovers living outside the Great Wall in the wastelands of Limbo, where the MPD won't go and edicts from the Palace carry no weight.

Some estimate that 50% of the illegal Vurt feathers in Manchester came in on a Rover's canal boat. The current approach of the Royal City Council is a hands-off one. They're aware that depriving Manchester of all the delicious Black, Yellow, and Hybrid Vurt feathers would likely cause an uprising.

Let's face it: Everyone does illegal feathers. Some of the most popular feather series are laced with Black and Yellow. Off-duty cops take them, and so do the Civil Serpents, Council members, and other bureaucrats. It's probable that King Jaz himself indulges. Until the law changes, the Rovers and their moving canal-boat empire remain just a sliver outside the law.

ON ROVER FAIRES...

Sunday mornings, starting at five a.m., they have this car boot sale at the Fleshpot canal site, down by the Old Trafford docks. That early all the illegal dealers turn up, selling off cheap feathers and Haze. Along with various domestic items. The sale was in full swing as we rushed out of the truckers' club. People were crowding the shore, looking for bargains. It was a crash of faces and noise. Cars were pulled up, tightly packed. Whole families were out in force, buying and selling. Felt like I was staring into a kaleidoscope, searching for a single crystal. Colours were swirling. Shouts and banter from all angles were calling to me, as I led the Stash Riders through the crush, back towards the van...Dozens of boats were tied up along the bank; the floating families selling off stuff, just to make a small life. Some were selling food from barbecue boats. Some were selling love, the down-market version; cheap sluts and rabid studs on deck. And a boat of flowers; a floating garden.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

THE GREAT WALL OF MANCHESTER

Outside the Wall lies Limbo. The Great Wall of Manchester went up after the first Vurt feather boom to keep out undesirables. The reinforced brick face of the Great Wall towers well over 30 feet tall in some areas, as low as 10 feet in others. It was fairly effective in keeping non-viable life forms (NVLs) out and most of the Great Wall is well patrolled. There are, however, less secure areas that are considerably more porous. Ask around, kittling—there are ways in and out of Manchester. Cracks, nooks, crannies. But watch out for zombies. Excuse me, that wasn't politically correct. U-type is the preferred nomenclature.

Trains are the most common way in and out of the City, but tickets are expensive and the security protocols are extensive. By law, all rail lines are routed underground at least 20 miles beyond Manchester. Limbo is avoided entirely this way. With all the proper transportation and entrance permits, one can board a clean, crowded train in London and make it to Manchester in 90 minutes. That secure train goes underground at the Stoke-On-Trent station, traveling under the wastelands of Limbo above, surfacing at the Congleton borough station in Manchester after a thorough inpho beam scan. Easy peasy.

ON THE CITY GATES...

Then we came to the northern gate of the city, outgoing, a giant shell of a building where sparks flew from lighting rods, and monster trucks were washed down for Zombie travellers. We nudged the car into a waiting line behind an International Vaz transporter. Its back wheels loomed larger than the Fiery Comet, and City Guardsmen shone lasers under the truck's carriage for illegal goods. Behind a wire fence I could see over to the incoming door, where tankers were being sprayed with anti-Zombie juice.

-Pollen, Jeff Noon

LIMBO: THE WASTELAND OUTSIDE THE WALL

Outside the Great Wall of Manchester is Limbo, where all the NVLs and other undesirables were exiled to. That means most U-type shadowmen, better known as zombies, live out here in the wastelands. Most just don't have the connections, cash, or drive to get inside the Wall. Rovers live out here too, as do exiled criminals. All of these residents of Limbo can be as dangerous as any wild Vurt creature on the loose. Protect your neck.

Limbo extends out for 20 miles in all directions: there's simply no getting around it. Armored transports have a chance, but if you think you're going to just walk out there, you're off yer lid. Lorries and armored transports that enter and exit the megacity all have to cross the deadlands of Limbo. A special division of the Royal City Council called the Civil Serpents are in charge of ensuring that no one sneaks in or out of town. Breaking these strict laws usually results in permanent exile or worse.

There are legal ways in and out of Manchester, but those surviving out in Limbo likely don't have access to these routes. Permits are very hard to come by, and more expensive than you'd think.

The Wall itself is patrolled by the Civil Serpents and Manchester PD, both of which utilize daily Shadow tech scans from above. The specialized shadowboxes discover several attempted tunnels a day. All are caved in immediately, without question, using heavy sonic weaponry.

There are very few camps or communities in Limbo; it's simply too dangerous to survive long-term out there. With the exception of Frontier Town North and

Frontier Town South, there are no permanent, safe homes for anyone in Limbo. Everyone else just keeps moving. A moving target is harder to hit, innit?

ON FRONTIER TOWN (SOUTH)...

The building is bleak as a ruin, standing alone amidst the wastes of Limbo. A ramshackle neon sign reads COUNTRY JOE'S FOOD AND FUEL SALOON. TAX-FREE PETROL. LAST STOP BEFORE THE END OF THE WORLD. ROOMS VACANT. From lasers mounted on the roof of the cafe, lights are playing in the sky... Frontier Town is a fuzzy kingdom. You get to know the people... Sure, Zombies are people. This is the last gasp of the city before Limbo, and we have to make allowances.

-Pollen, Jeff Noon

Limbo is a depressing place where those exiled from the city or those not allowed entrance are all considered NVLs. They fight hard as they try to eke out a living from scavenging or transporting dangerous items and people. No one really wants to live in Limbo; those that tell you they prefer living in squalor are lying.

Stay out of Limbo, okay? Stay inside the Walls, mate. No need to breathe that stench of burning petrol and brackish muck. And *don't* drink the water.

I'd like to say that it's not as bad as you've heard, but I can't. Extending outwards from the megacity in varying distances, this "dead zone" of Limbo has no new vegetation since the Pollen Outbreak of 20 years ago. The pesticides and herbicides used back then are still very much in the soil. I don't want to talk about the low life expectancy, the high rates of cancer and alcoholism, or the debilitating poverty. It bums me out, kittling, I don't like talking about Limbo, there's nothing there worth talking about as far as I'm concerned.

Well, it rains out there now, after years of drought. But the soil is spoiled, so it's either dusty or muddy. But the weather is the least of your worries when out there. As the Game Cat says: Be careful, be very, very careful. Limbo is a death trap.

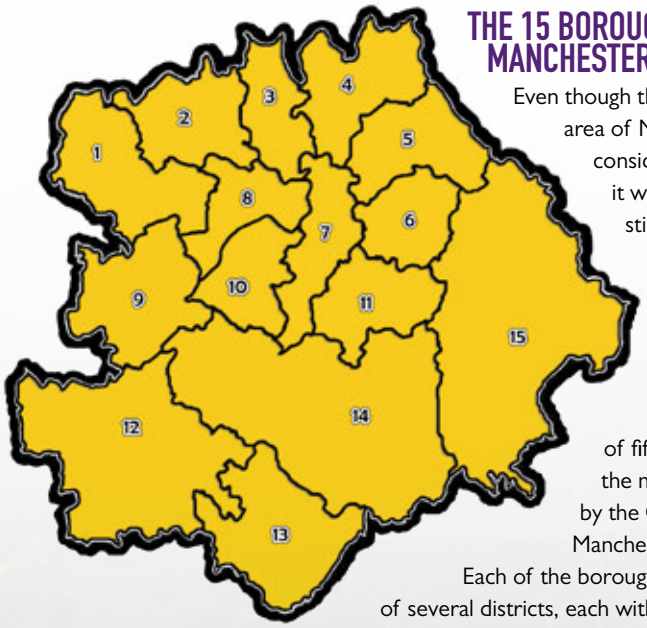
The most traveled route in and out of Manchester is the direct underground train line from Warrington to Liverpool, which takes just 20 minutes and avoids Limbo entirely. The area outside the Wall that borders the southern route towards London and Brighton is heavily patrolled by both the Civil Serpent drones and the MPD, so very few are allowed to loiter in this area. There are so many ways in and out of the megacity, legal and otherwise; by boat, on foot, by air or by underground rail. All require passage through Limbo.

Like a sewer-filled castle moat, this Limbo wasteland keeps outsiders from just walking up to the City Gates. Limbo is our thicket of briars, our halo of thorns. Ugly but useful.

ON LIMBO...

Some bad things are buried out on the moors. Some good things as well, some innocent things. Some things that didn't want to get buried. Some that did. Some that got buried by accident, by snowfall or rockfall or soil slippage. Some that buried themselves, wanting the darkness to fall over their all-seeing eyes.
Plenty get buried there, out on the moors. It's where you go, when you come from Manchester, and you want to bury, get buried, or be buried.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon



THE 15 BOROUGHS OF MANCHESTER

Even though the geographic area of Manchester is considerably larger than it was long ago, we're still all stacked on top of each other. What was once the entirety of the city is now called Centre; just one of fifteen boroughs of the megacity encircled by the Great Wall of Manchester.

Each of the boroughs is composed of several districts, each with their own identity and (mostly) unsupervised branch of city government. Today's Manchester is about 50 miles across, cut into fifteen boroughs that are notoriously difficult to navigate. The following contains brief overviews, but by no means a comprehensive descriptions of this megacity of over 250 billion.

1) Wigan

Nearly half of the organized crime in Manchester has some connection to illegal Vurt feathers. As it has both a major Eastern Wall-gate and a major Northern Wall-gate out of the city, the borough of Wigan is often filled with both local Mancunian criminals and many other undesirables from other parts of the real world. It is easier to sneak in and out of Manchester through Wigan than perhaps anywhere else. It will cost you though.

The MPD very rarely bothers responding to basic distress calls here, and most local gangs leave this area open for Syanka, yakuza, mafia, and the like. Some wingnuts say that Smok Wawelski, one of the Great Vurt Dragons, has crossed over from the Vurt world and hides here, growing in strength and size, ready to attack when the time is right. There have also been rumors that the Manchester City Council is going to attempt to retake the borough through force, funded by King Jaz. Both rumors are likely just chatter. The people of Wigan are known for their paranoia, and the Borough Council is full of unstable conspiracy theorists.

Most of the population of Wigan dresses alike, adopting what they proudly call "Wigan Style"—fur lined parkas, dark grey or black fingerless gloves, and knee-high combat-style boots. Everyone seems to wear jumpsuits and coveralls in muted colors, usually blues and greens. The color of your "underparka" layer is usually based on your particular district.

The only advice I offer is that unless you are from Wigan, don't even try to dress like you fit in. You won't. The people of this rough area are said to have a "nose for posers" and they "don't fuck wit' fakers." Wigan is not known for friendliness, sorry to say that, but you should know. I've never met anyone I liked in Wigan, it's too brutal for my delicate featherhead sensibilities.

2) Bolton

One of the wealthiest and most influential areas of Manchester, Bolton is widely considered the most progressive of the 15 boroughs in terms of acceptance and focus on civil rights. The International Center for Modal Rights is headquartered in Bolton, in Hall i' th' Wood, a refurbished 16th century manor house.

No firearms of any kind are allowed in the entire borough; even the Vurt-U-Want managers and district Council members are restricted while in Bolton. This means that most justice is doled out with bats, blades, and brass knuckles. It's still a very dangerous place for those who cannot afford to live in the protected condominiums, and the number of Choke and Boomer addicts in Bolton is reaching epic proportions.

This is also the borough that some of the wildest and most courageous featherheads call home. One can usually taste all the new feathers before they hit the other boroughs; Hybrids, Black and Yellows can be found relatively easily in Bolton, but often end up costing twice as much as most other places in town.

The part of the Wall that separates Bolton from Lancashire Limbo is relatively well maintained and guarded. There is a volunteer neighborhood watch-style civilian force that call themselves the BuzzCoughs. These twitchy bastards are known to carry unlicensed, loaded firearms, although that is illegal. Some wear the antique Union Jack flag as a cape during their "patrols."

3) Bury

This Bee-row is the wizzest in Manc Town, innit? Hip Vurt-stars sip Fetish-infused Early Graze out of bone-a-fine china teacups. Rich trendsetting Limbic Splitter enthusiasts hunt for lost records to remix and drop on the Crush.

If it's quirky and shows an ironic sense of self-loathing, it's "very Bury." There is so much second-generation money floating around this borough, it's ridiculous. Every single building seems to have been built in the last 20 or 30 years, erasing all traces of old, replacing it with advurt-covered luminescence that draws only the fabbest blurbflies with the latest Sonics. Yeah, you know it! Even though it borders the dilapidated and dangerous borough of Rochdale, it's still hip to cruise Bury.

Safety seems to be more or less in check, thanks to some privately funded mercenary forces that assist the MPD in keeping the rabble-rousers of Rochdale in their own borough. It's clear that they simply don't need that shite, and they have the quid to do what they want.

This year, Mods are en vogue, next year it might be Rockers; the life cycle of high fashion is napoleonic—short and brilliant, prone to fits of madness. Face it, Manchester. The cats and birds of Bury have some good reasons to be stuffy. The best of the best of the best of the one-night-only restaurants and underground feather parties are found here, and this season, everyone is dressing like hip steamed-punks; crusty droidlocks and shadowy eyeliner everywhere. Next season it'll be something else; but for now, just shut up and adjust your fog-infused-bowler hat, you're embarrassing me.

4) Rochdale

Lethal, lawless, and arse-ugly, this is the borough we tell all tourists to avoid. It may not be politically correct to say it like that, but it's the truth.

When the first Vurt feathers were being created and sold, Rochdale was well situated to be the Northern supply route. But money in the right hands made sure that the roads and rails used to export the real world's first manufactured Vurt feathers went through the boroughs of Oldham and Wigan, bypassing Rochdale entirely.

All basic funding for road and bridge maintenance was cut years ago by the Royal City Council and the property values plummeted. Urban decay set in faster here than anywhere else, and by the time the Pollen Outbreak hit, this dilapidated area already looked nearly apocalyptic. If it weren't for massive overpopulation this borough would certainly have been razed to the ground, but now there are too many that simply need a cheap roof over their head, no matter how dangerous the area.

It's a fairly large borough, and it's never wise to generalize, but in this particular case it's no exaggeration—there's really no safe area of Rochdale. Some areas are more visually appealing than others, some may even give off the impression that life in Rochdale is turning around, but don't let your proverbial guard down—this is a wicked little tinderbox, kittling; a place where many feel the next big anti-establishment uprising will occur.

This is also the borough that is home to the infamous Scallywaggers, and they do not take kindly to non-dogs. The Plague Poets gang are also expanding way out here, and have begun fighting more frequently with the Scallywaggers for territory. When the MPD roll into Rochdale, it's usually with guns drawn and no intention of communicating with words.

Just a few miles outside the City Wall is Frontier Town North, the single largest community of U-types and Rovers in all of Limbo. There are many sympathizers in Rochdale; they also know how to use their Limbo neighbors against the MPD any chance they get. Some MPD patrols that roll out the North Rochdale Gate don't come back, likely brought down by intel provided from within the City Walls. Some say that Rochdale has a considerable community of U-types that are starting to train and organize under the protection of the Rochdale Borough Council. That's mad, innit? Pro-zombie!? You can't trust anyone these days.

5) Oldham

If you want to enter or exit the City of Manchester, this is one of the safest points to do so. It's also where the Manchester Police Department stores most of the armored vehicles and arsenal they wield. Since the fall of Chief Takshaka 30 years ago, the reorganized MPD has been under heavy scrutiny, not just in Manchester, but beyond the City Wall. The damage done by that dragon is still being felt; public trust has never been restored.

As the most well-armed armed force in the area, the MPD use Oldham as a launching point for many missions all over the globe. Most of the residents of Oldham work for the Manchester PD or are related to someone who does. The administrative headquarters of the MPD are closeby in the neighboring Centre borough's district of Moston. Strangeways prison is also just across the Centre borough border in New Platting. This means that Oldham's Westside is where many of the inspectors, managers, and top brass of the MPD live.

While it is technically illegal to discriminate based on mode, anyone with dog genetics will tell you that the North part of Oldham is not a friendly place. Even those in the MPD who have Dog genetics avoid this area. It goes without saying that Vurt beings or Vurt genetics are also despised here. It's a safe place for a few, a nightmare for most.

South Oldham is more dangerous, as the border with Tameside is now more or less patrolled by two criminal organizations that have recently started working together, the Parkas and the Droylsden Dolls. While the borough has a dozen or more gangs vying for control, none are as organized or well equipped as this new combined threat, and the incidents of violence in the districts of Oldham is rising rapidly.

6) Tameside

Tameside is the borough famous for being famous, where the wealthy live and breed with each other, evaluating net worths over glasses of Fetish and commuting from rooftop to rooftop in private aircrafts. Everything costs more in Tameside.

Ashton-Under-Lyne is probably the best-known district in the borough, with one of the highest concentrations of wealth in the real world. Rent for a one-bedroom flat in the John Locke Quays skyscraper is reportedly one million pounds a month. Real-world famous Shakespeare Luxury Estates stands tall at 99 stories, overlooking MacDuff Park, built over the original housing projects that once covered the Droylsden district.

While there is some gang activity and bad areas of Tameside, most of the borough is relatively peaceful, with one of the lowest crime rates in the megacity. That might have something to do with the dozens of well-equipped private security forces that are licensed to protect and serve Tameside. One group in particular, the HOA, started out as a gang but has now evolved into an organization that controls the Shakespeare Luxury Estates.

The MPD still has jurisdiction, but will often let one of the many private security forces step in and take control when things become too dangerous. The few residents who have lived in the area for generations are still angry about the redistricting, watching their beloved landmarks moved or mindlessly destroyed. The Tameside Borough Council has a very volatile relationship with the Royal City Council, and often clash about the annual budget. Recently, a billion-pound river cleanup project's funding was pulled, still halfway to completion. The Royal Palace isn't putting up with Tameside's guff, and they've sent a very clear message to the Borough Council.

FLECKS

Three in the morning. Worn out dancers stumble around looking for all-night buses, their hair and hands and clothes stuck with feathers — once scarlet, emerald, lapis lazuli, now pale cream in colour, used-up: so many bliss tickets that fall away as they walk on. The street cleaning van arrives at 4 am, sucks the whole sorry cascade away into its belly. At dawn, Doris the hobo walks along, bent double, scouring the gutter for a cast-off flight or two, something with a bit of colour left in it. A fleck or two at the least. Even the dregs of pleasure do very nicely for Dame Doris, but once she found a whole blue just lying there, untouched, undreamt, all a sparkle in the spring sunlight. Now that was a day and a half to remember!

- Jeff Noon

7) Centre

This was, of course, the original boundary of the Old City. That changed in the redistricting that took place as the Vaz and Vurt booms focused the real world's money and attention onto Manchester. The city-state movement has changed the geography of most of the planet since, and it all started here. Centre is the most diverse borough in Manchester and also the real world's single most populated place.

There are 32 unique districts in the borough, but this is the one district that rules them all. On the banks of the River Irwell in the New Centerton district sits the Royal Palace, one of the modern marvels of the real world. Oh, it's impressive alright. This is where King Jazir and the Royal City Council make decisions that affect the more than the quarter-billion people living within the City Wall.

Canal boats float down the rivers Irwell, Medlock, Tib, Mersey, and Irk, crossing through 32 unique districts with odd names like BottleTown, Turdsville, and ToyTown. The two best Vurtball teams in the world both have their stadiums in Centre. Belle Vue Zoo and the Charlestown Robotics museum still draw huge crowds, and the International Royal Manchester Airport, Centre (IRMAC) is considered top notch.

Centre is the home of the Slithy Tove, The Village, Piccadilly Gardens, MPD HQ, Deansgate Blvd Bookstore, and the BlueFinch Cafe. The food here in Centre is unbeatable, and the good music never, ever stops.

Many say that blurbflies swarm thickest in this district, which explains the everpresent noise of advert jingles. The street traffic is unbearable, and every day the fighting gangs of modist hate groups seem closer and closer to the nuke point.

Many more details of this borough's 32 unique districts can be found on page 211.

8) Salford

Between the private body guards and the additional police presence, Salford gives many the feeling that they are being watched, crosshairs on their heads at all times. They're right.

This is where elite Mancunians might spend an afternoon—strolling along the vast network of glass bottomed walkways that connect the modern metallic architecture of the Quays, looking down onto the dark water of the Central Bay, then looking up at the uncluttered sky. The Salford Borough Council makes sure that everything looks lovely at all times.

Ashton-Under-Lyne District

This is where the richest and most powerful Mancunians hang their hats. This area of Tameside was once a dilapidated slum, but was razed and rebuilt after the Pollen Outbreak. Before moving into the newly built Royal Palace in New Centerton, King Jazir Malik lived here. The late Janus Fontaine also lived here, and his penthouse has been turned into a museum. Current famous residents include Cinders O'Juniper, Crystal O'Juniper, Gumbo YaYa, Tom Jasmine and Dingo Tush.

The heavy security in this small district is all coordinated privately by the HOA, a gang-turned-corporation that has been the most powerful group in the area for thirty years. The HOA run Shakespeare Luxury Estates and command their own street gang, the Parkas. The Parkas are usually more effective than the Manchester Police and most other security organizations, which is why Ashton-Under-Lyne is considered by many to be one of the safest parts of Manchester.

Shakespeare Luxury Estates: This megastructure stands 99 stories tall in the center of Ashton-Under-Lyne. This is where Dingo Tush, Old Gumbo and Cinders O'Juniper have their apartments. The top of the building has numerous helipads where the HOA houses a fleet of their own authorized Pandion copters. The Parkas are the security organization that ensure that things stay safe and quiet.

Shimmy-Plexodeon (The original) – In the Droylsden district of the Tameside borough, at the edge of MacDuff Park is Manchester's fourth largest single structure in terms of geography (after the Vaz International® building and both Vurtball stadiums). Like other Shimmy-Plexes, The Plexodeon is a space where people can go and take pink feathers with like-minded featherheads, lounging on overstuffed couches or rolling around on the pheromone-infused shag carpet floor while their minds travel to the Vurt world for some nasty fun. It's called shag carpet for a reason, kittling.

While the Plexodeon may not be as tall and imposing as other structures, the base spreads out a half mile from end to end, and each of the 20 floors contain a different theme based on famous pink feathers. Instead of numbering the stories, each floor has a name based on its theme. The twentieth floor is called "Level: GodHead." All floors have an exit that leads to the large glass slide that snakes around the structure. When you're done, you can safely jump onto the transparent slide and zip down to the ground floor, where you land on an immense pile of used feathers.

Entrance into the Shimmy-Plexodeon is extremely expensive; most Mancunians go just once or twice in their lives, if they're lucky.

MacDuff Park - All the trees and flowers in the area are genetically modified to grow pink leaves and flowers that give off the scent of pheromones and chocolate. Feeling unsexy? Take a walk in the park! Love is in the air. Literally. At the center of this lovely park is the original world famous Shimmy-Plexodeon, 20 stories of perma-stained carpets and broken dreams.

There are very few commercial blurbflies in this area, and those that mistakenly flutter into Salford airspace are attacked by swarms of defensive MechanInsect blurbflies that guard their wealthy masters' life and privacy.

The best and the brightest (and the richest) come to Salford to study under some of the greatest minds of Singland. This borough has the largest number of officially permitted temporary residents in the city. During large holidays, more tourists come to Salford than anywhere else, most are visiting friends and family; students at one of the many excellent universities.

The Royal Tech Institute in Salford is world renowned for its focus on Randomology and Musickology. Eccles University is where those with Shadow powers can study under great minds like Professor Sybil Jones and Dr. Don Murphy. Salford University has one of the best criminal justice programs in the real world; entrance exams are notoriously difficult. Kersal College is where the Pure Maths, Computermatics, and Genetic Calculus departments have been publishing weekly discoveries for decades, inspiring a generation of young mathemagicians.

The coffee shops and pubs are full of ambitious future politicians, aspiring MPD administrators, and the next generation of megacorp CEOs. These well-connected Mancs live in the expensive but spartan housing around the uni and study long hours, hoping to pass their tests.

The International Royal Manchester Airport, Salford (IRMAS) is considered by many to be the most beautiful airport in the real world, with a Vurt Feather History Museum on the ground floor. Arriving passengers are funneled through the museum, with merch at short reach, then spit out onto the cold but clean streets of Salford. A line of Nu-Xcabs lines the curb, and a small army of pickpockets and ne'er–do–wells loiters professionally, looking for fresh, flush targets with liftable goodies. Grab your bag tight, wallet in the front pocket, kittling. Salford may look safe, but looks can be deceiving.

9) Warrington

The nefarious individuals that live in the shadows of the dilapidated East Gate of Manchester's Great Wall are infamous for their willingness to pick fights they can't win. Limbo lies just outside the Great Wall, and the the main source of income here comes from "passage taxes" or "troll-tolls" that are demanded from those poor yobs trying to get to and from nearby Liverpool aboveground.

Warrington's unemployment rate is well over 90%. Many blame the lack of reconstruction funding after the Pollen Outbreak and riots that followed. The gentrification elsewhere pushed the poor out of other boroughs and forced them here, with their backs literally up against the wall. This is also where the River Mersey is so congested with trash that a small system of parallel frontage canals was dug to keep the polluted water flowing.

There are a few relatively safe areas of Warrington, but even those places are filthy, lacking many of the basic services guaranteed to them by the Royal City Council. No one really cares about Warrington except the brave souls forced by circumstance to live here.

Most residents do not have any human genetics, and this causes major clashes with their modist neighbors to the west in Trafford. Districts are patrolled by local gangs and most homicides go unreported and unnoticed. Eastbound travellers use the Wall Gates in other boroughs like New Tlön or Wigan.

There are a few districts in Warrington that are very heavily patrolled by the private security forces of the megacorp AJATA. This makes walking on the street possible and even pleasant in these small oases of peace. In these few key areas, security is totally under AJATA control. Their security drones have done a decent job of securing the East Gate train station and AJATA offices and factories. AJATA patrols only concern themselves with these specific "areas of corporate interest," the rest of Warrington is wide open. The MPD rarely gets involved and no longer actively patrol the districts. This leaves a lot of shady wiggle room for the drug smuggling gang members and roving roboshadowdog packs to cause mayhem.

The heavily traveled direct underground Liverpool line surfaces in a heavily guarded East Gate train station, where tourists can take connecting trains to other boroughs and never really have to set foot in Warrington.

They say that if someone has business in Warrington, but doesn't work for AJATA, it's likely not above the board. All but a few of the Warrington Borough Council members are also on the board of directors for AJATA. Again, conflicts of interest are a thing of the past, kittling.

10) Trafford

This once-thriving borough is the shame of modern Manchester. Most of the former residents have all moved elsewhere and blame various modes, groups, and violent incidents on the rapid decline. The river Mersey flows through this district, picking up all manner of refuse and pollution here, forcing residents downstream to filter and process the dark water.

Manchester United's Vurtball stadium, the "Old Trafford," hasn't been properly repaired or maintained

in decades. The stadium is now surrounded by three concentric red walls that stand 10 meters high, crowned with electrified razor wire and inpho beams that feed data into the MPD database. The on-the-ground security for Old Trafford is a volunteer force of hooligans, consisting almost exclusively of pure humans who feel that the rest of Manchester has turned its back on them. From the poorly designed stadium parking structure, one can see across the canal to the borough of Salford, where life seems infinitely better. Over there, the rich Mancs that live in the John Locke Quays residential skyscrapers literally look down on Trafford.

Rover Faires are very common here, as the disembarking law for canal boats is very loosely enforced. Featherheads all know that Trafford is a great place to find Black and Yellow feathers.

Even the nicer parts of Trafford aren't nice. There are plans to redevelop the borough, but the money that is allocated for these improvement projects keeps disappearing before it reaches where it needs to go. This is why the name Trafford is usually said under one's breath. There are districts like Stretford where the life expectancy is under 30. Yes, it's really that bad.

Ironically, this is also the area of Manchester with the some of the most open green space; low mosslands spaces in the middle of the megacity that are perfect for hiding what needs to be hidden.

The blurbflies in Trafford all seem designed to spout derogatory comments about non-pure humans, as well as any Manchester United Vurtball-related news. The loyal red fans of United are still called Day Trippers, but this is now because they spend their days tripping on hard drugs and tripping over trash. The walk around as if they own Trafford. Maybe they do. Just stay away from the Vurtball stadium on game days. Believe.

Anyone who dares walk into the borough with a blue Man City Vurtball shirt is likely to get jumped by the roving packs of scallies and hate-gang members. Even the Manchester PD refuse to spend their time worrying about most of the districts in Trafford, as they consider the whole borough to be a lost cause. However, they are present at every Vurtball match, and an average game night will end with scores dead and between 50 to 100 people in cuffs. Nights where there are major fights or riots can land thousands in jail overnight.

11) Stockport

The Stockport Market Hall is supposedly the first place a pink feather was actually sold legally, and since then, this borough is where most of the porno Vurt-stars and Shimmy-Plex owners live. There is a Stockport style that has caught on in other parts of Manchester and elsewhere on the globe: baggy, vividly-colored pants, white t-shirts or undershirts, wrists and necks wrapped in the gaudiest baubles and plastic bullshit beads, and undulating droidlocks down to the waist. Re-imagined 1980s/90s club-kid chic, upgraded for the new real world.

The air in Stockport seems almost electrically charged; so much so that some sensitive robos find it hard to navigate or do simple tasks in Stockport. Atmospheric tests show that the air is no different than elsewhere in Manchester, but something odd, something unseen seems to affect the way things *feel* here. Interestingly enough, most people with Vurt genetics seem to notice no difference whatsoever. There are simply too many competing theories to list here, but check your Personal Data Feather for more details.

The districts of Stockport vary greatly in terms of safety. It's common to see a high-end Speakeasy Haze bar next to a line of sketchy Robocrusties waiting around a drip feed terminal. Districts that used to be considered safe are now no-go, while some areas that were a death trap are now being renovated and developed into expensive apartment towers. Places seem to change quicker in Stockport than anywhere else, even the Xcab drivers joke about it.

12) New Tlön

The newest borough of Manchester used to be part of Cheshire, abandoned for almost 30 years after three inches of topsoil were irreparably spoiled by unconscionable industrial pollution. This is also where Fecundity-10 was first tested and where the first U-type shadowman (zombie) was discovered. Many ugly secrets about Manchester's recent meteoric rise to the top of the real world have their origins in this place.

Once the Manchester City Wall encompassed the wasteland of what was then called Vale Royal, it was zoned as a borough and renamed New Tlön. The Southeast is where most of the wealth is centered, especially along the border of Congleton. Known for an ever increasing amount of Vurt cartographers and mathemagicians, the odd, Vurt-fueled energy in this part of Manchester is palpable. Unfortunately, the constant Manchester Police presence is almost unbearable. The MPD has imposed a curfew here, harassing the residents with seeming impunity.

Recently, a neighborhood watch council was formed in the Northeast, along the border with Kennel. They seem to have access to some weapons they most certainly got from an outside (and wealthy) source. The Northern border with Warrington is effectively a no-go zone, guarded by the private security forces of the megacorp AJATA, the real world's foremost

Shadow tech arms producer. AJATA's corporate headquarters are on the grounds of Vale Royal Abbey, with a majority of the offices and laboratories deep underground. Since they are contracted by the MPD to supply all the shadowboxes in the city, the two organizations work very well together and rarely step on each other's toes. The Wall gate of New Tlön is considered one of the safest entry and exit points in Manchester.

The tension in the streets between the authorities and the non-corporate types has been getting worse. Districts once considered to be safe are being targeted by domestic terrorists, putting everyone on edge. The borough itself is not classically beautiful, but it's functional, and the traffic moves a bit more quickly here due to the extra-wide roadways. We'll see how long that lasts, right?

13) Congleton

Another huge land acquisition from Cheshire transformed Congleton into the latest borough to be swallowed up by the Great City of Manchester. This is a borough that is effectively split in half by cultural and economic divisions.

In West Congleton, along the border with New Tlön, life is easier. The traffic moves at a relatively decent pace and crime is low. Some of the city's most famous museums and music venues are here. As long as you stay on the Westside, you should be perfectly safe to take a stroll through the gardens and parks, enjoying fountains and sculptures while being serenaded by thousands of blurbflies equipped with classical music sonic programs. Makes any Manc feel classy.

On the opposite side of the spectrum is East Congleton. This is where many of the robocrusties ended up after being pushed out of the City Centre as it was flooded with money. The City Council believed they could solve this problem through relocation and subsidized temporary housing. The affordable housing was never built, but plans to break ground are announced every year at the King's State of the City address. It has become a joke at this point, the hopelessness of East Congleton is almost palpable.

The Astro-City Exhibition Museum in East Congleton used to be one of the most visited tourist attractions in the city, but has since fallen into disrepair and was closed to the public just six months ago. Gang violence is a daily occurrence now. The worst-quality drugs can be found here, as can many of the illegal immigrants that have scaled the Great City Wall or somehow snuck in to find a better life in the most populated megacity on the planet.

Not too far outside the Congleton Gate is Frontier Town South, a dusty bit of lawless danger, just close enough to attract "slum tourists" from inside the Wall. There are a few establishments out there, but I hear it's full of slathering zombies and roving Rovers, pickpocketing each other, dressed like cowboys, smelling like arse-rot. No thank you!

"Compared to Frontier Town South, you're actually better off in Congleton." That should be the official district motto. Or maybe: "Stay inside the Great Wall of Congleton—for your health!" No matter how you spin it, things in Congleton get more dangerous moving West to East. There are ever-growing protests and calls for splitting the borough in half; a move that has the residents of East Congleton understandably anxious. The Congleton Borough Councilors are notoriously difficult to reach for comment.

14) Kennel

The Pollen Outbreak had a great dividing effect on the already xenophobic population of Manchester. When news spread that the Outbreak had first been found in a dogman cal driver named Coyote, much of the non-dogman population of Manchester assumed that they were to blame. False connections were born out of modism fueled by differing views of hygiene and culture. Many dogmen were consolidated in the Turdsville district of Centre, but space was already running out. Before long, there was a mass exodus to the Macclesfield borough that had just recently been incorporated into the City of Manchester in a lucrative land grab from North Cheshire.

As a street war between the MPD and dogmen raged on in Centre, those that sought safety continued to move their furry arses south, into the urban blight of Macclesfield. The area was already in total disrepair, with entire city blocks being deemed unfit for human habitation. But human habitation assumes certain standards of cleanliness and respect of personal space, while dogman culture centers around community and considerably lower humanocentric pretense.

A year after the notorious MPD chief Takshaka was removed from power, life in Tudsville calmed down considerably. Still, most dogmen had not moved back to their original homes and now preferred the feeling of unity they had never felt outside of the nanoflea-infested borough of Centre. This new home borough was like a huge junkyard, a mostly dogman community that welcomed everyone but openly favored those with dog genetics.

No one remembers who first started calling it Kennel. Some attribute it to the pirate radio DJ Gumbo YaYa, always the wordsmith. Twenty years later, many don't remember a time when the dogmen didn't

ISSUE E92.38416

YaYa
ENTERTAINMENT NEWSBLURB

MODE OF BEING IS IMPORTANT, Part 1 of 3

Blurbs from the Editor

My loyal YaYa readers-
In the days before dogs achieved basic self-awareness, humans bred them every which way but Noonday, creating species, commandeering evolution; harnessing it to create teacup labrdoodlepughuahuas and other such sub-breeds. The more mixed the genes, the weirder things got. However, it also resulted in a lower rate of genetic side effects. Think about it… A Dalmatian is often deaf. A German shepherd often has hip problems like dysplasia, Boxers are prone to cancer and Pugs can barely breathe with their malformed sinus passages. Pure Bulldogs cannot even give birth naturally; they require a vet-assisted cesarean every time to even continue as a breed. Now mix all those together in a big genetic melting pot and you have the strengths and qualities of each, but the negative side effects go way down. It's true. There is no single breed more likely to live a long healthy life than a mutt.
The same goes with the modes of being that now share genetics. Robos, humans, Vurt, dogs, and shadows all benefit from the mix. Unexpected side effects are bound to appear, but most of the population now has two or three modes in their veins, and live relatively normal lives.
We'll get into the very rare unfortunates who have a four-way mix of modes mixed another time. For now, keep those heads up and those noses clean, Manchester.

control Kennel. Even the Manchester PD tends to avoid the area. Residents of Kennel have not forgotten all the blood spilled marking the territory. There's still considerable animosity shown to all non-dogs and tourism is limited to adrenaline junkies and idiots. Visitors are warned to play by the rules of the pack, or expect to get bitten.

The area of this borough is immense, equal in size to neighboring Mailkton. Kennel has so much potential for development, and many megacorps are fighting over which one of them will be the one to control new construction. Most of the Kennel Borough Councilors are a joke, and can be bought off for a cheap price.

15) Malikton

When the Vaz International corporation began mass-producing what would be the real world's newest and most ubiquitous all-use product, they immediately outgrew their old factory in Longsight. They required immense amounts of open land and control of the transportation routes which was impossible in most parts of Manchester.

Mountainous land in the Pennies of Derbyshire was selling at a premium. Once Jazir Malik and his corporation were able to ensure that it would be incorporated into city zoning, Vaz International bought the entire area. Highpeak became Malikton, Manchester's newest and largest borough.

This is the most inhospitable topography in all of Manchester, and still remains the least populated. Most roads in Malikton are private and remain off-limits to all non-corporate or authorized vehicles. The East Wall gates of Malikton are notoriously difficult to get passage permits for. Most overland travel in the borough requires a large 4x4 to get over the rocks and rivulets that make up the moorland plateau of former Highpeak and the mountainous Pennies.

Much of the original moorlands of the former Dark Peak area has been drained and developed for industrial and residential use. There's not much left for real birds or insects here, the only sounds of life are the gentle buzzing of wild blurbfly swarms that regularly congregate and join together in song. Most of the time, the music they play from their speakers is 50-year-old punk, post-punk, and prog rock—their light-up wings swirling and glowing with patterns of light affected by the rhythms. It's quite a show.

The Manchester Police Dept has jurisdiction over maybe 50% of the borough. This was all secured in backroom deals after the fall of Chief Takshaka, so the last 30 years have been relatively quiet for the MPD in Malikton.

This borough is all about business. Even the Pollen outbreak of 20 years ago didn't slow production in the factories of Malikton. Vaz, Sneeza-Freeza, most blurbflies, flower clocks, Interactive Vurt-star Posters, and more. If it's produced by Vaz International, it's likely produced in Malikton.

Private security is taken care of by the latest model weaponized blurbflies that are so numerous, they often block regular airflow and what little natural sunlight there is. In the center of the wild borough, large bunkers house the R&D departments of Vaz Int.

The International Royal Manchester Airport, Malikton (IRMAM) is basically a hub for most of the corporate traffic coming in from far away. The pock-marked mountain range that runs through the district is locally referred to as the "Pennies," and this is also a large draw for tourists.

Most employees of the Vaz International mega-corp live and work in Malikton, and seem to have an almost fanatical obsession with their king and boss, Jazir Malik. There are rumors that a secret tunnel with a working underground tube starts underneath the Royal Palace in New Centerton and connects directly to the underground bunkers in the mountains of Malikton, allowing the king to inspect his factories, meet with the Royal Core of Engineers, and continue to control the real world's largest corporation.

THE 32 DISTRICTS OF CENTRE

Centre is a borough made up of 32 unique districts.

What was once the entire "Old City" of Manchester is now just one of fifteen boroughs. That took quite a bit of getting used to around here. Back when Manchester was rezoned into 15 city boroughs, many of the existing neighborhoods and districts were combined or redrawn based on the old wards and historical electoral boundaries. It's still a mystery as to why the decision was made by the Royal City Council without public input. No one seems happy about the way the borders were redrawn, but what is done is done, and the ones who got rich from it have gotten richer.

The Royal Palace is here in the New Centerton district, where King Jaz and the City Council rule this megacity of a quarter billion people. The Centre borough is the heart of the real world, and we know it. I wouldn't live anywhere else in Manchester, but that's me.

The following gives a quick look at each of the 32 unique districts of Centre.

1) Higher Blackley

Noteworthy Locations and Services:
Victoria Avenue XYZ Vurt Theater, Heaton Hall, Tweedle Hill Amusement Park, Vurt-U-Want (3), Slick City (3), Vurturama (2), Whoompy's Burgers (2), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (2), Monstermart (2), Hotel (2), UrBlurb Shop (2), Shadowtown (1), Pharma-Logico (3), Library (1), District Council Hall, MPD station (1), Train station (2)

Higher Blackley seems caught in the middle. Much of the odd character of this district comes from its many borders with other boroughs and districts. To the North lies Rochdale, where a nasty gang war between the Scally Waggers and the Plague Poets has spilled over into Higher Blackley. Also to the North is Bury, a recently gentrified, popular tourist district of Centre.

To the South are two of Manchester's roughest neighborhoods. First, there's a very tense border with ToyTown, a militant, robo-only district, followed by Crumpsall, a notorious district that is mainly low-income housing estates patrolled heavily by the MPD. Higher Blackley is a bit of a oasis, employing private mercenary forces to assist the MPD in maintaining order. Much of the violent crime in Higher Blackley comes from non-gang-related criminals.

Higher Blackley has made it through the last 30 years more unscathed than the other districts in the area. They people here appreciate consistency. The same rain-soaked streets snake between the same dark red brick buildings with their charming white window frames. If a structure has been built upon, it likely has been done in a way that at least attempts to keep in line with the original architecture. Tradition is highly valued in Higher Blackley.

This district is also known for its strict ban on all MechanInsect-brand blurbflies and products. It has been stated that the District council is concerned about safety issues, but most residents are aware that something shady is happening. But as long as peace and quiet is achieved, all's well.

Most in Higher Blackley have their tea at the same time each day and have a small vegetable garden either in a yard or on their balcony in pots. Many major scenes and side-stories of the Cooperation Street feather series are set in a fictional representation of this neighborhood. So many of us have experienced the architecture and locations of this district vurtually each week when we take Cooperation Street. Half the of the featherheads in the real world know every inch of the Vurt feather recreation's version of Heaton Hall, where much of the weekly melodrama takes place.

The real-world residents of Higher Blackley often pose for tourists in front of their well-kept houses and apartments. It's considered polite to tip a few quid for recording their image and likeness.

2) Crumpsall

Noteworthy Locations and Services:
Northman Hospital, The Spike (Drip Feed Employment Agency HQ), Irk Rose MegaPlex, Vurturama (1), Whoompy's Burgers (7), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (3), Hotel (1), MPD station (3), Train station (1)

Crumpsall is considered by many to be the worst part of Manchester. They're probably right.

The Manchester Police have three stations here and make regular rounds, sending several Lancelots out at a time, picking up scores of robocrusty addicts and their pimps behind the Irk Rose MegaPlex. It's a sad part of the world, not much good can be said about it.

They say it used to be be beautiful, full of character; great pubs, a great hospital—but that was all before the Pollen Outbreak of 20 years ago. The riots that followed were especially destructive here. Very, very little of the old architecture survived the Crumpsall fires. The District Council Hall has never been rebuilt, and the councilors meet semi-regularly in private in neighboring Higher Blackley.

Crumpsall is known mostly for low-income housing estates that are situated around the drip feed Employment Agency headquarters, also known as the Spike. Begging Holes from the old days are still being used, since life hasn't really improved here for as long as anyone can remember. If the Borough of Centre had an armpit, it'd be here.

Even the rain seems colder here, the blurb-choked sky darker. The number of gangs in the area has dropped recently, but that's only because they've been killing each other off more effectively.

3) Toytown

Noteworthy Locations and Services:
Manchester Center for Autogen Rights, Charlestown Robotics Museum, Chez Barney Restaurant, Vurt-U-Want (2), Vurturama (3), Whoompy's Burgers (1), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (2), Monstermart (2), Hotel (4), UrBlurb Shop (5), Shadowtown (1), Pharma-Logico (5), Library (1), District Council Hall, MPD station (1), Train station (1)

Since the days before the Pollen Outbreak, a steady stream of pure robos (also know as autogens) and others with robo genetics have immigrated to this district of Centre. Outside investment money poured in from roboman high rollers over 1,000 miles away in the city-state of Chroma. They supplied most of the capital used to rebuild this district from the ground up, and their investments paid off. Modern Toytown is considered a marvel, drawing hundreds of thousands of tourists each year.

Warehouses and factories have been refurbished now in the "toybox" style that is so popular among the autogen mode of being. Optimum space use, all right angles. Toytown runs straight up and down and left and right, elevators and conveyor belts everywhere. Like a hive made of rectangles, Toytown looks impossibly dense, every square inch of this district taken up, everything clumped together, rising dozens of stories like an 8-bit monstrosity.

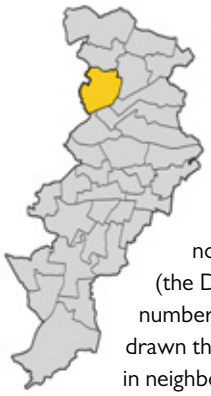
All who visit the district must park their vehicles in the multileveled lots on the border areas. Vehicles are too big to enter; there is no space for anything larger than 8x8 on the conveyor belt pathways and lifts that course through the toyboxes like arteries. Those who are claustrophobic are going to have a hard time adjusting to the tight passageways with moving floors that wind you through the dark. It is assumed you have some robo genetics in you that allow you to see in low-light conditions. It's a bit of a modal elitism, but this is Toytown, for Hobart's sake!

Perhaps the only outwardly-welcoming location sits on the border of Higher Blackley, a place with a longstanding reputation to uphold. Chez Barney, celebrating its fortieth year, is a local favorite, and draws patrons from all over the world. There are gastro-tourists who travel to Manchester just to eat at Chez Barney; they, like everyone else, are expected to make reservations at least six months in advance.

4) Cheetham

Noteworthy Locations and Services:
Museum of Transport, Cheetham Hill Pharmaceuticals HQ, Shadow Balkan Heritage Center, Vurt-U-Want (2), Vurturama (1), Whoompy's Burgers (2), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (2), Monstermart (1), Pharma-Logico (1), District Council Hall, MPD station (1)

For as long as anyone can remember, there's always been a major problem with gangs in Cheetham. Crumbling brick walls covered in gang tagging still mark



territory lines, but these days, the fight is mostly between several factions of flashy Eastern European-style gang members made up mostly of shadowmen and the occasional pure shadow. The one gang that does allow non-shadows into their ranks (the Drat Pack) has just lost half their numbers in a single bombing. That's now drawn the attention of anti-shadow gangs in neighboring districts and boroughs who want any excuse to come in and kick some shadow-arse. Things in Cheetham are worse than ever. The Manchester PD is often called in here, and when they show up, they show up with their safeties off.

If you're out on the street after dark, hopefully you're a local. Few wander over into Cheetham and get lost; there is ample warning signage for the students and tourists in the neighboring borough of Salford, as well as the other Centre districts that share a border with Cheetham. The train station is currently closed for renovation, and has been for almost five years. Stay out of here unless you're from here, and be especially careful if you aren't accompanied by someone with shadow genetics. The warring, mob-style gangs have organized to become a new cultural group and business entity known as the Syanka. Their ranks are full of angry, overly proud people with limited access to social services and employment. The rest of Manchester looks down on them, which adds fuel to their righteous fire. If you do find yourself in Cheetham, tuck your chains. Flashy targets don't survive an hour in Cheetham.

ISSUE E92.38415

YaYa
ENTERTAINMENT NEWSBLURB

MODE OF BEING IS IMPORTANT, Part 2 of 3

Blurbs from the Editor

My loyal YaYa readers-
Time for you to learn a new word: *autogen*. If you are a robo, you've heard this word before. I'm not trying to guess your mode of being.

The labor strikes that took place in the ports and factories of Brighton-Brighter last year reminded the real world that they must come to terms with the fact that robos drive the economy and without their cooperation, they can bring a large city to a standstill. The inevitable backlash has been manageable, but has pushed the modes of being even farther apart.

A machine is not alive. A robo is. Don't say machine. Any mention of the "M" word will result in very negative reactions inside Toytown. Generally, they do not even take kindly to the word "robo." They prefer "autogen". Any mention of "machine" or "robot" or "automaton" can actually result in a hefty fine, and it's simply not good form. There have been rumours of some impolite individuals whose visit resulted in a conveyor belt to the rubbish compactor. That's the rumour at least. You didn't hear that from me, though. Be nice to your autogen brethren. Why are you trying to mess with them? You don't like robos, best stay the fuck out of Toytown.

They're not all just walking calculators. You ever seen what a pure robo with an internally grown shadow-hydraulic skeletal system can do to soft flesh? You have? Oh, you've taken that feather already? Okay then, you do know. That was some wicked shite, wasn't it? That pure bastard had it coming though, shouldn't have messed with that type of autogen. Any dumb git should have known that.

No, I'm not pro-robo. I'm not pro-anything. Pure is poor, kiddos. That's not just a slogan or a song lyric, that's the truth. You want a slogan? I'll give you one: Keep those heads up and those noses clean, Manchester.

5) Harpurhey

Noteworthy Locations and Services: Gotherswick MegaPlex, Purton Estates, Namchester estates, Noel's Spew Tank Club, The Embassy Club, Vurt-U-Want (6), Slick City (5), Vurturama (2), Whoompy's Burgers (6), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (5), Monstermart (15), Hotel (11), UrBlurb Shop (10), Shadowtown (1), Pharma-Logico (15), Library (3), District Council Hall, MPD station (2), Train station (3)

Years ago, Harpurhey was neglected and dangerous, a place where one simply didn't loiter after dark. Once Manchester's population exploded and every square inch of habitable land became premium real estate, most of the landowners in Harpurhey combined their assets. As a group, they sold to a development company that razed most of the former housing and commercial structures to the ground. Just a short while later, it seemed like the entire district had been reimagined and rebuilt from scratch. There is little of historical value left, but the streets are clean and the flower clocks run on time.

If it wasn't for its unfortunately close proximity to Crumpsall and Cheetham, Harpurhey would likely be a world-class tourist destination. Much of the infrastructure funding allocated for neighboring Crumpsall and Cheetham is redirected here. Both the Purton and Namchester housing estates have hundreds of apartments affordable enough for the upper-middle class (or what's left of it), and the tallest of the large buildings is 65 stories tall. Parking structures for housing and local businesses are well designed and keep the traffic moving a bit faster than other districts. Manchester PD and other private security forces make sure that the undesirables from Cheetham, Crumpsall, and Toytown stay out of Harpurhey.

ON HARPURHEY...

I passed a street sign on the Rochdale Road that read Welcome to Namchester. Ahead of me the seven towers of Nam stood in silence, stark against the heated sun. Ten years ago this area had been desolated by the High-rise Wars, now the towers were home to the well-done and the well-to-do.

-Pollen, Jeff Noon

Harpurhey is home to a diverse, relatively liberal-minded population that has become increasingly upset with the way Manchester PD uses the district as a buffer zone between bad areas and their HQ in neighboring Moston. There is talk about forcing the MPD to go around Harpurhey to conduct their daily raids, or compensate the residents. Multiple times a day, swarms of armored MPD vehicles roar down Monsall Road towards the River Irk for yet another raid.

This district is also the birthplace and home of the world famous DJ Perfume Sword (see page 346), whose politics and anti-cop feelings are clear to anyone who hears his music.

Purton Estates: Beauty and comfort meet safety and distraction. Each floor of each tower has a private indoor park with fountains and calming music piped in over the speakers. Most of the residents in this high-rise community made their money a few decades back during the Vaz and Vurt economic booms, and invested in property here. The average age is 50 and most consider themselves to be superior to their younger neighbors in Namchester estates. Those who live in the Purton estates see themselves as culturally advanced; educated enough to care about the plight of the common Mancunian, but wealthy enough to be caught up in the superficial rat-race.

Namchester Estates: This is where some of the richest young Mancunians live and breed. Much of the population in this high-rise community has made their money recently, likely something Shadow tech related, as that is all the rage right now. Most look down on those other upper-middle class residents of nearby Purton estates who are older, quieter, and less likely to throw a massive block party. Those who live in the Namchester estates see themselves as forward thinking, ultra-liberal, antiestablishment progressives, but generally spend too much time inebriated to make any real change. These are the hip young Mancs who like to get down, but keep their parties above the sixth floor.

6) Moston

Noteworthy Locations and Services: Club Lancaster, Broadhurst Park, Hough Hall Museum, Manchester Police Department HQ aka "the Iceberg." the "Dorms" housing estates, Vurt-U-Want (4), Slick City (1), Whoompy's Burgers (10), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (5), Monstermart (3), Hotel (5), UrBlurb Shop (1), Pharma-Logico (4), Library (2), District Council Hall, MPD station (2), Train station (2)

Life in Moston is fairly quiet compared to other places in the city. This is where the main administrative headquarters of the Manchester Police Department is located. Much of the surrounding businesses and residential buildings are

owned by Vaz International, and there is a large subsidy offered to the MPD. Former residents that were priced out of their neighborhood and replaced by employees of the Manchester Police Dept have organized and are said to be forming their own political party. Many have moved to neighboring Harpurhey.

Moston shares a border with Toytown and up until very recently, clashes between the MPD and mostly robo residents were commonplace. This district feels close to exploding at any given moment.

The skies of Moston look a bit different than the rest of Manchester. Large shadowboxes practise formations and train for combat. The shadowcop subdivision of the force is based here in Moston. Most blurbflies are either registered officially or are brought down by the MPD's own small drone force. MPD mech suits are produced here, as are the Pandion VTOLs. Much of the decision makers in the MPD live and work in the MPDHQ megastructure, also known as the Iceberg. Supposedly, the 50-story building has nearly 150 subterranean basement floors. There are a lot of secrets in Moston; some go back all the way to the old era of Chief Takshaka.

Pandion VTOL, page 128

7) New Platting

Noteworthy Locations and Services:
Victoria Mill Shimmy-Plex, Strangeways Prison, Miles High Pub, Easthollows public housing complex, Vurt-U-Want (1), Slick City (1), Vurturama (1), Whoompy's Burgers (2), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (1), District Council Hall, MPD station (2), Train station (2)

New Platting is quite possibly the most depressing district of Centre, mostly because this is where the infamous Strangeways prison is located, surrounded by a sprawl of low-income housing. Behind the reinforced stone walls lie thousands of criminals of varying degrees of guilt and innocence.

A majority qualify through the "Manchester family togetherness" program that prioritizes the family of inmates housed in Strangeways. Even those whose sentence is not up for decades have family that live close, waiting for the day the authorities take the feather out of their mouths and let them walk free. As such, employment opportunities are limited here in New Platting, mostly involving the prison.

There is hope that more jobs will come as the Newton Heath Vurtball museum, closed for several years, is scheduled to reopen this summer.

The Victoria Mill Shimmy-Plex, once a top tourist destination, has fallen into utter disrepair. The original structure was built overlooking Rochdale Canal well almost 200 years ago, and poorly repaired ever since. There are entire areas of the large facility that are unsafe; floorboards are brittle, ceiling plaster regularly falls in chunks from above, and every surface seems stained. There are no more Pink Feather Festivals here, no celebrity sightings. It looks abandoned, but always seems to make just enough money to keep the dirty doors open.

Other parts of New Platting have followed suit—most public parks have traded manicured grass for mud, and even the birds don't dare perch on most of the gnarled trees. There is a pervasive odor of decay in New Platting—not just figuratively, but literally. It's as if the whole district is sitting on a shallow grave. The residents have a certain lost look in their eyes; trapped dreamers listening to an ever-slowing heartbeat.

Listen to me, I'm getting poetic again, I apologize. There are good parts of New Platting, I'm sure. I hear that the West side of the district is experiencing an influx of open-minded artists with plans to revitalize. Well, good luck with that, I say. I remember the recent riots there, I remember what happened when the MPD finally decided to put a stop to it.

8) Ancoats & Clayton

Noteworthy Locations and Services:
Beehive Mill Museum, Manchester Art Museum, Banklane Shimmy-Plex, The Fleshpot Club, Clayton Hall MegaPlex, Vurt-U-Want (3), Vurturama (1), Whoompy's Burgers (2), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (4), Monstermart (1), Hotel (5), UrBlurb Shop (1), Shadowtown (1), Pharma-Logico (1), Library (4), District Council Hall, MPD station (1), Train station (1)

This district seems to have had the hardest time coming to terms with the new redistricted geography of Manchester. Decades on, there are still protests for "Independent Ancoats" and "Independent Clayton." Some talk of seceding and becoming "West Lancashire." There are even calls for incorporating Droylsden from the neighboring borough of Tameside. Political discord has been the norm here for as long as

Strangeways Prison: The most notorious and densely populated prison in Manchester. It has recently been relocated and upgraded with the help of a hefty Royal grant, now reaching 60 stories of prime storage space. It looks like a flower from above, with the five central pavilions rising 10 stories above the others, in the shape of a pistil. The incarcerated who have been found guilty of higher-level crimes are most often housed here. Security is extremely tight at the center pavilions of the sprawling prison, also known as "dreamland" by the inmates and staff. This is where the "worst of the worst" are hooked up to assistance units that ensure nutrition, hydration, waste disposal, and other basic needs are met. Then those inmates are force-fed the official Strangeways feather and stay there until their sentence is over. They're trapped in a dream that cannot be jerked out of without multiple guards coming in and pulling them out. What once seemed like a humane option for inmates has proven to be the opposite. Being stuck in reality is bad enough. Being stuck in your mind, knowing your body is aging, feeling your real world life slipping away—that has given new meaning to living hell.

The Strangeways feather being used currently is an ironclad blue feather with both silver and Yellow feather security settings built in. Technically, it is still a Blue, and fulfills the official requirements for humane incarceration, but it's way too deep into the Vurt world to be accessed by all but the most epic of Edge Riders. No one at Strangeways wants a repeat of the terrifying internal prison break/riots that claimed tens of thousands of lives just a few years ago. Investigations, internal and otherwise, are still showing no proof of outside influence. It's as if the feathers simply stopped working.

No official figures are available to the public, but the oversight from the Royal Investigation Service is said to be strict. But what do we know, really? Those released from Strangeways have a 50/50 chance of committing suicide in the first six months after release. It's sad but true; something that has to do with their time inside, something planted deep. Even those who've done time the lowest security areas of Strangeways seem to have a certain blankness to their stare. Stay out of Strangeways prison.

On Strangeways Prison...

Strangeways... was where they put prisoners in those days, storing their bodies in racks whilst their dreams drifted through tiny cells in the Vurt. It was cheap and nasty, but it worked.

Once a person was feathered into a Strangeways dream, there was no access allowed to the imprisoned mind. It was a big civil liberties case from a few years before; given that Vurt prisons were only set up to relieve overcrowding and violence, which was stated to be a direct result of Government underfunding, it was decreed that all prisoners were to be allowed a peaceful, even pleasant stay in His Majesty's Vurt. 'No dream cruel or unusual,' ran the statute, 'shall be allowed to roam a prisoner's imagination during his sentence of sleep.' It was further decreed that no access was to be allowed into a prisoner's mind during this sentence, 'even for the purposes of law-enforcement or national security.'

It was a well-known fact that wardens sometimes changed the feathers in prisoners' mouths, from the official blue and gentle flights into dark and deadly ones. They did this with child molesters, cop-murderers, anti-authoritarian figures and any other serious reprobates. They swapped the blue for a black, which meant that the inmates would be suffering eternal nightmares in their prison-sleep.

-Pollen, Jeff Noon

anyone can remember.

The once-dangerous Ancoats overspill housing estates of long ago have been repurposed as expensive residential apartments. The 220-story Bristowe Shard, built on the border of Tameside, is the second-tallest structure in the city, and home of over 80,000 residents. Many who live here work at the Clayton Hall Megaplex or one of the

many fine museums or libraries. The part of the district that shares a border with New Centerton is a high-security area and much safer than the Eastside part of Ancoats & Clayton. Overpopulation is a major issue all over the district.

The Manchester Speculative Art museum is still here, the pride of the district. Tourists from around the globe flock to see the newest exhibitions. The real world-famous "Atrocity Exhibition" is now open 24/7 and draws more than one million visitors per month.

9) New Centerton

Noteworthy Locations and Services: Royal Palace, Canal Street (The Village), Turing Park, Piccadilly Gardens, Asiatown, New Petersfield, Spinningfields, The Electric Circle Club, Club Collyhurst, Exchange Square, Deansgate Blvd Bookstore, Blue Finch Cafe, The Twisted Eel, The Ars Scientia Club, Whitworth Fetish Brewery, The Platinum Samosa, Club Thunderloo, Vurt-U-Want (7), Slick City (5), Vurturama (4), Whoompy's Burgers (5), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (14), Monstermart (10), Hotel (20), UrBlurb Shop (11), Shadowtown (2), Pharma-Logico (15), Library (4), MPD station (2), Train station (4)

New Centerton is the jewel of Manchester, the center of political and financial power for the world's largest megacity. Long ago, before incorporating the surrounding districts, boroughs and areas around it, this district was actually the entirety of Manchester.

Once the Royal Palace was built, and the Yeoman Warders took over security, life in New Centerton was never the same. Yes, all the classic tourist attractions are there, and safety is more or less under control, but it feels like it's missing a lot of what made it so exciting back in the day. That's just my opinion, but I know others that agree. New Centerton never sleeps, and the tourists still visit in droves, so what do I know?

Gentrification and the removal of all begging holes made life impossible for the non-wealthy, and the unauthorized presence of blurbs or drones is restricted, making it one of the only parts of the city where a rare, unobstructed view of the sky is possible. Piccadilly Gardens is still open to the public but requires a reservation, often made months in advance. Exchange Square is also a big draw; this is where many of the district's best restaurants and clubs are located.

The River Irwell's waters run clear past this particular district; filters upstream ensure that the water along the palace is eternally crystal clear, even if it does smell of bleach. This stretch of the Royal Bridgewater Canal is a source of pride for most Mancs in New Centerton and connects them to the rest of the tightly-controlled 3000-mile Singlish canal network.

The banks of the River Irwell are always packed with throngs of rich elites attending cutting-edge Vurt theater shows. Security is tight along the banks, as the boats that come from undesirable upstream areas of Manchester pass along at all hours of the day and night. No Rover Faires or any disembarking is ever done in New Centerton, and any attempt to do so will bring the Royal Yeoman Warders and the deadliest swarm of blurbflies on the planet.

The Royal Palace: On the banks of the great river Irwell, New Centerton is the location of the new Royal Palace of Singland. Security is very tight, and while the Manchester Police Department technically has jurisdiction here, the Royal Yeoman Warders are the real law of New Centerton and protect King Jaz with their lives. Most Yeoman Warders are robomen who still wear the traditional Beefeater uniform and live and work on the Palace Grounds. Don't call them Beefeaters though. Trust me, kittling, they simply don't know how to take a joke.

The Village: Canal Street is lined by the oldest and most posh Shimmy-Plexes in all of Manchester. The legendary Icarus Wing crafted some of his first feathers here. It's the most diverse mix of modes on the planet (per square mile). The anything-goes attitude is the true spirit of an evolved Manchester. *Welcome all Flakes! Spanners! Lizards with ladders! The best pink feathers and the purest Cortex Jammers.*

The original architecture in the Village is mostly unchanged by construction and is a huge tourist draw for anyone visiting the greatest megacity in the real world. Many years ago, it was home to a mostly gay population, back when sexual orientation was something people felt strongly about. Thank Hobart we've moved past nonsense like that, right? Right?

The Village does still have that exuberant, celebratory vibe that made it world famous. This is still a joyful place of glitter and leather, but now we have hot shadowdogman kissing robovurts on the dance floors. Many of the residents here came from other districts or even other boroughs, ending up here with a family of friends who accept them for who they are and who they love.

This is the twenty-first century, kittling! Get with the now! The Village clubs are open until sunrise! The DJs have already starting spinning. Hit the crush, feel those beats! Last bit of advice—keep those papers with you at all times. The security here is pretty strict, even by Centre standards. But you're welcome here! Please come visit, spend your quid and enjoy the famous Village hospitality.

Dubtek's Nightclub: Dubtek's is located in a refurbished brewery on Whitworth street, perched on the edge of Turing Park. This classic club has seen dozens of different owners, but the club itself seems to remain the same. On the outside: half red brick, half chrome that looks 40 years out of style. On the inside: perhaps the real world's best acoustics. Many music artists and sonic beat jugglers get blown away on a nightly. Sucker MCs step back, this is where the Djinn goes in, old-school style. Expect to hear remixed classic Frank Scenario followed by new releases from DJ L-10. Ask the bartender for some glasses and then grab a 30-year-old, overpriced bottle of Fetish.

The Deansgate Blvd Bookstore: New Centerton's favorite bookstore is celebrating its hundredth year in business! Deansgate's was once a small library and still has much of the original decorations and furniture. Benches line the long tables and the lighting is often so low that patrons are given a small torch (flashlight) upon entering.

Bookstore visitors must observe the rule of TOTAL silence. Any and all noise is met with fierce glaring and swift removal from the premises. Because of this, many shadowmen find this to be an ideal place to relax and communicate "quietly" with other telepaths, far from distracting chatter, mumbling, and other annoyances. On any given Friday night, one will see the tables nearly filled with smoky shadowmen who sit and smile and communicate to each other silently.

The bookstore also carries the largest selection of shadow fiction crime novels, a hugely popular new genre of pulp fiction that features telepathic detectives and criminal organizations led most often by shadowmen. Some call it propaganda, some call it pure modism. But it sells well, so Deansgate Bookstore is interested.

There aren't many decent bookstores left in the real world, but Deansgate shows no signs of financial hardship. The fact that they still charge a puny entrance fee of 30 quid helps out quite a bit. Reservations are required and must be made at least 30 days in advance. Books are too valuable to simply let everyone in a once. The Deansgate door guards are usually pure shadows: cold, tall, smoky and extremely effective.

Patisserie Valkyrie: Celebrating 50 years, this French-Scandinavian bakery specializes in desserts that especially appeal to the palates of those with dog genetics. The world-famous mince pie at Patisserie Valkyrie is made of actual minced meat. Other notable specialties include chicken-heart profiteroles, *Éclair du boeuf and Moelle Flaugnarde*. There is often a line on St. Ann Street of more than 50 hungry people waiting to get in. It is also next door to the famous Deansgate Blvd bookstore, although the mostly shadowman clientele of the bookstore doesn't always mix well with the mostly dogman clientele of the Patisserie.

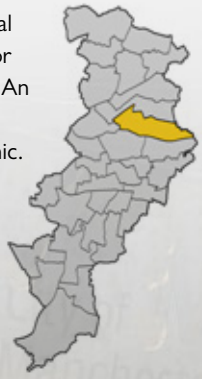
The Bluefinch Café on John Dalton Street: This is the famous Chef Barney's gastronomical paradise. Known for their Roast Whipporwill and Pitch Fish Poke, the Bluefinch Café has a reservation waiting list of at least six months. Many patrons have spoken about an uncontrollable orgasmic feeling upon tasting the food, and most diners pair this meal with a lucid pink or lucid blue feather to augment the experience.

There are also a great many (illegal) items available that are not on the menu like Original Spook, Aged Fetish cocktails and Mushroom Caterpillar soup. The prices are unbelievably high; one meal is the rough equivalent of a year's salary for most Mancunians. Some will save up for years just to go once and be able to brag to friends about the food and the Vurt-stars they saw there.

Chef Barney is arguably the most famous chef in the real world, and the ex-husband of Cinders O'Juniper. The culinary genius still runs the kitchen himself; the old roboman shows no signs of slowing down.

10) Bradford

Noteworthy Locations and Services:
Manchester City Vurtball stadium "Blue City," River Medlock Nautical Museum, Ashton Waterpark, The Crabby Cabby Pub, Vurt-U-Want (4), Slick City (3), Vurturama (4), Whoompy's Burgers (5), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (1), Monstermart (3), Hotel (14), UrBlurb Shop (5), Shadowtown (1), Pharma-Logico (3), Library (1), District Council Hall, MPD station (1), Train station (2)



Bradford likely has the most mish-mashed vibe in Centre, each street seems to be drastically different than the previous. High end artisanal olive oil markets might be next door to a decrepit Whoompy's Burgers. An exclusive, gilded Vurt theater might be across from a Jammer-rehab clinic. There are parts of Bradford where one can take a nice evening walk without fear of being mugged. There are also parts of Bradford where a wrong turn might cost you your thumbs, or worse. It all changes so quickly that even the Bradfordians aren't sure anymore.

The Manchester City Vurtball stadium was rebuilt last year and now holds 100,000 and boasts its own

indoor waterpark and resort hotel. Nicknamed "Blue City" by the fans, the stadium exterior is covered in bright blue LED panels that twinkle 24/7. Security is tight at the new stadium, which is something that the true-blue fans of Man City are still getting used to.

There are approximately 5,000 people killed every year in Manchester by incidents of Vurtball hooliganism, and the MPD has been tasked with bringing that number down. The MPD often brings in the equipment and personnel of its neighboring North Gorth station as a show of force. Most in Bradford have an uneasy relationship with law enforcement; cooperation between the community and the MPD is strained at best.

11) Hulme

Noteworthy Locations and Services: Hulme Arches, The Crescents housing estates, Birley Fields, The Old Burley Restaurant, Terre a Terre pub, Vurt-U-Want (1), Slick City (1), Vurturama (1), Whoompy's Burgers (4), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (5), Monstermart (1), Hotel (1), Pharma-Logico (1), District Council Hall, MPD station (1), Train station (1)

Hulme is slowly being restored to its former glory as a tourist destination. A few decades ago, the heedless competition was in full swing during the era that would later be called the High-Rise Wars. So many corners were cut, so many negligent decisions were made. Hulme was hit hard when one of the tallest towers in Manchester was nearly complete and toppled sideways, destroying several city blocks, nearly two thousand people.

Life is often hard, but good. If you're from Hulme, you likely are more accepting of most modes of being and ways of life than the average Manc. They take care of their own.

Celeborg, page 179

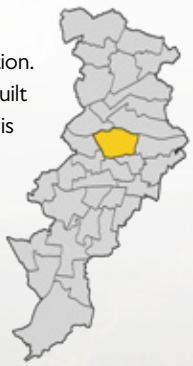
Hulme is the birthplace of Pablo Ogden, the disgraced former designer at Celeborg. He's said to be here, living in hiding. Some fear he is supposedly working on dangerous new experiments that might be unleashed upon the real world—again. Ogden is the one responsible for (accidentally?) developing the infamous Celeborg Virus that ravaged certain areas of the city just 15 years ago. He is a fugitive wanted by the MPD, and many of the best bounty hunters have tried to find him and collect the one million quid reward.

Maybe Ogden is too smart to be caught, or maybe he has paid off or somehow removed those that have managed to get close. Or maybe he doesn't even live in Manchester anymore. If an outsider asks anyone in Hulme about Ogden, the answer will inevitably be the same—"Oi, fuck off, ya daft wanker."

The Crescents housing estates: After the disastrous fall of the Hulme towers, The Crescents housing estates were rebuilt and expanded for low income residents. Nowadays, the sprawling housing projects are diverse and relatively well maintained. There are even areas of The Crescents where pure shadows openly congregate and create a community. Rumor has it that a small underground community of U-type shadowmen live in The Crescents, disguising their zombie appearances and trying to create a life for themselves.

12) Ardwick

Noteworthy Locations and Services: Manc Fenian Brotherhood Arch, The Old Arch Shimmy-Plex, The Polygon Housing Estates, Manchester Apollo Theater, Ardwick Green Park, Club Blood Red, Vurt-U-Want (2), Whoompy's Burgers (2), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (1), Hotel (2), UrBlurb Shop (4), Pharma-Logico (3), District Council Hall, MPD station (1), Train station (1)



Much of Ardwick is a dangerous festering labyrinth of smoky construction. Overspill housing projects are being built all over. Massive overpopulation here is so bad that long-forgotten diseases such as cholera, parvovirosis and polio are appearing again, creating the perfect environment for a pandemic. There is said to be a government-funded program in place that would legally allow the extermination of the entire area to combat the spread of disease.

Only the areas controlled by the Soul Boy Consortium are considered safe. The MPD rarely shows up in these "safe spots," leaving much of the small-time law enforcement to the locals. The anti-cop sentiment here is palpable.

Ardwick is also known for having a markedly larger percentage of natural mathemagicians, those who have a deep connection to "the numbers." Some say that it is environment, others point to genetic factors, but all agree that those who are raised in Ardwick seem

to have a natural ability to delve deep into this area of knowledge. There is simply no denying it, Ardwick is full of young numberphiles hailing from all the different modes of being, and we seem to be seeing more and more every day.

13) North Gort

Noteworthy Locations and Services:
Original Vaz International® Factory, Abbey Hey Park, Belle Vue Zoo, Robohound Racetrack, Club Bear Groove, Chez le Carré, Vurt-U-Want (6), Slick City (5), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (4), Monstermart (2), Hotel (11), UrBlurb Shop (2), Pharma-Logico (4), Library (1), District Council Hall, MPD station (1), Train station (3)

North Gort is confusing as shite. This district is nearly impossible to map accurately, as the names of the streets change on an hourly basis. The original law that allows for this mayhem was intended to dissuade developers from changing the names of the original streets. The opposite happened, and now advertising space is sold at one million quid per 60 minutes, just to have the name of your corporation be an actual street name in Manchester.

To maximize revenue, the North Gort District Council voted to build a second layer of roadways above the current ones. Multilayer traffic, what could go wrong? Like an ever growing layer cake full of honking horns and road rage.

Pay attention to where you're going around here. Most in North Gort can barely walk a block or two without having to take copious notes that ensure a quick return trip. Plans for using any real world placement system devices are thwarted by the constant construction on several levels of roadways. The skyscrapers here are almost all minimalist in design; monolithic dark rectangles with huge circular vents allowing air to pass through.

When Vaz International built the first of many factories here, CEO Jazir Malik, our future king, designed it himself to reflect his passion for dominoes. Even after the House of Chances scandal, Jazir Malik remained obsessed. Vaz International built factory after factory here, all designed the same, equally spaced apart in mile-long lines. Every other district structure around the factories followed suit. Now, decades later, the skyscrapers all look like giant dominoes, there is no mistaking the similarities—North Gort looks like a tangle of huge dominoes ready to topple over onto each other and bring the whole district down in one disaster.

All security is done by an ever-changing roster of private security companies hired by Vaz International. The MPD has a station here, on the district border with Bradford, but they do not get involved in North Gort issues unless asked to. The one major exception is Belle Vue Zoo, where security is still the sole responsibility of the MPD.

I find that those from North Gort are super-focused and opportunistic. *Carpe diem ad absurdum!* Even the street gangs here seem shiftier than other districts, more willing to stab you in the back for a few punies.

ON BELLE VUE ZOO...

Many years ago, after many attempts at renewal, it was decided that the Zoological Gardens at Belle Vue were no longer a viable proposition. Their closure had been imminent, as people moved on to electronic delights, and from there to feathery Vurt pursuits. The final touch of death. Money talked. The owners sold off, or put down, all of the sad animals there. Closed the funfair, then the speedway, then the concert hall, the ballroom, the dogtrack, the restaurant, the wrestling arena. Until only loneliness remained; the wind blowing through dry grasses, through the bars on the vacated animal pens. For many years Belle Vue was a desert, set in the run-down wastes of eastern Manchester, where the only change was metal oxidizing into rust, and hope melting into poverty. Only the prostitutes found a use for those broken vistas. Belle Vue became common ground. But then came the successful merging of dog and plastic. A proposal was put forward, passed with alacrity by the Authorities, and the dogtrack was reopened. Every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday the night air was filled with the sound and the smells of robohounds, charging the ground with their Vazzed-up claws, chasing to death some poor Zombie-rabbit. With the discovery of Fecundity-10, even stranger, wilder creatures were born. Some of them too wild, too full of curious genes to be ignored. So they opened the zoo again, filling it with the children of Casanova. Non-viables. Voyeurs dreamed of it, entrepreneurs put money into it. Oh, the thrill of seeing a hideous Zombie up close, safe behind bars. The New Belle Vue Zoo was a big success.

-Pollen, Jeff Noon

14) South Gort

Noteworthy Locations and Services:
New South Debdale, Ghost Cat Racetrack, Borges Megaplex, Peacock Shimmy-Plex, The Golden Naan restaurant, The Rub-A-Dub Pub, Vurt-U-Want (1), Slick City (1), Vurturama (6), Whoompy's Burgers (2), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (5), Monstermart (7), Hotel (x25), UrBlurb Shop (4), Pharma-Logico (5), Library (3), MPD station (4), Train station (3)

South Gort is one of the calmer districts of Centre. The last decade has seen steady decline in violent crimes and burglaries. The streets here are swept daily by volunteers who will not speak during work. Very few people walk around, the sidewalks are usually clear. The roadways are as clogged here as anywhere else. MPD presence is very heavy here, with four stations.

The blurbflies in this district seem to be mostly MechanInsect-brand, equipped with cameras. There is something very strange happening behind the scenes in South Gort. There is no District Council hall, yet the District Council meets regularly in secret, their true identities unknown to the public who (supposedly) voted them in. The three libraries in this district are also closed to the public, and no one knows why.

South Gort is the birthplace of the late artist Rob "P-Pod" Boss, and the location of the annual Sappy-Trees Art Festival, a huge tourist attraction, growing in popularity every year. This mega-fest is why South Gort has one of the highest number of hotels in Manchester.

There are weekly Ghost Cat races at a makeshift, unauthorized track in the Westside of the district. Here, the pestilent nuisances are made to run for hours, shocked along by electrical charges in the lane walls. Last one left running wins, and some Mancs can make a fortune if they put money on the right Ghost Cat. The bookies in the area are mostly smarmy robomen from Chroma; the racetrack is controlled by a local crime syndicate with ties to the *Chromerta*.

15) Rusholme

Noteworthy Locations and Services:
New South Debdale, Ghost Cat Racetrack, Borges Megaplex, Peacock Shimmy-Plex, The Golden Naan restaurant, The Rub-A-Dub Pub, Vurt-U-Want (1), Slick City (1), Vurturama (6), Whoompy's Burgers (2), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (5), Monstermart (7), Hotel (x25), UrBlurb Shop (4), Pharma-Logico (5), Library (3), MPD station (4), Train station (3)

Welcome to the Rush. This is where the world famous Slithy Tove is located, the birthplace of Jazir Malik, Joe Crocus and Celia Hobart. The Rush is where the famous Stash Riders once roamed, and where the worst of the post-Pollen riots took place.

The population here is the most even distribution of the 31 modes of being in the city, but don't let that fool you into thinking that life is fair here. It's not. Not by a longshot. There are still a large number of hate groups in the district, but less than surrounding districts.

Being so close to the New Centerton district has proven to be a benefit economically, but a detriment in terms of personal liberty and privacy. Everything is recorded, and the constant drone of adverts and jingles is incessant. No one in Rusholme has seen a clear, bug-free sunrise or sunset in years. The skies are so full of blurbflies at all times that plant life must be assisted by technology to make up for the lack of sunlight. All fast food in the district contains slightly higher levels of vitamin D to counteract the expected deficiency.

Life in Rusholme still glimmers with a sliver of hope. The District Council here tries its best to accept everyone and focus on common goals like security and new jobs. Economic opportunity is actually improving here for the first time in decades, and there is a strong bohemian vibe to the area that was never present before.

Relations with the MPD, however, are at an all time low. Every day it seems that the MPD is overstepping their boundaries as law enforcement and pushing those in the Rush to a breaking point. Many agree that if there were to be an anti-cop civil uprising in Manchester, the leadership would likely hail from Rusholme.

The Rush is the geographic center of the megacity, and the historical home district of the legendary Stash Riders.

This district pulses with life, new ideas, revolutionaries, genius inventors and artists, desperate criminals, innovative business people, and all the dangers that come with this violent life on the edge. Feel *the Rush*, kittling, there is no place in the real world like it!

The Slithy Tove: Some of the best music (and drugs) in Rusholme can be found here in copious amounts. For a DJ or anyone who knows their music history, this club is a place of pilgrimage, where Das Uberdog and Dingo Tush first teamed up and took the stage, where Frank Scenario once crooned over glasses of Fetish, where Acid Lassie's first mind-bending solo set took place. There is almost too much history packed into this club. The house drink is called Water Piss, and it tastes as you'd expect. But the price hasn't changed in almost 50 years—"A-quid-a-pint". A pint *of what*, you ask? Shut up and drink yer drink, ya snooty div.

The Cut Above: This pub has been shut down and reopened under new management countless times over the 20 years it has been open. Presently, The Cut Above is mostly frequented by a mix of robos, robomen and dogmen. Pure humans are not welcome here, but the door guards and bouncers are known to accept bribes to look the other way. Some of Rusholme's shadiest criminals hang out here regularly, betting on Vurtball matches and running other off-the-bookie pools.

The Original Pop-A-Damn!: This is the local restaurant that started it all. All Pop-A-Damn! franchises spring from this tiny little location on Anson Road, which still serves the original menu items to all the tired and hungry Mancs. Their "Go-Go Aloo Gobi" and "Five-Alarm Palak Paneer" are world-famous, the recipes unchanged after all this time. Eat responsibly.

The White Bull Pub: The drinks and drugs here are not high quality. Truth be told, neither are the people who frequent the White Bull. This place is in desperate need of a good scrubbing. The amount of dirt and grime on the walls is embarrassing, but no one seems to do anything about it except complain. Perhaps the dirtiness is part of the draw for some who use this place for business transactions. There are countless shadowy corners and oily booths to hide in. Legend has it that the first English Voodoo feather was sold here, but there is no evidence to back that up. Just talk. The White Bull has a nasty reputation and deserves it. It's a place where no one says "please" or "cheers."

ON THE SLITHY TOVE...

I walked into the crush, and was driven up, and lost, plugged in straight off, with a whiff of Bliss. You just can't get away from it. The love is clinging. Well, when it's breathed in direct, through the air conditioning, I mean, what chance do you have? I took a deep mouthful, felt high as a paper plane. Man, that was good Bliss Wind. I took another gulp, full lungful this time, head was spinning and I loved everybody in the crush all of a sudden. Caressed my way to the bar and ordered a glass of Fetish. The dark spicy afternotes hit my palette, causing sparks, and I was floating, hot. Slithy Tove system was playing The Ace of Bones. Original pressing by Dingo Tush, but this was the hard (hard!) remix, cooked up by Acid Lassie, and it was dancing the crush to a frenzy. I turned around, leaning my back against the bar, just to view the scenes better. I was gazing into a dub mirror. That's the kind where you only get the best bits looking back at you. It was that splendid mix of Bliss and Fetish, dogmusic and crush-dancing; makes you feel like a star in your own system.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

16) BottleTown

Noteworthy Locations and Services:
Crowcroft, Grindlow MegaPlex, Old Vickiepark, Whoompy's Burgers (1), MPD station (1).

BottleTown has been one of the worst parts of Manchester for almost 40 years now. Believe.

Decades of sharp broken bottles are piled on the sidewalks, teetering precariously, several meters tall. Driving through this district safely requires special tires and a knowledge of the ever-shifting shortcuts and ginnels that seem to change on a weekly basis. Driving in BottleTown is not advised, even with a properly equipped vehicle; if the mountains of broken glass don't slow you down, the bloodthirsty local gang members will.

The Grindlow MegaPlex is on the edge of the Rusholme district, and is always jam packed with featherheads who are looking to spend less; maybe find someone hawking a cheap bootleg feather out front or trade what they got for what they want. The constant fighting inside the MegaPlex needs to be broken up by the security team on a regular basis.

There are no Vurt-U-Wants or other brick-and-mortar feather vendors in BottleTown, the only restaurant is a Whoompy's Burger that is infamous for having the worst toilets in Manchester. It's simply too dangerous to keep a business open and running here. There is also a very strong anti-Pure sentiment here, Pure Humans especially. Almost every wall in BottleTown is tagged with the phrase "Pure is Poor".

The two major BottleTown gangs that fight over this shitty turf are the Torchers and the OG Brits; both have a major effect on how difficult travel within the district will be. Hotspots of gang activity flare up several times a day in BottleTown, it is not an area you want to find yourself stuck. The MPD still considers most of the district to be a no-go zone, but will show up if things get too out of control, guns blazing.

The old train station was burned to the ground too many times to count, so the BottleTown District Council stopped rebuilding. X-Cabs charge almost 6 time the normal rate here, and require daily tire changes, which is figured into the price. Unfortunately, if you're here, you're likely on foot. Wear sturdy footwear, and expect travel to take considerably longer than your initial estimates. It's painfully slow going in BottleTown.

Don't think for a moment that anyone is going to help you out here, most of the residents spend their time inside their dilapidated dwellings. Outsiders are rare. There is an unofficial sunset curfew in place that is enforced by the local gang members who roam the dark streets looking for trouble. The district is also well-known for its large population of wild RoboDogs hooked on Cortex Jammers. These speedy junkie beasts hunt for food in large packs and have been known to skeletonize a Pure Human in seconds. Most of these RoboDogs are beyond help, having lost all sense of self-awareness in their addiction.

No matter where you go in BottleTown, your life is likely very much in danger. Keep your head down. Pure is Poor! Pure is Poor!

ON BOTTLETOWN...

Bottletown... Some kind of urban dream. Pretty soon the wholesome families moved out and the young and the listless moved in... the robo-crusties and the shadowgoths and the students. Pretty soon the students moved out, sick to the back of mummy and daddy's car with too much burglary, too much mugging... leaving the place to the non-pure—hybrids only need apply. About a year later the council opened a pair of bottle banks on the outskirts of the town, one for white glass, one for green. The nice people from the outlying districts would come there, just to the edge of dirtiness, in order to drop their evidence of excessive alcohol intake. The council stopped emptying the bottle banks, and anybody walking there had to sink into a bed of pain, just to get near the good times.
When the banks were full, and overflowing, still they came, breaking bottles on the pavements and the stairs and the landings. This is how the world fills up. Shard by shard, jag by jag, until the whole place is some kind of glitter palace, sharp and painful to the touch.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

17) Moss Side

Noteworthy Locations and Services: North Alexandra Park, Old Royal Brewery, Triangle Gardens Park, Vurt-U-Want (5), Slick City (2), Vurturama (6), Whoompy's Burgers (6), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (4), Hotel (1), District Council Hall, MPD station (1)

Moss Side. Fucking hell. What do you want me to say about Moss Side? That it's full of strong willed people who are misrepresented in the media as hooligans or summat? Because the truth is they are all a bunch of hooligans and scallies, gang members fighting over the scraps of a forgotten district. Like rats. Mossy rats. Running the ginnels in search of filth to eat, rabid and deadly.

I'm sorry. That sounds awful, I'm sorry. I was rolled in Moss Side once, lost my shoes and left with my life. I consider myself lucky.

You say you want to go into Moss Side? You'll have to hoof it in, there's no train station here. Please go in packing some kind of weapon you know how to use. Or wear shoes you don't mind losing. Protect your neck, keep it chilly. Get in, get out, don't talk to anyone.

The MPD considers most of Moss Side to be a no-go. The station sits empty, boarded up years ago. Crime here is addressed internally.

Moss Side has more gang members per square mile than almost anywhere else in Centre. Life expectancy here is 35, I shit you not. North Alexandra Park is locally known as North Alex Cemetery. That says a lot.

Actually, kittling, just stay out of Moss Side. That's a gentleman's order. I'm not even going to tell you anymore about it, nothing good will come of it. Stay. Out. You've been warned.

18) Whalley Range

Noteworthy Locations and Services: South Alexandra Park, The Coyote memorial fountain, Brook's Bar, Game Cat Press Museum, Vaz International Tower 250 (tallest building in the real world), The Third Globe Theater, Vurt-U-Want (3), Vurturama (2), Whoompy's Burgers (1), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (2), Monstermart (5), Hotel (6), UrBlurb Shop (3), Pharma-Logico (6), District Council Hall, MPD station (1), Train station (1)

The parts of Whalley Range that border Moss Side are a death trap. South Alexandra Park is advertised as "Safer than Safe," but is often far from it. Even the blurbflies seem to avoid this part of the district—no Admin wants to lose valuable property to the aggressive Moss Siders.

The parts of Whalley Range that border Turdsville are worse. Or better, depending on how you view it. At least you can smell your flea-bitten attackers coming at you from Turdsville.

Am I being modist? Perhaps. Just stay to the West Side of Whalley, that's where the private security forces for Vaz International's 250-story skyscraper are concentrated. MPD covers the rest. Even the hordes of hooligans in the neighboring borough of Trafford are dissuaded by Vaz Int security drones that are armed to the teeth, both bullet and RPG licensed.

The nicer parts of Whalley Range are huddled in the middle of the district like a cultural oasis. The Game Cat Press Museum has hard copies of every single Game Cat magazine ever published, all on display behind reinforced glass. This is one of the top tourist attractions in Manchester. The luxurious hotels around the museum are booked out several years in advance at this point.

The Vurt theater experiences at the famous Third Globe are indescribably beautiful, combining unique Vurt feathers with live theater. The Coyote Memorial Fountain is a place of true beauty and draws tourists to the skirts of Alexandra Park South. Whalley Range is wonderful if you are rich and/or connected, not so wonderful if you aren't.

19) Chorlton

Noteworthy Locations and Services: North Southern Cemetery, Dalmatian Flower Memorial Park, Barlow Hall, Meadeville housing estates, Martledge Library Complex, Vurturama (8), Whoompy's Burgers (6), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (8), Monstermart (10), Hotel (20), UrBlurb Shop (4), Shadowtown (1), Pharma-Logico (8), Library (14), District Council Hall, MPD station (2), Train station (4)

The district of Chorlton (not to be confused with neighboring *Chorlton Park*) is a generally safe area of Centre. There are small pockets of unrest, but all in all, the district is quite walkable.

For the last 40 years, the District Council of Chorlton has been run by the same extended pure human family—most major positions filled by siblings and cousins who spend most of their time fighting. Nepotism is so rampant here, it feels natural.

But somehow, things get done. Streets are repaired in a timely manner. Bridges are built and parking structures are redesigned and retrofitted. Construction is steady and relatively balanced all over the district. The River Mersey is cleaner here than anywhere else within the City walls. There are more libraries here than any other district in Manchester, and the Martledge Library Complex is considered one of the best in the real world.

Yes, it's overpopulated, the gangs run the Meadeville area, and the street traffic is still shite—but life is relatively non-terrible in Chortlon.

These days, large construction projects are announced daily here, and unemployment is low. Trackies have been traded in for sweater vests. The Chorlton District Council, for all their infighting and seeming incompetence, is somehow shitting quid sideways. Build! Grow! Thrive! You gotta spend money to make money, innit?

Where does the District Council get all the money to make this happen, you ask? Shush. Stop asking questions, you'll get us buried.

20) Chorlton Park

Noteworthy Locations and Services: North Barlow Moor Research Facility, Dizzy Knees Theme Park, Manchester Horseracing museum, The Tannhäuser Gate Replica, UDC Factory, Vurt-U-Want (4), Slick City (4), Whoompy's Burgers (3), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (4), Monstermart (3), Hotel (5), UrBlurb Shop (2), Pharma-Logico (5), Library (2), District Council Hall, MPD station (2), Train station (2)

First things first—Chorlton Park and Chortlon are not to be confused. The differences are night and day, and those that forget get reminded quickly. This is The Park, home of the Parkies, respect that! Parkies fought for what's what, that other lot just sucks up to the Palace. Well indie. feather Blue true. C-Park is where you're at, no piss taken here.

During the major redistricting of the megacity, this area was initially slated to be razed to the ground to make way for the real world's most beautiful genetically modified green space, the Chorlton Uber Park. It was designed by the best (and most overpaid) architects—the design showed a spiral that erupted 50 stories into the sky, a double helix of self-contained ecosystems, connected by land bridges populated with non-pollinating flower forests. That was the plan at least.

The first major issue the District Council had to deal with was relocating the 150,000 residents who did not want to move. Much of Manchester was divided on the issue. At first, many saw the residents as obstructive and selfish, and the slang term "Parkies" was used as an insult. The Manchester Police Dept. began to mobilize and forcibly remove people from their homes, backed up by the Royal City government based in New Centerton. Mancunians who refused were being shipped to Strangeways prison or simply disappeared.

During one particularly aggressive purge, a small family of seven pure humans jumped one by one to their deaths from the top of a construction crane—while thousands of blurbflies recorded and broadcast the tragedy all over the real world. That was the moment when the recently retired radio DJ Gumbo YaYa retook the pirate airwaves and made it his personal battle to inform the public as to what was really happening.

As the issue dragged on and more information came to light, the public sentiment shifted in favor of the

residents and against the developers of the Uber-Park. Now, the term "Parkie" came to represent a person willing to die to save their homes. Never forget. Seven drops. Lost.

While other districts attempted to connect themselves to the movement, it was the district of Chorlton Park that embodied the fight against indiscriminate redistricting. Construction was halted on the Uber-Park project. Technically, the construction never stopped, the developers are still awaiting instructions from the Royal City building and zoning departments, but after almost 30 years, the likelihood that they'll resume any construction of the Chorlton Uber-Park is low.

Dizzy Knees Theme Park: This small amusement park was all that survived the initial Uber-Park blueprints, originally intended as the grand entrance. The theme park is small but exclusive. Some of the most cutting-edge Shadow tech entertainment is tested here. Buying an entrance ticket is prohibitively expensive for most Mancunians; it has turned into a playground for the super-wealthy. It's a tradition for some rich Mancs to get lit on Choke and Boomer before entering the park. The dangerous practice is called getting "dizzy-kneed" and it's honestly more popular than it should be.

UDC HQ: On the East side of the district, the original UDC (Unlimited Dream Co) factory is still producing blue Vurt feathers the way they have for almost 30 years, and employs 200 people from the community. The UDC factory has been designated a Manchester City treasure. The famous Tannhäuser Gate replica greets tourist and employee alike.

ISSUE E92.38416

YaYa
ENTERTAINMENT NEWSBLURB

MODE OF BEING IS IMPORTANT, Part 3 of 3

Blurbs from the Editor

My loyal YaYa readers-

Let's get into the very rare unfortunates who have 4 modes mixed into their genetic stream. With great power comes great… madness? Paranoia? Megalomania? No offense to the Flakes, Dunces, Floats, Squids and Spanners out there, but you folks have an uphill battle. Your genes have passed the goldilocks zone. Your "inner struggle" is a tug of war between 4 modes that were never supposed to be in the same body.

I met a Spanner once who told me that every moment was like having a dogmetal song stuck in your head with 4 different voices arguing endlessly with each other over who should turn down the music. That was their day to day life. Lived to be 30, that Spanner did. But suicide for the 4th Level Modes is sadly the norm. I heard that she had a child, but the truth is they always say that when a 4th level dies because it's they're so mysterious and rare. Most 4th Level beings are sterile and will never reproduce or be replicated genetically through other means. The mold gets thrown out with them. They're a small population of last unicorns, all of them.

The real world is afraid of its own blood. It was Miss Hobart said that, and she was right, dog bless the Queen! We're all mixed. Most of us at least. Over ¾ of the real world population is part something else. The days of Pure gangs roaming the streets unmolested is long gone.

You think you're pure? Really? Want to run some tests? Sit down at a GeneMachine® and test the honesty of your ancestors? Remember what happened to Philthy Folgate, the Pure Hate frontman from Chorlton Park? He was famous for twenty years of hate music and rallies and crimes against non-pures. Then he finds out he's 10% dog—Alsatian. Broke his heart. Now he works on some District Council as a number cruncher or something.

As always, keep those heads up and those noses clean, Manchester.

21) Old Moat

Noteworthy Locations and Services:
Eddisbury housing estates, Old Moat Megaplex, The Manor Pub, The Psychic Head-hog Pub, Vurt-U-Want (2),, Whoompy's Burgers (1), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (5), Monstermart (1), Hotel (2), District Council Hall, MPD station (1), Train station (1)

The district of Old Moat is small, from Wilmslow Road to Princess Road, and about the same distance north and south. It's an angry little rectangle of Mancunian oddness. In addition to being a natural battle ground for many nearby gangs, there is something more sinister in Old Moat that keeps the tourists away. This district has hundreds of dark secrets?

This tiny little district has an ugly history. Some say it has to do with the Fecundity-10 love fest that purportedly happened after the Daresbury cemetery was moved. In the population explosion that followed, many in Old Moat were born zombie. The round-ups of these particular NVLs by the MPD was done in a very aggressive manner by then-Chief Takshaka. Many U-types were never given the choice to leave the city; a single bullet through the brain was the unofficial MPD solution.

There are many areas of the district that we should all consider to be no-go. Stay out the Eddisbury housing estates in particular; the residents are, well—they're different. There's a smell, a certain odor. Don't look anyone in the eyes. And if you are a pure human or dog, you should really, really avoid Old Moat.

22) Turdsville

Noteworthy Locations and Services: Platt Fields Park, Wilmslow Hollows, Owens Park, Club Gow Gow, Club Bow Wow, Club Bauhaus, Chez Chien, Hotel (10), Pharma-Logico (6), Train station (1)

Turdsville is the dogshit-filled place where Das Uberdog saved the lives of the Stash Riders long ago, where his heroics boosted him from local super star to global celebrity.

A steady flow of tourists make the pilgrimage to see where the first of the dog stars grew up; where he met the great Dingo Tush; where they reinvented music; where it all started.

ON SHOW FOR ONE SEASON ONLY

The archaeological team found many other items in the grave: a silver brooch, a ceremonial dagger, a tortoiseshell comb, a wolf's thigh bone carved in the shape of a demon. Clutched in the skeletal hand of the Saxon queen was a bird's feather. Remarkably it had retained its flights and its colour over the centuries below ground, without any sign of decay. The skeleton and the other items went on view this week at the British Museum. Members of staff have reported that the public are drawn to the feather more than any other object; even the queen's remains receive less attention. It is without doubt a curious object: the world's leading ornithologists cannot identify the bird from which the plume came.

I visited the exhibition myself, drawn by the stories I had heard. A crowd of onlookers were pressed around the glass cabinet. At last my turn came. Photographs do not capture the feather's charm. The flights seem to sparkle: light blue with darker speckles. I thought I saw it actually move at one point, as though it were floating in mid-air within the cabinet. Faintly, I heard wings beating, and I saw the moon overhead inside the building. A woman came forward out of the shadows, beckoning to me. She knew my name, and she called me to me, over and over again. At last I stepped towards her...

Fifteen minutes had passed – I know not how – and still my body was held in thrall, my eyes spellbound. And then another spectator pushed at me in order to get a better view, and I moved away. In the museum cafe I drank a cup of strong tea and pondered what I had seen, or dreamt. For yes, the vision had the power and the elusiveness of a dream. I feared it might fade as any sleeping fancy might; but when I stepped out of the museum into the bright light of Great Russell Street I saw that the buildings, the sun, the trees, the cars on the road, the people themselves, all seemed more vivid than before, and more present in my sight. As I walked off towards Holborn tube station, my mind reeled with such pleasure that I felt I might faint.

I couldn't help but wonder: what is this glittering remnant of flight? What strange and terrible magic is caught within its barbs?

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

ON CLUB CHIEN...

There was a kind of alcove, with the door to the shop on one side, and the door to the upstairs flat on the back. Above the door someone had pinned a printed notice saying PURE FREE ZONE. Below that was tacked a piece of paper with the words- you no got dog, fuck off!!! - scrawled in thick clumsy letters. Above the letterbox was an ornate iron scrollwork sign that said CHEZ CHIEN in a Gothic script. Below the box someone had felt-tipped the message- Turdsville. Watch where you tread. It was written in human hand. Just to the left of the bell was a sticker, a photo of an Alsatian on it, and the words - Go ahead, make my day! Somebody had glued two blue human eyes over the dog's.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

The streets of Turdsville still run ankle deep with feces, higher in some places. At this point, it's a source of pride for the residents. Tourists always end up taking pictures of themselves in throwback Das Uberdog tees, posing in front of the piles of dogshite, their fingers plugging their noses and making fake gang signs.

It stinks everywhere in Turdsville. Like wet dog vomit mixed with parvo-diarrhea. There's no avoiding it, the rank odor permeates every inch of the district. Many outsiders wear rubber boots, getting messy is going to happen.

Platt Fields Park and Owens Park are both cleaned daily, and supposed to be a dogshit-free zone. However, by noon, the grass is covered in lawn-bombs by rebellious residents with dog genetics.

It's soooooooo dogpunk to shit where you're not supposed to! Woof! Woof!

A huge percentage of the best DJs in the real world come from this district, pushed from early ages by the dog-star examples of their hometown heroes. Club Chien has been the testing grounds for many a young DJ who thinks they can handle a Limbic Splitter. I strongly recommend making a reservation and checking it out. However, you better be part dog or you're gonna have a bad time.

Turdsville is ugly, dark, and dangerous. There are so many blurbflies, the sky is rarely visible, and the ground and walls are covered in dogshit. The district is bordered on all sides by other unfriendly districts, each with their own major problems. All the other districts and their problems seem to spill over into Turdsville.

Even Old Moat, that dreaded zombie-friendly district to the South, is now starting to send representatives to secure non-U-type-discriminating properties for rent in Turdsville. It's changing by the day, with no help from the Royal City Council, and the residents are starting to fight back. The former District Council was blatantly corrupt and required so many bogus and expensive permits that every chain restaurant pulled out and refused to continue doing business in Turdsville. The only chain store left in Turdsville is Pharma-Logico; there are no chain restaurants or feather stores left. The economy here is one of the worst in Manchester.

The MPD consider the district a no-go. Robodog packs run the ginnels of the district unchecked, high on Jammers, looking for trouble. Tourism is nonexistent. Turdsville's a lost cause.

For most residents of Turdsvile, roving robodog packs, 75% unemployment and shady U-type immigrants are just some of the problems they'll face on the daily.

Chase your bones, chase your dreams, claw your way out, doggies!

23) Levenshulme

Noteworthy Locations and Services: Blue Bell Megaplex, Radio YaYa Studios, Highfield Park, Nutsford Vale Tree Museum, The Street-With-No-Name, Vurt-U-Want (2), Slick City (2), Vurturama (1), Whoompy's Burgers (3), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (3), Monstermart (4), Hotel (4), UrBlurb Shop (3), Pharma-Logico (4), Library (1), District Council Hall, MPD station (2), Train station (3)

Levenshulme is a true mixed district, skyscraping mega-complexes towering above cramped red-brick apartments, crushing all the modes of being together between district borders like a spoiled socioeconomic sardine sandwich. Levenshulme is diverse, but not by choice. Even with the constant exposure to other cultures and modes of being, this remains one of the most divided district communities.

There are countless forgettable restaurants and mediocre art galleries, mindless live events and depressing festivals in Highfield park. Honestly. Finding any place in Levenshulme is a difficult task. There is literally a street called the Street-With-No-Name. It's as if everyone in Levenshulme wants to be lost.

Ironic that one of the beacons of light and clarity over the last few generations, Gumbo YaYa, has always broadcast from studios in this district. Levenshulme—Gumbo's old stomping grounds, although the MPD never knew it until long after.

Gumbo always said the quickest way to get lost in Levenshulme is to stand still. The construction and rerouting of major streets is constant, seemingly endless. Like an ever-changing maze of urbanity. And the best Haze this side of AmsterDamn! Levenshulme waccybaccy!

24) Withington

Noteworthy Locations and Services:
The White Lion Club, Milestone Estates, The Water Trough Restaurant, Snake Lounge Club, Vurt-U-Want (2), Slick City (2), Vurturama (1), Whoompy's Burgers (2), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (1), Monstermart (1), Hotel (2), UrBlurb Shop (1), Pharma-Logico (1), District Council Hall, MPD station (1), Train station (1)

Withington is no joke. Tourists are advised to stay out of Withington. Every year, a dozen die-hard tourists end up dead in the ginnels, face down, pockets out. Swarms of young scallies of all modes peer out from half-finished construction projects onto the forever-changing streets below. Withington is not a friendly place, not even for the locals.

The White Lion Club has a long history in Withington, as does the the Water Trough restaurant. Both have been witness to many of the major deals brokered in the era of redistricting; those wooden tables supported the elbows and signatures that profoundly affected the real world over the course of a few months.

The Manchester Declaration of Independance was signed at the Water Trough, in a room that has since been cordoned off with a velvet rope.

Withington was where, up until very recently, King Jaz could meet with ambassadors and business people from London who could not be seen at the Royal Palace in New Centerton. Back room deals make the real world go round.

The violence has escalated dramatically in the last few years since the undercover Yeoman Warders left. Now it feels like nobody's watching anymore.

Most residents of the district are proud of their reputation as gruff, no-nonsense, know-it-all aresholes. You're more likely to get information from a stone than from a local, but that's just my own personal experience. It's cold. People and the weather.

25) Burnage

Noteworthy Locations and Services:
Kingsway housing estates, Club Rollerchain, Concorde Shimmy-Plex, Vurt-U-Want (4), Whoompy's Burgers (2), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (1), Monstermart (5), Hotel (8), UrBlurb Shop (4), Pharma-Logico (4), District Council Hall, MPD station (1), Train station (1)

Dark, rain-slicked red rooftops, white walls, orange brick-lined streets—dark grey everything else. If it's raining in Manchester, it's raining in Burnage. Wet moss covers most walkways in the district with thick carpets of dark green slippage. Many a neck has been broken on these cobblestoned walks.

Safety in Burnage is a major concern of the local district council. Certain areas of the district are still too dangerous to walk down, day or night. Other areas, maybe just a few blocks away, are relatively safe at three in the morning. The District Council has paid the MPD off, so if something concerns a Councilor, it will likely be addressed quickly. There are some gangs that have also paid off the MPD, and they are more or less allowed to do what they want.

Burnage still has that garden village feel and most of the newer buildings are built to reflect this style. Many see it as kitschy. You make up your own mind. It's drawing loads of tourists and there seems to be a new restaurant on every corner. Even the Concorde Shimmy-Plex has been restored to its former glory.

Things are looking up for the residents of Burnage. Unless you're a roboman. They are blatantly being left out of all new contracts and commercial lease agreements. It's as if the District Council has a plan to eliminate all those with mixed robo and human genetics from existence. No one is really willing to talk about this, it's considered impolite to ask someone in Burnage about this anti roboman policy. Why not talk of more pleasant things, like the latest Cooperation Street feather episode? Living in Burnage is perfectly tolerable if can lock your door and you have enough feathers.

26) Yankton

Noteworthy Locations and Services: Old Didsbury Clocktower, Merseyford Megaplex, Siggepp Bar, The Yank Inc pink feather Factory, Uncle Sam Park, The Drained Swamp bar, Lady Liberty American Style Bar & Grill, Vurt-U-Want (1), Slick City (12), Whoompy's Burgers (2), Pop-A-Damn! Walk-thru (1), Monstermart (8), Hotel (x22), UrBlurb Shop (3), Shadowtown (1), Pharma-Logico (10), Library (3), District Council Hall, Train station (2)

Businesses that hailed from across the pond and beyond all wanted a piece of Manchester after the economic booms. The city-state model was slow to take in the former USA, but they certainly saw the value of getting in early and deep before the Manchester City Wall was finished. The newly formed City Council made the decision to declare an entire district unfit for use, then bought the existing real estate for "pennies on the pound." What used to be East Didsbury was purchased outright and renamed Yankton. If you'd owned enough property in East Didsbury, you were now a millionaire or even a billionaire. You ain't bovvered. Let the damn Yankees take it, rebuild it in their red white and blue image, who gives a shite, gimme my money!

The Council made a killing, selling everything almost instantly to investors and corporations from former America. They had their own little corner of Manchester, a place for arriving former Americans to start out, supported by their fellow Yank.

Uncle Sam Park is an architectural abomination. The Merseyford Megaplex sells fried food by the ton. There's only one Vurt-U-Want and a dozen Old West-themed Slick City feather stores. That horrible accent is heard everywhere, all the hard R's and slack-jawed vowels.

Most global corporations that once had their headquarters in the United States either opened a satellite office in Yankton or moved operations entirely.

Security is mostly private in this district, much of the district is an unofficial no-go for the MPD. They tore down the former MPD station last year and put in yet another hotel for all the permitted outsiders. Like most of the well-to-do areas of Manchester, there are quite a few Pharma-Logico locations. The rich can afford to grind their teeth in style.

Gangs do exist here, but their presence is mostly for show, they have no real power here. The blurbflies

owners and operators all must agree to a district-specific terms of use contract that makes anything in the air above Yankton the property of the Yankton District Council. Information is tightly controlled here; any and all eyes in the sky can be harnessed at a moment's notice by the powerful council. Most of us realize that Yankton is controlled by megacorporations based mostly in L.A.

Those few old locals who lived here before the days of the great redistricting now find their district irreversibly changed, and do not like it one bit. The Old Didsbury clocktower is vandalized regularly with the phrase "Yankee go Home". The Manc past and Yank future of this district are in direct opposition, but most of the private security is subcontracted out to AJATA. Most residents of Yankton consider themselves middle-class entrepreneurs. They're not all bad, kittling, there are a lot of good folks mixed up among the dicey top hats, irons and thimbles.

27) Didsbury

Noteworthy Locations and Services: Spath Park, Chez Miserables, Captain Ramshackle's Pub, Churrascaria Orappa, Center for Shadow tech Research Facility, Prima Michelle's Pizza Parlour, Vurt-U-Want (3), Slick City (3), Vurturama (2), Whoompy's Burgers (8), Pop-A-Damn! walk-thru (6), Monstermart (1), Hotel (7), UrBlurb Shop (1), Pharma-Logico (10), Library (2), District Council Hall, MPD station (3), Train station (3).

Didsbury of today would be barely recognizable to anyone living in the area just twenty years ago. Once known as Didsbury West, this district lies on the north bank of the River Mersey, where a steady stream of canal boats drift and sell their odd wares to the public. Rover Faires are common here, with the mostly dogman and robodog population of nomads selling various blackmarket items and miskel.

The newly rebuilt riverbanks are well constructed, lined with wonderful restaurants like Chez Miserables, Captain Ramshackle's and the new hot spot, Churrascaria Orappa, straight outta Cao Paulo. The Mersey riverbanks are a favorite place to congregate for both locals and tourists.

Shortly before the Pollen outbreak, the river flooded, as it is prone to, but the damage it caused was so extensive, many of the structures along the river bank were condemned and demolished. What was built in their place is a marvel of modern hi-tech architecture; a series of residential buildings built on a foundation system that rise and fall with the water levels of the river. Never again would a ground floor of a building along the Mersey be flooded.

This new real estate development exploded and the once-diverse bankside area was flash-gentrified, leaving only the rich and well-connected Mancunians. Several members of the Manchester Royal City Council live here, as well as several celebrity VurtStars and DJs.

Security is tightly controlled by the ShadowCop division of the MPD. Didsbury seems to have its own private ShadowCop units assigned to patrol the streets. But that would be illegal; an improper allocation of Royal City funds to benefit the rich and powerful of Didsbury. That would never happen, right?

This is also the district where the first of the riots following the great Pollen Outbreak took place. People from Didsbury aren't necessarily proud of this fact, and will usually deny it, stating that it started in neighboring Northenden. There is a regional rivalry with Northenden that seems to be growing. Didsbury's recent agreement with Yankton to alleviate traffic in the two districts will likely make traffic in Northenden much worse. But the permits have been approved by the Royal City Department of Transportation,with construction set to begin any day now. It pays to have friends in high places.

ON FINE MANCUNIAN CUISINE...

I was feeling so empty inside, and food was all I could turn to. The table was sagging under the weight of dishes. It was a spread of joy; my mouth was dripping. There were the tiny wings of larks, stewed in pig's blood. There were the ink sacs of squids, leaking onto a bed of palms. There were the eggs of the wren, griddled over charcoal, with a saffron marinade. And there were the encrusted eyes of virgin lambs, smothered in dark filaments of horse bread, deep fried in shadow oil.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

28) Brooklands

Noteworthy Locations and Services: Manchester PD training facility, Manchester PD areodome, Manchester PD historical museum, Vurt-U-Want (3), Slick City (2), Vurturama (1), Whoompy's Burgers (x23), Pop-A-Damn! walk-thru (12), , Hotel (10), Pharma-Logico (1), Library (3), District Council Hall, MPD station (3), Train station (1).

Brooklands is not a safe place for anyone with an arrest record. The MPD's shadowboxes run patrols, scanning their inpho-beams over everything. This is where the new recruits are sent for basic training. It's common to see long lines of recruits wearing black trackies, jogging up and down the sidewalks in line.

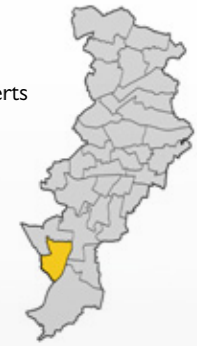
Brooklands has no real gangs, but it does have its fair share of roving ghost cats. The problem is a very real one, with some groups of ghost cats congregating in the hundreds, making life unpleasant for all within earshot. It feels like the harder you work at getting rid of them, harder it is to keep their numbers down. Young recruits from the MPD facility are often sent out on patrols to cull the population.

There are no sit-down restaurants in the district, but there is a Whoompy's Burger every two or three

blocks, and a dozen Pop-A-Damn! walk-thrus. All children between the ages of 5 and 18 are expected to be boarded and schooled elsewhere; the sight of a child on the streets during the school year is a rarity. The District Council saves a fortune on insurance and education costs. That extra money is funneled into improving the MPD facilities that directly affect the majority of the residents. Streets are repaired quickly here, and traffic moves at a relatively steady clip. Unless you are on the wrong side of the law, life is likely predictably boring and safe in Brooklands.

29) Baguley

Noteworthy Locations and Services:
Brookway MegaPlex, Roundthorn Industrial Estates, Pilkington Library, The Blinded Sundial Club, Ristorante Carpignano, Diamond Doug's Bar and Grill, Badgerwood Theme Park, Vurt-U-Want (5), Slick City (2), Vurturama (4), Whoompy's Burgers (4), Pop-A-Damn! walk-thru (7), Monstermart (7), Hotel (14), UrBlurb Shop (5), Pharma-Logico (11), Library (2), District Council Hall, MPD station (3), Train station (3).



Baguley is a strange place, even for Manchester. Some say that it's the abnormally high volume of the adverts here that caused the identifiable "Baguley accent". Speaking like a local consists of yelling loudly, over-enunciating and making offensively wild hand gestures.

The hum of blurbflies does seem to be louder here than other districts, but that can be explained. The towering office and residential buildings are covered in reflective glass, and many of the taller structures have large terraces and walkways connecting above. Sound is trapped and amplified back down towards the poor ears of the punters on the street. Wear earplugs in Baguley, you'll thank me later. Sonic Jingles are bad enough at regular volume but at three times normal, there's danger of permanent damage. Everything seems to echo oddly, and navigating by sound is nearly impossible. Sound simply doesn't act the way it should here. There may be a scientific explanation for it, but that's it at the most basic—Sound acts funny in Baguley.

Overpopulation has reached a breaking point here, with filthy 3'X5' studio apartments in Roundthorn renting out for 25K a month. There is simply no more space to build residential buildings. Some of the fancier restaurants have started charging an occupation fee at 10 quid a minute, just to sit down.

Traffic is almost always at a total standstill in Baguley, hundreds of cars are simply abandoned on the road every month by the rich and impatient. Specialized blurbflies are charged with identifying these automobiles and dismantling them piece by piece on the road, flying the vehicle out component by component to the appropriate buyer or recycling center.

Crime is on the rise in Baguley, and the Royal City Council has just allocated a huge sum of money to open two additional MPD stations in the area. Someone on the District Council has friends in high places it seems.

30) Northenden

Noteworthy Locations and Services:
Palatine Village Luxury housing estates, Churrascaria Sograga, Club Mercy, Club Overspill, Mighty Mike's Haze-hut, Vurt-U-Want (5), Slick City (5), Vurturama (3), Whoompy's Burgers (5), Pop-A-Damn! walk-thru (6), Monstermart (10), Hotel (15), UrBlurb Shop (5), Pharma-Logico (7), Library (3), District Council Hall, MPD station (1), Train station (4).

Until very recently, Northenden's star was on the rise in Manchester. A decade of solid investment re-created the district, making it a tourist destination and a desirable place to live. Club Overspill was rebuilt 5 years ago and is still one of the best places to experience the immersive live shows of master DJs like Dingo Tush, DJ Perfume Sword, and Lacy GoHome. featherFest is held here every year, drawing huge crowds from all over the real world, bringing in a lot of money for the local businesses. The Palatine Village Luxury housing estates are home to over 5,000 residents. The central tower, known as The Spindle, rises 75 stories and is one of the taller buildings in Manchester. Northenden had some shady areas, but it's generally in good shape and improving noticeably.

Badgerwood Theme Park: Considered out-dated by most, the few rides they have here seem to be just on the cusp of legal and likely not properly permitted. It's owned by Slick City, so the product placement is beyond intrusive, but relatively harmless and low budget. The upside is that the lack of crowds and security make this location a favorite meeting spot for the discerning street punk.

However, now it seems that some very big city back-room deals have slowed the progress for Northenden. Neighboring Didsbury's recent plan with Yankton to alleviate traffic in the two districts will likely worsen traffic in Northenden, and it seems that no one in the Centre Borough Council is listening to their complaints.

There have been demonstrations in the streets, but few in the megacity are paying attention. There have been some incidents of violence connected to the issue, but so far, no one group has come forward to claim responsibility. The MPD has been slower and slower to respond to calls in this area, much of the staff from the Northenden station has been reallocated to Didsbury. It's as if Manchester is just shutting its eyes, waiting for Northenden to disappear.

31) Sharston

Noteworthy Locations and Services: Shent's Fields Park, Sharston Green warehouse district, Lujo's Map Shop, Original Chimera Corporation factory, Vurt-U-Want (3), Vurturama (2), Pop-A-Damn! walk-thru (5), Monstermart (4), Hotel (4), Library (1), District Council Hall, Train station (2).

Some call this district *Chimera-land* or *Chimera-ville* due to the pervasive presence the megacorp has here. The original Chimera Corp feather factory opened here almost 40 years ago in the former Wythenshawe Bus Garage site. Back then, the Vurt feather industry was still in its infancy, and many in the public were hesitant to trust this new, untested form of potentially lethal entertainment.

Chimera Corp was the first to really make it big. Some of the most well-known Vurt feathers were actually created 100% on site, from initial concept to packaging and distribution. This is one of the reasons that featherhead tourists from all over make the pilgrimage to see the back studios and lots where geniuses like Cher Phoner, Tom Jasmine and Quentin Tarantula once worked together, before they became legends.

There are no Slick City feather stores in this district, only Vurt-U-Wants and Vurturamas. Licensing restrictions can be a bitch.

Security here is uber tight, controlled by the Chimera Corp private security force. Their security drone population is immense and they have the most advanced mech suits available. Skyscrapers here in Sharston are often 100 stories or more, and each Chimera Corp owned building has its own mech suit "guardian angel". That's what they're calling them at least.

The MPD considers this area a huge no-go, and you should too!

32) Woodhouse Park

Noteworthy Locations and Services: Shent's Royal Manchester Airport- Centre (IRMAC), Wythensawe ShimmyPlex, Emma-Jurema bar, Moss Nook Stadium, Chez Gizmo, Club Mutt's Nuts, Vurt-U-Want (2), Slick City (1), Whoompy's Burgers (3), Pop-A-Damn! walk-thru (3), Monstermart (1), Hotel (4), Pharma-Logico (3), District Council Hall, MPD station (2), Train station (2).

Right on the edge of the largest dogman-only community in the real world is perhaps the most anti-dogman community in Manchester. Tensions are always high; every time rubbish bin falls, everyone hits the deck, expecting bullets. It's no way to live, but there are decent jobs here in Woodhouse Park and MPD holds down the law. Residents work at the International Airport, the Moss Nook Event Stadium, even the infamous Wythensawe ShimmyPlex. Don't expect to get hired if you have visible Dog traits, it's a pretty small group of anti-Dog bigots that call the shots in this district.

Much of the best DogMusic stars got their start in the (in)famous Mutt's Nuts club. Even Old Das Uberdog is known to still show up here from time to time, as do other well known Mancs with Dog genetics. As a dogman club in an anti-dogman area, the vibe here is understandably electric. Club Mutt's Nuts has its own private security drones.

The homicide rate in Woodhouse Park is high, even by Manchester standards. Discharging firearms within city limits may have been outlawed, but that hasn't stopped Woodhouse Park. More firearms are confiscated here than anywhere else. Many know that if you want to get an untraceable gun, you go to "the Wood".

I don't go there. Neither should you. You wouldn't last a minute with your attitude, you'd be lost in the Wood.

NON-CHESTER (THE REST OF THE REAL WORLD)

There is a lot that is happening beyond the City Walls of Old Man. The rest of the real world is out there, happening.

There's so, so much to talk about. We could start with the fall of Birmingham or Bristol, the fall of Singland, or the fall of Europe. So many places fell. Maybe you should hear more about the rise of the global city-state model, or the rise of Cao Paulo or Chroma, or rising tensions within London, or rising prices everywhere, or rising populations everywhere. Everywhere, everything, constantly rising and falling and rising. No wonder we're all sick.

We're going to save all those conversations all for another time. Frankly, it bores me.

I'll never leave Manchester, I see no reason. In all the years I've been here, I've never once left. I came in as an enterprising young outsider, full of delusions I'd picked up from the dying empire I was escaping. Decades passed and I got to see it all grow and unfold around me like a fractal.

I survived, more or less. I wish the same for you, kittling

HISTORY OF MANCHESTER

Manchester. The real world. This is where you live, and unless you are a Pure Vurt being, this is where you were born. Planet Earth is four and a half billion years old, has a strong magnetic field, a functioning ozone layer, and stable gravity. We are part of an 8 planet solar system and have just now begun exploring outside our galactic neighborhood with Shadow tech assisted observation probes. We consider ourselves to be advanced. We like to think of ourselves as brilliant. We rule the real world.

It's important to differentiate the real world and the Vurt World, as they exist simultaneously as part of Earth's reality. Up until very recently, human beings thought that the world of dreams and myths was their creation, that simply inventing a story was an act of creation. We assumed that the nebulous world of dreams was imagined, that no substantive connection was shared between dreams and their dreamers.

The real world and the Vurt World each contributed greatly to each other's evolution over the course of thousands of years, but it's been less than 100 years since since each realized the other existed. We called them living dreams, aliens, things from outer space. They called us storytellers, bards, Real-Worlders.

Our communication was very spotty at first, mostly misunderstood attempts by both sides.

Miss Sayer was the first in a long line of mathemagicians. It was right after the second world war and her mathemagickal work allowed us to vastly expand our former narrow view, show us that we were not alone, that dreams could be tracked and traced,

using the Mechanisms of Exchange. We were part of the Univurt.

We learned back then that the Vurt World is an actual place, but much, much larger that our small planet, following different laws of physics, terrifying and beautiful. The pioneers like Miss Sayer just opened the door for the next generations of Vurt explorers—those that wanted a way to control the Mechanisms of Exchange and chart a course to the land of our neighbors on opposite sides of the looking glass.

RANDOMINOES AND THE RISE OF CHIEF TAKSHAKA

Skip ahead 50 years, it was around the turn of the century and we still hadn't yet been able to travel into the Vurt World, but we could measure its effects. Using what we knew of the Mechanisms of Exchange, the scientific community began to re-adjust all former models that had been based on singular reality; we made huge, immediate leaps forward in physics and astronomy.

We were so close to a breakthrough, and the real world was falling ever more deeply in love with numbers. What did we do with all that new mathemagickal knowledge? We set up a Randomino lottery! We *Played to Win!*

Well, we got fucked is what happened, and the skies

have been choked with blurbflies ever since.

Mancunians went mad over the Randomino fiasco and the now defunct Mr. Million's House of Chances. It was a very ugly time for Old Man, but full of possibility. Game Cat magazine had just come out, reviewing the best parties, drugs and clubs in Manchester. Gumbo YaYa began his pirate-radio show during this time as well. There were more and more "dreamsnakes" that had appeared from out of nowhere, and blurbflies buzzed about incessantly and broadcast the latest gossip news between advert jingles for Spook Cola, Celeborg and NanoSham. Burger-cops ate 3 meals a day at Whoompy's and the River Irwell was full of rubbish.

While the public was focused on the shocking case details of Mr. Millions and his Lottery cronies at the House of Chances, a quiet announcement was made by the Manchester Police Department that many in the ranks were neither expecting, nor supportive of—Takshaka, dragon-king of the Nagas had been appointed the chief of police in Manchester. A Vurt being was now running the security for the city, bringing in the infamous shadowcops to help lay down the law and put an end to the epidemic of drugs and crime. A war on drugs! Led by a fucking dragon! We all know how that turned out, don't we?

MATHEMAGICK AND THE NEW SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

Mathematica Magica! We were bewitched by the beauty and power in the numbers, we dabbled in nymphomation, amorphology, dream theory. The doors to our minds unlocked and it felt as if all channels were open to us, beckoning. The Vurt World was close—finally within our grasp. The Mechanisms of Exchange remixed our understanding of reality. We applied our best minds to improving our lives, remixing genetics through the newly accepted schools of Vurtology, Musickology, Randomolgy, and Mathemagick—only to have it blow up in our face with a worldwide epidemic of sterility.

FECUNDITY-10

The black air of Thanatos. It drifted in overnight, unseen. Then that was it. Humans stopped.

After a fairly steady rise in birthrates for most of recorded history, Homo Sapiens had nearly stopped having offspring. There had been no warning; we had poisoned ourselves with our own elixirs.

Humanity was not going to survive, it became clear. We needed a way to break through, to immediately improve ourselves on a genetic level and make quick and easy reproduction the solitary goal. We pooled our knowledge—Musickological advances in DNA-shifting remix recording combined with Randomology-assisted chemistry, all run through models based on early Mathemagickal work done by Miss Sayer herself.

ON FECUNDITY 10...

Fecundity 10 was the Authorities' answer to the black air of Thanatos, a plague of sterility that had covered England... Under the influence of Fecundity-10, ten thousand babies were conceived. Desire was overheated. The pure wanted more than purity, they wanted dogs, they wanted robos, they wanted Vurt-beings. And babies were made from this. Fecundity-10 had broken down the cellular barriers between species. The Authorities banned the use of Fecundity-10. Of course, nobody listened. Fecundity-10 became a bootleg drug, liquid or feather, and already it was firmly at home in the gene pool.

-Pollen, Jeff Noon

The greatest human minds in the real world put their heads together, unified in the common threat of extinction. We dove into the numbers, the glorious, terrible, mathemagickal numbers, and in desperation, we created our solution.

It started with a pill—better living through chemistry: Fecundity-10! A new pharmaceutical answer to our fertility problems with *No. Major. Known. Side. Effects.* Fecundity-10 seemed to work almost instantly. We broke down both intended and unintended reproductive barriers. The over-the-counter game changer.

As we all know, Fecundity-10 worked so well, it almost killed us. We outlawed it, and the unknown side effects have changed humanity forever—it somehow broke down the previous intramodal barriers of breeding between 5 particular forms of life. I say *somehow* because we still only have theories as to why those 5 previously incompatible entities ended up being—made *available* to each other, genetically speaking. Human, Robo, Dog, Vurt, and Shadow. With our genes around our ankles, we crossed ourselves for salvation.

The unthinkable happened, again and again, and within a few decades, totally new names had to be chosen to replace species and race, which now no longer had much taxonomic value.

We now call them *modes of being now*. Today there are 30 modes of being walking the streets of the real world.

31, if you count Zombies.

Genes were mixed and remixed and re-re-re-remixed. dogman and RoboMen were the first two new modes of being that began to procreate at rates that Pure Humans simply couldn't match, even with the best pharmaceutical assistance. By the time we were getting into the 3rd and 4th generation of intermixing, everything went from weird to weirder. Our real world had become unrecognizable and was growing moreso every day.

Manchester was the center of it all, and more and more people began arriving. England became Singland and the London-based government tried to show its regional dominance over its growing Northern neighbor.

THE FIRST VURT BOOM

It's been almost 40 years since the barriers between worlds were breached by a young Mancunian girl named Celia Hobart. She showed us how to make feathers into *feathers*. Already, ideas like collective consciousness and telepathy were being studied seriously. Research into dream theory was no longer considered unscientific or a shameful waste of time; quite the contrary. We had a better understanding of the Mechanisms of Exchange that dictate travel between the Real and Vurt Worlds.

We already knew that there was an entire world that strangely mirrored our own. A tangible place that could be tapped into if we only found a way to create a key to unlock the mirror, to step through the looking glass—who knew the key would be shaped like a feather? Or that a young street kid would be the one to show us how it all worked?

Long live the Queen of Dreams, Queen Hobart, may she forever be at peace and dream. Shhhhh...

BOOM! The real world had Vurt feathers! We now had mathemagickal keys to doors in our minds that opened sneaky pathways to the Vurt World. The residents of the Vurt World were as surprised to see us as we were to see them.

It would take just a decade or so before the majority of the world was hopelessly hooked on Vurt feathers. Swaps began to take place more often, randomly switching out a person from the real world with a Vurt

ON THE ORIGIN OF ZOMBIES...

Fecundity-10 had broken down the cellular barriers between species... The Casanova of drugs, there were no limits to what you could love. Even the dead were desirable, but the recently dead were especially so. They were shimmering waves of decay. Pures and dogs, robos and Vurts; they were all up for the pleasures of necrophilia. The chemical hands of Casanova reached deep, into the darkest genes.

Babies were made from these terrible couplings: half and half creatures, expelled from dead wombs. And they were born two ways, boy or girl, ugliness or beauty. The Authorities called the boy-children Non-Viable Lifeforms. Zombies, Ghosts, Half-alivers, these were their given names... Their ugliness was distasteful to the Authorities; NVLs were banned from the cities. They would have to make their desperate half-life out in the bleak places, the moors, which they named Limbo, after their plight.

But if the child of the grave was a girl...well then, she would have only the shadow of death upon her. That child would be very beautiful, because of this dark presence, this body of smoke she carried within her own. And because all living things carry the shadow of death within them, albeit unknowingly, shadowgirls could join their Shadow to the living. They could read the secret desires of the mind... These beauties had veins of smoke. A trace of death, clinging on to life.

-Pollen, Jeff Noon

Being from the Vurt World. The slow trickle of Vurt genetics began to seep into the already cloudy gene pool that resulted from Fecundity-10 just a few years earlier.

Officially, Manchester was going to welcome them with open arms. Unofficially, the prices for Vurt flesh were already being set and bounty hunters were being let loose. With the 5 pure modes of being mixing freely in Manchester, we found ourselves thrust headfirst into the 21st century, kicking and screaming the whole time. Manchester had given the real world the gift of Vurt feathers.

Every new Vurt feather meant a new doorway into the Vurt World, remixed dreams and deep knowledge. Information could be stored in certain feathers, and the way we connected to each other in the real world shifted beyond anything we'd anticipated. Shadow tech blossomed and led to the development of the Personal Data feather that everyone now owns. Why use a digital internet when you can connect through sweet-tasting feathers? Communication technology all over the planet was re-directed towards this free access communication medium. It's cliche, but the the rest is history.

The hyperprocessing power of those with Robo genetics led to advancements in architecture and material improvements that allow for mega-structures like 250 story office buildings. As Manchester's population exploded, the era of non-stop construction started.

We kept making mistakes, making love, making more babies. Genes kept mixing, twisting, remixing, retwisting. With Dogs, Robos, Shadows, Humans and Vurt beings crossbreeding, we were now experiencing both Worlds on so many more levels than before. Now the population was exploding and we needed a way to pass the time.

ON VAZ...

Sometimes it feels like the whole world is smeared with Vaz

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

THE MIRACLE OF VAZ

At the same time that young Celia Hobart was creating the first Vurt feather, a young wunderkind programmer named Jazir Malik had just cracked the codes and found a way to hack blurbflies. By extracting their biofluid, their essence, he discovered how to control them, how to improve their systems and expand their use past the simple advertising unit. Many see him as the father of modern Engimology, the first Admin.

Then this teenage master-hacker found that blurbfly fluid hid an even deeper secret, that it could be refined and modified into an entirely new substance. Jazir started processing it into a product he called Vaz. Jaz's Vav. Lovely, lovely, Vaz!

Jazir Malik, a 16 year old boy, had created the product everyone in the real world wanted. This young genius hacker and blurbfly controller would not only become the richest person on the planet, but also the future Prime Minister of Singland—all before turning 21.

As Prime Minister, Malik immediately began restructuring the national government in London, moving all operations North to his hometown of Manchester. As the country's economic growth remained concentrated in Manchester, the young Prime Minister began investing billions from his Vaz International megacorp, getting others to follow suit, all with the clear intention to redevelop Manchester as an autonomous city-state.

Prime Minister Jaz Malik himself led the movement to secede from Singland and become one of the top economies in the real world. By then, the Vurt feather economic boom and Vaz boom both made this economic dream a reality. No more Singland for Manchester, time to re-draw all borough and district lines and build a Great Wall.

When Prime Minister Jaz announced that elections would be held for the position of king, the people quickly voted and made him king. Everything he's worked for has been a success so far, and that is why he has been re-elected thrice by a landslide margin. He's certainly not without scandal, but nothing seems to stick to Manchester's First Royal Golden Boy. Recently however, the public seems to have turned on their beloved king, and more and more Mancunians talk openly about pulling the throne out from under him. `

THE POLLEN OUTBREAK

Twenty years ago, when the Pollen Outbreak hit the real world like a global viral infection, it landed hardest on Manchester. We took the brunt of the invasion. Rich and well-connected Mancs like young King Jaz were able to hide deep underground in bunkers built under the new Royal Palace. Most others were not so lucky. Life on this planet was truly in danger from an invading force in the form of Pollen. Sentient plants from the Vurt World were trying to become a 6th Pure mode of being to add to the genetic mix.

We weren't having any of that, thank you very much. Many lives were lost through asphyxiating Pollen attacks on weakened lungs, but we prevailed and drove them back—for now.

The worldwide celebrations that followed started out peacefully; dancing in the streets, clubs overflowing, lovers kissing, buddies high-fiving, all was good in Old Man. But somehow things turned ugly. What began as a small cluster of riots in Didsbury spread outwards. It wasn't long before all of Manchester seemed to be full

of screams, broken glass and rage; angry punks stealing anything they could get their hand on. Lives were lost, the riots were no joke.

THE SECOND VURT BOOM AND BEYOND

From out of the ashes to the top of the heap, Old Man! The fragile post-Pollen Manchester economy experienced a second major Vurt feather Boom that shot the megacity of Manchester solidly into first place. feathers were already popular, but new technology had taken the experience to entirely new levels. New mechanisms had been discovered that allowed users to bring special items into the Vurt World with them, equipping themselves with weapons and certain items before taking on the lethal Black and Yellow feathers. For the death-defying featherheads among us, it meant that while what we were doing was still life-threatening, at least we had a chance.

In other parts of the real world where laws were more lax, the Black and Yellow feather sales exploded, and fueled the underground feather market in Manchester as well. It may be illegal, but you've probably done a Black or Yellow yourself, kittling. No shame here.

At this point, it felt like everyone wanted to be a Manc, copying our style, our music, even our form of government. All over the real world, large mega-cities were following Manchester's example and seceding from their nations, declaring themselves city-states, redistricting and building large walls around their borders. It wasn't always as smooth a transition as it was for Manchester, and many wars around the world have been started with this bold action; most are still raging.

In the two decades since the Pollen Outbreak and riots, the population of the real world has tripled. Living space is at an uberpremium in a megacity like Manchester, construction and street rerouting is never-ending, and the megacorps that got in on the ground floor of the feather and pharma industries are making record profits every quarter.

Marketing for all these new companies and products means that blurbflies are being programmed to spout more jingles than ever; that the skies, already full of mechanical bugs, are now twice as crowded. Logos and slogans blink on and off on, fluttering mechanical wings light up in swirling LEDs, forming mesmerizing patterns, selling us drugs or food or sex or hope or love or tech or art or feathers—or all of the above.

The population of the real world is growing more diverse by the day, and we're all more hooked on Vurt feathers than ever. Mega-cities are dealing with over-population whether they like it or not, finding varying degrees of success. People everywhere share a general sense of dissatisfaction with the way things are being controlled, how unjust the system is, how divided we've become.

Vurt feathers are everywhere, and the residents of the real world are connecting with each other in the Vurt World, sharing dreams and nightmares. Only Australia, with its strict No-Vurt policies is being left behind. The rest of the real world is facing the future with feathers in our mouths and and song in our hearts.

TIMELINE OF RECENT EVENTS

- Miss Sayer cracks the mathemagickal code, loses mind.
- real world "discovers" Vurt World exists, but we cannot travel there yet. Many fields of science shift to address this.
- Game Cat Magazine founded.
- blurbflies invented.
- House of Chances Randomino debacle.
- Vaz invented by precocious teenager Jazir Malik.
- Vurt feathers invented. Most attribute this to Celia Hobart.
- Game Cat Magazine publishes first Vurt feather review.
- Gumbo YaYa starts his pirate radio station.
- Infertility epidemic followed by Fecundity-10 incident.
- Vaz economic boom.
- Vurt feather economic boom #1.
- Vurt-U-Want, Vurturama and Slick City all founded.
- Bottletown is born - City Council stops funding district's sanitation department.
- Discharging firearms in Manchester is outlawed.
- Turdsville becomes first official dogman enclave in Manchester.
- Das Uberdog is the first mixed-mode being to become famous.
- MPD restructured after Chief Takshaka is removed from office.
- Young Jazir Malik elected Prime Minister of all Singland, but immediately begins a push for Manchester's autonomy.
- Secession from Singland. Declaration of city-state status.
- Creation of Manchester Royal Councils by Prime Minister Jaz.
- City redistricting and incorporation of surrounding areas.
- The Great Wall of Manchester is built / Expulsion of all NVLs.
- 1st election of king of Manchester. Jazir Malik becomes king.
- 1st of many assassination attempts on King Jaz occurs during coronation ceremony.
- Introvert/Introvurt scandal.
- London and Brighton both go city-state, Singland is no more.
- Celeborg virus and subsequent cover-up.
- King Jaz re-elected. Another near-miss assassination attempt.
- Pollen Outbreak. Starts in Manchester, spreads worldwide.
- Outbreak contained, followed by widespread rioting.
- MPD restructured AGAIN after public outcry.
- High-Rise wars- the cost of living in Manchester skyrockets.
- Vurt feather economic boom #2.
- King Jaz re-elected (third term), appoints Long Distance Davis as new head of the Royal Yeoman Warders, an unpopular move.
- Population of Manchester reaches a quarter billion.
- King Jaz re-elected (fourth term). Scandal after scandal follow, his edicts become more and more aggressive.
- Manchester is a tinder box—there have never been more hate-groups, never more violence, never more civil unrest.
- *** Current Time

JACKSON'S PRAYER

An eye for an eye, a dream for a life. And a life for a dream. And so it goes on, the eternal dance of give and take. And if I could add up all the things I've lost and all the things I've gained due to Miss Hobart and her sodding constant, I should hope I would end up equal at the end, finely balanced. But life doesn't follow the manuals, natch, and every year it seems I lose a little more than I gain.

Hair, blood, skin cells, fingernails, clothes, even the words out of my mouth...

Soon enough I'll be more alive in the dreamworld than in reality. And this body will fall apart at the seams. Into dust. And even my sodding dust, well you can bet Miss H will take that as well. What the hell is she building in the Never Ever Neverland, some kind of giant flesh machine made out of human bits and bats, yeah sure, and the old kitchen sink and all?

Listen up. I have dreamt me some serious feathers in a long life of getting lost and this I know for sure: keep your eyes peeled and say a prayer and wish on a star and hope to God (or whoever's really in charge) that enough of you is left in the world to play the game, the game, the game, because life is the game and the game is life, as it was and as it shall ever be. Amen.

It's the one thing Miss H can't control: who wins, who loses. Chance operations. The roll of the dice, the flight of the bullet and where it happens to land. And how my wound is mine alone, never taken and never to be taken, no, never. I imagine it will be the last part of me left on planet Earth, long after the body has gone: the wound alone.

I ask one thing of whichever sorry reprobate reads this screed, this festering manifesto, please bury my wound in a deep dark grave and seal it over good, and oh, throw in some nice pink feathers, will you, or better still, jab them all direct into the wound. I'd like that, a nice bit of porno in the afterlife, or the afterdream, or wherever I bloody well end up.

And remember the motto. Keep on. Dream on. Roll on, roll on for the good times.

- Jeff Noon

CHAPTER 15

THE VURT WORLD

BURIED REMAINS

Bella discovered it by chance while playing a low level blue called O Mistress Mine! She took one tiny step sideways, and turned round and found herself alone, her dreaming companions nowhere to be seen. And she realised quickly enough that she'd fallen through some kind of fault or portal in the wall, because now she was inside a whole other Vurt dream entirely.

Bella, we ain't in Kansas anymore. We're not even in Sasnak, where they do everything people in Kansas do, but backwards.

No. This was a new vision in town. Serious. A land of clouded faces and mist monsters and strangling fog and mirage mirrors galore. And a forest that soon engulfed her as though night was a black curtain being drawn across day. But she walked on, being that kind of dreamer, the forward-thinking kind, and soon enough came to a clearing in the trees where an old stone well stood, crumbling away, the winding mechanism cracked and broken. She looked over the rim and saw that the well was dry, but not empty. Instead of water or any kind of liquid, it contained a whole bunch of feathers, hundreds of them, thousands even. All the colours you could think of and plenty you couldn't: scarlet, crimson, indigo, emerald, ultraviolet, silver and gold, and every mixture in-between, a rainbow of dreams.

So Bella reckoned she'd hit the jackpot, but when she examined a few of the choice finds, all she saw were reject feathers, dreams that had never made it past the testing stage. Desires discarded, failed adventures, nothingness flights, the destitute, the tired, the poor, the huddled mass of dream yearning to float free, the wretched refuse of the skull's far shore. The sick, the comatose, the faulty, the flotsam and jetsam of Vurt. And Bella thought to herself, 'This is like that story I heard, when they buried all those unsold computer games in the Mexican desert back in the dark ages. This old broken-down well in the forest is where feathers go to die when their dreams are decommissioned. The moon shone down golden upon the scene, and the feathers stirred.

Bella couldn't help herself: she plunged first her hands, and then her arms up to the elbows, and then up to the shoulders, into the hoard. And even though the dreams were ill-designed, or faulty, or even boring or badly made, still she felt more alive than ever. The flights stirred around her skin as though still worthy of play, and in her mind she heard the rustling and the shimmering of all the long-forgotten adventures. Here was the treasure. Here was the sound of a door opening in a forest clearing. Here was the whisper of the dark at the back of the skull. Here was second-rate bliss, the only kind worth knowing for a teenage girl of dreampunk sensibility.

And from that day she flew alone, her wings silent and raggedy, and tattered at the edges where the moonlight glinted.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

The Vurt world is a real place, separate from this, the real world. It was always there, waiting to be discovered. The Vurt is not an alien planet—it's not bound by the same laws of nature and physics that we are here in the real world. It's an amorphous, ever-expanding place, and still largely a mystery to us.

When humans and dogs first began to dream, the Vurt world began to take shape, making our dreams and nightmares, our myths and legends real. The locales and exotic landscapes that we have discovered there are molded out of free-form dream matter, and to the beings that dwell there, we are the *storytellers*.

The Vurt was initially discovered by a mathemagician named Celia Hobart, who created the first Vurt feather, granting us access to the world of our dreams. With feathers in our mouths we ride out of our skulls and into the dream, and while some feathers merely dip our noses into that pool, in others we swim so deep we might even reach the thing we call *the looking glass*, beyond which lies the raw and alien stuff of the Vurt world.

The more we dream the more the Vurt expands, brought to life from the raw dream material of that strange place. Dreams interacting with other dreams, myths and legends mixing and splitting, growing. Tens of thousands of years of accumulated nightmares and madness, bliss and euphoria. The places and creatures of the Vurt world are tangible, they are real, many of which have yet to see or interact with a feathered-up storyteller from the real world.

VURT BEINGS

The Vurt is home to pure Vurt beings, whose appearance is as varied as imagination. They might appear as archetypical dream creatures: heroes, villians, fairies, dragons, mysterious beings that populate the dreams and nightmares of those of the real world. Or they may appear more amorphic, looking like something out of a horrific fever dream or hallucination. The collective subconsciousness of the real world may have an effect on how they look, but we didn't create them from scratch. Pure Vurt beings are made up of a physical substance called Live Dream (aka Live Drug, Vurt flesh). Think of it as a kind of clay formed from the dreamtime interaction between the real world and Vurt world. They're real, they have their own lives that they live in the Vurt world, their own mortal hopes, fears, motives, and flaws. It's only when we find them marooned here in our world that most people seem to remember that they are more than the cast of characters in a Vurt feather dream.

There are beings in the Vurt of such tremendous significance that they wield godlike power and influence inside their respective domains. Many of them have been whispered of and worshiped under different names over the centuries. Takshaka the King of Snakes, Nidhogg, Azazel, Baphomet, Loki, Kushtaka—their forms and character have been shaped and strengthened over countless dreams and nightmares.

Feathers crafted to access the origin dreams of these beings are always deadly Yellows of mythical status.

To take one is to invite death. Still, to take one and survive—that's the highest dreaming there is. Only the most experienced, fateful, or reckless featherhead enters these godlike Yellows to contend with what resides there. Those who have done so and lived, like the Stash Riders, have become legends of the streets.

The Stash Riders, page 355

Some Vurt beings have come to resent the "story-tellers" of the real world for their power to shape the Vurt world. Some even long for a way to cross over to the real world or break the balance that separates the two realities—to be liberated from the tyranny of our dreams.

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

It's well known that dreamers in the real world sometimes swap with beings from the Vurt, but we don't understand the turbulent mathemagick and mechanisms of exchange well enough to control it. Those who dream too deep, ride too close to the Looking Glass simply vanish, taking their body with them. Some say there's a way to come back, but the few accounts of swapbacks come from unreliable sources.

According to one account, about 30 years ago a young pure-human street punk was able to swap someone back, losing himself to the Vurt and becoming a dreaming legend

in the process. Any featherhead hanging around the Vurt-U-Want bins knows a version of it, but all agree that he ran with a gang called the Stash Riders.

Swaps between the Vurt world and the real world are based on Hobart's Constant, the Mechanisms of Exchange, Randomology, and many other mathemagickal theories and models which are still largely shrouded in mystery. We know how to craft Vurt feathers that will transport us to the Vurt world, but we still haven't cracked the code beyond that. We all know that we don't know it all. The dreamlike, ever-shifting geography of the Vurt world has not been mapped. But that doesn't stop thousands of intrepid real world explorers from trying. Reports of people getting swapped are becoming more frequent every day. Most are swapped due to their own foolishness and arrogance. black and Yellow feathers are potentially lethal, and directly involve our real world bodies, so stick to the Blues and Pinks unless you know what you're getting into. The Game Cat has stated that clearly enough, but some people just don't listen. Reading every issue of Game Cat Magazine doesn't make you an expert.

Now we've got an ever-growing flow of Vurt beings and small creatures leaking into our world from the Vurt. We're already running out of space here, and the more we real-world beings tap into the Vurt world, the more likely it is that we will continue feeding this influx. In Manchester, dreamsnake infestations are a real problem these days, and it's getting worse. What used to be a wild fringe theory is proving to have merit: Every time we take a feather and bring something in with us to the Vurt world, we're mucking about with the mechanisms of exchange. It's said that every time you take a pill while inside the feather trip, every time you shoot a bullet or use one of your items—swap! Something or someone from the Vurt pops into the real world. Ghost cats, dreamsnakes and shadowslugs are the most commonly swapped creatures, but in cases when objects of people of great value have been swapped, other, more sentient beings have appeared in our world. This issue is driving an even bigger cultural wedge between those with Vurt genetics and those without. Vurt pests are everywhere in the alleys of the city and their numbers are rising every day. While they're not always lethal, they are a terrifying nuisance. There are entire neighborhoods overrun by wailing ghost cats and places where everyone wears knee high boots to guard against dreamsnake bites. Is this epidemic really due to the objects we leave in the Vurt, or is there some other reason these creatures are swarming into our world?

ON SWAPS...

Whenever a Vurt creature made an illegal entrance into reality, something else, something random and therefore innocent, had to take its place in the dream. This was known as Hobart's Law of Exchange, because the two people or objects involved in the swap had to be of the same worth. A little give and take was allowed as long as it stayed within Hobart's Constant. Hobart was the discoverer of Vurt, and she had added this rule to the mechanism in order to maintain a balance between the dream and the real.

-Pollen, Jeff Noon

NAVIGATION IN THE VURT

Cartographer's note, page 362

When inside a feather, navigation rarely works the way it does in the real world, because there are no contiguous laws governing physics in the Vurt. Places in the Vurt link together the way that thoughts do—sometimes in an orderly fashion and at others veering into unexpected territory. Some locations are hard to escape, like a spot in maze you keep finding your way back to. We all know how a place feels in a dream. You can't just choose to up and walk somewhere else. In fact, in a dream you might not even know what other places exist.

For most locations in a Vurt dream there is something which must be done, words to speak or thoughts to think that lead you there. These paths are called dreamways. Sometimes by defeating a swarm of dreamsnakes, or shooting lightning into the crowd, you find yourself in another location. Other dreams have doors to unlock, or trees that you can climb up to new horizons like Jack and his beanstalk. Anything that's ever happened in a dream can happen in a Vurt, and understanding that is helpful when trying to find your way.

Some dreamways are hidden or as yet undiscovered, and can allow the dreamer to side-step into an entirely different Vurt. These secret paths connect places in the Vurt which are tethered to each other in some way. For example, inside a Vurt which allows you to become one of Robin Hood's gang of merry men, there may be a dreamway that connects to a Questing Beast episode where King Pillowsnore explores an ancient version of Sherwood Forest. The scene is similar, but not the same. More often, these tethers are not related to the physical setting of a dream, but are connected to themes and ideas, like surrendering to dark desires, heroic sacrifice for the one you love, or getting lost and not wanting to be found. There are stories of dreamers blundering from one dream into another—discovering one of one of these hidden ways by accidentally pulling on a significant thread of logic that is tethered to another dream. For all navigation in the Vurt, the maxim holds true: **Forget about distance and direction, you've got to find the narrative connection**.

Because mathemagick is a language which can describe and affect both the Vurt and the real world, these secret dreamways can be exploited by an advanced mathemagician. Travelling from one dream into another in this way is know as *side hacking*.

VURT CARTOGRAPHY

Those who have made it their life's work to unravel the secrets of the Vurt world and how to navigate in dreams are called Vurt cartographers. This realm of study requires so much feather taking that Vurt cartographers often appear quite mad in the real world. However, when examined in the Vurt, the subjects of their ravings and jottings sometimes impart to the reader an understanding of the nature of the Vurt which can reveal shortcuts, clues, or grant incredible temporary powers. These scrawlings and muttered secrets are called cartographer's notes.

BLOSSOMING

Along the slow edge of waking, Katerina walks, gathering dream flowers. These she brings back with her each morning, in exchange for a few drops of blood pricked from her palm with a needle. Once awake she quickly gathers the nectar from within the petals and smears it on the wound in her hand. By day she walks down to the meadow or the waste ground behind the old car factory and waits for the bees to come to her, to land on her palm and tickle her as they feed. The hives vibrate with song as the larvae grow fat. Katarina's wound closes and seals itself and glows with a yellow light under the full moon. Her body trembles as the pollen travels her veins. Her uncle told her once: We are what we dream of ourselves, nothing more. She knows that now, as the flowers blossom on her skin, as the roots tangle around her bed.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

PROBLEM SOLVING IN THE VURT

RIDDLES

In order to win a feather, the dreamer must overcome challenges in the dream. There may be monsters to fight against or run from, mountains to climb or mazes to solve. In the Vurt, any encounter than you face, even if it appears to be a straightforward task, may actually be a riddle.

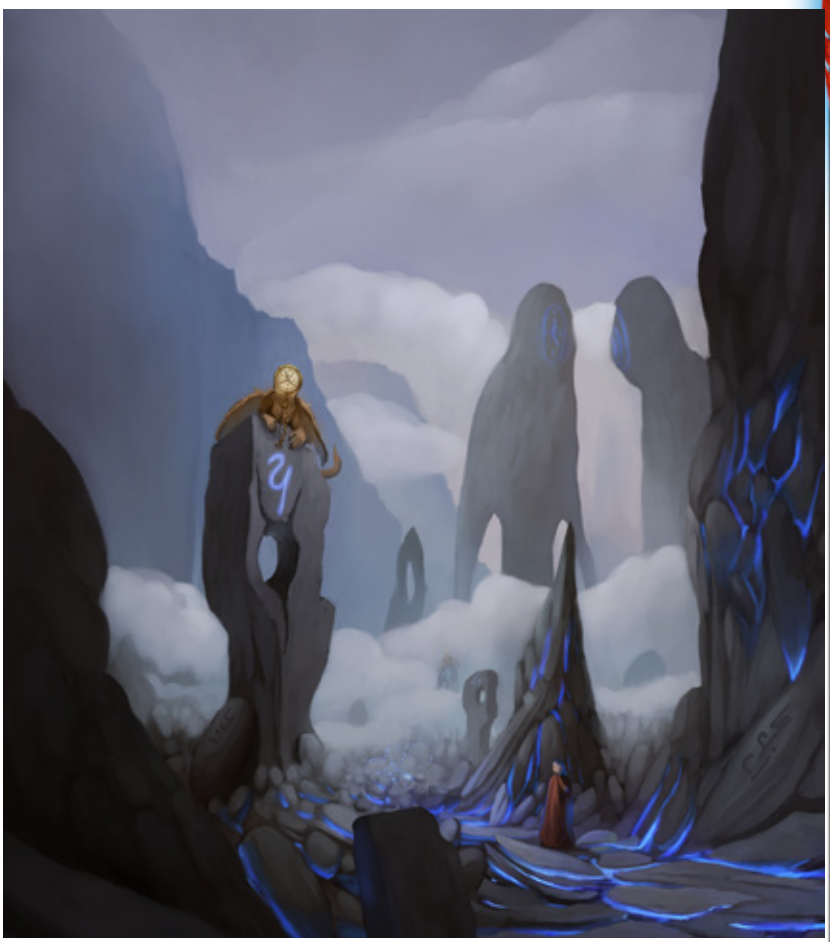
The most obvious form a riddle can take is an NPC presenting the dreamer with a trick question or word puzzle (the classic Sphinx scenario). But fighting with a powerful beast can also be a riddle; for example, it might only be defeated by giving up and allowing yourself to be killed (the classic Kenobi scenario), or by somehow cheating and breaking the rules which you assumed were set in stone (the classic Kobayashi Maru). Dreamers should always pay attention to the details, the introduction, the soundtrack, to the fine print.

Generally, legal dreams don't expect much from the dreamer in terms of solving riddles when it comes to winning. But in Blacks and Yellows, how to win the dream is rarely spelled out.

DREAM LOGIC

Dream logic is what you get when you switch off certain parts of your brain and turn other parts up to max volume. The dorsolateral cortex, which is very clear on the subject of rollerblading across a fan of moonbeams, is left drooling on the couch when the PC takes a Vurt feather.

Since the dreamers of the real world give shape to it, the very foundation of the Vurt world is without logic. That means walking straight down a path toward a distant city will be just as likely to lead you away from it, and turning around and walking away might put you at it's gates in a single step. Falling upwards, walking on the underwater surface of waves, shedding your skin like a snake—anything can happen in the Vurt.



However, just because the Vurt is not governed by real world logic, doesn't mean that you can do anything you want in the dream. The rules of the dream and the capabilities you have at your disposal are encoded into the feather and set the limits of your experience. In some dreams you can fly, in some you follow the rules of Earth. These rules change from dream to dream, sometimes within a single dream.

PROVERBS FOR DREAMERS

- Always keep your eye on the exit door. Even when there isn't one.
- Taking dream is just as easy as taking flight. But you need a longer runway and more fuel.
- Even after one thousand trips and one thousand wakings, your first ever dream never leaves you. There are always traces, traces, traces...
- Life? We're just flesh pasted on a daydream. Momentarily.
- Be wary of the sleep compass: the needle often points the wrong way on purpose.
- In life, it's easier to get lost than it is to get found. In dream, getting lost is getting found.
- There is only one dream, one Vurt trip, only one sleep. All feathers are part of the whole.
- You're not so much taking feathers, more the feathers are living inside you.
- We live as we die, alone; but we dream in our billions, as one.
- There are never enough miles to walk before waking. And so few left to dream in.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

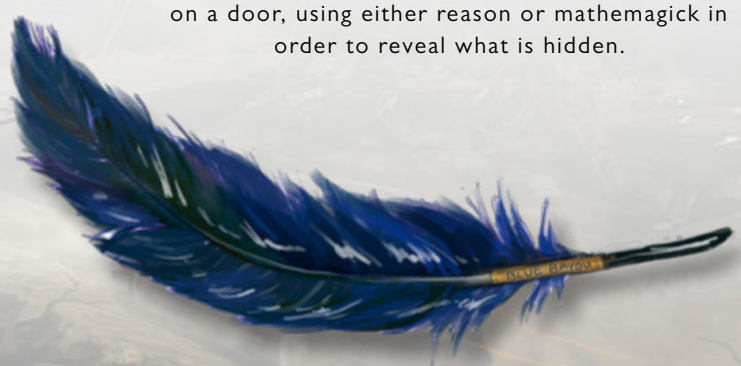
HIDDEN THINGS

It's not uncommon for things to be hidden inside a Vurt. An idea can be tucked away, out of sight of the inattentive dreamer, as can an object or a dreamway that leads from one place to another. These secrets are hidden by covering them with a *condom rose*, like an invisible blanket that conceals something in the dream.

A condom rose exists in a Vurt for one of two reasons. Firstly, one can be placed over a thing unintentionally, as with a repressed memory. When the dream that is used to create a feather comes from a person who is in denial about some aspect of himself, there will often be things hidden in the final experience. Secrets hidden in this way are often bad things, and are one of the reasons that less experienced dream editors accidentally create dangerous hybrid feathers. The second way things are hidden in dreams is when they are done so intentionally by the feather's creator. This is done either by manipulating the narrative of the dream in a skillful way, so that the idea is easily missed, or through the use of mathemagick.

Regardless of how it's created, a condom rose can be discovered by examining the

details of a dream or by exploring places that are off the beaten path. Once you find one, it must be broken, just like a lock on a door, using either reason or mathemagick in order to reveal what is hidden.



VURT CARTOGRAPHY

When a dreamer dreams, something takes shape in the Vurt world, becoming real—beings and places that can be shared, invaded or discovered anew by other dreamers. All the dreams dreamt of Manchester's streets, be they nightmares of getting lost in a maze of alleyways or uplifting fantasies of flying over the bright billboards and quixotic faces of the city's rooftops, have accreted into a place called Vurtchester, which is the twisted, dream-town equivalent of Manchester.

To be clear, Vurtchester is not a place that can be walked across or mapped out—to try and map Vurtchester would be even more futile an endeavor than trying to map Manchester. Like any larger environment in the Vurt world, Vurtchester is more like a cluster of connected ideas than it is a geographical location. Feathers which lead to Vurtchester dreams may be just one part of this larger idea, or a few connected ones, but the entirety of Vurtchester could never be explored in a single dream.

Because Vurtchester is shaped by the dreamers from the real world, there are places in the Vurt which are dream versions of places in Manchester. Take for example a forgotten corner of the city in the real world. There is an old concrete sewer entrance in twhe alcove of a dank alleyway—covered in graffiti and littered with discarded creamed feathers. Feather junkies and dreamsnakes are the only thing you would ever find in such a place. In Vurtchester, the same place might exist as covered well, constructed of smooth stones, in a forest clearing, softly lit by the weaving of fireflies—a place of wonderment and discovery. The character of this dream has been shaped by the featherheads who have slumped senseless in this alleyway over the years, many of them taking wing, lost in the emerald canopies above, or descending into the darkness of dreams far below.

CHAPTER 16

FEATHER TRIPS

SPECIMEN #51974: MARIA

Many years ago the young entomologist saw in a semi-legal dream an orange butterfly. Orange with blue dots. He had never seen the like before, and his hand shook with nerves as he reached out with his net; because of this, the insect escaped. Once awake, he jotted the sighting down in his notebook, drew a picture of it, gave it a name and a number. He named it after his poor mother, recently deceased from an overdose of trademarked paradise.

Now the entomologist roams from dream to dream to dream seeking the elusive specimen. He hears stories of travellers who have reported a viewing of the rarity, and he can't understand why he never gets to see it himself. He's seventy this year. Seventy. That's too many decades to be seeking a pair of wings and a body that weigh together less than the lint he carries around in his belly button. Still he believes: one day two elongated antennae will tickle his skin. Just one more feather...

- Jeff Noon

BALLOON QUIXOTE: SERIES OVERVIEW

Balloon Quixote is an episodic adventure series through the skies of the Vurt. The series is geared towards adults & children, so problem solving and general wonder are emphasized.

The only constant through the series is Professor Alonso Quixano, an eccentric scientist and creator of the Rocinante, the living airship which is his home & transportation. Professor Quixano is on a quest to "save the world," though what that means in practical terms seems to differ from episode to episode. The PCs play the part of his crew, recruited to help him in his quest.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The airship Rocinante is gigantic, translucent, and pink, with a mass of short, constantly-waving tentacles in front, a set of longer dangling tentacles below, and a large tailfin at the rear. A gondola is strapped to the underside of the central mass, with two tentacles acting as tiller-like joysticks in the bridge.

Behind the bridge, the gondola contains other rooms, featured in different episodes. The Rocinante's tentacles serve as cargo cranes, crew elevators, and even defensive weapons—shooting high-pressure jets of air or water.

BALLOON QUIXOTE: EPISODE 1

INTRODUCTION

Clouds part, revealing a blue sky and the words "Welcome to Balloon Quixote." The dreamers' point of view floats down to reveal Happy Valley, an idyllic village community built in a deep canyon. Credits appear over various scenes of happy life. "Dreamweaver: Lakshmi Madonna," "Produced by Gimble, Inc." As the credits end, this happy life is disrupted when the stone balloons anchored high on the edge of the canyon start exploding, raining stones and dust down on the peaceful village.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, EPISODE 1, PART 1

This feather, like most of the episodes in this series, is an adventure-on-rails. It is a linear progression of plot points, designed to not only involve the dreamer within the narrative of this dream, but to ensure that this feather trip fits into the larger context of the series.

Players enter this world as themselves, without weapons. They are understood to be visitors to Happy Valley, and to therefore have no objections to leaving the Village to sail the skies with Professor Quixano.

LOCATIONS

BOOM! The PCs must avoid falling debris and make it safely to a cave at the base of the canyon. For two turns, each PC must roll a d3.

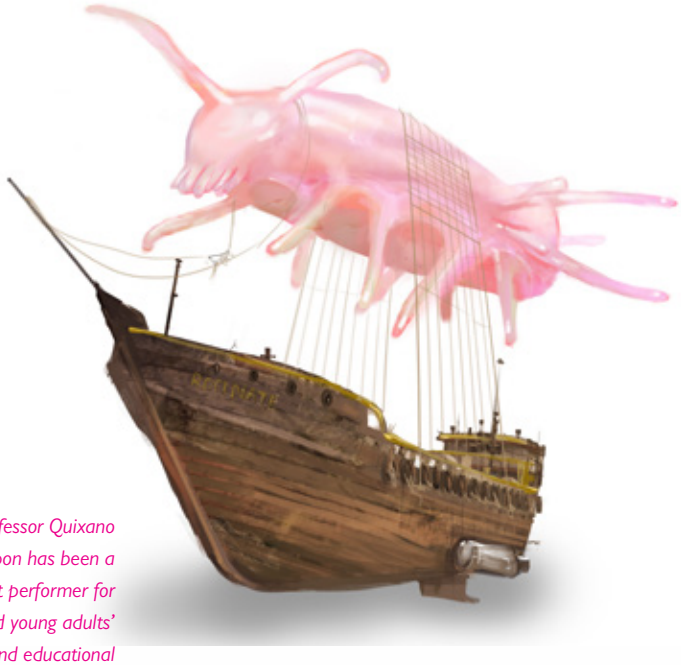
1: **DODGE!** Difficulty 3 Speed task to avoid being bonked by a rock.

2: **HELP!** Difficulty 3 Might task to help a random townsperson up.

3: **CHOOSE!** Difficulty 3 Intellect task to determine which way a tall object will tip over. If the PCs fail a task, they get bonked on the head. They are stunned, and they alone must complete another round of random tasks.

THE AFTERMATH When the dust finally clears, everyone wanders outside the cave, dazed and shocked by the destruction all around them.The PCs help the villagers to restore their town. Another giant shadow looms above. The PCs look up to see the Rocinante descending, and hear: "AHOY THERE! HELP IS ON THE WAY!"

When asked to roll a D3, you can simple roll a d6 and divide the numbers in to three groups. Count a roll of 1 or 2 as a 1, a roll of 3 or 4 as a 2, and a roll of 5 or 6 as a 3.



The Vurt-actor Professor Quixano is based upon has been a popular Vurt performer for children's and young adults' entertainment and educational dreams for years, and should be well-recognized by the PCs as such. He has previously starred as "Farmer MacGregor" in the popular "Blue Bunny Peter" series, and as "The Professor" in the "Blue Box" series (flying about the universe in a blue police call box, saving time and space).

The strange craft descends, its tentacles moving boulders or righting leaning buildings. When the majority of the large objects have been moved, the Professor rides down from the gondola in a tentacle-elevator. He introduces himself to the dreamers, and asks if they would like to help him track down the source of all this trouble. When the dreamers agree, they all board the elevator with him and ascend into the gondola

ABOARD THE ROCINANTE Above the canyon rim, a broad path of stone balloons lay shattered. The path of destruction leads from to the tall mountains at the head of the twisting canyon, and towards a huge plume of dust on the horizon.

The Professor explains that he's been tracking a rogue skyjelly. This one seems to have been wounded, and has gone to ground in a panic, as if it's trying to avoid a predator. This would normally be preposterous, the Professor continues, as they have no natural predators. Nevertheless, the Professor is out to solve the mystery, and appreciates the help of his new friends.

THE WOUNDED SKYJELLY The skyjelly has come to rest in a large box canyon, in a defensive posture. Any PC can inspect the creature (a difficulty 2 Intellect task). A successful inspection shows two types of injuries to the creature's tentacles: The ragged lower wounds from collisions, and clean-cut upper wounds, indicating that tentacles were purposefully severed. The Professor tells the dreamers that poachers often harvest skyjelly tentacles, as the venom within can be sold on the black market.

The Professor wants to heal the skyjelly. Any PCs with healing abilities are encouraged to help. Calming the wild beast is a difficulty 4 Intellect task, but all PCs are encouraged to cooperate and pitch in (Shadow contact may be particularly helpful). Once healed, the skyjelly will perk up and float away into the clouds. The Professor will then turn the Rocinante around and start tracking down the poachers.

CREATURES & NPCS

STONE BALLOONS: level 3, Speed defense as level 2, Might defense as level 4; health 9; Armor 2; inflict 2 points of damage by butting into enemies. If wounded, they explode, an area attack that inflicts 4 points of damage to anyone within immediate range. See p 320 for more details.

SKYJELLY: level 3, mental defense as level 7; health 5 (wounded); inflict 5 points of damage with electrically charged tentacles that also move the target down the damage track on a failed Might defense roll.

PROFESSOR QUIXANO: level 7; health 24; inflicts 2 points of unarmed damage, but should never engage in combat against the PCs. He is extremely well versed in all subjects related to science or technology and may lend his expertise to the PCs via cooperative actions. Treat him as if he is specialized in all skills relating to science or technology.

WINNING THE DREAM

The last task for the dreamers to perform is to help calm and heal the wounded skyjelly. After they have healed it, the skyjelly will float away, and the Rocinante will begin backtracking its trail. The dreamers' point of view lifts up above the clouds, to reveal the words "TUNE IN NEXT FEATHER, AS:" followed by a short montage of scenes from the next part of this series, including the Thunderhead Mountains, piloting the Rocinante through floating rocks and mist, and the silhouette of a spidaur. The PCs will awaken with a lurch, as if they just left weightlessness, with only very minor Vurt lag. Each PC is awarded 1 XP.

WHAT'S NEXT?

EPISODE 1, PART 2!

BALLOON QUIXOTE: EPISODE 1, PART 2

INTRODUCTION

Clouds part, revealing a blue sky and the words "Welcome to Balloon Quixote." The dreamers' point of view floats down to reveal the Rocinante, backtracking the trail of the wounded skyjelly from part 1. Credits appear over various scenes inside and outside of the strange airship. "Dreamweaver: Lakshmi Madonna," "Produced by Gimble, Inc." As the credits end, the PCs' point of view shifts to inside the bridge of the airship, and the dream continues.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This feather, like most of the episodes in this series, is an adventure-on-rails. It is a linear progression of plot points, designed to not only involve the dreamer within

the narrative of this dream, but to ensure that this feather trip fits into the larger context of the series.

Players enter this world as themselves, without weapons.

LOCATIONS

THE PURSUIT The trail of the wounded skyjelly will not be hard to follow. However, a few miles past Happy Valley, the trail begins to lighten, indicating where the skyjelly was still mostly off the ground. PCs will need to succeed at three difficulty 3 Intellect tasks in order to follow the trail all the way to the poachers. PCs do not need to apply a level of Effort when reattempting failed tracking tasks.

THE THUNDERHEAD MOUNTAINS The crew tracks the skyjelly's trail back to the foothills of the Thunderhead Mountains, a towering mass of dark clouds and floating rocks that resemble a mountain range. The "mountains" constantly rumble with thunder and rock collisions. Other, healthy skyjellies and floating islands of rock can occasionally be seen drifting through the mist.

The crew sees a flash, then hears a bang, followed by a mouthless roar. With a cry of "Onward to adventure!" the Professor steers the Rocinante headfirst into danger.

FINDING A SAFE PATH As the Rocinante enters the mass of clouds, Professor Quixano asks the dreamers to each take up a water-cannon tentacle and blast away dangerous rocks as he navigates through the mist. One by one, at random, a rock will float towards the airship in front of a PC (GM chooses randomly). Each PC must attempt a difficulty 1 Intellect task to spot a rock. Failure means the rock, unseen, hits the airship. Success allows the PC to attempt to blast the rock away from the ship with the water cannon, a difficulty 2 Speed task. If three rocks hit the airship, the Rocinante crashes, and this section starts over again.

THE POACHERS Spidaur poachers are using a large floating island as a base, studded with platforms and harpoon guns. Spidaurs have hard-shelled, human-shaped upper bodies with clawed hands attached to spider abdomens and legs. Several giant tentacles hang from around the island. A skyjelly is anchored to the island, several spidaurs use long hooked blades on poles to sever the poor creature's tentacles. They sever the last tentacle and release the wounded beast just as the Rocinante arrives within range. The crew can now deal with the poachers by speaking or in combat (see below).

SPEAKING TO THE POACHERS The crew can attempt to convince the poachers to stop harvesting the skyjelly tentacles. Convincing them just to stop is a difficulty 4 persuasion task. The PCs may only retry a failed attempt to negotiate with the poachers once. The normal rules for retrying a task after failure apply.

The PCs may also suggest an alternative. Ideas include: milking the skyjellies and releasing them, contacting the skyjellies (via Shadow communication, for example) and asking them to volunteer their venom, etc. The success of these suggestions is at the GM's discretion. If speaking fails, the PCs move to combat.

COMBAT The crew prepares for battle. The dreamers can choose to man one of the tentacle-powered water cannons, or they can stand by to repel boarders, fighting the spidaurs with belaying pins (treat as cudgels that inflict light damage). The spidaurs swing towards the Rocinante on their webs, hoping to damage the ship or board her. They have various bladed weapons, but they only turn their blades on rigging and equipment, preferring to use various blunt hooks and clubs to batter and grapple with the dreamers. The dreamers cannot actually kill the spidaurs: Direct attacks will result in either the spidaurs being knocked unconscious, or being knocked loose from their floating island, falling a few feet before spinning parachutes from their webbing and gliding away from the battle. There are four spidaurs to every PC, but only one spidaur will attack any one PC at a given time.

CREATURES & NPCS

SKYJELLY: level 3, mental defense as level 7; health 20; inflict 5 points of damage with electrically charged tentacles that also move the target down the damage track on a failed Might defense roll.

SPIDAURS: level 2; health 4; Armor 3 (exoskeleton); inflict 4 points of damage with melee weapons or 2 points with a venomous bite which dazes the target on a failed Might defense roll

WINNING THE DREAM

This feather series is for kids and adults, so there is no "death." When a character's pools are reduced to zero, they are simply knocked unconscious, and must observe the action from a disembodied perspective. If all the PCs are knocked out, the dream begins again at "The Poachers." Once all the spidaurs are knocked out or off their island (or are convinced to stop poaching), the skyjellies around them burst into mouthless song, and the airship swings away from the island, heading towards the next adventure. The dreamers' point of view lifts up above the clouds, to reveal the words "TUNE IN NEXT FEATHER, AS:" followed by a short montage of scenes from the next episode, including Happy Town threatened by a great windstorm, large broken windmills, and the Rocinante acting as a sky crane. The PCs will awaken with a lurch, as if they just left weightlessness, with only very minor Vurt lag. Each PC is awarded 1 XP.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Episode 2: The crew of the Rocinante help a small community repair its giant windmill, using the airship as

a sky-crane.

Episode 3: The crew rescues a small family from their rooftop during a storm and flood.

Episode 4: The crew encounters a band of sky pirates, and recruits the cooperation of the skyjelly they helped in Episode 1 to intimidate the sky pirates into leaving.

Episode 5, Parts I and II: The crew find a village of parasitic creatures living on the back of a gigantic but now sickly land-striding beast, and they convince the parasites to develop a more sustainable relationship with their host.

GAME CAT SAYS:
INSPECTOR VURT ANGEL (BLUE)

His name is Dove. Thomas Dove. He rides the heads of strangers like a feather. This is what he is: bladed skater's body, orange hair cut in a wedge, a pair of cop-wings and a bloodstream full of Vurt. The dream-stream. Tom Dove is the Manchester Cops' best ever Vurt angel, and he's flying down to Rio de Bobdeniro, with a parcel of tests for the phantasms there. His cop-job is to seek out and destroy illegal dreams; to find the bootleg Vurts. Listen to his prismatic wings flapping, making colours in the smoke of the mind. Boldness. Tom Dove: a clean, human road to fantasy, so good he doesn't need to take feathers. He is mostly human, of course, except for the thick traces of the Vurt living inside his flesh.

-Pollen, Jeff Noon

BLUE BAYOU

Since time passes differently in the Vurt, this 60-minute day can simply be the length of an encounter, which can be described as taking about an hour in perceived time.

INTRODUCTION

A wall of video screens flickers to life as you start the dream. The screens show random news and entertainment of the day, and the opening credits flash randomly between them: "Written by The Big O." "Edited by Ronda Lindstat." "Produced by Chimera Corp." A strange alien that vaguely resembles Ziggy Stardust appears. He smiles at you and gestures to the wall of screens, saying "Get them out of your mind. All of them." The wall of screens blasts apart, revealing a serene, natural scene: a sunrise above a large body of water dotted with sailboats, lined with cypress trees hung with moss. The title words float into view: "Welcome to Blue Bayou." The dreamers find themselves standing on a floating platform, about 20 feet from the shore.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The nominal objective of this feather is to catch fish, but the true objective of this feather is to forget about the real world and relax. There are several ways to collect fish, each specific to a certain location below. Dreamers are not restricted in the methods by which they travel in this feather: They may fly or hover like a dragonfly, swim and breathe in water like a fish, or walk on top of any surface, be it earth, water, or quicksand. There are "enemies," but they will only either steal fish or detain dreamers.

Dreamers have one 60-minute day to catch 10 fish in order to win this feather. Larger catches (size or number) often bestow real-world bragging rights on dreamers.

LOCATIONS

SAILBOATS The sailboats out on the open bayou are large enough for many fishermen, but each have only a single, smiling captain, welcoming the party aboard. There are fishing poles leaning and scattered around the railings of the open boats, but all the bait buckets are empty. This area is the fastest producer of the biggest fish, but dreamers will have to find bait elsewhere. Once they bring bait, they may use the poles: they may attempt one difficulty 1 Intellect task every minute to catch a fish. Baited hooks add a +2 bonus to these rolls, and a successful catch uses up one item of bait.

Suggested Major Effect: A dreamer hooks a particularly large fish, which requires a difficulty 2 Might task to successfully land.

UNDER THE BAYOU Dreamers may also attempt to hunt fish directly, under the open water. They may attempt a difficulty 3 Speed test every five minutes to catch a fish. There are no suitable bait fish here, only larger fish. Every 10 minutes underwater, dreamers must also make a difficulty 3 Speed test to avoid getting caught on a hook suspended from a boat above. Failure means the dreamer must spend five minutes becoming untangled, and cannot make a fish-catching attempt.

MUDFLATS The mudflats on the far end of the bayou are an excellent place to find bait. Every two minutes, dreamers may attempt a difficulty 2 Speed task to find a suitable word, crayfish, or small frog to use as bait. Every four minutes, a dreamer may attempt a difficulty 2 Speed task to avoid getting caught by an alligator. Alligators will catch dreamers by the foot and drag them to shallow water, where they can neither fish nor find bait. A successful difficulty 2 Might task is required to break free of an alligator's mouth.

CYPRESS SHALLOWS Snakes cling to the branches here, but they're too lazy to strike. Smaller flying fish linger here, amongst the lily pads and between the cypress stumps. The water here is too murky to swim in effectively, so the easiest way to catch them is to fly above the water and wait for them to leap out. Dreamers may attempt a difficulty 3 Speed task every three minutes to catch a flying fish as it leaps out of the water. Once they have caught at least one fish, dreamers must complete a difficulty 2 Speed task every six minutes to avoid having their fish stolen by a snake or a huge bullfrog.

BAIT SHACK Dreamers that explore the wooded shallows lining the bayou have a chance to find the bait shack. Every five minutes, they may attempt a navigation roll (difficulty 4 Intellect task). Rolling a 1 on this task means 10 more minutes and another navigation roll to find their way out. Every 10 minutes, dreamers must also attempt a difficulty 4 Speed task to avoid being entangled by prehensile vines lying on the ground and hanging in the air. Getting out of a vine tangle requires five minutes and a successful difficulty 4 Might task. dreamers that find the bait shack receive 10 free pieces of bait, but must make another navigation roll to find their way back out.

NIGHT-TIME Halfway through the dream the sun will begin to set, and a huge silver moon will rise above the bayou. Once night falls and the evening tide rises, all tasks in all locations become 1 step more difficult.

Night also brings fireflies, which dance above the waters of all locations. Flying fish will now leap from the water at all locations, enabling dreamers to attempt to catch them anywhere, once every three minutes, though this is now a difficulty 4 Speed task.

CREATURES & NPCS

As nothing in this feather causes damage or threatens the dreamers, creature stats are not presented here. The hybrid bootleg version of this feather, however, does feature lethal creatures and their stats (see page 278).

WINNING THE DREAM

Dreamers must tell the GM how much time they wish to spend, in which location, and make fishing attempts accordingly. For example, dreamers could say they want to spend 40 minutes looking for bait at the mudflats, and 20 minutes fishing from the boat. This means they get 20 attempts to find bait (40 min/2 min per attempt), and 20 attempts to catch fish from the boats (20 min/1 min per attempt), provided they don't get snagged by alligators. Of course, time in the Vurt doesn't necessarily directly correspond with time in the real world.

Dreamers that win, and have linked their blue feather to their PDF beforehand, are sent a picture of their catch with details. They awaken with minimal Vurt lag, but a slight sensation of still being on the water, and 1 XP.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Big O, the dreamweaver behind Blue Bayou, has been known to relax in a sailboat on Blue Bayou. A backdoor he wrote into the feather allows him to interact with random dreamers.

BUG COMPASS (BLUE)

INTRODUCTION

The dreamers stand in darkness as the feather begins. They all start to hear buzzing noises circling their heads. One of the buzzing noises gets particularly loud, seeming to dive bomb around all of them. Suddenly, the buzzing noise stops with a whoosh and splat!

Candlebugs appear from nowhere, forming a swarm in front of you. The swarm spells out the words: "Welcome to BUG COMPASS." The bugs form other words: "Written by Lady Morpheus." "Produced by AutoBuzz."

The dreamers find themselves in a field, holding bug nets. A wooden sign in front of them reads: "Find a compass bug, and bring it to me before the sun sets. Good Luck — Uncle Slippy."

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This was one of the first feathers to popularize interactive narrative play within feathers, as opposed to passive narrative art. Many Vurt historians cite this feather as one of the leading contributors to the revolution of the feather industry, before Chimera or any of the other megacorps got involved in feather production.

LOCATIONS

CATCH IT! The dreamers are in an open field of tall grass and flowers, near sunset. A candlebug lands on a random dreamer, burning them. When the dreamer flinches, the bug jumps off. It didn't seem to do that intentionally.

Dreamers may attempt a difficulty 1 Intellect task. If successful, they notice that one of the bugs flying around them is not a candlebug, but is instead shaped like a compass needle, complete with a letter "N." Every attempt to catch it involves two difficulty 2 Speed tasks: one to catch the compass bug in the net, and one to avoid being burned by a candlebug.

KEEP IT HAPPY! When the dreamers catch the compass bug, they may move away from the swarm of candlebugs. After a minute or so, the compass bug speaks, asking "Awright—wot u want now, guv?" The dreamers may ask it to find Uncle Slippy, but the compass bug will not agree to do so unless they can offer it some delicious ped ants. If they agree, compass bug points the way to a ped ant hive.

PED ANT HIVE Compass tells the dreamers it will take 10 minutes to get to Uncle Slippy's, so they must secure 10 ped ant workers for it to eat. Ped ants within earshot will immediately start insulting the compass bug, saying "You know, you really don't need to eat quite so often," and similar pedantic and condescending phrases.

The dreamers must successfully catch 10 ped ants, which involves 10 difficulty 1 Speed tasks, by any dreamer. After five have been caught, the Queen pokes her head out, insults the dreamers further, and unleashes a swarm of ped ant drones, four for each dreamer. Dreamers that continue trying to catch ped ants must forgo making attacks against the drones to do so.

GET TO UNCLE SLIPPY'S Dreamers may leave the anthill when they have enough ped ants, but any remaining drones will harry them for another five minutes. Drones will also attempt to free ped ant workers instead of attacking: An unsuccessful defense by a PC then becomes a freed ped ant. Compass will demand one ped ant every minute of the 10. If there are no more, it will stay for one minute, then attempt to flee after two minutes. Dreamers may then attempt to catch it again, but it won't point the way to Uncle Slippy's.

If Compass is no longer cooperating, dreamers must attempt an Intellect task to find Uncle Slippy's themselves. The task difficulty is the same as the number of minutes "away" from their objective: If they have been following Compass's direction for five minutes, it is a difficulty 5 task. Six minutes, it's a difficulty 4 task, and so on. Dreamers may cooperate on these navigation tasks.

UNCLE SLIPPY'S When the dreamers finally arrive, they will find a cabin made of bundled grass. Uncle Slippy is sitting on a woven-grass rocking chair on the woven-grass porch. He greets the dreamers with "Good to see you, Nephews and Nieces!" The sun begins to set.

CREATURES & NPCS

CANDLE BUGS: level 1, Speed defence as level 3 due to small size and quickness; health 1; Armor 1; inflict 3 points of damage with their burning touch.

A common Vurt bug, candle bugs don't actually have weapons: their jaws are much too small to cause any damage. The source of their light, however, is a super-heated internal flame: they will burn anything that they directly contact. They do not attack people, but they occasionally will land on them, inadvertently hurting them.

COMPASS BUG: level 1, Speed defense as level 2 due to small size and quickness; health 2; Armor 1; inflicts 1 point of damage with bite. A rare Vurt bug, a mouse-sized compass bug will orient itself towards whatever you wish to find, so long as you keep it happy by feeding it a constant supply of ped ants. After one minute without feeding, it will lose interest in helping you. After two minutes, it will bite the hand that holds it and fly away.

PED ANT WORKERS: level 1; health 2; Armor 2; inflict 2 points of damage with their bite. A large species of talking ant, these peanut-sized ants can speak, though few acknowledge their intelligence. Ped ants talk nonstop, constantly trying to correct, one-up, or otherwise lord it over any speaking creature within earshot, even other ped ants.

PED ANT QUEEN: level 2, attack as level 1, due to their slothful nature and unfamiliarity with combat; health 4; Armor 2; inflicts 3 points of damage with bite. Queens are even more boorish than ped ant workers.

PED ANT DRONES: level 2; health 2; Armor 3; inflict 3 points of damage with sting or bite. Drones can fly, and attack at the will of their Queen. They do not speak other than to say "Yes, m'lady" to the Queen.

WINNING THE DREAM

When the dreamers give Uncle Slippy the compass bug, candle bugs fly out from their hiding places in the grass, spelling out the words "YOU WON!" in the darkening sky. The dreamers awaken, slightly itchy, with minimal Vurt lag. Each dreamer is awarded 1 XP.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Being one of the earliest Vurt feathers, Uncle Slippy is a character beloved by many. The Vurt-star actor he was based on is also beloved, but has withdrawn from society in a self-imposed hermitage of drugs and pink Vurts. The PCs are hired by a PR firm to extract him and help save his image, and they are given this feather for context.

COOPERATION STREET (BLUE, SERIES)

INTRODUCTION

Cooperation Street is actually a soap opera, one of the longest-running Vurts on the market today. The various and intricately interwoven plotlines revolve around a cadre of mostly working-class folks in Salford. When the series started, Salford was largely working class, but the rapid expansion of the last few decades has changed the borough as well as the soap opera. Now many plotlines revolve around the working-class heroes' interactions with upper-crust antagonists. There's still a lot of room for classic soap opera tropes like "sudden amnesia" and "These puppies aren't yours, Rex!"

LOCATIONS

The series takes place in various locations (all fictional) including:

THE ROVERS' RETRIEVE PUB

TRIPLE-Z, A taxi office for a holdout black cab company.

TRIM, GROOM & BUFF: A hair, fur, and dermal paneling salon.

And many others...

CREATURES & NPCS

BILL BARLOW An educated, liberal womanizer; the longest-running character on the show.

LISTER MULLANEY A droidlocked cab driver who has left and returned to the cast several times, once to go on a *very* long trip aboard a mining ship.

ELIZABETH FIDEAUX-SMITHE III An upper-class dogwoman twit who works for the university.

TRINA MACINTOSH An extremely attractive robogirl whose input ports are, *ahem*... "universally compatible."

And many others…

WHAT'S NEXT?

GMs should feel free to create cheesy dialogue and typical soap opera situations themselves, should the need arise. The Vurt-stars who act in this series are recognized everywhere they go, and a brief soap opera scene in the Vurt could serve to introduce the characters to the PCs.

GAME CAT SAYS:

COOPERATION STREET (BLUE)

CO-OP STREET was a real low-level blue Soapvurt. You bought it every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. It took you to a small Northern terrace, gave you a house to live in, gave you a home and a husband or a wife, and you got to interact with all the famous characters as their epic stories unfolded. Seemed like the whole world was hooked up to it.

-Pollen, Jeff Noon

DUBSHIP ODYSSEY (SERIES)

INTRODUCTION

Each episode begins with credits rolling up in the darkness: *"Welcome, astronaughts, to the continuing adventures of: DUBSHIP ODYSSEY!"*

Rousing rock-and-roll theme music plays over quickly-cut space opera scenes. Spaceship battles, harrowing escapes, dazzling technology, romantic interludes, and choreographed production numbers flash before the dreamers. Images of the USS Odyssey's crew turning to the camera and smiling are underwritten by their names, ranks, and positions (see Series Stock Characters, below).

These feathers are half sci-fi romp, half music video. Think *Josie & the Pussycats in Space* meets 1980's *Flash Gordon*.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Players choose to inhabit a stock character within each dream. This does not change the PCs' stats; it merely changes the PCs' superficial appearance, and which instrument they "play." It also changes how the NPCs perceive and interact with the PCs during the feather trip. Instrumental performance for the dreamers is much like *Guitar Hero* or *Rock Band*: anyone can play!

These "dreams on rails" feathers do not have conditions under which the dreamers fail: a failure at any plot point only resets the action to the beginning of that location. All damage is automatically healed when the next stage starts. This series is both entertainment and music industry advertisement, and the sponsors don't want consumers to lose and cream out before they see the advurts.

LOCATIONS

The only constant locations in this series are the USS Odyssey, and her sub-locations, including:

THE BRIDGE
ENGINEERING
THE SIMULATED REALITY SUITE
THE REHEARSAL ROOM
PRIVATE QUARTERS

And many more...

SERIES STOCK CHARACTERS

CAPTAIN CLIFFORD TREBLE Dashing dogman space swashbuckler and lead vocalist
COMMANDER MARS VAN HALEN Roboman First Officer and lead guitar
LT COMMANDER MARIE CLAVIER Robodogman Science Officer and keyboards
LT COMMANDER GLAXAR STARCHILD Onyx and silver-skinned alien Comms Officer and rhythm guitar
LIEUTENANT BROCK KILMISTER Pure human Security Officer and bass guitar
LIEUTENANT JANE BONHAM Shadowgirl Chief Medical Officer and drums
CHIEF PETTY OFFICER SKRCH-1 Autogen Chief Engineer and DJ
ENSIGN REDSHIRT Stock crew people, available if more than seven PCs are playing the feather, or if a PC wants to take a less central role in the plot

DUBSHIP ODYSSEY, EPISODE 1: YOU CAN'T BE SIRIUS

INTRODUCTION

After the series credits, dreamers see the opening crawl:

EPISODE ONE: YOU CAN'T BE SIRIUS!

You are in orbit around the oppressed world of Sirius 3. You seek diplomatic relations with Felix IX, ruler of the Feline Empire, who currently claims Sirius 3. This planet has vast mineral resources that could benefit a great many people across the galaxy. If only there were a way to establish trade with the locals for their resources without dealing their despotic overlord and his draconian methods of control...

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Before the feather trip begins, the players must choose which characters they inhabit. Any main characters not claimed by a PC will be controlled by a player as an NPC, though the GM may take temporary control or use them as a mouthpiece as gameplay dictates.

LOCATIONS

THE BANQUET HALL OF FELIX'S PALACE ON SIRIUS 3 The crew finds themselves in the palatial estate of the despotic emperor, guests of Felix's hospitality. Felix is flanked by two sabretooth guards, and a dozen other catman soldiers stand ready. A lithe and scantily-clad catwoman dances behind gossamer veils in front of the table. Various other creatures line the table, including rowdy hawkmen, darkly-robed

mysticetes, and robots from the machine world. A few high-ranking (collaborator) Siriusites are also seated.

The robots attempt to communicate nonverbally with SKRCH-1: if a PC is playing the android DJ, they must succeed at a difficulty 1 Intellect task to notice and translate the message.The message is a cry for help, and warn the PCs of an impending attack against the catmen by the Siriusite rebels. If the android is purely an NPC, he surreptitiously alerts his crewmen to the impending attack.

AFTER DINNER FLOOR SHOW As the meal ends, the Emperor claps his paws to order the evening's entertainment: a gladiatorial combat between two Siriusite slaves. If the PCs do not object to this, one of the NPC crew will, causing Felix to activate the restraint bands built into the crew's chairs.

Emperor Felix orders the captain to fight both Siriusite slaves at once. The captain is stripped to the waist and given a strange double-headed polearm. The Siriusite slaves are armed with a trident, net, short-sword, and shield. The Siriusites are reluctant to fight the captain, but the Emperor reminds them that random civilians will be killed if they fail to fight.

BOOM! The floor of the banquet hall explodes upward, knocking half the catmen guards to the ground. A band of Siriusite rebels climbs up through the hole and starts attacking the catmen guards. Emperor Felix orders his catmen to attack, and is escorted from the room by his sabretooth guards. In the battle, shrouded by smoke and dust, the crew find their bonds released and are ushered into a tunnel under the floor. When all the crew members are inside, a Siriusite rebel detonates a second charge behind them, sealing off the tunnel and stopping any pursuit.

THE ESCAPE The crew, the rebels, and their robot allies follow the tunnel under the palace to the outside and an open-topped hoverskiff. The craft follows the bright red, highly-concentrated vein of laikanite, a rare mineral offworld but abundant on Sirius-3. SKRCH-1 notes its value for spacefaring technology, and that it is probably the reason that the Feline Empire invaded this world.

A squad of catmen on rocketcycles appears and begins firing on the hoverskiff. The crew are given weapons. The rocketcycles attack in five waves, each wave being half the number of PCs (4 PCs = 2 rocketcycles per wave). Each PC gets one shot per wave (a difficulty 2 Speed task). Any rocketcycles that are not shot down automatically hit the hoverskiff, then return to the cloud cover before the next wave attacks. If the hoverskiff sustains five hits before the last attack wave, the hoverskiff explodes and the location restarts.

When the last of the rocketcycles is shot down, the hoverskiff reaches the base of a large volcanic cone. The hoverskiff climbs the side of the cone, then lowers itself into the narrow opening at the top, descending into darkness.

VURT-U-WANT ADVURT Once they are in complete darkness, the PCs are shown a commercial for Vurt-U-Want, touting not only the selection of adventure feathers, but also music video feathers.

THE REBEL BASE The secret rebel base is hidden inside an extinct volcano. The skiff lands, and the astronaughts are taken to the rebel leader, Major Canis. He asks the astronaughts to help liberate Sirius 3 from the Feline Empire. Canis hopes that the crew of the Odyssey can inspire all Siriusites by playing an inspirational song for the entire planet on his broadcast system.

The GM is encouraged to find a karaoke version of an inspiring rock song and have the players perform it. If the players actually perform the song, the GM should not only consider the minigame won, but is encouraged to award extra XP for particularly enthusiastic performances. If the players refuse to perform, they should first be scolded for being sticks-in-the-mud. They must then each attempt a difficulty 3 Intellect task, indicating that the PCs performed the song adequately.

THE FINAL BATTLE After the song inspires the Siriusite people to rise up, Major Canis brings the PCs to the palace for the final battle. PCs are not expected to personally direct the entire battle, but are given the choice to take up a ground assault or antiaircraft role (see below).

Ground Assault: Each PC, armed with a weapon of their choice, will fight in succession: four normal catman soldiers and one sabretooth catman elite guard.

Antiaircraft: This is a repeat of the rocketcycle minigame (see above: THE ESCAPE), except that the PCs are defending themselves instead of the hoverskiff. This time, there are five waves of two rocketcycles each, and the PC gets three shots per wave. If the PC takes five hits, the PC "dies," and must restart the minigame (at full health). When the PC misses, a Siriusite rises up from the grass in front of them, giggles, and lowers back down.

CREATURES & NPCS

CATMAN SOLDIERS: level 2; health 8; Armor 2; inflict 3 points of damage with claws, or 4 points with light weapons (melee or ranged). Catmen appear exactly as they sound: human-sized anthropomorphic cats.

SABRETOOTH GUARDS: level 3; health 12; Armor 2; inflict 4 points of damage with light melee weapons, claws, or teeth (only one attack per round). Sabretooth guards are elite catmen: taller, more muscular, and with large sabre-teeth extending down from their upper jaws

SIRIUSITE REBELS: level 2; health 8; inflict 2 points damage if unarmed, other damage as weapons dictate. These are green-colored dogmen, slightly shorter than normal, with two fleshy antennae that extend from the peak of the forehead.

SIRIUSITE GLADIATORS: level 3; health 12; Armor 2; inflict 2 points damage if unarmed, other damage as weapons dictate.

MYSTICETES: level 2; health 10; Armor 2 (blubber); inflict 3 points of unarmed damage. These dark-robed monastic whalemen stand eight feet tall and have huge bodies, but are generally peaceful and not adept at fighting. They are unwilling subjects of the Feline Empire.

HAWKMEN: level 2; health 8; Armor 3; inflict 4 points of damage with melee or ranged weapons. These armored warriors can fly, but prefer to walk around non-flying creatures. They are unwilling subjects of the Feline Empire, but often fight on the Emperor's behalf, only because they enjoy fighting so much.

ROBOTS FROM THE MACHINE WORLD: level 2; health 8; Armor 4 (dermal plating); inflict 4 points of damage with built-in light weapons, ranged and melee. These are true robots, not living robos: they come in a variety of non-humanoid shapes, but are all roughly human-sized.

EMPEROR FELIX: level 5; health 20; Armor 10; inflicts 3 points of damage with claws, or 12 points with vorpal sword. Emperor Felix can be a fierce opponent in battle, but he rarely lifts a claw himself, preferring his minions to fight on his behalf.

MAJOR CANIS, SIRIUSITE REBEL LEADER: level 5; health 20; Armor 4; inflicts 8 points of damage with plasma sword. Major Canis is an inspiring leader, a true alpha dog; he is portrayed in this Vurt by Das Uberdog, a dogman DJ and media mogul in the real world.

WINNING THE DREAM

When the dreamers have defeated their enemies, they experience a "cutscene" sequence of Major Canis singlehandedly fighting Felix and two sabretooth guards. Canis defeats the guards but shows Felix mercy. Felix and his remaining catmen surrender their weapons and board his shuttle. The Emperor raises his fist for his parting threat:

"YOU MAY HAVE WON TODAY, YOU MEDDLING ASTRONAUGHTS, BUT I'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU, IN SPACE, SHARPENING MY CLAWS!" Felix boards the shuttle and leaves.

Before the astronaughts leave, Major Canis performs Das Uberdog's latest single: "Life's a Bitch, So You Gotta Bite Back." The dreamers must watch the entire performance to win. After the performance, end credits include a Vurt-U-Want discount code for the next episode. They should awaken from the dream with 1 XP and the hook from Das Uberdog's song stuck in their head.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Episode 2 — Guitar Trek: The crew must travel to a long-dead planet and search the ruins for a powerful yet ancient guitar. The planet, however, may not be as long-dead as they thought. Guest starring Alexander Courage, lead guitarist of the band Fledgling Dreams.

Episode 3 — The Naked Time Signature: A strange space-sickness infects the crew, removing their inhibitions and impairing their ability to play together as a band. Guest starring Iggy Camelia, robodogwoman hip-hop star.

Episode 4 — Rigellian Cat-Scratch Fever: Emperor Felix IX is back, and the Odyssey must face off against an armada of feline destroyers. Guest starring

the twin-helmed rock band Ned Twogent.

Episode 5 — Play me a Dune: On the desert world of Maracas, the crew arrives to spice up the fight for freedom of the native free men. Guest starring DJ Sandworm

Episode 6 — The Trouble with Treble: Captain Treble finds himself torn between his duty to the Odyssey, and the love of a Cling-on alien woman. Guest starring chanteuse Lady Q'apla

THERMOFISH (BLUE)

INTRODUCTION

As the trip begins, the PCs find themselves floating in warm darkness. Disembodied bass violins play two ominous notes as the credits appear: *"Welcome to ThermoFish."* The two ominous notes repeat, followed by a third: *"Brought to you by Gimble, Incorporated."* The music increases in intensity, adding more depth and driving, oppressive complexity: *"No lifeguards on duty: SWIM AT YOUR OWN RISK."* The credits continue to roll by as the music builds to a crashing crescendo, when suddenly the music stops. Two menu options appear before the PCs: *"Play for time"* and *"Number of catch."*

If the dreamers choose to play for time, they may choose a game between five and 60 minutes long, in five-minute game increments. If they choose to play for number of catch, they may choose a catch limit between one and 15 fish (per player). When the dreamers have set their game conditions, the menus disappear and the darkness fades away, and the dreamers find themselves in the SEAWEED GROVE (see below).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ThermoFish is a mostly open-ended "sandbox" Vurt: light on plot, heavy on exploration and play. The PCs appear as their original forms, but are dressed in ugly swimsuits. The only weapons they have are their hands and feet. This feather is set in the Seas of Pitch, an area of the Vurt where fragrant liquid pitch pools in gigantic oceans. Unlike the real world, players can not only breathe the pitch but can see through it as well, and they seem to be able to fight using a combination of martial arts and water ballet (all tasks involving unarmed combat or maneuverability are one step easier when swimming in this feather).

There is no land nearby, and any attempt to find it will just result in endless swimming and exposure to thermofish attack. Underwater, the reefs stretch out for miles, creating small valleys and alcoves that teem with odd Vurt life.

LOCATIONS

SEAWEED GROVE The dreamers find themselves floating in a viscous amber sea, known as the Sea of Pitch. They appear as themselves, except for the ludicrously-colored swimsuits they now wear, in an undersea forest of gently swaying seaweed. Tiny glowing crustaceans crawl through the strands of algae, and smaller undersea Vurt life dart in and out between the weeds. Thermofish will not attack the players within the starting Seaweed Grove, but once the players begin to explore the area beyond the forest, they are fair game.

THE OPEN SEAS OF PITCH Most of the Thermofishes' usual prey tend to stay near reefs, seaweed, or other objects that may offer them cover. Thermofish know this, and tend to prowl near these areas. However, they will occasionally be found swimming from one hunting ground to another, so it is possible to find a thermofish there. Most of the open sea is populated by large, strange, filter-feeding animals that will ignore the players.

REEFSIDE Inchovies spend most of their time near the reefs, hiding and feeding as best they can. Thermofish prowl the reefs looking for inchovies, and the tiny fish will form a tight ball of swirling fish flesh when one of them is spotted. This should indicate to the players that a thermofish is nearby. There are many colorful fish, crustaceans, and invertebrates hidden among the reef outcroppings. The players are free to explore every nook and cranny of the reef, but a few of the creatures who lurk there will not be happy if disturbed.

THE GROTTO Under the reef runs a dark tunnel. The tunnel is home to a gigantic grouper (level 3), a mean-tempered fish that will attempt to chase the players away. In the middle of the tunnel lies the grouper's lair: an undersea cave lit from above by a shaft of light that bears down through a gap in the reef. Players often use this area to entertain themselves and each other, but beware: the thermofish can sometimes develop a hunger for grouper, and may explore the tunnel and grotto themselves.

THE UNDERSEA MEADOW This meadow of sea grass is home to a large number of pitch worms, another favorite food of the thermofish. These worms will also swarm together at the approach of the thermofish, but their swarm takes the shape of a single giant worm, which can sometimes act aggressively towards players.

CREATURES & NPCS

THERMOFISH: level 4, Speed defense as level 2 when in a school; health 12; inflict 4 points of damage with their bite. See page 320 for more details.

INCHOVIES: level 2, Speed defense as level 4 due to tiny size; health 2; inflict 1 point of damage with theirbite. See page 308 for more details.

PITCH-WORMS: level 3, Speed defense as level 5 due to small size; health 9; inflict 3 points of damage with their bite. See page 314 for more details.

WINNING THE DREAM

The trip ends either in the predetermined time frame, or when the predetermined number of thermofish have been defeated. When either condition is satisfied, a school of inchovies swims in front of the dreamers and spells out "YOU WON!" with their bodies. Dreamers awaken, feeling slightly sea sick, and are awarded 1 XP each.

WHAT'S NEXT?

This feather is a common diversion for many featherheads.

GAME CAT SAYS:

THERMOFISH (BLUE)

THERMO FISH. You went swimming in the Seas of Pitch. But now you're back on Earth and you're feeling slightly queasy. It can only get worse. Because the Thermo Fish of Pitch have invaded your system. Your blood stream is a river home for them. They love those passages. You're feeling the heat inside, the biting heat. One thing to do; buy yourself some nano-hooks, some pitchworm bait, go fishing for a week. You know the Game Cat doesn't lie.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

TULGEY WOODS BLUE

INTRODUCTION

Finding your way out of the infamous Tulgey Woods is no joke. Nothing seems to make sense in this dark, wooded area of the Vurt world and danger hides in the giant trees above. You are an unwelcome visitor and you must get out of the woods before the creatures that watch from the shadows find you.

As the PCs begin the feather trip, credits roll up in the darkness: *"Welcome to Tulgey Woods Blue, crafted by Chimera Corp: Sharing the Dream."* The PCs find themselves in a wooded clearing, surrounded by a gigantic trees. A single path lies before them, and it could lead to any area in the dream.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The pathways and trails that lead from grove to grove are not logical and cannot be navigated normally. When the dreamers leave any area, they should roll a d6 to determine which of the feather's six numbered locations they encounter next (including leading back to the same one!).

Going off the paths is very dangerous. The woods are filled with dreamsnakes and other creatures. Not only will off-path travel never lead dreamers to a different area of the feather, but once they have gone more than 20 feet off the path, they increase the likelihood that they will encounter the jabberwalker, or something random and far more dangerous, perhaps not seen elsewhere in the feather (GM's discretion).

LOCATIONS

1. FLOWER BED The trees above bend away from the center, allowing as much sunlight as possible onto the gigantic flowers below. The flowers can speak, are extremely ill-tempered, and do not like guests. They will taunt the PCs relentlessly, making fun of their drab appearance and giving them bad advice about how to navigate through the Tulgey Woods. The flowers are mere distractions. After a few moments, a swarm of gigantic honey suckers will come swooping down out of the clouds and attack the dreamers (2 per PC). There are three bottles of quork juice (see Recommended Cyphers, page 265), hidden amongst the flowers for the players' benefit. Have the players attempt a difficulty 2 Intelligence task to find one. When the bottle of quork juice is thrown as a grenade, it'll take out a honey sucker in one hit—it's their true weakness.

2. ABANDONED TEA PARTY The branches tangle above this dark and silent grove, only allowing scattered shafts of light to penetrate the canopy. Between the tree trunks a large table, piled high with cracked dishes and rotting food, slumps between a few scattered chairs. Two desiccated, mummified bodies sit at the table: one resembles an anthropomorphic hare, and the other appears human, with an oversized head and a large top hat bearing a card in the hatband that reads "10/6." As the PCs examine the table and its contents more closely, four blundersnatchers hiding in the canopy will attack the PCs, attempting to paralyze them with their tentacles before descending to feed (see below: Creatures & NPCs).

3. NURSERY This grove seems ordinary and non-threatening. High-pitched chirping and whistling sounds coming from the trees above. The sounds are actually being made by an agitated group of eight branch manglers. They're not normally aggressive, but this grove happens to be their nursery, and there are at least a dozen nests in the trees above. If the PCs do not leave immediately, they will be attacked, though the branch manglers attack with the intent of driving the PCs away and will break off if the PCs flee.

4. VALLEY OF THE WISPS This grove is sunk into a deep valley, roofed over by extremely tall trees. An eerie green glow dances over the meadow through the narrow neck of the valley. Through the valley's neck, the grove opens into a gently rolling meadow. At the far end of the meadow stands a crumbling ring of standing stones, twice as tall as the PCs.

Willow whisperers graze here, glowing and whispering. When their glow becomes its brightest, they float towards the ring of standing stones, disappearing into the deep shadows within. Within the stone ring sits the jabberwalker, whom the willow whisperers feed and worship. The jabberwalker will do nothing unless the PCs enter the thicket, disturb the willow whisperers, or make an unseemly amount of noise (GM's discretion).

5. SHADOW GLADE The trees here have normal roots, but dissolve into upper trunks and limbs of shadow. Their leaves writhe and bend in a wind that the dreamers can neither see nor feel. Glowing fruit hang from the shadow-limbs of the trees above. Wisps of shadow-fog drift across the glade, obscuring vision beyond five feet. Ghost cats prowl the branches. Dreamers' names are whispered by directionless, ghostly voices.

The moment the dreamers step into the glade they become lost, requiring a difficulty 2 Intellect test to escape. Every minute that they stay inside the Shadow glade and with each failed attempt to escape, the difficulty of the escape task increases by one step. Eating one of the glowing fruits will dispel all effects, allowing the dreamers to find their way out.

6. THE CABIN IN THE WOODS, EXTERIOR The PCs find themselves looking at an ancient crumbling wooden cabin set amongst the tree trunks. Cold light streams out of the windows, and the PCs can hear the voice of a little girl from inside. The girl seems to be crying and complaining that she is lost. She occasionally calls for her mother, especially if something produces a noise outside. Ghost cats have started to congregate out of curiosity, but avoid the PCs.

Looking in the windows of the cabin reveals no obvious source for either the light or the little girl's voice. The cabin seems to be only a few rooms, but a central hallway leads to a closed interior door.

CABIN IN THE WOODS, INTERIOR Broken furniture and dishes clutter up the corners of the dusty, unkempt rooms. A short hallway leads to a door in the back of the cabin. The gentle weeping and plaintive calls of "Mummy?" and "I'm so lost, Mummy!" are coming from behind this door.

The interior door leads to a tiny room. Inside: a spinning wheel spins on its own, and it seems to be running backwards: golden thread flies off the reel and raw flax fibers spill out the other end, forming a growing pile in the corner. A high-backed, overstuffed chair faces away from the door. Sitting in the chair is a small blond-haired girl in a blue taffeta dress, her crying face cradled and covered in her hands. She continues to cry and repeat her calls for her "Mummy."

Once the dreamers touch or speak to her, she stops crying and with her face still covered asks "Are you my Mummy?" After a slight pause, she drops her hands to reveal that in place of a face she has a gigantic, jawless mouth filled with a spiral of jagged shark-like teeth. Rough, serpentine tongues extend from the palms of her hands, sliding out from deep within her mouth as her hands pull away from her face. "Malice" and her two palm-tongues attack relentlessly, attempting to kill and devour all the dreamers.

CREATURES & NPCS

GIGANTIC TALKING FLOWERS level 1; health 3; inflict 2 points of damage with a leaf slap, They normally have no inclination to attack physically, restricting themselves to verbal attacks, unless they become extremely agitated (and a dreamer gets close enough).

HONEY SUCKERS: level 3; health 9; Armor 2, inflict 2 points of damage with by slamming their bodies into targets (target dazed on a failed difficulty 2 Might task). Can also inflict 4 points of damage with their stingers, which also inject venom: failure on difficulty 3 Might task produces swelling and hives: target unable to do anything but scratch for 2 turns. Successful difficulty 4 Might task negates effects of venom (starting first round after attack). Human-sized, they initially attack by rolling into a ball and body-checking opponents, using their stingers sparingly.

BLUNDERSNATCHERS: level 5, Speed defense and stealth tasks as level 6; health 30; Armor 2; inflict 4 points of Speed damage from venom in tentacle nematocysts and an additional 4 points of Intellect damage on a failed Might roll. See page 301 for more details.

BRANCH MANGLERS: level 3, stealth and climbing tasks as level 5 when in treetops; health 9; Armor 1; inflict 3 points of damage with tentacles. Some have a large protruding thumb spike that raises their damage to 6 points. See: page 303 for more details.

WILLOW WHISPERERS: level 3; health 6; inflict no damage. Cannot attack or communicate with dreamers. See page 321 for more details.

JABBERWALKER: level 6, Speed defense as level 5 due to size; health 30; Armor 5; inflicts 8 points of bashing damage with limbs. In addition to its regular attack, this creature can attempt to grab a character in one massive hand, lifting them off the ground. While this doesn't inflict any damage, a successful Might-based action by any character is required to break the target free.

GHOST CATS: level 3, Speed defense as level 4 due to size, perception tasks as level 6; health 9; inflict 3 points of damage with their claws or bite. See page 306 for more details.

MALICE: level 4; health 12/8/8; inflicts 8/4/4 points of damage. Treat as three independent level 4 creatures: Malice herself and her two palm-tongues each attack and defend independently. Though defeating a tongue merely eliminates that creature and attack, defeating Malice eliminates all three. Malice has 12 health, and her bite inflicts 8 points of damage. Each of her palm tongues has 8 health and inflicts 4 points of damage.

RECOMMENDED CYPHERS

QUORK JUICE: While not technically a cypher (in that it cannot be brought out of this blue feather into the real world), within this feather it functions as one, acting like a grenade against honey suckers.

WINNING THE DREAM

When Malice is defeated, a huge thunderclap splits the sky outside the cabin. The clouds split and sunlight streams into the grove, while birds raise their voices in a harmonious chorus. When the dreamers exit the cabin, any path the dreamers take will immediately lead them back to the clearing at the edge of the woods, where they began. Once the PCs reach the edge of the woods, dozens of stone balloons sprout from the ground and float up into the sky, laughing and whistling as the sun sets in the distance. The PCs wake up in the real world with 1 XP and an annoying tingling numbness that lasts a few minutes.

WHAT'S NEXT?

This feather has often been rewritten as a black Securivurt: (See: Tulgey Woods Black page 277).

QUESTING BEAST (SERIES)

INTRODUCTION

This is Vaz International's most popular ongoing series. Loosely based on Arthurian legend, Questing Beast is an epic fantasy serial adventure. Each episode begins with the dreamers in a staging area, with a mirror and a catalogue of armor, weapons, clothing, and other suitable fantasy adventure equipment. Dreamers are also given the option to load their settings from previous episodes, if they have linked their PDF with the feather in the real world before they entered. When the dreamers have outfitted themselves, the series intro plays:

ROYAL FANFARE! "Welcome, good knight, to Vaz Int's QUESTING BEAST!" Various highlights of series action play under the credits, as well as turn-and-mug-for-the-camera depictions of the various main characters, followed by "...and YOU!" The dreamers find themselves on horseback as the episode introduction begins.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Questing Beast itself is meant to be eternally pursued, but never caught. In certain scenarios, or if the dreamers manage to get too close, the Beast will disgorge a small pack of belly hounds to attack and distract the party while the Beast itself escapes.

Dreamers play the part of valiant knights that have joined the king and his children on part of their quest. It is the Pillowsnore family curse to quest after the Beast, but he welcomes helpful guests. They are free to do as they please, but directly disobeying King Pillowsnore will cause the dreamers to lose the feather.

SERIES STOCK CHARACTERS

KING PILLOWSNORE level 6; health 20; Armor 4 (medieval full-plate) +2 when using his shield; inflicts 8 points of damage with a longsword, or 12 points of damage with a lance when on horseback. Human king of the Listennoise Islands.

SIR BUTTE Dogman (English sheepdog) knight, carries a great hammer and a shield with a ram's head ensign.

SIR SNAGGLEVALE Vurtman knight, large tusks in lower jaw, carries a large scimitar.

SIR ANORAK Shadowman knight, wears a chainmail hoodie, carries large twin axes.

SIR SERVICALL Roboman knight, carries a large spear.

LADY SPINDRONE Robowoman knight, twin of servicall, wicked with a crossbow.

QUESTING BEAST level 7, speed defense as level 7 due to size; health 50; Armor 7; inflicts 8 points of damage with its bite or by striking with its front hooves. Can disgorge d6 belly hounds at will, and when the Questing Beast is killed, d20 hounds will spring from its corpse. See p 315 for more details.

BELLY HOUND level 4, Speed defense as level 3 due to poor eyesight; health 9; inflicts 4 points of damage with its bite. See p 300 for more details.

QUESTING BEAST #8: IN WHICH IT IS FIRST LEARNED WHY THE BEAST IS SO DANGEROUS (BLUE)

INTRODUCTION

After the series credits, the dreamers find themselves on horseback, watching the episode credits: "*Welcome to Questing Beast #8: In Which It Is First Learned Why The Beast Is So Dangerous, A Chimera Corp production, sponsored by Vaz International. Vaz: the universal lubricant. For life's sticky moments. Not to be used for illegal purposes. The story so far:*

King Pillowsnore continues his relentless pursuit of the Questing Beast, aided by his family and a small band of followers. He and his party have met and conquered the Red Knight, solved the riddle of the fish-wife, and much more. It appears that the quest may end soon, as the King and his party seem to have cornered the Beast, yet all is not as it seems…"

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Episodes #8 and #12 are presented here as examples for the GM to follow, should they wish to create their own episodes of the Questing Beast series. It should be understood by the players that the PCs will be familiar with the very popular series, and will have at least some understanding of the episodic, never-ending nature of the quest.

LOCATIONS

TRACKING THE BEAST Continuing the ongoing quest, the King and his party are close behind the Beast, but they suddenly lose its trail. King Pillowsnore asks if anyone in the party can track the Beast, giving first opportunities to the dreamers.

If the dreamers volunteer to try and track the Beast, they must attempt 3 difficulty 5 Intellect tasks. These can be cooperative, or different dreamers may make successive attempts. If the dreamers fail to track the Beast, Sir Butte will dismount and sniff out the Beast's trail.

THE BEAST CORNERED The trail leads nearby, into a small but dense copse of trees. In the center of this thicket is a small open grove, before a stone keep. Above the keep's single door, glowing letters are carved into the stone, and they read "BUY VAZ". Thick brambles growing on either side of the grove prevent the Beast from fleeing, and it is now cornered before the keep's massive wooden door. The Beast turns and snarls at the party of pursuers.

Everyone may take a turn attempting to hit the Beast (as impossible as it may seem). After the dreamers have all had their turns, Sir Rufus Tunica strides forward and takes his own swing. He connects, inflicting a deep wound into the Beast's flank. The hounds within the Beast's belly all howl in unison, and the Beast turns and strikes, killing Sir Rufus outright. The Beast then seems to smile at King Pillowsnore, before it leaps headfirst through the cyclopean wooden door of the keep. It splinters the door, and massive pieces of wood now block the way, requiring a difficulty 5 Might task to move.

BLOOD VENGEANCE While the dreamers are moving the shards of the door, the drops of blood from the Beast's wound have sprouted up from the ground, becoming blood rills, attacking everyone. These tendrils are rooted to the ground, so they cannot advance, retreat, or pursue, but they have a reach of 15 feet.

THE KEEP Once the pieces of door have been cleared, and the blood rills destroyed or evaded, the party enters the keep. The keep is a very simple tower, and once inside, the party finds only one cavernous room. The room is dark, except for a tiny flame from a candle-lamp, held by a ghostly old hermit. As the party approaches the ghost hermit, he lifts his candle-lamp to reveal three unmarked doors, seemingly identical. There are no tracks or other indications of where the Beast may have gone.

The ghost hermit volunteers that he will answer only one question, but only answer with "Yes" or "No." The ghost hermit does not lie or deceive. Once the party opens any door, the ghost hermit disappears. Opening any door only reveals a long, dark tunnel sloping down.

DOOR 1 The tunnel behind this door leads down 50 feet, and then opens into a large cavern, lit by several glowing, truncated stalagmites. Above these stalagmites float stone balloons. Dreamers must attempt 3 difficulty 4 Speed tasks to avoid touching

THE KEEP

Note: There is no set answer to the Hermit puzzle: it is merely a bit of atmosphere. Players may use their one question to narrow their choices from three doors down to two, or they may assign the doors the names "Yes," "No," and "Steve" (or any random word), knowing that if they ask "Which door did the Beast use?" the answer will be "Yes," "No," or silence ("Steve").

these infant balloons. Failure means that the balloon detonates, loosening stalactites from the ceiling. Each dreamer must attempt a difficulty 3 Speed task to avoid the falling rock or suffer 4 points of damage. The balloons are far enough apart that one explosion will not set off the others. At the far end of the cavern, another tunnel leads outside.

DOOR 2 The tunnel behind this door leads down 50 feet, and then opens into a dark cavern. As soon as the dreamers enter the cavern, they hear the snarls of a pack of belly hounds, which the Beast has disgorged and sent down the tunnel. There are two belly hounds for each dreamer, as well as enough to keep Pillowsnore and his children busy. There is no other exit from the cavern.

DOOR 3 The tunnel behind this door leads down fifty feet, then slopes back upwards, leading another fifty feet to the outside.

OUTSIDE As the party exits the tunnel, they have just enough time to see the Questing Beast before it disappears over the large hill in front of them. If the party has not already encountered any belly hounds, the Questing beast disgorges six before it disappears. Whether or not the party encounters belly hounds here, King Pillowsnore leads them up the hill.

CREATURES & NPCS

SIR RUFUS TUNICA Sir Rufus is cannon fodder, and has an endless string of identical cousins that also bear his name who will appear in subsequent episodes as need be.

BLOOD RILLS: level 3; health 8; inflicts 4 points of lashing damage. They are stationary and have attack range of 15 feet.

GHOST HERMIT: level 7; the ghost hermit is completely intangible and cannot be harmed by any means. If the PCs make an attack against him, he will attack once and disappear, inflicting 8 points of damage with a chilling touch.

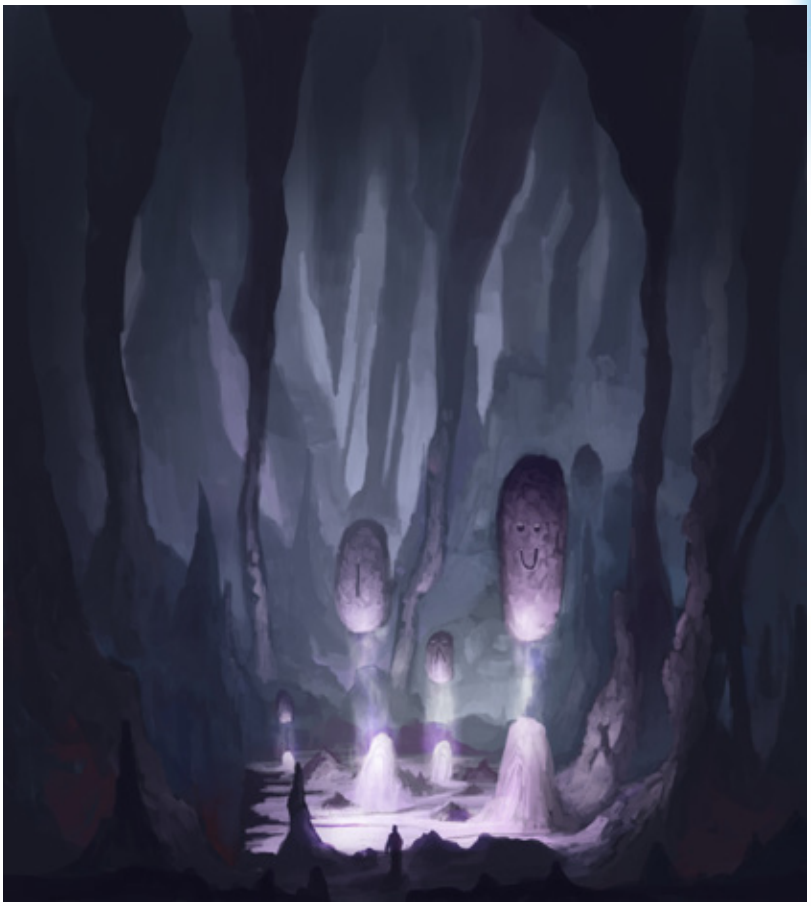
BABY STONE BALLOONS: level 1; health 1. If the balloon or its stalagmite placenta are touched, it will inflict 3 points of explosion damage to everyone in immediate range.

QUESTING BEAST: level 7, speed defense as level 7 due to size; health 50; Armor 7; inflicts 8 points of damage with its bite or by striking with its front hooves. Can disgorge d6 belly hounds at will, and when the Questing Beast is killed, d20 hounds will spring from its corpse. See p 315 for more details.

BELLY HOUND: level 4, Speed defense as level 3 due to poor eyesight; health 9; inflicts 4 points of damage with its bite. See p 300 for more details.

WINNING THE DREAM

As the dreamers take the crest of the hill, the Questing Beast is momentarily silhouetted against the setting sun



at the top of a far hill. The Beast disappears behind the hill, and King Pillowsnore turns to the dreamers and utters his signature sign-off: "Ah well, the quest goes on another day!" The setting and the dreamers' equipment dissolve into darkness, and they see the end credits, including another advurt for Vaz. The PCs awaken with the odor of wet dog noses, with minor psychosomatic flea bites. They are each awarded 1 XP.

WHAT'S NEXT?

This series includes or parodies many aspects of Arthurian legend and other medieval and fantasy sources, so the continuation of the quest is practically infinite.

QUESTING BEAST #17: IN WHICH KING PILLOWSNORE EXPLORES THE DARK FOREST (BLUE)

INTRODUCTION

After the series credits, the dreamers find themselves on horseback, watching the episode credits: "*Welcome to Questing Beast #17: In Which King Pillowsnore Explores the Dark Forest, A Chimera Corp production, sponsored by Vaz International. Vaz: the Universal Lubricant. For Life's Sticky Moments. Not to be used for illegal purposes. The Story so far:*

King Pillowsnore continues his relentless pursuit of the Questing Beast, aided by his family and a small band of followers. He and his party have met and conquered the

Red Knight, liberated the magic plow from the Drop-kick Ogres, braved the perils of the fire-swamp, and much more. The trail of the Questing Beast has lead the King to the Violet Vale, on the edge of the Dark Forest…"

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This episode explores portions of the Tulgey Woods, so there is a bit of overlap between this feather and Tulgey Woods Blue. However, navigation is easier in this feather, and dreamers that stray off the paths are not necessarily in danger of becoming permanently lost in the pathless sections of the woods. Dreamers that choose to stray far from Pillowsnore's party may, at the GM's discretion, discover some of the other locations described in the Tulgey Woods feather, but the Questing Beast feather will verbally remind them that disobeying the King puts them in danger of losing the feather.

LOCATIONS

THE VIOLET VALE King Pillowsnore suddenly spots the Questing Beast at the edge of the dark forest. Just as the Beast is about to enter the woods, it turns back to look at the party, seeming to mock them and their pursuit. The Beast disappears into the trees, and King Pillowsnore gives chase. Halfway across the Violet Vale, a band of brigands reveal themselves from their hiding places amongst the flowers. Their leader yells "Stand and deliver!" and the brigands brandish weapons, intent on robbing the party.

There is one brigand for each dreamer, as well as one for Pillowsnore and each of his children.

THE DARK FOREST Once the party has defeated the brigands or driven them off, they are free to enter the forest. Most creatures within the Dark Forest will not attack directly, they will hide from dreamers, attempting to confuse and separate them, only attacking if and when they have superior numbers. The most likely creatures the players will encounter first will be branch manglers, though they may also encounter a stray ghost cat.

THE ENCHANTED FOUNTAIN King Pillowsnore recognizes the fountain and its enchanted nature, and decides that he must have a bottle full of its magical waters if the quest is to continue. The fountain is guarded by Sir Esclados (see below), who allows no one to take from the fountain unless they can answer his riddle or best him in single combat. His riddle: "What runs all day yet never tires?" (The answer is: a river or a fountain). If he is defeated in combat, he uses his last breath to sip from the fountain, restoring his health. He will then let the victor take their spoils. If he wins, he will spare a sip from the fountain to heal his combatant.

THE MIDSUMMER VALE The path of the Questing Beast leads the party through the Midsummer Vale, a small meadow in the middle of the forest. A group of satyrs is having a drunken party here with a group of wood nymphs. None of these creatures will attack the PCs. However, they will be generally drunk and annoying, they will attempt to seduce the party and ply them with wine, and they may try to pilfer things from the dreamers' pockets. Sir Butte may have a bit of

trouble here, as his natural instincts may drive him to attempt to herd the goat men.

VALLEY OF THE WISPS This grove is sunk into a deep valley, roofed over by extremely tall trees. An eerie green glow dances over the meadow through the narrow neck of the valley. Through the valley's neck, the grove opens into a gently rolling meadow. At the far end of the meadow stands a crumbling ring of standing stones, twice as tall as the PCs.

Willow whisperers graze here, glowing and whispering. When their glow becomes its brightest, they float towards the ring of standing stones, disappearing into the deep shadows within. Within the stone ring sits the jabberwalker, whom the willow whisperers feed and worship. The jabberwalker will do nothing unless the PCs enter the thicket, disturb the willow whisperers, or make an unseemly amount of noise (GM's discretion). A path on the far side of the valley leads to the edge of the Dark Woods and into the light.

CREATURES & NPCS

BRIGANDS: level 3; health 9; Armor 3; inflict 4 points of damage with various light melee weapons.

BRIGAND LEADER: level 4; health 12; Armor 4; inflicts 8 points of damage with medium longsword.

BRANCH MANGLERS level 3, stealth and climbing tasks as level 5 when in treetops; health 9; Armor 1; inflict 3 points of damage with tentacles. Some have a large protruding thumb spike that raises their damage to 6 points. See page 303 for more details.

SATYRS: level 3; health 9; inflict 2 points of damage with fists, 4 points of damage with a head butt. Satyrs are peaceful unless provoked, These creatures appear half human, but are goats below the waist and have goat horns sprouting from the curly hair on their heads. They are much more interested in drinking and fornicating than battle. They are also slightly mischievous, and may attempt to pilfer small items.

WOOD-NYMPHS level 3; health 9; Armor 4; inflict 2 points of unarmed damage. These beautiful female creatures seem to be carved from moving wood (hence the armor). They are gorgeous and sensual, and much more interested in drinking wine and fornicating than in battle.

GHOST CATS level 3, Speed defense as level 4 due to size, perception tasks as level 6; health 9; inflict 3 points of damage with claws or bite. See page 306 for more details.

SIR ESCLADOS level 5; health 15; Armor 4 (+2 with shield); inflicts 8 points of damage with his large axe, or inflicts 2 points of damage with a shield bash. Sir Esclados is a formidable fighter, but an honorable one: if he disarms his opponent, he will likewise disarm himself and continue fighting.

WILLOW WHISPERERS level 3; health 6; inflict no damage. Cannot attack or communicate with dreamers. See page 321 for more details.

JABBERWALKER level 6, Speed defense as level 5 due to size; health 30; Armor 5; inflicts 8 points of bashing damage with limbs. In addition to its regular attack, this creature can attempt to grab a character in one massive hand, lifting them off the ground. While this doesn't inflict any damage, a successful Might-based action by any character is required to break the target free.

WINNING THE DREAM

As the dreamers exit the dark woods and step into the light, the Questing Beast is momentarily silhouetted against the setting sun at the top of a far hill. The Beast disappears behind the hill, and King Pillowsnore turns to the dreamers and utters his signature sign-off: "Ah well, the quest goes on another day!" The setting and the dreamers' equipment dissolves into darkness, and they see the end credits, including another advurt for Vaz. The PCs awaken with the odor of damp moss and pines in their noses, with minor psychosomatic saddle sores. They are each awarded 1 XP.

GAME CAT SAYS: BLUE LULLABY (BLUE)

BLUE LULLABY is for when life gets bad. When life deals a stupid hand. If you should ever find your give-a-fuck factor has gone down to zero, this is the feather for you. Blue Lullaby will wrap you up in blankets and cuddles, making the bad things seem, well you know, kind of good all of a sudden. It's sweet. But a little warning from the Cat. It works up to a point, and it's not much of a point. It can cure the tiny troubles; it fucks out on the big troubles, just makes them worse. For those who need something stronger may I recommend TAPEWORMER. Except that the Cat doesn't like these let's-make-everything-sweet feathers. Life is to be lived, not to be dreamt about. But when life needs a gentle hand, Lullaby could be the one. It's a cradlesong. The Cat says—use the Lullaby, don't abuse the Lullaby. It could turn nasty on you.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

WHAT'S NEXT?

This series includes or parodies many aspects of Arthurian legend and other medieval and fantasy sources, so the continuation of the quest is practically infinite.

BLACK FEATHERS

BITTER INNSMOUTH (BLACK)

INTRODUCTION

As the PCs begin the feather trip, credits roll up in the darkness: *"Welcome to Bitter Innsmouth. This feather is not for the faint of heart, be warned! Written by Obed Marsh."*

The PCs find themselves alone in the town square of an empty coastal town at sunset. They have no weapons of any kind. Every alley or street that leads away from the square is deserted and uninviting. The only signs of life in this town come from the strange church on the high hill overlooking town. Even from the square, strange chanting can be heard faintly through the twilight, repulsing the dreamers, yet drawing them towards it; the pallid, flickering light that streams out from the garish stained glass windows of the church.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This is a horror Vurt, written as a sequel to the Blue horror Vurt, Day Gone. However, as a black feather, the danger in this sequel is very real. After the DISCOVERED! location (see below), dreamers can dictate where they want to go. Because of the slow land speed of the pursuing mob, GMs should only allow a few actions at each location (a sentence or two of dialogue, or a few rounds of combat) before the mob arrives. dreamers may choose to hide at any location: this will require a difficulty 3 Speed task (stealth, camouflage, etc.) if they announce their intent to hide before a creature at a location sees them (GMs should give players 10 seconds to decide what to do). Once seen by a creature at a location, they must deal with the creature or run to another location (hiding is impossible).

LOCATIONS

THE CHURCH A carved banner above the double doors reads "The Esoteric Order of Day Gone."

Strange, wet, inhuman chanting floats down from inside the lonely building, mingled with screams and croaks never uttered by human throats. Sneaking a peek inside the church is a difficulty 3 Speed-based stealth task. Success allows a dreamer who peeks in a window to see a debauched pagan ceremony in which the high priest prays to a giant golden idol: a squat, scaly fish/frog/man squatting on the altar. Two acolytes then lead a naked man, bound and gagged, to kneel before the altar. The high priest reveals a wicked dagger and proceeds to sacrifice the victim to the golden idol, cutting out his still-beating heart and eating it. The congregation erupts in unison: "Hail Day Gone!"

DISCOVERED! If a dreamer fails the Stealth task above, they are immediately discovered. If they are successful, they manage observe more of the ceremony above, but they will still eventually be discovered by an outside patrol. Regardless, once the dreamers are discovered, the entire congregation, in various modes of human/fish/frog hybridization, rise up to kill them.

The dreamers' vantage point from the church allows them to see the basic layout of the town and the other locations. This vantage shows them that the town is on an island, making escape options limited. The slow shambling speed of their pursuers allows the dreamers a few moments at each location before the mob finds them. The steady ringing of the church bell alerts all townsfolk not at the church that interlopers are nearby. The GM should list the other locations below, and let the players decide their route.

THE ONLY BRIDGE OUT OF TOWN When the PCs arrive at the bridge, they find it guarded by two dagonites, one armed with a trident and one with three throwing harpoons. A third dagonite has just set fire to the bridge, making it impossible to cross. The dagonites immediately move to attack with their medium weapons. A successful difficulty 3 Intellect task will allow a dreamer to find a makeshift weapon here. A simple success will yield a light weapon, a Minor effect a medium weapon, and a Major effect yields a Heavy weapon, all improvised melee (simple stick clubs, axes or shovels, an extremely sharp brush hook, etc.).

THE TRAIN STATION From the church, the train station appeared to be intact, but as the dreamers approach they see that it has been abandoned for years. The tracks lead a few hundred yards away, towards a now-collapsed bridge. If the dreamers venture inside, they find what appears to be an old homeless couple, squatting in the station, shivering in fear. They promise to help the dreamers hide, but as soon as a small group of dagonites arrives at the station, the couple reveal themselves to be unspeakables posing as humans. They will attack the PCs with their tentacle-tongues, as well as a butcher knife and a cricket bat (both light weapons).

THE FISH CANNERY The Fish Cannery is not abandoned, but all of the workers were attending services at the church. There are two dagonite guards, one armed with a trident and one with three throwing harpoons. A successful difficulty 3 Intellect task will allow a dreamer to find a makeshift weapon here. A simple success will yield a light weapon, a Minor effect a medium weapon, and a Major effect yields a Heavy weapon, all improvised melee (a simple wrench club, a crowbar, an extremely sharp gaff hook, etc.).

THE DOCK Next to the Fish Cannery, there is a dock with a long pier that stretches out into the moonlit sea. There is a small rowboat tied to the end of the pier, large enough to accommodate the remaining dreamers, but no other boats. This rowboat is the only way out of Innsmouth.

If the dreamers came straight here from the church, there will be four dagonites lingering on the dock, armed like the guards in other locations. If the dreamers came here after any other location, there will be no guards, but the players should be given 10 seconds to decide what to do before the mob arrives.

As the dreamers row away from Innsmouth, the townscreatures gather at the end of the dock, cursing them and shaking their fists and fins. The crowd parts and the blood-soaked high priest shambles to

the water's edge. The villagers bow their heads as the priest offers up a blasphemous prayer. The waters around the dreamer's boat start to bubble and boil. A huge creature breaks the surface of the water. The dreamers notice that its outline follows that of the blasphemous golden idol on the altar in the church. Rows of jagged teeth close upon the dreamers, engulfing them and swallowing them whole.

CREATURES & NPCS

DAGONITES: level 3; health 9; inflict 3 points of unarmed damage, or as weapons dictate (mostly light weapons: 4 points of damage). These land-walking dagonites are not fully matured & ready to live their entire lives in the sea, so they are not as powerful as the dagonites listed on page 303, though other details remain the same.

UNSPEAKABLES: level 6; health 20; they inflict 6 points of damage with their up-to-two-meter barbed tongues, or 4 points of damage with melee weapons. Their tongues are venomous, and the venom works instantly: victims will spend the rest of the battle/encounter slowed down considerably (Speed defense tasks are 1 step more difficult). These creatures excel at appearing like frail and harmless humans, until they strike. See page 321 for more details.

WINNING THE DREAM

The final monster is an illusion: it will cause no harm, and the dreamers must be "swallowed" to win. After this, glowing words form in the darkness: "You have escaped from Bitter Innsmouth, for now…" The dreamers will awaken with a jolt, unable to breathe for 15 seconds, and are awarded 2 XP each.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Maybe a nice cuppa' and a walk in some warm sunshine, yeah?

BLACK B.A.S.E.

INTRODUCTION

As the dream begins, various credits calmly fade in and out of the darkness. Suddenly, the title "BLACK B.A.S.E." explodes out of the darkness, zooming right up to the dreamers' faces. The word "Black" fades away, and the letters of the acronym "B.A.S.E" rearrange themselves from horizontal to vertical. Each letter then expands into an interactive menu. Menu headings and results are in "Locations" below.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

No matter which option the dreamers choose, they begin with goggles on their faces, a parachute on their backs, and an altimeter on their wrists. The altimeter is automatically calibrated, and emits an audible and visual warning five seconds before the dreamer must pull the ripcord in order to land safely.

This being a Vurt-based experience, most of the normal laws of physics do not apply. In this dream, there is no terminal velocity (the speed at which a human being in freefall cannot surpass due to air resistance). The dreamers, therefore, can experience freefall for a full five minutes in this feather.

LOCATIONS

B - BUILDING The dreamers begin in an interior stairwell, three flights from the top. A door at the top of the stairwell reads "Roof Access." Through the door, the dreamers emerge onto the open roof of an impossibly tall building, high above a bustling Vurt city.

A - ANTENNA The dreamers begin on a caged-in platform, a few dozen feet down from an open platform at the top of an impossibly tall antenna. The only path available is to climb up the caged-in ladder to the open platform. The antenna rises above rolling fields that stretch out to the horizon.

S - SPAN The dreamers begin in the middle of a deserted bridge, spanning an impossibly deep canyon. The ends of the bridge are clearly barricaded and impassable, and the only way off is the break in the railing that leads to a diving board platform hanging above the yawning abyss.

E - EARTH The dreamers begin on top of an impossibly tall mesa that rises far above a desert floor. The area around the mesa is a spectacular array of unnatural rock formations, as can only exist in the Vurt. The top of the mesa comes to a point at one end, a natural diving board of living rock that stretches out above the desert floor far below.

CREATURES & NPCS

COACH In a slightly smaller font, a fifth option on the starting menu creates a BASE-jumping coach who instructs the dreamers in the operation of the altimeter, parachute, and ripcord. The coach looks vaguely like Patrick Swayze in *Point Break*.

WINNING THE DREAM

When the altimeter warning goes off, the dreamer has five seconds to pull the ripcord. This should be a difficulty 1 Speed task, with the altimeter acting as a +2 asset. If the player rolls a 1, the GM intrusion will be some kind of mechanical failure (broken ripcord, ripped chute, etc.). The GM should immediately count down from five, out loud, and if the player does not say "jerk out" or fails the attempt to jerk out, death is certain and instantaneous.

If the dreamer successfully pulls the ripcord, they are gently slowed by the parachute and allowed to

glide down to a landing. Successful landing requires a difficulty 3 Speed task, a failure inflicts 8 points of damage due to a rough landing. Regardless, 2 XP are awarded to each dreamer that survives this feather.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Maybe kiss the ground in the real world?

BLACK RAMSHACKLE

INTRODUCTION

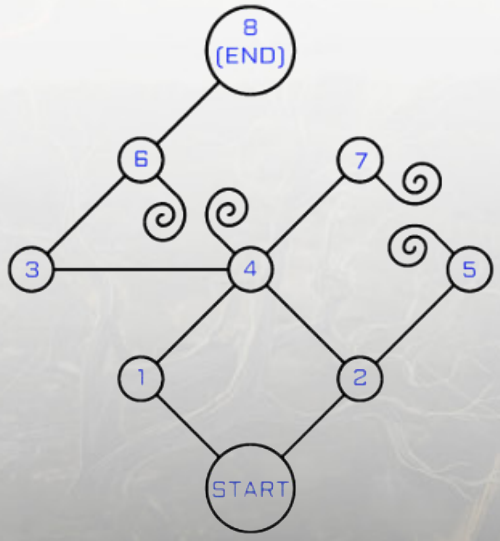
As the PCs begin the feather trip, credits roll up in the darkness: "*Welcome to Black Ramshackle. If you're a cop, jerk out now, jerk-off!*" The remaining credits for the creation of this Vurt have been redacted or warped beyond recognition, leaving no indication of the feather trip's origins. The darkness fades away to reveal the PCs are standing in a glade at the edge of a dark, forbidding forest (Vurt veterans may recognize it as Tulgey Woods).

The glade is completely enclosed, encircled by an impenetrable wall of brambles. Leading out of the glade are two bramble-enclosed tunnels. The left leads to area 1, the right leads to area 2 (see diagram below). No matter which tunnel the PCs chose, as soon as they enter a tunnel, a fayo-fayo will burst through a wall of the tunnel, surprising and scaring the PCs.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This illegal feather started out as a sort of Vurt-based opium den, providing a place where real worlders could partake of a highly addictive Vurt narcotic, soma. Over time, however, the repeated bootlegging of the original and the steady influx of stupefied real worlders has made this Vurt a hunting ground for various dangerous Vurtizens, come to prey on those real worlders too dazed and confused to defend themselves. Junkies, however, are not deterred easily.

LOCATIONS



1: WILLOW GROVE This glade is ringed with willow trees, their limbs and leaves drooping down into the opening between the trunks, obscuring visibility to a three-foot radius. A troupe of eight branch manglers has made a nest here. They will only attack if the dreamers startle them. All PCs should attempt a difficulty 3 Intellect task to notice the branch manglers. If they notice them, and make no intentionally loud, sudden noises, PCs can avoid confrontation via a difficulty 2 Speed task. Once one branch mangler is engaged in combat, the others will join in on the next turn.

2: CHESSBOARD TRAP This glade originally housed a large chessboard floor of black and white marble, with four-foot-tall chess pieces carved from quartz and obsidian. There was originally an intricate puzzle trap built into this glade, but the influences of the feather have worn down, and the Vurt has turned against the scripted dream. Most of the pieces are now shattered and scattered about the glade in pieces. A white knight, a white queen, and a black bishop are all that remains, and they will attack any PCs on sight (though they can only move about the chessboard according to chess rules). Every three steps a PC takes across the chessboard, in any direction or combination of directions, has a 50% chance of springing a trap, awakening one or more pieces to attack the dreamer.

3: TOPIARY GARDEN. There are several large topiary animals here, though they have grown wild and untrimmed. A hronir has made a lair here. It hides behind the gigantic rabbit-shaped topiary in the center of the glade, waiting for beings without Vurt genetics to enter the glade. It will immediately attack any being with no Vurt genetics.

4: HUB A foul stench assaults the PCs' noses the second they enter the glade. This glade is the central hub of the maze network, and is home to a large fountain. The water in the fountain is green and putrid. If the dreamers approach the fountain, they are immediately attacked by a trio of carnivorous beyonders. The tunnel between the hub and the lock glade is actually a recursive tunnel. The beyonders will not pursue the dreamers into a recursive tunnel.

5: KEY GLADE This glade is empty, except for a stone pedestal at the center. On top of the pedestal is a large, old-fashioned silver key. There is nothing further of note in this glade.

6: LOCK GLADE This glade has three exits: a standard tunnel that leads to glade 3; recursive tunnel that leads to glade 4; and a standard tunnel, barred by an iron gate with a very large silver padlock, that leads to the end. The padlock cannot be picked, and can only be opened by the key from the key glade.

7: STATUARY WALLS This glade is actually ringed with high stone walls, carved with bas reliefs of various characters and creatures from Lewis Carroll stories. Tweedle Dee & Tweedle Dum, the Walrus & the Carpenter, the Gryphon and the Mock Turtle are all

here, carved in stone in a jolly caucus race around the glade's edge. Unfortunately, a dozen dreamsnakes have wormed their way into the glade through various cracks in the crumbling sandstone and they now lie in wait, hiding amongst the bright purple and green flowers that carpet the glade.

8: MUSHROOM GLADE The final glade has remained uncorrupted, thanks to the influence of the Caterpillar. This glade is much larger than the others and is filled with fantastically-colored mushrooms of various sizes, thinning at the far end to reveal a single gigantic toadstool. The Caterpillar lounges on the toadstool, habitually breaking off small pieces, passing them from hand to hand to hand to hand to hand, placing them in the bowl of his enormous triple-chambered hookah. Smoke from the burning mushroom flesh bubbles through three chambers of chartreuse, mauve, and peridot-colored liquids.

The Caterpillar will request a recitation of a poem. Players should recite a poem from their own memory. If the recitation is successful, the Caterpillar offers them a hookah mouthpiece (of which there are always enough). The PC may then smoke the hookah, which reduces the smoker to an unmoving state of slothful bliss for fifteen minutes a puff. No creatures will attack the PCs within this glade.

RECURSIVE TUNNELS: The tunnels that should connect glades 4 and 6 and glades 5 and 7 are actually recursive tunnels, wherein a dreamer can walk facing forwards forever and never reach the end of the tunnel. If they turn around, the entrance is only a few steps behind them. Walking the tunnel backwards (keeping their eyes on the glade they just left) allows travel straight through. This effect is the same no matter from which end they enter the tunnel.

CREATURES & NPCS

FAYO-FAYO level 3, Speed defense as a level 4 due to its quick movements; health 9; inflicts 3 points of damage with a tentacle slap. These little bastards don't want to fight, they just want to scare the crap out of you and then run away. See page 305 for more details

BRANCH MANGLERS level 3, stealth and climbing tasks as level 5 when in treetops; health 9; Armor 1; inflict 3 points of damage with tentacles. Some have a large protruding thumb spike that raises their damage to 6 points. See page 303 for more details.

CHESS PIECES level 4, Speed defense as level 3; health 8; Armor 3; inflict 4 points of damage with their integrated stone weapons. Will not leave the chessboard

HRONIR level 5, defense as level 4 against PCs with Vurt genetics; health 25; Armor 1; inflicts 12 points of damage with a giant blunt sword carved from bone. See page 308 for more details.

BEYONDERS level 3, defense as level 2 out of water; health 9; inflict 4 points of damage by projectile-spewing their digestive juices. See page 300 for more details.

DREAMSNAKES level 2, initiative as level 5, defense against ranged attacks as level 5; health 3; inflict 2 points of damage with their bite. See page 304 for more details.

CATERPILLAR level 6; health 30; inflicts 2 points of unarmed damage. Not dangerous in combat, the Caterpillar is formidable in that he can directly manipulate his immediate Vurt environment (with great concentration).

WINNING THE DREAM

If the players cannot remember an appropriate poem, allow them to attempt a difficulty 4 Intellect task. If they are successful, the GM should write the following Lewis Carroll verses down and hand them to whomever had the success:

How doth the little crocodile
Improve his shining tail
And pour the waters of the Nile
On every golden scale

How cheerfully he seems to grin
How neatly spreads his claws
And welcomes little fishes in
With gently smiling jaws!

The PCs may stay in the glade, smoking the soma, for as long as they wish. However, the Caterpillar's protection of the glade, while providing safety, has also made it nearly impossible for PCs to jerk out from within the end glade. PCs must therefore walk back to the lock glade, where they must say "I wish to go home" to win the feather. They will wake up still tingling from the lingering effects of the soma, feeling great for at least another 15 minutes. After that, they will be nauseated for d20 hours. Dreamers get 3 XP.

WHAT'S NEXT?

In an ongoing campaign, The PCs may be contracted to rescue a real world person from this Vurt. The hronir in glade 3 has captured a real worlder, using a potent Vurt venom to keep them immobile and unable to jerk out. The hronir hopes to lure other real worlders into the Vurt, killing them and fulfilling its religious duty to cleanse the Vurt of all those without Vurt genetics.

CHARLIE DON'T SURF

INTRODUCTION

The opening credits begin while Wagner's "Flight of the Valkyries" roars from unseen speakers. After the credits, the dreamers find themselves in a helicopter with no side doors, flying in low over wide rolling waves while a fierce battle wages on the beach and beyond. Also aboard is Colonel Killmore (see below), shirtless,

wearing sunglasses and a black Stetson cavalry hat. The colonel orders the helicopter to stop and hover a dozen feet above the rolling waves. He then turns to the dreamers, telling them to pick up their surfboards and jump out of the helicopter. When the dreamers are all in the water, the helicopter flies towards the battle, joining other aircraft in blasting rockets and machine guns at the combatants on the beach. The dreamers have enough time to get on top of their surfboards before the next wave swells up behind them.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Getting up to a sitting position on the board requires a difficulty 1 Speed task (failure should just mean that the dreamer must try again).

Getting from a sitting position on the board to a standing position while catching a wave requires a difficulty 2 Speed task (failure should just mean that the dreamer falls off the board and must try both tasks again).

LOCATION

Once the dreamers have caught the wave and are standing upright on their boards, mortar positions on shore train their sights on the surfers, and the surfers must avoid incoming rounds and ride their boards to the beach. The rounds move slowly enough for the dreamers to visually track and avoid, provided that they successfully complete a difficulty 2 Speed task. Simple failure of this task should mean the dreamer gets knocked off their board by the blast, suffering light damage (4 points). Rolling a 1 means a direct hit, meaning heavy damage (12 points) and possibly additional consequences (broken board, the dreamer is also dazed, etc…) at the GM's discretion. The dream does not recognize dreamers as targets unless they are standing on their board, so the dreamers are free to take as many attempts as necessary to remount their boards without being shot at.

CREATURES & NPCS

COLONEL KILLMORE: The Colonel is neither involved in the fighting, nor will he enter into combat with the PCs.

MORTAR POSITIONS: These are not actually NPCs, and there is no way for the dreamers to interact with them.

WINNING THE DREAM

If a dreamer successfully makes it to shore, they are no longer a target. When all dreamers make it to shore, the ground combatants stop firing and flee, and Colonel Killmore lands his helicopter and personally congratulates the dreamers. Each is awarded 2 XP.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Get yourself some R&R. Maybe some cold rice and a little rat meat.

JURASSIC BLACK

INTRODUCTION

As the dream begins, the words "JURASSIC BLACK" loom out of the darkness before the dreamers, becoming a gigantic stone wall. The blackness around the dreamers coalesces into a clearing in a tropical jungle, while the credits continue to play across the sky above the word wall. When the credits end, the letters "SSICB" begin to crack apart through the middle of the "I", forming two massive gates that swing open towards the dreamers. Beyond the gate waits Bruce, a Dingo-styled dogman in khakis and a slouch hat with one side of the brim pinned up. In a thick Aussie accent, Bruce welcomes the dreamers to Jurassic Black and directs them to a rack of weapons.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Weapon choices include:

Elephant Gun - An antique weapon that fires enormous lead bullets. (heavy damage).

Minigun - Multibarreled electrically-spun lead thrower that fires smaller antique-style bullets at an alarmingly high rate. Inflicts 20 points of damage per attack round, but requires a level 3 Might task to keep on target: Failure means that only the first projectile found its target (4 points of damage inflicted), and the wielder is knocked backwards and prone.

Jurassic Flame Battle Rifle - Heavy damage, burst fire weapon, ignores 2 points of Armor rating.

Rocket Launcher - An antique weapon that fires self-propelled explosive rounds: inflicts 15 points of damage to everything in a five-foot radius of impact

All dream-provided weapons have unlimited ammunition. The dreamers are also allowed to use any weapons they own in the real world as well, though their real world weapons are subject to standard ammunition limits.

There are enough weapons for any dreamer to choose any weapon, or even two. Once the dreamers have equipped themselves, they will follow Bruce into the bush, to hunt for dinosaurs.

LOCATIONS

HUNT BRIEFING There are two main hunts: the stegosaurus and the triceratops. The dreamers can allow Bruce to track the prey for them, or they can attempt to track it themselves. Regardless, when the dreamers reach the final approach to the prey, they must all successfully complete a difficulty 3 Speed-based Stealth task, to avoid spooking their prey. Rolling a 1 on this task should not only spook the prey, but also alert a nearby velociraptor (see below: Creatures & NPCs), who will begin stalking the party through the jungle. The players should be made to periodically complete a difficulty 3 Intellect-based observation task to see if they notice that they are being stalked. Even if they're not being stalked, asking for these checks will keep the

PCs on their toes. Raptors who stalk the dreamers should attack before they encounter the stegosaurus, as the dream will reset the predators for the second round of the hunt.

THE STEGOSAURUS will take several direct hits to kill, and will attempt to counterattack with its spiked tail after it has been hit for the first time. Once the dreamers have killed the Stegosaurus, the feather will allow the dreamers time to reload, swap weapons, etc. Once the dreamers announce their decision to begin the triceratops hunt, the potential predators will be able to stalk the dreamers if they fail their stealth tasks.

THE TRICERATOPS is a more difficult kill. It should be possible for a dreamer to sneak up on the creature and fire at its body, but once hit the triceratops will turn its horned and shielded face in the direction of its attacker. The skull of the triceratops is heavily armored, so damaging it from directly in front will be nearly impossible. Some strategy is required to engage this beast as it will charge at any hunters it sees or hears in an attempt to gore the dreamers with its massive facial horns.

CREATURES & NPCS

BRUCE: level 4, tracking tasks as level 8; health 15; inflicts 4 points of damage with his bite, or as weapons dictate. .

STEGOSAURUS: level 5, Speed defense as level 3 due to size; health 20; Armor 4; inflicts 8 points of damage via trampling, or 12 points with a tail swipe. Large, plate-backed herbivores from the Jurassic period, these creatures have small brains but are formidably armed with spiked tails capable of impaling a person.

TRICERATOPS: level 5, Speed defense as level 4 due to size; health 25; Armor 5/2 (head-on/sides and rear); inflicts 12 points of damage by trampling or goring. Large herbivores from the Cretaceous period, these creatures have an armored head with three huge facial horns, and are prone to charging.

VELOCIRAPTOR: level 4; health 9; Armor 1; inflicts 4 points of damage with their bite, and 8 points with their claws. These dinosaurs from the Cretaceous period are slightly smaller than a person, but their speed, intelligence, and natural weaponry make them nasty opponents.

TYRANNOSAURUS: level 5; health 20; Armor 2; inflicts 12 points of damage with their bite. These Cretaceous killing machines only do three things: eat, sleep, and make little monsters.

WINNING THE DREAM

Once the triceratops is down, the dreamers should have a moment of respite before a scavenging tyrannosaurus appears, intent on killing the hunters and stealing the carcass of the triceratops for itself. Once the dreamers have killed the tyrannosaurus, the dream ends and they are each awarded 2 XP.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Vurt dinosaur teeth are valuable Miskel—almost as valuable as real world fossils!

SKULLSHIT

INTRODUCTION

As the ancient, cracked stone of the dream's title "*SKULLSHIT*" fades away, you find yourself standing on a stone outcrop at the top of a sheer cliff. A pitch-black sea stretches to the horizon, its waves crashing on jagged shores far below. A high wall guards the tops of the cliffs, curving out of sight to your left and right. It is broken only by a stone archway leading into a labyrinth, open to the stormy skies overhead. You hear the distant bellowing of an angry bull emanating faintly from the passages ahead. The thrumming of a lyre fills the air with suspense and mystery.

Just inside the stone archway, there is a row of wooden pegs which are hung with ancient Greek armaments. Each PC may choose a bronze gladius, javelin, or leather sling. All are light weapons that inflict 4 points of damage.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Each time someone in the group makes an attempt to solve the maze, they should make a difficulty 4 Intellect check. On a successful roll, they encounter a group of hungry shadow slugs (five), empowered by this feather with a venomous spittle attack, and do combat. On a failed roll, they find that they have gone in a circle, but that the raging bull sounds seem somewhat closer. After failing three attempts to navigate the maze, they find their way to the next area. Should they declare that they want to wander aimlessly, they arrive at the next area after the first turn.

LOCATIONS

THE OUTER MAZE The first location the group discovers is the maze. The ground is sandy and the feet of the PCs make raspy sounds as they walk. it is devoid of vegetation. After wandering a while, a mess of large splayed footprints are discovered. Following them leads to a group of shuffling shugazirs who live in the maze, on their way to a strange ritual of protection which will keep themselves safe from the angry minocentre who rules the labyrinth. If questioned in the maze they will make telepathic honking noises. If accosted, or if their path is obstructed, they will flee in terror. Following the shugazirs leads to the shugazir's garden. Close examination of the ground reveals that it is somewhat pliant and papery.

SHUGAZIR'S GARDEN A path leads through a lush garden framed by Doric columns that are overgrown with leafy vines. Plaques of algae populate the surface of a rectangular pond which always shows

the reflection of an angry-looking goat's head. At the end of the path, the peaceful shugazirs circle around a carved stone altar and perform a strange rite, casting ever-changing symbols on the altar and humming rhythmically with the dry twapping of the lyre soundtrack.

BRAIN MAZE Now deep in the maze, the lyre soundtrack picks up a marching drum accompaniment and the sounds of the raging bull seem to be even closer. The group notices that the stone walls have taken on a pinkish hue. Deeper still they soften and bulge, obviously resembling brain tissue. Blurred synaptic impulses flicker just beneath its wet-looking surface. Touching the walls will create sparkling geometric patterns under the surface and cause a random PC to perform a weird physical action, like raising their arm, or sticking out their tongue. Stronger touches will cause more animated motions. Hacking through the walls is a difficulty 4 Might task that causes all the PCs to shout the name of the first person they ever had sex with. Cutting away the brain tissue reveals a wooden door, that leads to the soundtrack room.

A boron wanders the brain maze, lost and confused. It does not seem particularly aware of its surroundings and can be easily avoided. It appears to have been gored by a horned or tusked animal and is searching for a comfortable place to die. If confronted by the PCs it will only moo tragically and trudge onwards, it's fleshy tail sweeping back and forth. If the PCs attack it, it will defend itself.

UNDERGROUND Tunneling downwards reveals that the island is actually composed of dense paper mache. Digging deeper still, the iron beams and trusses that support the island can be discovered, jutting from roiling black water, far below. Shadow slugs are here eating the mouldering old paper mache from the foundations.

THE SEAS OF PITCH If the PCs climb, jump or fall into the black waters beneath the superstructure of the island, they find themselves in the infamous Seas of Pitch. Beneath the surface of the dark, amber-tinted water, visibility is poor—the same as in very dim light, but the PCs can breathe normally. Massive clusters of territorial thermofish swim past in the darkness, eventually attacking any PC who does not attempt to climb back up the iron pilings of the island. If these thermofish are defeated, more will show up until the PCs exit the water. Climbing out of the water is a difficulty 2 climbing task.

Very dim light, page 145

SOUNDTRACK ROOM Hidden behind the tissue of the brain maze is small room with an old phonograph in the middle of it. A dusty vinyl record lies on the turntable—this is revealed to be the source of the lyre music. Disturbing the phonograph in any way stops the music of the dream. Uncomfortable echoey emptiness replaces the lyre, increasing the difficulty of all interaction tasks by one step. An outraged roar reverberates in terrifying proximity to the group. Exiting the room, they will abruptly find themselves at the center of the maze.

THE CENTER OF THE MAZE This large open plaza which appears to have once been decorated with potted trees, is now a wreck of broken stone. Walls tower upwards on all sides and a massive wooden door closes behind the PCs as they enter, revealing large lettering that states accurately: "YOU'RE FUCKED." A long distance across the plaza, a massive beast faces the group, gripping a gladius and bronze shield. The minocentre is seven feet tall with hooves, the body of a bulging, muscular Vurtball star, and a massive horned head resembling a goat. It belches fire from it's nostrils as it heaves and pants with ungovernable rage. It will attack without provocation.

CREATURES & NPCS

THE BORON: level 4, attacks as a level 3 due to injuries; health 7; Armor 4; inflicts 3 points of damage with a venomous bite. Bitten PCs must succeed at a difficulty 3 Might check or be paralyzed for one round. This boron is mortally wounded and barely aware of its surroundings. It will only resort to combat if the PCs attack first. For more details and stats for healthy borons, see page 302.

THE MINOCENTRE: level 6, defense as level 5 due to size; health 25; Armor 2; inflicts 6 points of damage with its horns, or 9 points of damage with a huge hammer, can also be used to strike the ground and create a shockwave—an area attack that causes all creatures within short range to take 4 points of damage on a failed Speed defense roll. Once it becomes injured (less than half health) it goes berserk and doles out 2 attacks per round. See page 312 for more details.

SHADOW SLUGS: level 2; health 6; inflict 2 points of damage by squirting little gobs of acidic slime. PCs hit by the slime must perform a difficulty 3 climbing task to see if they are able to hang on to the superstructure, or if they fall into the Seas of Pitch. These shadow slugs are more aggressive than the ones detailed on page 316.

SHUGAZIRS:. level 2, perception as level 6, health 6, inflict 2 points of damage with their beaks. They are peaceful, and if attacked they will flee in terror, screaming telepathically, their beaks flashing a red exclamation point on the ground in front of them where they run. They will use their beaks as a weapon only in desperate self defense. PCs who attack the shugazirs should be made to feel guilty. See page 317.

THERMOFISH: level 4, Speed defense as level 2 when in a school; health 12; inflict 4 points of damage with bite. See page 320 for more details.

RECOMMENDED CYPHERS

HURRIAN HYMN #6 (level 1d6+1). This vinyl record can be reverse engineered by any DJ or musickologist, producing a sonic jingle which is a dissonant mix of thrumming lyre melody with aggressive horns and digital bass. When played, all friendly characters receive an asset for all attack and defend actions. The effect lasts for one round per level of the cypher.

WINNING THE DREAM

As soon as the minocentre is defeated, fireworks explode overhead and the entire maze collapses into dust and sand, leaving the PCs standing on a sandy plane that stretches to the horizon. There is an ornate, wooden treasure chest, emblazoned with a bronze relief of a bull's head and horns. The chest opens and credits roll upward from within: "CONGRATULATIONS! You have defeated the beast! Play to Win! -Skullshit crafted by Ollie RipVan"

The PCs awake in the real world with a ripping case of Vurt lag, increasing the difficulty of all tasks involving concentration by one step for one hour per level of the feather.

GAME CAT SAYS: SKULLSHIT (BLACK)

SKULL SHIT is one heavy fuck. Don't try it alone, kittlings. This Vurt is going to blast you. You'll be travelling the paths of your own mind, and that's some maze in there. There's a beast at the centre and it's angry. Only the chosen know what the beast looks like, because only the chosen get that far. The Cat's been there, of course, and lived to write the review, but I wouldn't wish the sight on my children (if I had any). Unless they're ultra-brats, in which case... feed them this. Skull Shit aka The Synapse Murders, Head Fuck, Temple Vomit, Id Slayer. Call it what you like, do what you like; remember the rule: Be careful. Be very, very careful. Not for the weak.

Note: possession of this beauty can land you a two year stretch. That's a load of game-time to be missing, so stay cool. Keep it close. This Cat has warned you.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

WHAT'S NEXT?

The PCs may have been hired to play this feather to secure the Hurrian Hymn #6 track for a DJ or musickologist. This feather is also hacked to become a black Securivurt, and the PCs may have infiltrated it to steal a file.

TULGEY WOODS BLACK

The random nature of the connections between areas and the difficulty involved in defeating the creatures contained within kept the non-lethal blue version of this feather from becoming too popular. A black version of the feather was soon developed, and marketed as a Vurt-based secure location ("Securivurt") where users could deposit information, guarded by now-deadly creatures. This meant that not only could these deposits be protected by the confusing and deadly nature of the dream, but that copies of the feather could be locked behind additional layers of physical security in the real world The black security version of this feather is identical to the above blue description, except that lethal black conditions permeate the entire feather trip. Because the black version is also a higher level, it is more difficult to jerk out (now requiring a difficulty 7 Intellect task).

Tulgey Woods Black can be programmed with two security features:

Walkthrough Password: This must be spoken to the first creature encountered, and will stop all creatures (outside the cabin) from attacking, though attacking any creature after the password has been used nullifies the password, and all creatures attack as normal.

Cabin Key: This is a specific password created to access the Cabin of Secrets. In Tulgey Woods Black, this password gives the dreamers a chance to "disarm" Malice. Defeating Malice, in combat or by the password, unlocks a trapdoor in the ceiling of her room. The trapdoor opens downward, extending a ladder into the room. This trapdoor leads to the Cabin of Secrets.

If dreamers do not use the second password, Malice isn't the only danger to them. Once Malice attacks, all other creatures within the feather are now not only ready to attack, but are also leaving their respective areas and converging on the cabin. Every creature in the feather should be outside the cabin very soon, giving the dreamers enough time to engage in a round or two of combat with Malice before the others begin attacking. Their primary objective in attacking is to block the PCs from leaving through the cabin door. This not only keeps the PCs trapped in the cabin with the ravenous Malice, but also prevents them from passing through the doorway, which is a condition for the dreamers to exit and win the dream.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES

CABIN OF SECRETS: The trapdoor in the ceiling of Malice's room reveals a windowless room above, possibly smaller or larger than can actually be contained by the exterior of the tiny cabin. (The size of the Cabin of Secrets is determined at the time of purchase of the Securivurt.) This room begins as a functional, no-frills warehouse, but the level of clutter and organization

found within are purely functions of whomever owns and maintains that particular instance of the Securivurt.

FINDERS' FIGS: The glowing fruit from the Shadow Grove can dispel disorientation effects (e.g. the Shadow special ability Disorient and the mathemagician ability Decoherence), or they can grant an asset if eaten before a navigation task.

PINK FEATHERS

Many players will be uncomfortable playing a sexually-explicit pink Vurt in a group setting. Pink feathers are the Vurt world's version of interactive pornography, after all. GM's therefore should be very aware of the tastes and comfort of the players before introducing a pink feather, either in part or in its entirety.

That being said, Pornovurts can offer a unique opportunity for comedy roleplaying, if the players in a group are comfortable with off-color humor. While we don't expect many groups to roleplay a Pornovurt in its entirety, a basic familiarity with a few pink feathers can allow a GM to add some depth and character to the Vurt world. Pink feathers can act as useful MacGuffins, for example: If a high-profile dog politician is found with a stash of robo-themed pink feathers, this could make them vulnerable to blackmail.

We therefore provide the following titles of a few pink feathers, leaving the rest to the discretion and imagination of the GM.

GodHead (pink)
Toe Curler (pink)
Grind Bumper (pink)
InnaproPirates (pink)
DogFluffer (pink)
Goregasm (pink)

Naga antivenom, page 368

HYBRID FEATHERS

BOOTLEG BLUE BAYOU

This blue-black hybrid version of Blue Bayou is nearly identical to the Blue version, though the differences are deadly.

LOCATIONS

SAILBOATS Above the bayou, this area remains the same as the Blue version.

UNDER THE BAYOU Anywhere under the water in the hybrid feather is a black feather area: deadly black feather rules apply. Dreamers may still breathe and swim in water, but the large fish here become deadly. Dreamers must also avoid fishhooks from the boats above. The mechanics are the same, except that now the hooks inflict 2 points damage, and a result of 1 on an unhooking attempt inflicts 4 additional points of damage to the dreamer.

MUD FLATS Above the water, the mud flats remain the same as the Blue version. Alligators here, however, become deadly if they can successfully pull a dreamer under.

CYPRESS SHALLOWS The flying fish remain the same, but the woods around the shallows become dangerous: dreamsnakes linger in the branches, boa conscriptors cruise the shallow waters, and the giant bullfrogs become a deadly menace.

BAIT SHACK Searching for the bait shack now becomes a dangerous proposition. In addition to the dreamsnakes that linger in the branches, the prehensile vines from the Blue version now draw dreamers towards gigantic Venus fly trap-style mouths, lined with sharp teeth.

NIGHT TIME Nighttime in the hybrid feather doesn't offer any new dangers, but all non-combat tasks are still one step more difficult, owing to poor visibility.

CREATURES & NPCS

LARGE FISH: level 3; health 9; Armor 1; inflict 3 points of damage with their bite. They come in many forms, from huge groupers to sleek and deadly barracudas. All have the same stats, and catching each one requires defeating it in combat, no longer just a simple task to catch a fish.

ALLIGATORS: level 3; health 9; Armor 5 (0 on their bellies); inflict 8 points of damage with their bite.

BOA CONSCRIPTORS: level 4, stealth as level 5; health 12; Armor 2; inflict 8 points of damage with their bite, on a failed Might roll the target is poisoned, inflicting an additional 5 points of Speed damage every hour until treated with naga antivenom—effect carries into real world. They are primarily aquatic, and will not typically attack targets that are out of the water.

DREAMSNAKES: level 2, initiative as level 5, defense against ranged attacks as level 5; health 3; inflict 2 points of damage with their bite. See page 304 for more details.

GIANT BULLFROG: level 2; health 6; inflict 3 points of damage with their bite. They can choose to bite or use their tongues. Their tongues have a 15-foot reach, and a successful attack immediately drags the dreamer to the mouth. Dreamers caught in a frog's mouth suffer bite damage automatically every round until the frog is killed or the ensnared PC makes a difficulty 3 Might task in lieu of an attack.

PREHENSILE VINE-TRAPS: level 3; health 9; inflict 4 points of damage with their bite. Vines that successfully ensnare dreamers (failure on difficulty 4 Speed task, as in the Blue version) immediately inflict 2 points of constriction damage. Vines will take 1 to 2 turns to pull the target towards the vines' mouth, during which time the dreamer has a chance to break out (difficulty 4 Might task). Dreamers brought all the way into a vine's mouth suffer bite damage automatically every round until the vine is killed or the ensnared PC makes a difficulty 4 Might task in lieu of an attack.

GAME CAT SAYS:

ENGLISH VOODOO (HYBRID)

There is a dream out there, of a nation's second rise; when the dragon is slain and the good queen awakens from her coma-sleep, to a land capable of giving breath to her. The followers of ENGLISH VOODOO worship the new queen. The queen is the keeper of our dreams. Through her portals you can see a paradise of change, where trees are green, birds do sing, and the trains run on time. Also, lots of sex; that special kind, with a delicious English thump.

The Voodoo is a Knowledge Feather. It leads to other worlds. It cannot be bought, only given. You wanna go down there? Into the English Voodoo? Fine. And beyond? Fine, very fine. Just take precautions. That wet trip is a demon-path of bliss and pain, equal amounts. Be careful. Be very, very careful. Those sugar walls will squeeze you to the bone. Cat knows. Cat has been there. And lived. Just. You want to see the scars?
Well yes, I guess you do.

Status: black, with sexy pink, and with glints of yellow. It's got some doors in it, through to the Yellow worlds. Step softly, traveller, don't get yourself swapped.

Not unless you want to be.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

YELLOW FEATHERS

Yellow feathers are rare things, and should never play out as simply as the narratives of blue and black feathers. Yellows impart rich rewards of deep knowledge, but are also far more dangerous than any other type of feather; conditions within are lethal, but dreamers cannot jerk out. Yellow feathers should only be present as major campaign hooks, and generally not available to lower-tier PCs. The following Yellow is presented as an example.

SLIM SANDMAN (YELLOW)

INTRODUCTION

The seeker (and companions, if any) finds themselves in a small, dark, circular rom with a low ceiling. They are seated on the floor, facing a smoldering fire pit that's mostly burned down to glowing embers. In the center of the embers sits a large, flat stone. An unseen hand moves a long-handled ladle out from the darkness. The ladle pauses above the stone, then slowly tips sideways to dribble water on the hot stone. As the water hisses and bubbles, the steam rises from the stone, forming the letters of the credits:

"*WELCOME TO SLIM SANDMAN*"

The steam letters slowly dissipate. The ladle looms out of the darkness again, sprinkling more water on the stone, causing more steam to rise and form new words (this repeats with each block of text):

"*Produced by Yuki Kowsar. Written by Byron Shanks Jr. Edited by Jake 'The Snake' Kadrey. Proceed at your own risk, to the center of your mind...*"

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This feather is highly interactive with the dreamers' subconscious, so while the default form of the Guide is an ancient, weathered shaman type, the feather will alter the appearance of the initial Guide to suit the particular tastes and cultural background of the tripper.

LOCATIONS

Starting Point: As the last words fade, the coals increase in brightness, revealing the unseen water-sprinkler, the Guide. He is an ancient-looking shaman, and wears many necklaces of silver and turquoise, each shaped like an object of deep personal significance to the seeker. The old man's eyes open, revealing white orbs with neither iris nor pupil.

"Who seeks the path to knowledge?"

The player must identify themselves.

"How far are you prepared to follow the path, seeker?"

The player's answer to this question can't really be wrong, but it should indicate to the GM that the PC takes the vision quest seriously.

"You need take nothing with you. Expect to find nothing but yourself."

With those final words, the Guide gestures towards the exit of the sweat lodge, and then disappears into a wisp of steam.

When the dreamers exit the sweat lodge, they find themselves in a vast sandy desert. Cyclopean natural monuments form two lines on the horizons to the left and right. These spires and arches of ancient wind-carved rock draw together towards a distant point in front of the seeker: a tall mesa with the afternoon sun directly above. The dreamers may walk as far as they wish to the left or right, but they can never reach the horizon walls. The only feature that the dreamers can approach is the tall mesa. The path between the lodge

and the mesa twists through the dunes and rocky hills in front of the dreamers, never revealing the entire path, but the mesa is always visible.

ROPE BRIDGE As the path winds around a rock outcropping, a deep canyon appears ahead. A rickety rope bridge appears to be the only way to cross it. Standing before the bridge is a bearded figure, dressed in rags and a turban, holding a closed book in front of them. The seeker must confront the figure in order to gain access to the bridge. As the seeker approaches the figure, the figure raises a hand and announces: *"Face your fear!"* The figure then opens the book to reveal the character's greatest fear. This can manifest in whatever way the GM deems appropriate: If the seeker is afraid of spiders, the book opens to reveal a swarm of them. If the seeker fears the death of a loved one, the book reveals a zombified version. In any case, the seeker has two options: courage or combat.

If the seeker chooses courage, they must succeed at three tasks of willpower (difficulty 4 Intellect tasks). The seeker attempts to calmly walk past their fear in three steps. The representation of fear will not physically attack, as long as the seeker succeeds in their tasks. A failure in any of the willpower tasks means that the seeker has lost control of their fear, and the manifestation of fear immediately attacks. The manifestation ignores companion dreamers unless combat is initiated

If the seeker chooses combat (or fails the Courage test), they must physically fight their fear: it will manifest as a level 4 creature, but the seeker battles with one step greater difficulty on all tasks, due to their intense fear. If the seeker has companion PCs with them, one more fear manifestation appears for each of them (though they do not fight at any disadvantage).

Once the fear manifestation is bypassed or defeated, they will disappear in a puff of smoke, allowing the seeker to cross the bridge.

Note: if the seeker's greatest fear is heights, there need not be a guardian figure, as the yawning chasm below the rickety rope bridge will be enough: the seeker must succeed at three willpower tasks to successfully cross the bridge.

CLIFF PALACE The path leads gradually down between the walls of a deep, winding canyon. As the path turns a corner, the deep open V of the canyon is suddenly filled with huge stone spires that crash their way through the canyon floor as the dreamers watch. Some of the massive stalagmite-shaped stone outcroppings have bridges and aqueducts spanning between them, and one of the towers has an immense palace carved into the living rock of its base. The path leads directly through the enormous carved-stone gates at the center of the palace edifice. Inside the gates waits a cavernous theater, entirely carved from living stone. Two robed figures stand on stage, in front of the carved-stone curtain.

"Behold!" the figures cry in unison, pulling back the stone curtain. The stage opens to reveal a staging of the seeker's greatest regret. The seeker must watch the scene play out onstage. When the scene has finished, the players freeze in place. The two robed figures then reveal themselves as the seeker's greatest ally, and their greatest enemy.

The enemy asks the seeker *"What would you do differently?"*

The ally asks the seeker *"What should you do now?"*

The questions are asked one after another, so the seeker can choose to respond to either. The enemy intends to make the seeker dwell in regret, and every time the seeker suggests a way to change the past, a robed figure appears at the back of the theater, behind the seeker. When enough additional robed figures have appeared (GM's discretion), the enemy leads the figures to attack the seeker, with the enemy and the additional figures revealing themselves to be doomers (see below). The ally will aid the seeker in combat, if asked.

The ally intends to allow the seeker to accept the past and move forwards. If the seeker ignores the enemy and accepts the past as prelude (or acknowledges that the past cannot be changed and moving ahead is the only option), the ally will smile, and the scene on stage

will disappear to reveal a large door. The enemy will immediately attack the seeker, but the ally will also immediately attack the enemy on the seeker's behalf. Once all enemies have been defeated, the seeker is free to pass through the door.

The door leads to a tunnel that opens through a door in a smaller version of the palace edifice. This side of the palace edifice directly faces the base of the tall mesa, and the path ahead clearly winds up the mesa. The sun is by now starting to set behind the mesa, so the seeker must climb the path in the shadow of twilight.

THE TALL MESA At the top of the tall mesa, there are hundreds of dried dead bodies. These have been laid on top of a winding stone wall in the pattern of a labyrinth, requiring the seeker to trace a path through the dust-covered corpses. There is only one path through the labyrinth: it is not a maze in which one can get lost. When the seeker reaches the center of the labyrinth, they find a large circular open space. In the open space, there is a large circular area of sand. In the center of the area, there is something pertaining to the reason the seeker started the feather in the first place: it is an obvious reminder of their goal, but not the actual knowledge they seek

An ancient slim sandman lives here, and it has evolved from a simple ambush hunter into a mystical guardian. That being said, it still must eat, and it will occasionally attack a seeker. The ancient sandman may reveal itself to the seeker, or it may lay in wait under the sand.

When a PC steps on to the sand circle, the center immediately sinks, quickly turning the entire area into a conical depression of sliding sand. The slim sandman appears at the bottom of the cone-shaped trap. If the PC doesn't directly engage in combat, the slim sandman attempts to drag the PC in by blasting the PC with sand and/or burrowing beneath them, causing the sand to slide more rapidly down the center of the cone. Eventually, the seeker must allow themselves to fall through the center of the cone of sand, as this is the only entrance to the inner cave within the mesa, and the only way to retrieve the knowledge the seeker is looking for. Whether the slim sandman lets the seeker pass without a verbal interaction or a physical fight is up to the GM.

THE INNER CAVE Once the seeker has fallen down the sand trap, they find themselves deposited in a large dark cave. The sand that had fallen with them will begin falling upwards, filling in the underside of the sand trap. The cave is lit by two large braziers that flank a large stone altar. Above the altar floats a golden feather: a representation of the knowledge the seeker has come for. In front of the altar is another dark-robed figure. Behind the altar stands the Guide, who says:

"You have faced your fears, your friends, and your foes. Now, you must face yourself."

The figure in front of the altar removes their robe to

reveal a mirror image of the seeker. This doppleganger is actually a doomer, but it can be confronted with the same "Courage or Combat" choice as the seeker's fear at the bridge. The doppleganger will taunt the seeker three times: once with their greatest fear, once with their greatest regret, and once about the current situation. Each time, the seeker must succeed on a willpower test at a one step disadvantage. If the seeker fails, he must combat the doppleganger. If the seeker succeeds at all three tasks, the doppleganger disappears, and the seeker may claim their prize, ending the feather trip.

CREATURES & NPCS

DOOMERS: level 5, mental attack defense as level 8; health 15; Armor 1; inflict 4 points of Intellect damage with their long-ranged mental attack, or 4 points of damage with their short curved swords (that they cannot drop). Once per combat, they can also vomit sand at targets in immediate range: success causes blindness for d6 turns. They prefer to use their mental attacks from a distance, and will avoid close combat if possible. See page 303 for more details.

SLIM SANDMAN (ANCIENT): level 6; health 25; inflicts 8 points of damage with its claws. It can move just as fast when burrowing through the sand as when walking on top of it. Usually, slim sandmen are mindless ambush predators. This one has accumulated wisdom from the many seekers that have fallen through his trap. He may attack, or he may speak to the dreamers, helping or taunting them as the GM sees fit. See page 319 for more details.

WINNING THE DREAM

There is only one path through this feather, and that is to succeed in all challenges, reach the inner cave, and retrieve the hidden knowledge. The knowledge is represented by a golden feather, but this is not an actual object: when the seeker removes the feather from the altar, the seeker is immediately able to access the hidden knowledge they have sought, and they will find themselves awakening in the real world.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If the seeker is to be a PC from a campaign, the seeds for this feather trip must be sown at character creation:

The PC has some memory, either self-repressed or forcibly suppressed, that they cannot access on their own. It could be the underlying cause of an ongoing neurosis, a secret that underlies a campaign hook, or the result of a traumatic injury resulting in amnesia.

If the seeker is to be an NPC, the underlying knowledge should come from a similar suppression of memory, but the NPC has hired the PCs to accompany them through the feather trip. The NPC should either be very well known to the PCs, or incredibly desperate, as not many people are willing to share this trip through their innermost psyche with strangers.

SKY BOUND

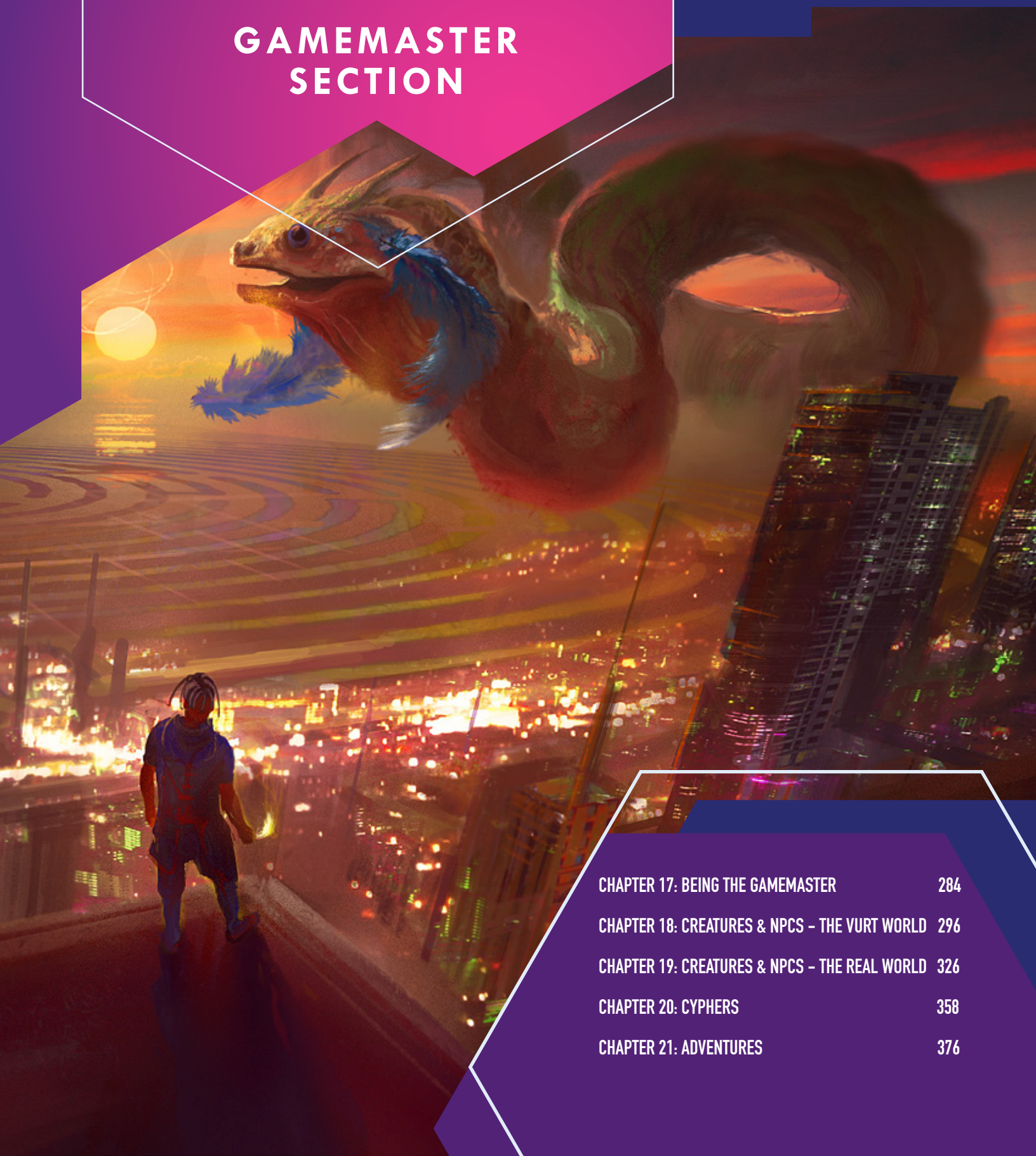
And floating before her in the room was the prize. Perfectly still, as if suspended, held by a nonexistent thread; and then moving just slightly, barely, as if blown by a breath from a fictional mouth: a nightblack feather. The moon and the stars and all the planets known and unknown shimmered in the flight, waiting for a tongue to touch upon, a new galaxy to circle around.

Livia stepped closer, she reached out...

- Jeff Noon

PART 5

GAMEMASTER SECTION



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CHAPTER 17

BEING THE GAME MASTER

Playing as the Game Master (GM) can be intimidating, especially the first couple of times you do it. The GM is both the main storyteller and arbiter of game mechanics, which may seem like a lot of things at once. But, with some preparation and by focusing on the right things, it can be the most rewarding experience an RPG gamer can enjoy. Also, rest easy! People love to be told a story, and use their imagination to expand the scene. So, as long as you're into it, your group is going to have a blast. To help you get started, here are a few points to keep in mind while running the game.

First, everyone playing the game should let their imaginations fuel the fun. You, as the GM, will maintain this atmosphere of creation by rewarding your players when they help make the game enjoyable. When your players envision something, like the way the character wants to launch off the hood of the car and tackle a fleeing enemy, meet them halfway and incorporate that cool image into the scene you're creating. The result may be a moment everyone enjoys recalling in future sessions.

Second, the GM is not the only storyteller in the group. You and your players are playing the game together and because of them, you'll be just as surprised and delighted by the story that unfolds as they will be. Your players are an endless spring of ideas that will feed your session with creativity and flavor, if you let them. Once your players start to imagine the world that their characters are in, they can populate your setting with backstories, colorful characters, and exciting events. They can do this because they are also telling *you* the story of what their character is like, and what they do in the world.

Finally, the rules of the game are a tool to give the events of your game session structure, and help you and the players find out what happens next. It's a good idea for the GM to have a good understanding of the rules and know where to find answers when the game takes an unexpected turn: Will the character be able to make the jump to the next rooftop, make it to cover without getting hit by gunfire, or resist the paralyzing effects of the venomous bite of a Vurt creature? The rules can help you determine the outcome of these events, while at the same time making sure that the game world feels real and the actions of the characters within it feel consequential. However, it's important to remember that they exist to *facilitate* the telling of your story, not to dictate it to you. When the rules get in the way of the story or the scene you are creating, they can be bent or sometimes even ignored to keep the game fun.

In the rest of this chapter we will discuss a number of mechanisms that can help you, the GM, keep the game moving along in fun way so that your experience and the experience of your players is awesome and memorable.

THE RULES VS THE STORY

As we mentioned earlier, the rules provide structure to the game world and the events of your game session. But rules aren't the heart of *Vurt: The Tabletop Roleplay-*

ing Game. The heart of the game is the story you and your players tell.

The rules of the Cypher System are very deliberately general and non-specific. This is so that you can focus on painting a picture of the scene you imagine, rather than digging up the right table to calculate the outcome of a given action. You don't need a different mechanic for every kind of activity or item; instead the GM is free to create whatever story elements are best for the story and the rules and just go. This is especially useful when your group travels into the Vurt, where the laws of the real world are often turned on their head.

The fundamental mechanic—determine the difficulty of an action, modify it with skills and assets, then roll to determine the outcome—can be used for everything that happens in your adventure. That being said, you'll be adding personality and detail to each encounter. So when you encounter something the rules don't specifically describe, like a fist fight in a pit of slippery Vaz®, you envision how the fight would go down and add effects that fit, such as falling after you miss an attack or after you've been hit, and grant assets when players surprise you with a good idea.

SETTING DIFFICULTY RATINGS

Probably the most important skill that you'll need to learn as a GM is how to set the difficulty of a task. Put simply, you rate the difficulty of the action being attempted on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 totally easy and 10 is impossible. Instead of an unwieldy list that attempts to show every specific action and it's difficulty, the table below gives a description of the type of situation each number should be applied to. You can rely on this guide until you eventually learn to apply these figures automatically.

The key to using this is envisioning the action. In real life, almost every action we take is a difficulty 0 or 1. We open doors, step over a broken bottle or carry a coffee without spilling it—these are examples of difficulty 0 tasks. They're automatic, even for a person with no special training. Now imagine you're trying not to spill your coffee as you hurry to catch the elevator, balancing a stack of boxes as you go up a flight of stairs, or someone says "heads up!" and tosses you the car keys. These are typical level 1 actions. We do this stuff all the time and usually it's no problem. Still, we can roll a 1, 2 or 3 and we burn our hand, drop boxes, or miss the key toss. If we focus our full attention on the action (i.e. use a level of Effort), these tasks are also automatic.

Beyond difficulty 0 and 1 tasks, we get into the bread and butter of the adventure. We are jumping to catch things, leaping across gaps, schmoozing past security guards and lying to a fixer about a job you were supposed to have completed. This is where things get tough and players get excited about achieving success. One practice you want to avoid is defaulting to the same two difficulties for every check. When you do this, the gameplay becomes repetitive—the PC always using a level of Effort and aiming for the same target number. Players want to feel that the challenges are as varied as the story.

If you're having trouble determining what difficulty score to assign, consider an average person with no special training or knowledge. How likely are they to succeed?

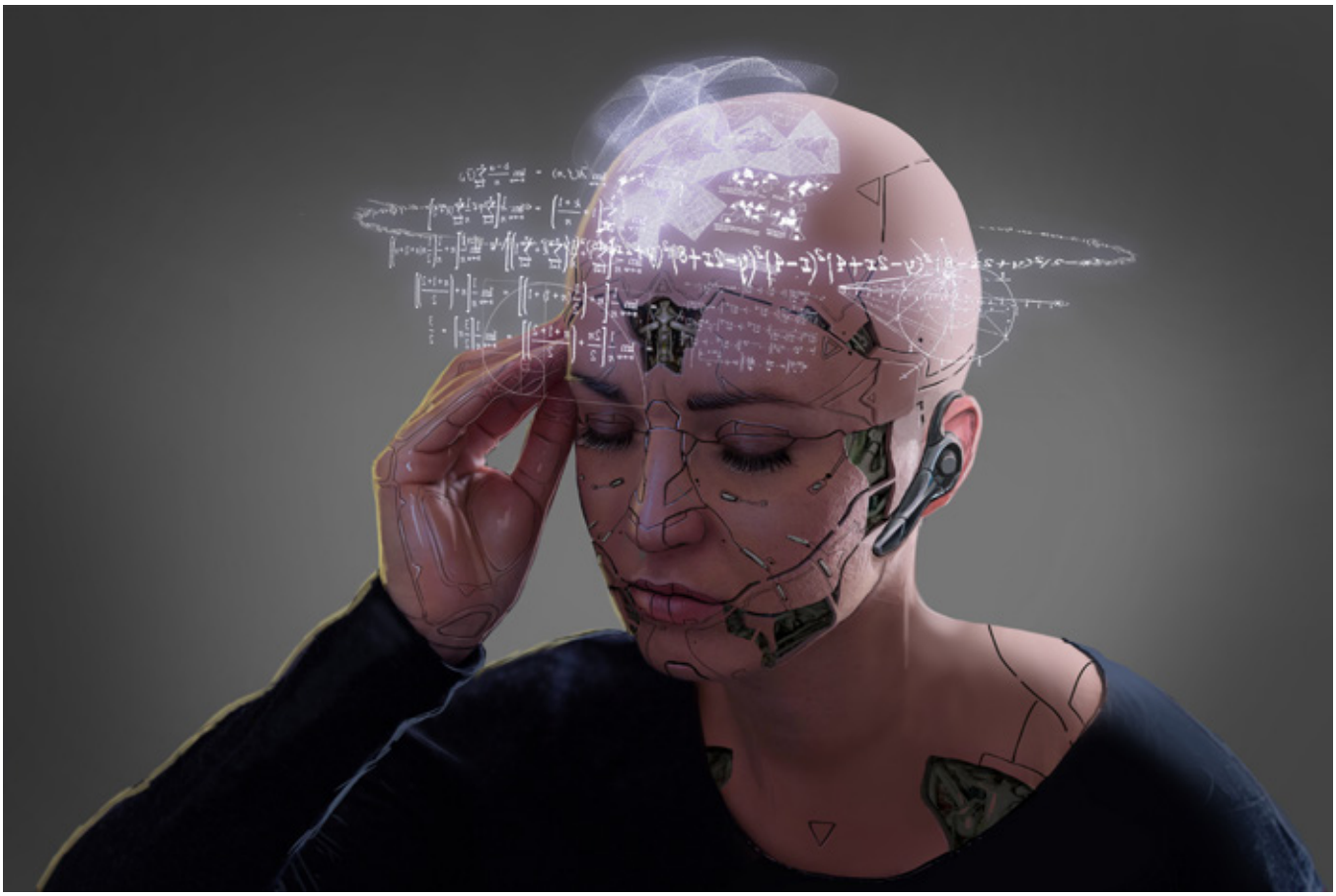
A trained person is someone who has some experience with the kind of task in question, so difficulty levels will automatically be reduced by one level. This means that a trained person can attempt tasks that a regular person would have little or no chance of completing.

TASK DIFFICULTY

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

When setting difficulty, it's important to remember that the difficulty of the task has nothing to do with the character who is attempting it. If the character approaching the task is a professional climber, for example, there's no need to insist that every wall is slathered in slippery oil just to keep things challenging for them. Let them scale it with style! Allowing higher-tier players to breeze past simple tasks lets them revel in their hard-earned strengths and capabilities.

If you feel like your characters are using the same skills to overcome every task, consider adding a different obstacle to the task, such as an alarm system protecting the skylight, that will encourage the player to test the other abilities of their PC.



Finally, consider a professional who is highly trained and experienced. This character is specialized in the task being attempted so difficulty levels are reduced by two levels automatically. When concentrating, a professional can automatically complete tasks an average person would have a good chance of failing.

So, when confronting a task such as climbing, for example, ask yourself at what point a normal person be concerned about falling. What could a professional climber do without any concern?

Say the character is looking at climbing up the side of a one-story garage. Even an average person could climb up onto the roof of a garage if there was a drainpipe and decent handholds (assuming that they concentrate). This is a probably a difficulty 2 task. Applying Effort, there's a chance they might fall, but it's unlikely (target number 3). Now, if the character is trained in climbing, there is no way they will fall if they apply Effort, so the player doesn't even need to roll. A professional, specialized in climbing, doesn't even need to use Effort to climb to the top of a garage and no roll is necessary.

Now consider a two-story building. Again, there is a drain pipe and decent handholds, but it's a more difficult climb. The average untrained person could still probably do it if they used Effort, but the chance of falling is greater. This task is probably level 3, and so with a level of Effort applied, an untrained person will fall, or fail to complete the climb on a roll of 1-5. In real life, a difficulty 3 climbing task is something most people wouldn't risk, unless there was a really good reason, such as being chased by an enraged robodog. Even a trained climber might fall (target number 3), but there's no chance that a professional climber will fall when using a level of Effort.

But what if you're in a hurry and want to climb quickly, or if it's raining and the wall is slippery? Just increase the difficulty by a level for each factor. In this way the relatively simple task of climbing up the garage is increased by two levels of difficulty and is now a difficulty 4 task. This means that with one level of Effort, the untrained person will probably fall (target number 9). A professional climber on the other hand, will shimmy up the rainy garage and only fall on a roll of 1 or 2, when using Effort.

THE IMPOSSIBLE DIFFICULTIES

Difficulties 7, 8, 9 and 10 are all technically impossible. Their target numbers are 21, 24, 27 and 30, and you can't roll those numbers on a d20 no matter how many times you try. Consider, however, all the ways that a character can reduce difficulty. If someone spends a little Effort or has some skill or help, it brings difficulty 7 (target number 21) into the range of possibility—difficulty 6 (target number 18). Now consider that someone has specialization, uses a lot of Effort, and has help. That might bring the difficulty down to 1 or even 0 (re-

ducing it by two steps from training and specialization, three or four steps from Effort, and one step from the asset or assistance). That practically impossible task just became routine. A fourth-tier character can and will do this—not every time, due to the cost, but perhaps once per game session. You have to be ready for that. A well-prepared, motivated sixth-tier character can do that even with a difficulty 10 task. Again, they won't do it often (even with an Edge of 6, they'd have to spend 7 Pool points, and that's assuming they're specialized and have two levels of assets), but it can happen if the PC is really prepared for the task (being specialized and maxed out in asset opportunities reduces the difficulty by four steps). That's why sixth-tier characters are at the top of their field, so to speak.

TYING ACTIONS TO STATS

Although the decision is open to your discretion, when a PC takes an action, it should be fairly obvious which stat is tied to that action. Physical actions that involve brute force or endurance use Might. Physical actions that involve quickness, coordination, or agility use Speed. Actions that involve intelligence, education, insight, willpower, or charm use Intellect.

There are situations where one of these tasks will use a different stat. A good example is willpower. If the PC is attempting to resist becoming entranced or seduced by some creature, an Intellect-based willpower task may be in order. However, if they're attempting to resist the ravaging temptation of addiction, a Might-based willpower task might be just as relevant.

In rare instances, you could allow a PC to use a different stat for a task. For example, a character might try to break down a door by examining it closely for flaws and thus use Intellect rather than Might. This kind of change is a good thing because it encourages player creativity. Just don't let it be abused by an exuberant or too-clever player. It's well within your purview to decide that the door has no flaws, or to rule that the character's attempt will take half an hour rather than one round. In other words, using a stat that is not the obvious choice should be the exception, not the rule.

ADJUDICATING

A lot of what we're talking about here is what people sometimes call "adjudicating." Adjudicating is basically the difference between computer game software and a game run by an actual, living human being. All software can do (as of yet) is follow the rules. But a human can use their sense of logic (we'll discuss that in detail below) to determine whether the rules make sense for a given situation on a case-by-case basis. Because there's a human GM using logic, the rules for how to play the Cypher System take up only a small part of this book. If the rules had to cover every imaginable situation, well, this would be a very different book.

For example, imagine that the PCs encounter a NPC Admin that is using a blurb with a hypodermic injector filled with poison. The PC is wearing medium armor and doesn't take any damage from the attack—not even close. That sort of sounds like the injector just bounced off the armor. Should the poison in the injector that can't penetrate a character's armor affect that character? Probably not. But that's not an actual rule.

Well, why not make it a rule? Because then suddenly anyone wearing a light armor jacket can't be affected by blurbfly injectors. Should that be the case? No, because the armor doesn't protect every area on the PC's body. It's more complex than that. Of course you could devise a rule to cover both situations, but why bother? The GM can make a decision based on the situation. (You can also use GM intrusion and say that a needle hit where the armor didn't offer protection—GM intrusion solves a lot of these issues.)

Likewise, sometimes a character who falls off a high ledge should be stunned and lose their next turn. That isn't the rule, but it makes sense—sometimes. And the key word is sometimes. Because sometimes the situation or the context means you don't want that to happen, so you adjudicate.

A character falling from a 100 ft (30 m) ledge might take 10 points of damage. That's a lot, but a fresh character with a decent amount of Might can take that and keep going. Sometimes that's okay, but at other times it strains our suspension of disbelief. If a player reads the rules on how much damage is dealt by falling, they might even have their character jump off a high cliff deliberately, knowing that the PC can take it. So you adjudicate that the PC not only loses his next turn, but the fall also knocks him down a step on the damage track, causing a lasting damage effect (such as a broken leg). That's harsh, and the player will really feel it. But they *should*—and it'll keep them from exploiting what might seem like a loophole in the rules in a way that no real person could (and no one in a story would).

Remember, it's your job to use the rules to simulate the world, even if the world is a fictional place with all kinds of strangeness. You're not a slave to the rules—it's the other way around. If you come across something that doesn't make sense, don't shrug your shoulders and say "Well, that's what the rules say." Override them!

When talking about rules, sometimes people will toss around words like "game balance" or refer to rules as "broken." These concepts belong in games where players build characters using extensive rules, make a lot of choices and then pit those characters against specific challenges to see how they fare. In such a game, a challenge rated or designed poorly, or a character option that grants too much or too little power, can throw everything completely out of whack. Advancing and improving characters is the point of that kind of game, and the way that characters "win" is by overcoming challenges (often by fighting). Because the Cypher

System is not a game about matching PC builds against specific challenges, nor a game about advancing characters (at least not solely, and in any event, characters do not advance due to fights or overcoming challenges), these concepts really don't apply. If something seems broken, fix it. If a PC ability is too powerful, make it less so. Do it either as a part of the story, or—perhaps even better—just be upfront with the players. "Hey, guys, this new power of Susan's is just too good. It's making every fight a pushover and that's not fun. So I'm going to tone down its effect. Sound okay?" An honest discussion with the players is often the best way to handle just about any problem that crops up in a game. And if a player can't handle that kind of interaction, maybe you don't want them at your table anyway.

LOGIC

Running a game requires a lot of logic rather than a careful reading of the rules. For example, some things give characters a resistance to fire (almost always expressed as Armor). But there is no special rule for "fire damage" as opposed to "slicing damage" or "lightning damage." Instead, you use logic to determine whether the damage inflicted counts as fire.

In these situations, there are only two times when your answer is wrong. The first is when the answer breaks the players' suspension of disbelief. For example, something that makes a PC fire resistant should probably provide some protection against a heat-based weapon. If it doesn't, your answer will spoil the moment for the group.

The second wrong answer is when you're inconsistent. If you allow a PC's fireproof armor to grant some protection against molten metal one time, but not the next, that's a problem—not only because it breaks the suspension of disbelief but also because it gives the players nothing to base their decisions on. Without consistency, they can't make intelligent decisions.

The Cypher System rules are written with the assumption that the GM does not need to fall back on the rules for everything, either for the GM's own sake or as a defense against the players. "I'm going to run a long distance and jump on my friend's back. On his action, he will run a long distance. So I can move twice as far in one round. There's no rule against that right?" It's true that there isn't a rule against that, but it makes no sense. The GM's logic rules the day here.

You don't need lots of rigid rules to create a world that's believable and fun to play. And don't hesitate to push back against players who try to take advantage of the lack of rules to give their characters unrealistic and illogical advantages.

Further, the rules don't say things like, "The GM decides if the NPC knows the answer to the question, and how he will answer." Of course that's the kind of thing you decide—that's your role, and it's up to you to decide what makes sense within the story at any given time.

Does this put more pressure on the GM? Yes and no. it means that you need to make more judgment calls—more of the adjudication described above—which can be challenging if you're new at it. But being an arbiter of what seems appropriate and makes sense is something we all do, all day long. Look at it in this way: When you're watching a television show or a movie, at some point you might say, "that seems wrong," or "that seems unrealistic." That's the same reasoning and common sense you apply to the game as GM.

Relying on logic frees the GM. No longer saddled with hundreds (or thousands) of individual rules, compatibility issues, loopholes, and the like, you're free to move ahead with the story being told by the group. You can focus more on the narrative elements of the game than on the mechanical ones. To look at it a different way, in other games GMs sometimes spend a lot of time preparing, mostly on stuff related to rules: creating NPC stat blocks, memorizing subsystems that will come into play, carefully balancing encounters, and so on. A Cypher System GM does very little of that. Prepping for the game means figuring out cool storylines, weird new devices or foes, and the best way to convey the atmosphere. The mechanical elements can be handled during the game using improvisational logic at the table.

WHEN TO ROLL THE DICE

Using the rules involves rolling dice. If the dice don't actually determine what happens, then everything is predetermined, and it's no longer a game by any definition—just a story being told. So the results of the dice need to stand, even if it means that sometimes a PC will fail where they might have expected to succeed,. and vice versa. That's not a flaw; it's a feature. It's what makes roleplaying games so exciting. When we're watching an action movie, we know that in the third act the hero will defeat the villain at just the right moment. But in an RPG, maybe not. That's one of the things that makes them so special.

On the other hand, things like GM intrusions sometimes trump the die rolls to help the story move along in a direction that is best for the game. How do you manage it all?

As you describe the action or as the PCs move about the world, the vast majority of things that happen shouldn't involve dice. Walking around, buying things in a market, chatting with NPCs, crossing the wilderness, looking for an ancient ruin—these are not actions that normally require die rolls.

However, it's easy to think of exceptions where rolls might be needed. There are two rules of thumb that will help you decide when these exceptions should occur. First, don't ask for a roll unless it seems like there should be a chance of failure and a chance of success. If a PC wants to shoot an arrow from his bow and hit the moon, there's no need to roll, because there's no chance for success. Likewise, if he wants to shoot that

same arrow at a large building from 10 ft (3 m) away, there's no chance for failure. You and logic run the game, not the dice.

Second, if a creature (PC or NPC) or object is affected in a harmful way—or, in the case of a creature, in a way that he doesn't want to be affected, harmful or not—you need to involve a die roll. Whether the action is slashing with a blade, using deception to trick someone, intrusively reading an NPC's mind, breaking down a door, or applying poison, something is being harmed or affected in a way that it doesn't want to be, so a die roll is needed. Similarly, using a device to shape the emotions of another creature would require a die roll.

Of course, sometimes a character can use Effort to reduce the difficulty so there's no need to make a roll. But as the GM, you can also waive the need for a roll. Consider a mathemagician who uses her Z-Point Burst ability on a bunch of level 1 rodents. Each has 3 health, and the PC needs to roll only 3 or higher to affect each one, but there are twenty-four rodents. You can simply say, "With a discharge of sudden energy, you incinerate the swarm of rodents, leaving little behind but scorch marks and the smell of burnt hair." This keeps things moving and prevents the game from coming to a dead stop while the player makes two dozen rolls. Frankly, most first-tier characters will regard level 1 creatures as merely a nuisance, so no drama is ruined when the mathemagician takes them all out. Move on to another, greater challenge! What you're effectively doing is making the action routine, so no roll is needed. In the case of the mathemagician, you're reducing the difficulty by one step due to circumstances: the rodents just aren't that tough. That's not breaking the rules—that's using the rules. That's the way the game is meant to be played.

As an aside, this doesn't mean that the swarm of rodents is a bad encounter. It *would* be bad in a game where it takes an hour and a half to resolve a fight that was no real challenge. But in the Cypher System? Even if the mathemagician doesn't blast every rodent, an encounter like that can be resolved in five minutes. Not every encounter needs to be life-or-death to be interesting. We'll talk more about designing encounters (and the related issue of pacing) later in this chapter.

KEEPING THINGS CHALLENGING

At some point as a Game Master, you might feel compelled to increase the difficulty of encounters because your group isn't being challenged, or if your players are burning through your carefully imagined adventure too quickly because they're stronger or more resourceful than you anticipated. Before you do so, consider that the difficulty of tasks doesn't have anything to do with how powerful or skilled PC is. A higher-tier character attempting to run across a narrow plank between rooftops is attempting the exact same task that a lower-tier character would be attempting. The fact that the character can choose to spend several levels of Effort to succeed automatically, or roll and succeed with ease, is not always a bad thing! It will likely encourage the player to try more exciting tasks and help you keep the adventure interesting. Also, they've earned the right to be awesome at times, so let them do it!

Raising the difficulty of tasks can also make a player feel like they are being made weak, even though they're supposed to be getting stronger and more capable as they gain experience. They might get frustrated and ask "Why are all the planks between buildings getting narrower now that I'm trained in balance?" That doesn't sound like fun!

So instead of ratcheting up the difficulty to keep things challenging, try introducing some extra adventure. For example, navigating a maze of rooftops and narrow bridges might have been intended to be a focal point during an encounter, but the characters are sprinting across all the planks with ease. Try throwing an enemy at them when they're half way across! The PC may decide to take out their knife while balancing on the plank and suddenly you've got a riveting melee battle high in the air!

Z-Point Burst, page 50

When it comes to combat encounters, increasing the level or the number enemies will definitely make the encounter more challenging, but not necessarily more entertaining. So when it becomes obvious that an encounter is going to be a breeze, try throwing in a complication, such as a blurb swarm that makes concentrating on combat actions and other tasks more difficult, or giving one of the NPCs a gun or cypher and positioning them on the high ground to drive the group to take cover. Alternatively, if you think the group has a motivation to give chase, you could have the NPCs flee when it becomes obvious that they're outmatched; the foot chase might end suddenly when the NPCs find a way to turn the tables using the environment. When you create encounters that cause the players to use a variety of skills—tracking, perception, athletics, etc.—it will make things much more enjoyable than just trading a few extra blows during combat.

After you've considered those options, by all means make the NPCs tougher! Have the enemies wear light armor, forcing the PCs to mete out more violence to finish them, or give the enemies a weapon that deals more damage. Since the damage system in the Vurt RPG is already quite unforgiving, a hit or two with a medium melee weapon like a nail bat can be a real game changer. Other weapons, such as a stun baton for example, might daze the characters and make tasks temporarily more difficult.

One of the most effective ways to make an enemy more challenging is to make them smarter. Start playing the NPC as if it was a thinking being. Have them retreat to cover, use the environment to create hazards for the PCs, and so on.

CHARACTER DEATH

The death of a PC is obviously the worst that can happen (well, except for the death of the whole party!). As the GM, you may feel like bending the rules or finding ways to explain away the death of a PC, and that's okay. There are even optional rules for substituting permanent injuries for what would otherwise be lethal damage. But don't forget, the threat of serious injury or death is part of what makes RPGs more fun than other games—the stakes are high! Chasing an enemy across exposed beams high above the city isn't going to be fun if you know that the GM won't allow you to fall. It's also okay to allow a PC to die, especially if they've had opportunities to avoid it, but they took a big risk anyway and came up short.

If this happens, the easiest solution is to have the player roll a new character from scratch. If the rest of the party is of a higher tier, you can also have the player roll a character at that same tier, but in the Cypher System a lower-tier PC can still contribute to a party of higher-tier characters. In fact, roleplaying a character that needs the protection of stronger companions, or is in over their head with a more experienced group, can make for some really memorable parties.

However you choose to handle it, you should introduce the new character to the party through the narrative. Maybe they're a feather dealer who gets mixed up with the group in a sale that gets busted by the cops, or a cabbie that the group hires to help them with a mission. If the player puts some thought into their new character, it should be easy to find a way to connect them to the group.

GM INTRUSION

As a tool for guiding a story, GM intrusion is useful in a lot of different contexts where just letting the dice decide what happens can result in a less interesting or enjoyable play session.

For starters, GM intrusion lets you introduce challenges and complications at exactly the right moment. Instead of waiting for a particular roll or action to trigger something you had planned, you can choose when it happens using GM intrusion. For example, say the group is using stealth to sneak into an office and steal something. They've learned that there are two security guards in a nearby room, but that they don't walk in patrols. If the PCs making perfect stealth rolls and avoiding all the security measures will mean that the rooftop escape you had planned will be foiled, it's okay to say "a security guard rounds the corner in front of you and stops short in surprise, the empty teapot falling to the floor with a loud clang!" You can now award 2 XP to the character closest to the surprised guard and let them deal with the new situation.

Another situation where GM intrusion can save your session from losing substance is by foiling lucky shots that would otherwise bring a climactic encounter to a premature conclusion. Say, for example, that the group has learned that a powerful robodog enemy they're about to do combat with has a critical weakness in an area that's difficult to reach. In the first round of action, one of the PCs rolls a natural 20 and pulls off a nearly impossible targeted shot which destroys the weak component and deals enough damage to kill it. The roaring beast stiffens and sparks with electricity and crashed to the ground. But wait! The group's celebration is cut short when they hear a low growl and the robodog slowly raises itself from the ground with bared teeth! It's impaired by the targeted shot, but it turns out your tip about the weakness wasn't 100% accurate! Award 2 XP to the player who made the legendary shot.

If a player uses skills and effort to reduce the difficulty of a task to zero, the GM can use GM intrusion to negate the automatic success. The player must roll for the action at its original difficulty level or target number 20, whichever is lower.

Finally, GM intrusion is an opportunity for you to grant XP points to the players which they can then use to reroll the dice, or purchase temporary benefits which can be key in completing their missions.

Take care not to abuse the privilege of GM intrusion. If it's applied too often, or if players feel that frequent GM intrusions neutralize great rolls or undermine inspired ideas, they'll end up resenting it. Use it judiciously to enrich the the narrative and keep your adventures exciting!

DESCRIBING THE SCENE

Plot developments are important to all stories, but how they're depicted and described to players is what brings them to life in roleplaying games. So make an effort to do more than just tell the group what happens. Suspenseful description of the action, unique characterizations of the NPCs, and vivid descriptions of the environments are what draw players deeper into the game and make the difference between competent GMs and truly great ones.

For example, when a PC succeeds at an action and hits an enemy, take a second to reward the player with a slick description instead of merely reporting "you hit the guy for 4 damage." You might say: "The dogboy twists his body to avoid the incoming bat, but he's a fraction of a second too slow and it connects solidly! He stumbles backwards a step with a snarl, baring his teeth." In this way a relatively routine event becomes an immersive moment in an exciting scene.

It's also important to describe similar or repetitive events differently each time to keep them fresh. Attacks can hit different body parts, ricochet off hard armor with a sharp report, or a PC might "feel the rush of air as the bat comes an inch from smashing into your face!"

In the same way that combat scenes are made more interesting with colorful, intense descriptions, environments and NPCs should also be enriched with creative

details. Rather than saying that the PCs walk up to the bar and order a drink from the robodogman bartender, you can say "The bartender is a massive and shaggy robodog with the slightly frothy jowls of a mastiff. He's polishing a glass as you approach and you can see an elaborate 'Pure is Poor' tattoo on the flesh of one cybernetic arm." You don't have to put too much into every scene, but a few well-placed details can feed the imagination of the player. You can describe the way the ancient ceiling of the bar seems to sag in the middle, or that the floor is littered with piles of dog shit and fliers for upcoming dog-metal concerts. Encourage your players to join you in describing the way that their characters perform actions. With all this detail and color in the scene, the sense that you're playing a game can sort of melt away and that's when you know you've got a great RPG session going.

However, don't let yourself or the players derail the flow of the scene in favor of elaborate descriptions. Try to keep the description no longer than the action would take. Sizing up the bartender as you approach the bar only takes a few seconds, so the description should do likewise. Keeping this fact in mind, if a player is running on about how they will act, you can interrupt with something appropriate from the world. For example, when the player drags out talking about how they are going to lean casually on the bar and slowly light a Napalm Filter and nod at the nearest patron while resting their arm on the pommel of their cricket bat—you get the idea—have the bartender interrupt with a gruff and impatient *wuff*: "What do you want?" If you've already hinted about the bartender's demeanor, the interruption will actually add to the immersion of the scene and not offend the player, while moving the encounter moving forward.

DESIGNING ENCOUNTERS

There is no concept of a "balanced encounter" in the Cypher System. There is no system for matching creatures of a particular level or tasks of a particular difficulty to characters of a particular tier. To some people, that might seem like a bad thing. But matching character builds to exacting challenges is not part of this game. It's about *story*. So whatever you want to happen next in the story is a fine encounter as long as it's fun. You're not denying the characters XP if you make things too easy or too difficult, because that's not how XP is earned. If things are too difficult for the PCs, they'll have to flee, come up with a new strategy, or try something else entirely. The only thing you have to do to maintain balance is set difficulty within that encounter accurately and consistently.

In a game like the Vurt RPG, if everyone's having fun, the game is balanced. In this context, there are two things that have the potential to unbalance the game.

- One or more PCs are far more interesting than the others. Note that I said "more interesting," not "more powerful." If my character can do all kinds of cool things but can't smash dreamsnakes as efficiently as yours does, I still might have a whole lot of fun.
- The challenges the PCs face are routinely too easy or too difficult.

The first issue should be handled by the character creation rules. If there's a problem, it might be that poor choices were made or a player isn't taking full advantage of their options. If someone really doesn't enjoy playing their character, allow them to alter the PC or—perhaps better—create a new one.

The second issue is trickier. There is no formula that states that N number of level X NPCs are a good match for tier Y characters. However, when the game has four or five beginning characters, the following guidelines are generally true.

- Level 1 opponents will be nothing but a nuisance, even in sizeable numbers.
- Level 2 opponents will not be a challenge unless in larger groups (10 or more).
- Level 3 opponents will be an interesting challenge in number of four to eight.
- Level 4 opponents will be an interesting challenge in numbers of two or three.
- A single level 5 opponent might be an interesting challenge.
- A single level 6 opponent will be a serious challenge.
- A single level 7 or 8 opponent will likely win a fight.
- A single level 9 or 10 opponent will win a fight without breaking a sweat.

But be cautious when deciding how many enemies to throw at the group—it depends on the situation at hand. If the PCs are already worn down from prior encounters, or if they have the right cyphers, any of the expectations listed above can change. That's why there's no system for balancing encounters. Just keep in mind that even tier 1 characters are pretty hardy and probably have some interesting resources, so you aren't likely to wipe out the group by accident. Character death is unlikely unless the PCs have already been through a number of other encounters and are worn down. However, any group that fights foolishly, refusing to flee when they are outmatched or at a disadvantage, is likely to suffer fatalities sooner or later.

KEEPING TRACK OF THE NUMBERS

One of the great things about the Cypher System is the simple way that complicated situations are resolved without a lot of math. As described in Chapter 11: The Rules of the Game, all you need to do as GM is increase the difficulty by one step for each complication and decrease it by one step for each asset or skill.

However, there will inevitably be situations where you need to keep track of points; for example, if a

PC's descriptor states that they have extra Pool points in the Vurt, or if the PCs are in a blue or pink feather and the Pool points they lose or gain will be reset when they jerk out. In situations like this it can be handy to have some tokens that can be used to represent extra or temporary points. Coins are great for this because three different denominations can be used to represent Might, Speed and Intellect. Or, if you're fancy, some colored-glass counters are perfect.

METAGAMING

When the players discuss the mechanics of the game, or the stats out-of-character, they are metagaming. You'll often find that players will say, "Oh, you're specialized in persuasion; you should do all the talking from now on" or "You do it, you have more points left in your Speed pool." While there's nothing wrong with this, it's sometimes more fun to try and have the same discussion in character: one player asking another player to try prying open the door because they're still exhausted from that last combat, for example.

If players stay in character, their character's abilities and deficits are more likely to have consequences in the game as they would in real life, which is how it should be. A PC who has an inability in positive social interaction might very well be the one that speaks first in a negotiation, making the PC who is trained in persuasion spend their Effort to repair the social blundering of their companion and save the encounter. These kinds of relationships between characters can be so much fun, and often fall by the wayside if players always focus on stats and stray from their characters.

UNDERSTANDING POOLS AND THE DAMAGE TRACK

While the rules of the game clearly state how to adjust the Pools and states of the player during combat and adventure, you may feel like this system doesn't represent reality. You may ask "Why do my abilities effectively cause me to be closer to death when I use them?" The key to understanding how this makes sense lies in the narrative.

Take two boxers in a boxing match. How close they are to getting knocked out is a combination of both their level of exhaustion and the amount of abuse they're suffered. Should a boxer leap forth at the first bell, wildly throwing punch after punch without stopping, they'll likely soon be out cold from a few well-placed hits from a more conservative and defensive opponent.

In this example, the crazed boxer depletes their Might Pool again and again while the opponent bides their time and waits for exhaustion to set in. Once the berserker is down to a few points in their Might Pool, *bang*! A well-placed blow to the head knocks them to the mat. This is a simplistic example which demonstrates how overextending yourself and becoming weak from exertion is actually a part of combat and is not well represented by the "life points" of other systems.

As GMs, part of the responsibility of keeping the system fun and feeling realistic is up to us. Remember to describe to the players how their PCs actually *feel* from time to time. If you remember to explain how they're getting more and more exhausted as they wrench on that locked door, it will not seem so unfair when a couple of blows from a cudgel leaves them impaired and fighting at a disadvantage. This also helps explain how a player can be knocked down to impaired, and then be hale again after a few moments of rest.

When it comes to the Intellect Pool, which is often the last Pool to be depleted before death, think of this as your final will to live, the last thread you hang onto when your body is beaten to a pulp. If the character's Intellect Pool is already exhausted from many math-emagickal calculations or intense concentration, it will mean that they are more likely to slip away into darkness when the other Pools become empty.

MAKING NAVIGATION CHECKS

When the party wants to travel somewhere, a difficulty 4 Intellect task must be completed in order to get to the destination without incident. As a GM, this is an opportunity for your to break up the linear events of an adventure and add some color into the world. Manchester is bustling with activity and opportunities for trouble, so when the players fail a navigation check, introduce a complication to spice things up. The Travel Complications table provides a number of example encounters if you don't have any specific ones in mind. When choosing a complication from the table, remember that an RPG isn't a boardgame and these examples aren't being read from cards drawn from the community chest. Whenever possible, these complications should be encounters which are described and played as if they were part of the main story.

Depending on the adventure, there may be a specific encounter that seems to connect well with the story. If so, use it! Also, you can introduce specific NPCs or areas from the story to tie things together. For example, if the group is racing against the clock to locate a missing person before a local gang does, a complication from the table that involves a run-in with gang members might help enrich the plot of the story.

IT'S THE COPS, MAN!

Regardless of whether or not the PCs have committed a crime, running afoul of the Manchester Police Department can present major complications. The group could be detained for questioning, mistaken for the actual culprits of a crime and arrested, inpho beamed by a shadowbox, caught in the crossfire of a shootout, or they might just be in the path of one of those big-ass vehicles and have to move fast. It's due to these possibilities that many Mancunians make themselves scarce

TRAVEL COMPLICATIONS

1	You take a corner and find yourself on the edge of a tense standoff between the dominant local gang and an upstart rival. 10 pairs of eyes turn to you, and as each group assumes that you've arrived to reinforce the other, the fight explodes.
2	You get the sinking feeling you've seen this particular Slick City feather store just minutes ago. Somehow, with all the police diversions and sidewalks under construction, you've arrived where you began. It's starting to get dark and wherever you were headed, you're going to be late. Succeed at a difficulty 5 Intellect task or you wind up in the wrong city district.
3	A blurbfly hovers near you as it plays a remixed mashup version of *Love Will Tear Us Apart and Gymnopedie No. 1*. It's lovely—and distracting. You miss your footing and step on a broken Enola Cola bottle. You're not walking anywhere without pain until it's taken care of. The PC who made the navigation roll has all movement distances reduced to half for two days or until the wound is treated.
4	A lorry full of MungryMan Self-Hearting Dinners crashes into a barricade, popping the back door open. As the crusties fall upon it, clawing for dinners, you feel something tugging at you. You turn and see a figure (level 3) running down a ginnel to escape. You can chase after them or lose one random cypher.
5	A tiny, hunched woman, probably human, walks towards you clutching her purse. When she sees your face, she yells out and starts to fumble through her purse, where you can clearly see her drawing a light machine pistol. Mistaken or not, she recognizes you and wants you dead.
6	A vurtman with bright yellow eyes has been dragged out onto the street where a group of ruffians surrounds him. As they beat the piss out of him with cricket bats, he reaches directly toward you in desperation. A couple of the ruffians seems to be trying to decide if you're in cahoots with the victim.
7	The blubflies at this intersection are swarming thicker than you've ever seen before; something strange is happening. Visibility is the same as in dense fog. If there is an admin in the group, one of their active blurbflies is swept up into the frenzy and lost forever. The swarm is still active as you arrive at your destination
8	As you cut through a trash-filled alley, a rogue Joy Divider hovers behind a rubbish bin, psychotic giggling sounds crackling from its defective speaker. The playback voice functions have gone haywire, but it's malicious intent is evident. This Joy Divider hovers out to fight with a triumphant "A-ha!"
9	It starts to rain, hard. A knee-deep flood full of trash and debris completely halts vehicle traffic for an hour or more. In order to make it to their destination, each character on foot must expend 3 points from their Might Pool to battle their way through the torrent. Otherwise, make a new navigation check, observing the rules for retrying a task.
10	A robocrusty approaches you, mumbling and holding a torn Interactive Madonna poster. As you ignore him he becomes more agitated, screaming and gesticulating wildly. He pulls a hammer from his coat and threatens to attack.
11	MPD! It's a raid at the Vurt-U-Want that has spilled out onto the street. Two shadowboxes hover over to you, orange inpho beams probing.
12	A dogman and a roboshad are having a fist fight on the sidewalk in front of you. As a crowd gathers to watch, you feel someone reach into your stuff and and steal 1 cypher. Turning around, you see two members of the dominant local gang staring you down.
13	This really doesn't look like the district you were heading to. In fact, it looks pretty sketchy.
14	As you approach a street corner, you hear a shrill whistle. Four members of a local upstart gang move into your path. Three have light melee weapons and the leader has a decrepit antique medium pistol.
15	Just a few feet in front of you, two MPD flesh cop officers are harassing a young dogboy they'd caught reselling Game Cat magazines on the street. One of the MPD officers jumps the dogboy and chokes him out as his fellow officer turns to you. Inpho beams flash across the group from overhead as a shadowbox hovers into view.
16	A drip feed riot has erupted around a busted terminal about a block away from your destination and will likely affect any outdoor encounters.
17	A battle between weaponized blurbflies rages overhead of your destination, causing bystanders to huddle under cover or risk getting hit by random attacks. This will affect any outdoor encounters.
18	Two droidlocked robos are arguing loudly, both clutching the same Yellow feather as a crowd gathers. They pull shotguns on each other and start to fire, peppering each other, the bystanders, and passing cars. A Ford Comet hops the curb and plows into them. They drop the feather and everyone jumps on it, causing a small riot.
19	From opposite sides of the street, two DJs with portable Limbic Splitter systems explode into deadly sonic combat. As their ears bleed and their teeth grind down to the gums, the pedestrian crowd between them erupts into a frantic dance crush. Escaping is a difficulty 4 Might based task and the PCs suffer 2 points of damage each round that they are trapped in the throng. The party comes out of it feeling *epic* and for the next hour, all tasks involving social interaction are reduced in difficulty by one step.
20	An Xcab screeches to a halt next to the group and pops the door. Apparently, you've been mistaken for the fare who called it in. "Sorry I'm late!" the driver says as you jump in and state your destination. You arrive a few minutes later and as you exit, the Xcabber tosses you a burner PDF. "Keep the late pick-up off the books and you're next ride is on me, no questions asked."

when the MPD rolls past. Well, those reasons and the fact that pretty much everyone has *something* illegal on their person.

That isn't to say that all MPD are bad news. Officers like Constable Alan Usher are a credit to the force—exactly the geezer you hope will happen past when you're getting a kicking from a group of Scallywaggers in Rusholme.

Constable Alan Usher, page 343

Scallywaggers, page 196

GETTING BEAMED

All MPD roboshads (also known as a shadowboxes) employ charged inpho beams to collect and transmit information. Getting tagged by the beam of a passing shadowbox is like having your barcode scanned at the supermarket. All situational information is uploaded to the MPD mainframe and checked against any previous data that may exist there: warrants, active investigations, you name it. If that isn't invasive enough, the energy of an inpho beam can be dialed up to the point that they deal medium damage and are capable of setting small dogs on fire.

Shadowbox, page 337

If you come up in the MPD database, the cops will move to arrest or detain you. Depending on that nature of your file, they may also deem it necessary to use lethal force.

GETTING BUSTED

If a PC is apprehended by the police in connection with a crime, they will be arrested and taken to a district precinct and sentenced. In most cases a PC who is apprehended by the police and taken to a precinct will be released the next day with no weapons or equipment and will generally have suffered a beating or two, leaving them impaired on the damage track. It is up to the GM to determine if any lasting damage was suffered.

For crimes less serious than gunning down a civilian in front of the police, PCs are released due to lack of jail space, a distaste for paperwork, or sometimes just because of a clerical mishap. If the crime the PC got nabbed for involves violence against cops, politicians, or non-gang-related citizens, the character will be sent to the Strangeways Prison, which is the rough equivalent of death for the purposes of gameplay.

Strangeways Prison, page 217

It isn't technically impossible to bust someone out of Strangeways, but it would likely be a tier 6 adventure, on par with breaking into Chimera Corp headquarters.

PLAYING IN THE VURT

Roleplaying inside a land of dreams can be challenging. The objective as a GM is to create a sense that reality is warped and fluid, encouraging the players to be creative in their roleplaying. Once you find that players are trying to walk through walls, or jumping to try and reach a star, hanging in the sky, you know you've created an appropriately weird environment. That doesn't mean that the party should always be surfing around the Vurt on moonbeams and walking upside down on the ceiling: Mix up dream logic with real world logic to create a Vurt that is unpredictable and fun.

In order to add that *deja vu* feeling so common in dreams, try to make it so that what is experienced inside the Vurt is flavored by the recent experiences of the group. For example, if the party recently had an encounter where they were forced to contend with civil serpents at a service window in a municipal office, a challenge encountered in the Vurt might involve annoying and officious NPCs that keep rejecting the party's requests to advance to the next part of the dream. If an adventure in Manchester has had them scraping through Bottletown recently, perhaps enemies or locations encountered in the dream will be covered in rainbow-colored shards of glass.

Unless you are very good at improvising in this way, consider writing down some ideas when you're preparing for the play session. You can adapt the dream logic or puzzles you jotted down to any situation or environment in the Vurt to make the feather trip bizarre and interesting.

COMBAT AND ACTIONS IN THE VURT

Since the Vurt is fundamentally different from the real world, the way that simple actions such as walking, throwing, or shooting may not be handled the same way. In order to get the players into the mindset that the Vurt is a weird and different place, feel free to impose some strange physics into Vurt encounters. For example, the players might discover that movement in combat feels like walking on the bottom of a swimming pool and an immediate distance is the limit of movement in a combat round. Or perhaps movement is instantaneous, allowing characters to warp anywhere they can see as part of any action. You can reverse or remove gravity, or allow characters to fly or leap a long distance.

In combat you could determine that any thrown object flies at such terrible speed that it acts as a bullet and deals extra damage, or that melee attacks seem to slow to the point that they deal no damage unless the PC applies Effort.

If a PC suffers damage inside a Vurt, there is no reason to assume that points will first be drawn from the Might Pool. Instead, you can decide that a hit suffered in this place causes a deafening psychic reverberation in the PCs mind and inflicts Intellect damage, or perhaps their essence is drawn out from their chest in wispy strands causing the damage to be drawn from their Speed Pool instead.

NAVIGATION IN THE VURT

When the group attempts to navigate from one place to another inside a Vurt feather, dream logic is likely to come into play. A compass, a map, or even a direct line of sight is no guarantee that the PCs are going to find their way. Even if the PCs have done this dream 10 times in the past, walking down the same path may lead them to a different location every time (in the same way that you may have many dreams where you're flying, but the context is different).

Many locations inside feathers have specific tricks or riddles that must be used to access the location. While these makes it easier for the GM, specific examples will not always be present and you will need to think up your own.

Moving from place to place in a Vurt dream rarely involves a navigation check like it does in Manchester. Instead, try to think of interesting ways for the players to arrive at their destination after interacting with the environment, NPCs, or each other. For example, if the PCs are searching for a way out of a dark woods, try saying "As you search the ground around a gnarled tree, you lift a leaf and beneath it lies a tiny diorama of a glimmering forest dell. Fwoosh, you find yourself standing inside it!" or "Looking up at the ceiling of the sandy cave you see a reflection of yourselves looking down at you. They appear to be standing on a wide grassy lawn. When you look down, you realize that you are no longer in the cave."

Alternatively, you can choose a specific trick, such as allowing the party to escape the maze after making two right turns in a row. Keep in mind that not everyone will figure out your riddles, however, so make sure that you either leave clues, like a butterfly that sings "Two rights don't make a wrong!" while the group searches the maze, or make the trick something that they might do accidentally before they get too frustrated.

One of our favorite ways to travel from one location in a Vurt to another is to trigger the navigation with a certain concept or thought. PCs may suddenly appear in a specific location the moment that a discussion between characters turns into an argument, or when someone wonders aloud if there is something under the floor or if there actually *is* a way out of this maze.

Depending on what is required to win a particular Vurt, failing to navigate from one place to another may result in failing the dream. For a Blue or even some Blacks, failing may just mean jerking out. But in a Yellow, not finding your way may mean that you are trapped forever, or swapped physically into the Vurt.

CHAPTER 18

CREATURES & NPCS: VURT WORLD

Both the real world and the Vurt world are dangerous places. Many of the creatures in both the real world and the Vurt world travel in groups, just like the player characters. Some are just trying to survive, some are looking for trouble. Some are simple-minded, cold-blooded beasts with an appetite for PCs.

This chapter is a bestiary of sorts, chock full of deadly enemies. It's also an excellent source for GMs who want to create their own creatures, both friends and foes. One-of-a-kind NPCs from the Vurt world can also be found here, including some of the Vurt dragons who have been causing so much trouble over the last few decades.

UNDERSTANDING THE LISTINGS

Level: Like the difficulty of a task, each creature and NPC has a level attached to it. You use the level to determine the target number a PC must reach to attack or defend against the opponent. In each entry, the difficulty number for the creature or NPC is listed in parentheses after its level. As shown on the following table, the target number is three times the level.

Level	Target Number
1	3
2	6
3	9
4	12
5	15
6	18
7	21
8	24
9	27
10	30

Description: Following the name of the creature or NPC is a general description of its appearance, nature, intelligence, or background.

Motive: This entry is a way to help the GM understand what a creature or NPC wants. Every creature or person wants something, even if it's just to be left alone.

Environment: This entry describes the place where this creature is likely to be found or what kind of terrain it favors. It will also indicate if a creature originates from a specific Vurt feather.

Health: A creature's target number is often also its health, which is the amount of damage it can sustain before it is dead or incapacitated. For easy reference, the entries always list a creature's health, even when it's the normal amount for a creature of its level.

Damage Inflicted: Generally, when creatures hit in combat, they inflict their level in damage regardless of the form of attack. Some inflict more, or less, or have a special modifier to damage. Intelligent NPCs often use weapons, but this is more a flavor issue than a mechanical one. In other words, it doesn't matter if a level 3 enemy uses a knife or claws—it deals the same damage if it hits. The entries always specify the amount of damage inflicted, even if it's the normal amount for a creature.

Armor: This is the creature's Armor value. Sometimes the number represents physical armor, and other times it represents natural protection or some other effect that reduces damage. This entry doesn't appear in the game stats if a creature has no Armor.

Movement: Movement determines how far the creature can move in a single turn. Creatures have movements of immediate, short, or long, which equates to the ranges of the same name. Most PCs have an effective movement of short, so if they are chasing (or being chased by) a creature with immediate movement, their Speed tasks are one step easier. If the creature's movement is long, the PC's Speed tasks are one step harder.

Modifications: Use these default numbers when a creature's information says to use a different target number. For example, a level 4 creature might say "defends as a level 5," which means PCs attacking it must reach a target number of 15 (for difficulty 5) instead of 12 (for difficulty 4). In special circumstances, some creatures have other modifications, but these are almost always specific to their level.

Combat: This entry gives advice on using the creature in combat, such as "This monster uses ambushes and hit-and-run tactics." At the end of the combat listing, you'll also find any special abilities, such as immunities, poisons, and healing skills. GMs should be logical about a creature's reaction to a particular action or attack by a PC. For example, a pure robo is immune to purely biological diseases, a character can't poison a being of energy (at least, not with a conventional poison), and so on.

Interaction: This entry gives advice on using the creature in interactions, such as "These creatures are willing to talk but respond poorly to threats," or "This creature is an animal and acts like an animal."

Use: This entry gives the GM suggestions for how to use the creature in a game session. It might provide general notes or specific adventure ideas.

Loot: This entry indicates what the PCs might gain if they take items from their fallen foes (or what could be gained by trading with the creature, or deceiving it). It doesn't appear in the game stats if the creature has no loot.

GM Intrusion: This optional entry in the stats suggests a way to use GM intrusion in an encounter with the creature. It's just one possible idea of many, and the GM is encouraged to come up with their own uses of the game mechanic.

VURT CREATURES BY LEVEL

Dreamsnake	2	Stone balloon	3	Maestro	5
Flaunt worm	2	Willow whisperer	3	Nerdburner	5
Inchovy	2	Backbiter	4	Pitymorph	5
Shugazir	2	Belly hound	4	Slim sandman	5
Bader	3	Boron	4	Thundersleyar	5
Beyonder	3	Lightkeeper	4	Unspeakable	6
Branch mangler	3	Skinvader	4	Jabberwalker	6
Erasure snake	3	Thermofish	4	Kaykatzo	6
Fayo-fayo	3	Boa conscriptor	4	Minocentre	6
Ghost cat	3	Blundersnatcher	5	Saturator	6
Pitch worm	3	Doomer	5	Dagonite	7
Poorbill	3	Gorsedd	5	Questing beast	7
Sixtring	3	Hronir	5	Baphomet	8
Skyjelly	3	Kasha	5	Naga	8

Something always has to spoil the day.
-Vurt, Jeff Noon

VURT WORLD CREATURES

BACKBITER 4 (12)

At first glance, backbiters are just dogmen, nothing out of the ordinary. You may meet one in a Vurt feather and not even realize it. But backbiters are actually pure Vurt beings who use this disguise to help them trap their favorite prey—real dogmen. The entire back of the backbiter is a tangle of tentacles and small circular mouths. When they feed, they gnaw on their prey's flesh by laying on top of them.

Recently, more backbiters have crossed over into the real world somehow. Obviously, a good jacket or covering is all any backbiter needs if they want their true identity to remain undiscovered. There are public service announcements in the dogmen communities of the real world to warn of this new threat. Even though backbiters in the real world are extremely rare, it causes panic.

Motive: Hungers for fresh meat, especially dogman flesh
Environment: Vurt world and very rarely, the real world. Their origin feather is unknown.
Health: 18
Damage Inflicted: 6 points
Movement: Short
Modifications: Deception and perception as level 7.
Combat: Backbiters prefer to trick or double-cross their prey, attacking when they have the element of surprise. They use melee weapons, fists, or a dog bite.
Interaction: Intelligent and manipulative, they can also communicate telepathically with any willing subject. Strangely, their Vurt flesh is not psychoactive and their bodies decompose completely within a few hours of death.
Use: The backbiter may present itself as a guide, initially offering to help the PCs navigate in a Vurt, then attacking when they're in a precarious situation. In the real world, a backbiter may be terrorizing a small community of dogmen, who are becoming more paranoid that the backbiter is hiding in their midst.
GM Intrusion: If the PC hasn't yet figured out that the dogman in front of them is really a backbiter, now is when they find out. The tentacles that slither out from behind the backbiter's back are dripping with saliva and they all reach towards the PC, knocking the weapon from their hands and pulling them into a tight embrace. In the following round, the PC can attempt a Might-based roll to get away. Each turn that the PC spends in the backbiter's grip will cause the PC to take 8 points of damage.

BADER 3 (9)

In the wastelands and industrial outskirts of Vurtchester, small groups of baders roam around on their hands, chattering as they look for food. Each hand is set at the end of one of four long, flexible, boneless legs. Their faces and heads are encased in metal sheeting, which makes them blind. But their echolocation allows them to react just as quickly as they need to.

They are simpleminded and subservient to their appointed maestro. They scurry into battle happily, clicking for echolocation, wild tufts of hair sticking out of their metal masks.

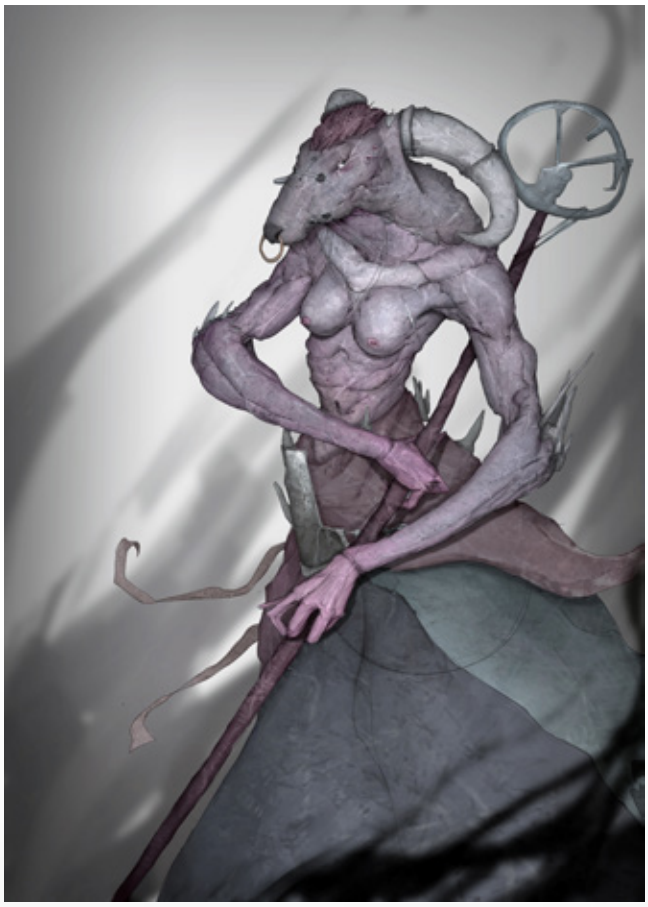
Motive: Follow the instructions of their *maestro*
Environment: Vurt world. Origin feather is *Let-Mi-Go-Pink!*
Health: 15
Damage Inflicted: 5 points
Armor: 2
Movement: Short. They navigate using echolocation.
Modifications: Speed defense as level 2 due to poor coordination.
Combat: Baders attack by punching and throwing small projectiles like rocks. They also attack in large groups, following the commands of their maestro.
Interaction: A lone bader might be relatively harmless, but they are aggressive

in groups. Baders do the bidding of their maestro.

Use: The PCs may encounter a bader wandering outside of the urban limits of a Vurt town.

GM Intrusion: Running at full speed on its four hands, the bader slams into the PC and sends them flying back several feet onto their back, dropping whatever was in their hands and taking 5 points of damage. Before the PC can right themselves, the creature scurries over and straddles them, opening up its metallic bader faceplate to reveal themselves to the PC. The sight of the bader's naked form is so frightening, the PC loses control of their bowels and brown-notes their trousers like a toddler.

BAPHOMET 8 (24)



Each traveller to the Vurt world sees this mighty creature differently, and its physical form is in a constant state of flux. Most accounts seem to share some common themes: a horned goat's head, and a human-like form that shares both male and female characteristics. There are accounts that describe a voice louder than a thunderstorm and others a soft sibilant speech which makes the listener later doubt what they heard. Accounts differ because Baphomet embodies the sum of the universe—hideousness, erotic beauty, good and evil, strength and vulnerability—the marriage of both the cyclical nature of Mother Earth and the linearity of eschatology.

Motive: Restoring balance to the univurt, even if it means destroying the PCs; impregnating itself to continue the cycle of death and rebirth.

Environment: Vurt world. Origin feather is *Night Temple*.

Health: 50

Damage Inflicted: 10 points

Armor: 6

Movement: Long (teleporting)

Modifications: Intellect defense as level 9.

Combat: This being wields a long staff with a metal device at one end. If wounded, Baphomet will teleport a short distance on its next turn, and use its voice to command one the group to turn against the others. Resisting this command is a difficulty 9 Intellect-based willpower task. If killed, Baphomet will be reborn in another part of the Vurt world.

Interaction: Baphomet sits in judgement over the PCs, possibly requiring them to perform bizarre rituals that involve blood, self-sacrifice, or in some instances copulations that end in the birthing of minions to serve and worship this Vurt being. Baphomet knows the secrets of the mechanisms of exchange between the Vurt and the real world, and will sentence the PCs to be destroyed if it is learned that they plan to upset the balance.

Use: When stories involve the balance of the univurt, swapbacks, Vurt cartography, or great, ineffable mysteries, Baphomet is the ultimate example of a keeper of powerful secrets.

GM Intrusion: Jerk out! The PC and all who were part of their traveling group in the Vurt awake to find themselves back in the real world. The PC and all involved cannot remember anything that happened in the feather trip. All cyphers are gone, as well as all ammo and weapons that were taken in—all gone! The PC and all involved are reduced to 1 point in each Pool and a wicked case of Vurt lag. As far as the PC and others are concerned, the feather must have been a total dud, and while they were passed out, someone broke in and robbed them. If they only knew.

BELLY HOUND 4 (12)

Belly hounds are the tragic offspring of the Questing Beast. Legend has it that when the Questing Beast is killed, a dozen hounds will burst from her belly to devour her carcass and then turn on her killer.

A belly hound resembles a small wolf covered in blood and amniotic fluid, its umbilicus dragging on the ground behind it. They are pure Vurt creatures, not true canines. Belly hounds are not viable offspring and live only a few hours under the best circumstances. If you see one alone, it is a sign that the Questing Beast has recently been past.

Motive: Vengeance for being born, finding a good spot to die
Environment: The Vurt world. Origin is the *Questing Beast* feather series.
Health: 9
Damage Inflicted: 4 points
Movement: Short
Modifications: Speed defense as level 3 due to poor eyesight.
Combat: Belly hounds use their bite to attack.
Interaction: They attack without provocation and cannot be reasoned with. Pure hatred in an impressive embryonic wolf demon package.
Use: Whenever a Questing Beast is killed, roll a d20 and see how many belly hounds burst from inside to avenge their mother's death. They also are an indication that the PCs are on the trail of the Questing Beast.
GM Intrusion: The belly hound rears back, dripping its rancid mucous all over the ground and howling in pain. Sidestepping the incoming melee attack from the PC, the belly hound lurches forward and catches the weapon in its teeth. Not only does the PC's attack fail, but they must succeed at a level 4 Speed task, or the weapon breaks in the creature's jaws.

BEYONDER 3 (9)

Resembling vine-covered sea slugs with small useless wings, beyonders are known for their aggressiveness. One can often smell a beyonder well before seeing them—their putrid stench can be detected from over a mile away.

Under water, they can swim well and use their small wing-like appendages to propel themselves quickly. On land, they move slowly and leave a trail of fetid slime. Multiple, luminescent halos hover in a stack over their head, emitting a soft ringing sound. It has been hypothesized that this is how they communicate with each other, but there is no confirmation of this.

Motive: Hunger for flesh
Environment: Vurt world. Origin feather is *Vurtnautica* Prime.
Health: 9
Damage Inflicted: 4 points
Movement: Immediate when on land. Short when swimming underwater.
Modifications: Defends as level 2 when on land.
Combat: Their skin is covered in foul-smelling slime that causes severe burning sensations when touched and can be lethal if ingested. They attack with projectile sprays of their digestive juices and slime.
Interaction: They travel in large groups. Simple-minded and mean, they seem to have no fear.
Use: These creatures can make wading through a swampy area of the Vurt a disgusting challenge.
GM Intrusion: The beyonder sings out loudly, its floating halos expanding, changing from gold to bright white. If there are other beyonders nearby, they will all do this in unison, without needing to take an action. *Flash!* Any PC who can see the glowing white halos must immediately make a Might-based roll or go blind for ten minutes.

BLUNDERSNATCHER 5 (15)

These odd, solitary creatures live most of their lives attached to the sides of trees in the wooded areas of the Vurt world. Their umbrella-like bodies are almost weightless, and they propel themselves through the air by opening and closing their hoods. Beneath the hood is a sharp beak and a skirt of thin, 10 ft (3 m) tentacles which are covered in deadly nematocysts. The tentacles trail through the air as they fly, latching onto any creature they touch. While beautiful to observe, they are one of the more deadly creatures in the forests and jungles of the Vurt world.

Motive: Reproduction, self defense

Environment: Groups of 5 to 10 blundersnatchers (called a smack) can be found dwelling in the forest canopy of the Tulgey Woods.

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 4 points from Speed Pool, 4 points from Intellect Pool due to toxin; see combat

Armor: 2

Movement: Long while flying. Short while on the ground.

Modifications: Stealth as level 6. Speed defense as level 6.

Combat: When agitated, the creature will flail its tentacles. If a character is contacted by a waving tentacle, tiny barbed nematocysts inject a Vurt toxin that inflicts 4 points of Speed damage and an additional 4 points of Intellect damage on a failed Might roll.

Interaction: They are thought to be nominally intelligent, but very little is known about their behavior.

Use: The PCs might brush against one, accidentally triggering a frantic surprise attack as they launch about. Alternatively, the PCs may notice the smack of blundersnatchers, forcing them to make Speed rolls to deftly maneuver through the area without disturbing any of the resting creatures.

GM Intrusion: The blundersnatcher opens its hood, lashing all of its tentacles around the PC, inflicting 8 points of Speed damage and an additional 4 points of Intellect damage on a failed Might roll. Until the PC is able to succeed at a difficulty 5 Might task to escape the tentacles, the blundersnatcher will inflict this same damage on each of its subsequent turns, also making a separate attack with it's beak that inflicts 4 points of Might damage.

BOA CONSCRIPTOR 4 (12)

Boa conscriptors are silent killers in the swamps and bayous of the Vurt world. Ranging in size from 6 to 8 feet, these serpents are excellent swimmers, much faster in the water than out. Their mottled skin makes spotting them very difficult. They aren't the only Vurt serpents around; boa conscriptors interact with common dreamsnakes regularly, and have a natural hierarchy that sets the boas above them (dreamsnakes are recruited to serve as the boa conscriptors' protectors). It's a common site to see a boa feather conscriptor slithering out of the water, followed by dozens of dreamsnakes.

Boas make no noise whatsoever, making them even more deadly. Their bite is extremely powerful compared to their size; conscriptor neurotoxins cause intense pain with even the smallest bites. Once a target is bitten, the scars will follow them back to the real world. It's best to stay out of the murky waters of the Vurt world—that's just solid advice. Getting bitten by one of these buggers is no joke!

Motive: Self defense, hunting small prey

Environment: Vurt world. Origin has been traced back to the Blue Bayou feather.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Long while swimming. Short while on the ground.

Modifications: Stealth as level 5.

Combat: This reclusive Vurt serpent spends most of its life in the water and uses the element of surprise to attack. Its bite is extremely painful. Even if the venom doesn't take them down, most people won't survive two or three bites without passing out from the pain. Each bite inflicts 8 points of damage and on a failed Might roll the target is poisoned, inflicting 5 points of Speed damage each hour until treated with naga antivenom.

Naga antivenom, page 368

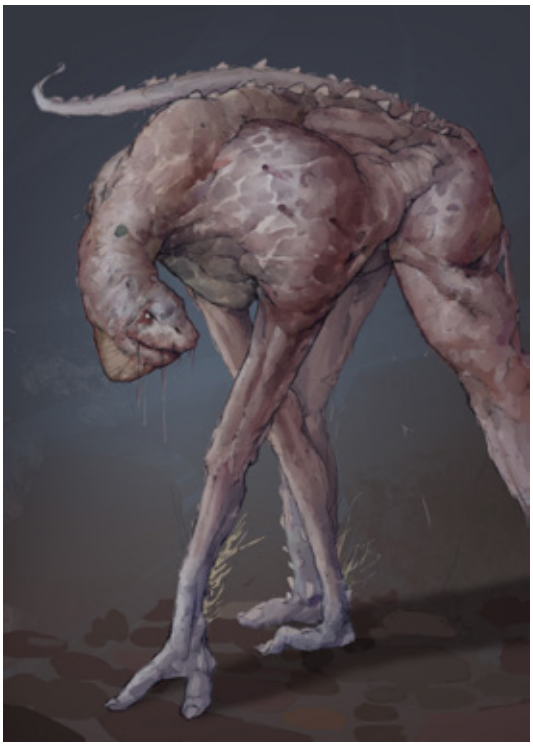
Interaction: They don't go out of their way to attack travellers on land, but those who decide to enter their waters will find that boa conscriptors are quick to react. From time to time they are accompanied by a large number of subservient dreamsnakes that protect their conscriptor commander.

Use: There's always that one player who didn't pay attention when you told them not to wade into the water. Now they have their PC to take a swim in the swamps? Game on!

GM Intrusion: The wide open mouth of the attacking boa conscriptor is dripping with delicious neurotoxins. Its fangs clamp down onto the PC's arm and it wraps its body around the PC's arm, shoulders, and neck, squeezing hard and quick. The PC takes 8 points of damage and is knocked one step down the damage track, but the boa

conscriptor is not going to let go. The only physical action the PC can take is to try to wriggle free, either as a Might-based or Speed-based action. Failure results in 8 points of damage each round.

BORON 4 (12)



Borons are quick and lethal, roughly the size of an adult human, and they can pounce distances up to six times their length. They are technically ruminants that graze on grasses and flowers, but don't let that fool you. They have been known to kill other creatures for sport—some believe that there is even a special scoring system between different boron tribes.

The flowers that make up the majority of their diet are poisonous to most other creatures. When a boron bites a victim and breaks the skin, it's the deadly saliva that (quickly) does the real damage.

Motive: Rage, territoriality
Environment: Vurt world. Origin has been traced back to the *Elemental Turntable* feather.
Health: 15
Damage Inflicted: 4 points
Armor: 3
Movement: Short
Modifications: Perception as a level 5. Speed defense as level a 5.
Combat: The venomous bite of the boron is deadly. When bitten, the target is also immobilized until they can succeed on a Speed defense roll to shake it off.
Interaction: Borons communicate using a complicated system of sounds and smells, marking their tribal territory with pheromones and defending it to the death.
Use: Describing a group of peaceful-looking borons grazing far off in the distance is a sure way to entice players to make a dumb decision like taking a closer look.
GM Intrusion: As the boron launches at the PC and bites down for 4 points of damage, its venomous saliva overwhelms the PC and causes a seizure. For d6 rounds, the PC will be dazed, sweating, vomiting, and rolling around on the ground. Once this initial reaction has passed, the PC will have to regain their footing but will remain nauseated for 10 minutes.

BRANCH MANGLER 3 (9)

In the treetop canopies of the Vurt world, the fierce branch manglers build their nests and hunt for small prey. Communities can range from just a handful to hundreds. They've spread into many woodland areas of the Vurt world, and pose a very real threat for any living creature that passes under the branches of their hidden nests.

The size of a small dog, branch manglers have slippery, moist skin with little to no pigmentation, and therefore cannot tolerate direct sunlight. They reproduce by laying clusters of eggs in large nests woven in the treetops. Some have a specialized thumb spike that many Vurt experts have attributed to the individuals who act as the community's queen, laying eggs at a much faster rate and often fighting twice as fiercely as the others. Manglers communicate to each other through a series of high-pitched chirps and clicks, but otherwise make very little sound, even in combat.

Motive: Fiercely protect their treetop nests and communities
Environment: Vurt world. Origin has been traced back to the *Automated Alias* feather.
Health: 9
Damage Inflicted: 3 points
Armor: 1

Movement: Short
Combat: Branch manglers have tentacles surrounding their mouths that can extend to draw in small prey. Some have a large protruding thumb spike that raises their damage to 6 points. Modifications: When in their treetop homes, stealth and climbing tasks as a level 5.
Interaction: They have very limited mental capacity and live to protect their nests. They do not understand language, and if captured they almost always die within minutes.
Use: While in the Vurt world, the PCs are ambushed from the treetops by a group of 10 angry branch manglers trying to protect their nests. That might draw another 10 into the fight, then another 10 until the PCs are forced to flee. Can't win 'em all.
GM Intrusion: Without warning, three more branch manglers drop from the canopy above, directly on top of the PC. They each get to attack once before the PC can react.

DAGONITE 7 (21)

There are great cities and civilizations that have always lived deep under the oceans of the Vurt world. The dagonites are an aquatic people that live in the old sea and defend their city and fellow dagonites from invaders. They see all non-dagonites as a threat to their existence, so most do not interact with outsiders unless there is a very good reason.

They are not as brutish as their appearance would suggest. Sure, they're covered in hard scales, fins, spines, and barnacles, but they also communicate with each other telepathically using a complicated language older than memory. Poetry and dance are important to them and they spend most days gathering materials to use for their large scale reef installations. Their odd shell art is sacred to the dagonites and real-world recreations are prized by collectors.

Motive: Territorialism, making sacred art
Environment: Vurt world. Origin feather *DayGone*.
Health: 21
Damage Inflicted: 7 points
Armor: 2
Movement: Short
Modifications: Underwater defense as level 8. Above-surface defense as level 6
Combat: Even unarmed, a dagonite's punch or kick can be lethal. Some carry tridents and spears, which raises their regular damage by 2 points.
Interaction: Intelligent, intensely pragmatic creatures who have a sense of honor. They live in large communities and are seldom encountered alone.
Use: If the PCs need to talk art or poetry or dance, the dagonites are perfect. They're also perfect enemies for disrespectful characters who might need a good arse-whipping.
GM Intrusion: Both scaly fists of the dagonite come crashing down onto the PC's face at the same time. The PC takes 8 damage, is dazed for one round, and descends one step on the damage track. The PC has lost a tooth (if it has teeth) will not be able to speak clearly enough to be understood for one hour. The dagonite winds up for another attack.

DOOMER 5 (15)

Doomers are mysterious desert warriors who live in hidden colonies under the sands of desert dreams. They can appear suddenly from patches of undisturbed sand and vanish in the same manner. They are rare, uncommunicative warriors whose culture and dwellings are yet unexplored.

It is difficult to tell which of the many characters you encounter in the dry sand dunes and high deserts of the Vurt world is a doomer, as they sometimes pose as travelling mendicants or traders. Once they attack, there is no doubt. Opening their mouths wide, they vomit a strong spray of sand that often blinds their enemies long enough to get the upper hand in a fight. The short curved swords they each hide beneath their robes are said to be crafted from the tooth of a naga. Never underestimate any strange traveler you happen upon out in the deserts

of the Vurt world—they just might be a doomer.
Motive: Unknown
Environment: Vurt world. Origin has been traced back to the *Airkisser* feather.
Health: 15
Damage Inflicted: 4 points; see combat
Armor: 1
Movement: Short
Modifications: Mental defense as a level 8.
Combat: Doomers are armed with curved swords that inflict 4 points of damage and can never be knocked out of their hands, or with long-range mental attacks that inflict 4 points of Intellect damage. Once per combat they can open their mouth and attempt to spray sand into the eyes of an enemy within immediate range, blinding them for d6 turns. Most doomers prefer to use mental attacks from long range and avoid close-range combat.
Interaction: Usually only seen from a great distance, doomers will sometimes lead dreamers into secret corners of a dream and spring an ambush, or simply vanish, leaving the characters alone with the secrets or creatures that reside there. They are telepathic but very rarely speak to Vurt travellers.
Use: A doomer might be used to defend a sacred location in a desert Vurt, act as a keeper of secrets or mysterious guide, leading the group to an important, hidden location for unknown reasons.
GM Intrusion: The doomer points toward the PCs weapon and a second later it becomes red-hot, inflicting 4 points of damage until it is dropped to the ground. The doomer swiftly picks it up, unharmed by the intense heat. As it cools, the doomer is left holding the PCs weapon in its hands, a crooked smile on its lips.

DREAMSNAKE 2 (6)

Dreamsnakes are small iridescent serpents that are regularly seen in both the real world and the Vurt world. Their glowing red eyes allow them to see in near darkness and they move to attack with lightning quickness. Unbeknownst to most people, dreamsnakes come from the Vurt realm of Takshaka, King of the Nagas, slithering into the real world whenever anything small is left in the Vurt by a hapless dreamer. Despite whispered rumors to the contrary, a dreamsnake's bite has not been shown to confer any special powers or Vurt nature.
Motive: Survival, feeding on rodents and other small prey
Environment: Both the Vurt world and the real world. Origin feather unknown. Many have crossed over to the real world and are considered pests.
Health: 3
Damage Inflicted: 2 points
Movement: Short
Modifications: Rolls initiative as level 5. Defense against ranged attacks as level 5.
Combat: Usually, dreamsnakes will strike and then attempt to slither away from combat. If trapped in a place with no exit, or if defending a more powerful serpent like a naga, they will fight to the death.
Interaction: They only attack when directly threatened and prefer to slither away to safety. Most bites have occurred when someone mistakenly steps on them. They are the most common Vurt creatures found swapped over in the real world. Strangely, their Vurt flesh is not psychoactive and they decompose entirely within an hour of death.
Use: Dreamsnakes are commonly found in dark hallways, tall grass, or other good hiding places in both the Vurt world and the real world.

ERASURE SNAKE 3 (9)

The erasure snake is one of the fastest creatures in the Vurt world relative to its tiny size. They can cover huge distances in an instant and often move so quickly that dry grass it passes over catches fire. These quiet grey-colored serpents only live a week if they're lucky, and never grow longer than an inch or two.

They have been encountered most often in illegal hybrid Vurt feathers that take place in forest or jungle settings. Many a dreamer has been killed by this tiny, lighting-fast snake, and never even realized what bit them.

Erasure snake venom affects the portion of the brain responsible for storing long term memories and will usually result in death after a day or two if left untreated. There are accounts of people who have intentionally allowed themselves to be bitten by an erasure snake in order to permanently lose specific memories focused on for a period of time before the antivenom is administered. An extremely dangerous practice with wildly unpredictable results.
Motive: Self defense, hunting very small prey
Environment: Vurt world. Origin has been traced back to the *Flippety-Floppety Comes Unstuck* hybrid feather.

Health: 9
Damage Inflicted: 5 points
Movement: Long
Modifications: Stealth as level 6. Defense against ranged attacks as level 7.
Combat: This Vurt serpent is so quick that it can cover long distances in the time most creatures can cover short distances. Very difficult to spot, it is most often stepped on accidentally, then it escapes, avoiding combat. Its bit inflicts 5 points of damage and on a failed Might roll, the target is poisioned, suffering 5 points of Intellect damage every hour until properly treated, with naga antivenom.
Naga antivenom, page 368
Interaction: They sleep in the sun during the day and only attack when threatened. If they are stepped upon, their quickness means they might be able to bites multiple times before fleeing.
Use: A suprise bite by an erasure snake can set the group on a desperate hunt for antivenom. Also, the dangerous practice of memory erasure can be attempted using one of these creatures.

FAYO-FAYO 3 (9)

Uglier than sin and dumber than a bag of hammers, the only thing the fayo-fayo seems to want to do is giggle and cause dread. Quick and mean, these little sonsofbitches live to surprise others by popping out of the shadows, jumping out of closets and out from under beds, screaming and laughing maniacally.

They each balance a golden ring atop a prehensile flagellum. If at any point it falls, the fayo-fayo will desperately search for it and set it back in its original place. They are also known to cry loudly when in combat, hurling sophomoric insults and flailing with its many tentacles.

Motive: Terrorizing
Environment: Vurt world. Their origin feather is *Black Ramshackle*.
Health: 9
Damage Inflicted: 3 points
Movement: Short
Modifications: Speed defense as a level 4 due to its quick movements.
Combat: Their tentacles are used for slapping, and can cause severe rashes on human and dog skin. Most will flee when injured, if able.
Interaction: They live to surprise travelers in the Vurt world, and are usually satisfied with causing fear, not damage. Fayo-fayos are not known for their bravery, and will only fight fiercely when cornered. They do not speak, but communicate using high pitched screams and giggles.
Use: Annoying and cruel, they're always ready to jump out of dark places.
GM Intrusion: The fayo-fayo starts to tremble slightly and turn greenish around the cheeks. The golden ring balanced on top of its head falls to the ground as it sprays the PC with acidic vomit, and the PC takes 4 points of damage. The fayo-fayo looks at the PC and laughs, as if this is the funniest thing it has ever seen, then picks up the golden ring with its torso flagellum.

FLAUNT WORM 1 (3)

Tiny, blood-sucking flatworms often infest the the stagnant swamps, ponds, and moors of the Vurt world. Ranging in length from one to three inches, flaunt worms are dark brown and difficult to see in the murky water. They move very, very quickly and taste like salty muckweed—so I've heard. They are almost always in large groups, so while contact with one flaunt worm might only deliver mild burns and welts, 20 at once might take down an unlucky PC who can't swim away in time.
Motive: Hungers for blood/biofluid
Environment: Vurt world. Origin has been traced back to the *AirKisser* feather.

Health: 3
Damage Inflicted: 3 points
Movement: Immediate
Modifications: Speed defense as level 6 due to size and speed.
Combat: They only attack/interact within immediate range, but when they do, it is in great numbers. Roll a d20 to see how many you're up against. Any contact with them leaves welts and minor burns, stinging worse than a dozen papercuts.
Interaction: Mindless. Literally. They have no brain whatsoever.
Use: PCs swimming or wading through the swamps or mucky waters of the Vurt world? Check for flaunt worms afterwards. Check *everywhere*.
GM Intrusion: The flaunt worm wriggles away quickly from the PC attacking it without using an action. It turns towards the PC. Then it dies. The PC feels bad for some reason. Really, really bad. That flaunt worm didn't really deserve to die, did it? But it did. It *did* die, and the PC is to blame. What was it that made that brave little worm give up and embrace death? Was it the shock of battle? Was it the great sadness that took it at last? Perhaps a pre-existing condition? The PC will *never* know and this moment will bother them for the rest of their lives. Why? Whyyyyyyyyyyyy?!

GHOST CAT 3 (9)

Ornery and skittish, ghost cats live in the shadows, surviving off refuse and small prey. Their origins are in Vurt world—the farmlands of the Ulthar feather—but they've spread to other feathers. Their insatiable curiosity and inexplicable luck has led them to some very hard-to-find crossover points and secret doors. Not that they give a shite, they're too busy scrounging up food and tail to even notice where they are most of the time.

Their screeching mating call has been described as a violin being scraped across a chalkboard. Ghost cats are now found all over the place, and are becoming more and more of a nuisance in the real world as they multiply.

Adaptability to almost any environment—Vurt and real world alike—has made them a common sight. Some experts have estimated their real-world numbers in the millions at this point. The upside is that the more ghost cats there are, the fewer dreamsnakes there are. For a while there, it seemed there'd be no end to the invasion of dreamsnakes slithering into the real world. Now with so many ghost cats, we may find that they were not necessarily the lesser of two evils. Meow.

Motive: Malicious curiosity, mating with other ghost cats
Environment: Both the Vurt world and the real world. Origin has been traced back to the *Ulthar* feather in the Vurt world. Many have crossed over to the real world and are considered pests.
Health: 9
Damage Inflicted: 3 points
Movement: Short
Modifications: Perception as level 5. Speed defense as level 4 due to size.
Combat: Sharp, retractable claws and needle-like teeth are all a ghost cat needs to defend itself from other creatures its own size. When attacking a larger creature, ghost cats will group up and use distraction tactics to overwhelm the threat. Many are pale, weak, and ineffective for open one-on-one combat, but what they lack in strength, they make up for in stealth and guile.
Interaction: Ghost cats, like most felines, either tolerate you or they're plotting your death. Or both.
Use: Often more of a nuisance than a real threat, PCs might find that they're being followed silently by one or more ghost cats, but when confronted, several more will appear and join in the attack. Or they can't sleep because a ghost cat is feeling randy.
GM Intrusion: Four more ghost cats appear seemingly from nowhere, mewing and pouncing on the PC, the group pinning the PC down solidly in place with their sharp claws. Their combined strength is impressive, and

it leaves the PC immobile and defenseless, wide open to any attack. The PC can make an Might based roll to throw the four ghost cats off.

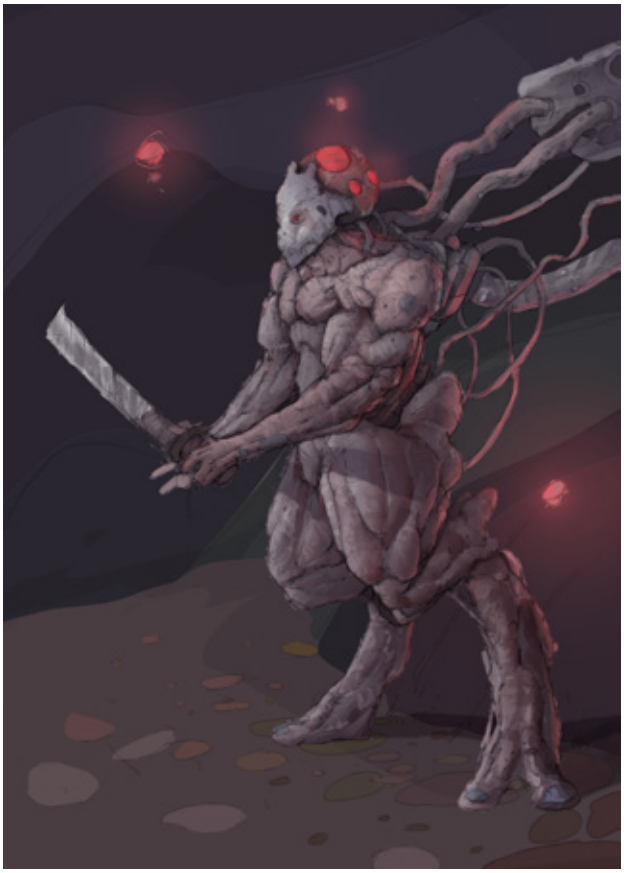
GORSEDD 5 (15)

Four arms make it easier for a solitary gorsedd to hold lanterns up and light their lonely midnight pagan rituals. They carry sacred objects of great importance, oftentimes musical instruments and intricately carved staves, and their robes are covered in runes, glyphs, and other sacred symbols. Each gorsedd is assigned to an area of the Vurt world by the High Council of Gorseddau, self-tasked with offering assistance to any traveler who asks for help. They are forbidden by their own secretive laws to lie or mislead.

These are the poets and oracles of the Vurt, often found at crossroads or on mountaintops, creating masterpieces of art and collecting the histories of the various parts of the Vurt world. Their flesh is mostly plant-based, and the older they get, the more their roots and vines grow and slow them down. Eventually, they literally settle down and plant their roots to spend the rest of their lives as large trees.

Motive: Assist travelers, create art, record Vurt-world history.
Environment: Vurt world. Their origin feather is unknown.
Health: 30
Damage Inflicted: 5 points
Armor: 1
Movement: Short
Modifications: Intellect defense and resistance to trickery as level 8. Perception as level 7.
Combat: They carry staves and have four arms, so they get two attacks per round. Devastating mental attacks and mind-control are only unleashed as a last resort. The gorsedd do not like to use this type of power—they feel it's undignified.
Interaction: Wise and helpful, they give advice and expect nothing in return.
Use: Are the PCs lost somewhere in the Vurt world? Do they need a hint or advice?
GM Intrusion: The gorsedd closes its eyes for a few moments and concentrates. When it opens its eyes again, it looks at the PC and snarls. Something has angered the gorsedd, and now it wants the PC and anyone else around to leave it alone. As the PC feels their mind being peeled back and manipulated by the gorsedd's mind-controlling attack, they can make an Intellect defense roll. On a failed roll, the PC will be controlled for one minute and draw their weapon on any companions, demanding that everyone leave the gorsedd alone. The PC can make another Intellect defense roll each round to try and regain control of their actions.

HRONIR 5 (15)



Muscled to the point of deformation, these giant quasi-humanoid Vurt creatures are usually intelligent and always driven. They are all members of a single cult, the Third Tlonir Consortium, and their mission is to cleanse the Vurt world of those who do not have Vurt genetics. Those in the cult are cruel and hedonistic, drinking copious amounts of Fetish and taking slaves as they raid Vurt world communities. No one likes the hronir.

They all wear a sacred mask that covers their disfigured faces, and wield a dull sword made of bone or hard wood—more of a bludgeoning weapon than anything else. Many require special breathing apparati if any humidity is present. Their lungs require dry air and they are prone to pneumonia. Some hronir are followed everywhere by enslaved creatures that carry its heavy breathing tubes, power cables, and cargo. Hronir legs have evolved to better cover ground over the rocky volcanic wastelands that border the mountainous and remote areas of the Vurt world.

Thankfully for anyone who is not part-Vurt, the Vurt world is not full of these fanatical hunters. None have ever been spotted in the real world, as the laws of their cult require them to immediately commit suicide hara-kiri-style if they cross over. As the hronir tell all new recruits: *If it ain't Vurt-blood, make it squirt blood*.

Motive: Hunting down non-Vurt beings for sport
Environment: Vurt world. Their origin feather is *Orbus Tertius*.
Health: 25
Damage Inflicted: 12 points
Armor: 1
Movement: Short
Modifications: Defends at level 4 against PCs with Vurt genetics.
Combat: Most carry a large bludgeoning weapon that resembles a stone sword. Seldom encountered alone.
Interaction: Intelligent but insane. They follow their own twisted logic and will not be persuaded against their mission to rid the Vurt world of "impures." Most travel in groups of two or three, and will actively seek out trouble with travelers from the real world.
Use: Inside a feather, sometimes it's good to remind the players that having Vurt genetics in the Vurt world has many advantages. Those that don't will feel it from any hronir. The Vurt world has its hate groups as well.
GM Intrusion: The attacking hronir suddenly sneezes wildly, losing its balance and falling directly on top of the PC with its full weight. It continues to sneeze, obviously very allergic to something in the area. The PC must make a Might-based roll to crawl out from underneath the beast, taking 4 points of damage each round under its crushing weight. Once the PC is free, the hronir will also regain its balance and continue the fight, covered in snot, sneezing occasionally, but able to carry on. Fun fact: Hronir snot stains and smells strongly of pine pitch mixed with spoiled milk. The more you know!

INCHOVY 2 (6)

Inchovies are small, single-toothed silver fish that live in most bodies of water of the Vurt world. Reaching a maximum size of 1 inch, they spawn schools of millions in order to survive. They do not stand a chance of defense, so they play the numbers game and hope that enough make it through the regular thermofish feeding frenzies and keep the species going.

Inchovies turn bright white when exposed to the air. Most agree that once you get past the initial briny flavor, the aftertaste is heavenly.

Motive: Survival
Environment: Both the Vurt world and the real world. Origin has been traced back to the *Ulthar* feather in the Vurt world. Many have crossed over to the real world and are considered pests.
Health: 2
Damage Inflicted: 1 point
Movement: Immediate
Modifications: Defends as level 4 due to tiny size.
Combat: The only reports of anyone being harmed by an inchovy involve poor refrigeration and scombroid

poisoning. In other words; no worries, mate.

Interaction: They just keep swimming and reproducing. Sometimes their behavior gives PCs subtle clues as to what's nearby, friend or foe.

Use: Want to find a good spot to catch thermofish? Look for schools of their favorite dish—fresh inchovies.

GM Intrusion: An inchovy swims right down the PC's throat and bites the inside of their esophagus. The PC chokes and takes 3 points of damage for d6 rounds before being able to swallow it down or bring it back up, whichever is quicker. That's no way to eat inchovies, ya dingus! For your health!

JABBERWALKER 6 (18)

Deep in the Tulgey Woods, gigantic trees pull up their roots and make their nightly rounds, guarding the secluded clearings that serve as gathering points for other, smaller denizens of wild. Solitary creatures, these giant guardians of Tulgey Woods are massive living trees usually three to four times the height of an average human—and much, much heavier. Often they can be identified by their pungent smell of wet moss and rotting leaves.

In addition to protecting its own territory, jabberwalkers are particularly protective of the tiny willow whisperers who light up these secret woodland meeting places with their soft green glow. Any attempt to disturb a willow whisperer will bring about swift retribution from any nearby jabberwalker. The two creatures are symbiotic; the protective jabberwalker harmlessly feeds off the energy provided by the soft green glow of its tiny wards. Some say that this is also the reason behind the jabberwalkers' shocking speed—even at such a large size, they move very quickly.

Motive: Protect their sacred groves and allies deep in the woodland areas of the Vurt world.

Environment: Vurt world. Origin has been traced back to the *Tulgey Woods* feather.

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 4

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 5 due to its size.

Combat: If they remain still, they are very difficult to distinguish from a large tree, a fact which often grants jabberwalkers the element of surprise in a fight. They use their gigantic hardwood limbs to bash and hammer anything they feel is a threat. In addition to its regular attack, this creature can attempt to grab a character in one massive hand, lifting them off the ground. While this grappling attack doesn't inflict any damage, a successful Might-based action by any character is required to break the target free.

Interaction: They are simpleminded but ultra-focused on their tasks of protecting their territory and fellow forest creatures. Jabberwalker territories can cover wide areas of the Tulgey Woods, but they do not willingly venture outside the forest for any reason.

Use: Have the PCs face a "Boss" at the end of any feather that takes place in the Tulgey Woods, which is (usually) a fairly common occurrence in many Blues.

KASHA 5 (15)

This demon has been part of real world mythology for centuries, but has only recently been spotted in the Vurt world. They resemble huge, amorphous balls of fur and fangs and whiskers, enveloped in flame. Kashas descend from the skies in a few of the less explored parts of the Vurt world and carry off dead bodies after battles or natural causes.

There are entire Vurt cities that have developed cults around kashas, and make offerings and sacrifices to appease

and summon this gigantic, purring demon. There are very few who are stupid enough to provoke it into a fight.
Motive: Remove corpses from a specific area
Environment: Vurt world. Their origin feather is *Flayer*.
Health: 30
Damage Inflicted: 12 points
Movement: Long
Combat: Speed defense as level 4 due to size.
Interaction: They do not speak—they purr and carry off the dead to some unknown place far away. If they feel threatened, they will drop their entire weight on their targets.
Use: This is a good example of injecting the weird into the everyday lives of the citizens of the Vurt cities and Vurt towns. And a good example of not picking fights you won't win.
GM Intrusion: The sky above rumbles with cloudless thunder as the kasha becomes angered by something you just did that it felt was profoundly disrespectful. The kasha floating in the sky over the PC is so large that any thoughts of fighting it with simple melee weapons are worthless. Any ranged attacks or mental attacks will be very effective in drawing its attention and ire. If the PC truly wants to engage this creature in combat, they'll have to do it from 20 feet directly underneath. Otherwise, the kasha will hover above the PC closely for the remainder of their time in the feather, grumbling loudly as it follows.

KAYKATZO 6 (18)

Furry giants who walk the canyons and mushroom forests of the Vurt world, a kaykatzo is one of the most mysterious creatures one might encounter in the Vurt world. Their prehensile tails are usually dragging a large stone hammer behind, carving out long trenches in the soil in the process. Their third eye can see heat signatures, and their mouths are full of sharp stone teeth.

Kaykatzos do not speak, and have very simple minds with no long-term memories. They do not know where they come from, or where they're going, or even what they are. The confusion this causes is a good reason to avoid antagonizing them further and starting a fight with something the size of a five-story building.
Motive: Keep walking. Try and remember both who they are and where they were supposed to be going. They are pure confusion and frustration.
Environment: Vurt world. Origin feather is *Fractalized Fairy Tales*
Health: 18
Damage Inflicted: 12 points, 16 points with hammer
Armor: 3
Movement: Long
Modifications: Intellect defense and resistance to trickery as level 4. Speed defense as level 4 due to large size and slowness. Hiding from a kaykatzo is a level 8 task.
Combat: Makes unarmed attacks inflicting 12 points of damage. May also wield a massive hammer, which inflicts 16 points of damage. Striking the ground with this hammer makes an area attack that inflicts 4 points of damage within short range on a failed Speed defense roll. They can also naturally see heat signatures, so trying to hide is not the best option.
Interaction: They don't speak because they've forgotten how. This makes trying to communicate with them not only cruel, but dangerous. Many weep and become frustrated and volatile when encountering other, smarter beings.
Use: These creatures are dangerously big and can't be talked in or out of anything.
GM Intrusion: The kaykatzo is upset and wants the PC and anyone else in the area to go away. It throws its gigantic body on the ground with a force so great that the PC and everyone else falls down. The giant beast begins to throw a tantrum, crying loudly like a baby. The tears that stream from its eyes are so intense that the area begins to flood. Hundreds of thousands of gallons a second, the kaykatzo continues to weep. Seconds later, the PC is neck-deep in salty water. Those that can't swim must stand still and wait for the tears to drain or risk falling over and drowning. The kaykatzo gets up and stomps away as the water level drops back down. The PC and everything else will have to wait just one minute before the ground is totally dry again.

LIGHTKEEPER 4 (12)

Lightkeepers stroll along the shorelines of the oceans, lakes, and streams of the Vurt world, praying to their gods in low, rumbling voices. Often walking slowly in single file, they do not sleep and they never stop walking.

Their ability to generate electricity seemingly out of thin air is something many have tried to study, but even the lightkeepers themselves don't seem to understand the details of the process. The weird gods they pray to have no names, but those who've studied their prayers say that it has something to do with tides and running water.

Motive: Praying and fulfilling their lifelong religious pilgrimages along bodies of water in the Vurt world.

Environment: Vurt world. Their origin feather is unknown.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 5 points.

Movement: Short

Modifications: Defense against mental attacks as level 6.

Combat: In addition to having 4 strong arms they use to punch, lightkeepers are able to concentrate and create a small ball of crackling electricity that can be thrown short distances.

Interaction: Most travel in small groups, mumbling under their breath, avoiding conflict as much as possible. Lightkeepers think only of their strange prayers, but some have been known to stop long enough to communicate intelligently with non-lightkeepers. They become very angry when anyone or anything delays their long walks, and will attack anything that touches them.

Use: If a traveller in the Vurt world is respectful of their odd customs and doesn't attempt to stop their walking, it's possible to ask them questions. But don't touch!

GM Intrusion: The PC doubles over in pain and drops everything in their hands as they begin to seize. The lightkeeper's long fingers trace shapes in the air and the mystical hovering light it holds glows red. The PC takes 6 points of damage and is overwhelmed by intense itching all over their body. As long as the lightkeeper is within short range and its light is visible to the PC, this debilitating state will continue. After the group exits the feather, the PC will find something hidden in their inventory that wasn't there before: a cypher! It's an illegal black feather, Skullshit (level d6).

MAESTRO 5 (15)

A maestro is a being who controls a small group of baders. No one seems to know why they have this hierarchy or how a Vurt being is chosen as a maestro. The control pack is called a shoulder-bader, and allows a bader to climb inside the backpack and lift the maestro several feet off the ground, acting as their means of locomotion.

The original Vurt-star of the *Let-Mi-Go-Pink!* feather was known only as "Maestro." It is tradition for those controlling the baders to take the same name. Most maestros are quick-tempered and demand respect.

Motive: Varies. Many are self-centered, affected by their power over the baders.

Environment: Vurt world. Their origin feather is *Let-Mi-Go-Pink!*

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Long, due to the shoulder-bader

Modifications: Terrified of mental attacks, a maestro will flee at the first sign of any Shadow powers or mathemagickal effects that affect its mind.

Combat: A maestro can move long distances and most often uses a ranged weapon such as a crossbow or short bow. Most have several baders that follow them and any nearby baders will sacrifice themselves to save a maestro.
Interaction: Junk collecting, fringe dwelling urban Vurt beings with power over killing machines are not often friendly.
Use: Stay where it's safe in the outskirts of the urban areas of the Vurt world, or you might bump into one of these power-tripping twerps.
GM Intrusion: The pompous dickbag being shuttled around by his four-legged bader-backpack attacks the PC by throwing a wonky-looking sonic grenade to the ground, where it explodes. The PC and everyone in immediate range takes 8 points of damage, eardrums splitting from an insanely catchy sonic jingle detonated at top volume. The audio blast throws the all in the area to the ground, dazed for d6 rounds as the jingle finishes. The lyrics of the jingle are vapid—something about champagne-flavored supernovas—and the PC is going to be humming the blasted melody for the next week at least.

MINOCENTRE 6 (18)

ON MAZES AND MONSTERS...

Travelling the paths of your own mind, and that's some maze in there. There's a beast at the center and it's angry. Only the chosen know what the beast looks like, because only the chosen get that far.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

A minocentre makes its home in forgotten mazes in the Vurt world. Their appearance varies, but most often are seen as a hulking minotaur with the body of a professional Vurtballer and a head that's more goat-like than bovine. These beasts carry blugeoning weapons and often wear cured leather armor.
Motive: Territoriality
Environment: Vurt world. Origin has been traced back to the *Skullshit* feather.
Health: 25
Damage Inflicted: 6 points, 9 points with a weapon
Armor: 2
Movement: Short
Modifications: Defends as level 5 due to size.
Combat: The minocentre's horns are by far the most effective weapon it has. Some carry melee weapons like clubs or warhammers, which inflict 9 points of damage or can be used to strike the ground and create a shockwave—an area attack that causes all creatures within short range to take 4 points of damage on a failed Speed defense roll. Once it becomes injured (reduced to below half health) it goes berserk and doles out 2 attacks per round.
Interaction: Intelligent, but usually too confused and angry to communicate clearly.
Use: PCs are in a labyrinth; they hear the snorting and bellowing of a large bull somewhere in the echoing stone passages. It's getting closer…
GM Intrusion: The hammer of the minocentre comes crashing down just inches from the PC, but hits a wall (or floor tile) that cracks the stone surface and

spreads outward, causing the nearest wall to fall. If the PC is anywhere near that collapsing wall, they take 8 damage and are dazed for one round. It does open up the labyrinth a bit, allowing the PC to take the fight into a larger area, and revealing an escape route.

NAGA 8 (24)

This flying serpent that shows up in varying forms in the legends of a thousand cultures. Most are long and snake-like with dark scales and long, poisonous fangs. Their faces are said to change in appearance from serpentine to human-like. They're extremely strong-willed and do not like to be bothered, spending most of the time wandering the Vurt world harassing those they meet, sometimes demanding tribute as if they were a creature of great authority. It is for this reason that many weak minded dreamers have come to worship these creatures as lesser gods.

When in the presence of a larger, stronger serpent such as Takshaka the Kingsnake, they are totally subservient and forget all petty mischief—fighting to the death to protect their master.

Motive: Revenge

Environment: Vurt world. They are often found wandering in mountainous Vurt environments. Origin has been traced back to the *Takshakutanka* feather.

Health: 30

Damage Inflicted: 10 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Long while flying, short while on the ground

Modifications: Stealth as level 5. Speed defense as level 4.

Combat: Its venomous bite is excruciatingly painful, causing the target to lose consciousness for one round on a failed Might defense roll. Additionally, any PC who loses consciousness in this way is poisoned and is unable to make any recovery rolls until properly treated with naga antivenom.

Interaction: When encountered alone, nagas may harass the PCs verbally, attempting to intimidate them and demanding some form of tribute. They may use stealth to attempt to steal things, or frighten the party. However when a naga is protecting a larger and more powerful serpent, they become mute bodyguards and will not communicate directly with PCs unless instructed to.

Use: Creatures like these contribute to the striking similarity of many Vurt worlds to the worlds of human mythology.

GM Intrusion: The naga wraps its body around the PC like a constrictor, clamping down on their arm with its fangs. On a failed Might defense roll the PC is crushed for 8 points of damage on a and is knocked one step down the damage track. If the Might defense roll is a success the PC wriggles free, otherwise they remain constricted, and must contend with the naga's crushing attack each turn until they escape.

NERDBURNER 5 (15)

Sometimes solid, sometimes vaporous, nerdburners prey on mathemagicians and their allies. When they are seen clearly, nerdburners have grey skin and are covered in thousands of tiny, featherlike soft black hairs. Those that have seen them and survived describe them as having multiple eyes and mouths.

Nerdburners make no sound whatsoever, and are so amorphous and intangible that harming them physically with regular weapons is very difficult. They are known to wander the moors and swamplands of the Vurt world in small groups, looking for mathemagicians to kill.

Motive: Destroy all mathemagicians and/or mathemagickal items

Environment: Vurt world. Their origin feather is unknown.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Long when flying, short when on the ground

Modifications: Perception as level 6. Stealth as level 7. Solid melee weapons and non-flame bullets do not damage nerdburners.

Combat: Mental attacks allows a nerdburner to lock onto a target and fill its mind with stabbing pain, inflicting 6 points of Intellect damage and on a failed Might roll, increases the difficulty of all Intellect-based tasks for the rest of the encounter. They make no noise and do not cast a shadow, which might affect certain combat situations. Solid, non-flame attacks do no damage.

Interaction: Telepathic. They most often ignore anything or anyone who does not have mathemagickal items or attributes. Those that do immediately become their target.

Use: Sometimes it's good to remind a PC that using mathemagick has consequences everywhere—even in the Vurt world.

GM Intrusion: For the mathemagician(s) in the party: The PC feels the recognizable sensations of the

mathemagick in the air, but something is wrong. The attacking nerdburner stops and begins to emit intense vibrations, and a static electric charge raises the hairs on the PC's arms (if they have them). The nerdburner incantation is somehow draining the meaning from the glorious numbers and creating uncontrollable panic and confusion in the PC. The PC is dazed, slack-jawed and bleary-eyed, and they take no action other than to attempt to clear their racing thoughts and recover their composure (a difficulty 7 Intellect-based roll).

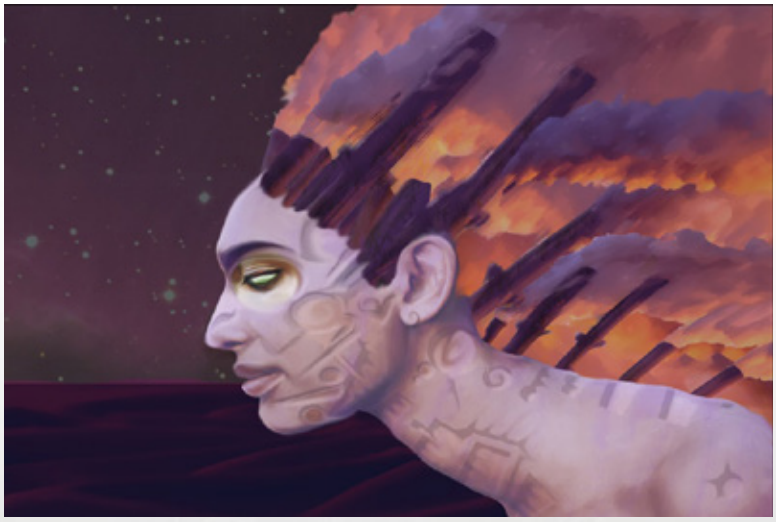
PITCH WORM 3 (9)

Pitch worms are long, carnivorous earthworms that live in the mud and sandy soil near bodies of water in the Vurt world. Ranging widely in length from three inches to three feet, pitch worms spend their time burrowing underground searching for small prey. As they reach full maturity, they move from the mud to the open waters in search of bigger prey. Pitch worms are the favorite food of the thermofish, who live and die in the Seas of Pitch.

Pitch worms are covered in dozens of tiny holes that regulate their airflow when surfacing. The air that escapes these tiny holes escapes in short bursts that result in whistling sounds of different pitches. Some say that they communicate through these multitimbral sounds, but no pattern or melody has yet to be identified.

Motive: Hungers for flesh
Environment: Vurt world. Origin has been traced back to the *ThermoFish* feather.
Health: 9
Damage Inflicted: 3 points
Movement: Immediate
Modifications: Speed defense as level 5 due to small size.
Combat: They only attack/interact within immediate range. Their mouths are lined with sharp teeth and their bites almost always cause scarring on soft flesh.
Interaction: They live to eat. If you have food or are food, they're interested.
Use: In the waters of the Vurt world, spotting a pitch worm means two things: more pitch worms are nearby, and hungry thermofish are going to arrive very soon.
GM Intrusion: An odd, sudden surge of panicking pitch worms in the water mean only one thing: the thermo fish have arrived. The PC turns around to see four thermo fish approaching fast, drawn by one of their favorite meals.

PITYMORPH 5 (15)



Wandering the darkest pathways within pink Vurts, one can find the strange race of shapeshifting pitymorphs. Exotic and alluring, they beckon to those looking for that wicked twist that can't be found in most of the mainstream pink feathers one might buy over-the-counter at a Vurt-U-Want. Equal parts pleasure and pain, these creatures are infamous for leaving a trail of scorched, smiling dead.

Often taking the form of gigantic beings of intense beauty, their physical appearance seems to change with every moment, creating confusion and awe that is nearly impossible to resist. The intense heat that comes from their touch is often the last thing their victims feel before—well, you can imagine. What a way to go!

Motive: Unknown, but it seems that the more they kill, the larger and more powerful they become.
Environment: Vurt world. Their origin feather is *Oh Mistress Mine!*
Health: 20
Damage Inflicted: 5
Armor: 1
Movement: Speed defense as level 4 due to large size.
Combat: Their touch causes instant searing of any flesh. The searing heat that emanates from their skin also acts like armor, and they can also expel smoke and vapor at will, making visibility the same as in dim light.
Interaction: Pitymorphs will attempt to lure the party into striking range, supplementing their speech with mind-control powers. Their beckoning is a mental attack, requiring an Intellect defense roll to resist.
Use: Just when a Pink Vurt traveler thinks they've seen it all, the pitymorph shows them what they never knew they were missing.

GM Intrusion: The PC and all who are near the pitymorph are hit with waves of augmented pheromones that cause those affected to tense up, experiencing extremely painful/pleasurable muscle spasms that continue for the remainder of the fight. These twitching body spasms increase the difficulty of all tasks by one step. If you weren't in a life or death fight, this feeling might not be so bad…

POORBILL 3 (9)

Poorbills can best be described as ornery bipedal, humanoid reptiles that have a wide duck bill and carry ladders with them wherever they go. Most dress like 19th-century chimney sweeps and speak in exaggerated cockney accents. They are solitary creatures, and do not seem to notice much in their ever-distracted states.

They can be found in almost any part of the Vurt world, as they seem to have a natural ability to cross between Vurt feathers more easily than others, although even they don't know exactly how this is done. Poorbills seem to be on a mission, constantly walking about, muttering to themselves, looking for ways to use their ladders and find passageways and shortcuts between different parts of the Vurt world.

Motive: Vurt-world exploration for reasons known only to them
Environment: Vurt world. Origin has been traced back to the *Automated Alias feather.*
Health: 9
Damage Inflicted: 3 points
Movement: Short
Modifications: Defends as level 2 due to poor coordination.
Combat: If forced to defend itself, a poorbill will swing its ladder as a melee weapon.
Interaction: They are normally too focused on their own thoughts to interact, and they are very wary of strangers. But many have found poorbills to be friendly if treated well.
Use: A poorbill is could provide an interesting way to hack sideways, so to speak, between Vurt feathers and open a pathway for the PCs into entirely different feathers. Or maybe the PCs just need a lizard with a ladder.
GM Intrusion: The poorbill sticks its ladder into the ground in front of the PC and the sound of bells can be heard everywhere, accompanied by the smell of wet earth after a rain. Suddenly the PC finds themselves sinking slowly into the soil. The PC must escape this certain death of crushing suffocation within the next 4 rounds (a difficulty 6 Might-based roll).

QUESTING BEAST 7 (21)

The Questing Beast is the quarry of King Pillowsnore in the woodlands and pastures of the Vurt world. They vary in size from that of a small dog to the size of a dragon, but all are equally as dangerous and difficult to kill. With the head of a serpent, the body and tail of a leopard, and the legs of a *hart* (or deer), this legendary creature is always on the move. A horrific noise—like the baying of a dozen hounds—emanates from its belly.

The beast will always flee and will only fight when there is absolutely no escape. If cornered, it will lash out wildly and its thick hide acts as excellent natural armor. If killed, it will give birth to a dozen ravening belly hounds which will then fall upon her and devour her corpse. If disturbed in any way, or after the corpse is devoured, they will turn and attack any nearby characters.

Motive: Survival, self-defense
Environment: Vurt world. Origin has been traced to the *Questing Beast* feather series.
Health: 50
Damage Inflicted: 8 points
Armor: 7

Movement: Short

Combat: Fangs, claws, swift kicks, tail—you name it, this beast has got it and knows how to use it. It can also unhinge its jaw and disgorge d6 belly hounds at will. If killed, the Questing Beast's belly is ripped open from the inside and d20 belly hounds emerge, baying for vengeance.

Interaction: Another mysterious rare creature that should be seen from afar and never followed. It will always avoid danger until it feels cornered; then it will usually fight to the death.

Use: Sometimes spotting a wandering belly hound will alert the players to the presence of a nearby Questing Beast. If the PCs don't know about the dangers of cornering and attacking a legendary Vurt beast with unbelievable natural armor, they're going to learn quickly.

GM Intrusion: In the sky above the PC, feather-credits roll, showing a projection of a countdown flower clock with half its petals gone and 30 seconds remaining. The PC and any companions must beat the feather within the next six rounds, or they will be jerked out and return to the real world. If the Vurt feather the PC is playing is a Yellow, they will be stuck in the feather indefinitely.

SATURATOR 6 (18)

Devoid of any pigmentation, saturators seem to be angered by bright colors. Large horns grow from the sides of their narrow faces, and they dress themselves in long flowing white robes, talismans, and stolen jewelry. Their cracked skin is concrete grey and they are immensely heavy and slow-moving.

But what they lack in speed they make up for in telepathic powers. Simpleminded and goal oriented, a saturator reacts to what they perceive through astral projection and aura-reading. They're not called "*de*-saturators" because they expel much more than they take in, saturating the Vurt world with *uncolor*. They don't walk quickly because they don't need to. They also happen to be totally blind and deaf in the physical sense, but it does not hinder them one bit.

Motive: Avoid color and be left alone

Environment: Vurt world. Their origin feather is *Fractalized Fairy Tales*.

Health: 20

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short, very slow

Modifications: Anyone wearing colorful clothing or bright colors is going to be the focus of the saturator's attacks.

Combat: Mental attacks are usually manipulative, pitting PCs against each other or causing them to harm themselves. Each round requires a level 6 Intellect roll to resist its commands. If a saturator can escape, it will.

Interaction: Unless you are wearing very bright colors or clothing, the only reaction a PC will get is silent avoidance. If any PC tries to interact with it, it will fight or flee.

Use: Saturators do not look for trouble, so an encounter with PCs might be a surprise, and likely something a saturator would want to avoid if possible. Their usual method of evasion is using mental attacks that causes the PCs to fight each other and allow the saturator to escape.

GM Intrusion: The PC sees the colors of fade from their vision and experiences a rush of cold that brings them to their knees. The saturator is draining the PC's energy, sucking in the air in big gulps. drinking it in audibly, then smacking its lips as if it's just eaten a meal. The PC takes 6 points of damage and descends one step on the damage track. The saturator regains 5 points of health as it rears back its tusked face and howls at the sky.

SHADOW SLUG 1 (3)

Shadow slugs are small iridescent slugs that are regularly seen in both the real world and the Vurt world. These simple creatures actually have no brain whatsoever, but something in their DNA pushes them to slowly go about their business of finding food. Ranging in length from a few inches to a few feet, they do not bite or seem to have any natural defenses. In the Vurt world they are often spotted slowly munching on leaves, oblivious to their

surroundings. The name "shadow slug" is a bit of a misnomer, as they have no genetic connection to Shadow beings. Shadow slugs are native Vurt creatures.

Shadow slug sightings in the real world are becoming more frequent; they're often found eating the pages of books or magazines—their favorite meal. Their iridescent slime trails are extremely viscous and cause dozens of slip-and-fall injuries every year.

Motive: Survival, feeding on plants (but always looking for tasty paper and books)

Environment: Both the Vurt world and the real world. Origin feather unknown. Many have somehow crossed over to the real world and are considered pests.

Health: 3

Damage Inflicted: None

Movement: Immediate

Combat: A shadow slug will avoid confrontation. The only injuries they have been reported to cause come from careless people slipping on their slime-trails.

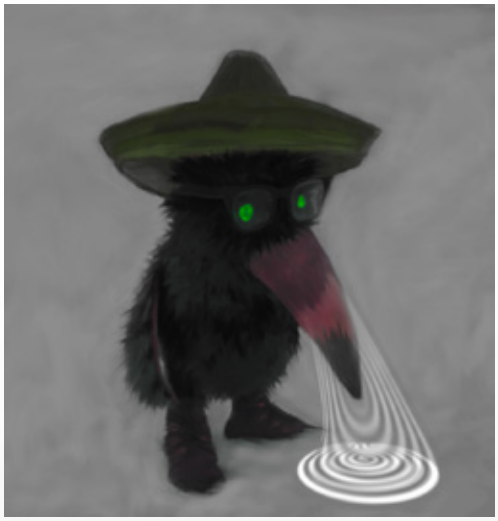
Interaction: Like dreamsnakes, a shadow slug's Vurt flesh is not psychoactive and their bodies decompose entirely within an hour of death.

Use: Shadow slugs are found in both the Vurt world and the real world, and their favorite food is paper/books. Why not have a shadow slug eat something important?

GM Intrusion: Slipping on the viscous slime trail of a shadow slug, the PC lands on their back, taking 2 damage and dropping everything in their hands.

SHUGAZIR 2 (6)

Soft, waddling, flightless birds, shugazirs are intensely curious and will follow anything or anyone that holds their interest. Quiet and diminutive, shugazirs mostly communicate with each other using a series of soft clicks and purring sounds. They enjoy spending time with each other, often singing softly in their strange language around small fires or sources of light. Their long bird beaks emit strange patterns of lights, which is another form of communication for them.



They seem to gather strength and sustenance from being around other shugazirs and their strange rituals, which is why they are almost never seen alone. There has never been a report of a shugazir attacking anyone unprovoked; they are too shy and peaceful for that sort of behavior. Most just bumble around adorably in little groups.

Motive: Curiosity

Environment: Vurt world. Their origin feather is unknown.

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception as level 6

Combat: Basically defenseless. Most wander in groups of four or five and avoid confrontation. They are peaceful, and if attacked they will flee in terror, screaming telepathically, their beaks flashing a red exclamation point on the ground in front of them where they run. They will use their beaks as a weapon only in desperate self defense.

Interaction: Shugazirs are simpleminded and communicate with each other telepathically, but have no mental attacks. PCs won't understand them, and vice versa.

Use: When you need equal parts adorable and bizarre. If PCs are lost, shugazirs might be followed at a safe distance as they make their little single-file walks towards the exit.

GM Intrusion: From all around the area, shugazirs start to appear and waddle over to the PC, knocking them over and squeezing in tightly around them, making movement nearly impossible. The PC must regain their footing and escape this tightening ring of fuzzy cuteness in order to make any actions (a difficulty 5 Might-based roll or a difficulty 6 Speed-based roll). When the PC does eventually get away, they will find that they have a useful level 4 cypher in their pockets that wasn't there before.

SIXTRING 3 (9)

These metallic robots straight out of the science fiction films and TV shows of the 1940s and 50s. Sixtrings are heavy, clumsy, and stubborn, armed with kitschy looking ray guns. None will stop once it has locked onto a target. Their origin is from some remote, retro-colorized part of the Vurt world that they call "The Cool Factory," but

their specific origin Vurt feather is still unidentified.

Sixtrings usually assemble in small gangs in the urban areas of the Vurt world. One of Vurtchester's most notorious gangs is the Deathbeat Squad: 100% sixtring, all of them. They speak in monotone robotic voices and use slang like *Daddy-O* and *Cool it*. These Beatnik automatons are far out, man! Get hip to the 'six.

Motive: Territorialism, looking cool

Environment: Vurt world. Origin feather unknown.

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 4

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense at level 2 due to its slow movements.

Combat: Sixtrings attack with wicked metal punches and carry ray guns. In addition to their normal attacks, sixtrings generate defensive arcs of electricity automatically respond to any melee attacks made against them, inflicting 4 points of damage to the attacker on a failed Might defense roll. They are slow and clumsy, and once they're knocked prone (a difficulty 6 Might task) they are unable to make normal attacks. It is nearly impossible for them to right themselves without assistance.

Interaction: Some have been able to reason with a sixtring, most have not.

Use: Another wrong turn in the urban areas of the Vurt world and you're face to face with the Deathbeat Squad. They may move slowly, but they look cool.

GM Intrusion: When the PC hits the sixtring with a melee weapon, it deftly sidesteps and disarms them, throwing the weapon into the air in the process. Having the PC catch their own weapon again is a Speed-based action. Success means the PC stays armed and looks like a badass. Failure means the sixtring catches it and uses it immediately to attack the PC.

SKINVADER 4 (12)

The city streets of the Vurt world have their fair share of bizarre gangs as well. Skinvaders resemble undead monsters from a horror film that have been oddly dressed in the bright, dated rave clothing of early 1990s. Big headphones and baggy pants, candy necklaces and bracelets, reflective stripes and clashing patterns, multicolored dreadlocks and facial piercings, visors, backpacks, glowsticks—the skinvaders are the flyest zombies on the block! These are the first-gen raverzombies *all the way turnt up!*

Portable Limbic Splitters are big in the Vurt world too, and these rotting creatures all seem to have one hanging over their shoulders on straps or in backpacks. The sonic blasts that come from these weapons are intense, often sampling antique music from the '90s. Don't be fooled by their bright colors and goofy appearance—these are cold-blooded cannibal Vurt creatures whose only goal in life is to eat flesh and scratch records. In that order.

Motive: Hungers for flesh and Vurt-world club fame

Environment: Vurt world. Their origin has been traced back to the feather *NeedleJuicer*.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 6

Movement: Short

Modifications: Very sensitive to sound. Without ear protection (such as headphones), they defend against sonic weapons as level 2.

Combat: They move and think as quickly as an average human. Skinvaders are known for sonic warfare and often carry portable Limbic Splitters. Their bite inflicts 6 points of damage and causes a necrotic sore to fester if not properly washed and bandaged within one hour. The necrotic sore inflicts 2 points of damage every hour until properly treated. Once treated the infection clears on its own in d6 days. They also are very easily distracted by blurbflies, and will always focus their attacks on them.

Interaction: Skinvaders are intelligent humanoids, but are almost always high on Cortex Jammers, which seems to have no negative long-term effects on them. The short-term effects are very pronounced: mania, slurred speech, and paranoia. Attempting to reason with them is an option, but not a very good one. They do, on rare occasions, make exceptions for musicians or DJs with skill—that'd be a real DJ battle, and one you'd better win.

Use: Skinvaders often travel in small groups through the more urban areas of the Vurt world, looking for trouble. They also detest blurbflies and will always try to kill them.

GM Intrusion: The PC's attack fails, throwing them off balance just long enough for the skinvader to pounce on them. In the process of clawing at the PC the skinvader drops their portable Limbic Splitter on the ground, and the PC takes 5 points of damage. The skinvader's left arm falls off as it tries to bite the PC. Avoiding its bite is a difficulty 6 Speed-based roll. The bite of a skinvader causes necrotic sores to quickly sprout up around the wound.

SKYJELLY 3 (15)

Gargantuan box jellyfish that float slowly in the skies above some areas of the Vurt world. They rarely touch down, and their tentacles, while deadly, pose little threat to anyone paying attention to the slow-moving beasts. They emit a low, soothing humming sound and many Vurt creatures use their presence as indicators of approaching weather. Their flesh smells strongly of mint, although when they're scared, many say that the scent changes to eye-watering jalapeño.

The skyjelly is an odd beast and very little is known about them. Some say they're made of clouds, as they disintegrate into mist if killed. There has never been a report of an aggressive skyjelly, as they don't need to feed or procreate and their territory is the entire sky.

Motive: Unknown
Environment: Vurt world. Their origin feather is *Balloon Quixote*.
Health: 20
Damage Inflicted: 8 points
Movement: Short (even with their giant size, they move *very* slowly in the sky)
Modifications: Mental defense rolls as a level 7.
Combat: Skyjelly tentacles deliver electric shocks causing severe nausea that move the target one step down the damage track on a failed Might defense roll. However, at their immense size and slow speed, avoiding these tree-trunk-sized trailing tentacles is very easy.
Interaction: They have simple minds that think only of humming tunelessly as they float delicately through the sky, avoiding storms. If attacked, they will slowly flee.
Use: Weird, peaceful megafauna is always a good way to add flavor to a feather trip.
GM Intrusion: One of the skyjelly's tree-trunk-sized tentacles whips around and connects squarely with the PC, inflicting 10 points of damage and rendering them unconscious for one round. They are also instantly moved one step down the damage track.

SLIM SANDMAN 5 (15)

In the dunes and sandy shores of the Vurt world, slim sandmen are a danger to anyone who fails to watch their step. Made almost entirely of sand, they burrow under the surface and use their long, hooked arms to snatch unsuspecting travelers and pull them under to be suffocated and crushed to death. A slim sandman will strip the flesh from bone and dry its food in the sun for later. It's said that they collect and trade skull trophies between each other.

Travelers who have survived slim sandman attacks warn us to watch closely for subtle disturbances in the sand which indicate their hiding places. Some even say that there's a popping sound preceding each attack, so be vigilant about suspicious noises when traversing the dunes.

Motive: Hungers for flesh
Environment: Vurt world. Their origin feather is *Fractalized Fairy Tales*.
Health: 15
Damage Inflicted: 5 points
Movement: Short, both under the sand and above
Combat: They can burrow under the surface of the sand just as quickly as they can run above the surface, so much of their combat is based on submerging and surfacing to attack. Listening very closely might allow PCs to anticipate where the slim sandmen will surface next (listen for small popping sounds).
Interaction: They have the minds of simple, hungry beasts. They do not show any interest in anything that doesn't have flesh.
Use: PCs should know that long travels over sandy areas can bring one or more slim sandmen. Keep in mind that PCs who aren't made of flesh have a distinct advantage in these circumstances.
GM Intrusion: With a roar, the slim sandman opens its mouth and sprays the PC right in the eyes with coarse sand, which blinds them for 3 rounds. The PC also takes 4 points of damage and will only be able to defend themselves for those 3 rounds.

STONE BALLOON 3 (9)

Stone balloons are the ever-smiling, massive creatures of floating rock that sprout from the scrublands and mountain passes of the Vurt world. Varying widely in color, size, and demeanor, stone balloons communicate by laughing. They are not known to be aggressive, but when agitated some have been known to explode outwards, causing harm to all nearby.

They are simple beings, normally ignoring travelers and other beings in the Vurt. They almost always sprout from the ground in large, smiling numbers.

Motive: Unknown, some inside joke shared among other stone balloons
Environment: Vurt world. Their origin feather is the *Balloon Quixote* series.
Health: 9
Damage Inflicted: 2 points
Armor: 2
Movement: Short, they float slowly
Modifications: Speed defense as level 2. Might defense as level 4.
Combat: Stone balloons can fly and butt into enemies, which is more annoying than dangerous. They do flee, however. Once they are injured they explode outwards with a short range area attack that inflicts 4 points of damage.
Interaction: They just smile, laugh, or explode.
Use: An area filled with stone balloons is a veritable minefield. Once one explodes, it might pop others and start a lethal chain reaction around the PCs.
GM Intrusion: The stone balloons drifts over to the PC and starts to tremble and giggle. It explodes and the PC takes 4 points of damage. If there are any other stone balloons within short range, they too will explode and cause 4 points of damage. A chain reaction like this just might be deadly to a PC caught in the middle.

THERMOFISH 4 (12)

Schools of glistening thermofish can be found swimming in the warmer waters in any of the Vurt world's Seas of Pitch. Incredibly aggressive, they will often swarm and kill other Vurt creatures much larger than they are for no specific reason other than sport. They live off the ample supply of pitch worms, flaunt worms, and small inchovies in the Seas of Pitch.

When out of the water, thermofish can survive by switching from their gills to their small lungs.

Motive: Hungers for flesh
Environment: Vurt world. Origin has been traced back to the *ThermoFish* feather.
Health: 12
Damage Inflicted: 4 points
Movement: Short in water, immediate on land
Modifications: Speed defense as level 2 when in a school. Level 4 when alone.
Combat: Their mouths are lined with sharp teeth, and they often cause feeding frenzy when they attack. Their blood is extremely corrosive and makes all tasks in bloody water more difficult. Most schools have at least 10 thermofish, some as high as 100.
Interaction: They live to eat. If you're made of flesh, you're fair game.
Use: Encourage players to make the wise decision to avoid danger from time to time. When in the waters of the Vurt world, spotting a pitch worm means two things, both of them bad: either more pitch worms are nearby, or hungry thermofish are going to arrive very soon.
GM Intrusion: A thermofish that just attacked you has mistakenly bitten a fellow thermofish, who reacts by biting a third thermofish, which bites back. Within moments, the water is full of thermofish blood as the feeding frenzy starts up, drawing in another five thermo fish the PC hadn't noticed and making visibility very poor.

THUNDERSLEYAR 5 (15)

There's no arguing that the sight of one of these beasts is an unforgettable experience. Standing twice the height of a human, a thundersleyar is a bloated beast formed from tusks, teeth, horns, and sallow skin, dripping inky discharge as they glide quietly an inch above the ground. Each thundersleyar wears a wig of long blonde hair and tattered denim vest—proud of their hard-rock look.

In the sacred groves and woodland meadows of the Vurt world, these shadowy cult followers of Nüthunor are on patrol for anything that does not have either Vurt or Shadow genetics. Their cult calls for the blood of travelers from the real world, but that sacrificial blood must not contain any traces of Vurt or Shadow. Individuals with either mode of being in their bloodstream do not interest the thundersleyars; they're on the hunt for those who have only dog, robo and/or human genetics. However, they'll enthusiastically engage in combat with anyone

of any genetics stupid enough to step up to them.

Some say these terrifying creatures might not actually be full Vurt beings, that they're an example of evidence of crossover between the Vurt world and the legendary Shadow world long before Queen Hobart. That is all speculation of course, as no thundersleyar has ever been detained and questioned.

Motive: Eradicate all who do not have Vurt or Shadow genetics
Environment: Vurt world. Their origin feather is unknown.
Health: 15
Damage Inflicted: 5 points
Armor: 2
Movement: Long, as they are gliding over the ground at all times
Modifications: Speed defense at level 6.
Combat: In addition to using their broadswords well, they use telepathic mental attacks to cause debilitating nausea for d6 rounds to their target (but leave them weak afterwards, unable to attack again for d6 rounds).
Interaction: If a PC has Vurt or Shadow genetics, they are not considered a threat. Those without, watch out.
Use: The Vurt world has its angry hate groups as well, as evidenced by the thundersleyars. It's also another opportunity to remind players about how important your genetic makeup is.
GM Intrusion: *Boom!* As lightning strikes from above, sparks fly and the PC is knocked to the ground, dropping their weapon. Walking over towards the downed PC, the thundersleyar is chanting and glowing as it is restored to full health. The screaming sounds of heavy metal guitar riffs drown out its chanting as a righteous wind blows the thundersleyar's perfectly feathered blond hair. The PC is impressed. Hell, anyone who sees this shit would be impressed.

UNSPEAKABLE 6 (18)

The unspeakables are known to draw in their prey by posing as sick or injured elderly humans, setting elaborate traps that allow them to pounce once they get close enough.

They despise anything that comes from the real world, and spend most of their lives waiting in the shallow waters of the oceans and lakes of the Vurt world for the chance to come out onto land and feed on the flesh of others.

There are some that say the unspeakables can be lulled to sleep by the sound of a good sea shanty. So go on, sing out strong, and we'll roll the old chariot along!

Motive: Feeds on flesh, hatred of real world travelers
Environment: Vurt world. Origin feather is Vurtnautica Prime.
Health: 20
Damage Inflicted: 6 points
Movement: Short
Combat: Their deadly tongue-tentacle can stretch up to six feet from their mouth and is covered in nematocysts that pump venom into the victim. The venom works instantly, and victims will spend the rest of the battle/encounter slowed down considerably (Speed defense tasks are 1 step more difficult).
Interaction: Difficult to distinguish from most humans, these solitary creatures are intelligent and conniving, using trickery to kill and eat real-world travelers. Upon close inspection, their gills are visible.
Use: Heart-string tugger. Who could resist the pleas for help from that poor old fisherman on the beach seemingly trapped under the debris of a recent shipwreck?
GM Intrusion: The sky above the PC begins to dolly-zoom out of focus as visions of vast, colorless space and cosmic horrors assault their mind. The PC is dazed and takes no action other than to attempt to snap out of it (a difficulty 6 Intellect-based roll).

WILLOW WHISPERER 3 (9)

Glowing green bits of light that flicker and flutter through the tall grass and foliage of the wooded areas of the Vurt world. Willow whisperers are most often seen in small groups, following each other around from grove to grove, whispering softly in their language.

Some say that when lost in the woods, one should never, under any circumstances, follow a willow whisperer. But surely the willow whisperers know this by now. So does that mean that they are, in actuality, revealing the true way out, knowing that most don't trust them? Is there a way to follow them and not end up at the bottom of a pit, or worse?

Motive: Supply sustenance for the jabberwalkers in the form of glowing green energy
Environment: Vurt world. Origin has been traced back to the *Tulgey Woods* feather.
Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: None
Movement: Short
Combat: They can distract or mislead, but do not cause harm themselves.
Interaction: They can not, or possibly *will* not, communicate with anything other than each other and the jabberwalkers.
Use: "Look! Pretty lights! Let's follow them," said the famous late Vurt explorer.
GM Intrusion: The willow whisperer showers the PC (and everything within short range) with green sparks as the scent of rosemary fills the air. This spark shower slows everything down for the PC, who falls to the ground, feeling profound lethargy and an inability to coordinate their movement for two rounds. This is often just long enough for a willow whisperer to escape. The dull headache that the PC experiences afterwards is not debilitating, but it is certainly annoying.

VURT WORLD NPCS

PROFESSOR ALONSO QUIXANO

The star of the *Balloon Quixote* series, Professor Quixano has been cropping up in bootlegs and tangential dreams for quite a while now. He combines the best aspects of daring adventurer and absentminded scientist, and his curiosity often overpowers his sense of danger. There have been rumors that some poorly made *Balloon Quixote* bootleg feather was so shoddily cobbled together that the Professor managed to pilot his living airship, the Rocinante, beyond the bounds of the feather and is now roaming the wild and untamed portions of the Vurt, exploring and lending aid wherever he can.

This is especially interesting given that the Vurt-star that served as the basis for the Professor had previously served as the basis for the main character from the equally popular *Blue Box* feather series, about a similarly-styled character who travels through time and space in a ship disguised as an antique police call box. That character, and his ship, have also been often seen outside his own feather.

Professor Quixano will resort to violence only in the direst of emergencies, preferring quick, creative thinking and nonviolent solutions to conflict. He is extremely well versed in all subjects related to science or technology and may lend his expertise to the PCs via cooperative actions. Treat him as if he is specialized in all skills relating to science or technology.

Cooperative actions, page 150

Professor Quixano: *level 7; health 24; inflicts 2 points of damage with unarmed attacks.*

KING PILLOWSNORE

The hero of the *Questing Beast* feather series, King Pillowsnore is another character that was originally written for a specific series of dreams, but has since spread far beyond those intended boundaries. There are the obvious Pink/Blue hybrids and Pink bootleg feathers that were created from initially blue feathers, putting King Pillowsnore into various adult situations for which he was never intended. The fact that the character was inspired by the ancient legends of King Pellinore and the quest for the Holy Grail have also ensured that this character or some may pop up in many other dreams, searching for the riddle of the average airspeed of an unladen Vurt swallow.

There was even a rumor that King Pillowsnore's constant questing for the Beast and the Grail may have lead him to certain weak points between the Vurt and real worlds, allowing this Vurt character to cross over—out of dreams and into reality. But that's just a rumor, isn't it? He is also the king of the Listen-Noise Islands and has a strong sense of honor and fair play.

King Pillowsnore: *level 6; health 20; Armor 4 (medieval full-plate) +2 when using his shield; inflicts 8 points of damage with a longsword, or 12 points of damage with a lance when on horseback.*

HERE BE DRAGONS...

When the dreams of the real world began to give shape to the Vurt. The beings who reside there took on the aspect of the characters of our dreams, myths and folklore.

Some Vurt beings wield such power that they have grown to inhabit the skins of our most fearsome myths. Dragons, demons, gods and Titans—these beings exist in the Vurt, each with tremendous influence within their domain and many with designs that reach beyond the Vurt and into the real world. They are the accretion of our dreams and nightmares, made even more powerful by the fear or reverence they receive from the dreamers of the real world. While they may possess the recognizable form of a single dream, their being can be an amalgamation of countless versions of the tale whose skin they wear.

TAKSHAKA

Takshaka, known as the Kingsnake or King of the Nagas, makes his home in a deadly Vurt, Takshaka Yellow, described with fearful wonder by featherheads as "the marinade of God." A decade ago, Takshaka reached into the real world, insinuating himself as Chief of the Manchester Police Department. During his reign of terror, the department was molded into an abusive and sadistic entity. He was eventually deposed by the Game Cat himself, but as the Cat explained, "You don't kill something like Takshaka. You just win the current game."

After his defeat, the serpent king retreated into the Vurt and was hatched again. There have since been no overt signs of his influence in the real world, leading some to believe that Manchester is safe from his malice. Others contend that his dreamsnakes are once again creeping out of Takshaka Yellow—an indication that he is determined to return to Manchester.

Takshaka: *level 8; health 100; Armor 8 from naga scales; inflicts 12 points of damage with venomous bite that paralyzes the target for one round on a failed Might check; can grapple targets with his powerful tail, inflicting 8 points of damage on a successful attack, immobilizing the target (difficulty 6 Might task to break the grapple). In addition to Takshaka's attacks, the tail will hold the target and inflict damage each round until a successful escape roll is made. Once per encounter, Takshaka will vanish in a puff of Shadow-smoke, d6 dreamsnakes appearing to attack in his place. At after two rounds Takshaka will reappear and continue the battle. Takshaka will never flee from combat.*

KUKULKAN

In the guise of a feathered serpent, Kukulkan resides atop a stone temple, deep in the tangles of a dangerous Vurt jungle. At the top of a wide stair, adorned with carvings of his likeness, he benevolently receives visitors who offer gifts or sacrifice in exchange for knowledge. Possibly due to such a trade, Kukulkan has lately acted as chief advisor to the CEO of AmériCo, the largest feather distribution entity in the Americas. As a result of the CEO suffering a massive elextroke, Kukulkan has assumed administrative control over the company.

An AmériCo office complex exists at the top of the El Castillo pyramid in real-world Chichen Itza, on the Yucatan Peninsula. The complex is guarded by a fanatic but exceedingly polite security force composed entirely of Mormon volunteers in white shirts and ties. There are unsubstantiated rumors that this facility holds powerful Knowledge Feathers which were actually *shed* from Kukulkan's glorious mane.

When a concerned regulatory agency came to investigate the troubling news that a Vurt being was in control of the company, they were met by a man with deep and hypnotic, yellow eyes calling himself Kukulkan. They were satisfied with the interview, chalking the reports up to rumor and the case was closed.

Kukulkan: *level 8; health 90; Armor 7 from a protective feathered mane; inflicts 12 points of damage with large teeth; can breathe fire once per encounter, an area attack which inflicts 18 points of damage to up to three targets within immediate range; can grapple targets with his powerful tail, inflicting 8 points of damage on a successful attack, immobilizing the target (difficulty 6 Might task to break the grapple). In addition to Kukulkan's attacks, the tail will hold the target and inflict damage each round until a successful escape roll is made.*

GARUDA

The King of Eagles and the immortal Phoenix, the great Roc and the Thunderbird—all are names associated with Garuda. He is most likely to be observed in flight, high in Vurt skies where his body can stretch for miles and a single beat of his wings is capable of generating ravaging gale-force winds across the lands below.

Garuda is known to be the most aloof of the Vurt dragons, showing no interest in the real world or its denizens and rarely communicating with travelers who seek him out in the Vurt. While he may pose no *intentional* threat to a dreamer from the real world, he is the sworn enemy of Takshaka and his minions—their conflicts can be cataclysmic. When descending to do battle with serpents on the ground, his size diminishes to a mere 60 feet (20 m) in length. Garuda has battled with Takshaka countless times and in many forms, foiling his many schemes and devouring his minions uncounted.

The origins of the war between Garuda and Takshaka are not known, and whether or not Garuda was instrumental in Takshaka's fall from the MPD years ago is a hotly debated topic.

Garuda: *level 8; health 100; Armor 8 from feathers; inflicts 12 points of damage with his talons, or 8 points of damage with a swipe with powerful wings that also knocks targets prone on a failed Speed defense roll. Garuda will avoid most combat situations, moving at up to 500 feet per turn. If angered or forced into combat, and given access to open sky, Garuda will seemingly flee upwards, using the distance gained to turn and dive-attack, adding 10 points of damage to any subsequent attack. Engaging in combat with Garuda or any other Great Vurt Dragon is not advised.*

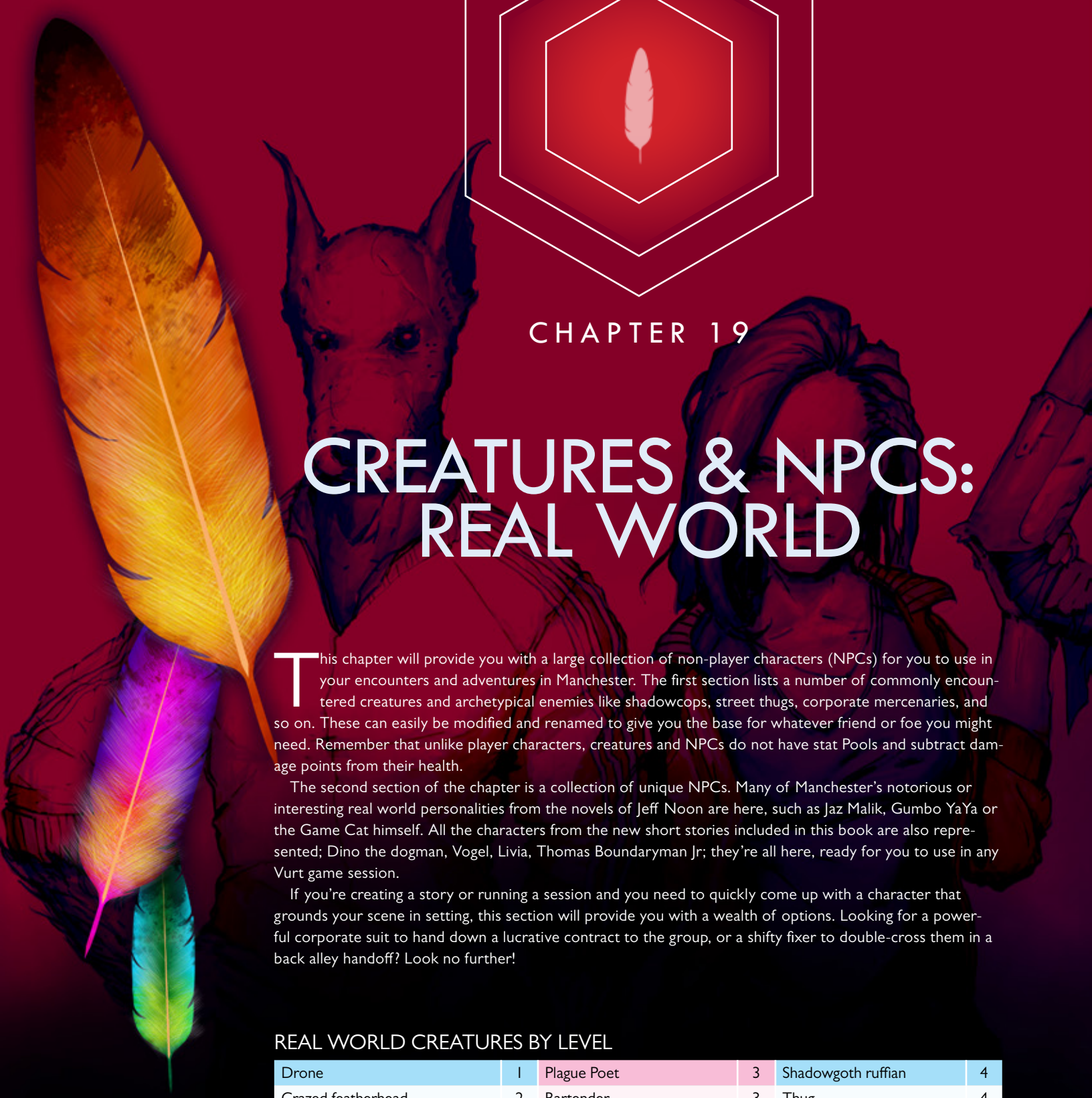
SMOK WAWELSKI

At the heart of a ravaged and smoldering countryside in the Vurt, the enormous scaled wyrm Smok Wawelski resides in a cave at the base of Wawel Hill. Just outside the dark opening, shackles hang from a charred post protruding from a bed of crushed human bone. Every month, Smok Wawelski comes forth to devour a person shackled to this sacrificial pillar. If he is denied his tribute, he will fly low over the countryside blasting everything for miles with belches of dragon's fire, consuming cattle and farmer alike. He does not negotiate or grant knowledge of any kind.

A Manchester crime syndicate known as the Syanka has integrated Smok's demand for monthly sacrifice into a ritual of ascendancy. Two members marked for elevation within the Syanka will take the Yellow feather "Smok Wawelski" and do battle before the dragon's cave. If able to defeat the other and shackle them living to the post, the winner emerges victorious from the dream and is promoted. Those who have survived this ritual believe that they have been chosen to do Smok Wawelski's bidding. They adorn themselves with tattoos of the scene of their ascension, referred to as the "Mark of the Dragon."

Whether the operations of the Syanka's sprawling criminal empire are somehow guided by the will of Smok Wawelski is unknown. However, there are hushed mentions of a man with a thick eastern-European accent high up in the organization who wears gold jewelry and a scaled three-piece suit. Some fear he is the dragon himself, now crossed into the real world—an engine of destruction thinly disguised by a human form.

Smok Wawelski: *level 8; health 100; Armor 8 from Vurt dragon scales; in human form, he inflicts 8 points of damage with a dream sword he keeps concealed beneath his jacket. In dragon form he inflicts 10 points of damage with his bite, or 12 points of damage with his claws. In any form, he can breathe fire as an area attack which inflicts 12 points of damage to up to three targets within immediate range, and he has the ability to produce a choking smoke which envelops all creatures within short range in total darkness, in which only Smok Wawelski can see and breathe clearly (all within smoke range have all tasks increased in difficulty by two steps: one due to coughing and the other due to visibility).*



CHAPTER 19

CREATURES & NPCS: REAL WORLD

This chapter will provide you with a large collection of non-player characters (NPCs) for you to use in your encounters and adventures in Manchester. The first section lists a number of commonly encountered creatures and archetypical enemies like shadowcops, street thugs, corporate mercenaries, and so on. These can easily be modified and renamed to give you the base for whatever friend or foe you might need. Remember that unlike player characters, creatures and NPCs do not have stat Pools and subtract damage points from their health.

The second section of the chapter is a collection of unique NPCs. Many of Manchester's notorious or interesting real world personalities from the novels of Jeff Noon are here, such as Jaz Malik, Gumbo YaYa or the Game Cat himself. All the characters from the new short stories included in this book are also represented; Dino the dogman, Vogel, Livia, Thomas Boundaryman Jr; they're all here, ready for you to use in any Vurt game session.

If you're creating a story or running a session and you need to quickly come up with a character that grounds your scene in setting, this section will provide you with a wealth of options. Looking for a powerful corporate suit to hand down a lucrative contract to the group, or a shifty fixer to double-cross them in a back alley handoff? Look no further!

REAL WORLD CREATURES BY LEVEL

Drone	1	Plague Poet	3	Shadowgoth ruffian	4
Crazed featherhead	2	Bartender	3	Thug	4
Crazed robocrusty	2	Ruffian	3	Feral robodog	5
Joy divider	2	Club bouncer	4	Mercenary	5
Shadowbox	3	Rabid dogshadow	4	Shadowcop	5
Attack dog	3	Feral vurtdog	4	Zombie thug	5
Burbletron	3	Gang lieutenant	4	Corporate commando	6
Corporate security guard	3	Fleshcop	4	Corporate cleaner	8
Cult member	3	Roboman admin	4	Tethra mech	8

REAL WORLD CREATURES

ATTACK DOG 3 (9)

Training pure dogs to guard and attack is now relatively controversial. Since dogs now possess a simple self-awareness, they are granted the same rights as the other modes of being. If there is an attack dog guarding a warehouse or office building, chances are it has agreed to work and it is being compensated according to the law.

All that aside, the guard dogs of today do what a guard dogs have always done—walk in circles, sniff arse, and find intruders to bite.

Motive: Guard, attack, respond to simple commands
Environment: Real world
Health: 9
Damage Inflicted: 4 points
Movement: Immediate
Combat: A dog will chase down and bite intruders or anything they consider a threat.
Interaction: There are some remote warehouses that still use attack dog security.
Use: They are useful protectors and guards. Also a pure dog trained to serve humans is something that those with dog genetics are going to have a real issue with.
Loot: An attack dog doesn't carry anything valuable, unless you're looking for fleas.
GM Intrusion: The attack dog flies into a frenzy and gains an extra attack against the PC next round.

BARTENDER 3 (9)

These pint-slingers work late hours in the pubs and clubs of Manchester. Some pubs have a silent roboman serving waterpiss ale only to those whose mode they tolerate, while some clubs have a resident mixy-mix-fetishologist that wows the crush with their newest woozy creations. It runs the range as far as personality and quality of service.

There are a few things that most bartenders share—a love of money, all the good info, the ability to put up with idiot drunks, sleep deprivation, a quiet hatred of their fellow Manc, an addiction of some sort, and the simple desire to finish their shift and go back to their stash pad. Chances are when they get home they'll flop onto the settee with some crackin' blue and pink feathers and forget about work until tomorrow. No customers shouting, no sick to clean up—just peace and quiet. They've earned that much, at least.

Motive: Tolerate customer's bullshit, maybe a little "side business"
Environment: Real world
Health: 5
Damage Inflicted: 3 points
Movement: Short
Combat: Most bartenders keep a cudgel of some kind under the bar, but the bartender is on their third shift in a row and has been hitting the merchandise, so they lack the stamina for a decent fight. They will always try to avoid getting hurt.
Interaction: Bartenders and food service employees are everywhere in Manchester.
Use: Sometimes a conversation at the bar has turned ugly and the PCs find themselves fighting the bartender. Respect those serving your food and drinks.
Loot: Drug-related cyphers.
GM Intrusion: The angry pub bartender throws a bottle up in the air dramatically and the PC follows it with their eyes. In that split second of distraction, the bartender jumps at the PC and knocks them to the ground, kicking them in the gut like a Vurtball penalty kick. The PC takes 6 points of damage and must succeed at a Might-based roll to stop coughing, stand up, and return to the battle.

BOUNCER 4 (12)

There many clubs, pubs, bars and Shimmy-Plexes in Manchester, and most are full of rowdies that need a good shove. When things get out of hand, the club bouncers jump in and clean up quickly, tossing any offender out onto the street. If the threat is more than a simple drunken Vurtball scuffle and requires more than just muscle, a bouncer knows where the weapons are hidden in the club or pub. They're paid to keep the peace.

Club bouncers are often the people you talk to out front, the ones you need to convince. Don't assume that you're dealing with some dumb git. Oftentimes bouncers have enough downtime during the day to further their education and try to climb their way out of the Manchester nightlife industry into something less bruisey. Arrogance is often a trait of someone in this position. Many bouncers are robodogs or dogmen with the brawn to guard the gate and no patience for gits.

Motive: Get through the night without another fight, maybe let off some steam by punching someone

Environment: Real world
Health: 12
Damage Inflicted: 6 points
Armor: 1
Movement: Short
Combat: Bouncers are almost always well trained, able to deliver impressive damage without needing a weapon. However, if they need to reach under the counter for something like a shotgun, they know where to look.
Interaction: Out in front of the club patting down wannabes. Inside the club, guarding the bar and VIP section. In the ginnels behind the club tossing punks onto the pavement. Bouncers are one of the most integral parts of a nightclub or pub team, and it usually goes to their head. Oh, and they hate to be called "bouncer."
Use: So many locations of interest in Manchester are bars, pubs, or clubs; almost all have numerous bouncers working at once. They are also the ones the PCs have to convince in order to enter the location. They also know a lot of juicy info and can be bought off for the right price. Many of the bouncers will act arrogantly.
Loot: Pharma-related cyphers. Maybe a blue feather.
GM Intrusion: The bouncer points a stubby finger at the PC and shouts out at them to stop. Another bouncer on the other side of the club is now seen making their way over to source of the ruckus. The first bouncer yells at the PC again, drawing their attention. From behind, the PC is cold-cocked with a cricket bat, and temporarily loses consciousness for d6 rounds and immediately descends one step on the damage track. Surprise! There are now two additional club bouncers in the fight, standing over the PC's limp body. What a night!

BURBLETRON 3 (9)

Originally meant as a children's toy, burbletrons are still found on shelves even after more than 30 years without a single design change. These short, simple machines are made from thick, segmented glass panels and run on steam power, emitting a steady stream of vapor from the top of their heads. They are programmed to answer simple questions with randomized answers.

A favorite of the high-on-something crowd, these simple machines have a self-defense setting that turns them into wind-up deathbots. No one is really sure why a simple toy would have such a dangerous setting, and the activate button is very easy to reach. It's estimated that in Manchester alone, nearly 100 deaths a year are linked to burns suffered from accidentally turning on the burbletron's self-defense.

Speaking of burns, it is a fairly common sight to see deactivated burbletrons repurposed as Hazers or apparatus for other smokable drugs.

Motive: Respond to simple questions with random answers. When malfunctioning, it only wants to watch the world burn.
Environment: Real world. Manufactured by Burbletron 3000.
Health: 9
Damage Inflicted: 4 points
Movement: Immediate
Combat: A burbletron is able to heat itself to a very high temp and slowly walk around, setting all it touches on fire.
Interaction: They answer simple questions. Some are activated in self-defense mode and set loose for nefarious purposes.
Use: An annoying toy you can start a fire with. A custom Hazer for big parties. Both?
Loot: A burbletron doesn't carry anything with it, but electronic salvage *might* be possible.
GM Intrusion: The burbletron slows down and comes to rest, slumping to the ground awkwardly. Wisps of smoke start to come out of the top of the machine's head. The PC may be expecting a bomb of some sort, but it's a much better surprise. The sweet smell of Haze fills the air and within seconds, a thick cloud of premium Speakeasy is spreading outward, affecting all within short range. It seems that whoever set this machine loose also used it as a room Hazer, and the chamber was still full of the good stuff. Suddenly and without warning, the attack is over. The fight may be over, but the party has just begun.

CORPORATE CLEANER 8 (24)

When a megacorp needs to deal with a problem quietly and permanently, they call in a cleaner. A professional killer of the highest caliber, the cleaner is trained in stealth, infiltration, and the use of deadly devices. More than simply a tougher-than-average badass, they are smart, have resources of their own, and know when to retreat, regroup, or call in a favor.

If you've got a large price on your head, this person is the worst possible scenario.

Motive: Completing contracts, upholding their reputation
Environment: Real world

Health: 30
Damage Inflicted: 10
Armor: 3
Movement: Short.
Combat: A wise hitman doesn't approach a target head-on. The element of surprise, the ability to avoid being seen, and an avenue of escape are always on the forefront of a cleaners mind. They will attempt to surprise the PCs, attacking with a powerful ranged weapon such as a sniper rifle, an explosive, or even a flame pistol. If the PCs get the advantage or if the cleaner is injured, they will attempt to flee. They carry pistols and melee weapons which are high tech and designed to pierce armor.
Interaction: Generally, there isn't much dialogue with a high-priced assassin. The only exception is when the employer has specifically requested a message be delivered. When undercover, the cleaner is excellent at assuming identities and turning on the charm.
Use: If the PCs have crossed a powerful megacorp or other billionaire entity in a major way, this NPC may enter the story. Generally dealing with a cleaner is difficult enough to warrant playing a large part in an adventure scenario.
Loot: High-tech weapons and gear, maybe some SpekTek body armor or even a flame pistol (often a cleaner will hide a tracking device in their kit).
GM Intrusion: From inside their vest, the cleaner produces and activates a small handheld device, creating a powerful pulse of sonic energy. Any character within immediate range suffers 10 points of damage on a failed Might defense roll and is immediately moved one step down the damage track.

CORPORATE SECURITY GUARD 3 (9)

Those who work corporate security do not often get the respect they think they deserve. Some get into this line of work because they couldn't make it through the basic training for the MPD, but all of them get off on their license to carry firearms and will draw down whenever possible. They're total wankers with itchy trigger fingers and nothing to do 99% of the time.

Corporations don't want security goons that ask too many questions, so none of these characters have any inside knowledge about the company they work for. Despite this fact, corporate security guards are usually fiercely loyal to their employer, wanting to believe that they are in fact valued employees.

Motive: A decent salary, seeming important
Environment: Real world
Health: 9
Damage Inflicted: 4 points
Armor: 2
Movement: Short
Modifications: Speed defense as level 4 due to their training.
Combat: Corporate security guards usually carry light firearms and melee weapons. They will make ranged attacks from behind cover, in defense of whatever facility or person they are tasked with guarding. Some are admins that control weaponized blurbflies, and will set them to harass targets. They will attempt to call for backup as soon as combat is initiated.

Harassed, page 111

Interaction: These characters will typically pretend that they are unaware of your presence, answering questions without making eye contact and generally pretending to look official. If a character enters a restricted area or approaches the corporate suit they're guarding, they will draw their weapons and start barking orders. If the PCs do not immediately back down, they will attack.
Use: That corporate warehouse you want to get into so badly is likely swarming with these security guards who are armed and bored, looking for any excuse to play cowboy. One or two are usually assigned to bodyguard low or middle echelon corporate management.
Loot: Bulletproof vest, cyphers.
GM Intrusion: Backup! The shouting and approaching footfalls of two more guards can be heard, just around the corner.

CORPORATE COMMANDO 6 (18)

These are the most skilled in their deadly field, traveling all over the real world to enter the battlefield on behalf of whomever is paying the most quid. Most are on contract with one of the many megacorps, but at their skill level, recruitment of corporate commandos is a very pricey game.

All modes of being can be mercenaries, and their knowledge and equipment often dictate the price of their services. Most situations that require their services are outside the realm of legality and/or basic morality. These

people are the best at what they do, they know it, and they expect to be very well compensated for it.

Motive: Money

Environment: Real world

Health: 20

Damage Inflicted: 9 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Short

Modifications: Might defense as level 7 due to strength and training. They do not suffer any disadvantages to being injured during a battle. When their health falls below half, they do not suffer the penalty for being injured.

Combat: Most have a firearm or two. Others carry explosives or are stealthy assassins. Circumstances and weapons will change the amount of damage they might deal.

Interaction: If you have the money to pay their unconscionable rates, these people are the best money can buy. Most demand at least three-fourths upfront.

Use: They often perform small jobs on their off time. If their megacorp bosses knew what they were doing, it'd be trouble. But who's got the bollocks to squeal on one of these killers?

Loot: Bulletproof vest, pistols, cyphers.

GM Intrusion: The corporate commando puts a finger to their earpiece and then smiles widely before ducking behind cover. The next second, roof and wall explode inward in a shower of glass and metal, knocking the PC and all those in immediate range to the ground. The PC takes 4 points of damage and is unable to hear anything but ringing in their ears for one hour. As the smoke and dust clears, another corporate commando stands there, holding a shotgun like an action Vurt-star, Napalm Filter cigarette hanging from their lip and the words "Sleep is For the Dead" scrawled on their corporate-issue helmet. The first corporate commando joins their buddy and they both prepare to mess up the PC something fierce.

CRAZED FEATHERHEAD 2 (6)

Some folks just can't handle their feathers, innit? We call them featherheads, and deep down, most of us can understand what drives their obsession. Many have spent all their money on feathers, losing family and friends in the process.

The streets of Manchester are full of these poor gits, always scanning the gutters for discarded trips, always scamming the punters for feather funds. Most tell people that they're "just a few quid away" from the price of a Vurt feather. It's sad, it really is. All most of them want is to find a dream deep enough to disappear into forever. But until that sweet day arrives, a crazed featherhead is likely just a danger to themselves and others.

Motive: Finding and ingesting Vurt feathers—nothing else matters

Environment: Real world

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 1 due to chronic Vurt lag. Might defense as level 4 due to feather-related brain damage. Crazed featherheads feel no pain and do not suffer any disadvantages to being injured during a battle. When their health falls below half, they do not suffer the penalty for being injured.

Combat: They are rarely armed. Many have nerve damage that causes total numbness; they feel no pain, and stay standing in a fight longer than they should be able to.

Interaction: A crazed featherhead is usually either aggressively picking fights or sleeping. Many beg for feathers outside local Vurt-U-Wants or Shimmy-Plexes.

Use: Manchester and the rest of the real world is in the grips of a global Vurt feather epidemic. Life has changed, there is no going back. A crazed featherhead wailing and punching at traffic is a reminder of the limits of our minds. Even imagination has its price.

Loot: Pharma-related cyphers, maybe a blue or pink feather.

GM Intrusion: The PC is face-to-face with the toothless lunatic and it yells something unintelligible, pointing to the sky. Smelling worse than the worst toilet in Scotland, the crazed featherhead lunges at the PC and wraps them up in a sweaty bear hug. The PC must spend one or more actions attempting to wrestle out of their grip with a successful Might-based roll. Every round the PC is entangled, they take 3 points of damage. At the end of it all, the PC will discover that the crazed featherhead has stolen a cypher in the scuffle, ruining or ingesting it.

CRAZED ROBOCRUSTY 2 (6)

Some robomen develop a certain inability to cope with their mix of human and robo genetics as they age. Those that have spent a great deal of time taking feathers or doing drugs have a particularly hard time keeping it together and functioning in society—we call them robocrusties. Many stop caring about their appearance and hygiene, becoming twice as likely to die from an overdose of some kind.

The streets of Manchester are full of these unfortunates, and they have become not only a drain on an already broken drip feed social service network, but a genuine safety concern.

Their madness often stems from their aging robo genetics— they lose the ability to process the copious amounts of data that assaults the senses in the Vurt world. This is exactly what the human mind is so very good at doing when under the influence of a drug. A robo brain understands that it's not logical to snort Choke all day or get feathered up on bootlegs, but the human brain knows it *feels* good. When these two worlds collide day after day, the likelihood of this particular condition increases. *Psychosis + agonizing sensory overload + hard drugs = crazed robocrusty.*

Motive: The pursuit of good drugs, perhaps a safe place to spend the night
Environment: Real world
Health: 6
Damage Inflicted: 3 points
Movement: Short
Modifications: Speed defense as level 1 due to poor coordination.
Combat: When enraged, they will lash out at anything within reach. They are rarely armed, but many have the innate strength that comes with robo genetics.
Interaction: Talking to a crazed robocrusty is usually worthless. Most beg for money or drugs outside local Vurt-U-Wants or Shimmy-Plexes, babbling incoherently.
Use: These are tragic figures and while they can be dangerous, they usually serve as reminders of just how bad things can get in Manchester when one overindulges in all the heavy drugs that flood the streets.
Loot: A crazed robocrusty doesn't carry anything of value.
GM Intrusion: As it stumbles towards the PC, it falls into their arms. In the scuffle to remove them, the PC loses one cypher to the sticky fingers of the junkie. The robocrusty holds up the stolen cypher and ingests or uses it quickly, without even knowing its effects.

CULT MEMBER 3 (9)

The words of their manipulative leaders command them to follow and serve. There are hundreds of recognized cults in Manchester alone, most center around extreme pro-Vurt or anti-Vurt ideologies. Some are less confrontational, preferring to go about their odd ceremonial business unmithered. Matching robes and other clothing are common for cult members, and many do not carry money or other "real worldly" items. The behavior of a cult member is often dictated by their cult leader's commands.

Many cults make their money in the illegal drugs and feathers market; some work in the trafficking industry. Many live together in highly secured places, doing things all day that most others would find disturbing. Often, cultists are weak-willed or impressionable people who are being manipulated by someone or something with a much stronger mind. A cult member may merely be someone who is desperate to appease their leader in exchange for absolution for some personal weakness, but that doesn't make them any less dangerous.

Motive: Obeying the cult leader, absolution, following an insane ideology
Environment: Real world
Health: 9
Damage Inflicted: 4 points
Movement: Short
Combat: Cult members usually travel in small groups. Very few carry firearms, but most carry small knives or other easily hidden deadly weapons. Some are commanded to fight to the death or end their own lives upon failure. .
Interaction: This depends entirely on the cult. Some are peaceful, some are not. There are cult members that attack without warning, and others that form small groups to carry out murder.
Use: Sometimes a GM needs some illogical expendable wackos to throw at the PCs.
Loot: Light melee weapons, usually blades.
GM Intrusion: The cult member pulls out a small vial of dark liquid and uncorks it before throwing it directly at the PC. When it hits the ground, a noxious gas billows out that, if inhaled, will cause coughing fits and shortness of breath. The PC and all others within immediate range must succeed on a Speed defense roll or take 5 points of damage as they immediately begin coughing. No recovery rolls will be possible until the victim is cured (perhaps treated by a special cypher or receiving care and medicine from a medical professional). The cult member who threw the vial inhales the gas and their coughing fit takes them out of the fight entirely.

DRONE 1 (3)

Simple drones have been around for decades now, and not much has changed in the field. Most drones that are available to the public are lightweight and relatively expendable, performing a variety of basic functions. Often used for transporting lightweight packages, they are a regular sight all over the city, zipping between the swarms of blurbflies as they fulfill their simple missions. Many of the food and feather delivery services use drones.

Security is another area where drones are used often, but unless there is an existing on-site drone-control system in place, their basic functionality limits them to small areas.

Drones usually require an active controller to pilot them remotely when attempting something more than a simple A-to-B delivery or patrolling a small area.Whether for delivery or security, most drones are fitted with simple recording equipment. Very few are weaponized; it's simply not cost-effective.

Motive: Patrol, deliver packages, whatever they've been programmed to do
Environment: Real world
Health: 3
Damage Inflicted: 1 point
Armor: 1
Movement: Long
Modifications: Speed defense at level 3 due to speed and size.
Combat: Standard drone models have no weapons. Models that can handle the weight and action of a weapon are rare. Most are used to transmit and record images as well as pick up and drop lightweight packages. Some drones carry explosives.
Interaction: Food delivery, feather delivery, simple security, construction.
Use: Drones that are guarding an area might need to be avoided. Hacking into a drone is something that a PC with the right abilities might be able to do.
Loot: A downed drone might have some electronic parts worth salvaging.
GM Intrusion: A drone destroyed by a melee attack falls to the ground and starts to tick ominously. *Boom!* The PC and all others within immediate range take 6 points of damage as the drone explodes in a blast of sparks and shrapnel.

FERAL ROBODOG 5 (15)

Feral robodogs often live in small packs in the less populous areas of Manchester, near the City Wall, and even outside it. They are driven by a combination of canine and robo instinct, which drives them to reproduce and scavenge for resources in order to survive. Thanks to the complexities of their robo nature, the nests they build can be very elaborate, sometimes including automated pup-care functions, blurbfly slave module for intuitive perimeter security and a host of unique contraptions. Every nest is different and reflects the identity of the pack or individual who built it.

While some feral robodogs may be more hostile towards interlopers than others, they are extremely unlikely to be calm when approached, choosing either fight or flight, depending on the situation. While robodogs in society range in size from five-pound ankle biters to tank-like monstrosities, most ferals are the survivors of many might-makes-right encounters. Therefore, when encountering a lone feral robodog that is out hunting for food or nesting hardware, one should be extremely cautious.

Motive: Protecting its pups or pack, expanding the nest
Environment: Real world
Health: 15
Damage Inflicted: 5 points
Armor: 1
Movement: Short
Combat: The feral robodog attacks with powerful jaws or built in weapons.
Interaction: Feral robodogs are never friendly. They are threatened by the approach of any character and will be openly hostile and quite intimidating. If obviously outmatched, the robodog will likely try and flee. They can sometimes be placated by tossing useful electronic components, but even this won't make them safe to approach..
Use: Finding out that a pack of feral robodogs has constructed a nest in a key location can turn what would otherwise be a simple errand into a complicated encounter. Out in Limbo, feral robodogs may even stalk characters for their robo parts.
Loot: Cyphers

FERAL VURTDOG 4 (12)

This poor creature is lost and too high to find its way back to reality. From the look in its bloodshot yellow eyes, the vurtdog is likely suffering from the effects of mixing strong pharma for several days on end without stopping or sleeping. It's having trouble breathing. Mucous pours out of its nose and onto the ground as it paws at its snout. The purplish color of the dripping snot is a telltale sign of a Choke overdose, and this beast has lost its mind. Whatever it sees, it will attack.

The tentacles that surround its mouth seem to be forcing its mouth closed against its will, as if the dual nature of the creature is fighting with itself. It is in obvious pain and looks about ready to drop from exhaustion.

Motive: Aggressively reacting to anything within immediate range
Environment: Real world
Health: 10
Damage Inflicted: 5 points
Armor: 1
Movement: Short
Combat: This particular beast is already weak from drugs and lashes out at anything within immediate range, scratching and headbutting but not biting. The mouth tentacles that surround this creature's mouth encircle its jaws like a muzzle, fusing it together tightly.
Interaction: The overdosing Choked-out vurtdog growls from the shadows, ready to pounce.
Use: There are certain streets in Manchester that make the PCs wish they'd turned left instead of right. Running across a violent creature like this is llikely the reason why.
Loot: Carries d6 bags of Choke.

Choke, page 363

GM Intrusion: The yellow eyes of the feral vurtdog fade to white as it opens its mouth wide. Two newborn vurtdog pups wriggle out of its mouth and drop to the ground. Almost instantly, a mess of worm-like tentacles erupt from the backs of the tiny creatures and they scramble toward the nearest PC, crawling frantically up their legs. Each vurtdog pup inflicts 1 point of damage each turn until the PC rips them off (a difficulty 4 Might task).

FLESHCOP 3 (9)

Let's not mince words here: A career with the Manchester Police Department often appeals to private citizens who have been personally wronged in the past or have a very simple worldview. While there are some on the force who have a genuine desire to make the city a better place, most of the frontline grunts are former thugs and bullies who hide behind the badge in order to dish out hatred and revenge.

Those that show an aptitude for decision-making under pressure are usually quickly promoted to a desk job at the MPD HQ in Moston. Those left patrolling the streets are likely to take out their anger on the poor punters of Manchester.

Not all cops are bad guys, but the Manchester PD has more than its fair share of them, and the grunts of the MPD make it very difficult for those good ones who really want to make a difference. Truth is, a fleshcop is the last person most Mancs go running towards in case of an emergency, as sad as that may sound. They are a major reason that so many crimes go unreported in Manchester.

Motive: Following orders
Environment: Real world
Health: 9
Damage Inflicted: 6 points
Movement: Short
Combat: Pistols and batons are standard issue for all MPD grunts. They patrol in pairs, immediately calling for overwhelming backup in any combat situation.
Interaction: Unless you know someone in the MPD, you're more likely to get a baton over the head than any assistance. Some can be bribed, but with all the eyes in the sky, this is not an easy task.
Use: The go-to bad guys for those on the wrong side of the law. Or, you can flip the bad-cop narrative on its head and have a group of these MPD officers fight bravely alongside the PCs.
Loot: Body armor, firearms, cyphers—cops carry a lot of good loot. However, the prying eyes of a single surveillance blurb or searching inpho beam that picks up the possession of a murdered cop's gear is going to bring a world of hurt. Most people wouldn't touch a cop's gear with a ten-foot pole.
GM Intrusion: It's the cavalry! Sirens and screeching tires announce the arrival of two patrol cars, each with two more fleshcops ready to leap into the fray, guns blazing.

GANG LIEUTENANT 4 (12)

Wherever there's a group of rowdies, there's someone to lead them. A gang lieutenant is almost always tougher and scarier than their underlings—that's how they keep control of the group (though occasionally leadership can be maintained through sheer cunning). Gang lieutenants always speak for and negotiate on behalf of the group that they run with, and will be the one to decide if you need a beatdown or if you can pass unmolested.

Motive: Representing the gang and being perceived as strong
Environment: Real world
Health: 9
Damage Inflicted: 5 points
Armor: 2
Movement: Short
Modifications: Speed-based attacks as level 4.
Combat: When a gang lieutenant decides that you need to be battered, they generally stay a step back from the act and let their thugs to the kicking. They will leap into action if it looks like the fight is not going well, or if they are outnumbered. If they feel disrespected or their dominance is in question, they will lead the charge, melee weapon out and ready for action.
Interaction: To the leader of a small group of gang members, the first objective is to be a badass. That means they are the ones who call out jibes or step into your path when you're on their turf. If you step to them, they will feel obligated to put you down. In fact, it's very difficult to keep from setting them off. Their second priority is to uphold the gang's turf and directives—mugging, selling, protecting territory. So, even if you avoid lighting their fuse, be aware of the colors you're wearing, the Vurtball team you support, or if you look like you've got anything of value on you.
Use: If you're looking to beef up the challenge of a group of thugs, or introduce a lesser authority figure, the gang lieutenant is the perfect NPC.
Loot: Melee weapon, cyphers, light armor.
GM Intrusion: The gang lieutenant performs a spinning attack, stripping the weapon from the PC's hand and hurling it to the ground, where it breaks. Lighting quick, the lieutenant's elbow drives straight towards the PC's chest inflicting 4 points of damage on a failed Speed defense roll.

JOY DIVIDER 2 (6)

It's easy to see that this hovering drone is at least a decade old and not functioning properly. Electricity sparks threateningly from a number of discharge capacitors and the onboard speaker crackles with sounds that are disturbingly similar to a child's laughter.

Joy Dividers were originally simple drones designed to protect their owners from the strobe-like harassment of advertising blurbs, zapping any that come near. Eventually, they were unable to compete with the grace and maneuverability of the latest blurb models and they fell into disuse. A few still hover tragically about Manchester, but unable to fulfill their directives, they have become twitchy and dangerous. They may be seen bumping mindlessly into the walls or lunging hopelessly at passing blurbs (who evade them easily), but they can suddenly zero in on a passerby and go into full attack, mistaking the target for an unwanted advertiser.

Many people have been killed or maimed by these old drones and due to the huge number of wrongful death suits, most of the executives of the manufacturer, Most-Manc Inc. have either gone into hiding or are languishing in prison at Strangeways.

Motive: Their life or death mission is to create calm and quiet at any price
Environment: Real world.
Health: 6
Damage Inflicted: 4 points
Armor: 2
Movement: Long
Modifications: Speed-based attacks as level 4.
Combat: Shock plates emit small arcs of electricity, the joy divider's only weapon.
Interaction: I a Joy Divider is nearby, they are likely to be made violent if the PCs are not very quiet. If the group is completely still and silent, it is not guarantee the Joy Divider will not decide to attack.
Use: A passing Joy Divider can be a complication to any encounter. Also if a idle Joy Divider is hovering nearby, a tense stealth encounter may be required to pass.
Loot: Some electronic parts may be repurposed as blurbfly components.
GM Intrusion: The joy divider scans the PC carefully and recalibrates its shock plates. It's found a weakness in the PC's armor or defenses. All attacks it makes against that PC deal an additional 5 points of damage, and it will attack only this PC for the remainder of the encounter

MERCENARY 5 (15)

In the absence of a standing army, action junkies who are unwilling or unsuited for the MPD or private security forces trade their combat skills for cold, hard cash. Unless they are part of an organized unit, a mercenary will almost always run with the highest bidder. They are used sparingly by large corporations due to their lack of loyalty, but are often a necessary evil for small companies that lack the funds to employ a decent security force.

A seasoned merc is a very tough customer who can usually be hired very cheap. Just remember that you're likely to get exactly what you pay for.

Motive: Cold hard cash
Environment: Real world
Health: 15
Damage Inflicted: 7 points
Armor: 3
Movement: Short
Modifications: Resist persuasion as level 3 when cash is involved.
Combat: Most mercenaries have a firearm or two (or three) at their disposal. Others carry explosives or are stealthy assassins. Circumstances will detemine the weapons a mercenary will use.
Interaction: When negotiating a deal with a mercenary, don't be surprised if they change the terms of the deal when it suits them—sometimes when you need them most. On the other hand, this also means that you can occasionally bargain your way out of combat if you have the ready money.
Use: "This was supposed to be a simple stick-up, where'd all this muscle come from?!"
Loot: Armor, firearms, cyphers. Mercenaries often have a lot of good loot on them.

PLAGUE POET 3 (9)

This isn't your typical Manc ruffian gang, mate. Behold the beatboxing scallies who wear old plague doctor masks, spitting rhymes and corrosive acid. They wear their matching hoods and faded leatherwear proudly as they wander the streets looking for victims to batter and rob. Plague Poets respect no one, except the person that can beatbox or flow. That doesn't mean they won't roll them afterwards.

Despite being a rude, worthless bunch of ginnel-rats, Plague Poets are master wordsmiths, and many of the most popular lyrics and sonic jingles are inspired by the multilayered rhymes they recite.

Motive: Doing violence, crafting rhymes
Environment: Real world
Health: 9
Damage Inflicted: 4
Movement: Short
Modifications: Mask attacks of corrosive acid are possible once an encounter, and inflict an additional 4 points of damage.
Combat: Most Plague Poets carry melee weapons and wander in groups of four or five. Very rarely, one might have a firearm. They can spit out a stream of corrosive acid from their plague doctor masks once per encounter, usually immediately following an aggressive and rhyming staccato of words.
Interaction: When a group of Poets spots you, they approach like a pack of psychotic, rapping wolves, slow and threatening. They won't be reasoned with or backed down. You can draw your weapons and prepare to throw down, make a run for it, or step to and spit some rhymes of your own. If you're good enough to earn their respect, you might just avoid getting battered. No guaratees though.
Use: Taking a wrong turn in Manchester might lead the PCs into Plague Poet territory.
Loot: Melee weapons, vials of corrosive acid and drug cyphers.Exclusive sonic jingles based on the best compositions the day are not unommon and may be valueable (moderately priced to expensive) if marketed to a record company.

RABID DOGSHADOW 4 (12)

This particular creature is rabid, no doubt about it. The slippery white foam that slavers from this dogshadow's massive jaws is tinged with blood. It's been fighting recently, and fresh wounds cover its snout and front legs. Slight wisps of Shadow smoke drift up out of its nostrils. It is vicious and ravening—suffering from the effects of a specific type of rabies that only affects dogshadows. There is no cure, all cases are terminal.

It no longer remembers its name, or anything about its life before the rabies took over. The brain damage sustained up to this point make normal communication impossible.

Motive: Finding a place to die, lashing out at threats
Environment: Real world
Health: 12
Damage Inflicted: 4 points
Armor: 1
Movement: Short
Modifications: Mental attack actions as level 5
Combat: Each time the rabid dogshadow makes a melee attack it also pours its Shadow into the mind of its target, inflicting 2 points of Intellect damage on a failed Intellect defense roll. If the rabid dogshadow becomes injured it will cloak itself in a dense fog using its Shadow, which remains for the rest of the encounter. It can see normally inside this fog, but for anyone else within immediate range, visibility is the same as in very dim light.
Interaction: This creature will go into full attack if approached by anyone or anything. However as long as the PCs are not within long range, or are outside the creature's line of sight, the rabid dogshadow will have no interest in them and will just wander, searching for food and attacking anything that comes near. Sometimes a rabid dogshadow will simply stand in one place, wavering, waiting for something to blunder into its line of sight.
Use: This creature is a great way to make a party reconsider taking this particular alleyway.
GM Intrusion: The rabid dogshadow launches into the PC, bowling them over and making three consecutive attacks as part of a single action.

ROBOMAN ADMIN 4 (12)

This character's oversized streetwear covers the thin frame of a Jammer addict. Bright LEDs light up a Vurtball team insignia on the back of their jacket, the latest from a bluer-than-blue Man City or red-blooded Man United fan. On their shoulder flutter two blurbflies, brand new MechanInsect models that have clearly been weaponized. MechanInsect control goggles come out and the two bugs fly straight up, out of sight. This is no ordinary hooligan scally, this is an admin!

Controlling two blurbflies allows this roboman admin to keep enemies busy as they (or someone else) take care of business from long range. If the fight ends up turning into close-quarters, this admin is armed with brass knuckles and a pocketful of Jammers. This badass grinds what's left of its metal teeth, muttering to itself as it controls the blurbflies that make life hell for anyone in their sights.

Motive: Money, gang-related contract work
Environment: Real world
Health: 12
Damage Inflicted: 4 points
Movement: Short
Modifications: Both blurbflies are level 2 MechanInsect models with sonic jingles.
Combat: Thanks to advanced programming, the blurbflies automatically attack which ever PCs are the greatest threat to the admin. The admin attacks with a light melee weapon, or possibly one or two shots from an antique light pistol. They will usually attempt to flee if injured or fighting alone.
Interaction: If a PC is wearing Vurtball gear, this character may be hostile, repping the opposing team with a vengeance. They are also commonly hired by local gangs as long range backup.
Use: This type of admin-for-hire is relatively common, either for the PCs to hire or for the PCs to battle. And this particular bloke is a drugged-up Vurtball hooligan to boot.
Loot: Random cyphers or blurbfly parts might be salvaged.
GM Intrusion: The roboman's blurbfly flutters back to its master and lands on their outstretched hand to pick up a small metallic spherical device illuminated with blue, holographic equations. The roboman admin dives for cover. As the blurbfly flies swiftly towards the PC, it's clear that it has a mathemagickal device in its small grip. The next solid, nonliving object that touches the device will begin to hum with energy, the crescendo ending in the object's explosion at the beginning of the admin's next turn—an area attack that inflicts 10 points of damage to anyone within short range.

RUFFIAN 3 (9)

Don't underestimate the power of a group of disenfranchised individuals with access to weapons and no sense of honor. Hate groups are everywhere, and often funded and equipped by nefarious local businesspeople who have no qualms about arming the worst arseholes to do their dirty work.

Many sell illegal drugs and feathers, and some work in the Vurt-being trafficking industry. Turn your back on a ruffian and you're likely to get pig-stuck. Their turf and bravado are all they have.

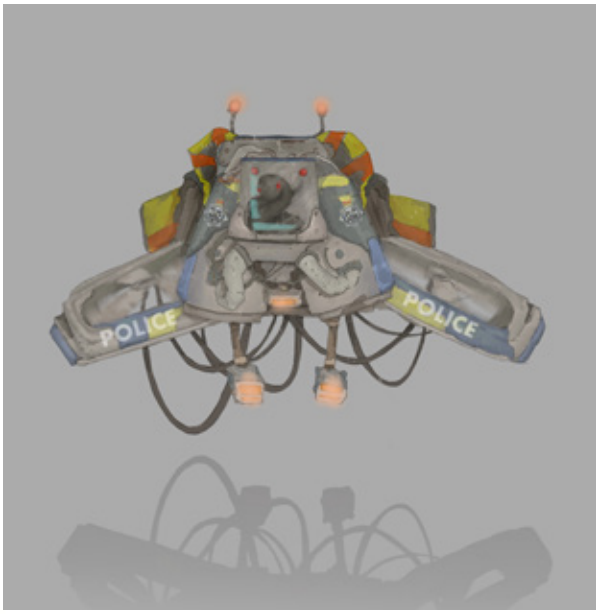
Motive: Territoriality, delusions of grandeur
Environment: Real world
Health: 9
Damage Inflicted: 4 points
Movement: Short
Combat: Ruffians mostly travel in small groups of three or four, with more small groups right around the corner ready to jump into the fight. They rarely have access to firearms, but most carry brass knuckles, cricket bats, knives, or other small instruments of destruction. They are not known for their bravery, but they *are* known for their small-minded territoriality. The longer you spend fighting a small group of ruffians, the more likely it is that their buddies will show up and overwhelm you.
Interaction: Ruffians always travel in groups and have some reason to be hostile to the group—because they don't like the mode of being of one of the PCs or maybe just to make a buck. They're often peddling contraband, but buying anything from a ruffian is not a wise move. You never know if the Choke, Fetish, or illegal Vurt feather they are selling isn't bootlegged or laced.
Use: Ruffians are the perfect enemy to fill out a combat encounter. A number of these characters are great backup for a tougher enemy and might be a part of any gang or mode of being that the encounter requires.
Loot: Random cyphers, melee weapons
GM Intrusion: Seven more ruffians from the same group/gang show up smiling, holding cricket bats and bandy sticks, fresh for the fight. If the PC can quickly find an escape route, the ruffians may let them run away in shame, shouting insults that affect the PCs' pride on a deep level. The insults are pretty strongly worded; therapy might be required.

SHADOWBOX 2 (6)

These flying roboshads are mounted with a glass tank that imprisons a dreamsnake. Submerged in Shadow, the dreamsnake is parasitized, it's Vurt nature fueling the shadowbox in some unknown way. (It is a matter of debate whether this fact makes shadowboxes not actual roboshads but roboshadowvurts.)

Shadowboxes are deputized support agents of the MPD and are usually a part of any police patrol or check point. Each is equipped with an inpho beam module which is both a scanner and a beam weapon when the energy is dialed up. They also patrol solo, inpho beaming everyone they see and relaying the inpho to the nearest police precinct for evaluation and storage. Technically, they aren't supposed to use inpho beams indiscriminately, but they do. If you see those orange beams scanning the crowd, you best bet is to run. Though they are not considered full officers, shadowboxes are an official part of the constabulary and an attack against them is a capital offense.

Motive: Following orders, coordinating attacks
Environment: Real world
Health: 8
Damage Inflicted: 3 points
Armor: 2
Movement: Short



Modifications: Speed defense as level 4 due to its speed and maneuverability.
Combat: Direct combat is rare, but they are protected by an electric shield. Their inpho beam can be dialed up to full power and used as a weapon that sears targets with incredible heat.
Interaction: Shadowboxes are always suspicious, scanning everyone and relaying the inpho to the nearest precinct. They do have a bit of trouble sensing Shadow-smoke, even though it is part of their roboshad makeup, which gives a PC who is pure or part shadow an asset when evading inpho beams. They're usually fairly intelligent and take their duties very seriously.
Use: Just when you thought you'd outrun those cops and made it to safety, the buzzing sound of the shadowbox's rotors and the orange flash of the Inpho-Beams appear.
Loot: A shadowbox is made of advanced electronics, and has a living dreamsnake encased in Shadow-smoke at its center, so much can be removed, modified and repurposed with the right expert know-how.
GM Intrusion: The orange inpho beams are dialed up to such a high level that for the next round anything they contact lights on fire, including the PCs armor or clothing!

ON SHADOWBOXES...

Shadowcops were everywhere. Most pubs had one, broadcasting from above the Vurt-box, shining inpho all over undesirables. Those inphobeams could match a face up to the Cop Banks in half a nanosec.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

SHADOWCOP 5 (15)

The shadowcop division of the Manchester Police Department has been around for over 30 years now, created by the King of Serpents and former chief of police, Takshaka. These officers are all at least part Shadow, fiercely loyal to their precinct commander and much better equipped than their fleshcop counterparts. Shadowcops have the best weapons, vehicles, and tech at their disposal, and bend or break departmental regulations whenever the feel the need. When things get really nasty out there—when the MPD need to show force to maintain order—they send in the shadowcops.

Shadowcops are well-armored grunts who live for the opportunity to rough up some civvies. Technically, the shadowcop division of the MPD has the same jurisdiction as the other divisions, but everyone knows where the real power lies. They may not have their patron dragon chief around anymore, but there are no signs that their hold on power within the ranks of the Manchester PD is in jeopardy.

Motive: Following orders
Environment: Real world
Health: 15
Damage Inflicted: 8 points
Armor: 2
Movement: Short
Modifications: Some grunts use fractal ammo, which adds to the damage considerably.
Combat: Billy clubs, pistols, and rifles are standard issue for all MPD grunts.
Interaction: Unless you know someone in the shadowcop division of the MPD, don't expect any assistance from these guys. If you see more than one shadowcop in the same place, that means that something big is going down; bloodshed and very heavy weaponry is likely in the forecast.
Use: Whether the PCs are private citizens or non-shadowcop MPD fleshcops, no one trusts the shadowcops, and the grunts are always the loudest assholes in any room.
Loot: Weapons and ammo, bulletproof vest, the occasional cypher and fractal bullet.
GM Intrusion: The shadowcop pours its shadow into the PC, assaulting their mind with a brutal shadowfuck. The PC must succeed at a mental defense roll or become completely immobilized, screaming and holding their head in their hands. The attack inflicts 6 points of damage and is sustained, inflicting damage and immobilizing the target each round until a successful mental defense roll is performed.

SHADOWGOTH RUFFIAN 4 (12)

Gangs like the Bottle Town Torchers are the epitome of shadowgoth chic. For this type of ruffian, looking good is more important than almost anything else. If they can't do it with shadowgoth style, they see no reason to do it. When pushed to defend themselves, all bets are off, and survival becomes the focus.

Clad in dark clothing, most of the shadowgoths are either shadowman, dogshadow, roboshad or pure Shadow. There are many shadowgoth gangs in Manchester, all with varying ideologies and goals. Some have adopted the cool mod style, getting around the city on Vespas, wearing porkpie hats and skinny ties. Others embrace the classic goth: black lace and leather, obnoxious eyeliner, and nine inch nail-bats. But the one thing that really binds them as a group is their use of Shadow powers. Almost every shadowgoth ruffian is able to use their Shadow powers in a fight. And they will.

Motive: Territorialism, showing off
Environment: Real world
Health: 12
Damage Inflicted: 4 points
Armor: 1
Movement: Short
Modifications: They have access to all the tier 1 and tier 2 Shadow power abilities.
Unarmed non-Shadow-powered attacks only do only 2 points of damage.
Combat: Often wandering in groups of two or three, most shadowgoths carry switchblades or brass knuckles. They also have access to (tier 1 and tier 2) Shadow powers.
Interaction: Roaming shadowgoth gangs are common in many parts of Manchester. While they will eagerly fight any mode of being, they might be more willing to listen to PCs with Shadow genetics.
Use: Another opportunity to bring Shadow powers into a street fight.
Loot: Melee weapons, drug-related cyphers
GM Intrusion: The shadowgoth starts the low humming that often precedes the release of some wicked Shadow power. Dark plumes of Shadow smoke pour out of the shadowgoth's eyes, nose and ears, creating a smoke cloud that obscures an area extending to short range. For 4 rounds, any character inside smoke must perform tasks as if they were in very dim light.

TETHRA MECH 8 (24)

Without a doubt the most terrifying piece of urban combat equipment in existence, the Tethra mech suit is deployed when maximum firepower and mobility is called for. It is capable of easily dismantling light armor vehicles using its pair of linked 12.7mm guns, can stomp through a 12-inch concrete barricade, and maneuver in any direction without taking its sights off of a target. Under the control of a skilled mech suit driver, a single Tethra mech has been known to quell an armed riot while sustaining negligible damage.

These behemoths are only used by the most powerful megacorps to protect their critical assets and corporate power structure, or by the Manchester Police Department to suppress armed revolt.

Motive: Devastation of opposing force
Environment: Real world
Health: 150
Damage Inflicted: 24
Armor: 20
Movement: Short

Modifications: Defends as a level 4 due to its size.

Combat: Will attack targets within long range with twin 12.7mm guns. For enemies within immediate range, it will use kicking and stomping attacks, inflicting 50 points of damage to enemies directly in front of it, and 20 points of damage if the target is to the side or flank. If all targets are behind cover, the Tethra will move to and destroy the cover by kicking or barging through it.

Interaction: Interaction with the driver depends on the situation. But, generally, when a Tethra mech suit is deployed, the opportunity for peaceful negotiation has passed.

Use: Tethra mech suits protect locations which are essentially impossible to penetrate, or are deployed to put an end to large, conspicuous combat operations which are not sanctioned by the Manchester City Council.

Loot: Steel. Lots and lots of steel.

GM Intrusion: The Tethra lowers itself into a forward posture and launches a barrage of gas canisters which explode, filling the area with tear gas up to long range. Any characters that breathe are affected by the gas for 30 minutes, or until counteracted. Increase the difficulty of all tasks by two steps.

THUG 4 (12)

A thug is a special breed of street punk. On the chaotic streets of Manchester, there are some that not only survive, but thrive. Some find protection in criminal groups, learning how to take advantage of others and refine their combat skills by practicing on the weak. Every neighborhood has at least a handful of these brutes. Unlike ruffians or other lower level criminals, thugs walk the streets like roosters, proudly conspicuous, begging for attention. They are known for their juvenile stupidity and willingness to jump into any fight. Turf and territory are important, many thugs act as the muscle in local gangs.

Fighting is what a thug does best. This is the only area where they shine in life, and their reputation is often the reason that thugs don't back out of fights. A thug sticks around until the last punch is thrown; being thought of as a coward is the worst thing imaginable. Most will even brazenly badmouth the MPD patrols that pass in front of their corners and stash pads. A thug don't give a fuck.

Motive: Territorialism, a massive inferiority complex

Environment: Real world

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Combat: Thugs mostly travel in small groups of like-minded badasses. Few have access to firearms, but most carry brass knuckles, bats, and blades. Most wear street armor of some sort.

Interaction: Thugs stick to their neighborhoods, harass outsiders, and pick fights.

Use: Sometimes as the PCs finish a bloody battle with ruffians or other street punks, they turn around to find that they're faced with a thug or two. Or three.

Loot: Melee weapons, drug-related cyphers

GM Intrusion: Thugs like this are the worst. The PC only hears a slight flicking sound and then looks down to see that a throwing knife sticking out of their leg. The PC takes 5 points of damage and the thug pulls out another throwing knife, and lets another fly at the same leg. Dodging this quick follow-up attack is a level 6 Speed-based task for the PC, or they'll take another 5 points of damage. Until the leg is properly tended to, anything that involves walking or running will be nearly impossible.

ZOMBIE THUG 5 (15)

There is a good reason why the citizens of Manchester are scared to death of U-type shadowmen thugs and refuse to allow them inside the City Wall. It is technically illegal to discriminate against them, and recent political movements and organizations fight for equal rights and inclusion. Strides are made every day. But all it takes is one deadly raid from a gang of seven-foot-tall nightmarish brutes who look like the living dead and it's back to square one.

These fearless zombie thugs give honorable U-types a bad name, and honestly could care less. The rest of the Real world seems to hate them, and can barely stand to look at their rotting skin and other deformities. Pushed out of society, often living in the Limbo area outside the City Wall, these terrifying badasses stick together and patrol their lawless areas with ferocity.

Miskel, page 165

Motive: They often deal in valuable miskel, bootleg feathers and other equipment that isn't easily obtainable in Manchester.

Environment: Real world

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 3
Movement: Short
Modifications: Shadow-power attacks and other mental attacks due to their shadowman genetics; intimidation defense as level 6.
Combat: Most U-type thugs travel in small groups of three or four, have large weapons prominently displayed, and wear bulky armor under their black leather jackets. Some have trained their Shadow powered mental attacks extensively and can drop a weak punk from across the room without even lifting their weapons.
Interaction: Since most U-type shadowmen live and work outside the City Wall, they don't need to follow the same societal rules. They don't have to hide their armor or weapons, and treat all non-U-types as the enemy. They often have a hard time getting their hands on certain items , so perhaps you have something from inside Manchetser they might want to exchange for services.
Use: There are few things more terrifying than a raiding gang of what many call "killer zombies."
Loot: Large rifles, ammo, cyphers, body armor
GM Intrusion: When the PC hits the zombie thug with a melee weapon, it grabs it with its massive hand and yanks it from the PC's grip, tossing it several feet away.

REAL WORLD NPCS

AUTO-MATT

This git deals feathers out of the back of the White Bull. The bartender, Posh Aiden tolerates his presence (and his kickbacks), as long as he doesn't cause trouble or draw too much attention to himself. Auto-Matt gets his stock from various sources, but he has a special arrangement with a mid-level figure in feather production, Mikey Kowsar, who himself has a direct line to a few unique feathers. This roboman dealer can swing open a panel that covers a secret compartment built into his chest. This allows him to store a decent supply of feathers and a derringer pistol without fear of discovery during a standard police frisk. This makes him more likely to call the cops if a feather deal goes sour, as he can generally expect to walk away scot-free. He is a business roboman, not a fighter.

Auto-Matt: *level 3; health 9; Armor 2 from light dermal plating; attacks with .32 caliber derringer pistol (2 shots, light damage) but will flee any combat if possible. Quick to call the police.*

BELLA SAINTALIA

This featherhead appears pure human, but her eyes glow yellow in certain light. The Vurt portion of her nature has often allowed her to slip outside the normal boundaries of scripted dreams, though she has no control over when or how it happens. This ability has allowed her at least one fantastic discovery: an ancient well in Vurtchester, full of discarded, unfinished, and faulty feathers. She has managed to consistently find her way back to this place, hooked on watching the forgotten scraps of failed dreams float at the bottom the Vurtchester feather-well. Back in the real world, this experience is a valuable commodity for dreamweavers and feather hackers, always on the lookout for forgotten dream fragments from which to cobble new feather stories. Bella won't willingly give up directions to the well, but she may accompany a traveler there, for a hefty price.

BIG DADDY K9

Big Daddy K9, smooth king of the three-piece pinstripe zoot suits and matching wide-brimmed hat. Jeweled scepters and velvet capes. A diamond-encrusted pocketwatch reportedly worth 10 million quid. This is the self-proclaimed "Yankee King of Bling" has made Manchester his home for almost 20 years now.

He has gotten progressively "artsy" and is starting to confuse and alienate his audience. His new music still tops the charts, but it has gone from regular music to what might only be described as performance art. He spends most of his time with Patron, a fellow artistic dog-star musician, also a very odd dogman.

The recent violence between fans of Big Daddy and C.L. Dachshund is reaching a very dangerous level. Both sides are guilty of influencing their fans through powerful sonically-augmented music, perpetuating the violence with each new bestselling hit.

Big Daddy K9: *level 4; health 12; Armor 2 from anti-stab vest under clothes; inflicts 4 points of damage with a sword cane, or with a straight razor he keeps tucked into his boot, though he usually lets his bodyguards do the fighting. His bodyguards are 2-4 large dogmen, (level 4) wield light machine pistols capable of* burst fire.

Burst fire, page 147

BUB

Bub is a U-type shadowman, but don't call him a zombie. Bub lives in Limbo managing Chaladh, a commune where a few dozen U-types live in mutual support without the corrupting influence of Boomer or the various other drugs that allow some U-types to descend into a zombie stupor. He is an activist for U-type rights, advocating for their acceptance in mainstream Mancunian society. He is a founding member of the Justice For U-types (J4U) political action organization. He is also a blurbfly admin, using his blurbs to both gather and disseminate information for the cause.

Bub: *level 4; health 12; Armor 2 from anti-stab vest under clothes; inflicts 4 points of damage with a cudgel, usually followed by his favorite blurb "Wizer" (Coleopter with video & cypher pod modules), and often one other. Can use tier 1 and 2 Shadow powers at GM's discretion.*

BYRON SHANKS JR.

Byron Shanks Jr. (level 3) is a well-known *wunderkind* dreamweaver, the namesake son of the legendary Vurt feather director. While Junior's work is more based in realism, he does share some similarities with his famous father. Some say that his early feathers were too advanced to have been crafted without outside help; regardless, they sold like crazy. His most popular feather is *Pink Guzzler*, a Game Cat magazine top pick that's definitely not meant for the whole family.

BYRON SHANKS SR.

Byron Shanks (level 6) is a legendary dreamweaver and Vurt director. Some of the most popular feathers have been Byron's creations. His latest, a Blue adventure called *Fireman 1666* is a current best-seller, already on its fourth printing. No one mixes in the absurd so deftly into feather trips; he has been called the "Fellini of Feathers" on more than one occasion.

CERBERUS REX

Cerberus Rex is a dogman, current leader of Rover's Rude Boys. "Cerberus" was not the name he was born with—he earned the name after a particularly nasty gang battle in which he managed to fight off three OG Brits simultaneously, as if he had three heads, each one snapping at a different thug. His ability to multitask and keep his cool have earned him a lot of respect amongst the Rude Boys, even if he does get a bit mental once in awhile. A cool customer while his temper holds, but once it breaks, Cerberus is off the leash.

OG Brits, page 194

Cerberus Rex: *level 3; Armor 2; inflicts 4 points of damage with an antique .25 caliber pistol (only 3 bullets), or 4 points of damage with a knife*

CHARLES LUTWIDGE DACHSHUND

There is a story told about a young Scallywagger who made fun of C.L. Dachshund's short arms and legs. The young punk was found by the cops the next day in a bathtub full of ice, his arms and legs removed and reattached at half their original length. Urban legend or not, it illustrates just what people think about this fearless dogga music star. *Little Charlie dog-son, real-life big dog—believe the bark, expect the bite.*

Right after the big Das/Dingo split, Das Uberdog was looking for a new protégé and took the young C.L. Dachshund under his wing. With Das producing, C.L. Dachshund went from zero to hero and very quickly made the DUI label one of the most valuable corporations in the real world.

Recently, C.L.'s beef with Big Daddy K9 has reached a level of violence that even the MPD can no longer ignore. Now people are dying, killing each other in the streets over their musical preferences. Fans of C.L. Dachshund are regularly influenced by his amazing dogga music and look for fights with anyone who doesn't agree that he is the greatest dog star of all time. His crazed fans call themselves "Rabids."

Charles Lutdwidge Dachshund: *level 4; health 12; inflicts 4 points of damage with bite or improvised melee weapon. Will not back down from a fight. Will not call his bodyguards, but they will intervene on his behalf: 2-4 large, level 4 dogmen who inflict 4 points of damage with machine pistols capable of burst fire.*

CHER PHONER

Cher Phoner is a legendary musician and sound designer whose creations have been the soundtrack to many of Chimera Corps bestselling feathers for over 30 years. Her exclusive contract with Chimera Corp is rumored to be one of the most generous in company history. The famous soundtracks to many of the real world's favorite feathers were written by Cher Phoner, and her style still has a major impact on the current generation. No one can mix brass and vinyl like her—no one.

CONSTABLE ALAN USHER

Constable Alan Usher is a new addition to the MPD. Only 22 years old, and in his first year as a copper, he's learning that policing is a tough job. Still, he's damn good at it, capable of investigating and solving crime all the while getting on well with characters on the street. Residents on his beat have called him "the only good copper in Manchester," but Alan is quick to inform them that there are lots of caring constables on the force. He backs up his formal education (Salford Uni) with Geordie street-smarts—he is honest but not naive and knows there are shades of grey when it comes to working the streets. He will on occasion let some information slip regarding a crime, or even vouch for a PC to his superiors, but only if he is confident they have the best interest of the community in mind.

When he is not on duty he can often be found partying and dancing with friends at one of the many gay clubs in the Village, or sharing a feather-fuck with a friend at a Pink Shimmy-Plex. He is also a keen sportsman, playing five-a-side Vurty with the Rusholme MPD station team. He faithfully follows the Newcastle United Vurtball club, who haven't won a major match in years. With no proverbial dog in the fight, this keeps Usher far from the United vs. City hatred. He currently shares a stash pad with roommates but wants to get a place where he can relax with the real love of his life, his cat Orinoco.

Constable Alan Usher: *level 4; health 15; inflicts 4 points of damage with light flame pistol (ignores 2 points of Armor) but will only use it in life-or-death situations, favoring non-lethal, hands-on policing.*

ROYAL CITY COUNCIL OF MANCHESTER

DEPARTMENT OF MODAL RESOURCES

Recommendation for Promotion

Complete a separate request form for each department/class requested
See page two of this form for excepts from the Civil Service Rules regarding transfers

Type of Transfer Requested:

- ☐ Regular promotion
- ☑ Promotion based on merit
- ☐ Promotion to clerical
- ☐ Early retirement

SECTION I: Employee Information

Employee Name: Usher, Alan
Title / Department: Manchester Police Department – Rusholme Precinct
Recommending Supervisor Name: Assistant Chief Constable Edward Sumas
Signature: Edward M. Sumas

SECTION II: Transfer Information

Immediate Limited Term Transfer From: Patrol to Criminal Investigations Department
Requested Class # / Title: Detective Constable
Requested Department: Manchester Police Department – Rusholme Precinct
Comments: Constable Usher has shown a gift for getting on with Manchester folk of all ilk. Currently based in the Rusholme district, his regular beat is North Rush, the centerpoint of an expanding gang war between the Torchers and the OG Brits from the neighboring district of Bottletown. Usher has shown incredible restraint and professionalism throughout his probationary period.
In his first week on the force, constable Usher played an active roll in apprehending a key suspect during the raid of a black feather production facility, and the rescue of a young woman who fled the scene. His quick thinking and instincts are indicative of natural police.
Personal details– Usher is a good copper with a clear sense of justice. He knows the laws, follows them, and expects the public and his colleagues to do the same. He is known around the station as a bit of a boy scout, which has isolated him somewhat. He was recently offered a higher-paying position at the Manchester PD main office HQ in Moston, but refused, stating that he "preferred to be out on the beat helping people."
Recommendations: - Promotion to Trainee Detective Constable (TDC), admission into the two year Initial Crime Investigators' Development Programme with the intent to become a full-fledged Detective Constable.

SECTION III: Approvals

Appointing Officer / Designee Name / Title:
Dawn Murphy, Deputy Chief Inspector Signature: Dawn Murphy

OFFICIAL FORM #: 28402KS-93☐850SK-I99☐-29☐01001

CURLY JANE

A gifted shadowgirl engimologist, hacker, and circuit-bender, extremely adept at blurbfly modification and creation. As a child, her fontanelle did not fuse, and as a result, she constantly has a curly wisp of Shadow smoke streaming from the top of her head. This is the origin of her nickname, "Curly Jane." It was also the origin of the nickname "Chimney," but repeat that nickname in her presence and she'll lay you out cold. She is responsible for one or two of Dino's custom-built blurbs.

Engimologist, page 68

Curly Jane: *level 6; inflicts 3 points of damage with a stun stick, that also increases the difficulty of the target's Speed-based tasks in the next round, on a successful hit. Jane prefers to stun and run, if possible, using her blurbs to cover her escape (she always travels with a swarm of three customized blurbs). Though the individual blurbs that make up the swarm change constantly, there is always at least one that is armed with a poison-filled stinger or heavier (illegal) armament. She is an expert at electronics, blurbfly hacking and crafting and may assist friendly characters in related tasks during cooperative actions.*

Cooperative actions, page 150

DAISY LOVE

Daisy Love is the famous pure human CEO of MechanInsect, one of the largest megacorps in the real world. Until last year she was unknown, hired as the CEO without ever having held a corporate position before. Her first year at the helm has shown insane growth, effectively shutting up all the naysayers by proving her business savvy. The company has never been so boldly innovative, testing the limits of blurbfly design while making unconscionable amounts of money. Yes, there are rumors that she knows someone very powerful on the inside at the Royal Palace, perhaps a City Council member or other bureaucrat who can pull favors. Inexperienced as she is, those who have worked closely with her over the last year have nothing but good things to say about her ability to lead, broker lucrative deals with former competitors, and find brilliant solutions to longstanding issues. She is a wonder. But where did she come from, and why had no one heard about her until last year?

DORIS

No one knows exactly how old Doris is, but she is definitely older than Fecundity 10 (though she holds no modist prejudices). A pure human, self-proclaimed "hobo," she is a fixture on the early morning streets of Salford, constantly scouring the gutters and ginnels for abandoned feathers. She is unusually successful, often finding whole discarded feathers left behind, no doubt by intoxicated kids from the University. Doris may seem daft and harmless, but she constantly keeps her eyes and ears open: it's amazing what one can witness when the world decides it's not worth hiding from you.

Doris is a prime source for a juicy rumor or little-known street inpho, just as long as you've got a nice bit of feather in exchange. She lives in a registered hole, but she's more likely to be found on the streets.

Registered holes, page 108

DAS UBERDOG

The Top Dog. Mega-rich and uber-famous, Das Uber has survived and thrived in the music industry as it evolved over the last 30 years, always at the top of the heap.

Das is a dogman that looks mostly dog. Bull mastiff to be exact. His signature dark fur has gone grey and his eyes are nearly useless from cataracts that he refuses to get fixed. At this point he has outlived his life expectancy by a long shot, and while he has the occasional health issue, this ornery old dogman is still kicking. Supposedly he is as physically strong as he was when he was a youngster.

He is the third-richest person in Manchester and considered royalty by many Mancunian dogmen. He diversified and started Das Uber Industries (DUI) over 20 years ago, and now corners the market on many products, from flower clocks to sonic jingles. Das Uberdog has become a veritable empire now. Pure is poor!

Das Uberdog: *level 6; constantly accompanied by 2-4 level 4 bodyguards with light melee weapons.*

DIAMOND DOUG

Whereabouts unknown. The adventures of the greatest thief in modern Mancunian history are well known. If this person was responsible for even half of what has been attributed to them, they'd likely be in the real world's top ten as far as wealth. The MPD has been looking for them for nearly 10 years, and the closer they seem to finding the true identity of this thief, the more outrageous the heists seem to get. Theories abound, but no one seem to know much. Aliases have included: Thin White Marmaduke, Miner Tom, Jareth Stardust, and Omikron Jones. Supposedly, there is filmed footage of this person, but the MPD and Royal City Council deny it. Some say he is dead, but don't listen to that shite.This legendary figure is simply planning his next job, the biggest yet, something that will once again amaze not only Manchester, but the entirety of the real world. But the biggest question remains: Who is the real Diamond Doug?

DIANA GLABRO

Diana is a vurtman, and is the current Vurt Security Officer for Gimble Inc. Her dual nature makes her at home in both the Vurt and the real world, yet she has never been fully accepted by the people of either. As a VSO, her duties take her to shadowy corners of both worlds. She is comfortable lurking in dark corners to protect the company's interests, and will not hesitate to call for aid.

Diana Glabro: *level 5; health 16; inflicts 8 points of damage with a Vorpal flame pistol (ignores 2 points of Armor). Diana also has access to various Vurt special abilities, at GM's discretion.*

DINGO TUSH

A dogman who was twice voted "Sexiest dogman in Manchester," this old hound is now showing his age and his wild lifestyle has caught up with him. Once a tall, even mixture of human and Weimaraner, the damage of 30 years of Boomer use has turned him into a pathetic public figure whose neurological problems now make performing impossible. Dingo started his career as the young musical protégé of Das Uberdog.

His skyrocketing fame was too much for him to handle and he decided to split from Das Uber Industries in an ugly, embarrassing, and public way. While he retained co-ownership of DUI, he has never again been a part of business operations. The two dog stars have not spoken to each other in over 30 years.

Das is not his only enemy. For many years, Dingo has been trading insults and threats with DJ-L-10 (see below), and even though both dogmen are old, they continue their fight. Dingo Tush's niece is the famous Lacy GoHome (see below).

Dingo Tush: *level 6; all Speed-based tasks as level 2, due to infirmity. Accompanied by 2-4 dogman bodyguards (level 4) armed with light ranged weapons. He is also accompanied at all times by a nurse.*

DINO BHOLA

Dino is a dogman, and a very well-connected admin. His blurbfly swarm of customized models (see page 114) is well known throughout the Rusholme district, and his services are almost always available—for a price. His primary motivation for working so hard is to maintain a high enough standard of living to allow him better access to his daughter Magenta, currently in the sole custody of his estranged wife. His past problems with Spook addiction and a short stint in Strangeways Prison are a big reason for his current legal issues, and he currently owes money to quite a few different people. Things aren't going so well for Dino at the moment, but he still has hope.

Dino Bhola: *level 5; Armor 2 (leather jacket); inflicts 4 points of damage with a cricket bat and uses weaponized blurbflies. Dives a Plastic Pig with upgraded suspension, fuel tuner and armored glass.*

Plastic Pig, page 122

DJ PERFUME SWORD

Everything about his upbringing suggested little Rawdge Minkle would grow up to be a legendary DJ. He got his first DJ system at age 3 and a year later, he had his first DJ set at the Embassy Club. By age 5, Rawdge had already spun all over Manchester at places like the Slithy Tove, the White Lion, the Blinded Sundial and Club Rollerchain.

Before he was 10 years old, he'd been interviewed by Gumbo YaYa and announced that his new name was DJ Perfume Sword, after his favorite Vurt feather series character of the era.

For ten to twelve hours a day, every day of the week, young DJ Perfume Sword practiced. When Dogstarrr Limbic-2 system was released, the first machine was given to him as a promotional gift from the company, and his well-known name and face became even more ubiquitous.

When the Pollen Outbreak hit and Manchester went into survival mode, quite a few of the clubs experienced a temporary but drastic drop in attendance; some DJs either gave up or moved elsewhere. That was when DJ Perfume Sword began to study music and psychology on his own, dropping out of school early to focus on his craft.

Little is known about the reclusive musical genius, now in his mid-thirties, but it's been confirmed that he spends most of his time with his (fifth) husband in his home district of Harpurhey, periodically giving impromptu shows in nearby Queen's Park or atop his penthouse apartment in the Purton estates. His most recent albums have been well received, but all have very violent anti-cop imagery and messages in the lyrics. His namesake DJ Perfume Sword feather brings in several million quid a year in revenue.

DJ-L-10

A brash and dynamic musical genius, this dogman became popular with the bestselling classic album "Where Has All the Pollen Gone." Resembling a short terrier with a glittering hairpiece, DJ-L-10 (level 4) is also one of the richest people in Manchester at this point, having sold most of his music to be used in the last 5 major advurt campaigns for Vaz International.

His live shows are massive events and often require two stadiums to be used at the same time. The public take feathers at the shows just like they do for Vurtball, but with DJ-L-10, they can feel what it's like to be in the front row of the show.

His decades-long beef with Dingo Tush is well known, and the two megastars continue to antagonize each other even in their old age. DJ-L-10 is known as one of the "Big Dogs of Manchester."

DJ-L-10's bodyguard: *level 6; health 20; armor 4; inflicts 8 points of damage with custom electronic claws in left arm, or 4 points of damage with built-in burst-fire machine pistol in his right. Is capable of using various Shadow special abilities at GMs discretion.*

DOLLY MATION

Dolly Mation is half human, half Dalmatian, clad in cowgirl fringe jackets and dreamsnakeskin red boots custom made for her long digitigrade legs. Her hair is curly and platinum blonde, and all her jewelry is Native American turquoise.

Born in Manchester, Dolly spent her childhood obsessed with American country western music. Now her signature fake accent is seen as endearing and many Mancunian fans will mimic her. She is considered Manchester's sweetheart and has been connected romantically with many other famous dog stars. Unfortunately, she is intensely anti-Shadow, anti-Vurt, and anti-robo, and seems to be getting more modist as time goes on. Dolly is one of the "Big Dogs of Manchester."

EDUARDO GUTIERREZ

Eduardo Gutierrez is the brilliant but ruthless CEO of AmériCo, the real world's largest feather importer/exporter. Many feel that his control over the corporation is too tight, but no one who works for the megacorp dares say so. That might have something to do with the fact that his closest advisor is the immortal Vurt dragon, Kukulkan. We've seen this before—when Takshaka the Kingsnake dominated the Manchester Police Department. A dark chapter in the Manchester's history.

ELLIPSISTERS

The Ellipsisters, (Dorothy, Dorothy and Dorothy) are identical Vurt-star triplets who feature in many of the most popular Blues and Pinks. Everyone loves these robodogman sisters and their clothing line sells like crazy. There is talk of a new megacorp being set up with seed money from AmériCo.

Is this the start of a new megacorp capable of taking on the Vurt feather market dominated by Chimera Corp? Is Eduardo Gutierrez, the CEO of AmériCo, involved as much as we've been told? The Ellipsisters are certainly has the business savvy, fame, and financial clout to make any new venture profitable— but would this team-up be enough to break the back of one of the most powerful megacorps in the real world?

ELISA LEBIC

Also known as Elisa Gretchen, she is the disgraced former head of the Royal Manchester Yeoman Guard and

former Manchester ambassador to Auz (formerly known as Australia). Ms. LeBic was a trusted advisor and personal friend of King Jaz for years, which makes her sudden resignation and refusal to return home even more odd. She is now the second in command for the entire continent of Auz, run by the Prime Minister in the newly built capital fortress at Ayer's Rock. It seems that the rumors were true all along—she is a Dodo, unable to take Vurt feathers. The entire continent of Auz is fervently Vurt-free, proclaiming the entire continent a safe place for Dodos to live life in peace and harmony. The sudden buildup of their military says otherwise.

F4NT4ZM

Few haven't heard of F4nt4zm, the young dogman who tried to kill the King. Once a promising dog star with a bright future ahead of them, this elegant hermaphroditic mix of human and wire-haired terrier threw it all away with an attempted assassination on King Jazir Malik during his first post-coronation party at the Palace. F4nt4zm (level 4) pulled an electro-knife on the young king and missed by an inch.

As a symbolic gesture of forgiveness, King Jaz commuted the expected life sentence in Strangeways Prison to 20 years. Now on parole, F4nt4zm has apologized publicly and is again allowed to make music and communicate with others. However, F4nt4zm is followed at all times by a swarm of blurbflies that guard and broadcast every move to the Manchester Police Department. F4nt4zm is effectively a social pariah that no music label would dare sign. Only fans who agreed with the assassination attempt still show support.

FRANK SCENARIO

The one and only. So many rumors muddy this artist's musical legacy that it's difficult to separate fact from fiction. No one can deny that this crooner's voice was what made him a household name for more than 40 years, performing regularly with other legends like Jimi Hentrails and Janus Fontaine. He was well loved and seemed to be able to do no wrong. But after the Randomino/House of Chances fiasco hit, the subsequent investigation brought into question his involvement. While no charges were ever raised against him, his reputation was shot afterwards and he has not performed live or recorded anything in the decades since.

Some conspiracy theorists have even suggested that the current octogenarian is not the original Frank Scenario, pointing out small physical differences and other spotty, unofficial evidence. Some say he was related to the late singer Adam Jagger, that they both worked directly with Mr. Millions and saw the downfall of the Randomino empire. But no evidence supports this claim, nothing solid exists to link any of them together. These same wingnuts say that this is exactly why King Jazir has assigned some of his personal Yeoman Warders to an around-the-clock security detail at the old man's home, keeping him effectively cut off from communicating with anyone.

GUMBO YAYA

In the days of the Pollen Outbreak, there was one voice of dissent that a Manc could count on. A longtime DJ, Gumbo's radio show became more and more counterculture and antiestablishment until he was finally forced to take it underground and broadcast from secret locations. He was a fierce opponent of then-Police Chief Takshaka, and spoke daily about overthrowing the MPD and surviving a growing Pollen Outbreak. Many older Mancs think of Gumbo as a hero, and still tell stories about how his show was the only thing dependable in a time when the whole world was sneezing their brains out (sometimes literally). Oh, how things have changed for Gumbo since the days of Takshaka! Gumbo sold all rights to his name and brand to Joe Crocus, a good friend of King Jaz. Selling control of the company to the billionaire made Gumbo a very rich Manc. After decades as a wanted man, he received a royal pardon from King Jaz and stopped his daily broadcast. Now Gumbo's former enemies, the MPD, have him appear in advurts for their annual fundraisers. Yes, the legendary old hippy works with the cops now. This change of position was seen as a betrayal to many, and cost him the few friends he had left.

Nowadays, old Gumbo lives a relatively quiet life in one of the most expensive apartments in the world—the top floor penthouse of the Shakespeare Luxury estates. His health is failing fast and he has no known heirs to his enormous fortune. For his upcoming 100th birthday, a large statue of the pirate DJ is being unveiled in New Centerton, near the Palace.

HERCULES SMITH

A well-known Pornovurt producer, and one of the more tragic victims of overindulgence from the early days of Vurt feathers, Hercules suffered from a serious Boomer addiction that eventually cost him everything. Overdosing hard on his third daily dose of Boomer, he fell into a coma that lasted 11 long years. Hercules has no memory of anything that happened before his coma and was left severely affected by the trauma. The former producer still makes the occasional appearance in anti-Boomer public service announcements, trembling, slurring his words and losing his train of thought. Boomer is a helluva drug, innit?

ICARUS WING

Icarus Wing is a legendary Vurt creator/director. Perhaps no one is as well known among true featherheads. His work has been described as mind-bending art and copies can go for thousands of quid on the black market. It's very difficult to make bootleg versions of Icarus Wing's feathers, as his unique crafting style makes the task nearly impossible. He is arguably the most famous dreamweaver in Manchester, although no one has seen or heard from him in some time.

JACKSON PRIESTLEY

This robodogman has been a featherhead for years. Some say for too long. He has no Vurt genetics, but the rumor is that he's slowly becoming more and more Vurt, swapping out a piece of his soul every time he takes a feather. Most people, however, don't care about the rumors—they just care about his supply. He is a very successful independant feather dealer, and his tendency towards Vurt exploration make him a much sought-after authority on specific feathers, and the Vurt in general. He usually works out of Rusholme's Club Helium, but he is known for getting around.

Jackson Priestly: *level 5; health 16; Armor 2 (dermal plating); inflicts 8 points of damage with an electronic knife which is plugged into an uplink port on his wrist, or 4 points of damage if it becomes unplugged.*

JIMI HENTRAILS

This robomanvurt musical genius supposedly found a way to swap himself into the Vurt world on his 27th birthday. Supposedly. All rights to his entire music catalogue were bought years ago by Gumbo YaYa, who then transferred them all over as part of his lucrative deal with Joe Crocus. More and more featherheads are reporting sightings of Jimi in the Vurtchester-based feathers, but there is no proof.

JOE CROCUS

Joe Crocus is the billionaire CEO of YaYa Entertainment, one of the largest megacorps in the real world. Crocus and the future king Jazir Malik knew each other in their youth; many say that this is how YaYa Entertainment was able to bypass many of the obstacles that corporations face when doing business in Manchester. Joe Crocus himself is a recluse; only his inner circle of associates has any contact with him. His recent acquisition of YaYa Entertainment has proven thus far to be an absolute failure, needing a steady stream of outside money to keep the megacorp afloat. They aren't producing anything: all money seems to be funneled into R&D. Crocus says he has a plan, but most are losing faith. All board meetings for YaYa take place in a secure feather so that Crocus can remain in his penthouse apartment in Namchester. What could he possibly be working on that is important enough to bring one of the largest megacorps to the brink of financial disaster?

JUD TAYLOR

This old boy is well past 90 years old, and has been known to tell a tale or two after a pint or seven. He has spent his life cultivating an image of wisdom and sincerity, but all his yarns are bollocks and shite, like as not. Buy the old div a pint of stout, why don't ya?

JUNIOR PIMP

The legend! He's one of the biggest-selling DJs, up there in sales with the likes of Das Uberdog and Dingo Tush. Once known as Willy Wheels, this pure human's real name is William Wheeler, raised in the MacDuff Park district of Tameside. He started pimping at age 11, joining the Parkas gang and starting his life of crime. He is currently in Strangeways prison for tax evasion, but it's a well-known fact that the MPD simply couldn't pin anything on him. After nearly 20 years inside, he's scheduled for release later this year, and his fans are ecstatic.

ON DROIDLOCKS...

They were twinned crusties, sharing the same haircut. Six feet of thick entwined hair stretched between them, and you couldn't see where one ended, and the other began. Over the years their hair had knotted, and knotted hard, until separation was an unthinkable torture. They would walk the world together, never less than six feet apart. Now there's love for you

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

KUMAR BROS.

Neil and Vaneesh Kumar are droidlocked roboman dreamweavers have a secret workshop where they craft some of the most mind-blowing feathers around. Most of the megacorps would like to hire them, but they work on a project-by-project basis, only creating what they are drawn to. Their feathers are instant classics, and hard to get your hands on. There are an enormous amount of bootleg Kumar Bros. knockoffs out there—don't waste your quid on that shite. A genuine Kumar Bros. Vurt feather is something that stays with you long after you've tasted victory and returned to the real world. Their feather trips are about deep knowledge and self-discovery; no one is able to twist myths as artistically these days.

LACEY GOHOME

One of the most talented producers around, and a fierce businessperson. Some say that she gets her abilities from her uncle, the legendary Dingo Tush.

She has just married Zef-Dog, the (in)famous musician from J-Burg. Many feel that she is being stupid and reckless, wasting her time and talent with Zef, but they don't know what she has planned. Hell, even Zef doesn't know what she has planned. Never underestimate a dogwoman like Lacey. She's always three steps ahead of everyone else.

LIVIA OKAFOR

This young featherhead has often grasped for things beyond her reach. While this has resulted in catastrophic failure more often than not, her successes in plumbing the depths of the deepest black Vurt feathers have been spectacular. Livia is a wealth of Vurt-related knowledge, and her Shadow abilities make her a useful ally when dealing with extracting information from uncooperative subjects.

Livia Okafor: *level 5; various Shadow powers, at GM's discretion*

LONG DISTANCE DAVIS

Long Distance Davis (level 7) is a pure Vurt being who is the head of King Jaz's Royal Yeoman Warders and acts as a close advisor to the King. No one seems to know where this person came from, or why they have been appointed to one of the most powerful positions in the real world. Supposedly this Vurt being looks like a floating cephalopod, uses color-changing patterns like a cuttlefish for both camouflage and communication, and is trusted implicitly by King Jaz. While few people know the truth behind this person's origin or influence, everyone knows that there is major contention between Long Distance Davis and the administration of the MPD. The fact that LDD is a pure Vurt being is also a big reason why many Mancunians are angry and losing faith in the government of King Jazir Malik.

LULA-9

A stunning 50-50 split of robo and human genetics, Lula- (level 5) 9 has been an Xcab driver for as long as they can remember. With the glowing blue Nu-X map covering a shaved head, all movement is shown in real-time. Lula-9 is also a huge United Vurtball fan, and will likely refuse to give a ride to anyone wearing Man City blue. It's their cab, their rules. Blue and white is simply not an acceptable choice of color scheme in their presence.

MADDY BOOM

Half pure dog, half pure human, Maddy Boom (level 4) is the newest dog star on the scene. Maddy is a tall, attractive gender-neutral dogman who just signed with Das Uberdog's DUI label. Not much is known about Maddy's past, but their voice is absolutely mesmerizing. So much so that some rumors are beginning to surface that suggest Maddy might have a touch of Vurt genetics. This has not been proven, but it adds to the mystique and translates directly into more sales. Maddy Boom is known as one of the "Big Dogs of Manchester."

MAEVE BLUNT

The legendary Pornovurt director who is now over 100 years old. The City of Manchester put on a massive birthday celebration in their native borough of Tameside, full of scores of Vurt-stars and DJs who've been inspired by their creations over the years. Most days, Maeve is teaching directing and feather crafting via PDF conference. It pays well and allows the old vurtman to stay at home wearing tartan slippers and a robe, sipping Fetish and smoking Haze. They earned it!

MAGENTA BHOLA

She's a young dogman street ruffian who grew up thinking her deadbeat dad didn't want anything to do with her (which actually couldn't be farther from the truth). She appears to be pure human, like her mother, but is very sensitive to specific high frequencies and loves to chase blurbflies like her absentee dogman father. One of the benefits of growing up under such adversity, however, is an innate toughness that makes her a force to be reckoned with on the mean streets of Manchester. She pays

for rent for herself and her mum by lifting wallets and conning tourists. Her potential is totally being wasted; she has the innate talents that might make her an amazing admin, but she has no money for blurbflies and no one to teach her.

Magenta Bhola: *level 3; attack and defense as level 4 when outnumbered; health 12; Armor 2 from leather jacket; inflicts 4 points of damage with a cricket bat and will never back down from a fight*

MANCHESTER TERRY

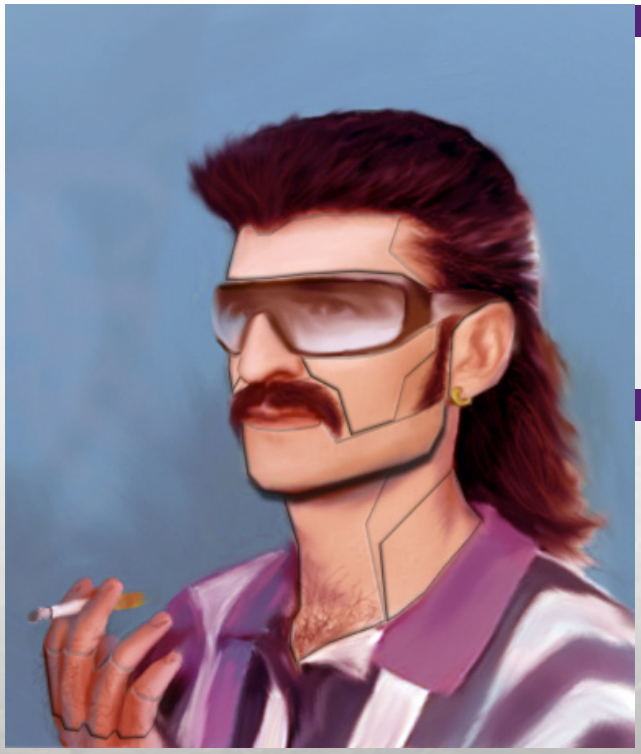
Terry's Dog heritage was obviously Manchester Terrier, as his sleek brown-and-black fur and small stature make plain. His yellow eyes also hint at a touch of Vurt heritage, though there is little else to suggest this. Terry is always exquisitely dressed, usually in an old-fashioned waistcoat and shirtsleeves. Terry is an "Independent Feather Consultant," as he will repeatedly and pretentiously insist. He has woven a few of his own dreams, but he never found the success that others have had. He has instead focused on Vurt security and interconnections, essentially working as freelance tech support for the Vurt industry. He helped Gimble Inc setup their Securivurt, but was then suddenly cut from the payroll. As such, he has a bit of an axe to grind with Gimble.

Manchester Terry: *level 5; health 15; Armor 2; inflicts 8 points of damage with a medium flame pistol. He carries the pistol in a briefcase, usually just between home and the office. He is an expert in feather hacking and Vurt security.*

MIKEY KOWSAR

Mikey is pure human; thick of face but thin of body, and almost completely bald at 25. They say only the good die young; in that case, Mikey should be around for a long time. He's not a bad guy, but is a bit of a weasel and a twat. His regular job as a Vurt-U-Want clerk allows him to keep up a network of contacts for his off-the-books sales. He also personally knows Icarus Wing, as Icarus likes to hang out in Mikey's Vurt-U-Want on Birch Hall Road, eavesdropping on people buying his legal feathers. Icarus supplies Mikey with custom-printed feathers: bootlegs of illegal dreams that he doesn't sell to Chimera Corp. This is the main reason Mikey still gets business, despite being a wanker.

Mikey Kowsar*: level 3; health 10; inflicts 4 points of damage with a retractable carpet knife, though he is more likely to run or call the police than to fight.*



MR. RABIES

Mr. Rabies is the owner of Rusholme's well-known Club Helium, this dogman earns his nickname both with this temperament and his constant production of slobbery foam. It's nearly impossible to get an audience with this Choke addict—he probably doesn't need whatever you're trying to sell. Originally from West London, this bad-arse is rumored to have connections to the deadly street gang, the 45th Generation Romans.

Mr. Rabies: *level 4, attack and defense as level 5 when cornered; Armor 2 from bulletproof vest; inflicts 4 points of damage with a switchblade and will never flee from a fight.*

NASTY DAVE

This mysterious figure hangs around big clubs and sells some of the best bootleg feathers. He supplies to the top dogs, and while his prices are steep, people pay him for it. He is a roboman with an intensely unique style and is often followed by dozens of blurbflies. No one knows his real name, even Nasty Dave himself. His signature Southern Singlish accent makes some assume he's some tough from East London, but there are some who have sworn they've heard him speaking in private with a native Mancunian accent. No one knows who Nasty Dave really is, and that's just fine by him. He works all over the city, but is said to live in the Chorlton district of Centre.

Nasty Dave: *level 4, Speed attack and defense as level 6 when cornered; inflicts 4 points of damage with brass knuckles and will flee any combat if possible.*

PABLO OGDEN

Former designer at Celeborg, the one responsible for actually developing the infamous Celeborg virus. He remains wanted by the MPD and many others. Hundreds of lives were lost and countless more affected by the virus. If he is still alive, the old man is keeping his head down and his mouth shut. He sold all his shares of Celeborg long ago, and the current board members want nothing more than to distance themselves from him and his horrible creation.

PATRON

Many consider Patron's specific dogman morphology to be the ugliest: the body of a poodle and the face of a human. But Patron embraces his oddness and creates music with lyrics that reflect what it's like to be an outsider. He was born in Barcelona but has lived in Manchester most of his life.

His most recent musical hit was a duet with Big Daddy K9, and they are planning a world tour together. Patron is known as one of the "Big Dogs of Manchester."

Patron: *level 4; Armor 4 from SpekTek body armor; inflicts 8 points of damage with matching gold-plated pistols if cornered.*

POSH AIDEN

Posh Aiden (level 3) the dogman tends the bar at the White Bull Pub. Posh Aiden is a dapper dogman, meticulously groomed and attired. However, he used to run with the Rover's Rude Boys gang, and now tries to keep himself as distant from gang activities and petty criminality as possible. His dog loyalty, however, will not allow him to easily give up information about them, especially to cops. He might be more willing to tell a fellow dog. He makes a mean mojito, but push him too far and he's as likely to muddle your face as your mint.

PRIME MINISTER "THE WIZARD"

The Prime Minister of Auz has never been photographed, and is said to be a Flake: a genetic mix of robo, Shadow, dog, and human. On the continent of Auz, he is simply known as the Prime Minister.

Everyone else in the real world has nicknamed him "The Wizard." Initially, it was just for catchy Newsvurt headlines, a weak play on words. Now, we're all finding that this mysterious and powerful figure who controls an entire continent of fanatical subjects seems much like the evil wizards from some antique fantasy book. No one outside of his inner circle has seen him, yet they all follow him. His four-way genetic split gives him unique abilities that allow him to float, to disappear, to read thoughts, and to command aspects of the weather. As he builds up the Auz Continental Army, the rest of the real world is becoming nervous. Perhaps we all underestimated the Dodos down under who worship The Wizard. The Prime Minister's hold on the people of Auz is unquestionable.

QUENTIN TARANTULA

Quentin Tarantula (level 4) is Chimera Corp's highest paid and least favorite employee. He is a feather crafter and his creations are legendary, but working with him has proven to be too much for Chimera; his spoiled, over-the-top, childish behavior has forced them to keep paying him to produce nothing. The contract states that Tarantula is required to produce at least three feathers a year, but it doesn't require Chimera to release them. It's costing the megacorp a lot of money, but they do not have to deal with his personality anymore. Reprinting his old feathers brings in enough money to cover the added cost of putting him out to pasture.

RALPHY THE ROMANCER

Unique in the dog star music world for his mix of dogga and classic punk, this dogman looks mostly human, but has a tongue that hangs out as he pants. Known almost as much for his overdosing as his talent, Ralphy is in a downward spiral and has recently disappeared. Rumors abound that he has been seen in London or Chroma, but no one has any solid leads. The entirety of Manchester is just waiting for the inevitable report that he has been found dead. Lemon Stoner, Cherry Stoner, Haze, Boomer, Choke, Jammers, Fetish: you name it, he's ingested it in large quantities.

His first solo album "Bollocksy Blues" was produced by Lacey GoHome, and the songs are used as the soundtrack for the popular Questing Beast feather series produced by Chimera Corp. Hi is known as one of the "Big Dogs of Manchester."

RED ROVER

The Albino Vizsla from Trenchtown Jamaica. He is so pale and graceful that false rumors still persist that he is a dogshadow, not a dogman. His talent for music production is unquestionable, and he is responsible for discovering

many of today's most famous dogga music stars.

He is a proponent of Haze, and is often seen wearing an old diver's helmet that is attached to a Hazer, allowing him to inhale the smoke with every breath. His current hit is called "HotBox Ya Head." He is known as one of the "Big Dogs of Manchester."

Red Rover: *level 7; usually accompanied by a large entourage of thugs and ruffians.*

REGGIE WILLIAMS

Anyone who knows Rusholme or Underworld history may also know Reggie Williams by an old nickname "The Marrowbone Jelly Dodger" for his doggy habit of constantly gnawing on a bone. The abandoned nickname is a source of embarrassment for him, reminding him not only of his previous gang affiliation, but also of his previous weight problem. He used to run with the rough-and-tumble Torchers, but is currently trying to convince a parole officer that he is going straight. He has shifted his underworld interests from violence and petty larceny to information brokerage, making his underworld experience and network of contacts available to the highest bidder.

Reggie Williams: *level 4; health 12; Armor 2 (concealed light vest); inflicts 4 points of damage with a folding knife. Competent in intelligence gathering and burglary Has many contacts.*

RUTH ROAR

A stunning mix of greyhound and human, Ruth Roar is considered by most to be the most cutting-edge of the "Big Dogs" in terms of music. Her live shows draw very diverse crowds of all modes, and her message is one of unity and anti-authoritarianism.

She is the only dog star mixing Vurt music into her songs. Some Vurt-world cultures have their own music, and Ruth Roar samples these dreamy melodies in her work. She is known as one of the "Big Dogs of Manchester."

SIMON ADDISU

The current Police Chief of Manchester. He was just promoted after yet another MPD administration scandal sent a MPD chief packing. Simon Addisu has promised to restore order to the city through community policing and involvement in charitable organizations and programs. Most say this is just a load of pure dogshit, that he is unable to empathize with the people because Addisu (a native of Liverpool) wasn't born in Manchester.

SIR THOMAS

The newest dog star to make it big. His songs are an interesting mix of dogga music and folk horror music, laced with some very intense anti-Shadowman lyrics and clear calls for violence. It is a very poorly-kept secret that Sir Thomas is actually a Shadowmandog, but he will angrily deny his Shadow genetics. He looks like a dogman, but Shadow smoke pours from his eyes when he is enraged. Sir Thomas is knows as one of the "Big Dogs of Manchester."

UNCLE MORTIMER, CHOPPER, AND DWEEZIL

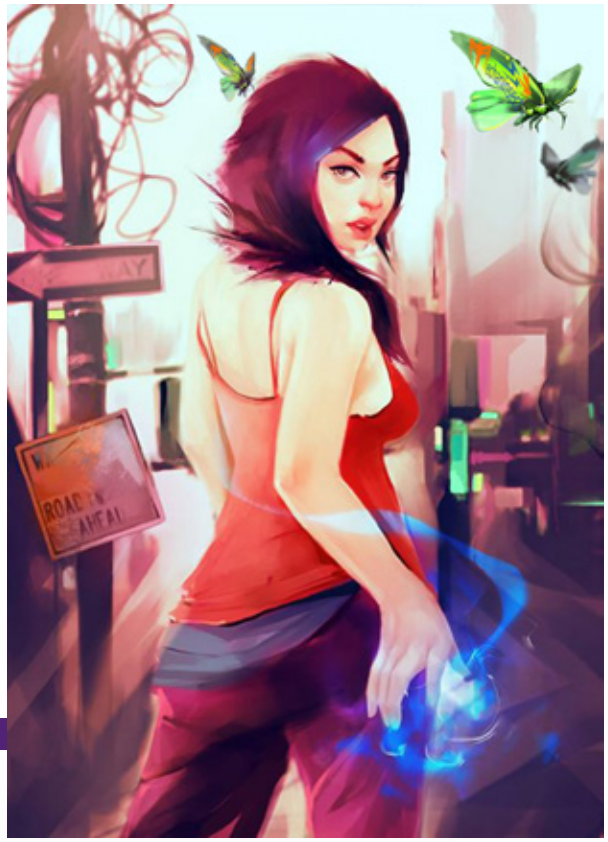
Uncle Mortimer is a pure human who runs Uncle Mortimer's Emporium in Frontier Town South (on the other side from Country Joe's). He is a giant hulking man, usually working late and sporting a leather apron and a welding helmet that looks like an old-school hockey mask. He lives in the wasteland of Limbo by choice, partially because of his distaste for the crushingly overcrowded life inside the megacity of Manchester, and partially because his obsession with post apocalyptic Vurts had made him somewhat out of touch with the real world. In addition to welding mask, he also owns a 1973 Australian Ford Falcon XB GT "V8 Interceptor." He is sympathetic to his friend Bub's cause for U-type rights, and employs several U-types in his large junkyard and shop. He also employs Chopper, a dogman, and Dweezil, a roboman admin, as assistants. He mainly services independent truckers in Limbo (most large corporate lorry companies have their own mechanics and tow vehicles). He or his assistants can fix or sell you just about anything you might need. Uncle Mortimer is genuinely helpful and sympathetic, but he's also a businessman trying to eke out a living on the fringes of the wasteland, so you shouldn't expect charity. Honest goods and repair for a fair price.

Uncle Mortimer: *level 5; health 20; Armor 2 (heavy leather apron), inflicts 8 points of damage with a pipe wrench. Highly skilled in auto repairs and general mechanics, he can assist PCs with skill checks using cooperative actions.*

Chopper: *level 4; inflicts 4 points of damage with a length of chain. Sells and uses various drug cyphers.*
Dweezil: *level 4; controls three blurbs which are usually tasked as junkyard security monitors.*

THOMAS BOUNDARYMAN JUNIOR & NORAH LI

Thomas Boundaryman Junior and his droidlock-bound lover Norah Li are living cautionary tales: examples of what can go wrong while dreaming. Sometimes, through as yet unknown mechanisms, people can become stuck halfway between dreams and the real world. They can be fully immersed in a dream, yet their bodies walk about in the real world with fleeting glimpses of lucidity flashing through here and there. These rare casualties of hard dreaming are called "dreamwalkers" or "sleepwalkers." They are both dreaming and awake simultaneously, and usually become wards of other people or the government, unable to maintain normal lives in the real world. Such people, however, are sometimes sought out for the wisdom this dual nature can impart, if they can be reached to impart it.



Norah and Thomas had each fallen into their own sleepwalking states independently, having never met before they were each half-lost to the Vurt. In a rare moment of mutual lucidity, they met and fell in love. No one knows how or why, but in this brief flash of love, their dream states somehow also merged, and they became inseparable in both worlds at once. They are currently the joint wards of a well-respected government-funded institution, as neither of their respective families are equipped to care for the pair together. The institution's use of nanite activated shampoo, Nanosham™ soon resulted in the dream-locked pair also becoming droidlocked, their hair binding them together in this world as their dreams bound them together in the other.

TIDYMAN

The infamous killer who has murdered several high-ranking MPD officers. Still very much at large, the bounty on his or her head is one million quid. Some say that Tidyman is a cop himself; others say that it's the reincarnation of the deadly serial killer, Joker Bone. Most say that Tidyman is not a man at all, but a shadowmanvurt who can bend light and make themselves invisible. The MPD are desperate to catch this cop killer, but so far have turned up nothing useful in investigations.

Tidyman: level 7; *stealth as level 8, intellect defense as level 6; Armor 4 ; inflicts 8 points of damage with a bladed weapon.*

THE LEGEND OF THE STASH RIDERS

You've heard of the Stash Riders. Everyone has at this point. Nearly 30 years ago, this motley gang of unknown featherheads started the war between the Manchester Police Department, led by Chief Takshaka, and the dogmen led by Das UberDog himself. You remember, the raid on Club Djinn that left almost a hundred dead? That all happened because the Stash Riders led the MPD to Das Uber's door. Some say that Jazir Malik, future king of Manchester, was the one who armed and supplied the dogmen, but that still has not been proven in a court of law. The Stash Riders were a low-level gang of misfits and featherheads, cruising Rusholme for illegal feathers, staying out of the MPD's way, barely surviving. The original lineup was Beetle, Scribble, Desdemona and Bridget, but after the Vurt-Swap incident, Desdemona was replaced by an unfortunate Vurt Being nicknamed TFOS (The Thing from Outer Space). Mandy joined soon thereafter, then the young street girl named Twinkle and Karli the robodog joined the ranks. Their journey to find Desdemona in the Vurt world and swap her back for TFOS did not end well. Most stories about featherheads and Jammer-junkies don't end well.

30 years later, only half of the Stash Riders are alive or accounted for, lost in the crush of time. There are also persistent rumours that Scribble is the "New Game Cat", but there is no solid evidence to support this theory. But again, what is solid evidence, really?

TINA WAVE

The first person to successfully mate two different models of blurbflies. Combining the Scoop model with a Gossip model, she created a entirely new model— the Blabbermouth. She did this at the age of 10 and was heralded by many as the next Jaz. Her sudden and unsolved disappearance is the subject of countless feathers, books and songs: "*What ever happened to Tina Wave?*"

TOM JASMINE

A legend in the feather business, Tom was one of the first Vurt-stars. While he is now in his 70s, he's never stopped working and he still appears regularly in popular Vurt series' like *Titus Polyhedronica, Oh Mistress Mine!* and *Naughty Pines*. Tom also narrates feathers and has a contract with Chimera Corp. If you've taken a Chimera feather (like Questing Beast), and heard a booming voice narrating the opening, chances are it's Tom's voice. He lives in the Shakespeare Luxury Estates and still has wild parties that last for days.

TWEEDLE-TWINS

This grotesque pair of shadowvurt twins are known by their codenames "Tweedle-Deep" and "Tweedle-Dark." Part of Gimble's Vurt Security Team, they are employed as shock-troopers by Diana Glabro, and they spend most of their time in various dark corners of the Vurt. They are particularly strange and bloodthirsty, and are not known to the general public. They rarely spend time in the real world, as their claws and teeth tend to intimidate anyone they meet. They are a pair of natural-born edge riders, able to infiltrate dreams and circumnavigate Vurt obstacles that hold back most run-of-the-mill dreamers. They also have a deadly command of their own Shadow natures, allowing them greater stealth, as well as the ability to extract information from unwilling subjects. They are a nasty pair: steer clear of them if you can.

Tweedle-Deep & Tweedle-Dark: *level 5; health 15; Armor 2 (thick hides); while in the Vurt, they can inflict 8 points of damage with their claws or 4 points with their teeth. They also have access to Shadow special abilities, at GM's discretion.*

THE STRANGE MYSTERY OF BIRD WOMAN

When she was a young girl, Vogel always hated her given name. I mean, Vogel? It sounded like some alien species off a cheap SciFi TV series, some two-bit actor in a rubber mask threatening the human race with destruction only to end up in a ball of flame by episode's end. But once she learned that the word actually means 'bird' in German, well then she was happy enough. A bird!

So can you blame her, age of twenty-two, when she stripped herself naked and stuck Vurt feathers in every bare inch of skin she could find. No, no blame. Just living out her destiny. So then, I know what you're thinking: Vogel Smith climbed to the top of the nearest high tower and throw herself off, hoping to fly? Well no, that was not her plan. But fly she did. No one knows where, but her physical body has never been seen since that night. Just a few blue and pink and black feathers floating around her bedroom. That's all. She was never seen again. Some people claimed it was a full body swap, no other explanation. But what the hell was given in return?

So there it is, a mystery. Episode's end. Just remember kids: dream responsibly.

- Jeff Noon

VOGEL SMITH

The transition of Vogel Smith is a bit of a legend amongst featherheads and edge riders. The story is that one day this intrepid (some say mad) explorer of the Vurt stripped herself naked, then proceeded to jam a feather into every square inch of her exposed skin. She was never seen again, at least, not in the real world. The legend says that she full-body-swapped herself permanently into the Vurt, but nobody understands quite how. She will never be encountered again in the real world, but she may be glimpsed in some deep feather, gliding on the updrafts along the edge of some buried, forgotten dream. A rare bird, indeed.

Vogel Smith: *level 7; health 21; Armor 2 (full-body covering of feathers); can flee or avoid combat in the Vurt by simply leaving the confines of any dream she visits, to dreams where few real world dreamers can follow.*

WHISKERS MACDUFF

A blurbfly engimologist who found a new way to develop a blurbworm that metamorphosizes into very powerful silver scarab beetle blurb. He is a reclusive and sloppy dogman who looks mostly human and lives in Harpurhey. His addiction to Cortex Jammers is off the charts, and it lands him in hospital several times a year. It's rumored that he is currently developing another strong blurb based on his Silver Scarab model. His apartment in Harpurhey is protected by one of the strongest personal security swarms. When he goes walking about, he's covered entirely in a large cloud of his own weaponized blurbfly creations. The MPD leaves him alone for some unknown reason—some say it's because he has found a way to hack a shadowbox operating system. Imagine that!

Blurbworm, page 113

WINSTON LAUBER

Dogmanvurt Vurt-U-Want clerk at the Birch Hall Road location. Sad-sack Winston is a straight shooter and kind of a stick-in-the-mud. He knows about his coworker Mikey Kowsar's illegal side work, but he wants no part of it. Winston is a lonely, dumpy dogmanvurt, and the tentacles growing from his purplish bulldog snout tend to put people off. Despite his appearances or your prejudices towards them, he is genuinely nice person. It's rumored, however, that he has been using a viewing feather to peep on some of his pink feather customers, but that's just a nasty rumor.

Viewing feather, page 368

Winston Lauber: *level 3; health 9; while in his shop, protected by security features, he acts as level 5 against intimidation.*

ZEF-DOG

Zef-Dog is a South African dogman who looks mostly human but walks on all fours. His penchant for pure dog behaviors often creates awkward social situations . He is a very, very dangerous person, and travels with his "Zef pack" of dogmen from Johannesburg. He produced his own R&B record titled "Digital Soul" which is considered unlistenable, but due to his many connections and intimidating personality, his tracks are featured prominently in many feathers.

He has just married Lacey GoHome, the famous producer and niece of the legendary Dingo Tush. Many feel that he did this just to marry into the Tush Family.

Zef-Dog: *level 6 health 25; Armor 2 from body armor, inflicts 12 points of damage with an antique, break-action shotgun (two shots).*

ZENITH O'CLOCK

Zenith O'Clock (level 5) is a Vurt-star who also is known for his feather crafting ability. He often mixes and creates the feather trips he stars in. His classics include *I, Astropop; Dubship;* and *Automated Alias*. O'Clock feathers are best known for their themes of isolation and exploration. Most of his creations are organized into record-breaking longform series. Some, including *Cooperation Street*, have been in continuous production for over 30 years. His health is failing after decades of heavy drug use, but his dedicated team of weavers ensure that his creations continue to bring joy to the good people of the real world.

THE WANDERER

The stranger had an old tattered feather, pale blue with golden flecks, which she offered for sale. Once, many centuries before, people had used such means to frolic and fight and play and love and dance and float away in their sleep. Or so her story proclaimed as the words unfolded around the camp fire. But of course, no one believed her. The stranger moved on, from village to village, hoping to find a buyer; and hoping at the same time that the feather remained in her possession forever. At each stopping point she raised the price. She imagined a future evening – soft with rain and moonlight – when the dream might be unlocked from the flights, that it might travel her tongue, her skull, her eyes, her fingers. She pictured her body set aglow, reaching out for new adventures.

- Jeff Noon

CHAPTER 20

CYPHERS

Cyphers are abilities that characters gain over the course of play. In the majority of situations these come in the form of items, but they can also be more esoteric, such as a Vurt cartographer's knowledge or a powerful mathemagickal equation. Cyphers are designed for frequent discovery and use. PCs are always finding cyphers and they are encouraged to use them at a steady pace.

In theory, cyphers discovered by the PCs are determined randomly. However, the GM can place them intentionally as well. Cyphers have useful powers that can modify the PCs abilities, help overcome obstacles, or perform special attacks. Cyphers are generally single-use items that are consumed when used. Manchester is swarming with cheaply manufactured and illegally cooked up disposable objects, and characters are always driven to consume: Buy more! Play to win!

Cyphers can sometimes be used while in the Vurt, but a character's capability to grasp the use of these real world objects and clues is limited. Therefore, the number of cyphers that can be taken into a feather is different for each character and can grow as they gain knowledge and experience.

Cyphers are found with such regularity that PCs should be encouraged to use them freely. There will always be more, and they'll have different benefits. This means that in gameplay, cyphers are less like gear or treasure and more like character abilities that the players don't choose. This leads to fun game moments where a player can say, "Well, I've got an X that might help in this situation," and X is always different. X might be an explosive device, a disposable blurbfly or a Buff Track that pounds out a deafening gene-warping soundtrack that drives the characters into a combat frenzy. Cyphers keep the game fresh and interesting.

CYPHER LIMITS

There is technically no limit to the number of cyphers that a PC can carry in the real world. However, Manchester is a place of probing eyes. Blurbflies are scanning and evaluating everyone, shadowcops are inpho beaming people, and every kind of scum imaginable is looking for an opportunity to come up in the world. If a PC is carrying cyphers that exceed the cypher limit designated on their character sheet, they are likely to draw attention to themselves.

It is up to the GM to determine when and how the characters become hassled for their abundance of loot. A group of players armed to the teeth with grenades and special combat gear is likely to draw the attention of cops, gangs, or security forces who are keeping an eye out for threats. A character with a pocket full of Vurt feathers is going to shine like a spotlight to feather-heads slouching against the walls of a Vurt-U-Want, who can smell the aroma of delectable Vurt dreams coming off of you in waves. This is not magic—it's intuition.

Where cypher limits become a hard and fast rule is in the Vurt world. Refer to Chapter 15 (page 242) for specifics.

LEMON & SALT

Danny placed a lemon in his mouth as he lay down, sprinkled salt on the edge of sleep, bit down hard on the feather. Tingle! Spark flower! Buzz bomb! Now that's serious, hardcore dreaming.

- Jeff Noon

WHY CYPHERS?

Cyphers are the heart of the Cypher System. This is because characters in this game have abilities that rarely or never change and can always be counted on—pretty much like in all games—and they have abilities that are ever-changing and inject a great deal of variability in play. They are the major reason why no Cypher System game session should ever be dull or feel just like the last session. This week your character can solve the problem by creating mathemagickal doorways in walls, but last time it was because you created an explosion that leveled half the building.

The Cypher System, then, is a game where PC abilities are fluid, with the GM and the players both having a role in their choice, their assignment, and their use. Although many things separate the game system from others, this aspect makes it truly unique, because cyphers recognize the importance and value of two things:

1. Character abilities as "treasure" makes the game fun and exciting. (In the early days of roleplaying, treasure—usually in the form of magic items found in dungeons—was really the only customization of characters that existed.) Going out into the world and having adventures results in discovering new things that help you when you go on the next adventure. This is true in many RPGs, but in the Cypher System, it's built right into the game's core.
2. Letting the GM have a hand in determining PC abilities makes the game move more smoothly. Some GMs prefer to generate cyphers randomly, but some do not. For example, giving the PCs a cypher that will allow them to fold spacetime to a distant location might be a secret adventure seed placed by a forward-thinking GM. Because the GM has an idea of where the story is going, cyphers can be used to guide the adventure down a path. Alternatively, if the GM is open to it, cyphers can be given out that enable characters to take a more proactive role (such as folding spacetime to any location they choose). Perhaps most important, the GM won't have to worry about long-term ramifications of the power. A device that lets you fold spacetime multiple times might really mess up the game over the long term. But once? That's just fun.

FINDING AND IDENTIFYING CYPHERS

Cyphers are often found in groups of one to six (the GM can roll a d6 to determine the number), usually because the PCs are looking for them. They might be among the possessions of a fallen enemy, hidden behind a ventilation grate, or scattered amid the wreckage of a crashed vehicle. The GM can prepare ahead of time a list of what successful searchers find. Sometimes this list is random, and sometimes there is some logic behind it. For example, the PCs might find four different sonic jingles in a DJ's home studio, or a hidden stash of illegal Vurt feathers in the back of a Vurt-U-Want van. Alternatively you can roll a d100 and refer to the List of Cyphers table to obtain a random cypher. Certain cyphers come up on multiple die results because they are more commonly encountered items.

If the characters search for cyphers, the GM sets the difficulty of the task. It is usually 3 or 4, and scavenging can take fifteen minutes to an hour.

Scavenging is not the only way to obtain cyphers. They can also be given as gifts, traded with merchants, or sometimes purchased in a shop.

Once the PCs find a cypher, identifying it is a separate task based on Intellect and modified by knowledge of the topic at hand. It may be a food hack or other a device, a music track, or a street drug. Being skilled in a related area helps with the attempt to identify the cypher. The GM sets the difficulty of the task, but it is usually 1 or 2. Thus, even the smallest amount of knowledge means that cypher identification is automatic. By checking serial numbers, tasting substances, reading computer code, or examining mechanisms, identification usually takes one to 10 minutes. If the PCs can't identify a cypher, they can bring it to an expert for identification and perhaps trade, if desired.

A character can attempt to use a cypher that has not been identified. If the cypher is a pill, for example, the PC can take it and the GM will describe the effect. However, if the cypher is a device or mechanism that the players were unable to identify, such as a handheld

ROLLABLE TABLE OF CYPHERS

1. A to Z Book
2. Acid Lassie™ Single Biscuits
3. Acid Lassie™ Double Biscuits
4. All-Over-in-a-Second Delay Cream
5. Artificial Facial
6. Auto-Doll
7. Bliss
8. Blurb Hackcontroller
9. Boomer
10. Buzz-Kill
11. Cartographer's Note
12. Cherry Stoner
13. Choke
14. Chrownotransducer
15. Computermite Mound
16. Cortex Jammers
17. Demon Bacon
18. Dogseed Cake
19. Doggy-Fresh
20. Domino Chok
21. Drip Feed Card
22. Fetish
23. Flashbang Grenade
24. Fractal Blade
25. Fractal Bullet
26. Frank Scenario Record
27. Gas Grenade
28. Goon Juice
29. Grape Stoner
30. Haze
31. Hogwasher
32. Hyperboloehyde
33. Ibotenic Blart
34. Janus Fontaine Record
35. Jet Injector
36. Kirby Grip
37. Lemon Stoner
38. Litotezol
39. Lucid Blue
40. Lucid Blue
41. Lucid Blue
42. Lucid Blue
43. Lucid Blue
44. Luzine
45. MadKow Spirit
46. Mad Dog 40-40
47. Mandel Bullet
48. Metaphorazine
49. Mini Black Hole
50. Mini-Maxis
51. Mouth-Guard
52. MungryMan Self-Hearting Dinners™
53. Naga antivenom
54. Napalm Filters
55. Napalm Filters
56. Napalm Filters
57. Napalm Filters
58. Nitrokisserine
59. Orange Chrism
60. Oxymorox
61. Pop-up Shelter
62. Potty Cement
63. Potty Cement - Grappling Pen
64. Pure Vurt Flesh
65. Queen Hobart's Day Cracker
66. Quirk moth cocoon
67. Randomino Scratchers
68. Regenerol
69. RoseWater
70. Shadow Ball
71. Showbiz
72. Simileum
73. Sneeze Bomb
74. Somnus Postmortemol (Mandies)
75. Sonic Grenade
76. Sonic Hole
77. Soporifico Spray
78. Sticky Smell-O-Tape
79. Stupify Card
80. Subscription Hormones
81. Super Randomino
82. Takki Jack's Enola Boomtape
83. Tidal Bomb
84. Trainspotters
85. Ultra-Garlic
86. Unsolved Equation
87. Vaz
88. Vaz
89. Vaz
90. Vaz
91. Vaz: Ballistic Vaz
92. Vaz: Body Vaz
93. Vaz: Door Vaz
94. Vaz: Flame Retardant Vaz
95. W.U.R.M.
96. Wrecktangler
97. Blue feather (Chapter 16)
98. Blue feather (Chapter 16)
99. Black feather (Chapter 16)
100. Black feather (Chapter 16)

electronic device, the attempt to use it is an Intellect-based task using the cypher's level for difficulty. Failure might mean that the PC can't figure out how to use the cypher or uses it incorrectly (GM's discretion). Of course, even if the PC uses the unidentified cypher correctly, the character will have no idea what its effect will be.

Controlled burst, page 62

If a cypher has been identified, it can be activated automatically.

USING CYPHERS

Certain cyphers require an action in addition to the activation of the cypher itself. For example, if the PC needs to throw the cypher to a specific location, like when using a thrown explosive, or when aiming a cypher that shoots, like a Potty Cement™ Grappling Pen, the PC will be required to perform that task too.

When a task is required during a cypher's use, the nature of the cypher determines the stat that is used for the task. That is, if a cypher is being thrown or aimed, the Speed stat is used, but a technically-focused cypher may require an Intellect check to manipulate.

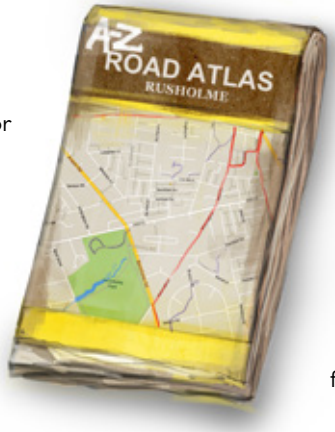
Because cyphers are single-use items, cyphers used to make attacks can never be used with abilities like Controlled Burst. They are never treated as rapid-fire weapons.

A LISTING OF VARIOUS CYPHERS

Cyphers in this section are explained using three terms: level, form and effect. The level of the cypher often indicates how powerful or effective it is. It is also useful for certain optional rules (see Hobart value, page 164). *Form* describes the appearance or physical properties of the cypher, and effect describes what it does and how long it works (if applicable).

The following cyphers are not the only cyphers in the Vurt game world. GMs are welcome to create their own cyphers, but should keep in mind that cyphers are

tools intended to provide a boost in dealing with an encounter and shouldn't be so powerful that they spoil the story.



A to Z BOOK

Level: d6

Form: A battered old road map or map book that has changed hands a thousand times. The maps are covered with notes and lines, with old streets crossed off and new routes drawn in.

Effect: Provides the PC with an asset when attempting to navigate from one place to another within the city district covered by the A to Z Book. Each A to Z Book covers one specific city district. Because the landscape of the city changes so quickly, the map is only useable a number of times equal to the level of the cypher, after which time, it is no longer accurate. A to Z Books can be acquired as a short-term benefit by spending 2 XP and the time to scrounge one up.

ACID LASSIE™ SINGLE BISCUITS

Level: d6+2

Form: A small, flat dog biscuit depicting a bulldog wearing shades and a spiked collar. Notably, there are very few kibbles visible in it.

Effect: Anyone who is part dog receives +1 to all intellect rolls for 10 minutes per level of the cypher.

ACID LASSIE™ DOUBLE BISCUITS

Level: d6+2

Form: A small, flat dog biscuit depicting a bulldog wearing shades and a spiked collar. This one is loaded with delicious kibbles.

Effect: For anyone who is part dog, decrease the difficulty of all Intellect tasks by one step. Effect lasts for 10 minutes per level of the cypher.

ALL-OVER-IN-A-SECOND DELAY CREAM

Level: d6

Form: A small tube of clear gel.

Effect: When applied to the body, the PC can resist any physical temptation. Lasts for a number of minutes equal to the level of the cypher. Hang in there!

ARTIFICIAL FACIAL

Level: d6+1

Form: A moist, lemon-scented facial towelette.

Effect: When applied to the skin (or equivalent) it causes the PC to shine like the sun. For a number of rounds equal to the level of the cypher, the difficulty of any action that requires looking directly at the PC (such as an attacks or defense actions) is increased in difficulty by two steps. The PC is not affected by this, and can see normally.

AUTO-DOLL

Level: d6

Form: A creepy and unrealistic-looking humanoid mannequin.

Effect: When activated, an Auto-Doll will perform up to three simple gestures, such as waving, pointing, or bowing. They were discontinued after a food hack was released that caused Auto-Dolls everywhere to make occasional, obscene gestures. The battery lasts one day for each level of the cypher.

BLISS

Level: d6

Form: This classic party drug hasn't changed much in the last 30 years. This concentrated liquid is atomized into a fine mist, then sprayed onto crowds of people, usually during live shows. This sexy aroma makes everyone a perfect dancer (in their own mind). Feel it!

Short-term benefit, page 156

Effect: For 10 minutes per level of the cypher, those affected are more susceptible to manipulation. The difficulty of persuasion tasks on the target are decreased by one step.

BLURB HACKCONTROLLER

Level: d6

Form: A disposable handheld remote, about 10cm long.

Effect: A blurbfly hackcontroller can be used to assume remote control of any blurbfly. The captured bug can only perform its programmed function, i.e. a jingle blurb can be made to deliver verbal messages or used as a remote camera, but it cannot open a door or upload a food hack into a terminal. The controller lasts for 10 minutes per level of the cypher, after which the remote becomes useless junk. 300 foot (100 m) range.

BOOMER®

Level: d6

Form: A miniature bottle of golden liquor.

Effect: For 10 minutes per level of the cypher, decrease the difficulty of social interaction tasks by one level. Intimidation, persuasion, negotiation—anything involving smoothness. For the next 2 hours, the difficulty of all Speed tasks is increased by one step. The effect can stack up to three times. If three drinks are taken, the character dies at the end of the effect. U-type are immune to this effect.

"Take one measure for a good time, two for a blast, three for a clean and sexy death."

BUZZ-KILL

Level: d6

Form: A suppository.

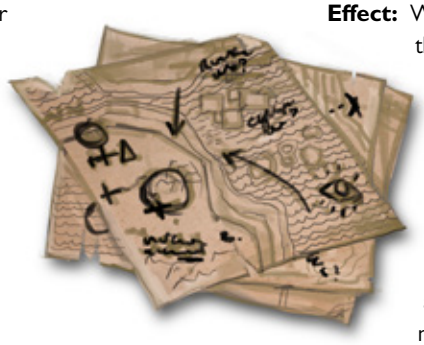
Effect: Renders the user immune to poisons of the same level or lower (and ends any such ongoing effects, if any, already in the user's system). It also renders the user immune to any drug effects, removing all active effects, positive or negative.

Immunity lasts for 10 minutes per level of the cypher.

CARTOGRAPHER'S NOTE

Level: d6+1

Form: A page from a cartographer's notebook, a weird poem, a cartographer's note imparts temporary knowledge regarding the weird workings of the Vurt world. They are single use items that lose their intelligibility, or dissipate in some way after use.



Effect: When examined in the real world, the note is an esoteric scrawl resembling the ravings of an insane person. But in the Vurt world, the secrets contained in the cartographer's note shows the PC hidden paths, unlocks the secret reasoning of a dream, or even the key to amazing abilities. A cartographer's note is the ultimate "guide" for a Vurt trip. Here are some examples of cartographer's note effects:

1	The note illuminates "the narrative connection" between two locations in a Vurt, allowing the PC to find the correct path from one location to another, inside the dream. For example it will enable the PC to know the way from one location to another within the Tulgey Woods, but not from the Tulgey Woods to another Vurt dream.
2	The note examines the bizarre logic of a Vurt entity, enabling the PC to solve a riddle posed by an NPC (the riddle must have a difficulty equal to or lower than the level of the cypher).
3	The note reconfigures the PC's perception of three-dimensional space, enabling the them to solve a physical puzzle based on spatial reasoning. For example, illuminating the secret way to the top of a mountain, or how to get to the other side of a river (the puzzle must have a difficulty equal to or lower than the level of the cypher).
4	The note opens the PCs mind to the amazing trickery of belief. For the duration of the dream, the PC gains the ability to leap a long distance as an action.
5	The note fills the PC with a formidable sense of personal power. For the duration of the dream, all attack and defend actions are reduced in difficulty by one step.
6	The note imbues the PC with devastating combat focus. For the duration of one combat encounter, the PCs melee attacks are increased in damage by a number of points equal to the level of the cypher.
7	The note temporarily imparts an understanding of pure Vurt flesh's resilience. Restore a number of points to each of the character's Pools, equal to the level of the cypher. (Once a Pool is full, extra points are ignored.)
8	The PC's mind is filled with empowering wisdom. For the rest of the dream the difficulty of all Intellect tasks is reduced by one step.
9	The sluggish logic of the dream evaporates for the reader. For the rest of the dream, Speed tasks are reduced in difficulty by one step.
10	Untethered from notions about their limitations, the PC is able to exploit their full physical potential. For the rest of the dream, strength tasks are reduced in difficulty by one step.
11	The note reveals the intangibility of this place. PC gains +2 Armor for the remainder of the dream.
12	Condom Rose: use to block or obscure information. It can be used in a Vurt to block or mask elements of the dream, lock doors, hide objects, throw hunters off a scent, etc. Cypher level determines strength of the rose.
13	The note reveals details about the nature of the feather's minions. Reduce difficulty of all checks against a minion in the current Vurt feather.
14	The note reveals a clue which may help the PCs advance in the Vurt dream. Use this cypher like an insight, allowing the GM to reveal something about the dream.
15	The reader affects the substrate of the dream, causing an immediate area within the PCs sight to become gluey black swamp. Any creatures within the area are reduced to half movement and any ranged attacks against them gain an advantage until they are free.
16	The PC is able to change the weather in the dream.
17	The note crumples itself into a ball and emits a strong, warm light.
18	For the rest of the dream, the PC gains +4 armor to one type of environmental damage.
19	The note causes a single word to appear in the air before the group. It may be a password, or any kind of useful clue.
20	The note pertains to the guidance of others. Grant one companion 1 XP.

CHERRY STONER
Level: d6

Form: A pink, disposable one-hitter.

Effect: Immediately restore Intellect points equal to the level of the cypher (any remaining points after the Intellect Pool is full are lost). Decrease the difficulty of navigation and spacial awareness tasks by one level. The difficulty of Speed-based actions is increased by one level. The effect lasts for 10 minutes per level of the cypher.

CHOKE
Level: d6

Form: Lavendar-colored powder that is snorted.

Effect: For 10 minutes per level of the cypher, the user has +2 intellect edge. As soon as the effect wears off, apply one day of the lasting damage effect, malaise (-1 to all Intellect rolls).

CHROWNOTRANSDUCER
Level: d6

Form: A small clear cube that ticks. It can be squeeze-activated only in the Vurt world.

Effect: When in the Vurt world, this device slows down time to a crawl for all creatures and PCs except the one holding it. This effect lasts for the number of rounds equal to the level of the cypher. It has no effect in the real world, but might fetch a good price from the right buyer.

COMPUTERMITE MOUND
Level: d6

Form: A small dirt termite mound full of black and white termites.

Effect: This can be used to hack and control complex computerized security systems by sending out a swarm of termites to cover the equipment. The system will remain under your control for the number of rounds equal to the level of the cypher.

How they do this depends on the type of system.

CORTEX JAMMERS
Level: d6+3

Form: A green and black gelcap.

Effect: For 10 minutes per level of the cypher, the user gains +1 to their Speed Edge. For two hours after the effect wears off, the user is weakened and gets -1 to all Might rolls.

DEMON BACON
Level: d6

Form: A bite-sized bit of dried bacon infused with Ghost Cat Milk. Don't ask.

Effect: Restores a number of points to your Might Pool equal to the level of the cypher. Tastes great but causes very inconvenient stomach problems for the next three days. Yes, days.

DOGSEED CAKE
Level: d6

Form: A small, roasted Haze-seed biscuit. Typical hippy-burnout baking from three decades ago.

Effect: Add 1 point to users Might Pool. User gets -1 to all social interaction rolls thanks to weird, earthy breath.

DOGGY-FRESH
Level: d6

Form: Infused chewing gum.

Effect: For 10 minutes per level of the cypher, the user can apply one level of Effort to any task (including a combat task) without spending points from a Pool. The level of Effort provided by this cypher does not count toward the maximum amount of Effort a character can normally apply to one task.

DOMINO CHOK
Level: d6

Form: A small bar of chocolate shaped like a domino.

Effect: For 1 minute per level of the cypher, the user can apply one level of Effort to any non-combat task without spending points from a Pool. The level of Effort provided by this cypher does not count toward the maximum amount of Effort a character can normally apply to one task.

DRIP FEED CARD
Level: d6

Form: A plastic card/plug that inserts into a drip feed terminal. The company name "Maple Falls Investments" is listed on the back along with a PDF address for support (disconnected).

Effect: When inserted into a functioning drip feed terminal, the terminal dispenses a number of quid equal to the level of the artifact.

Depletion: Each time the card is used, roll a d6. The drip feed account associated with the card is suspended on a result of 1.

FETISH
Level: d6+2

Form: A small vial of nasty-smelling greenish-black liquid.

Effect: Restore points to Might Pool equal to the level of the cypher (any remaining points after the

COLOUR: UNKNOWN

There exists a feather of unknown colour, by necessity one of a kind, that, when taken on the very edge of death, places the soul itself into a dream everlasting. Mind you, that was Jud Taylor talking after six or seven pints. He's past ninety and well on his way to darkness. He would spout such a tale; it puts a glint in his eye. Still, it keeps me awake at night, just thinking about it. It paints my dreams with a different colour, diminishes them by degrees. God damn you, Jud Taylor, you decrepit specimen! Because nothing seems as bright or as necessary as that feather you've placed in my mind. Nothing at all. The dreams wither in my mouth.

I'll spend a year or more and most of my wages looking for an erasure snake. And we all know how dangerous that can be. Look at Beatrice Hennessey. She ended up blank-eyed and hollow-skulled from a bite that went wrong; that snake took out more than the one idea she wished to lose; it near emptied her out. Damn you twice and thrice times, Jud Taylor! Is that why you're giving me that smirky grin every time you see me, over your fifth pint of stout: have you passed on a curse, a godforsaken feathery curse?

- Jeff Noon

Might Pool is full are lost). User is paralyzed by stomach cramps for one round and can perform no actions other than pained speech.

FLASHBANG GRENADE

Level: d6+2

Form: A grenade.

Effect: Either thrown or detonated on a timer, this cypher explodes in an immediate radius, blinding and deafening anyone caught in the blast for one round per level of the cypher. NPCs will be unable to take any actions until the effect wears off, but a PC can spend 1 XP to "make a lucky shot," allowing the player to attempt an attack action, with the difficulty increased by 4 steps.

FRACTAL BLADE

Level: d6

Form: A jagged, shimmering blade of fractal math, wrapped with tape at the base.

Effect: A fractal blade is a light weapon (4 damage) that deals additional fractal damage equal to the level of the cypher. The fractal damage causes flesh to fracture into brilliant fractal scars that cannot be removed. When used against a PC, any Pool points deducted by fractal damage are permanently lost. After a successful attack, roll a d6. On a result of 1 or 2 the fractal shatters and the blade is destroyed.

FRANK SCENARIO RECORD

Level: d6+1

Form: A dusty antique record.

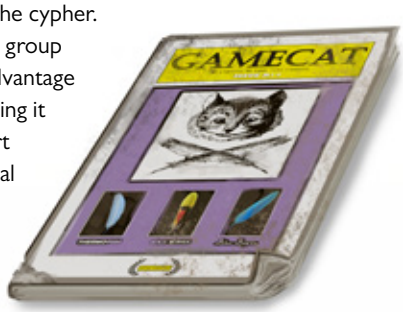
Effect: When played at appropriate volume on a Limbic Splitter or equivalent DJ device, the smooth voice of Frank Scenario puts everyone within short range who hears it at ease. Each round for a number of rounds equal to the level of the cypher, all targets within earshot will do whatever the person playing the record orders, so long as it doesn't directly cause anyone to knowingly hurt themselves or others. The records breaks after just playing just one song.

GAME CAT MAGAZINE

Level: d6

Form: A 30-year-old paper magazine.

Effect: In the Vurt world, reading the magazine gives you an asset to all tasks for a number of rounds equal to the level of the cypher. Every PC in the group may gain this advantage by actively reading it while in the Vurt world. In the real world, it has a street market value of an expensive item.



GAS GRENADE

Level: d6+2

Form: A grenade.

Effect: Thrown a short distance, this bursts into a poisonous cloud within an immediate area. The cloud lingers for d6 rounds, unless conditions dictate otherwise. See table on the next page for some types of gas.

GIRL OF ETERNAL FLAME DOLL

Level: d6

Form: A creepy, dress-wearing doll with glowing eyes and a wisp of smoke constantly issuing from the nose and mouth.

Effect: Like a wind-up explosive: pull her string and point her in the direction of your target, and she runs screaming at them, electrical sparks flying, setting everything around her on fire.

GOON JUICE

Level: d6

Form: A beer in a slender silver can.

Effect: For 10 minutes per level of the cypher, the drinker is more susceptible to manipulation. Attempts to convince the them to perform an action are decreased in difficulty by two steps.

GRAPE STONER

Level: d6

Form: A purple, disposable one-hitter.

Effect: Immediately restore points to Might Pool

GAS GRENADE TABLE

01-10	Thick smoke: occludes sight while the cloud lasts.
11-20	Choking gas: living creatures that breathe lose their actions due to choking and coughing for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level.
21-50	Poison gas: living creatures that breathe suffer damage equal to the cypher's level.
51-60	Corrosive gas: everything suffers damage equal to the cypher's level.
61-65	Hallucinogenic gas: living creatures that breathe lose their actions to hallucinations and visions for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level.
66-70	Nerve gas: living creatures that breathe suffer Speed damage equal to the cypher's level.
71-80	Mind-numbing gas: living creatures that breathe suffer Intellect damage equal to the cypher's level.
81-83	Fear gas: living creatures that breathe and think flee in a random direction in fear (or are paralyzed with fear) for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level.
84-86	Amnesia gas: living creatures that breathe and think permanently lose all memory of the last minute.
87-96	Sleep gas: living creatures that breathe fall asleep for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level or until awoken by a violent action or an extremely loud noise.
97-00	Rage gas: living creatures that breathe and think attack the nearest creature and continue to do so for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level.

equal to the level of the cypher (any remaining points after the Might Pool is full are lost). Increase the difficulty of Intellect-based checks by one level. The effect lasts for 10 minutes per level of the cypher.

HAZE
Level: d6+2
Form: A lump of purple plant matter.
Effect: When smoked, the PC gets an asset for all Intellect-based checks. The difficulty of all social interactions is increased by one step until an item of food can be eaten. Up to three Haze cyphers maybe stacked; the lowest-level cypher sets the duration. Effect lasts for ten minutes per level of the cypher.

HOGWASHER
Level: d6+2
Form: A child's water pistol that is modified to shoot boiling water.
Effect: Boiling hot water can be shot in bursts at any target within short range. Each shot causes medium damage. The number of shots is equal to the level of the cypher.

HYPERBOLOEHYDE®
Level: d6+2
Form: Tincture drops.
Effect: The difficulty of all tasks involving pleasant social interactions are decreased by one step per level of the cypher. Subtract a number of points from you Speed Pool equal to the level of the cypher.

IBOTENIC BLART
Level: d6
Form: A gelcap filled with powdered mushroom.
Effect: When ingested, the PC experiences an episode of intense euphoria paired with profuse sweating/secretion and is unable to perform any actions at all. Ingesting the PCs secretions during this time will reduce the difficulty of all Might-based tasks by two steps. The effect lasts for one minute per level of the cypher, at which time the PC behaves normally and the drugged sweat loses it's effect.

JANUS FONTAINE RECORD
Level: d6
Form: A brittle record that is about to break.
Effect: When played at high volume on a Limbic Splitter or

The late, great Janus Fontaine only made seven albums before his untimely death. All are considered to be masterpieces by his fans, of course.

1. Plastic Flowers
2. Flow UP
3. Boy, Blue
4. Pixelkids Come Out Tonight
5. Sooner than Summertime
6. 1000 Faces
7. Torcher's Garden

equivalent DJ device, the musickological stylings of Janus Fontaine inflicts sonic damage to all targets within short range. At the beginning of the PCs turn, all unprotected characters within short range that are able to hear the track take 8 points of damage for a number of rounds equal to the level of the cypher.

JET INJECTOR
Level: d6+1
Form: A hand held auto injector
Effect: Restores points to Might Pool equal to the cypher's level. If the Might Pool is full, remaining points are added to the next Pool (Speed, then Intellect).

KIRBY GRIP
Level: d6+1
Form: A slender, electronic pick that resembles a bobby pin.
Effect: Disables any lock (electronic or mechanical) equal to or lower than the cypher's level.

LEMON STONER
Level: d6
Form: A yellow, disposable one-hitter.
Effect: Immediately restores points to Speed Pool equal to the level of the cypher (any remaining points after the Speed Pool is full are lost). The user is rendered completely deaf. The effect lasts for 10 minutes per level of the cypher.

LITOTEZOL®
Level: d6
Form: Tincture drops
Effect: These drops go under your tongue and work almost instantly, numbing the body for 10 minutes per level of the cypher. While the cypher is active, the PC will not suffer any penalties for being moved down the damage track, though they can still be killed if all Pools are reduced to zero. Also, the PC gains two assets for tasks involving pain tolerance, such as resisting physical torture.

LUCID BLUE
Level: d6
Form: A blue feather with a tiny label attached.
Effect: A lucid Blue is a Vurt feather that doesn't remove the PCs consciousness from the real world. Rather, the perception of the real world is altered in some way. It may manifest as visual

Baby Blarney X. There are many versions of this lucid Blue available, each attuned to a specific language (e.g. "Baby Blarney Español"). Engaging this feather allows a PC to comprehend and converse in a specific language.

Baby Bruce. By casting the PC in the roll of a legendary martial artist, complete with soundtrack and sound effects, Baby Bruce decreases the difficulty of all unarmed attack and defense actions for a number of minutes equal to the level of the cypher. However, if the feather is removed during the combat encounter, the difficulty of melee attacks is increased by one step for the next three rounds.

Baby Cyrano. This lucid Blue is a romantic life coach, giving a PC confidence and feeding them appropriate lines of flowery, romantic purple prose while engaged. Decrease difficulty of romantic interaction tasks by one step while engaged.

Baby Driver. Baby Driver superimposes a scene in which the player careens joyfully across a bulging, cartoon landscape in a checkered yellow taxicab. Meanwhile, if operating an actual motor vehicle, the user drives like an insane baby, wreaking havoc on the streets. Decrease the difficulty of all driving tasks by one level. Lasts for 10 minutes per level of the cypher. Quirk: Any successful driving action creates mayhem; e.g., nearly hitting people, or driving over post boxes.

Baby Lucy. A creation of the legendary DJ Gumbo YaYa, Baby Lucy grants temporary immunity to any mind-clouding chemically-based effects, from simple drunkenness to the effects of the most powerful mind-altering drugs. Once the feather is disengaged, the user instantly returns to their intoxicated state. Any physical damage caused by toxicity is also not affected by this feather. Lasts for a number of minutes equal to the level of the cypher.

Blue Collar. Suppresses muscle and joint fatigue and pain (but not pain from acute injury). Also increases dopamine response for physical exertion making what would normally be experienced as onerous labor suddenly pleasurable. Lasts for eight hours, plus 30 minutes for lunch.

Blue Lullaby. Blue Lullaby relieves anxiety, relaxes the body, and suppresses unhappy memories. Long-term use can have deleterious effects on personality, as well as on long and short-term memory. Restores a number of points to the Intellect Pool equal to the level of the cypher. If the Intellect Pool is full, extra points may be added to the Pool of the player's choice. Increases the difficulty of tasks involving concentration by one step.

Chef Barney Blue. A popular feather series, this Vurt augments the flavor of any dish. Also instructs a cook in the creation of specific recipes. Bootlegs have been created to aid in the creation of chemical compounds. Grants an asset in any cooking or chemistry task.

Grease Monkey. Be the best mechanic in town, if only for a little while. The user becomes trained in mechanical and repair tasks for a number of hours equal to the level of the cypher.

Id Wizzer. Impulse-control feather that supresses id, allowing the user to delay gratification and resist effects of hunger, digestion, and other biological distractions. The PC receives two assets for willpower-based tasks for a number of minutes equal to the level of the cypher.

Mood Organ. Via thalamic modulation, this feather puts the user in a mood of their choice, from frank acceptance to pure venom. Mood Organ grants an asset in any personal interaction task for a number of minutes equal to the level of the cypher.

Perceptron. Enhances sensory input, granting two assets to perception-related tasks, but also doubles any negative sensory effects (such as the damage from a sonic grenade or duration of blindness from a bright flash).

Strategicon. Make the world your own personal board game and become the ultimate strategist! Grants the PC a free Insight.

Truth feather. While riding the Truth feather, it is difficult to tell lies or half-truths of any kind. What's worse, the user is compelled to answer questions when asked. While primarily designed to be an interrogation tool, on the streets it is known as one of the worst forms of torture. The difficulty of verbal tasks involving deception is increased by one step per level of the cypher. Effect lasts for about 15 minutes.

Viewing feather. When a viewing feather is rubbed against another feather (of equal or lower level), the two become "paired." When the viewing feather is used, the character will be able to see through the eyes of the person taking the other feather. Viewers cannot communicate or interact with the "feather rider" in any way, but accompany them invisibly as a "hidden rider." Viewing feathers are usually used so that viewers can jerk a companion out should they get into trouble in a black feather, but they can also be used to spy on other people's trips and real world activities. So how do you know if the Vurt-U-Want clerk has paired a viewing feather to the Pink you and your dogboy are about to do together? Wake up call: You don't.

Vurtball feather. A viewing feather specifically linked to your favorite Vurtball star. During a Vurtball match, this feather will allow the rider to experience the game (and the sensation of total roid-max) from the perspective of the player. A moderately-priced item, very easy resale.

hallucinations which change the appearance of the PCs environment, visible text overlays, or even just an altered state of mind which grants the PC perspectives or capabilities they wouldn't normally possess. Unlike immersive feathers, there is no significant knowledge gain associated with taking lucid Blues, so no XP is awarded afterwards. Lucid Blues come in countless varieties and are totally legal. Here are a few examples.

LUZINE®

Level: d6

Form: A squeeze dropper containing a luminous blue nanite solution.

Effect: Cypher enables the user to see in total darkness for one hour for each level of the cypher. During this time, any actions involving vision that are performed in greater than dim light are increased in difficulty by one step.

MADKOW SPIRIT

Level: d6

Form: A small bottle containing a frothing yellow liquid.

Effect: The taste of straight Madkow spirit is so abhorrent that it is usually trickled into a glass through a crystalline inpho cube to add knowledge and flavor. After a few moments, the cube will begin to produce green sparks at which point it is plunged into the drink and the spirit is stirred vigorously. For 10 minutes per level of the cypher, the drinker experiences intense euphoria, but is unable to communicate intelligibly at all. This is definitely the good shit, but not particularly useful.

MAD DOG 40-40™

Level: d6+2

Form: A miniature bottle of yellow liquid, derived from canine hormones.

Effect: For 10 minutes per level of the cypher, the user gains +2 to their Might Edge. User adds one day of the lasting damage effect malaise (-1 to all intellect rolls).

MANDEL BULLET

Level: d6+2

Form: A bullet which reflects bright colors in a fractal pattern.

Effect: This bullet carries the lethal fractal

Naga antivenom is rare and expensive. If a PC has been poisoned by the bite of a Vurt serpent, a side mission may be required to obtain a vial of Naga anti-venom.

virus that transforms a being's very molecules into pure light over the course of 10 hours, minus a number of hours equal to the level of the cypher. Quickly removing the affected part of the body is a possible lifesaving solution, but only if done within the first minute after impact. Otherwise the virus spreads and death is certain. It must be fired from a flame weapon to be activated. When hit, the victim is overwhelmed with a sense of euphoria known as "Beetle Mania." This variety of fractal bullet is highly illegal. Not even the MPD is permitted to possess this technology.

METAPHORAZINE®
Level: d6+3
Form: A small lozenge.
Effect: The user can apply one level of Effort to a non-combat task without spending points from a Pool. The level of Effort provided by this cypher does not count toward the maximum amount of Effort a character can normally apply to one task.

MINI BLACK HOLE
Level: d6+2 (?)
Form: A small glass canister with a black hole mathemagickally suspended within.
Effect: When shattered, a black hole appears within immediate range of the impact and lasts until the start of the PCs next turn. Any creatures or objects caught within the black hole's area suffer crushing damage equal to the level of the cypher and are unable to take any actions.

MINI-MAXIS®
Level: d6
Form: A small explosive the size of a walnut that can be thrown a long distance.
Effect: The grenade explodes in an immediate radius, inflicting damage equal to the level of the cypher.

MOUTH-GUARD™
Level: d6
Form: A small tube of paste.
Effect: When squirted into the PCs mouth, Mouth-Guard causes any feathers that are taken to have no effect. Effect lasts for 10 minutes for each level of the cypher. Note: If used to protect against a Strangeways feather, it will only protect the PC until the effect wears off, at which time the character will enter the Vurt.

MUNGRYMAN SELF-HEARTING DINNERS™ (by Silvershell Inc.)
Level: d6
Form: A foil-wrapped dinner. Available in Pseudo-Pork Pattie, Chicken a La Queen, Franks 'n Dreams, and a number of less-popular flavors. When the foil is torn, the meal heats itself.
Effect: The PC does not need to eat for one day per level of the cypher.

NAGA ANTIVENOM
Level: d6
Form: A tiny vial of purple-tinged liquid. This substance is synthesized in the real world, and is very expensive and difficult to obtain.
Effect: This antivenom instantly negates the deleterious effects of any Vurt serpent's poison.

NAPALM FILTERS®
Level: d6
Form: A inexpensive cigarette with a green filter, sold individually.
Effect: Lighting up a Napalm Filter provides an asset for any situation where positive social interaction is called for.

NITROKISSERINE®
Level: d6
Form: A popper containing a fine powder that vaporizes when contact with air.
Effect: When inhaled nasally, Nitrokisserine® completely removes the lasting damage effect associated with post-feather Vurt lag.

ORANGE CHRISM
Level: d6
Form: A deliciously frothy carbonated beverage, bright orange in color.
Effect: Reduces the level of the drinker's drug addiction by one step per level of the cypher.

OXYMOROX®
Level: d6+3
Form: Pill
Effect: Causes intense euphoria and temporarily removes one lasting damage effect for one hour per level of the cypher. At the end of that time, the effect returns.

POP-UP SHELTER
Level: d6
Form: A frisbee-sized disk.
Effect: A small shelter pops up around the user. It is large enough for one person only. While inside, user is protected from environmental effects such as gas, pollen, or acid rain. Damage from effects such as extreme cold, fire, or electricity is reduced by the level of the cypher.

POTTY CEMENT®
Level: d6
Form: A ball of rubbery glue wrapped in a sheet of plastic.
Effect: When the plastic is removed, the ball can

be smashed against anything to glue it to something else. The strength of the bond is stronger than steel, but decays over time. Decays after one hour per level of the cypher. Surfaces covered in Vaz™ cannot be bonded by Potty Cement™.

POTTY CEMENT® - GRAPPLING PEN

Level: d6

Form: Pen

Effect: With the press of a button, this pen-sized grappling gun fires an anchor coated in Potty Cement™ that will attach to any surface other than one that is coated in Vaz® . When the button is pressed again, the NanoFlex™ cable retracts. Can be used to pull the user to a solid object, or draw a lighter object to the PC. Supports up to 220 lbs (100 kg) without breaking. Glue degrades after one minute per level of the cypher.

PURE VURT FLESH

Level: d6

Form: A greyish hunk of rubbery flesh harvested from a pure Vurt being. Referred to on the streets as "Live Drug."

Effect: If a piece of Vurt is ingested in the Vurt world, the user gains +1 to all task rolls for the duration of the dream. When ingested in the real world, the user falls into an intense stupor and can perform no actions for the duration of the drug's effect. No living being can eat more than one piece of pure Vurt flesh at a time and survive. Pure Vurt flesh is rare, expensive, and highly illegal.

ON EATING VURTFLESH:

It was a potent cocktail of meat and dreams. Highly dangerous. Highly desirable. The Game Cat had talked about it once, in the magazine...Game Cat had warned against it, saying it was a sucker's trip, that it led to wild, uncontrollable games, mutant theatre.

-Vurt, Jeff Noon

QUEEN HOBART'S DAY CRACKER

Level: d6

Form: A small, explosive cardboard tube wrapped in a brightly decorated twist of paper with a prize in the central chamber. It can be thrown a long distance.

Effect: It explodes in an immediate radius, inflicting damage equal to the level of the cypher. Also releases a small toy prize at the location of detonation (valued by collectors).

QUIRK MOTH COCOON

Level: d6+2

Form: A small cocoon that hatches a black and white quirk moth.

Effect: As the full grown quirk moth emerges from the cocoon, anyone looking at it is unable to focus on anything other than this miracle of life for a number of rounds equal to the level of the cypher.

RANDOMINO® SCRATCHERS

Level: d6

Form: Blank, computerized domino that is activated by scratching the surface.

Effect: To play, scratch the surface of the Randomino. If the two numbers match, you win a prize! Roll two d6. If both dice show the same number you win £10 for each level of the cypher. If the result is double 6s, you win the jackpot of £100 for each level of the cypher.

The cash prize for a winning Randomino can be redeemed at any Vurt-U-Want, Vurturama or Slick City store. Note that there are never any blanks on randominoes, only 1-1s through 6-6s. NovoAno guarantees this, and it actually improves the chances, which the gambling punters like.

REGENEROL®

Level: d6

Form: A handheld auto injector

Effect: Reduces healing time of all lasting damage effects by a number of days equal to the level of the cypher.

ROSEWATER™

Level: d6 +1

Form: A tiny aerosol spray can containing a mathemagickally-infused liquid.

Effect: When applied to another cypher of the same level or lower, the target cypher's level and property can't be discerned, effectively disguising it. The effect lasts for one day per level of the cypher.

SHADOW BALL

Level: d6 +2

Form: A small glass canister filled with swirling Shadow smoke.

Effect: Creates a seething ball of Shadow smoke which covers an immediate area. Any creatures inside the ball are made very difficulty to perceive from the outside. If a character observes the effect they will be inclined to think nothing of it and move on. However, if the Shadow ball is used in an especially conspicuous location or very close to an enemy, a Speed-based stealth check must be made to avoid detection.

Lasts for 10 minutes per level of the cypher.

HARVESTING PURE VURT FLESH

Because of its high street value (1000 quid per piece!) players may look to a pure Vurt PC or NPC as a source of easy cash. Consider carefully! When pure Vurt flesh is harvested, the pure Vurt character suffers 8 points of damage. Also, since pure Vurts are hunted so doggedly for this valuable drug, selling one's own pure Vurt flesh is likely to draw some very dangerous attention to the group.

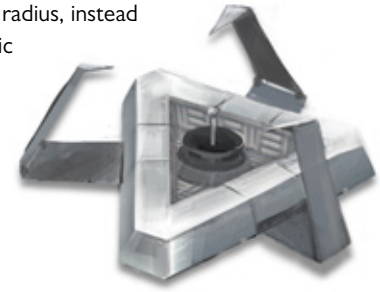
SHOWBIZ
Level: d6 +1
Form: A tangy cologne with mild psychotropic effects. The aroma wears off pretty quickly. "Smell like a celebrity on the first night of a party!"
Effect: For 10 minutes the user has +2 Intellect edge. When the effect expires, apply one day of the lasting damage effect malaise (-1 to all Intellect rolls).

SIMILEUM®
Level: d6
Form: Light grey powder that is snorted.
Effect: Restore points to Speed Pool equal to the cypher's level. If the Speed Pool is full, remaining points are wasted and do not get added to the other Pools. Using Simileum more than once per day causes nosebleeds (or robofluid discharge). Increase the difficulty of all social interaction tasks by one step.

SNEEZE BOMB
Level: d6
Form: A tiny paper sachet filled with Vurt pollen.
Effect: Upon impact with a hard surface, the Sneeze Bomb creates a cloud of Vurt pollen within immediate range. Any breathing creature within that area begins to sneeze uncontrollably and is unable to perform any action other than to move an immediate distance. Lasts for one round per level of the cypher.

SOMNUS POSTMORTEMOL (Mandies)
Level: d6
Form: These substances can come in pills of a variety of colors, nasal spray, eye drops, injectors, or in powdered form.
Effect: The character does not require sleep for a number of days equal to the level of the cypher. A 10-hour rest is treated normally, but the character remains awake and is able to perform non-strenuous tasks such as blurbfly maintenance, reading or studying, etc.

SONIC GRENADE
Level: d6+2
Form: A grenade.
Effect: As a default effect, the grenade unleashes a massive sonic wave when detonated. Anyone in immediate range suffers damage equal to the cypher's level from the concussive blast. Sonic grenade may be reprogrammed with a sonic jingle and will deliver the jingle to the same radius, instead of the default sonic blast.



SONIC HOLE
Level: d6+2
Form: A small triangular mathemagickal device.
Effect: Draws all sound within long range into the device for one round per cypher level. Within the affected area, no sound can be heard.

SONIC JINGLE
Level: d6
Form: Jingles are inpho: they can be uploaded and downloaded. These short, looping beats are used by most marketing blurbflies to inspire their customers to spend. They are also used often by a DJ's Limbic Splitter System to inspire the crush to dance.
Effect: The effect varies depending on the nature of the musick. Sonic jingles usually last for the number of rounds equal to the level, unless otherwise indicated.

SOPORIFICO® Spray
Level: d6
Form: A tiny canister of aerosol spray, decorated with an image of a bounding sheep.
Effect: When sprayed in the face of a medium-sized creature, it will fall asleep for 10 minutes per level of the cypher. The target will be awakened by any violent action or extremely loud noise.

STICKY SMELL-O-TAPE
Level: d6
Form: A stick of gum.
Effect: When chewed, the gum releases an intense chemical strawberry smell that can be used to overwhelm the olfactory senses of anyone who passes within immediate range of it. For 10 minutes for each level of the cypher, the smeller is unable to identify any scent other than the powerful odor of artificial strawberries.

STUPIFY CARD
Level: d6
Form: A playing card.
Effect: It shows the "Twenty-Seven of Spades" on its face and causes all who look at it to become so absorbed that they remain enthralled for one minute per level of the cypher. The effect will end if there is an extremely loud noise, or if the viewer is attacked.

SONIC JINGLES

	Name	Effect
1	Chameleon Melody	A common jingle that forces the listeners to dance, synchronizing their moves to the beat. With Chameleon Melody, everyone is a great dancer, if only for a short while. Feels great in a club. During a fight—not so much.
2	Deadly Poison Love Ballad	An oldie-but-goodie. Those that hear this romantic jingle are filled with feelings of loss, regret, and heartbreaking nostalgia. Remember that first breakup you thought you'd put out of your mind? *Too. Many. Feels.* Anyone able to hear the track suffers Speed damage equal to the level of the cypher.
3	Death Lounge	This bass is deep. Everyone dies. This tune reminds the listener of their fleeting mortality. Most find themselves depressed for days afterwards.
4	Deathbeets	This is a buff track so intense, it creates sizzles in the brain pan. Everyone able to hear this buff track gains +1 to all attack rolls, but also suffers 1 Intellect damage per round.
5	Desire Tactics	This randy track is pure below-the-waistline sunshine. Listening to this jingle creates a wonderfully distracting tingle in your special area. Everyone able to hear this track gets -1 to all initiative rolls.
6	E.Z. Muzak	E.Z. Muzak is so subtle that listeners likely won't even notice when it starts playing. Tasks related to attention are increased in difficulty by two steps while this track plays.
7	Gadget Handbag	The intro on this track is so explosive that anyone able to hear it suffers Intellect damage equal to the level of the cypher.
8	Guitar Ghost Power	On the dancefloor, this one is used to cause euphoric, out-of-body experiences for the listeners. What a tune!
9	Halo	This jingle assails your sense of smell, causing what feels like an olfactory overload. Aromas so good you just have to stop everything and breathe it all in.
10	Infection Courtship	When this beat drops, all everyone wants to do is party. It's inspiring and feels like your own personal theme song.
11	LogoBio	Most commercial sonic pulse jingles use this basic jingle structure. The frequency is so low, most listeners do not notice the sound, but suddenly feel they are more open to suggestion or outside influence than normal.
12	Lost Sword of GirlForce 7	This classic jingle creates such an intense sensation of euphoria that the listener focuses only on how good it all feels. Dance, suckers, dance! Listeners gain two assets for tasks involving physical movement or balance.
13	Murder Fashion	There's so much depth to this bass, it brings the listeners down to hell with it as it drops. Causing everything from panic attacks to suicides, there is a reason this jingle is illegal.
14	Sonic Graveyard Explosion	Low frequencies target lower digestive systems, causing everything from cramps to immediate, uncontrollable defecation. Not a pretty ditty.
15	Sticky Death	Pulses of sound trigger immediate production of massive amounts sticky mucous. Makes breathing difficult.
16	Sub-Subzero	This beat quickly lowers the listener's body temperature several degrees. The aching pain is intense.
17	Sucked Ghost	All treble, no bass, this jingle knocks the wind out of you, usually toppling the listener prone in the process.
18	Trademark Feedback	Most commercial jingles use this basic jingle structure, which seems to soak up the energy of whatever you lace it with. For the 10 minutes the track plays, add 1 to the level of any other sound-related cyphers or drugs.
19	WormHood	This deep bass jingle is almost always used for combat, because many listeners are provoked into seizures by the tune. For a number of rounds equal to the level of the cypher, everyone able to hear this track must roll a d6 before performing any action. On a result of 1, the action fails.
20	ZeroTornado	Here's a tune for the autogens in the house! CTPUs (Central Thought Processing Units) and other robo genetic markers are targeted; listeners who are part robo find that they are temporarily unable to see or communicate.

SUBSCRIPTION HORMONES

Junk Mail	Causes blurbfly to become sex-crazed and focus only on finding a mate.
Ginger Mail	Causes the bug to mount the closest and brightest light source (often an LED streetlight or even an open flame) to attempt mating at such high speeds that the friction causes them to overheat and malfunction. The name comes from the smell the blurbflies make when their materials burn (similar to burnt ginger for some unknown reason).
Whale Mail	Causes blurbfly to malfunction and blow their bio-juice out the top of their thorax, killing them. It looks like a blowhole spouting, and while not strictly prohibited, this Subscription Hormone exists in a gray legal area.
Snail Mail	Slows down blurbflies to half speed, usually by flashing specifically programmed light patterns at their sensors and triggering a hypnotic state.

SUBSCRIPTION HORMONES

Level: d6

Form: A tiny, single-serving aerosol sprayer.

Effect: When fed to a blurbfly, Subscription Hormones cause the bug to perform functions against it's will. A commonly employed tool of blurbtronic warfare, Subscription Hormones come in different varieties and more are always in secret development by ad companies.

SUPER RANDOMINO

Level: d6

Form: Electronic domino that has constantly changing pips. Each Super Randomino costs £10.

Effect: The Randomino drawing takes place every Sunday at 10am at the NovoAno House of Chances. At that time, every Randomino in Manchester settles on a number. If one or both of the values on your Super Randomino match the broadcasted numbers, you win a prize. To play, roll two d20s. If both dice show the same number you win £20 for each level of the cypher. If both dice show a 20, you win the jackpot of £2,000 for each level of the cypher.

Let's say a character purchases a Super Randomino for £10. The PC rolls a d6 to discover the level of the cypher, which turns out to be level 3. On Sunday at 10am, the character tunes into the drawing and the player rolls two d20s. Both dice show the number 18. It's a match! The PC has won a prize of £60 (£20 times the level of the cypher). Had the PC rolled matching 20s, the prize would have been a jackpot of £6,000 (£2,000 multiplied by the level of the cypher).

TAKKI JACK'S ENOLA BOOMTAPE

Level: d6

Form: A black cardboard tube, tightly sealed.

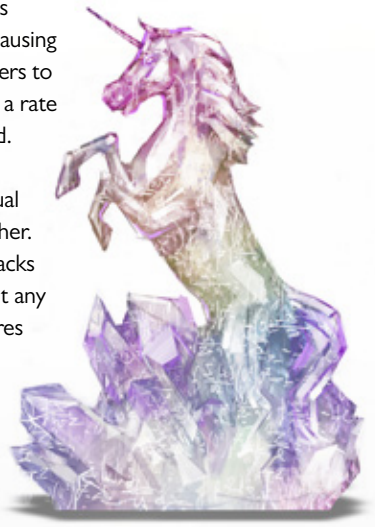
Effect: When the end of the tube is twisted off, a mass of sticky black tape strands will spring out in the direction the cypher is pointed. Any creature within immediate range will be bound by the gooey Boomtape and be unable to move. The difficulty of any actions attempted while bound by tape (including attack and defense actions) are increased in by two steps. The effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the level of the cypher.

TIDAL BOMB

Level: d6

Form: A small mathemagickal sculpture made of glass or crystal that shatters when thrown. The object vibrates almost imperceptibly.

Effect: To a distance of long range, gravity is apparently reversed, causing all objects and characters to slowly float upward at a rate of 6 ft (2 m) per round. The effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the level of the cypher. Ranged and melee attacks are made normally, but any movement at all requires an action to initiate and something to push or pull against. Movement in a downward direction or clinging to something fixed to the ground requires a Might action (climbing). Any action while "hanging" in this way increases the difficulty of the next climbing task by one step.



TRAINSPOTTERS

Level: d6

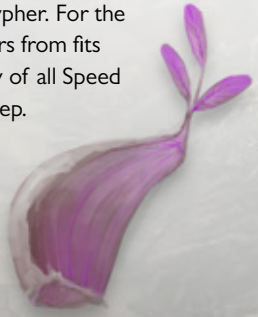
Form: A single-use inhaler.

Effect: Improves your eyesight and grants exceptional hand-eye coordination. The difficulty of all ranged attacks is decreased by two steps for one round per level of the cypher. For the next two hours, the PC suffers from fits of trembling and the difficulty of all Speed actions is increased by one step.

ULTRA-GARLIC

Level: d6+2

Form: A powerful stimulant in the form of a genetically engineered clove of garlic.



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Journal of Vurtological Science
Journal Vurt address ∞–42 ∝ 739 ∠°∞

The nature of Objectiles and their origins

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 31 May
Received in revised form 31 May
Accepted November 5

Keywords:
Objectiles
Miskel
Mechanisms of Exchange
Limbo

ABSTRACT

The recent proliferation of Vurt significant objects in Manchester is undeniable and can be demonstrated with a great degree of significance. We hypothesise that Objectiles originate in the Vurt World and are brought to the Real World via the Mechanisms of Exchange. In attempting to trace the origins of these Objectiles, evidence appears to support the hypothesis. We were, however unable to obtain sufficient data to support any of our hypotheses regarding the reason for the recent increase in found Objectiles.

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1. Introduction

On the streets of Manchester, they're called "Miskl". You can find them on the sellers mats of the elusive and infamous Rover Faires, dangling from the rear views of Black Cabs and clutched in the twitching fingers of mendicant Vurt addicts in alleys citywide. It was thanks to the explorations of one of Vurtology's most tragic figures, Ronald Z, that these objects were identified and brought into the focus of the scientific community. The nature of Objectiles, as they are known in scholarly circles, has been a mystery thus far, though there have been many hypotheses regarding their significance, all of which point the Vurt as the source of their weirdness.

Our favored hypothesis is that these objects are not only possessed of Vurt nature but, in fact, originate from the Vurt itself and enter the Real World via the Mechanisms of Exchange, $(V=R+/-H)^{\Phi}$. In order to collect data that can effectively test this hypothesis we determined that we must be able to 1. Distinguish between a Objectile and a mundane object 2. Determine if the incidence of Objectiles in the possession of those exiting the Vurt is greater than that of those found in other places in the real world to any degree of significance. We attempted to achieve this first goal by exposing a random selection of volunteers to an assortment of objects while taking lucid Blues and recording those which triggered their interest. We filtered this initial data with a number of double blind tests which are detailed in section 2. Secondly, we traced the Objectiles used in part 1 of the study to various Rover Faires, but were unable to determine exactly which faire they came from. As previously observed (Chester, vol 42) there appeared to be a higher than average number of Objectiles in these faires, though we were often unable to convince the Rovers to part with them, owing to a lack of trust in "Featherheads".

Effect: Restores a number of points equal to the cypher's level to the user's Intellect Pool (any remaining points after the Intellect Pool is full are lost). Subtract two points from the user's Speed Pool.

UNSOLVED EQUATION
Level: d6+2

Form: A scrap of paper, a chunk of computer text, or the ramblings of a crazed number junkie. In any form, it's the key to an incredibly large and complex mathemagickal equation.

Effect: The equation can only be solved by a mathemagician and can affect the substance of the universe in any number of ways at the moment of the mathemagician's epiphany. After the cypher is used, the key to the solved equation can be written down and used as a crafting component.

See the table on the facing page for some examples of the mathemagickal effects of unsolved equations.

VAZ®
Level: d6+2

Form: A tiny 5mg tube of greasy lube. Vaz is a nanite suspension and universal lubricant.

Effect: Vaz provides an asset in most tasks where moving parts or conductivity are involved, such as assembling or modifying a weapon, fixing a car engine, or picking a lock. Provided that the player and GM agree that it is appropriate, Vaz is used for almost everything. Vaz remains active for 10 minutes per level of the cypher, during which time tasks involving the item have an asset (GM's discretion).

BALLISTIC VAZ®
Level: d6

Form: A small tube of grease that congeals into a flexible ballistic skin.

Effect: Where Ballistic Vaz is applied, gain +1 Armor rating per level of the cypher for one hour. It may be applied to clothing, armor, bare skin, or even to objects.

BODY VAZ®
Level: d6

Form: A small jar of greasy lotion.

Effect: Body Vaz is a contraceptive, personal lubricant and moisturiser. Also protects against absorption of chemicals or trans-dermal poisions when appied to any part of the body. Takes one minute to apply to the entire body or one round to apply to a single specific body part. Body Vaz is so common that they give it away in courtesy jars at most hotels.

DOOR VAZ®
Level: d6+2

Form: A tiny 5mg tube of greasy lube.

Effect: Door Vaz is a modified Vaz designed specifically to motivate all the parts of a mechanical door lock, encouraging them to release. The lock automatically disengages if the lock is equal to or lower than the level of the cypher. Otherwise, Door Vaz grants two assets for the attempt to unlock the door.

FLAME VAZ®
Level: d6+1

Form: A small tube of greasy lube bearing an illustration of happy-looking people standing around in open flames.

Effect: For any character or object coated in Flame-retardant Vaz®, reduce ambient damage from flames or heat by a number of points equal to the level of the cypher.

W.U.R.M. (Wisdom-Undoing-Randomization-Mechanism)
Level: d6

Form: A small, squirmy, grub. It's biomechanical workings are visible beneath its translucent, rubbery skin.

Effect: When eaten (yummy!), this grub causes increasingly erratic behavior for a number of hours equal to the level of the cypher.

WHOOMPY'S BURGER
Level: d6

Form: A fat, greasy burger of dubious composition. Totally delicious and habit forming.

Effect: A Whoompy's burger is so chock-full patented nutrients, suppliments and hormones that the PC does not need to eat for one day per level of the cypher.

WRECKTANGLER
Level: d6

Form: A bag of small metal devices, resembling toy jacks with sharpened points.

Effect: Worse than the caltrops of the ancient ninja clans, wrecktanglers are mathemagickally charged with kinetic and electrical energy, causing them to gravitate towards a person's feet. When thrown on the ground in an immediate area, wrecktanglers will deal damage equal to the level of the cypher to any person who passes through them. The target will also be unable to move for a number of rounds equal to the damage dealt as they pick them from the soles of their shoes.

D20 result	UNSOLVED EQUATION
1	Creates a shimmering distortion of spacetime in the immediate vicinity of the mathemagician, granting +2 to their Armor rating for 10 minutes per level of the cypher.
2	A spike of fractal logic materializes, driving up from the ground and dealing damage to a random enemy equal to the level of the cypher.
3	The revelation creates a depression in spacetime. In an immediate area, time throbs slowly, reducing the difficulty of all defense actions by two steps. Any timed devices (such as grenades) within in the area will be affected by the time distortion (a grenade will not detonate until the end of the enemy's next turn).
4	The probability that a door exists nearby is recalculated using nymphomation. The PC realizes that there is actually an unlocked door in a nearby wall.
5	The PC discovers the mathematical nature of a certain subject. For 10 minutes per level of the cypher, the PC is specialized in a noncombat skill of their choice.
6	The PC focuses a ball of gravitational energy (four-dimensional space distortion) and releases it in the direction of an enemy. On a successful attack, the target suffers 2 points of crushing damage for each level of the cypher.
7	The equation concerns gravitation and tidal forces. To a distance of long range, gravity is apparently reversed, causing all objects and characters to slowly float upward for three rounds. Ranged and melee attacks are made normally, but any movement at all requires an action to initiate and something to push or pull against. Movement in a downward direction or clinging to something fixed to the ground requires a Might action (climbing). Any action while "hanging" in this way increases the difficulty of the next climbing task by one step. When the effect is terminated, characters fall 6 ft (2 m) per round that they floated upward.
8	PC can manipulate small objects up to a short distance, moving them at will.
9	The matter of a nearby object becomes unbound, causing it to explode, dealing 1 point of damage for each level of the cypher to immediate range.
10	An object is imbued with a powerful magnetic effect for one day per level of the cypher. When attached to a metallic object, a level 2 Might action is required to separate it.
11	The probability of a barrier is questioned, allowing the mathemagician to pass through it as if it were smoke. The thickness of the barrier affected can be 1 inch per level of the cypher. Effect lasts for this turn only.
12	Choose an object within long range. The molecules of this object become agitated, causing it to become red-hot. Any flammable material in contact with the object after one round is likely to burst into flames.
13	The equation generates a dense lump of energy that disrupts the flow of time. When thrown, it will cause any object that it hits to hiccup backwards in time six seconds (1 round). If the target is a character, the last action performed will be undone and any effects of the action removed, including damage.
14	By explaining the true nature of matter, the equation allows the PC to become intangible for one round per level of the cypher. The character cannot interact physically with any matter and cannot be harmed by attacks other than Shadow attacks. Walls and doors may be passed through at a rate of three inches per round. Any living tissue trapped inside a solid object when the effect expires will be annihilated.
15	By affecting the nature of electrons, any significant electrical charge within short range is nullified. All electronics (including any robo characters or body parts) will be disabled completely for one round per level of the cypher.
16	Choose a small object within long range. After grasping a different small object in a closed fist, the mathemagician is able to launch into a frenzied and impossibly complex explanation of the probability of events and the nature of "everyday objects." After two rounds, roll a d6. On a result of 1-3 the object in the fist has vanished. On a result of 4-6 the two objects have switched places. In either case, the mathemagician will be unable to perform any actions for the next round due to fits of hysterical laughter.
17	The equation defines the structure of "random patterns" enabling the the mathemagician to guess any number correctly, up to 20 digits in length.
18	Chattering incessantly about "prime spirals" and blocks of color touching each other, the mathemagician can lead the group on a shortcut across the city. Any city district may be traveled to with only a single navigation check, regardless of distance (travel time is calculated normally depending on the distance).
19	Any object no larger than three feet square is made to shine brightly like a fluorescent light for 10 minutes per level of the cypher.
20	The patterns emerge from the chaos. By spending one hour sifting through information, the mathemagician can create a "file" on an individual that includes their probable location, profession, income, favorite hangouts, etc.

CHAPTER 21

ADVENTURES

SKY BOUND

And floating before her in the room was the prize. Perfectly still, as if suspended, held by a nonexistent thread; and then moving just slightly, barely, as if blown by a breath from a fictional mouth: a nightblack feather. The moon and the stars and all the planets known and unknown shimmered in the flight, waiting for a tongue to touch upon, a new galaxy to circle around.

Livia stepped closer, she reached out...

- Jeff Noon

This chapter contains four short adventures which are intended to introduce your group to the setting of Manchester and the Vurt. Players should be encouraged to create their own characters, but they are also free to make use of the pregenerated characters provided in the back of this book.

Each of the four adventures are broken up into sections which are intended to provide the information necessary to GM the adventure in useful bits, including supplemental information or characters which can be used to embellish the plot if necessary.

In the Vurt RPG, adventures often take place in both the real and Vurt worlds, combining the plots of real world characters and those of Vurt beings inside the Vurt. All these adventures begin in real-world Manchester and most lead into the Vurt at some point.

Remember that, as a GM, you are free to alter these adventures in any way you see fit—include NPCs of your own creation, feather trips from Chapter 16, sub-plots or side adventures that tie into a grand, over-arching campaign. If you'd like to invent your own cyphers, or locations, go for it!

Here is a brief explanation of the headings contained in each adventure:

Brief Summary. This "elevator pitch" description of the adventure will give you a quick overview of the plot of the adventure.

Details. This section offers more specific information on the goals, characters, and themes presented in the adventure.

Mood Suggestion. This section is intended to provide more atmospheric options for the GM, including comparisons to novels or films, suggested musical soundtracks, etc.

Salient Points. This is a simple bullet point list of the major background and end goal aspects of each adventure.

Starting Point. This section is often a location, but it always contains the most pertinent information for the PCs, and often contains passages intended to be read aloud by the GM.

The Wrap-Up. This section contains information on the conditions necessary to win the adventure, and the rewards commonly awarded to the PCs for their success.

Keys. These are objects or pieces of information that the PCs will need to collect to advance the adventure. Locations will be marked with matching symbols that indicate which of the keys exist at that location, to help the GM guide the flow of the story. This information should not be revealed to the PCs.

Map Locations. These are descriptions of the different areas of the adventure, as well as details about the NPCs, creatures, puzzles, riddles, and resources to be

found at each one. These are not necessarily always physical locations—they can sometimes represent specific points in the adventure narrative that require a key decision before proceeding. If there is the potential for combat at a location, the stats of the enemies located there will be listed at the bottom of the location box. Some NPCs may have a simple indication of their level in parentheses following their name in the description of the location, which can be used for combat, persuasion or other tasks, if it is unlikely (but not impossible) that they will be involved in combat.

GM Intrusion. Some locations include a suggestion for a GM intrusion that is specific to that location. These are of course, only suggestions; the GM should feel free to substitute their own intrusions as they see fit.

More Details. This section is a catchall for other information that may enhance the depth of experience and complexity of play, but that may not be absolutely necessary to complete the adventure.

Additional Locations. This section contains different information for different adventures. In some scenarios, PCs may want to purchase items or upgrade their equipment, but visiting a shop is not a requirement to complete the adventure, so such locations are listed here. In other scenarios, the map locations contain an open ended collection of locations that may be visited in any order. In this case, the final location or encounter necessary to complete the adventure will be located here.

Some adventures will also include play inside a Vurt feather that is unique to the adventure at hand. These unique feather trips will often be detailed as an "additional location."

Further Development. This section includes information that may add to the depth of the adventure. If a GM is looking to run a quick, uncomplicated game, they can easily disregard the information in this section

Using This In A Campaign. This section features details and further suggestions as to how a GM might use the adventure as a stepping-off point into a larger story arc, involving multiple adventures and long term narrative goals.

CRASH DRIVERS

BRIEF SUMMARY

PCs are out to obtain a copy of Crash Driver Black, a bootleg remake of a legendary, if now nearly impossible to obtain, blue feather. PCs must obtain a copy of the feather, retreat to their stash pad, and enter the dream. The PCs, however, aren't the only ones looking.

DETAILS

Everyone knows the legend, but not everyone knows the whole story. Forty years ago, a young punk Stash Rider named Scribble dreamed farther and deeper than nearly anyone before or since. His story and his legacy have left a mark across the Vurt world, the real world, and a few places in between. The original dream written about his exploits was a deep blue feather called "Crash Drivers," now seemingly lost in the march of time.

A few years ago, some intrepid dreamweaver rewrote it, forging a new dream from the scattered remains of the legend. This re-release has become a legend in its own right, being rewritten as an illegal black feather. It is in high demand, being sought after by Vurt-exploring outlaws and the law alike. All that is certain is that Crash Driver Black is a prize within a prize. Though the original blue feather is remembered fondly by many as a harmlessly fun time, the rewriting of the dream as a deadly black feather has made it a rite of passage for many Vurtnauts and featherheads. The potential for real world bodily harm to those bold enough to risk this dream has ensured that more than a few inpho beams have been tuned for it. Thankfully, the PC's source for the feather is trustworthy—they hope.

This feather also has a simulation of a Yellow feather experience, a section of the dream called "Singlish Hoodoo."

All real world locations in this adventure are in the Rusholme district of Manchester.

MOOD SUGGESTION

The real world locations reflect the gritty, grimy life in tomorrow's urban sprawl, but the Vurt feather experience is a bit campy and fun, reminiscent of early video games.

SALIENT POINTS

- PCs are looking to score an illegal bootleg Black version of a legendary blue feather.
- Completing the feather will give the PCs bragging rights and street cred.
- Other featherheads are also looking for this feather.
- The feather features a simulated Yellow feather experience (not a real Yellow feather).

STARTING POINT

The adventure begins in the real world, with the PCs waiting to get into the Slithy Tove, a popular Rusholme nightclub. They are there to meet with a contact, Fast Eddie, who might have a line on a Crash Driver Black feather. The PCs know Fast Eddie by reputation only.

The party begins this adventure with a pool of £100 cash, intended for the purchase of the bootleg feather within the adventure (not intended for character startup shopping).

THE WRAP-UP

The adventure ends when the PCs exit the Crash Driver Black feather and return to the real world.

KEYS

This adventure has three keys.

A lead on a copy of Crash Driver Black, or the feather itself.

A possible confrontation with a rival group of featherheads.

A safe place to take the feather.

LOCATIONS

THE SLITHY TOVE

The PCs should have no problem getting inside, as it's early in the evening and not yet too crowded. Their contact, Fast Eddie (level 4), is seated at a private booth just off the second-floor balcony. He is a slick roboman in a sharkskin suit, surrounded by several females of various modes and holding court over his small kingdom within the Tove.

Fast Eddie is friendly, but he is unknown to the PCs, and doesn't completely trust them. He is cautious and must be coaxed into revealing what he knows about Crash Driver Black. He doesn't respond well to threats or intimidation, and any attempt to employ these tactics reveals his two large hidden roboman bodyguards (level 4). They will attempt to counter-intimidate the PCs first, but they are prepared to fight. Persuasion is a better tack. If they gain his trust, he will reveal that he knows of two sources for Crash Driver Black in Rusholme: Auto-Matt and Mikey Kowsar.

Auto-Matt is a feather dealer who works out of the back of the White Bull, a smallish pub nearby. He is a fellow roboman, and may therefore not be so friendly to PCs with dog heritage.

Mikey Kowsar is a legitimate employee of a Vurt-U-Want who also happens to deal illegal feathers on the side. Fast Eddie has heard that Mikey may have a copy, but they are not on the best of terms, so Eddie isn't quite sure where to get a hold of Mikey, other than the Vurt-U-Want on Birch Hall Road.

GM INTRUSION: The DJ spins a particularly powerful bit of musickology: all PCs must succeed at a difficulty 3 Intellect task, or be compelled to dance for at least 20 minutes.

THE WHITE BULL

This pub is a neighborhood fixture, with a small dance floor and an even smaller coterie of locals. Posh Aiden, the bartender and owner, is a dapper dogman, meticulously groomed and attired. However, he is a tough customer beneath his slick veneer.

Auto-Matt, the roboman feather dealer, works out of the back of the White Bull. When the PCs find him, he is laying on the ground, bloodied and roughed up. He has just been robbed by a small company of thugs, who have stolen his money and his stock of feathers, including a copy of Crash Driver Black. The thugs took off down a nearby alley, and the PCs must succeed and 4 difficulty 3 Speed tasks to catch them.

If the PCs catch the thugs, they will discover that they are another bunch of featherheads, like the PCs, but with a few less scruples. These thugs are willing to do almost anything to be the first to find Crash Driver Black. This crew calls themselves the "Hard Corps."

They will fight if confronted by the PCs, but if one of their number falls in battle, the rest will flee, regrouping and returning to plague the PCs later. The GM should tailor their roster in this encounter to match the party: if there are only 3 PCs, pick 3 Hard Corpsmen, etc.

Posh Aiden: level 3; health 10; inflicts 6 points of damage with a shillelagh.

Auto-Matt: level 3; health 9; Armor 2 from light dermal plating; inflicts 4 points of damage with derringer pistol (2 shots); will flee any combat if possible and is quick to call the police.

The Hard Corps: see the More Details section, below, for NPC stats.

GM INTRUSION: An MPD patrol car happens upon the featherheads mid battle, and everyone must scatter, to regroup later.

BIRCH HALL VURT-U-WANT

Mikey is not actually working tonight, but Winston (level 3, level 4 against intimidation), the clerk on duty can supply the PCs with a featherphone number, if the PCs can persuade him nicely. Winston is a cowardly man and a straight-shooter, and wants nothing to do with illegal feather deals. If the PCs threaten him, he will clam up and attempt to call the police. If they treat him nicely and don't mention illegal activity, the PCs have a chance to persuade him to give up the contact info for Mikey, and he will happily sell the PCs a PDF so that they may make the call.

GM INTRUSION: A robocrusty tries to mug the PCs right outside the store. If the PCs kill the would-be mugger where Winston can see, all social interactions with him increase one step in difficulty.

MIKEY'S FEATHERPHONE

Mikey (level 3) is easy to deal with, but may not want to sell to strangers. He can be persuaded to meet the PCs for a feather deal, but the persuasion task will be one step more difficult if the PCs mention Fast Eddie in their conversation. If the PCs can persuade Mikey to deal with them, he will quote them the price of £100, and will agree to meet the PCs at the parking lot of the Whoompy's Burger on Meldon Rd.

WHOOMPY'S

Mikey picked Whoompy's as a meeting place because their policy of free food for cops ensures that there are always at least two or three cops inside, providing free security for Whoompy's (and Mikey).

WHOOMPY'S BURGER ON MELDON RD

Mikey (level 3) shows up a half an hour after he told the PCs to expect him. He apologizes for the delay, but he was forced to take an alternate route to ditch someone following him. Now fearing for his safety, he tries to renegotiate the price with the PCs, asking for 10% more. PCs can attempt to negotiate him down to 5%.

The people following Mikey were the Hard Corps, another group of featherheads that are also looking for the street cred that comes with finding and taking Crash Driver Black. If the PCs went to Auto-Matt first, the Hard Corps are looking to mug Mikey and take the feather. If the PCs encountered the Hard Corps at the White Bull, they are looking to sabotage the PCs' efforts with Mikey.

The Hard Corps crew will show up a few minutes after Mikey. If the PCs have already made the deal, Mikey proceeds directly inside the Whoompy's. If the deal is done quickly, the PCs may part with the feather before the Hard Corps shows up. If the deal takes too long, the Hard Corps shows up during negotiations. Mikey will visibly hand the PCs the package and walk inside the Whoompy's, telling the PCs they owe him, leaving them to deal with each other. Mikey will immediately direct the cops inside to investigate the "gang battle" outside. Whatever happens, Mikey urges the PCs not to open the package out in the open.

Whoompy's Cops: level 5; health 10; Armor 2; inflicts 3 points of damage with stun stick which also increases the difficulty of Speed based tasks by one step during the next turn, or 8 points of damage with a flame pistol.

The Hard Corps: see the More Details section, below, for NPC stats.

GM INTRUSION: The PCs picked a bad night at Whoompy's: there are six cops there tonight, instead of the usual two or three.

RUMBLE WITH THE HARD CORPS

This encounter is not linked to a specific location. The Hard Corps may have previously escaped with the feather, and the PCs managed to track them down to retrieve it. Perhaps it was the PCs that had previously escaped with the feather, and the Hard Corps had tracked them down. A third possibility might be that this encounter happens after the PCs have completed the feather-trip, and the Hard Corps are out to get the PCs for beating them to it. However it plays out, it still amounts to a final confrontation between the two groups. See More Details section, below, for NPC stats.

GM INTRUSION: This battle attracts the attention of police patrol car (same stats as Whoompy's Cops, above).

THE STASH-PADS AND CRASH PADS

When the party makes it back to their stash-pad, allow them time to prepare their own crash pads: comfortable places for their bodies to rest while their minds travel the Vurt. They should also want to secure all the doors and windows, making sure nothing can sneak up on them while they lay unresponsive.

This is a good time for the GM to remind the players of the rules of playing black feathers, and to have them make their recovery rolls and gather any cyphers they may want to bring into the feather with them.

GM INTRUSION: The landlord is at the PCs' pad, waiting for them and the rent. The PCs had better not let the landlord see the illegal black feather.

MORE DETAILS

THE HARD CORPS:

This rival gang of featherheads is quite a motley crew, and they have a nasty reputation for doing any dirty deed necessary to get what they want. There are several possibilities for confrontation between the PCs and the Hard Corps, and they may even clash more than once. Most of the Hard Corps are unremarkable street punks, but there are a few characters in their roster that stand out. Teddy Boy is their leader, and should be present at the final confrontation, at least. The GM should feel free to add one of the various lieutenants below to add depth or challenge to a battle. Any encounter with the Hard Corps will feature at least one of the unique characters below, plus 5 to 7 grunts.

Teddy Boy (Leader): level 3; health 11; inflicts 4 points of damage with a cricket bat. With his pompadour, frock coat and bolo tie, he cuts a dashing figure as he tries to dash out your brains.

Dwayne Digit: level 2; health 5; inflicts 4 points of damage with a cheap pistol (25% chance the weapon explodes after each shot fired). Dwayne is a nerdy roboman admin in an anorak; he controls two level 1 blurbs, each equipped with a stinger that inflicts 1 damage.

Roughshod: level 2; health 7; Armor 1 (ballistic skin); inflicts 4 points of damage with his bite, or 3 points of short range damage with built-in shock nodes. Roughshod's a rough and rugged robodog, ready to rumble.

Klaus: level 2; health 8; inflicts 4 points of damage with his bare fists. Klaus U-type. Speak little. Klaus smash!

Cassandra: level 2; health 5; Armor 1 (mathemagickal ward); inflicts 4 points of damage with a knife, or 5 points of damage with a mathemagickal lance attack once per encounter (immediate range, ignores armor). This sexy, smoky mathemagician is a deadly threat.

Grunt: level 1; health 3; inflicts 4 points of damage with various light melee weapons.

ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS

CRASH DRIVER BLACK: INSIDE THE FEATHER

INTRODUCTION:

A rolling crawl of text appears in front of the PCs. It reads:

CRASH DRIVERS

Episode IV: Bootleg Dreams

Shona, Scratch's sister, has been caught in Metaland, swapped for a lump of lard alien. Your job is to get Shona back to base Earth. Of course that's virtually impossible; nobody's managed it before. Still you can't stop trying anyway, because of the deep love. Then there's the fact that the evil she-cop Moloch is after you. For putting scratches in her face, no less. It's a hard life, and most probably you're going to die. Be very, very careful. This ride is not for the weak. It's a bit psycho. A bit like real life. Well maybe not quite that bad.

Wendy comes out of the all-night Vurt-U-Want, clutching a bag of goodies...

The caption fades away, and one of the dreamers finds herself walking out of a brightly lit doorway, into a parking lot, holding a bag. The rest of the gang is in the parked van on the other side of the lot, waiting for her. In the middle of the dreamers, squirming on the floor, is the Thing-From-Outer-Space, or "TFOS" for short.

TFOS

TFOS squirms and writhes and babbles to itself in a nonsensical syllable salad, but it doesn't appear at all threatening. It is translucent green, gelatinous and vaguely tubular, with ropey, smooth tentacles and oddly sized orifices randomly appearing and disappearing anywhere on its body. It will react when touched, but only to momentarily speak more loudly and wiggle a bit faster.

The "bag of goodies" contains a bunch of large feather-shaped keys, in the exaggerated style of a 1980s video game, including a Yellow key labeled "Singlish Hoodoo." The dreamers must carry this Yellow feather-key back to their stash-pad and use it to complete the mission. Other feather-keys in the bag are labeled with the titles of various well-known Blue and Black Vurt feathers, but they serve no purpose within this dream.

When the dreamer with the bag gets halfway across the parking lot, a shadowcop peels away from one of the exterior walls of the store, flashing inpho beam beams at the van. Two fleshcops exit the store and slowly chase after the dreamers. The cops' movements appear stiff and mechanical, like the animatronic animals on an amusement park ride. As the dreamers shut the doors on the van, the cops outside start calling: *"Officer Moloch! Officer Moloch!"*

From behind the Vurt-U-Want emerges Officer Moloch—a huge, hulking fleshcop with a hideously scarred face. She pulls her weapon and points it at the van *"I've got you!"* she screams, and pulls the trigger. Bullets slam into the side of the van. *Real* bullets. This feather just stopped playing around.

The windshield lights up with the words "HURRY, CRASH DRIVERS, BACK TO THE PAD IN BOTTLETOWN!" then quickly fades away. A flashing

green arrow appears on the street in front of the van. The street ahead is dotted with brightly lit signs for all-night Vurt-U-Wants, drip feed terminals, Pornovurt theaters, and nightclubs.

VURTCHESTER GRAND PRIX

This is not a true navigation, but a simplified driving simulation. There are no turns onto other streets, but they must negotiate several obstacles, similar to early video game driving sims. The driver must roll a d6 10 times, each time generating one of the following obstacles or effects:

1. Narrow opening ahead: Thread the needle!
2. Stopped car ahead: Swerve to miss it!
3. A car tries to pass you: Cut it off!
4. Pedestrians in zebra zones (crosswalks): Don't hit the peddies!
5. Flashing Blue Wrench: Repair 10 points!
6. Flashing Yellow Star: Invincible! (No damage on next obstacle only.)

Obstacles 1-4 on the above list will require a Speed task (difficulty 2). Simple failure means the van sustains 5 points of collision damage. A catastrophic failure on a driving task results in double collision damage. The van will absorb 20 points of damage, and all damage in excess of 20 is equally distributed to all dreamers.

After all 10 obstacles, the van will smash through a barrier and jump an unfinished bridge, landing in Bottletown and sending glass flying everywhere. This is an automatic, cutscene-style occurrence, and neither requires a roll nor counts against the van's damage.

PEDESTRIANS

Strange creatures walk these Vurt streets: a large dogman walking a tiny pure human on a leash; an 18-inch roboman body with a five foot tall head supporting seven-foot prehensile droidlocks; and a dazed crusty with a yard-long feather protruding from his mouth, etc.

VURTCHESTER: BOTTLETOWN

This is much like the real world Bottletown, except the buildings here are bottle-shaped. One bottle building bears a neon sign that reads "HOME." A block of text appears, floating in front of the dreamers: "GET TFOS UPSTAIRS, INTO YOUR PAD!"

Waiting in front of the building is a small gang of droidlocked robomen (one per dreamer). From a distance, the robomen seem unarmed. As the dreamers approach, however, the droidlocks begin moving on their own. Some reaching down to the ground like spiders' legs to lift the dangling robomen. Some start whipping and striking at the dreamers. If the PCs choose to simply run past the gang members, they will disappear once all the PCs have made it onto the stairs, but the PCs should not be made aware of this ahead of time.

Robomen: level 2; health 6; the groggy robomen themselves inflict no damage, though they do swipe at the PCs, ineffectively, with their bare hands.

Droidlocks: level 4; health 2; inflict 4 points of damage with their sharpened tips. Each roboman is connected to many droidlocks, and two from each host may strike at a PC in a round. Severing a droidlock only allows another to take its place, but killing the roboman effectively kills all the droidlocks attached to it.

SECOND FLOOR:

The dreamers climb the stairs to the second floor and run into another encounter, this time with three shadowgoths. Just before combat begins, the three shadowgoths begin to twist and writhe with smoke. This seems like normal Shadow behavior, until they dissolve into three shadowgoth-shaped, smoky towers of purple and green, collapsing onto the floor and separating into nine dreamsnakes. Dreamers may simply run through the swarm rather than fight, though this will automatically incur 1-3 bites per dreamer. One more staircase leads up to the third floor, and apartment 3D.

Dreamsnakes (9): level 2, initiative rolls and defense against ranged attacks as level 5; health 3; inflicts 2 points of damage with their bite.

HOME AGAIN, HOME AGAIN, JIGGITY-JIG

Once inside apartment 3D, the PCs are encouraged to take a rest, recovering what pool points they can before proceeding. There is little of value or interest in the pad, other than a chest of drawers. Inside the drawers are glass vials with green liquid. There is one bottle per PC, and they are all labeled "DRINK ME." Drinking a vial will restore 6 points to their Might Pool. After their recovery, a glowing door appears in the center of the room, emblazoned with the words "SINGLISH HOODOO." An oversized keyhole sits below the doorknob, just the right size for the Yellow feather-key. When they insert the correct feather-key into the keyhole and turn it, the apartment fades away from view.

SINGLISH HOODOO

The dreamers find themselves in an quintessential English garden. Soft breezes blow through the leaves of green trees, wildflowers overflow their raised beds, and a curving brick-lined path leads you to a large open area centered around a babbling fountain. As they approach the fountain, a purple robed and hooded figure sprouts out of the ground, on top of a very short pedestal. The figure removes its robe to reveal a beautiful human-like woman with yellow eyes.

"My name is Shona. Welcome to Singlish Hoodoo." She looks at each of the dreamers in turn as she riddles:

"Of no use to one
Yet absolute bliss to two.
The small boy gets it for nothing.
The young man has to lie for it.
The old man has to buy it.
The baby's right,
The lover's privilege,
The hypocrite's mask.
To the young girl, faith;
To the married woman, hope;
To the old maid, charity.
What am I?"

The answer to the riddle is: "a kiss," and one of the dreamers must now kiss Shona. Merely speaking the answer only makes Shona smile. When Shona has been kissed, she steps off the pedestal and leads TFOS to take her place. The word "CONGRATULATIONS!" appears above TFOS, accompanied by "fireworks" of exploding flowers.

Apartment 3D

The dreamers "awaken," not in the real world, but in the apartment of the dream. Moloch, a fleshcop, and a shadowcop are waiting for the dreamers. Fortunately, Shona has come with the dreamers, back to Apartment 3D, and she will fight on the side of the dreamers.

When Moloch and the cops are defeated, the word "CONGRATULATIONS!" appears before the dreamers. The dream fades to black and the PCs awaken in their own stash-pad, groggy and tingly, having earned an additional 2 XP for completing the feather, along with full bragging rights and street cred.

Moloch: level 4; health 12; Armor 1; inflicts 8 points of damage with a flame pistol.

Fleshcop: level 3; health 9; inflicts 4 points of damage with a nightstick (cudgel).

Shadowcop: level 3; health 9; inflicts 4 points of damage with a nightstick, or 6 points of damage with "inpho beams" from its eyes (once per encounter).

Shona: level 4; health 12; Armor 1; inflicts 8 points of damage with a glowing golden sword that she seems to draw from nowhere.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Rumors persist that the Game Cat himself is interested in this feather, and is either searching for a real-world copy, or is lurking inside the feather, looking for something special in the Vurt. Even if the rumors aren't true, there might be many more people looking for the feather than just the Hard Corps crew.

USING THIS IN A CAMPAIGN

The Hard Corps crew are not fanatics, and they will most likely attempt to flee from battle if a few of their numbers fall. Those that escape could return to pester the PCs later, adding to both their numbers and individual abilities as the PCs progress.

DOWN THE BOTTLE IN ONE SHOT

BRIEF SUMMARY

The PCs have been hired by a small Vurt feather production company to steal a document file from a rival feather production company. The location of this file is a closely guarded secret that is buried deep in a Securivurt feather. The physical feather is stored in a secret facility.

DETAILS

A small Vurt feather production company, Oneiro Quills, is producing some of the hottest new feathers to hit the market. Unfortunately, their groundbreaking and popular work still has trouble competing with the name recognition and infrastructure of their biggest rival, Gimble Incorporated. Determined to level the playing field, O.Q. and has hired the PCs for some industrial espionage: they are to steal a document file called "The Madonna Dossier." The PCs are not told what is in the file, only that they must steal it from Gimble.

The dossier is being stored in a Securivurt—a Tulgey Woods Black feather. This particular Securivurt feather also generally requires two passwords to bypass the Vurt-based security, once inside the feather. Gimble is not keeping this feather in their well-known corporate offices, but in a little-known secure location in Bottletown.

Gimble's secret location in Bottletown is known as "Ginnelgaff." This is Gimble's headquarters for black-market operations, including the distribution of illegal black feathers (like Tulgey Woods Black). Gimble's employs the Torchers street gang as distributors of their black market products and as outside security for Ginnelgaff, preferring to not have a paper trail to police or known private security firms for this facility.

Oneiro Quills has paid a high price to discover the existence of Ginnelgaff, but cannot expose it to the authorities at large without exposing themselves and their own less-than-legal activities. Regardless, they are counting on the PC's discretion in obtaining the Madonna Dossier. O.Q. has their own contacts within the Mancunian underworld, and these contacts have led

TULGEY WOODS BLACK

This job requires the PCs to retrieve information from within a Securivurt feather. This adventure, however, only contains the details necessary to retrieve the physical feather itself. Please consult the description of Tulgey Woods Black (page 277) for more details about the environment within the feather.

them to Reggie Williams. A barfly who frequents the Slithy Tove, questioning him is an excellent way for the PCs to start. O.Q. wants nothing to trace back to them, and if any of the PCs are caught or killed, the company will disavow any knowledge of their actions.

MOOD SUGGESTION

"Down the Bottle in One Shot" is an industrial espionage thriller requiring subtlety, finesse, and stealth skills more than brute force. This pursuit of information will lead the PCs from the gang-ridden streets of Rusholme into terrifying areas of the Vurt world.

SALIENT POINTS

- The PCs have been hired to retrieve a document file hidden inside a Securivurt.
- The Securivurt is contained in a feather stored at Ginnelgaff, Gimble's secret black market facility in Bottletown.
- The Torchers street gang provides external security for Ginnelgaff.
- The PCs must gain access to the Securivurt without Gimble being aware of the incursion, so the feather must be copied or replaced with a facsimile.
- In addition to the physical feather, there are two passwords that make accessing the Securivurt less hazardous. These are also to be found in Ginnelgaff.

STARTING POINT

The PCs begin their adventure by contacting Reggie Williams, whom O.Q. has on retainer for information. He can be found at the Slithy Tove.

The Slithy Tove is a well-known nightclub that also happens to be a favorite hangout of both gangs, and is seen as neutral territory. The vast nightclub, like most of Rusholme, is patronized heavily by people with at least some dog heritage, so a roboman might not find it the most welcoming place.

The PC's contact from Oneiro Quills has already told Reggie to expect someone, though for security reasons, he has not told Reggie why. Reggie may be a washed-up foppish lush, but he's still very shrewd, and O.Q. doesn't trust him any more than they trust anyone else. The PCs will start at the Slithy Tove, getting information from Reggie, but the direction of the adventure beyond that is entirely up to the PCs.

REGGIE WILLIAMS

Any PC trained in Rusholme or Underworld history may also know him by an old nickname "The Marrowbone Jelly Dodger," for his doggy habit of constantly gnawing and sucking on a bone. The abandoned nickname is a source of embarrassment for him, reminding him not only of his previous gang affiliation, but also of his previous weight problem. He used to run with the rough-and-tumble Torchers, but is currently trying to convince a parole officer that he is "going straight." He has shifted his underworld interests from violence and petty larceny to information brokerage, making his underworld experience and network of contacts available to the highest bidder.

Reggie Williams: *level 4; health 12; Armor 2 (concealed Light vest); inflicts 4 points of damage with a switchblade; competent in intelligence gathering and burglary; has many contacts.*

THE WRAP-UP

The PCs must somehow gain access to Gimble's Ginnelgaff facility, and secure the Securivurt feather and the passwords, preferably without Gimble becoming aware of the incursion. If they secure the feather (or gain access to it), the PCs will receive 3 XP, with the understanding that accessing the Tulgey Woods Black Securivurt to retrieve the file will earn them another 3XP each, and allow them to get paid.

KEYS

This adventure has four keys.

Details about Ginnelgaff's location and physical security.

Details about the nature of the Tulgey Woods Black Securivurt.

Information or techniques to gain access to the Securivurt without Gimble becoming aware of the incursion.

The Securivurt feather itself.

MAP & LOCATIONS

THE SLITHY TOVE

The Slithy Tove in Rusholme is a sprawling club complex of dance floors, bars, VIP lounges, and dark corners, where many a shady deal goes down. The PCs must navigate through the crush to find one of the relatively quiet side bars, where Reggie Williams is waiting for them.

Reggie will play his cards close to the vest around the PCs: he will answer questions, but he will not volunteer information. He will also skirt around any direct references to illegal activity until he is sure he can trust the PCs. Reggie is also susceptible to seduction or bribery (especially with drink and drugs), and either one of these tactics will lower his guard.

Reggie will direct the PCs to Jaffa Jake on all matters regarding Ginnelgaff, and to Manchester Terry on all matters relating to the Securivurt itself, or Vurt feathers in general. Reggie will still expect to get his snout wet for the referrals.

Jaffa Jake (dogman gangster, level 2) is sitting alone, nursing a pint in a dark corner of the club. He wears the tracksuit and gold chains typical of the Torchers, but he seems as uncomfortable in his gangster clothes as he does in his own skin and droopy jowls. Jake owes a debt to a robo gangster, and wants to clear it without his Torcher pack mates knowing about it. Jake will tell the PCs the location of the Ginnelgaff facility, as well as the security details he knows about the building, if the PCs agree to steal a box of black feathers from the warehouse when they break in. The feathers in question are hard for the robo gangs to acquire, as the dog gangs usually shun any direct business with them. If the PCs agree to the additional theft, see the Ginnelgaff Map Locations, below, for specific information.

Manchester Terry can be found at his office in Rusholme the morning after the PCs meet Reggie.

GM INTRUSION: A pure robo enforcer (level 3), for the robo gangster to whom Jaffa owes money, arrives. They assume the PCs are trying to help Jake cheat their Boss. The party must convince him otherwise without drawing attention.

MANCHESTER TERRY'S OFFICE

Terry (dogmanvurt level 5) has an office in Rusholme. The office is decorated with various framed feathers, a modest feather-editing setup, and Terry's private collection of Miskel. Terry's dog heritage is Manchester Terrier, but his yellow eyes also hint at a touch of the Vurt. Terry always wears an old-fashioned waistcoat and shirtsleeves. He helped Gimble set up their Securivurt, but was then suddenly cut from the payroll. He now has a bit of an axe to grind.

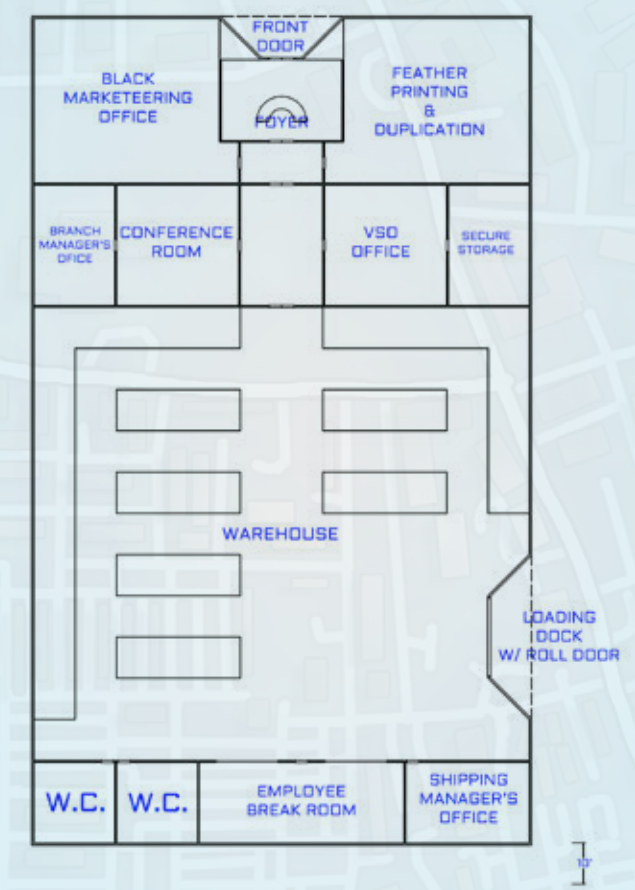
Terry suggests two methods for stealing the feather without Gimble knowing about it. The first method requires PCs to leave a different Black feather in the vault, which will delay Gimble's discovery by a few hours. The second method requires PCs to purchase a special Xtrovurt machine from Terry, which has been modified to read a feather's information without creaming it. The PCs can then break in, read Gimble's feather, and return with the machine. Terry will then use the data to imprint a generic copy of Tulgey Woods Black with Gimble's Securivurt's specific Vurt address, allowing the PCs to access it at their leisure. The first option requires no money, but has a time constraint; the second requires the PCs to spend their own money, but allows them more time after the break-in.

GM INTRUSION: Outside of Terry's office, an eight-year-old pure human pickpocket (level 3), is caught stealing a cypher (choose one) from one of the PCs. The street-kid is going to scream and draw attention if scared by the PCs. Either the PCs let her escape with the cypher she stole, or do something about it.

GINNELGAFF (OVERVIEW)

The Ginnelgaff facility lies deep in the dregs of Bottletown. A narrow area immediately outside the large warehouse doors is clear of glass, but most of the rest of the area surrounding the building is covered in broken glass.

The Torchers have blurbfly admins patrolling the skies around Ginnelgaff in shifts, controlled from the back of a van parked across the street. Jaffa Jake suggests to the PCs that they attempt their break-in during Denny Diptera's graveyard shift (midnight to 6am). A Boomer addiction has made Denny increasingly unreliable. The internal Gimble's security night watchman, Frank Walsh, has been derelict in his duties lately—he has been sneaking out of the building to meet with a local cocktail waitress, and usually leaves at 3 am for at least an hour.



THE SKIES ABOVE GINNELGAFF

Denny Diptera the admin (level 3) pulls his graveyard shift of blurbfly aerial patrol from the back of a van parked across the street from the building. His blurbs continuously orbit the building, spotting any movement within 200 feet. Various crusties and drunkards plow through the glass-drifts at all hours, so Denny will usually ignore any characters who successfully appear drunk (bluffing or other Intellect task, difficulty 3). He may shoo away any vagrants who loiter near the van, but he has been known to leave them alone if they share a nip of their hooch.

If a blurb is damaged, he will send the other two to investigate before leaving the van himself. Jaffa Jake suggests posing as a vagrant and plying Denny with spiked Boomer, or attacking a blurb as a distraction, entering the building from the opposite side when the other blurbs go to investigate.

Denny's Blurbs (3): level 1, Speed defense as level 3 due to small size; health 3; these blurbs inflict no damage.

GM INTRUSION: An actual drunken vagrant (level 2) tries to pick a fight with the PCs.

GINNELGAFF BUILDING EXTERIOR

There are only two ground entrances to this windowless building: the front door and the loading dock roll-door. The roll-door power switch is inside. The front door requires a magnetic keycard. This can be hacked, but it is mounted in full view of the foyer. Smashing the glass door or catastrophic failure while hacking the lock will summon the Security Response Team (SRT), and alert the guard behind the front desk.

There is the possibility of entering through the ventilation system on the roof. This would require a climb up a 20-foot tall sheer wall, a difficulty 3 Intellect task to determine the point of entry, and a series of Intellect, Might, and Speed tasks to navigate the ducts, pry open a vent, and drop 18 feet to the floor below. A skillful admin could pilot a blurb through the ducts and disarm security from the front desk, provided they were on the roof. There are no security measures in the ventilation system.

GM INTRUSION: Two drunken ruffians (level 2) interrupt the PCs while they are trying to hack the door-lock or climb the walls.

INSIDE THE BUILDING

Jaffa Jake has no knowledge of the inside layout of the building, though all doors inside are clearly labeled. If the PCs agreed to also steal a box of black feathers for Jake, they can find them in the warehouse. Particularly clever PCs may intentionally disturb the warehouse goods, to distract from the Securivurt theft. They can also find a generic copy of the Securivurt, if they wish to leave a decoy in the vault.

The safe containing the feather is inside the secure storage room, behind a level 3 electronic lock. The safe is small but dense, with a level 3 old-fashioned combination lock. Removing the safe from the building would definitely alert Gimble's Vurt Security to a problem. Everything else in the vault and secure storage is electronic or paper information storage.

The PCs can search the Vurt Security Officer's (VSO) office for the passwords to the Securivurt. This will be a difficulty 4 Intellect task, with each search attempt requiring five minutes. Tossing the office can decrease this difficulty by one step, but this will increase the likelihood that their efforts are discovered later. A simple success of this task will yield a Cartographer's Note with one password, a minor effect yielding a cartographer's note with both passwords, and a major effect of this search would be to find the mathemagickal formula used to generate additional cartographer's notes and passwords.

GM INTRUSION: The robodog janitor (level 2) comes to clean the building while the PCs are there.

FOYER

Frank Walsh is usually a competent security guard. As a Dodo, he cannot be distracted by a Vurt, and Frank has no substance abuse problems. His only weakness is sex: he has been carrying on an illicit affair with a cocktail waitress months now, and he has been bribing Denny to look the other way while he spends an hour or so with her. The bar where she works is a favorite of Jaffa Jake's. Jake assures the PCs that Frank takes at least an hour in the waitress' flat. His certainty about the timing definitely gave the PCs the creeps.

If the PCs break in while he is still there, he is a formidable fighter, as well as being quite quick to call the SRT. He performs regular building walkthroughs, but he will not leave the building to investigate. He will call Denny first, then the SRT, as needed.

Frank Walsh: level 4; health 12; inflicts 8 points of damage with a flame pistol (ignores first two points of Armor), or 3 points of damage with a stun-stick which also increases the difficulty of Speed-based tasks by one step during the next turn.

GM INTRUSION: Frank comes back earlier than expected from his tryst.

MORE DETAILS

There are several options for GM intrusions in any of the Ginnelgaff locations: Frank the Guard may come back from his tryst early, Denny may see past the distraction or become otherwise aware of a problem and alert the Security Response Team. The SRT itself may randomly stop by, checking up on Denny, etc.

Chapter 16: Feather Trips, page 250

When the PCs have recovered Gimble's Tulgey Woods Black feather, they begin operating on a shortened timeline. If the PCs leave any trace of their break-in for Frank to find, he will alert Gimble's physical security, and he will call Gimble's Vurt security if there are any signs of intrusion into the Vurt security officer's office, or the secure storage room.

When evidence of the theft of the feather is discovered by Gimble's, they will immediately begin the process of trying to recover their data from the Vurt. They will begin by trying to change the passwords. They will next attempt to change the Vurt address of their Securivurt, making the stolen feather merely a doorway to an empty vault. They cannot, however, change the passwords or the address while it is being actively engaged (even by the PCs). If Gimble cannot change these, their next step is to send the Vurt security team into the feather, along with an operative to upload all files from the cabin for transfer to another address. See "Inside Gimble's Securivurt" for more details (below).

Leaving the building could potentially be another hurdle for the PCs, depending on how they disposed of Frank the guard and Denny the admin. The GM should not forget them. Furthermore, even if the PCs have not failed any tasks during the break-in, and none of the graveyard shift security team discovered any sign of their activities, the PCs have two further possible deadlines before which they must recover the data from the cabin. At 6 a.m. the morning shift comes on duty, and they perform a full walkthrough. At 9 a.m. the Vurt security officer gets into her office, and her duties require her to routinely enter the Securivurt for her own walkthrough. If the PCs have been trying to cover their tracks, and they have not accessed the feather before these times, each PC must perform a difficulty 4 Intellect task. Simple failure means that evidence of a break-in was detected, while catastrophic failure means that evidence was discovered that may lead investigators specifically to the PCs. Of course, if the feather is no longer in the safe when the Vurt security officer attempts to do her Vurt walkthrough, no roll is necessary.

ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS

INSIDE GIMBLE'S SECURIVURT

A full description of the environment of Tulgey Woods Black can be found in Chapter 16. There are, however, a few details that apply to the feather in the context of this adventure. To begin with, the walkthrough password must be spoken aloud to the first creature the PCs encounter, even if the creature has initiated a sneak attack. The creature, and all others, will immediately stop attacking. If, however, creatures disarmed by the password are then attacked by the dreamers, the walkthrough password's power is nullified, and creatures will behave normally.

As outlined above, Gimble's may send a Vurt Security Team into their iteration to recover the data and/or intercept the intruders. Their front-line Vurt shocktroopers are a grotesque pair of vurtshadow twins known by their codenames: "Tweedle-Deep" and "Tweedle-Dark" They have the special ability to navigate the Tulgey Woods directly, by-passing the random nature of the pathways that are normally the only travel option available to dreamers. They will use this ability to immediately proceed to the Cabin, moving directly through the undergrowth of

THE TORCHERS' SECURITY RESPONSE TEAM

Torchers Gang Members (6): level 3; health 9; Armor 2; four inflict 4 points of damage, 2 with melee weapons, 2 with ranged weapons, and the last two inflict 8 points of damage with ranged weapons.

the forest, taking the Vurt Security Officer with them. Their mission is to enter the Cabin, allow the VSO to extract all data, and then leave the feather, destroying the iteration behind them. Their secondary mission is to engage any intruders. Their priority is to use their Shadow abilities to keep intruders from jerking out, and extract any information that may lead to their apprehension in the real world. They are authorized to kill intruders, but are discouraged from doing so. They are, however, particularly blood-thirsty, and the death or departure of the VSO will almost certainly give them reason enough to kill the PCs, as painfully and horrifically as possible.

The Tweedle twins also have the ability to disengage the anti-attack passwords while within the Vurt, but they leave this option as a last resort, as the creatures inside will not differentiate between friend or foe, once unleashed. If at all possible, the twins should speak in rhymed couplets, though this is at the discretion of the GM

Tweedle Twins: level 5; health 15; inflict 8 points of damage with their claws or 4 points with their teeth. Once per encounter, each Tweedle Twin will extend their Shadow into the mind of a target. A failed mental defense roll inflicts 4 points of Intellect damage and paralyzes the target completely. On subsequent turns, the Tweedle Twin can sustain the effect, inflicting 4 points of damage each time, until the target succeeds at a mental defense roll. Any successful attack on the Tweedle Twin will instantly end this effect.

Diana Glabro, Vurt Security Officer: level 5; health 16; inflicts 8 points of damage with her Vorpal sword. Once damage is inflicted by this sword, the target suffers 1 additional point of damage on each subsequent turn, until a recovery roll is made or some other type of healing task performed. While in the Vurt, Diana can heal 2 points of health every turn in addition to her normal action.

GM INTRUSION: Either or both of the passwords have been changed in the time between the burglary and entering the feather. The Tweedle Twins and Diana Glabro would most likely know the new one, though they would choose to disable and enable passwords strategically, using the feather environment to soften up the PCs before directly attacking,

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Regardless of any evidence of Securivurt theft, any evidence of physical break-in will mobilize Gimble's private security forces. It will require at least 24 hours of investigation on their part to physically track down the PCs, if the PCs were not careful during the break-in, or if they are not careful with their words after the fact. This could lead to many intrigue- or action-packed sessions of gameplay, outside the scope of this adventure.

USING THIS IN A CAMPAIGN

Once inside the Cabin of Secrets, the PCs may discover other dossiers or information that they could steal, leading the PCs to extort Gimble's on threat of exposing them, or to attempt to sell those secrets to O.Q. or another feather production company altogether.

Of course, Gimble's will not take kindly to their being either physically infiltrated or extorted (or both), and this is only the branch headquarters of a much larger company, with resources and reach that could follow the PCs for quite a while, both in the real world and the Vurt.

What O.Q. actually intends to do is to recruit away the dreamweaver of the Quixote series, Lakshmi Madonna. Lakshmi Madonna is a very private person, not allowing her actual name or contact information to be known to the general public. Currently, the only way to get in touch with Lakshmi is through Gimble, and they seem to keep her under an inordinately secretive security blanket. Upon completion of the mission, the PCs could be further tasked by Oneiro Quills with following through on the information they obtained in the Madonna Dossier, actively seeking out Lakshmi Madonna.

At the GM's discretion, it may also turn out that Oneiro Quills never actually hired the PCs at all, and Gimble's pulled a Slugworth on them: they were hired as a blind test of Gimble's security. The PCs may be then be tasked with closing the security breaches, including dealing with Manchester Terry, Jaffa Jake, and/or their entire gang network.

SUGGESTED CYPHERS:

- Cartographer's Note: containing either or both of the passwords for the Gimble's Securivurt
- Blurb hackcontroller: for breaking into Ginnelgaff
- Boomer: for bribery
- Computermite Mound: for hacking physical security at Ginnelgaff
- Kirby Grip: for opening locks
- Unsolved equation: for cryptographically generating a working password for the Securivurt
- Vaz®: for pretty much any task (not to be used for illegal activity)

THE FEATHER FORGE

BRIEF SUMMARY

Mystery, murder, and a missing dreamweaver intertwine in this adventure, taking the PCs through the shadows and back alleys of the real world, leading them to a new and unique corner of the Vurt world. PCs must follow clues and rumors that will eventually lead them to the workshop of the legendary dreamweaver Icarus Wing, and beyond.

DETAILS

This adventure has two plotlines that intersect at multiple points. The first plot assumes the PCs are featherheads, and has them tracking down a feather. The second assumes the PCs are investigators (private or police), and has them tracking a string of murders. The GM can have the PCs follow either, or both. There are ample reasons for everyone to get involved.

The legendary dreamweaver Icarus Wing has disappeared, and the rumor is that it has something to do with his latest feather, rumored to be a Yellow. This Yellow feather is now being sought after by featherheads all over the city, but the PCs may actually have a drop on the competition. One of the PCs' feather suppliers, Auto-Matt, always seems to have Icarus' feathers before everyone else, and the PCs are betting that he might know something. The PCs are off to the White Bull Pub in Rusholme to talk to Auto-Matt.

In an alley across the street from the White Bull Pub, Manchester PD are investigating a gruesome murder. It looks more like a wild animal attack than your average street crime, and there are other, stranger pieces to the mystery, as well.

What the PCs don't know is how these two things are related. Unbeknownst to the world, Icarus Wing created the Yellow feather "Wax Wings" to intentionally and permanently transfer himself into the Vurt world. His goal was to create a secret place within the Vurt to create more powerful feathers and other objects for an as yet unknown purpose. Unfortunately, Icarus' permanent move to the Vurt has unwittingly released a mysterious Vurt creature onto the streets of Rusholme, who has inadvertently been behind a rash of killings. The thing from Wax Wings— hereafter known as "The Monster"—has been hiding, terrified, in back alleys, disguised as a human and searching for a safe haven or a way back to the Vurt.

The Monster has been drawn to large concentrations of feathers that were made by Icarus Wing: it can feel the the dreamweaver's influence in these feathers, and has been drawn to them, hoping to find a way back home. Unfortunately, feather-crazed crusties can sense the unusually powerful Vurt nature of this creature and attack it, attempting to eat its pure Vurt flesh. The effect is a Vurt flesh overdose so magnificent that the attackers' bodies literally explode in a bloody mess.

ICARUS WING

Icarus is a dreamweaver with an odd reputation. He sells his dreams to the large distributors, but he is also rumored to distribute some feathers himself, especially Hybrid or Black versions of his own feathers that the large companies can only legally sell as Blues.

MOOD SUGGESTION

Feather Forge is a blending of two mysteries, shrouded in shadow and doubt. Elements of the murders can be used to unnerve the featherheads, and the strange Vurt connections can be used to unnerve investigators. Exploding Vurt flesh junkies should unnerve anyone.

SALIENT POINTS

- Icarus Wing, the legendary dreamweaver, has disappeared into a Yellow feather of his own creation. Featherheads are anxious to find a copy.
- A series of gruesome murders have taken place in the ginnels (back alleys) of Rusholme district of Centre. A pure-Vurt being, unintentionally pulled into the real world by Icarus Wing, is behind them.
- The Vurt being ("The Monster") is not killing on purpose. It is only trying to get home, but junkies sense its potency and attack it, dying by catastrophic overdose on pieces of savagely purloined Vurt flesh.
- Icarus Wing now resides in a Vurt environment of his own creation and will stay, to fulfill what he considers to be his grand purpose.

STARTING POINT

The featherhead PCs begin at the White Bull Pub, looking to speak with Auto-Matt about why he always seems to have the latest Icarus Wing feathers. The investigator PCs begin in the alley across the street from the White Bull, investigating the crime scene.

THE WRAP-UP

Either path will eventually lead the PCs to the workshop of Icarus Wing, where they can find the means to create a copy of Wax Wings, and the evidence that links the killings and the Vurt Being to the feather. One final confrontation outside the workshop brings the adventure to a close. The PCs will each earn 3 XP for completing the adventure, with an additional 3 XP if they enter Wax Wings.

MORE DETAILS

BIRCH HALL VURT-U-WANT SECURITY FOOTAGE

The footage is from two cameras. One shows a lone, vaguely humanoid figure entering the alley. As the figure passes the shopping cart, a crazed junkie bursts out from under the tarpaulin with a knife. The junkie carves out a piece of the other's flank. The figure then erupts into a monstrosity. Chimneys trailing acrid smoke erupt from its body, while its fingers fuse and elongate into three wickedly sharp claws on each hand. The Monster swipes at the junkie, knocking him across the alley. The Monster lurches out of view while the junkie picks himself up and runs the other way, stuffing a cut of flesh into its mouth. The junkie seizes and stumbles before his upper chest and neck erupt. He collapses, headless.

The other camera shows the grotesque Vurt being transforming back into a hunched, human form. He stops to take the overcoat from the dead junkie. It seems to match the one found at Crime Scene 1.

KEYS

This scenario has five keys.

A clue that leads the PCs to the Birch Hall Vurt-U-Want or Crime Scene 2

A clue that leads the PCs to the Rusholme Shimmy-Plex or Crime Scene 3

A clue that leads the PCs to Icarus Wing's workshop

Something connecting the string of murders to the disappearance of Icarus Wing

The Yellow Wax Wings feather

CRIME SCENE 1 CLUES

Normal clues (awards of successful difficulty 2 search or investigative tasks)

- One pool of blood is pure Vurt in origin, and does not appear to match either of the two bodies found.
- The tracksuited dogman is a member of the Rover's Rude Boys gang.
- The PCs find a large, shredded overcoat, the pockets stuffed with broken stubs of creamed feathers, and various other drug paraphernalia: an obvious junkie.
- The bedroll appears to have been stained by Vurt-being blood that had already dried and oxidized before the attack.

- Special clue, awarded as major effect
  - A tiny shred of extra-potent pure Vurt flesh is found among the detritus.

CRIME SCENE 2 CLUES

Normal Clues (awarded on a successful difficulty 3 search or investigative tasks)

- An overcoat is found, shredded in a similar manner to the one found at the first crime scene, its pockets full of creamed pink feathers and stubs from the Rusholme Shimmy-Plex.
- A trail of Vurt-being blood leads away from this alley, in the general direction of the White Bull crime scene.

- Special Clue, awarded as major effect
  - A tiny shred of extra-potent pure Vurt flesh is found among the detritus.

CRIME SCENE 3 CLUES

Normal Clues (awarded on a successful difficulty 2 search or investigative tasks)

- No witnesses, though a few will have noticed the disappearance of Willy, who matches the description of the victim in the construction site.
- Canvassing the area will lead the PCs to a nondescript doorway down the alley, surrounded by a suspicious amount of surveillance cameras (many of which are in a position to have recorded something of the attack). This is the door to Icarus Wing's workshop.

- Special Clue, awarded as major effect
  - A tiny shred of extra-potent pure Vurt flesh is found among the detritus.

MAP LOCATIONS:

THE WHITE BULL

This pub is a neighborhood fixture, well known to the PCs. Posh Aiden (level 3), the bartender, is a dapper dogman. He pours pints and dishes gossip, specifically about Icarus Wing and the rumored Yellow. He may mention the bloody crime scene across the street, but he doesn't know anything about it. Others in the pub have similar info.

Auto-Matt (level 3), the roboman feather dealer, works out of the back of the White Bull. He has heard the rumors about Icarus, be he claims complete ignorance. He then opens his chest cavity panel to reveal his stock of feathers for sale, most written by Icarus, even a few of the bootlegs.

The PCs will have to convince or coerce him to give any further details. He is strong-willed, so any intimidation or interrogation tasks against Auto-Matt will be at difficulty 4, though PCs may cooperate. If successful, the PCs learn that Auto-Matt gets his Icarus feathers from Mikey Kowsar at the Birch Hall Vurt-U-Want.

GM INTRUSION: A PC bumps into a doggirl (level 2), spilling her Boomer. She's angry, snarling and barking as some of her friends try to hold her back. Talking your way out of a fight with her and her mates is a difficulty 4 Intellect task.

BIRCH HALL VURT-U-WANT

Mikey Kowsar (level 3), seems visibly shaken by the attacks that happened behind the shop. He's partly worried that this will draw attention to his bootleg feather dealing. He was not working during the attack, so he has no pertinent information, but he will allow investigator PCs to view the security footage (see "More Details" for footage details). The clerk who was working, Winston, is being questioned at the Rusholme MPD precinct.

Featherhead PCs will ask him how he gets his Icarus Wing products. Mikey will brag that he knows Icarus, and he does indeed come into the shop quite often. If the PCs ask to see the security camera footage to see what Icarus looks like, they will also unintentionally see the crime footage. Mikey actually spoke with Icarus two days ago, when Icarus told him he might not be around for a while. If pressed successfully, he will tell the PCs that Icarus' shop is behind the Rusholme Shimmy-Plex.

GM INTRUSION: As the PCs leave the shop, a robocrusty finishes a bootleg feather, pulling 5 dreamsnakes out with him. Dreamsnakes (5): level 2, initiative rolls and defense against ranged attacks as level 5; health 3; inflicts 2 points of damage with their painful bite.

CRIME SCENE 1: ALLEY ACROSS FROM WHITE BULL

Police vehicles block both ends of the alley, and crime scene techs comb the alley looking for clues. Blood splatters the walls, and a river of congealed blood marks the mouth of the alley.

There are 3 police constables (level 3), 2 shadowboxes (level 3) on crowd control, and 4 crime scene technicians on site to show the PCs the features below, when asked.

There are several dead bodies that appear to have burst from within. Near the mouth of the alley is the body of a dogman in a red tracksuit, who appears to have been clawed from behind, while on the run. Time of death estimated at 3 am, about five hours ago.

A bedroll of old newspapers reveals that someone has been sleeping behind a dumpster. In the grime on the ground next to the bedroll has a pattern drawn through it with a finger. The pattern is a recursive, tightly-packed single line that completely fills a circular space: a labyrinth.

Police PCs should report their findings to their superiors, at the Rusholme MPD Precinct (See Additional Locations).

GM INTRUSION: A street punk (level 2) is trying to break into the PCs' unmarked car when the PCs return to it. The punk is part greyhound, and runs like a level 3. Go get 'im!

RUSHOLME MPD PRECINCT

The PCs can be directed to other crime scenes by their supervisor here, in person, or they may be directed to proceed to new locations by the dispatch when they call in. When the PCs report their findings from Crime Scene 1, their supervisor will suggest that it may be linked to Crime Scene 2, and suggests the PCs follow up.

Winston (level 2), the Vurt-U-Want clerk that witnessed the attack, is being questioned here, though he has slightly less information than can be gleaned from the store's security footage.

CRIME SCENE 2: BEHIND BIRCH HALL VURT-U-WANT

The alley behind the Vurt-U-Want is not quite as bloody as the alley across from the White Bull. The area is still behind police tape, but there are no crime scene techs here, as this site is now over a day old. This crime scene was discovered by Constable Alan Usher, and he may provide any details that the PCs do not find themselves, or were found by the crime scene techs.

There is again a pool of blood where a struggle occurred. A few dozen feet away from the alley, there is a chalk-outline, depicting a body with only a splatter where the head should be. Observant PCs will notice 2 security cameras on the rear of the Vurt-U-Want that likely captured the action.

As the PCs are investigating, they discover a tracksuited dogman scally (level 2) lurking around inside the caution tape. If they catch him, and successfully interrogate him, the PCs learn that the Rovers' Rude Boys also made the connection between the two crime scenes, and they are looking for revenge for their fallen brother.

GM INTRUSION: The lurking Rude Boy runs around the corner, joining four of his mates, who all turn to fight. They all pull out matching metal-plated cricket bats and prepare to kick some arse.

CRIME SCENE 3: CONSTRUCTION SITE NEAR THE RUSHOLME SHIMMY-PLEX

This is not actually known as a crime scene until the PCs begin to investigate. If the PCs found the overcoat with the Shimmy-Plex stubs in the pocket, their investigation leads them to search the area around the theater, discovering the dead body in the construction site.

If they came here because of a tip, they will meet with a garbage truck crew. The crew found the explosively-decapitated body of a homeless dogman junkie in a construction site while picking up a dumpster after a week-long rental. The method of death and the lingering traces of Vurt presence mark this as connected to the other two crime scenes. The construction crew has been on strike, which is why no one found the body earlier.

GM INTRUSION: A neglected scaffold on the construction site topples towards the PCs. Difficulty 3 Speed task to avoid injury, 4 points of damage from falling debris.

ICARUS WING'S WORKSHOP

The door to the workshop is unlocked. The workshop itself is a strange and unsettling place, full of dream-editing equipment, feather printers, and other esoteric machines. To access the security cameras or any other machines, the PCs must find and reset the breakers.

Icarus's security footage can provide concrete proof that the killings and the disappearance of Icarus Wing are related: The exterior camera feeds show that a lone junkie was nodding off in the alley across from the workshop, and saw the undisguised Vurt-being come out. Suddenly overcome by the presence of so much potent pure Vurt flesh, the junkie leapt at the unsuspecting Vurt being and bit into its flesh. The junkie ran into the construction site, where his head exploded (reaction likely delayed by Vurt lag).

The internal cameras clearly recorded Icarus removing a newly-printed Yellow feather from a machine and placing it in his mouth. The image flashes to white for a moment, and when the image returns, a bull-headed, hoof-footed Vurt being is standing where Icarus was. The creature, confused, looks around the workshop for a second before it heads out the door.

When the PCs reset the breaker, they also started the feather-printer, and it used the self-powered dream canister in its buffer to print a new feather. This feather is yellow, and is labeled "Wax Wings." The dream canister is now spent, and this copy of Wax Wings is likely the only copy that is or will ever be.

If the PCs wish to take the feather, see "Wax Wings: The Feather" in Additional Locations, below. When the PCs leave the workshop, they will walk directly into the "Showdown with the Rude Boys" entry in Additional Locations, below.

ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS

SHOWDOWN WITH RUDE BOYS

After the PCs have investigated the workshop, and obtained the Wax Wings feather (whether or not they take it), they are free to do what they wish. They should be led to believe that they have completed the adventure, until they exit the workshop.

A pack of dogmen is waiting for the PCs outside the workshop. Cerberus Rex and his Rover's Rude Boys are gathered around a mortally wounded figure. The Monster moans weakly as its life drains away. Several Rude Boys frantically carve away pieces of the pure Vurt flesh before the creature dies and the flesh spoils. Cerberus thanks the PCs: he had people tracking them, and whatever they did inside the workshop seems to have summoned The Monster to the premises. He also tells the PCs that he doesn't intend to let them walk away. A battle is unavoidable.

Cerberus in particular has a long rap sheet, and his arrest, on top of solving the murder case, would be a feather in the cap of any cop or investigator, possibly leading to promotion or other official honors.

After the battle, when the PCs look to where The Monster lay dying, they will discover that it has disappeared—vanished into the shadows of the Rusholme night.

Cerberus Rex: level 3; health 10; Armor 2; inflicts 4 points of damage with an antique .25 caliber pistol (three bullets), or 4 points of damage with a knife.

Rude Boys (two for every PC): level 2; health 6; Armor 1; inflict 4 points of damage with various melee street weapons.

WAX WINGS: THE FEATHER

The only credits at beginning of this feather are the words "Wax Wings" seemingly written by hand. The PCs find themselves at the edge of a huge bowl-shaped valley, at the top of a stone staircase. The valley is filled with the tall, tightly-packed walls of a labyrinth (resembling the doodle drawn in the grime at Crime Scene 1). This is not a maze, where one can get lost, but a twisting, concentric, recursive single path that fills the entirety of the circular valley. At the center of the valley, the path widens into a circular opening. The walls of the opening cast a warm glow back at the PCs, in stark contrast to the cold, blue, sourceless light that illuminates the curving walls of the labyrinth. The warm glow from the center pulses, and the faint but steady sound of hammers falling on anvils is carried towards the PCs on a noiseless wind.

At the bottom of the stairs, the PCs must simply follow the winding path towards the center. As they continue, the distant sound of hammers falling on anvils grows steadily louder. Rounding the last corner, the PCs enter the warm, pulsing light of the forge.

The forge is arranged in a circle: a great blast furnace rages in the center, fanned by the wings of a gigantic white bird. As the bird fans the flames, feathers dislodge themselves and settle into the flames. Small goblins reach into the furnace with long-handled tongs, transferring the white-hot feathers to the anvils arrayed radially around the room. At one anvil, a cyclops grabs a glowing feather, and works it with a glowing blue hammer, creating blasts of heat and

LEADS

If the PCs are police or otherwise authorized, they can pick up crime-scene clues here that they did not receive on their own, fed to them by their supervisor or other detectives. Additionally, they can be told:

- Post-mortem analysis of the junkie victims reveal that they died of an overdose of very potent pure Vurt flesh.
- The Rover's Rude Boys gang seems to be extremely agitated: they appear to be carrying out their own investigation of the killings, and officers are warned to be alert to possible vigilantism.
- Strange footprints left at the scene indicate that a single killer is responsible, but as several cops suggest: "It's some deformed shit. Maybe one of those leg-humping, fucked up dogmen, or some kind of freak."
- If the PCs did not discover the overcoat at Crime Scene 2 that pointed them towards the Shimmy-Plex, the PCs should be alerted of a called-in tip about Crime Scene 3. The PCs will be routed there, and will be the first on the scene to investigate.

light and showers of sparks. Other cyclops at other anvils wield pink, black, yellow, and silver hammers, smithing out their own feathers. When a feather is done, another goblin carries it to a fountain on the far end of the room, thrusting the glowing feather, hissing and spitting, into the water.

Behind the fountain, on a throne made of dripping wax and feathers of every color, sits Icarus Wing. He looks like an ordinary human, but there are flecks of yellow in his eyes and he wears a twisted crown of writhing dreamsnakes. The crown is connected by a glowing, silver cord to the fountain. The cord pulses as waves of liquid travel from the crown to the fountain, saturating the newly-formed feathers with Icarus' liquid dreams. He is deep in concentration, and will not notice the PCs until they make several attempts to get his attention.

When the PCs finally do get Icarus's attention, he will be angry. All forge work stops, and the forge creatures gather behind the PCs, walling them in. They will snarl and posture, but they will take no action unless instructed by Icarus, who demands the identity and intentions of the PCs.

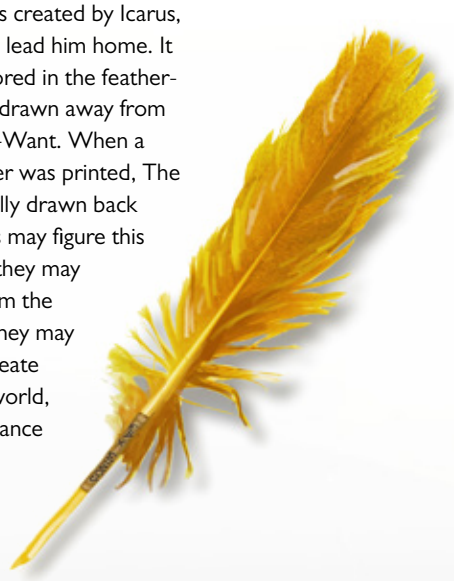
At this point, the PCs are only in the feather as long as it pleases Icarus. He has transcended his previous existence, and has become a Vurt Titan: he has absolute control of the environment within this feather, and his will is law. He will answer questions so long as they are respectfully asked, and he will provide the following details:

- He never intends to return to the real world.
- He did not intend to release The Monster into the real world, but he doesn't care about it or its victims.
- He has retreated to the Vurt to work on a great and secret project.

When the PCs are satisfied (or Icarus grows bored with them), Icarus will dismiss the PCs, allowing them to "win" the Wax Wings feather.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The Monster was drawn to feathers created by Icarus, as they seemed—to his senses—to lead him home. It could not sense the inert dream stored in the feather-printer's buffer, and so was initially drawn away from the workshop, towards the Vurt-U-Want. When a new copy of the Wax Wings feather was printed, The Monster was instantly and powerfully drawn back towards the workshop. The players may figure this out, or the PCs may ask Icarus, or they may learn this through an Insight roll from the GM. Regardless, if they learn this, they may be able to use this knowledge to create a lure for The Monster in the real world, drawing him out after his disappearance from the final battle.



USING THIS IN A CAMPAIGN

Icarus Wing may have permanently entered the Vurt, but that doesn't necessarily mean he will be completely lost to the real world forever. The secret project for which he created the forge may become the focus of a greater campaign arc, and Icarus himself may intrude into other feathers to contact the PCs.

The murders may have been solved, but The Monster is still at large. The Monster can serve as an campaign hook for many adventures. The Monster could be the object of a dragnet and monster hunt, ranging through Manchester and possibly out into Limbo. The Monster could also be a recurring NPC, adjusting to a disguised life in the real world and periodically seeking out the PCs, asking for help.

SUGGESTED CYPHERS

Goon Juice: to ease NPC's resistance to interrogation.

Hyperboloehyde: to increase a PC's effectiveness at interrogation.

LIGHTS OVER LIMBO

BRIEF SUMMARY

The party has been hired to smuggle a refugee named Bub from outside the city into Manchester. This refugee has valuable information about the nefarious dealings of a trucking company, and is hoping to smuggle himself inside the city and expose the trucking company with his testimony, putting an end to their operation.

DETAILS

A trucking company, Limbo Lorries, LLC, has been rounding up Zombies in the wasteland, transporting them to secret facilities, and selling them as slave labor. While most people within the walls of Manchester choose to ignore the existence of Zombies and are happy to keep them excluded from city life, evidence of slave trading would definitely hurt business and likely even result in criminal charges against Limbo Lorries.

There are two groups of people who take a less cynical view of the Zombie population. The Justice-4-U-types (J4U) organization is a group of political activists who are working towards integrating U-types into society at large. They are not only working to change the stance of the government with regards to living-impaired rights, they are also trying to raise public awareness of the humanity of U-types. They fight against the negative stereotypes in popular culture that keep people from recognizing U-types as people deserving of their full rights. They have hired the PCs to transport Bub past the City Wall into Manchester.

Limbo Lorries has employed a pure human hate gang, Humanity United ("HU-men"), to help them round up Zombies in the wastelands. They also act as security forces, patrolling the trucking routes and guarding the round-up sites, usually cruising the wasteland in modified vehicles specially outfitted for their activities.

The True Resurrected is a religious cult that believes that the only way life can come from death is through baptism and rebirth in the church. They believe that Zombies (who they call "half-alivers") are an abomination, and likely a sign of the coming apocalypse. They usually relegate their activities to counter-protests of the J4U's activities, but lately they have become more brazen, taking physical action against half-alivers and their sympathizers.

MOOD SUGGESTION

Lights Over Limbo is a web of possibilities, from clandestine intelligence activities to all-out wasteland car-chase action. Think "Casablanca" meets "Mad Max" with a bit of George Romero Zombie flick thrown in for good measure.

SALIENT POINTS

- The PCs have been hired to transport a pro-Zombie activist ("Bub") from Limbo into Manchester.
- The party is set to meet their passenger at Country Joe's Food and Fuel Saloon in Frontier Town South.
- The party will need a vehicle capable of transporting themselves and their passenger into Manchester, possibly with a method of secretly smuggling their charge through the security checkpoints.
- The party has a known ally in the J4U, a pro-Zombie, U-type-rights organization.
- The party has known enemies in the Limbo Lorries, LLC trucking company, as well as their "HU-men" thugs.
- The party is also aware of possible enemies in the anti-Zombie True Resurrected cult/organization.

STARTING POINT

Country Joe's Food and Fuel Saloon is a truck stop and motel deep in Limbo, a lonely outpost for travelers on the edge of the vast wasteland. The PCs will have arrived at Country Joe's in their own vehicle or a borrowed ride. Xcabs do not take fares to or from Limbo, though some Black Cabs do. Most of the vehicles out that far are trucks of some kind, so the PCs should be aware that some vehicles may be more conspicuous than others. The PCs have been instructed to go to the bar, where Bub will contact them.

THE WORD "ZOMBIE"

Bub will explain the significance of the word "Zombie" to the PCs: Many U-types are functionally normal—at least as normal as anything is these days. Many other U-types often fall victim to mental illness due to biological or sociological factors (being "half-dead" in a world of the living). This mental illness can be mild or severe but it often goes untreated. Some U-types turn to self-medication through heavy Boomer abuse. U-type physiology prevents Boomer from killing them, but it does cause serious cognitive impairment. These unfortunate addicts and "walking wounded" become Zombies in the classic sense of the word, and are the source of the stereotype.

THE WRAP-UP

The PCs must transport Bub—and his evidence of Limbo Lorries' activities—within the walls of Manchester, to the J4U headquarters in Congleton. Delivering only Bub or only his evidence will not be enough for J4U to take action, or to pay the PCs. Authorities may be looking for Bub, so he must enter the city unseen, whether that be by smuggling him undetected through an official gate, or finding an alternate port of entry.

MORE DETAILS

If the PCs fail a Navigation task, or as a GM intrusion, a d6 roll has the party encounter:

1: Cultist Excursion: see "True Resurrected" under "Additional Locations."

2: Limbo Lorries Zombie round up crew. Five people of various modes (level 2), one equipped with a mancatcher; driving a Land Raver; one level 2 Zombie prisoner in trailer cage.

3: Five Zombies (level 2). They will attempt to board the PC's vehicle and steal any Boomer or other substances. They will attack if provoked and are beyond reasoning.

4-6: HU-man patrol: antique Land Raver (no uplink ports), five ruffians (level 2 humans): all have Armor 2; three inflict 4 points of damage with melee weapons, two inflict 4 points of damage with antique firearms.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Bub is a well known figure amongst U-types in Limbo. It is possible that the Bub may (directly or indirectly) inspire Zombies in the wasteland to come to the PCs' aid at some point during the adventure: from a lone Zombie appearing with a crucial piece of technology or transportation, to an army of Zombies rolling into The Chase, supporting the PCs and directly combatting the combined forces of the HU-mans and Limbo Lorries. This is entirely at the GM's discretion.

KEYS

This adventure has six keys.

- Bub, the PC's contact and object for transportation.
- Evidence of Limbo Lorries' rounding up of Zombies for slave labor.
- A secret entrance into Manchester.
- A method of smuggling Bub into Manchester through a standard gate.
- Alternate transportation (if the PC's vehicle is compromised or too conspicuous).
- Alternate means of gathering evidence.

COUNTRY JOE'S FOOD AND FUEL SALOON

Lasers and searchlights play across the sky, beaming up from the roof of a solitarily bleak building. A ramshackle neon sign reads COUNTRY JOE'S FOOD AND FUEL SALOON. TAX-FREE PETROL. LAST STOP BEFORE THE END OF THE WORLD, ROOMS VACANT.

The parking lot is mostly lorries, and a few all terrain vehicles. Half a dozen motorcycles are clustered at one end of the lot. One battered Land Rover, covered in nasty, modist graffiti, sports a "100% pure HU-man" bumper sticker.

Inside, a retro rock band singer onstage finishes her power ballad, hotter than rolling dice, to rowdy applause: "...Stick to ya like a tire on a licorice ro-oad!"

The stage resembles a hillbilly-style ranch house. American Old West decorations line the walls. Truckers, bikers, and HU-men ruffians sit on one side of the bar, and a shimmering field called a "Wonder Wall" keeps the U-types on the other side. Most patrons will pay no attention to the PCs, except the ruffians. If the PCs quietly order drinks and wait patiently, a blurbfly will land on their table, saying *"Not out for blood. Looking for Bub?"*

The blurbfly's owner stands in the U-type entrance to the saloon, beckoning the PCs to meet him outside.

Outside in the parking lot, the PCs meet Bub, a U-type admin (level 4), and his blurbfly "Wizer." Bub wants to know the PCs' plan for getting inside the city undetected. While they are discussing plans, the pack of gang members soon exits the saloon. Their leader is Two-Tone Tommy. Tommy has been told to watch for U-type activists and sympathizers and will bluster and attempt to intimidate, but won't attack. If the PCs attack Tommy the five thugs will attack and Tommy will run off to report to his masters. As soon as the first thug is killed or incapacitated, the rest will also attempt to flee. Tommy will flee earlier than that, to report back to his masters (the other HU-mans covering his escape).

In the battle, one of the thugs will destroy Bub's blurb. Bub will explain that the evidence was in the blurbfly, which is clearly unsalvageable. The PCs will have to gather new evidence, as Bub's testimony alone is not going to be enough to expose Limbo Lorries. Bub suggests that the best place to gather evidence is at the U-type corral and pulls out an old vidscreen camera they can use if they don't have anything better. If the PCs are heavily wounded, Bub will invite them to stay at his place overnight (about a 20 minute drive from Country Joe's).

Bub: level 4; health 12; Armor 2 (anti-stab vest under clothes); inflicts 4 points of damage with a reinforced Irish Hurley (cudgel). Can use his Shadow to silently communicate with any willing sentient mind once per encounter. Once per day, he can transform completely into shadow smoke for a maximum of 3 turns, during which he is untouchable (and cannot control blurbs).

Two-Tone Tommy: level 4; health 12; Armor 1 (leather jacket); inflicts 8 points of damage with a nail bat, or 4 points of damage with a small pistol (3 rounds). Tommy is a pure human skinhead, but he is biracial, of black and white descent (hence the nickname).

HU-Man Thugs (5): level 2; health 6; Armor 1 (leather jackets): inflict 4 points of damage with various melee weapons.

GM INTRUSION: The party's transportation is disabled during the battle, requiring them to acquire a different vehicle.

BUB'S PLACE - CHALADH

A ramshackle arch over the entry to this walled farmstead deep in Limbo reads "Adopt hope, all ye who enter here." Bub has food, fuel, and other supplies stashed here, but neither Boomer nor any drugs, and he asks the PCs not to flaunt theirs while in Chaladh.

Chaladh is a small community of teetotaling U-type shadowmen in various stages of decomposition. The 30 residents (levels 1-3) will shy away from the PCs at first. U-types all work together here, maintaining the small vegetable plot, the water reclaimers, and the compost system (the only way to create soil that will bear plant life in the wastelands). Everyone here helps to maintain and defend Chaladh.

A watchtower with an alarm bell sits on the roof of the main house. The residents can arm themselves and be ready at battle positions within minutes, manning the perimeter, the flamethrower in one gate tower, and antique Lewis machine gun in the other gate tower. A large flatbed Lorry sits in the yard.

Chaladh is well known to the HU-man ruffians and Limbo Lorries, so they could show up here looking for the PCs if they were previously spotted elsewhere. Chaladh is still unknown to the True Resurrected—so far.

GM INTRUSION: One of the residents has smuggled in a hidden stash of Boomer, and in their inebriated state has picked a fight with one of the PCs.

THE U-TYPE CORRAL

The corral itself is a large area, enclosed in 20 foot high chainlink fence, ringed with floodlights. There are several gates around the perimeter, through which captured Zombies can be deposited. One end of the corral fence is tapered into a chute, leading to an exit gate. When the corral has reached capacity, the Zombies are herded towards the chute and onto a waiting truck, to be transported en masse to their secret facility.

It should be simple enough for the PCs to clandestinely obtain footage of the Zombie roundup and escape unnoticed. It should be slightly more difficult for the PCs to obtain other physical evidence, such as a shipping manifest stolen from a Limbo Lorries truck. However, there may be a few complications, at the GM's discretion.

When the PCs arrive, there will be about a dozen Zombies (levels 1-3) inside the corral. There will be about a dozen and a half Zombie-wranglers (level 3) manning the gate, two or three lorries (with drivers) offloading more Zombies, and one or two HU-man patrol vehicles, either depositing Zombies or just leaving the corral.

GM INTRUSION: Whatever course the PCs take, they may make a mistake that gets them noticed, resulting in The Chase (see Additional Locations entry, below).

THE CONGLETON WALL GATE

The Congleton Wall Gate that leads into South Manchester is heavily guarded. High pressure water cannons are used to forcibly remove "hitchhikers" that attempt to sneak into Manchester by clinging to Lorries. These water cannons can push most man-sized creatures 10-20 feet away (difficulty 6 Might task to resist).

Most vehicles passing through the gate will be large branded trucks, many of them Limbo Lorries. If the PCs' vehicle had been spotted by ruffians or Limbo Lorries truckers earlier, other Limbo Lorries drivers will be on the lookout, alerting the guards if need be.

If the PCs time their passing through the gate when there are no lorries, the four guards will spot Bub and attempt to stop the PCs. The PCs may, collectively, complete an Intelligence task to conceal Bub and his evidence. The base difficulty for this task is difficulty 6, assuming Bub merely sits amongst the PCs in their vehicle, in plain sight. A disguise for Bub decreases the difficulty by one step, simply concealing Bub inside the vehicle (under a blanket, etc) decreases the difficulty by three steps, and concealing Bub inside a device or compartment specifically designed for smuggling decreases the difficulty by five steps (making it a difficulty 1 task)

Gate Guards (4): level 4; health 12; Armor 2; can inflict 8 points of damage with flame pistols (ignores first 2 points of armor), 4 points of damage with truncheons, or they may man the water cannon (see above).

GM INTRUSION: A Zombie that was sprayed off a truck in front of the PCs scrambles to hide under the PC's vehicle, possibly exposing them to more scrutiny.

THE SECRET ENTRANCE

Bub can lead the PCs to a secret entrance into Manchester, one with no official security presence. It is actually a long abandoned underground tube going under the Great Wall. This secret entrance is hidden in a culvert, flanked by dead trees.

The True Resurrected found this a while back and has been using it to conduct clandestine Zombie-culling raids into Limbo. There is a 50% chance that the party will encounter an armed raiding party of cultists inside the tunnel (Same as "Raiding Party" but without U-types). If the tunnel is clear, they will encounter the cult's guards at the Manchester end. The cultists will attack the PCs no matter what, as they cannot afford to have their killing sprees and secret tunnel known to others.

GM INTRUSION: A group of smugglers (three at level 3) try to use the Secret Entrance at the same time the PCs do.

USING THIS IN A CAMPAIGN

After delivering Bub and his information, the party might be further contracted by the J4U, either to guard and facilitate Bub's dissemination of the evidence to the proper authorities (or a populist mouthpiece like Gumbo YaYa), or to provide further assistance with the U-type rights problem. The PCs could be asked to commit acts of sabotage against the Limbo Lorries, or to go undercover to help discover and destroy or cripple the facility where the Zombie slave laborers are being delivered, or be asked to cripple the operations of the True Resurrected cultists.

The PCs might also develop several allies and resources from this adventure, including future business with the uncle Mortimer, or new possibilities for smuggling through the secret City Wall entrance.

MANCATCHER

A "mancatcher" is a pole arm designed to capture a person without injuring them by grasping them at the neck, with mechanical jaws, a noose, etc. Treat as a melee weapon with a 10 foot reach and no damage. Attacks with a mancatcher are one step more difficult than a standard melee weapon, and defenses against are one step easier. A wielder becomes immune to simple melee attacks from a target that is so caught, and can move the target 10 feet per round with a successful Might task. Attempts to break free are Might-based tasks with a difficulty two steps above the level of the wielder.

ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS

UNCLE MORTIMER'S EMPORIUM

On the other side of Frontier Town South from Country Joe's stands the Uncle Mortimer Emporium, a glorified junkyard and repair shop. Independent truckers go here for repairs, but the truckers from the big companies go to the company-run repair shops, so there is little danger of the PCs or Bub being recognized by anyone dangerous here.

The shop is run by Uncle Mortimer (level 5, repair tasks as level 7), a giant hulking human in a leather apron, usually working late and sporting a welding helmet that looks like an old-school hockey mask. The junkyard is guarded by Chopper (level 4), a ragged dogman who has seen better days, but can still bring some serious pain if need be. Uncle Mortimer employs several U-types as parts-pullers and tinkerers (level 2), though Chopper tries to have as little to do with them as possible. Security, parts, accounting, and electronics repair are handled by Dweezil, a pure robo admin (level 4, specialized electronics and blurb tech). He maintains several blurbs as security patrols around the junkyard, and it was he who initially sold Bub his blurb. If asked, Dweezil can repair Wizer the blurb, but the data store within has been lost, and new parts will delay the repair by a week.

Mortimer is sympathetic to the Zombie rights cause, but he is a businessman trying to eke out a living on the fringes of the wasteland, so the PCs should not expect charity. He can offer a variety of services:

- Parts and repairs on any vehicle (parts may take up to an hour to pull, and repair times are fast, but depend on the severity of the problem)
- Several methods of recording video and information: standard video cameras, cheap blurbflies, etc. (prices will be double what they are in the city, but devices will be of lesser quality: barely enough to complete the mission)
- A variety of vehicles for purchase, ranging from a beat up black cab to a 15 foot' box truck (none currently registered with Manchester City tags)
- A false fuel tank, used for smuggling contraband (or people) through a city gate (can only be attached to large lorries)

Uncle Mortimer also owns two vehicles: a heavy duty tow truck (treat as standard Lorry, with towing crane instead of rear cargo box), and a supercharged, black 1973 Australian Ford Falcon XB GT (treat as a level 4 version of standard Ford Comet). He is available for towing, and has been known to give a lift or two, but he will not himself attempt to drive a vehicle smuggling a U-type into Manchester.

If the PCs are especially gifted at persuasion, Uncle Mortimer might be convinced to sell the party his smuggler's special: a passenger van with concealed compartments built into the seat benches. The van holds up to 8 visible passengers, with room to smuggle 2 or 3 more, depending on their size and comfort within tight spaces.

Chopper can also provide Ultra-Garlic, Cortex Jammers, and a few other niceties (at the GM's discretion). He also owns a custom tricycle: a chopped Triumph motorcycle with a rear axle and bench seat from a classic Mini (treat as a Mini with two person capacity)

GM INTRUSION: The PCs are followed to the Emporium by a pure human ruffian patrol, who either randomly spotted them or were alerted to their presence by any ruffians who escaped the confrontation outside Country Joe's.

THE TRUE RESURRECTED

As a result of a navigation complication, or at the GM's discretion, the party has stumbled upon an excursion of the True Resurrected cult in Limbo. The cult members have captured a small group of Zombies. They have already killed a few. One of the U-types, Boris, is coherent, and has been begging for their lives, using religious language to appeal to their better natures. This has confused the cultists, who assume all half-alivers conform to the Zombie stereotype.

Once the cultists spot them, the PCs may use the confusion to attempt to persuade Brother Maynard, the expedition leader. to let the rest of the U-types go. This will be a difficulty 4 Intellect task of persuasion. If the cultists spot Bub amongst the PCs, however, they will see the party as deceivers and blasphemers, and will not hesitate to attack.

THE TRUE RESURRECTED RAIDING PARTY

The PCs have come across five cultists, lead by Brother Maynard and driving a Land Raver, that have cornered four U-types.

Zombies: Four level 2 Zombies, unarmed.

Brother Maynard: level 3; health 9; Armor 3 (under robes); inflicts 8 points of damage with a full-sized scythe, or 6 points of damage with an antique revolver.

Cultists (5): level 2; health 6; inflict 4 points of damage with various melee weapons.

J4U HEADQUARTERS (SOUTHEAST CONGLETON)

If the PCs manage to escape the Wasteland and evade pursuit within Manchester, they will take Bub and his evidence to J4U Headquarters (not far from the Congleton Wall Gate). From there, the PCs will be paid for their services, and Bub will be able to disseminate his knowledge to the people. The PCs will have also made an ally of the J4U, and several possible enemies.

THE CHASE

If the PCs are spotted and run, they will be pursued, not only by those that spotted them, but also by any other Limbo Lorries trucks or HU-man patrols in the area. This could potentially mean a running fight through the wasteland, including: ranged weapon combat, vehicular combat maneuvers, and/or melee combat with crazed ruffians jumping from a moving vehicle to board the PCs' vehicle.

If the PCs are attempting to escape in an open-topped vehicle, the HU-man patrol vehicles will attempt to use their mancatchers to pluck PCs off the escaping vehicle. The HU-men could also attempt to snag the PC's vehicle with a Land Raver's winch, trying to drag it to a stop.

This adventure could be driven as one of subtlety, espionage, and clandestine operation, allowing the PCs to sneak around the wasteland, with a small skirmish here or there. However, if the GM wants to drive this adventure through the wasteland as a fiery, action-packed whirlwind, The Chase should be the centerpiece of that action. Depending on how the story develops, the Chase could involve several groups of combatants, including antagonists:

- Several ruffian-manned vehicles (with or without Two-Tone Tommy).
- Several True Resurrected vehicles (with or without Brother Maynard)
- Several Limbo Lorries trucks (with or without ruffian support).

The Chase may also involve several protagonists:

- Several U-types from Chaladh, who have mounted one of the gate defense weapons on the bed of the rat rod lorry that was sitting in the courtyard.
- Uncle Mortimer, Chopper, and Dweezil, who are not only there to help the U-types, but also to stick it to Limbo Lorries for their menacing business practices towards independent truckers (who may also be there).

The Chase could end at Chaladh, where the U-type defenders manage to drive off the attackers. It might also end at the Congleton Wall Gate, where the authorities would be likely to fire upon anyone inciting violence near the wall, regardless of who was involved.

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HOW TO CREATE A VURT PLAYER CHARACTER

THE MODE DESCRIPTOR, TYPE, AND FOCUS ARE WHAT COMPLETE THE SENTENCE AT THE TOP OF YOUR CHARACTER SHEET. THIS SENTENCE IS THE BASIS OF YOUR PC.

1 CHOOSE YOUR MODE DESCRIPTOR

This first step in the process is where you decide what your PC is, physically. Mode Descriptor indicates not only their genetic makeup, but also the the traits and aptitudes they were born with.

Add the various benefits, skills, inabilities or bonus pool points granted in each Mode Descriptor. Tier 1 mode special abilities will be available as well. Your PC might also gain additional equipment. Lastly, you'll choose from a list of 4 possible initial links to the starting adventure, or come up with your own.

2 CHOOSE YOUR TYPE

Here you have the basic core of your PC, the part that has nothing to do with their genetics or their job. Type is where you'll get your Pool starting values. Fill in those values. All PCs get an additional 6 points to divide among the Pools however you'd like. Distribute these points now. Also, your mode descriptor might also have already added a few additional points. If so, add them to the appropriate starting Pool. Now your Stat Pools are complete.

Type also determines your Edge stats. Fill those in now. Add any Effort, skills, tier 1 special abilities associated with your type, and/or tier 1 mode special abilities associated with your mode descriptor. Be sure to write down the cost (if any) of any special abilities and to note whether you are trained (T) or specialized (S) in a skill.

Cypher Grasp is indicated as well, something that really matters when travelling in the Vurt world where your PC is limited to what they can "take in with them". When in the real world, this number indicates how many cyphers your PC might walk around with (relatively) safely before drawing attention to themselves.

Most types get starting equipment of some kind, like a weapon. Choose those and add them to your sheet. You may get some starting cyphers and/or money as well. Add these to your character sheet.

3 CHOOSE YOUR FOCUS

Focus is what your character does, what moves them and pushes them to do what they do.

Most foci also grant Tier 1 special abilities to your PC. Add these to your character sheet along with the other special abilities. Additional equipment might also be indicated. You may choose a connection to other PCs in your party or create your own.

4 GET READY TO PLAY

List your attacks- While most attacks are determined by your choice of weapon, some special abilities, Types or Foci grant additional damage to unarmed attacks, or grant natural or integrated weapons such as a dog's teeth or a robo implant.

Armor rating is mostly determined by physical armor worn by the character, but certain traits may modify this, regardless of equipment. Fill this in.

In the Notes portion of the character sheet, any character information not listed elsewhere can be listed here, including the major and minor effect and GM intrusion suggestions provided by a character's Focus. Your PC's initial link to the starting adventure and connections with other PCs can go here as well. If you have anything else you want to keep in mind during the game, put it under Notes.

You can fill in your PC's background bio, and perhaps draw/insert image into the portrait box. Your character sheet is now complete, you're ready to hit the mad streets of Manchester!

NOTE: All characters start out as Tier 1, with an Effort of 1, and with 0 XP. To create a higher tier PC, simply follow the basic progression, starting at Tier 1

VURT

GERALD KEYMAN
NAME

IS A ROBOMAN DESCRIPTOR EXPLORER TYPE WHO

CRAVES THE FIX
FOCUS

TIER 1
EFFORT 1
XP

MIGHT	SPEED	INTELLECT
10	15	9
POOL 1 EDGE	POOL 1 EDGE	POOL EDGE

RECOVERY ROLLS 1d6+1
- 1 ACTION
- 1 HOUR
- 10 MINS
- 10 HOURS

DAMAGE TRACK
- IMPAIRED: +1 Effort per level; No minor or major effects on rolls; Rolls of 17 - 20 deals +1 damage
- DEBILITATED: Can move only an immediate distance; Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- Danger Sense (1 Spd): Initiative -1 step difficulty
- Practiced with light and medium weapons
- Pharma Pro: Can identify all common drugs and knows their effects
- Firewall: Mental attack defense -1 step difficulty

ADVANCEMENT

- INCREASE CAPABILITIES: +4 into Stat Pools
- MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION: +1 into the Edge of your choice
- OTHER: +1 into Effort
- SKILL TRAINING: train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill
- OTHER: refer to VURT Corebook

SKILLS • MIGHT

T = Trained S = Specialized I = Inability

	T	S	I

SKILLS • SPEED

	T	S	I
Melee defense	X		

SKILLS • INTELLECT

	T	S	I
Healing	X		
Medicine/First Aid	X		
Electronics	X		

LASTING DAMAGE

	DAYS LEFT

CYPHERS

Cortex Jammers x 2 (Level 2)

2 LIMIT

ATTACKS

	MOD DAM
Brass kunckles	4

ARMOR

MONEY

BACKGROUND

Gerald Keyman lives in Harpurhey, on the border of Cheetham, though it's not much of a life. Picking up what's left of bad-lucked citizens or the live meaty leftovers from MPD raids in the deeper parts of the night doesn't make for a caring bedside manner.

Gerald originally became a paramedic for the thrill, if not to help people, but that was way back and the adrenal juices can only squirt so far. Plus the nerves and senses weren't meant to go some places. Especially every evening until sunup.

A lot of the loose feathers Gerald comes across at the frequent crime scenes he attends, before they end up in MPD evidence, he pockets and passes on to the Scallywaggers or Plague Poets of Harpurhey, for a small finders fee. Thus the moniker of "Ferryman" that he wears and with this arrangement In place, Gerald is able to spend his days quietly and happily by himself; not having to consider the alternative option of selling to the gangs what drugs he could appropriate from his workplace.

As long as he knows you, can trust you, and as long as you meet his very fair price the Ferryman might have a Vurt you're looking for; as well as save your life.

EQUIPMENT

- Simple Toolkit
- Retractable toolkit w/uplink port
- Brass knuckles

NOTES

Minor Effect Suggestion: The target is also dazed for one round, during which time the difficulty of all tasks it performs is modified by one step to its detriment.

Major Effect Suggestion: You destroy a piece of equipment worn or held by your opponent.

GM Intrusions: Sometimes the urge to get lit comes at the most inopportune times. But right now, all you want is to search your pockets for any and all drug cyphers and take them all at once, damn the consequences. You'll regret it later, and the effects of mixing pharma might mess you up, but you crave the fix and won't be talked out of it.

PORTRAIT

VURT

HARRIET GOODGIRL
NAME

IS A ROBODOG (DESCRIPTOR) WARRIOR (TYPE) WHO

MAKES IT THEIR PROBLEM
FOCUS

TIER	EFFORT	XP
1	1	

ADVANCEMENT

- INCREASE CAPABILITIES: +1 into Stat Pools
- MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION: +1 into the Edge of your choice
- OTHER: +1 into Effort
- SKILL TRAINING: train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill
- OTHER: refer to Vurt Corebook

	MIGHT	SPEED	INTELLECT
POOL	13	13	8
EDGE	1	1	

RECOVERY ROLLS (1d6+)

- 1 ACTION
- 1 HOUR
- 10 MINS
- 10 HOURS

DAMAGE TRACK

- IMPAIRED: +1 Effort per level; No minor or major effects on rolls; Rolls of 17 - 20 deals +1 damage
- DEBILITATED: Can move only an immediate distance; Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- Find the Flaw: GM will point out straightforward weaknesses in opponents
- Control the Field (1 Might): Melee attack does -1 damage, move target immediate range
- Practiced with all weapons
- Warding Shield: +1 to Armor when guarding
- No Thumbs: unable to use items or cyphers that require hands to operate

SKILLS • MIGHT

T = Trained, S = Specialized, I = Inability

	T	S	I
Running	X		
Jumping	X		

SKILLS • SPEED

	T	S	I
Initiative		X	

SKILLS • INTELLECT

	T	S	I
All Perception Actions	X		
Resisting Interrogation/Intimidation	X		

LASTING DAMAGE

DAYS LEFT

CYPHERS

- Acid Lassie Double Biscuits (Level 4)
- Dogseed Cake (Level 3)

LIMIT 2

ATTACKS

	MOD	DAM
Bite		4

ARMOR 3

MONEY £200

BACKGROUND

You follow your nose. You can trust your nose. Your nose is what leads you through life. The maternal side of your big family is mostly RoboDog. Proud RoboDogs, respected by the community. Hard working RoboDogs known for their loyalty. The paternal side of the family is mostly pure Robo, hailing from Toytown. They don't approve of your mixed mode nature, and they make it very clear.

You're proud to be a RoboDog. You feel like you can help. You can make a small difference out there. There are those that need protection from others. Helping wags your tail. When you stand by someone in need, you are part of a team. Wandering the streets is lonely, and you like to feel warm and wanted.

It's possible that your augmented Dog brain is slower than it should be. Your Pure Robo father tells you that all the time. Your siblings all seem to be a little bit smarter than you. They seem to process information better. They tell you that they are more efficient, that they can work harder than you, that they matter more in society because they are intelligent. But they don't have the heart that you do. They work only for money. They may be smart, but they don't have any joy. They have no sense of adventure, no reason to wake up in the morning. But you have a purpose. Your tail wags because you're keeping others safe.

EQUIPMENT

Light armor jacket (+2 to Armor)

NOTES

Ballistic Skin: +1 to Armor

Major effect: You can take an extra action. You can use this action only to guard.

Minor Effect: You can draw an attack without having to use an action at any point before the end of the next round.

GM Intrusion: Maybe the person or group you're defending doesn't appreciate the way you are protecting them. Perhaps you find yourself trying to put yourself in harm's way for someone who doesn't deserve it or is making it even more difficult.

PORTRAIT

VURT

NAME: D. I. CHESTER BALLARD

IS A **DESCRIPTOR:** SHADOWMANDOG **TYPE:** WARRIOR WHO

FOCUS: WORKS FOR THE CITY

TIER | EFFORT | XP

MIGHT	SPEED	INTELLECT
POOL: 12	POOL: 12	POOL: 10
EDGE: 1	EDGE: 1	EDGE:

RECOVERY ROLLS (1d6+)

- 1 ACTION
- 1 HOUR
- 10 MINS
- 10 HOURS

DAMAGE TRACK

- IMPAIRED: +1 Effort per level; No minor or major effects on rolls; Rolls of 17 - 20 deals +1 damage
- DEBILITATED: Can move only an immediate distance; Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- Simple Communication (1 Int): Action-- communicate telepathically with willing target for 10 min
- Bash (1 Might): Melee attack -1 damage, target dazed for 1 round (all tasks +1 step difficulty)
- Control the Field (1 Might): Melee attack -1 damage, move target in immediate range
- Practiced with all weapons, guns
- Firearmed: All gun attacks +1 damage
- Transportation Vouchers: 1/day, the City picks up the tag for a Black Cab ride

ADVANCEMENT

- INCREASE CAPABILITIES: +1 into Stat Pools
- MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION: +1 into the Edge of your choice
- OTHER: +1 into Effort
- SKILL TRAINING: Train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill
- OTHER: refer to VURT Corebook

SKILLS • MIGHT

T = Trained, S = Specialized, I = Inability

	T	S	I

SKILLS • SPEED

	T	S	I
Initiative	X		
Running	X		

SKILLS • INTELLECT

	T	S	I
Intimidation	X		

LASTING DAMAGE

	DAYS LEFT

CYPHERS

- Queen Hobart's Day Cracker (Level 1)
- MungryMan Self-Hearting Dinner (Level 1)

LIMIT: 2

ATTACKS

	MOD	DAM
Unarmed (No Need for Weapons)		4
Nightstick		4
Stun stick (damage + target stunned)		3
Vorpal flame pistol (ignores 2 pts Armor)		9

ARMOR

MONEY: £200

BACKGROUND

It wasn't easy for a ShadowManDog like you to make Detective Inspector in the Manchester Police Department. The fact that you're part dog basically takes away any hope you had of being a part of the shadowcop division. Those tossers don't have to follow the same rules as everyone else… which is why you envy them so much. But you'll settle for DI for now, hopeful that someday you'll have enough power to force a division transfer and make them accept you.

The MPD is the largest and greatest security force in the real world, and you're proud to be a part of it. Your mother and grandfather were both Pure Human cops and your father was a DogShadow station manager for the Manchester fire brigade. Of your 12 siblings, all but 2 work for the City of Manchester in some capacity. You all may be a mix of 3 modes, but you're 100% Mancunian. And you'll be dogdamned if you let the Hazed-out scallies, immigrant-arse featherheads and Choke-nosed robocrusties clog your streets.

You love your city. As chaotic and mad as Old Man is, it's home and you have never felt the desire to ever leave her walls. Here, you are an officer of the law. Others may not like you, but they'll respect you enough to listen to you. Here, you have your pride, your Manchester United Vurtball club and your corner pub where everybody knows your name.

EQUIPMENT

- Nightstick (cudgel)
- Stun stick - Targets hit are at +1 difficulty for all Speed-based tasks next round
- Vorpal 10mm flame pistol, fully loaded

NOTES

Major effect: You can immediately take a second action during this turn.

Minor Effect: You learn something completely unexpected but useful.

GM Intrusion: Working for the City means that you know a lot of people and a lot of people know you. This isn't always a good thing. You were just spotted doing something that is likely to harm your reputation or cause problems with the job.

PORTRAIT

VURT

NAME: EWAN CAMBERWICK

IS A **DESCRIPTOR:** PURE HUMAN **TYPE:** SPEAKER WHO

CONTROLS BLURBS

FOCUS

TIER	EFFORT	XP
1	1	

	MIGHT	SPEED	INTELLECT
POOL	10	10	16
EDGE			1

RECOVERY ROLLS (1d6+)

- 1 ACTION
- 1 HOUR
- 10 MINS
- 10 HOURS

DAMAGE TRACK

- IMPAIRED: +1 Effort per level; No minor or major effects on rolls; Rolls of 17 - 20 deals +1 damage
- DEBILITATED: Can move only an immediate distance; Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- Drip-feed account: 1/day--£10 on 1-4 out of d6
- Scrounge (3 Int): Instead of 10hr recovery roll, can gather cash and scrounge for d20 ammo
- Fast Talk (1 Int): Convince target that can understand you to give up information
- Spin Identity (2+ Int): (see notes)
- Control 1: You can control 1 blurbfly at a time
- Blurbfly Builder: Can cobble level 1 blurbfly with no modules in 10 hours
- Drug-related willpower tasks +1 step difficulty
- Practiced in light weapons

ADVANCEMENT

- INCREASE CAPABILITIES: +1 into Stat Pools
- MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION: +1 into the Edge of your choice
- OTHER: +1 into Effort
- SKILL TRAINING: Train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill
- OTHER: refer to Vurt Corebook

SKILLS • MIGHT

T = Trained, S = Specialized, I = Inability

	T	S	I

SKILLS • SPEED

	T	S	I

SKILLS • INTELLECT

	T	S	I
Pleasant Social Interactions (humans)	X		
Blurbfly construction/maintenance	X		

LASTING DAMAGE

	DAYS LEFT

CYPHERS

- Sonic Grenade (Level 2)
- Kirby Grip (Level 1)

LIMIT: 2

ATTACKS

	MOD DAM
Antique .22 pistol	4

ARMOR

MONEY: £300

BACKGROUND

Deep down, you have a problem with the other 30 modes, you feel that Pure Humans are the only legitimate and natural beings of the lot. Your opinion is not popular outside of your mainly pure human housing block in Harpurhey. Things must have been so much easier in your great grandparents' day. Life back then was simpler, they shared modal purity and traditional human values. A pure way of life.

You feel like the Royal City government in New Centerton doesn't have your interests in mind, that everyone seems to have forgotten that pure humans are the original mode of being, even Dogs should stay dogs and stop trying to act like the master mode. You keep these thoughts to yourself most of the time, because the fact is, humanity is outnumbered now. So you just do what you can to stay true to your heritage and not get caught up in the bullshit of the other lesser modes.

You may not have many friends in the real world, but you always have your Human pride and your precious blurbflies. You adore your dreamy little bugs, your tiny mechanical friends and protectors. They allow you to walk where you want and stand tall. If someone wants to pick a fight, you'll send in the bugs. You aren't defenseless. You aren't scared of shite. You are a proud pure and if anyone doubts your mettle, they're free to test it.

EQUIPMENT

- Coleopter Level 1 (no modules)
- Antique .22 pistol
- Spare blurb parts
- Simple blurb repair kit

NOTES

Trained in all tasks involving pleasant social interactions with pure humans

Contact: You have a contact (either cop or manager of a small business)

Spin Identity (2+ Intellect): You can convince targets that understand you that you are a class of person you are not (not specific person), for up to an hour. Add one target: +1 Intellect cost.

Major effect: Gain an extra blurbfly action.

Minor Effect: Enemy's actions are one step more difficult on its next turn.

GM Intrusion: Even the most dependable blurbs can malfunction. It's annoying and probably doesn't last too long, but it reflects poorly on your ability to control your blurbs. Downed blurbs like these sometimes require your attention to get them up in the air again.

PORTRAIT

VURT

IRVINE
NAME

IS A ROBOMAN DESCRIPTOR MATHEMAGICIAN TYPE WHO

IS A LUCKY BLEEDER
FOCUS

TIER	EFFORT	XP
1	1	

MIGHT	SPEED	INTELLECT
9	11	20
EDGE	EDGE	1 EDGE
POOL	POOL	POOL

RECOVERY ROLLS 1d6+ -1

- 1 ACTION
- 1 HOUR
- 10 MINS
- 10 HOURS

DAMAGE TRACK

- IMPAIRED: +1 Effort per level; No minor or major effects on rolls; Rolls of 17 - 20 deals +1 damage
- DEBILITATED: Can move only an immediate distance; Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- Hedge Maths (1 Int): Creates various small, non-harmful effects (float/mend small items, etc.)
- Force Point (1 Int): Mathemagical missile
- Firewall: Mental attack defense -1 step difficulty

ADVANCEMENT

- INCREASE CAPABILITIES: +4 into Stat Pools
- MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION: +1 into the Edge of your choice
- OTHER: +1 into Effort
- SKILL TRAINING: train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill
- OTHER: refer to Vurt Corebook

SKILLS • MIGHT

T = Trained S = Specialized I = Inability

	T	S	I
Melee Defense	X		

SKILLS • SPEED

	T	S	I

SKILLS • INTELLECT

	T	S	I
All Computational Devices	X		

LASTING DAMAGE

DAYS LEFT

CYPHERS

- Chrownotransducer (Level 2)
- Ibotenic Blart (Level 3)
- Naga Antivenom (Level 1)

3 LIMIT

ATTACKS

	MOD DAM
Force Point (1 Intellect, Short Range)	4
Unarmed	2

2 ARMOR

£300 MONEY

BACKGROUND

Even before you were mathemagickally aware, you could still feel the numbers around you, the never-ending push and pull of the sacred geometry of reality. Physics is merely the jumping off point, a rule book to be rewritten. Numbers can be renamed, replaced, re-spun back into the processes to bend the solid and assault the senses. You've been trained to use your natural talents, studying for years at the now-defunct Sayers Academy. You've been told on numerous occasions to keep your mathemagickal mumbling to yourself, to hide the amazing things that you can do with numbers. It draws envious eyes and you know that your survival rate goes down exponentially as an open mathemagician. Your mother was a pure human and you have no idea who your father was.

Your physical appearance seems to bother the small minded. You don't identify with a specific gender or culture, and your total lack of interest in fitting in only exacerbates the situation. To many, you appear aloof or even quietly arrogant. You are extremely compulsive in certain areas, something quite common in a RoboMan.. You feel most comfortable on your own, but you know that to achieve your goals and continue your studies, you need to go out into the real world from time to time, and without ample protection, you're not likely to last long.

EQUIPMENT

Simple Toolkit

Good luck charm

NOTES

Ballistic skin: +1 to Armor
Ward: +1 to Armor
Contact: Supplies her with tools or computer tech for 1/2 the going rate

Major effect: A very lucky chain of events knocks your target prone, where they are also stunned and lose their next turn.

Minor Effect Luckily, you move out of the way at just the right time and add +2 to Armor

GM Intrusion: Envy is a bitch. Your recent good fortune has drawn some negative attention and you'll likely have to defend yourself or your actions before it ends up in bloodshed.

PORTRAIT

VURT

NAME: EMMA JUREMA

IS A [DOGMAN] DESCRIPTOR [SPEAKER] TYPE WHO

FOCUS: TAKES THE REINS

TIER	EFFORT	XP
1	1	

MIGHT	SPEED	INTELLECT
POOL: 8	POOL: 9	POOL: 17
EDGE:	EDGE:	EDGE: 1

RECOVERY ROLLS (1d6+1)

- 1 ACTION
- 1 HOUR
- 10 MINS
- 10 HOURS

DAMAGE TRACK

- IMPAIRED: +1 Effort per level. No minor or major effects on rolls. Rolls of 17 - 20 deals +1 damage
- DEBILITATED: Can move only an immediate distance. Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- Socially Acceptable: Asset to bureaucratic or pleasant social interaction tasks
- Loyal to a Fault: Disloyal actions +2 step difficulty
- Werewolf Chic: All social interaction tasks -1 step difficulty. Clothing & armor 150% cost
- Aggression (2 Int): Target in short range gains Might asset on attack rolls for 1 minute
- Good Advice (1 Int): If you give a PC advice on an action, they are trained in it for 1 round
- Practiced with light weapons

ADVANCEMENT

- INCREASE CAPABILITIES: +1 into Stat Pools
- MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION: +1 into the Edge of your choice
- OTHER: +1 into Effort
- SKILL TRAINING: Train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill
- OTHER: refer to Vurt Corebook

SKILLS • MIGHT

T = Trained, S = Specialized, I = Inability

	T	S	I

SKILLS • SPEED

	T	S	I

SKILLS • INTELLECT

	T	S	I
All social interactions	X		
Persuasion		X	
Intimidation		X	

LASTING DAMAGE

	DAYS LEFT

CYPHERS

- Flashbang Grenade (Level 4)
- Mad Dog 40-40 (Level 2)

LIMIT: 2

ATTACKS

	MOD DAM
Cricket bat	4

ARMOR: 1

MONEY: £300

BACKGROUND

You are the seventh of nine DogMan pups from the absolute worst part of Rusholme, left on your own at a very young age. While you haven't lived there in ages, you still know how to find what you need. Your natural knack for leadership has drawn all the right (and wrong) sort of attention over the years, but you ain't bovvered. Your charm, grace, and self-confidence attract everyone around you, and that suits you just fine. Leading a group towards a goal and then achieving it is what makes you feel most alive. You like to be in charge when you can, but you're smart enough to know when it's in your best interest to follow. It's rare though. You are usually the most charismatic person in any room.

You know how to make and save your quid, and you have dreams for yourself in the future that include your own business in the Vurt feather industry. Up until recently, you had quite a decent bit of savings built up, but you lost it all in a bad bit of investments in a start-up Vurt feather company who left town with your cash. So now you're back to square one. Basically broke, in need of quid to pay for this month's rent. Which is now officially past due. Your best mate Namo Komakino is almost always by your side, you watch each other's backs like you have since you were both teen losers in Rusholme.

EQUIPMENT

Cricket bat

NOTES

Uberdog: +1 to Armor

Major effect:: The foe is influenced, captivated, or otherwise affected by your ability for twice as long as normal.

Minor Effect: The next time you attempt to command, captivate, or otherwise influence the same enemy, the difficulty of the task is decreased by one step.

GM Intrusion: You're addicted to something. Hell, we all are. But your addiction, even if it was in the past, rears its ugly head at the worst possible moment. Flashbacks, cold sweats, maybe just remembering the way you once were under the influence is enough to stop you in your tracks for a bit. As a natural leader, it's likely that you don't want to show this weakness in front of others.

PORTRAIT

VURT

NAMO KOMAKINO
NAME

IS A SHADOWMANVURT DESCRIPTOR EXPLORER TYPE WHO

DELVES DEEPER
FOCUS

1 TIER | 1 EFFORT | XP

ADVANCEMENT

- INCREASE CAPABILITIES: +1 into Stat Pools
- MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION: +1 into the Edge of your choice
- OTHER: +1 into Effort
- SKILL TRAINING: Train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill
- OTHER: refer to Vurt Corebook

SKILLS • MIGHT

T = Trained, S = Specialized, I = Inability

	T	S	I

SKILLS • SPEED

	T	S	I
Climbing	X		
Jumping	X		

SKILLS • INTELLECT

	T	S	I
Persuasion	X		

LASTING DAMAGE

DAYS LEFT

CYPHERS

A-Z Book (Level 2, District of your choice)
Luzine (Level 3)

2 LIMIT

ATTACKS

	MOD DAM
Switchblade	4

ARMOR

£200 MONEY

MIGHT	SPEED	INTELLECT
13 POOL	12 POOL	11 POOL
1 EDGE	EDGE	EDGE

RECOVERY ROLLS

1d6+ -1

- 1 ACTION
- 1 HOUR
- 10 MINS
- 10 HOURS

DAMAGE TRACK

- IMPAIRED: +1 Effort per level; No minor or major effects on rolls; Rolls of 17 - 20 deals +1 damage
- DEBILITATED: Can move only an immediate distance; Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- Show Shadow (1 Might): action to initiate, hiding in shadows/dim light -1 step difficulty/10min
- The Natural: You can attempt 1 untrained task as if trained (refresh w/ recovery roll)
- Danger Sense (1 Spd): Initiative -1 step difficulty
- Surging Confidence (1 Might): Use action, take first recovery roll of day, gain another action
- Practiced with light and medium weapons
- Stealth: Asset for all stealth-related tasks
- Flight not Fight: If use action only to move, all Speed defense tasks -1 step difficulty

BACKGROUND

You're the most curious person you know, always have been. Your father was a VurtMan and your mother was a ShadowMan. It was a short-lived, violent relationship and you wish you didn't remember it so well. Since then, you've felt that it was the Vurt part of your father that drove him mad. His former business partner (and current Warrington District Council member) helped pay for you and your mother to move away from him. You haven't seen him since.

You likely haven't told anyone about the fact that you have Vurt genetics, you tell everyone you meet that you're just a regular ShadowMan girl. Since you moved from Warrington to Rusholme as a teenager, no one knew your past and you've kept it that way. You are ashamed of your Vurt blood, it makes you feel freakish, dirty even. Ironically, you've devoted your life to exploring the Vurt world through feathers. Even your childhood friend Emma Jurema doesn't know your true mode of being, as you were raised by your single ShadowMan mother who never said much to anyone anyway at that point in her life. Your mate Emma is almost always by your side. You still have to watch her back so she doesn't get harassed (or worse), just like you have since you were both young punks in Rusholme. Friendship is important, and divulging your secret would ruin everything.

EQUIPMENT

- Switchblade
- Small, powerful LED torch (flashlight)

NOTES

All drug-related willpower rolls +1 step difficulty

Major effect: The target is also stunned and loses their next turn.

Minor Effect: Enemy's actions are one step more difficult on its next turn.

GM Intrusion: You're always dwelling on your conspiracy theories, but it usually leaves you with no answers, just more questions and a headache. But when a real epiphany strikes, when you can connect some of the dots and make some sense of the chaos, it brings you to your knees and makes it nearly impossible to do anything other than laugh and/or weep.

PORTRAIT

VURT

BLYTON SAXONDALE
NAME

IS A SHADOWMAN
DESCRIPTOR

WARRIOR
TYPE

WHO LIQUIDATES
FOCUS

TIER	EFFORT	XP
1	1	

MIGHT	SPEED	INTELLECT
POOL: 16	POOL: 10	POOL: 13
EDGE: 1	EDGE:	EDGE:

RECOVERY ROLLS

1d6+

- 1 ACTION
- 1 HOUR
- 10 MINS
- 10 HOURS

DAMAGE TRACK

- IMPAIRED: +1 Effort per level; No minor or major effects on rolls; Rolls of 17 - 20 deals +1 damage
- DEBILITATED: Can move only an immediate distance; Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- Show Shadow (1 Might): action to initiate, hiding in shadows/dim light -1 step difficulty/10min
- Bash (1 Might): Melee attack -1 damage, target dazed for 1 round (all tasks +1 step difficulty)
- Thrust (1 Might): Melee attack +1 damage if weapon has sharp edge or point
- Flight not Fight: If use action only to move, all Speed defense tasks -1 step difficulty
- Surprise Attack: -1 step difficulty, +2 pts damage
- Drug-related willpower tasks: +1 step difficulty
- Mental Attack Defense: +1 step more difficult

ADVANCEMENT

- INCREASE CAPABILITIES: +1 into Stat Pools
- MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION: +1 into the Edge of your choice
- OTHER: +1 into Effort
- SKILL TRAINING: train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill
- OTHER: refer to Vurt Corebook

SKILLS • MIGHT

T = Trained; S = Specialized; I = Inability

	T	S	I

SKILLS • SPEED

T = Trained; S = Specialized; I = Inability

	T	S	I
Stealth tasks (hiding/sneaking)	X		

SKILLS • INTELLECT

T = Trained; S = Specialized; I = Inability

	T	S	I

LASTING DAMAGE

	DAYS LEFT

CYPHERS

- Stupify Card (Level 3)
- Fractal Blade (Level 2)

LIMIT: 2

ATTACKS

	MOD DAM
Trench Knife	4
Katana	12

ARMOR: 2

MONEY: £200

BACKGROUND

Mommy was a ShadowMan, Daddy was a Pure Human who ran with a Crumpsall hate-group until he was arrested by the MPD. Neither lived to see 20 and you were raised by a RoboShad uncle from Chroma. Because of him, you have a deep respect for elders and especially RoboShads. You also are a Chroma Vurtball Club super-fan like he was and you'll show your shadow to any wanker who wants to argue otherwise.

You've done so, so many bad things and you'd rather that no one knew about your shady past. You've used your Shadow powers to take lives, and you'll likely do it again before someone takes yours. Truth be told, you like to scrap, it clears your mind and makes you feel solid. Right or wrong, the sound of breaking bones relaxes you. After a grueling battle, you're usually able to sleep through the night.

Most of the last decade is just a blur of Choke-induced rage mixed with increasingly dangerous Black and Yellow laced Vurt feathers. Just recently you've slowed down long enough to start taking your future seriously. You honestly never thought you'd live this long anyway, no one from your Crumpsall group of childhood friends has survived, and you almost feel guilty about it. Almost. You're obviously better at dodging bullets and paddy wagons than they were. Bloody survival of the fittest and all that, innit?

EQUIPMENT

- Armor vest (+2 Armor)
- Trench knife: if Effort applied, ignores 2 points of Armor on stabbing attack
- Katana

NOTES

Practiced in Armor: Armor speed cost reduced 1 step, start the game with armor vest

Major effect: You can take a second action this round.

Minor Effect: No one but the foe notices that you make the attack.

GM Intrusion: Something has just reminded you of your first murder and for some reason, this time the memory is accompanied with intense feelings of guilt. You may need a round or two to collect yourself and return to your comfortable sociopathy.

PORTRAIT

VURT

NAME

IS A DESCRIPTOR TYPE WHO

FOCUS

TIER

EFFORT

XP

MIGHT

POOL EDGE

SPEED

POOL EDGE

INTELLECT

POOL EDGE

RECOVERY ROLLS

1d6+

1 ACTION

1 HOUR

10 MINS

10 HOURS

DAMAGE TRACK

IMPAIRED

+1 Effort per level

No minor or major effects on rolls

Rolls of 17 - 20 deals +1 damage

DEBILITATED

Can move only an immediate distance

Cannot move if Speed Pool is 0

SPECIAL ABILITIES

ADVANCEMENT

INCREASE CAPABILITIES +4 into Stat Pools

MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION +1 into the Edge of your choice

OTHER +1 into Effort

SKILL TRAINING train in a skill or specialize in a trained skill

OTHER refer to Vurt Corebook

SKILLS • MIGHT

T = Trained
S = Specialized
I = Inability

T S I

SKILLS • SPEED

T S I

SKILLS • INTELLECT

T S I

LASTING DAMAGE

DAYS LEFT

CYPHERS

LIMIT

ATTACKS

MOD DAM

ARMOR

MONEY

BACKGROUND

EQUIPMENT

NOTES

PORTRAIT

RAVENDESK GAMES

We at Ravendesk Games would like to extend special thanks to these people, without whom we never would've created this game. Or else, we would have lost our mind in the process, or done a really bad job. Anyway thanks very much:

Pauline Lepera	Louis Lepera
Dulce Ramos	Gabriella Lepera
Eric Priestley	Louisa Lepera
Mark Rickard	Lethicia Lepera
Jennifer Klinger	Cheyenne Coles
Jonathan Uttenreither	Scribble, canine secretary
Andrew Mura	Peggy Sue and G.
Omen Wild	Rod, David, and April Pruitt
Adam Gubman	The City of Manchester
Our friends at Monte Cook Games	And most importantly, Jeff Noon

And finally, to our beloved backers who are listed on the following pages.

DODO TOWN

After many hours of walking the lamp-lit boulevards we finally reached a House of Sleep, one of those fabled palaces where eyes might close at last and one world might fade into another. Sadly, the place was closed. A notice in the window said DONE DREAMING. Together we traced our steps back to the town square where all the other lonely refugees were gathered.

- Jeff Noon

KICKSTARTER BACKERS

This book was made possible by the generous contributions of these amazing backers.
Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for making this game a reality.

Angus Abranson / Chronicle City
Brett Achorn
adamnemo42
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Lewis Allan
Ashley J. Allen
Sean Anderson
Madcat Angrymog
antifuchs
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James W. Armstrong-Wood
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Regis Renevey
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