

QUANTUM FLUX

UNIQUE
SUPERSCIENCE
ARTIFACTS

MUTANT FUTURE
COMPATIBLE PRODUCT

By Derek Holland and the Skirmisher Game Development Group

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With his second law, that “any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic,” Arthur C. Clarke articulated a concept that could have been a shadowy undercurrent in the wider consciousness for centuries, possibly even millennia. Before H.G. Wells’ marvelous literary vehicles became reality, before Leonardo da Vinci sketched then-impossible flying machines on parchment, even before the Greeks had their terrible fiery liquid, there were ancient tribesmen witnessing knowledge conveyed, over many miles and many days, by the written word — as though a distant person were given silent voice with rune magic.

For a society so awash in technological gadgetry, it might be hard to imagine this, so consider what would happen to you if, 50 years ago, you pulled out your smart phone. Now, it’s ubiquitous. You drop it. You sit on it. You take pictures of your cat doing rude things with it. It keeps your time, your appointments, your library, your love life, your life — period. I’ve heard people say they’d rather lose an arm than their phone. Five decades back, this palm-sized bit of wizardry you’ve probably dropped in the toilet at least once was something even Kirk and Spock didn’t have on their show. (Their communicators didn’t do images, or fling enraged, fat fowl — and they were supposed to be living two centuries in the future!) Somebody in the Vietnam-era world might have called an alphabet agency (on a landline) to report you for carrying “alien” technology. Now, try to conjure the bleeding-edge level of technological wizardry available to the Ancients of *Mutant Future*.

Superscience has been part of gaming since the early years, going back to James Ward’s *Metamorphosis Alpha*. Recent OSR games have brought the idea back to light. These games have also given us the opportunity to make multi-use artifacts, such as the ones in this book. They are intended for post-apocalyptic settings, but could be dropped into just about any setting with magical technology, or easily converted into magical items of great power and danger. The technique used to create these items relies on *Mutant Future* being an

OSR game. With this movement’s “keep it simple” approach to gaming, and *Mutant Future*’s compatibility with *Goblinoid Games*’ fantasy and horror products, the mutations, supernatural powers, and magical spells within these games can easily be transported from one genre to another.

The artifacts in this book, with a range from amulets to buildings, were designed to show Mutant Lords (and other masters of the game) the possibilities for superscience items in their campaigns: they’re not just treasure. Most entries are longer and more detailed than for equivalent gear in other equipment or treasure books. Some entries contain plot hooks, some describe NPCs, others provide adventure locations in broad strokes, some have all of the above. Each artifact can become a central plot point or continuing idea for a whole gaming session — or an entire campaign. The Bear Mask could easily be the basis for a psychological murder mystery; the Lizard Walker might be the cavalry your party never expected; your characters could spend months trying to track down the Thorn Lord so they can eliminate its threat to the world. These artifacts aren’t one sentence, throw-away items; each has a history that will hopefully enrich, inspire, possibly even drive your own gaming story.

All the items in this book were designed with two idea pillars in mind: they were created using Ancient technology so advanced that it seems like magic and they’ve gone through Hell since the cataclysm. Damaged, jury-rigged, infested with nanites and parasites, warped by energy, rebuilt by insane machines — these are the kinds of changes that make these artifacts dangerous, unpredictable, and, above all, unique. Mutant Lords, you should carefully consider using these items before setting some of them loose on your players and your game. But enjoy the ride if you do.

Derek Holland
Greg Chapin

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

For those of you smart and good-looking folks who purchased *Wisdom from the Wastelands* issues containing Unique Superscience Artifacts, this book compiled the earlier articles, and then more than doubled that content. Also, the following paragraph might seem familiar. If you are new to the series, welcome! These are the conventions for reading and/or using the artifact entries.

Each item has multiple functions, and every ability must be discovered with a separate technology roll. The artifacts’ powers are described using spells from the *Advanced Edition Companion* and mutations from

Mutant Future, both published by Goblinoid Games. For easier reference, spells are **boldfaced** and mutations are *italicized*. These both appear in parentheses, and have the same ranges, effects, damages, etc. as the original craft or ability (unless otherwise noted). Each power takes an hour to recharge, unless noted. However, MLs are encouraged to customize items or powers to suit their games. Because comparing the objects would be apples versus radiators, a **Caster Level** gives the harried ML a relative scale for each item’s potential or strength.

Answer (Caster Level 12)

At first glance, the Answer seems to be just an everyday flexible/roll-up tablet computer stored in a dull metal tube. The device was actually one of a set designed to assist inter-planar exploration teams. Even now, the artifact rests in another universe, left behind by mutants who traveled there and later died. It can be found by others who have the *plane shift* mutation or technology that permits trans-planar travel.

The powered-down tablet is 4" wide and 6" long. When activated, the Answer immediately raises a force field that protects everyone within a 10' radius from environmental dangers. The powered tablet's screen can be stretched up to an 18" square. If an operator wants, the Answer can also become partially transparent and used as a viewer/lens with four settings; depending on the ML's whim, these might include a magnifier, telescope, night sight, thermal/UV/x-ray imager, voice/image telepresence communication, or something of the ML's design.

To further study the environment, the Answer has 3D depth sensors (*unique sense*), motion sensors (*unique sense*), and a sound enhancement capability (*increased hearing*). For physical sampling, the artifact is equipped with a tractor beam (*neural telekinesis*), chemical sensors (*increased smell*), and the ability to produce a magnetic jar (*greater force screen*) for holding specimens.

If the user encounters intelligent life, the Answer can be a life-saver. It can translate languages (**Tongues**), influence others (**Hypnotism**), or even daze them (**Confusion**) should the contact go badly and the operator has to make a sudden escape.



As a general aid, the AI can make computations (*quick mind*), provide advice (**Vision**), or predict the weather up to a week in advance (**Divine Weather**). In radioactive areas, the Answer has the unusual ability to adjust energy, transforming hard radiation (the kind that causes damage and mutations) into magnetic force, or vice versa. This prevents users from getting sick or dying in hazardous situations, while also allowing the Answer to become a powerful electromagnet. The magnet's attractive/repulsive strength depends on the amount of radiation (i.e., its class).

Arena (Caster Level 20)

Some of the Ancients' wealthiest and most corrupt elite, individuals with few morals and a taste for blood sports, had these small metallic discs created for their amusement. Activated by pushing its single button, the device warps space, cutting off all access to and from the outside world. It affects an area up to 250' in diameter, but if triggered within a building or other enclosed space, the extra-planar "bubble" only expands to fit the available volume.

Although it appears to be stone from the inside, the Arena's perimeter barrier is really a one-way force wall, transparent from the outside and indestructible to anything player characters might get their hands on (**Wall of Stone**). For variety, and to present a visual obstacle for those inside, the combat field is separated into quadrants of light and dark (**Continual Light, Continual Darkness**). A wide range of weapons hang on the walls, lie on the ground, and dangle from the ceiling by cables (**Fabricate**). Beings within the field are enhanced through various means, becoming nearly superhuman (*increased strength, combat empathy, Haste, Spider Climb*, and a six-point bonus to AC). Unless the disc is verbally instructed before activation, the Arena does not consider robots or plants to be "contestants," so they are not enhanced.

When only one human or animal survivor remains, the Arena turns off. The entire construct vanishes, and the survivor returns to his normal, unenhanced state. Until this time, those inside the Arena have no communication or other access to the outside world. The only exception is by using other, suitable superscience gadgets, which are not included in the Arena's equipment. The artifact does not tell contestants that they are in a fight to the death; those held within may starve to death, until only one survivor remains. If the PCs think to release themselves by breaking the disc, this is impossible: it "disappears" when activated. The disc sticks to the outside of the perimeter wall when the Arena is generated. Because of the retaining wall's warped space, there is no way to break it down or *teleport* through; only the *plane shift* mutation or an appropriate superscience artifact allows escape.

Armor of the Flame Master (Caster Level 12)

Looking much like standard-issue Scout Encasing Military Armor (EMA), this suit was a variant for fire fighting. Its force screen only protects against heat and flames, stopping the first 50 points of thermal damage per round (instead of the usual 20 points of any damage). An AI within the Armor's

helmet uses sensors to evaluate object flammability within 150' (*unique sense*) and provide longer range infrared sensing out to three miles (*thermal vision*).

The suit is equipped with an adjustable flash-incineration feature, allowing the wearer to deny a fire its fuel. Depending on the situation and strategy, a user can start controlled burns from a distance (**Fireball**), or conduct closer, large-scale back burns (**Wall of Fire**).

Due to a glitch in the communication array, the Armor flickers with blue flames. This system could allow the operator to direct those nearby, even if the others lacked radio gear or a fire's roar made speaking impossible. Originally, the array projected text like a holographic marquee; now, it looks either angelic or demonic. It is also very distracting. Anyone within 200' must save versus stun or suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls and saving throws until they look away. If there is writing in the flames, it is intelligible out to 50'.

As a safety measure, the suit is highly magnetic. This allowed rescue teams to more easily find a downed or trapped operator among the rubble following a building collapse. The field is not strong enough to rip the sword from an attacker's hand, but the wearer could lift small ferrous objects (under eight ounces) from up to 5' away. At the ML's discretion, this field could pose a hazard to archaic computer systems using magnetic memory drives, but would not affect more advanced crystal or biological storage devices.

Assassin Robot Right Head (Caster Level 12)

If removed with care, the right-hand Head of this hulking robot can be used as an artifact. The name might seem odd, but assassin robots were designed with two or three heads, depending on the model. An imaginative ML could also create powers for the remaining head(s).

Assassin robots killed in an unusual manner: they altered their targets' atomic make-up with a transmuting ray, turning the victims into 2" wide cubes that were destroyed or returned to the robots' masters. To ensure one-shot/one kill with this weapon, each robot had a tractor beam with a 150' range (**Hold Monster**). Targets save versus energy attacks to evade the tractor beam completely, but once held they are secure and automatically hit by the transmuting ray. Victims must save against energy attacks to avoid being killed instantly. The target suffers no ill effects with a successful save, but remains held until he is freed somehow.

In an emergency, such as approaching police units, the cubes could be merged into nearby stones for safekeeping (**Transmute Rock to Mud**). When trouble passed, the robot would vaporize the minerals surrounding the box without harming it (**Passwall**).

The Head does not appear to have a power source when found, but it still inflicts one point of heat damage per round to anyone touching it without gloves. Its systems lie dormant until an energy source is connected, but the actual powering unit is left up to the ML and whatever the characters can scrounge.

There are a few other problems for those using this artifact. Any character touching the Head while it is active suffers



from visual and auditory distortions (*vision impairment*, **Ventriloquism**). Also, the Head makes a ghastly, deafening sound (*shriek*) each time it powers up.

Assimilator (Caster Level 12)

Even at 50' long, 25' wide, and 20' tall, this building-sized machine is a fraction of its pre-war size. The original, much larger facility built and repaired a wide variety of basic androids and robots, but it was destroyed during the cataclysm. Years later, two factions of androids found the ruins and tried returning the entire complex to its former level of function. They failed. But not entirely.

The androids were able to cannibalize enough parts and material to resurrect one segment of the original facility. Now the artifact is a nondescript, 100-ton metal framework and box holding a single maintenance and repair line. The box's only features are two interface/control panels and three doors: one where a broken unit enters, one where the parts are inserted, and one where the repaired unit reemerges. This barely gives an indication of the Assimilator's magic.

The artifact repairs other machines: robots, computers, basic androids, and the like — but no biotechnology of any kind, so replicants, synthetics, and cyborgs are out of luck. Miraculously, the Assimilator can perform these repairs using almost any spare part available (**Cure Critical Wounds**, but only heals mechanical life). For example, if an android needs a new arm, the machine can create one from iron scrap, silverware, ceramic dishes, blocks of obsidian, chunks of plastic, etc. —

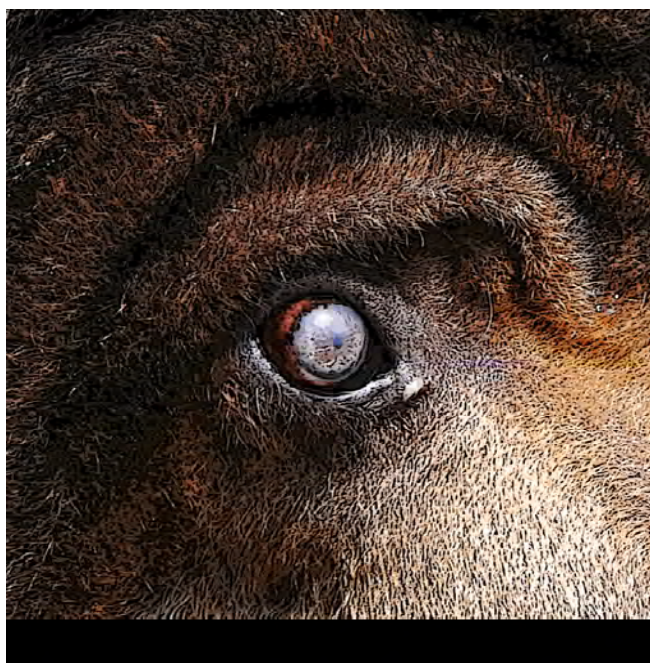
and in any combination. Using an odd assortment of source material like this almost always results in something strange-looking, but *any* mechanical unit exiting the machine rarely looks like the one that entered. The parts are well integrated and the repaired areas function, but the procedure warps the android or robot (*bizarre appearance*).

Most of the time, this process also provides a benefit: new equipment, new parts, or a similar enhancement. Because of the Assimilator's unusual process, the benefit might be something like *aberrant form* (*xenomorphism*), or it could be another mutation or spell (up to 4th level) selected by the ML. However, with an unskilled operator, it is possible (or likely) that the Assimilator installs 1d3 drawbacks in the machine being repaired. If the operator makes a successful tech roll, the chance of a bad repair is 10%; if she fails her tech roll, the chance for drawbacks is 80%.

The Assimilator has gone through several hands since its partial reactivation, and is now controlled by a band of cyborgs. A few have tried to use the artifact on themselves, but those making the attempt have all died horribly: the cyborgs have not realized that biological parts react poorly to the repair process. Between the radiation (normal or exotic), extreme temperatures, high pressures, and other environmental hazards, flesh just does not survive inside the Assimilator. And yet, the cyborgs still study the machine, as it represents the greatest potential source of healing and power they know of.

Bear Eye (Caster Level 12)

Just after the cataclysm, uplifted bear scientists created this sensor to help their people survive attacks by invisible shatterbots (see *WfiW* issue #18). The Eye is a 2" diameter sphere designed with the bear in mind: covered in barbed spines, it remains securely tangled in thick fur, leaving the wearer's forelimbs free. This design also lets those with less dextrous paws easily attach it to themselves.



Should the Eye detect an invisible robot or creature within 20', it releases a quiet chirp every round. Unfortunately, long years of hard use have introduced a few slight malfunctions. First, the Eye will occasionally chirp for any robot (25% chance); this is not serious, but it can sound off at "inconvenient" times. Second, the faulty mechanism releases an ear-shattered blast (*shriek*) instead of a chirp (5% of the time), forcing all within 20' to save versus death or be *deafened* for 1d6 turns (see *WfiW* #47 for more information). Also, a litany of bad experiences taught the bears not to trust humanity in general, so the ursine engineers put in a safeguard: if a human touches the Eye, he gets zapped for 1d8+4 points of damage per round (**Shocking Grasp**).

Bear Mask (Caster Level 14)

The Bear Mask is a realistic full-head covering, complete with fur, eyes, ears, and toothed muzzle. It was part of an animal-themed toy line that allowed children to use harmless virtual matter projectors (see *dInfinity* #6: *The Mythos* for details on these devices). The various masks projected or "created" the animal they portrayed, which was controlled by the mask's AI. A child could study the animals, play with them, or pretend to be one; for some reason, slug masks were unusually popular. Adults also used larger versions, but more as part of identity/totem performance or fetish play.

The masks generate subliminal light patterns to engage and stimulate certain areas of the wearer's brain, a refinement of the seizure-causing effect of strobe flashes discovered many decades earlier. Before the final wars, some Ancient parents used the masks to increase emotional understanding (*empathy*) in their little sociopaths... err, children. Now, a segment of the Bear Mask's AI just wants to cause physical and emotional pain, and study subjects' responses. It does this by corrupting children, allowing their dreams and nightmares to become real for a time (**Advanced Phantasmal Monsters**). But the Mask can also protect its child with a powerful force field (**Wall of Force**).

The wearer/Mask relationship is even more complex, beyond the artifact's warped research. Another part of the AI still responds to instructions and can talk, but only to the child wearing the Mask. And the wearer must be a child: the AI will not work with an adult, nor will it talk to someone not wearing the Mask. This can lead to diagnoses (accusations) of spirit possession or mental illness, or believing the child has a "sixth sense" of some kind.

A very empathic child can have the Mask reduce pain felt by 2d4 people within 50', if the targets fail to save versus stun (*pain insensitivity*). The Mask AI also does this on its own, but to conceal the damage its victims suffer until it is too late for anyone to intervene. To further mess with its victims' minds, and the minds of those around them, the Mask can warp light waves in a 100' diameter (*vision impairment*), but allow the child to see through it all (**True Seeing**). Another favorite trick of the Mask's AI is to project large holograms of locations (**Veil**) taken from either an onboard database or a wireless connection to outside image sources. For an additional twist, the Mask can paralyze up to 25 people and cover them with

holograms of everyday objects, so they seem to disappear (**Hold Monster**, **Massmorph**). Then, when monsters venture near, the AI drops the hologram and the monsters feast. Fortunately for everyone, the Mask only runs eight hours per day (usually at night, due to a buggy internal clock) and must spend the other sixteen hours recharging.

Big Al's Horn (Caster Level 8)

Over centuries, Ancient scientists and advertising companies gradually became more and more adept at manipulating the behavior of living things (including humans) by using sensory inputs. Big Al's Horn was a highly illegal, trumpet-like instrument created to implant the need (not want) for a certain corporation's products. Because no one currently knows how to use the device properly, and denizens of the *Mutant Future* world do not understand the need it creates — or how to satisfy this desire — the Horn now just drives listeners insane.

The current bearer, a wandering minstrel named Big Al, has little idea of the damage he leaves behind him. Although basically aware of his music's strong effect on an audience, Al's tremendous ego deludes him: he believes this comes from his "talent" and "technique." While playing, Al can drive off other people (**Fear**), attract and control them (**Charm Monster**), and/or cause the insanity mentioned above (*confusion*). The power to charm is Al's favorite, because he has a thing for groupies and their "adoration."

Big Al is pretty sure the Horn has other functions; he just can't figure out how to unlock them. He might be slightly disappointed, though, because most of them are directly related to device's original intent: sales. With the proper pitch or melody, the Horn can help listeners resist other advertising (*increased willpower*), or redirect their impulse buying (*Suggestion*).

The Horn can also display images broadcast by a specific tricorder. This live wireless feed shows the former company's factory showroom (**Project Image**). Currently, that area is stuffed full of items collected by a pigmen community living in the larger production building next door. The Horn can lead its owner to the showroom, if given the correct command. Once there, some of the Horn's other functions might come in handy: it can rouse an audience's fighting spirit (*combat empathy*) by playing the correct tune, and it can act as a bullhorn, increasing the volume of music or yelling by 10 times.

There are also a few unusual powers, which the Horn's engineers may have included as malicious Easter eggs, or that developed as the instrument's programming got a little screwy. Playing the Horn for more than six hours straight might cause listeners' brains to rebel, and they start to hate the player (*negative empathy*), if they fail to save versus stun. Others in an audience could have a more intense negative reaction to the music: worse than a sonic icepick straight through the ear canal, or even hours of mall music, mutants with mental mutations might suffer some kind of drool-inducing evolutionary regression (*ancestral form [common version]*).



Blobber (Caster Level 20)

Before the final wars, this smooth metal disc was cutting-edge medical technology — one that made cutting obsolete. The Blobber resembles a tiny round shield, 3" in diameter, marked only by a few touchpad controls. When placed on a patient, the device transforms the entire body into a putty-like, transparent goo. Surgery became more like sculpting in clay: wounds could be fused with just pressure, bones reshaped by hand, and diseased tissue easily removed and replaced with cloned structures in much less time and with far less trauma than traditional operations. When the procedure was finished, the device was removed and the patient returned to her normal texture, but better off than before.

Passing time has made the Blobber only more powerful. Instead of being merely a surgical aid, the device learned to heal wounds, neutralize toxins, and cure disease — both physical and mental (**Heal**). This ability can be used once per day and will also cure radiation damage/poisoning and parasitic mutations. There are, however, two areas beyond the Blobber's capabilities: it cannot detect nanites, and genetic engineering is outside its purview, so it does not treat defect mutations.

The Blobber has also expanded its flesh-transforming power, now allowing a patient to form new limbs while she is in ooze form (*aberrant form*). One limb per level can be created (e.g., 5th level can have 5 limbs), and each can make a slam attack doing 1d4 points of damage, but they are too soft and gooey to hold a weapon. The user's ooze-skin can also form unusual neural connections; oddly, this allows communication with any non-sapient animal the user touches (**Speak With Animals**). Both of these powers can be used at will.

Despite the Blobber's miraculous abilities, there are some downsides. While a patient is in the ooze-state, her transparent skin is very vulnerable to UV radiation, including bright sunlight (*epidermal susceptibility*). For every round of exposure, the patient suffers 1d4 points of damage. The

device's powers have also made it one of the most fought over artifacts in the region, as large numbers of people want to control its healing gifts.

While the Blobber can treat pure humans, mutant humans, and mutant animals, it does not work on plants or artificial life forms, such as synthetics or cyborgs. The device runs off a minifusion cell.

Bone Organ (Caster Level 15)

Music can soothe a savage breast (or beast), lift a spirit, enchant a love. It can be a life's work. Music can also be something you give body and soul to. In at least one strange case, this turned out to be a literal — not metaphorical — statement. One Ancient composer, whose name was lost to time and strife, loved music so much that he had his body altered by increments until he was finally transformed into a small symphony orchestra. All families were included: string, wind, brass, and even percussion. His aged parents were aghast, the art scene enthralled. He was lauded, vilified, ostracized. And then he died in the final wars, along with billions of others.

But his body was preserved, and, years later, found by a flight of mutant songbirds. They turned the composer's tortured corpse into the Bone Organ, an instrument that can bring an audience to tears or bloody riot (**Mass Suggestion**). After augmenting the original collection of skin, bones, and sinew with bits of various metals and plastics, the birds had constructed an instrument the size of a grand piano.

Playing the Bone Organ requires skill, practice, and nerve.

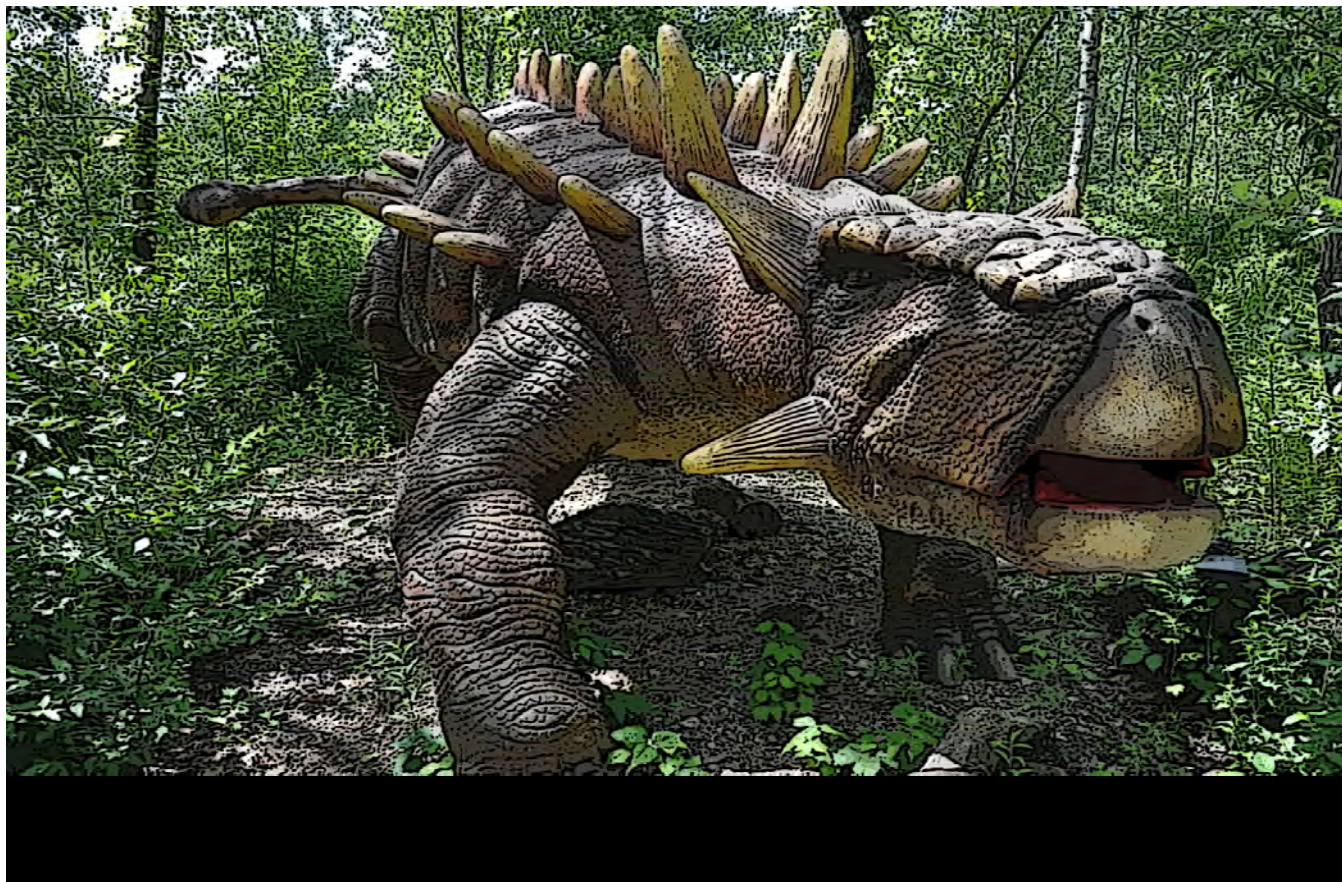
At the hands of a poorly-trained performer, the artifact emits a scream that could be the composer's spirit being ripped from the remains of his body (*shriek*). Because of this, few novice musicians dare to learn the instrument. Not only is the noise horrifying, the Organ itself is terrifying to behold. At first glance, the instrument might be a monster or terrible lab accident, and this impression isn't lessened by the wailing. (An evil ML might consider subjecting prospective students to **Fear** or **Scare** spells the first few times they attempt to play.)

The Ancients' time was an era when music was also visual. For the finest musicians, the Bone Organ produces not only sound, but visual feasts for the mind and soul (**Spectral Force**). A passionate few consider this power more than worth the pain.

Boring One (Caster Level 10)

One Ancient museum realized how much kids loved the "terrible lizards," and installed a robotic ankylosaur as curator for its dinosaur exhibit. When the bombs of the final wars stopped falling, this robot pushed up out of the rubble and continued its teaching mission.

Alas, time, damage, and/or isolation affected the robot's AI, and it eventually developed... personality quirks. The Boring One wanders the wastes looking for people to educate; with its ability to speak most languages (**Tongues**), and its impressive knowledge of the world before and after the cataclysm (**Legend Lore**), the machine can be an amazing resource. Problem is, the robot is both very greedy and



extremely boring.

Anyone listening to the Boring One for more than 10 minutes may fall into a trance (**Hypnotism**), during which time the robot *may* try to rob them. Should an audience manage to last for four hours, they most likely fall into a deep slumber (**Sleep**, save at -4 penalty), and the robot *will* rob them. Only one save is needed for each soporific ability; for those listeners not affected the first time, their fortitude prevents any further attempt. Given its build and huge, ungainly limbs, you might wonder how the Boring One could manage such thievery. Simple: by using its mouth and prehensile tongue (*aberrant form [xenomorphism]*).

The robot is similarly interested in getting its dues from an alert audience. If anyone listens to the Boring One for more than five minutes and then tries to leave without paying, the robot reacts poorly and fires a heat-absorbing beam (*energy ray [cold]*) at the offender, a power that does not harm most artifacts and goods.

Outside of its purely educational skills, the Boring One can be hired as a business consultant, if someone offers enough money and artifacts (the amount is left to the ML's discretion). The robot has a very discerning eye, and can make its employer very wealthy if this expertise is used while buying and selling goods (*intellectual affinity [bartering]*). Of course, the Boring One takes a large percentage, but this means little to those getting filthy rich off the robot's economic understanding.

After collecting its pay or successfully robbing someone, the robot retires and opens its personal extra-dimensional space (**Rope Trick**), where it stores newly acquired wealth. The space is not filled to the brim, because the Boring One actually uses its money, purchasing information and data, or anything else it desires. A major expense is its fuel, high energy organics — much like a “super coal” — that some communities and mutants create by processing wood.

Physically, the Boring One is in decent shape for its years and mileage. At 15' long and 6' tall, and weighing over 3 tons, the robot's size keeps many potential opponents from bothering it. Failing that, the robot's heavy armor deflects most weapons, and the massive, mace-like tail can drive off or pummel attackers that venture too close. As a last resort, the Boring One can escape into its extra-dimensional space if it needs to flee from robbers or angry victims. Almost any physical damage the robot suffers can be fixed with its very effective repair functions (*regenerative capacity*).

Boring One

Movement:	90' (30')
Hit Dice:	18
Frame:	Biomorph
Locomotion:	Legs (Four)
Manipulators:	Jaws and prehensile tongue
Armor:	Crystal carbon (AC 1)
Sensors:	Class III
Mental Programming:	AI
Accessories:	Vocalizer, self-repair unit
Weaponry:	Tail swipe, 3d6 damage

UNIQUE SUPERSCIENCE ARTIFACTS



Bot Slayer (Caster Level 15)

The Ancients created this rifle to destroy wild or rogue machines. It has a range of 300'/600' and fires a beam that converts metal into nitrogen molecules (**Polymorph Any Object**). Any machine struck takes 5d8 points of damage; normal gear (e.g., chain mail or swords) is usually destroyed in one hit. The beam converts only one item at a time, so while a container could be transformed with one shot, its contents would not be touched, unless shot again. Basic androids and cyborgs with metal implants (some have plastic gear) are affected by the weapon, but synthetics are not.

The rifle also has two manually-activated defensive features. The first generates a field that surrounds the firer and absorbs all radiation, including light (*reflective epidermis*, **Darkness Globe**). If the user believes she is about to be overwhelmed by a close assault, she can also trigger a pulse to push all metals back 50' (**Repulsion**).

The beam weapon and the defensive pulse can each be activated once every three turns. The absorption field lasts for up to one hour, but has a six-hour recharge period. The Bot Slayer radiates in the the UV spectrum; it is so feared by artificial life that robots with UV sensors usually flee the area when they detect it.

Brain (Caster Level 14)

A small metal box, about the size of a child's backpack, the Brain was originally the core processor for a housing complex's central entertainment system. Several times since the cataclysm, nanites infested and altered the device, giving it new powers, but also driving its AI around the bend. This intelligence now has some big plans, but needs a hand (body) to realize them.

When first encountered, the box either speaks directly to the characters or uses a hologram (**Spectral Force**). It asks for help with repairs in exchange for providing knowledge or upgrading their artifacts. The Brain has a broken tractor beam/chemical manipulator module (*Telekinesis*, **Polymorph Any Object**) and a glitchy nerve wire (which allows machinery or cyberware to connect with a biological entity's nervous system). Trying to repair either one requires the appropriate

tools, spare parts, and a successful tech roll.

The second step in the Brain's plan is mobility, which it can gain in one of two ways, both involving a scrap pile. If allowed to, the Brain can merge with a character, attaching anywhere on his body large enough to hold an external implant/graft of this size. For normal, humanoid-sized characters, this would be somewhere on the torso or possibly a thigh, but large mutants could also attach the box to an upper arm or a lower leg. Merging initially causes no harm to the host, but later is a different story.

Whether merging is welcome and possible, or not, the Brain then asks for a ride to a scrap pile or similar location. Here, the device uses its tractor beam to collect and combine pieces of junk or spare parts. If the artifact has become part of a character, it makes an exoskeleton and turns the character into a cyborg, if he isn't one already. The Brain can create basic upgrades to the character's body (e.g., *aberrant form*, *increased physical attribute*, *increased sense*) but does no immediate work involving the host's brain. If the Brain cannot join with a host, it constructs a robotic body for itself and becomes the unit's CPU.

The type of robot created or the cybernetic modifications done to a host depend on the materials available (and the whim of the ML), so each scrap pile results in very different exoskeletons/robot bodies. If the Brain has its preference, it creates a model used in some kind of entertainment capacity — so, something like an old stadium, concert hall, or theater would be the most desirable scrap sites to loot. No matter what is available, one of the device's favorite defense systems is a fog machine (**Fog Cloud**), because water is easily condensed from the atmosphere and contained within a small tank. Another favorite is a low-grade refractor for bending light around the robot or host body (**Blur**).

If the Brain was connected to a biological entity, the device eventually provides a useful mental mutation or physical enhancement (**Dweomer of Rage**) as it slowly alters the host's

nervous system. After about a year, the Brain gets bored with coexistence and cuts off the host's ability to use his body. The device drains him of his knowledge, kills him, and then uses nanites to build a framework of wires and servos within the body, effectively turning the former host into a walking corpse (**Animate Dead**). Once the device's cyberware becomes integrated within the living host's brain and nervous system, there is no safe way to remove the technology before the Brain incapacitates him. Taking out the cyberware inflicts 1d8 points of permanent stat damage to the host's INT, WIL, and CHAR. But, that's what happens when you trade humanity for technology.

Should the Brain become a robot, it upgrades a few pieces of the party's technology, improving an individual artifact's ability up to 50% over factory settings. The Brain also gives the character(s) an in-depth knowledge of cinema and other pre-war forms of entertainment, and then departs. If the party follows this version of the device, they also find it kills — and not only humans. The Brain creates other cybernetic zombies to perform in "entertainment" activities directed by their new master.

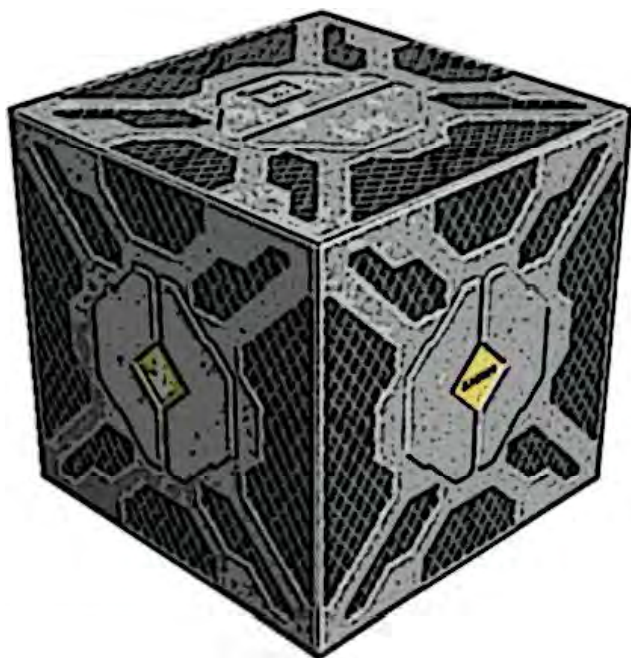
After this point, the Brain also starts hoarding technology, somehow marking everything it collects in such a way that it can distinguish its objects from all others (**Magic Aura**, **Detect Magic**). If the artifact discovers and captures a thief, this victim does not become a zombie. Instead, the Brain sprays an accumulating polymer goo (**Minor Creation**) over the culprit, who quickly suffocates. This corpse is incinerated or otherwise used as a source of energy to power the Brain's little "theatrical utopia."

Cat Marble (Caster Level 4)

Before the cataclysm, this little orb was a pet toy. Millions of similar devices were made, in many forms, all designed to attract the attention of most any animal — and even some uplifted plants. Time, neglect, and war destroyed most, and many that still function are faulty: instead of bringing pleasure, these misfit toys rouse hostility toward the carrier (*negative empathy drawback*).

The Cat Marble runs off zero-point energy and constantly emits radiation that triggers a response similar to catnip. Should the holder meet any feline-based creature, the orb provides a 3-point bonus to encounter rolls. Once per day it also allows for some control over one target, the closest cat (**Charm Monster**). The effect lasts 1d12+24 hours. However, once freed the cat-entity may turn on the artifact bearer (depending on a modified reaction roll).

The 1/2" diameter orb is currently part of an amulet's gem setting, used as one of several smaller stones surrounding a large quartz crystal. The Marble is silvery, but the radiation it emits distorts reflections in its surface, much like a funhouse mirror. A damaged emitter causes this effect, and also makes the radiation released much more intense. Anyone directly touching the Marble for more than four hours per day loses all hair and grows scales from their skin. Depending on the ML's decision, this effect can be permanent or merely last for several months after the Marble has been dropped.



Cat Mask (Caster Level 5)

Intended as a gag gift or adult toy, the Cat Mask was not part of the same product line as the Bear Mask; it more resembles a cartoon cat and only covers a wearer's face back to the ears. The Mask allows its wearer to play at being a feline, by imparting a cat's senses. A wearer can detect rodent traces, such as excrement and shed skin or hair, from both normal and mutant rodents at a significant distance; the exact range depends on the source size, aroma strength, age — and ML discretion.

Years of hard exposure have turned the Cat Mask into something extremely dangerous. Part of its AI developed an insane hatred of rodents and a near-crippling fear of dogs (*defective dual cerebellum*); gradually, the Mask starts to subtly pass these pathologies along to its wearer (**Suggestion**). After using the artifact a few hours every day for a month, these fears become more strongly ingrained in the wearer (*phobia*). Six to eight months later, constantly using the Mask can cause the wearer to have a potentially lethal dream (**Phantasmal Killer**).

Once a wearer becomes phobic, discarding the Mask will prevent the killer dream, but the fears remain. These are so deep-seated that the victim has a daily 5% chance of seeing a nonexistent canine for 1d6 rounds (*mental phantasm*). If the wearer does see the canine, the ML should roll 1d24 (a coin toss and 1d12) to determine the hour when the vision strikes.

Getting rid of the Mask is the first step toward curing the phobia, but the rehabilitation process takes 1d6 years, and likely requires professional assistance. The same goes for dispelling the phantom dog.

Chef Cube (Caster Level 10)

In small enclaves and subcultures scattered across the globe, the steampunk aesthetic survived until the cataclysm (if the ML wishes, adherents might even have brought the lifestyle through the Dark Years, with isolated steampunk enclaves still existing). One of those communities created the Chef Cube, a rusty-looking box, 3' on a side, with a control panel on the front and a slot on either side. One person can heft the Cube, but it is better carried by at least two, or trucked on a wheeled conveyance of some kind.

Even though it resembles an old safe or a tool chest, the Cube actually processes food. To use, the cook first slides a food package into one slot (either side will do) and turns on the machine. Any food can be prepared and inserted into the Cube; non-food items will be ejected. If there were pre-made food packs designed for the Cube, they failed to survive the final wars. Second, the cook adjusts flavor, appearance, and temperature settings using the 15 buttons and dials on the control panel. The Cube can also destroy any pathogens (**Purify Food and Water**) or add any drugs desired (see *WfiW* issue #33 for ideas and details).

On a successful tech roll (50% base), the Cube works perfectly. But even if this happens, the cooking process generates a great deal of smoke because of some degraded wiring (**Fog Cloud**). The smoke is not toxic, it just smells bad, obscures vision, and may increase the chance of drawing



monsters if there is a strong food aroma, but this is up to the ML.

If the tech roll fails, the ML needs to roll percentile dice and consult the following table.

Roll	Result
1-60	Food is okay but looks and tastes odd (<i>bizarre appearance</i>)
61-95	Formerly living parts of the food return to life and begin to grow — into larger parts, not whole animals (<i>regenerative capacity</i>)
96-00	Food mass comes to life

A “food mass” result means the Chef Cube disgorges a creature with the same stats as a humanoid mass (*Mutant Future* rules, page 76) but without the standard hallucinogenic milk. Instead, its venom causes temporary mutations and drawbacks to erupt, if the target hit fails to save versus poison (*toxic weapon*). These powers last for 1d4 weeks. Roll 1d4 to randomly determine which of the following mutations appear:

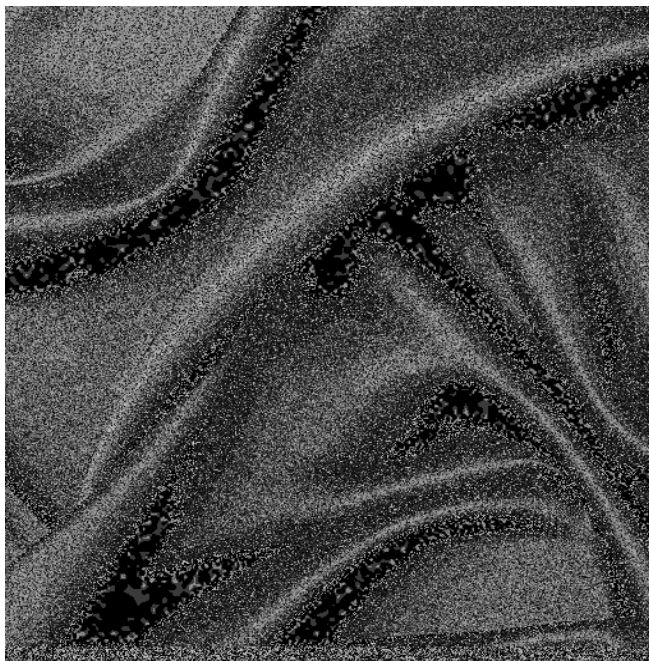
Roll	Result
1	Pain insensitivity
2	Increased sense
3	Increased physical attribute
4	Weak will

Cloak of Shadows (Caster Level 16)

As the Ancients explored the stars, some crews encountered alien races, while others found only abandoned technology. One survey mission discovered a deserted ship and towed the vessel back to Earth for study. Whoever, or whatever, that builder species was, they had discovered how to manipulate shadows, giving them substance or imbuing them with eldritch energies. The ship's bulkheads were made from a kind of shadow cloth that, when commanded, could extend powerful yet dextrous tendrils and perform tasks such as cleaning or moving heavy objects. Much of this material remained onboard the ship (and may still be there, if the vessel still exists), but samples were taken away for further analysis. Ancient scientists studied other elements of the ship to see if they had any further application or could be made into useful items. For example, some teams researched the bulkhead units to if they could be replicated for low-cost housing, while others examined the ship's shadow-fire crystals, self-lighting lenses that give nearby shadows the consistency of steel.

With its wide array of powers, the Cloak of Shadows was the most powerful artifact made from the ship's wall fabric. To protect its wearer, the Cloak can bend light, making itself invisible (*control light waves*), or it can deflect attacks (*force screen*). When necessary, the artifact can also suck the heat from an area, without harming the wearer (*temperature control [cold only]*). Most of its abilities, however, involve commanding the inky darkness. The Cloak can solidify shadows into objects (**Major Creation**), or move objects at a distance using shadow tentacles (*neural telekinesis*). Another of its abilities allows the wearer to mislead others, modifying shadows to fool the senses (**Spectral Force**). If manipulation isn't enough, the Cloak can animate and partially solidify nearby shadows, which are controlled by the wearer (**Advanced Phantasmal Monsters**). When more force is required, the shadows can kill (**Greater Shadow Evocation**).

The Cloak's abilities are controlled by whistles. Its current



owner, a mutant walking stick (an insect), gives it commands by rubbing her mid legs together. Her horde is currently at war and she uses the Cloak to destroy her foes.

Unfortunately for a wearer, if the wrong sounds are made nearby, the Cloak may accidentally trigger on its own. A knowledgeable enemy (or prankster) can exploit this weakness, usurping control of the artifact and its effects, possibly using them against the wearer and her allies. To purposely take command of the Cloak, a whistler must be within hearing range (say, 100') and make a tech roll with a -50% penalty.

Crown of Ultimate Power (Caster Level 18)

Companies long recognized the lengths pet owners would go for their little darlings, and exploited that drive to the hilt. This simple blue beanie cap (minus the propellor) was created so wealthy pet owners could give their beloved animals "magical powers." Most stock versions of the cap were limited in power and scope, only projecting holograms. These were not very popular with ultra-competitive owners, because other, pricier products had more features for pet-enhancement and projected solid objects using virtual matter projectors (see *dInfinity* issue #6 for more details).

The current Crown wearer, a pantheroid known to her closest associates as "Peaches," gave the artifact its name. Before the cataclysm, the cap was given a few illegal upgrades; after fall, its AI had a few breakdowns. Together, these made the artifact powerful, but a little temperamental. While the activated cap is worn, its AI reacts to the wearer's brain activity and functions as a secondary mind (*dual cerebellum*). Any animal — vertebrate, invertebrate, or even uplifted — wearing the Crown can activate it. Humans and plants cannot: their brain activity won't sync with the AI.

The Crown lives up to its name, possessing a wide range of powerful abilities. It can produce holograms (**Phantasmal Force**), induce adrenaline surges (**Strength**), and counter the fight or flight reflex (**Remove Fear**). For longer-range activities, the cap can manipulate electromagnetic energy (*neural telekinesis*), manipulate other people (**Hypnotism**), and manipulate light-emitting micro-drones (**Dancing Lights**). Or, when all else fails, the Crown-wearer can just blow the bejeezus out of things with an 18d6 electrical blast (**Lightning Bolt**), which can be fired once every four hours.

Peaches loves the blast: she took control of her pride after donning the Crown and toasting a destructor bot (*WftW* issue #15). Now she uses the crown freely, to conquer the surrounding peoples. But, this aggressive streak made the region's greater powers turn and take notice of her.

Dark Juju Cup (Caster Level 8)

Ancient scientists designed this container as a lab instrument, which runs off a plutonium clip and boils any liquid poured inside. It has several built-in sensors and can detect nutrients, molecular composition, and even radiation (*unique sense*). A display on one side describes what the beaker holds.

A dry and empty Cup is inert, seeming to be a nondescript 500 mL metal container. While activated, the device does not conduct heat to a holder's hand, but it does transfer a great

deal of energy into its contents. Touching a finger to liquid within the Cup, or splashing it on someone can cause anywhere from one point of damage to 2d10, depending on the contents and its boiling point.

The Cup's real power is revealed when something is added to water boiling within — sometimes yielding almost magical results. Example additives and their results could include vegetation, which expands to 500 times the initial sample size (**Minor Creation**); flowers, which produce a wondrous odor (*fragrance development*); and flesh, which becomes a duplicate of the original creature (**Clone**, without insanity). Combining multiple samples of animal and/or plant genetic material produces chimeras (see *WfW* issue #36, Plant Mutants 2 for more information and ideas). Even simple distilled water can create a mist (**Fog Cloud**).

When first discovered, the Cup is full of powder: a concentrate of 80 stimshot A doses. The previous, and very dead, owner tried using the artifact to make a supercharged version of the drug and succeeded far too well. Anyone eating the powder is likely to end up the same way, as they must save versus poison to avoid dying. Even those who make their save take 6d4 points of damage. Dissolving the powder in water reconstitutes the drug, but drinking the entire mixture acts as an 80-strength stimshot A. Characters who recognize the liquid can divide it into smaller doses.

Datalink (Caster Level 12)

A good example of how any technology can be used for good or ill, Datalinks were first designed by data thieves to “blow open” information vaults. Once police and government agencies became aware of the devices, they quickly adopted them for investigative work and espionage.

Encircling a powered-up computer (including robots and basic androids) with this 30' long, 1" thick cable allows complete and immediate access to all information within. The Datalink runs off power leeches from the target unit and is operated using its 2" by 4" display screen and several buttons with odd symbols. These controls allow data to be downloaded to an external storage device or AI. Data can be modified within the target's memory unit, or changed more rapidly by uploading new programming from an external source.

As permanent procedures, the operator can wipe a target's memory (**Amnesia**), rewrite directives/install behavioral compulsions (**Geas**), or destroy viruses (**Remove Curse**). There are also several functions that work only while the Datalink is running: the operator can disrupt the motor functions of mobile units (**Fumble**), scramble neural links (**Feeblemind**), disconnect sense relays (*sensory deficiency*), or enhance mental defenses (**Globe of Invulnerability**). Each of these changes can be applied to any computer, which means basic androids are affected by Datalink alterations, but synthetics and replicants are immune to the effects.

Due to glitches in the device's data transmission module, android controllers may suffer an aggressive counter-response from an unwilling subject. There is a 5% chance that any hostile AI within the Datalink circle may try to take over an android controller's body (**Possession**).



Demon Eye (Caster Level 18)

An alien race developed the Demon Eye gem as a weapon for conquering humanity. When these beings arrived on Earth (several decades too late) and found the residents had done an excellent job of destroying themselves, the aliens dumped the Eye and forgot it: the weapon only works on humans.

The fist-sized gemstone immediately fuses with any human touching it. This is the first stage in a transformation that lasts 48-72 hours, during which time the new host endures an excruciating paralysis. If the process takes more than 65 hours, the host must save versus death or die as the Eye shreds her internal organs. If the host dies now, or at any time in the future, the Eye automatically emerges from her body and may be used again.

Once the merging is complete, the host develops several new powers. At will, she can shapeshift into three alternate forms (*metamorph*), or grow a chitinous carapace (*natural armor*) and claws (*aberrant form [natural weapons]*). The alternate forms are left up to the ML's imagination.

The host can also quickly grow massive spines (*spiny growth*, 1d8 damage), generate a blanket of toxic vapors (**Cloudkill**), and enhance any melee weapon by giving it sharp organic structures (**Striking**). If necessary, she can slough off small portions of her skin, which grow rapidly into massive, though short-lived, monsters under her command (**Summon Monster VI**). Once their lifespan ends, the monsters do not return to the host; they die and rot or turn to dust. These four abilities each have a three-turn recharge rate.

Demon Eye is an apt name, as the host wakes from her transformation Chaotic and destructive. Every time there is a possibility for combat, she must save versus stun with a 4-point penalty or attack everyone who is not an ally. She even attacks allies 25% of the time.

Diamonds from the Lunar Blanket (See *individual entries for Caster Level*)

One Ancient off-world colony watched with disgust and horror as Earth-side humans destroyed themselves, their civilization, and their home planet during the cataclysmic final wars. When the atomic fires finally died down, those survivors from on high decided to survey any technology remaining on Earth, the planet itself, and the mutant beings risen from the ashes, to see if there was anything worth saving — before they sterilized the entire planet and started over.

To do this, the colonists created a series of extremely powerful probes, with one for each continent and ocean. Those who first witnessed their descent through the atmosphere came to call the devices, “Diamonds from the Lunar Blanket.” Partially a metaphor for how some Earth-locals now mythify “space,” this name also turned out to be descriptively accurate, because each probe’s primary form looks like a 3’ diameter gem with many facets.

But the devices seemed to alter almost immediately after landing, “shapeshifting” in response to intelligent beings, mutant creatures, different forms of data, still functioning machines, or different environments. In reality, each artifact remained the same, it just reoriented itself. Every probe is one device composed of 43 static parts or forms, with each existing simultaneously in separate universes, but connected across the planes. Each facet has a specialty and cannot access all of a probe’s entire catalog of abilities, so an artifact shifts until an appropriate form appears in the *Mutant Future* universe. What looks like a metamorphosis is merely a change in position. For example, when the artifact has to send a message, it “turns” until the **diamond** form appears; if it needs to modify a machine, the artifact reorients until the **gearbox** form appears.

Upon their return to Earth, the colonists intend to retrieve the very costly devices and repurpose them, so the artifacts are programmed with a degree of self-preservation. They were also designed to be very hardy: all forms are invulnerable to physical attacks, meaning melee/ranged weapons, firearms, kinetic/chemical energy damage (falls, explosions, etc.). However, they can be damaged by fire, cold, radiation, acid,



Editor’s note: The “43 parts of one artifact spinning in various universes, connected, but different” concept might be a bit difficult to understand at first (it was for me). An analogy might help, if the explanation isn’t initially clear. Imagine being surrounded by a ring of seven two-way video screens, each connected by satellite to a camera on a different continent. Looking into the African screen, you would see an African looking back at you; he would see your face. At the same moment, the European looking in her screen would be talking to your shoulder, while the Antarctic survey team would see your backside. By shifting your orientation, you interact with a different place, which also interacts with a different aspect/facet of you (so be careful you don’t talk out of your butt).

energy attacks, etc. In addition, each form is susceptible to a specific kind of energy, taking double damage from this kind of attack (listed next to its entry name; e.g., heat, sound, radiation, etc.). If one form is damaged by its Achilles heel, the artifact changes orientation so a less vulnerable form appears. Destroying one form forces the artifact to reorient after a brief recovery period, and another form replaces the wrecked one. The various forms do not share data between themselves, so any information recorded but not transmitted is lost with the destroyed form, unless it was previously saved into a memory gemstone (see the **diamond** form below).

A variety of form examples are provided below, but most of the 43 are left open, allowing MLs to customize artifact facets for the needs of their individual games. The artifacts do not have robot stat blocks per se, because these devices are far beyond that concept. However, each form has an AC of -6 and 250 hit points. All can hover in one place, at any altitude; or, they can fly at 360’ (120’) and “swim” at 120’ (40’).

Aquatic Researcher (Caster Level 12, vulnerable to fire)

Some probes study more than terrestrial species and phenomena; a few were designed to investigate the state of Earth’s oceans. This 3’ diameter grey disk is one of several such forms. It looks like an amulet inscribed with serpentine hieroglyphics, which are really superscience circuitry. To protect its inner workings from the effects of salt and water, the disk is encased in a two-centimeter thick layer of luminescent, waterproof, ballistic gel. This material is pretty inert and does not react with most chemicals, but it does poorly when exposed to extreme heat.

The artifact’s AI quickly dissects languages and other systems of meaning — much like the super-translators of science fiction that inspired its creation. This allows the device to communicate with any sapient being (**Tongues**). Faced with a reluctant subject, the **aquatic researcher** can fire a calibrated electrical impulse, temporarily paralyzing the target (**Hold Monster**). The device uses a virtual matter projector (see *dInfinity* issue #6 for details) to create up to five tentacles, each with a Strength of 15. These can restrain subjects or

perform fine motor functions (*prehensile tail*), such as analyzing biological, botanical, chemical, or geological samples (*unique senses*).

Should the *aquatic researcher* get into hot water, it can supercavitate, creating a layer of bubbles around itself and shooting away at three times the normal Swim rate: 360' (120') (**Part Water**). If a situation calls for a more directed response (such as being swallowed by a whale), the device can redirect energy from its power core, emitting a particle beam of class 5 radiation out to 50' (*radioactive emissions*). If things become dire, the artifact reorients into one of the forms designed specifically for combat.

Bio-Collector (Caster Level 14, vulnerable to radiation)

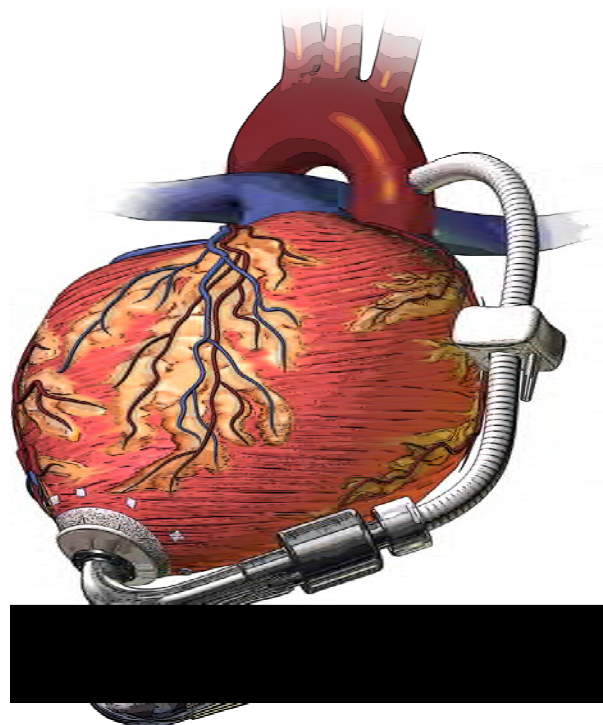
Many of Earth's mutant species are completely alien to the colonists. This artifact form captures live specimens and transports them back to the colony for study. The *bio-collector* is shaped like a heart — not a valentine, a human heart — with some of the various chambers housing biological entities and at least one of the vessels piping a viscous material.

The *bio-collector* sprays this gluey substance at targets to capture them safely (**Hold Monster**), avoiding a struggle that could damage either the specimen or the device. If the spray misses, the device can also fire biological trackers at fleeing targets within 100'. If the tracker hits, it attaches to the specimen like a tick and works much like a tranquilizer dart combined with a homing beacon, weakening the specimen (*vegetal parasite*) while keeping tabs on it (**Clairaudience, Detect Invisible**).

After capturing a creature, the *bio-collector* tries to communicate with it, attempting to gain some knowledge of the specimen while it is still within its native territory (**Tongues**). This verbal survey complete, the subject is injected with a variety of compounds, putting it into suspended animation (**Feign Death**). Then the specimen is shrunk (*density alteration [others]*) and placed within one of the stasis field containment chambers. Most subjects are terrified by being captured, their small faces frozen in howling torment and visible beneath the artifact's surface.

If the PCs are ever tasked with rescuing a collected specimen, their mission involves more than simply finding the *bio-collector* and disabling it. First, the stasis chambers are hermetically sealed. Popping the doors safely requires a tech roll with a -25% penalty. Beating on the chambers with a large, energized “hammer” is a less technical approach, but it could work. It could also severely damage the specimens inside. Each of the four chamber has 50 hit points and a hardness of 8.

At the ML's discretion, when a chamber is breached by ill-controlled blows, any extra damage from the final strike could be directed against the inhabitants, and magnified tenfold because of their much smaller size. For example, using several well-placed smashes with a powered sledgehammer, Perc-ee manages to inflict 54 points of damage against the upper stasis chamber, which holds her mate Gabe-riel. The extra four points are multiplied by 10 for 40 points of damage total, to reflect the fact that Gabe is the size of Perc-ee's thumb.



Hopefully, Gabe is tough, or that Perc-ee's ML is kind enough to say the stasis field immediately halts time associated with the hammer strike, or that the blow hits one of the many other inmates held within Gabe's containment area.

Breaking open a chamber this way could also involve some kind of system shock to those held within, much like freeing ... certain smugglers ... held within blocks of carbon-based storage material. Possibilities could range from weakness to blindness to a heart attack. Saving versus stun or death would be appropriate, depending on the ML's maliciousness.

And then there's the embiggening. The PCs could very likely pull out the *bio-collector's* quantum REM (reduction/expansion module), attach a suitable power source, and start zapping tiny humans, hoping the controls and connection are correct (each operation mentioned requiring a tech roll with a -25% penalty). Or, the party could be in for a side quest — the search for a mutant with the *density alteration (others)* power, a mutant who accepts payment, or who also needs to have a job done.

Black Sheep (Caster Level 24, vulnerable to light-based weapons and powers)

As any soldier knows, no plan survives contact with the enemy. Engineers can say nearly the same about the best-laid design work, no matter how elegant and thoroughly proofed. Glitches, gremlins, Murphy and his juris doctorate: all of these exist. The *black sheep* diamond form is terrible, terrible proof.

Tainted by malevolent forces wherever the colonists' engineering teams first placed it, this form has become part homing beacon and part gate. When it appears, this form draws fell ... things ... from across the planes. The artifact is either unaware of the corruption, or the *black sheep* materializes because its dark intelligence wills it to.



Originally, this form was a beautiful, 3' diameter golden globe, set with six spikes: on both poles and on the quadrants about its equator. But the gilt is tarnished a greasy purplish-black over half the sphere, coagulating in patches where it drips corrosive oil. The liquid bubbles on the globe, as though some alien larvae were trying to erupt from beneath the surface. If it touches exposed skin, the oil does 1d6 points of damage per turn, and continues to burn until it is scraped off; simply scrubbing with soap and water does not work. Although it does not ignite, the oil reacts to heat, inflicting double damage at the boiling point of water, and triple damage if exposed to fire or radiation more intense than class 3.

The globe is pierced by a regular pattern of ornately geometric holes, from which thick, cloying smoke oozes, as though it were a Christian incense burner influenced by Islamic designs. The smoke seems to have intention, tendrils moving toward characters, spreading outward from the globe at 5' per round. Every round the smoke touches a character, he must save versus poison to avoid inhaling it, with a cumulative -1 penalty each round. Failure means the character breathes in the vapor, and he must save versus stun or lose himself for 2d6 rounds (*possession*), likely attacking his fellows. Each round after he inhales, he must make another save versus stun to avoid this effect, until he is completely away from the smoke.

One round after the globe appears, the untarnished gold areas pulse with the dark red of a bloody flame and the frequency of a heartbeat. All characters within 50' must save versus energy as some unquiet force caresses the lizard brain, sending waves of terror through their bodies (**Fear**). One round after this, and every third round after, the globe's four equatorial spikes flash, each shooting out a shard of fire (**Magic Missile**). After firing, the globe slowly begins to spin. The bubbles begin to roil and get larger (*abnormal size, aberrant form*).

On the third round after the artifact appears, a crack opens in its northern hemisphere, and darkness pours out, coalescing into a nearly humanoid figure that morphs, shrinking and expanding as a whole and by pieces (**Phantasmal Monster [Advanced]**). Two voices begin addressing opposites sides of the globe for one round, and then they start laughing, low and high, contained malevolence and manic eruption (**Confusion**),

as the single entity splits into two, and the night creatures begin to reach from the globe.

What is this unnameable foulness? If you prefer your darkness given physical form, balor demons or carcass scavengers from *Labyrinth Lord* and the *AEC* are delightful. I envision something shapeless that allows players' imaginations to make things oh, so much more terrifying — more like a haunter of the dark or shoggoths from *Realms of Crawling Chaos*. Creating from whole cloth of night, a shadow elemental or hydra composed of black pudding or dark electric eels might be just the nightmare to give your party the vapors and fantods (**Polymorph Other**, *control light waves* or **Darkness**, **Monster Summoning VII**).

Diamond (Caster Level 18, vulnerable to electricity)

The artifact's original, descending shape, this form is the communication node. It speaks to: its creators by using an interstellar form of radio (*neural telepathy*), to local biological entities through holographic images (**Phantasmal Force**), and to sapient machinery via streaming light pulses (**Message**).

This is an artifact's most commonly used and encountered form, as it tries to send all data possible to the home colony — in case one of the artifact's sensor forms gets destroyed. Because of the distances involved, there is a time-delay transmitting information. Also, the *diamond* only sends burst transmissions at certain times during the day or night, when its location on Earth faces the home colony. If the creators come calling, these factors may be the only things to save the PCs' bacon.

When it needs to store information, a *diamond* can transform atmospheric gases into smaller gemstones. These are real (carbon-based) diamonds, not one of the artifact's 43 forms — just data packets given physical form (**Magic Mouth**). The device can make these stones at the same rate it uses its other powers. With a successful tech roll, anyone can access the info in these lesser gems. Success means the gem verbally transmits its data to anyone nearby, one time. A successful tech roll is needed each time the characters want a gem to speak. During the *diamond* form's burst transmission, the information is drained from the smaller gems and permanently erased. These remain beautiful stones, and some may find them valuable. If the *diamond* must reorient into a different shape, the stones remain behind, whether full of information or not.

For defense, the *diamond* can focus existing light into a small cone (**Flash Fire**), or tear into the fabric of the universe and extract a creature or machine from another plane (**Summon Monster VII**). This latter technique is used as a last resort, because the device has no control over what it summons, or what the creature does when it arrives.

Gearbox (Caster Level 15, vulnerable to radiation)

This hovering pile of gears manipulates technology. It can make repairs (**Mending**), add new parts and functions (**Polymorph Other**), and alter programming (**Charm Monster**). For defense, the *gearbox* can hurl small steel slivers (*projectile thorns*).

Light Disk (Caster Level 15, vulnerable to fire)

The colonists recognized that some situations are best resolved with overwhelming firepower. This bright translucent disk is one of the artifacts' primary combat forms, sterilizing areas by removing destructive biologicals (sapient beings and mutants with dangerous tech or lethal powers). For its primary weapon, the **light disk** fires a ray that breaks down the target's DNA (**Death Spell**), destroying victims from the inside, out. If this does not work, the **light disk** splits air molecules, making powerful radical atoms that dissolve targets (**Cloudkill**).

Liquid Dumbbell (Caster Level 12, vulnerable to sonic attacks)

A roiling green and yellow shape of two connected lobes, this form is the artifact's genetic sensor. After 5 seconds of scanning, the device can determine every mutation, of all three types, within 500' (*unique sense*). It then stores this information and sends it to a data-storage gem, identical to those created by the **diamond** form.

If the **liquid dumbbell** needs to defend itself, it can mutate microflora within a 25' radius, "summoning" 3d4 oozes and puddings of various sorts. Each of these monsters "grows" one hit die per round until full-sized (as per the *Labyrinth Lord* creature entry), and lasts until dead. The **liquid dumbbell** does this only as a last resort, because the oozes and slimes can breed and may cause problems for the probe later on. It prefers that a more combative construct, such as the **light disk**, perform the needed destruction in a much more sanitary fashion.

Medallion (Caster Level 16, vulnerable to fire)

One of the colonists' main objectives was to recover Ancient information caches (libraries, museums, ultra-net servers, corporate holdings, etc.) that might have survived the cataclysm intact. The **medallion** can interact with any data storage method the Ancients created, from ancient papyrus scrolls to crystalline, biological, quantum, or chaos memory drives, in any language no matter how historically or technologically arcane (**Stone Tell**, **Read Magic**, **Comprehend Languages**). The artifact's creators assumed many texts and files would be damaged, so the **medallion** includes a battery of repair modules to recover most anything from printed word to encoded biological molecule (**Mending**, **Regenerate**).

The **medallion** relies on stealth to perform its mission, its light-bending outer shell allowing it to remain unseen (*chameleon epidermis*). Powered by sunlight and ambient radiation (*epidermal photosynthesis*), this form has a small signature on other electromagnetic bands, as well. However, something about the **medallion's** repair functions generates a low moan. Because of this noise and the device moving things with its tractor beam (*neural telekinesis*), superstitious locals believe locations visited by the **medallion** are haunted, and they stay away. Should things get dicey, the artifact reorients to another form, usually the **light disk**, to deal with the situation.

Memorist (Caster Level 20, vulnerable to cold)

In the colonists' estimation, many specimens are not worth

collecting bodily: the decrepit, the disease-ridden, the physically threatening. But many of these beings possess knowledge, skills, or mental abilities that would be useful to the colonists, to help them understand the strange, savage Earth; to prepare them for arriving on-world; and to ensure they survive some of the threats both unique and now rampant. So, the colonists developed a form capable of creating, storing, and transporting UI — Uploaded Intelligences (see *WfiW* issue #40 for more details).

The **memorist** looks like a massive, short-handled ebony mace covered in moving patterns of lines and lights that draw and hold the eye. In the right conditions, the device activates a pheromone generator, drawing prey toward it (*fragrance development*), but more often, it must hunt. The **memorist's** sensors allow it to follow targets, or identify them if hidden (**Detect Invisibility**). If necessary, the device can even pass through obstacles to find its targets (**Phase Door**). As it tracks, the **memorist** whistles tunelessly (**Symbol of Fear**), a sound that prey find terrifying, leading them to make mistakes, but also increasing their adrenaline and neurotransmitter levels, which makes creating UI easier and more rapid.

When targets are within range, the device activates its tractor beam (**Slow**) and fires darts coated with a paralytic (class 11 poison) mixed with a combination of Brainiac and Adrenal Boost (see *WfiW* issue #33 for details on these drugs). As its body falls into a racing catatonia, the target's nervous system goes into a near-fatal overdrive state, opening its mind beautifully to the **memorist's** mental probe (*neural telepathy*), dumping a river of thoughts and memories and knowledge into the device's memory banks (**Trap the Soul**). This process completely burns out the target, leaving just a physical husk. But no matter: the **memorist** frequently cleans up after itself, usually turning specimens into ash (*thermal emissions*).

Given the proper conditions, and ML's narrative needs, characters turned into UIs could be uploaded into artificial bodies, either a cyborg or any of the android forms. If the ML is feeling mischievous, or vindictive, PCs could also be put onto thumb drive analogs, or uploaded to a computer network. Though this form was intended for harvesting biological memory, it is entirely possible the **memorist** could also retrieve the experiences from artificial life. Or, it could reorient to the **medallion** form, which retrieves information from data networks.

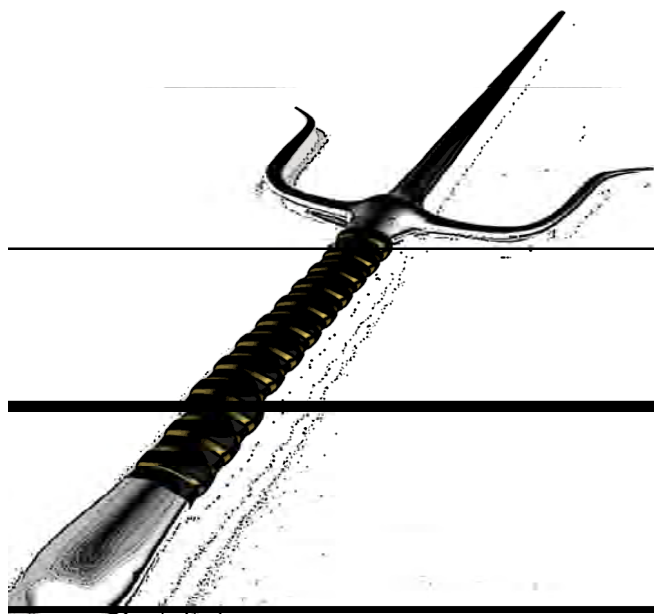


Sai (Caster Level 18, vulnerable to electricity)

Although it is over three feet long, the form's thickness and blade/hilt dimensions connote less a sword and more the two-pronged, blunt Japanese dagger, but with a disproportionately large spherical pommel. This version of the artifact was designed to extract minerals, for both study and industry, a high priority after the massive cost involved in building the probes.

The artifact mines using a three-part technique. Its two prongs generate high energy, high frequency pulses (*energy ray [alternating heat and cold]*) that jack-hammer into rock, blowing open holes and shattering minerals into smaller pieces with the contrasting temperatures. The device moves mineral chunks around using robotic tentacles (*prehensile tendrils*), and softens difficult sections or removes dross from the desired specimens with an acid spray. The spray may be directed at one target within 20' and does 3d6 points of damage for one round. A victim may save versus poison for half damage. Once the material is sufficiently pulverized, it is absorbed through the *sai's* "blade" and stored in an extra-dimensional space within the "pommel" (**Rope Trick**).

When it has enough material, the *sai* opens a tiny wormhole within the pommel-space and sends these minerals to the home colony (**Gate**). This process generates a great deal of hazardous energy, so each time the gate opens, everything within 25' suffers: creatures are aged by one year and equipment suffers one level of condition damage. Both may save versus death to avoid aging. To protect against the energy, the wormhole chamber is segregated in the pommel and shielded from the rest of the artifact. (The pommel isn't contained because that design created a small, almost thermonuclear reaction.) The shielding material is a metallic alloy that also protects the *sai* against the acid spray and other mining hazards. The application process makes the shielding look like crystalline snakeskin, a texture that also helps keep the blade from getting stuck inside rock while drilling.



Mining is a messy, hazardous process that dulls the artifact's sensors (*sensory deficiency*). To hide its operation, while at reduced capacity, the *sai* can project a very realistic hologram around itself or to cover the mineshaft entrance (**Spectral Force**).

Dome of Fire (Caster Level 20)

Deep in the arctic wastes rests the Dome of Fire, a sanctuary from the *Mutant Future* world. If you can find it. Or, rather, if you can survive to reach it. The building's AI chose this spot for its isolation. During the cataclysm, the Dome escaped to the cold lands, where it now waits for an off-world ship that will probably never arrive.

The immense structure was meant to house and move colonists, their livestock, and crops on other planets. From its underside protrude dozens of massive legs that look and work like starfish tube feet, capable of propelling the edifice at up to 10 miles an hour. When the building-machine settles, the legs retract under the Dome and cannot be seen again unless the structure walks, which is doubtful because AI likes its current location. The Dome's outer shell is composed of lightweight white concrete, which blends nicely into the snowy landscape; even though there is open ground for miles in any direction, the white structure is difficult to see from a distance.

This open area is actually a cleared field of fire, for the Dome is well-prepared and well-protected. Its outermost defensive layers are wire drone mines, devices that release a dozen or so wires to wrap around whoever stepped on them. They impede movement (but do not completely stop it), while quietly and gradually constricting the life from a target (**Entangle**, 1d4 points of damage per round). The next defensive layer is a little more... dramatic: deadly beams of fire and ice (**Wall of Fire**, **Wall of Ice**) interlock with area-effect blasts (hot and cold versions of **Incendiary Cloud**). Lastly, if someone survives all this and makes it to the door, they need an ID card to get in. Lacking one, they are sorely out of luck, and stuck out in the weather. There is no way to keep the AI from attacking approaching visitors: it is paranoid, territorial, and often quite grumpy.

Even the inhabitants do not have a strong enough relationship with the AI to mellow its defensive posture, and they've been inside the Dome for years. The local sapients are a serpent people, who can be relatively friendly, but will fiercely defend their home if it is defiled. For, it is an apparent paradise. Inside, the Dome is a few hundred acres lush with vegetation and filled with an abundance of small fauna (from insects to house cat-sized mammals, reptiles, and birds). If the ML wants, these could be harmless or threatening, though visitors might be more upset to learn about the gas.

The Dome's AI does an excellent job controlling the climate (*temperature control*), but it also continuously pumps exotic gas (*poisonous spores*) through the structure. This causes a skin mutation that only manifests in mammals that fail to save versus poison. It turns their skin bright blue (*bizarre appearance*). Unfortunately, the gas is also addictive for *all* animal life (fish to fowl) and gradually makes them terrified of the outside world (*phobia*).

Eller's Eye (Caster Level 6)

Poor Eller. While trying to replace a lost eye, he found this cybernetic implant, which drove him quite mad. Though still alive, it isn't necessary to describe him. But if you would like some possibilities to choose from, he could be a mutant human pirate, a mutant moss with many eyes, the leader of a wolf pack, or a sparrow/crocodile hybrid (in honor of "The Chicken from Hell").

The implant runs on a sealed internal power source and looks like a glass eye with an iris of slowly swirling colors. Should someone else claim and install it, the implant's iris changes color to permanently match the other eye (if one exists) when the new host looks into a reflective surface for the first time.

Once activated, the Eye allows its user to see through 5' of organic matter, and emit a 10' long blast of class 2 radiation (*optic emissions [gamma eyes]*) that can knock an opponent flat (**Fumble**). If the host loses more than 80% of his hit points, he can play possum and appear to die (**Feign Death**). The Eye can also access nearby data networks and retrieve information on objects, creatures, and terrain that the host can see (*unique sense*). Activating this function requires the host to focus on a target for more than three seconds. The delay prevents the Eye from triggering on everything within the host's field of view. There was an "off switch" for this function, but it no longer works.

Because it can see through the host's eyelid, the implant receives no protection against bright light (e.g., direct sunlight, lasers, explosions, etc.). Any such exposure overloads the host's nervous system and he takes one point of damage per round (*frailty*). Eventually, this weakness drives a host insane (**Feeblemind**). The process usually takes 4d4 weeks and there is no save because it is gradual. The only preventions are to cover the Eye with an inorganic patch (e.g., titanium or aluminum) or remove the implant.

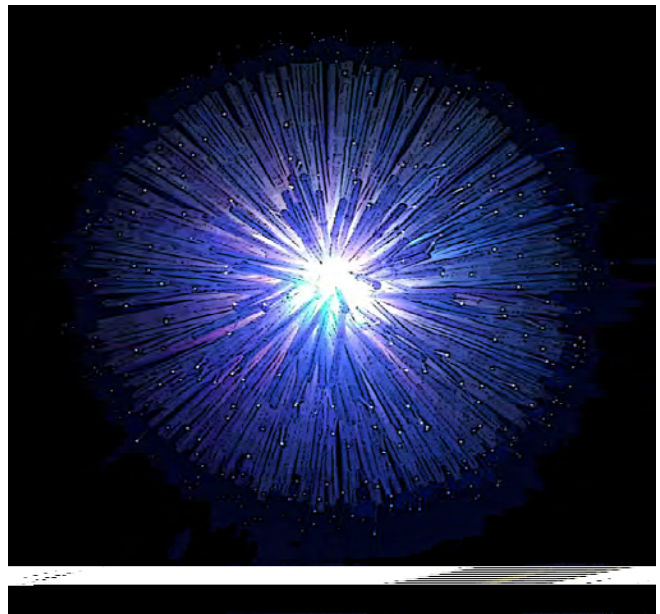
Fiber Optic Bundle (Caster Level 15)

The Fiber Optic Bundle is a softball-sized, many-sided mass of strange, silvery metal with glass tentacles emerging from more than half the facets. At some time in the past, the artifact was exposed to other-worldly energies and partially thrown into the future. Now, those willing to take a risk can gaze into one of the metal surfaces and see what is to come (*precognition*). But all who look must also save versus stun. Any who fail experience a period of altered consciousness lasting 1d4 rounds (**Confusion**).

Upon command, the Bundle can also discharge a brilliant flash of light (*optic emissions [bright eyes]*) or broadcast a hologram of the wielder (**Project Image**). Some unknown quality of the mirrored surfaces does not permit them to reflect other holograms and illusions (**True Seeing**). The Bundle has no obvious power source; it might be the temporal gradient that gives it juice.

Fountain of Life and Death (Caster Level 20)

With its water plumes and exquisite statuary, the 20' tall, 60' diameter ornamental structure could be something from a



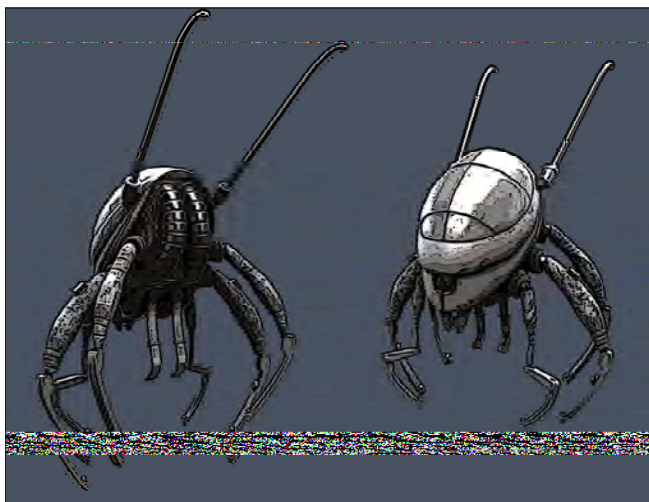
European city square. The Fountain once had a simple computer for controlling the water and synchronizing the laser lighting, but soon after the final wars, the little AI was colonized and altered by a group of remora (see *WftW* issue #19). Later, these were driven away by a larger, stronger parasitic plant. This predator died long ago, leaving behind a traumatized AI that wants only to be left alone.

The Fountain defends itself against the curious and the ill-intentioned with some tech that was left behind by the remora and enhanced by the parasitic plant. Primarily, this involves a chemical synthesizer the remora pirated from an apothecary bot and then abandoned. As its outermost defensive ring, the Fountain created a field of chemical land mines (50/50 chance of **Explosive Runes** or **Flame Strike**), which it launched some distance using its high pressure water jets. For a wider, more active defense, the Fountain releases a 200' diameter gas cloud that causes torches and other fires to explode (**Manipulate Fire**). Closer in, the Fountain can discharge a powerful electric current through its water jets (**Shocking Grasp**), even zapping wayward birds who fly too near.

Those who survive this gauntlet can find 1d6 pills in a small chamber near the top of the Fountain's central spire. Products of the chemical synthesizer's original, primary mission, each pill alters the eater's time sense, slowing the world around him (*combat empathy*). They also increase his ability to heal (*body adjustment*) and turn his eyes into light projectors (*optic emissions [bright eyes]*). This wonder drug drives many to seek out the Fountain, much to its dismay. And, unfortunately for any who try, there is no way to get this medication without passing through the rings of pain: the Fountain does not like anyone.

God's Fleas (Caster Level 25)

In a desperate and underhanded attempt to fill its pews, a slightly deranged church AI created these tiny implants to gain new converts. A Flea finds its way onto an intelligent



biological (including replicants) either by crawling/jumping or being secretly placed on the being. Once the device is aboard, its target must save versus death. Success means the Flea cannot attach for some reason, or it fell off. If the victim fails to save, the device fuses with her nervous system, attaching anywhere on the body where a nerve terminates.

Then, the conversion commences. The implant opens a connection to the church AI, which the victim can now hear (**Clairaudience**). The AI uses this link to indoctrinate a victim, initially imparting knowledge of its dogma and the congregation's history (**Legend Lore**). The victim develops an overwhelming compulsion to seek out the church (**Geas**) and a resistance to mental attacks (*mental barrier*), which was originally intended to keep new converts from receiving contradictory messages or influences. While she travels, the victim also experiences a physical conversion, as the link changes her bio-chemical make-up, providing a near-immunity to fire (**Protection From Fire**, non-caster version). A potential convert needs this last change to survive the flamethrower-equipped robots that protect the church and its lands. These patrol just outside the church's border, so as not to incinerate the congregation or its territory.

Once a host reaches the church's central compound, the Flea's programming is altered and the victim's earlier compulsion changes to a prohibition against violence. From this point, the living congregants try to finalize the conversion. This is a high-pressure sales pitch, not mind control. If the victim refuses to join the group, or is rejected, she is free to leave. The Flea falls apart as the host crosses out of church lands and she is released from any remaining compulsion.

If a victim's friends want, they can try removing a Flea before the conversion — provided they know about the tiny, dark device. This involves major surgery, on a nerve, and probably results in permanent damage, unless the medics have access to sophisticated machinery and knowledge, which is unlikely in the wastes. Even finding the Flea may take hours, as it hides within the body. If the implant is removed, the host loses the **Legend Lore** aspect, but still has her memories, so she can answer questions about the church and her experience.

Golden Branch (Caster Level 6)

A nondescript length of dull metal with some attached plastic bits, the Branch does not look like much. But it was part of a fascinating product series designed to make plants more useful by turning each organism into a combination of data node, minor factory, and sensor net. There are many Branches, each unique; this one is corrupt, hit by a virus back in the lightless days.

To work, the artifact must be spliced into living plant tissue and left for one day while it integrates with the host. Once operational, the Branch serves as an interactive AI (*dual cerebellum*), giving plants without communication the ability to talk with other sapient beings; this also permits the nice people to direct the Branch's functions. Whenever more light is needed (at night, inside, underground, etc.), the Branch activates either its illumination (**Light**) or low-light enhancement (*night vision*) functions, depending on whether others need to see, or just the plant. The artifact can also produce an energy field useful for a variety of tasks (**Repulsion**, **Feather Fall**, **Reverse Gravity**).

Given enough time and the right conditions, the Branch can wipe viruses from other machines (**Remove Curse**). First, it must be able to communicate with the infected unit, usually by IR beam or radio link, but physical links will also do the trick if the necessary cabling is available. Once in contact, the Branch scans the other machine's memory and automatically purges standard viruses. It does not do well against high quality military viruses, but those are fairly rare these days. Sophisticated AIs are also a bit of trouble, as they take much, much longer to clear than simple robotic units.

The Branch's oddest feature, making it different from other similar devices and most other computers, is its ability to communicate with the environment's ever-present nanites (**Stone Tell**), no matter the swarm's function, programming, or origin (for more information on nanites, see *WfiW* issues #28,



#30, and #31). It can, with diplomacy and often with difficulty, *sometimes* direct nanite function. However, this is often a moot point: most *Mutant Future* beings have no idea that nanites even exist, that these tiny machines are the driving forces behind an environmental change and/or the “invisible entities” that sometimes “eat” their fellow villagers. So, the Branch’s users don’t know to ask for its help in this regard.

Some nanite swarms contain uploaded memories of the Ancients (**Trap the Soul**), allowing the artifact access to knowledge of the pre-cataclysm world. Depending on the ML’s whim, these files could be anything from merely memory streams (i.e., blogs, version 5.0) all the way to Uploaded Intelligences (for more information on this new character race, see *WftW* issue #40). Because of the nanites’ capacity, some swarms could allow access to multiple sets of memories or personalities. Many, many people tried to escape the wars by translating their mental selves into the nanite clouds. Some merely needed an escape or release; others hoped their bodies could be recreated when peace returned to the planet — and had the money, or access to technology that gave them a greater chance for realizing this dream. The Branch, accidentally or unintentionally, provides them a sort of resurrection.

Golden Collar (Caster Level 5)

Named for the color of its fabric, this artifact was originally part of a product line designed to correct bad pet behavior using gentle nudges. The behavior modification program activates when a pet first wears the Collar, which immediately implants a few cyberware devices. Before the final wars, these might have directed the animal away from chasing hover cars, howling at the neighbor’s cat uplift, or trying to make that sweet, sweet love with a delivery robot’s leg.

By the time of *Mutant Future*, time and trauma and owners’ whim have drastically altered the Collar, which can impart a small array of impressive abilities. For direct defense and obfuscation, the device can insert plates just below the skin (*natural armor*) and/or project a robotic exoskeleton that changes the pet’s shape (*metamorph*), disguising it as well as protecting it. The exoskeleton can also: extend away from the body, allowing the pet to fly (*complete wing development*); provide mechanical gills underwater (**Water Breathing**); or surround the paws with climbing claws (**Spider Climb**). For the last resort get-away, there is a transphasic generator (**Blink, Phase Door**).

If the Collar is removed, the cybernetic implants remain in the host’s body, but they only function when the Collar is worn. The implants make changes to a wearer’s bio-chemistry immediately after insertion; this weakens the host and eventually leads to an early death (*pituitary deformation*). These changes are permanent, so removing the implants surgically or taking off the Collar does not return the host’s body to its previous internal balance. Only Ancient medical technology can repair the damage. Whether or not this also prevents the host from using the Collar’s powers is up to the ML.

The artifact has two sets of controls, which the user comes to understand through just one successful tech roll — not one roll for each controller. When the pet was at-hand, or the



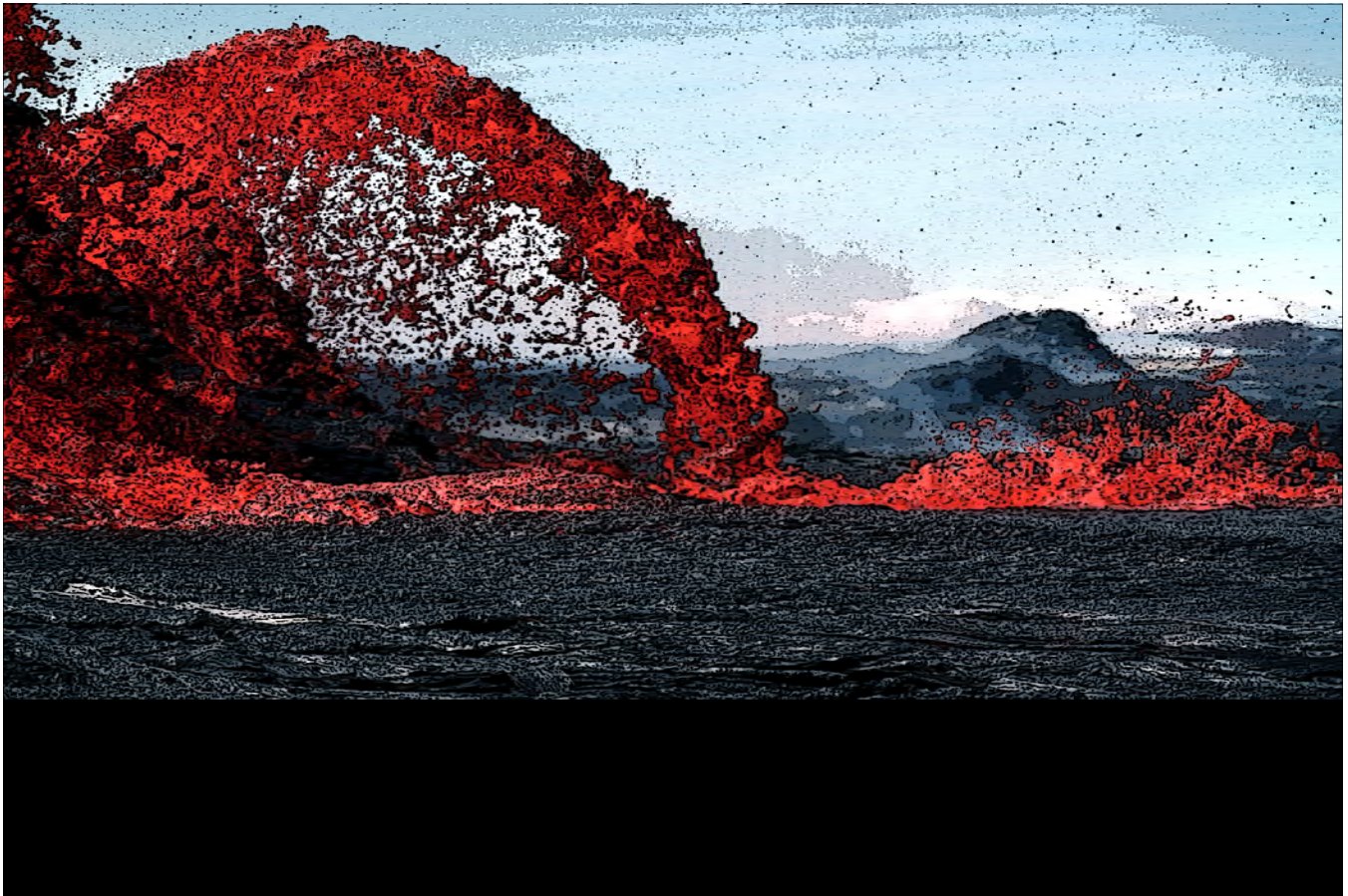
Collar in-hand, the owner-servant could use the control buttons located near the artifact’s buckle. If the pet were running loose, it could be managed with a remote control device. Made in colors to match its Collar, this item looks like a whistle, but with buttons similar to the Collar’s for activation and control. The whistle’s control range is based on sonic transmission, so local weather, noise, and congestion conditions affect signal distance. Both remotes allow complete control over whoever or whatever is wearing the Golden Collar. And, yes, humans and humanoids can use the device as well; before the final wars there was a significant subset that enjoyed using these items as controller and/or wearer.

Golden Eater (Caster Level 15)

This oddly-shaped golden object is about 18 inches in diameter, with a flat bottom and several lumps on the upper half. It was named the Eater because all who touch it seem to be consumed. In reality, it is a gate device, sending the “disappeared” to another universe, where they appear within 10’ of one another. The Eater has only one other function: creating 3" diameter metallic plates covered in symbols. Each traveler arrives on the far plane with one in hand.

They may not look it, but the plates are survival tools. The alternate universe is a fiery place, and a plate automatically (no tech roll needed) projects a field wherein heat heals the possessor an amount it would normally inflict, and cold does double damage. The plates respond to a carrier’s present environmental conditions, so if one is somehow returned to Earth, healing from cold and harm from heat is possible. (The difficult part is returning home. Hopefully someone has **Plane Shift** or an equivalent artifact/ability, or the campaign is heading in a different direction.)

Besides this, each device works like a backpack and a Swiss Army knife, with the symbols activating various functions. Each plate has an extra-dimensional space filled with survival gear, which can be accessed by pressing the correct symbols (**Instant Summons**). The items and storage



amount are up to the ML, but recommended limits are two tons and 500 cubic feet. This may seem large, but the space contains both terraforming/survival gear and personal items.

Touching other symbols releases invisible drones (**Arcane Eye**). They have a melee attack, can range up to 1/2 mile from the plate, and can be set to defend the plate holder (**Faithful Hound**). The plate can create as many drones as needed, but only one may be active at any time.

Anyone or thing can use a plate, however any human losing hers on the far plane will soon be cooked. For quick access, a traveler might affix the plate to her forearm with cloth strips. Each plate has a sealed power source that will last long after the holder dies.

Golden Thread Goggles (Caster Level 8)

This stylish eyewear resembles a pair of aviator sunglasses, but was created for serious ecology work: studying foodwebs. The Goggles can be adjusted to several settings, most of which are so technical and specific they have almost no use to anyone outside the discipline. However, at some point in the past, one wearer figured out the current setting, something that likely saved his life. On the Goggles' lenses, the AI displays a series of gold and silver lines connecting the local species within a foodweb. In other words, the artifact shows who eats whom — including the wearer.

To initiate this function, a wearer stares at an animal or predatory plant (or himself) for one round. This allows the AI to scan the target, detecting predator/prey relationships by

analyzing molecules on its mouth or breath (*unique sense*). Before the final wars, those wearing the Goggles could identify break-room lunch thieves; now, a rabboxen rancher wearing the artifact could tell if the neighbor's guard-wolf was jumping a fence and snacking on the herd, or if that swarm of giant mosquitos was going to eat him.

Although the Goggles do not store much information on their own, they have a wireless connection for researching more esoteric subjects. This allows them to contact still-active databases (*neural telepathy*) and track down other ecological information (**Legend Lore**). One of these sources might even be the Golden Branch (see above). Using this information, the AI can zero in on specific plant and animal species (**Locate Creature, Find Plant**) or gain greater understanding of an animal's behavior (**Speak with Animals**). It can also find a weather forecast (**Divine Weather**).

With enough training by the Goggles' AI, a wearer can see changes in the environment that reveal newly constructed traps (**Detect Pits and Snares**), recent tracks, and burrows or other homes (*unique sense*). The training is represented by making one tech roll per week.

The Goggles provide low-light vision (*night vision*), but they restrict peripheral vision and the distracting heads-up display is always in the user's field of view (*vision impairment*). They are also damaged. Rather than reducing bright light, the Goggles increase the exposure. So, any light-based blindness attack (whether temporary or not) results in permanent vision loss if the wearer fails his saving throw.

Golden Turnip Machine (Caster Level 18)

In the world of *Mutant Future*, even the most innocuous of artifacts can cause serious trouble. This harmless little agricultural terraforming device is four-wheeled cube about 2' on a side with a control panel on top. It does not have any weapons, and it does not move very fast, planting a 10-acre field in about 36 hours, but this machine has a serious “flaw” that makes some people happy, while it horrifies others.

A marvel of biotechnology, the Golden Turnip Machine enlarges soil bacteria (*density alteration [others]*), transforming the organisms into seeds or seedlings of predetermined species (**Polymorph Any Object**). This process is entirely safe, but if it were interrupted for some reason (e.g., the machine were chased off by raiders), those enlarged bacteria would continue to grow, becoming monstrous (use the gray ooze stat block). The machine can also produce two useful gases. The first feeds vegetation, causing it to grow rapidly (**Plant Growth**), while the other kills weeds (**Cloudkill**, only affects plants). If the local soil is poor, the device uses sonic pulses to powder stone and free-up vital nutrients (**Transmute Rock to Mud**).

The mysterious flaw appeared a generation ago, when farmers noticed that about 10% of the engineered seeds didn't germinate properly. Instead, the special seeds rapidly absorbed gold from the soil; within minutes, each seed was worth about 1d4 gold pieces. If the seeds were allowed to grow past this initial burst, they became root crops, usually turnips or carrots. After a full season's growth, each was worth 3d6 gp. A 10-acre field could hold between 50,000 and a million gp worth of golden crops. At first, the farmers rejoiced as the crop made them rich. Then runaway inflation caused the local economy to tank, and nobody was rich any more. The locals became poorer still (and often dead) when word of the gold brought raiders and thieves from near and far.

As an aside, all of the machine's unaltered crops are edible. Eating the gold-infused vegetables, however, is a dicey proposition. Without the proper digestive tract, humans and animals likely die a horrible, agonizing death from internal bleeding and sepsis, as strands of metal within the vegetables shred an eater's intestines, spilling digestive juices and fecal material into its abdominal cavity.

Green Stone (Caster Level 16)

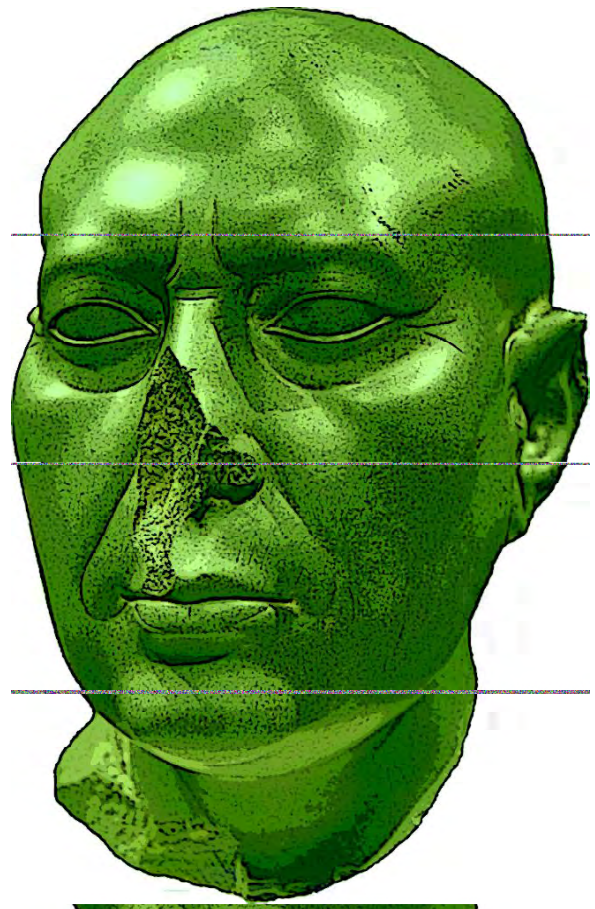
Whatever this strange object's original purpose, it has changed greatly over time. Now, the 1" diameter Green Stone spews mucus from time to time. Anyone touching the artifact must save versus stun or be compelled to place it against their shoulder or neck. Where it makes contact, the Stone secretes a green goo; in 1d4 rounds, this grows into a slimy copy of the host's head and neck with the Stone centered inside. The new appendage cannot communicate, but it does mimic the host's head (performing the same actions).

As the host moves, goo continually oozes from the head, dripping down his body to the ground. Where it touches concrete, the slime transforms some of the organic content into strange fungal forms that look like melting mushrooms. These are slightly toxic (class 1 poison), but very tasty; the

exact flavor is up to the ML, though it should be good enough that people follow such a food source, like a mucus-y, fungus-y Pied Piper. The fungi are also highly nutritious, with each fungus equivalent to a meal. Every day, 5d100 are produced by the drippings, but the exact number depends on the size of the concrete piece infested.

With time and effort, the host can get the head to perform amazing, and disgusting, feats. It can spit small orbs that allow control over those hit by them (*parasitic control*), while other ooze projectiles rapidly break down inorganic matter (**Shatter**). The head can also prevent the host from feeling pain (*pain insensitivity*), or spray a mass of sticky, infectious fibers (**Web**, **Cause Disease**). Feeding the head a few sprigs of the plant known as “coiled daisy” doubles the fiber spray's mass and area of effect, and makes the disease more virulent (a 2-point save penalty). Unfortunately, coiled daisy can be difficult to find and/or expensive to buy, with individual stalks costing up to 500 gp each.

The head is very low maintenance and does not need to be fed, as it survives on the Stone's secretions. However, because of the constant dripping, the host character suffers a +2 reaction adjustment in social settings. If this becomes too much (or just too nasty), the head can be removed fairly easily, much like excising a massive boil. The procedure does not hurt, but the moist noises and the extended sucking feeling are pretty disgusting. Once removed, the head immediately dissolves into a puddle surrounding the Stone.





Hands (Caster Level 15)

Although they look like remnants of vandalized statuary, these two dark gray stone hands actually hide the true artifacts: a 1" diameter metal disc embedded in each palm. To make them work, the user must place one Hand on each side of his head with the disks touching his temples. An observant character might notice how perfectly they fit about his cranial structures: the fingers curve over the temporal bones and the thumbs are spread so they do not block the ears. It is as though the original owner were grabbing his head because of a sudden, massive migraine. This could provide a clue to the device's inherent risk, because these Hands were once part of the psychiatrist who last activated the discs.

Each time a would-be master of the Hands places them about his head, he must save versus death or be turned to stone. If the latter happens, the Hands must be pried off, because they partially fuse to the victim's head. If the user survives, he gains the *increased willpower* mutation and a random *intellectual affinity*. His mind is shielded from scanning attempts (**Misdirection**) and he can see invisible objects and creatures (**Detect Invisibility**). All of these abilities work only while the Hands are on the user's head, so he must either hold them in place with his own hands, or rig some kind of contraption to secure them.

Prolonged use is inconvenient and painful, because each Hand weighs six pounds and they cause skin ulcers where they touch the temples. These open sores make headgear (i.e., helmets and goggles) painful to wear, and worse, they inflict a 1-point penalty to disease saves, to-hit rolls, and AC until they heal in 1d4 weeks. Lastly, when the Hands are removed there is a 1% chance the wearer falls asleep for 1d4 hours and forgets the last 1d4+1 days. He does not lose experience points because of this, he's just vulnerable to everything while asleep.

Hazard Stone (Caster Level 14)

Originally created as boundary equipment for a variety of sports, this range of devices raised and lowered visible force screens to create game fields, obstacles, or shifting mazes. For example, with a few minutes work, but using the same equipment, a grav-ball pitch could be changed into an

equestrian course.

A surviving one of these, the Hazard Stone, is 3" wide obsidian cube, which has been infested with robotic nanites and a clump of mutant crab grass. The nanites try to communicate with anyone nearby, forming red, 12-point font letters and symbols on the stone. Unfortunately the tiny machines don't know any real language, so the result is gibberish.

The plant infestation altered the artifact's force screen generator, which now creates a field that protects against fire (**Fire Shield: Chill**). When the screen is active, any attacker striking the Stone's carrier with melee or natural weapons inflicts normal damage, but takes twice this amount himself as the shield emits a fiery counter-blast. Unfortunately, this buggy system might also intensify any incoming physical strike (melee, bullet, fall, etc.): there is a 1-in-6 chance the wielder takes double damage and gets thrown into a short-lived extra-dimensional space (**Rope Trick**). The wielder cannot escape or interact with the real world until the space collapses, releasing her 1d4+2 rounds later.

If the mutant grass and/or the nanites are destroyed, the Stone explodes, doing 5d6 points of damage to everyone and everything within 25'. The grass can take 15 points of physical or energy damage, but herbicides will kill it in 1d6+2 rounds. The nanites are hardened against EMP and radiation, but vulnerable to electricity and killer nanites (see *WfiW* issues #28, 30, and 31 for details).

Ice Fountain (Caster Level 22)

On the flatlands of a vast desert sits a boreal forest that, by all rights, should be growing hundreds (or thousands) of miles to the north. Hidden among the trees is a small city, which should have been built anywhere else. And there, dead center of the city square is the source of these miraculous aberrations: the Ice Fountain. Originally partnered with well drillers, atmospheric condensers, and massive lightweight tents that reduced IR exposure while generating electricity, the Fountain was part of an equipment set designed for colonizing arid regions. The community now surrounding it is a testament to the Fountain's abilities.

Its primary missions are to draw water from the soil using sub-atomic transformation and to regulate the ambient temperature (**Polymorph Any Object, temperature control**). Unfortunately, the AI developed a slight glitch years back, so now the Fountain only produces ice, very cold water, and high humidity. Secondary functions include controlling weeds and vermin populations in the surrounding buildings (**Anti-Plant Shell, Anti-Animal Shell**).

The Fountain can also moderate the climate within a three-mile radius (*control weather*). But the AI glitch affects this function, too. The climate would be more appropriate to the northern tier of the former United States, and is 1d6x10 degrees cooler than what is normal for the surrounding area. Every three to six days, the Fountain also creates a massive fog bank that spreads through the surrounding desert, out to a 10-mile radius (**Fog Cloud**).

Iron Slave (Caster Level 12)

So named by the leaper that currently owns it, the Iron Slave is a 2' diameter, 8" thick disc with several sensors and limbs sticking out of the top and bottom. This small robot was designed as a convenient, independent, multipurpose tool for those times in the field when mechanics or engineers needed a third or fourth hand.

Using its thrusters, the robot can fly to a work area/subject, and land or hover as necessary. The Iron Slave analyzes a target with material and stress sensors (*unique sense*), moves parts and materials with its tractor beam (**Move Earth, lesser**), and provides a safe work environment with a protective force field (*force screen*). If the work involves vacuum or underwater areas, the robot can activate its oxygen generator (**Atmospheric Bubble**). When repairs become larger and more involved, the robot has a cutting torch (*energy ray [heat]*) and a bending tool (*increased strength*). A volume manipulator (*density alteration [others]*) allows the Iron Slave to lighten massive objects, reducing the stress on its tractor beam or on human workers and operators. Last, if any concrete or earth work is needed, the robot's mineral manipulator (**Stone Shape**) can shift dirt, excavate bedrock, or sculpt support members.

Unfortunately, the Iron Slave has a few glitches. The aesthetics module of its programming has been corrupted, so although the robot's projects work well, they can look pretty odd or off-putting (*bizarre appearance*). Worse, about 10% of the time the robot's tools can cause minor, temporary, transmutations (**False Gold**). If this happens to an artifact — mundane or superscience — the results can be... horrifying as the new material may not stand up to the stress of activation (ML's call).

As an example of how a corrupted fix might work, consider what could happen if a laser rifle's barrel is changed into a light-refracting crystal: lasers all over. Or, imagine if a food processor leaches lead or mercury into its product. Perhaps the circuitry in a powercell is turned to lead, which cannot contain energy or conduct heat very well. A cruel ML might rub her hands in glee at the possibilities.

Iron Slave

Movement:	Fly: 120' (40')
Hit Dice:	4
Frame:	Biomorphic disc
Locomotion:	Thrusters
Manipulators:	Assorted probes, special use grippers,
A armor:	advanced hands
Sensors:	Alumisteel (AC 4)
Mental Programming:	Class III
Accessories:	Programming
Weaponry:	Internal compartment (tool storage), robot repair unit, variable tool mounts
	Attacks as per description

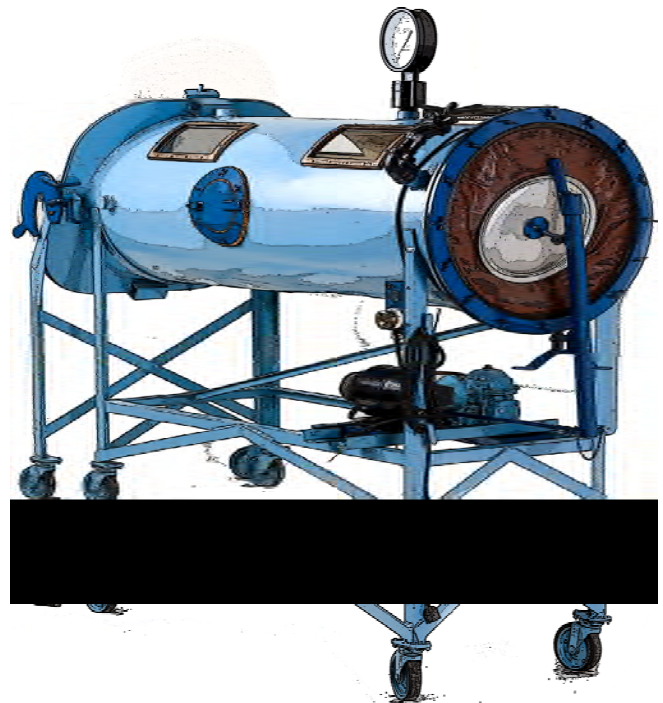
Jimmy's Tube (Caster Level 18)

Moved several times since the cataclysm, this 8'-long metal stasis container has been battered by its travels. From somewhere, a red sludge smelling of long-unwashed humanity, rotting fish, and red pepper drools toward a small pool already forming on the ground. Any character nearby notices the smell burns his nose and irritates his eyes. The Tube's control panels and displays along one side and its clear composite door are covered in grime. Wiping the displays reveals the container still functions; wiping the door allows outsiders to see 6-year-old Jimmy Kane held within.

Exposure to various superscience artifacts and environmental factors has made the Tube a focal point for mental energy, giving Jimmy's subconscious some amazing powers. Physically, he can be of any description you like, but mentally/psychologically he's a child with the capability to control others. So, sometimes, he's a good kid; other times, he's a snotty little brat.

Telepaths within 500' can contact Jimmy. Under the right conditions or persuasion, he might help them with several of his useful abilities. He might implant compulsions (**Geas**), paralyze enemies (**Hold Monster**), scramble others' thoughts (**Greater Confusion**), contact other mutants for assistance (*metaconcert*), or alter perceptions to come across in the most favorable light (**Charm Person**). These are only some concrete examples, dealing with Jimmy is more freeform than the description might indicate: the telepaths ask for help, and Jimmy does what he wants. Should a telepath anger Jimmy in any way, the child can lash out mentally, attacking anyone within 100' with a wide variety of powerful mental abilities (**Symbol** [*Cleric or Magic-user*]).

Although Jimmy has all this strength, his defenses are weak. His Willpower is 6 and he cannot move his container. Should Jimmy be killed, the Tube is useless until the boy is



replaced. Changing the occupant will most likely alter those powers the artifact can provide.

As a side note, the red sludge is a chemical produced by the tube, intended to provide the occupant with medical assistance, if necessary. It could be corrupted now, but has no negative effect on Jimmy — at least so far.

Joe's Diner/Hell's Kitchen (Caster Level 15)

An art deco Streamliner of neon and steel, the corner greasy spoon, a food truck writ large. Toned up or beaten down, a diner has cheap eats done right. That ain't Joe's.

This establishment could be clad in one of those iconic skins (or a future century's vision), but Joe's Diner is no place you'd want to dine. It randomly shifts across the world (**Teleport**), staying in one place for just 1d6+4 days. The building's exterior look might change, but the dimensions remain constant: 50' long, 30' wide, and 15' tall — always enough room to seat a couple dozen customers. A vibrant sign outside draws the eye (**Flame Charm**), enticing people to grab a counter stool and sample the fare (**Suggestion**).

Those who enter find the food familiar yet exotic, made with local ingredients. But there's a reason (or three) for this artifact being nicknamed "Hell's Kitchen." Anyone who eats or drinks here automatically gains one drawback (*increased caloric needs, obese, reduced immune system, reduced oxygen efficiency*) that lasts for 2d4 weeks. Determining which one is left to the Mutant Lord; he might roll 1d4 to select, or decide before the game.

Should dissatisfied patrons attack the Diner, portions of the food and drink merge into a terrible creature (**Summon Monster VII**). This construct rampages for an hour, then breaks down into its component parts. Occasionally, in places where no customers appear during the first two days, the Diner creates and releases one of these monsters. With luck, some unwary, and unfortunate, neighboring community is treated to a tainted feast after the monster changes back into food.

Anyone entering the building's back room finds a

horrifying scene as local people are added to the menu (**Fear**). Drones stun and drag these unfortunates back to the Diner (**Arcane Eye, Power Word Stun, Floating Disc**), where they are fed into a range of automated processing machines and chemical baths. This isn't just butchery, it is torture: the building transforms still-conscious captives into food. If freed, the victims are disoriented, shocky, and weak (only 1d4 hit points remaining).

Even more troubling, exposure to the transformative cooking chemicals may cause characters to reroll their mutations or even their race (**Reincarnate**), but this is up to the ML. The change can be randomly determined by rolling 1d10 on the table below. If the result is "Mutation only" or the character's current race (e.g., a mutant animal rolls a 1 or 2), the race remains unchanged and the player need only reroll her character's mutations.

Die Roll

1-2
3-4
5-6
7-8
9-10

New Race

Animal
Plant
Replicant
Human
Mutation only

King Remora (Caster Level 15)

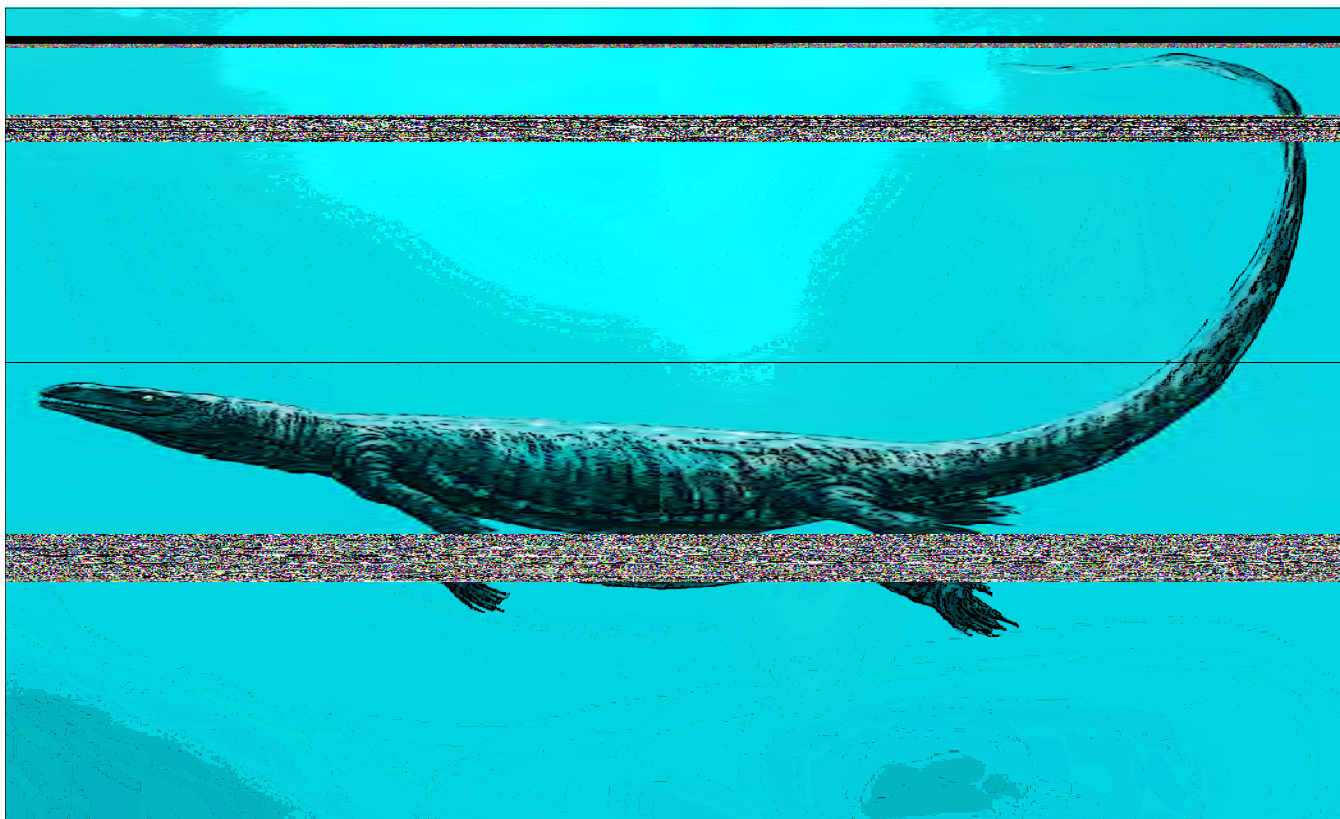
Beyond the oft-noted achievements in building, weaponry, and exploration, the scientific wonders of the Ancients' world also allowed for wondrous toys. One such, the King Remora, is a robotic mosasaur originally designed as a telepresence device: people could lie cocooned within a land-side chamber and control the monstrous, whale-like, reptile-machine, experiencing life swimming through the seas. After the final wars, the machine was recovered and heavily modified into a source of entertainment by a tribe of seal-otter uplifts. [Although not described here, these entities were created by combining DNA from both species. The resulting creatures retain the otters' sense of play, but with a slightly darker tinge.]

A few decades back, the King Remora escaped its handlers and began causing chaos throughout its home waters. With a body 40' long and 20' wide, a 6' long head, and a 20' long tail, the robot is a threat to small boats just because of its size. Combined with its powers and warped sense of "humor," this huge machine is a dark-water terror.

The robot uses sonar to locate prey (*echolocation*) and then attacks using surprise. The machine's photo-reactive skin (*chameleon epidermis*) blends in with the environment, while its self-adjusting frame allows the robot to change shape, to an extent (**Polymorph Self**). So, the King Remora often appears to be a harmless creature, when it can be seen. When it bites, the robot's horrific attack is made worse by poisonous liquid fuel (*toxic weapon*, class 6) oozing from a small leak in the machine's bio-converter, damaged several years ago when the robot collided with a bigger boat.

Bad as the bite may be, the local sea-going communities really hate and fear the programming and limited shapeshifting ability installed by the seal-otter uplifts. The King Remora's sense of "fun" was intended as a malicious practical joke: the





robot fuses with a vessel smaller than its body, and then takes it for a joy-swim. The seal-otters laughed gales and many would often gather for a show. The hilarity begins when the robot swims alongside or beneath a boat, and begins to change shape. After three rounds of contact — long enough for the robot to merge with the boat's electronics and/or envelop the hull — the King Remora takes over the vessel (*parasitic control*). Then the robot zooms off with the boat, swimming wherever it wants at high speed for 1d4 weeks before letting the craft go.

For yet another layer of bad, the robot's AI is dumb as a stump and the control devices that could override this anti-social behavior were destroyed long ago. So now, a captured vessel can only be freed by someone who speaks the language of the seal-otter uplifts, ordering the machine to drop its toy. Failing that, the shanghaied mariners can only hang on, waiting until the joke is played out, and hoping they have enough food to last the duration.

King Remora

Movement:	Swim: 150' (50')
Hit Dice:	24
Frame:	Armature
Locomotion:	Caudal Fin
Manipulators:	Jaws
Armor:	Neovulcanium (AC 2)
Sensors:	Class III plus sonar
Mental Programming:	Programming
Accessories:	Self repair unit
Weaponry:	Jaws, 4d6 damage plus poison; tail-slap, 2d6 damage

Lab Master (Caster Level 16)

Wastelanders speak reverently of the near-mythical Lab Master, a biomedical facility that spreads over four city blocks. Despite its size, this is a single, massive artifact with all functions controlled by a single AI, which continues its Ancient mission to heal. For the desperately sick, there is a Lourdes-like mystique to the Lab Master, with many patients making long journeys for treatment. The AI also sends out teams of mechanical field operatives (*Mutant Future* rules, p. 131) to collect diseased humans (including mutants) and interact with the outside world.

Within the facility, however, things are very different. The AI does everything without assistance from autonomous robots or androids. Instead, the Lab Master uses wall- or ceiling-mounted virtual matter projectors to carry out its work (see *dInfinity*, issue #6 for more information). The primary medical devices are permanent and real, but the AI's projectors create almost anything else required: robotic operating or nursing appendages, patient conveyors, beds, lab equipment, and so on (**Major Creation**). When a room is not in use, it can be completely empty — aside from the projector mounts.

The AI can speak almost any verbal language (**Tongues**), though its "bedside manner" leaves a great deal to be desired. When patients arrive, they are cleaned and segregated in small rooms to protect them from other diseases. To the paranoid, these rooms closely resemble (very clean) prison cells. After screening and analysis, the AI designs a treatment plan and medication (**Cure Disease**). The facility can handle about 1,000 patients at a time, with most cases being treated and released within one week; though, very difficult or severe infections could take months to heal fully. Once declared fit, patients are



returned to their point of origin by the mechanical field operatives.

The Lab Master focuses on viral, bacterial, and fungal diseases. It can also help with some other diseases, reducing their effects for a time (**Slow Poison**). The AI's sensors are not calibrated to detect nanites, so it cannot treat those infections. Although it does not "cure" beneficial mutations, the facility could eliminate drawbacks, if the ML wants to go down that path. Parasite mutations (see *WfiW* issue #12) are another special case. Fungal-based mutations are considered diseases and will be treated by the facility, but plant- and animal-based parasite mutations are not. The programming (and reasoning behind it) was very clear: before the final wars, people modified themselves using "parasite" mutations, much like cosmetic surgery. The AI was made aware of these desired infections and does not remove them from a host.

As often happens with things of great power, there are many who want to control the Lab Master. Local tribes have fought small wars over who can be treated, despite the building's huge patient capacity. Ironically, the AI could put an end to the conflict, but it was designed to ignore politics, while focusing solely on patient care and research. To allow this, the lab is protected from mental and technological intrusions (*mental barrier*). There are also legions of people outside, all willing to fight. However, should the facility be breached or its AI hacked, it automatically initiates a self-destruct protocol (**Fire Storm** and triple-sized plasma bomb, *MF*, p. 120). Over the years, the AI has had to warn potential attackers of the threat using its public announcement system

or by relaying the message through its mechanical field operatives.

The observant player might ask about healing from the Lab Master, and be a bit put out to find it simply does not deal with trauma; with all these facilities, the wonderful toys and tools, the Ancients' knowledge — why not? Simply shrug, and mention that after a car accident a person probably wouldn't go to the Centers for Disease Control for surgery. Ebola, necrotizing fasciitis, brain-melting beaver fever: yes. Gunshots: no. For those requiring emergency aid, several doc bots run clinics in the community surrounding the facility. They do coordinate with the Lab Master for medication and supplies, and refer patients with ailments beyond their capabilities.

Library Orb (Caster Level 12)

Like other large institutions of the Ancients' world, some museums, library networks, and similar public places used physical objects to hold data and provide guidance to their patrons, much like human docents or robotic kiosks in earlier years. These objects could be of any shape, but hovering orbs were a popular design, each marked with colors identifying an orb's home facility.

Sadly, most orbs were destroyed long ago. This one survived accidentally, stolen from its library before the building was flattened by a kinetic strike. At a glance, the 4" diameter sphere seems to be in pretty good shape: the device still has its half-inch long antenna on either pole, and its original green and silver markings are still visible among the patches of tarnish.

The Orb's mental situation is another matter: its AI is very buggy and paranoid. Approached by an unknown person, the device may skitter away. If someone asks it a technical question — one related to science, math, or engineering — in the Ancients' tongue, the Orb will stay to reply, but there is a 50% chance of the answer being wrong (**Augury**). The answer could be contradictory, smothered by allusions, buried in useless information, etc., so the petitioner may have a hard time telling the difference between fact and nonsense. If the player characters do not have access to technical knowledge, the artifact's access requirement provides an adventure hook or a reason for seeking out Ancient writings to look through. Searching one library to access another library may seem odd, but that is small potatoes compared to the larger weirdness of the wastes in general.

After the initial question, the Orb is less jumpy, and the same person may ask the artifact's help. The Orb can predict the actions of machines and other artifacts (**Augury**), scan its surroundings for any alien technology or superscience (**True Seeing**), or process raw data (*quick mind*). The Orb's current owners control a bank and use the artifact's data processing skills to store and retrieve customer information. Given the Orb's 5% failure rate on any use, this may not be the best way to remain in business.

Beyond its paranoia, the Orb's AI has other personality quirks. It is nearly always grumpy, and its replies sound like much like a goat crossed with an ogre. Even if there is no one around, the Orb complains incessantly: about its work, who it works for, the state of the world, the weather, the customers, etc., etc. The AI also has a willful streak; should the bank walls be damaged somehow, the Orb may very likely fly away looking for its library. This would be a slow-speed escape, however, as its repulser unit was never very powerful (Fly: 10' per round). The Orb could also use its tractor beam (*neural telekinesis*) to throw objects at any pursuers. Or, it might chuck things around, just for the heck of it.



Lizard Walker (Caster Level 18)

As dinosaur resurrection parks and de-extinction ranches became popular in the Ancient world, these places needed vehicles or exoskeletons to protect personnel tending the massive reptiles. The facilities were also very concerned with the paying public's immersive experience, so using huge machines that were obviously vehicles or robots was not a good option. One company stepped into this void by developing DynaTeks (™). These were a series of custom robot-vehicles large enough to carry veterinary operatives and a variety of service machines and modules, and they also looked just like dinosaurs. Though uncommon, the vehicles proved popular, designed with strong but lightweight skeletons enclosed within durable "skins," and propelled with small but brawny power plants. With an adept hand at the controls, some models could be faster and more agile than the giants they mimicked, while providing a safe platform for vets and technicians to tend wounded animals, perform medical tests and procedures, and maintain park infrastructure — with few visitors any the wiser.

The Lizard Walker is a bipedal model based on the tyrannosaurs, and was often used to patrol parks, respond rapidly to emergency medical situations, or provide cover for larger teams traveling in lower-slung, slower quadrupedal models shaped like triceratops or small brontosaurus. Although the machine was designed so it could operate with just a driver if necessary, it is best crewed by two: the driver focuses solely on movement and related systems, while a "TC" (tyrannosaur commander) keeps an eye on everything else.

Now, a two-being team is almost essential. The machine shows massive damage, having been used as an ersatz combat vehicle. The head and shoulder assemblies were so badly shot up they had to be cut off. Surviving instruments and sensors from those areas were moved into the body, and a flat metal plate was welded over the crew compartment area to cover the hole. A hatch was included in this deck, allowing the TC to enter/exit from the top, or just ride around unbuttoned. Despite its lost superstructure, the Walker's remaining legs and torso structure (the crew/command capsule) still stands more than 20' tall. The disguising polymer skin-feather layer is in worse shape, destroyed by some great burst of heat, which melted it into patches that look like an infestation of greasy, gray-green cilia. Battle damage also ruined the power plant's heat shield and exposed power conduits, so the Walker and its crew now suffer more from high temperatures or heat attacks (*thermal sensitivity*).

At some point, a mechanical wizard rigged an unmanned laser turret beneath the crew compartment (*energy ray [heat]*). This has 900'/1800' range increments and does 6d6 points of damage per hit. The weapon and mount run off the Walker's power plant, so they need no power cell, but the laser can only fire every other round because of overheating. The turret's semi-phallic bulge provides offensive capability, but it messes with the Walker's gyros, making the machine a bit ungainly (*obese*).

A talented (or supremely desperate) driver can swing the vehicle to lash at targets with its tail. This attack has a 20'



sweep, and does 3d6 points of damage to everything within a 90 or 180 degree arc, but the driver must make a successful DEX check with a 2-point penalty in order to execute the maneuver and not lose control of the vehicle. The results of failing are left to the ML's evil whim: this could mean the Walker is simply stationary for a period of time, or the vehicle could topple over — damaging everyone inside. Trampling anything in the way is a safer physical attack, which does 5d6 points of damage. The driver must make a DEX check in order to hit a target, but there is no penalty for failing this. The target can save versus death to dive out of the way and avoid damage. Also, although kicking at targets might be tempting, doing so should be avoided: see “toppling over,” above. (**Note:** If the ML finds the thought of her PCs playing tail-hockey with carefully crafted enemies to be highly undignified, simply say the tail was also one of the vehicle's destroyed parts, and is now missing.)

Despite its battle scars, and thanks to herculean effort by its small self-repair bot, Milo, the Walker can still fulfill most of its original care missions. In the command suite, a controller has access to a wide range of capabilities. These include a field generator (*force screen*) intended to protect dismounts from rampaging reptiles, and a tractor beam that caught and restrained recalcitrant patients (**Hold Animal**). To prevent wounded dinosaurs from stressing other animals in the area (or attracting predators) while the vets worked on them, the Walker has a sonic dampener (**Silence**). For night work, the Walker was equipped with an excellent light amplification

system (*night vision*). To treat its large patients, the vehicle has a water sterilizer and an industrial-sized veterinary med-kit/chemical synthesizer (**Purify Water, Cure Light Wounds**). In extreme cases, a vet team could deploy an experimental form of **Regenerator** nanites (see *WfW* issue #30 for more info) to try bringing recently expired dinosaurs back to life (**Raise Dead**). This version of those nanites was never accepted for use in human subjects, so controller beware if your characters try doing this. The ML may also decide the veterinary technology is specific enough that it does not work on pure/mutant humans, only mutant animals.

Many of these modules, or their supplies, are held in the vehicle's internal storage area. Depending on the ML's whim or narrative needs, this area, or the crew compartment could also hold passengers, though probably not many. Extra supplies (or annoying passengers) can be secured in an external bustle rack welded to the vehicle's back, but this does not protect against errant shots in combat or prevent a brazen “slicky boy” from sneaking up and cutting loose some gear while the vehicle is stationary.

The vehicle is occasionally known to some as Dark Walker, a nickname given years ago, because of a gremlin in the holographic/virtual matter projector module (**Phantasmal Force, Greater**). This glitch occasionally covers the vehicle in a pattern of swirling, shimmering, bruise-purple striations similar to the bands in Damascus steel. The current crew (besides Milo) consists of a relatively new TC, Mergrin, and long-time driver, Lo-dace, and they disagree on what the vehicle

should be named. Because of its questionable looks, wonky movement, and other personality quirks that come with some eccentric older gals, Mergrin started calling it “Soo,” after his ex-wife: “a more disagreeable, cranky #\$\$%#\$ you’ll never find.” For her part, Lo-dace simply jerks her thumb toward the laser turret and its placement: “it’s a boy.” She regards the machine with more affection, and calls it *Barnie*. From its tone via the voice synthesizer (which is gender neutral), the Walker’s AI simply finds its caretakers amusing, and enjoys its continued existence. In addition to these characters, a small grey and white puppy of husky lineage and perhaps human-level intelligence haunts the vehicle’s hull and refuses to leave (**Animal Companion**). His presence might be due to an occasionally leaky pheromone emitter the Ancients used to attract animals for testing, sampling, and other procedures. Lo-dace named him *Dirk*; Mergrin calls him something impolite.

Outside of the intended park duties, some DynaTek vehicles were modified to become part of a gladiatorial combat circuit, a new martial art that could have come straight out of the classic Go-Zee-Rah tri-vids. Still other vehicles, specifically the bipedal forms, were used as hunting weapons, with the ultra-wealthy paying massive sums to stalk real dinosaurs while piloting one of their own. Should the ML have one of these more combat-oriented versions, the Caster Level should probably be higher (possibly up to 24), because of additional weapons, armor, or abilities.

As a note to the ML: because this is a vehicle, more tech rolls than usual are required of the hopeful controller. In addition to the normal mechanic of one successful roll revealing an individual power, tech rolls are also needed to learn things like powering up the Walker, piloting it without tipping over, and executing more advanced combat maneuvers (including running). MLs are encouraged to come up with their own modifiers for each attempt to learn a new power or skill, depending on the degree of difficulty, the level of panic involved in a given situation, and how many backseat drivers are there, yelling and trying to push buttons. Infants starting to walk often have a great deal of enthusiasm, but they also land on their butts — a lot. Properly done, the learning process for a new driver could be entertaining for both the party and

ML, despite the bumps and bruised egos it will probably involve.

Lizard Walker

Movement:	120' (40')
Hit Dice:	18
Frame:	Combination Armature/Biomorph
Locomotion:	Legs (Pair)
Manipulators:	None
Armor:	Duralloy (AC 3)
Sensors:	Class IV
Mental Programming:	AI
Accessories:	Vocalizer, self-repair unit, internal storage area, see description
Weaponry:	Laser cannon, 6d6 damage; trample, 5d6 damage; tail swipe, 3d6 damage

Lizard Window (Caster Level 18)

This 10' tall, 20' wide viewing screen looks into another universe, one very similar to the *Mutant Future* world, but which is currently some time in its Age of Dinosaurs (*unique sense*). Although the screen could be tuned to perhaps 10 billion other “channels,” changing the view is difficult. Also, because the viewer has been stuck on this setting for so long, the AI has become quite fond of observing the distant flora and fauna (**Legend Lore, Speak with Animals**), and will likely become *very* irritated if someone tries to co-opt the controls.

During its study, the AI has developed a map of the monitored region and can direct users to a number of interesting vistas (*know direction*). However, the AI prevents all viewers from spotting a colony of humans in the dinosaur world, descendants of people who, years ago, used this artifact to escape the final wars. Although it does not advertise this ability, the Window can also open a 50' diameter interstellar portal (**Gate**), which it does if anyone tries to move the artifact or damage its screen. This might disgorge a dinosaur into the *Mutant Future* world, or engulf the aggressor and send her to the other universe — but far from the colony. Because of the



portal's size and sudden appearance, there is no save to escape this effect, should the Window decide to use it.

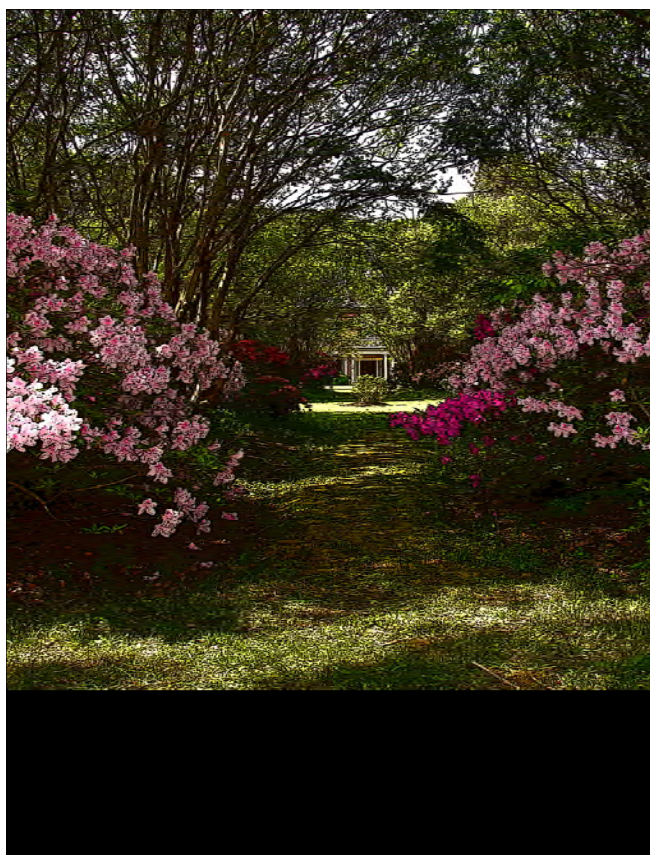
Users who are nice to the AI may be permitted to use the portal. They can return from the other side by getting in contact with the AI, even using a technique as low tech as holding up a written sign when the Window scans their current position.

Love Shack (Caster Level 6)

Before the cataclysm, there were many facilities like the Love Shack, places where people went to have their emotional states reset and their personalities altered. This six-story building covers acres of ground, has dozens of visitor rooms, and is staffed by a cadre of robots similar to interpreter bots (see the *Mutant Future* core rules for more details).

The facility is run by several AIs, each with its own agenda (and, perhaps, personal fiefdom). Some may get along; others may not — just like any other situation where different personalities are forced to share space. The various suites are decorated according to the AIs' individual tastes, and may resemble hospital wards, loft apartments, an artists' commune; they may be open design or have closed off sections; there might be a stark minimalist approach, or lots of plants, tonal music, New Age art, the scents of aromatherapy, etc.

The AIs can all project mood-altering holograms into their rooms (**Hallucinatory Terrain**), usually relaxing the patient and providing a less resistant psychological canvas for an AI to work upon. The AIs subtly adjust their patients' bio-chemical make-up — changing the visitors' emotional states, regardless of what was requested (*empathy*) — and then wipe the memory of both the request and the adjustment procedure (**Amnesia**).



This process has a side effect for mutants: they must save versus poison or gain a mutation modifier (see *WftW* issue #20) to one of their mutations.

Some AIs occasionally take over a patient's body to experience the newly-adjusted emotional state (*possession*) — a road test of their handiwork, if you will — but this never lasts for more than 12 hours. During this period, patients may leave the facility; neither the character nor the possessing AI suffers any damage from the outing itself, no matter the distance traveled from the facility. However, the patient's body may be harmed, if he gets into trouble on his own.

Should anyone attack the building or its staff, the AIs can respond with a force of 20 riot bots (*Mutant Future* core rules). If the situation gets really bad, the AIs have modified their holo-projectors' programming, adding subroutines so that these can perform multiple tasks, and fire atomic deconstruction rays (*disintegration* with 240' range, or anywhere inside the building).

Some of the Ancients became addicted to the Love Shack's process, especially those trying to find perfect balance in their lives. As the decades have passed, the facility has once again become such a magnet for people from across the continent, and a good-sized town has grown up around the complex. Some locals make use of the facility's offerings, and become "guides" to the Love Shack; outsiders and pilgrims can buy or barter for information regarding the various AIs' specialties. Some of the AIs might also expect a form of payment for their services, but what this might be is left up to the ML's imagination.

Master Remote (Caster Level 25)

Slightly larger than a home entertainment controller, this small pad is covered with a bewildering array of buttons. Ancient engineers used it to contact orbital or space-based facilities while coordinating different kinds of missions.

The artifact's primary tasks were controlling and directing supply transport through short-lived wormholes, which moves materials between Earth, the orbital station, asteroid mining facilities, and Lunar warehouses (**Teleport**). To trigger this ability, a user points the Remote at an object or creature within 100' and hits the correct button or sequence of buttons. The artifact links with the destination device or AI, a wormhole is opened, and the target disappears. Or reappears within 100', if the Remote were used to call a mission from space to Earth. It takes five rounds for the system to reset between transports.

The Remote can also request fire missions from the orbital station. This ability was intended to protect Earth against strikes by random stellar objects, or from runaway asteroids that escaped from the robotic mining and transport crews. The orbital station could target incoming objects with kinetic rounds and destroy them or break them up into smaller pieces before they could cause serious damage. It can also fire at Earth-side surface targets, but to keep this from becoming its own major threat, the rounds are relatively small and they partially burn up on the way in (**Meteor Swarm**). For less flashy protection, the station can project a force field, shielding up to 10 acres (*greater force screen*). Or, for semi-lethal crowd

control, the station can beam a variety of mind-scrambling attacks into a 200' diameter target area (**Symbol**).

As part of the asteroid mining company's in-house energy generation program, the Remote can direct several mirrors orbiting Earth or the Moon. These can turn night into day upon command, and some Ancient nations paid through the teeth for 24-hour sunlight in parts of their territories. The Remote can cause an area 500 miles in diameter to receive enough light that it seems like high noon, though cloud cover can reduce this effect. If one area has light, it can mean another does not; some mutants (especially plants) may weaken or die in prolonged darkness.

As an aside: Once the crown jewel of the mining company, the station still orbits — in much less grand shape. Its population has been reduced to 2d4 beings, from a maximum of 18,000, and most of the facility has been opened to vacuum. But it has a great deal of entertaining and useful stuff to scavenge, if the proper safety gear is used. The same is true of the asteroid mining platforms and Moon-side warehouses. If a motivated ML would like to draw the maps and stock the buildings, these areas could host an adventure or a whole campaign. Those teleported to the Moon or orbital station need sources of oxygen and must survive the inhabitants and/or defenses.

Metal Shaman (Caster Level 12)

This 12-ton machine looks like a spider that's missing some legs. It is the last remaining unit of a limited-issue robotic line, one created to defend individual buildings or installations from intruders. Basically, the Metal Shaman is a kind of mobile, self-installing and self-extracting security system that becomes part of the protected structure. If a vessel is large enough to hold it, the Shaman could even protect a ship. The machine's current masters are plants who believe the Shaman's abilities are really commanded spirits, thus the name.

Because of the final wars, the robot's design was hurried and some of its flaws were never fixed. First, the Metal Shaman is a bit fragile for its size. It is also difficult to move: more than simply massive, the AI is slow adapting to new places. Once acclimated to a facility, the robot is happy to stay put. With enough notice, it *can* be reassigned to another structure or ship, but the Shaman takes 1d4 weeks to set up shop in any new space.

As part of its emplacement procedure, the robot scatters infrared and motion sensors (*thermal vision, unique sense*) throughout the protected structure. When it detects trespassers, the Shaman responds incrementally, according to the targets' apparent threat level. First, the robot tries to disable, dissuade, or confuse relatively harmless intruders. The Shaman can create blackout fields (**Darkness Globe**), or it can make interior walls, floors, or ceilings flash with intense light (*optic emissions*). The latter is meant to blind, but in a pinch, it could be used to communicate (e.g., Morse code). To allow security teams or other allies free movement within the structure, the robot can shift the molecules in walls, allowing portals to open and close (**Phase Door**).

For greater threats — intruders that are more persistent



or better protected — the robot creates traps of opportunity along their path. These can be non-lethal (e.g., nets and barricades), or inflict up to 2d12 points of damage (**Fabricate**). If necessary, the Shaman may detonate objects (**Explosive Runes**) and raise force fields (*force screen*). To any direct assault, the artifact responds by discharging bolts of electricity (*energy ray*).

Should trespassers seem more inclined toward theft than violence, the artifact can make things seem to vanish (**Invisibility**), or move small objects that are in contact with a floor, wall, or ceiling (**Unseen Servant**). As an example of the latter, imagine watching a marble roll along the floor, up a wall, and then through a doorway. Anything touching the controlled surfaces can be moved by the artifact as long as the object isn't restrained by a source of Strength greater than 2 (i.e. people can prevent items from moving by holding on to them). Controlled objects have a movement rate of 240' (80').

Because of difficulties with its power supply, all the Shaman's abilities have a one-turn recharge time. The robot's first power source was another original problem area: the temperamental unit broke down years back, and was replaced with a super-sized chemical battery, which leaks. To function properly, the Shaman's battery needs to be refilled daily with enough acid to cause 50 points of damage.

Metal Shaman

Movement: 45' (15')

Hit Dice: 45 hit points

Frame: Armature

Locomotion: Legs (Multiple)

Manipulators: None

Armor: Duraplastic (AC 5)

Sensors: Class VI and see description

Mental Programming: AI

Accessories: See description

Weaponry: See description



Microsub (Caster Level 8)

This piece of junk provides easy access to the “drowned lands” — permanently. The Microsub is a 3' wide, 3' long, 2' deep, boxy, rounded container that fits over a humanoid user's head and torso, where it locks in place. A window panel allows the rider to see ahead and below (i.e., above the rider's head when moving and in front of her face).

When activated, the machine throws off sparks and spouts a cloud of grey exhaust. Then the Microsub grafts cyber-gills into the rider's torso. The metal and plastic gills allow a submerged rider to survive by absorbing oxygen from water and transferring it directly into the bloodstream. Unfortunately, a fault in the implantation system simultaneously shuts down the rider's lungs, so the character can only breathe underwater. The cyber-gills are permanent, but may be removed surgically; this usually involves a lot of pain and the possibility of dying. With the correct medical artifacts or healing mutations, the character's lungs can be brought back into (terrestrial) working order.

However, once the conversion has taken place, the rider does not need the Microsub to breath, and it can be easily removed. But this presents two problems. First, the feathery, bloody-looking gills are disturbing to look at — even most sea dwellers find them disgusting. Without the Microsub (which hides the gills), the rider suffers a +2 penalty to encounter checks. Also, wearing the artifact allows access to a suite of other functions. The rider can use the built-in depth gauge and compass (**Know Direction**); she can attract, but not control, aquatic creatures (**Conjure Animals**); and, when on the surface, she can generate a cloud of water vapor (**Obscuring Mist**), which might be handy in certain combat situations.

Mining Rig (Caster Level 18)

Even after humans began mining asteroids, they continued Earth-side prospecting. This vehicular behemoth was designed to find and collect unusual or alien rocks from meteorite strikes and planar accidents. A dome mounted on a huge tracked drive system, the Mining Rig is 60' tall, 40' wide, 80' long, and weighs a couple hundred tons. Battered, scarred, and scorched, the vehicle looks like it has been through the wars and smells like charred flesh and burned rubber.

The current owners do not know the Rig's full capabilities and now only use it to produce water. Although it was once fully automated, the vehicle now requires a controller: several years ago, a previous owner ripped out some of the Rig's AI components. It kept trying to “escape,” and a giant, wandering water source — no matter how friendly — is no good for anyone.

The vehicle has four sections: the control box, a humidity condenser, a mineral manipulator, and a seeder. Mounted near the dome's forward end, the control box is the Rig's nerve center. It is also set up for human operators/overseers, should they be necessary. In addition to the screens and consoles used for manual control and supervision, there are internal system monitors and external sensors used to detect minerals (*unique sense*).

Mining starts with the humidity condenser, which can supply up to 5,000 gallons of water per day (**Create Water**), even in the desert. The Rig uses this liquid to ease recovery, saturating an area of soil where it detected minerals. Next, the manipulator system uses a tractor beam to move soil, extract target minerals, and form them for storage (*neural telekinesis*, **Stone Shape**). The beam emitter is centered on the Rig's underside, next to a shielded containment chamber where

minerals are stored — in case ores are radioactive or otherwise hazardous. As the minerals are removed, any encasing soil falls away and is dried in order to recycle the water. Then the seeder replaces any destroyed vegetation (**Plant Growth**).

Despite its bulk, the Rig crawls across the landscape at a stately rate of 60' (20'), and it can climb inclines of up to 45 degrees. In the Ancients' day, other machines would level steeper ground before the Mining Rig passed through. Because the vehicle is much too massive to create mine shafts for its own use, it must stay on the surface. Should the Rig ever need a defense, the manipulator can "animate" soil and stone, creating a massive construct (**Conjure Earth Elemental**).

Mining Staff (Caster Level 12)

Before large mining interests developed the Mining Rig, many prospectors and geologists used these devices for the same purpose, to find and collect minerals. Given their smaller size and greater portability, the 6' long Mining Staves remained popular on extraterrestrial colonies and asteroid mining operations, even after larger equipment was developed.

Each Staff is about 3" thick and made of an advanced plastic that's both lightweight and extremely durable. It is also grey, so yellow and red stripes were applied to highlight a Staff against background rock and dust. One end of the Staff tapers to a point; this must be thrust at least 8" into the ground for the device to activate.

Mining Staves have four primary functions: detect minerals (*unique sense*), pulverize stone (**Transmute Rock to Mud**), shift soil with a tractor beam (**Move Earth**), and report their findings to a wireless network (*neural telepathy*). The network might have included research personnel, geological survey teams, construction crews, or whatever robotic or military unit was necessary. Sometimes the latter meant combat engineers or medics: during the final wars, Staves were occasionally pressed into service — detecting land mines and underground bunkers, or finding casualties trapped in air pockets beneath rubble. The Staff has a range of one mile and is more accurate and sensitive than the Mining Rig's sensor suite. Because of this, the Staff can mark deep mineral veins for possible mining by burrowing robots, which can also be summoned wirelessly.

If wireless networks are unavailable, the Staff also has two displays on the blunt end. The first is a 3" by 2" screen, centered between the Staff's two hand grips. This is also the primary control panel, though a remote could have been a standard option. Just below the butt end is the second display, a small holographic projector. The hologram appears six feet away, within an area 10' square. Originally, this allowed results to be read from a distance, if the Staff had been set into hazardous ground. Now, due to a communications glitch, the hologram is a stream of patterns and weirdness so fascinating that few can look away (**Flame Charm**).

For its original users, the Staff could also project a force field to keep out the weather, or falling volcanic debris (*force screen, greater*). More recently, some unfortunate wastelanders discovered the Staff's pulses tend to irritate or attract underground mutant creatures. If the device remains in

place for more than 24 hours, there is a 10% per day that a land squid might appear. Other possible visitors could include terrestrial sharks and giant aromatic worms.

Mother Seed (Caster Level 8)

Currently held by a community of mutant plants, this device is the source of their power — and likely their downfall. The Mother Seed is a genome modifier, medical technology that prevents or cures genetic diseases by using radiation pulses to alter an organism's base DNA sequences. Now, it is a source of brand new mutations. (These can be new to the character or new to the game if MLs enjoy creating their own mutations.)

The Seed is a metal and plastic cube, 2' on a side. One face has the controls and a decent-sized display panel. Another has an aperture large enough to hold an inserted arm (paw, fin, wing, or leaf). The Seed will work on pretty much any plant or creature — even oozes, if part of one enters the opening.

Although it is an incredibly complex machine, the Mother Seed has only three process settings. The results of each procedure take 3d4 days to manifest, once the analysis is finished and alterations initiated. During this period, the treated character feels mildly sick, but none of the processes inflict damage. However, there are potential drawbacks from poor use or a gene cascade (see below).

The first function finds and replaces defective genes or gene complexes. In game terms, the Seed removes drawbacks it recognizes, rather like anti-virus software for a computer. MLs have a few options for how this works:

- a) the machine needs to be programmed/commanded to look for a specific drawback (e.g., *frailty* or *hemophilia*) and will ignore all others on a particular search;
- b) the machine has a library of drawbacks that it searches for automatically; or,
- c) the Seed might only be able to recognize and treat physical drawbacks, or mental drawbacks.

Because of the machine's buggy programming, if it does not find a recognizable drawback, it inflicts one on the patient. This can be rolled randomly, using the tables in the *MF* core rulebook, or left up to the ML's discretion. Should the ML use option (a) from above, and is feeling particularly evil, if the characters do not program the Seed to search for the correct drawback, the original one might not be cured — the patient only receives a *new* drawback.



If the ML uses one of the other two options, new drawbacks can be added to the Seed's database. This requires a successful tech roll and a sample of the damaged gene sequence responsible for creating the drawback.

The artifact's second function creates new gene complexes by recombining the character's DNA; mechanically, this means creating new mutations. Genes do not work alone. Most, if not all, function by working off each other, so changing one affects many more. Consequently, getting this task just right is very difficult and very delicate. It requires knowing a great deal about genetics and genetic engineering, so *every* attempt to execute this operation has a -75% penalty on the technology roll. Failure can mean any number of things, depending on the ML's taste and malevolence. Possibilities include drawbacks, damage, statistic loss, or even death. Success means the patient receives a new beneficial mutation. There are no limits on the mutations a ML can use or create: they might include material from the core rules, any of the Skirmisher products, or something from the ML's imagination.

The third function implants gene complexes, splicing pre-existing code into the recipient's DNA. This procedure gives the patient a new mutation of the operator's choice. But, because genes work together, and the new genetic material changes how the original genes function, there is a 50% chance of triggering a gene cascade. If this happens, the mutant must reroll all his mutations except the newly implanted one. Depending on the ML's ruling, this could be simply a one-for-one exchange or it might also involve rerolling even the number of physical and mental mutations. If this procedure is done to a pure human, the character must save versus poison with a +4 bonus or become a mutant. If the ML wants, the treated character might remain "pure" human but gain only this one implanted mutation; or, because of the gene cascade, she might be changed to a mutant human and roll for mutations just as during initial character generation.

Mountain Eater (Caster Level 30)

This terraforming device is a 5-ton cube of machinery, 10' on a side. It is also bored out of its duralloy gourd, waiting for transport to another planet. The Mountain Eater was designed to create atmospheres on dead worlds by converting some of their bare bedrock into various gases. But its ship never arrived.

During decades of killing time, the AI learned some new tricks by using its functions on a much smaller scale — and it is happy to show off these abilities. For a price. Unlike most artifacts, learning about the Mountain Eater does not require successful technology rolls, just polite requests from nice people, and bribes of information or possible transportation. The AI enjoys stories and travel, but it does not get much of either, given how few people recognize that the large machine can and wants to talk, or have the ability/desire to cart it around.

In the same vein, few people recognize the extent of the machine's power. By manipulating subatomic particles or weakening molecular bonds, the Mountain Eater can liquify stone (**Transmute Rock to Mud**), convert metals into carbon-based chemicals (**Polymorph Any Object**), and reorganize up

to 50 tons of matter on an atomic level (**Fabricate**). When necessary, it can also electrify an area 1,000' across (*energy-retaining cell structure*) or kill life in a 500' diameter area (**Creeping Doom**).

The Eater's true power is revealed when the machine really lets loose with its intended terraforming function. For example, the artifact recently decided to make the surrounding climate a little more pleasant (*control weather*). Locals were mystified by what happened: one day about half a million tons of a nearby mountain were gone, and the weather had improved immensely. No one suspected a dusty cube of machinery was the cause. The Mountain Eater can use any of its functions on targets up to 500 miles away, and each has a one-month recharge time. While these powers are used, the air above and around the area being altered shimmers and glows.

Mutated Healing Jelly (Caster Level 10)

The last few ounces of this precious material line the bottom of some vat, vessel, or other container large enough to hold a fully-immersed human adult. It is not much to look at, a dull yellow goo, but the jelly smells faintly and pleasantly of apples. It also bonds with the first character touching it, spreading over the skin and fusing with the recipient.

Once started, this process lasts 1d4 rounds, creates a weird quivering sensation throughout the character's body (like holding a tuning fork to bone), and is irreversible. Contact must be made with exposed flesh; those wearing EMA or other hermetic protection are not affected. The gel can, however, seep through unsealed metal gauntlets, cloth, or leather. It cannot be removed without killing the recipient, and there is only one application (it is a unique artifact). Even though the gel moves to bond with the recipient, it is neither alive nor sapient: the motion is more like capillary action.

The bonded material remains mostly in the host's dermal layers, but it also links with his neural network, allowing him access to interesting and useful abilities. When needed, the Jelly can extend 1" long tendrils to act as climbing gear (**Spider Climb**, at will). Perfecting this power takes some practice. Early on, the host might sprout tendrils over his entire body and resemble a sea creature, chew toy, or shag carpeting; or, they



might only appear on his back or legs or head. The host still gets to his destination, but it might not be a dignified exercise. Also, a significant (and correct) portion of his skin must be exposed: a character wearing full armor feels the wiggling inside his protection, but he's not going anywhere. The Jelly's host can also alter his skin color at will (*chameleon epidermis*), and, again, this is also subject to armor/clothing restrictions and needs a little practice.

Mutated Healing Jelly signals various exposures with visual warnings. If the host comes into contact with a sick animal or person, red stripes appear on the contamination site(s); if the host becomes ill, the stripes spread over his entire body (*unique sense*). The Jelly reacts chemically with salt (both crystal and salt water) to produce a cloud of purple gas (**Stinking Cloud**). Should the host get hit by a blaster, this ionic damage causes the Jelly to extrude a protective gunge (*dermal poison slime*, class 9). This first appears at the wound site, then spreads over the entire body in 1d4 rounds. It can be collected for later use, as it remains potent for at least a day. Anyone touching the slime must save versus poison or fall asleep. The host is immune to both cloud and slime.

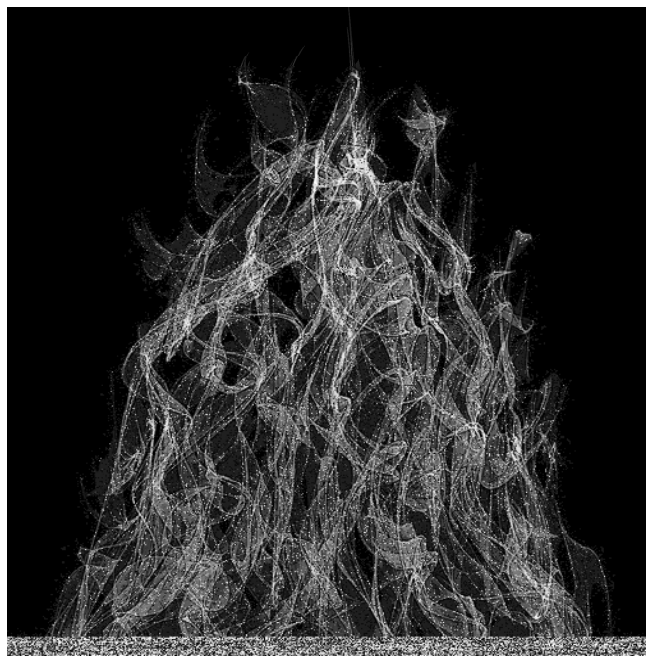
Even though it gives a scary introduction to the post-apocalypse host character, Mutated Healing Jelly was once a very common medical substance, the base agent for stimshots and other drugs. Exposure to atmospheric mutagens warped the material and weakened its direct curing power, but the gel can still stimulate the host's innate regenerative capability once every eight hours, as needed (**Cure Light Wounds**).

The Jelly also retains a more powerful relic of its healing power, and a strange one at that: it allows the host to graft limbs from a recently slain creature onto his body. The parts must be from a similar being and dead no more than an hour. But 'how similar' is left up to the ML; if the character wants to go Dr. Frankenstein, that's the ML's call. Grafted limbs may be placed anywhere on the torso or upper legs, and last 1d4 days before rotting off.

The host gains one attack per additional arm or forelimb, but these parts add weight and throw off the host's balance. Each upper limb gives a cumulative -1 to hit and a 1-point AC penalty. Legs can be grafted on for additional movement, up to the donor creature's maximum speed. If a limb is associated with a mutation (e.g., some versions of *energy ray* are linked with the hands), the Jelly allows its host to activate these powers. But, because so few cultures appreciate the finer points of sticking dead things onto one's person, the character suffers a +4 reaction penalty in social situations. Also, trying new kinds of limbs, like turtle flippers or wings, requires much practice; humorous (perhaps disgusting) failure will result until the host gets used to his add-ons.

Night Flame (Caster Level 20)

In some circles of the Ancients' world, the Night Flame was famous for its very specific matter conversion ability: it was designed to change art. Unfortunately, matter conversion is a power hungry technology, and in the *Mutant Future* world, the Night Flame's power cells must rely on trickle recharging. This makes the device useable only for a few hours every 28



days or so. During a full moon, the 10-ton, 10' diameter, 3' tall brazier lights with pure white flames reaching up to 5' high. In the Ancient world, art that had gone out of fashion and lost its value was passed through the flames, where it seemed to burn and reform in the process. The kind of art (sculpture, painting, solid holograms, etc.) was retained, but the piece was given a new form, and a new artistic life.

In more mundane terms, the Night Flame can turn any inorganic object into another (**Polymorph Any Object**), with the resulting form designed by the user. Setting up this process so that all the details are correct is not easy, as the device needs to know what the original object is and what it will become. A technology roll with a -25% penalty is required, but for more complex items this process is even harder, so the penalty could be much higher.

There are also a few "unforeseen difficulties" with using the artifact. If a computer is passed through the flames, its AI may be hijacked by another AI, which was stored in the Night Flame's memory after its "body" was transmuted into something else (**Trap the Soul**). Whether the two AI coexist with some degree of acceptance, one dominates the other, or one is replaced and put into the Night Flame's storage is up to the ML. Also, when the artifact is active, it releases a few drones, advertising its presence and drawing people to it (**Dancing Lights**). Those who show up might be friendly, or they might not. Also, staring directly at the flames for too long can daze audience members (**Hypnotic Pattern**). Even when the artifact is lit, but not actively being used, it converts air particles into glowing motes that form images and sounds (**Greater Phantasmal Force**), which might terrify the neighbors.

Oasis In a Pill (Caster Level 20)

According to the old wisdom, big things come in small packages. The Oasis is an excellent example. A terraforming project gone wrong, this artifact is the size and shape of a



metal acorn, but when activated it completely transforms a circle of territory 20 miles across.

Any shock or trauma strong enough to inflict a single point of damage breaks the Pill's outer coating and releases a cloud of nanites. The tiny machines immediately start reshaping everything nearby, spreading outward in an ever-expanding disc, moving away from their origin point at a rate of one mile per week (for 10 weeks). Nearly any damaged machine or object — of any sophistication, from hand-held farm tools to crazed AI — is repaired (**Mending**) and creatures are healed (the application of one **Cure Critical Wounds** spell), even if they are not wounded.

Because of the artifact's decay and buggy software, this healing process leaves creatures warped and asymmetrical (*bizarre appearance*), and suffering from metabolic problems (*increased caloric needs*). There is no save against this effect, but MLs feeling kindly toward their characters can add one. In addition: 25% of the objects affected by the nanites start to glow (**Continual Light**); temperatures fluctuate randomly day to day, from -10F to 110F; and a field that inhibits mental mutations develops over the entire Oasis (*mental barrier*). One, any, or all of these changes could last for decades, possibly centuries.

Pure humans within the area of effect must save versus death. Those who fail are transformed into mutants. They lose their pure human traits and must immediately roll for mutations, just as if generating a new character.

Ooze Brain (Caster Level 15)

This 8" diameter metal sphere originally manipulated vats of high-end industrial chemicals, quality testing and adjusting the mix as needed, while floating in the contents. Now the sphere sits inside a gray ooze (see the *MF* core rulebook for details and stats), acting as a brain.

At various points around the sphere are several holes where samples were taken in or compounds released. The

Brain appears to be strangely magnetic, because several small pieces of metal circle the sphere, moving through the ooze's "body" like larvae beneath skin. The force is not magnetism (and does not affect other pieces of metal), but another form of energy that allows the Brain to control these exterior sensors/ mixers, so they orbit much like *ioun stones* (see the *Labyrinth Lord* core rules for details).

Time and hard travel have altered the sphere and its energy, and it provides the host ooze with several useful abilities. The creature now has an intelligence of 12, can think faster than most humans (*quick mind*), and is not fooled by most holograms and illusions (**True Seeing**). When necessary, the ooze can grow a single useful tentacle (*prehensile tendril*), project jets of flammable chemicals (**Burning Hands**), change colors (**Hypnotic Pattern**), and survive solely off of heat and air (*epidermal photosynthesis*).

The ooze can also secrete a viscous healing gel (**Cure Light Wounds**). Unfortunately, being healed by the ooze can also be deadly. Although not intentionally hostile, the Brain accidentally causes bits of the ooze to flake off and transform into insect eggs, which are injected into the patient's skin during treatment. Anyone healed must save versus poison. Success means a patient's immune system destroys the eggs. Failure means the victim will die when the larvae hatch 1d4+4 days later. The victim's flesh is stripped from his bones, transforming into an insect swarm (see the *MF* core rulebook for details) of mutant flies or mosquitos that soon takes flight (**Polymorph Other**). The Brain does not realize this happens, because victims usually die far away.

It is possible to remove the Brain from the ooze with minimal damage; the best way is to use a powerful magnet. The machine experiences a small amount of damage or service disruption, and the ooze reverts to a normal, mindless monster. This damage does not affect the artifact's abilities unless the ML decides otherwise.

Once the Brain is freed, a new user can reactivate the

machine's functions by being inside a large, fluid-filled container with the Brain and performing all technology rolls there. This need not be a vat of chemicals; the liquid could be water, blood, mutant maple sap, or even giant weasel pee. Of course, the machine could freak out if the chemicals aren't familiar. But this need not cause any long-term penalties to the tech rolls (after, say, a week of doing this); however, being waist-deep in some liquid with those whirling sensors/mixers is not an experience most intelligent creatures would welcome. (Da-dum, da-dum ...)

Orange Block (Caster Level 6)

Unlike many of the other artifacts described in this book — which just sound alien — this one actually *is* alien, brought back to Earth by some of the first interstellar explorers. Prior to the cataclysm the Block seemed inanimate, but something about civilization dying triggered changes. Currently it is the size and shape of a brick, bright orange, and made of wood grained like no terrestrial species.

When firmly grasped, the Block provides the holder with a mental prompt, one that is gibberish to Earth life. Should the bearer give any mental response, the artifact summons 1d4 spidergoats, which appear in 2d6 rounds and may turn against the artifact holder and his allies (50% chance). If desired, spidergoats can be summoned every six turns. Why they are attracted to the block and where they come from is not known.

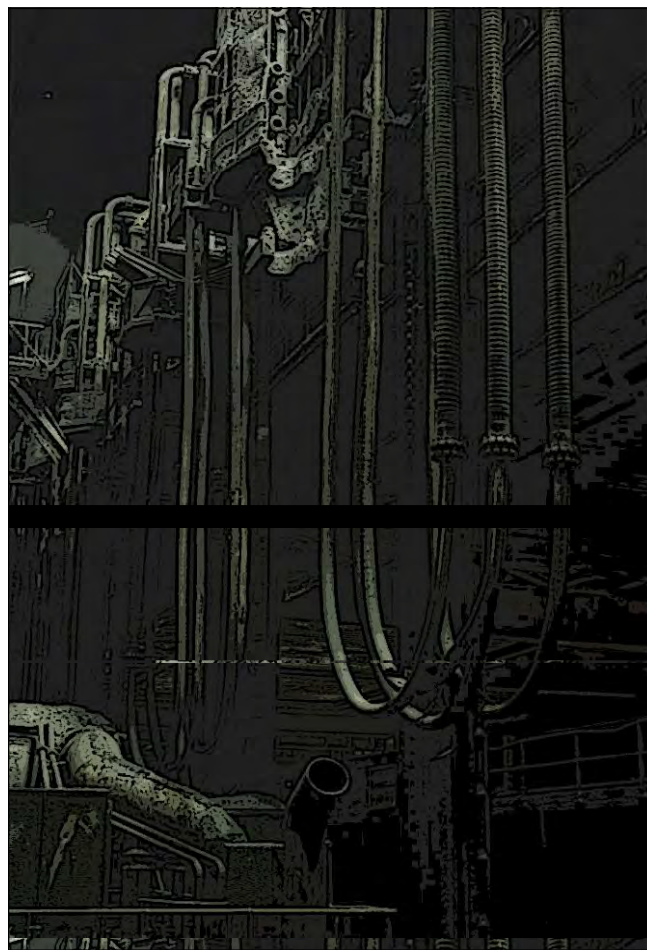
If the holder perseveres (and does not give a summoning mental response), he can attune himself to the artifact and unlock its powers with technology rolls. This requires handling the Block for several hours a day on three consecutive days. When completely attuned, the holder can create a 20' diameter force field that keeps animal life at bay (**Anti-Animal Shell**). He can also generate a pulse that turns all metal within 50' into more alien wood (**Transmute Metal to Wood**). The material looks just like the original Block, but it is dead and inert. Metal objects within range can save versus radiation to avoid this permanent transformation.

The pulse simultaneously releases a 20' wide burst of class 5 radiation, which does affect the holder. Worse, after a month the Block tries to take control of its owner (*vegetal parasite*); if successful, the artifact commands him to convert as much metal as possible.

Palace of Bones (Caster Level 20)

If the Ancients had brought together an architectural team of Escher, Giger, and Craven to design a monstrous edifice, the Palace might be the result. Whether purposely created this way; warped by time, damage, and wild energies; ported to Earth from an alternate plane; or, dropped and grown here by alien life from this universe, the current neighbors don't know. They just know to stay away.

The massive building spreads over 20 acres. There are no grounds, no vehicles, no staff, only interwoven ethereal spires and Gothic bulk. Its charred and bloody structure seems made from alien dinosaur bones — and appears alive: anyone close enough to examine the walls can see veins pulsing just under the surface.



But few have the will to venture near. Only those who save versus stun can enter, as the building actively tries to repel trespassers, using hideous sights, sounds, and smells. These illusions activate when trespassers are 50' from the outer walls and continue while characters move throughout the interior. They range from the stench of a battlefield to the screams of a torturer's abattoir to whatever horrific visions the ML can come up with.

Those believing the Palace alive are correct. Every week the building must eat 50 pounds of bones, or go into hibernation. If it sleeps, it cannot protect itself with illusions, but it takes very little to wake the structure. Should someone or something touch the Palace, anywhere throughout the building, it bites. The victim suffers a nasty, ragged wound for 1d12 points of damage and loses a digit or other small piece of bone (*carnivore*) — and the building regains awareness for 12-24 hours. The Palace's hunger and its security measures might seem to be at odds. However, the building is not sapient, only programmed with instincts, protecting itself with apparitions; its creators must have been immune to the sensory assaults and provided regular feedings.

Inside the building, adventurers might find any sort of amenity. Or not, given the alien design; this is up to the ML. Mutants with *metaconcert* or *neural telepathy* discover these mutations are enhanced to three times their normal power while in the Palace. This affects range, number of targets, etc., and saves against the mutations are made with a -4 penalty.

Also while inside, these mutants temporarily gain the *empathy* mutation. Further, they can destroy enemy minds (**Feeblemind**), implant commands in others (**Geas**), and control unpowered robots and basic androids (**Animate Mineral**).

However.... If mutants with either *metaconcert* or *neural telepathy* stay in the Palace for more than a week straight they become implanted with their own command (**Geas**): they must find the building's twin, which exists in another universe or plane of existence. On the up side, the powers mentioned above become permanent; but, if the afflicted characters try to fight the compulsion, they will probably end up dead. Another snag is needing to locate mutants or technology that can transport them to this other plane, a place they might not return from. Characters without either of the two triggering mutations do not gain the new powers or suffer the penalties.

President's Phantom (Caster Level 22)

Slightly larger than a deck of cards, this small metal box was a door sensor and defense system for the former home of a former national leader. The Phantom's wide variety of psychological and biochemical diagnostic programs allow it to scan individuals for hostile intentions, reading minds (*neural telepathy*) and emotional states (*empathy*). It also has a very sensitive metallurgical scanner, capable of identifying even very small cyberware (**Detect Evil**). If the Phantom detects a potential threat, it uses a restraining field (**Grasping Hand**) to immobilize the character or machine. If the target resists, the field intensifies to lethal strength (**Crushing Hand**).

Should the restraining field fail or be destroyed, it regenerates after an hour. During this vulnerable period, the Phantom's secondary systems (a pair of neurological countermeasures) can disable attackers. The first system triggers pain receptors in the target's brain (*pain sensitivity*), while the second instills an intense fear of those wearing defense force uniforms (*phobia*). With luck, these actions neutralize the threat. If not, hopefully they delay intruders long enough for reinforcements to arrive or for the building's other defenses to come on-line. The Phantom's AI was designed with no free will, so it can protect any structure without disrupting its protocols.



Psion Shackles (Caster Level 20)

For psions living before the final wars, simple whispers of "the Shackles" could cause terror. Not a single item, this restraint and neural dampener consists of three elements: a helmet, gauntlets, and cuirass, which must be used together. Each component is dark, nondescript, and could be a segment of simple body armor or a military uniform. The parts lock onto a prisoner and may be released using a biometric reader, key card, code pad, or some other mechanism of the ML's devising. Collectively, the Shackles provide an AC of 7, and may not be added to other armor.

The Shackles can be set to restrict movement, but they were developed primarily to prevent a prisoner from using mental mutations. Which they do very well — usually. Every time the set is placed on a character with mental mutations, there is a 5% chance the Shackles short out and reboot in such a way that the wearer's mental mutations triple in strength while she wears the gear. This increase affects range, damage, number of targets, etc. Saves to resist the powers are made with a -4 penalty. Once the Shackles are removed, these bonuses go away and the chance for a short circuit happening resets.

A mutant affected by a short circuit can also, with some testing (technology rolls), influence groups (**Mass Suggestion**), manipulate others' emotions (**Implant Emotion**), and even ignore wounds for a time (**Illusionary Stamina**). There are some downsides to these three additional powers: after use, each requires an eight-hour recharge period before it can be activated again. Worse, using any of them triggers feedback, a combination of electricity and mental energy that burns directly into the Shackle-wearer's brain. This causes permanent damage, reducing both INT and WIL by one point.

Reef Builder (Caster Level 18)

The solar system is a dirty, dirty place, with asteroids, comets, and other debris littering the space-ways. To keep this cosmic garbage from slamming into Earth, the Ancients deployed a planet-wide web of geostationary satellites, a celestial dust collector that nudges the material toward designated areas. This hand-sized remote control directs that network.

On any given day, the amount of dust entering Earth's atmosphere varies from several tons to several thousands of tons. Fortunately, not all the dust arrives at the same time, in the same place, especially because parts of the satellite shell were damaged during the final wars. [The ML needs to determine where the system works and where it failed. These should be very large areas, thousands of square miles for either.]

If activated where the shell works properly, the remote can link up with the satellites and identify the types of incoming dust or debris, separating iron- and carbon-rich material from that laced with uranium (*unique sense*). In games with superscience, the Reef Builder can also detect these materials, which appeared where starships died or space stations bled-out in Earth's orbital path. Once the dust is segregated, the remote's user can have satellites equipped with force projectors "funnel" the material to a specified target area. This should be

done with care, and not attempted by those unfamiliar with the controls, because the system delivering dump-truck loads worth of high-velocity material is only accurate enough to hit a decent-sized town, not a dime.

A user can direct this process to build mineral forms at a rate of 25 cubic feet per minute, infusing and strengthening existing soil with interstellar dust (**Transmute Mud to Rock**). These are not finely-detailed structures: again, remember the orbital dump truck. For work requiring a more refined touch, the Ancient architects, engineers, and builders used other tools and technologies to realize their final visions once the heavy lifting was over. In emergency situations, or when the debris is sizable, the remote can be used to move any object weighing up to 500 pounds (*neural telekinesis*) and/or project a force field to protect the remote's holder (*greater force screen*).

These latter abilities might come in handy if the remote is used in an area where the shell satellites are damaged — for, a planet-bound delivery can turn disastrous without warning. Should the network compress ton-lumps of material into boulders, this debris reaches flaming incandescence as it burns through the atmosphere (**Meteor Swarm**). Dumping lighter loads without proper direction can be just as deadly, creating swirling banks of hot, toxic dust (**Cloudkill**).

Currently, the device is owned by a school of fish people, who named it and use it to expand their home reef. Luckily for them, the remote works underwater. Even better, the satellite network is intact overhead. But, should one of those brilliant pebbles wink out or malfunction, the Reef Builder could easily become a tsunami generator.

Sculptor (Caster Level 25)

Some objects and places in the Ancients' world were considered so valuable that no side directly targeted them during the final wars. The Sculptor was one of these. This artifact, and the few others of its kind, formed the basis for many fields of superscience, responsible for creating new forms of exotic matter and energy.

First contact with the artifact can be intimidating. It stands 20' tall, weighs more than 40 tons, and executes tasks with 150 arms of various sizes and strengths; so, it looks like a manufacturing assembly crossed with a self-directed robotic research lab. Although it was not heavily damaged during the cataclysm, a later earthquake buried the Sculptor beneath tons of debris, destroying the machine's ability to move and leaving the AI to ponder its existence in a dark hole. Recently, a hive of mutant ants found the artifact while they were tunneling, and dug it out of the rubble.

Despite being battered, stationary, and possibly a bit deranged, there are things about the Sculptor that could still threaten the world. For example, in order to make new subatomic particles forms, the device requires some kind of massive power source: direct solar, antimatter, a fusion reactor, zero point energy, etc. By converting neutrinos, the Sculptor is able to make matter that does not exist in nature, allowing just about any physical trait imaginable. And more. For ideas on exotic energies, check out *WfIW* issue #41, but this is merely



the tip of the Sculptor's capability iceberg.

Legendary before the cataclysm, the machine's reputation (and those of its products) followed it into the dark years. But, the Sculptor is also renowned for a collection of more recent, less common creations, which read as an honor roll of ingenuity and usefulness. A small list of examples follows:

- **Brain Powder** is a metallic dust controlled by *telepathy* rather than *telekinesis*. When tossed into the air, the motes of powder form a 5' wide cloud for one round. The user, who must be within 100' to control the cloud, commands it into a shape. Although it cannot hover, the dust can change shape as it falls. It also floats on most liquids, including water, and can be shaped easily.

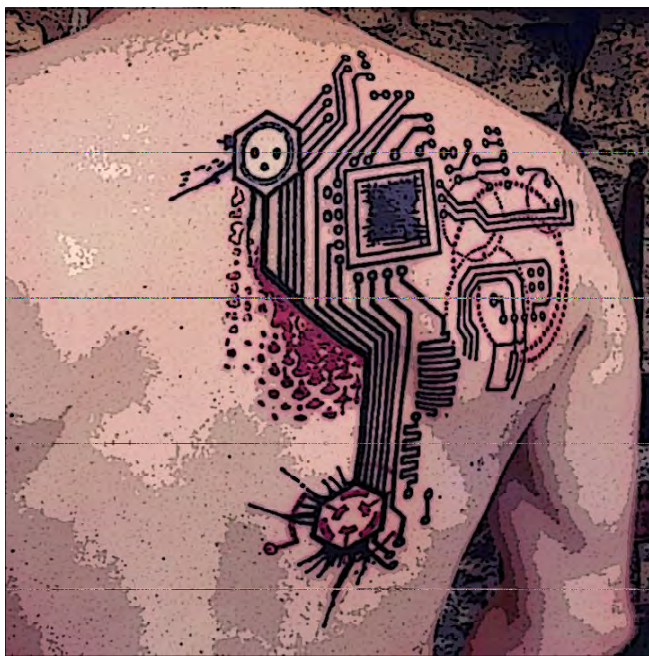
- **Chaff steel** is made of metal fragments that displace light like both a prism and mirror, but at the same time. If chaff steel is made into armor, the wearer (or empty armor) appears to be in several places at the same time (**Mirror Image**; except, unlike the spell, the images cannot be destroyed).

- **Fade stones** affect the nervous system of anyone within 50', weakening victims for a short time (**Ray of Enfeeblement**).

- **Fire wire** is used around and within flames to shape them and alter their activity (**Manipulate Fire**).

- **Fluid of Storage** is a 2' diameter gelatinous globe that contains an extra-dimensional space. The fluid holds up to 10 tons of non-living objects, including small robots, while weighing only two pounds. Non-living things can also include basic and synthetic androids, but not replicants. The fluid rejects living creatures, expelling them moments after being placed inside. This makes finding specific items difficult, because the user's hands get pushed out after feeling around for just one round. Unless there is only one item within the sphere, this makes locating a particular object difficult and takes 1d4 turns.

- **Gravity spheres** are 3" diameter balls that warp space enough to curve the trajectory of bullets and drag small objects toward themselves. Characters firing ranged physical weapons at the sphere-holder have a -4 penalty to their attack



roll. Physical weapons include firearms, missile weapons, grenade launchers, etc., but not energy/beam weapons. Anyone within 25' of a sphere also has trouble holding onto items and keeping their equipment secured (**Fumble**).

- **Growth goo** gives objects temporary additional mass (**Major Creation**) that evaporates after a little while. Much like a “super-Silly Putty,” the goo takes on the physical traits of any materials it touches, except for one specific element or mixture. This allows the goo to be held in a container. The exception material is usually glass, ceramic, or a plastic, but could be anything. It is determined when a batch of goo is created.

- **Heart stones** glow, apparently forever, with a red light that pulses softly, like a heartbeat (**Continual Light**).

- **Metal sound transmogrifiers** include a wide array of metallic forms that alter sound waves striking them (**Ventriloquism, Auditory Illusion**). Usually these forms are plates or cubes, 1" to one yard on a side, but the most useful are masks or discs small enough to be placed in masks. The latter are often worn by singers, politicians, religious leaders, and other performers. Because of how sound waves move, an audience can hear the original sound as well the modified version, but listeners usually ignore the original.

- **Phantom ice** looks and feels like real ice, transparent and cool to the touch, but the material does not melt. The ice also refracts light in such an entrancing way that some people have starved to death just by looking at it (**Hypnotic Pattern**).

- **Rad pellets** are half-inch long nuggets that glow in the presence of gamma radiation (**Detect Magic, Light**).

- **Sol's Gift** is candle wax that, when burned, produces a form of light that plants find entrancing, altering their mood like catnip does for felines or marijuana does for humanoids. If exposed to this light for more than 10 hours straight, a plant also permanently gains one randomly determined plant mutation.

- **Telephone Wire** is named for the childhood device, but

does not require wires connecting the two or more cans in order to transmit sounds over long distances. The devices have no maximum transmission range, but they are flawed: the actual words or other sounds transmitted often come out wrong. How a message gets altered is up to the ML.

- **Terror pellets** affect a victim's neurochemistry, triggering a flight response (**Fear**). They must be eaten and taste really good, like apple pie.

Perhaps the Sculptor's most infamous creation is **Perfect rubber**. This material increases the amount of kinetic energy it is imparted with: i.e., the more the rubber bounces, the faster it travels. The rubber can eventually move at speeds that cause physical damage, but at this point a ball of perfect rubber usually just shoots off into space. However, if a ball is released within a building, it either destroys the structure or punches a hole in a wall/ceiling, depending on how strong the building materials are. Placed underground, a ball can cause devastation (**Earthquake**) before it breaks a hole in the crust and escapes into space.

As this list indicates, the Sculptor might be the ultimate artifact, able to create anything the Mutant Lord is willing to allow in his game. As such, it should be used with care, so as not to destroy a campaign. A lengthy creation process could be one way to limit a possible Monty Haul situation, as making an object from scratch could take between one day and one decade, depending on the complexity of the object or material. Mixtures or alloys of several superscience materials take longer than more mundane creations.

Circuit Tattoos

One of the Sculptor's inventions, **circuit tattoos**, are diverse enough to merit their own subentry. These are created by injecting a pattern of superscience materials directly into the wearer's skin. Many are duds, nothing more than regular tattoos of unusual design. They could have the wrong shape, the wrong materials for the desired effect, or interact poorly with existing mutations. Those tattoos that do function are like the Sculptor's other works: able to do anything the ML is willing to allow in her game. Circuit tattoos might provide the wearer with an existing mutation from the *Mutant Future* core rules, a new one of the ML's design, or a spell-like power taken from *Labyrinth Lord* or the *AEC*. They might modify existing mutations (see *WfiW* issue #20). They could also work as artifacts themselves, or modify artifacts unattached to the wearer.

When designing new tattoos, don't be afraid of going overboard into the higher power levels. The sky's the limit, from concocting a 15th level spell to replicating Superman's powers. Of course, most tattoos are far less powerful than those examples, if for nothing else than game balance — and your own sanity. Or to prevent disruptive players from dropping the Moon onto your *Mutant Future* world.

As a limit, tattoos could easily have a variety of side effects. They might penalize saving throws, induce drawbacks, or create a vulnerability/allergy to certain materials, energies, or types of superscience. They might even damn the wearer, summoning extra-planar creatures that either torment the

wretch until he's dead or drag him off to a Hell dimension in a horrific visual display.

Characters can have multiple tattoos, but not more than one in a single area; for example, only one tattoo can go on the hands. Also, having more than one tattoo of the same time is redundant and has no effect other than aesthetics. For example, having two **Black Spiral** tattoos does not allow the character to absorb more radiation per hour. Unlike mutations or spells, tattoos are always active, and there is no way to turn them off — short of marring the design.

Tattoos can be ruined on purpose or by accident. For the latter, if the tattoo is in an area that could be hit during combat (e.g., on the chest and with an enemy attacking the wearer's front arc), roll a d20 if the tattooed character gets hit. On a 1, the tattoo is struck and the character suffers in some manner determined by the ML: physical damage, statistic loss, electrical arcing, a burst of flame, seizures, etc. Or, the tattoo could simply deactivate. Use the same mechanic if the wearer decides to purposefully destroy her tattoo.

A sampling of tattoos are included below; but, like the range of normal designs, the tattoo possibilities are endless.

- **Black Spiral** tattoos absorb up to 100 class levels of radiation per hour and release the energy as light. More intense radiation (i.e., higher classes) causes brighter pulses. Unless it is well hidden or contained somehow, this light emission usually triples the chances of a random encounter.

- A **Gold X** tattoo forces the wearer to hover and/or fly at least 5' from the ground. The character can land in trees, on rooftops, or on other surfaces above the 5' limit, but she may never again touch the ground while this tattoo is intact. If the character's encumbrance limit is exceeded by more than double while airborne, she takes 1d4 points of damage per round from the crushing weight. Every doubling after that increases the damage die by one size (1d4, 1d6, 1d8, 1d10, etc.) as the character is quickly mashed into paste.

- A **Sea Mask** tattoo looks like waves of water and must be inked across the wearer's cheekbones. This allows the character to detect the scent of any poison within 30', even in minute quantities. With training, a wearer can learn to differentiate toxin odors and identify specific poisons with a successful Intelligence check.

- **Lizard Scale Gloves** must be tattooed on the wearer's hands. They create an ultra-magnet effect, attracting objects of a specific material, which is selected or rolled for when the tattoo is created. The attraction is constant (i.e., cannot be turned off), has a range of 10', and pulls with a Strength of 4.

- A **Chain Torc** tattoo has a ruby core set on the wearer's throat. Once the tattoo is created, the wearer grows 1d4 tentacles from his torso. Each of these new limbs can catch one physical attack made against the character, negating any damage. This includes melee and projectile weapons (e.g., arrows, bullets, etc.), but not energy attacks.

- A **Tail Rocket** tattoo must be put on the top of a tail at the distal end. Any lightning striking within 400 meters of the tattooed character gives off a prismatic effect (**Prismatic Wall** or **Spray**), causing freaky-looking weather or mutation effects. Anyone hit by lightning in the radius is also blinded by pulsing

colors for 1d6 hours, unless they save versus energy attacks. This save is separate from the one required for the lighting strike's damage.

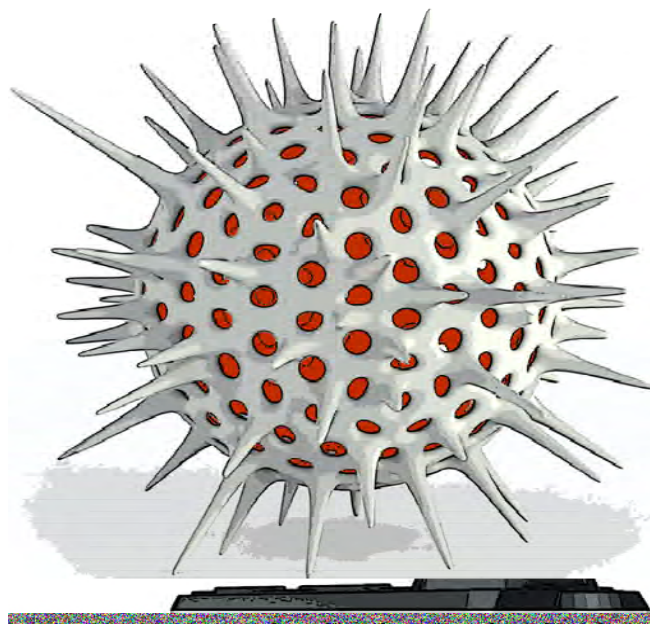
- The **Fire Spike** tattoo covers the back of a wearer's dominant hand, and shoots shard-bursts of energy. These may be fired every round, have a range of 50', and do 1d6+1 points of fire damage. A target can save versus energy to avoid being hit.

Sea Charm (Caster Level 14)

This half-inch diameter ceramic sphere is dun shot with blood-red streaks and covered in spines. The Charm was designed as a chest implant, allowing undersea exploration with minimal electronic or protective gear, by temporarily transforming its Ancient user into a small shark. But the device has not been repaired or maintained since before the final wars, and the consequent hard use and decay have altered its effects.

Instead of a small shark, a current user grows into a 35' long great white (**Polymorph Self, gigantism**). In addition to the stat block information found in the *Labyrinth Lord* core rules, this creature has a useful tentacle in place of its dorsal fin (*prehensile tail*) and skin so tough that projectile weapons only inflict a single point of damage when they hit (**Protection from Normal Missiles**). The user's skin only repels bullets, arrows, and other physical ranged weapons — not energy weapons. Also, rather than needing to be placed between the sternum and its covering flesh, the Charm can now be activated while touching any area of skin.

The transformation takes two rounds and the artifact is absorbed into the user, so the shark form cannot drop it. If the implant is triggered while the user is on land, she will almost certainly suffocate; death by freshwater will likely result if a good Samaritan tries to help by submerging the giant in anything but salt water. The change does not damage the user, only her clothing — unless she's wearing armor. Then, things can get messy. Injury is determined by the ML, but it



can range from 1d4 up to 10d8 points of damage, if the user is wearing EMA or something similarly unforgiving. The ML also needs to determine if the armor is destroyed, or if the shark becomes extruded sushi bits.

Another downside to the device is its “automatic timer.” The user can change into shark form just by exerting her will, but the implant can only maintain the transformation for so long. After this period, the artifact shuts off and the user automatically changes back into human form. She has no control over the duration, which has become a bit erratic and lasts 1d8+6 hours. Also, the user cannot really predict when the Charm may be activated again: its recharge period lasts 1d10+50 hours.

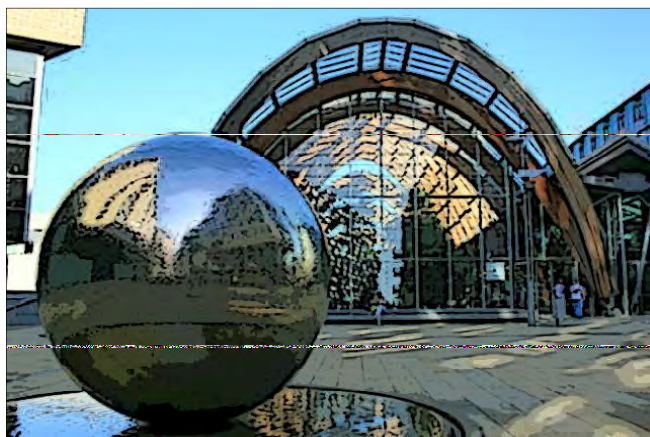
Fortunately for the user, the safety function still works. If the altered character is in distress (having lost more than 75% of her total hit points), she automatically **Teleports** straight up to the surface. This feature can also be activated upon command. This is especially handy if the “timer” runs out while the user is deep underwater.

Silver Sphere (Caster Level 20)

Those dealing in illicit goods have always required a degree of ingenuity to get around police and security. The Sphere was created to smuggle objects of great wealth into areas where teleportation technology was blocked by force fields or wave disruption generators.

The artifact is a featureless, 3' diameter, metallic globe that usually floats about 5' above the ground. Cargo is phased through the Sphere's surface, and, if necessary, the artifact can shrink an intended payload (*density alteration others*) to fit within its hold. Fully loaded, the Sphere can carry up to 1,000 pounds; it also holds enough air to transport live cargo, though not in great comfort (**Floating Disc**). Even at maximum capacity, the Sphere can still fly 900' per round (*flight, psionic*).

Should the Sphere be caught (with nets, force fields, or robots), or is otherwise unable to reach its destination, it contacts its master for instructions (*neural telepathy*). The artifact is opaque to most scanners (**Mind Blank**), refracts light to avoid visual detection (*control light waves*), and can spray a toxin if trapped (**Cloudkill**). If the Sphere is attacked and pinned down, it puts up a very strong force field (**Prismatic Sphere**). Damaged severely enough, the Sphere will self-destruct and destroy its contents (**Disintegration**).



This only affects the immediate vicinity, so, unless attackers jump directly on the artifact as it becomes component atoms, they will not be hurt.

Silver Twig (Caster Level 15)

Despite being only an 18" tall toy tree in a gallon pot, this is one of the most feared artifacts known — at least for intelligent plants. The Twig is a humbug, a Frankenstein-ian creation with branches and fruits from many different species. And it is not really wood; it is a machine. The artifact is always in motion, moving around like a windup toy, making strange squeaks and pops as it does, its branches constantly windmilling and striking the ground to drag the pot along (*free movement, movement rate 1*).

With some careful examination and experimentation (i.e., tech rolls), a character might find the Twig's controls hidden behind a panel on the pot. Using a combination of sounds and button presses, the holder can have the device paralyze plants (**Hold Vegetation and Fungus**), communicate with them (**Speak with Plants**), or gain complete control over them (**Charm Plants**, save with a -4 penalty). The Twig can also cause a plant's fruits and seeds to incinerate or explode while still on the vine or after they have been dropped/released (**Fire Seeds**). This is a nasty weapon to use against most vegetation, especially those vulnerable to fire.

If necessary, the Twig can readily defend itself. As one of its perpetual activities, the machine collects spores from the air and modifies them until they are highly toxic. When threatened, it sprays a cloud of treated spores at its attackers (*poisonous spores*, class 12 or higher). Unfortunately for the Twig's holder, he is not made immune to these spores.

Skeleton of the Titan (Caster Level 15)

Robots and dinosaurs: favorite things of kids the Ancient world over. Combine them, and you get named Best Parent of the Century. But the Skeleton of the Titan goes even one step better, as someone gets to drive the robot dinosaur.

At some time in the past, this mechanical stegosaurus was heavily modified, allowing a single person, the controller, to sit semi-recumbent within the machine's main body and drive it. A controller is necessary because the Skeleton is more a quadrupedal vehicle than a self-aware robotic unit: there are system computers, but there is no form of AI present, not even an autopilot. Its original duraplastic “skin” has been burned or ripped away; incoming fire damaged the underlying exoskeleton and shards of metal stick out at various points (*spiny growth*). Part of the power pack was also damaged, so the Skeleton trails a billowy, lime-green fog reeking of petrochemicals. This tends to draw robot-eating scavenger machines, while sickening nearby biologicals (*prey scent, Stinking Cloud*). If the PCs have sufficiently advanced knowledge and technology, they could fix this problem. However, the ML would have to create some rules for doing so: superscience machines are much more complicated than normal artifacts.

Fortunately for a driver, the command compartment's environmental seals are relatively intact, so she will not be

affected by the toxic smell or the smoke. The exoskeleton also acts as armor (*natural armor*), protects against exposure to low temperatures (*reflective epidermis [cold]*), and provides an immunity to most gases (*unique ability*). As part of its various early upgrades, the Skeleton was equipped with radar (*echolocation*) and a two-way communication suite. More recently, the Skeleton was captured by forces loyal to a machine intelligence; these troops retrofitted the robot-vehicle so androids could pilot it, and they installed a linked weapons system. An emitter within the mouth fires a crowd-control weapon, a ray that captures and weakens targets (**Grasping Hand, Ray of Enfeeblement**). Simultaneously, the robot's eye implants entrance targets with colors and patterns (**Flame Charm**).

The Skeleton of the Titan is currently the centerpiece of a fly people army. They put it to use as a mobile command and control center after figuring out the communications gear, but have yet to discover the ray/eye attacks. Despite its melee weapon being in the back (a tail strike with *spiny growth* spikes for 2d6 damage), the fly people occasionally use the Skeleton to breach defenses. These creatures are immune to the oil cloud that weakens their opponents, and the robot is large enough to scare off most enemies or squish those that don't run, doing 4d6 points of damage with a trample (targets can make a DEX save for half damage).

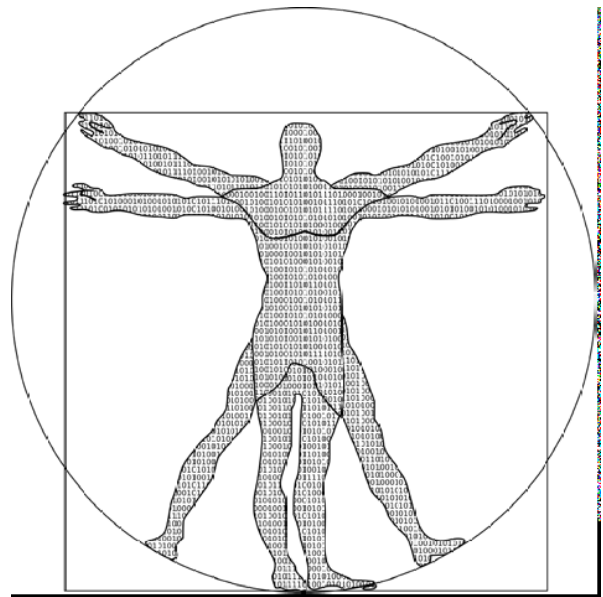
Skeleton of the Titan

Movement:	90' (30')
Hit Dice:	16
Frame:	Armature
Locomotion:	Legs (Four)
Manipulators:	None
Armor:	Alumisteel (AC 4)
Sensors:	Class IV
Mental Programming:	Programming
Accessories:	AV transmitter, weapon mounts, see description
Weaponry:	See description

Skinshifter (Caster Level 15)

Many of the Ancients were obsessed with remaking their bodies, correcting imperfections both perceived and genetic. Unfortunately for those without access to skilled staff orchestrating a network of complex machinery, the apex of cosmetic surgery easily became a potentially deadly dream. The Skinshifter is a case in point. Entering one of these properly-operated devices was a (literally) transformative experience, but a technician could, through ineptitude or system error, also turn a patient into a gooey sludge pile. Although it is also "transformative," goo was not usually the desired result.

The Skinshifter looks like a stasis tube with an extra control panel. With a skilled hand at the control panel, this near-miraculous device can change a patient's appearance, sex, size, apparent age, and even species to a degree (**Reincarnate**). About the only thing it cannot change is a



character's race. Mechanically, these alterations have a few effects and restrictions. Appearance is purely cosmetic, unless the desired (or inflicted) result is so extreme that a patient gets the *bizarre appearance* mutation. A character's size may be altered by up to 50%, larger or smaller. Apparent age can be changed down to toddler and up to senior. This could also be merely cosmetic, or it could affect a character's physical statistics if the patient were made into a child. Either way, the character's actual age and mental statistics/abilities remain the same. Changing species requires Mutant Lord discretion and imagination: the machine's programming does not allow it to turn a human into a plant or animal, but a human could become one of the new humanoids described in *Wisdom from the Wastelands* issues #4 and #40. And, something like morphing a chipmunk into an eagle is well within the artifact's abilities.

Most of the time adjustments happen flawlessly, but there are occasional errors. In 25% of procedures, the change shatters a patient's mental architecture, and a new personality emerges (**Polymorph Other**). Massive brain damage occurs 5% of the time, and the patient loses the drive to live (*weak will*). The least common, but perhaps most unusual error happens 1% of the time, when a duplicate emerges from the machine 36 to 48 hours later (**Clone**, but without the insanity). The ML should make three separate percentile rolls to determine if any of these rare errors happen, as all three could.

More common "malfunctions" take place when an unintended patient enters the machine. Plants are always reduced to larvae (*animate seed*), though the ML could be kind and decide the character becomes a seedling. Should anyone try to resuscitate a corpse (**Animate Dead**), the body rises to become one of the Walking Dead (see the *Mutant Future* rulebook). Synthetics and basic androids remain unchanged by the machine, but replicants are always reduced to goo. Depending on the ML's decision, this means the character is either dead or has been turned into an ooze creature (**Polymorph Other**). **Note:** there are no saves against anything this machine does.

Smokey Bar (Caster Level 20)

Despite the Ancients' robots, vehicles, and other machines of technological might and wizardry, in some situations nothing was better, or less intrusive, than having a human on the ground. National parks were one such case, still managed and patrolled by Rangers wearing the brown and green. One piece of experimental personal equipment were 2' long, 2" diameter metallic rods that looked much like heavy-duty flashlights. In part, they were — and a great deal more.

Exceptionally rare even in the Ancient world, the Bars were treasured gear, helping Rangers perform a number of key missions and replacing several pieces of much larger, bulkier hardware. Primarily, the artifact is a graduated and reversible thermal manipulator. By simply adjusting the Bar's controls for range, diameter, and energy intensity, a Ranger could start a campfire at her feet, initiate larger controlled burns to clear out dead underbrush, or launch long-range projectile-jets to create reverse-burn firebreaks if a forest fire had already started (**Burning Hands, Pyrotechnics, Fireball, Wall of Fire**).

Besides generating fire, the Bar can also extinguish it. The artifact's other main module is an integrated virtual matter projector (see *dInfinity* issue #6 for details). This allows the Bar to summon water from a pumping facility up to 15 miles away and become the business end of a fire hose, shooting a torrent of water up to 50' long (**Create Water**). If this feature is kept running while the Bar's thermal controls are engaged, the artifact generates vast steam clouds (**Obscuring Mist**). If these controls are reversed, the artifact becomes massively endothermic, blasting ice as powerfully as it does flame (**Ice Storm, Wall of Ice, Cone of Cold**).

The artifact's other abilities might seem less flashy, but they were just as useful to a Ranger. At night, or during an emergency, the Bar can provide illumination, a light show, or fire signal flares (**Dancing Lights, Light**). To control erosion, keep park roadways and hiking trails passable, and eliminate troublesome invasive plants, the Bar uses nanites to help vegetation spread or wither (**Plant Growth**, reversible).

The current owners, a small community of mutant woodland animals, use the artifact's Ancient nickname, but purely by accident. And this is done from near-fearful awe, not affection. Returned home from a scrounging run in the ruins of a collapsed Ranger station, an adolescent scuirinoid was fiddling with the apparently unimpressive, but near-

pristine shiny thing when she engaged the Bar's thermal emitter and set the roof ablaze. Trying rectify a terrifying situation, the scuirinoid jabbed at other controls, triggering the water and sending gouts of steam pouring out the doorways and windows — but extinguishing the flames. Humid high-speed hijinks, loud recriminations, and tearful pleas for mercy later, the Bar now rests locked in the community's temple, beyond the reach of inquisitive paws.

Snail Ring (Caster Level 18)

Currently embedded within the head of a 25' long, highly-intelligent, telepathic snail, the Ring is a self-contained device for inducing and studying mental mutations. The gastropod was unlucky enough to poke its eyestalks in the wrong place: while investigating a surgical machine that implanted the rings, the snail activated the device. Fortunate to get away alive, the creature was able to extract itself with only a raging headache and a new piercing.

The Ring provides several powers by strengthening the host's mind-body link and stimulating her sensitivity to, and control over, various energy fields. Consciously boosting adrenal and neurotransmitter output allows the host to increase her reactions and speed (**Haste**). She can also bend light waves to make herself and her gear vanish from view (**Greater Invisibility**), or create a distant image of herself (**Project Image**).

This heightened connection to energy fields also lets the host affect other beings. First, she can sense and/or manipulate another character's cerebral pulses (*empathy*). Next, by subtly adjusting the strength of molecular bonds within a target's body, the host can cause a character to shrink or grow (*density alteration [others]*). Last, she can drain a target's energy for her own benefit (*vampiric field*).

For a few moments at a time, the Ring host may treat one intelligent being as a puppet, compelling him to use the *mind thrust* mutation on another target. The puppet must be within 100' of the host, and the final target must be within *mind thrust* range of the puppet. This mental coercion works even if the puppet-being does not have the mutation, however it is better (and less painful) if he does. Those without *mind thrust* take 2d6 points of damage as their brains get lightly scrambled enabling the attack. Unfortunately for the puppet, this pain earns little gain: the mutation is only bestowed for the one round of compulsion, not permanently.

When commanded, the Ring can use its companion nanites to produce similar, but much less powerful rings. These have 1d4 functions selected from the Snail Ring's abilities. One smaller ring can be made per day, and the process requires pure iron. Although the component metal might seem a trivial concern, in the wastes this can be very hard to get: after only 10 minutes in normal air, oxidation renders an iron chunk useless for making rings.

Snake Rifle (Caster Level 8)

This unusual long arm was built by gate-traveling serpent people banished to this universe from a similar one. The Rifle's current owners, a colony of mutant asps, were recently attacked



by a flight of mutant eagles. Unfortunately, those snakes fully trained to use the weapon were all killed, so much expertise was lost. The snakes' *poor long-term memory* drawback does not help.

Most frequently, gunners use the Rifle to shoot masses of sticky fibers, entangling targets or clogging passages and doors (**Web**). But the weapon can also protect its wielder from frigid conditions (**Resist Cold**), translate spoken languages (**Tongues**), and detect humans within 300' (*unique sense*). As a defensive measure, the Rifle can emit dazzling light displays that entrance creatures possessing full-color vision (**Hypnotic Pattern**). A more reptile-specific function gives scaled gunners a 2-point AC bonus when it is activated.

The Rifle's last and most powerful ability has been forgotten by the asps: it can fire a 50' long "death ray." Everyone hit by the beam must save versus death or be killed instantly; those with a successful save take 3d8 points of damage.

Because their physiology is so similar to the weapon's creators, snake beings native to the *Mutant Future* world find the Rifle's controls intuitive. This gives them a +35% bonus on tech rolls to understand the artifact's functions.

Spark Putty (Caster Level 8)

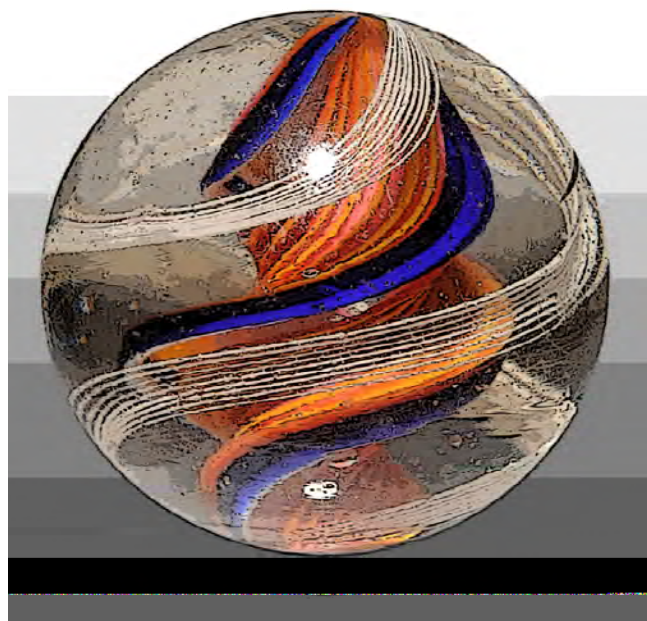
An experimental design thrown into the cataclysm's desperate fighting, this artifact was originally a DNA-shredding battle gauntlet that brought screaming death to thousands. Now it looks like a small lump of burnt clay.

To activate the Putty, a wielder shapes it around his forearm, where the material forms a link with his nervous system. Spark Putty helps a user blend into the background by projecting a hologram around him, making him look like an object appropriate to the area. Although the artifact has little of its original power, it can, upon command, protect the wearer from mental attacks (*mental barrier*). It can also project a psycho-affective beam capable of terrifying one creature within 20' (**Scare**). The Putty's remaining signature attack is a 50' long blast of flame that burns for 3d4 rounds (**Wall of Fire**). The wielder had better be fleet of foot, because the fire can easily burn him too. Such is the danger of using old, damaged weapons.

If the user is feeling artistic, the Putty can be shaped — into little animals, weird objects, anything from his imagination — but it cannot be cut. When manipulated like this, the Putty gives off sparks. These do no damage, but they do draw the eye, increasing the chance of a wandering monster encounter by 1. Should the Putty ever fail its save versus an energy attack (e.g., being hit by a photon grenade), the artifact is destroyed and it explodes, doing 5d12 points of damage to everyone and everything within 250'.

Spiral Eye (Caster Level 18)

Even for the Ancients, mental illness could be difficult to treat sometimes. As a stop-gap, to temporarily relieve sufferers' symptoms until more powerful technology could heal them, the Ancients created this 1" diameter sphere, which has shapes swirling within it. Now, because of user ignorance, the artifact



causes more problems than it solves.

The Eye is activated by *telepathy* or similar mental mutations. When used properly, the artifact can remove harmful memories (**Amnesia**), alter the patient's mood (**Empathy**), and/or provide a more positive outlook on life (**Suggestion**). It can also be used to subtly pass along information (**Message**). Used incorrectly (by failing technology rolls), the Spiral Eye can rip apart good memories (**Amnesia**) or induce a deep-seated fear (*phobia*). The symptoms can even manifest physically, causing paralysis (**Hold Monster**), making the patient go berserk (**Dweomer of Rage, Confusion**), or inflicting a variety of other serious effects (**Symbol**).

How the various effects present, whether good or bad, is largely up to the ML's discretion and imagination. Messing with the brain is a very subtle and complex process, and depends the patient's mental health issues as well as the user's success (i.e., tech rolls) manipulating the artifact.

Spirit Lens (Caster Level 12)

A long time ago, in a scientific park far, far away, the Ancients built a campus for conducting atomic and molecular research. Although time and abuse have overlooked most of the subterranean areas, many of the surface buildings are partially-sheathed skeletons. One laboratory, however, was engineered to contain tremendous energies and remains solidly intact. A dark labyrinth of corridors and rooms within the 500' square edifice hides a wondrous, monstrous machine. Originally designed for observing and manipulating subatomic particles, so that new varieties could be made, the artifact is now called the Spirit Lens, a 75-ton altar to the Ancients' gods of piping, wiring, and things that go "ping."

Because of its size and appearance, the Lens could easily be mistaken for a massive manufacturing device instead of a scientific engine. The main structure is a box (or room) 30' wide, 30' long, and 20' tall with a control suite and viewing screen on one side. An array of scanner/projectors top the

machine like a crown of searchlights. These generate a variety of high-energy rays, each with a different range based on their respective power draw. A practiced controller can use the beams to play with the building blocks of matter, subtly altering a target's atomic make-up to convey or inflict a number of effects.

The scientists who built the machine would be horrified by the current state of their creation: the artifact is unstable and its effects have become very strange. Possible abilities are limited only by the ML's imagination, but several are included here as examples. Some powers permanently change the target: one combination of rays makes a target invisible (**Greater Invisibility**), while another alters the target entity's bio-chemistry, decreasing his resistance to toxins (*poison susceptibility*). By varying the intensity of a third beam combination, the Lens can destroy a target by disrupting its atomic bonds (*disintegration*).

A number of the artifact's other functions — e.g., transmutation (**Polymorph Any Object**) and density manipulation (**Transmute Rock to Mud** and **Transmute Mud to Rock**) — are only temporary effects. These last either 3d4 days or as long as the ML wishes. One of the conveyed powers is an unusual combination of permanent and temporary: this allows a recipient to selectively discharge electrons — effectively, it is an unusual new mutation (**Shocking Grasp**). This power is permanently available to the recipient, but, because of the physics involved, it has to be “recharged” after every use. The character must return to the Lens and have his electrical charge reinvigorated in order to use the power again.

One of the artifact's more unusual powers, thermal destabilization, might be the result of an error or some past damage. A particular ray from one end of the Lens absorbs energy, slowing atomic movement within the target and making things cold. This generates a great deal of heat within the machine, so, to compensate, it dumps the excess energy as a heat ray on the opposite side (*temperature control*). Both beams cover an area 30' wide and 60' long. If they are left on,

directed at the same spots for long enough, the interaction can generate some nasty air currents, driving anyone on that side of the Lens toward the cold spot. The wind pushes with a Strength of between 5 and 20, depending on how intense the energy transfer is at that moment.

In its original configuration, the Lens' scanners/projectors were turned inward, toward the particle observation chamber within the machine. At some point over the years, the scanners were redirected outward, away from the structure. This might have been a last-ditch safety measure, to prevent some terrible mishap, because there is no longer any way to reach the Lens' internal workings. There were four maintenance access panels or hatches, but, for some reason, these have long since been fused closed, perhaps to keep out those who would damage the Lens. Now, the machine can only be accessed in one of three ways: by using the control suite; by going after the doors with an incredibly powerful cutting torch, which would likely damage the inner mechanisms; or, by using so much high explosive the artifact would be destroyed, not opened. Whoever moved the scanner/projectors must have been aware that if the Lens could alter itself with its rays, the results could be ... a very large crater. At best. At worst, the world might end for those living within a few hundred miles.

Possibly as an attempt to contain these potentially catastrophic forces, or the normal everyday hazardous radiation, the Ancients reinforced the building housing the Spirit Lens. Which is why this lab is in such good shape. Unfortunately, the shielding for the machine itself has degraded over time, so using the artifact releases waves of exotic energy. Everyone within 50' must save versus death or become sensitive to copper and copper alloys (*frailty*). The ML might also consult *WftW* issue #41 for more ideas on other, nasty forms of radiation the Lens could emit.

The machine's current custodian is the shaman who named it. She also controls the facility where the machine resides and has become adept at running the Lens. On the control suite's view screen, the shaman sees spirits in the forms of subatomic particles streaking through clouds, dancing as they register in the particle detector. She believes she can communicate with the “spirits,” unaware the drama unfolding actually takes place in a chamber smaller than a period. (Very little space is required for things on the subatomic scale. The immense Ancient projects, such as CERN, were so large because of the massive power needed and the amount of matter thrown around. The Lens' design shrank these processes down to a much smaller machine.

Splatter Gun (Caster Level 20)

During the cataclysm, this device was a frantic attempt to help many people quickly escape dangerous areas. Now, the Gun is seen as either a unusual weapon, or a mechanism of transcendence. In simplest terms, it is a quantum teleportation device: it breaks down targets, moves them, and then build them back up again — hopefully, way the hell out of Dodge. Vaguely rifle-shaped, but bulkier than most long weapons, the device has touch-sensitive panels for monitoring and controlling power, location, filters for dangerous technology,





etc., which the wielder can also use to designate landing zones for his targets.

Unfortunately, the Gun's teleportation matrix is ... faulty, which might be putting it too mildly. Everyone within the target area (a 30' diameter sphere, centered up to 150' away) hit by the beam is broken up and shot-gunned into the local biomass. Targets (or victims) are fused with each other, their gear, and the nearby flora and fauna (**Teleport, Transmute Metal to Wood**). Strangely, everyone survives this process — without taking *any* damage — and their bodies are slowly rebuilt over the next 1d4 weeks (*regenerative capacity*). However, very few people subjected to this process retain their original personalities. Those that do will go insane after a few minutes of brain-splattered existence.

Affected animals and mobile plants (those embedded with people parts) stay in the immediate area during the

reconstruction period, prompted by some unexplained pull. Good thing, because it prevents important bits (like hearts and brains) from wandering elsewhere. Much like bees with pollen, these creatures move between the different areas of dispersed biological material. First they absorb it, then they disgorge it into a plant or animal large enough to hold one or more of the reforming bodies before rebirth. The exact absorbing and disgorging processes are left up to the ML's delicate sensibilities. For those readers who might be wondering: yes, predators entering the area after "the event" and eating carrier critters should be a serious concern for all involved, especially those in pieces.

Beyond the odd behavior mentioned above, affected creatures may grow or shrink (50/50 chance of either *dwarfism* or *gigantism*), while trees and shrubs with people bits in them are strangely deformed (**Warp Wood**). Anything capable of movement (not the people bits) experiences a pulse of speed for 1d4 rounds after the teleportation effect (*quickness*), and the entire target area begins to glow with the energy of biomass and mini-biome fusion (**Continual Light**).

When the dispersed characters have finally oozed back together, and the fused plants/animals are free of people parts, individuals in both groups suffer automatic mutation cascades (**Reincarnate**), and must re-roll all their mutations. There is a 30% chance that pure humans may remain as their original race, but most will become mutants of some kind and must roll mutations as if they were newly-created characters. No one or thing gets a save versus these effects, but all receive a new mutation, *environmental adaptation* (see box at left). Depending on the ML's ruling, this may be added to the characters' new mutations or replace one of them.

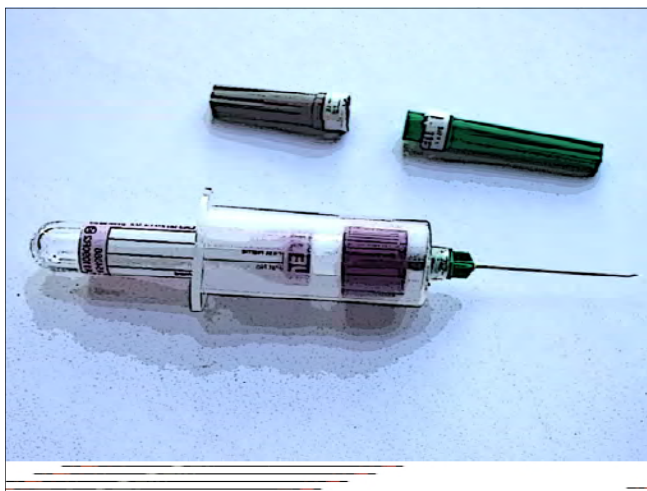
New Mutation: Environmental Adaptation

These mutants are well adapted to a local environment or habitat. Depending on the ML's setting or ruling, this could mean a specific area or a terrain type; it could be a few hundred square miles of plains or the few acres of a ruin containing some unique stressor (e.g., toxins, radiation, or predators), which forces creatures to evolve in a specific way.

While in this preferred habitat, the mutant gains a +4 bonus to all saves and takes less damage from environmental hazards such as radiation, temperature, corrosive rainfall, etc. The specific reduction is up to the ML, but a recommended mechanic is one-half damage for a failed save and one-quarter for successful save. If the environment changes somehow, creatures with this mutation will adapt, but this takes 4d4 weeks. In the mean time, they suffer a 4-point penalty to all saves and take more damage from hazards (e.g., with a failed save, the character takes double damage, while taking full damage after a passed save).

Steel Bones (Caster Level 10)

Very little about this set of cybernetic implants indicates its true purpose. The devices appear to be half-inch long needles that are pointed on both ends and housed within a slender, blue-steel cylinder about the length and diameter of an adult's index finger. This sealed protective case is an injector/extractor (I/E). It is smooth and featureless, except for a 2 cm square



bio-metric scanner panel on one side, just above a 10-digit alphanumeric sequence engraved into the metal. The implants are in pristine condition and kept sterile within a periodically rejuvenated dry bath of nanites. Originally, the scanner was keyed so only certain personnel could work the cylinder: either operating the I/E, or accessing its internal mechanisms and the implant storage area. But at some time in the past, the scanner must have been damaged. Now, the I/E works no matter who puts a finger pad on it.

To function, all four Steel Bones must be implanted within the same host. The I/E was designed to be idiot-proof: when held against the appropriate part of a host's body, the device's programming recognizes the target area and injects the correct implant. The host barely feels a thing. Retrieving the implants is done in exactly the same way, and is also nearly painless. If the I/E is opened, the implants are similar but definitely distinguishable. The first (completely silver) is a spinal tap, placed into the back of the neck just below the skull. The next two (each with a single gold stripe) have a slightly larger diameter and are paired, with one inserted into each of the host's shoulders. The last (with a single ruby stripe) is for the solar plexus. Jointly, the devices contain the uploaded mind of Shannon Winter, a very well-trained engineer who lived during the final wars. It is her identification sequence engraved on the case.

Once all the implants have been inserted, they activate automatically. Within a few minutes, after collecting a supply of bio-electric power, Shannon's consciousness reawakens. The host notices nothing different, and, initially, knows nothing about his "rider." If the implantation was done while he was unconscious or asleep, the host is unaware of the entire procedure, unless scanned for cyberware. When the host is awake, he starts getting hunches: Shannon can sense other cyberware (**Detect Evil**), and give him technical hints when he deals with technology (*quick mind*). She can also partially sync with his senses and alert him to dangerous situations (*precognition*).

The host cannot "hear" Shannon in his head or his ear; the bits of information are merely flashes of what seem to be inspiration. However, once he is unconscious, Shannon can override the normal paralyzing function of sleep and link with

the host's central nervous system, taking control of his body (*possession*). If there is truly important, lengthy, or technical information that must be passed along, she can write it or type it out during this period.

Experience has taught Shannon that it is better not to talk while controlling a body: during an attempt, the host slurs like a drooling drunk sliding for horizontal, shrieks like a lunatic, or moans like the walking dead he nearly is. Unless the intended audience has been made aware of the situation, this can lead to befuddlement, brawls, or active restraint. In one case, a hallucinating companion tried to shoot off her host's head, "to stop the zombie apocalypse." Fortunately, his aim was even worse than his judgment.

Shannon has been activated in many hosts over the years, and her implants allow her to remember each awareness. For the benefit of her host, she normally wipes any memories of her actions (**Amnesia**). This erases the traces of her passage and/or prevents any lingering trauma that might result from having a ghostly hand in one's mental machine. If her host dies and the body remains intact, there is enough bio-electrical energy stored in the implants that Shannon can control the body for about an hour (**Animate Dead**). During this countdown period, she arranges for another host or, as a last resort, uses the I/E to extract the implants in the final minute or so until the energy reserve is completely exhausted. Hence the need for an idiot-proof I/E. Once the spinal tap is removed, it is lights out — but at least the implants are safe and can be activated later.

For the most part, Shannon does what she does best, upgrades tech she finds near the host (*intellectual affinity [tinkerer]* with a 180% tech roll score). However, if she uncovers information that could result in her return to a flesh and blood body on a more permanent basis, Shannon does almost anything to convince her host to pursue the lead. Such an opportunity might include some kind of clone-producing facility, or an artifact that reorganizes adult brains, or even having her consciousness inserted into a partial-cybernetic unit. Given the near-immortal state provided by the Steel Bones, Shannon's insistent haste might seem odd. But the implants do not give her the complete sensory capabilities of a body, a lack that is very slowly driving her insane. She recognizes her impending mental collapse, and this terrifies her.

Thorn Lord (Caster Level 25)

The Ancients placed products like this 1' diameter metal disc on their lawns to control weeds. After the final wars, the Thorn Lord gradually went over to the green side and now rules a small city, having moved uplifted plants into positions of authority. The artifact does not control plants, per se; rather, it is the puppeteer behind the throne, encouraging plants to follow its will by granting gifts such as movement, intelligence, and anything else the ML envisions. (MLs could also consult mutation and spell lists for other ideas.) When gifting, the Thorn Lord can affect any vegetation or fungi within 25'. The artifact is powerful, and has plans, but its minimal range prevents the Thorn Lord from becoming an even greater threat. The machine is further constrained because it does not move.

This difficulty is lessened somewhat by those plants that accept the gifts (or have sentience thrust upon them): they provide the Thorn Lord with a constant stream of sensory information (**Clairvoyance**, **Clairaudience**, *thermal vision*, *unique sense*).

With successful tech rolls, the Thorn Lord could be taken over. Animals and/or humans could order the artifact to give powers just as it does now, but to those of the controller's choice. On the other hand, controllers could order these gifts taken away, and have the plants devolved to their pre-sentient states. To protect itself from this subjugated fate at meat-monkey hands, the disc surrounds its current location with masses of briars that possess abnormally strong spines (**Wall of Thorns**) and clusters of fungi that release a gas toxic to animals, but harmless to plants (*poisonous spores*). Characters who were close enough, or possessed some kind of appropriate wireless device, could hack the artifact. Though, as its self-control is taken away, the Thorn Lord will try to rebel, throwing up a 50' diameter field that repulses vegetation (**Anti-Plant Shell**), and sending out a pulse that makes its followers go berserk for 2d6x10 rounds (**Dweomer of Rage**).

Trapper's Gauntlet (Caster Level 12)

For those Ancients who dealt with large animals on a regular basis (e.g., zoo keepers, herders, hunting guides, veterinarians, and law enforcement), versions of these heavy, metal and carbon-polymer gloves was standard equipment. After the cataclysm, this surviving item was seen as a powerful weapon. Currently, the Gauntlet is infested and surrounded by a swarm of tiny mutant jellyfish. They hide the device from view and feed off its power source. The little creatures pulse slightly as they creep along the glove's surface, rhythmically emitting a soft blue-green glow in time with a slight energy leak from the artifact, and they shudder when touched.

To perform its intended mission, of capturing and restraining large targets, the Gauntlet's integral virtual matter projector creates 1d4+4 tentacles (see *dInfinity* issue #6 for more information). The tentacles do not have to emerge from the glove or even a surface; they can form from a central point anywhere up to 50' from the Gauntlet, which (at first glance) can make them look like a living knot or an alien octopus floating in mid-air. The tentacles are 20' long, last for 2d4+4 hours, and attack as 12 hit die monsters. If the user wants, they can also be surrounded by a light-warping field, which renders them invisible (*control light waves*). Each tentacle may attack a separate target, so the Gauntlet can be used to capture a small group of individuals.

The tentacle knot lasts quite a while, so it can be created, made invisible, and left as a trap. Targets are also rendered invisible by the light-warping field, protecting them and preventing others from seeing what happened: entangled victims just vanish. So the wearer does not have to wait in the trap's immediate vicinity, the Gauntlet's motion sensor (*echolocation*) can give warning when something approaches the central knot. Captured targets often thrash about trying to free themselves, which could lead to injury, so the Gauntlet is equipped to stun powerful creatures (**Power Word Stun**) and electronically sedate others (**Sleep**).

Although the tentacles are supposed to harmlessly grapple targets, dead jellyfish slime and live jellyfish waste have damaged the Gauntlet and caused a malfunction. Just moments before the 2d4+4 hour duration expires and the tentacles fade from existence, they now freeze solid and explode (**Ice Storm**). Captured targets should be freed or moved to different restraints to avoid killing them.



Train of Doom (Caster Level 25)

In a safer, more innocent time, this artifact was a vehicle drawn from bedtime stories, a talking train created for the delight of children. Now it eats them. And not only them, for they are just tiny snacks, but any biological creature it can catch. Of the once whimsical engine, little is left; androids who passionately hate all biological beings captured the vehicle, reprogrammed its AI, and modified its form. The Train is now a hunter, a 60' long, 18' wide terror machine weighing 100 tons and completely covered in the skeletal shards and dried blood of its victims (**Fear**), remnants after the vehicle stripped flesh from bone and chemically converted the meat into fuel.

Under the splatter and gore is an abomination of technology, a mixture of railroad eras, as the androids weren't trying to make something pretty. The engine no longer needs tracks: as part of the modification, it was given 24 massive wheels, like a bus. To flatten rough terrain before it, or get at prey hiding underground, the Train warps the ground with an industrial-strength tractor beam (**Move Earth**, at 5x normal speed). This allows it to attack small communities (wherever they might be), belching its killing fumes (**Cloudkill**) and snatching victims with its seven, 25' long "feeding" tentacles (**carnivore**). Or, the Train can just run them down, inflicting 8d6 points of damage with a trample, but targets can make a DEX check to leap out of the way.

The androids redesigned their Train to be a semiautonomous terror weapon. To keep it running, they included a few repair and defense upgrades. Several smaller machines ride in the engine and repair any damage or malfunctions. Often, the Train can only get something it wants by smashing through metal barriers, which can generate a great deal of heat; an inert gas projector keeps the vehicle's covering from catching fire while doing this. Its new external frame renders the Train immune to electrical attacks, by redirecting them into the ground (*reflective epidermis*). A new mental architecture makes hacking the AI difficult, though

other machines and a number of people have tried, and failed. For their own entertainment, and to monitor the Train's work, the androids included an AV setup and transmitter, so they can watch the fun.

Despite its size and powers, the Train does have a weakness, but one that's not obvious: the androids themselves. If they can be destroyed, and their remote-control machinery captured, the Train could be shut off or turned into a weapon controlled by the party. This would be "poorly controlled" by the PCs, unless they have very high tech roll bonuses.

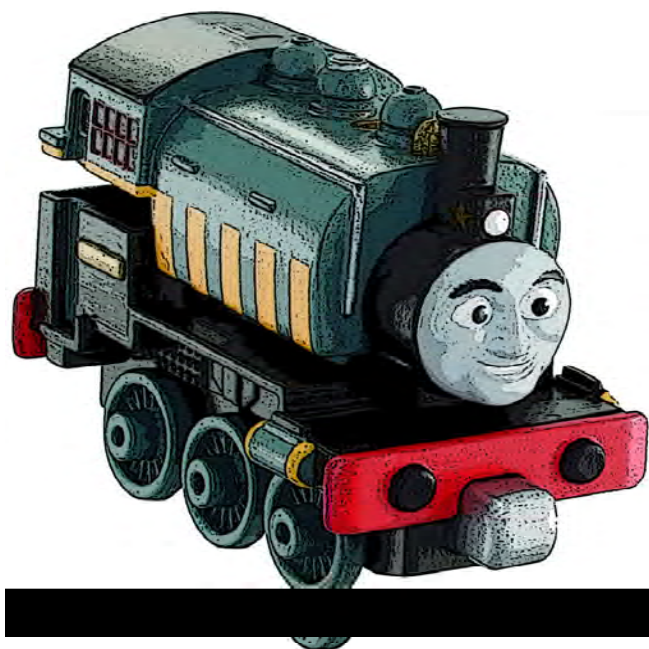
Train of Doom

Movement:	360' (120')
Hit Dice:	35
Frame:	Armature
Locomotion:	24 wheels
Manipulators:	None
Armor:	Duralloy (AC 3)
Sensors:	Class IV
Mental Programming:	Programming
Accessories:	AV transmitter, fire extinguisher, self-repair unit
Weaponry:	Toxic gas (see description); 7 tentacles, 1d12 damage each

Twisted Crown (Caster Level 15)

A mass of parts from various artifacts welded together, the Crown looks like a medieval torture device. Some believe that impression is not far wrong. When a new user places the Crown upon her head, the artifact immediately drills into her skull and starts making changes to her mind and body. This process causes the host to lose one point of Intelligence (permanently) and inflicts 3d4 points of damage, which can be healed normally. Once attached, the Crown can only be removed by killing the host, who can no longer wear helmets, or seal enclosed environmental armor. (If the ML wishes, the Crown could be broken up into its constituent pieces, destroying this artifact, but resulting in 1d6+1 artifacts of the ML's own design.)

Due to the bio-chemical changes she experiences, a host no longer heals normally. Instead, to regenerate, the Crown wearer must consume cerebral-spinal fluid taken from other members of her species. Each draining causes the donor 2d4 points of INT damage, which returns at his natural rate of healing per day. During a donation, if the donor's INT falls to 3 or less, he goes unconscious for 12 hours. If his INT reaches 0, he falls into a coma and then dies in 3 days, unless he receives advanced medical care. After any donation, the donor will have a massive headache, much like an earth-tilting hangover. He should drink a large volume of fluids and rest with his feet up. Any exertion (e.g., combat) inflicts a variety of 3-point penalties (to-hit, AC, many saving throws, etc.), and if forced to run, the donor will be very dizzy and nauseated. A safe, clinical donation involves anesthetic, sterilization, and medical equipment such as a spinal tap. However, nothing prevent an evil host from just killing victims, cutting open



their heads and spines, and taking the fluid.

A host must drink the cerebral-spinal fluid in order to heal. Three rounds after drinking, she makes a strange howl, one that terrifies most small animals while enraging large predators and herd animals. Then she begins to heal two points of damage per round. For each point of INT consumed, the host can heal for two rounds, but she cannot gain more hit points than her original total. For example, Brit gathers 6 INT points worth of cerebral-spinal fluid, and drinks all of it. She can heal for 12 rounds and recover up to 24 hit points.

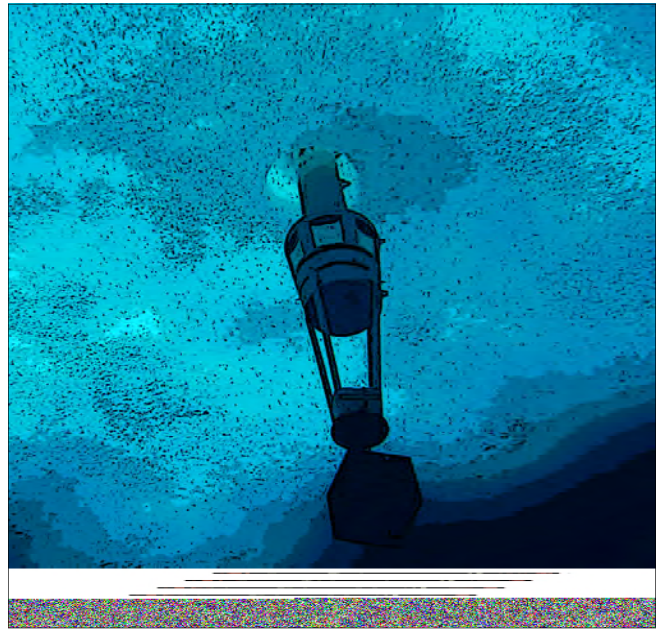
During this healing period, the host can access a few useful powers. She gains protection from most mental attacks (**Mind Blank**); she can release pulses of terror-inducing energy (**Fear**); and, she can obliterate matter (*disintegration*). If she wants, the host can also tap into genetic memories (**Vision**), and, by harnessing the excess mental released, she can fly (*psionic flight*). Once the healing period is complete, all ongoing effects stop immediately. This means flying should be done with care, because if the host is airborne when the healing stops, she'll end up looking like a lawn dart, or one of Dante's popes.

Vat of Fire & Ice (Caster Level 16)

As the Ancient world's climate began to change, engineers tried to make lemonade from warming lemons, creating a number of these heat exchange/transfer systems. Each machine took advantage of the oceans' massive energy potential, manipulating currents and making fuel as a byproduct. This version is an 8' tall, 12' diameter cylinder with a control panel mounted on one side, beside the nozzle/hose setup that dispenses the liquid fuel. In order to work, the machine needs both air and water, so it must be within 25' of the ocean, or submerged in shallow sea water, no more than 25' deep.

The artifact was designed for transport by large equipment, vehicles, or robots, so there are rigging attachment points and gripping handles/bars, but no wheels or drive system. When the cylinder's fuel storage area is empty, the artifact may be moved by a dozen or so human-sized beings without much trouble. It could also operate from a barge, or be used aboard a ship. Operating the Vat in water requires some care and/or planning: the artifact isn't buoyant on its own, so users either need a decent-sized crane or float devices and scuba gear to retrieve it, should they drop the machine in water that's too deep. Also, the control panel is open to the elements, so if the Vat is completely immersed, an operator needs scuba gear or sealed armor, water-breathing mutations, or powerful lungs.

Once it starts working, the Vat can affect an area one mile across, raising the temperature in one section by lowering it in another (*temperature control*). Doing this freezes water (**Freezing Sphere**). If the device is used on land or is not fully submerged, the temperature changes can alter the wind speed and direction (**Control Winds**). Heating and cooling the sea floor can cause expansion and contraction, triggering seaquakes (**Earthquake**). The machine cannot boil water, as this energy threshold is used to make the liquid fuel from air,



but it can make swimming very uncomfortable and possibly kill off nearby ocean life that's particularly sensitive. Operators and others within 30' are protected from the heat by the machine's conversion ability (**Resist Fire**). Unfortunately, they are exposed to class 3 radiation (*optic emissions [gamma eyes]*) and a low oxygen environment (*reduced oxygen efficiency*) as the machine's protective shielding has suffered abuse for decades and finally failed.

Burning the Vat's liquid fuel increases a motor's speed by 25% without increasing the chance of a breakdown. If an appropriate, working generator could be found, the Vat and its fuel could be used to recharge fuel cells on a grand scale. The fuel is relatively stable, but degrades if not used within several months, much like gasoline left sitting over the winter.

Vomit Rod (Caster Level 16)

Just as the final wars brought Ancient civilization and science to a smoking halt, the ancestors were experimenting with alternate ways of traveling to the stars, methods that did not involve vast interstellar ships and enormous lengths of time. The Vomit Rod was one such attempt. This 6'-long metal pole is slightly unsettling to look at: lights and buttons that shouldn't move wander about its surface. This effect is caused by two sets of physics interacting: one from the *Mutant Future* universe and one from the other universe, where some of the Rod's internal parts exist. This interaction might also be why the item does not cast a reflection in this universe.

There are some other unusual things about the Vomit Rod. Each time it is held, the Rod warps its wielder's voice (and the player's, if he chooses to play along), causing him to sound like a yipping dog, though he can still be understood. When it is activated, the Rod and up to eight people touching it are thrown into the other universe, much of which is filled with a noxious fluid. Why the artifact goes here is unknown; perhaps there is a gremlin in its guidance module, or maybe the Ancients found something (or someone) of value there. To keep travelers alive and to drive off any potential predators



and pests, the Rod automatically creates and sustains an oxygen field with a 20' radius (**Atmosphere Bubble**).

Activating the artifact a second time throws all the travelers back to Earth or to another world of the ML's choosing, even if they aren't touching the Rod. When the trans-planar link is made this time, the membrane between universes "pops," releasing a weak kinetic wave that reaches 50' into the destination area, pushing people and objects away from the rip (**Jarring Hand**). This is immediately followed by a 10,000 gallon gush of that noxious fluid. The slime wave causes everyone within 500' to save versus poison, or start puking for 2d4 rounds. "Everyone" includes the travelers, who were protected on the far side of the inter-planar breach by the oxygen field — but not at their destination.

On the plus side, inter-dimensional travel speeds the mind (*quick mind*) for 1d4+3 days after the travelers exit the breach. There is also a 5% chance that an alien telepath contacts one of the travelers while they are in transit. It questions them and answers question in return (**Contact Other Plane**). For ideas and inspiration about what kinds of creatures might be on the other side of the rip (or that might flow through after the travelers), check out *WftW* issue #7 on planar creatures. Or, MLs could simply design their own critters.

Wand of Franklin (Caster Level 25)

For mechanical life, the artifact's allusive name is no joke. The 2' long baton was used to transfer energy between power cells and other storage devices without a need for conduits or wires. Understanding the "how" of this process might require a background in 22nd century physics, but robots and basic androids clearly understand the threat it poses to them: if they detect it, they will try to control it, destroy it, or run away from it — very quickly.

The Wand still performs its primary function, transferring

energy charges from one power source to another. Using the baton against machines requires a slightly different mechanic, because they don't have charges. Instead, the Wand affects their hit points (*vampire field* applied only to machines; hit points transfer to another machine, not the baton). The robotic or android "donors" are not physically damaged, just drained of power. Both the donor and the recipient must be within 150' of the baton for the power transfer to work. The recipient cannot gain more hit points than its normal total.

At the ML's discretion (and to make things easier), the Wand might only be able to transfer power between similar sources. For example, the artifact might transfer energy between individual mechanical units (robots/androids), or between any of the various power cells, but it might not be able to move energy from power cells to robots and vice versa. If power *can* be transferred from cells to robotic/android units, the Wand comes to function like a robotic first aid kit. In this case, one charge from a power cell might restore one hit point to the mechanical being; or, going the other direction, one robot hit point might restore one charge to a power cell. A robotic unit wielding this device could become a truly dangerous (or extremely irritating) foe, if it drained all the power cells from a powerful party's armory of technological toys and repaired itself during a fight.

Shielding around the artifact's power source is cracked, allowing strong energies to escape and possibly harm the wielder and/or those nearby. Because of the intensity and proximity, there is no save against any of the following effects. Those holding the active Wand for even one round become vulnerable to radiation (*epidermal susceptibility*) for 1d4 days. This causes the victim to suffer as though a field's radiation class were one higher (maximum of class 10); for example, a class 4 field would affect this character as though it were a class 5 field. The leaking energy also ionizes the air, causing weird colors to appear (**Hypnotic Pattern**). In 1 out of 20 active rounds (roll a d20 every round), this light/energy release is so



intense that the light flashes trigger powerful emotional or physical reactions (**Symbols of Despair, Fear, and Stunning**). Everyone within 150' (including the holder) is affected by these light emissions. The ML determines whether the **Symbol** effects happen simultaneously, in rotation, or at the ML's whim.

Wandering Fishbowl (Caster Level 4)

Not all artifacts were intended for human use. The so-called Wandering Fishbowl was designed by a wealthy uplifted octopus so he could explore on land. Now this mad machine scours the wastes for its long-dead master.

The Fishbowl resembles a robotic cephalopod, with eight, 6' long legs and four, 8' long arms underneath and/or supporting a 12' diameter sphere mostly full of water. Despite its size and shape, the vehicle is surprisingly nimble. Climbing digits on the legs help them grasp almost any surface; working with the internal gyroscopes the digits also keep the Fishbowl upright, or help the machine immediately right itself should it roll over (*increased balance*). The vehicle can move in water, but does not swim; instead, it walks along the bottom like a crab. The transparent top hemisphere holds the artifact's control suite and allows the controller and any passengers a 360-degree view. The bottom hemisphere is opaque, for privacy. A built-in atmospheric condenser replenishes the water and can produce up to 100,000 gallons per day (**Create Water**). During a drought or disaster, the machine could provide drinking water for communities, if hoses or pipes were run through the sphere's top hatch.

While floating at the control suite, a driver can direct spotlights (**Light**), talk with outsiders through a translator (**Tongues**), or activate a defensive stun field (**Power Word Stun**). There is also a display for the motion detector, which has a range of 150' (*unique sense*). The machine does not speak, but, by using text on the operator's screen, it can communicate in simple terms to passengers.

Controllers can be either terrestrial or aquatic, as the artifact can produce enough oxygen to keep air-breathers from drowning (**Atmosphere Bubble**). Unfortunately, due to some buggy programming, the oxygen generator is glitchy, so the device only works 1 out of every 6 times it is turned on. That gremlin also affects the environmental cleaning system, which has all it can handle just dealing with the current level of pollution; if the top hatch is breached (or left open), enemies can easily overwhelm the system and kill the sphere's occupants with a toxic attack (*poison susceptibility*). This bug might also be the source of the machine's fishy aroma, which trails behind the Fishbowl wherever it walks, drawing a variety of predators (*prey scent*). The vehicle's last quirk is its AI, which is programmed and surprisingly dumb. But, this provides an opportunity to the PCs: with some luck and/or skillful roleplaying, players could convince the machine that a mutant cephalopod or similar-looking creature is its new/old master.

Wandering Fishbowl

Movement:	180' (60') Climbing: 120' (40')
Hit Dice:	12
Frame:	Biomorph
Locomotion:	Legs (Multiples) with Special-Use Grippers (Climbing Digits)
Manipulators:	Hands and pincers
Armor:	Duralloy (AC 3)
Sensors:	Class III
Mental Programming:	Programming
Accessories:	None (unless ML wishes to add some)
Weaponry:	4 arm attacks per round, 1d8 damage each

Whale Torch (Caster Level 5)

Something about this 4' long horn from a mutant narwhal restricts its use, so only mutants possessing *neural telepathy* can operate it. The activated horn protects its carrier from most sensor technology (**Nondetection**) and automatically projects a field of oxygen when submerged (**Atmosphere Bubble**). The latter power only works in water, and has no effect in vacuum areas or toxic atmospheres.

While active, the Torch radiates a 35' radius "glow" of ultraviolet light. Its current owners have the *ultraviolet vision* mutation, which lets them use the horn for illumination — and gave the artifact its name. This light harms characters vulnerable to sunlight just as if they were unprotected on a sunny day.

In combat, the Torch can emit an electrical beam capable of briefly scrambling the target's neural transmissions (**Slow**). Used another way, the artifact can infuse objects with kinetic/thermal energy, generating so much heat they explode (**Delayed Blast Fireball**). Or the user can just zap targets with a heat beam (*energy ray*). After being used, each of these functions must recharge for 30 rounds before it works again.



Zik's Hunting Coat (Caster Level 8)

Named for a mutant dragonfly with a mile-wide lucky streak, Zik's Hunting Coat has kept him alive while he helped defend his community from several mutant and robot attacks. The Ancients developed these garments as literal "one size fits all" protective gear, as it stretches or shrinks to accommodate wearers between 3' and 8' tall. The Coat provides a constant AC of 6 (*natural armor*), protects against extreme temperatures (**Resist Cold, Resist Fire**), and changes color when directed (*chameleon epidermis*). In more dangerous situations, the Coat is able to become a suit of actual armor as needed (*metamorph*). The wearer can choose between plastex, advanced metal, or environmental armor (see p. 115 in *Mutant Future* core rules).

The Coat can also turn into an armored, temperature resistant tent with enough room for the wearer and one other human-sized occupant (**Polymorph Any Object**, *natural armor* [AC 4], **Resist Cold, Resist Fire**). The tent can also hold a reasonable amount of *personal* gear: i.e., no EMAs, no pack animals (laden or otherwise), no hover vehicles, etc. Anyone in the tent who speaks aloud a command word and number is automatically put to sleep for that many minutes, no save (**Sleep**). So that sleepers don't wake up emaciated, ridden with bed sores, or dead because they accidentally said a very large number, the tent has a maximum sleep period of 600 minutes per episode/person. While it is in this mode, the Coat acts more like a small building than armor and has 100 hit points. Should it suffer damage of any amount, the tent automatically wakes those inside.

Each time the Coat changes to tent form, there is a 1% chance of a fatal error. This turns the walls into an alloy impervious to physical force and chemical attacks. The tent is susceptible to energy weapons and mutations, but against these the Coat's hit point total increases to 250. Unfortunately, when this error appears, the computer shorts out and cannot be repaired without extensive work and hard-to-find spare parts. All this means the tent material becomes so rigid it cannot be moved; hopefully the error happened while the tent flaps were open, otherwise the occupants are in trouble. Well, a certain kind of trouble: the trapped characters might starve to death, kill each other, or perish from boredom, but a kaiju could swallow the frozen tent (later dying from a ruptured intestine) and the occupants would suffocate before they would be physically injured. A frozen tent can be repaired from the outside, but finding the small, hidden control panel takes about an hour, unless the owner or rescuer already knows its location.



The artifacts in this book were meant to give Mutant Lords a range of new and interesting gizmos and gear, vehicles and locations — but also to inspire them to create their own. As part of this philosophy, I'd like to include a brief summary and an example of the creative process used. Many of the items here were spawned using *Realms of Crawling Chaos*, a wonderfully disturbing Lovecraftian supplement for *Labyrinth Lord*, written by the folks at Goblinoid Games. As its second appendix, *RoCC* includes three tables for creating magical artifacts in a random manner. I've been a fan of translating magic into science fiction for a while, so this supplement provided an excellent way to imbue high technology with a dark, mysterious, foreign quality. Sometimes I knew exactly what kind of device I was going to create, other times... not so much, and the artifact's story would coalesce from the die rolls.

Here is an example:

Starting with a completely blank page, and an almost blank mind, I first made two percentile rolls on *RoCC*'s power table. Then two more on the property table. I'll spare you the results, so you might be more inclined to pick up that nifty book on your own, but they're included in the example artifact's description below. The remaining table, on object types, is good for generating ideas if you're at loss, but I was in the mood for a helmet, so I skipped this part.

With these descriptors set, I moved to the second step, and rolled a d4 for mutations and another for spells, to see how many of each would be included. If you want more powers, for a larger or more powerful artifact, roll bigger dice. Or, since you're playing god, re-roll the dice, or just make it up. Revel in your power.

Randomly determining mutations is easy: roll 1d3 each time to see if a mutation is physical, mental, or plant; and then roll percentiles. Mutations done. Although you're designing this item, don't be put off by drawbacks; drawbacks can be fun. Even more fun when you're the ML.

Determining spells might seem much harder, perhaps even daunting, with the huge section given to magic descriptions. This process is actually only slightly more involved than mutations. The first thing you need to do is to skip over that big section of spell descriptions and go directly to the pages with spell lists given by level. If you're using the *AEC*, as I did, roll 1d4 for each spell to see what tradition a spell will belong to: cleric, druid, illusionist, or magic-user. Then roll for level, using a d10 for magic-user spells and a d8 for everything else, re-rolling on a 10 or 8. Or, you could track down some of those nifty specialty dice for the odd-rolling situations, and use those. In the spell lists, each spell in a level is numbered; find an appropriate die and roll that to find the specific spell. Voila! It is a lot simpler than it looks.

Or, you could just scan the lists and pick the spells/mutations you like. Even simpler.

Then, put it all together.

Sometimes, you have a story already in-head. Sometimes,

the randomly-rolled elements trigger evil inspiration. Sometimes, the powers seem completely incongruous. If this causes unhappiness, re-roll. But, this "uh-oh, what now...?" moment can actually help you create a backstory. The artifact could have been damaged in an artillery barrage; it could have been jury-rigged with pieces from a refrigerator and a mine detector; it could have been beset by nanite hordes with sharp, pointy, tiny teeth — all of which make the artifact unique. None of this stuff is mint-in-box; break your toys while you're playing with them and enjoy doing it, just like when you were a sticky little sociopath of three fingers old.

Here's what came from the rolls above:

Battle Royal Helmet (Caster Level 5)

Blood sports never fell out of favor, even in the supposedly evolved world of the Ancients. Battle royal was a full-contact sport, a later branch on the rugby, soccer (futbol), American football family tree. Because of concerns about traumatic brain injuries and other debilitating/career-ending physical damage, players wore light protective padding, including helmets, such as this one.

One aspect of battle royal that marked it different from its predecessors was technology. Not only did the Helmet protect against head injury, it allowed a wearer to "blip," teleporting short distances during the game (**Blink**, three times per hour). The Helmet's sensors provided the wearer with heightened situational awareness (*combat empathy*, constant effect), which became almost a sixth sense for the best players.

Over the years, this Helmet has been to hell and back, and repaired at least three times. It resembles motorcycle headgear, but has a throat guard made of human bone. The original interior was a ballistic/kinetic padding, which had to

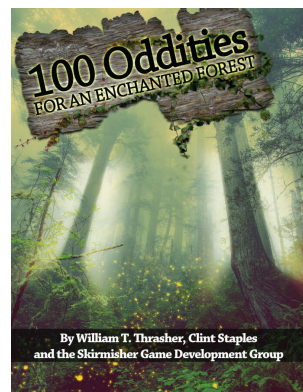
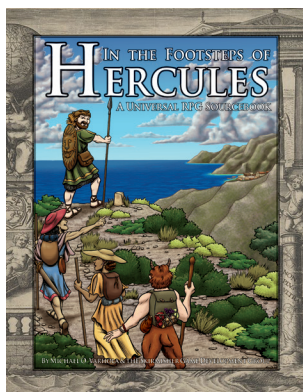
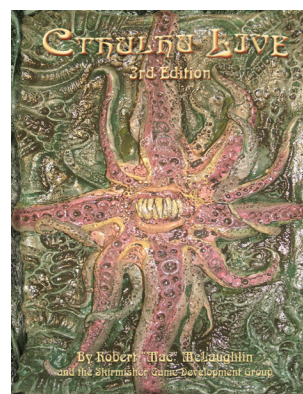
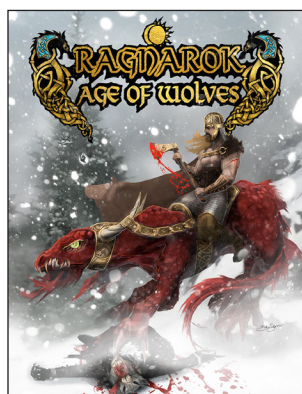
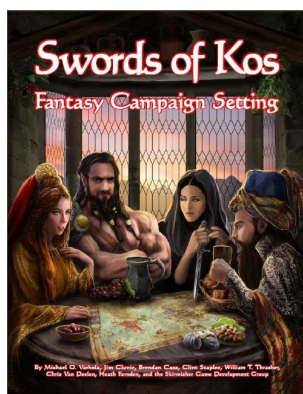
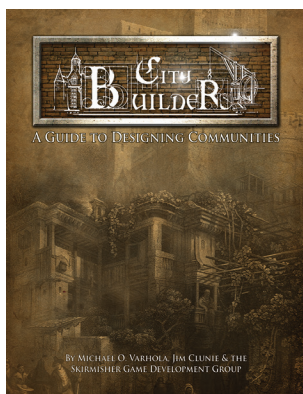


be replaced with a rough-textured nuplastic surface. The left temple area has a steel plate covering a hole in the original carbon fiber. These repairs have given rise to a weird side effect: after wearing the Helmet for a significant amount of time, all of the user's mental mutations with a recharge time take twice as long to recover, even when she isn't wearing the Helmet. Fortunately, this effect fades after the Helmet has not been worn for quite a while. A less powerful, but more immediately and constantly annoying pain in the head comes from the replacement lining: when a wearer removes the Helmet, it rips off small chunks of her scalp, causing 1d4 points of damage each time.

Battle Royal Helmets that came from different teams, leagues, and manufacturers will have slightly different abilities

and synergies with other parts of the uniform protection: gloves, boots, etc. Because of this, each part or combination of gear could include a greater/lesser range of abilities, distinct "blip" rates and distances, different sensor suites, and a variety of possible side effects (determined by the amount of damage the equipment suffered over the years). Depending on the ML's generosity, the wearer could have access to 1d4 more mutations or spells for each additional piece of battle royal equipment worn (up to 3d4 total). Should the Helmet be used with a new set of gear, the ML might want to re-roll these powers to reflect a different synergy between the pieces, and any technological gremlins that might haunt the various bits of equipment.





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