

PARANOIA^{xp}

PARANOIA

THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE



Author
R. Eric Reuss

Original design by
DAN GELBER
GREG COSTIKYAN
ERIC GOLDBERG

Paranoia XP design by
ALLEN VARNEY

PARANOIA™

It was you, MUTIE!



RM240-8046-92

Mutation: **ELECTROSHOCK**

Nominal clearance: **ORANGE**

Current assignment: **AUXILIARY POWER GENERATION**

Mandatory drug regimen: **METALOBITRAN 15%/50cc - QUALINE**

YOU used your treasonous **MUTANT POWER** to melt that **High Programmer** into goo!

We know it was you. No *loyal* citizen in **Alpha Complex** would crush **The Computer's** trusted friend. Only a mutant, an inhuman traitor with unnatural powers, could manipulate gravity—or cast radiation—or control a warbot and make it fire—or whatever you did. *Mutie*.

My partner here, he's not as nice as I am. He'd just as soon put you straight on **Freak Suppressor** and fit you with an **anti-psiionic enforcer**. Me? I'll help you if you help me.

Play along! We have all the evidence we need, but we're making things easy on you. Sign this confession. You have no choice. Get used to it—it's just another part of...

THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

Creatively mutated new rules and powers for **PARANOIA XP** by **R. ERIC REUSS**
Illustrated by **JIM HOLLOWAY**

What's that you say, **PARANOIA** Gamemaster? The roster of mutations in the **PARANOIA XP** rulebook lacks the exact powers you want to inflict on your Troubleshooter players? You're looking without success for the mutations **Acidic Spit**, **Adaptive Metabolism**, **Bouncy**, **Call Bots**, **Chromativariation**, **Clean Slate**, **Creeping Madness**, **Cryokinesis**, **Enervating Darkness**, **Environmental Control**, **Find Location**, **Forgettable**, **Gravity Manipulation**, **Haze**, **Hyperreflexes**, **Hypersenses**, **Jump!**, **Light Control**, **Magnetize**, **Mind Sense**, **Pouches**, **Psychometry**, **Push Mutant Powers**, **Radioactivity**, **Scream**, **Sculpt**, **Second Skin**, **Speed**, **Spikes**, **Stasis**, **Stench** and **Stretchy**? You want new ways to handle the existing stuff too?

Relief is at hand, Gamemaster. Acquire, by any legal means, this fine 72-page rules supplement, *The Mutant Experience!*

You need the **PARANOIA XP** roleplaying game to use this book.

- ② Three dozen new mutant powers! Variants of existing powers!
- ② New rules to ignore! Fun and terrifying new Alpha Complexes!
- ② Mutagens, equipment, medications! Edible Perversity points!
- ② For beginning or experienced **PARANOIA** GMs (human only)
- ② Perversity points guaranteed *not* mutagenic unless ingested

A world fit for Kafka, Orwell and the Marx Brothers

PARANOIA is a satirical roleplaying game set in a darkly humorous future. A well-meaning but deranged Computer desperately protects the citizens of an underground city from secret societies, mutants and all sorts of real and imagined enemies. You play a **Troubleshooter**, one of The Computer's elite agents. You track and destroy the enemies of The Computer. You hope The Computer and your fellow Troubleshooters won't find out you are one of these enemies.

PARANOIA: a lighthearted game of terror, death, bureaucracies, mad scientists, mutants, dangerous weapons and insane robots, which encourages players to lie, to cheat and to backstab each other at every turn.

Originally published in 1984, **PARANOIA** sold over 150,000 copies. The new **PARANOIA XP** edition updates Alpha Complex for this new and more paranoid time.

ISBN 1-904854-65-6



For use with
PARANOIA XP

For
Gamemasters,
not players!

ISBN 1-904854-65-6

\$19.95 MONGOOSE PUBLISHING—SWINDON, UK

MGP 6634

The Mutant Experience and PARANOIA Copyright ©1983, 1987, 2005 Eric Goldberg and Greg Costikyan. PARANOIA is a trademark of Eric Goldberg and Greg Costikyan. All Rights Reserved. Mongoose Publishing Ltd., Authorized User

Revised Mutation Tables

Welcome, **PARANOIA** Gamemaster! *The Mutant Experience* offers you dozens of new mutant powers, plus hundreds of variations, mishaps and backfires for the existing powers presented in the **PARANOIA** XP rulebook. The rulebook's measly piddling pathetic little girly-boy mutation tables cannot encompass this bounty—this plethora—of new options. You want *new* tables, so you can quickly bring your players up to speed and down in flames.

These three pairs of mutation tables are suited to the three play styles presented in the XP rulebook: *Classic* (the Computer monitor), *Straight* (the eyeball) and *Zap* (the smoking boot). Each style includes two tables. Choose either table appropriate to your game's style. If you don't want to decide, roll 1d20: On a result of 1-10, use the first (upper) table for your play style; on 11-20, use the second (lower) one. After you select at all a roll 1d20 a second time to pick a power from that table.



Roll of 1-10: Classic table 1

- 1 Charm
- 2 Corrosion
- 3 Detect Mutant Power
- 4 Electroshock
- 5 Empathy
- 6 Energy Field
- 7 Hypersenses
- 8 Levitation
- 9 Machine Empathy*
- 10 Matter Eater
- 11 Mental Blast
- 12 Polymorphism
- 13 Puppeteer
- 14 Pyrokinesis
- 15 Regeneration
- 16 Slippery Skin
- 17 Telekinesis
- 18 Teleportation
- 19 Uncanny Luck
- 20 X-Ray Vision

Roll of 11-20: Classic table 2

- 1 Call Bots
- 2 Chromatization
- 3 Creeping Madness
- 4 Environmental Control
- 5 Gravity Manipulation
- 6 Haze
- 7 Hyperreflexes
- 8 Jump!
- 9 Light Control
- 10 Magnetize
- 11 Pouches
- 12 Push Mutant Powers
- 13 Radioactivity
- 14 Scream
- 15 Sculpt
- 16 Second Skin
- 17 Speed
- 18 Spikes
- 19 Stench
- 20 Stretchy



Roll of 1-10: Straight table 1

- 1 Adhesive Skin
- 2 Adrenalin Control
- 3 Bureaucratic Intuition
- 4 Charm
- 5 Death Simulation
- 6 Deep Thought
- 7 Electroshock
- 8 Empathy
- 9 Energy Field
- 10 Hypersenses
- 11 Machine Empathy*
- 12 Matter Eater
- 13 Mechanical Intuition
- 14 Mental Blast
- 15 Pyrokinesis
- 16 Regeneration
- 17 Rubbery Bones
- 18 Toxic Metabolism
- 19 Uncanny Luck
- 20 Ventriloquist

Roll of 11-20: Straight table 2

- 1 Adaptive Metabolism
- 2 Call Bots
- 3 Clean Slate
- 4 Creeping Madness
- 5 Environmental Control
- 6 Find Location
- 7 Forgettable
- 8 Haze
- 9 Hyperreflexes
- 10 Jump!
- 11 Light Control
- 12 Mind Sense
- 13 Pouches
- 14 Psychometry
- 15 Push Mutant Powers
- 16 Radioactivity
- 17 Second Skin
- 18 Speed
- 19 Stench
- 20 Stretchy



Roll of 1-10: Zap table 1

- 1 Absorption
- 2 Chameleon
- 3 Charm
- 4 Desolidity
- 5 Electroshock
- 6 Energy Field
- 7 Growth
- 8 Levitation
- 9 Machine Empathy*
- 10 Matter Eater
- 11 Mental Blast
- 12 Polymorphism
- 13 Puppeteer
- 14 Pyrokinesis
- 15 Regeneration
- 16 Shrinking
- 17 Telekinesis
- 18 Teleportation
- 19 Transmutation
- 20 X-Ray Vision

Roll of 11-20: Zap table 2

- 1 Acidic Spit
- 2 Bouncy
- 3 Chromatization
- 4 Creeping Madness
- 5 Cryokinesis
- 6 Enervating Darkness
- 7 Gravity Manipulation
- 8 Haze
- 9 Hyperreflexes
- 10 Jump!
- 11 Magnetize
- 12 Radioactivity
- 13 Scream
- 14 Sculpt
- 15 Second Skin
- 16 Speed
- 17 Spikes
- 18 Stasis
- 19 Stench
- 20 Stretchy

* Having this mutant power is grounds for immediate and lasting execution.

Utterly random mutation tables

Roll 1d20. On a result of 1-5, use the first table; on 6-10 use the second; 11-15 the third and 16+ the fourth. If you specifically want a **metabolic** mutation (one that affects the mutant's body or the world through physical means), choose powers only from the two tables in the **left** column; if you want a **psionic** mutation (that works through weird extrasensory psychic woo-woo emanations), select powers only from the **right** column. The distinction between metabolic and psionic mutations is explained in Chapter 1 of this fine **PARANOIA** supplement, *The Mutant Experience*.

M

Roll of 1-5: Table #1 (metabolic)

- 1 Absorption
- 2 Acidic Spit
- 3 Adaptive Metabolism
- 4 Adhesive Skin
- 5 Adrenalin Control
- 6 Bouncy
- 7 Chameleon
- 8 Charm
- 9 Corrosion
- 10 Death Simulation
- 11 Desolidity
- 12 Electroshock
- 13 Growth
- 14 Hyperreflexes
- 15 Hypersenses
- 16 Jump!
- 17 Matter Eater
- 18 Polymorphism
- 19 Pouches
- 20 Radioactivity

Roll of 11-15: Table #3 (metabolic)

- 1 Regeneration
- 2 Rubbery Bones
- 3 Scream
- 4 Sculpt
- 5 Second Skin
- 6 Shrinking
- 7 Slippery Skin
- 8 Speed
- 9 Spikes
- 10 Stench
- 11 Stretchy
- 12 Toxic Metabolism
- 13 X-Ray Vision
- 14-15 Two powers: roll again twice
- 16-17 Fringe power: choose from Chapter 4
- 18-19 Unique power: invent something (or re-roll)
- 20 No power (or re-roll)

P

Roll of 6-10: Table #2 (psionic)

- 1 Bureaucratic Intuition
- 2 Call Bots
- 3 Chromatic Variation
- 4 Clean Slate
- 5 Creeping Madness
- 6 Cryokinesis
- 7 Deep Thought
- 8 Detect Mutant Power
- 9 Empathy
- 10 Energy Field
- 11 Enervating Darkness
- 12 Environmental Control
- 13 Find Location
- 14 Forgettable
- 15 Gravity Manipulation
- 16 Haze
- 17 Levitation
- 18 Light Control
- 19 Machine Empathy
- 20 Magnetize

Roll of 16-20: Table #4 (psionic)

- 1 Mechanical Intuition
- 2 Mental Blast
- 3 Mind Sense
- 4 Psychometry
- 5 Puppeteer
- 6 Push Mutant Powers
- 7 Pyrokinesis
- 8 Stasis
- 9 Telekinesis
- 10 Teleportation
- 11 Transmutation
- 12 Uncanny Luck
- 13 Ventriloquist
- 14-15 Two powers: roll again twice
- 16-17 Fringe power: choose from Chapter 4
- 18-19 Unique power: invent something (or re-roll)
- 20 No power (or re-roll)

Thanks to proofreaders Paul Baldowski, Jeff Groves, Bill O'Dea, Saul Resnikoff, and the Traitor Recycling Studio. Thanks for 'fortune cookie' help to the loyal citizens who rallied to the call on the **PARANOIA** XP development blog (www.costik.com/paranoia): David Boyle, Michael Croft, Peter Dommermuth, Chaz Estell, Adam Haase, Greg Ingber, Eric Minton and Saul Resnikoff. And, as always, thanks to the bubbly throng active on the forums of Paranoia-Live.net (www.paranoia-live.net).

—Allen Varney, editor (www.allenvarney.com)

PARANOIATM XP

The Mutant Experience

R. ERIC REUSS

Design/Deep Thought

ALLEN VARNEY

Editing and layout/Sculpt

JIM HOLLOWAY

Cover and illustrations/Psychometry

PAUL BALDOWSKI

ANNE CROSS

BILL O'DEA

CHARLES TETZLAFF

DAN ABRAHAM

MATT DALTON

ALON ELKIN

BEN ENGELSBERG

BETH FISCHI

JEFF GROVES

ERIC MINTON

ROBERT RODGER

GEORGE SCHICK

JOHN SPANN

ZIV WITIES

Help and feedback/Mechanical Intuition

DAN GELBER

GREG COSTIKYAN

ERIC GOLDBERG

Original game design & development/Machine Empathy

RON BEDISON

Proofreading/Environmental Control

IAN BELCHER

Mongoose Publishing line editor/Charm

IAN BARSTOW

Mongoose Publishing studio manager/
Hypersenses

ALEXANDER FENNEL

Mongoose Publishing production director/
Bureaucratic Intuition

THE COMPUTER

Ever vigilant against the mutant threat

CONTENTS

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Mutations in play | 2 |
| 2. Variations | 6 |
| 3. New mutant powers | 9 |
| 4. Quick shots | 49 |
| 5. Gamemastering mutations | 52 |
| 6. Mutations in Alpha Complex | 55 |
| 7. Fun things to do to your players | 61 |
| 8. Mutagens | 64 |
| 9. Equipment | 65 |
| 10. Medication | 68 |
| Appendix: Tables, charts, forms | 69 |

Security clearance **ULTRAVIOLET**
WARNING:

Knowledge or possession of this information by any citizen
of Security Clearance VIOLET or lower constitutes treason
and in all likelihood means you're a crummy mutant

TM & Copyright © 1983, 1987, 2005 by Eric Goldberg & Greg Costikyan.

All Rights Reserved. Mongoose Publishing Ltd., Authorized User.

Based on material published in previous editions of **PARANOIA**.

ILLUMINATI is a registered trademark of Steve Jackson Games, and is used by permission.

The reproduction of material from this book for personal or corporate profit, by photographic, electronic, or other means of storage and retrieval, is prohibited. You may copy character sheets, record sheets, checklists and tables for personal use.

E-mail questions and comments to Mongoose Publishing at sales@mongoosepublishing.com, or write to
PO Box 1018, Swindon, Wiltshire SN3 1DG, UNITED KINGDOM. On the World Wide Web: www.mongoosepublishing.com.

Published by Mongoose Publishing, Ltd. Publication MGP 6633. Published January 2005. First printing January 2005.



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

1. Mutations in play

In other (non-fun) roleplaying games, this introduction would open with a meandering and slightly poetic musing on the nature of mutants—you know, stuff like, ‘Misunderstood since the dawn of time, mutants represent the inevitable dichotomy of progress and danger’, and so forth. Presumably it’s to get you in the right mood or something.

None of that here. *The Mutant Experience* is a supplement for **PARANOIA** XP. It’s about mutants. If you’re cleared for the information herein, you’re probably already in the right frame of mind. If you’re not cleared for this sourcebook, but are secretly buying it anyway, you’re *definitely* in the right frame of mind.

If you’re slaving for the new powers, jump straight to Chapter 3. You can always read Chapters 1 and 2 later. We won’t tell.

Details, details

Metabolic vs. psionic

Once you get to Chapter 3 (assuming you haven’t already skipped ahead), you’ll see some mutations listed as *metabolic*, others as *psionic*. If you don’t like this distinction (or just don’t want to bother), feel free to throw it out the window and ignore all references to either type. Sure, some equipment and drugs may claim to only interact with one or the other—but clearly, those writeups have been tampered with by saboteurs. There are no differing categorizations of mutant powers. Everything is simple. You can skip to the next section now.

Still with us? All right.

Metabolic mutations alter the mutant’s body (Chameleon, Pouches) or interact with the world via the mutant’s body (Charm, Corrosion). There is some physical mechanism, however ludicrous, for the mutation’s effect. Area effect mishaps usually involve the spread of a physical substance (Adhesive Skin). Area-wide metabolic backfires that don’t involve such a substance, like Shrinking, occur in Zap games or other outlandish situations.

Psionic mutations affect the mutant’s mind (Deep Thought, Mechanical Intuition) or interact with the world via the mutant’s mind (Empathy, Magnetize). There may be physical results (Gravity Manipulation, Pyrokinesis) or side-effects (like Deep Thought’s glowing eyes), but the primary effect of the mutation just happens, with no physical vector for its manifestation.

(Of course, some fringe cases such as Hypersenses could easily be interpreted either way. We decided arbitrarily, and encourage you to do the same.)

So why is this distinction relevant? Only because other things may behave differently depending on

the type of power. For instance, there might be pharmaceuticals that amplify or suppress the effects of metabolic mutations—but not psionic ones. There may be weird R&D devices that occasionally detect psionic energies—but not metabolic powers. Psion may consider psionic mutations to be more desirable than metabolic ones, seeing the latter as crude and barely above changes like ‘Really Ugly’ or ‘No Arms’. This book assumes you’ll use the split this way.

Alternately, you can use the distinction as a red herring—experts in Power Studies have concluded there are these two completely different types of mutations, when in reality there are, oh, seven and a half different types—or none at all. This will send players who attempt to use ULTRAVIOLET-cleared knowledge barking completely up the wrong tree, a situation we heartily approve.

Note: Two items in **PARANOIA** XP (the ‘psionic phenomena’ multicorder program and the hallucinogenic drug benetridin, aka *VideoLand*) refer to ‘psionic’ as meaning ‘all mutations’. If you’re using the psionic/metabolic distinction, then obviously, ‘psionic’ refers to ‘psionic mutations only’. No need to inform the players of this; they’re not cleared for that part of the rules anyhow.

Multiple mutations

If you let PCs start the game with more than one mutation, see ‘Alternate character creation’ in Chapter 2. If you want an NPC to have more than one mutation, wave your hands dramatically and presto! There, wasn’t that easy?

Regardless of how many mutations a character has, he only has one Power attribute. So yes, a mutant who exhausts his Power supply Regenerating all his limbs may not have sufficient Power left to encase that warbot entirely in ice and then Levitate away. Isn’t life tough?

If a character gains a new mutation during play, increase his permanent Power attribute by one. If he loses a mutation somehow, lower his permanent Power by one. (Except, in either case, if the fiddly bookkeeping would get in the way of playing the game, in which case don’t bother.) Generally speaking, there are three ways for someone to acquire a new power:

- ☉ **Gamemaster fiat:** If you want a character to develop another power, he does.
- ☉ **Further mutation:** This generally involves exposure to mutagenic substances, which is no walk in the park. See the Mutagen Exposure Table in the Appendix.
- ☉ **Training from Psion:** Some of the secret society’s high-ranking Controls can help unlock latent psionic potential in the human mind. This generally involves being a member of Psion, which is no

walk in the park. It may involve exposure to mutagens, too, if you think it would be more entertaining that way (or if you’re just itching for a chance to roll on the Mutagen Exposure Table). Generally, members of Psion learn one new psionic power for each rank they advance, unless you decide otherwise.

The powers Psion tends to train characters in may vary by play style:

Classic: Empathy, Energy Field, Gravity Manipulation, Levitation, Magnetize, Mental Blast, Puppeteer, Pyrokinesis, Telekinesis or Teleportation.

Straight: Deep Thought, Empathy, Energy Field, Find Location, Haze, Light Control, Mental Blast, Mind Sense, Push Mutant Powers or Pyrokinesis.

Zap: Cryokinesis, Energy Field, Enervating Darkness, Gravity Manipulation, Levitation, Mental Blast, Pyrokinesis, Stasis, Telekinesis or Teleportation.

Feel free to disregard these suggestions. Perhaps Psion rigorously indoctrinates recruits with Bureaucratic Intuition, the better to subvert the system. Perhaps they teach Call Bots because it’s the closest they’ve come to Machine Empathy. Perhaps the character is serving some bizarre faction that believes in The Power of Sweat, espousing physical labor and training members in Adhesive Skin, Charm, Corrosion, Sculpt and Slippery Skin. (Okay, that last one’s a stretch. But you get the idea.)

Margin of success—cumulative or not?

There are a number of powers where the margin of success affects multiple aspects of what happens—for instance, a higher margin with Telekinesis can help in affecting heavier objects, affecting more distant objects or having a greater degree of precision. The question is: If the mutant gets a margin of (say) 7, does he have to ‘split’ it between weight, distance and precision? Or does it apply to all three?

The answer, as you may have guessed, is ‘whatever you want at the time.’ Sure, some of the powers say explicitly one way or the other—for instance, the speed of Polymorphism uses the margin of success after accounting for the form’s difficulty, which is also a matter of margin—but if you don’t happen to remember that little detail during a session, just wing it! Who wants to spend precious gaming time waiting around while the Gamemaster looks up how long it takes a Troubleshooter to turn into a chair? Booo-ring.

You don’t even have to wing it consistently. Mutant powers are anything but consistent!

All that said, how do we do it? Except where it’s explicitly stated otherwise, higher margins

1. MUTATIONS IN PLAY

don't have to be split up among different aspects of the power—the mutation is just that much more successful overall. It's an extension of the 'winners win big' guideline in Chapter 20 of *PARANOIA* XP.

Using mutations cross-style

All the fully detailed mutations indicate which of the three play styles—Classic, Straight and Zap—they're appropriate for. The independent-minded are already cheerfully ignoring these recommendations, for which we applaud you. A Straight character can work perfectly well with the Enervating Darkness mutation, just as Adrenalin Control can be great fun in a Zap game.

You may wish to alter a power slightly when importing it to a different play style, to match the tone of the game. Perhaps in Zap, Adrenalin Control doesn't knock the mutant for such a loop afterwards—he's a bit winded, but that's all. In Straight, Enervating Darkness might have a subtler manifestation, making the lighting in the area flicker and die rather than generating a big cloud of darkness out of nowhere. You can even do this for mutations listed as appropriate for all three play styles, fine-tuning them for whatever you're using at the time.

But if you don't want to, you don't have to—if you'll have fun running Straight where some people can Desolidify and walk through walls, go for it. Really, play styles exist in the XP rulebook only to inspire you to create your own unique style, picking and choosing whatever you like from the various options. Don't sweat the differences, and be creative.

When powers go wrong

When a mutant's power activates without his conscious intent, that's an **accident**. When a mutant's power goes horribly awry and does something it wasn't supposed to, that's a **mishap**. When a mutant's power goes completely overboard, that's an **overkill**.

Accidents

A citizen who stays up for days at a time will eventually fall asleep at an inopportune moment. A citizen who avoids using the bathroom for too long will sooner or later have an unfortunate accident. And a mutant who constantly refuses to invoke his power at some point finds the decision is no longer in his hands.

Yes, biology can be cruel sometimes.

From a metagame point of view, active mutations do good things for *PARANOIA*. They provide opportunities for blackmail and scheming. They increase the quantity of treason being performed and the overall mayhem level. They provide everyone with entertaining antics and possibly the spectacle of one or more characters



During enhancement by the drug meganoxin, a Psion mutant's Deep Thought power backfires, leaving him with agonizing headaches and the unshakable conviction that he is a small Russian dwarf hamster.

getting thoroughly hosed. All in all, having a character who never, ever uses his mutation is just less fun.

Contrary to popular belief, we do not recommend beating the player of the less-fun character with a stick. No, that would just engender resentment—as well as assault charges.

Instead, a mutant who remains at his full Power rating long enough starts feeling... odd. A bit tingly, and kind of floaty. At some dreadfully inconvenient moment, his mutation spontaneously activates—either more or less normally or with a mishap, as you please. The main purpose is to have some fun with the mutation and to get the idea across to the player that it's better for his character to choose when to activate his power than to just let it sit there until it pops.

How long should you wait? That's entirely up to you and need be in no way consistent. If you want, vary it by Power—perhaps more potent mutants 'overflow' faster. Or perhaps less potent mutants lack the control necessary to hold their power in check longer. Maybe you want to base it on out-of-game time rather than in-game time. Whatever works.

We do recommend giving the players a grace period at the start of the session, just so there's enough time for an opportunity to arise before you spring accidents on them.

Triggered accidents: Some powers (such as Teleportation or Scream) have specific conditions for accidental activation. Some equipment (such as FreakBlaster ammunition) or pharmaceuticals (such as Slip-Up) may say 'check to see if the mutant has an accident.' Push Mutant Powers forces other mutants to check for accidental power use. In all these cases, roll the mutant's Power—if it succeeds, the mutation goes off; if it fails, nothing unusual happens. This is an exception to the usual recommendation that *something* happen whenever a mutation is activated, because it's a test to see *if* the mutation activates.

If you're not tracking Power points, you may choose to make triggered accidents less likely for mutants who've used their power a lot recently—but you don't have to.



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

Mishaps

Mishaps occur when a mutant invokes his power but fails to control it properly. As stated in **PARANOIA** XP, a failed Power roll seldom means 'nothing happens.' Some sort of backfire or unintended consequence occurs, usually replacing the desired effects. (Mishaps which are in addition to the desired effects ought to say so in their description.) The wider the margin of failure, the more powerful the mishap will tend to be. It is entirely permissible to apply multiple mishaps to a single failed roll, particularly if the margin of failure was large. You can even combine an overkill with one or more mishaps to get some truly spectacular catastrophes. Unless you're playing Zap, though, try to use instant-death mishaps sparingly. (See 'Player conditioning' below.)

If a mutant tries to use his power in a way that requires a certain margin of success and doesn't make it—say, if he needed a margin of 5+ and only gets a margin of 2—should he have a mishap? Judge on a case-by-case basis. If it would be entertaining for the game as a whole, then sure—something goes horribly awry. Otherwise, the mutant's power works a little bit, but not well enough to accomplish whatever he was shooting for... or simply fails altogether, though that's awfully prosaic.

There are plenty of mishaps that require (or benefit from) good roleplaying on the player's part. A player who really throws himself into it in an entertaining and appropriate fashion ought to earn some sort of Perversity award—particularly if the roleplaying in question puts his character at a disadvantage. Perversity is a potent tool in helping the players to value 'being entertaining' more than 'eking out every conceivable edge', which is very important. **PARANOIA** war stories should never end with 'and I stayed safe and secure the entire time!' They should end with things like 'it was utterly hopeless!' 'I pulled the scheme off perfectly!' and/or 'and then I exploded!'

Overkills

Overkills happen when the mutant puts so much oomph into his power that it does more than he'd intended—kind of like powering an electrical device with too much juice or letting a fission reaction run too hot. An overkill will generally accomplish whatever the mutant was trying to do, but have unforeseen additional effects. Usually, these additional effects fall into one of two categories: 'works too well for the mutant's own good' or 'really obvious'.

Usually, a margin of success of 10 or higher on a Power roll indicates an overkill. Of course, some powers have effects that require extremely high margins to accomplish anything at all—should those effects automatically suffer from overkill? You're welcome to run it that way if you'd like. But we recommend applying overkill when there's at

least 5 points of excess margin—so for effects that require a margin of 10+, apply overkill on a margin of 15+; for effects requiring 15+, apply overkill on 20+; and so forth. Or just wing it.

Some may ask: What's the point of overkill? First and foremost, it keeps mutations from being too reliable—even if the character has a Power of 20 or the player spends a pile of Perversity points, he can't guarantee his mutation will work exactly as desired. That lack of reliability means that though high-Power mutants are more effective with their mutation, they're no less susceptible to discovery—important for keeping a proper atmosphere of fear and paranoia. The potential for powers to have catastrophic effects on everyone and everything in the vicinity also enhances the atmosphere of fear... not to mention being just plain fun.

Player conditioning

Mutations are most fun if the characters use them. So avoid overusing mishaps that cause instant death—a player whose character's head explodes every time he activates his power will just stop trying. Remember the lessons of 'Player conditioning' in Chapter 13 of **PARANOIA** XP, as well as the maxim at the head of Chapter 18: 'If you *reward* players for doing something you like, they will do *more* of that. If you *punish* players for doing something you don't like, they will do *less* of that.'

But mutations are *supposed* to go horribly awry, right? Hoisting the characters on their own petard and all that? So how do you make the players want to use them?

There are lots of ways, but they all pretty much boil down to three fundamentals:

Don't give them a choice: This can be accomplished through judicious use of accidents, which provide a dramatic reminder that characters *will* use their mutant power—so they might as well choose when and where it happens. You can also put characters into situations that are more or less insoluble without use of a power. On the 'carrot-and-stick' scale, this definitely falls into the 'stick' category. Balance it with one of the two other approaches.

Make it look like a good gamble: Occasionally, have Power rolls pay off big-time. One way of doing this is with wildly impressive results when the Power roll has a high margin. A more subtle way is emphasizing the 'mutations can give you an edge' theme, where the power's manifestation lets the mutant do something just that crucial bit faster/better than somebody else. (This method is good for Straight.)

You can also push the 'good gamble' angle by using mishaps that mess around with the entire team—or at least, not just the mutant. This lets the mutant's player feel that while failure may be painful, at least someone else will share that pain.

Finally, there's the tactic of putting the mutant in such a bad situation that a mishap probably wouldn't make matters appreciably worse—at which point, hey, he might as well give his power a shot.

Punish the character, reward the player:

The player's the one deciding when his character will use his mutation, after all. In-game bennies are probably only appropriate if the mutant's a member of Psion, but you can use Perversity points, preferred seating, public lauding or other out-of-game rewards to praise the player's action—even if it had disastrous consequences for his character. Players may be gratified by having their mishap harm more than just their own character—*schadenfreude* at work—or by grabbing the limelight. (Nothing catches the eye like a self-immolating Pyrokinetic, after all.) You can also reward players by making their terrible mishap relevant to ongoing events—'Sure, you can see who's shooting. The Commies are illuminated nicely by Ellen-R's burning corpse'—this gives a feeling (however illusory) of importance and relevance. If the consequences of the mishap are entertaining, so much the better—perhaps the E/M pulse didn't actually wreck the team's docbot, but just scrambled its personality and skill programs in amusing ways.

Note: By no means do you need to apply these motivators consistently across players! You may have one or two individuals who are reluctant to use their mutations while some other player is slowing down the game by trying constantly to use his power. Prod and encourage the former using these methods, and deal with the latter in-character via ever-greater mishaps or outright failure to do anything interesting.

Power Studies

The Power Studies skill is an excuse.

For one thing, it keeps players from saying, 'Nobody knows how mutations work, so as long as there's no obvious link between me and my power, they'll never be able to prove a thing!' Well, they still can say it, but they'll be wrong. (Not that they'd be getting away with anything if they were right. Just about any power can backfire in a way that paints a nice big blinking 'MUTANT HERE' sign on the user's forehead. But it's the principle of the thing.)

Power Studies is also an excuse to give characters lots of misinformation that prompts them to act in entertaining ways. For instance, suppose a Troubleshooter team includes a Pyrokinetic. In the absence of information about Pyrokinesis, they might take sensible actions, such as making sure always to keep a bucket of water or fire extinguisher on hand. They might attempt to apply deduction and investigative work to ascertain the identity of the mutant.

MUTATIONS IN PLAY POWER STUDIES RESULTS

This is all well and good, if it's what you want. But also consider the entertainment value of misleading information:

- ③ 'Pyrokinesis lights fires. The best way to protect against it is to wear lots and lots of cold stuff, like ice-packs strapped all over your body.' (Hypothermia, anyone?)
- ③ 'When something ignites, look around. The pyrokinetic's eyes will have glowing sparks of light in them!' (Of course, any citizen who's looking at the fire will have glowing sparks of light in his eyes.)
- ③ 'If you completely cover your exposed skin with chapstick, the Pyrokinetic can't light you on fire.' (Ummm..)

The player, of course, knows you're feeding him hokey. But he asked for information, so he'd better go along with it. (If he does so with appropriate enthusiasm and follow-through, Perversity awards are in order. Reward entertaining behavior!)

Power Studies should occasionally come up with useful information. That way, the player will keep asking, and you can keep stringing him along with entertaining misinformation 50-90% of the time. (If this gets old because he's pestering you too often, blandly feed him the same piece of utterly pointless data every time he asks. He should get the message.)

It's probably safe to assume that anyone with Power Studies of 5 or higher has a firm grasp on some basic facts, with no rolls required—unless you feel like leaving the character to labor in cheerful ignorance, of course:

- ③ Mutations can do all sorts of weird things.
- ③ Mutations occasionally do things even the mutant doesn't expect.
- ③ Mutants could be hiding anywhere.
- ③ Mutants often have an affinity for skintight clothes.
- ③ Every mutant has at least one weakness.
- ③ Mutants who keep using their powers over and over sometimes get tired.
- ③ Some Old Reckoning artifacts are labeled 'Kryptonite'. A mutant touched by one of these items cannot use his powers.

In addition to these fundamentals, some questions should always be met with the same response. Go ahead and make a hidden die roll, just to keep the player guessing—he'll eventually catch on, but until then, it might make him nervous:

'Could [so-and-so] be a mutant?' Yes.

'Do I think [so-and-so] is a mutant?' *That's a good question. Do you?*

'Could a mutation do [thus-and-such]?' *Perhaps, yes.*

'Could a mutation be responsible for [something-or-other]?' *It's entirely possible.*

'Is there any evidence of mutant activity here?' *It's not conclusive, but there might be.*

'What mutations exist?' *A whole whoppin' lot of them.*

Eventually, the player will probably realize he needs to ask slightly more detailed questions to get useful information. When he does so, make a hidden Power Studies check. Then tell him whatever you want.

Okay, okay, fine—you want a chart? We'll give you a chart. See below.

Running the game smoothly

These suggestions supplement the information in **PARANOIA** XP Chapter 31, 'Running the Game'.

Notecards! Notecards!

Sometimes players miss out on chances to use their character's mutant power because the situation evolved very rapidly and they can't scribble out notecards fast enough—or because you don't happen to be reading notecards at the time. Wise players write out a few notecards in

advance, with 'I use my mutation to...'; perhaps followed by some detail. (It doesn't take Deep Thought to realize Regeneration probably requires a notecard saying 'I use my mutation to heal my wound,' and Pyrokinesis could use one saying 'I'll light _____ on fire with my mutation.') Encourage your players in this; it helps them have fun, which means they'll want to play more **PARANOIA**.

You may also choose to accept notecards that specify contingencies. For example, a character with Puppeteer might specify these conditions:

If Jim-R ever points his laser pistol at Judy-R, I make him twitch his finger and fire.

If anyone takes a swing at me with a dangerous weapon, I'll try to make them miss.

If someone tries to report me for treason, I'll control someone else into attacking him.

Not only does this encourage players to think of active, devious uses for mutant powers, but it gives you foreknowledge of the circumstances under which they'll use them and leeway in interpreting how they're used. With this information, you can stage events in a more dramatic fashion or ruthlessly manipulate the

Power Studies results

Margin of success:

0-3: The character recalls something that is either accurate (but useless) or inaccurate (but harmless). 'Mutants who control gravity are manipulating some kinda particle or something.'

4-7: The character has information that's essentially correct, even if it's vague, spotty or incorrect on details. 'There's a mutation called Gravity Manipulation. The mutant can make himself—or other things—heavier or lighter with it. Mutants with this mutation tend to be wary of high ceilings.'

8-11: The character knows some spot-on accurate information and some (possibly) helpful advice. 'The Gravity Manipulation mutation only tends to affect areas and isn't usually precise. Fire extinguishers can help you move around in zero-G.'

12-15: As above, but with more detail and perhaps some notion of the science (if any) involved. 'Gravity Manipulation can reverse, negate or shift gravity in an imprecisely defined area within the visual range of the mutant. It involves mental manipulation of gravitons in an inverted Huxley-Bartholomew field, which is why it's not precise. Carry magnetic clamps.'

16+: Subtract 15 and use the Failure table. Knowledge about mutations is hit-or-miss.

Margin of failure:

1-3: The character doesn't really remember anything. 'Gravity Manipulation? Maybe it exists, but you've never heard of it specifically.'

4-7: The character recalls something that's simply wrong, with the possibility to be entertaining. 'Gravity Manipulation exists. It can be blocked by lead and other heavy metals. You can identify a mutant with Gravity Manipulation by his wide, flat feet.'

8-11: The character has knowledge that is likely to actively harm him if he encounters the mutation in question. 'To defend against a mutant who can control gravity, carry as much weight as you can manage. This will anchor you to the floor more firmly if he tries to affect you.'

12-15: As above, but with more detail and perhaps some mistaken notion of the science involved. 'Gravity Manipulation only occurs in high-ranking Psions who have deliberately mutated themselves. The process involves a hyperenzymatic reaction that leaves them susceptible to being stunned by loud noises. You can shield yourself by carrying 12 hollow spheres of glass, each about 15 centimeters across and filled with butane.'

16+: Subtract 15 and use the Success table. Sometimes rank stupidity can be effective.



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

storyline so that all hell breaks loose (which are really much the same thing, when you come down to it).

This method does have the downside of being another set of things to remember, but in critical situations you can ask your players to remind you by making urgent-sounding noises, waving their arms and, when you ask them what's wrong, saying 'You *knoooo!*' (or, more simply, by passing you a notecard reading 'MUTATION').

Code words

If you have a good verbal memory, you may choose to give each player a code word that indicates his character is using his mutant power. This can be a real timesaver, but will frustrate and annoy the players if you keep missing their cues, so it certainly isn't for everyone.

This works best with mutations where it's obvious exactly what the player intends to do with his power. For instance, Regeneration is easy; Levitation slightly trickier; Corrosion hard; and Pyrokinesis quite difficult.

Dice management

Players can generally get away with only having one 20-sided die. As a Gamemaster, you may

find it useful to have more than one—especially if they differ in color or appearance. That way, you can assign a separate die to each Troubleshooter and roll them all at once for things like 'does he notice the warbot?' or 'does Push Mutant Powers force an accident?' rather than laboriously doing them one at a time.

Another trick for keeping the game moving is to make die-rolls before looking anything up. If the dice come up 16, 17, 19 and 3, you probably don't need to check skills or attributes; unless you were rolling for something that plays to a notable strength or weakness of one of the characters, then three of them just failed and one succeeded.

Of course, you can also keep things moving by taking the results of die rolls as vague guidelines... or even ignoring them altogether. That's much faster.

Corkboard data tracking

If you have trouble keeping track of Power, Access, health, clearance and approximate credits using pencil and paper, you can try this trick: Get a small piece of corkboard or tackboard and tack a sheet of paper to it. Make a row for every player, and keep track of each item (Power, Access, etc.) with a different colored pushpin.

It's a matter of personal taste whether you have separate columns for each statistic, really thin sub-rows or just keep track of everything on the same scale.

This method does, admittedly, take some advance preparation, but it means you never need to worry about deciphering your own scrawled handwriting.

Edible Perversity

Instead of poker chips, you can use some form of hard candy or wrapped chocolate to represent Perversity points. Not only are they a bit easier to toss accurately, but they add a truly Pavlovian touch to the player conditioning of **PARANOIA**. Plus, you get to appreciate the anguished expression of players who realize they've been unthinkingly eating their Perversity stores during play.

(Okay, you got us—this tip doesn't have anything to do with mutants. But it's such a fun idea we couldn't resist sharing.)

Entertain or starve!

2. Variations

Here are a few ways of doing things that are even *more* optional than all the other stuff in **PARANOIA**. Use them verbatim, as inspiration for your own twisted notions or not at all, as the whim strikes you.

Alternate character creation

Hidden mutations

You make the mutation roll for all characters, then a second roll to see whether the character has any clue what his mutation is. On a roll of 1–5, the PC has no idea at all—he just *suspects* he has a mutation. On 6–15, he knows something about it—you can secrete something weird from your skin—but none of the details. On 16–20, he has a name for his mutation and knows as much about it as any starting character ever does.

All rules that induce headache or increase blood pressure must be ignored. Thank you for your cooperation.

This can be nicely combined with 'Variable numbers of mutations', below—make a separate knowledge roll for each mutation a character has, treating 1–5 as 'character is completely unaware he has this power'.

Variable numbers of mutations

Before a player rolls for his mutation, make a secret 1d20 roll. On 1–5, the character has no mutation. On 6–15, he has one mutation. On 16–19, he has two mutations. On 20, roll again and add one mutation to the result. If you want to fiddle with these ranges, feel free, though we recommend against making 'no mutation' too likely; it's just not as much fun. Feel free to make it less likely, though, or to make multiple mutations even more common. (See 'Multiple mutations' in Chapter 1 for further information on characters with more than one power.) This works especially well with 'Hidden mutations'.

Useless mutations

This is appropriate for settings where not all mutations are potentially beneficial. (See Chapter 5 for some examples.) Replace the initial table-choosing roll:

1–7: Roll on the first table for your play style (see the inside front cover)

8–14: Roll on the second table for your play style

15+: The character has a mutation that's useless or worse

The default for 15+ is some sort of physical deformation, but others may be chosen as desired—see 'Useless (or worse)' in Chapter 4, 'Quick Shots'.

Mathematically astute readers may note this formula fails to incorporate the ratio of potentially useful mutations to non-useful ones in the general populace. This is deliberate—even if pointless mutations outnumber the others by ten to one, Troubleshooter teams with deadly, invisible tools of mayhem tend to be more entertaining than Troubleshooter teams with webbed fingers and a strange rash.

Variations and limitations

Each power in Chapter 3 includes one or more variations. These, like nearly everything else in **PARANOIA**, are completely and utterly optional. They're there to provide a greater selection of possible powers for those Gamemasters who enjoy variety or like to keep their players guessing. The easiest way to include them in character generation is after the fact—once a character's mutation has been settled upon, look

2. VARIATIONS

over the variations and limitations for that power and decide whether to use one of them.

If you really want to leave it up to the blind whims of chance, roll 1d20. On 1–3, use a variant from the Universal modifications in Chapter 3. On 4–8, use a variant listed under the mutation proper. On 9+, use the normal version of the power.

And yes, a character who has more than one mutation may have multiple variations on the same power. Sometimes this can even be useful.

Improving powers

You might occasionally have a character who wants to try and practice with his mutation, in an effort to gain improved control over the thing. Now, the average Troubleshooter in **PARANOIA** doesn't usually have a career long enough to merit bothering with that sort of stuff. However, in a Straight miniseries, you may choose to let a character attempt it, assuming he has sufficient time between missions to practice.

Yes, 'attempt'. Mutations are erratic; even with practice, improving them is no sure bet. Have the player describe how he's practicing and pay 20 Perversity, then roll a few dice behind a screen. You can either use the system detailed in the sidebar or just keep an eye on the player and see how nervous he is. (Pay no attention to the sunny smile he's bound to be sporting; that's mandatory, after all.) If he seems appropriately fearful, have it work—increase his character's Power or give him a trick (see below). If he seems blasé, then his character doesn't learn anything. If he's really overconfident, perhaps Internal Security gets a tip-off about his little practice sessions.

If you decide it's possible, characters may be able to learn tricks they can do with their mutation—for instance, a mutant with Light Control might work out how to cloak his face with shadow, making it harder to tell who he is. Tricks should be things that the mutation normally has the power to do, but which are weird enough or specific enough to really benefit from practice. They should also be moderately to extremely specific—'Use my mutation really well' is not appropriate. You are the final arbiter of all proposed tricks and may disallow, tweak or utterly change them as you see fit.

Moderately specific tricks have a rating four higher than the mutant's Power, much like common specialties for skills. Extremely specific tricks have a rating six higher than Power, much like narrow specialties. Unlike skill specialties, however, tricks cannot be raised independently of Power—they go up and down as the attribute does, always staying four (or six) points higher.

Some examples of moderately specific tricks: 'Appear on top of someone in sort of an impromptu tackle' (Teleport); 'Cling to back of speeding autocar' (Adhesive Skin); 'Turn laser barrels red' (Chromatization); 'Find my usual

Practicing a mutant power

Practicing with a mutation is all about learning from one's mistakes. Here's a way you might do it:

- ④ The player pays the necessary 20 Perversity and describes how his character is practicing with his mutation.
- ④ Roll three checks against the mutant's Power. If the mutant fails all three, his Power attribute goes up by 1. If he fails two of them, he learns a moderately specific trick—preferably relevant to the method he was using to practice. If he fails only one of them, he learns a highly specific trick (again, relevant to how he was practicing). If he doesn't fail any of them, he doesn't learn anything—he must be pretty good with that mutation already, after all.
- ④ For every roll that fails, the mutant has a mishap that's threatening in some way—either a personally hazardous event or an incident that might get him reported for suspicious activity. The higher the margin of failure, the more drastic the event, as usual.
- ④ If the player wants to spend Perversity above and beyond the initial 20, ask him whether his character is more concerned with staying safe or with learning stuff. If the former, the extra Perversity assists the Power rolls. If the latter, the Perversity counts against the Power rolls, making them more likely to fail.
- ④ If you're not playing with tricks (or you just don't feel like giving one out), fewer than three failures doesn't accomplish anything—but make a note of them. If the character later practices some more (after paying the Perversity again), you can allow his prior failures to carry over, adding them to any failures he gets on the new attempt. Eventually he'll accumulate the three needed to gain a point of Power.
- ④ If the mutant has a teacher or mentor, then—holy crap, this is getting ridiculously like other (non-fun) roleplaying games. Apply some modifiers or something; we're not wasting your valuable time with fiddly details like this.

secret society contact' (Mind Sense); or 'Force Pyrokinesis to light my hair on fire' (Push Mutant Powers).

Some examples of highly specific tricks: 'Jump-start autocar #99273' (Electroshock); 'Deliberately slam head against wall without hurting self' (Rubbery Bones); 'Stack one more crate on my forklift than it really ought to be able to carry' (Gravity Manipulation); 'Even out the legs on my bed to make it stop wobbling back and forth' (Sculpt); or 'Consume rancid Vat Special #5 without vomiting' (Matter Eater).

Using a trick is in all ways like using the base mutation—the mutant is simply considered to have a higher Power rating for performing that one particular action. Tricks have the normal chance for mishaps and overkill. If the action attempted with a trick is difficult, the usual margin of success is still required—the mutant merely has a better chance of achieving that margin of success due to his higher effective Power.

Power and Control

Power and Control is an alternate mechanic that, if used, should be used for all mutations.

Rather than controlling all mutant activity with a single attribute (Power), use two: Power and Control. The former governs the strength of a mutation; the latter represents the mutant's ability to do what he wants with his mutation. Determine

Power as usual (1d20, with a minimum Power of 8). Generate Control by rolling 1d20, with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 16.

When a mutant wants to use his power, roll 1d20 twice. Compare the first result to his Control and use that margin for any effects that require finesse or precision (such as getting the fine details right with Polymorphism). Then compare the second roll to the mutant's Power and use that margin of success for any effects that require raw ability or mutant strength, such as trying to use Polymorphism to turn into a cone rifle. Mishaps are governed by Control, overkills by Power. If the Control roll succeeds but the Power roll fails, treat it as a margin of 0 on the Power roll. Perversity points spent help (or hinder) both Control and Power.

Alternately, you can determine whether a given use of a mutation relies more on Control or Power and roll only against the appropriate attribute, using it for all of the margins.

This system lets you have mutants who are powerful but lack control over that power—like epileptic baboons with plasma generators. The disadvantage is, it's more fiddly, with lots of extra die rolls—though as always, you can just use the numbers as a guide and improvise.

When you use this system, most things that increase Power (including rolling a natural 1, if you're using that rule) decrease Control by the same amount. Likewise, most things that



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

decrease Power (including rolling a natural 20) increase Control—when you're tapping less power, it's easier to manipulate. The converse is not true—changes in Control do not alter Power.

Power can be improved as per 'Improving powers' above. Control can be improved like a skill: 5 times the new rating in Perversity points. Of course, the player shouldn't know exactly what his Control is, so let him decide how much Perversity to spend. If he doesn't spend enough, it's all wasted. If he spends too much, he doesn't get any back.

Addictive mutations

This variant can be used for all mutations, for metabolic mutations only or just for individual PCs lucky enough to be selected by your benevolent self.

In this variant, when a mutant uses his power, his body releases endorphins and other chemicals, causing him to feel happy and satisfied. This sensation is not merely pleasant but downright addictive—a mutant who goes too long without activating his power is afflicted with a strong desire to use it, rather than just feeling a bit over-full (see 'Accidents' in Chapter 1).

The higher the mutant's base Power, the better he feels—and the harsher the addiction. Someone with a Power of 8 or lower might merely feel kind of good when he uses his power, cranky or irritable when he hasn't done so in a while—kind of like a mild caffeine dependency. On the other hand, a citizen with a Power of 20 might know the highs and lows of crack or heroin, with commensurate cravings between uses.

If a citizen obstinately suffers through the privations of withdrawal, somehow managing to avoid accidental activation... well, if you're feeling generous, you can decrease his Power by 1 or 2 and tell him he's reached a new plateau. He doesn't need to activate his (less-strong) mutation as frequently or as urgently as he used to.

But as **PARANOIA** isn't generally a game about the triumph of raw will over adversity, we

recommend simply killing the poor sod. Maybe next time he'll use his power to try getting ahead rather than keeping it bottled up inside like a pipe bomb in his chest cavity.

Motivated powers

This variant can be used for all mutations, for psionic mutations only or just for those citizens hand-picked by you for a more interesting existence.

With this variant, some or all mutant powers have—well, 'a mind of their own' is stretching it a bit, but not too much. They have a certain... *volition*, which a mutant feels as strange urges coming from inside his own head. A citizen who has only just discovered his mutation probably can't differentiate between these desires and ones originating from his own subconscious, but more experienced mutants (the definition of which is left deliberately vague) can generally tell when it's their power causing an unusual impulse.

Pick a motivation for the mutant's power. It's easier to remember during play if you make it simple, such as 'harm those who have frustrated us,' but if you want something more elaborate, go for it. Motivations may be tied into the nature of the power—'extinguish all fires' for Cryokinesis, for instance—or completely separate, such as 'when we see IntelliFluid, drink it.' Feel free to improvise during the game; perhaps the power takes a dislike to one of the mutant's fellow Troubleshooters, producing homicidal impulses. This will (of course) shock and dismay the compassionate player, but he'll cope.

When the mutant has been fighting the impulses of his own power, he has a harder time using it—reduce all margins of success by up to 5 points, depending on how recalcitrant he's been. This can cause failure on a roll that would ordinarily have succeeded. Use descriptions such as 'your power escapes your control' and 'your mutation lashes out wildly.' If you wish, accidents may become more common, as the mutation attempts to activate on its own.

On the other hand, when the mutant has been regularly acceding to his power's impulses, he has an easier time wielding it for his own purposes. Increase all margins of success by up to 5 points, depending on how much he's been going along with it. Use descriptions such as 'your power flows smoothly' or 'your mutation bends to your will with surprising ease.'

(If you don't like the notion of a mutant power having volition or motivation, think of it as 'the part of the mutant's mind in control of his power has its own subconscious agenda'. It all works out the same.)

Obviousness

All powers detailed in Chapter 3 have some noticeable effect to cue an observer that a mutation is being used. However, in some cases

it's subtle—such as with Mechanical Intuition or Forgettable. In other cases, though the manifestation is obvious, it has no obvious tie to the mutant himself—such as with Pyrokinesis or Gravity Manipulation.

If you dislike this, you can dictate that all mutations have 'tells' of some sort—a giveaway that the mutation is being used. For instance, a subtle shimmering in the air could link an area under Gravity Manipulation with the mutant who's affecting it; mutants with Creeping Madness have to grind their teeth to activate their power; faint wisps of smoke waft off the head of anyone using Mechanical Intuition. The tell may be the same for all mutants with a particular power or may vary by individual.

This variant makes characters more reluctant to use their powers, so you probably don't want to use this variant unless your players are a little too trigger-happy with their powers.

Safer mutations

Though it's unorthodox, you can decide mutations are almost entirely safe to use—they only backfire on a roll of natural 20. The rest of the time, they simply fail, or succeed with a margin of 0. Don't tell the players this, of course. Let the bold and adventurous discover it through experimentation, while the craven and timorous cowards who neglect their mutation are chewed up and spat out.

This does reduce worry and anxiety associated with being a mutant, but doesn't eliminate it entirely—mutations are still treasonous, after all, and that 20 can always come up at an inopportune moment. Not to mention, all those *other* mutants out there are now a much larger threat—and any given PC is outnumbered by his fellow Troubleshooters.

If this smacks of giving the players too much control over their own fate—well, we agree. But it can still be an entertaining diversion for a single session. See who figures it out and how quickly.

WHAT'S WITH
ALL THESE
MUTANTS
AROUND HERE,
ANYWAY?

IS THERE A
CONVENTION,
OR...?

3. NEW POWERS

Random mishaps

We Famous Game Designers honestly believe mishaps work best when you select them to suit the current in-game situation and the mutation used, rather than resorting to a roll on a generic table. By deciding randomly, you lose a valuable chance to apply feedback and conditioning to the mutant's player. Plus, there's the matter of fear: in other (non-fun) roleplaying games, Random Mishap Tables are a cause of worry and dread because there's a small but finite chance the character will suffer some grievous penalty. In **PARANOIA**, a Random Mishap Table provides a small but finite chance the character will *not* suffer some grievous penalty. This is, of course, dangerous.

That said, we acknowledge certain Gamemasters *really* like rolling on tables. For these proud folk (who are always right!), we offer the **Random Mishap Table**.

Just roll 1d20 and consult the table at right. If you find any of these entries overly brief, see 'Mishaps' under 'Universal modifications' in Chapter 3.

The Random Mishap Table may help some GMs feel less guilty about inflicting severe mayhem and/or death on a character. We're not entirely sure why people with this mindset have chosen to run **PARANOIA** in the first place, but hey—far be it from us to criticize their choice of hobbies, particularly when it involves purchasing our fine products.

Random Mishap Table

- 1: Nothing happens (but Power is still drained)
- 2–3: Do unto others—affects mutant instead of others or vice versa
- 4–6: Fluctuating effect—varying in intensity
- 7–10: Inverted effect—the opposite of what the mutant was trying for
- 11: All the mutant's Power is drained
- 12: The power shorts out and is unusable for a while
- 13–14: Time delay—wait for it...
- 15–16: Wound self—ow!
- 17–20: Wrong target—whoops!

3. New mutant powers

We expect you are happy with the mutations introduced in the **PARANOIA** XP rules. Failure to be happy is treason. We furthermore expect you will be even happier now, as we provide you with many more fully detailed mutations, to help keep your NPCs unpredictable, your players uneasy and their characters overwhelmed.

We also provide additional data and possibilities for the original mutations from **PARANOIA** XP. Not only do you get scads of new material, but it's side-by-side with the old in a convenient, handy-to-reference format! The Computer gives you full permission to jump for joy, should the impulse move you. (Maximum permissible altitude when jumping for joy: 50 centimeters.)

As always, if there's something you don't like, don't use it.

Effects (or Synopsis): New mutations have a writeup explaining their effects, much like the writeups in **PARANOIA** XP. Mutations from **PARANOIA** XP have a short bullet list of essential information to remind you what the power is and how it works.

Variations and limitations: Different ways of running each mutation. These range the gamut from 'minor tweak' to 'same basic effect, different mechanism or appearance' to 'completely different notion for this sort of power.' Use them whenever you want, or not at all. You might give a different variation of the base power to each of the mutant's successive clone backups.

Mishaps: Impish ideas for things that can go wrong when the mutant's Power roll fails. Most of them happen instead of the mutation's normal effects; some alter the effects. In general, use the margin of failure instead of the margin of success to determine how powerful the event is—in other words, if a Pyrokinetic blows a Power roll by a point or two, he might light his shoes on fire, but if he fails by 10, he might immolate the entire room. See 'When powers go wrong' in Chapter 1 for more on running mishaps.

Overkills: Overkills are suggestions for events that can occur when the mutant's Power roll is far more successful than it really needs to be. See 'When powers go wrong' in Chapter 1 for more on overkills.

Format

Each of these fully detailed mutations has the following information:

Play style: One or more icons denote the style of play for which the mutation is most appropriate (see the icon key at right). You can often use a mutation to excellent effect cross-style, but some powers lend themselves to certain styles. Style isn't a rigid concept anyway; each GM picks and chooses elements to evolve his own unique style, which is of course *always* right.

Mutation type: Each mutation is listed as either *metabolic* or *psionic*. As explained in Chapter 1, metabolic mutations alter the mutant's body or affect the world via the mutant's body. Psionic mutations affect the world through no apparent physical mechanism. Whether the distinction is relevant is up to you. Both types use the same mechanic (roll vs. Power).

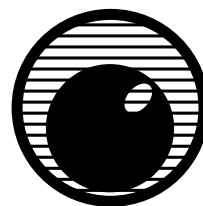
Universal modifications

Some variations, limitations, mishaps and overkills can apply to nearly any mutation out there. We've also included them in the main listings under powers for which they're particularly apt, but really, apply them wherever you please.



Classic

Fast-paced slapstick; mutations maybe make a sporadic nod toward scientific plausibility.



Straight

Tense suspense and fear in a scarily functional Alpha Complex; mutations are often (if not always) plausible, assuming you don't think about them too hard.



Zap

Frenzied firefights and hysterical gonzo action; mutations would fit right into a Warner Brothers cartoon.



Metabolic

These powers physically affect the mutant's own body or the world.



Psionic

These powers work through spooky mysterious invisible mental energy. Don't ask, it's psionic, all right?



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

Variations & limitations

Activity requirement: The mutant needs to perform some pre-determined physical activity to use his power, such as 'sing a little song', 'do a little dance', 'open his eyes really really wide and stare' or 'pretend to be a scrubot'.

Energy requirement: The mutation requires heat, electricity, nuclear radiation, magnetic fields or some other source of power.

Limited target: The mutant can only affect a particular type of target (citizens, bots, objects, surveillance cameras, one type of material, etc.). Consider increasing the scope or effectiveness of the power when you do this—the player may even think it's for 'game balance', rather than 'increased danger level'. Ha!

Prohibition: The mutant's power doesn't affect (and, if you so choose, is counteracted by) a pre-determined substance. Roll on the Random Material Tables (see Appendix) or just pick something.

Secondary effects: In addition to whatever the mutation normally does, it produces some secondary effect, such as a faint flare of light, the minty aroma of Toothpaste Supplement #5 or an audible hummmmmmmmmmmmm.

Substance requirement: The mutant needs some pre-determined physical material to use his power, such as motor oil, Cold Fun, chapstick, uriglutonium-332 or a used tankbot axle. Alternately, the mutant may not need the substance to use his power, but may require it to replenish his Power attribute. Pick a substance or roll on the Random Material Tables (see Appendix).

Mishaps

Do unto others: If the power targeted someone else, it affects the mutant. If it targeted the mutant, it affects someone else.

Fluctuating: The power manifests, but its intensity fluctuates wildly, perhaps even reversing the usual effect occasionally.

Instant death: The mutant melts into a pile of goo, has a brain hemorrhage or otherwise kicks the bucket. Use this one sparingly! If mutations are too frequently fatal, characters will stop using them—and it's ever so much more fun when the mayhem is player-instigated.

Inverted effect: The power does the opposite of whatever it would normally do.

Permanent Power loss: When using the power in some particular circumstance or situation, the mutant loses a point of Power permanently. Usually reserved for a roll of 20.

Power drain: The power fails and the mutant's Power attribute is temporarily drained to 0.

Short-out: The power fails and is unusable for some amount of time.

Time delay: The power seems to fail completely—but goes off in a little while, either where it was originally used or where the mutant is at the time, whichever is less convenient.

Wound self: Something goes wrong in the mutant's anatomy and/or mind. He suffers a wound.

Wrong target: The power affects the wrong item, person or area.

Overkills

Alert: Any and all nearby citizens with the Detect Mutant Powers mutation abruptly become aware of the mutant, along with what his mutation is, what he looks like and/or where he is, as desired.

Area effect/Larger area/More targets: The power affects more stuff—be it everything within a certain area, a larger area than usual or more targets than normal.

Chain reaction: Anything affected by the mutation can pass along those effects to whatever it touches.

Enduring: The effect of the power lasts for much longer than usual—or even becomes permanent in some way.

Excessively potent: Dramatically increase the effects of whatever the mutant was trying to do.

Expansion: Every round, the mutation's effects spread by a few meters.

Permanent Power gain: When using the power in some particular circumstance or situation, the mutant gains a point of Power permanently. Usually reserved for a roll of 1.

Power refresh: The mutant's Power is restored to its full normal rating. You may wish to drop a hint of this to the player so that he continues generating mayhem.

Repeated activation: The power activates repeatedly, anywhere from 'each and every round like clockwork' to 'erratically over the next few days.' The target / desired effect may stay the same from activation to activation or may drift.

M Absorption



③ The mutant's body absorbs all forms of non-kinetic energy: sound, lasers, plasma, heat, explosions, etc. (Yeah, we know—sound and explosions are kinetic. The mutant absorbs everything except attacks, okay?)

③ The damage level of Energy attacks is decreased by the margin of success. If an attack is reduced below minimum damage, it has no effect.

③ The mutant glows afterward. The more energy he absorbed, the more brilliant the glow.

Solid absorption: On a successful Power roll, the mutant's body absorbs any unliving material that pierces it, such as knives, swords, hypodermic needles and slugthrower bullets. Attacks absorbed in this way may snafu the mutant, but never do worse than that. This doesn't protect against *all* Impact damage; blunt objects such as truncheons and transbots still have full effect.

Mishaps

Amplification: Instead of absorbing it, the mutant's power *amplifies* energy that strikes him. Energy weapons increase their damage by two steps.

Nova: The mutant accidentally emits rather than absorbing, producing blasts of energy in all directions. Everyone in the area who fails an Agility check is hit. Those within a meter of the mutant are downed; decrease damage as distance from the mutant increases. This mishap drains the mutant's Power to 0. (Yes, this means he can't Absorb anything until it replenishes.)

Reflection: The mutant reflects the energy attack rather than absorbing it. Everyone within a few meters takes minimum damage from the attack—and most likely becomes somewhat irate at their former pal.

Overkills

Drain ammo: Not only does the mutant's power absorb the energy, but it drains the energy-producing weapon of an extra shot or two.

Sucking vortex: Not only does the mutant absorb the attack, but he starts actively pulling energy out of everything which has any in a ten-meter radius. Streamers of crackling light leap towards the mutant from laser barrels, blaster ammo packs, batteries, lights, robot power supplies and the local electric grid. While the vortex is active, all Energy attacks in the area automatically veer to strike the mutant, but he makes all Power checks as if he'd rolled a 1, so he's not apt to take damage. He also chews through 1 Power per round until he's completely drained.

Variations & limitations

Kinetic absorption: Though lasers, sound, etc. aren't affected, the mutant absorbs kinetic energy. If something strikes him, its momentum simply dissipates—the laws of inertia be damned. Decrease the damage from Impact weaponry and collisions rather than Energy attacks.

M Acidic Spit



The mutant can produce a highly acidic, noxious green saliva, capable of eating through metal, plastic, concrete and citizens. Fortunately, the inside of his mouth is resistant to this substance. Unfortunately, the rest of him isn't, so he'd better avoid drooling. One point of Power will produce the equivalent of a shot glass full of potent acid—enough to thoroughly cover about half a meter square. If the mutant wants to make less than that much—say, if he wants to be subtle—he needs to succeed with a margin of 5 or higher.

The saliva loses its potency shortly after leaving the character's mouth, so he can't save up quarts of the stuff, even if he could find something to store it all in.

If the mutant attempts to spit on another character, have him roll his Violence to hit. (If you really want to, you can let him take 'Spit Weapons' as a specialty. We won't stop you. Heck, we *can't* stop you.) The acid does W5K of Biological damage.

Variations & limitations

Caustic spit: Instead of being highly acidic, the saliva is highly basic. No real game effect, except to thwart smart-aleck players who try to neutralize the acid using an alkaline substance.

Explosive spit: The saliva is more like nitroglycerine, exploding on any notable impact. Treat as a (very) short-range grenade.

Mishaps

Drool: Do we really need to go into detail? W5K Biological.

Swallow: Stomach acid may be acidic, but not *that* acidic. Remember, W5K Biological.

Snarf: AKA 'Beverage up the nose'. All together now—W5K Biological.

Tender palate: No acid is produced... and unknown to the character, his mouth loses

its usual immunity to the acid for the next few hours.

Unacidic: The mutant manages to produce some noxious green saliva, but aside from the color, it's completely normal. So instead of incapacitating that IntSec goon, he's just spit a big gob of green stuff in the goon's face...

Overkills

Distance: The mutant actually spews forth a long-range blast of acidic spittle, just like some dragons do in Popular Fantasy RPG—only with much, much less control and finesse. Think 'fire hose of hydrochloric acid' and you'll be heading in the right direction.

Overproduction: You know when you smell a really good meal and your mouth just keeps watering? Like that.

M Adaptive Metabolism



To a certain extent, everyone has an adaptive metabolism—cuts heal, heating and cooling mechanisms try to keep the body at a safe temperature, inhaling dust results in coughing and so forth. A mutant with Adaptive Metabolism takes this several steps further—muscles constrict around major wounds (such as amputations) to keep him from bleeding to death, his skin reformulates itself to cope with corrosives, he safely metabolizes excessive doses of drugs, and chemical processes in his lungs shift to allow survival in toxic or low-oxygen atmospheres.

This is, of course, staggeringly useful—Alpha Complex offers a wide variety of hazards and inhospitable environments, and Troubleshooters get to see and perish in most of them. But the power has limitations: Any changes that require reworking of internal chemistry take time to accomplish, during which the mutant may choke, itch, cough, lose access to any of his senses, have his exposed skin dissolve and/or outright die. Neither can Adaptive Metabolism actually regenerate lost limbs or heal wounds; it merely minimizes shock and bleeding. (Game effect: The character may still spend Perversity when wounded or maimed and can act while nominally down. Medical attention is still required for long-term recovery.)

Adaptive Metabolism may go off all on its own without the mutant's intent, rather like Teleportation. It also may adapt the mutant in calamitously obvious ways.

Example: Stan-O and Lisa-O are stuck in the control room of a slowly overheating reactor. The temperature is 110° F and rising. Stan-O has Adaptive Metabolism.

Lisa-O: All right, I'm desperate. I'll start trying the YELLOW and GREEN Clearance controls.

Stan-O: [*to GM*] Is the security camera in here still active?

GM: Well, the little red light is on...

Stan-O: [*Gasps dramatically.*] Just because it's a little hot in here is no call for insubordination, Lisa!

GM: [*Gives Stan a Perversity point.*] All right. [*To Lisa:*] While Stan is mugging for the camera, you try some of the higher-clearance controls. None of them seem to help. [*Rolls against Stan-O's Power; makes it exactly.*] But you do notice Stan seems to be... changing. He's growing taller and lankier... and as you watch, two slits open up on his temples and shoot out jets of what looks like superheated steam.

Stan-O: Don't I notice this?

GM: Well, you feel a bit cooler. Maybe Lisa's fiddling around worked.

Lisa-O: Is that security camera rolling?

GM: [*smiles*] The little red light is still on.

Stan-O: *Gulp!*

When you make Power rolls for this mutation, a high margin of success can mean the change is effective, subtle or some combination of the two. Low margins of success mean either the modification doesn't work very well, it results in obvious physical change or it severely inconveniences the mutant. (For instance, growing gills at the cost of no longer being able to breathe air.)

Changes induced by this mutation aren't permanent—they lapse and fade once they're no longer necessary. Likewise, changes from Adaptive Metabolism don't carry over between clones, even if the new clone has the mutation.

Variations & limitations

Remain conscious: The mutant's biological systems have a single imperative: keep him conscious and aware at all costs. A successful Power roll lets him resist any wound, drug, mutation or technology that would knock him out or cut off his higher brain functions. Of course, it doesn't do much to help keep the mutant alive, and there are times when consciousness is a curse rather than a blessing. Failed Power rolls tend to afflict the mutant with severe insomnia for days or even weeks.



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

Mishaps

Flee! Sometimes the best adaptation is avoidance. The mutant uncontrollably flees the area at top speed.

Glitch: The process of adaptation has a hiccup and something in the mutant's physiology goes haywire. Perhaps he's now allergic to nitrogen, which composes about 78% of the atmosphere. Perhaps he becomes hemophiliac. Perhaps his arms have receded into his body, but haven't been replaced with anything.

Incorrect adaptation: The mutant's body comes with an adaptation that isn't quite right—for instance, instead of being able to breathe fluorine, the mutant can now breathe argon or finds fluorine tastes really good (but is still remarkably corrosive). This isn't necessarily detrimental in itself, but in circumstances where adaptation is necessary, it may be deadly.

Pointless physical change: The mutant's body changes shape in some way that's obvious but useless—he grows a three-foot webbed neck ruff, an extra set of ears, double-length fingers or some such thing.

Overkills

Alien mindset: Sometimes the mind changes with the body. The mutant becomes deranged (by human standards) in some way and/or acquires a tic of your choice. Perversity awards are in order for good roleplaying of this overkill.

Lasting change: The adaptation is subtle, but lasts for far longer than truly necessary. It's not likely that anyone will notice—but make the mutant sweat about it.

Stroke of blatancy: The mutant's body comes up with an amazingly effective solution! Unfortunately, it makes it really obvious the character is a mutant.

M Adhesive Skin



Let your fingers do the walking.

- ☉ The mutant secretes a sticky goo that adheres to one of: walls, flesh or clothing. Normal solvents do nothing to remove it.
- ☉ The margin of success indicates how long the adhesive lasts:
 - 0-4: One or two rounds
 - 5-9: Several rounds
 - 10+: A scene or longer
- ☉ Higher margins may also improve stickiness or effectiveness of application.

Variations & limitations

Sticky blood: The mutant's blood gels into a sticky, clinging substance upon exposure to air—anywhere from 'taffy' to 'superglue', depending on the margin of success. This happens whenever the mutant bleeds, unless he's out of Power, by which point he's likely suffering from severe blood loss. This replaces the usual ability to create adhesive goo.

Time delay: The mutant's goo will stick to anything... but it stays goopy for somewhere between two rounds and a few minutes before instantaneously setting, like epoxy.

Mishaps

Broken surface: The mutant sticks himself to a weak part of whatever surface or object he was attaching himself to. It rips free, leaving an access panel, chunk of ceiling tile or other fragment stuck to the mutant's hand, leg, body, face, etc.

Discoloration: The mutation works mostly normally, but the adhesive goo discolors whatever surfaces it touched. Hope the mutant didn't leave any hand prints.

Full-body coating: The adhesive covers the mutant's entire body, sticking him to anything and everything he's touching... and then dries up. Where he's not actually stuck to things, he has a coat of shellac.

Gummed up inside: The mutant's internal glands go haywire, causing his sticky goo to be secreted inside of him. On a small margin of failure, he simply feels ill and has trouble breathing. On larger margins of failure, he may pass out entirely or mummify some of his own internal organs.

Slippery: The goo is slippery instead of sticky, much like the Slippery Skin mutation. Whoops!

Sweat: Instead of emitting sticky secretions, the mutant just sweats. Hope he wasn't trying to stick to the walls of an elevator shaft...

Overkills

Clingy film: A slick adhesive ooze spreads with almost sentient purpose out from the mutant, tacking everything together, gumming up machinery and generally being a vaguely comic bother. For Straight, it reaches about a meter or so; for other play styles, the ooze spreads a number of meters equal to the margin of success.

Indestructible: The adhesive is no stickier than usual while wet, but once it dries, it becomes nearly indestructible. Even R&D's experimental solvents do nothing to remove the resinous residue.

Stuck: The adhesive is very strong—and lasts a loooong time.

Genetic impurities will be prosecuted.

M Adrenalin Control



③ The mutant's Agility and Unarmed Combat temporarily go to 18 each. He can perform amazing feats of strength, speed and coordination; may be able to take multiple actions in a round; etc.

③ After the power wears off in a minute or two, the character suffers a wound due to shock and stays wounded until he has several hours of tranquil rest or a nap.

③ If he uses this power again before recovering, the second use knocks him out for several hours.

Rage: The mutant can only activate his power when he's angry—and has a chance to accidentally activate it any time he gets angry. (Exception: If he's used it once and not yet recovered, he has to be really mad to risk it.)

Mishaps

Base instincts: The mutant's higher brain functions get knocked for a loop by an onslaught of adrenalin, leaving him with only his primal instincts. He gets the full benefits of his mutation, but behaves more or less like a beast would. You can either dictate the character's actions yourself or let the player roleplay it, as you decide.

Instant burnout: The mutant gets all of the aftereffects of an adrenalin surge, without any of the good parts.

Heart palpitations: The adrenalin overload doesn't do anything other than make the mutant's heart rate go through the roof. Perhaps he feels faint and dizzy, but that's about it.

Short surge: The adrenalin rush is short-lived and gives out at the worst possible moment—like when the mutant is hefting four hundred kilos above his head. *Crunch!*

Twitchy: Instead of a massive surge, the mutant's body releases adrenalin a bit at a time over the next few hours. The mutant ends up twitchy, restless and faintly irritable for the duration.

Wrong hormone: Adrenalin isn't released; some other hormone is. The mutant may become extremely happy, irritated, sleepy or fearful—or may get the joy of having his body become a battlefield between a surge of sexual hormones and the omnipresent dietary supplements that suppress them.

Overkills

Broken bones: Somewhere in all that autocar-lifting and bot-tossing, the mutant breaks a few bones without even noticing... until the power wears off.

Not tired: The mutant doesn't suffer the usual aftereffects of shock. This doesn't prevent him from hurting himself by abusing his body during the adrenalin rush, but it means he won't be exhausted afterwards.

Unkillable: For as long as the adrenalin is flowing, the mutant completely ignores all wound modifiers up to and including 'killed'—he just keeps going, too hopped up to realize he ought to be dead. Vaporization will still stop him, though. (Thank goodness for plasma generators.) Once the mutation ends, all the wounds catch up to him at once.

Mutation is an error. Errors must be deleted.

Variations & limitations

Berserk: While pumped up, the mutant cannot distinguish friends (such as they are) from foes. Anything that moves becomes a target for the mutant to vent his not-inconsiderable rage upon.

Brute: The mutation only increases brute strength; agility and coordination are unaffected. However, it also provides resilience; lower all damage done to the mutant by two steps. The mutant suffers shock afterwards as usual.

Lightning fast: The mutation only increases speed and agility; raw strength is unaffected. Anyone trying to hit the mutant needs a margin of at least 5 to succeed. The mutant still suffers shock afterwards as usual.

M Bouncy



The mutant can change the material properties of his body to behave like a springy, high-density rubber, permitting him to survive long falls and high-impact collisions. Of course, he'll ricochet around like a superball fired out of a bazooka, which is pretty obviously abnormal—but it's still better than decorating the walls of a transtube tunnel or doing the Big Pancake onto plasticrete.

Have the mutant make a Power roll, with a penalty for 'attempting to concentrate in the face of imminent death', if you feel like it. (Hey, he could have activated the power before going into that transtube tunnel.) A low margin of success (4 or lower) means the effect lasts a round or two. A middling margin (5–9) means it lasts for a minute or two; 10+ causes it to last for an inconveniently long time.

While active, this mutation also provides protection against Impact attacks (such as fists, knives, truncheons, slugthrowers, slugthrower rounds, pry-bars and really big lug-nuts tied to the end of a chain). Treat the margin of success as Impact armor. This may well make the character more or less immune to Impact damage, which is fine. Just remember to have shots that bounce off of the intrepid mutant go scattering around the



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

area, hitting whatever is most inconvenient for everyone concerned.

A mutant under the influence of this power has a hard time bending his limbs or moving around with any grace. Treat his Violence as 1 while it's active.

Variations & limitations

Bouncy objects: The power affects any or all of the mutant's possessions, but not the mutant himself. Bouncy grenades, anyone?

Gooley: Rather than being rubbery-and-bouncy, the character becomes gooeey-and-semi-liquid, with equivalent game effects. (This then overlaps somewhat with Rubbery Bones.)

Mishaps

CPR dummy: The mutant is still Bouncy, but loses all muscular control.

Completely rigid: Instead of becoming elastic, the mutant renders his body completely rigid and incapable of movement.

Midas touch: The mutant inadvertently turns one or more of his possessions into a solid rubbery mass. The effect is permanent.

Shatterable: The mutant becomes springy and high-density... and, if hit strongly and sharply, will shatter. (Ever hit a big glob of Silly Putty with a sledgehammer?)

Overkills

Appearance change: The mutant's skin changes texture and tone to look more like rubber or plastic. This may or may not wear off when the power does.

Area effect: Everyone near the mutant is affected by the power. If you want be to really excessive, it affects all objects in the area, too.

Incredibly bouncy: The mutant becomes perfectly elastic. Any time he comes into contact with anything, the full energy from that contact is reflected back into his body. This makes normal activities (such as walking) rather difficult and complicated activities (such as running) nigh-impossible.

P Bureaucratic Intuition



③ The mutant can get a feel for the operation of an unfamiliar bureaucratic process. Doing so requires an initial period of observation, which can range from a few minutes to as long as you want.

③ Making productive use of this deduction generally requires delving deep into the heart of arcane and intricate Alpha Complex procedures.

③ With success, the mutant may achieve results that are much faster or better than usual—though the process is rarely less *complicated*, at least to an outside observer.

Alpha Complex paperwork, as well as finishing in about half the usual time. You may allow other applications as well, such as recalling obscure details of a form filled out long ago or granting a bonus on an attempt to forge a form.

Mishaps

Delay: The character's intuition is off; he gets stuck in a morass of paperwork for a while, constantly thinking that success just requires another form... or two... or 30. Even once he finishes, the results aren't any better than they would have been had he gone through normal channels.

Lost: The character's intuition leads him off on a wild goose chase somewhere—either physically or procedurally. This may actually cost him less time than Delay does, since he'll realize his mistake more quickly, but whatever he was trying to do doesn't actually get done at all.

Really seriously lost: The character gets literally, physically lost in the labyrinths of PLC or HPD&MC while off on his bureaucratic quest.

Side effect: The method the character uses to navigate the bureaucracy has some unintended side-effect. Perhaps in addition to assigning himself better sleeping quarters, he's inadvertently forced his old quarters onto a high-clearance citizen.

Wrong goal: The character inadvertently does something other than what he'd originally intended—instead of requisitioning a warbot, he ends up volunteering for warbot testing; or instead of filing a difficult-to-trace accusation of treason against a superior officer, he accidentally erases his own identity. Whoops.

Overkills

Loophole: The character succeeds fantastically by finding a loophole or fast-track through the Alpha Complex bureaucracy. 'See—if I check off this box on this form, it authorizes me to fill out this other form as if I were my own supervisor, so I don't have to attach either of these riders or wait for departmental approval!' This may draw unwanted attention from CPU and/or Internal Security.

Windfall: While solving the problem at hand, the mutant discovers he's inadvertently gotten himself something else useful in the process—perhaps as minor as a free daycycle-pass to a BLUE-clearance washroom or a few extra laser barrels; perhaps as major as a pre-approved combat requisition form or a list of all undercover IntSec agents in AQT sector. The more useful the windfall (and the more blatantly it's used), the more likely it is to draw Internal Security's attention.

Variations & limitations

Domain-specific: The mutant only has an uncanny understanding of a subset of the Alpha Complex bureaucracy—perhaps the rules and regulations regarding bot requisitions, for instance, or the processes involved in promotions, demotions, commendations and fines.

Form mastery: Instead of the usual effects, the mutant simply has a preternatural affinity for dealing with forms. A successful Power roll when filling one out means he automatically avoids all the catch-22s and loyalty tests built into most

**Frequent
axe) is easily traced indirectly.**

For instance: Though all direct record of traitor Peter-G-BTB-5 has, indeed, been deleted, one can determine items he tended to requisition at the local unmodified aggregate records derived from the trend analysis logs. Fortunately, it's a distinctive set, and several files of PLC documents record the date, time and location of distributions likely made to him. *[continued on facing page]*

P Call Bots



Some mutants are able to send out mysterious impulses that draw the attention of bots. Throughout the area—which may be as small as ‘this room and the next’ or as large as ‘most of this sector’, depending on your whim—anything with a bot brain feels a desire to go visit the location where the mutant is. The attraction created by this power is entirely subconscious—affected bots rationalize a reason to drop by, unless the margin of success on the Power roll is so high they’re literally compelled to make the trip. A bot fortunate enough to have Power Studies software loaded at the time it’s affected might notice the effects in itself or its fellows.

The strength of the bots’ desire to come to the mutant depends on the margin of success: 0–4 draws bots whose routines might ordinarily bring them to that location; 5–9 brings any bot that can find enough wiggle-room in its orders to take a look; 10–14 causes bots to disobey direct orders from other citizens in their efforts to arrive; and 15+ compels bots to attend, overriding all asimov circuits for the purposes of the journey. If the mutant wants to attract only a particular type of bot, feel free to let him try, but require a higher margin of success.

Normally, this power doesn’t give the mutant unusual control over bots that have been called. However, bots must obey commands from citizens unless they conflict with existing orders. As this mutation is likely to draw off those bots with some leeway in their duties and instructions, the mutant stands a decent chance of getting bots to do as he instructs. (Within limits—see ‘Bots’ in Chapter 41 of *PARANOIA* XP.)

Still, the potential utility of this power is highly dependent on how common you decide bots are in Alpha Complex, as well as how ironclad their basic orders tend to be. If bots are relatively rare or are routinely given instructions such as ‘do not obey anyone below Clearance GREEN’, you may wish to use the ‘Goodwill’ variation below.

Variations & limitations

Asimov suppression: The mutant’s strange call utterly negates the asimov circuitry in all local bots. This can replace or augment the normal version of the mutation.

Audible call: The mutant must make some sort of an audible noise (choose from: a hummed tune; a loud, long moan; a whistle; a single word such as ‘blast!’ or ‘here!’; a yell of pain; or a snapping noise).

Goodwill: The called bots have a measure of goodwill towards the mutant and are apt to take instructions or suggestions from him in a favorable light. (This starts shading towards Machine Empathy—in Straight games, the maximum treason damage for such a mutation should be increased to ‘Erasure,’ though unlike Machine Empathy it’s not guaranteed.)

Repel bots: Instead of drawing bots’ attention, the mutant can make bots want to leave the area around him. Great when scrubots assault the team with high-speed rotary brushes.

Single bot type: The mutant can only affect a particular type of bot, such as warbots or bot-controlled autocars.

Targeted: The mutant can call the bots to somebody else. Not as good as ‘Repel bots’ for defense, but it’ll do in a pinch—and can be great for harassing teammates.

Mishaps

Calling Friend Computer: The mutant inadvertently calls The Computer’s attention—increase Tension to 18 for the next scene or two.

Hatred: For a while all bots hate the mutant with a passion. As with the actual power, the bots rationalize reasons for this dislike. If you want to



be mean, use this in addition to the usual effects, surrounding the mutant with hostile robots.

Irresistible target: Anything using computer-based targeting goes after the mutant instead of its actual target.

Short circuit: Any and all electrical equipment on the mutant shorts out, suddenly and violently.

Trackable: All PDCs in the area track the mutant’s location for the next half-hour.

Overkills

The basic effects of the mutation already provide for a certain amount of overkill—high margins of success pull bots away with such vehemence (and, perhaps, collateral damage) it’s almost certain to draw the attention of rather angry citizens. If you want some more, though:

Location broadcast: Bots always notice the mutant immediately, even if he’s trying to hide.

Lost puppy: Bots start following the character around. This may be paranoia-inspiring or just kind of silly, depending on the bot... but either way, it can be real trouble if the wrong person notices, inasmuch as it’s also one of the overkills for Machine Empathy.

Steamroller: The affected bots feel the urge to run over the character. Just like the call itself, they rationalize why this is necessary.

[continued from previous page] One of the relevant PLC facilities is rather modern in regards to data logging; though following the DNA sweep logs is futile due to record purges, the relatively recent Thermal Imaging Profiler System is not hooked into the main datastores yet. (Though the technology has been out of R&D long enough to be reliable, the data migration operation is bogged down.) A bit of work with the TIPS staff gets the Thermal Image Profile of someone likely to be Peter-G. Similar work places him at several more TIPS locations over the last month—including one where records indicate the requisition of equipment with a distinctive radiation signature, which then can be further traced, and so forth.

During all of this, cross-correlations crop up that verify the inductive assumptions, and you end up with some reasonably solid data.

Really, how difficult is that?

—Kenneth-U-GTP-9 (unregistered Bureaucratic Intuition mutant)



M Chameleon



- ③ The mutant can alter skin color over his entire body. This is mostly useless unless he's naked.
- ③ If he stays still, a color-shifted mutant is immune to aimed weapon fire and attempts to find him using the Concealment specialty.
- ③ If he moves, instead penalize aimed attacks and Concealment rolls by the mutant's margin of success.

Variations & limitations

Body paint: Instead of changing color to match the background, the mutant's skin can change color to simulate clothes and changes in physical appearance, through a combination of color, texture, line and shadow. This effect enhances Disguise and Shadowing checks, as well as possibly thwarting identification on surveillance records.

Invisibility: Instead of color-shifting, the mutant actually turns invisible. It's still not much use while wearing clothes, though. Mishaps may

result in some body parts becoming invisible while the rest don't.

Limited palette: The mutant's skin can only replicate colors and patterns which he's exposed to on a semi-regular basis. As the construction and decoration materials of Alpha Complex don't vary too much within a particular security clearance, his mutation will probably function perfectly well anywhere that's of his own clearance or lower. Higher clearance areas are iffy—RED citizens just aren't around INDIGO wall-to-wall shag carpeting all that often—and the Outdoors is right out.

Mishaps

All these mishaps remain uncorrectable for some amount of time (basically until it isn't funny any more).

Bullseye: The mutant's skin turns stark white (or jet black) with a big, bright, neon-orange bullseye on the front and back of his torso.

Glyphs: The mutant covers his skin in strange glyphs, runes, sigils and symbols. Though Alpha Complex clones have no notion of 'magic' or 'alchemy', they can probably discern that these

shapes aren't the random markings of someone who fell into a supply-closet full of markers.

High-contrast: The mutant turns his skin bright yellow, bright purple or some other color that really makes him stand out. He is not immediately aware of this failure.

Screen saver: The mutant's skin begins gently shifting through the spectrum, with whorls of different colors spinning gently across his flesh. The effect is ethereal, beautiful and somewhat distracting—though not so distracting that bystanders won't remember to report the mutant for treason.

Overkills

Spreading: Pigmentation soaks out through the mutant's skin and changes the color of the mutant's gear—as well as anything else he touches.

Stuck on: The color shift is dramatically effective—and refuses to go away. Clothes can be donned, of course, but any exposed skin will continue to instantly and perfectly match itself to the background.

M Charm



- ③ The mutant can produce pheromones that cause all humans in the area—including him—to admire and trust other humans. This makes them generous, open and sincere.
- ③ If the mutant makes a Management (or Chutzpah) roll, he can resist these good-natured impulses and exploit others for his own ends. (A +5 on all Management rolls against Charmed citizens.) If he fails, he's just as affected as anyone else.
- ③ The area and duration of this power are affected by environment and airflow, because it's carried via pheromones.
- ③ Once the power wears off, the victims return to normal, with full memory of their abnormal behavior.

Variations & limitations

The variations on Charm are also mishaps. Producing an alternate effect (such as 'aggression') by accident is usually unfortunate, but being able to do so deliberately can be quite

useful. Obviously a variation that's the same as a mishap shouldn't ever succumb to that mishap—though it can instead blunder into the effect of the basic Charm mutation!

Basic hallucinations: The mutant's scent causes everyone who breathes it to have hallucinations. They hit quickly and hard, though they only last for a few minutes, depending on airflow. As usual, the mutant has a chance of succumbing to his own pheromones.

Incite aggression: Instead of producing friendly goodwill, the pheromones boost anger and aggression. This is great for getting other citizens to commit acts of assault—though they may be on the mutant! As usual, the mutant has a chance of being affected by his own power.

Mishaps

Fealty: The mutant temporarily develops an absurdly loyal and subservient attitude towards a nearby citizen, for whom he will do anything—up to and including leaping into the line of fire to protect him.

Worse hallucinations: As above, the mutant pheromones induce hallucinations. This also affects the mutant, with no chance to resist.

Incite aggression: As described under 'Variations', the mutant produces pheromones that boost anger and aggression. But in this mishap, this also unfailingly affects the mutant, with no chance to resist.

Ordinary sweat: The mutant produces nothing but a lot of sweat and the aroma of a citizen under stress. Time for a hygiene inspection!

Self only: The pheromones don't kick in very strongly—just enough to affect the mutant, but not anyone around him.

Overkills

Larger area: The pheromones spread quickly and cover great distances. Exactly how far depends on play style—in Straight, the range of the power may be doubled; in Classic, citizens hundreds of meters away might be affected; in Zap, an entire sector might get into the act. Airflow still influences the power's spread.

Lingering effect: After the Charm wears off, those affected by it may retain small amounts of goodwill towards those they interacted with during the period of hazy happiness.

P Chromativariation



The mutant can alter the optical properties of objects he touches, changing the spectra of light reflected and absorbed—in short, he can change the color of things, at least temporarily. In other societies this mutation would be a harmless curiosity, but remember the security clearance system in Alpha Complex?

The greater the margin of success on the roll, the longer the mutant's changes last. Any sort of design or pattern requires a margin of 5+, maybe much higher. Changing the color of large areas drains large amounts of Power. Fine detail such as writing is impossible.

(Whether or not color-shifted reflex armor behaves differently is up to you. But changing the color of a laser barrel doesn't change the laser beams it fires.)

Now, if you're cackling with glee, envisioning bloodbaths among Troubleshooters whose gear has been color-shifted so that they're all committing treason—great! Have fun!

If you're instead concerned the potential for mayhem and 'instant treason' is too great—worry not. In Classic, the official punishment for carrying equipment above one's clearance is either probation, censure or medication (plus a healthy fine)—not termination. Proper reporting and documentation of treason can earn bonuses and commendations. Improper termination of citizens can earn fines and 'friendly chats' with

burly Internal Security GREEN goons. So anyone carrying out spontaneous executions had better have a more convincing rationale than 'But he was carrying an indigo crowbar!'

Though changing something's color will disguise its apparent clearance, it probably does not change its actual clearance. Just because a wrench has been turned blue doesn't necessarily mean it's now cleared BLUE, though those on the scene might make that mistake. Otherwise, any idiot with a can of paint could foul things up for years. (The Great Paint Catastrophe of 172 never happened. Rumors are treasonous.)

Smart mutants with this power avoid turning objects extremely high clearances—a white laser barrel turning up where one shouldn't be is more apt to grab The Computer's attention than a simple green or blue barrel.

Variations & limitations

Finger-painting: The mutant has to touch the entire area to be affected—as if he were painting with his hands.

Limited colors: The mutant can only change things to and/or from one or two specific colors.

Palette: The mutant must have an object of the desired color in order to make something else that color.

Slow change: The change takes place gradually over a minute or two.

Mishaps

Beacon: The targeted object begins emitting bright flares of light.

Incrimination: A beautifully clear colored fingerprint (of the mutant's, of course) appears on the selected object, which otherwise remains unchanged.

Skin color: The mutant's skin turns the selected color.

Wrong color: 'Green? Looks more like black to me. Or maybe a dark blue. Hey—it's turning white!'

Wrong target: The mutant affects a different object than he had intended.

Overkills

Chain reaction: The color-change is passed by contact—anything touching the affected object also turns the new color.

Too much!: The color-change spreads much further than the mutant intended.

P Clean Slate



This power clears a physical (not electronic) surface of all stains, color variations and writing by subtly scrambling its molecular arrangement. Aside from having its color homogenized, the material of the surface is not adversely affected. If this power is used on a citizen, he feels a tingling sensation, but no pain—at least, normally (see 'Mishaps'). The mutant must touch the object.

The most frequent use of this mutation is to clean up quickly for snap hygiene inspections. A successful Power roll should give a bonus on a Hygiene roll.

This power can also creatively alter paperwork. A successful roll renders a sheet of paper completely blank; a margin of 5+ allows for deletion of specific lines or areas of the page, rather than the whole thing. If the mutant tries to erase a number of objects at the same time—say, a big handful of CommieProp pamphlets—require a margin of 10+.

By far the most fun use of this power is in creative mayhem—wiping away warning labels or identifying tags, turning a team's equipment requisition list into a blank sheet, rendering crucial instructions useless and so forth.

Variations & limitations

Clean the living: The mutant can only affect living targets, such as citizens, plants and strange life-forms that rise from algae vats.

Clean the unliving: The mutant can only affect nonliving targets, such as forms, walls, bots, coveralls and reactor control panels.

Clean breath: Instead of having to touch the object affected, the mutant must blow on it.

Rearrangement: The mutant can't actually clean or erase anything, but instead can rearrange words and letters printed on a surface. On a good margin (5+), this can include signatures.

Scouring: The mutation actually destroys the outer layer of the substance touched. A target citizen effectively gets a bad rug burn all over (treat as Snafued). Also works as a mishap.

Mishaps

Color shift: The surface in question turns an unusual color.

Jumble: All color that would normally be erased instead slides to one side of the object or makes a geometric pattern thereon.

Molecular degradation: The item affected is weakened and may disintegrate at any time it's humorous or inconvenient.

Warping: The surface of the object is slightly mangled, becoming warped and bumpy.

Wrong target: The wrong item is affected. (It should still be something the mutant is touching.)

Overkills

Chain reaction: For the next few minutes, the target passes the Clean Slate effect along to anything it touches.

Clean scalp: The mutation works... but all the mutant's hair falls out, too.

Clean sweep: The power affects the mutant and his possessions as well as other targets.

Shiny: The object touched becomes highly polished, smooth and slippery—like a waxed floor.



M Corrosion



- ④ The mutant can exude a sweat that corrodes metals, even those that don't normally rust. It does not affect coated or sealed metal.
- ④ The amount rusted depends on the margin of success:
 - 0-1: A spoon
 - 2-4: A laser pistol
 - 5-9: An entire docbot
 - 10+: An autocar or the caterpillar tracks of a warbot
- ④ The mutant sweats readily and profusely under exertion or high temperature. His power may activate accidentally.

Variations & limitations

Corruption: The mutant's sweat breaks down human biology by transforming the natural iron in the body (or something like that). His touch causes fatigue, nausea and aches; on high margins of success, it also damages the target: treat as S4K Biological damage that only affects clones. The mutant is likely to affect himself on failed Power rolls.

Different substance: Instead of affecting metal, the mutation affects some other common substance. Roll on the Random Material Tables (see Appendix) or simply choose one.

Mishaps

Adhesive: Instead of corrosive sweat, the mutant gets adhesive sweat—as per the Adhesive Skin mutation.



Drenched: The mutant drenches himself with sweat, destroying any/all of his metallic equipment.

Itchy rash: Instead of producing corrosive sweat, the mutant breaks out in an itchy rash.

Wrong material: The mutant's sweat pits, scars and dissolves plastics rather than metals. Or some other material, if you like.

Not just metal: The mutant's sweat corrodes metal and whatever else amuses you. Plastic? Rubber? Hair?

Trail: The mutant keeps on sweating, leaving a trail behind him that corrodes and rusts out the floor in any places that it's not covered by paint or rubberized traction material. Follow the path to the mutant!

Overkills

Area effect: Everything metallic within a five-meter radius of the mutant instantly rusts out. Hope the floor wasn't metal.

Hey, this manifest lists 200 more cases of Shoe Liner pads for that High Programmer in Sector GHT! Can that be right?

P Creeping Madness



The mutant can project a psionic field that unbalances all organic minds in the area—including his own, sometimes. The field extends about two or three meters away from the mutant, unless you decide otherwise.

A few minutes of exposure to the field is enough to induce occasional lapses in attention and judgment, minor sensory hallucinations and whatever other low-grade symptoms you care to inflict. Half an hour of exposure will cause more noticeable hallucinations, brief mental fugues, unusual ideas and mental fractures; two or more hours will produce major sensory hallucinations,

full loss of control, raving madness and so forth. Paranoia, phobias, schizophrenia, delusions, catatonia... have fun with it.

Exposure wears off at the same rate as it accumulates—someone who's been exposed to the field for three hours will require three hours away from it to get back to full sanity.

The power lasts five minutes, plus another five times the margin of success. If the roll is even, the mutant himself remains unaffected; if odd, he is affected normally. Of course, he won't know until it's too late. (If you'd prefer, you can make a second Power roll to see if the mutant avoids

affecting himself. Either way, he'll have a slight edge even if he is affected, because he'll know his own senses may be untrustworthy.)

Once Creeping Madness is activated, it runs for its full duration—the mutant cannot turn it off voluntarily.

Variations & limitations

Bot madness: The power only affects bots, not humans.

Shared hallucinations: The sensory hallucinations induced by this mutation may be shared among some or all of the citizens affected.

Specific insanity: Instead of general unbalancing that depends on the individual, the field produces a specific sort of insanity in all those affected. ‘Twelve Angry Megalomaniacs’, anyone?

Voices in your head: The psi-field causes a sort of murmuring whisper in the mind of anyone affected—though most citizens will assume that the whispering is physical, unless they have some sort of mental mutation (like Telepathy or Mind Sense) themselves.

Mishaps

Aggression: The field induces violent pathologies—homicidal mania, sadism, irrational hatred, etc.—and it’s all directed at the mutant! (Well... at least mostly. We wouldn’t want him to have *all* the resulting ‘fun’.)

Inwardly focused: The field only affects the mutant and it’s twice as powerful as usual. Whoops.

Laughter: Everyone in range hears a voice laughing maniacally in his mind (and unlike ‘Voices in the head’, it’s obviously mental), with no other effect.

Overkills

Accelerated madness: People go mad 50 times faster than usual—minor effects in a few seconds, moderate effects in just under a minute and severe effects in 2–3 minutes. Citizens may notice an odd feeling the moment they enter the field.

Brain downtime: Instead of being driven mad, citizens within the field have their conscious mind switched off for as long as they’re exposed. Even if the mutant affects himself with this, the power continues operating for its full normal duration.

Larger area: The field reaches ten or 20 meters away from the mutant.

P Cryokinesis



The mutant can freeze objects, encasing them in a layer of hard, slippery, frigid ice. A higher margin of success generates more ice, more thoroughly encasing smaller objects or allowing larger objects to be affected. Higher margins also make the ice harder and colder—a success of 5 or more will be painful to touch with uncovered skin, which may be problem for the poor sap whose jumpsuit’s just been frozen. Citizens touching extremely cold ice while wet get to experience the ‘tongue stuck to the flagpole’ effect first-hand.

Any object within sight may be affected, even if it’s in someone else’s possession. Alternately, the mutant may want to affect part of an object (such as coating the floor of a hallway) or just create some free-standing ice—in either of these cases, require a higher margin of success; this mutation is easier to use when the ice is focused around an item.

Some items won’t react well to extreme cold—and no electronic device is going to be much helped by the water that may get inside it as the ice melts away. Coated items may be much harder to hold due to slipperiness, unless they’re so cold that wet appendages stick to

them. Even if they can be held, it’s awfully hard to use a laser pistol or PDC that’s in the middle of a hunk of ice.

Whether the ice formed by this power melts away at a normal rate or does so instantly at some arbitrary time is up to you (and may vary from use to use).

Variations & limitations

Lower temperature: Instead of being able to create ice, the mutant can lower the temperature in a location within line of sight. As a rule of thumb, assume he can lower it by 10° F (about 5° C) times the margin of success.

Mishaps

Hypothermia: Instead of freezing an object, the mutant sends a nearby citizen’s body temperature plunging into realms normally associated with ‘wearing a swimsuit in a snowstorm’. Or perhaps he does it to himself.

Snowfall: All that happens is a light, fluffy snowfall—not enough to really make it slippery or obstruct vision, but certainly enough to be very, very noticeable.

Wrong target: The mutant freezes the wrong item—quite possibly something on his own person.

Overkills

Absolute zero singularity: The mutant creates an immobile singularity that sucks away all heat in the area at truly alarming speed. The atmosphere in the area condenses into liquid, expanding outwards at one meter per round.

Liquid helium: Instead of being encased in ice, the target item’s temperature is dropped to about 4° Kelvin. If it’s dropped or struck, it shatters into hundreds of sharp shards.

More targets: Anything (and anyone) touching the target is also encased in ice. This may or may not be fatal for citizens, depending on whether they thaw quickly enough to avoid suffocation.

M Death Simulation



④ The mutant can virtually stop his metabolism. He requires no food or water, uses little oxygen, can handle fatal temperature extremes and is unaffected by chemicals, toxins and infections.

④ The mutant chooses the duration when activating the power—from one hour to a few weeks—and cannot wake before

then. Entering the trance does not normally require a Power roll.

④ Waking requires a successful Power roll. If the mutant has been comatose for more than five days, first reduce his Power by the number of days he’s been under.

④ Once awakened, the mutant must wait for the number of days he was under

(rounding up) before using his power again. If he does not, he halves his Power, then must make a Power roll to enter the trance.

Variations & limitations

Brainscrubbed: Instead of simulating actual death, the mutant can simulate brain death,



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

fooling sensors into reading the results of a fresh brainscrub. As with the normal version, the mutant must specify the length of time when entering the state and is pretty much out of it for the duration.

Conditional wake-up: Instead of being time-based, the mutant wakes up based on some condition: when he hears his name called; when it gets cold; when his laser pistol is pried out of his cold, dead fingers; etc. We suggest letting the mutant specify his condition when he puts himself under—the power is tricky enough to use already. If the player abuses this generosity by trying to specify overly complicated conditions, ruthlessly simplify them without telling him. Failed Power rolls may also result in warped or changed wake-up conditions.

Specific stasis: The mutant can will a single body part into suspension, preventing blood loss, spread of toxin and so on. Of course, the body part is non-functional during that time, as it ceases all metabolic activity. The stasis can be shaken off with about as much effort as it takes to get rid of a bad case of pins-and-needles or leg cramps. On a failed roll, roll randomly to see what body part the mutant puts in stasis. Hope it's not his chest or head!

Mishaps

Coma: The mutant falls into an actual coma and will die in a number of days equal to his Power rating. He can be revived with 1d20 days of professional medical care, but may suffer some sort of permanent trauma—lowered Knowledge skills or Power, etc.

Sleepwalking: The mutant's higher brain turns off, but his body keeps on going. He'll respond to simple verbal commands directed specifically at him—at least, usually. Otherwise, he takes no action. This state lasts for as long as it's amusing, though no longer than the amount of time the mutant had intended to go comatose.

Wrong duration: The mutant wakes up earlier or later than intended. Useful when you want to get a comatose character back in the action.

Overkills

Awareness: While seemingly dead, the mutant remains aware of his surroundings. He has no control over his body (and thus, whether his eyes are open or closed) and can't feel anything, but can see, hear, smell and taste just as well as he could if he were conscious. If he has a purely sensory mutant power (such as Hypersenses or Mind Sense), he can use that, too.

Healing trance: The mutant slowly heals while 'dead.' This isn't visible to casual observation, but someone who carefully examines the body on two occasions several days apart might notice.



P Deep Thought



☉ The mutant has a superhumanly brilliant mind, both in problem-solving and in memory.

☉ The player submits a question or problem to the GM that he believes his character would know/remember or could calculate. The trickier it is, the higher the margin of success required.

☉ While the mutant uses this power to do anything beyond the capability of ordinary smarts, his eyes glow brightly.

Variations & limitations

Combat mind: The mutant's brilliant mind is oriented towards combat, combat and nothing but combat. Upon activating his mutation, he gains the equivalent of a sophisticated heads-up display superimposed over his vision. Friends and foes are highlighted in appropriate colors; environmental threats are analyzed according to likelihood of harm, with high-threat zones clearly marked; a top-down view of the local environment is available; etc. This lasts for a number of rounds equal to the margin of success (minimum one round). While the mutation is active, the mutant's eyes glow red and his combat-relevant skills (including Stealth specialties for observation and hiding) are all considered to be 16. When the Power roll fails, the information shown is unreliable, erratic or downright misleading—no skill bonus is gained. Instead, apply the margin of failure as a penalty on all combat-relevant rolls.

Oblivious: While using Deep Thought, the mutant is so focused he doesn't notice anything going on around him. Physical pain jolts him out of his contemplation, as does the application of intravenous stimulants.

Mishaps

Infinite loop: Some aspect of the problem sends the mutant's brain careening off into an infinite loop. He stands stock-still with his eyes glowing a brilliant red until someone shakes him out of it or shoots him.

Stupid: The mutant's genius mind decides that it's been working too hard and decides to take a bit of a break. Not only does the mutant fail to solve his problem, but he becomes very, very stupid for a little while.

Wrong problem: The mutant's brilliant brain decides that it really wants to extrapolate the per capita toothpaste consumption of HHN Sector from bathroom surveillance statistics, or something else equally pointless.

Overkills

Background processing: The mutant's brain latches onto the problem like a ten-ton magnetic steel clamp. He gets his answer (whatever it is) right away, but his subconscious keeps chugging away, re-correlating and re-checking while factoring in any new data that may have been observed in the meantime. This may result in sudden weird bursts of insight later on. ('Seven cans of Bouncy Bubble Beverage? Oh, no—this is a setup!') The background processing is halted by any further use of Deep Thought.

Eureka! The mutant doesn't just solve the problem he was working on, but generates some other insight along the way. Perhaps he comes up with a unified field theory—or just figures out a new and brilliant method for keeping INFRARED bunks from squeaking quite so badly. The insights may be relevant to the situation at hand, but certainly don't have to be—the deep brain is mysterious, after all.

M Desolidity



- ④ The mutant can desolidify his body. A low margin of success lets him pass through small cracks and renders Impact and Biological attacks against him harmless. A margin of 5+ lets him pass through virtually any solid object and renders him invulnerable to attack.
- ④ Some arbitrary substance resists the mutant's passage. Choose one, use the table in the **PARANOIA** XP rulebook or roll on the Random Material Tables (see Appendix). This material may change as frequently or infrequently as desired.
- ④ The mutant cannot breathe while Desolidified. This limits how long he may stay insubstantial while also staying alive. (No, we don't provide rules for this. If you really want an accurate simulation, see how long the player can hold his breath. Otherwise, just make something up.)
- ④ Vertical movement is not normally possible while Desolidified (but see 'Overkills').

Variations & limitations

Object phasing: The mutant can't turn himself immaterial, but can make an object within line-of-

sight immaterial on a successful Power roll. Great for disarming enemies! Lasts for a few rounds. This variation is a psionic power, not metabolic.

Osmotic skin: The mutant's possessions never desolidify with him. However, he can absorb a measure of necessary oxygen through his skin. Multiply the length of time he can stay desolidified by three (or the margin of success, if you're feeling whimsical).

Unnatural chill: The area around the Desolidified mutant drops in temperature—enough for citizens to see their breath. Any physical objects he passes or squeezes through are rimed with frost. (Living beings feel a strong chill and are snafued from it if they fail a Power roll.)

Mishaps

Blowable: The mutant becomes misty and vaporous—and completely at the mercy of any local air currents. He cannot choose where he moves; he simply goes with the flow, as it were. This can be particularly bad if he's sucked into a ventilation shaft that's not big enough to accommodate his solid body.

Equipment only: The mutant desolidifies his equipment, but not himself. Fortunately, equipment doesn't need to breathe, because it's anyone's guess when it'll solidify again.

Increased density: The mutant becomes more solid and quite dense. He's not any stronger than he was before, so he has trouble moving faster than a slogging walk and his breathing is laborious, to say the least. He may rip catwalks off their supports or tear through insufficiently sturdy floors.

Standstill: The mutant desolidifies, but lacks whatever mojo lets him move around while insubstantial. Until he returns to solidity, all he can do is hang there and wave his limbs around.

Vaporization: The mutant's atoms fly apart in all directions, never to re-coalesce. Next clone! (Use this one sparingly.)

Overkills

Extended time: The usual prohibition against breathing doesn't apply—which is good, because the mutant is stuck being intangible for a few minutes. Or hours, if you're having fun with it.

Invisible: The mutant goes completely intangible and also invisible.

Pass through floor: The mutant becomes so un-solid that he overcomes the restriction against vertical movement, falling freely through the floor, the next floor, the rest of the sector and perhaps down through bedrock into the bowels of the earth.

P Detect Mutant Power



- ④ By concentrating and standing perfectly still, the mutant can detect the general number and location of nearby mutants. He may also get a vague idea of the powers they have, the danger presented by each and whether a power was used recently.
- ④ Low margins give vague impressions. Margins of 5+ gather more information, especially regarding recently used powers. For margins of 10+, see 'Overkills'.

Variations & limitations

One type only: The mutation can detect psionic powers but not metabolic ones or vice versa.

Touch only: The mutant must make physical contact with the target.

Mishaps

Incorrect information: The mutant gets just as much detail as he normally would, but the specifics are wrong.

Paranoia: The mutant's power goes on a paranoid jag. He senses (non-existent) individuals nearby with highly dangerous mutations, apparently intent on harming him.

Stuck: The mutant gets stuck on a particular power and starts sensing it in everyone—including non-mutants, assuming such exist.

Overkills

Larger area: The mutant detects all mutants within 200 meters, and their approximate location, but no particular details of their mutations.

Mutant-net: The mutant can sense virtually everything about the mutations of all those within line-of-sight. Unfortunately, the mutants so scanned can also sense exactly who just scanned them and what he learned.

Aiding and abetting a mutant is treason.

Circulating rumors about a mutant is insubordination.

Impersonating a mutant is just stupid.



M Electroshock



- ③ The mutant can resist electrical shocks. A low margin of success is required for minor shocks, a high margin for large ones.
- ③ The mutant can generate electrical shocks, zapping a target within five meters. Treat as a stun-gun—the victim can't do or perceive anything for one round. These shocks can also short out unshielded electronic equipment.

output of generators or just make his stereo that much louder than anybody else's. He can even use it to increase the deadliness of energy weapons—increase both the minimum and maximum damage levels by one step. Any equipment forced to carry energy levels beyond its normal capacity will likely burn out, spark and/or explode—*after* the mutation has run its course, barring mishap. This variation replaces the normal mutation.

Van de Graaf generator: The mutant's hair slowly rises into the air. Once it's good and puffy, a bolt arcs from the mutant to a nearby citizen, whose hair also starts rising. Lather, rinse, repeat for as long as desired. (Anyone generating static electricity may also arc onto nearby walls, bots, etc.)

Wrong target: The mutant shocks the wrong target—or perhaps himself. (And no, he can't use his power to resist it.)

Variations & limitations

More potent: The electric shocks the mutant generates do S3K damage in addition to stunning the target for a round. Works well with 'no immunity', below.

No immunity: The mutant has no resistance to electrical shocks.

Power surge: The mutant has the ability to increase the amount of power flowing through... well, just about anything nearby. The mutant can use this to overload circuits, boost the

Mishaps

EM ruin: All unshielded electronic equipment on the mutant is destroyed.

Equipment activation: Powered equipment in the nearby area starts activating at random. Not such a problem for PDCs, but a trifle hazardous with weapons.

Radio broadcast: The mutant broadcasts something (probably static, but who knows?) on some radio frequency or other.

Overkills

Area effect: The mutant blasts everyone standing within five meters of him.

EMP: In addition to whatever the mutant was trying to do, he generates an electromagnetic pulse. All unshielded electronic equipment in a 5-meter radius is destroyed.

More deadly: In addition to stunning the target, the shock does S3V Energy damage. (An unarmored victim will probably go down, given that overkills usually occur on margins of 10+.)

P Empathy



- ③ The mutant can read a target's emotions and project his own emotions onto the target.
- ③ Reading a target's emotions can improve the chances of success with most Management specialties or give the player hints as to the target's reactions. The better the margin, the better the result.
- ③ Projecting an emotion requires that the mutant actually be feeling that emotion or work himself up into some sort of frenzy. The better the margin of success, the more exaggerated the emotion and the more effectively it lodges in the victim.
- ③ Empathy is extremely difficult to use on more than one person—usually the mutant gets caught up in the crowd's emotions.

penalty on all of the target's die rolls for the next few minutes.

Incite riot: The mutant cannot read emotions or control individuals, but can generate psionic feedback between the minds of other citizens in the area, making all of them angry and prone to violence. Unfortunately, in order for this power to work, there must be at least half a dozen other citizens within five meters—and the mutant must be approximately in the middle of the group. The higher the margin of success, the more strongly the emotions flare up.

Mishaps

Delusional identity: If the mutant was reading emotions, he overdoes it and actually believes that he is the citizen whose emotions he was reading. If the mutant was projecting emotions, he overdoes it and the target now believes that his identity is that of the mutant.

Incorrect information: The mutant completely misreads a subject's emotions. (Only appropriate when trying to sense feelings, obviously.)

Overwhelmed: For the rest of the scene, the mutant feels the emotions of anyone and everyone nearby—whether he wants to or not.

Temporary insanity: The mutant goes over the edge in the direction of whatever emotion he was attempting to read or induce.

Thought broadcast: The mutant telepathically broadcasts his thoughts to everyone in the area. This may or may not include himself—if it does, those thoughts are apt to include a lot of cursing after the first few seconds.

Overkills

Excessive amplification: Whatever emotions were projected onto the target are exaggerated beyond the point of normal behavior. A citizen blasted with 'hate' would hate everything and everyone with a blazing fury; a citizen inundated with 'agitated' would become utterly incoherent and spastic. This may tip others off to the unnatural origin of the individual's behavior.

Permanent: Emotions projected onto the target become permanent. Psychosis, ahoy!

Personality insight: In addition to reading emotions, the mutant gains a measure of insight into the target's personality. This can be as simple as 'He's a greedy weasel who'd sell out his own clone backup for a quick credit' or as subtle as an intuitive insight that permits reasonable guesses about how the target would act under various circumstances.

Variations & limitations

Apathy: Instead of the usual Empathy powers, the mutant has the ability to dampen the brain activity of a nearby citizen. This makes it difficult for the target to muster the necessary gumption to do—well, just about anything. Use the margin of success on the mutant's Power roll as a

P Energy Field



- ③ The mutant can create a field around himself that absorbs energy (including kinetic energy), granting him armor rating 3 against all attacks. It blocks lasers but permits visible light. (Don't ask.)
- ③ The field is showy and sparkly. Energy absorbed by the field is radiated away as heat and light.
- ③ The field usually lasts about a minute. When it fades, it leaves the mutant exhausted (wounded) until he has a few hours of rest or a nap.
- ③ The field usually extends about 6 inches away from the mutant's body, but may fluctuate. If the mutant uses a projectile or beam weapon that doesn't reach far enough to poke through the field, it may ricochet around inside.

Variations & limitations

Anonymity: In addition to its usual effects, the field blocks all emissions of light from within—the interior seems inky black to all those outside it. The mutant can see out normally, but can't look in (say, at his arms or legs) any more effectively than anyone else. Alternately, the mutant is the only one who can see through the field in both directions, which means he can't tell whether the light-blocking is working or not. We're sure it would never, ever activate only partially, causing the mutant to indict himself in front of dozens of witnesses. Heh-heh-heh.

Barriers: Instead of forming a field around his body, the mutant creates flat barriers. Though less useful for personal protection, this variation is a bit less obvious in its source. Mishaps may still result in a (screwed up) field around the mutant, however.

Limited shielding: The energy field only protects against a limited set of attacks—perhaps just heat and lasers; perhaps all Energy weapons except lasers; perhaps all Impact damage from inorganic objects. However, the protection is much stronger—armor rating 6.

Variable strength: Instead of a predictable protective value of 3, the field's armor rating is equal to half the margin of success (round up).

Mishaps

Directional radiation: The field appears, but reflects the energy it absorbs in an inconvenient direction: through the floor beneath the mutant or at a nearby support beam or control panel.



'Me? Oh, you know—the usual. How was your day?'

Immobile: The field appears, but doesn't move with the mutant. He's trapped inside an invisible shell. For extra fun, let other citizens pass through it—'Come on!' [Yank. Wham!]

Opaque: The field appears, but reflects all energy—including light, leaving the mutant blind.

Oven: The field appears, but releases the energy as heat and light on the inside, frying and/or blinding the mutant if it absorbs anything substantial.

Too small: The field hugs the mutant's form so closely that some parts stick out... and inasmuch as his mouth and nose are covered over by it, he can't breathe well.

**Unlicensed evolution
is treason.**

Overkills

Hermetic seal: The field prevents absolutely everything other than visible light from passing through it, including gases and sonics. On the bright side, this may allow the mutant to survive for a minute or two longer in highly radioactive or toxic areas. On the down side, he can't hear—and if the field lasts longer than a minute or two, he's going to start running out of fresh air.

Stuck on: The field continues to vigilantly protect the mutant far longer than usual. Unfortunately, this also means it continues to be sparkly and obvious far longer than usual... and though Internal Security is not *entirely* correct in their belief that big enough guns will overcome nearly any weird defensive mutation, in this case they're quite right.



P Enervating Darkness



The mutant can create a shapeless, roiling cloud of cold and darkness that saps the strength from any citizens within—those affected must make a Violence roll to attempt any action more complicated than ‘run blindly forward’, ‘open the tool kit’ or ‘pull the pin on the grenade’. The effects wear off after a victim has been outside the cloud for a round or two. Bots and machines suffer no impediment, although the darkness affects their optics.

The cloud lasts for a number of rounds equal to the margin of success on a Power roll. The mutant can create the cloud anywhere in physical line of sight (but not remotely, such as through a video screen). Once called, the darkness sometimes drifts around at about walking speed.

Variations & limitations

Accident-prone: Victims affected by the darkness must make all their rolls twice and

use the worse of the two. This can be vastly entertaining, but causes a lot more dice-rolling.

Vampiric: For every citizen affected, the mutant instantly heals a wound, so long as he is outside the area of darkness.

Mishaps

Coma: The mutant passes out, and his body temperature drops 20 degrees. Just about any stimulant or hallucinogenic drug will revive the mutant, and will have its normal effect as well.

Personal cloud: A miniature version of the cloud appears around the mutant’s head and stays there. It has the full usual effects.

Pursuing cloud: The cloud appears normal—but chases the mutant. Good for rolls that just barely fail.

Time delay: The power seems to fail, but actually goes off some time later. The cloud may appear where it was originally intended

or anywhere near the mutant’s new location, whichever is funnier.

Trailing mist: The mutant starts leaking dark (but harmless) vapors out of pores in his skin.

Overkills

Death cloud: Any citizen caught in the cloud for more than 3 rounds dies. Each time this happens, the duration of the cloud is extended by three rounds and it grows by a meter or two.

Expansion: Every round, the cloud grows in size by a few meters.

Severe chill: The cold is intense enough to freeze water, numb faces and make expensive equipment more fragile than normal.

Let ‘em glow, let ‘em glow, let ‘em glow.

P Environmental Control



The environmental systems of Alpha Complex are manifold and omnipresent—there are vents for HVAC, humidity control and air filtration; drains for runoff from high-powered cleaning spray and accidental floods; networks of fire extinguisher spigots; huge banks of lights; and much, much more. All of it is interlinked and automated to some degree—if nothing else, all but the most ancient of thermostats and other controls send their signals to local Environmental Control Monitors.

Some mutants have a measure of control over these complex, high-omnipresent and often badly maintained systems.

control drugs into the local ventilation system, for instance, or flooding a building with fire retardant foam. Either way, a margin of success that large tends to have repercussions in systems beyond the mutant’s intent. (See ‘Overkills’, below.)

This mutation comes ready-made with large and powerful enemies. Every Tech Services and HPD&MC service firm involved with maintenance of Alpha Complex’s environmental systems hates the mutants who make their jobs hell.

Variations & limitations

Blowout: The mutant cannot control environmental systems—only destroy them. He can try to be selective about what he destroys, but needs a margin of at least 5 to avoid blowing out everything in the area.

Specialist: The mutant can only affect one type of system (temperature, humidity, fire control, radiation mitigation, airflow) but is much better at it. Treat his margin of success as 5 higher for determining what he can accomplish.

Mishaps

Flood: The mutant accidentally begins to flood the room that he’s in. This is particularly entertaining if combined with ‘Isolation’, below.

Inhospitable: The mutant accidentally tells the local environmental systems that life support is unnecessary. All airflow, heat, oxygen recycling, radiation mitigation and so forth cease instantly.

Isolation: Something in the environmental systems’ sensors reads the mutant’s power as a reason to isolate the area. Blast doors slam down, sealing off the mutant (and companions) from the rest of Alpha Complex. The area sealed off can be as small as a section of hallway or as large as a building or subsector.

Overkills

Brownouts: The affected systems require so much power to obey the mutant’s commands that the local power grid has trouble keeping up. Brownouts result.

Cascade effect: The mutant’s power causes a cascade reaction, resulting in changes to a far larger area and/or a far wider range of systems than originally intended. This can be a cascade failure, cascade success or cascade of unusual behavior, as you desire.

Excessively potent: Whatever the mutant was trying to do, increase its effects dramatically. Instead of dropping the local temperature a bit, he plunges it to 40 below zero. Instead of increasing the humidity levels, he deluges the area with water.

- ③ A low margin of success (0–4) lets a mutant with Environmental Control do simple things such as turn a fan on or off, turn a single light on or off, raise or lower the temperature to a slightly uncomfortable level or increase the humidity so the air is faintly misty.
- ③ A better margin (5–9) can cause airflow of 20–30 kph, raise the temperature to scorching or lower it to freezing, set the lights in an entire hallway flickering madly, create a bank of ‘fog’ in a room or hallway, trigger a set of fire sprinklers, etc.
- ③ A margin of 10+ may either have more extreme effects along the same lines or unusual results: injecting aerosol crowd-

P Find Location



The mutant is in tune with the corridors and tunnels of Alpha Complex, giving him a sixth sense with respect to finding his way around. If he closes his eyes and concentrates on a place—either someplace he's familiar with or a place for which he has an official designation (such as 'Warehouse 993-Z-delta in Sector GGN' or 'the Directorate for Authorizing Vending Machine Repairs')—he senses a filament of glowing light running along a path from him to wherever he's trying to get to. The filament lasts for as long as he keeps his eyes shut. If he opens them, the path vanishes and doesn't return unless he uses his mutation again.

The way illuminated by this mutation is not necessarily the fastest, safest or most direct route from point A to point B. It may wend through seventeen sectors, even if the destination is only meters away. It may lead through active steel foundries or Vulture Squadron firing grounds. It may involve getting through a door with a combination lock that takes a week to brute-force. It may involve going through areas the mutant isn't cleared for. (It will not generally involve phasing through solid rock, fitting through three-centimeter pipes or other physical impossibilities, except as a mishap. Think 'insanely inconvenient' or 'ludicrously perilous', instead.)

The higher the margin on the Power roll, the less painful the route in these regards. However, no matter how good the margin of success, this mutation never finds a route that is fast, direct and safe. (Unless you want it to, of course. Sometimes you'll take any excuse to get the characters where you want them.) Also, a path may be eminently safe—no rickety catwalks or excessive levels of radiation—yet perilous things can still happen, usually courtesy of other Troubleshooters.

If the mutant tries to find a location that doesn't exist or is outright impossible to reach via normal means, either the power can outright fail (booooooring!), or he has a mishap no matter how well the Power roll goes.

Technically, this mutation has the potential to circumvent missions (or parts of missions) such as 'find the briefing room'. Practically speaking, those situations rely on the characters wandering around for a while before they eventually blunder into their destination, and this mutation doesn't change that. It just dangles a forlorn hope of eventual success, like a worm on a fishhook, while leading the mutant on a meandering, potentially hazardous walkabout. It also requires the mutant to fast-talk the others into following him even as he seems to be wandering aimlessly through Alpha Complex with his eyes closed, which we think could be, you know, pretty entertaining. If you really want to avoid this problem, use the 'Known places only' variation.

Variations & limitations

Find object: The mutant can find one particular type of thing, such as 'hand weapons', 'drugs', 'batteries' or 'nuclear power plants'. He can either look for anything (i.e., 'any hand weapon') or a particular type of hand weapon (i.e., 'a laser pistol'). The mutation will lead him to one... but not necessarily the closest one.

Generic locations: The mutant can find types of places, such as 'a transbot station' or 'a steel foundry'. This can either replace the usual version or supplement it, as you desire.

Known places only: The mutant can only find his way to places he's been. He doesn't have to be overly familiar with them; they can be as generic as 'that corridor I was in last Threeday when the vendabot ran out of change.'

Transit intuition: Instead of being able to mystically sense an actual path from Point A to Point B, the mutant simply has an uncanny intuition for the massive transit systems of Alpha Complex—transbot networks, elevator systems, crawlways and maintenance tubes. This works like Find Location, except the mutant just gets hunches about what might help—'Hey, I think we should jump on the back of that speeding autocar' or 'Y'know, I bet this maintenance crawlway would get us there faster.' One Power roll governs the mutant's accuracy for the entire journey.

Mishaps

Compulsion: The mutant's mind senses the path—and locks onto it with a vengeance, forcing

him to travel it. He cannot stop; the best he can do is slow to a crawl.

Impossible path: The route goes through solid rock, insanely small spaces, vats of acid, the core of a nuclear reactor or other impossible paths. The mutant gets to figure this out with his eyes closed. Wheel!

Utterly lost: Halfway along the path, the mutant's power conks out—and he loses all sense of direction.

Wrong destination: The path leads somewhere other than the intended destination. Or perhaps around in circles?

Overkills

Everyone's path: Though the mutant remains the only one who can see the path, other citizens can sense it on a subconscious level and will tend to follow it—either as a means of reaching their destination (if it's about the right direction), by accident (if they're not paying attention to where they're going) or because it seems like the best way to try (if they're outright lost). As a result, the mutant encounters far more citizens along the way than would be normal for the area being traveled.

Visible: The filament of light coming out of the mutant becomes visible for at least a meter or two—perhaps even further. The good news: It won't vanish when the mutant opens his eyes. The bad news: He probably won't realize this, because he, of course, has his eyes closed. The *really* bad news: It's visible to everybody, pegging the character as a mutant.

P Forgettable



WARNING: This mutation rides the ragged edge of 'difficult to run'. Make sure you understand how it works before giving it to a character. If you don't want to deal with all the ramifications of this mutation, choose another or use the 'Only involuntary' variation.

When not physically present, the mutant tends to slide out of the memory of other citizens and (to a lesser extent) that of electronic devices such as bots, PDCs and The Computer. People forget appointments with him, requisitions he places are usually circular filed unless dealt with immediately, his superiors neglect to consider him for promotions and his sleeping quarters are occasionally re-assigned to somebody else. Basically, apply the 'out of sight, out of mind' principle liberally to the mutant's daily life (though not so liberally as to be utterly blatant).

All of this inconvenience is not without some benefit. In addition to the obvious advantages of being forgotten when it comes time to draft personnel for the latest Experimental Hot Fun Flavor Tasting Squad, the mutant can also deliberately attempt to affect somebody else's mind, diffusing memories of his current interaction with the mutant. Roll the mutant's Power. On a success with a margin of 0–4, the target forgets details of the current encounter, but remembers the basic gist of what happened. A margin of 5–9 indicates that while the target remembers



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

that there was a meeting, he doesn't recall anything about what transpired. A 10+ indicates that memory of the encounter is completely suppressed. As with the involuntary usage of this power, this forgetfulness only applies when the mutant is not present—out of sight, out of mind. (This can also make it quite difficult for the mutant to judge whether the power worked until much later, when it's probably too late.)

If this power is successfully used on another player character, you have three options: 1. Tell the player that his character doesn't remember certain recent events except when he's with all of the other Troubleshooters and trust him to role-play well. 2. Tell him nothing and filter any reports of the forgotten memories the player makes to outside parties (such as during Secret Society debriefings). 3. Curse vehemently, throw your hands in the air and move to Guam.

As **PARANOIA** is a game about secrecy and ignorance, we recommend option #2. But it's your game. Try #3 if you like, or blatantly avoid the issue by stipulating that the other player characters are somehow strangely immune.

Variations & limitations

Only involuntary: Only the involuntary, constant effects of the mutation exist. The mutant cannot make other citizens forget encounters with him.

Machine-focused: Instead of mostly affecting citizens (and occasionally machines), the mutation mostly affects machines (and occasionally citizens). Unless you're feeling really sadistic, exempt The Computer's main recognition modules from this mutation. Instead, PDCs consistently lose the character's contact information, bots forget orders from the character, his quarters are assigned to other citizens on a weekly basis and electronic records of his behavior (both meritorious and treasonous) are generally mistaken for old core dumps and overwritten.

Mishaps

Partial amnesia (mutant): The mutant forgets what he was doing, where he is and (if he blew

the roll badly enough) who he is. The confusion lasts for as long as is entertaining—anywhere from a few minutes to a day or two.

Unrelated inconvenience: Someone, somewhere, forgets about the mutant, in a way that's annoying, inconvenient and/or deadly. The target is completely unaffected, though the mutant may not realize this.

Overkills

Brain damage: The target suffers brain damage that affects his memory. This can simply make him a bit absent-minded or turn him into that guy from Memento.

Partial amnesia (target): The target forgets what he was doing, where he is and perhaps even who he is. The confusion lasts for as long as is entertaining and/or incriminating.

Permanent effect: The target will never remember the mutant for longer than the duration of their interaction—every time the two of them meet, it's for the first time, so far as the target is concerned.

P Gravity Manipulation



The mutant can manipulate the flow of gravitons to amplify, nullify or even reverse gravity. Anything from freefall to bone-crushing weight is possible, and any area from a welcome mat to a room, staircase, corridor or missile launch silo—in theory, anyway. Base the degree and area of adjustment on the margin of success of a hidden Power roll. A margin of 5+ means the mutant has pretty fair control—or rather, he can make something happen without turning himself into neutronium.

This power is imprecise in magnitude and area of effect. If a player tells you, 'I'd like to manipulate gravity just around me so that I can fly!' you have just been handed license to fling his character and all those around him to the Indian Ocean.

The exact effects of crushing gravity are left to you, the Gamemaster, as are pesky details such as 'Does the altered gravity field move with the mutant?' The real point of this power is the fun you can have by wildly swinging Troubleshooters between crushing Jovian weights, sudden bouts of near-freefall and the ensuing *genuine* freefall when the gravity turns back on. This ostensibly useful mutant power is really just an excuse for bringing mayhem into the mix. It also means twice as many people—meaning you and the player—are keeping a weather eye on opportunities for this particular brand of mischief.

(Of course, this is true for all the mutant powers in **PARANOIA**... but you knew that already, right?)

Variations & limitations

Air blast: Instead of affecting gravity, the mutant can generate extremely strong air currents that do more or less the same thing.

Conservation of gravity: Any increase in gravity in one place must create a corresponding decrease or reversal elsewhere. Calculating the exact location of this corresponding manifestation is pretty much impossible, so have it happen wherever you want: near the mutant, a whole sector away, Troubleshooter Dispatch, a moon of Jupiter, etc.

Fixed area: The mutant can only affect a ten-meter radius area centered on himself.

Limited effect: The mutant can only increase gravity, decrease gravity or negate gravity—pick one.

Mishaps

Inertial short-out: The power fails and the mutant's inertia is scrambled. The slightest force of any sort will throw him around like a feather in a maelstrom.

Wrong area: The power affects a location other than the one intended. For instance, gravity might be intensified on the ceiling directly above the Troubleshooters or nullified for that huge vat of molten steel over there. Or instead of affecting

a nearby location, it only affects the area right around the mutant.

Wrong direction: The power pulls in the wrong direction, amplifying gravity instead of reversing it, or shifting it sideways instead of going away entirely.

Wrong magnitude: Instead of a crushing four gravities, the mutant's foes are subjected to a 2% increase in weight. Or vice versa.

Overkills

Too strong: Pretty self-explanatory.

Way too strong: The mutant inadvertently creates a miniature black hole. It's unstable and collapses in microseconds, but not before eating everything in a hundred-meter radius. Save this one for margins of 20+, really spectacular climax scenes and/or Zap.

Would the anonymous party responsible for collapsing the Loyalty Parade bleachers please report to Internal Security for termination. Thank you.



'Friend Computer, one of our team members—our loyalty officer, Shiela-R-TWQ-2—apparently had a treasonous mutant ability to control gravity. She trapped us in a deserted corridor and attacked. Fortunately I destroyed the mutant traitor with a grenade. Unfortunately the blast killed everyone save myself, and also destroyed all recordings of our mission as well as nearby surveillance cameras. How tragic!'

M Growth



- ③ A successful Power roll increases the mutant's size by a quarter and his mass by a third. Each 5 points of margin adds an additional quarter and third, respectively.
- ③ The mutant's speed increases by the same ratio as his size. His strength increases in direct proportion to your whim.
- ③ The giant mutant can ignore a number of snafued results equal to his margin of success. However, these all affect him when the power wears off.

Variations & limitations

Grow item: The mutant can make an item grow larger by touching it. If the item is animate (like a bot), it does get stronger as it gets larger.

Super strength: The mutant becomes much stronger, but doesn't actually get any bigger—maybe he bulks up to a slightly more muscular form, but he doesn't actually increase in height.

Mishaps

Body parts: Some of the mutant's body parts grow—perhaps more than originally intended!—but others fail to get the memo.

Bloated: The character turns into a round, bloated mass of flesh that can't do anything more impressive than block hallways.

Constant mass: The mutant increases in size but not in mass. He becomes slightly transparent, weaker and susceptible to strong winds.

Equipment growth: Instead of the character growing, all of his equipment grows, leaving him lost in the folds of his now-immense jumpsuit.

Fluctuating: The character grows... and then shrinks... and then grows again... and so forth. He may stabilize just long enough to mislead him into thinking the wild fluctuations are over, only to suddenly get even bigger again. He may be smaller than usual for parts of this process.

Overkills

Attack of the 50-foot Mutant!: C'mon, you know you want to...

Giant ape: The mutant feels a strong urge to climb tall buildings and swat flybots out of the air. (Hey, it's Zap, okay?)

Ongoing size control: For the duration of the mutation's effect, the mutant can adjust his size between 'normal' and whatever he initially managed to achieve, with no further Power rolls required.



P Haze



This mutation scrambles all light and sound in the vicinity. Citizens look like vaguely clone-shaped blurs, distinguishable only by extreme differences in size, shape or coloration. Bots look like shiny blobs. Speech is still (barely) comprehensible, but voices come out flanged and distorted. Ambient sounds are likewise mangled, though their basic nature can still be heard.

The upshot of all of this is that everyone can see and hear what's happening, but is unable to distinguish important details like 'What is that citizen pointing at me?' 'Who fired that slugthrower I just heard?' or 'Was that order given by our treasonous team leader or Friend Computer?'

The effects of the Haze reach about five meters in all directions from where the mutant invoked the power. It lasts two rounds—maybe three if the margin of success is particularly good.

Variations & limitations

Darkness: Instead of merely making sight imprecise, the mutation actually plunges the area into darkness. Sound is unaffected by this variation.

Mobile: The power's effects travel with the mutant.

Radio jamming: Instead of mucking around with sight and sound, the mutation affects radio signals, as well as the frequency band used by PDCs. This variation may have the mishap of 'works like normal Haze'.

Silence: Instead of distorting sound, the mutation suppresses all noise in the area. Vision is unaffected by this variation.

Smokescreen: The mutant's pores emit a dense cloud of smoke, limiting visibility to about half a meter away. This variation is metabolic, not psionic.

Mishaps

Blindness: The mutant strikes himself blind. Or, if you're feeling perverse, he strikes everyone in the area blind.

Blurred senses: The mutant's senses become scrambled. To him, it looks as if the mutation is functioning normally. In fact, it's not, and treasonous deeds he attempts in his perceived anonymity are perfectly plain to everyone else around him. BLAM.

Deafness: The mutant goes deaf. Or everybody in the area does. Either way.

Radio jamming: The mutant affects the wrong areas of the electromagnetic spectrum,

inadvertently jamming all radio equipment in the area. Don't use this with the 'radio jamming' variation, obviously.

Vocoder: The mutant's voice becomes flanged and distorted, as if affected by this mutation, but nothing else is changed.

Overkills

EMP: In addition to the haze, the mutant generates an electromagnetic pulse. Perhaps it's strong enough to wipe out all unshielded electronics in the area. (The Computer is always shielded.) Perhaps it's weak enough to just scramble a few PDCs a little bit.

Enduring: The haze lasts a really long time—several minutes at least, but more likely hours.

Sensory overload: The scrambling is so severe that it overloads the senses of everyone in the area, causing severe nausea, dizziness, disorientation and general incapacity. Bots can't effectively use visual or auditory sensors, but are not incapacitated and may have other senses or means of communication, such as electrostatic proximity sensors or radio. Citizens who manage to cover their eyes and plug their ears can recover somewhat.

M Hyperreflexes



The mutant's uncanny reflexes let him dodge just about anything— even laser beams! (Yes, yes, we know. Speed of light and all that. He has precognition or something.)

When an incoming attack would hit the mutant, he may make a Power roll. If it succeeds, subtract the margin from the attack's margin. In addition, a successful Power roll lets the mutant automatically succeed in any action requiring fast reaction time, such as catching a dropped cafeteria tray. If he fails the Power roll he still gets the regular chance at success (unless a mishap prevents it). The effects last a moment or two—long enough to get out of the way.

Like Teleportation, this power can work involuntarily. If the character is about to be flattened by an oncoming warbot, the mutation kicks in and the mutant unthinkingly tries to get out of the way.

The margin of success governs whether the power appears obviously unnatural. Low margins are not readily distinguishable from simple good reflexes. Margins of 5+ might be noticed, and margins of 10+ are obviously superhuman.

A mutant who uses this power more than once or twice in a scene becomes exhausted a few moments after the last use. He slurs his words, has trouble coordinating and quite possibly falls asleep. The more he used the power, the stronger and longer the aftereffects.

Variations & limitations

Crack shot: The mutation doesn't help with dodging, but with hand-eye coordination. A successful Power roll allows a ranged weapon to hit practically unerringly; as with the basic version of this mutation, a failed Power roll still permits the normal chance to hit.

Mishaps

Injury: Whoops—the mutant pulled a muscle, strained a ligament or otherwise forced his body to go a little too fast without warming up. He takes a wound, which heals normally.

Instant burnout: The mutant gets really tired, just as if he'd overused his power.

Time dilation: The mutant's sense of time speeds up, so he feels like everything—including himself—is moving much faster than normal, making it much harder to react.

Twitchy: The mutant's nerves rev up, but without control. This can range from 'too much coffee' twitchy to 'constant low-grade electrocution' twitchy.

Overkills

Hyperactive: The mutant becomes unbearably energetic and bouncy. Think 'six-year-old who's consumed his body weight in pixie sticks'. (If you have sufficient pixie sticks on hand to simulate this effect, by all means, give them to the player! Just don't hold us responsible.)

Increased metabolism: Instead of just accelerating reaction times, the mutant's entire system speeds up. He talks, walks, shoots, thinks, tires and ages faster.

M Hypersenses



- With a successful Power roll, all five of the mutant's senses are more powerful and versatile.
- The mutant's ability to focus in on one sight, sound, scent, taste or sensation while ignoring others is vastly improved.

Sonar: The mutant can find his way in darkened areas by emitting little ultrasonic squeaks (and listening to the echoes). He can't discern writing or colors. Mishaps may result in high-pitched but audible squeaking, complete misinterpretation of the local geography or only being able to hear ultrasonic noises for a while.

sight fixates on a small bit of grime clinging to the nearby wall.

Variations & limitations

Project senses: Though the mutant's senses are no more powerful than usual, he can project them to anyplace within line of sight, enabling him to see around corners, hear sounds as if he were closer or taste things without actually putting them in his mouth.

Mishaps

Sensory overload: One or more of the mutant's senses become over-sensitive, much like during a migraine headache. The slightest stimulation sets off spasms of pain and nausea.

Useless hyperfocus: The mutant's super-hearing focuses in on his own heartbeat or his

Overkills

Lurking watcher: Anyone that the mutant is observing gets the sense he's being watched. Granted, this is not a terribly unusual sensation in Alpha Complex.

Sense substitution: The mutant's senses become so amazingly well-honed that they can substitute for each other—he can feel the difference between red and blue, hear the layout of a room or know what something tastes like just by looking at it.

M Jump!



The mutant can make prodigious leaps, beyond all limits of normal physiology—anywhere from 'action movie' to 'superhero', depending on the margin of success. If you want a rule of thumb, allow a standing vertical leap in meters equal to the margin of success or a standing horizontal leap of double that. (Yes, this formula suggests a mutant who makes his Power roll exactly jumps 0 meters. It's a rough rule of thumb.) You may choose to tone this down a bit for Straight, if you wish.

Success means the mutant lands smoothly, absorbing the momentum of the jump. Unless you decide otherwise, the power doesn't neutralize gravity (or explosions, high winds, magnetic fields, etc.), so the mutant can't safely leap off cliffs. Nor is the mutant immune to harm from colliding with objects mid-jump, for that matter.

Some players—particularly those who have watched a lot of anime or Hong Kong films—may want their character to show off by performing fancy flips and mid-air acrobatics. Feel free to allow this—not just so the mutant can look ultra-cool as he slams into a catwalk he didn't

notice ten meters overhead, but because displaying that level of control and finesse pegs the Troubleshooter as a practiced mutant, rather than some poor schlub whose R&D device accidentally sent him airborne.

Variations & limitations

Sound effect: The mutant makes a telltale noise whenever he jumps—perhaps a dramatic whooshing noise in Classic, a low-pitched grunt in Straight or a loud, springy 'poing!' in Zap.

Trail of devastation: Whatever spot the mutant launches from or lands on undergoes the split-second equivalent of being hit with a 100-kilogram sledgehammer.

Mishaps

No control: The mutant launches himself successfully, but loses all control once he's in the air. He may land on his head or go pinwheeling through a huge plate-glass window.

One leg only: Only one of the legs gives a superhuman leap—the other one behaves normally. This generally sends the mutant off on a completely unexpected vector. Oh, and the next time he Jumps, the leg that didn't work leaps at double-strength.

Rough landing: The power gets the mutant going, but doesn't help with the landing. Hope he didn't jump too far...

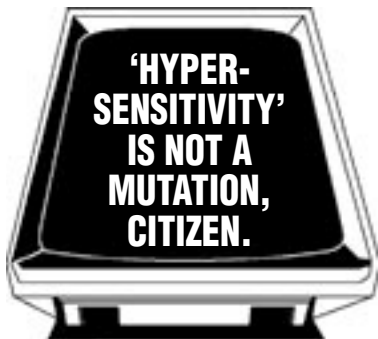
Stuck on: The mutant jumps—and as soon as he lands, jumps again. Until he runs through all of his Power, he is incapable of taking a normal

step without jumping. Particularly painful in areas with low ceilings.

Overkills

Faster than a speeding bullet: The character ends up jumping a little more... vehemently... than he'd intended. He either flattens himself on the next hard surface encountered in his trajectory or blasts straight through it, depending on whether or not he also has Invulnerability. (Oh, wait—there is no Invulnerability mutation. Too bad for him.)

More powerful than a hackneyed catchphrase: The mutant leaps so powerfully that instead of propelling himself through the air, he sinks his legs into whatever surface he was pushing off of. Or, if the surface was poorly supported to begin with (a ledge or catwalk, for instance), he rips the whole thing free of its moorings, sending it, him and everyone else on it into freefall.





P Levitation



- ③ The mutant can generate a thin field around his body which repels gravity, allowing the mutant to float up and down in the air.
- ③ Higher margins of success allow greater finesse—controlling rates of ascent and descent or orientation. Very high margins may permit actual horizontal flight without the need for pushing off of objects.
- ③ Kinetics still apply—if a levitating mutant blasts a portable fire extinguisher (or cone rifle) one way, he'll start floating in the other direction.

Variations & limitations

Hovercraft: The mutant can defy gravity and not fall, but only has the power to move horizontally, not vertically—as if he were sliding along an

invisible sheet of ice. Though this is mostly useful for navigating gaps and chasms, it can also be used to glide centimeters above the floor, avoiding spills of sticky chemicals and corrosive foodstuffs. As with normal Levitation, the mutant may still push off of objects and a high enough margin of success may permit actual flight.

Levitate objects: The mutant can levitate objects instead of himself. Unlike Telekinesis, the weight of the object is irrelevant—the relevant thing is the size. An ordinary success can affect a hand-held object, a margin of 5+ a clone-sized object and a 10+ whatever you let him get away with.

Mishaps

Amplified gravity: The mutant's personal field makes gravity around him much, much stronger. Breathing is hard. Walking is harder. Lifting anything is right out.

Low altitude: The mutant hovers about a hand's breadth above the floor—not really high enough to be useful, but definitely enough to attract attention and perhaps derision.

Up, up and away!: The mutant rises, and keeps on rising... and rising... Hope there's a ceiling.

Overkills

Hyperspeed: The mutant rises to exactly the level he wants with extreme speed—very, very extreme. He may lose his lunch or black out in the process. Also, the quick motion will tend to catch the eye of anyone with line of sight to his little aerial stunt.

More targets: Everything within five meters of the mutant that isn't bolted down is affected by his levitation, rising or descending exactly as much as the mutant does.

P Light Control



The mutant can control photons with the power of his mind, allowing him to amplify, suppress or bend light. A simple Power roll can make a room dimmer or brighter or completely suppress a single small light source such as a flashlight. A margin of 5–9 can plunge a room into near darkness or make it so bright it's hard to see; 10+ can produce pitch darkness or total brilliance.

This mutation can also be used to affect laser beams. Treat the margin of success on a Power roll as either a bonus to a shot being helped or a penalty on a shot being interfered with. Mucking about with laser fire takes a fair amount of oomph—only one shot is affected per roll—and is not without risk: a mishap at the wrong time could end up amplifying a shot aimed at the mutant, turning what would have been a minor flesh wound into a huge gaping hole through his torso.

Variations & limitations

Optics wizard: Rather than being able to affect environmental light or laser weapons, the mutant is specially tuned to lasers of the sort involved in optical storage and data communications. The margin of success on a Power roll can be used as a bonus on any Security Systems, Surveillance, Hacking, Programming, Operating Systems or similar roll which involves some form of

optical data system. This variation is particularly appropriate for Straight games.

Sympathetic material: Rather than being able to affect ambient light, the character can make a particular substance shed or absorb light. Choose a substance or roll on the Random Material Tables (see Appendix).

Mishaps

Blindness: The mutant's eyes start ignoring incoming light, rendering him effectively blind. This normally lasts only a few minutes, but on a really spectacular screw-up, it might last much longer—or even be permanent.

Film noir: The local area loses all color, fading to black and white. This effect lasts for a scene or so.

Fixture blowout: Light fixtures in the area overload and blow out in a violent shattering of glass.

Inverted effect: Instead of creating light, the mutant creates darkness. Instead of amplifying his laser, he diffuses or deflects it.

Overkills

Aura: The mutant's body is surrounded by either a softly glowing aura of light or a nimbus

of shadowy darkness. It lasts for a scene (or however long is amusing).

Excessively potent: The mutant generates light of laser-like intensity or plunges the area into darkness so thick that light sources and lasers can't penetrate it. If he was amplifying a laser, it's as powerful as the latest experimental laser cannon; if suppressing one, it doesn't even appear to fire.

Permanent: Whatever was done with the power is permanent. Only appropriate for environmental effects, not tweaking of laser fire.



P Machine Empathy



Warning! Warning! This mutant power is REALLY treasonous!
The Computer will execute anyone possessing it, regardless of other factors!

- On a successful Power roll, robots and computers (including The Computer) tend to like and trust the character. They won't attack or kill him unless they have specific orders or some other strong reason. Bonuses to Management rolls may be in order.
- Success also means The Computer will give the mutant the benefit of the doubt when it comes to matters of poor performance, insubordination and treason.

Variations & limitations

Bots only: The mutant's power only works on robots, not computers or The Computer. This limitation is pretty nasty, as the character can't even use it in his own defense when accused of having Machine Empathy.

Machine annoyance: The mutant can't make machines happy, only unhappy and irritable. However, unlike the 'Machine hostility' mishap, the artificial mind's ire is not necessarily directed

at the mutant, but rather towards whomever or whatever it's interacting with at the time.

Mishaps

Machine hostility: All machines in the area get bad vibes from the mutant, becoming annoyed, uncooperative, testy or downright hostile towards him. The worse the margin of failure, the worse the vibes.

Mood crash: The power works—but whenever the mutant leaves, any and all machines in the area become depressed, cranky and generally unhappy.

Quirkiness: Instead of influencing the machine intelligence to like and trust him, the mutant accidentally tweaks it in some other way, causing quirky and unpredictable behavior. Perhaps The Computer starts speaking in a garbled voice. Or only in metaphors. Or exactly like Inspector Clouseau. Maybe that warbot gets a righteous craving for Cheez Pleezer despite the fact that it has no way of eating the stuff. Though Straight is likely to have less over-the-top results than

Zap, they can still be pretty strange; after all, the mutant's just gone and meddled directly with the machine's mind. Use your imagination!

Overkills

Lost puppy: Any robots in the area like the mutant so much that they start following him around. Depending on what the robots are, this can range from 'funny' to 'downright sinister'.

Solicitousness: The machines affected become not merely well-disposed, but downright solicitous. Robots will ask if the mutant wishes to be carried rather than having to walk, offer to fetch him refreshing beverages, concernedly inquire into his health after firefights and so forth. Even The Computer may be affected in this way, though it's less likely to verge on the obsequious. (It will also, of course, not actually do any of the labor itself, but instead command other citizens to do it—'Hank-G! Go and fetch the fine and upstanding citizen Jean-R a drink!'—which may earn the mutant quite a number of resentful enemies.)

Joseph-B-NTJ-4: And that, Friend Computer, is why I shot the team leader in the back four times during this mission.

The Computer: I see. Well, citizen, I have to say I can't see any way out of this except to terminate you for treason.

Joseph-B: I understand, Friend Computer. It can't be easy having to make these decisions all day. I commend your commitment to fairness and equity.

The Computer: Well now, thank you for recognizing that. Confidentially, it sometimes seems like everyone just takes me for granted around here.

Joseph-B: It must be a thankless job, safeguarding the hapless masses from the spectre of treason. It speaks highly of your programming that everyone is so happy all the time. Please let my replacement clone know if he can do anything to help ease your burden.

The Computer: Well, you do seem repentant... Let's just leave it at a fine and brainscrub this time around, all righty?

Joseph-B: Once again I'm delighted by your generosity. Thanks, Friend Computer.

The Computer: Just don't let it happen again! Here, have some HappyTime pills.



P Magnetize



The mutant can force an alignment of electromagnetic charge in a nearby object, turning it into a powerful magnet.

- ④ A margin of 0–4 can affect an object made of ferrous metal and massing no more than 10–20 kilograms.
- ④ Margins of 5–9 can affect an object that's either non-metallic (a jumpsuit, an apple, copper wire) or massive (a warbot, a chunk of steel wall);
- ④ 10+ affects targets both nonmetallic and massive (a citizen, a food vat).

If the mutant is trying to affect multiple objects, add 5 to the required margin—or just laugh heartily and go straight to the list of mishaps.

The magnetic field can usually affect items about five meters distant, though this may vary wildly with GM whim, as may the strength—which you'll note we haven't described at all. It's more fun that way.

The precise effects of Magnetize depend on circumstances. Large objects tend to pull smaller objects towards them, regardless of which one is actually magnetic. Don't worry much about accuracy—in *PARANOIA* you bend, fold, spindle and mutilate physical law as you see fit. (Is, say, tungsten attracted by a magnetic field? Hey, it is *now*!)

For additional chaos, exploit the fact that similar magnetic charges repel each other. Because electric currents generate magnetic fields, you have license to fling around anything with embedded circuitry.

Whether or not magnetic fields corrupt the digital memory in PDCs, bots, data storage devices, etc. is entirely up to you—perhaps Alpha Complex still uses magnetic-based memory technology, perhaps it's moved on to different tech. Most likely it mixes the two, with the least vulnerable systems used for critical equipment such as The Computer and some bots, and cheaper magnetic memory for mass-produced items like PDCs.



Variations & limitations

Alternate material: Roll on the Random Material Tables. The mutant can magnetize this material most easily, instead of metal.

Metal only: The mutant can only magnetize objects made of ferrous metal. Less humor, more verisimilitude.

Repellent charge: The magnetic field repels metal rather than attracting it. Yes, this violates the laws of physics. Who cares?

Mishaps

EMP: The mutant blows out all unshielded electronic equipment on his person.

Ground zero: The mutant magnetizes himself powerfully. Loosely secured metallic objects in the area rip free and pelt him at high velocity.

Weak attraction: The mutant generates a faint tugging towards himself on all metallic objects in the area, but no other effect.

Overkills

Amazingly strong: The field isn't necessarily any larger than usual, but is immensely strong, exerting virtually irresistible force.

Attract everything: The 'magnetized' material doesn't just attract metal—it attracts *everything* within range.

Chain reaction: Whatever the magnetized object touches becomes magnetic, as do things touched by those things and so forth, with the strength of the field diminishing slightly on each hop.

Immense area: The field isn't necessarily any stronger than usual, but reaches for hundreds of meters (or more!) in all directions.

M Matter Eater



- ④ The mutant can, in theory, digest any substance whatsoever, though he only gains nourishment from organic materials.
- ④ When he eats something unusual or toxic, a successful Power roll means everything is fine.

Variations & limitations

Amazing jaw strength: The basic mutation doesn't provide any unusual capability in the actual consumption of objects which would ordinarily be difficult or impossible to eat. You can, if you wish, decide the mutation also provides extreme jaw strength and sharp, durable teeth,

allowing the mutant to chew objects normally too large to swallow whole and too hard to bite. Whether this requires a separate Power roll from the ensuing digestion is up to you. Failed Power rolls may then also result in broken teeth or a dislocated jaw. This variation is most appropriate for Classic and Zap.

External feeder: A hybrid mutation somewhere between Corrosion and Matter Eater, this

3. NEW POWERS

MECHANICAL INTUITION

variation allows the mutant to exude a sweat that digests matter for subsequent re-absorption. (Kind of like a starfish, only without the 'expel the stomach through the mouth' step. Even we have limits.) This sweat can affect any matter, not just metal, though it doesn't affect nearly as large an area as Corrosion does—only where the mutant touches. The higher the margin of success, the faster and more successful the digestion is. As usual, nourishment is only derived from organic material.

Mishaps

To some extent, this mutation is its own mishap—if it fails to activate, the mutant has just put something non-digestible (and possibly toxic or pointy) into his stomach.

Cramps: The mutant's stomach doesn't feel so good. Even if he was just trying to get nourishment from digesting a few pieces of paper, he's laid up with nasty abdominal cramps.

Nausea: Pretty self-explanatory.

Synthesis: The mutant's body assimilates whatever was eaten into its own structure. If he ate a bunch of metal, maybe he starts growing metal hair or scales or something. If he drank kerosene, perhaps his blood becomes flammable.



Overkills

100% digestion: The mutant's stomach starts digesting things so well that he stops excreting altogether. Mildly convenient, but subtly dangerous if anyone is monitoring how often he makes use of the facilities. ('Why have you not applied for an Emergency Bathroom Break ticket in two years?')

Nonstandard nourishment: The mutant's metabolism shifts and somehow manages to extract some sort of value from non-organic materials. This can be normal 'sustain the body' nourishment or can replenish the mutant's Power by a point or two, at your discretion.

P Mechanical Intuition



⑥ With a bit of observation, the mutant can deduce the basic operating and design principles of an unfamiliar mechanical device.

⑥ This may permit him to use a device that he wouldn't normally know how to use or simply give him information about an unusual object's function.

⑥ The mutant's Power roll may be improved by longer examination time or familiarity with similar devices.

the bailiwick of Chemical Engineering, but can also aid with guessing the function of unfamiliar pharmaceuticals.

Mishaps

Breakage: While trying to figure out how the object works, the mutant somehow breaks it.

Futile obsession: The mutant's mind becomes obsessed with the device. He has difficulty concentrating on other problems, getting to sleep at night or even carrying on an ordinary conversation. This lasts for some amount of time and then either passes, leaving the mutant with no more insight than he started with, or results in some incorrect revelation.

Misinterpretation: The mutant thinks he understands the device, but his information is either woefully incomplete or just plain wrong. Or perhaps he understands the general principles

but swaps details around—he might see an accelerator as a brake or the 'blow up now' button as a disarming mechanism.

Overkills

Know-it-all: The mutant not only understands whatever object he was studying, but realizes how to work lots of nearby objects. He also feels the overwhelming compulsion to tell everyone what they're doing wrong with the devices, how to use them more effectively, etc.

Obsession: The mutant's mind becomes obsessed with the device. He has difficulty concentrating on other problems, getting to sleep at night or even carrying on an ordinary conversation. This lasts for some amount of time and then culminates in an amazing burst of insight.

Variations & limitations

Biological intuition: Instead of working with mechanical devices, the power works with biological systems. This may help a bit with nearly any Wetware skill (or specialty), but is most useful with tasks falling under Biosciences, Outdoor Life and Medical.

Chemical intuition: Instead of working with mechanical devices, the power works with chemical systems. This mostly covers things in

Look, it's simple. Just realign the left manipulator joint's secondary armature bearing so it runs parallel to the motor coil. Neutralizes the magnetic moment, get it? What is the problem?



P Mental Blast



- ⑥ The mutant can mentally blast all living beings (except himself) in a five-meter radius from him. He has no choice of targets.
- ⑥ Every being affected must make a Violence roll with a penalty equal to the margin of success on the Power roll. Success means he feels a bit of mental discomfort. Failure means he experiences mental agony and is Snafued until the end of the round following this one.

Variations & limitations

Brain lock: Instead of the usual effects, the mutant can distract other citizens by talking incessantly. If he makes a successful Power check, all who hear him must match his margin of success on Power checks of their own or zone out to the incessant blather of his voice. Brain-locked citizens can take no action of any sort, but acute pain shocks a victim into activity—at least, for a round or two. A single use of this power lasts as long as the mutant is continuously talking, up to the margin in minutes. The effects of this variation don't normally reach through surveillance or recording devices, though that might be an appropriate overkill. Mishaps tend to involve partial effects or the mutant dazing himself.

Heightened state: The mutant may stimulate either agonizing or ecstatic brain activity in a single organic being within five meters—either one prevents the target from doing anything useful until the end of the next round, but in rather different ways. (Funny how most citizens enjoy

'euphoria' more than 'traumatizing anguish'. The target gets a Violence roll to resist, as usual. For an example of this variation, see the mission 'Traitor Backup' in the *PARANOIA* supplement *Crash Priority*.

Lasting injury: Instead of the usual snafuing, the mutation does S5K damage. Normal armor doesn't protect at all. If you're feeling generous, some mind-affecting drugs might provide resistance.

Targeted: The mutant can only affect a single individual. The victim must be within five meters.

Visible effect: The mental blast is accompanied by a staticky, crackling light show in the area of effect. The amount of electricity isn't enough to damage anything but the most fragile and finicky electronic devices, but it looks impressive.

Mishaps

Brainbuster: One or two victims in the area—perhaps including the mutant—die of the exceedingly rare Exploding Head Syndrome. Everyone else is unaffected. Use this one sparingly, if at all.

Do unto others: The mutant stuns himself, or even knocks himself out entirely.

Really wrong targets: It looks like nothing happens... but actually, one or more citizens have been knocked out, just a long way away. Generally, the citizens affected were operating heavy machinery, controlling nuclear reactors or halfway through giving detailed and complicated instructions to a squadron of warbots.

Telltale vision: The mutation works normally, but all snafued targets have a vision of the mutant that hits at the same time as the blast. (Alternately, those affected can simply know who did it. But the vision allows for more interesting weaseling.)

Overkills

Brain damage: Some or all victims suffer brain damage. This may mess with memory, induce psychological problems and/or reduce Knowledge ratings by a point or two.

Knockout: Targets who make their Violence roll are snafued; those who fail it are downed. A citizen knocked out by this power will awaken in a few minutes on his own or can be revived with a successful Medical roll.



P Mind Sense



The mutant can psionically sense the presence of nearby citizens. Though he can't discern thoughts, he does get a unique, recognizable 'mental fingerprint' for each mind he senses. This power is most helpful for noticing observers, tails and ambushes, but the mutant can also use it to sense and identify a known mind.

The range of Mind Sense is fuzzy; 'nearby' varies with the nature of the local space. Amid twisted crawlways, 'nearby' won't reach far, but in huge gymnasias it extends some distance. Higher margins of success on the Power roll permit sensing of larger areas. The power does not reveal precise directions or locations, only a vague sense of proximity—so a mutant might detect a cluster of five familiar minds around him (his Troubleshooting group), a lone mind he recognizes as his secret society contact,

and a group of 20 unfamiliar minds somewhere close by.

Though this power is comparatively subtle, the mutant does risk accidentally talking to people he shouldn't know are present. In addition, anyone watching the mutant when he uses the power may notice the mutant's eyes glazing over.

Mutants with this power tend to have a predisposition towards paranoia and often feel they are being watched, whether they are or not.

Variations & limitations

Location tracker: The mutant doesn't get a 'mental fingerprint', but he does get a precise location for each mind he senses.

Psi sense: Instead of getting a 'mental fingerprint' revealing each mind's identity, the mutant can sense the presence or absence of psionic mutations in each mind. If you want, a high margin of success can identify the mutations—though he won't know exactly who (say) the Puppeteer is, just that there's one nearby.

Mishaps

Broadcast: Instead of the mutant sensing everyone else, everyone else senses the mutant. They may know who he is or simply his approximate physical location, whichever is more entertaining.

Headache: Treat the mutant as wounded for the next scene due to a head-splitting migraine.

Instant paranoia: The mutant briefly goes off the deep end in the 'paranoid' direction.

Wrong wavelength: Instead of sensing the mental landscape, the mutant accidentally senses the location of every vending machine in the area or mentally tunes in to old reruns of the *Best Good Happy Sector Hour*. Or, you know how you get a

new pop tune or commercial jingle in your head and it just won't go away? For days? HPD&MC writes its Alpha Complex loyalty anthems to rigid melodic standards, developed and propounded by the music industry in Old Reckoning times, that maximize mental addictiveness. When the mutant senses a large number of minds, and they're *all* mentally humming 'Hey Computer, You're My Friend,' it's a traumatic experience.

Overkills

Enduring: Rather than a brief flash of insight, the power stays active for a number of minutes.

Sector-wide: The mutant senses the mind of everyone in the entire sector. This generally results in (at the very least) a massive spike of adrenalin, if not an actual psychotic episode.

M Polymorphism



- ③ The mutant can change his physical form.
- ③ Looking like other humans is easy, anything that requires altering bone structure is difficult, and changing total mass is virtually impossible.
- ③ The margin of success (after accounting for the difficulty of the intended shape) determines how well the mutant assumes the desired form.

Preferred forms: The mutant has a small number of preferred forms (typically one to four) into which he can change with little difficulty. These are often radically non-human shapes, such as 'scrubot', 'bunk bed', 'cone rifle' or 'big pile of Hot Fun' but could in theory be different citizens. Changing into any preferred form takes only a marginal success, but the form will always be absolutely the same—for instance, if the mutant can assume the form of a vendabot, the vendabot will always sport the exact same logo, have precisely the same arrangement of items within it and even show the same chips and scratches in its paint. Altering even the smallest of these details requires a margin of 5+ and taking a shape notably different from a preferred form requires a margin of 10+.

reconfigured. Anyone attempting to use the Medical skill specialty on the mutant for any purpose other than recognizing 'Hey, something's really wrong here' takes a penalty equal to the mutant's margin of failure.

Permanent change: The mutant changes shape successfully, but the form he's assumed becomes his 'natural' form.

Wrong shape: The mutant turns into something different than what he'd intended. This may be a subtle mistake (impersonating the wrong citizen) or a blatant one (turning into a cone rifle instead of a jackobot).

Variations & limitations

Mimic: In place of the usual effects of this mutation, the mutant can impersonate any citizen he's touched in the last week—not only the target's appearance but also his voice, speech patterns and other tics. (It does not convey the target's actual knowledge.) On a margin of 5+, the impersonation is good enough to trick simple technological checks like retinal scans, fingerprints and tongue prints; on a margin of 10+, even DNA scans and rigorous IntSec bioscans can be fooled.

Mishaps

Grotesque: The mutant sprouts a third arm, a few extra ears, a third eye in his forehead or similar ornaments. Or perhaps he grows fur or feathers. Or gourds. Gourds are nice.

Internal change: Nothing changes outwardly, but the mutant's internal organs have been

Overkills

Functional: If the mutant changed into a machine or device, the machine or device actually functions—the 'cone rifle' can load and fire shells, the 'vendabot' can dispense snacks, etc. The effect this has on the mutant is up to you.

Lost in the role: The mutant changes so effectively, he temporarily suppresses his own personality and starts acting like whatever (or whomever) he changed into.

M Pouches



The mutant can open and close small pouches (like a kangaroo's) in his skin, allowing him to conceal small items on his person in a manner that normal searches are unlikely to detect. A single Power roll opens a pouch for about half a minute—just long enough for the mutant to put something in or take something out. The opening in the mutant's skin then seals itself, concealing the item. Retrieving a previously-hidden object takes another Power roll to re-open the pouch... or a scalpel and (ideally) some anesthetic. Generally speaking, a pouch only holds a single object—having multiple things rubbing around in there can really pinch. However, the mutant can open as many different pouches as he wishes. Any pouch closed without something in it vanishes entirely.

Small objects—a wristwatch, a form or two, some plasticreds, a ME Card or a small bottle of pills—will never be noticed in a visual search, and perhaps not even with a pat-down or electronic scan (such as a metal detector or X-ray machine). Add the margin of success on the mutant's Power roll to his Concealment or other roll to avoid detection. Slightly larger objects—a laser barrel, grenade, hammer or PDC—can be hidden as well, but may be detected by a visual search and certainly by a competent pat-down or electronic scan. Much larger objects can, technically, be 'hidden' but a margin of 5–9 or even higher is required to open such a large pouch—and even the most incompetent, sleep-deprived IntSec goon will notice a huge cone-rifle-shaped growth on the mutant's back.

Variations & limitations

Envelop: The mutant can envelop objects all the way inside his body. This permits the storage of much larger items, but may expose the mutant to greater risk if the object is sharp, contaminated, radioactive or otherwise dangerous, since it's less isolated from the rest of his system.

Extradimensional: The pouches actually open to another spatial dimension, so large objects can be hidden without any visible bulge. Enough of each object is still in this dimension that it can be detected, but it's no longer quite so foregone a conclusion. This variation isn't terribly appropriate for Straight. Actually it's sort of Zap....



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

Regurgitation: Instead of the usual pouches, the mutant has a sac in the back of his throat. He can store small objects there by 'swallowing' them—and also use it to store things he doesn't actually want to swallow, such as drugs or that really noxious-looking special at the INFRARED cafeteria. In order to retrieve anything, though, he has to empty the entire sac, which may sometimes be a bit messy.

Mishaps

When the mutant is attempting to put something into a pouch, don't bother with major mishaps on a blown roll—just have the pouch fail to appear or show up someplace inconvenient, like between his shoulder blades. Save the good stuff for when he's trying to get something *out* of the pouch.

After all, he has to risk two Power rolls for full use of his mutant power.

If the player catches on to this and starts making excessive use of the 'scalpel and anesthetic' option, stop playing nice.

Absorption: The contents of the pouch are broken down into their component molecules and absorbed into the mutant's body. Paper and plastic are generally harmless; metal can either be harmless or somewhat toxic; and drugs have their full normal effect, as if they'd been directly injected into the mutant's bloodstream.

Eject: All items in pouches are ejected violently. This doesn't hurt the mutant, but may get him some funny looks.

Swap: The mutant's body has swapped the contents of two pouches, so what he was after isn't what he gets.

Unretrievable: The mutant's body has grown accustomed to the presence of the object and

grown/healed around it. It is not retrievable without surgical aid.

Wound self: The mutant's body injures itself in the process of opening the pouch. He takes a wound.

Overkills

Assimilation: The mutant's body assimilates the stored object in an impromptu bio-cybernetic fusion. This may be useful (such as having an integrated weapon embedded in the mutant's arm) or not (such as having a foil bag of algae chips integrated into his respiratory system).

Voracious: In addition to the regular pouch, the mutant's body chows down on a few more random items in his possession, putting them in pouches, too. The mutant may or may not realize this at the time.

P Psychometry



The mutant can sense echoes of the past from objects he touches or places he's in. These impressions may take the form of visuals, audio, scents/tastes, tactile sensations and/or emotional states. On a low margin of success, the impressions are fleeting and faint. As the margin improves, so does the clarity and strength of the effect, from hallucinations overlaid on reality all the way up to a complete overwhelming of the mutant's ordinary senses.

If the mutant knows of a particular event or circumstance the object or place was involved in, he can try to get impressions of that specific time. This generally requires a margin of success of 15+. Otherwise, he gets impressions of an emotional situation, a recent time or some combination thereof. (The echoes of a recent murder would overshadow any events that happened months or years ago—save perhaps food riots or something similarly drastic.)

When the mutant enters an area or touches an object that has been associated with particularly strong or violent emotions, the mutant's power may activate on its own. Make a Power roll, just as if the mutant had deliberately tried to activate it. Keep in mind that in Alpha Complex, 'moderate fear' is pretty much the norm, so use it as a baseline.

Variations & limitations

Aura reading: Instead of reading objects or places, the mutant can read the past of people. This can be tricky to give a player character, but not impossible. It's easiest if you write up short notes for what he'll get if he successfully reads his teammates—you know he'll try.

Single sense: The mutant's impressions always take the form of a particular sense—for instance, always hearing events of the past.

Mishaps

Imagination: Unable to determine anything real, the mutant's brain resorts to making things up, feeding him completely false information.

Temporary insanity: The mutant's mind fixates on some part of what he sensed and goes off the deep end for a little while.

Wrong object: Instead of reading the past of the bloody sword he's holding, the mutant accidentally senses the emotion-laden past of... his jumpsuit. Or the briefing room he's in. Or his teammate's laser pistol.

Overkills

Multiple sources: The mutant gets impressions of the past regarding everything he's carrying, everything he's near and everywhere he's been in the last half-hour. Needless to say, it's all a jumbled mess, though he might learn some interesting tidbits in there. He'll be disoriented for a few minutes afterwards, though.

Overwhelmed: The impressions of the past are so strong and so violent that the mutant's mind is blasted with their power. He passes out for several minutes and is disoriented (maybe even hung over) for about half an hour after waking up.



P Puppeteer



- ⑥ The mutant can 'remote-control' a single body part of a living target within line of sight. The larger the body part, the better margin of success required:

0-4: A finger or eyelid

5-9: A hand or foot (including fingers/toes)

10-14: An arm or leg (including hand/foot/fingers/toes)

15+: Entire head/face, including speaking (lots of muscles to track)

- ⑥ The mutant can make the body part do whatever he wants, while still moving and acting normally himself. Control requires at least 1 Power point per round.

Recent touch: Instead of having to be within line of sight, the mutant must have had skin-to-skin contact with the target in the last few minutes.

Mishaps

Epileptic blast: Everyone in the area (including the mutant) loses control over their body, spasming wildly and almost certainly falling over. Weapons in hand may be accidentally discharged or flung across the room.

GM puppet: The mutant loses control over his own body, doing whatever you feel like having him do.

Power siphon: Instead of controlling the target, the mutant loses 1-3 Power to him. If this puts the target over his normal Power score, he feels all warm and tingly.

Reverse puppet: The mutant's entire body is controlled by the movements of the intended target. He walks when the target walks, says what the target says (at the same time, no less!) and otherwise mimics the target's movements exactly. If you're feeling kind, this can only affect a part of the mutant's body rather than the whole thing.

Wrong target: The mutant successfully controls someone, but not whom he'd originally intended.

Overkills

Extended control: Control only requires 1 Power point per minute rather than per round.

More targets: The mutant grabs control over the desired body part of multiple citizens. However, he can't control them separately—only in unison, all doing exactly the same thing.

Variations & limitations

Control robot: The mutation affects robots rather than citizens, but otherwise works identically.

P Push Mutant Powers



This power taps into the same notional energy as Detect Mutant Power, but instead of sensing mutant abilities, it amplifies them.

'What kind of wussy... *cooperative*... power is that!?' we hear you cry. Never fear. Push Mutant Powers can indubitably increase the effectiveness of another mutant's abilities, but it can also activate them. When a surfeit of Push energy suddenly floods through a mutant's system, as often as not he reflexively uses it.

When the mutant with Push Mutant Powers makes a successful Power roll, each other mutant in the area has his Power attribute boosted for a few seconds by the margin of success. Then make a Power roll for each boosted target—or, if you hate that many rolls, make one roll for the whole bunch. Success indicates immediate, involuntary mutation use; failure indicates the target has avoided accidental activation.

Needless to say, this mutation is fantastically useful in gathering blackmail evidence. Unfortunately, the accidents it inspires tend to target the mutant with Push Mutant Powers. This can be entertaining, in a painfully karmic way.

Two mutants with this power can get into an unstoppable feedback loop, causing all mutants in the vicinity to repeatedly have accidents with ever-escalating Power. Assume any mutant who reaches an effective Power of 50 or higher has a fatal heart attack, explodes or outright vaporizes—assuming everyone in the area isn't killed by one of the Pushed mutations first. (Pyrokinesis, anyone?)

If this power is used in cooperative fashion, it boosts Power as usual, but the target being aided doesn't check for an accident. However, he will almost certainly end up with an overkill effect if he succeeds by 10+, or a mishap if he fails. Heck, these may happen *in addition* to the target's normal success—he's got energy to spare, and manipulating it is tricky.

Variations & limitations

Copycat: Rather than the usual effects, this power duplicates the effects of some other mutation used nearby in the last half-hour or so. If no other mutation has been used nearby during that time, this power does nothing except make the mutant feel tired.

Energy crystals: Instead of directly increasing other mutants' Power, the mutant can craft glowing crystalline shards that contain a one-shot boost of Power (works as described above). This is more appropriate for NPCs than for players. The mutant can use only one shard at a time.

High energy requirement: Instead of taking one point of Power for each use, this power takes one point of Power for every mutant affected.

Time delay: Instead of causing immediate accidents and fading, a given mutant's Power boost lasts until he uses his mutation deliberately or has an accident. However, it also means that the mutant has an overkill if he succeeds by 5 or more, rather than the usual 10.

Mishaps

Aura: The mutant is surrounded by a glowing nimbus of light. It lasts for a scene or however long is amusing.

Recharge: Other mutants in the area have their Power attributes fully recharged. The mutant using this power has his Power completely drained.

Shove: Other mutants in the area feel a strong shove from the direction of the mutant using this power.

Tingle: Other mutants in the area feel an odd tingling sensation, but that's all.

Overkills

The mechanics of this power provide overkill automatically—a margin of 10+ means everyone around the mutant who's rolling for accidents has a Power of 10+ higher, making overkill more likely on all of the ensuing accidents. If you want others, though:

Auto-repeat: The mutant's Power is temporarily drained to 0. All mutants in the vicinity then use their powers repeatedly and uncontrollably until their Powers are also drained down to 0.

Larger area: The power affects a rather larger area than usual. This can be utterly harmless if nobody else is around or it can cause all manner of mayhem.



P Pyrokinesis



- ③ The mutant can ignite a fire on a flammable object within five meters.
- ③ The size and intensity of the fire depend on the margin of success, as does how quickly it spreads.

Variations & limitations

Fiery breath: The mutant can breathe fire. Whether he produces huge, billowing gouts of incinerating flame or embarrassingly small, lighter-like burps depends on his margin of success.

Fire affinity: In addition to being able to generate flame, the mutant can make a Power roll to ignore damage from heat or flame. A simple success might resist a lighter or Bunsen burner, while a flamethrower would require a margin of at least 5+. Remember: tacnukes generate concussive blasts and radiation in addition to extreme heat!

Heat vision: The mutant can project fiery beams from his eyes. The margin of success determines how accurately he aims them—eyes have a tendency to flick around quite a bit, you see. The beams are hot enough to slag a metal object on a good hit, doing W4K Energy damage to citizens and I4J to objects.

Raise temperature: Rather than lighting things on fire, the mutant can raise the ambient temperature in a target location by 10° F (about 5° C) times the margin of success.

Mishaps

Fever: Nothing burns, but the mutant feels dizzy and flushed. His body temperature rises 1° F (about 1/2° C) times the margin of failure.

Inverted effect: The target object is frozen solid in a layer of ice, as per Cryokinesis.

Wrong target: Something unintended ignites. Perhaps the mutant's utility belt. Perhaps the mutant.

Overkills

Flame on: The mutant is immediately engulfed in flames that burn brightly but do not harm him. He leaves flaming footsteps as he walks and the air around him shimmers with heat. This lasts for about as many rounds as the margin of success.

Rampaging inferno: The fire ignites flawlessly and impressively—and immediately begins spreading. Anything remotely flammable—including concrete and metal—catches on fire, as the inferno marches relentlessly outward. Water and fire-retardant chemicals won't burn, but will be required in very large quantities to douse this particular blaze. After a certain point (whenever you want), the inferno loses its supernatural potency and tendency to spread, simply becoming a big, hot fire.

M Radioactivity



The mutant can generate radiation—as in, invisible radioactive particles that make you bald and sickly. Fortunately, he himself is quite resistant to radiation. He's not outright immune, but in Alpha Complex, odds are pretty good he'll kick the bucket in some other fashion before managing to kill himself with his own mutation.

When the mutant decides to become a fountain of gamma rays, make a Power roll. The margin of success is how many minutes the effect lasts. No effects are immediately visible to the eye, although detection devices (Geiger counters, radiation badges) go nuts.

When the mutant is exposed to significant radiation from an outside source, make a Power roll to see if he avoids ill effects.

The mutant's radiation isn't sufficient to drop citizens dead in their tracks, but even a few minutes of exposure is sufficient to induce dizziness and shortness of breath. Ten minutes is enough to cause hair loss, nausea and possible mutation—if you want, use the margin of success as a modifier on the Mutagen Exposure Table (see Appendix). Half an hour of cumulative exposure generally causes death. (Yes, we know this isn't an accurate simulation of actual radiation sickness. Real radiation sickness is un-fun. **PARANOIA** is not a game of clinical medicine.)

Any gear that shields against radioactivity also protects against this power. Full-body or torso

armor that protects against all Energy damage (not just lasers!) also helps; assume every point of protection doubles the amount of time the wearer has before being affected.

Variations & limitations

Martyr: The mutation provides no protection whatsoever from radiation. Yeowch.

Meltdown: Every time the mutant uses this power successfully, his Power increases by one. When it goes above 20, he is consumed from the inside by a bizarre form of nuclear reaction, spewing huge amounts of radioactivity everywhere during the meltdown (about 20 minutes).

Nova: As per Meltdown, except the when the mutant's power goes over 20 he actually explodes. Treat as a tacnuke cone rifle shell—automatic vaporization or V1V damage, as appropriate.

Targeted wrath: Instead of sending gamma rays in all directions, the mutant can send a concentrated burst in a single direction. He has to gesture (as if he were blasting invisible bolts of lightning out of his hands). The margin on the Power check is the number of minutes' worth of exposure anyone in the path of the radiation takes, even though the blast only lasts for a round.

Mishaps

Aura: The mutant generates the wrong sort of radiation and is surrounded by a glowing nimbus of light, which lasts for a scene or so.

Overheat: The mutant generates the wrong sort of radiation and begins throwing off heat, to which he is not immune. The higher the margin of failure, the more heat. Ouch.

Radiation sickness: The mutant becomes short of breath and slightly nauseous. Perhaps all his hair falls out?

Tagged: The mutant's body becomes faintly radioactive for the next hour or two—not enough to actually harm anything, but enough for sensors to pick up on it.

Overkills

Chain reaction: The mutant causes everything in the area—walls, bots, cameras, other Troubleshooters—to begin generating radiation. Since he's not the only one producing it, make a Power roll to see if he's affected by the sudden flood of the stuff.

Self-sacrifice: The radiation is so impressive, it affects the mutant just as much as everybody else.

M Regeneration



- ③ The mutant can heal injuries or regrow tissues and organs which don't normally regenerate.
- ③ When the mutant is wounded or maimed, make a Power roll. If successful, the injury heals quickly.
- ③ The better the margin of success, the faster the healing, and—perhaps—the more the mutant can control the outward appearance to avoid discovery.

Variations & limitations

Substance requirement: The mutant can only heal his wounds if he has a particular substance—perhaps he needs to drink some TeaSir, consume a whole bottle of NutriMax Meal Replacement Tablets or smear the wound with omega-hybrizine.

Vampiric healing: In order to regenerate, the citizen must inflict comparable amounts of injury on another citizen.

Mishaps

Exacerbate injury: Whatever injury the mutant is trying to heal gets worse instead—cuts widen and deepen, bruises turn into mangled tissue and so forth. If the mutant is trying to completely regenerate a body part, he instead loses some other body part. The game effect of this is that the wound gets one level worse (so wounded becomes maimed, down becomes killed and so forth).

Grotesque: The mutant heals... wrong. He grows an obviously non-human replacement to a missing limb, scars over wounds with thick scales or sprouts gnarly bits of bone through his skin. Be creative in your sickening vision of the horrors that might ensue.

Permanent wounds: Whatever the mutant's current physical state, it becomes the new 'normal and healthy' as far as his mutation is concerned. If he has a chunk taken out of his arm, whenever he invokes Regeneration successfully, that chunk will be taken out of his arm again. The only way out of this is to have the same exact mishap after healing all wounds naturally—not a very common occurrence, to say the least. (Dying will also do it, assuming the mutant's next clone also has Regeneration.)

Overkills

Auto-regeneration: Not only does this injury regenerate, but so do any further injuries in the same scene—no Power roll necessary.

Instant healing: The injury heals instantly and completely. Handy, if a bit tricky to explain.

M Rubbery Bones



- ③ The mutant has rubbery, flexible bones.
- ③ This mutation is continuously active, though it's not noticeable in daily life without close, continuous observation.
- ③ Roll Power when the mutant takes Impact damage. On a margin of 1–4, use the margin as additional Impact armor. On 5+, Impact damage does no harm at all. On 10+, see 'Overkills'.
- ③ The mutant can squeeze through small spaces, depending on the margin of success:
 - 0–4: A wide-barred fence.
 - 5–9: Like an eel through a drainpipe.
 - 10+: Liquid-like passage through incredibly small passages, leaving skull and ribcage narrower.

Variations & limitations

Incredibly strong bones: The mutant's bones are made of carbon-nanotube ceramics, titanium or a similarly hard substance—or perhaps just laced with the stuff in some unfathomable freak of biology. As a result, they're extremely resistant to breaking and protect the mutant's internal organs quite well—treat as armor rating 2 against Impact damage only. We suggest using non-metallic materials for Straight, as basic metal detectors

would quickly screen out mutants of this sort in an Alpha Complex of any efficiency. This variation is continuously active and only requires Power rolls for extreme stresses and strains.

Multi-jointed: Though the mutant's bones are of normal hardness, all of his joints can bend in any imaginable direction. (Imaginary directions not included.) This allows passage through small spaces, but doesn't grant Impact armor. A successful Power roll completely defeats any attempt to hold the mutant with joint locks or restraint devices which rely on joints.

Mishaps

Sloooow recovery: The bones bend, but take a long time to return to their normal shape.

Split bone: One of the mutant's bones peels in two like a piece of string cheese. It may eventually heal, but until then he's permanently wounded.

Temporary hardening: The mutant's bones go squishy for a while, then suddenly stiffen to normal bone rigidity in whatever shape they're currently holding. The stiffness only lasts for a minute or two. Usually.

Too squishy: One or more of the mutant's bones change consistency from 'rubber chewtoy' to 'limp noodle'. The exact effects depend on what bones are affected, but will generally involve either flopping about on the ground, complete failure to carry or hold anything, strange

compression of the torso or lots of uncontrollable head-lolling. This will fix itself in a round or two, but may recur if the mutant failed by a wide margin.

Overkills

Bouncy: The bones become so rubbery that the mutant visibly bounces when walking—let alone running, colliding with anything or falling on the ground.

Tangled: The mutant succeeds wildly at whatever he was trying to accomplish (or avoid), but is so floppy that he gets tangled up in his own skeletal structure for a round or two and has to sort himself out.





M Scream



The mutant's voice can shatter glass, plastic and (most especially) all-too-fragile biological systems such as 'eardrums' and 'capillaries'. Everyone within easy hearing distance of the mutant takes S3D energy damage—and only hardened, full-figure armor such as ArmorAll or battle armor helps protect against it. Use the margin of success on the Power roll to determine the damage boost, as if it were an attack roll.

The mutant is affected, just like everybody else—being at the center of one of these blasts is no picnic—but he gets 1 innate level of protection against the resulting damage simply from being at least a little bit used to it. Good thing, too, since there's no armor in existence that shields against attacks coming from inside the wearer's own body. (Well, unless R&D has come up with something particularly disturbing—er, innovative.)

The sonically charged scream also shatters or damages material goods throughout the local area. A low margin might crack a wineglass; a high margin will shatter nearly anything that isn't made out of metal or concrete. (See 'Damaging objects' in Chapter 27 of *PARANOIA XP*.)

Oh, and if at any point the mutant might scream involuntarily—say, in shock or alarm—feel free to make a Power roll to see if his mutation goes off by accident.

Variations & limitations

Psionic scream: The scream is purely mental—even full-figure, hardened ArmorAll doesn't do a thing to stop it. It doesn't damage objects or bots at all. Range is up to you—say 10 meters?

Stunning scream: Instead of doing damage, everyone affected by the scream is stunned (unable to do or notice much of anything) for a number of rounds equal to the margin of success on the roll—or for just a moment or two, if the margin is 0. Any armor which helps against the basic version of this mutation (including the mutant's single point of innate resistance) reduces the duration by one round per point of armor.

Mishaps

Aria: The mutant draws a deep breath and belts out a loud, strong and beautifully crystal-clear high E, which has no appreciable damaging effects to anyone or anything. Citizens cleared for opera may applaud, once they've finished reporting the mutant to IntSec.

Blowout: The mutant blows out his voice box, causing bleeding and rather a lot of pain. Oh, and

now he can't speak. This can either be permanent or temporary, as desired.

Deafness: The scream goes off as normal, but takes a toll on the mutant's hearing. He goes partially or completely deaf for as long as you want.

Loudspeaker: The mutant briefly acts as a loudspeaker for some arbitrary portion of the electromagnetic spectrum. Cool jazz, anyone?

Static: The mutant ends up making a sort of 'walkie-talkie shriek'—enough to make others wince momentarily, but that's about it.

Overkills

The base power provides for simple overkills—screams that trash everything and everyone in the vicinity. If you want something even more extreme, try:

Relayed scream: The scream maintains its potency even when relayed over communications equipment, such as walkie-talkies, surveillance mikes, PDCs and intercoms.

Shatterstorm: Disregard the material strength of objects for the purposes of resisting the scream. It all shatters, just like glass. (Metal splinters, S4M impact—ouch!)

M Sculpt



Solid, rigid objects become putty in the mutant's hands—literally. A thin sheen of oil secreted from his palms and fingers softens nearly any non-living material in existence, letting him shape it as if it were made of stiff clay. The higher the margin of success on the Power roll, the more quickly and easily the mutant can work, and the larger the object he can affect—the classic 'bend the barrel of a slugthrower' trick would take five or ten minutes with a margin of 0, five or ten seconds with a margin of 5 and be instantaneous with a margin of 10.

Hand coverings like gloves render this power useless. The oil denatures soon after secretion, to the lamentation of R&D scientists and the chagrin of mutants who try to store buckets of the stuff for later use.

This power confers no ability to make pleasing or accurate sculpture. If a character really wants that, let him take Sculpting as an Unlikely skill.

Variations & limitations

Crumple: Instead of reshaping objects, the mutant can crunch items into a tangled wad at the merest touch. Higher margins let the mutant affect larger items.

Material limitation: Roll on the Random Material Tables (see Appendix). The mutant can only affect items made of that material, but he can do so much faster (treat all margins as 5 higher).



'I don't care if you're a registered mutant—you need a Permit #997/Z-35G to create Art!'

Mishaps

Imprint: The item is reshaped only slightly, and the mutant leaves a nice set of incriminating fingerprints sculpted into the item. (Or alternately, the item imprints its texture onto the mutant's hands for a day or two.)

Limp hands: The mutant's hands become soft, floppy and incapable of muscular effort.

Stuck: The mutant's hands stick to the object he's trying to reshape.

Wrong location: The oil is secreted out of the mutant's leg or the top of his head or something. The item he's attempting to sculpt is unaffected, obviously. Whether anything else is altered is up to you.

Overkills

Liquefy: The item being reshaped actually liquefies and flows all over the place before re-solidifying.

Permanently squishy: The item being reshaped stays semi-soft and can be reshaped by anyone at any time.

M Second Skin



The mutant has a thin layer of tissue several millimeters beneath his skin which can protect him from injury by hardening into a fibrous, resilient state. When the mutant activates the power, make a Power roll and note the margin of success. For the duration of the scene, subtract that number from the success margin of any attack that hits the mutant. If this reduces the attack's margin of success below 0, use the wound level below the usual minimum for the weapon.

In its dormant, inactive state, the subdermal layer is practically impossible to detect without dissection and careful examination. This doesn't provide complete safety; The Computer might well order a citizen suspected of having this mutation to donate an arm to the lab.

In its active, resilient state, the subdermal layer isn't visible—but the mutant walks a little funny and anyone touching his skin undoubtedly notices its hardness. In addition, anybody treating the mutant's wounds while the mutation is active may make a Medical roll to notice it, whether or not he actually contacts the skin.

If the mutant did particularly well on his Power roll, others may also notice minor oddities. ('Hey,

that warbot ran over Frank-R, but he looks fine. What's up with that?')

Variations & limitations

Environment shield: Instead of warding against injury, the second skin protects against radiation, temperature extremes and environmental hazards that would penetrate via the skin.

Limited protection: The second skin only protects against one form of damage (Energy, Impact or Biological).

Mishaps

Comfortably numb: Instead of activating his mutation, the mutant loses all tactile sensation in his skin. Though this negates any Snafued result the mutant may suffer, it also makes many simple, everyday tasks quite difficult. Have him make a Violence check to succeed at tasks like 'walking' or 'chewing without self-injury', and he cannot spend Perversity on any Violence-based checks until the numbness wears off.

Itching: The mutant gains no protection, but an itchy rash spreads all over his body.

Rigid: The mutant's skin becomes so rigid he has trouble moving (for a low margin of failure) or becomes a living statue (high margin). It's so rigid, in fact, it transfers energy perfectly, meaning it also provides absolutely no protection. Great situation, huh?

Overkills

Carapace: The mutation works even more effectively than usual—increase the mutant's current armor rating by 2. Unfortunately, the protection manifests as an actual external carapace on the mutant's skin, which is kind of blatant.

Enduring: The mutation stays active for more than one scene. Given the high margin of success, this should be quite useful, but also increase odds of discovery. There's the breaks.

Stiff: The mutation is effective but makes the mutant even stiffer than usual—think 'can barely bend knees' and 'unable to turn neck independently of torso'.

M Shrinking



④ A successful Power roll decreases the character's size by a quarter and his mass by a third. For each 5 points of margin, he can shrink by a further quarter and third, respectively. Sufficient success could get the character down to the size of a field mouse.

④ A shrunken mutant can use his power again to try and shrink even further.

④ Shrunken characters are harder to hit and can fit through small spaces, but move more slowly, the damage they deal to others is reduced, they're easier to knock around and when they do get hit it

hurts a lot. Specifics are left deliberately nebulous.

Variations & limitations

Shrink item: The mutant can't shrink himself, but can shrink a touched object.

Thinner: The mutant only shrinks in one dimension, becoming narrower and narrower rather than all-around smaller. This may allow him to squeeze through small spaces without making stairs an insurmountable obstacle. Overkill may result in a paper-thin mutant—hope there are no strong winds....

Mishaps

Body parts: Some of the mutant's body parts shrink, but the rest of him doesn't follow along.

Constant mass: The mutant's size decreases, but his mass stays the same. With his lessened strength, he's going to have a hard time just moving around, let alone climbing anywhere. Or maybe his mass increases and he punches a (very small) hole in the floor.

Fluctuating: The character shrinks some... then expands a bit... then shrinks even further. Perhaps he stabilizes for just long enough to breathe a sigh of relief, then swells up substantially at just the wrong time. It should be



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

amusing, eye-catching and inconvenient. The mutant may even be larger than usual for parts of this process.

Shrinking equipment: The mutant doesn't shrink, but all of his equipment does. This is one instance where having a shoddily-made jumpsuit can actually help, since the sooner its seams burst the less painful the experience will be. Pity the poor mutant wearing ArmorAll.

Overkills

Area effect: Everything in a five-meter radius of the mutant shrinks by the same amount he does.

Microscopic: Ever wanted to be the size of a dust mite? Well, now the mutant is. Threads of fabric become colossal trunks and seemingly smooth surfaces reveal a multitude of pits and

crevices. Light air currents may waft the mutant about. Rent *The Incredible Shrinking Man*.

Ongoing size control: For the duration of the mutation's effect, the mutant can adjust his size between 'normal' and whatever he initially managed to achieve, with no further Power rolls required.

M Slippery Skin



- ③ The mutant can secrete an ultra-slippery oil, allowing him to squeeze through tight passages, skid across flat surfaces and escape grapples or bonds.
- ③ For escapes and tight squeezes: A Power roll allows success, after a fair bit of wriggling. Higher margins improve speed.
- ③ For sliding: A Power roll allows movement at double running speed. Higher margins improve this further.

so it will burn nicely—but he puts himself at risk of combustion whenever he secretes his oil for any purpose at all.

Mishaps

Corrosion: The mutant's sweat isn't particularly slippery, but corrodes metal nicely (as per Corrosion).

Feet only: The mutant only produces the oil on his feet and shins, soaking through footwear. Not only is this unlikely to help the mutant, but for the next few minutes he has difficulty keeping his footing. Agility rolls, anyone?

Slippery pool: The mutant ends up floundering in a spreading, slippery puddle—as does anyone nearby.

Sticky: The mutant's skin dries up, leaving him very sticky (and stuck fast to wherever he was).

Stinky: The sweat smells terrible—like rotting flesh, maybe. And yep, it's still slippery, for maximum incrimination value!

Variations & limitations

Flammable: In addition to being ultra-slippery, the oil is highly flammable. A clever mutant can exploit this—say, by leaving a trail of flammable liquid for use as a crude fuse or to soak an object

Overkills

Drenched: The mutant succeeds marvelously, but his clothes are drenched in oily goo.

Frictionless: The oil is so slippery it negates friction. Though the mutant is unable to walk normally, he slides beautifully, assuming he manages to acquire momentum—he can't effectively hold anything, which makes hurling objects around kind of difficult. At your discretion, Impact damage may be lessened or negated; attacking objects simply slide off.

M Speed



The mutant can run, hop, crawl, climb and swim/drown much faster than a normal citizen. This doesn't improve his reaction time, so he can't dodge weapon fire and is as vulnerable to surprise as anyone else. He may also, on his faster days, run into walls.

Make a Power roll. On a low margin (0–4), the mutant moves as fast as humanly possible—fast enough to raise eyebrows, but not instantly incriminate himself. On 5–9, he achieves speeds several times normal, running nearly as fast as an autocar. A margin of 10+ indicates speeds an order of magnitude better than human—200 kph or even higher. He'd better hope it's in a large area without many obstacles. A single use of this power usually lasts for a minute or two, but don't let it get too predictable.

Don't worry about pesky little things like 'traction' and 'air resistance'; the mutation handles those, given normal conditions. (Which do not, incidentally, include things like 'oil spills' or 'recently waxed floors'.) The larger issues of 'momentum' and 'collisions' ought to give the mutant plenty to worry about. It doesn't take the

mutant any more time than usual to stop from a dead run, but he goes much, much further in those few seconds than someone sprinting at normal speeds.

Variations & limitations

Energy drain: The mutant's super-speed lasts longer (10–20 minutes) but relies on power: electricity, heat or whatever else is available. Any items he carries that have power sources are drained 50% of their capacity each time he uses the mutation. As he runs, the lights flicker and the area gets colder. If there's no power in the vicinity, the mutation won't work.

Mishaps

Auctioneer: The mutant's ground speed doesn't improve, but his speech processing goes into high gear. He becomes incapable of speaking more slowly than 'really fast auctioneer', rendering

him completely unintelligible to other citizens without severe effort. Bots and The Computer can just stretch out the incoming audio, so they'll understand the mutant, but nobody else will.

Erratic: The mutant gets an erratic speed boost, which fluctuates between 'nothing' and 'ultra-fast', sometimes even changing mid-step. He must make a Violence/Agility roll to avoid wiping out if he tries to run, and dodging obstacles becomes much trickier.

Super-slow: The mutant's speed decreases dramatically. Depending on the margin of failure, he may be anywhere from 'hobbled' to 'slogging through wet concrete' or even 'bedridden'.

Overkills

Comic-book physics [Zap only]: The mutant's high speed lets him run along walls, straight up sheer surfaces or across bodies of liquid.

Sonic boom: The mutant leaves a sonic boom in his wake. This knocks back citizens, shatters fragile materials and really grabs attention.

M Spikes



The mutant can extrude sharp, pointy bone spurs from his body. These spikes are securely anchored in his skeletal system and strong as steel. Forming them doesn't hurt the mutant, but breaking the spikes is painful. The mutant can (try to) control the spikes' body location and length, but not their shape. They're spikes—not hooks, body armor or scrimshaw. The spikes take a round to form and last for a few rounds (on a low margin) to a few hours (on a high margin). The mutant can try to retract extended spikes, but this risks mishaps (and spends Power) as usual, so it's often safer to just let them go away on their own.

Two frequent uses of this power are 'spiky knuckles for vicious punches' (knife-length spikes do S5K impact, sword-length W5K) and 'traction when climbing or being dragged' (add the mutant's margin of success to his ensuing Violence/Agility roll).

Let the player devise other uses. Spikes has the potential for painful, messy backfires—so the least you can do is give him lots of chances to blow it.

Variations & limitations

Sharp edges: The spikes are not only pointy but have sword-sharp edges. Useful, but also more hazardous to the mutant.

Single location: The mutant can only extrude spikes from one body part, such as shoulders, feet, toes or knuckles—but can do so instantly (as with the 'Instant spikes' overkill) rather than taking a full round, and can retract them without a die roll.

Mishaps

Blunt: The spurs are dull and rounded.

Bone fusing: Some of the mutant's bones grow together and can no longer move relative to each other. Ow.

Fragile: The spikes emerge, but are about as strong as your average ceramic bowl and will shatter on any notable impact. Double ow.

Painful emergence: The usual painless, skin-shifting, let's-ignore-biology growth fails and

the mutant gets to experience the joy of having sharp objects grow their way out of his body. Ow ow ow OW.

Pincushion: Meter-long spikes grow out all over the mutant's body. Though this provides an effective deterrent to anyone approaching him, it also makes movement somewhat difficult—even if he hasn't anchored himself to the floor in the process.

Wrong body part: The mutant grows spiky horns out of his head or a single spike out of the small of his back. Not so useful.

Overkills

Huge freaking spikes: Enough said.

Instant spikes: The spikes emerge instantly, rather than growing over the course of several seconds. Nearby surfaces and/or citizens in the way are apt to be punctured; treat the Power roll just made as an attack doing S5K.

Retractable: For the duration of the power, the spikes may be retracted and re-extended at will.

P Stasis



Strange chrono-particles bend to the mutant's whim, allowing him to briefly suspend a nearby object or person from the flow of time. From an observer's point of view, the target stops moving, hanging in space if he (or it) was unsupported by a floor at the time. From the target's point of view, everything and everyone else flickers into new positions—he simply doesn't experience the intervening time.

While the target is in stasis, it remains unaffected by forces such as gravity, magnetic fields, electricity, heat, etc. (So a security camera put in stasis will stop receiving commands and relaying data, for instance.) However, the effect is broken by any notable quantity of physical matter attempting to occupy the same space as the target, so a shove, slap or stray bullet will cause it to slip back into normal time immediately, suffering full normal effects from whatever hit it. Even a sufficiently vigorous movement of air—such as a concussive blast or extremely high wind—can break the effect in this way. Entering and leaving stasis does not disrupt any momentum the target may have had, so if it was moving when the power was used on it, that motion is resumed afterwards.

The stasis field generally lasts for a number of rounds equal to the margin of success on a

Power roll, with an exact success indicating a mere instant or two. Affecting a person-sized object lowers the margin by 5; a warbot-sized object by 10. Affecting a person can affect all of the objects he's carrying, or not—whichever is easier for you to deal with.

Variations & limitations

Slow: Instead of being suspended, the target slows down in time. He moves, falls, thinks, speaks and acts at half-speed.

Vanish: The temporal suspension actually causes the target to vanish altogether and re-appear later, rather than remaining in place.

Mishaps

Frozen limb: The mutant firmly suspends one of his own limbs in time, strongly enough that the field is not disrupted by being struck with physical objects. The rest of him can still move, but remains anchored by that arm or leg until the effect wears off.

Slowdown: The mutant starts moving through time at half-speed, as per the 'Slow' variation.

This effect is not broken if/when the mutant is struck by physical objects.

Temporal breakdown: Time goes utterly screwy in the local area. Effects are completely up to the GM, but can include reversal of timeflow, alternate realities, repetition of events à la *Groundhog Day*, sucking things from the past or future into the present and so forth. Use this one sparingly if you're not playing Zap, and preferably only for really spectacular mishaps (margin of failure 15+).

Wrong target: If trying to affect someone or something else, the mutant affects himself, and vice versa.

Overkills

Excessive area: The stasis field affects everything within a five-meter radius of the target.

Protective: Physical objects don't disrupt the stasis field as normal, but instead bounce off of the suspended person or object. Truly excessive amounts of force (buildings collapsing, nuclear explosions, etc.) may—may—still break the field.



M Stench



In times of severe stress—or, sometimes, when he actually wants to—the mutant emits a gut-roiling, eye-stinging stench that nauseates everyone in the vicinity. In order to take any meaningful action while affected by the mutant vapor, a character must make a Violence roll. If he succeeds by at least as much as the Power roll for Stench did, then he can act normally. If he succeeds, but by an insufficient margin, then he tries to act but is snafued. If he fails the Violence roll altogether, he spends this round and the next trying to control his stomach and thrashing around like an electrocuted bot.

The mutant himself is generally unaffected by his own power, though he may be well-advised to fake it in order to avoid discovery. Gas masks provide complete protection, as do anti-nausea drugs—albeit only in doses high enough that the recipient risks hallucinations, vertigo, complete failure of his digestive system, brain damage, megalomania or death.

The mutant generates this stench for a number of rounds equal to the margin of success on a

Power roll. In the absence of ventilation, assume the vapors spread one meter per round. Once the power is no longer active, it takes one more round for the existing stench to lose effect—though a certain odor lingers for hours.

The mutant is in no way immune to other mutants with this power.

Variations & limitations

Fatal: In addition to incapacitating, the released vapors can be fatal. Each round of exposure moves a citizen one step closer to 'killed' on the damage track—the first round, he goes from okay to snafued, the second he becomes wounded, etc. Victims have the chance to act as described above.

Psionic nausea: Rather than being a physical stench, the mutation is a psionic effect that induces nausea in those around. The area affected is static rather than expanding, but the effects are otherwise identical.

Mishaps

Bad breath: The mutant's breath becomes vaporous—as if in cold weather—and unpleasant to smell. Nothing else happens.

Lemony-fresh scent: The mutant smells overpoweringly of lemon-scented cleaning fluid—eye-watering but not debilitating.

Not immune: The mutant is not immune to this use of his power. And unlike everyone else, he can't get away from the source.

Overkills

Corrosive: In addition to affecting human biology, the vapors are also faintly corrosive and may etch or weaken exposed metal and plastic.

Hazy: The vapors are so strong they're actually visible, like a fog bank or heavy mist.

M Stretchy



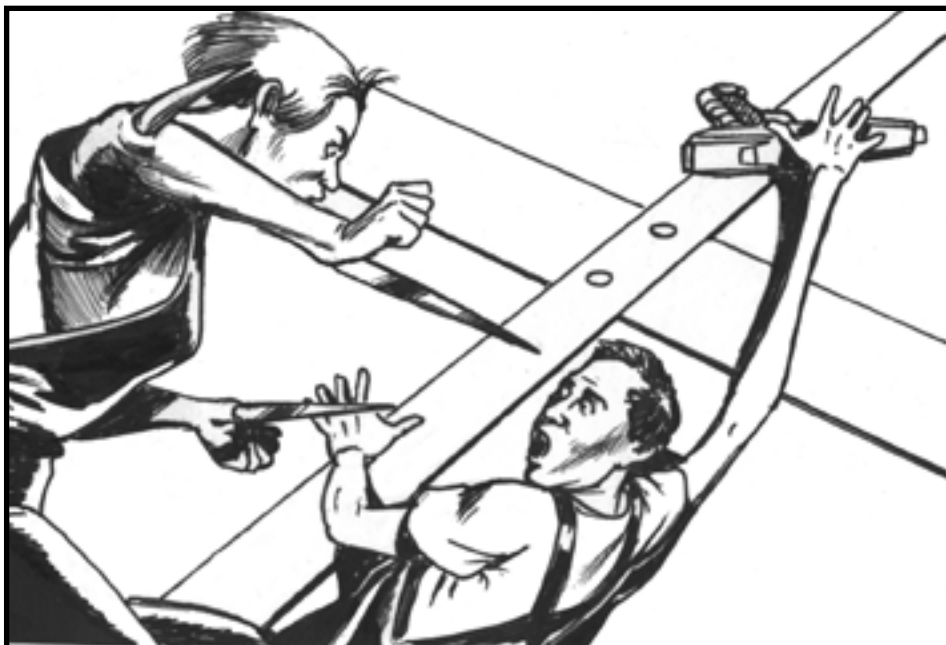
The mutant can stretch his extremities—arms, legs, fingers, toes, tongue and neck—further than they would ordinarily be able to reach. How far they can go is mostly dependent on play style—in Straight, an additional meter or so is about the limit; in Classic, across a large room; in Zap, probably kilometers, given sufficiently comic circumstances.

The margin of success indicates not how far the mutant can reach, but how much control or finesse he's able to apply. Simple success is sufficient for something like 'yank real hard' or 'hold on' but anything more complicated requires a higher margin, reaching into the 10+ range for truly fine manipulation such as 'operate a keyboard from a distance' or 'open a door from the far side by reaching underneath it with my tongue'. The extremity remains stretched as long as the mutant concentrates, then snaps back to its original length.

Stretched extremities retain normal strength and keep all bones and joints. They do get a bit thinner and more flexible, and as such might be able to pass through slightly smaller openings than normal—this is up to you.

Variations & limitations

One body part: The mutant can only stretch one type of extremity. This may be a bit too restrictive



'Well, Friend Computer, I was helping our mission team's loyalty officer, Benny-R-QJQ-2, replace a security camera that had accidentally malfunctioned. Imagine my shock when Benny-R extended his arm to an unnatural length. I realized he was an unregistered mutant, so naturally I immediately ordered him to surrender.'

'Of course you are far better informed than I as to the nature and function of mutations—why, I think I've never even seen a mutant, thanks to your steadfast protection! So I won't try to speculate about why Benny-R's body suddenly developed those strange, fatal ruptures. That's one less filthy mutant to menace Alpha Complex!'

'Punctures? Really? Perhaps—um—Benny-R was carrying a hidden knife, and his inhumanly corrupted body stretched around the blade? No, Friend Computer, I don't know what happened to the knife...'

for some, as the mutation isn't that powerful in the first place.

Stretch-fu: The character can only stretch 10–20cm, and only to punch someone's lights out. The extra reach gives him a combat advantage; add the margin of success on a Power roll as a bonus to Unarmed Combat rolls made for the rest of the fight.

(By the way, combine Stretchy with Bouncy for extra fun!)

Mishaps

Boneless: The extremity fails to stretch, instead becoming completely limp and boneless (literally) for several minutes.

Limp: The mutant loses all muscular control and collapses on the floor.

No retraction: The stretching works, but stays at its longest extension for as long as is inconvenient.

Overkills

All-over stretch: The mutant stretches all his extremities, not just the one he wants.

Completely elastic: Instead of merely stretching a bit further, the affected extremity can be tied in knots, reach around an arbitrary number of corners, fit through tiny openings and wrap itself repeatedly around things.

P Telekinesis



- ④ The mutant can lift or manipulate an object with his mind. The object may be in somebody else's possession.
- ④ A nearby object of ten kilograms can be affected.
- ④ Higher margins of success are required for larger masses, greater distances or a very high degree of precision.

Variations & limitations

Fine control: The mutant's Telekinesis is much weaker—but more precise—than normal. Regardless of his margin of success, he simply can't lift anything heavier than half a kilo (about a pound). However, he can use his mutation to jiggle locks, open doors, palm objects and suchlike—add the margin of success on a Power roll as a bonus to a Security Systems, Sleight of Hand or other relevant skill roll.

Repulsion: In place of the usual effects of Telekinesis, the mutant can generate a repulsive field around himself, pushing everything and

everyone in the area away from him. A marginal success creates a force about equal to a firmly pushing citizen; a margin of 5+ shoves with the strength of several gravities. With a margin of 10+, the power embeds objects in walls—and dents the walls themselves.

Mishaps

Brain explodes: The mutant's brain explodes from the effort of manipulating physical space with the power of his mind. Next clone. (Don't overuse this one, unless the mutant is being really excessive.)

Equal and opposite reaction: The mutant succeeds, but is affected by an equal and opposite force.

Hallucination: The mutant doesn't move the object with his mind; he moves it *in* his mind. He truly believes he accomplished what he was trying to do—and will not learn otherwise until reality forcibly intrudes on his delusion.

Minimal effect: The mutant's manipulation takes effect, but with a minimum of force—generally not enough to accomplish anything

effective, but often enough for someone else to notice it.

Visible manifestation: The telekinesis works, but a tell-tale rippling in the air stretches between the mutant and the target.

Wrong direction: The object moves, but not as the mutant had intended—instead of hurling that armed grenade away from him, he ends up stuffing it down his jumpsuit.

Wrong target: The mutant grabs the wrong thing with his mind. Hope it wasn't fragile.

Overkills

Excessive force: The mutant performs his manipulation with one or two orders of magnitude more force than he'd intended.

More targets: The mutant manipulates a whole mess of stuff in whatever way he'd intended to manipulate the target. So yes, he may have tossed that grenade back at the enemy—along with his laser pistol and three of his teammates.

P Teleportation



- ④ The mutant can voluntarily teleport to a location he can visualize. A higher margin allows teleportation of greater distances and helps the mutant show up in good working order.
- ④ The mutant may also involuntarily teleport as an instinctive reaction to the imminent threat of death. The higher the margin, the more likely the mutant is to end up in a safe place. (Don't overdo this. The player will hate it, and not in a good way.)
- ④ The teleportation field extends along the mutant's body, a few centimeters from his

skin. Held and worn objects are usually transported along with him.

Variations & limitations

No place like home: The mutant's power has latched on to a single location and will always teleport him there. Distance is not a factor in the required margin of success; he can get 'home' from anywhere equally easily. However, if his 'home' becomes inconvenient (say, submerged under a hundred feet of radioactive gunk), he'll have real problems until he manages to relocate his destination. (How? We have no idea. Neither does he, probably.)

Snap: In order to activate his power, the mutant must snap twice.

Teleport object: Instead of being able to teleport himself, the mutant can teleport small objects to or from his hand. Anything larger than a grenade or further away than ten meters requires at least a margin of 5, if not higher. Works well in concert with 'Snap', above.

Mishaps

Lost luggage: Any or all of the character's possessions don't make the trip with him. Though the 'shows up stark naked' trick can be funny, it can be equally amusing for a single small object



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

(the mutant's ME Card, perhaps?) to go missing, since he's not apt to notice it right away.

Scrambled: The mutant's body gets from Point A to Point B, but doesn't re-assemble quite right. This can manifest in any number of ways—tiny little cuts over every inch of his body, his arm sticking out through his ribcage or his internal organs not hooking together quite the way they ought to.

Stuck: The mutant teleports to the right place, but gets an arm or leg stuck in a wall, floor, bot,

etc. He suffers a wound and may need to teleport again in order to get un-stuck.

Wrong destination: The mutant goes to The Wrong Place—preferably somewhere ominous, inconvenient or downright hazardous. Fortunately, Alpha Complex is full of reactors, transtube tunnels, firing ranges, darkened rooms, elevator shafts, manufacturing plants, busy roadways, locked closets, food vats, high-clearance facilities and perimeter defense systems.

Overkills

Area effect: Everything within a few meters of the mutant goes with him when he teleports—as if a three-meter-radius sphere were carved out of space in one location and plopped down in another.

M Toxic Metabolism



③ The mutant can consume toxic materials and use them to synthesize and exude a toxin through his skin pores. He can then poison someone by touch.

③ Roll the mutant's Power after he's eaten his meal of arsenic, detergent and industrial solvents.

③ The margin of success indicates how potent the poison is:

0–4: The target suffers nausea, dizziness and sweating, but the mutant gets a case of indigestion and burping.

5–9: The target suffers vomiting, fever, cramps and perhaps unconsciousness—he's either Snafued or Wounded, depending on a Power roll. The mutant has mild gastric discomfort.

10+: The toxin is viciously crippling—the target is maimed or down, depending on a Power roll. The mutant has dead, blackened skin on his palms + soles but is otherwise fine.

poisonous vapors. The vapors disperse rapidly in open air, so the mutant pretty much has to breathe directly into someone's face for it to be successful. Treat the Power roll as an attack roll, doing the same damage as standard poison gas (S3K biological).

No substance requirement: The mutant's body can generate the toxins all by itself, rather than needing to consume and refine them. Failed Power rolls still cause equivalent effects, as the toxins are released into the mutant's system rather than secreted on the hands.

Pharmaceutical metabolism: Instead of absorbing and passing on toxins, the mutant can absorb and secrete drugs. The higher the margin of success, the less of an effect the pharmaceutical has on the mutant and the more of its kick is passed on to the target. This mutation doesn't activate automatically upon being drugged—the mutant must consciously decide to use it. Well, at least most of the time.

Mishaps

This power is its own mishap—when the mutant has just eaten a plateload of concentrated chemical fertilizer, failure to digest it properly can be pretty bad. Look up the margin of failure on the success table above and apply the 'target' effects to the mutant. If you want other mishaps, here are a couple:

Cyst: Instead of synthesizing and breaking down the consumed toxins, the mutant's body isolates them in an internal cyst. So though he feels fine (as if he'd digested the stuff quite efficiently), he generates no poison of his own. If you're feeling mischievous, a sufficiently strong blow to the mutant's torso just might break open that motherlode of toxic nastiness sitting inside of him.

Wrong location: The mutant secretes poison from the back of his knees, his sternum or some other place that's not really conducive to being used in an aggressive fashion.

Overkills

Continued production: The mutant's body continues churning out deadly poison for hours, whether he wants it to or not. Though this may be useful in some ways, it also means he'll eventually be leaving a trail of the stuff behind him as it soaks through his boots and/or gloves.

Variations & limitations

Deadly breath: Instead of producing a tactile poison, the mutant exhales invisible but highly

Hey! Who used up all the drain cleaner? That's the second jug this week!

P Transmutation



③ The mutant can turn a nearby non-living object into some other non-living object.

③ If the change doesn't alter size or type of material much, a simple success will do. A substantial change in one or the other requires reduces the chance of success by a few points. Massive alterations in both

size and substance lower the chance of success to near nil.

③ The duration depends on the margin of success: 0–4 = a rounds or two; 5–9 = several rounds; 10–14 = a scene; 15+ = fairly permanent.

③ Unlike most powers, Transmutation should take effort even when run in Zap—the larger the change, the greater the effort.

Variations & limitations

Limited target: The mutant can only affect a particular type of target—bots, forms, foodstuffs,

uranium, weapons, jumpsuits or whatever you'd like. Or perhaps he can only turn things into a particular sort of thing—miniature replicas of whatever they used to be, tasty desserts, cybernetic enhancements or Teela O'Malley paraphernalia.

Shape-swapping: The mutant can only transmute things into the original form of the last object he used his power on. (So if he turns a cone rifle into a mop, the next object he transmutes must be turned into a cone rifle.) This variation probably doesn't need to take effort when run in Zap.

Mishaps

Half-and-half: Only part of the target is transmuted, resulting in a freakish object that may not work properly for either form.

Subverted intent: Though the transmutation technically succeeds—that warbot turns into a small dessert or whatnot—the mutant's intent fails. If he was trying to create something useful, it's of shoddy quality. If he was trying to produce something lethal, it's made of foam rubber or otherwise completely safe. If he was trying to form something harmless, it's flammable, explosive, toxic and/or mutagenic.

Wrong effect: The mutant's concentration slips, and he changes an object into something other than what he'd intended—probably something terribly dangerous.

Wrong target: The mutant alters the wrong object—or objects. This can be combined with 'Wrong effect' for some truly spectacular screwups.

Overkills

Area effect: Everything non-living within a meter of the target is changed into something else, usually thematically related to the original intent. For instance, if the mutant attempted to turn a laser pistol into a banana, the rest of the target's equipment might change into the rest of a three-course, YELLOW-clearance Alpha Complex meal.

Universal change: Anything in the vicinity that's similar to the intended target is also changed into the same thing. So if the mutant attempted to turn a laser pistol into a banana, all laser pistols anywhere nearby would turn into bananas—as might laser rifles or blaster pistols.

P Uncanny Luck



- ③ The mutant can affect probability. He can only influence concealed rolls made by the GM that directly affect him in some way. He must give the GM a note explaining what roll he wants to influence and how.
- ③ Every Power point spent influences a single die roll by 2 in whichever direction would benefit the mutant.
- ③ If the mutant tries to use Power he doesn't have, he has catastrophically bad luck on the roll in question.

enthusiastically. Or every time he fires his laser pistol, it ricochets several times off of shiny surfaces before actually hitting anything.

Overkills

Lucky streak: The mutant goes on an incredibly lucky streak. He wins lotteries, never misses a shot and is promptly and efficiently served by the Alpha Complex bureaucracy. He's so amazingly lucky it should be glaringly obvious something's not normal. And the streak inevitably ends....

Variations & limitations

Activity/charm requirement: The mutant must use a lucky ritual—for instance, put his boots on in a certain order, or do the hokey-pokey—or a good-luck charm.

Scene duration: Instead of spending Power on individual rolls, the mutant invokes his luck like any other mutant power. If the Power roll succeeds, he's lucky for the next scene or so. If it fails, use one of the mishaps below.

Task duration: Instead of spending Power on individual rolls, the mutant invokes his luck for a particular task. If the Power roll succeeds, he's lucky with regard to that task. If it fails, use one of the mishaps below.

Mishaps

In its original form, this mutation doesn't involve Power rolls—mishaps result only when the mutant tries to spend Power he doesn't have. Some variations above involve Power rolls, in which case the following mishaps may be of use:

Bad luck: The mutant has really horrendously back luck for a while, if he survives that long. Alpha Complex is pretty deadly even for those who aren't cursed by fate.

Strange coincidence: The mutant isn't any more or less lucky—but strange coincidences start cropping up all around him. Perhaps he keeps running into old roommates from his INFRARED days, who greet him



A citizen who has stretched his Uncanny Luck too far. (Okay, putting this illustration here may be too big a stretch, but we had no room in Chapter 6.)



P Ventriloquist



- ③ The mutant can project his voice over a distance, either to a single target or a small group close together. The target(s) must be in line-of-sight.
- ③ While using this power, the mutant appears to be shouting, though no sound actually comes out of his mouth. The voice comes across as a whisper to the target(s).
- ③ If the GM is generous, success means the entire message is transmitted. Otherwise, success conveys the general gist, a margin of 5+ communicates the whole message and 10+ conveys it with skin-crawling clarity.

Variations & limitations

Psychic message: The mutant's message is sent directly mind-to-mind. There's not a lot of difference from ordinary Ventriloquism when it works, but the potential mishaps tend to be mind-oriented rather than sound-oriented—see Mental Blast, Mind Sense and Empathy for examples.

Subtle: The mutant does not appear to be shouting when he uses his power—merely whispering noiselessly.

Mishaps

Blowout: The mutant's throat is blasted and scourged. Not only does he end up with the worst sore throat he's ever had, but he can't speak (including use of his mutant power) for a while.

Megaphone: Instead of generating a precisely targeted whisper at the target, the character simply shouts his secret message at megamplified loudspeaker volumes.

Wrong target: The message goes to the wrong person. Great for confusing plots and muddling conspiracies!

Overkills

Continued broadcast: The ventriloquism works, but anything further that the mutant tries to say over the next minute or two behaves as if it were a part of the original message, being heard as a whisper next to the target(s) rather than where the mutant is actually speaking.

Too many targets: The mutant's message is whispered to everyone in line-of-sight.

M X-Ray Vision



- ③ The mutant can 'see' inside of people and objects, using electromagnetic radiation.
- ③ How the mutant interprets what he 'sees' depends on how accurate his understanding of what he's studying is. Lack of relevant knowledge may result in cartoonish simplifications or analogies to better-understood fields.
- ③ Denser materials are harder to see through.

Variations & limitations

Entropy sense: The mutant can perceive how badly damaged or worn an object is—even when the telltale signs aren't visible or would normally require an expert to interpret. Like with X-Ray Vision, his impressions are interpreted by his mind as best as possible, depending on his relevant knowledge. This variation replaces the ordinary effects of X-Ray Vision.

Radio vision: Instead of being able to see into objects, the mutant can see radio emissions. His range is fairly limited, as he's constantly looking through the equivalent of a moderate fog—Alpha Complex has a lot of radio-based systems—but a successful Power roll will permit him to notice anything nearby that's actively broadcasting. A really good roll might even let him note devices that are receiving.

Mishaps

Blind: The part of the mutant's brain responsible for sight shuts down in confusion. This lasts as long as is humorous.

Incorrect conclusions: What's seen is oversimplified in a misleading or incorrect fashion—a broken bone might be portrayed as a transbot track missing a segment, leading the mutant to conclude additional bone (or additional track, if he's really dim) is needed in the injured citizen's leg.

Stuck on: The mutant's brain stops processing normal visual information in favor of this nifty wide-band E/M spectrum stuff! Who needs eyesight, anyway?

Unintelligible: The mutant receives a wide variety of bewildering impressions. They're pretty and distracting, in a screen-saver kind of way, but not actually much use.

Wrong target: Focusing on the right thing can be tricky, sometimes. The mutant is most likely to accidentally examine something in front of or beyond the intended target, but hey, it's a mutation—if you want, he can end up contemplating the navel of someone seven sectors away.

Overkills

Amazing insight: Through his examination, the mutant achieves a certain amount of insight into whatever it is he's looking at. He may immediately raise the relevant skill specialty for half-cost. (See Chapter 12 in the *PARANOIA* XP rulebook.)

Multiple items: The mutant gets a good look at several things with his X-Ray vision—for instance, if examining a lock, he might also get a look at the door and the room beyond. A few bits and pieces from one thing may be misinterpreted as being from another thing. But hey, that's the price of knowledge, right?



4. Quick shots

Not all mutations are created equal. (See the sidebar 'What makes a good mutation?' later in this chapter.) There are any number of mutations that can be great for the game under the right circumstances, but which aren't really appropriate for random assignment or a full-length writeup. Broadly speaking, they tend to fall into one of three categories: difficult to run; weird and/or creepy; and useless (or worse).

Difficult to run

At the end of Chapter 39, the **PARANOIA** XP rulebook discusses mutations that can make your life overly difficult by derailing a mission or requiring far too much attention. Still, they can be perfect for NPCs, plot hooks or—very occasionally and carefully—for PCs.

Complex Intuition: The mutant is in tune with the underlying nature of Alpha Complex. Yes, the whole thing. Though in theory this could let the mutant discover just about anything, in practice, there's so much information that filtering it is incredibly difficult and draining. Still, a mutant with this power gains occasional unexpected insight into societal trends, technological progress, geography, cafeteria menus, etc. He can try to activate it deliberately, if he wants to open the metaphorical floodgates just to get a drink of water. Even if he succeeds, for the next few minutes (or more) he'll be catatonic, insane or mindlessly babbling facts about loyalty song adoption percentage quotas.

Deep Probe (XP): The mutant can extract information from deep within someone else's mind. It's easiest to retrieve simple, consciously recalled information, but with a high enough margin of success, even complex, subconscious memories can be accessed. The target gets a splitting headache and obsesses over the required information—both tip-offs that he's being victimized by a mutation. Mishaps are likely to involve mental malfunction on the part of the mutant or the broadcasting of his thoughts.

Implant Memory: Many citizens can forge paperwork; this mutant can forge memories in the minds of other citizens. The more unusual, detailed or vivid the memory to be implanted, the higher margin of success required on the Power roll. Mishaps may tinker with the mutant's own memory, broadcast his memories to the subject or give either one of them partial or full amnesia.

Machine Communion: The complement of Machine Empathy, Machine Communion allows the mutant to get a sense of what a machine intelligence is thinking and feeling. Aside from the distinction in targets, it works just like Telepathy. If used on The Computer, it only senses the motivations, thoughts and emotions of the local

node being observed—not its entire distributed system!

Mental Block (XP): The character can prevent other mutants with Deep Probe or Telepathy from reading his mind and (if you want) those with Mind Sense from detecting him. Mishaps are similar to those of Deep Probe—brain-lock, mental malfunctions and/or thought broadcasting.

Mind Control: The mutant can give a subconscious mental instruction to a hapless victim, who remains blissfully unaware of his new programming until the appropriate conditions are met and he's forced to perform some predetermined task to the best of his ability. Think *The Manchurian Candidate*. The better the margin of success, the more complicated the conditions and instructions that may be given. Mishaps may alert the target to the attempt, push him into a homicidal berserk rage or simply misprogram him altogether.

Precognition (XP): The mutant can sense the future in limited ways—either as a (highly subjective) sense of 'wrongness' or 'rightness' about a course of action or just as a general premonition of danger. Unlike most powers, deliberate use of this mutation reduces the mutant's Power by 2 rather than just 1. Mishaps may give false cues, leave the mutant oblivious or cause everyone else in the area to feel that the mutant is dangerous.

Telepathy (XP): The mutant can read the surface thoughts/emotions of a visible target, at least in the normal version of this mutation. You can also have one that allows two people to communicate mentally. Either way, it can be a

real pain to deal with. Mishaps are, again, similar to those of Deep Probe.

Time Jump: The mutant can make short hops in time. This lets him pull stunts that make the laws of causality bellow in fury and disgust, such as jumping back to warn himself of imminent danger, jumping forward to aid himself in the future or handing off items to himself that he only has because he got them from himself in the first place. If you're on the verge of dropping this supplement in horror, you've got the right idea—you *really* don't want to give this one to a player character. It's a plot device, preferably for Zap. If you absolutely must give it to a PC, make sure the character has a low Power, so that he can accidentally lose himself in the time stream nine times out of ten.

Weird and/or creepy

Some mutations, though potentially useful, are just plain weird. Or perhaps 'esoteric' is a better word. Either way, they're not really appropriate for random assignment.

Other powers push the game more in the direction of horror than is normal in any of the three playing styles. Still, **PARANOIA** can lend itself quite nicely to that sort of play for those who enjoy it, so they're worth at least mentioning.

As there's a fair overlap between these two categories, we've lumped them together. (It's not because we're lazy. When we're lazy, we cheerfully admit it!)

Creating your own mutations

If you're short of ideas for your own mutations, here are a few sources:

- ③ Comic books and other (non-fun) roleplaying games offer plenty of weird powers. ('Wow, *The Mutant Experience* suggests looking at comics for mutant powers. I *never* would have thought of that! The scales have fallen from my eyes!') Keep in mind, though, **PARANOIA** isn't a superhero game—mutations should be both powerful and disastrous.
- ③ Open a dictionary to a random page and read the definition for a random word on that page. Do this once or twice more, then use the combination of words as inspiration for a mutant power. This will, admittedly, yield some unlikely abilities ('Your Troubleshooter has the mutation Earthquake Hypothyroid Lagniappe'). But that can be good—it keeps your players guessing. (Guessing about *what*, we won't say.)
- ③ If you don't have a dictionary, do the same thing with free-association—just grab a piece of paper and write down arbitrary words as they occur to you. Once you've got a good list, use a few of them as inspiration for something fiendish and twisted. (And, as with the dictionary trick, probably a bit weird.)
- ③ You can also create a mutation based on a character concept—something that exacerbates a notable character trait, supports/butresses the character's personality in some way, gives the character a dilemma or problem, etc.



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

Bioreflexion: The mutant can reflect his physical injuries onto other citizens. The victim is afflicted with some version of whatever the mutant is suffering from—blood loss, broken limbs, poisoning, missing teeth and so forth—but not mental conditions such as insanity. A small margin of success causes the target to manifest a lesser version of the injury—the mutant's broken leg translates into a bruise on the victim's knee. A spectacular success can actually amplify the effect—instead of a simple fracture, the victim ends up with a multiple compound fracture or a completely shattered leg. Mishaps exacerbate the wounds the mutant has and/or reverse the direction of reflection.

Breathe Anything: Well, okay, not absolutely anything. If it's solid, it has to be in pieces small enough to be drawn into the lungs and expelled again, but just about any liquid or gas will do. Higher margins of success may protect the mutant's lungs (and only his lungs) from secondary effects such as the scorching heat of molten steel or the caustic bite of chlorine gas. Mishaps aren't often relevant, since in any situation where this mutation is necessary, simple failure to activate is likely to kill the character.

Chaff Sneeze: Whenever the mutant activates this power, he sneezes—and vice versa. His sneeze erupts in a large cloud of foil-and-grit chaff, perfect for fooling radar-guided missiles. Unfortunately, most munitions in Alpha Complex aren't radar-guided, and while the cloud does obscure normal vision somewhat, it's less effective than a smoke grenade or smoldering Hearty-Hearty BrickLoaf. But if the mutant ever is being shot at by one of the 14 Pyrus-class warbots still in use, he'll be glad for that head cold! Mishaps tend to produce substances other than chaff or result in highly painful stifled sneezes.

Detachable Limbs: The mutant can, with a bit of effort, remove his limbs (and probably even re-attach them later!). While detached, the limbs can be controlled just as if they were still connected to the mutant's nervous system, though they'll be somewhat lacking in leverage. Still, a properly placed hand can pull a trigger just fine, and sometimes, that's what really counts. The mutant's stump(s) are slightly tender and do bleed a bit, but he isn't considered 'wounded' per se. A failed Power roll on detaching generally means simple failure, while a failed Power roll on re-attachment is license for whatever gruesome mishap you care to inflict. Higher margins of success may permit detaching of smaller units—hands, fingers, eyeballs or whatnot. (Can two mutants with this mutation swap limbs? Um... we'll leave that one up to you.)

Rigor Vitae: The mutant can make parts of his body go rigid—to the point where his fingers will snap and break before they release their grip on whatever he's holding. This power doesn't actually increase the structural integrity of his flesh and bones. Better margins of success permit more discrimination in what's affected—any margin lower than 5 results in the mutant's entire body going rigid in its current position. The rigor lasts a few minutes. Mishaps can result in limbs getting stuck in positions permanently, painful muscle spasms or uncontrollable twitches.

Scrub-A-Dub: The mutant can cover surfaces with a sudsy, soapy cleaning fluid. This can either be energetically squirted from the mutant's pores or teleported in from the Elemental Plane of Scrubby Bubbles; either is equally ridiculous in the larger scheme of things. Still, The Computer takes hygiene and cleanliness very seriously, so despite this mutation being kind of wacky, it's potentially fairly useful. Unfortunately, it's also extremely obvious, and mishaps tend to end up producing ammonia, grease or VIOLET paint—or just creating the soapy suds on the inside of the mutant.

Symbiont: The mutant has a secondary biological system inside his own body, which has its own intelligence, personality and goals. Its presence doesn't actually harm the mutant and is even beneficial in some minor way (slightly higher drug tolerances and resistance to disease, perhaps?) but is pretty damn disturbing. It may have an appendage or 'face' that emerges from the mutant's torso or slithers out of his throat. Or it might be able to hijack the mutant's body from time to time. The mutant may or may not



be aware of this other entity, and if aware of it, may or may not get along with it. Power rolls are required to try and communicate with the thing, maintain dominance over the body or gain the minor metabolic benefits of having a symbiont.

Tentacles: The mutant can sprout tentacles out of some part(s) of his body—common sites include the sides of the ribcage, the center of the stomach, the mouth or the palms of the hands. These slimy, writhing appendages can extend up to 5 meters. The lower the mutant's Power, the more of a 'mind of their own' the tentacles have—though whether they're truly intelligent is up to you. If they are, that's kind of sinister-scary. But if they're not, they might well strangle the very mutant they're attached to, which is threatening-scary.

Third Eye: The mutant has a third eye embedded in his body, presumably somewhere normally covered by his clothes. (The sternum works pretty well for this, as does the center-top of the ribcage.) Unfortunately for him, rather than being a sign of any particular enlightenment, the eye is the result of being marked by some Lovecraftian horror. Citizens—including the mutant—who see the eye tend to go mad or pass out and lose all memory of it, depending on the margin of success on a Power check. Security cameras and the like see it normally, however, so the mutant is well-advised to avoid wandering around with the thing exposed. Keeping it hidden longer-term will be an interesting challenge, should the mutant survive so long.

Time Scramble: The mutant has the power to disrupt the orderly flow of time in the area around him. He has no control over how it's disrupted—if you think of time as a smoothly flowing stream, the mutant is lobbing a hand grenade into the water. Citizens and objects may manifest in multiples, vanish altogether or blink between different locations; cause may follow effect rather than preceding it; events may recur multiple times; and different possibilities may play themselves out or—without actually happening—make their effects known, temporarily or permanently. Basically, this is license to inflict whatever sort of chaos and confusion you want on the area. Mishaps may screw up the mutant's interaction with time—see Hyperreflexes and Speed for ideas—or just give him a blinding headache.

Some of the fully detailed mutations also lend themselves nicely to horror: Acidic Spit, Adaptive Metabolism, Adhesive Skin, Creeping Madness,

Death Simulation, Enervating Darkness, Haze, Hypersenses, Mind Sense, Psychometry, Puppeteer, Regeneration, Spikes, Second Skin, Stench and Toxic Metabolism all work well.

Useless (or worse)

Finally, there are the mutations that nobody in their right mind would want—certainly not useful, and sometimes obvious as well. These are great for inflicting on characters who've died often enough to start suffering from genetic drift (see Chapter 27 in **PARANOIA** XP). They're also good for games with (slightly) more 'realistic mutations' or for inflicting on veteran players who are getting too cocky.

Many of these mutations severely curtail a character's life expectancy, which is saying something for **PARANOIA**.

Blind Self: The mutant can render himself blind at will—hooray. Even worse, this ability can go off accidentally. Whenever you feel like it, roll the mutant's Power, as if the mutant had attempted to use the mutation himself. The blindness lasts a few minutes or as long as it's amusing.

Boiling Blood: The mutant can raise his own body temperature. If this ability were precise, it might actually be of some use in fighting off infections or illness—but let's face it, how often do Troubleshooters have time to die that way? Every point by which a Power roll succeeds raises the mutant's body temperature by 5° F (about 3° C). In practical terms, this means that a margin of success of 1 will give the mutant a severe fever, a margin of 2 will cause delirium and brain damage and anything higher than that will cause death in relatively short order.

Colorblind: The mutant sees in shades of black and white, with no color vision whatsoever. (If you want something slightly more realistic, have him be unable to distinguish between some set of colors, such as 'red and green' or 'yellow, blue and indigo'.) This mutation requires good roleplaying by the player. If he does an entertaining job, give him Perversity points. If he blatantly ignores it, see 'Player conditioning devices' in Chapter 18 of the main rulebook. This mutation is always active; no Power rolls are required.

Create Mustard: The mutant can cause a pasty yellow substance to ooze from underneath his fingernails. On a high margin of success, it may even squirt rather than ooze! Isn't that exciting? No... no, it isn't. The stuff is messy and goopy, smells acrid and tends to accumulate under the nails, almost assuredly causing trouble for the mutant during hygiene inspections. If anyone is actually nuts enough to voluntarily *spread this gunk on his food and eat it*, give him a nasty case of indigestion.

Fatal Allergy: The mutant is deathly allergic to a particular substance—pick one or roll on the Random Material Tables (see Appendix).

Anytime the mutant comes into contact with it, make a Power roll and treat the results as an attack against him doing S2V damage. (In Straight, limit the damage to S2K.)

Faulty Metabolism: The mutant's body is missing some vital enzyme, protein or metabolic process. Choose a method by which he can hold off his otherwise inevitable demise—an injection of drugs, a supplement pill of some sort, gnawing on a bar of magnesium or some other process. If he doesn't get his required remedy, he passes away. The details of how often the remedy is necessary and how quickly death arrives are left up to you. This mutation is always active; no Power rolls are required.

Inflation: The mutant can swell himself up with air like a puffer fish (minus spikes) or inflatable parade balloon. While inflated, the mutant is somewhat more fragile; increase all damage dealt by one level. In addition, he cannot take physical actions (none of his joints bend) and is a large and obvious target. He is no stronger than usual—not that it'd be relevant, even if he were. It's up to you whether this power leaves the mutant's weight constant or actually makes him lighter than air, as well as whether clothing/armor inflates along with the mutant.

Just Plain Stupid: The mutant is—well—dim. Dumb. Stupid. The higher his Power, the more idiotic he is. Appropriate roleplaying should be rewarded with Perversity points, while egregiously inappropriate brightness may be punished with player conditioning devices (Chapter 18 of **PARANOIA** XP). The mutant also takes his Power as a penalty to any Knowledge skill rolls. This mutation is always active; no Power rolls are required.

Limited Lifespan: The mutant's lifespan is extremely limited. A very low Power indicates a natural life expectancy of one to five years; a very high Power indicates a natural life expectancy of one to five days. This limited lifespan can be extended by appropriate medical technology—generally, very expensive drugs that are cleared BLUE or higher. Feel free to specify exactly how the mutant is going to die—'Limited Lifespan' is so much less colorful and evocative than 'Metastasizing Tumors' or 'Flesh What Rots Off The Bone'. This mutation is always active; no Power rolls are required.

Liquid Production: Whenever the mutant comes into contact with a liquid of some sort, make a Power roll. On a failure, nothing happens. On success, the mutant starts uncontrollably producing identical liquid out of his pores, tear glands, nose or mouth. Needless to say, this can be somewhat uncomfortable, and most of its potentially useful applications involve the mutant covering himself in something messy, toxic and/or corrosive.

Look Really Ugly: This mutation encompasses a wide variety of physical deformities, from 'little nasty-looking warts all over' to 'four meters tall with two heads'. The higher the mutant's Power, the more extreme his appearance. You should detail exactly how the character looks unusual, for the sake of flavor, if nothing else. There's no particular game effect to this mutation, other than the obvious risk of discovery. This mutation is always active; no Power rolls are required.

Machine Hostility: This mutation is the exceedingly unfortunate inverse of Machine Empathy—machine intelligences have a tendency to dislike and distrust the character.

What makes a good mutation?

As discussed in the **PARANOIA** XP rulebook, mutant powers have these requirements:

- **Hidden** when not in use so the mutant is not likely to be immediately detected;
- **Conspicuous** when used so the mutant has some chance of being detected;
- Potentially **backfire** in unusual and/or grievous ways.

Powers should also meet these requirements:

- Potentially **useful** enough that a mutant may risk using it to gain an edge or solve a sticky situation.
- **Straightforward** in concept so you can wing it if you don't remember the details during play. This is less an issue with powers you make up yourself; you'll presumably have some notion what you meant by 'Cognitive Anterior Destabilization'.
- Fit the **tone and setting** of the game. Powers that are vulgar, X-rated, pure parody or suited to a space-opera setting don't work as well.
- **GM-friendly**—that is, not a real pain to run, don't give a player the power to completely circumvent missions, doesn't give make your hair fall out, etc.

Of course, there are times when you'll want to violate these guidelines, but do so deliberately and knowingly. If you're going to disregard the advice of Famous Game Designers, it soothes our wounded egos to know you did it with forethought.



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

Whenever the mutant interacts directly with a robot or The Computer, make a Power roll. If it's successful, the machine intelligence is grumpy, testy, judgmental, angry, inclined to take things in the worst possible light or—with a large enough margin—downright hostile. Nothing happens on a failed Power roll—neutrality is about the best reaction the mutant can hope for. Needless to say, citizens with this mutation don't usually live very long.

Narcolepsy: The mutant has a propensity to fall asleep at dreadfully inconvenient times. Whenever the whim strikes you, roll the mutant's Power. Success means he falls unconscious—the higher the margin of success, the longer he's gone for. Nothing happens on a failed Power roll. Caveat: If you're making these rolls frequently, don't knock the character out for more than a round or two—you're effectively removing the player from the game, which can get old really fast if overused. If you want to inflict some inconvenience frequently and for long durations, try Blind Self instead.

Partial Invisibility: The mutant can turn one part of his body (say, his kneecaps) completely invisible. Absolutely and entirely see-through. The mutant's friends will be amazed! His neighbors astounded! Internal Security... unimpressed. On a mishap, the mutant makes the wrong part of his body transparent, makes the right part flicker in and out of visibility or actually destroys

the targeted body part altogether. (Look, Mal No knees!)

Stunningly Fragile: The mutant is horrifyingly susceptible to physical injury. Add the mutant's Power to the margin of success on all attacks that strike him and increase the maximum damage level inflicted to Killed. This mutation is always active; no Power rolls are required.

Ticking: The mutant—who may or may not be aware of his mutation—occasionally hears ticking noises, not unlike those of a geiger counter or even a bomb! In actuality, this has something to do with electromagnetic delta waves, overlapping spectral frequencies or other completely useless and mostly harmless technobabble. But the mutant doesn't know that, does he? If he tries to narrow down where the ticking is coming from, make a Power roll. On success, he gets nowhere. On failure, he gets some sort of general (incorrect) idea about the source—a fellow Troubleshooter, his laser pistol, a wall panel, etc.

Vampirism: The mutant requires the life-force of others in order to live. Select a means by which he drains it—the classic method is by drinking the victim's blood, but it can also be done by touch, making extended eye contact or being present when the victim dies. Every eight hours (or however long) that the mutant goes without feeding, his physical condition worsens by one step—if he was okay, he becomes Snafued; if he was Wounded, he becomes Maimed; and

so forth. This degeneration will not heal without feeding, although it can be temporarily alleviated through the use of appropriate pharmaceuticals. This mutation is always active; no Power rolls are required.

If you're chortling to yourself and wishing there were more of these—well, you can also use the listed mishaps as powers. Yes, that's right, you can assign 'Fail to teleport by scattering your molecules all over 17 sectors' as a mutation. Life's tough in Alpha Complex. Just remember it's more fun for everyone when the players hang themselves with their own rope, and they're more likely to do it with useful mutations.



5. Gamemastering mutations

The average **PARANOIA** player believes mutations exist for three simple reasons:

1. To doom his character by ensuring he's treasonous from daycycle one;
2. To let him have some fun on the way down by setting one of his teammates on fire or something;
3. Because 'CommieMutantTraitorScum' rolls off the tongue so much more nicely than the sadly abbreviated 'CommieTraitorScum'.

There is, admittedly, some truth to this attitude, but a cunning Gamemaster can use mutations in a far more deliberate fashion. You can emphasize or de-emphasize many aspects of **PARANOIA** just by selecting appropriate mutations or running mutations in a particular way.

Ambience

You can greatly affect the ambience of your game by choosing which mutant powers to use, how to describe them and how they go wrong. The 'selection' part of this is already done for you by the separate Mutation Tables for Classic, Straight and Zap, assuming you choose to use them. The descriptions and mishaps vary by game type:

Ⓢ **Classic:** Mutations aren't particularly realistic, but do tend to stick within some very loose boundaries of power and effect—a citizen with Polymorphism might manage to become a vending machine, but isn't going to turn into a hundred-foot-tall fire-breathing three-headed Bozo the Clown. Pyrokinesis may ignite a form, a citizen or perhaps even an entire cafeteria—but it's not apt to depopulate an entire sector. (Unless a mutant ignites the control room of a nuclear reactor or something. Not that *that* would ever happen.) *Metaphor:* Mutations are experimental auto-blasters. They're capable of a great deal of mayhem or just fizzing and spitting sparks. They may occasionally blow up, which is fairly spectacular.

Ⓢ **Straight:** Mutations work in a relatively realistic fashion. This does not mean that they obey the laws of physics as we understand them, simply that their effects (and backfires) will tend to be more consistent and more plausible than in Classic. There's more subtlety, too; excessively flashy mutants will eventually be hunted down and dealt with. *Metaphor:*

Mutations are knives—fairly easy to conceal and potentially useful, but two-edged; getting good with them takes practice.

Ⓢ **Zap:** Throw reality and consistency out the window; do whatever's funniest at the time. *Metaphor:* Mutations are fusion-powered mallets made out of plastic explosives.

You can also run Classic or Straight with a creepy/horror bent: Mutants with Regeneration feel their sinews writhing to knit themselves together and are inflicted with strange deformities when the power goes awry; Adrenalin Control prompts bestial rage; Spikes rupture from the skin dripping blood; citizens with Psychometry are assaulted by violence-laden echoes of the past; and every time a mutant uses Desolidity, he feels like a little bit more of him never really phases back to reality. For more ideas, see the weird and creepy mutations in Chapter 4.

Entertainment

Mutations are fun! They allow absurdly entertaining situations to develop that wouldn't be able to happen otherwise. When the entire

5. GAMEMASTERING

gaming group is rolling on the floor laughing because a Matter Eater just bit the end off of a slugthrower that was jammed in his mouth, who cares about a little gritty realism?

Suggestions for entertainment: This depends to a large extent on what your group finds amusing, but will nearly always be powers that involve some sort of effect that's noticeable to the world at large. Nearly any of the mutations used in Zap are good for some laughs.

Fear

PARANOIA is about fear. Mutations heighten fear in several ways:

Mutants have good reason to fear themselves

You'd be afraid, too, if there were a small but nonzero chance your head would explode whenever you sneezed. Most mutations carry the capacity to backfire grievously when used—or when unused, for that matter; if a character tries to avoid mishaps by never, ever using his power, you have free license to say it has 'overflowed' and gone off unintentionally—see 'Accidents' in Chapter 1. No matter how beneficial a mutation may be, it can be a source of fear if it isn't completely under the character's control—and the more powerful the mutation, the more true this is.

Mutations are somewhat like R&D devices in this sense, except that characters can't drop a mutation, pawn it off on somebody else or sabotage it so that it's just a harmless lump of plastic and metal. It's part of them.

Backfires need not threaten outright death to inspire gut-clenching paranoia—accidentally thwarting the goals of one's own secret society or earning the lasting enmity of a high-clearance

citizen can be just as effective. See 'When powers go wrong' in Chapter 1 for more on handling mishaps, accidents and overkills.

Suggestions for making the mutant fear himself: Anything which involves the mutant's own physiology can go wrong in some truly disturbing ways—particularly Adaptive Metabolism, Polymorphism, Rubbery Bones and Spikes. Any of the 'collateral damage' powers can turn on the character or screw things up for him in some fantastic ways.

Mutants have good reason to fear other citizens

Turning in unregistered mutants is a great way to earn commendations, bonuses, perhaps even a promotion! With the exception of a few whackos (Psion) who believe that mutants are better than everyone else, pretty much anybody will be more than happy to get the bennies of turning one in. Or perhaps he'll simply use the mutation as blackmail material and profit from it that way.

Once exposed, about the best a mutant can hope for is a mandatory diet of HappyHaze ('The Lobotomy in a Jar!') or other such pharmaceuticals; all-out brainscrubbing or termination and twiddling are equally likely. Even if the traitor survives, he'll be designated a registered mutant and live out his days as a second-class citizen.

Avoiding discovery is therefore a high priority. This can be tricky, given the erratic nature of mutant powers; it's hard for a citizen to plausibly claim he's perfectly normal when he keeps inadvertently teleporting.

Even a citizen fortunate enough to have a mutation without any recordable manifestation isn't out of the woods. Mere suspicion of mutation can buttress other charges of treason, and if a large mob of citizens becomes convinced someone's a mutant, they may dismember first and ask questions later, proof or no proof—particularly in Classic and Zap. (In Straight, citizens who suspect others of mutation are more likely to distance themselves, withhold aid, quietly sabotage, gather more evidence and/or report their suspicions to a superior.)

And of course, there's always Anti-Mutant. They'll string somebody up just for doing the 'got your nose!' trick.

Suggestions for making the mutant fear others: The most worrisome powers are those with flashy manifestations that obviously emanate from the mutant (Electroshock, Energy Field, Scream) and those that obviously change the mutant's form (Adaptive Metabolism, Bouncy, Chameleon, Desolidity, Growth, Polymorphism, Shrinking, Spikes) or movement (Jump!, Levitation, Speed, Teleportation). To a lesser extent, any power with a visible manifestation renders the character vulnerable to discovery.

The Big Kahuna of perilous mutations: Machine Empathy. Guaranteed termination or erasure has a way of making a clone fret.

Everyone has good reason to fear mutants—especially other mutants

Mutants can electrocute, freeze, mind-probe, irradiate, immobilize, dissolve and incinerate hapless citizens. They can eat anything, see through walls, squeeze through ventilation shafts and survive assaults that would kill a warbot. Your jumpsuit could be a shapeshifted mutant secretly reading your mind *right now!*

Is it any wonder everyone fears them and starts pointing fingers when mutant activity is suspected?

Mutants themselves have heard the same stories as everyone else, but have first-hand experience with the erratic, accident-prone nature of mutations. It isn't particularly comforting to contemplate that all those electrocuting, incinerating, mind-probing muties out there aren't really in full control of their powers. Some pyrokinetic might light you on fire entirely by accident. Or a citizen who tries to sense your emotions might end up in a homicidal berserker rage.

Even worse, when a mutant slips up and needs to frame someone in order to establish his own innocence, the best target for the frame is another mutant. Citizens and The Computer alike can easily believe that someone who has one unregistered mutation might well be concealing a second.

Suggestions for inspiring fear in those around: Any of the 'collateral damage' powers that don't emanate from an obvious source work great, as do psionic powers that affect a character's mind (Creeping Madness, Empathy, Mental Blast). Detect Mutant Powers and Push Mutant Powers can outright panic other mutants, once they realize someone has them.

'Collateral damage' mutations

Some powers excel at wreaking havoc upon objects and/or citizens in the local area. The most versatile are Cryokinesis, Electroshock, Gravity Manipulation, Magnetize, Pyrokinesis, Scream and Telekinesis. (Some of these can't affect people directly, but can indirectly harm them with ease.)

Enervating Darkness, Mental Blast and Radioactivity are good against living beings (and perhaps, in the case of Radioactivity, non-hardened electronics); Corrosion, Sculpt and Transmutation can cause lots of property damage. Acidic Spit and Spikes can harm either, but usually not at a distance, barring strange quill-shooting mishaps or projectile vomiting.

Gamemaster control

In other (non-fun) RPGs, special powers decrease the GM's control of the game, as they explicitly permit the character to do certain things. In **PARANOIA**, mutant powers increase your control of the game. They may work, fail, only partially function or do something completely unexpected, as you please. They can even go off completely accidentally.

Suggestions for increasing GM control: Most of the 'collateral damage' powers let you blow something up if the pace of the mission is dragging. Clean Slate, Environmental Control, Haze and Light Control can cause chaos, cover for the bold (not necessarily the mutant!) to commit treason. Both Adrenalin Control and Empathy give you license to send the mutant into a berserk rage; Empathy also lets you inflict arbitrary emotional states.

Bureaucratic Intuition, Detect Mutant Power, Hypersenses, Mechanical Intuition, Psychometry



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

and Uncanny Luck can give you an excuse for handing out information the player(s) wouldn't normally get. (Not that you should go around handing out useful information willy-nilly, but appropriate partial information can sometimes be more terrifying than complete ignorance. And who said the information you give out has to be accurate?)

Keeping characters alive (!!!)

Sometimes—all right, rarely—you'll want a group of **PARANOIA** characters to be somewhat longer-lived than average. Perhaps it's because you're playing a mini-series of Straight games, or perhaps it's because you just want to make sure that the Troubleshooters get to the point where they realize *exactly* how screwed they are. You can use mutations to get this effect without making Alpha Complex an intrinsically nicer place.

Suggestions for keeping characters alive: Desolidity, Energy Field, Hyperreflexes, Regeneration and Second Skin can help defend against nearly all physical threats; Absorption, Adaptive Metabolism, Bouncy, Electroshock, Light Control, Radioactivity and Rubbery Bones offer more specific protections. Under the right circumstances, Puppeteer and Stasis can both save a PC's bacon. Death Simulation may work well for the tricky types and Uncanny Luck can work well for anyone. Machine Empathy is a big sextuple-or-nothing gamble: if never discovered, it's an amazing boon; once revealed—well, there goes that clone line.

The suggestions under 'Player control', in the next section, can also keep characters alive longer.

Player control

We Famous Game Designers believe giving players control over their destiny dilutes the unique fun of **PARANOIA**. It's your game, though, and

you can run it any way you darn well please. Ignore what we say! Laugh at the printed word! Heck, take a razor blade to this very book and cut out parts you don't like! Just don't complain to us if your players try to take over Alpha Complex.

Oh, and the pages are double-sided, so be careful with that razor.

Anyhow—perhaps you want to give the players more control over what happens in-game—more tactical options or different ways to get out of trouble. As with keeping characters alive, mutations are one way of accomplishing this goal without easing up on the usual Alpha Complex oppression.

You might also wish to actively avoid increasing player control. This is fine; simply avoid the mutations listed below—or realize that if the character uses them frequently you'll be inflicting a lot of mishaps.

Suggestions for increasing player control: Many powers can let characters get to places they can't normally go—Desolidity and Teleportation are obvious, but appropriately used Acidic Spit, Adhesive Skin, Chameleon, Corrosion, Magnetize, Polymorphism, Rubbery Bones, Sculpt and (if persistent) Matter Eater can also work. Bureaucratic Intuition, Charm, Deep Thought, Detect Mutant Power, Empathy, Hypersenses, Psychometry and X-Ray Vision can all aid with information gathering—which may or may not aid the players, of course.

Plot

Because you have free reign to invoke accidents at dramatically appropriate moments, you can work mutations into the plot of a mission. For instance, you might throw an irrelevant objective at the Troubleshooters, only to reveal the real plot (a highly treasonous device being assembled by Pro Tech) by having a character's Magnetize mutation go haywire when he visits R&D, triggering a pair of sealed blast doors into opening. (Of course, you should have a backup plan in case the mutant with Magnetize is dead or AWOL when the party reaches R&D.)

You can also craft situations within a mission to work around the characters' powers—set up a catch-22 easily solvable by use of a mutation, and watch the player squirm over whether to use his power (and be revealed as a mutant) or keep it hidden (and let the entire group, including him, get screwed). Most often, he'll try to have his cake and eat it too, attempting to wield his powers out of sight or subtly enough that nobody figures out it's him. If he's entertaining enough, you can let it work—but if he's overconfident, teach him that indecision leads to failure on all fronts.

There are also umpteen gazillion missions that revolve around real or suspected mutant activity, but have little to do with the Troubleshooters' mutations. Unless, of course, one of them is actually behind whatever they're investigating....

Roleplaying

Yes, yes, we know—this is **PARANOIA**, not *Acting & Angst* or *Character: The Motivation*. Some players still enjoy having a strong sense of character and getting into the roleplaying.

Mutations can help define a character's personality—is he in denial about having a mutation? Does he think it's cool? Or does it creep him out? Does the official propaganda about mutants give him a feeling of self-hatred? Would he get rid of his mutation if he could? Or does he see it as an edge? Perhaps he derives certain traits from it—a character with Mental Blast seeing himself



Some mutants refuse to believe they have unusual powers.

6. ALPHA COMPLEX

as stronger-minded and dominant over others, for instance, or a member of Corpore Metal who believes his Deep Thought is a step towards the perfect machine-mind.

If it amuses you, give Perversity points to players who choose to roleplay quirks related to their mutations—staring a lot for X-Ray Vision, twitching for Adrenalin Control or Hyperreflexes, continually forgetting how big things actually are for Growth or Shrinking, etc. Some mutations don't lend themselves to this, so players whose characters have Toxic Metabolism or Light Control may get the short end of the stick.

Social satire

Sometimes modern society needs a poke in the rear to keep from falling into habits that are oppressive, xenophobic or just plain dumb—and satire makes a sharp stick. Not that sitting around your friend's basement playing RPGs is going to change the actions of governments—if only!—but satire keeps the wits sharp and reminds us that sometimes people do terribly ill-advised things that ought to be opposed.

Not to get heavy here, but the treatment of mutants in Alpha Complex highlights the human tendencies to fear the poorly understood and to make people who are different into second-class citizens. Emphasizing this has more to do with how you present the overall setting than the powers the characters have, though particularly inoffensive mutations (Death Simulation, Detect Mutant Power, Find Location) can highlight Alpha Complex's harsh treatment.

Treason

Ahh, the sweet smell of treason. **PARANOIA** is not about being a perfect cog in a giant dystopia; it's about pretending to be a perfect cog while covertly doing all sorts of unauthorized things.

Sometimes characters try to play things completely safe and avoid all treasonous behavior. Not only is this futile—Alpha Complex can grind up and spit out the most impeccably loyal citizen if he's in the wrong place at the wrong time—but it makes the game less fun. Mutations help prime the pump of treason, as it were, and get people moving in the right direction.

A citizen with a mutation is treasonous, just by his very existence. He can register it, should he be so foolish—er, loyal—but even then, it's assumed he's already halfway to true traitorhood. Furthermore, he's committing treason whenever he fails to use his mutation in service to The Computer. No mutant is ever considered completely innocent, uncorrupted or loyal.

Mutations can also inspire more frequent acts of treason. This is partly due to the maxim, 'Traitors have nothing to lose by committing treason.' In addition, many mutations let citizens (especially Troubleshooters!) commit treason more effectively, more quickly or less traceably—so they'll do it more often.

Suggestions for inspiring more treason: Any of the 'collateral damage' powers are great for property destruction. Clean Slate, Environmental Control, Haze and Light Control can create windows of opportunity for treasonous behavior. Any movement-enhancing power can let the character get away from the group for a bit. For players you know are more into finesse, Bureaucratic Intuition, Call Bots, Charm, Clean Slate, Empathy and Machine Empathy allow for interesting shenanigans.

6. Mutations in Alpha Complex

This is where other (non-fun) RPGs would detail exactly what percentage of Alpha Complex's citizenry has mutations, where mutations come from, how registered mutants fit into society as a whole and other such details of setting. We, however, will do no such thing. Truth is elusive (absent, really) in **PARANOIA**.

Instead, we tell you this: Do whatever you want! Tailor the Alpha Complex of your game to any vision of mutantdom you see fit to describe. Not only will this make your game unique and interesting, but it will keep your players guessing. Ignorance and fear. Fear and ignorance.

If you want to improvise and make up the details of setting on the fly, that's absolutely fine. If you'd prefer to have an internally consistent Alpha Complex, there are some questions you can ask yourself ahead of time. (Don't feel obliged to try to answer all of them. They're here to spur your imagination, not as some sort of sadistic Setting 101 Final Exam.)

Questions to ask yourself

How common are mutants?

How many citizens are mutants—one in 100,000? One in 1,000? One in ten? One in two? Virtually everyone? Absolutely everyone? Just the Troubleshooters?

If mutants don't comprise the entire population, are they more (or less) common in certain occupations, clearances or portions of Alpha Complex? Perhaps R&D labs have an unusual number of them due to the convenient excuses available when accidents occur—'Whoops, the Proactive MegaSpectrometer must have malfunctioned again'. Perhaps INFRAREDs have a lower incidence of helpful mutations because those mutations give enough of an edge that citizens who have them are more frequently promoted. Or maybe RED through YELLOW citizens are under enough scrutiny that mutants tend to be weeded out more easily among them than among their higher-clearance superiors or the teeming INFRARED hordes.

How many mutants know that they're mutants? Is it something you just—*know*? Do repeated accidents tend to tip them off? Or could a citizen go for years without realizing he's unusual?

Is the frequency of mutation rising, falling or about what it's always been? And why? Perhaps new detection techniques are cutting back on metabolic mutations, but psionic ones are becoming more and more common. Or vice versa. Perhaps Psion's been more effective than Anti-Mutant lately, so incidence levels are rising—or the exact opposite.

Where do mutants come from?

To be honest, we prefer one of two approaches to this question:

- ④ As **PARANOIA** XP suggests, you can throw internal consistency out the window and present whatever reasons you'd like—plausible or not—in a blandly irresponsible manner which makes it crystal-clear you're lying through your teeth. Change your rationale whenever it's convenient for you or just because you feel like it. Keep the players guessing.
- ④ Finesse it in the same way as 'Where did Alpha Complex come from?'—the players may uncover an answer, but it invariably proves to be merely a cover story for some deeper 'truth', which in turn is a ruse to throw people off the scent of the 'real' answer. Keep the players guessing.

Still, if you want to establish an absolute truth simply for your own purposes, go ahead. Possible answers (cadged shamelessly from **PARANOIA** XP) include fallout from a nuclear war, radiation from nuclear generators, genetic experimentation by secret societies and/or The Computer, interference by aliens, faulty cloning technology, Alpha Complex food, the nigh-omnipresent regime of pharmaceuticals



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE



Using Hypersenses in low-clearance cafeterias can be a mistake.

and hormone suppressants, cosmic rays, side-effects from pollution or the cumulative effects of exposure to watches with radium dials.

Are all mutations like the ones listed in the rulebook?

Regrettably, in real life, cosmic rays and nuclear reactors don't provide the human race with a wide variety of dubious superhuman powers. (Okay, so maybe it's not all that regrettable. Imagine rush hour if everyone had **PARANOIA**-style mutations.) In our reality, the majority of mutations do one of three things:

- ③ Nothing particularly apparent;
- ③ Alter the being's appearance or lifespan in some minor fashion;
- ③ Kill the being outright.

The original mutations presented in **PARANOIA XP** are all drastic (they affect reality in fairly noticeable, relevant ways) and all potentially quite useful, so long as they don't backfire. This raises the question: Are all mutations like this? Are some mutations subtle and/or less useful? (For some useless-though-still-drastic possibilities, see 'Useless (or worse)' in Chapter 4.) Is there some agency selecting for 'useful' mutations? It doesn't need to be deliberate eugenics—it could simply be that two-headed scaly monstrosities are much easier to recognize and terminate.

How common are registered mutants?

What proportion of mutants actually go public with their freakish natures? The more effective Alpha Complex is at rooting out mutants, the more incentive there is to register. The worse the subsequent treatment, the more disincentive.

Does mutation registration vary by position or security clearance? Perhaps more high-clearance citizens register, trusting in their positions

to shield them from anti-mutant sentiment. Perhaps The Computer is convinced anyone who registers has to prove his loyalty all over again and busts him back to RED or ORANGE clearance, resulting in a much lower rate of registration among higher-ups. Maybe some service firms have enough registered mutants to make the notion more acceptable to others working at that firm.

Does registering a mutation incur a fine for paperwork processing? A small bonus for being loyal enough to turn oneself in? How many non-mutants end up registered due to unusual circumstance or bureaucratic foul-up? Is it possible to un-register a mutation?

When a registered mutant dies, does the bureaucracy give his new clone the benefit of the doubt? Or does it presume he's a mutant until proven otherwise? Perhaps there's some sort of test. Or maybe the new clone has a grace period to figure it out, during which time he can re-register with little or no penalty. ('Citizen! Your re-registration paperwork is due in the next 30 seconds, beginning... *now!*')

What is the role of registered mutants?

Are registered mutants disliked, hated or outright shunned? When walking down the street, do they get hostile looks and rude treatment? Or are they just plain ignored?

Does the average citizen fear their power and give them a wide berth? Or do most people see them as convenient outlets for frustration and annoyance? Is there some common derogatory slang used to refer to them—muties? Yellowstripes? Talents? Freaks?

Is a registered mutant required to advertise what his mutation is? If so, who is entitled to know? Does he have to carry papers?

Are registered mutants considered citizens? Second-class citizens (in the official sense, not just the practical)? Or are they actually property, like bots? If so, can they be privately owned or are they all considered to be in the service of Alpha Complex as a whole?

How much latitude do The Computer and Alpha Complex society grant in hassling, harassing or executing registered mutants? What level of authority is necessary to terminate a registered mutant? ('I'm sorry, citizen, but ordinance 72.10.9.3(c) clearly states that anyone may execute a registered mutant so long as it's done in an entertaining and uplifting fashion.')

Under what circumstances may (or must) a registered mutant use his mutation—only when directly commanded to by a superior? Only in the line of duty? Or also to fight treason and the enemies of Alpha Complex? Perhaps he has to fill out some sort of paperwork after each incident, justifying its use—or ahead of time, to authorize it beforehand. How much latitude do the bureaucracy and The Computer allow the mutant's justifications?

What organizations deal with mutants?

How do mutants fit into the bureaucracy? Is there a centralized Office of Mutant Affairs or a variety of relevant service firms? Or is all tracking and filing dealt with directly by The Computer?

How likely is a mutant to be caught in day-to-day life? Are there screening mechanisms in place? If so, what sort, and who runs them? How seriously are suspicions of mutation taken?

Are there any teams that specialize in dealing with rogue mutants? Perhaps there's a special branch of IntSec or Armed Forces that tracks down mutants. Perhaps there are watchdog teams of registered mutants, brainwashed into mindless loyalty and made to hunt their own kind. Or perhaps The Computer fears educating any citizens lower than INDIGO about mutations, so counter-mutant squads are laughably ill-informed.

What are the attitudes of Psion and Anti-Mutant relative to the rest of society? What actions do these secret societies tend to focus on—long-term plans to change the hearts and minds of Alpha Complex, short term ‘get results now’ programs such as ‘put mutagens in the food vats’ or ‘kill the stinking mutie’ or something else altogether?

Why are mutants treasonous?

Is it simply that unregistered mutants are selfishly failing to use their unique abilities for the good of Alpha Complex? Does The Computer have some deep directive to maintain genetic purity in the population? Or maybe it’s just completely and utterly paranoid of Machine Empaths, and all other powers have a positive statistical correlation with that most hated of mutations. Perhaps fifty years ago all mutants were viewed as superior beings—and they will be again if the balance of power among High Programmers tilts Psion’s way. Who knows?

Like ‘where do mutants come from?’ this question is best finessed. At the very least, never let your players uncover a truth that isn’t simply a cover story for some deeper secret. You may want Alpha Complex to have a stated rationale for why mutants are treasonous—or you may not. Either way is fine.

How do mutations work?

Is there some unified theory on the subject? Is it all fundamentally inexplicable? Or are there separate theories for each mutation, all incompatible?

Do all mutations draw on a similar source of power? If so, could that power be detected or manipulated with mechanical devices? (If so, why aren’t there Mutant Detectors? Or are there?) Perhaps metabolic and psionic mutations each have their own type of energy.

This setting question is closely tied to some mechanics-relevant questions, particularly the separation between psionic and metabolic powers—see ‘Details, details’ in Chapter 1.

Example settings

The following are some examples of coherent settings (at least, as regards mutants). Each is listed as appropriate for one or more of the different styles of play. By no means should these be considered definitive or ‘right’; they’re simply illustrations of the many different ways one can choose to run things.

Confusion (Classic/Zap)

Everyone agrees on this much: mutations are bad, mutants are the enemy—or at least,

an enemy—and registered mutants can be tolerated if they’re watched carefully. On all other particulars, the consensus falls apart.

Exactly how bad a given mutation is can be looked up on the highly respected **Gunter-Skilovsky scale**. Unfortunately, there are approximately 47 different versions of the scale in use; though all rate ‘Unmutated’ as best and ‘Machine Empathy’ as worst, they otherwise disagree on virtually every particular. The Computer is no help; not only does it have multiple copies of all 47 versions of the scale in its memory banks, but many of them are corrupted, some are inaccessible and a few have been accidentally replaced with ORANGE-clearance cafeteria menus, occasionally leading to the decision that Cheez Pleezer is more treasonous than Pyrokinesis.

Exactly how the mutant menace should be combated was a matter of much debate until each service group decided to ignore the others’ opinions and spawn off its own service firms to deal with the problem. Armed Forces has special mutant-hunting teams, Internal Security has its Mutant Vigilance Patrols, Tech Services has the Mighty Mighty Gene-Scrubbers and R&D’s motto appears to be ‘fight fire with napalm’. Power Services has three firms dedicated to decreasing stray sources of radiation (to lower the incidence of mutation) and two dedicated to *increasing* them (so that when mutants try to mutate themselves further they’ll die of radiation poisoning). Some

firms in HPD & Mind Control believe that if they can whip up enough anti-mutant frenzy, all the mutants will be lynched, while others attempt to black out all information on mutants, laboring under the delusion that ‘it’s all just in their minds, so we shouldn’t encourage them.’ The Computer supports both views, alternately or simultaneously, depending on which reference sources it’s checking at the time. CPU has a massive bureau dedicated to statistical tracking of mutation risk factors and preemptive strikes against citizens ‘likely to possess mutations, either now or in the future.’ And PLC is doing... something. Nobody’s exactly sure what, since everyone who’s gone to check the forms filed on the issue hasn’t come back. PLC claims the problem is ‘excessive gravitational fields due to improper use of heavy cardstock’ and that the offending service firm has been dissolved.

Registered mutants are also a matter of some improvisation. The Computer alternately claims that all registrations must go directly through it, that they must be filed with CPU, that they must be reported to Internal Security or that ‘mutation registration is no longer accepting applicants; please try again next year.’ As a result, some registered mutants operate with a fair degree of autonomy, while others are loaded down with Malfeasance Control Devices until they can barely walk.

The eye in the center of this storm is the Office of Mutant Affairs, a backwater service

Spontaneous Mutation Syndrome

Excerpt from Instructional Vid #227-9358B (‘Freaks are Everywhere’)—Clearance GREEN:

The genetic prototypes stored in The Computer’s databanks contain perfect encodings of the human form. Each and every genetic variance introduced into the baseline genotypes prior to cloning is double- and triple-checked, both by experts in the field and The Computer itself. The High Programmers who study the process assure us that it is flawless in every regard. Therefore, it is obvious that all mutations in individual clones must occur after their decanting. This explains why some clones in an otherwise identical sequence may express mutations while others remain pure, as well as why different powers may evidence themselves in the same clone line.

One way these mutations occur is through Spontaneous Mutation Syndrome (SMS). The initial symptoms of SMS vary widely—to the point of being nearly random—but almost invariably involve a great deal of pain. Typically the victim screams loudly, clutches at anything in reach and begs for his own speedy termination. At some later date, assuming he survives, he is likely to manifest a mutant power of some sort. Initial expressions of the mutation vary widely in strength—sometimes the nascent power manifests with uncontrollable strength far beyond any later potential; sometimes it grows slowly in potency as time progresses.

The vast bulk of the research into SMS was performed by the now-defunct service firm MutoWatch. They investigated possible sources: DNA-altering retro-viruses, proximity to certain power service providers, combinations of Bile Suppressant and Toothpasty Supplement #5, excessive exposure to arc lighting and even various food flavorings. By all indications they were making substantial headway when they themselves suffered an outbreak of Spontaneous Mutation Syndrome. Unfortunately, in their scientific zeal, they opted to continue working rather than take the time to register their mutations. Vulture Squadron Bravo 9 was called in to terminate all personnel and the collateral damage from the strike destroyed all of MutoWatch’s records.

The Computer appointed a Troubleshooter team of registered mutants to salvage what they could from the labs and continue the research, but later deemed it a security risk to have so many mutants working together on a project of such importance. The team was terminated and the investigation suspended. To date, the cause of SMS remains a mystery.



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

firm that's arguably underneath either Tech Services, HPD & Mind Control or R&D. It's an entirely bureaucratic agency that does nothing but shuffle papers around. Ostensibly, they deal with all issues mutantly, but in practice, nobody knows they exist or gives them any information (let alone authority), so they pretty much juggle make-work all day...except when somebody blunders in trying to file a 993/7F422: Light Bulb Replacement Authorization Voucher Request Form. They *love* that—playing with the poor sap really brightens up an otherwise monotonous afternoon.

So, in short, nobody really knows what's going on. Oh, and of course, virtually everybody is a mutant.

Fear and loathing (Classic/Straight)

Mutations are near-universally useful—well, as useful as mutations ever are; they're still just as prone to failure and backfiring as normal. The average citizen thinks of 'mutants' as 'treasonous, dangerous and malefic beings that are indistinguishable from the rest of Alpha Complex until they use their unnatural powers'. Many citizens wouldn't even think of someone with patchy skin or an extra finger as a mutant—just as 'the victim of genetic drift or a radiation accident.' Others are less forgiving, however, and will tend to meet any deviation from physical norms with accusations. ('You—you're missing an arm! You must be a mutant!' 'No, no! It's just...this stupid docbot...cut off...ahggg...*thud*')

Mutants are one of Alpha Complex's prime declared enemies—up there with Commies, though not quite as high a priority when push comes to shove. Officially, of course, all declared enemies of the state are first in importance. ('There is no such thing as an insignificant traitor, citizens!')

Despite no true evidence supporting the opinion, it is widely assumed that there are large numbers of unregistered mutants out there, plotting and scheming against Alpha Complex. This belief is the source of much anxiety, not to mention frequent covert operations and military exercises. Even the very few registered mutants are regarded with fear and suspicion by absolutely everyone—the party line is 'mutants are to be feared and distrusted', so that's how everybody says they feel, at any rate.

The vid propaganda makes mutants out to be a bit more powerful than they generally are. (Not to mention unremittingly evil and malevolent.) This is partly to instill the proper fearful attitude, partly to enhearten and glorify Troubleshooters and Armed Forces groups who've fought mutants and come out alive and partly so that your average low-clearance INFRARED will run screaming—thereby raising an alert—if confronted one-on-one by an actual, bona fide unregistered mutant. This does backfire on

occasion, particularly in crowded areas; despite multiple vidshows depicting heroic mobs of INFRAREDs taking down mutants, the mobs never end up acting quite so heroically in real life. Citizens of RED clearance and higher are expected to overcome their fear and take down the mutant while simultaneously reporting in or otherwise raising an alert.

There are many, many pieces of the bureaucracy that deal with mutants—detection, hunting, interrogation, statistical tracking, genetic modification and scanning, propaganda, power studies, technological innovation, registration and registration placement, etc. Discrimination is institutionalized; all registered mutants are required to put '(RM)' in big letters by their name on any forms or documents they may fill out. Failure to do so is moderately treasonous (C5T treason damage—effectively, disobeying an order given by The Computer.)

All mutations—both psionic and metabolic—utilize a single form of energy, though in two very different ways. R&D has been working on devices which use, store, change, block or drain this energy for a good long time, now—but unfortunately, technology which interacts with the stuff is even more unreliable and prone to backfiring than mutants who access it directly. The labs where such things are created turn over staff at an incredible rate—half due to injury or termination from accidents, the other half due to probation or termination for coming up with notions so treasonous that even R&D can't get away with it. The Computer evidently feels that 'an Electroshock device which uses an embedded brain to control the mutant energies' is just a little too close to 'a mutant cyborg with built-in weaponry'. Still, all manner of research continues, mostly undeterred by the collateral damage among the researchers.

The genetic image of any citizen proven to be a mutant is given a quick, automated once-over that more often than not completely fails to eliminate the citizen's mutation. Perhaps it tweaks it in some way or alters his Power attribute, perhaps not. In spite of this, new clones are given the benefit of the doubt and assumed to be mutation-free—after all, the clone banks are perfect, as is the genetic scrubbing! The Computer says so! The wise keep a quiet eye on new clones who claim to be clean, however, and some citizens say (quietly) The Computer's presumption of innocence is purely a test to see who is vigilant enough to monitor and catch the mutants at their deception. A citizen can always re-register a mutation his previous clone had, and if he does so while still at the clone banks, no additional onus or treason is associated with the act. Unfortunately, every now and again the genetic meddling *does* remove a mutation or change it into something else, which can result in awkward situations when a citizen registers a mutation he no longer has.

If the population at large fears and hates mutants, you can imagine what the Anti-Mutants are like. They're willing to break any law, perform any deed, commit any treason to eliminate mutantdom from Alpha Complex. 'Fanatics' doesn't even begin to go far enough. They arrange 'accidents' for registered mutants, but are—for the most part—very canny when it comes to dealing with unregistered mutants. If an Anti-Mutant suspects that a mutant may be in contact with others of his own kind, he'll report his information on the mutant, then start in on surveillance and blackmail to try and get the whole lot of them. A few select Anti-Mutants, zealous to the point of mania, have even deliberately tried to mutate themselves so they could infiltrate Psion, accepting eventual death at the hands of their fellows as a small price for the damage they could do to the enemy.

Ironically, most of Psion is quite pleased at the overall attitude towards mutants—the propaganda makes them seem powerful, which fits in nicely with their self-image as the next stage of evolution and garners like-minded recruits. They sometimes stage strikes and raids to buttress their fearful image and terrorize the populace. This makes The Computer crack down on mutants even harder, driving even more of them into Psion's arms. It's a pretty good scam. If mutations were more reliable, Psion might even be in a position to accomplish some sort of large-scale change...but unfortunately for them, even their top talents tend to self-destruct eventually. They also need to rigorously screen new recruits to keep spies from IntSec, Anti-Mutant or other sources from achieving a dangerous level of status or information.

Slaves of the state (Straight)

Unregistered mutants are few and far between—though thanks to the vigilant propaganda of HPD & Mind Control, their existence is never forgotten. Registered mutants comprise about 1% of the population and are not considered citizens at all, but property that belongs to the whole of Alpha Complex.

Unlike a bot, a registered mutant has a nominal 'clearance', which is used purely to determine what manner of equipment he's allowed to use and what areas he's permitted to enter—under no circumstances can he give orders or commands of any sort. He is required to obey all citizens, even INFRAREDs. (Obviously, higher-clearance orders take precedence over lower-clearance ones.) 'Promotions' are granted purely on the basis of reliability, safety and compliance—no BLUE citizen wants a mutant that's anything but perfectly obedient anywhere near him!

Competence and meritorious behavior are rewarded with credit bonuses—while mutants cannot purchase or own property, they maintain credit from which the cost of their replacement



clones is deducted. In this way, a mutant's utility to Alpha Complex is measured. Any citizen of RED clearance or higher can levy fines against a mutant, for any reason, including 'the mutant annoyed me'. (For that matter, any citizen of RED clearance or higher without orders to the contrary can simply kill a mutant out-of-hand, though he'll be required to justify the action and pay for it, just as if he'd wrecked a bot or destroyed a piece of equipment.)

A mutant's only real defense against this sort of treatment is by making himself useful enough that more powerful citizens would object to his harassment, termination or erasure. As often as not, however, the issue doesn't come up. The prevailing attitude towards mutants is one of superiority and contempt; while a few citizens may take pleasure in trashing them for no good reason, the average citizen pretty much ignores them unless one demands his attention in some way—whether by behaving improperly, actively initiating social interaction or simply being relevant to the citizen's job.

A small minority, closely watched by IntSec, is openly sympathetic and highly patronizing to 'the poor wretches', working within the system to try and make mutants' lives a touch easier—increasing the standard bonuses a bit, agitating

for a maximum 20-hour workday and similar well-meaning but ultimately futile gestures.

Each registered mutant has a facial tattoo which not only distinguishes him as a mutant, but contains a crosshatch-style identifying bar code and an iconic representation of what his power(s) are. The icons for more municipally useful mutations (such as Matter Eater) are universally recognized, while more esoteric ones may require a Power Studies roll on the part of the observer—though unless he's been given orders to the contrary, the registree must accurately describe his power to anyone who inquires.

In addition to the tattoo, registered mutants are required to wear the usual yellow stripe to avoid being mistaken for a citizen at a distance. They are often outfitted with Malfeasance Control Devices on general principle, particularly at lower clearances, and must undergo Conditioning Therapy (read: light brainwashing) at least once a week.

No effort is made to cleanse genetic images of mutations; it's considered a waste of resources better spent on twiddling out inappropriate behavior from actual citizens. A new clone is simply assumed to have the same mutation(s) his old clone had registered, and any failure on the mutant's part to report deviations is severely

punished. If a new clone claims he is no longer a mutant, he is subjected to a torturous battery of tests designed to manifest his power. The tests are designed around the premise that it's far better to kill or drive insane a citizen who used to be a mutant than it is to accidentally allow a mutant to impersonate a citizen. They do their job well—the pass rate is less than 0.01%. Mutants who deliberately attempt to fool the system can have incapacitating trauma-induced seizures if they even think too hard about re-testing.

Mutations tend to be drastic rather than subtle and lean heavily towards superhuman capability rather than uselessness. The mechanisms of mutations are ill-understood despite intense study and tend to be beyond technology to replicate or even interact with, although power-affecting pharmaceuticals influence mutants normally. The lack of mutant detectors is probably the only reason that any significant percentage of mutants manage to avoid registration. Renegade mutants who 'act out' are nearly always apprehended and/or terminated swiftly—the populace barely even associates such incidents with the compliant, tattooed chattel they see every day.

Several HPD & Mind Control firms are dedicated to dealing with registered mutants, and several IntSec firms dedicated to hunting



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

down unregistered ones. Though they do occasionally collaborate on larger projects, they are also responsible (along with The Computer) for overseeing each other and take those duties seriously. Like most service firms in Straight, they are efficient, competent, ruthless and utterly lacking in compassion.

Psion is, by necessity, very loosely organized and takes incredible pains to keep its members' true identities secret from each other—even the telepathic Controls are heavily compartmentalized, having learned their lesson from the time they were razed to single-digit membership following the capture of a secret master. Parts of the society favor 'lash out in anger' agitation, while others work for longer-term change in Alpha Complex—whether to simply emancipate mutants or to ensconce them as leaders is indeterminate. Either way, a great number of members will have to reach very high clearances indeed in order to accomplish anything useful.

Anti-Mutant is a fringe group of whackos who believe that mutants are so dangerous that they should be purged out of existence. This attitude is viewed as destructive and anti-progress, much as the Luddites would be in modern society.

Unclean (Straight/Classic)

Mutations vary widely in power and usefulness. There are two grades of registered mutation—one for more-or-less useless physical mutations which don't really do much, such as having warty, lumpy skin or a few vestigial fingers; the other for mutations which grant unusual capability, such as Charm or Stretchy. Officially, these are categorized as 'deformities' and 'alterations', respectively. Informally, registered mutants are often referred to as 'red-stripes' and 'yellow-stripes,' after the color of the band they must wear to distinguish themselves from the population at large. (There used to be a third categorization, which wore blue stripes—but it was eliminated and its constituents purged quite some time ago. The details are unknown to all save The Computer and its High Programmers.) The popular notion is that the color of the stripe represents the security clearance at which registering a mutation won't mean instant termination. Though this is by no means 100% accurate, it is true that INFRAREDs who register mutations—particularly alterations—tend to simply disappear.

Red-stripes are more common than yellow-stripes by a factor of about 6 to 1; whether this is due to the greater difficulty involved in concealing physical changes or the actual incidence rates of each category of mutation remains unclear. Any citizen who's been RED-Clearance for any length of time has probably worked alongside at least one red-stripe during his career, if not more.

Of course, that doesn't mean it was a pleasant experience. The prevailing attitude towards mutants is one of disgust and discomfort, although the magnitude of this feeling varies

widely. There are education programs which teach that mutations are not, in fact, contagious—but even so, most citizens find the notion of any physical contact with a mutant to be repulsive. Some also feel a certain amount of distrust and fear, particularly towards yellow-stripes—after all, they look perfectly normal, but aren't. It's kind of like they're, y'know, hiding something.

Discrimination against mutants is unofficial but omnipresent—while it's never on the list of criteria that ought to be used when judging requisitions, promotions or housing transfers, the mutation is a matter of public record and is nearly always checked for. Many citizens who are particularly uncomfortable working with a mutant will make unofficial requests of their supervisors, who will more often than not solve the situation at the mutant's expense. And even with three arms, it can be tough to balance your cafeteria tray when everybody's foot just 'happens' to trip you up.

Some mutants try to deal with the ostracism and pushiness by associating primarily with their own kind. (Red-stripes with red-stripes and yellow-stripes with yellow-stripes—there tends to be no love lost between the two.) Unfortunately, these social groups often draw unwanted attention and are considered suspicious by just about everybody else, including Internal Security. It's not uncommon for IntSec to assume that a gathering of mutants represents some sort of secret society activity and haul the whole bunch of 'em in.

Needless to say, dissatisfaction with the rampant discrimination and suspicion they face makes mutants a ripe recruiting ground for actual secret societies of all sorts. Sharing an ideology or goal tends to make the mutant's co-conspirators a little more tolerant—even if they still try to avoid touching him.

Some effort can be made to clean up a mutant's genetic template, in hopes that future clones will be mutation-free. This is pretty much the same procedure as cleaning up genetic drift, only much less likely to be successful. It still costs an arm and a leg to have done, regardless of whether it succeeds, fails or even introduces new mutations. (Not that *that* would ever happen.) Unless a mutant pays to have this cleanup done, it is assumed that new clones have the same mutation(s) as their previous clones. (Well, a red-stripe who points out that his latest clone clearly no longer possesses meter-long earlobes—or whatever—has a hope of being removed from the rolls of mutantdom... eventually. The quantity of paperwork involved may be anywhere between 'lots and lots' and 'truly staggering'.)

The actual use of alteration powers is officially discouraged, even when they would be useful—such actions must be approved in advance by both the yellow-stripe's supervisor and his supervisor's supervisor. Of course, most citizens would rather eat stale vat scrapings than have that sort of approval listed in their record. In cases where a mutant power would be really

useful, the supervisor will generally swallow his disgust and arrange for the incident to happen off the record. Occasionally, he'll also arrange for a carefully edited recording that gives him blackmail evidence on the mutant.

Until recently, there were only two official organizations whose primary function related specifically to mutants: the large Internal Security division responsible for mutant tracking, registration and termination; and a small Armed Forces platoon with a special strike force of hand-picked yellow-stripes. In recent years, however, there has been a mild upward trend in the quantity of mutations, causing (via The Computer's insistence) the formation of several new firms—one in CPU to investigate and audit the Tech Services firms which manage equipment used to maintain and replicate genetic images; and several in R&D, related mostly to understanding how alterations do what they do. The R&D firms have had some success, and even managed to create a few prototype pieces of technology that interact with some alteration powers—though by their own admission, they're just beginning to scratch the surface of an immense field. The Tech Services audit has yet to come to any conclusions, but where the investigators go, resignations, terminations and erasures follow. Those with inside information whisper that recent data hints at rates of unregistered mutation an order of magnitude higher than anyone had suspected.

Well... it's Zap. (Zap)

Mutants are BAD! Nobody likes them. Even the mere accusation of being a mutant is enough to set local bystanders running for cover or drawing their weapons, and revelation of actual mutant powers is nearly guaranteed to start munitions and accusations flying—generally in that order. If someone's a registered mutant, though, then you've gotta wait to kill him until he does something suspicious—like touching his laser pistol, breathing funny or blinking.

Mutants are everywhere (or nowhere), constantly causing mayhem (or laying low and plotting); mutations are always wacky (except when they aren't); and internal consistency has been tossed out the window along with the baby, the bathwater, the kitchen sink and a low-yield hydrogen bomb.

Clearly my aberrant behavior was caused by a treasonous mutant mind control attack.

7. Fun things to do to your players

Missions and plots

Universal Mutant Surveillance

Universal Mutant Surveillance was one of the first service firms established underneath Internal Security. Its initial mandate was 'watch citizens who are mutants' but somewhere along the line this slipped into 'use mutants to watch citizens'—it is now composed entirely of registered mutants, which tends to give unsuspecting people who walk into its office a bit of a shock.

The Computer is usually fine with this, but every now and then will go into full-alert mode and order a strike force to take out the 'nest of perfidious traitors'. The duty generally falls to Troubleshooters, as the usual groups that might handle such matters have learned that ducking this particular task is really for the best—who wants to fight several hundred registered mutants all at once? Especially when The Computer is likely to change its mind about whether those citizens were traitors by the time you're done with the job?

(As presented, this is a Classic mission. For a Straight feel, Universal Mutant Surveillance would merely have a higher-than-average proportion of registered mutants, a high-ranking citizen would decide they were treasonous, and the entire mission would be done under-the-table with the Troubleshooters as expendable scapegoats... each of whom knows this and is trying to set his teammates up for the fall.)

'Highly dangerous, well-armed mutants'

The Troubleshooters are given a whole mess of weaponry and sent after a group of 'highly dangerous, well-armed mutants'—which is actually another Troubleshooter group with the exact same instructions. A third group is standing by, keeping the area under surveillance to see if anyone uses a mutation (perhaps thinking he can blame it on his foes).

Alternately, maybe the Troubleshooters genuinely *are* sent after a group of 'highly dangerous, well-armed mutants'—who are attempting to illegally fix a malfunctioning water purification plant, the repair of which has been bogged down in paperwork for the last seven years. If the team succeeds, they'll earn commendations and cause the death of thousands of innocent civilians to bacterial infection.

As a further alternative, perhaps the Troubleshooters were supposed to be sent after a group of 'highly dangerous, well-armed mutants' but were transported to the wrong place entirely due to a grievous logistics error. The description of the mutants is vague enough that the Troubleshooters might well eradicate completely unrelated groups of people, especially when the pressure mounts to finish quickly.

Or if you really want, the purported mutant hunt is a sham designed to test the team's loyalty and enthusiasm. If they're disloyal, the theory goes, they'll foot-drag and take forever to get through briefing, equipping, service service assignment and so forth. Of course, given the usual **PARANOIA** snafus, it may take the team forever for reasons that have nothing to do with reluctance about the mission. The IntSec debriefing board will investigate those reasons with a keen interest in rooting out treason.

Finally, those highly dangerous mutants could *impersonate* a debriefing board as described above, making an entirely real mission appear just like the prior scenario. If the Troubleshooters fall for it, they'll be unhappy when the real debriefing arrives.

Damned if you do...

The Troubleshooters are assigned to acquire and preserve for study a highly treasonous device of some sort. Each of the characters learns through his secret society that the device massively amplifies the power of mutations, and every society in Alpha Complex wants the thing—so get hold of it, all right? The team is then assigned incredibly inadequate weaponry and dispatched.

Should they manage to locate and secure the device—which is about the size of a minivan, but not nearly so transportable—they then must defend it from all the various groups that want it (some of them aided covertly by one character or another) until PLC can get a freightbot out there to move the thing. The characters could easily defend the device if they used it, but that would be highly treasonous—even for a registered mutant.

The unstoppable mutant army

Psion often takes the blame for it, but really, nobody knows who first came up with the notion of an unstoppable mutant army. At one time or another, most secret societies in Alpha Complex have tried to assemble a specialized mutant force. It just seems to be one of those harebrained schemes that leaps naturally to mind.

As soon as rumors start circulating that one secret society is on the path to acquiring an unstoppable mutant army, everybody else wants one too—either for self-defense or just to prove that they're a society to be taken seriously. Before you know it, citizens are covertly scouring Alpha Complex for mutagens, passing them along to societies who inflict them on unwitting dupes or low-ranking members. Trusted operatives look into rumors of new, less risky techniques for deliberately inducing mutation.

Reactor breach!

Everyone in the area—including the Troubleshooters—is called in for emergency containment and cleanup of a major reactor breach. Chaos reigns—describe lots of flashing lights, sirens, garbled emergency





THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

alerts and environmental system malfunctions. High-clearance citizens get faraday suits, which actually help against radiation. The Troubleshooters get paper-and-foil contamination suits which don't block any more radiation than normal clothing would, but provide an excellent illusion of safety and include respirators. INFRAREDs get nothing.

Citizens with technical skills are assigned to repair duty. Citizens with high Violence (or welding skill) help secure giant metal plates blocking off contaminated areas. Everybody else gets bags of fine, dusty, respirator-clogging powder marked 'DO NOT BREATHE!' which they're supposed to go and sprinkle on anything that looks radioactive. Once the inevitable rioting and looting breaks out, the Troubleshooters are reunited to help maintain order and calm—hah.

Of course, during all of this, they (and everyone else) are soaking up the rads, causing all manner of nasty symptoms and/or mutations.

Mopping duty

While the Troubleshooters are on some other mission altogether, they're commandeered by a bombastic high-clearance citizen to 'assist with the critically important task of hygiene and cleanliness in Alpha Complex.' This involves mopping out gunk-coated, darkened, utterly deserted YELLOW-Clearance rooms and hallways, once chemical labs doing research into an arcane project of your choice—spray-can concrete, artificial bone marrow, electroplating human tissue onto tennis rackets or whatever. The scientists had a nasty accident that knocked out all power and left mutagenic goo everywhere; now their director wants it cleaned up posthaste without having to go through normal channels.

Troubleshooters with appropriate skills find a plethora of chemical materials to loot and plunder; PCs without those skills have all sorts of things to break. Everyone gets the chance to perpetrate some mayhem, as the security cameras appear to be non-functional. And everyone has the chance to mutate, as they're exposed in varying degrees to mutagenic gunk.

Hunt among the vats

The Troubleshooters are dispatched to perform some irrelevant task among the food vats of Alpha Complex—perhaps taking samples of vat slime or checking up on some automated mixing machines. The location is a long way from the briefing room. Upon arrival, the team discovers that the area is abandoned—the vats there haven't been used for some time and are apparently being inspected so they can be brought back into active duty. There are no other citizens in the darkened rooms as the Troubleshooters make their rounds. This presents prime opportunities for treason.

Unknown to the Troubleshooters, this disused area is the home of a multiply-mutated (and by now, quite insane) citizen who got lost here some time ago—she's been surviving off of ancient vat leavings and the occasional inspector ever since. She has a Power of 25 or 30 and half a dozen mutations or so. Make one of them Teleportation, both so she can pick off stragglers and so she can vanish after killing someone, leaving whomever else was present to take the blame when the rest of the team shows up.

If the Troubleshooters avoid confrontation with the mutant and just try to do their stated job, they'll slowly suffer attrition. If they try to take out the mutant, they'll die like flies, but may eventually

prevail. (If they try to flee the assignment, have the angered mutant follow them out and go on a rampage, the blame for which falls squarely on the Troubleshooters' shoulders.)

Situations

Here are a few catch-22s and nasty twists you can throw at your players. They're not missions, just little situations to give them hair-tearing moments of paranoia, dread or agonizing indecision—and perhaps some entertaining roleplaying opportunities.

Registration

- ☉ A Troubleshooter who's submitted his registration paperwork (either pre-game or in the course of play) can be held to a double standard: until his registration goes through, using his mutation is treasonous and he may be punished for it. But once his registration goes on the record, it's backdated to the time it was filed, making him accountable for all those occasions when he failed to use his mutation for the good of Alpha Complex.
- ☉ A Troubleshooter trying to register a mutation may find that his paperwork was misinterpreted, registering a mutation he doesn't actually have. Now he's responsible for using a power he doesn't possess, and he may even be accused of having a second mutation if he reveals his original power or protests what's happened to him. Attempting to fix the situation will require secret society pull, Bureaucratic Intuition or some other such edge; otherwise, everyone will assume that the mutant is confused (at best) or attempting to deceive the system (at worst).

Trouble at PLC

- ☉ For no readily apparent reason, the entire team is issued new uniforms, all with the characteristic registered-mutant stripe. No explanation is given, nor is one easily discoverable—all inquiries into the matter hit stonewalling, clearance regulations, unavailable data, departmental jurisdiction and so forth. A prime opportunity to use the Information Withholding table in the back of the **PARANOIA XP** rulebook!
- ☉ The team's PLC requisition lists a mutation, such as 'Telekinesis' or 'Rubbery Bones'. PLC doesn't bat an eye at the form, but simply hands over a small box. The



7. STUNTS & PLOTS

character who takes the box is expected to be able to use the listed mutation for the good of the team, putting him in a situation rather like someone with a mis-registered mutation (above). He also has a bright yellow stripe stapled to his jumpsuit (and him) by diligent PLC workers. If at any point after accepting the box he claims inability, he gets nailed for 'losing valuable equipment'.

- ③ The PLC staffer in charge of filling the team's requisition is a registered mutant with the Stretchy power and a slight attitude problem. He retrieves all of the Troubleshooters' gear with his tongue. This works best when there's an Anti-Mutant on the team.

Blame and responsibility

- ③ Introduce a registered mutant (PC or NPC) who's purportedly very important to the mission and make the Team Leader responsible for his behavior. However, give the Happiness Officer responsibility for medicating the registered mutant, along with a mandatory regimen of medication which makes the mutant erratic, dangerous and highly destructive. Watch how it plays out, applying appropriate pressure to keep it from being in any way amicable.
- ③ Bots are constrained by their asimov circuits, but have their own ways of exacting revenge. An angry but cunning robot may be excessively, conspicuously, unreasonably pleasant and helpful to a citizen, in hopes that someone else will take the hint and try to frame him for having Machine Empathy. If asked why it's being so helpful, 'I feel like it' is a perfectly true answer, if not entirely complete. (This tactic is a real gamble on the bot's part, both because the citizen it's obeying may tell it to do something very dangerous and because The Computer really frowns on machine intelligences lying about Machine Empathy—so it's not something that's done very often. Which, of course, is why it sometimes works.)
- ③ Introduce an NPC who obviously has Machine Empathy. The problem is, it's so powerful that The Computer brushes off casual implications—and formal charges actually backfire, causing correction for the citizen who leveled such a vicious, mean-spirited accusation against this upstanding and honest citizen! Of course, if and when The Computer ever does realize what's going on, it's going to be awfully upset at all those citizens who failed in their duty

to vigilantly ensure that the mutant was exposed.

Psion and IntSec

- ③ The Troubleshooters are accosted—or even better, trapped—by a motley but well-armed group of citizens who claim to be from Psion. They say they *know* the Troubleshooters have mutants among their ranks, and wish to speak with them—and all other members of the team will be killed or mem-wiped somehow. Perhaps it's real. Perhaps it's an Internal Security ploy to root out mutants and traitors.
- ③ The Troubleshooters are accosted by a bunch of IntSec's GREEN goons, who explain (in small words) that the Troubleshooting group has been confirmed to contain at least one mutant and that they're here to haul him off. If the accusations are slow to fly, the goons mention what a shame it is that the entire group is collaborating to hide the mutant among them. Perhaps it's real, or perhaps it's actually Psion impersonating the GREEN goons, in which case the mutant(s) are hauled off in a conversion attempt. (What happens to the rest of the group depends—in Straight, the scam is probably left as-is, whereas in Classic or Zap you can stage a big mutants-vs.-Troubleshooters bloodbath.)
- ③ Either of the prior two situations can be spiced up if the group doing the accosting is part Psion and part IntSec, due to one organization's infiltration of the other (more likely in Straight) or plain and simple confusion (Classic). Once one or more citizens are identified as mutants, the split may become evident—or the undercover agents may simply report to their superiors on how the different Troubleshooters behaved during the crisis.

The 'no mutation' trick

In its base form, the 'no mutation' trick is simple: Tell a player that no, his character doesn't have a mutation. Isn't that a relief? Of course, his character actually does have a mutation, which will manifest under the stress of Troubleshooting, but he doesn't know that yet.

Players catch on to the basic trick quickly. So instead, tell the player no, his character doesn't have a mutation—and mean it. Sure, he might mutate during play, but he starts off pristine and pure. (For added entertainment, give one or more other characters the secret objective of framing him for having a mutation.) You'll want to use this

one sparingly, though, as there are many good reasons for characters to have mutations.

So instead, perhaps a character isn't a mutant, but thinks he is. Or maybe he thinks he has one power, but actually has another one entirely. (Yeah, he'd have to be drugged out of his mind not to notice nearby objects suddenly bursting into flame every time he fails with his 'Telekinesis'—but some citizens *are* that drugged, especially among the INFRAREDs. He simply may have never been lucid enough to notice the truth.)

For real deviousness, give the player a partial truth. Tell him about one of his character's *two* mutations. Tell him he has Telekinesis when it's really Gravity Manipulation. Tell him he's the Chosen of Friend Computer and can afflict other citizens with Its Inevitable Wrath, when what he's got is Radioactivity. Or let him think he's the source of the Creeping Madness when it's really a symbiont living inside his spinal column.

These tricks work best on **PARANOIA** veterans—new players may not know enough about the 'norm' for the mind-games to work.

Miscellaneous

- ③ Just as a mission is starting, a Troubleshooter feels an unusual presence in his mind. As he goes to speak up, he hears (in his thoughts) 'Don't tell them I'm here! They'll kill both of us! You'll be erased just for knowing about me!' If the character thinks a question back at it, it responds with 'I'm a— oh, no, here they come—I must hide. Don't tell them!' and stops communicating, just about at the same time the briefing officers enter the room. (If the character speaks up about this strange phenomenon, his character is escorted from the room and never seen again—hand the player a new character sheet. Then have the same thing happen again to his next Troubleshooter.) Where you run with this is entirely up to you.
- ③ The Troubleshooters blunder into a PLC pheromone extraction lab, where substances used in high-clearance pharmaceuticals are harvested from registered mutants with Charm. The mutant vapors hang so thick in the air that anyone not wearing a gas mask is automatically affected. In this new-found haze of camaraderie, how could the Troubleshooters deny the mutants a chance to take a quick five-minute break? Even if the characters manage to salvage the situation after angry, enviro-suited PLC staffers arrive on the scene, they may have made all sorts of embarrassing (and potentially deadly) confessions to each other and/or the mutants by then.



8. Mutagens

In Alpha Complex, mutagens can be as common or uncommon as you want. If you prefer a setting with no notable mutagens, that's fine. If you want one where virtually every substance in existence is mutagenic in sufficient quantity, you certainly have precedent—in real life, glycerin, testosterone, caffeine, cortisone, Vitamin A and table salt all may muck around with DNA, depending on concentration, form of delivery, etc. We won't even go into things like nicotine and DDT.

But wait—with The Computer's famed vigilance against mutants, why would it tolerate known mutagens in Alpha Complex? Well, many substances are only slightly mutagenic (generally in extremely high dosages). Others may be useful enough to merit the risk or were once vitally needed and are still in the process of being phased out—in both cases, there may or may not be mandated 'safety procedures' that may or may not help. Some substances may be officially banned but covertly used. And finally, some substances may not be known to be mutagenic—either the information hasn't been discovered yet, it's slipped through the cracks or it's been suppressed for some reason.

What follows is a brief sampling of mutagens intended to inspire your own creativity and imagination. If a Troubleshooter should happen to encounter one or more of them, you may fiat what happens or consult the Mutagen Exposure Table in the Appendix.

Radiation and radioactivity

Radiation can be a mild or an insanely potent mutagen, depending both on its type and on the quantity and duration of exposure.

Nuclear plants, fuel and by-products: Contrary to the cheerful propaganda of Happy the Neutron, the reactors of Alpha Complex aren't exactly as safe as one might hope. They churn out plenty of power, to be sure, but they also churn out plenty of radiation and radioactive waste—there's a reason only low-clearance citizens are housed near the things. The lower-clearance the citizen, the higher level of radiation is permissible. (This can occasionally be inconvenient for a high-clearance citizen, as well-meaning bots and bureaucrats attempt to block him from entering an area with just a smidgen too much radiation—but nowhere near as inconvenient as it is for the low-clearance citizens soaking up the rads in their Refurbished Reactor Apartments.)

Radioactive equipment: Some experimental devices use radioactive isotopes in their composition—perhaps for power, perhaps for random number generation, perhaps because it just seemed like a good idea at the time. If you

want to go even further and decide that every bot in Alpha Complex is powered by a micropile battery with inadequate shielding, that's fine by us. And don't forget, equipment exposed to certain forms of radiation may itself become radioactive.

Radon: Radon is an invisible, odorless, radioactive gas that seeps out of subterranean rocks. Guess where Alpha Complex is?

Ultraviolet radiation: The prime source of ultraviolet radiation is, of course, the sun. Most citizens of Alpha Complex never see the sun, so sunburns and UV-induced mutations are rare. Certain forms of arc lamp produce UV, and now and again some genius at R&D comes up with 'a foolproof method for making Krispy Fun 300% more Krispy!' that gives everyone in the lab a second-degree burn.

X-rays: Either Alpha Complex is blissfully unaware of the dangers of excessive X-ray radiation, or The Computer and some high-clearance citizens are well aware of the problem but don't discuss it—either way, the average clone-on-the-street isn't aware that certain scanning devices could be dangerous if they happened to malfunction and blast out hundreds of times as much radiation as usual. That hardly ever happens, though, so why worry about it?

Chemicals

Listed strengths are for normally-used concentrations of the given substance; higher or lower concentrations may be much more or less potent.

Diethyl azodicarboxylate ('DEAD'): This orange liquid is used for chemical conversion in various and sundry reactions which are undoubtedly quite important—otherwise, chemical engineers would find safer things to do with themselves, like taunting Vulture Warriors or something. In addition to being a potential mutagen, the stuff is a skin, eye and respiratory irritant; shock-sensitive; light-sensitive; and explosive. Its common moniker is, all too appropriately, DEAD. *Mutagenic strength:* Average to strong.

Ethidium bromide: The clone banks of Alpha Complex have to deal with all sorts of potentially mutagenic chemicals when doing any notable research—which may be one of the reasons why cloning technology doesn't tend to advance very quickly. One such substance is ethidium bromide, used as a gel stain in the visualization of DNA, but there are plenty of others. Ethidium bromide is a potent mutagen, whether it's ingested or simply absorbed through the skin. *Mutagenic strength:* Very strong.

Hydrazine: Citizens in Armed Forces know hydrazine as a propellant used in Vulturecraft,

cone rifle shells and rockets. Citizens in PLC know hydrazine as a chemical intermediate used in the production of pharmaceuticals, textile dyes and stretchy fabric. Citizens in Power Services know hydrazine as a reducing agent in plutonium extraction from reactor waste. R&D sees great potential for it in the production of fuel cells and improved PDC displays. Of course, hydrazine is always handled with the utmost care and adherence to proper safety regulations, which are never, ever ignored in favor of convenience. Really. *Mutagenic strength:* Weak to average.

Magulyse: In its concentrated form, a potent mutagen with a sharp, acrid odor and bilious yellow color. When highly diluted, a powerful deodorizer and disinfectant! Though magulyse-derived sanitary products are mostly used in StinkAway bathroom freshening devices, hygiene-deficient individuals are sometimes sentenced to wear a Corrective Aerosol Device loaded with a magulyse solution. *Mutagenic strength:* Negligible (at normal dilution).

Nitrogen mustard: A key component of some poison gases, this stuff can have longer-term mutagenic effects on those who survive exposure to it. The Computer knows this, but permits the gas to be used anyhow—after all, anyone fighting loyal citizens who are equipped with it must already be a traitor, and eliminating traitors is more important than safeguarding their genetic health! *Mutagenic strength:* Average.

(Note: Four of these five chemicals are real, with more or less the uses and qualities described. In real life they bestow no mutations other than, perhaps, Get Tumors and Die.)

Other

As with the chemical mutagens, listed strengths are for normally encountered concentrations of a substance.

CaustiClean: Official R&D policies and procedures call for the use of this cleaning agent after sandblasting has failed but before calling in an Ultra-7 experimental scrubot. Higher-clearance citizens are well aware that it's mutagenic, but sometimes, having to terminate a few mutated underlings is easier to deal with than doing poorly on a Premises Cleanliness Inspection. *Mutagenic strength:* Strong.

Saalax-2: An industrial solvent known for its ability to eat through just about anything. Though Saalax-2 itself isn't mutagenic (it'll just dissolve your arm), it is highly flammable—and the vapors given off when it burns are as dangerous to DNA as ethidium bromide. Gas masks will protect against the worst of the effects, but full-body environment suits are better. *Mutagenic strength:* Very strong.

9. EQUIPMENT

Vat slime strain 66-7/E: One particularly malignant and difficult-to-eradicate variety of vat slime has proven mutagenic when forced down the throats of unwilling volunteers. As a result, CPU has recommended that PLC mandate testing of all active food vats for strain 66-7/E among all of its service firms, but the recommendation is hung up in sub-committee. Anyhow, outbreaks

hardly ever crop up outside INFRARED-destined supplies. *Mutagenic strength:* Average.

WunderSmell: Most of Alpha Complex's synthesized foodstuffs have their origins in a food vat of some sort. The algae harvested therefrom is just the beginning, though—any given cuisine (and we use that term loosely indeed) is likely to have at least a dozen other ingredients: softeners, stiffeners, preservatives, texturizers,

flavorings, pharmaceuticals, waxes, dyes, aroma enhancers, hormones, hormone suppressants, antibacterials, carbonation, thickeners, thinners and the occasional insecticide. WunderSmell is an aroma enhancer—the scent of any food treated with it tends to trigger a salivation reflex—that also happens to be mildly mutagenic. *Mutagenic strength:* Negligible to weak.

9. Equipment

As always, The Computer may assign Troubleshooters gear—especially experimental equipment—substantially above their security clearance. Listed clearances are for personal purchase and possession.

Standard

Anti-psionic reinforcer

Clearance: YELLOW

Cost: 2,500cr

This Malfeasance Control Device ('McD') looks like a set of metal headbands securely welded around the victim's head, with a self-contained

battery pack sitting at the base of his neck. It delivers a sharp electric shock to the wearer whenever it detects psionic activity unless it has received a 'permission granted' signal in the last few seconds (from a remote control, usually given to a team leader or supervisor). When it receives such a signal, it emits a distinctive 'bloop-BLEEP!' noise, alerting nearby citizens that the mutant may be about to unleash an unnatural power.

The experimental psi-sensing technology actually works passably well, detecting nearby activation of a psionic mutation about half the time (use an Arbitrary Justice roll). Unfortunately, the device's notion of 'nearby' is broad enough that it covers substantially more area than just the wearer's head. Upon sensing unauthorized psionic activity, the reinforcer emits a loud

BUZZZZ and delivers a strong electric shock, Snafuing the wearer in the next round.

Dead mutant decals

Clearance: RED

Cost: 2cr

Citizens who want an enduring record of the many mutants they've killed can purchase decals in the shape of a mutant silhouette, complete with oversized head and little tentacles. The decals come in two sizes, small and large. Small is about right for affixing on the side of a laser pistol or slugthrower; large is appropriate for autocars and other vehicles.

Brought to you by Approved Memorabilia, the same HPD&MC service firm that makes dead

Uri-gluttonium-337

Vital Memorandum #148 from Internal Security's Mandatory Guide for Deputy Supervisors—Clearance INDIGO

WARNING!: Do not read or think about this memorandum unless protected by a P-class security field!

ATTENTION: Do not confuse uri-gluttonium-337 with uri-gluttonium-332, which is entirely safe (unless eaten).

Uri-gluttonium-337 is an insanely dangerous compound that ought never to have been invented in the first place, let alone produced in quantities greater than 'just enough to figure out how bad an idea this really is.'

- ☉ It is a psi amplifier. It can amplify psionic mutations in those physically present or serve as a form of psionic relay for those who have touched it. Micrograms are sufficient to induce a small (but measurable) increase in mental potency and grams are sufficient to let a mutant use psionic powers through it at a distance of 20 meters—through solid steel, empty air or multiple layers of LeadLike.
- ☉ It is a psi resonator. Some substances are sensitive to mental impressions—thoughts, emotions, states of mind. Uri-gluttonium-337 is such a substance, with a short range but extremely detailed 'recording' ability, as such things are measured.
- ☉ It is fissile. Extremely fissile, in fact; quantities of more than 30 grams begin spontaneous reaction unless a dampening alloy or control mechanism is in place. Even when it's dampened, a number of catalysts can accelerate the fission reaction, causing a nuclear explosion.
- ☉ It can be psionically detonated. I don't understand the details (or want to), but the practical upshot is, some mutants can detonate the stuff just by thinking about it, if they've prepared appropriately.

So for the sake of argument, let's assume a treasonous, telepathic citizen has acquired a 120-gram lump of uri-gluttonium-337 (pre-damped alloy)—a sphere about two centimeters across. After preparing it, he hides it inside a vendabot. He can now read the mind of any citizens near that vendabot from over 120 meters away. He can examine the recorded surface thoughts of any citizen who's stood in front of that vendabot in the last □

Now assume he had half a dozen of these mini-spheres. He could hide them in proximate but separate locations, forming a repeater network capable of further magnifying his psionic range. He would be recording thoughts from citizens in many more locations and would have greater choice of targets.

The material's only good point—if you can call it that—is that the processes involved in its creation require so much power most secret societies can't even hope to manufacture it covertly. Oh, and Psion covets it with a vengeance, so it makes fantastic bait—we snared four Controls in that raid last month, more than we've gotten in quite some time.

Too bad the fifth one escaped with close to a kilogram of the stuff.



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

traitor decals, 'Die, Mutant!' stickers and Public Hating souvenir programs, as well as Official Commendations in a wide range of designs.

EZ-2-Use self-administered anonymous mutant test

Clearance: RED

Cost: 100cr

'99% accurate! Just place the coated plastic strip under your tongue—if it turns blue, you're a mutant! If it turns red, you're not! Simple, clean and—as always—easy-to-use!' What the advertising fails to mention is that you must leave the plastic strip under your tongue for a day or more in order to get results—99% of the devices turn red or blue in the course of a week, which is what the fine print defines as 'accuracy'. Be capricious when deciding whether the color has something to do with the presence or absence of mutations or is merely indicative of the acidity of the foods the user has consumed over the last few days.

Internal Security, of course, gets a daily list of all citizens who've purchased these kits through legal channels, which makes them very popular on the INFRARED market (at immense markups). Let the buyer beware, though, lest he find himself sucking on a 600-credit shard of utterly mundane plastic for a week.

FreakBlaster energy pistol ammunition

Clearance: YELLOW

Cost: 250cr

'The mutant condition is not only treasonous, but a WEAKNESS! Exploit that weakness with FreakBlaster energy packs. Synapses will fry as the mutant's own unnatural physiology is turned against him!'

These energy packs are manufactured by Creative Annihilation, one of several Armed Forces service firms specializing in munitions and other harmful devices. A FreakBlaster pack provides five shots when attached to an energy pistol, just like any other reload—but in theory, it does extra harm to mutants by setting up some sort of psionic resonance field in addition to the usual flesh-frying blast. In practice, it does the standard W3K damage regardless. The only effect of the resonance field is that any mutant who's wounded by FreakBlaster ammunition and has a psionic mutation may have an accident with his power during the following round; roll his Power to see if he activates it unintentionally.

Many INFRARED marketers will alter standard Creative Annihilation energy packs to look like they're FreakBlaster ammo, making a tidy profit at the expense of the consumer.

Lucky GeneClean pin

Clearance: INFRARED

Cost: 5cr

Troubleshooters and other citizens with hazardous duties often carry some sort of good-luck charm in an effort to stay alive a bit longer—sure, maybe they don't work, but what does it hurt? They're just a few credits. And if they do work, well, it's an edge.

These pins bear an image of Gene-MXZ at one of the security clearances he achieved during his career (INFRARED through BLUE are available). Gene was a multiple recipient of the Hero Of Our Complex award who worked tirelessly and diligently to clean up dangerous spills, leaks and ruptures throughout Alpha Complex. Despite his massive exposure to radiation and mutagenic substances, the story goes, only one of his clones (the last one) ever mutated—at which point he unhesitatingly terminated himself.

Some citizens wear these pins as a good-luck charm against unwanted mutation; others wear it because it's an Authorized

Morale-Boosting Device and looks good on the record; and a few fashion-conscious citizens wear it because it's one of the few accessories cleared INFRARED that comes in blue or green.

Mutant defense rod

Clearance: RED

Cost: 20cr

This is a perfectly ordinary truncheon done up in a theoretically stylish black-and-red pattern, with a little 'MDR' logo on the bottom of the handle. S5K damage, just like any other truncheon.

Radiation badges

Clearance: Any

Cost: 5cr x clearance level

Any citizen can purchase a simple badge which records exposure to most common forms of radiation. It changes color at a pre-defined exposure level corresponding to the recommended radiation allowance for a citizen of the badge's clearance. These are most useful at higher clearances; not only is quality control rather spotty below GREEN, but the levels of acceptable radiation for low-clearance citizens tend to be extremely high. INFRARED badges are really little more than a pre-autopsy report (and warning to those handling the body).

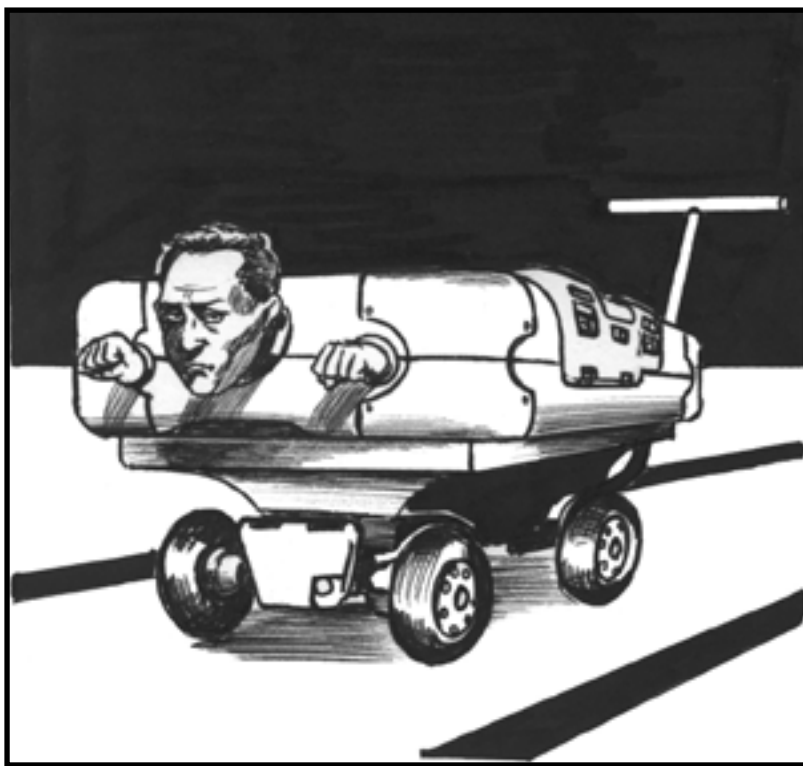
Variants of these badges exist for exposure to various types of chemicals—some mutagenic, some merely toxic.

Registered mutant box

Clearance: ORANGE

Cost: 250cr (box), 50cr (dolly)

The registered mutant box is one of the more confining Malfeasance Control Devices, used for real problem cases (and occasionally, due to clerical error). It's a reinforced metal box with three rubber-gasketed holes in one side: one for the mutant's head and two for his hands. The box is opened, the mutant is placed inside, then the box is securely closed around the appropriate extremities. The sophisticated locking mechanism can only



be opened by someone with the physical key and a proper voiceprint.

An optional metal screen is included which fits securely over the mutant's head and hands. It can be used to keep him from using his unnatural powers when not desired, to shield citizens from having to look at him unless necessary or as a mild punishment for poor behavior or bad attitude.

The registered mutant box is usually wheeled around on a dolly or handcart of some sort, though fancy models may have built-in wheels.

Experimental

Brain amplifier

Clearance: INDIGO

Cost: Not commercially available; 100,000cr or more for a prototype

The brain amplifier was invented by some scientist with an overwhelming envy of the Deep Thought mutation. It looks like nothing so much as a pair of large, metallic shoulder pads holding a round metal plate on either side of the wearer's head. The brain amplifier requires a lot of power—usually wall current, though a large fuel cell can be lugged around if necessary.

When switched on, the Brain Amplifier goes through an initial calibration, humming and buzzing for several minutes. If it calibrates successfully, the wearer will hear a mellifluous voice inside his head state 'Calibration complete'. (Roll 1d20. The higher the number, the better the device has calibrated to the user.)

At this point, the brain amplifier is triggered as soon as the user begins thinking—little bolts of electricity begin arcing between the two plates and the wearer's head. This stings rather a lot, especially if the device didn't calibrate very well, and is apt to jolt the citizen out of whatever thoughts he was beginning to have.

Still, many citizens will stubbornly attempt to keep thinking. If the brain amplifier calibrated poorly, it will continue to be disruptively painful, effectively serving as a negative reinforcement device for the act of cognition. If it calibrated well, the stinging slowly fades and the user feels an immense rush of exhilaration. (Whether it actually helps him think any better is entirely up to you. We suggest treating the calibration roll as the Power for a single use of Deep Thought.)

Leaving the brain amplifier plugged in for too long is dangerous. Though the overheating problems have mostly been solved and it rarely fries the wearer's head anymore, it can interfere with cognition and perception in subtle and dangerous ways. Be fiendish.

High-energy drug delivery system

Clearance: GREEN

Cost: 500cr + cost of 50 doses of drug

'I tried to kill the mutant, but he mind-controlled me!'—true or not, it's an excuse that The Computer has heard far, far too often. As a result, it's set several R&D labs working on methods to terminate or subdue mutants while staying out of sight. (It's also tried removing or suppressing the minds of Troubleshooters prior to sending them after mutants, but that hasn't panned out too well.)

One result is the high-energy drug delivery system, which resembles a spiky, crystalline grenade. Like a grenade, it detonates after being thrown (at least in theory). The spikes are actually drug-saturated organic flechettes that dissolve into the bloodstream of anyone injured by the explosion.

(Its blast is less potent than an ordinary grenade, doing S5M damage. For every damage level a victim suffers, he also receives a single dose of the drug. The drug type for a given H-EDDS is fixed at creation and cannot be changed.)

Though this delivery method is effective and circumvents gas masks quite nicely, the devices can be somewhat expensive for single-shot weapons. And, like all experimental devices, they're even more prone to malfunction than run-of-the-mill Alpha Complex equipment.

It is not unheard of for The Computer to issue high-energy drug delivery systems saturated with combat pharmaceuticals, intending that Troubleshooters use them for swift whole-team drug application in emergency situations. It is also not unheard of for Troubleshooters lacking the clearance to know anything about such plans to unknowingly blast their enemies full of stimulants and painkillers.

MindShield memetic supplement

Clearance: GREEN

Cost: 2,000cr

The manufacturers of MindShield hate it when people compare their product to those viral marketing schemes which take up residence in citizens' frontal lobes. Unfortunately for them, the comparison is apt—they use nearly identical technology; the only real difference is that MindShield is a subtly engineered virus which attempts to combat outside psionic influences on the user's brain.

Amazingly enough, it actually works—about five minutes after a user gulps down the mint-flavored nanovector paste, he becomes highly resistant to all direct mind-to-mind psionics. Creeping Madness, Empathy, Puppeteer, Telepathy and active uses of Forgettable have no effect on him and he automatically gets 1 on his Violence roll to resist Mental Blast.

That's where the good news ends. MindShield has any number of potential side effects, which may occasionally linger after the protection has run its course—euphoria, nausea, paranoia, grogginess, loss of self-control, temporary amnesia, behavioral disorders, eating disorders, homicidal rage and hair growth, to name a few. Taking a second dose while the first is still active results in the two batches fighting it out, causing a raging fever and other flu-like symptoms—and the protection lasts anywhere between half an hour and a week or two, with no good way to tell when it's worn off.

Oh, and the virus doesn't provide any protection against the user's own mind, so psionic mutants who take the stuff hoping to avoid painful mishaps are out of luck.

Psionic interference grenade

Clearance: BLUE

Cost: 300cr

The psionic interference grenade is an experimental attempt to neutralize the advantage mutants have in a battlefield situation. After it's thrown, it (usually) explodes in a rippling blast of barely-visible energy. Roll 1d20:

1: All citizens in a five-meter radius with psionic mutations have their brains explode.

2–5: All psionic mutations are harder to use in a five-meter radius. Exactly how is up to you; we suggest lowering all margins by 5-10 points.

6–10: Acts as a Mental Blast to all within five meters (must make a Power roll or be snafued until next round).

11–15: Acts as an ECM slugthrower round (H2J damage) to all equipment in a five-meter radius.

16–19: Gives everyone in a 50-meter radius a splitting headache.

20: All citizens in a five-meter radius without psionic mutations have their brains explode.

All low-clearance paperwork states that the device is foolproof, with a 100% success rate. (This should trigger alarm bells for any Troubleshooter who's familiar with R&D.) Buried in an INDIGO memorandum somewhere is the reality—in addition to the erratic nature of its effects, the grenade may go off accidentally if it is dropped, takes a sharp blow or is exposed to excessive amounts of electricity. Oops.

Revelation gas

Clearance: BLUE

Cost: 1,500cr (canister)

This is the latest in a long line of attempts to create an inhaled version of tryxoliraphin, a drug that causes mutants to accidentally trigger their powers. Though it's no more successful at its stated goal than any of the dozens of prior attempts, the literature waxes enthusiastic about



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

its amazing effectiveness at forcing mutants to reveal their abilities.

It actually acts as a mood-altering agent for citizens who have metabolic mutations... or who've eaten anything containing efeliquine (a common preservative) in the last few days. Make a Power roll for each citizen who might be affected. If it fails, he becomes tired, stoned, manic, fearful, gleeful, angry or confident (according to GM whim) for a scene or two.

The canister is a gas grenade. As soon as someone pulls the pin, it spews the stuff for a minute or two, filling a 30-meter area.

Treasonous

Energy shards

Clearance: Treasonous

Cost: Whatever the IR Market will bear

These faintly glowing shards of crystal weren't created in R&D labs, but by treasonous citizens with a variant of the Push Mutant Powers mutation. Though certain high-clearance citizens might be specially authorized to examine shards seized in raids, there are no non-treasonous

sources where one can purchase them. (Treat as illegal ownership of an ULTRAVIOLET item, as well as evidence of mutant ability.)

A mutant holding a shard can draw upon its energy—for a single use of his mutation, treat his Power as 5 points higher and/or don't drain any Power points. However, the extra oomph makes his mutation more erratic—if he fails, he'll always have a mishap, and even if he succeeds, he's virtually guaranteed to have a mishap or overkill in addition to whatever he was trying to do. When used, an energy shard dissolves into faintly glowing vapor.

10. Medication

Benetridin (a hallucinogen) and hydropsionic acid (an experimental) from *PARANOIA* XP both affect mutations. Here are some more mutation-affecting drugs to use or not use as you wish.

Cloud 9 (preterdextrinol)

Clearance: BLUE

Availability: Restricted. Occasionally available on the INFRARED market. Frequently available to members of the Mystics, as they were responsible for this drug's discovery.

Effects: Induces heightened consciousness, lifting the user beyond physical cares. This enhances psionic powers—when making a Power check, roll twice and use the lower roll. (Or just apply a flat +5 bonus.) It can give the same benefit to Knowledge skill rolls, if you want.

Side-effects: Physical actions become cumbersome and dealing with the physical world seems burdensome. All skill checks that are not purely cerebral must be rolled twice and the worse of the two rolls used. (Or just use a flat penalty; -5 would be appropriate.) So while a user might airily conjecture upon the reasons a bot wasn't working, he would have a hard time actually making the repairs himself.

Method of application: Injection (a scene)

Method of application: Capsule (a scene); alternate method shown below (a day).

GoGetEm (meganoxin)

Clearance: GREEN

Availability: Restricted. Available only to duly authorized mission personnel.

Effects: Sends a massive 'GO! GO! GO!' message to the entire body. Has the same effects as Adrenalin Control, and sends all metabolic mutations into massive overdrive. Assume overkill-level effects every round.

Side-effects: Like Adrenalin Control, the user takes a wound when this drug wears off. It also drains the user's entire Power reserve and may cause permanent nervous system damage—especially if more than one dose is taken back-to-back. Psychologically addictive.

Method of application: Tablet (a minute or two), injection (high dosage, a scene)

Power Pill (blatuline)

Clearance: INDIGO

Availability: Occasionally available on the INFRARED market. Very occasionally prescribed to high-clearance registered mutants with a psionic power.

Effects: Massively enhances psionic powers—using them costs no Power, and Power is temporarily boosted to a 25. Tastes like really nasty artificial grape flavoring.

Side-effects: Causes a long-lasting splitting headache the instant it's taken and permanent Power loss (0-2 points) once it wears off. Most subjects also experience a lingering aversion to anything with artificial grape flavoring.

Method of application: Quick-dissolve tablet (a few rounds). Rumors of an injected form lasting a full scene persist, but have not been substantiated.

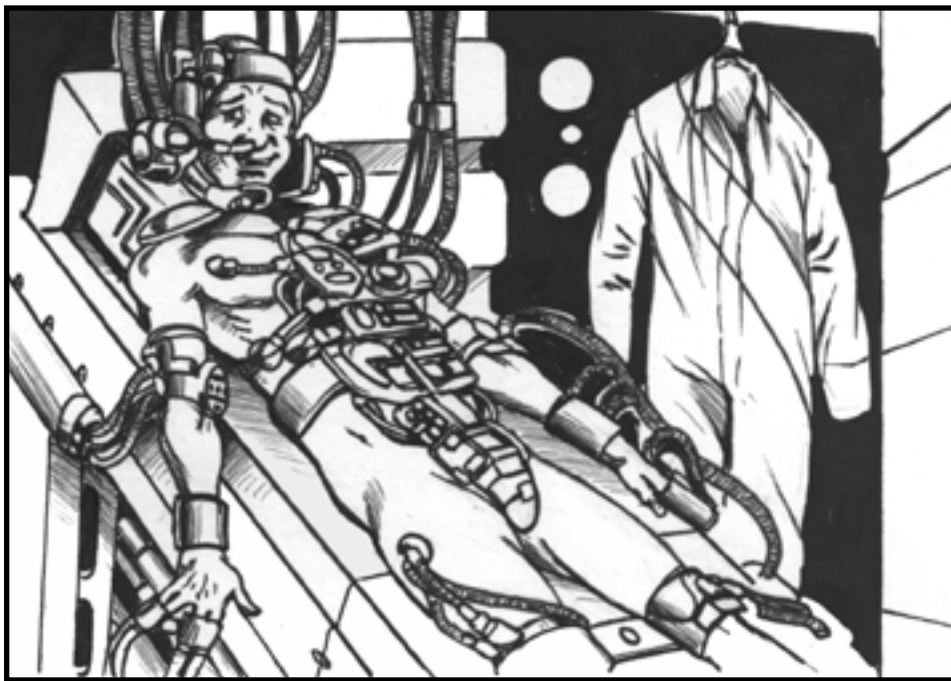
Freak Suppressor (lasketigol)

Clearance: ORANGE

Availability: Issued to registered mutants (or those in charge of them) when they really need to avoid using their power for a while.

Effects: Mutation suppressant—keeps used Power from regenerating as long as the mutant stays on the drug. If he misses a dose, however, it all comes flooding back at once, generally resulting in severe accidents. (The latter information is often omitted from drug labels.)

Side-effects: Strong diuretic; mood swings.



THIS GAME NEEDS MORE CHARTS!

Quick Pep (allacon)

Clearance: RED

Availability: Generally considered inferior to xanitrick (Wakey-Wakey), but manufactured due to demand from addicts. Occasionally dispensed when nothing else is available.

Effects: Increases alertness for a short time (known) and restores three points of Power drained by using mutations (not well-known). Taking this drug when at full Power causes the subject's heart to race dangerously—roll 1d20; on a 19 or higher, it gives out entirely. Next clone!

Side-effects: Physically and psychologically addictive—only mildly at first, but increasingly so with continued use.

Method of application: Pill (a few minutes)

Slip-Up (tryxoliraphin)

Clearance: GREEN

Availability: Restricted to Internal Security

Effects: Lowers a mutant's self-control with his mutation—check for an accident every scene unless he's at 0 Power. IntSec sometimes spikes the food of suspected mutants with this stuff to try and provoke a documentable incident. Unfortunately, calibrating the dosage administered via drugged food can be tricky—doses that are slightly too low do absolutely nothing, while even mild overdoses send the subject into a screaming, homicidal psychotic episode. In high concentrations, tastes like Lemonie-Moistened Towelettes.

Side-effects: Itchy face and palms. Oh, and those occasional psychotic episodes.

Method of application: Droplets in food or drink (four hours)

Smooth Groove (metalobitran)

Clearance: YELLOW

Availability: Issued to particularly erratic registered mutants with metabolic mutations.

Effects: Makes metabolic mutations less powerful but more reliable—increase effective Power by 5, but decrease all success margins by 10 (to a minimum of 0).

Side-effects: Drowsiness, distraction and carelessness. Do not operate heavy machinery or perform other tasks requiring... where was I? Long-term use may cause insanity.

Method of application: Tablet (a while), capsule (one day)

Appendix: Charts / tables / forms

Random Materials table: As described in Chapter 3, some mutant power variations affect or require specific things or substances. Choose the specific object or material you find most interesting. For guidance, consult these tables.

Roll 1d20. If you want a common material, consult the first table. If you want a less common material, either use the Material/Subtype on the first table for inspirational examples, or consult the second table. If you want something really specific, feel free to go even further—for instance, instead of 'Foodstuffs', choose 'Hot Fun'.

Random Materials: Mostly Common

| Roll | Material | Subtype |
|------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Metal | Walls and floors |
| 2 | | Reactors |
| 3 | | Bot chassis |
| 4 | | Wires and cables |
| 5 | | Weapons and armor |
| 6 | Plastic | Furniture |
| 7 | | Weapons and armor |
| 8 | | Trinkets/novelties |
| 9 | | Pipes |
| 10 | Glass | Walls and doors |
| 11 | | Computer monitors |
| 12 | Rubber | Seals and gaskets |
| 13 | | Little anti-skid feet |
| 14 | Rock | Actual stone |
| 15 | | Brick |
| 16 | | Concrete |
| 17 | Paper | Actual paper |
| 18 | | Cardboard |
| | Scissors | (...what?) |
| 19 | Flesh (hoo boy) | Living |
| 20 | | Nonliving |

Random Materials: Mostly Less Common

| Roll | Material or other requirement |
|------|--|
| 1 | Paint |
| 2 | Wood |
| 3 | Water |
| 4 | Fabric |
| 5 | Algae and vat slime |
| 6 | Foodstuffs |
| 7 | Fungus |
| 8 | Soap |
| 9 | Electricity and magnetism |
| 10 | Fire |
| 11 | Radioactive materials |
| 12 | Industrial chemicals |
| 13 | Dust, dirt and grime |
| 14 | Toothpaste |
| 15 | Chapstick |
| 16 | Graphite |
| 17 | Batteries |
| 18 | Noble gases (helium, argon, neon, radon, etc.) |
| 19 | Liquid nitrogen |
| 20 | Air (in uncommon form—compressed, liquefied, etc.) |



THE MUTANT EXPERIENCE

Mutagen Exposure Table

A citizen exposed to a mutagen may react in the following ways. Roll 1d20 when exposure ceases or whenever you feel like it. Apply the 'Duration of exposure' and 'Mutagen strength' modifiers listed at the bottom of this page. Then pick the result you want. (Remember, you're always right!) If you suspect your players have treasonously memorized the table, roll once for physical effects and once for mutation/Power change. '0-' means '0 or lower'; '41+' means '41 or higher'. '±1 Power' means 'either add or subtract 1 Power, as your whim dictates'.

(This table is tilted a bit toward Straight play style. For a more Classic feel, only increase (never decrease) Power, inflict a new mutation when the character gains 2 or more Power, and accelerate all effects—none of this long-term crap.)

- 0-: No effect.
- 1-2: Becomes faintly itchy. Scratch, scratch, scratch.
- 3-4: Feels warm all over.
- 5-6: Feels nauseated. No Spicy Fun tonight!
- 7-8: Is short of breath for a while.
- 9-10: Feels vaguely unwell for a day or so.
- 11-12: Feels achy. (±1 Power)
- 13-14: Itches, then skin gets all flaky and hair falls out.
- 15-16: Feels nauseated for a day or so; cannot run nor spend Perversity on tasks requiring concentration.
- 17-18: Vision worsens slightly—and permanently. (±1 Power)
- 19-20: Is short of breath and weak. Violence skill and specialty ratings drop to 1 for hours. (If you want, swap the mutation for another variation on the same power. ±1 Power)
- 21-22: Feels warm all over, then breaks out in horrible sores. Hefty penalties to face-to-face interaction.
- 23-24: Becomes nauseated, then delirious. (+1 Power if he survives his hallucinations)
- 25-26: Permanent neurological impairment. Lower all Knowledge skills and specialties by 2. (±2 Power)
- 27-28: Aches for a while, then feels fine for a few days before abruptly expiring. Next clone.
- 29-30: Gets a nasty rash and falls ill for days. (Gains a new mutation, ±2 Power)
- 31-32: Grows short of breath, then falls down in convulsions; death without medical treatment. (+2 Power if he survives)
- 33-34: Has itchy hives and is short of breath for days. Cannot run; must spend a Perversity point for any exertion. (±2 Power)
- 35-36: Gets a nasty rash, is severely ill for days and becomes horribly deformed. (±3 Power)
- 37-38: Glows faintly for days; has occasional hallucinations and gut-wrenching nausea. (Loses an existing mutation, gains two new mutations, ±5 Power)
- 39-40: Nervous system shudders and fails. Next clone.
- 41+: Dissolves into nauseous mutagenic sludge. Next clone. Roll on this table for each character nearby.

| Duration of exposure | Modifier |
|----------------------|----------|
| Just an instant | -5 |
| A round or two | — |
| Minutes | +5 |
| Hours | +10 |
| Days | +15 |

| Mutagen strength | Modifier |
|------------------|----------|
| Weak | -5 |
| Average | +0 |
| Strong | +5 |
| Really strong | +10 |
| Oh, dear. | +15 |

Extended Mutagen Exposure Tables for table-happy Gamemasters

If you want mix-and-match variety in your results, use these tables instead of the basic Mutagen Exposure Table. Roll 1d20 on each of the three sub-tables, applying the same exposure modifiers to each. '10-' means '10 or lower'; '41+' means '41 or higher'. Results that adjust the mutant's Power attribute rating can never reduce it below 1 or increase it above 20.

If you want, experts in Biosciences can add slightly to the Mutation Effects roll and subtract slightly from the Longer-term Effects roll—or vice versa, if they're feeling malicious.

Immediate Effects

- 0-: No effect
- 1-4: Feeling of warmth
- 5-8: Faint nausea
- 9-12: Itchiness
- 13-16: Achy joints
- 17-20: Nasty rash
- 21-24: Nausea
- 25-28: Dizziness
- 29-32: Hallucinations
- 33-36: Convulsions
- 37-40: Roll again twice!
- 41+: Instant death

Longer-term Effects

- 10-: No effect.
- 11-12: Short of breath
- 13-14: Malaise, apathy
- 15-16: Achy joints
- 17-18: Flaky skin
- 19-20: Vision loss (permanent!)
- 21-22: Hair falls out
- 23-24: Nausea
- 25-26: Roll again twice!
- 27-28: Open sores
- 29-30: Extremely weak
- 31-32: Brain damage (permanent!)
- 33-34: Downright ill
- 35-36: Deformity

- 37-38: Hallucinations
- 39-40: Insanity (permanent!)
- 41-42: Roll again three times!
- 43-44: Death
- 45+: Complete organic breakdown

Mutation Effects

- 10-: No effect
- 11-15: +1 Power
- 16-20: -1 Power (minimum 1)
- 21: Swap a mutation for a variation of the same power
- 22-24: +1 Power (maximum 20)
- 25-26: -2 Power
- 27-28: New mutation!
- 29-32: +2 Power
- 33-34: -3 Power
- 35-38: +3 Power
- 39-40: -4 Power
- 41-42: Lose an existing mutation and gain two new ones!
- 43-44: +4 Power
- 45-46: -5 Power
- 47-48: +5 Power
- 49-50: Two new mutations!
- 51+: +6 Power

New equipment

Key: Name: Cost in credits; clearance

Standard

- Anti-psionic reinforcer: 2,500; Y
- Dead mutant decal: 2; R
- EZ-2-Use self-administered anonymous mutant test: 100; R
- 'FreakBlaster' energy pistol ammo: 250; Y
- Lucky GeneClean pin: 5
- Mutant defense rod: 20; R
- Radiation badge: 5 x clearance; varies
- Registered mutant box: 250; O
- Wheeled dolly: 50cr; O

Experimental

- Brain amplifier: 100,000+; I
- High-energy drug delivery system: 500 + 50 x drug dose; G
- MindShield memetic supplement: 2,000; G
- Psionic interference grenade: 300; B
- Revelation gas canister: 1,500; B
- cone rifle shell: 3,000; B

Treasonous

- Energy shards: illegal channels only

Mutation Registration Form

Distributed by Department 72 in coordination with the Office of Forms and Vouchers, PLC

Name _____ - ____ - ____

Date and time _____

Service firm _____

Housing unit _____

Per annum radiation exposure _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Answer all questions fully and completely. Except where indicated, check only one response for multiple choice questions. If you have speculations as to the source of your mutation, include them on the back of this form. Practice good penmanship. Trust The Computer. Failure to obey is treason.

Having a mutation makes me feel (check all that apply):

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Happy | <input type="checkbox"/> Morose | <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unhappy | <input type="checkbox"/> Powerful | <input type="checkbox"/> Very worried |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enthusiastic | <input type="checkbox"/> Kind of tingly | <input type="checkbox"/> Inferior |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cunning | <input type="checkbox"/> Apathetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Despairing |

I need to register my mutation because (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I love mutants | <input type="checkbox"/> The Computer loves mutants |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am being blackmailed | <input type="checkbox"/> I dare not disobey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I lost a really dumb bet | <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty is the best policy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have a death wish | <input type="checkbox"/> My head is going to explode |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My awesome might should be used for the good of all Alpha Complex | |

It takes me _____ to eat a HappyTummy Energy Bar.

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | I have been on the premises of a nuclear reactor within the last three months. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | I have watched more than two complete episodes of <i>The Best Good Happy Sector Hour</i> . |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | I have heard of the secret society known as 'Psion'. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | If given the choice, I would opt to terminate myself in hopes that my next clone would not suffer from this mutation. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | My mutation is powerful enough to possibly harm the citizens, social institutions and/or property of Alpha Complex. |
| | | If 'yes', why should you be permitted to live on as a menace to all who surround you? |
| | | If 'no', how will your mutation be of any use to Alpha Complex? |

What can you possibly hope to accomplish that would make up for the mere fact of your blighted existence?

How long will it take you to do this?

Describe your mutation. Include specific examples with time, date, location and witnesses.

ATTACH TISSUE SAMPLE HERE

FOR AUTHORIZED USE ONLY

| INITIAL PROCESSING | | ID |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|
| Credit Adjustment | _____ | _____ |
| Revised Loyalty Index | _____ | _____ |
| Mutation Classification | _____ | _____ |
| Personality Profile Code | _____ | _____ |
| Medication Recommendation | _____ | _____ |
| ASSIGNMENTS | | |
| Registration Contact | _____ | |
| Medication | _____ | |
| Surveillance | _____ | |
| Termination | _____ | |

Please list all citizens you have damaged, injured or inconvenienced with your mutation. Continue on reverse if necessary.

| Citizen | Date and Time | Location | Offense |
|---------|---------------|----------|---------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

The average handling time for this form is between THREE DAYS and EIGHTEEN MONTHS. Resubmitting an identical copy of this form will not expedite processing in any way. If you need to alter or amend any information on this form, resubmit it with an attached Application Modification Rider (993-51-Z8854). Until this form has been duly and fully processed, you are not authorized to use your purported mutation in any way whatsoever. If your application for Registered Mutant status is approved, you will be retroactively subject to all requirements and regulations thereof, in accordance with section 72 of the *Laws of Alpha Complex* ed. 39/B.3.9.

Suspicion of Mutant Activity Report Form

Distributed by Department 72 in coordination with the Office of Forms and Vouchers, PLC

Name _____ - ____ - ____
Location (current) _____
Date and time (current) _____
Height (current) _____
Weight (current) _____
Sanitation grade (current) _____

No. of mutants killed (career) _____
No. of mutants turned in (career) _____

Location (of suspicious activity) _____
Date and time (of suspicious activity) _____

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | I am unusually thirsty today. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | My jumpsuit fits perfectly. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | I have never failed The Computer. |

FOR AUTHORIZED USE ONLY

Additional notes

Loyalty index _____
Credibility index _____
Transition rating _____

List all pharmaceuticals administered to you in the 24 hours prior to the observed event:

What did you do to document the suspicious activity?

How did the suspicious activity make you feel?

ATTACHED DOCUMENTATION

| Description | Reference code |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | _____ |

Check all that apply:

The observed activity might have been the result of

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a mutation | <input type="checkbox"/> an experimental device |
| <input type="checkbox"/> an optical illusion | <input type="checkbox"/> not enough sleep |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bad timing | <input type="checkbox"/> a plot against The Computer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> weather balloons | <input type="checkbox"/> drugs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sunspots | <input type="checkbox"/> lots and <i>lots</i> of drugs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bots | <input type="checkbox"/> nuclear radiation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> too much pressure | <input type="checkbox"/> random chance |

Describe the suspicious activity in detail. Include the names of all citizens involved and/or present. Note any registered mutants.

What do you wish had happened instead?

Why didn't it?

What sort of mutation do you think was involved?

Where did you learn about this mutation?

Who do you believe was ultimately responsible? Why?

Why should we believe you?

☐ Yes ☐ No Did you attempt to stop the suspicious activity?

If 'yes', how? _____

How did you ensure your interference would not compromise the evidence against the mutant(s)?

If 'no', why not? Do you not believe mutant powers are dangerous? Or were you simply too frightened?

The average handling time for this form is between TWO MINUTES and SEVEN WEEKS. Re-submitting an identical copy of this form will not expedite processing in any way. All witnesses of a suspicious event must submit separate paperwork. Unauthorized discussion of events prior to filing said paperwork is treason. If you need to alter or amend any information on this form, resubmit it with an attached Report Modification Rider (993-52-H1996). By submitting this report, you authorize Internal Security and/or other duly authorized representatives of The Computer to contact you about it at any time of day or night in a method of their choosing.