

Chaos swept the world.

Already tense conditions on the eve of the Millenium were made worse by the Survivalist paranoia sweeping the globe. Food and fuel became scare in the cities, as people hoarded against the coming Millennium. Insane cults bloomed like toadstools after a storm. Unfortunately, the worst predictions were true.

Shortly after the midnight line passed over Korea, US surveillance detected a series of missile launches from North Korea. After hurried consultations, the President decided not to launch the US arsenal. Several other small nations loosed nuclear weapons that evening. Most of North America was untouched, though the area west of the Rockies was subject to severe fallout effects. Chicago was badly hit; the Windy City is rubble even now. Southeast Asia was nearly uninhabitable, and Eastern Europe was pretty bad off — all the same, the world would have survived. We would have pulled through, were it not for the Survivalists, the followers of the mad prophet Nathan Holn.

Immediately following the Millennium, reports of paranormal phenomena skyrocketed. It was attributed to Millennial fever, and ignored. Perhaps if we'd had more time, we'd have figured out what was going on. . . perhaps not. On May 3, as the planets converged overhead, mystic cults the world over enacted their own little part of the great drama. Best remembered are the Slavic Mystics, who detonated several dozen primitive nuclear devices around the world, in a bizarre attempt to use sympathetic magic to correct the problems afflicting their homeland. It had little effect beyond pissing off most of the world.

Coupled with massive computer shutdowns, this threw the world into chaos for several years. Despite these setbacks, humanity came back fighting, and managed to do extremely well for the next few decades. We turned our collective backs on the darkness of the past, and moved forward together as one people. The reactivation of the global Internet is generally regarded as the starting point of the **Golden Age of Mankind**. Great leaps were made in science and technology. Human augmentation hit new levels, greatly increasing quality and length of life. As the years passed, the fears of the past began to be put aside, and a new age of peace and cooperation dawned. Nationalism was forgotten; the ecosystem was beginning to recover from the ravages of the bombs, everything was Good.

And Nathan Holn destroyed the world. Broadcasting to the world over shortwave, and syndicated on several radio networks, Holn's neo-feudalist philosophy had garnered a much wider following than anyone else had realized. On September 8, 2040, as another great conjunction took place in the heavens, the Holnists attacked. Biochemical weapons wreaked havoc in cities and airports as Holnist strike teams took control of missile silos, launching attacks on the rest of the world, which retaliated in kind. The great dream was shattered.

As five billion human lives were extinguished, their life-energy burnt through the barriers between the worlds, opening gaping holes in reality. Other world spilled in through these rifts, carrying other beings with them. These strangers took advantage of humanity's weakness, creating beachheads and even whole empires on our world.

The old flame is dim now — the Golden Age is dead, but its spirit is still with us. Humanity **will** prevail. We will push back the alien invaders, and reclaim our world. We will once again reach into space. We will tame the wild forces which now hold sway over our lands. And until that glorious day. . .

We will survive.

The Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Gateworld

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Chapter 1

Characters

Characters should not be pigeonholed into narrow “classes.” The following are descriptions of the general categories of character which might be appropriate for PCs. Other directions are open; feel free to experiment. Pre-cataclysm tech was at late TL10, verging on TL11, while post-cataclysm ranges from TL6 to early TL9.

Basic starting wealth is no cash and no regular job – Dead Broke. Increased or decreased (heh) wealth is available at 1/2 the normal wealth prices. A regular job is available at 1/2 the normal wealth prices, though discouraged except in special cases. Money to be spent on equipment only is available at 1 point per \$5000.

1.1 Augments

Before the final cataclysm, the militaries of the world had begun to shift their focus from masses of infantry and high-tech tools to supermen, each one able to do the work of an entire company.

1.1.1 Cyborgs

Among the earliest attempts at a superhuman was the Full Cyborg. These human brains in robot bodies could be made stronger and faster than humans, with machine-perfect accuracy and the resources of a computer at their disposal. A typical pre-cataclysm military borg would have:

ST 50, DX 13, IQ 13, DR 20, Move 10, Magic Resistance 4, Appearance (Hideous), Reputation -4 (Dangerous), Absolute Timing, Eidetic Memory 2, Lightning Calculator, Mathematical Ability, Acute Vision +2, Acute Hearing +2, Night Vision, Telescopic Zoom 2, No Sense of Smell/Taste, Disturbing Voice, Short-Range Radio, Cable Jack, SQUID Tempest Scanner, 2 Sharp Claws, Battle Jaw, Solipsist, an internal microfusion plant with backup battery, and a variety of built-in nonlethal weapons.

Since the cataclysm, some enterprising doctors have tried to recreate these mechanized wonders by detaching components from an old borg and reattaching them to humans. There has been only limited success, but they have been able to recreate the science of cybernetics and master everything up to the creation of partial borgs:

ST 30, DX 12, IQ 11, DR 10 (arms/legs only), Move 8, Magic Resistance 2, Appearance (Hideous), Reputation -2 (Dangerous), Callous, Acute Vision +2, Acute Hearing +2, Night Vision, Telescopic Zoom 2, 2 Sharp Claws, Battle Jaw, and whatever else might have been found or scrounged.

Other cybernetic implants abound; feel free to look to Shadowrun, Rifts, or GURPS Cyberpunk or Biotech for suggestions.

1.1.2 Juicers

While Borgs are certainly useful devices, they are expensive and difficult to maintain and repair. Popular in third-world countries before the cataclysm, these chemically-enhanced supermen were chosen from elite special-forces units. Unfortunately, their designers erred: rather than choosing soldiers, they augmented warriors. The result

is usually a hyperactive superman, stronger, faster, and (for a time) healthier than a normal man. Juicers can be created by the more advanced of modern post-cataclysmic societies. Why not make everybody a juicer? Well, besides the fact that Juice is totally addictive, it also has some nasty side effects.

A typical Juicer will have: ST 23, DX 14, HT 16, DR 8, Altered Time Rate 1, Enhanced Move 2, Extra Encumbrance, High Pain Threshold, Less Sleep, Combat Reflexes, Weak Will 2, Magic Resistance 2, Very Fit, Recovery, Very Rapid Healing, Reputation -3 (Dangerous), Fearless, Glory Hound, Addiction (Juice), and Terminally Ill (5 years)

1.1.3 The Mind over Matter Programme

Following some of the disasters involving the first Juicers, the program was publicly scrapped. There was too much negative sentiment; it wasn't safe to continue. However, the militaries of the world weren't going to give up on a promising idea like augmentation because of a few bad apples — though they did decide to scrap the existing project, designed for super-soldiers. The new MOM project, begun in Great Britain and eventually duplicated in most nations, was designed primarily to augment certain Eastern martial arts techniques, rewiring the lower-level areas of the brain. This process also had side effects: it triggered latent psionics in most implantees, and the implantees have a slight tendency towards insanity...

A typical Crazy will have: ST 19, DX 16, HT 12, IQ 12, DR 4, Combat Reflexes, Discriminatory Smell, Alertness +5, Enhanced Move 1, Extra HP 10, High Pain Threshold, Increased Speed 1, Manual Dexterity 2, Perfect Balance, Fit, Fast Regeneration (requires intense concentration -50%), Strong Will 3, Telescopic Vision 6, ESP 5, Healing 3, Reputation -2 (Dangerous) and any number of insanities.

1.2 Men of Magic

Along with the rifts, magic entered the world. The ley-lines glow bright with power, and the caerns and sacred places of the world are alive again. Mages are those who have learned to tap the ambient psychic energy of the world around them, and to store more than the usual amount of that energy within themselves. In addition, most mages have learned to communicate with the spirits of the dead, the billions of people killed in the cataclysms.

Magic is illegal in some places, but that doesn't stop some people from wanting access to it.

1.2.1 Mechanics

Mages learn the Ritual Magic (Ley Line) skill. The following paths default to Ritual Magic (Ley Line) at -6: Animal, Body Control, Communication and Empathy, Elemental Earth, Elemental Air, Elemental Fire, Elemental Water, Food, Healing, Illusion and Creation, Knowledge, Light and Darkness, Making and Breaking, Mind Control, Movement, Necromancy and Spirits, Plant, Protection and Warning, Sorcery and Meta-Spells, and Sound. Paths cannot be above 14 by default — that is, no matter how high a character's RM skill is, any paths he hasn't put points into are at 14 or less.

Most spells are Mental/Average maneuvers within these paths; spells which would normally be M/VH skills are now Mental/Hard maneuvers. Each spell defaults to the appropriate path, with a penalty equal to twice the smallest number of prerequisite spells needed; other prerequisites apply as normal. M/VH spells get an additional -2 penalty. Fireball, for example, defaults to the Path of Elemental Fire -6, or Ritual Magic (Ley Line) at -12.

"Normal Time" is as listed; each second shaved off of this time is a -1 penalty to skill. Acting on unconsented ground is the default; acting near a ley line grants a +1, on a line +2, near a nexus +3, on a nexus +4, and near a supernexus +5. Being "on" a supernexus is not possible, as there's always a rift there. Symbolic components are unnecessary, but may be used to counteract long-distance modifiers. They have no other useful effect. Making a normal spell area effect is a -4 penalty.

Note: This is a test rule which may be recalibrated or go away completely. Don't count on it continuing to exist. *Each -2 penalty to skill (voluntarily taken) reduces the energy cost of the spell by 1. This last is reversable – for each extra energy point put into the spell, there is a +1 bonus to skill.*

Normal humans trained in the arts of magic have a Power capacity of 10. Extra Power cost 2 points/level. Mages also recover power, naturally drawing it in from the mana-rich environment, at a rate of 1 point every 10 minutes. Increased Recovery Rate costs 5 points/level, and decreases the recovery rate by 1 minute/level – it cannot be bought above 8 levels.

All spells are assumed to have some sort of side effect - a pretty trail of sparkles from caster to subject, a blue ray, a shimmering light for the Shield spell, or whatever. Some spells have only visual effects, some have only sounds; most have both. Spells with either sights or sounds already implied in the effect (Illusions, Missile Spells, and so on), are the only exceptions. The general nature of ANY visual effects varies with the mage; it's a side-effect of the "aura" of the wizard's personality. Some wizards might have spells that are all one color, or always heralded by electric crackling noises. It's up to every mage-player to describe, in general terms, the nature of the sounds and sights that accompanies his magic. Sensory side effects may be "muffled" by a -2 penalty to skill, when necessary for stealth reasons. . .

Magic Sensitivity is an advantage costing 5 points; it allows an IQ roll to detect magic upon coming into direct physical contact with it. Any character trying to cast a spell without Magic Sensitivity is at a -5 penalty for "casting blind". Magery is an advantage representing natural talent with magic; it costs 10 points/level and is a prerequisite for some spells. It grants no skill bonuses. Mages may burn up to Magery+1 energy/second on attack spells, and do 1d(4) damage per point of energy. Such spells may still only be built for 3 seconds, however.

Special Powers

Some mages have developed special powers from their long relationship with ley lines or rifts. Examples of these are listed below:

Dimensional Rift Home (50) This allows the mage to return to his home universe, at a cost of 10 fatigue

Familiar Link (Variable) Some mages have developed an especially strong link with a favored pet or other animal; some of these animals have been modified in turn. This can use the Familiar or Ally rules (for NPCs) or the Mindlink rules (for PC familiars).

Ley Line Phasing (63) Teleportation to anywhere on the same ley line on an IQ roll. A mage may carry up to heavy encumbrance with him when phasing

Ley Line Rejuvenation (13) Some mages intuitively use the energy of the ley lines to heal themselves; This grants the slow regeneration advantage when on or very near the line, or casts the Major Healing spell on the mage only once per day, with skill 15.

Ley Line Transmission (32) Activation roll of 15. Allows the mage to communicate (one-way) with any other being on the same line.

Sense Ley Line, Nexus, or Rifts (5 each) Rifts can be detected opening and closing up to 40 miles, or, if stable, within 20 miles. Ley Lines can be detected within 10 miles, and Nexi can be detected within 20 miles.

Harmony with the Tao (20/level) Those in tune with the world to this degree may attempt an unknown skill at IQ or DX level once per hour of gameplay. Two levels allows it to be used once per 30 minutes, and 3 levels allows it to be used once per 10 minutes.

Enchantment

It is possible to create charms or "Talens," which are simple, single-use enchantments. Their only failing is that they have a shelf life – after a certain period of time, their magic dissipates. Creating a charm is handled as a normal spellcasting, with the following penalties for shelf life: -1 for Up to 12 hours, -2 for up to a day, -4 for up to a week, -8 for up to a month, -4 for each extra month up to a year, and -4 for each extra year after that. Only people with Magic Sensitivity can use these, however.

Quick & Dirty and Slow & Sure enchantment work as usual.

Technowizardry

Technowizards are those magicians who attempt to combine magic and technology. They use the Gadgeteer (Technomagic) advantage, costing 25 points. They may also, of course, buy the separate normal Gadgeteer advantage.

1.3 Psychics

During the Golden Age of Mankind, it was discovered that most people had entire regions of the brain which were not used. These regions could be awakened, resulting in enhanced psychic powers. Telepathy, Healing, Astral Projection, Antipsi, Electrokinesis, Psychokinesis, and ESP are available as normal, up to level 10. Psychic Vampirism is not available to normal humans, but there are psi-vampires who exhibit such effects.

An Unusual Background will be assessed against all psychics. A particularly high one will be charged for access to Teleport, World Jumper, Time Jumper, or Snatcher, or for those who wish to exceed the level limits above.. All psychics must buy Magic Sensitivity, which costs 5 points.

1.4 Adventurers

In these dark days, many others roam the wilderness. Some are outcasts from civilization, now living outside society. Others have chosen that path — some because they honestly prefer it, like the Holnist Survivalists in the South, others because it is the only means to an end. Anyone capable of surviving a journey through the wilderness can make a great deal of money doing so.

1.4.1 Scientist/Scholar

1.4.2 Doctor

1.4.3 Thief

1.4.4 Decker

1.5 Nonhumans

1.5.1 Psychic Vampires

1.5.2 Dwarves

1.5.3 Dragons

Dragons are not native to Earth, but merely visitors here. Adult dragons seem able to easily cross the boundaries between the worlds, sustaining themselves on the universal mana flow. They do not demonstrate any apparant society or racial unity – rather, adult dragons are as likely to fight as to befriend each other. Dragons are hatched from solitary eggs after lying dormant for almost five years. At hatching, they are fluent in at least two languages and familiar with basic mathematics and thaumatology, and are capable of basic movement, flight, and so on. They do **not**, however, start with any conception of social relations; this, they pick up from the other intelligent beings around them.

Dragons are stronger, faster, and smarter than humans at birth. They subsist on mana, having no need of food or drink. They breathe fire (sometimes other substances), are skilled mages, fly, see in the dark, and can shift themselves into other forms. It's no wonder that so many dragon-cults have grown up in the hinterlands.

A typical dragon hatchling might have: ST 20, DX 12, IQ 12, HT 14, Increased Move 2, Regular Regeneration, Four Legs, Extra Encumbrance, Flexibility, Doesn't Eat/Drink, Doesn't Breathe, Slow Maturation, Talons, Sharp Teeth, Early Maturation 2, Cast Iron Stomach, Breathe Fire (4d, 4m range), Extra Reach (forelimbs), Increased Move 1, Tail (Sriker, 2 yard reach), Monstrous Appearance, Magic Sensitivity, Magery 3, Morph, Winged Flight (Cannot Hover), Infravision, Mathematical Ability, Unaging, PD 2 (scales), DR 12 (flexible) (scales), Clueless, Gluttony, Greed, Intolerance, Jealousy, Megalomania, Odious Racial Habit (Eats Sentients), Pyromania, Stobbornness, Horizontal, Inconvenient Size, Poor Grip, Dependency: Mana, and a variety of spells and psionics, including autoteleport.

Chapter 2

A World Overview

Welcome to the Shattered Earth in the One and Twenty.

2.0.4 The Ruined Zones

2.0.5 Amazons in Oregon

2.0.6 Neohippies

2.0.7 South America

vancian shattered earth – nasty plants, mobile predatory fungi, Heavy Weirdshit.

2.0.8 Dragon-cults

2.0.9 The Black Market

Chapter 3

Magic and the Supernatural

Chapter 4

Technology & Equipment

4.0.10 Weaponry

Several varieties of ranged and close-combat weapon see common use. Attempting to cross the wilderness unarmed is suicide. Lasers and Blasters (particle beams) are common personal beam weapons, while Flamers and Gaussguns see greater use on the battlefield. Beam weapons are, in general, preferred over slugthrowers because of the comparative ease of obtaining ammunition. Old-style ammunition is in no short supply, thanks to pre-cataclysm survivalists, but has limited effect against modern armor. Specialized weapons also exist: assassins prefer Gauss Needlers, while police often carry Tanglers (“Loogie Guns”).

Of special interest is the “Ripley Combo,” named after a pre-cataclysm war hero. This weapons package consists of a 20mm gauss slugthrower with an underbarrel plasma blaster.

In close-combat, three types of weapon predominate: non-lethal Stun Wands, Vibro-blades, and Mono-molecular weaponry. Magic weaponry also exists, but each item is too differentiated to give a single description. Standard medieval weapons are available “cheap”, fine weapons for normal cost, and very fine weapons for the cost of a “fine” medieval blade. “Super-fine” Durasteel weaponry is available, doing +3 damage and costing twenty times normal price. Vibroblades do an extra die of damage and have an armor divisor of 5. Monowire-edged do an extra two dice of damage and have an armor divisor of 10. Stunwands force a roll vs HT-3 to stay conscious, in addition to doing damage as normal. Some stunwands are hinged to prevent the impact from doing any damage whatsoever.

Melee Weapon Tables

Weapon	Type	Amt.	Reach	Cost	Wt.	Hld	LC	TL
Vibroknife	Imp	th+1d+1(5)	C	240	1	+1	3	8
	Cut	sw+1d-1(5)	C,1					
Vibrosword	Imp	th+2d(5)	1	1000	3	-2	3	8
	Cut	sw+1d+2(5)	1					
Monoknife	Cut	sw+1d-1(10)	C,1	540	1	+1	3	9
Monosword	Cut	sw+1d+2(10)	1	1600	3	-2	3	9
Variable Sword	Cut	sw+1d+R(10)	C-5	2000	1/2	+2	2	10
Monowhip	cut	sw+1d-2(10)	C-5	900	1/2	+2	2	9
Hinged Stunwand	Spcl.	Spcl.	1	150	2	-1	6	8
Rigid Stunwand	Spcl.	sw	1	100	2	-1	5	8
Force Sword	Imp.	4d(5)	1	3000	2	+1	3	11
	Cut	8d(5)	1					

Ranged Weapon Tables

Weapon	Malf	Type	Dam	SS	Acc	1/2D	Mx	Wt	RoF	Sht	Rcl	\$	LC	TL
Holdout Laser														
L Laser Pistol														
H Laser Pistol														
Laser Rifle														
L Blaster														
H Blaster														
Blaster Rifle														
Portable Flamer														
5mm RG														
1mm RG														
Ripley Combo														
Gauss Needler														
Spring Needler														

4.0.11 Defense

The best defense in the wilderness is speed, but sometimes even the fastest roadrunner gets caught. In that case, the solution is armor. Several options are available even before turning to the super-powerful power armor used by the military. Armor can be Cerametal or Bioplas, Light, Medium or Heavy, and Sealed or Unsealed. See GURPS Ultra-Tech 2 for weights and such; Cerametal is TL 9, Bioplas is TL 10, and both are semi-ablative (for every DR/2 points damage done in a single attack, it loses 1 point of DR at that location). Cerametal can be repaired very easily; tubes of resin are commonly available, and need merely be slathered over the ablated areas. Bioplas regrows damage at 1 point/hr, up to 20% of its original value. Beyond this, it requires overhaul in an appropriate shop (TL 10 armoury).

Bioplas armor is difficult to obtain outside of the Restored US, where it is the standard military armor, but Cerametal is available over most of the rest of civilization. In some areas, aliens have sold force-field technology to humanity. Such devices tend to be fragile and dangerous, as likely to burn out as to protect.

4.0.12 Cyberdecks

A cyberdeck is a specialized computer designed to act as an interface between a human brain and a computer or network. They are illegal or controlled in most places, but are the only effective way to attack secure computing facilities. These are the mainstay of modern industrial espionage, forgery, and counterfeiting. Each deck has a complexity, indicating how many tasks it can perform at once, and a speed index, indicating how fast it can perform those tasks. Note that these are *unprogrammed* decks – programs may be purchased as per GURPS Cyberpunk.

Components may be added to a prebuilt deck for roughly twice the cost they'd be found in a prebuilt one, though they are available for somewhat less if built completely from scratch.

Several decks are common, but even these are usually modified by their purchasers. These are:

Sony Cyberman (\$15,000) This is a rich kid's toy deck: anyone who tries to use this for real work is going to get flatlined before he hits his second phase. Complexity 2, SI 0.5, 2 ROM slots, 200 MB storage. 16000 ms Phase (yes, 16 seconds).

Wilks D++ (\$36,900) A good deck to train on, but hardly awe-inspiring. Complexity 2, SI 1, 4 ROM slots, 500 MB storage. 8000 ms Phase

Wilks Deckmaster (\$89,400) A versatile and effective deck. Complexity 2+, SI 2, 6 ROM slots, 1 GB storage. 4000 ms Phase.

Northern Gun MilSpec CD5 (\$178,800) Built with all-optical redundant construction, this deck is designed to take a pounding. A few minutes with some spray paint will remove the bright yellow exterior. Complexity 2+, SI 3, Hardened, 4 extra ROM slots, 500 MB storage. 2600 ms Phase.

RUS Excelsior Class Cyberdeck (\$945,000) The allegedly standard tool of the postman-deckers of the Restored United States. Be afraid. Complexity 3, SI 5, 4 extra slots, 2 GB storage. 800 ms Phase

Masix P600 (\$186,900) An incredibly fast deck, though somewhat limited. Complexity 2, SI 6, 4 ROM slots, 500 MB storage 1300 ms Phase.

Fairlight Excalibur 7 (\$7,755,000) If you meet one online, be very friendly or run like hell. Complexity 4, SI 5, 10 ROM slots, 30 gig storage. 400 ms Phase