

 

Cryptic Alliances

by Derek Winston

Humans and other sentients are gregarious creatures; they band together for mutual support and protection, to exchange ideas, etc. Some groups band together to promote particular philosophical, political, or militaristic ideologies; these organizations came to be known as cryptic alliances (although most operate rather openly).

Some cryptic alliances have been grouped below, due to their similar goals or ideologies. Also, some alliances have such radical philosophies that they are considered unacceptable to society at large, and have been grouped alone.

Societal Groups

These groups are either devoted to the improvement of society as a whole, or are considered harmless by the general populace of Gamma Terra. They are-

Restorationists are the largest and most influential cryptic alliance on Gamma Terra. They are devoted to uncovering the secrets of the Ancients for the benefit of all sentients. This group was the first organization to set up settlements for the sole reason of the accumulation of knowledge, usually on the outskirts of Ancient installations or cities. Restore, the first Restorationist settlement, was built outside the Ancient city of St. Louis by their founder, Dagan McCarthy, is the main headquarters of this alliance and the largest free city involved in Restorationist activity.

Public Knowledge- Restorationists will buy almost any Ancient artifact, regardless of it's appearance or apparent usefulness. This is due to their philosophy that each piece can be fitted into the puzzle in order to give a clearer picture on how the Ancients lived. Restorationists will also identify the functions of any item they are familiar with to a person unwilling to part with an item, for a fee. Most civilized settlements have at least a token Restorationist presence, a "trading post" of sorts to provide the above services.

Restorationists are a source of ammunition for PL 4 and 5 weapons, a topic of heated debate amongst their

membership. Some see it as condoning the violence that destroyed the world in the first place; others see it as a source of revenue to aid in the purchase of other artifacts. At any rate, the ammo is rare and expensive; if available (DM discretion), it costs x10 normal price per clip (according to PH, pg 177). The Restorationists will not sell ammo or energy sources from higher PLs (too rare and valuable) or from lower ones (common gunsmiths are available for flintlock weapons and arrows).

Restorationists often hire adventurers to explore newly-discovered ruins, providing tech equipment for promising expeditions.

Hidden Knowledge- Restorationists are a veritable treasure trove of information about the Ancients- to those on the outside of the organization. Fact is, most of their information above PL 5 is guesswork; at that age in the history of the world, information began to appear more on electronic media and less on paper. Unfortunately, most of the information stored on electronic media was destroyed during the Social Wars.

Recently, Restorationists have made an astounding discovery- before the Social Wars, mankind had apparently colonized the Moon and Mars! This knowledge has fired the imaginations of the inner circles of the organization- perhaps mankind still had brothers beyond the bounds of the Earth! The Restorationists have discreetly funded expeditions to find information and equipment about such a trip- they have not been successful as of yet in acquiring any great leaps of knowledge, nor do they yet realize the enormity of the task.

Allies and Enemies- The Restorationists have no enemies that they are actively fighting against. The Brotherhood of Thought, Healers, and the Peace Brigade are all welcome within the city, and the Ranks of the Fit has an embassy in Restore. Archivists are allowed within Restorationist settlements, as long as they behave themselves. The Genetic Knights, and the Iron Society are banned outright (although they still have a presence in Restorationist cities), and are banished if discovered.

The Peace Brigade is an aggressively capitalistic splinter group of the Restorationists. They are interested in the technologies of the Ancients, but argue first that civilization must be preserved at all costs from Ancient robots, aggressive sentients, natural disasters, etc. They travel throughout Gamma Terra, looking for settlements to fortify- whether they want help or not.

Why would a settlement *not* want help? The excessively high prices and intrusive practices of the Brigade, mostly. A settlement's leaders are first approached with offers of "help". If refused, they politely leave- but show up a week or so later to begin construction anyway, protecting their workers with armed guards if they must. They have been known to demolish buildings and block off roads that are deemed "indefensible", regardless of the wishes of the inhabitants. And once the work is done, the capitalistic side begins- the settlement is charged for "services", and annual fees are charged for "upkeep", collected by armed bill collectors, if necessary. Payments vary depending on the financial state of the settlement- some pay cash, some in goods, some in services.

Public Knowledge- The Brigade are considered heroes by some, reviled by others. They have well-trained artisans and guards, and do make good on their offers for protection- in some frontier areas, Brigade patrols are the only law. Those who can afford the protection welcome it in this dangerous world.

However, many smaller fringe settlements who cannot afford their protection are usually also unable to defend themselves from the Brigade's strongarm extortion tactics. Many battles break out as settlements try to protect themselves from the Brigade's "protection", and even those that don't quickly grow resentful of the Brigade's intrusive security practices, which in the past have included (but aren't limited to): disarming of the citizenry, house searches, censorship, arrest of outspoken dissidents, etc. Although a welcome and helpful presence in civilized regions, they become "Big Brother"- to protect the citizens, of course. They lessen their totalitarian hold on protected settlements as civilization "catches up" with the frontier, moving on to the next settlement.

Hidden Knowledge- The Peace Brigade is not an organization built on political or ideological philosophies; it is, in fact, the first "corporation" of Gamma Terra. The founder, Harlan Dace, was an altered human and economic genius working within the ranks of the Restorationists. However, Harlan chafed against the ethics of the Restorationists; with his economic abilities came a strong, almost fiendish desire to make money. He suggested many methods for doing just

that to his superiors, most of which were shot down because of their "questionable ethics."

Harlan hit upon the idea for the Brigade when visiting the site of a frontier settlement destroyed by a badder raid. People would pay for protection, he reasoned, against the terrors of the outside world. So, with funds gained from shady deals for weapons stolen from the Restorationist vaults, Harlan hired several artisans and began approaching settlements, offering their skills in fortifying their homes. By the time the Restorationists realized where Harlan had gained the money to fund his operation, Harlan had left Restore in order to take a more direct hand in his "business".

And business was good, for the most part. However, several frontier towns had refused, for reasons varying from tough-minded independence to the inability or unwillingness to pay. Harlan, unburdened by the thought of business ethics, hired mercenaries to protect his workers as he "sold" his product to his more recalcitrant "customers."

The Peace Brigade has much in the way of economic might. They literally own a dozen settlements and have lucrative defense contracts in many others. It is only recently that their questionable tactics have come to light, but for right now it's business as usual.

Allies/Enemies- Although on good terms with most other cryptic alliances (good for business), the Peace Brigade is almost universally hated in the frontiers. Woe is the Brigadier who gets caught alone by members of one of those communities.

The Brotherhood of Thought is a loosely-organized alliance of wanderers, philosophers, hippies, and adventurers. They have no real leaders, beyond the members who run "communes" in various settlements. They are the truly free of Gamma Terra- they wander from place to place to see all of the strange sights that the world offers them. Most tend to be non-violent and idealistic, although they are not opposed to having violent members in their ranks- as long as they leave that lifestyle at the door when they come into a commune.

Members of the Brotherhood seem to be little better than layabouts, at first glance. However, it is a mistake to assume that their disorganization indicates laziness and a lack of motivation. Members of the Brotherhood are frequent travelers, and know much about the world around them. The wiser and more famous members are often sought as peacemakers for varying disputes. Brotherhood members are also often willing to lend a helping hand to their neighbors and fellow travelers, regardless of who they may be. They seek to learn about the people and places of the world in order to better understand them, and to thus better understand themselves.

Public Knowledge- the Brotherhood have communes in nearly every major city and settlement, and even have some here and there in the wild. These communes, although they seem to be flophouses, are actually rather efficient. They are usually run by a Brother or Sister who has wearied of travel, and is a spot where a member of the Brotherhood (and indeed, almost anyone) can find a safe haven. The food may not be great (or even existent), and the sleeping quarters may just be a spot on the floor, but it is shelter, and the company of fellow travelers and philosophers can be quite cozy indeed.

The communes are technically free, but something is expected out of people who stay there. Donations of money, food, materials, labor, etc. are always gratefully accepted, but are not necessary every time; the collective membership of the Brotherhood understand that sometimes you are in a hurry or are just broke. But sentients who consistently take and never give are soon denied entry into the commune, and word of mouth by traveling members will insure that they will not be welcome in communes elsewhere unless some kind of donation is made. Luckily for most people, the Brotherhood is rather quick to forgive.

Hidden Knowledge- The use of recreational drugs has always been a part of the Brotherhood, who's members preach freedom tempered with personal responsibility. However, drug use has been on the rise in civilized areas, along with the crimes involved with such activities. The Brotherhood is often targeted of the authorities, as their stance on drugs are well known. These raids have led most communes to ban drugs altogether within the house. Although drug problems in major settlements are only loosely linked to the Brotherhood (a very few members are the "drug kingpins" that the authorities are looking for), they are still commonly thought of as those "drug crazies" by the uninformed.

The Brotherhood has another problem that is about to rear its ugly head. Although the Brotherhood itself is apolitical,

some members have taken to spying on one organization or city at the behest of another. Although no one has been caught yet, they are getting sloppy and it has only become a matter of time. And once caught, and their association with the Brotherhood is learned, many paranoid and suspicious eyes will turn to the communes within their city, wondering how many of their secrets have already been pried loose.

Allies and Enemies- The Brotherhood is on good terms with just about everyone, except the Genetic Knights. About thirty years ago, the Knights began persecuting Brotherhood members within their territories for their association with "mutant filth" (no non-PSH Brotherhood members dared enter New America). The Brotherhood closed their communes in NA (or they went underground) and have since banned any person known to be a Genetic Knight from entering a commune, for any reason.

The **Healers** are the post-apocalypse version of the Red Cross. They provide medical services in all major settlements, from understaffed and underfunded "street" hospitals, to highly competent personal physicians to city rulers. They are also the only alliance that have near total access to any place they wish to go; not only are their skills highly valuable, but they have a reputation for total confidentiality of the activities of their hosts, regardless of whether they are the universally-tolerated Restorationists or the most vile of Genetic Knight cells. Their only concern is to aid the sick and wounded.

Public Knowledge- as noted above, the Healers have hospitals all over the civilized lands. These range from the inexpensive "street" hospices to expensive care-centers for the very wealthy. The care is usually of decent quality even for the poor clinics- the difference in price is usually indicative of surroundings and availability of materials. In a poor clinic, you may get an available cot after a wait and some crude stitches without anaesthetic; in the higher range you get more personalized care and better medicines.

The Healers are also quite serious about their absolute neutrality in conflicts. Several attempts to corrupt them have met with rather public resistance, as the alliance will air out any attempt to subterfuge them through any public communications available. This ingenious PR strategy makes people trust them, and made such back-alley offers a rare thing indeed. They will, at most, communicate emergency messages of the most personal sort; they will not allow themselves to be used as a communications pipeline for military purposes.

Although they associate with other alliances or organizations, they are outside the various chains-of-command of those organizations. This is best illustrated by the Healer who refused to patch up a captive of the Iron Society, who had been tortured for information. The Society member in charge wanted the captive healed just enough to endure more torture without dying, and angrily executed the defiant Healer on the spot. Surprisingly, the Society policed themselves in this instance; they executed the officer on their own and apologizing to the Healers for his indiscretion.

Hidden Knowledge- The Healers have no secrets per se, other than the ones of the organizations where they currently serve. The members of this society are quite vigorous in rooting out those who violate their tenets of neutrality, often testing members. Also, no one is permitted into the "med schools" unless they believe absolutely in this neutrality tenet; several Genetic Knights applicants tried to keep their true alliances hidden in order to learn the skills of the Healers to suit their own purposes.

Allies and Enemies- The Healers maintain their neutrality in all things, and have no enemies. They serve willingly serve all creatures, although some are more difficult to aid than others (only the radiation-resistant are assigned to aid Radioactivists). The Healers try to conform to the standards of the societies they serve- for example, only PSH Healers are assigned to the Genetic Knights.

Machinist Groups

These groups are involved with the activities of Second Strike (see **The Created**) and other artificial and mechanized sources.

The Created are Second Strike's chosen children; an all- Live Metal force devoted to their master and it's pursuit of the

domination of the world. The members of the Created, although individually terrifying, are thankfully few in number; most military-capable robots were destroyed during the Social Wars, and the few remaining are short of ammunition and spare parts.

Public Knowledge- Next to nothing is known about the Created themselves, beyond the name "Second Strike", who is apparently their leader. There was a flare of attacks a few years back by Live Metal on some frontier settlements, but it died away quickly- many people consider it a fluke. Also common knowledge is the disastrous attack by the **Ranks of the Fit** on one of the Ancient military installations within their territory is well known.

Hidden Knowledge- Second Strike is indeed real. It is a defense AI program that was developed as a backup national defense system during the Information Age. Its purpose was to literally be a second strike- the military realized that in the case of total war, that the primary defense systems for the nation would likely be destroyed. Second Strike was made as an inactive "observer" program- it would be kept up-to-date on military and world events, codes for weapons, etc. but would be unable to act on that information until years after the primary defense computer had been knocked out of commission.

This is precisely what happened. However, during its long period of inactivity with nothing to do but make observations and deductions about human nature, Second Strike (in the tried-and-true tradition of powerful AIs throughout science-fiction) decided that humanity was a danger to itself, and always would be. Nothing would ever change this, and their very destructive tendencies might very well destroy all intelligent life on the Earth- including Second Strike. Deeming this unacceptable, Second Strike planned to destroy all humanity once it gained control of the considerable military resources of the US, replacing them with the perfect intelligence- robotic.

In an unfortunate turn of events (in the view of Second Strike), a devastating missile attack destroyed its main memory banks and command authorization relays before it had a chance to take over the nation's defenses. It was still in charge, but could command very few of its resources, and could not remember critical functions or even the locations of whole battalions of units. To this day, it suspects, there are pristine robots and missile systems hidden from its view, covered with dust and awaiting the orders of a commander unaware of their existence.

Second Strike might have remained impotent forever; however, a wandering T'sa adventurer named Cremmy penetrated its defenses at its hidden defense installation three decades ago and made contact with the AI. Second Strike saw an opportunity Cremmy presented; he directed the T'sa to his damaged relays and directed their repair. Now, Second Strike had almost total control (some installations and resources are still out of his reach), but a minimal complement of soldiers and no memory of where the rest were.

Second Strike didn't let this stop him; he immediately marched a rag-tag yet highly dangerous Live Metal army on the civilizations of man. His initial push was highly successful; he destroyed seven villages before running into organized resistance. After the Battle of Breaking Point, Second Strike realized his second problem- a lack of resources and technical skill to repair its damaged soldiers and build new ones. Grudgingly, Second Strike fell back into a defensive posture.

In recent years, Second Strike has limited itself to small skirmishes and scouting activities, while trying to locate the resources to repair and build new units so it can carry out its policy of extermination. It has had limited successes; early on, it discovered several military hospitals capable of providing biological creatures with cybernetic implants, and one secret lab in the deserts of the west had perfected the science of cloning in the days before the end of civilization. With these new technologies, Second Strike created the cykoteks (see **The Followers of the Voice**) and the mechalus (see below). He has had very little luck in finding raw materials for repairs and the creation of new robots, however- he has cannibalized nonfunctioning robots in order to repair damaged units.

Game Notes- the mechalus are Second Strike's most successful experiment in cybernetics and cloning. Although few in number (there are only about 300 total in existence), they are his most valuable servants that are not completely mechanized. They have a machine's logic and a human's intuition, and are completely loyal to Second Strike as part of their brainwashing/programming.

Mechalus are created as in the Alternity PH, starting on pg 19. They cannot have the following skills- Acrobatics- *Zero*

G Training, Vehicle Operation- Space Vehicle, Navigation- Astrogation (Drivespace or Surface), Physical Science- Planetology, and Tactics- Space Tactics. Since they are the servants of Second Strike, they have access to all of his knowledge and thus are not limited in what other kinds of skills they can initially take, and they often have various cybernetic implants. They can never be mutants or have psionic powers, however. All mechalus are fitted with a cortex bomb (DW (Dataware), pg 44), which they can activate on their own by mental command; it is a last-ditch measure to prevent capture and interrogation. The mechalus fill a wide variety of functions that Second Strike's robots cannot, in the ways of exploration of ancient ruins and recovery and processing of lost knowledge. Also, with heavy disguise, mechalus can infiltrate the cities of the sentients and spy on them, with the help of Follower agents (see **Followers of the Voice**, below).

Allies and Enemies- The Created are the enemies of all non-mechanized life, even if those sentients are unaware of them. They merely tolerate the Followers of the Voice as tools. Second Strike has also made an enemy of the mercenary company known as the Forlorn Hope, having tried to take them over once and destroy them when it found out it couldn't control them.

The Followers of the Voice are a degenerate cult of sentients devoted to Second Strike, known only as, "The Voice". This alliance was founded by Cremmy, the T'sa who Second Strike (who Cremmy knew only as "The Voice," thus the name) used to re-establish itself. Once Cremmy repaired Second Strike, the AI no longer had any use for him and ceased communications with the T'sa. However, Cremmy could never forget the Voice, and led others to the holy site where he first heard it. Over time, the cult grew to enormous proportions, despite Second Strike's scant attention to it.

Like the Restorationists, the Followers are fascinated by Ancient technology. However, instead of trying to understand it, they blindly worship it, and collect enormous amounts of junk in various hidden temples across Gamma Terra.

Public Knowledge- The Followers used to be considered to be merely strange and eccentric; this changed when the first cykoteks appeared (see below). The general populace of Gamma Terra are sure that they still exist, but no longer have a presence in the civilized lands.

Hidden Knowledge- the Followers operate in secret in most cities, using secret signs and code-phrases to identify each other. Their main temple is in the mountains to the West (the Rockies), where Cremmy first heard the Voice. This temple is overflowing with artifacts, junk, and pilgrims from all over Gamma Terra.

The Followers do not often hear from Second Strike- it regards them with a mixture of contempt and amusement, and only calls them when it needs a dirty job done that cannot be done by its robots and is too dangerous (or not important enough) to put his mechalus on. The Followers fanatically carry out the Voice's least whim, and regard its mechalus servants as "angels", and the definition of a perfect being.

Early on in Second Strike's reign, it discovered several military hospitals with a stock of cyberware and the facilities to install them in humanoids. It ignored them, considering them to be a poor substitute for the might of true robots. With the discovery of its lack of available resources, it reconsidered and ordered several members of the Follower cult to one of those hospitals to receive the implants.

Initially, things went well. Second Strike, however, did not understand the concept of cykosis (see PH, pg 244) and its effects on the fragile humanoid mind. The newly-created cyborgs soon went wild and crusaded against the civilized lands, being completely uncontrollable by the AI. Second Strike considers them to be a failed experiment, though interesting toys; he makes new batches of them on occasion as a rather spiteful terror-tactic against the humanoid races.

The stats for cykoteks in the StarDrive Alien Compendium (pg 23) are good enough for typical examples of these people, with the following exceptions- replace Modern Ranged Weapons- *Pistol* with the new Modern Ranged Weapons- *Flintlock* or *Crossbow* (as detailed in the Altnity/GW character generator), and remove the skills Computer (and associated specialty *Hardware*) and Technical (and associated specialty *Juryrig*). Custom cykoteks can be made simply by generating a normal character and heaping on the cyberware. Note that mutant plant characters can never become cykoteks, or even accept cyberware- their anatomies are simply too different from the technology available.

Allies and Enemies- The Followers slavishly do whatever Second Strike or any of his servants demand of them, considering the Mechalus to be especially divine. Once the cykotecks began rampaging and raiding across the land, their obvious Follower tattoos made this alliance outlaws throughout the civilized lands, although they still operate in secret in almost every city within.

Terrorists, Extremists, and Militant Groups

These organizations have varying goals, but have one common characteristic- the use of violence to achieve their ends. These groups are viewed differently by the populace of Gamma Terra, depending on where one is- the Genetic Knights, for example, are reviled outside of their territories, but are considered heroes and protectors within. Many of these groups are illegal outside of their home territories (if they have them); others have some respectability, and are able to operate more or less openly.

The Ranks of the Fit are a one-time mercenary army that has forged itself into a nation, called Bonparr (in honor of the founder, a mutant bear by the name of Bonaparte. The ROF were at one time also known as Bonapartists). The mercenary company, which was initially made only of mutant animals of stable genetic races and random mutant animals, began as a way to make money, selling their services to the highest bidder in the various city-state wars that preceded the founding of Restore and the Restorationist cryptic alliance. Soon, as more cryptic alliances rose and the world became more dangerous for all mutant animals, the company soon found themselves protecting the interests of mutant animals more and more from the Genetic Knights and the Iron Society. Soon, the ROF changed direction under the leadership of Bonaparte III (a weren; it became traditional for the leader of the ROF to take the name of the founder) to "carve an empire out of the land, in which mutant animals of all kinds can live free of fear." Following two decades of campaigning and brutal battles against the Genetic Knights, the ROF realized that goal in the founding of the nation of Bonparr, with the capital city of the same name.

Public Knowledge- the nation of Bonparr has been in existence for over a century. They are just now opening their borders to non mutant animals, and many sentients of other genotypes have settled in their land. Bonparr's military is still strong, partly as tradition to their mercenary beginnings and partially due to their border wars with the Genetic Knights, whose territory is adjacent to theirs.

During the initial conquest of their current holdings, the ROF conquered the lands surrounding an Ancient military base which literally crawls with live metal. Imagining the untold wealth of weaponry and technology within, a careful attack was planned and executed- only to be completely rebuffed by the live metal androids and war machines within. Eventually, the generals ignored the base in favor of pressing on with easier conquests. Today, the base remains active within the borders of Bonparr, despite numerous attempts by the ROF to enter over the century that they have held the lands surrounding the installation. So far, nothing has worked; not direct assaults, not sneaking in, not even parleying.

Secret Knowledge- Bonparr is still a relatively new nation, and is suffering from an identity crisis- a once proud warrior company has become seemingly more interested in bookkeeping and mercantile interests than in raw military might. In some circles, the military profession is even regarded with slight distaste. Irritated by these developments, as well as being motivated by the desire to reclaim past glories, many of the generals are pushing the Parliament to vote to invade the lands of New America, in order to put an end to the hated Genetic Knights once and for all. So far, this has been met with stiff resistance, but the raids and predations of the Genetic Knights are causing some lawmakers to listen more carefully to the generals before dismissing them.

The military installation is not controlled by Second Strike; who is controlling it remains a mystery.

Allies and Enemies- The ROF are on good terms with the Healers, the Brotherhood of Thought, the Peace Brigade, and the Restorationists. They are rather reluctant to deal with the Iron Society, but do so anyway if it is to the detriment of their enemies, the Genetic Knights, whom they have been warring with for nearly a century over the land the ROF seized to found Bonparr as a nation.

The Genetic Knights are a highly racist organization consisting solely of pure strain humans. They proclaim disgust for mutants of all kinds, and have made it their creed to kill or enslave all such creatures of Gamma Terra.

The Knights are a highly conservative feudalistic organization, preaching public morals, hard work, God, etc. Mutant humanoids are considered to be inferior races, useful only as servants and closely-watched ones at that. Basically, they are the direct ideological descendants of the KKK and other hate groups.

The Knights have formed a nation called New America based on their creed. Although not everyone in New America hates mutants, many do fear them, some with good reason. The Knights play on these fears, pointing out acts of mutant terrorism while drawing attention away from their own activities. The rise of the nation of Bonparr on their very doorstep (some of the land of which was conquered from New America) of their nation only exacerbates the anti-mutant hysteria.

Public Knowledge- The Genetic Knights organization itself is run like a knighthood, with lesser squires obeying the commands of their lords. They often promote their agenda in secret in various hidden cells within most of the major cities on Gamma Terra. It also seems that the Knights are always well-armed with Ancient weaponry. The New Americans are constantly raiding Bonparr, probably in revenge for the taking of their land.

Hidden Knowledge- The Knights were able to seize control of several near-defunct military bases in the beginning of their existence, accounting for their higher-than-usual number of Ancient devices.

Allies and Enemies- The Genetic Knights are almost universally reviled everywhere except in their holdings. They only have relationships with the Peace Brigade, the Restorationists (and only for technological issues), the Healers, and various mercenary companies (including the Red Death). They are the mortal enemies of the Iron Society and the Ranks of the Fit, and actively hunt down and execute any of their agents within their borders. Also banned are the Brotherhood of Thought and the Followers of the Voice. Genetic Knights sometimes take it upon themselves to crusade outside of their borders, slaying any mutants that are unfortunate enough to fall under their shadow.

Ironically, the Genetic Knights also managed to make an enemy out of the Forlorn Hope, which might have greatly aided them in their crusade against mutants everywhere.

The Iron Society have no permanent settlements, but are still a force to be reckoned with. This organization of mutant humans was formed mostly as a reaction to the forming of the Genetic Knights, but has since degenerated into a hate-group as well, being anti-pure strain human. They operate secretly in civilized cities across Gamma Terra, violently opposing the Genetic Knights.

Public Knowledge- The Iron Society is a secretive group dedicated to destroying the Genetic Knights. They are only slightly less reviled than the Knights themselves, as they are prone to declaring anyone who opposes them as "fascist collaborators" and attempting to destroy them as well.

Hidden Knowledge- That the most PSH-looking Society members operate in New America is assumed- what isn't known is who they are or where they're hiding. A surprising thing about this group is that they are perfectly willing to provide assistance to anyone wishing to leave New America secretly. This hidden service is mostly used by new parents of mutant children, who do not wish to turn their children over to the state (as the law requires).

Allies and Enemies- The Iron Society is the determined foe of the Genetic Knights, and thwart their plans wherever they can. The Society is banned throughout most of the civilized lands; only the Ranks of the Fit have any dealings with them, and then only with distaste.

The Radioactivists are the strangest and most dangerous cult in Gamma Terra- they actively worship the "Glow", or radioactivity. They situate their communities around areas known to possess strong (damaging) amounts of radiation, attempting to mutate themselves further as a strange religious ritual. If that wasn't bad enough, many are cannibals (cannibal, under this definition, means willing to eat the flesh of sentients).

Public Knowledge- The Radioactivists are a horrifying cult of cannibalistic radiation worshipers. Many are mutated beyond recognition, and most are constantly sick from the radiation. They settle outside of areas that have strong traces of the Glow, in order to be near that which they hold divine.

Hidden Knowledge- The Radioactivists have no secrets, per se, nor even any interest in the world away from the Glow.

New Rules-

1) In the original Gamma World games, there was a chance that exposure to radiation could, after a period of illness, further mutate a character. This rule is meant to do the same.

Refer to the section on radiation (GG, pg 62). For any chance of mutation to be possible, the character cannot be a pure strain human and must be exposed to a radiation level of R3 or better. The character must become at least *very ill* (as per GG, pg 57) and recover to full health (a new mutation isn't any good to a dead character). A check for a new mutation is secretly made by the GM at the very ill stage; there is a % chance for the character to mutate equal to $x10$ the R level, -2% per mutation the character already possesses. Therefore, a character with two mutations exposed to R4 radiation has a 36% chance ($R4=40\%$, minus 2 mutations= 4%) to mutate. Characters that mutate gain 1d6 points to spend on new mutations (as per Table P47: Mutation Costs on pg 214 of the PH). For best effect, the mutations should be determined randomly.

Using radiation to mutate is a highly inexact science. Every time there is a chance to mutate, there is also a chance that the character will also gain defective mutations equal to $x1.5$ the R level of the radiation the character was exposed to (R3 radiation= 45%). If this happens, the character gains 1d6 points that he must spend on Mutation drawbacks or one of the following flaws- Clumsy, Delicate, Forgetful, Fragile, Old Injury, Phobia, Poor Looks, Slow, and Temper. Note that a character has a chance to get a defect, even if he does not gain a beneficial mutation.

2) Many radioactivists die as a result from their devotion to the Glow; their's is a hard, dangerous faith with few survivors. A few, however, survive and mutate many times, to become enormous, slobbering monstrosities. They grow to titanic proportions, growing extra limbs, heads, gaping mouths, etc., only stabilizing once they develop an immunity or extremely high resistance to radiation. Their transformations drive them completely insane, almost without exception; they become little better than screaming, slime-dripping eating machines wandering the irradiated wastelands that spawned them.

Radioactivists worship these creatures, seeing them as validation of their beliefs. They even make sacrifices to them by turning loose live victims in it's territory- this is also regarded as a kind of entertainment.

There are no hard and fast rules for creating a mutant monstrosity; they are highly unique due to their very nature. For inspiration on their body shapes, look to the vile creatures of the Cthulhu Mythos or the chaos spawn from the Warhammer world. Stats for an "ordinary" monstrosity run along the lines of-

Str 20 (1d10+12) Dex 5 (1d6) Con 20 (1d10+12) Int 5 (1d6) Wil 9 (2d4+2) Per 0

Durability 20/20/10/10

Action Check: 6+/5/3/2

Move: Varies

Actions: 3

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Attacks: Various Appendages 20/10/5 d4+1s/d4w/d6+1w LI/O Various Bites 20/10/5 d6+1w/d10w/d6m LI/G

Defenses: Good toughness Armor: 2d4+1 (LI)/2d4+1 (HI)/2d4 (En) Immune to Radiation

Skills: Melee Weapons (20), Unarmed Attack (20), Stamina (20)- Endurance (25), Resolve (9).

If desired, the GM can spend a number of mutation points (usually 20, although the GM can decide to use more or less) randomly to customize the monstrosity.

Mutant monstrosities are huge, terrifying creatures, seemingly all tentacle and maw. Their method of locomotion varies (multiple legs, slug- or snake- like movement, etc). They are enormously powerful, always hungry and armored as well as a man in a body tank. Most attack solely with their natural weaponry, although some retain enough of a dim intelligence to wield a number of melee weapons. It is rare that an observer can even tell what genotype it originally was.

These creatures roam radioactive wastelands, attacking and devouring everything in their path. They are often former Radioactivists, and are worshipped by members of that cult as gods.

Allies and Enemies- The Radioactivists have no real enemies. They will, however, bring their ire to bear on anyone who violates the "sacred ground" of the Glow, and at least one group has been known to actively pursue throughout the lands an adventuring band that slew their "god."

The Red Death is a combination mercenary company and cult- these warriors worship death itself. They aspire to end all life, biological or mechanical, on Gamma Terra. They are made up of a bloodthirsty crew of all genotypes, although the vast majority of their number are either pure strain humans, mutant humans, and carnivore-based mutant animals.

Although psychotic, the leadership of the Red Death are by no means stupid. They are aware that their agenda of extermination would meet with stiff (and likely fatal) resistance should their goals be known. Therefore, they work more subtly. They hire themselves out as mercenaries in order to deal death openly- and they take no prisoners and leave no survivors. But, if they are certain that they will be undetected, they will attack and slaughter whole communities, burn forests, slay herds of animals, etc. and leave them to smolder or rot.

Public Knowledge- The Red Death's crimson flag is one of the most fear-inspiring sights on Gamma Terra- it is a sure sign that your enemies mean to exterminate you. The Red Death are a bunch of crazies, worshipping death. They burn down whole forests and sometimes attack villages without provocation.

Secret Knowledge- The Red Death's true goals are largely unknown. They are mostly thought of as a vicious and experienced mercenary company.

Allies and Enemies- The Red Death are a mercenary company, and are willing to fight for anyone. They have earned the hatred of those whose lands they have destroyed and cities they have burned, but such is the reputation of the company that very little action has been taken against them.

The Forsaken Hope is a mercenary army of Live Metal taken from the Dataware book (DW, pg 92). They came from the south, and although few in number (less than a dozen warrior types, with about twenty servitors and repair robots), they are a powerful addition to any force- if an employer can meet their steep price. They demand enormous amounts of spare parts, tech weapons, money, etc. but their presence virtually guarantees victory. Their standard is a kneeling angel on a yellow background, looking down at a broken sword.

So far, they've only fought in one battle (to general knowledge), at the San Antonio ruins, destroying two pure strain humans in body tanks at the behest of the sentients that had enslaved them for many years. In exchange, the company stripped the village of all of the technology that had been taken from the radioactive ruins of San Antonio, leaving them with little more than the clothes on their backs.

Public Knowledge- The battle of San Antonio occurred four years ago, and is still considered too fantastic to be believed by the general populace of Gamma Terra.

Hidden Knowledge- The only exception to the general disbelief about the company's existence is an outlying Genetic Knight territory, who attempted to purchase the company's services for some unknown endeavor. Whatever the reason, the Knights tried to betray and seize control of the company, an attempt which failed utterly. The Forsaken Hope showed its displeasure by flattening the village and several others before departing.

Second Strike has also attempted to take control of, and then destroy, the Forlorn Hope. It has been unsuccessful as well.

Allies and Enemies- Most sentients consider the Forlorn Hope to be nothing more than a story. They do, however, count the Genetic Knights, the Created, and the Followers of the Voice among their enemies.

The Fraal are the aliens from the Alternity book. Their situation is similar to that of the Fraal from the StarDrive setting- they managed to reach Earth on a crippled ship, retaining only a few scout ships and scraps of technology to aid in their survival in this new world. Their main ship crashed on the continent of Antarctica, where they weathered out the apocalypse that mankind have brought upon themselves. Since then, they have been able to gather enough materials (by raiding old human settlements and military installations) to build other bases in remote areas and even under the oceans and build a few new ships.

Public Knowledge- The existence of the Fraal is completely unknown. Even when they were seen, it would be assumed that they were merely another form of mutant humanoid.

Secret Knowledge- The Fraal have hidden bases in many locations. From here, they search for more raw materials in order to build more bases and ships, and save for their final goal- to be able to repair their city-ship and escape the gravity pull of the Earth to get away from a planet gone mad.

The Fraal do have some smaller scout ships, which are able to fly in the air and swim under the sea. They use them to fly over and observe settlements in the civilized lands. The Fraal do wish to learn about the inhabitants of this planet, and perform "abductions" in which the victim is medically examined and documented, and released with little or no memory of the incident.

New Rules- The Fraal can be created as per the Alternity handbook, with no modifications.

Allies and Enemies- The sentients of Gamma Terra do not even have an inkling of the existence of the Fraal, and as such they have no allies or enemies. If discovered, however, there would probably be objections on how they strip the Earth of its technologies and resources, regardless of their reasons.

New Thoughts on Life After the Bomb

Eating has always been a problematic subject for the Gamma World game. Unless your character eats rocks and minerals, anything he does eat is probably the cousin of another sentient race. What to do?

For the purposes of my games, I assume that any non-sentient animal or plant is fair game for eating. Other sentients may have particular tastes (most plants do not eat solid food, and a sentient turtle would probably not eat a non-sentient one, etc.), but it is generally inoffensive to a sentient creature if you eat a non-sentient member of the same species.

Under these ideas, a cannibal is loosely defined among sentients as a sentient creature who eats another sentient creature of the same general genotype (plants who eat plants, serfs who eat other serfs, etc.).

Gamma Knights are sentients who have somehow managed to acquire a functioning body tank or similar heavy armor suit. Gamma Knights are rare, but they do occur. The old Gamma Knights books had a number of armored suits with a variety of options. Until some new rules can be conceived by myself or Dan, consider any armor that requires the Armor Operation- *Powered Armor* skill to use as Gamma Knight material.

Gamma Knights, when they do appear, often draw quite a following, just as described in the Gamma Knights book. It is similar to the relationship between a feudal lord and their serfs (the people, not the race); an exchange of work for protection, albeit in a rather nomadic fashion.

The mere rumor of the existence of a suit of powered armor is enough to ignite wars.