

HUMANS

"The six permanent members of the Circle Sea council of powers declare all close-to-baseline sentient and soulful post-humans as effectively human and possessing the full spectrum of rights attendant to a soul-body-personality triad."

—Full Circle Charter, 2:a, n.e. 749

Traditionally, all sentient creatures of this Given World were divided into two groups. Those protected by the Dream Canopy, in all their polymorph variety, were called humans. Those outside the Dream Canopy's grace were called beasts.

Since the canopy's departure, since the jewels of rebirth have become unusual, this division seems less certain. Yet, traditional communities around the Circle Sea still gather every night to recite the List of All Humans—the *Pananthropy*. If nothing else, it should make their resurrection smoother, should they die before they wake.

HUMANS BY CANOPIC CATEGORY

Of old, each human was made with a canopic jewel within their head. This jewel recorded their mind and soul and dreaming. Canopic jewels made rebirth within the Garden possible. A human's jewel also encoded their category in the eyes of the Lords of the Dream Canopy.

Now, no living human can know, whether they possess a true, functioning canopic jewel. So all humans must live as though they are condemned to die, like mere beasts of the land.

ACCUSERS

The heart of the jeweled gift was choice. Humans could choose: to live in the grace of the Canopy, or to accept the darkness and the lie. These accusers are the worst of humans. Wretched, destructive creatures who accuse the Dream of stealing their purpose, their lives, their very cosmos. Most disappear, harmless as ghosts, into the Wilderness beyond the Gardens, but some remain as parasites and traitors in the bosom of the Best of All Possible Worlds, the civilized lands of the Circle Sea.

The kindness of the Canopy extended even to guilty Accusers who vainly attempted to sabotage the Gardens. They are given the Illusion and allowed to live out their allotted years in synthetic pleasure. Nowadays, with the processing power of Heaven much reduced, the Inquisition finds other solutions for Accusers.

SEE, THIS ACCUSER!

1. *Philosophe*, who denies the spiritual truth of human creation. Each day they spit on their box for youths to make sport of them with spoiled vat meat giblets.
2. Nihilist, who has enslaved their soul to pleasure and coin. They mouth the platitudes of faith, but sell humans for beasts.
3. Renegade, a killer of humans, an eater of souls. They would live forever, as though this is something they could choose?
4. Sturdy yeoman with a heart all rotten, a vessel for the maggot in the meat, faithless and untrustworthy.
5. Pillar of the community, corrupted by the dragon in their mind, how little it would take for them to turn on their community!
6. Sorcerer who, in their pursuit of old, forbidden knowledge, now claims that the gods were but humans of an elder age!

BETTERS

The Betters (from the archaic *beta*) are the middle classes of humans. Suitably well-adjusted to the Garden Path, they provide the bulk of the civilized lands' managerial population. Their life is one of cutthroat competition for status and displays of consumption to prove their worth. This pleases the Canopy.

BEHOLD, A BETTER!

1. Sanitation and war brigade chief, dedicated to keeping the pipes clean and their purse filled.
2. Academic administrator who proudly serves as a talking head on the nightly inquisition chat shows.
3. Temple keeper who ensures the ritual sacrifices are performed on time to appease the Lords.
4. Ceremonial quartermaster who preserves and oils the old golems of the town's militia.
5. Linguistic sanitizer who removes blasphemies from the official town chronicles.
6. Human calculator responsible for the appropriation and redivision of taxes in kind.

FINES, LEPHINES

The Fines or Lephines (from the archaic *aleph*) are those humans who have best accepted the Garden Path into their hearts and are thus blessed by fortune and grace to occupy the finest positions in societies. All civilized humans would like to become Lephines, but only few succeed. Much sacrifice, conspicuous consumption, and extravagant inheritance are required for this exalted status.

LOOK, SO FINE!

1. Holy child, exalted by their astrological magnificence and worshiped as a living prayer.
2. Blessed virgin showered with lands and royalties.
3. Traditional corpocrat figurehead, their skin a lustrous bronze, their hair a halo of gold, their eyes empty as stars.
4. Shadowy eminence, their gray skin older than bones, their mind sharper than a dozen razors.
5. Celebrity artist, whose every word drips with hidden meanings and complex innuendos.
6. Noble demi-lord, halfway ascended, ensconced in a world of palaces, balls, regattas, and mock battles.

HAMMERS

The Hammers (from the archaic *gamma*) were the least blessed humans, who were nevertheless graced by ambition and merit to remain on the Garden Path and not succumb to the Fog of Futility. Once they filled out the serving classes, now most deny their ancestors were ever a member of this category.

THUS YOU WILL KNOW THEY ARE A HAMMER!

1. A sloth, unwilling to apply themselves. Do not the traditions speak of the congenital laziness of the lowly, satisfied to live on the universal manna of the Dream Lords?
2. This human, consumed by pride and grand ideas, surely rises above their station.
3. A degenerate, consumed by lust, quite unnecessary in a time of purified contemplation and refined wisdom.
4. The acedic, unconcerned with their position and unwilling to perform their duties, is certainly debased.
5. This deplorable creature, consumed by rage. Obviously only a hammer could be so volatile.
6. Humans are not the gnomes of fairy tales, who prolong their lives by inhaling dust-of-gold. Thus, greed is the mark of a gamma, a sign of their worship of the Invisible Hand.
7. Do they look askance with envy at their betters and their lephines? This must prove their base derivation.
8. They are all-consuming, never satiated, promised to the Eater in Darkness, a glutton.

MEGAS

The least of the humans were the Megas (from the archaic *omega*). They succumbed to the Fog of Futility and forsook a meaningful life in the Given World for one of Illusion. In their kindness, the Bliss Lord Soma gave them infinite pleasures of the imagination, that they could forget the world that no longer gave them truth. Most are now long gone, for few towns are now rich enough to support hollow shells as once they could.

In the Green Land, some are still provided with sarcotrephs that maintain their bodies until the allotted time when their spirits and bodies are recycled. In the Orange Land, post-mortal lords still use the Megas' corporeal forms for labor while their minds dwell in the Bliss Lord's gift.

OH, ANOTHER MEGA

1. A shell-man, wired into old machinery, their vacant brain additional storage for the town's archives.
2. A living zombie, their consciousness consumed by virtual pleasures as their mortal form works away for the patron paying for their processing costs.
3. A docile body, massaged every day as it dreams, keeping its organs healthy for its clone-sibling.
4. A human battery, their soul virtually exercised to keep it strong, ready for the soul mill.
5. Freshly succumbed, they stumble about, mind half-gone in the haze as they fall for the delusion that all existence is but a simulated purgatory, or some other new-fangled modern nonsense.
6. Infected by some form of anti-me, their ego collapsing into itself, strange machines coursing through their flesh. The vome catchers will have them soon.

RECUSERS

Some humans refused the Garden Path and chose the Vale of Thorns. They found meaning in toil and struggle, and the Dream Canopy accepted their choice. They averted their souls from the gifted technologies of the Dream Canopy and lived instead hard lives of toil upon the soil. Once, the Gardens welcomed those who tired of this path. Now, the Gardens are overgrown and many of the Recusers, grown harsh over the lonely eons, return to rule.

1. Vampiric, they have found abmortality by absorbing the vital bodily fluids of other, softer humans.
2. Barbaric, they have embraced the wildness of the Vast.
3. Nomadic, they no longer believe in the preciousness of polis and the sacrality of soil.
4. Heretics, they have hacked the oldtech and fantascience gifts of the Dream Lords for their own ends.
5. Splitters, they spliced themselves with the beasts, becoming somehow half-human. Both more and less at once.
6. Archaic, they have excised all the magic of oldtech from their source codes, gaining a level of immunity to the gifts of the Builders and the powers of their priests.
7. Corrupt, they have eaten of the dragon and become human in skin only, their souls and mind alien and twisted.
8. Ascetic, they have developed new fantascience to mimic the precious powers of the Gods.

HUMANS BY MANIFEST FORM

Since the beginning of forever, when the Lords received the Given World into trust from the Builders, humans could choose their form. There are many tales of these primordial, protean times, but for longer than recorded history, archaeology shows that adult human forms can be categorized as follows.

FERALS

Extra-canopic humans born or grown outside of the garden protocols, with neurosystems that cannot support a traditional canopic jewel. These hylosphere-bound varieties must use complicated devices like dream helmets to access the noosphere. Ferals required a full-body rebuild to enter the Dream Canopy, that walled garden reality the lords reserved for deserving humans. Many of these atavistic humans feared and shunned the full-body rebuild. Eventually, when the Dream Canopy shut down, this reticence proved a decisive advantage for this form.

FEIGN ATTENTION, A FERAL

1. Upgraded with strange protective machinery that is anathema to the garden path. This promise is one code error away from becoming a vomer.
2. Constitutionally stunted by dozens of generations in a nutrient-poor environment, this human is very small.
3. Biosphere symbiote, grown together with their alien ecology, they have useful algal and fungal colonies growing on and within them.
4. They were adapted to a hard environment, with a physique to match. Quite over-engineered for polite society.
5. This human is clearly an uplifted fox. Or jackal. Something with big ears.
6. Oh, come on, and this one straight up has a dog's head.

IRON HUMANS

Humans who ostentatiously eschew the use of a canopic jewels and other abmortality oldtech, usually as a show of bravery or zealous faith. In ancient times, this was often seen as an adolescent phase, like education, revolutionary activities, or capitalism. Today, many recusers proudly tout their iron human credentials. Not to be confused with machine humans.

FORGED INTO A NEW HUMANITY

1. Pudgy, stout, and self-satisfied. Perfectly adapted to small-town suburban life.
2. Lean, honed, and sharp. A true survivor. This one has no need of the phylakes' anti-war.
3. Sculpted like an ancient god, through hard work, pharmacology, and discrete fantascience.
4. Gnarled like an old pine, twisted but unbroken in their pursuit of independent knowledge and power.
5. Devout and devoted to their pursuit of fundamental, authentic humanity.
6. An augmented adventurer, defiantly risking death to prove they are alive.

GHOSTS

Humans who have abandoned the hylosphere for permanent residence in the noosphere. Long ago, many foresook even the pretence of a stored body or canopic jewel backup, opting for a completely spiritual existence. With the slow decay of the universal noosphere, whole ghost lineages have been lost to flawed crystal memory drive updates.

EVERY SHADE HAS A TALE

1. They haunt the machines of this town. Like an immanence of generations past.
2. Born in a portal error, they now wander bodiless, hopping from shell to shell. Even a toaster will do.
3. Stored in a slow moorland, to them one of our hours is a minute. Alas, the poor, who can not afford better substrates.
4. Free-floating in the noosphere, they are a parasite, stealing processing power to survive. An electric vampire.
5. A radiation ghost, trapped in a loop of noosphere, stuck reliving the same moment of destruction over and over. Are they mad yet?
6. A time-traveler by design, they awaken copies of themselves at random intervals to see if the world is interesting enough to return to.
7. A hedonist, rewriting themselves to forget dull experiences and maximize their pleasure. They've been at it so long, they're barely human now.
8. A servant, with barely any rights of their own, their mind is reset as needed.

GOLEMS

Humans who have moved beyond the fallible, decay-prone shell of organic flesh and embraced the synthetic likeness of the great minds' ensarcs. A golem's canopic jewel is cradled in an armored ur-matter core, protecting it from most forms of bodily death.

'GARD, A GOLEM!

1. A pleasure golem, they feel—and inspire more feelings—than any mere flesh human ever could.
2. A sentient vehicle. Was there once an individual before they gained their wheels? Or was it a mind-clone?
3. A thinking house. Were they once its master or its slave?
4. An engine of combat, their synthetic shell permitted by the grand phylakes. What restraints allow this to be?
5. A labor golem, they do the work of 10 men. Were they sentenced to this state, or did they choose it in the hope they could buy luxury and a fresh body after they retired?
6. A broken golem, destroyed in battle or attack. Can they not afford to repair their shell? Imagine that, trapped in a decrepit shell for decades, centuries even!
7. A basic model, weaker and slower than flesh. Was this all they could afford? What ailment took their first body?
8. A synthetic body of gleaming skin and iron muscles, wreathed in force fields and golden resistors. This is truly a scion's form, a golem that fallen tribes out in the feral wilds could worship.

LICHES

Traditionally, most sensible humans in the Gardens followed the garden protocols. They lived in biological bodies but used canopic jewels to maintain a personality backup in case of catastrophic injury. Nowadays lichés are rarer. In some cultures, to depend on oldtech for one's abmortality is a mark of cowardice or moral failure. Still, one finds lichés; from the oldest houses to the strangest new cult-clans.

LO, FOR THEY ARE DEATHLESS

1. An ancestor, much withered, animated by oldtech electrics and the will in their jewel.
2. A body of bone and machinery and synthetic flesh. One would think golem, or undead. But no.
3. Twins? No, clones, both slaved to the same jewel, for twice the experiences, merged by machine.
4. A fresh-faced jugend, still clumsy as their jewel implants.
5. An ordinary man or woman, proud of the homestead and picket fence and garden they have preserved these seventy, eighty mortal generations.
6. A flimsy, disposable body. The more important body and the jewel are remote and protected.

MACHINE HUMANS

Once, this form was more common. Now, it is so rare as to be considered legendary. These sapients combine mind and soul with bodies built from the dust of the earth. Not derived, born, or inherited, but fully created. Assembled by the generative power of the Builders. Not to be confused with iron humans.

THIS ARTIFICIAL PERSON

1. Living metal and machine logic cloaked in human flesh.
2. A bio-construct so perfect, one would need a microscope to realize each of their cells is synthetic.
3. A hard-light entity, a physically-interacting hologram. A machine ghost made solid.
4. No pretence of feeble flesh, but no golem either. This mechanical creature is a different species. Is it wrong to tolerate it as human?
5. A wonderful simulacrum of human form in clockwork, brass, glass, and dense force fields.
6. Microfusion core, adamantium harness, anti-gravity organelles, silicorganic composite muscles, porcelain skin. Flesh folk shouldn't punch this one.

PLASTICS

Finally, some humans embraced the biomantic potential inherent in their sculpted flesh. Through old traditions, dangerous arts, and strange sciences, they turned themselves malleable and impermanent.

THIS SOFT PERSON

1. A rheosarc, their flesh is protean even if their bones are not. Their appearance and form adjusts to match their task.
2. A falliment, a grotesque. Their interventions have destabilized their source code. Now, absent ongoing oldtech intervention, they suffer tumors and ailments.
3. A varnavikari, a color-changer. Their coloration varies with their moods and needs. In some societies, they stand out, in others, they blend in.
4. A varvi, a doll. Their beauty is astounding, but like that of the blue moon orchid, fragile and dependent on care and attention.
5. An ereunt, a raw-person. To the untrained eye, they seem ordinary. But for a biomancer or reanimator, they are a rare treat, easy to modify and transform, a perfect subject.
6. An impressibile, an easy-person. Their humanity is conditional on their upbringing. Raised with monsters, they grow into monsters; suitably trained with machines, they become spectacular factory laborers.