

## Mensch

If Reality were a living creature, then Mensch would be antibodies- or possibly galls. They are a kind of response to the presence of the **UNNATURAL**. Although grounded in reality they can exceed it. In practical terms, this means that their universal attributes can exceed **3**, as can the number of physical or mental crises required to kill them or drive them insane. Although Mensch naturally have no awareness of the rules mechanics, they never-the-less have a feeling of superiority over other people, even when this arrogance is not merited. They grow to view those around them with contempt for not meeting their lofty standard.

There is no upper limit on their universal attributes. They may also buy greater resistance to physical and mental crises with experience- an extra box of either for **3** points. They still cannot cure crises they have already suffered. For physical crises, this implies, that they despite many injuries they can still do a great deal (if this seems unlikely, consider competitors in the Paralympics). For mental crises, a Mensch can simply develop more derangements before becoming not sane enough to function.

However, despite this potentially greater capacity to withstand mental trauma, bending reality in this way makes a Mensch more prone to fall prey to mental disorders in the first place. When rolling to avoid a mental crisis, a Mensch does not add any 1s, 2s and **3s** to the Roll Total.

A more subtle drawback is that ordinary people may mistake the Mensch's extra-normal abilities for evidence of **UNNATURAL** influence. How ironic.

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I looked around the woman's flat with distaste. It had clearly been well-kept until recently. The décor was ordinary and plain, evidence of a poorly-defined sense of taste, but that was quite normal. The neglect had changed the tenor of the rooms. Streaks of dirt on the walls, filth encrusting the spare carpet and of course the newspapers stuck to the windows spoke of near total mental collapse.

2 of my colleagues were sorting through the mess in her desk drawers. I knew they wouldn't find anything useful. The items there would only tell them about who she had been, not what she had become. Detective Benson had expressed surprise that someone from an academic background could collapse so totally, but I knew from previous experience that scholars were brittle and would break rather than bend. People left things where they were handy for next time. An untidy desk was a series of strata charting the owner's thoughts. I took an ashtray from the desk and turned it over in my fingers. It was clean, but on top. What had she used it for, then?

Benson entered the room from the stairs, looking about him sadly.

"I suppose we had better find out what we can," he said, "We can establish a timeline by looking for the oldest newspaper on the windows."

"July 13<sup>th</sup>," I said without looking up.

The officers next to the window were wrong-footed, but neither of them dared contradict me. They kept looking through the woman's meagre possessions.

"Pieces of broken mirror in the bin," one said, "That's 7 years bad luck."

I tore some of the paper from a window, and glared at my own reflection. Superstition. Superstition all around, and only me with a truly rational mind.

It was hard to conceal my disgust.