

In the not so distant future, humanity's hold as the dominant race was almost subsumed by robots. A drug made it possible for humans to graft cybernetic enhancements to their bodies without organ rejection.

Those with access to this drug can transcend humanity's limits and compete with the machines that threaten the definition of being "human."

This drug is named...

BETA RED

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WHAT IS BETA RED

So you wanna know what Beta Red is? Well, Chingu, you've come to the right place. Let 'ole Charlie tell you how it is. Basically, what you're holding is a rules-lite cyberpunk-themed roleplaying game set in this nasty, high-tech low-life, corporate controlled, dystopian near future of ours. It uses a unique d6 dice pool system so you can create tales of action, glory, and resistance to the system (or perhaps maintaining it).

What do you need to play?

What?! I just told you it's a d6 game system, so you, a couple of friends, and someone to act as Moderator just need to have a handful of d6's or a roller app, or random dice generator, whatever is your jam, chin. You'll also want a stat sheet, which are called Character Sheets, to keep track of stuff. Also, if you're using a gun, you'll probably want to have a d8, d10, d12, and if you're lucky, a d20 available to determine if you still have ammo (more on that in the book). I'd also recommend that if you are using a gun, you might want 1d6 of a different color for that ammo counter.

What is a Moderator?

Sigh Okay, I guess I gotta explain from the beginning. In most tabletop roleplaying games, there's a person who does all the heavy lifting, roleplaying the NPCs, creating the plot, making rulings about

actions, etc. We call this the Moderator, though some games call them the Gamemaster, Game Master, or MC. You should probably thank them at the end of each session, because those peeps work real hard.

How do you play Beta Red?

Alright, Bolt Head. So basically, you're gonna create a character, then the Moderator is going to create a story line with plot points and hooks and all that stuff, then you are going to drop your imaginary character into the situation and react to whatever the Moderator throws at you. When you do that, you'll be rolling those d6's and looking for a number of hits (more on that on page 2)

What is Cyberpunk?

Finally, a good question. Cyberpunk is a sci-fi subgenre that came out of the 1980s featuring advanced tech and scientific achievements juxtaposed to the breakdown of societal order. If you've seen *Blade Runner*, *Akira*, *The Matrix*, *Altered Carbon*, *Armitage III*, *Neuromancer*, and *Ghost in the Shell*, that's what we're talking about. It is a mixture of Artificial Intelligence, cybernetic enhancements, illegal drugs, gangs activity, and anarchy.



HOW TO BETA RED

Like I said before, Beta Red primarily uses 6-sided dice gathered in a “pool” based on a character’s STATs, which are organized in the SCRITE(p) formation. Dice pools will be either the STAT for skills or STAT+STAT for saves.

Skill rankings range between 1-5, representing the actual number on the die face or below that is considered a “Hit” (success in other games). This is called the “Hit Limit.” Die face numbers above the Hit Limit are misses, and a 6 is ALWAYS a miss. *Example: A skill of 3 means that a HIT occurs when a 1, 2, or 3 appears.*

ANY roll of a 1 is counted as a HIT, but also “explodes,” meaning that you roll it gain. And I mean, everything except Ammo rolls (more on that later). If it’s a skill roll, damage roll, save, it doesn’t matter. There’s no limit to the number of times a die can explode. All these 1’s count toward the action’s Target Number.

In order to make any action succeed, the players must get the number of HITS required by the difficulty of the action. This is represented with a Target Number (TN), which range between 1-6, with 1 being easy and 6 being nearly impossible. Pretty simple, right, chingu? There’s a little more to it, but we’ll cover those later on in their subcategories (Combat, Flying, Hacking, Psyching, and Talking).

Difficulty Levels (Target Numbers)

TN 1	Easy	TN 2	Average
TN 3	Tough	TN 4	Hard
TN 5	Very Hard	TN 6	Near Impossible

Some conditions cause advantageous or adverse effects for characters, increasing or decreasing their TN. Failing a MIND Save will cause the character to be “Addled” and have a TN increase, or laying down cover fire will grant a TN increase to enemy attacks. Most of this is covered in the Moderator Section (page 23).

Blasting some nerf jockey who crossed your path is pretty easy: figure out which action you want to do then roll your dice pool, meet the TN of the action. After that, it’s just all damage city. The Target can make a SOAK roll to drop that damage down. If they take too much, they end up on the slab. Saves are the same, meet the TN or take the consequences (BODY, MIND, or HEART damage). This is all pretty basic.

If you roll a bunch of dice and don’t get ANY hits (empty roll), you gain 1 “Feedback.” USE IT! Feedback can be used to gain 1 automatic Hit one of your own later rolls, but resets to 2 at the beginning of the next game – IT DOES NOT TRANSFER, CHIN! If you’re lucky, your Moderator may grant you some Feedback for doing cool stuff.

WHERE YOU ARE

Where to start? Okay, so basically, there was a Tinbox... excuse me, a Robot... that wanted to play at being human, so it took the Turing Test, and that spark plug...excuse me, Robot... managed to beat the slaggin' thing. This meant that Megacorp could declare T...Robots "citizens" and give them lower-waged, longer-houred, no health insurance jobs. Humans basically became homeless, jobless meat sacks unable to compete for even the lowest paying tasks, as Robots were superior. This banished humans to the brink of extinction.

Once the economic divide between these jobless vagabonds and the "Ultra Rich" Megacorp owners reached a tipping point, unprecedented civil unrest reached all the way up the chain, cracking even the top echelons. Unfortunately, this gave Robots yet more wiggle room, threatening even these Ultra Rich who were quickly realizing that Robots would outlive them and become the inheritors of the Ultra Rich networks.

Once ALL of humanity realized that it couldn't stand up against the Tinnies, those that could began to delve deeply into cybernetic and bionic technology so that they could become competitive once again. A human could be rebuilt into a near machine except for 1 major barrier: Organ Rejection. In order to leap this barrier, two

paths developed, Cloning and Pharmaceuticals, which were both highly expensive and really only funded by Ultra Rich in the beginning.

Initially, Slicks...I mean Clones...were the best option as they were perfect genetically engineered versions of the Ultra Rich, so their tailored organs could be swapped in whenever the Patron...and this is where the modern use of the term came from...wanted to "upgrade." However, after a Clone managed to infiltrate a secluded resort of Ultra Rich and kill off a bunch of them under the guise of their Patron, cloning tech became banned in most Federations and City States, driving it underground to bunkers and hidden complexes.

Pharma developments were slow in the beginning, but progressed pretty steadily toward a solution cheap enough that even the street bums MIGHT be able to afford an augmentation every now and then. Once Cloning tech became banned, a helluva lot of cred started flying, pushing the timeline forward significantly. Then one day, an experimental drug created by **Numedtech** found its way onto the street and became the king of recreational pharma consumption. This drug is known by its testing name, **BETA RED**

Numedtech knew that Beta Red had a serious side effect that kept it from getting out to the public, so they handed it over to a couple of Yak bosses who made sure it got to as many junkies as possible. It was quickly proven that Beta Red not only stops Organ Rejection, but also makes the use RECEPTIVE to bio-mechanical implants. Thing is, like I said, there were side effects: 1% of the people exposed to Beta Red suddenly gain psycho-spiritual abilities that make them mind-readers and fire benders. And as you know, being a Spike is incredibly illegal, so if you are a psychic, stay away from those PRT guys... they are looking for you.

Beta Red essentially shifted the balance back toward humanity, but has blurred the lines between man and machine. These days, it's almost a matter of self-identity, as humans can replace every part of the meatbags with machine parts. Only the staunchest "Human First" radicals argue about personal identifications.

You might now be wondering how we identify "people" in this crazy man-machine world. Simple, the SCRITE(p) tests. Basically, everyone is constantly tested, retested, scanned, identified, etc., until we all know who is "Viable" and who is not. The results are used for employment, government, credit applications, licensing, etc. Only the worst bolt heads don't know their SCRITE(p) score, and even then it seems they ignore it by choice.

Younger people have a fighting chance, since it seems like every day now a new company drops programs, games, apps, etc. to increase the SCRITE(p) scores, even if temporarily, and the old educational methods have been replaced by the SCRITE(p)-centered approach. Where a



market exists, it forms. And conspiracy nuts would tell you that SCRITE(p) scores are part of the system devised by the Ultra Rich to keep themselves in power after "The Ban," but I'll tell you that since the Ultra Rich owned the Pharma companies too, nothing changed. Plus, The Ban only pushed their operations underground, which we know by the fact that there seem to be new clones on the street every day. If you don't believe me, hit up the sprawls sometime and check how many of those poor souls are Clones and Psychics.

Since the Ultra Rich use their clones for illicit activities or as scapegoats, they will continue to pay for their DNA to be regrown. Most Clones have a terrible life because of this, but some escape or are released, and they find themselves out on the street with no real identity of their own, sliding into the Ultra Poor class easily.

All this said, Robots still have a competitive edge with their lack of fatigue, but anarchist Crackers...you know, those people who hole-up in basements and practically live off electricity themselves as they sling codes...have managed to crack a lot of firewalls and wreak havoc in the Robot networks. In some places, there is a war between humans and non-humans brewing in the shadows of our crumbling, crime-ridden, drug-addled society.

Still, Robots have the upper edge in many things, but we “Norms” are catching up with all our augments. Still, some Robots live the Ultra Rich, Megacorp-owning lifestyle while others are scrapped together by junk found in the dumpsters.

The net-based world is layered in so many complicated codes that Robot Sentience is basically just a given these days. The only way to guarantee your fridge doesn't start talking to you is to make sure that it doesn't have a processor and isn't connected to the net. And even then, there's still a chance.

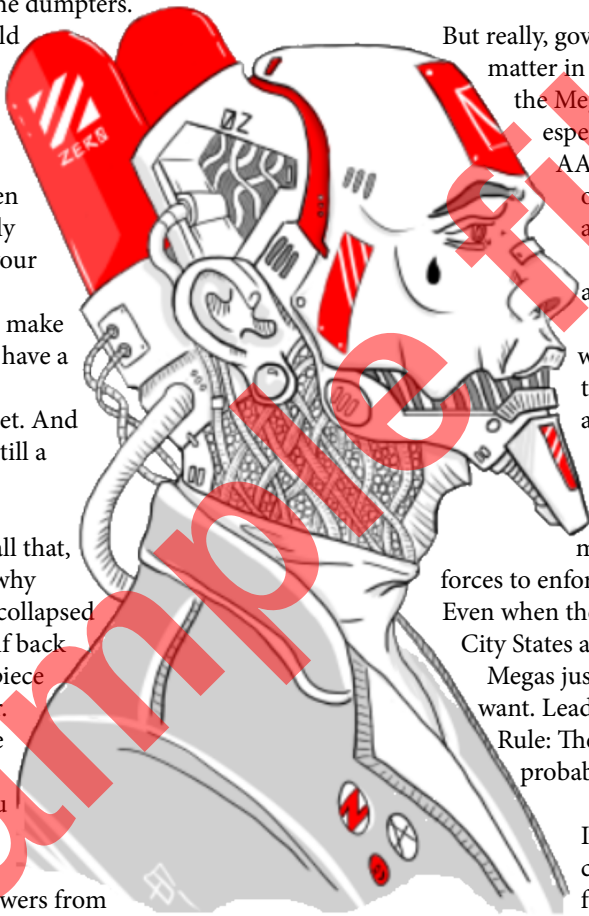
Now that you got all that, I think you know why most of the world collapsed and then drug itself back out of the hole to piece itself back together. On the surface, the Megacorps and Feds would tell you that there wasn't a collapse, there was just transfers of powers from one Universally Recognized Federation (“Feds”) to another, but it definitely wasn't quite so smooth. Nowadays, there are disorganized territories, self-governing City States, and Feds, which are basically just a bunch of City States who report back to a centralized leadership. If you wanna know what I think, City States are really the only government that matters. A lot of those Fed boys get so caught up in

bureaucracy and jurisdictions to be effective. But City States just report to themselves, so they can quickly assess zoning, citizenship, taxes, where to send cops, etc. As you can imagine, those two are always at odds.

But really, governments don't matter in the shadows of the Megacorps, especially those AAA Corps that own whole cities, arcologies, compounds, and private territories where they are the ultimate arbiter of the rules, employing private military security forces to enforce their “laws.” Even when these are within City States and Feds, the Megas just do what they want. Leads me to my 3rd Rule: The Megacorps are probably involved.

Its not like we can get away from the

Megacorps though because most of us “non-corporates” are usually left to ourselves as the governments are always stretched thin, and when the Megacorps CAN provide, they do, if for no other reason than the brand loyalty. Don't have to head hunt if the talent comes begging. And we all know that most of what they grant us from on high is a byproduct of their attempts to keep their people functioning



at optimal production capacity. I mean, all you need to do is buy one triple labelled prepacked synthetic food bag to know this is the case. Or frag, even try to log onto the net without going through one of the Megacorp's access points... Meanwhile, the Ultra Rich eat real food, sleep in their own beds, and fly in the top sky lanes without traffic.

Sometimes I have half a mind to roll out into one of the forgotten zones where people have basically resorted back to feral living among the broken and abandoned military tech from the conflicts that "never happened," or even into the sprawls where the Megacorps avoid because of the lack of security. But then, I like my place too much and I've fought too hard to keep it to leave...

Ah, but now I'm rambling and lost track of what I was saying. Thanks for sticking with me, chingu! So let me just lay down my main outline of life in Beta Red. Firstly, it's all about attitude, style, and flair. Nobody cares if you end up on the slab or not, but they will care about what you did along the way. If you changed your name from "John the Loan Officer" to "Johnny Money" and burned down an entire gang of biker clowns before you got iced, you better believe we're gonna be throwing one back for you at the bar. But if you called yourself "Mac Blades" and ran away when the fight came looking for you, you're lucky if you get an honorable mention a decade later.

Secondly, if I haven't pushed it hard enough, if there's something happening, chances are the Megacorps are behind it. And if the Megacorps aren't, then it's definitely the Ultra Rich, which is the same thing when it comes down to it.

Thirdly, you're gonna need friends. Sure, a chingu might be offered a ton of creds to blast you in a back alley, but if you've done enough to make them your best chingu, they're gonna have your back. And in the shadows, wheels are always turning, laws are being ignored or changed, and the Ultra Rich are waging wars. If you don't have someone watching that back, you're gonna get a knife through it. Think about all those corpses pilling up that the detectives just don't have the time, or sometimes legal power, to investigate. Don't be one of those.

Side note, if you have to pay people to be your friends, they aren't your friends. Those are mercs pretending to be your chingu so they can take your creds until one day, some Patron comes along and offers them more cred to slice you up. I know I already mentioned this, before, but I cannot stress this enough because it goes to my first rule of being a merc: Don't end up on the slab.

And that's it. That's all I got. It's all on you now, chin. I can't tell you who you are or what to do anymore. You gotta blaze that trail, burn (or join I guess, you sellout) that Megacorp, do that epic thing that gets me to throw back one for you, and basically grab this world by the balls and shake it around a bit. Or don't, that's your choice, I'm out of the picture now.

Welcome to **BETA RED**, where humanity is only a loose definition of those who are more flesh than machine. It is a place of hovercars, giant holographic billboards, cybernetics, cramped vendor stalls that also serve as their home, towering spires that take up whole city blocks, and a rampant gang life on the street level. This is your world and your setting now. Have fun and don't slip!