

SHARDS: UNSUNG DESTINY

Genre: Miscellaneous

Power Level: 10

Scope: Ongoing series

Tech Level: 3

Theme and Tone: Vary, but discovery and wonder should permeate any particular theme a story in this setting may have.

Story Elements: Mysterious organizations, enigmatic aliens, mecha, pets, magical girls/boys.

Synopsis: Since Earth crossed the tail of the Shiva comet, ordinary people can gain extraordinary powers by attuning to crystals known as Shivan shards. The shards can manifest a person's innermost desire in a combat-ready form, but what people do not know is that there are beings inside each shard, and what they will do in the future can exalt or condemn humanity.

The world changed when the Shiva Comet narrowly missed Earth's orbit. Its tail left a legacy in the form of crystals that grant certain people spectacular powers, which they use as they see fit. Shiva also left another gift for humanity—we're no longer alone on our planet.

Shards: Unsung Destiny is the main setting for a *Mecha & Manga* game. It incorporates most of the optional rules in this book and is open enough to let you play almost any manga and anime genre, starting from its central premise.

If you wish, you can even incorporate elements of *Shards* into existing *Mutants & Masterminds* settings. In *Freedom City*, limit the effects of the Shiva comet to southeastern Asia, centered primarily on the Japanese islands. You can make the arrival of the shards a recent event or an ancient one, perhaps connected with the mysterious daka crystals (*Freedom City*, page 87). The Shiva comet and its aftereffects is also a good breakout for a *Paragons* setting, perhaps with a greater extent of breathers and weavers with innate paranormal powers derived from Shivan shards.

BACKGROUND

Shards: Unsung Destiny takes place mostly in Tokyo, in a future that's very near chronologically but far away in every other aspect.

SHIVA

In the year 2010, astronomers around the world discovered with horror that a comet had been hiding its route behind the Sun for an unknown number of years, maybe even centuries. The path was charted and discovered to cross Earth's orbital path.

In the space of a few months, panic and chaos gripped the world as calculations between several specialists conflicted. Some ensured that the comet would crash into our planet, while others presented proof that it would pass by. There were several upheavals that the different governments were hard-pressed to control while planning disaster scenarios. Old religions were tested, and new cults were born and died as their members killed themselves before the promised end of the world.

By the end of the year, Christmas was celebrated with a gigantic new star in the sky. The astronomer that discovered the comet named it "Shiva," after the Hindu god whose last dance would mark the end of days.

Shiva missed the Earth by hundreds of kilometers, which, in astronomical scale, is a hair's breadth.

Coastal cities suffered from tidal waves, while earthquakes along fault lines created chain earthquakes. Despite the rash of disasters, people confronted them with relief, hope, and happiness, because the alternative could have been much, much worse. Still, the most spectacular gift from Shiva were several weeks of lights in the sky, as ice crystals from its tail melted as they entered Earth's atmosphere.

The crystal rain showered over several parts of the world, and people also were gifted with shimmering rivers and sparkling forests, until whatever substances the comet's tail was composed of sank into the ground and became part of the world's ecology.

THE SHIVAN SHARDS

A lot of research studied the Shivan substances. It started as a secret, but soon it spread that there were spots all over the world where large crystal formations began to appear, as fungus colonies spread in the rain. Most of these crystals were compounds of Shivan matter with the local minerals it bonded with when it touched the ground, and they had the novel effect of changing color according to the general mood around them.

The Shivan shards were psychoactive; that is, they reacted to thought, just as quartz reacts to electricity by emitting periodic pulses. Industry did not see much other use in the crystals and abandoned them for any use other than cheap jewelry.

It wasn't until 2012 that it was revealed that the shards were much more than cheap gemstones. A spelunker found a vein of pure Shivan shards deep in a South American cavern. These shards didn't bond with local minerals but grew independently. When smugglers beset the solitary explorer as he exited the cave, the fragments he had taken as a keepsake reacted by manifesting an enormous three-headed hound with a strange biomechanical appearance. The hound dispatched the attackers.

The same thing happened in other locations where pure Shivan shards surfaced. Further research concluded that in their pure state, the shards were not only able to resonate with surrounding emotions but synchronize to the unique brain patterns of an individual and create matter responding to his wishes. The age of the Focusers had come.

THE FOCUSERS

Shivan shards are now produced synthetically, and the imprinting process is easy and within reach of people with the right combination of mental strength and monetary funds. The governments closely monitor these shards, but private enterprises won the right to produce their own and hire people to imprint them.

The people who are able to imprint a Shivan shard and manifest something out of the synchronization are called Focusers, because what they do is basically focus a deeply entrenched wish into the shard, which resonates and makes it real. Imprinting happens only once, and then the shard does not accept further manipulation of its resonance. A Focuser can bring forth his mind's desire as much as he wants, but he's stuck with the particular desire he had when the imprinting happened.

Focusers hire out as mercenaries, specialists, entertainers, security, or other such professions, depending on how they obtained their shards. Others turn to crime, using the powers granted by the Shivan shard for their own selfish ends.

There are three types of Focusers, registered and researched by several international organizations.

- **Handlers:** These Focusers secretly wish for a guardian and a companion, and their Shivan shards manifest a creature that obeys them, protects them, and even fights for them. The creature comes from the Focuser's subconscious and echoes his particular preferences, culture, and personality.
- **Riders:** A Rider doesn't create something to fight for her but rather focuses her Shivan shard into a suit of armor around her, increasing her size, strength, protection, and bestowing several other gifts, depending on the Focuser's heart.