

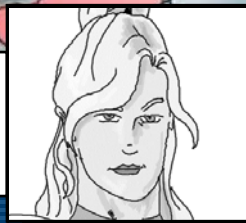
DIGITAL HERO

#39

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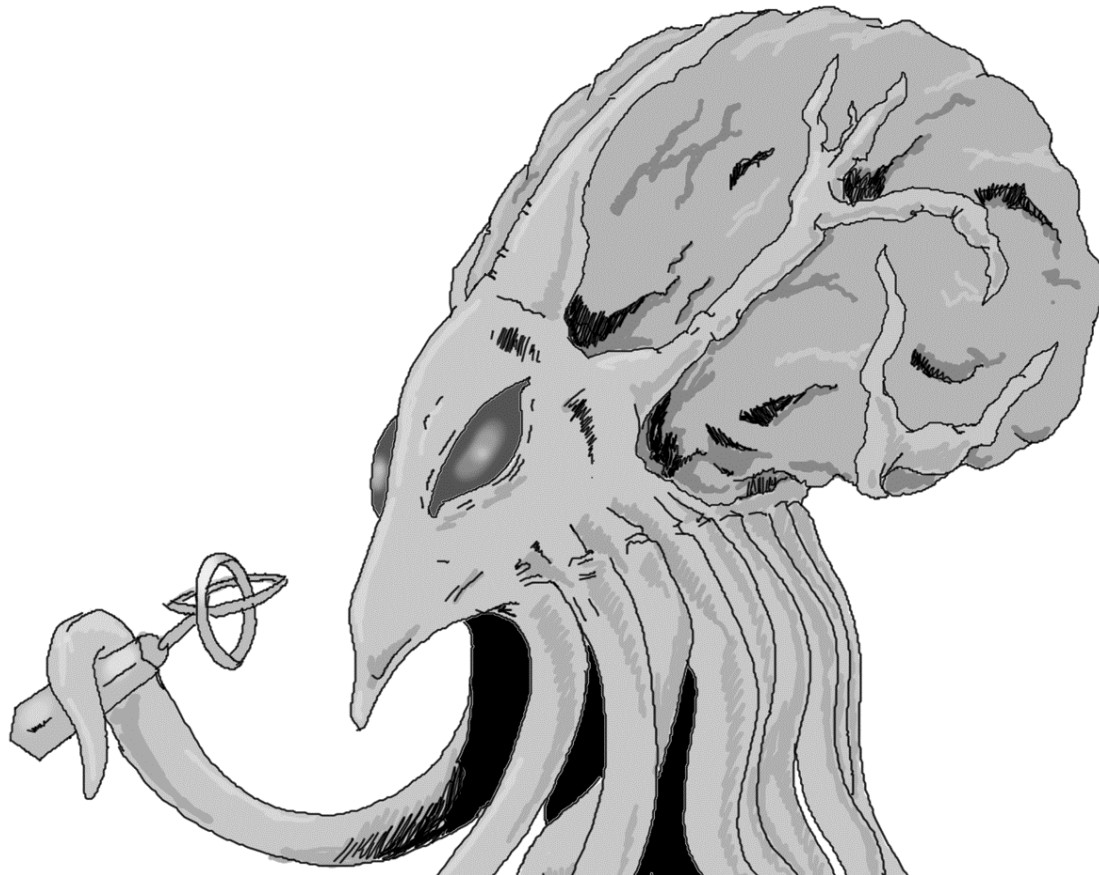
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DIGITAL HERO

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Issue #39 (August 2006)



When Last We Left Our Heroes...

by Steven S. Long

As we continue with the summer convention season, we've got plenty of great books on the horizon for you! This month I'll touch on two just released: *Evil Unleashed* and the *Champions 25th Anniversary Commemorative Edition*.

EVIL UNLEASHED

In the four years since the publication of the *HERO System 5th Edition* rulebook and the *5th Edition* version of *Champions*, Hero Games has published a lot of supervillains – well up in the triple digits. Many of them have been in books specifically dedicated (entirely or partially) to villains, such as *Conquerors*, *Killers*, *And Crooks*, *Arcane Adversaries*, or *Champions Worldwide*. Others have appeared in books devoted to the organizations those villains worked for or the locations they're specifically linked to, like *VIPER*, *DEMON*, or *Vibora Bay*. And some have debuted in subgenre books devoted to a particular style of superhero play, such as *Galactic Champions* or *Teen Champions*.

Not so the rest. They're scattered here and there among dozens of books as example characters, characters who often visit a specific setting but aren't restricted to it, or characters whose particular "flavor" is best suited to a given book. Thus, if you want to have the complete *Champions Universe* roster at your fingertips, you've got to own a lot of books and keep them all handy.

That's where *Evil Unleashed* comes in – it saves you the effort of carrying a lot of books to the gaming table and the time needed to look through them for the particular villain you want. It collects all those "miscellaneous" villains from other books and puts them between two covers so you only have to refer to one book when you're searching for a superpowered bad guy from a non-villain book. It includes villains from *Champions*, *Champions Universe*, *Millennium City*, *Vibora Bay*, *Champions Battlegrounds*, *Sharper Than A Serpent's Tooth*, *UNTIL*, *Villainy Amok*, and the *Ultimate* series of sourcebooks. It doesn't necessarily have every villain from each one of those books – for example, some of the villains in *Vibora Bay* are so closely tied to the Queen City that putting them in EU doesn't make sense. But most "miscellaneous" villains make their way into EU with no problems. Some of them have even gotten a bit of a shine and a polish, with a new power added here and there or an old one improved a little.

And since there's no good reason to pass up such a fine opportunity to expand the roster, *Evil Unleashed* adds five all-new villains to the *Champions Universe*: Stareye, Piledriver, and the Cahokian (the members of the supervillain team Merc-Force 1); the mysterious, demonsouled supermage Josiah Brimstone; and Vixen, a swift and seductive cat burglar with other goals on her mind than just robbery. So get ready to jazz up your campaign with some fresh villainy!

CHAMPIONS 25TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE EDITION

Champions was first published in 1981, and since that was 25 years ago, it's only fitting that we mark the occasion with a special edition of the game. The *Champions 25th Anniversary Edition* is that book. It essentially combines three books into one with some added goodies, all wrapped up in a fine blue leatherette cover with a silver foil-stamped logo on the cover.

The main contents of the book are the current editions of *Champions* and *Champions Universe*, but there are two all-new sections that won't appear anywhere else but this book. The first, which opens the book, is *The Heroes Speak!*, a chapter of reminiscences, anecdotes, and testimonials about the game from people important to its history. It opens with stories from Steve Peterson, George MacDonald, and Ray Greer (the "Big Three" who created and first marketed *Champions*) talking about the early days of the development and production of the game and how things went from there. After that other game designers and people associated with *Champions* in some respect chime in, telling tales about their favorite *Champions* games or what the game has meant to them. It's a wonderful, fascinating tribute to the best roleplaying game system ever.

The other new section, which concludes the book, is *The Island Of Dr. Destroyer*, a version of the classic adventure updated to the 5th Edition rules. It includes a fully mapped-out island, details on Destroyer's plan to launch another orbital weapon into space, four new villain and agent character sheets, vehicles, and other cool stuff. It's a perfect adventure to celebrate the game's 25th anniversary with!

— Steven S. Long
HERO System Line Developer



HEROglyphs by Steven S. Long

Time Enough for Spells

CREATING A “TIME DURATION” POWER MODIFIER FOR *FANTASY HERO*

In a lot of Fantasy RPGs, it's common for spells to have specific durations defined by units of time: 1 Hour, 1 Minute, +1 Minute per point a skill roll succeeds by, 10 seconds per “power level” of the character casting the spell; or what have you. That makes sense to a lot of gamers – it's easy to follow and calculate.

The *HERO System*, on the other hand, defines categories of Duration for its Powers that don't relate to real-world increments of time: Instant, Constant, Persistent. This is because most Powers are designed for (and used in) combat, where what's important is how long a Power can continue to affect a target or location. From a logistical standpoint, this often works better than a defined time duration. However, it makes it difficult to build many of the sorts of spells found in Fantasy RPGs – in *HERO System* combat, a single Minute, much less an Hour, is practically an eternity, and buying something with enough Duration to last that long can get very expensive.

In *Fantasy Hero* and *The Fantasy Hero Grimoires*, I sort of get around this problem by using Uncontrolled (+½) for powers that cost no END (either inherently, or because they're bought with Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½)). The “end condition” for the Uncontrolled is the passage of a certain amount of time. This works, but in some ways it's unsatisfying – it feels like going around your elbow to get to your hand. It's even worse with Persistent Powers, which in theory can remain active for enormous amounts of time. Restricting them to, say, “1 Minute, +1 Minute per point the caster's Magic roll succeeds by” means paying for a +½ Advantage that makes them last *less* time than they ordinarily would.

What's needed, it seems to me, is a special Power Modifier that indicates a specific duration based on real-world time increments. Constructing one is a tricky proposition because of all the possible variables involved. But this column doesn't shirk from the hard tasks! Let's see what we can come up with.

Prerequisites

The *Time Duration* Power Modifier (sometimes it's an Advantage, sometimes a Limitation) has a few prerequisites:

1. It can only be applied to powers that cost 0 END, either inherently (like Mental Defense) or because they're bought with Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½) (like, say, Images).
2. If applied to a Power that's Constant (either inherently, or through the application of the *Continuous* Advantage), Time Duration is typically an Advantage. If applied to a Persistent Power (either inherently, or through the application of the *Persistent* Advantage), it's typically a Limitation. It cannot be applied to Instant Powers without the GM's permission.
3. Time Duration is generally intended for non-attack abilities – “utility” or defensive spells that don't require Attack Rolls to affect a target or which won't unbalance a campaign. Attacks should continue to use the standard *HERO System* duration rules.



Factors

Determining the value of Time Duration requires you to evaluate several factors.

LENGTH OF DURATION

The first and foremost consideration is, of course, how long the Time Duration is, using units from the Time Chart. A spell that remains in effect for 1 Minute merits a lesser Advantage (or greater Limitation) than one with a Time Duration of 1 Hour.

VARIABILITY FACTORS

Second, is the Time Duration a flat amount of time (like “1 Hour” or “15 Minutes”) or does it depend on some variable? In the *HERO System*, which doesn’t rank characters in terms of “power level” or the like, typically the variable depends on a Skill Roll – if the Skill Roll succeeds, the character gets one unit of Time Duration, and for each point by which the roll succeeds, he gets an additional +1 time unit. Other variables are possible, but for the purposes of this discussion we’ll stick with the Skill Roll one alone – the GM can easily use it as a guideline for creating value structures for other variables.

If a character builds an ability with a Time Duration variable, the unit of time added by the Skill Roll must be equal to or less than the base unit of time. For example, if a character defines a spell as lasting for “1 Minute” with a basic successful Skill Roll, then the additional time units obtained by making the roll by a greater margin cannot exceed 1 Minute – they can be anything up to “1 Minute,” but nothing longer than that. For example, any of the following are legal forms of Time Duration:

- 1 Turn, +1 Turn per point Skill Roll succeeds by
- 1 Turn, +1 Phase per point Skill Roll succeeds by
- 1 Turn, +2 Segments per point Skill Roll succeeds by
- 1 Minute, +1 Turn per point Skill Roll succeeds by
- 1 Minute, +2 Phases per point Skill Roll succeeds by
- 1 Minute, +30 Segments per point Skill Roll succeeds by
- 1 Hour, +1 Hour per point Skill Roll succeeds by

On the other hand, the following are illegal:

- 1 Phase, +1 Turn per point Skill Roll succeeds by
- 1 Turn, +1 Minute per point Skill Roll succeeds by

- 1 Minute, +5 Minutes per point Skill Roll succeeds by
- 20 Minutes, +1 Hour per point Skill Roll succeeds by

As the examples above show, a character can define additional time units with a value greater than 1 (such as “+2 Phases per point Skill Roll succeeds by”). However, this requires the GM’s permission. In general, the time units added should be significantly smaller than the base time increment (*i.e.*, at least two steps below on the Time Chart in most instances).

While the examples above all use “per point Skill Roll succeeds by” as the method of calculating a Time Duration, that’s not the only possibility. A character might only get an additional time unit for every *two* points his roll succeeds by, or every three points, or whatever the GM thinks is most appropriate.

Typically a variability factor increases the value of a *Time Duration* Advantage by +¼, and decreases the value of a *Time Duration* Limitation by ¼. However, it’s up to the GM to determine the final value of the Power Modifier based on game balance considerations and other factors. A variability factor that requires a lot of success (for example, “per 4 points Skill Roll succeeds by”) might be so unlikely that no change in value is necessary.

TIME DURATION

Value (Advantage)	Value (Limitation)	Length Of Time
+¼	-3	1 Turn
+½	-2¾	1 Minute
+¾	-2½	5 Minutes
+1	-2¼	20 Minutes
+1¼	-2	1 Hour
+1½	-1¾	6 Hours
+1¾	-1½	1 Day
+2	-1¼	1 Week
+2¼	-1	1 Month
+2½	-¾	1 Season
+2¾	-½	1 Year
+3	-¼	5 Years

For Time Durations longer than a 5 Years, the GM should adjust the costs accordingly, since the Advantage value of the highest increment of Time Duration becomes the Limitation value for the lowest increment of Time Duration.

Value (Advantage)	Value (Limitation)	Modifier
¼ more	¼ less	Variability factor (such as a Skill Roll; see text)

Other Considerations

Establishing the value for the *Time Duration* Power Modifier isn't the only thing to consider.

DISTINGUISHING TIME DURATION AND UNCONTROLLED

If you adopt the Time Duration rules for a campaign, you need to make some changes to the *Uncontrolled* Advantage so the two serve different purposes. Uncontrolled becomes more restricted. First, it only works for powers that cost END – the character has to set up a “pool” of END to fuel the power, as described on 5ER 272. Second, unless the GM rules otherwise, Uncontrolled only applies to attacks (which Time Duration generally cannot apply to).

USING TIME DURATION POWERS

Once a character casts a spell with Time Duration, it requires no Actions, concentration, or other conduct on his part to maintain – it continues working automatically. The character could, for example, make more attacks with the Time Duration spell or his other Powers (or take other Actions), or move away from the target of the power, without affecting the Time Duration power at all – it continues to function as intended. If the caster is Stunned or Knocked Out, or loses Line Of Sight on the target, the power does not cease working – it continues to function as intended. Similarly, if a Time Duration power is bought as a Multipower or VPP slot and the character switches the Framework to a different slot, the Time Duration power does not turn off; it continues to function until the defined duration ends.

Of course, a character could place a Limitation on a Time Duration power so that it *does* require some conduct on his part. A *Concentration* Limitation that must apply throughout would force him to Concentrate to maintain the spell; a $-\frac{1}{2}$ *Limited Power* Limitation could require him to use a Half Phase Action every Phase to keep the spell going.

INTERRUPTING THE SPELL

Characters can stop or interrupt a Time Duration spell in several ways.

First, unless the GM rules otherwise or a Limitation on the spell so states, a character with a Time Duration power can stop that power from functioning at any time. This requires at a minimum a Zero Phase Action; the GM might increase this to a Half Phase or Full Phase Action instead. Once stopped, a Time Duration power can only be re-started by going through all its usual preparations (and making another Attack Roll, if necessary).

Second, a negative Adjustment Power or Dispel that reduces a Time Duration power to 0 Active Points causes it to stop working. Depending on the nature of the powers involved and the circumstances, the GM may let the character start the Time Duration power again by going through all its usual preparations, or he may have to wait until the Adjustment Power's effects fade normally or some other precondition occurs.

OTHER WAYS OF ESTABLISHING A TIME DURATION

If you like the idea of having a specific time duration for spells, but don't want to use the *Time Duration* rules set forth above, here are some other ways you could build a time duration into a spell:

- Use Uncontrolled, but revise the rules for it so that as most it's only a +0 Advantage for Persistent Powers (which would ordinarily last longer than the duration). It might even be a Limitation, if the duration is particularly short compared to how long the power usually lasts.
- Make the power Persistent, but with a Limitation (not to exceed $-\frac{1}{2}$ in value) that the spell stops functioning after some defined time period.



FILMS INSPIRED
BY RONDO
HATTON

**The Monster
Maker (1944):**

Never ones to miss a trick, the evil (and very thrifty) geniuses that ran skid row production company PRC decided to capitalize on the success of Hatton in “Pearl of Death” by making their own acromegaly film! In this rather disturbing picture, a concert pianist becomes disfigured by acromegaly after his daughter refuses the attentions of a mad scientist. Not surprisingly, the picture climaxes in a good solid strangling.

Doomwatch

(1972): Ecological contamination off of the coast of England produces an entire island of surly, borderline homicidal acromegaly sufferers. While considerably more sympathetic to their plight than most Rondo-inspired films, the movie suffers from not having an actual villain (not to mention being British).

The Rocketeer

(1991): A pulp-inspired, retro-recreation of 1930s Hollywood complete with gangsters, Nazi spies, and a flying hero, this Disney film more importantly had a Hatton tribute character named



You Gotta Have Character

by Jason Walters

“No man of woman born, coward or brave, can shun his destiny.” — Homer

Rondo Hatton may have been the strangest actor of Hollywood’s Golden Age. A handsome high school football star, he was cursed from late adolescence with the disease acromegaly that caused his head and hands to become enlarged and misshapen. Hatton worked as a reporter for Tampa Times before being discovered by director Henry King during the 1930 shooting of the film “Hell Harbor.” Rondo subsequently moved to Hollywood, where he was billed alternately as the “ugliest man in movies” and “the monster who needs no make-up.” After playing bit parts in dozens of films, he finally achieved horror stardom as a backbreaking murderer in the successful Universal films “The Pearl of Death” and “House of Horrors.” Tragically, Hatton died from heart problems related to his condition before the release of his star vehicle “The Brute Man.” By all accounts a kind, generous, and deeply religious man, the exploitation of Hatton’s physical condition by Hollywood remains controversial to this day.

Yet Hatton’s story is also the story of The Creeper, a Universal movie monster that never quite happened. By 1946 “The Creeper” had become Universal’s in-house name for all of Hatton’s pseudo-autobiographical film rolls that involved a super-strong killer driven insane by his deformities. Studio executives had plans to add The Creeper to their official rogues’ gallery of monsters such as Frankenstein, Dracula, and The Wolf Man. Unfortunately, Hatton’s untimely death and the exploitive nature of “The Brute Man” caused them to sell the property onto the now defunct PRC Films. Relegated to “midnight movie” status, both Hatton and The Creeper were largely forgotten by the public until the 1990s when they spontaneously enjoyed a fan-driven revival due to the Pulp-noir film “The Rocketeer” and artist Gahan Wilson’s tragic-comic *Big Book of Freaks*.

Background/History: An only child, Rondo was born to Stewart and Emily Hatton in the small community of Hagerstown, Maryland in 1894. The family moved to Tampa, Florida in 1912 so that his father could work at a Hatton family-owned business located there. A popular student and exceptional football player, he was considered attractive by the girls at Hillsborough High School. After graduating, he briefly attended college before joining the Florida National Guard. He fought under General Pershing in the Mexican Border War, and then severed as member of the American Legion in

France during World War I. During a battle he was exposed to poison gas, hospitalized with a lung injury, and then subsequently honorably discharged from service with a pension.

Upon returning to Tampa, Rondo acquired a job as a reporter for the Tampa Times. He married his high school sweetheart Elizabeth Immell James in 1926. Rondo found that he enjoyed being a journalist in a small, quiet city. Save for a cruel twisting of fate’s knife, this might have been the profession that provided the framework for the rest of his life: writing obituaries, interviewing local characters, and perhaps authoring the sorts of columns about life in rural Florida that are gathered into a book at the end of one’s career. But these simple dreams began to disintegrate when he developed acromegaly, a disease of the pituitary gland that causes the progressive deforming of the head, hands, and feet. At the time doctors considered Rondo’s condition to be a direct result of his exposure to poison gas, although subsequent research has shown that the disease is genetic and occurs in late adolescence – although, as in Rondo’s case, there are exceptions. His case manifested imperceptively in his teens, and then blossomed into a full deformity in his mid 20s.

Rondo’s handsome features quickly became misshapen and monstrous. His wife, horrified by the sudden change in her husband’s appearance, began having a series of adulterous affairs, leading to their divorce in 1930. Rondo soldiered on with his career as a reporter, although with considerably less enthusiasm. That same year the prolific director Henry King began shooting the movie “Hell Harbor” in Tampa. Rondo was assigned by the Times to cover the shooting of the film. Fascinated by Rondo’s bizarre appearance and deep voice, King quickly talked him into taking a small part in the film. Before leaving he also offered to help Hatton find work in Hollywood if he wished to move there. Rondo declined, but the offer must have made an impression on him.

In 1934 Rondo remarried, this time to a considerably more devoted and encouraging woman named Mabel Housh. Revitalized by his new relationship, Rondo felt confident enough to move himself and his bride to Hollywood where with King’s help he secured a string of bit parts and minor roles in numerous movies. The most noteworthy of these were “In Old Chicago” (1937), “The Hunchback of Notre Dame” (1939), and “The Ox-Bow Incident” (1943). He developed a reputation as a reliable, good-natured character actor suitable for playing

bouncers, thugs, and sailors. All of this would change with the release in 1944 of “The Pearl of Death,” a commercial success now considered by many to be the greatest of all of Basil Rathbone’s Sherlock Holmes films. Rondo played a character known as The Hoxton Creeper, a backbreaking mass murderer who worked as muscle for a master criminal.

With the film a hit, Universal Studios signed Rondo to a seven-year contract. They were practically cranking out B-movies at the time and saw a potential franchise in the character of The Creeper. He made four more films, “The Jungle Captive” (1945), “Spider Woman Strikes Back” (1946), “House of Horrors” (1946), and “The Brute Man” (1946), before suffering a mild heart attack around Christmas 1945 (heart weakness is a common complication of acromegaly). Although he seemed to recover, Rondo suffered a fatal stroke just over a month later and was buried with honors at the American Legion Cemetery in Tampa. He died before the release of his two final Creeper films.

Yet Rondo’s tale doesn’t entirely end with his passing. After his death, Universal – perhaps experiencing a twang of guilt over exploiting a deformed man (or perhaps not) – sold his final, pseudo-autobiographical picture “The Brute Man” to the bottom basement B movie house Producers Releasing Corporation. It was released as a PRC picture without Universal’s name appearing anywhere on it. Eventually PRC went out of business, and Rondo Hatton was all but forgotten until the 1989 release of the pulp-revival film “The Rocketeer,” which featured a character based on him. A revival of interest in Rondo began, led by an unlikely alliance of horror movie fans, comic book artists, and academics interested in the history of Hollywood exploitation. The most obvious flowering of this renewed enthusiasm is the annual Rondo Hatton Classic Horror Award.

Personality/Motivation: Rondo Hatton is a kind, sensitive man who has been cursed with a deforming affliction. A deeply religious Christian, he is plagued by the fear that his disease is God’s punishment upon him for the killings he performed as a soldier. Despite these doubts, or maybe because of them, he is also an excellent husband. His second marriage to Mabel Housh has been an extremely happy one, although the couple has chosen to not have children out of a fear of passing along his acromegaly to another generation of Hattons.

Rondo is very unhappy with the crude, vulgar way in which Universal has exploited his condition, but he is under contract and can do nothing about it. While he has no problem with portraying “ugly men” – thugs, gangster, sailors, and the like – the entire idea that deformity

automatically turns men into amoral killers galls him. He is after all, living proof that it does not. Once his contract with Universal is fulfilled, he wants to go back to being a reporter so that he can put his entire movie monster career behind him.

The Creeper is Rondo Hatton’s twisted opposite. He *has* been turned into an insane killing machine by acromegaly (or some other plot device) and, in his rage and impotence, wants to punish the entire human race for his condition. He actively seeks out situations where he can commit brutal acts of murder – always personal, always by hand without weapons. Yet, at the same time The Creeper a tragic figure that has been transformed into a monster by events beyond his control. His existence forces us to ask ourselves what sort of personal transformation we might undergo given the same experience – which is where the horror of The Creeper character lies, of course!

Quote (Rondo): “Am I being exploited for my looks? Of course. Hollywood exploits the handsome and beautiful for their looks as well. The only difference is that they have to worry about losing theirs.”

Quote (Creeper): “My brain says Kill! Kill! Kill!”

Powers/Tactics: Rondo Hatton is tall, strong man with a deep voice. He has the sort of skills that one would expect from a reporter turned actor: various CKs, PSes, Streetwise, Conversation, and Acting. A former WWI soldier, he knows how to handle a gun, and even speaks a little French. Unfortunately, his acromegaly has left him with a lower CON and BODY than a normal person. It has also made him quite ugly, although not to the hideous extent presumed in The Creeper films.

The Creeper is an entirely different matter. Evil shines through him like a beacon, provoking extreme reactions from all whom he encounters. Essentially a “super” murderer, he possesses a variety of devastatingly effective martial arts maneuvers based around grabbing, choking, and breaking the spines of his opponents. Inhumanly strong and reasonably fast, he can withstand damage that would cripple a normal man. These are reflected by his *Tough* and *Hard to Knock Out* powers. His skills are ones that allow him to more effectively stalk and surprise victims: Tracking, Shadowing, Lockpicking, and Stealth, to name but a few. Finally, The Creeper has the innate ability to slowly come back from the dead. This isn’t a magical or supernatural gift, as The Creeper’s demise should always be enigmatic. Rather, it reflects his ability to miraculously return from the “dead” to seek vengeance upon the PCs even after they are *certain* that they’ve killed him.

Lothar (played by 7 foot tall actor Tiny Ron).

THE RONDO HATTON CLASSIC HORROR AWARDS

The Rondo Hatton Classic Horror Awards are a series of fan-based awards created by horror buffs extraordinaire David Colton and Kerry Grammill. Winners receive a “Rondo,” a miniature version of the bust of Hatton used in the Universal film House of Horrors. Categories include Best Genre Film, Best Book, and Best Independent Film. Driven exclusively by the tastes of the hardest of hard-core horror movie fans, the Rondo has (somewhat surprisingly) become a coveted honor in recent years.

OTHER ACTORS WITH ACROMEGALY

Richard Kiel: Best remembered for his portrayal of the villain Jaws in James Bond films, this popular “monstrous” actor has also been in such noteworthy films as “Force 10 from Navarone,” “Pale Rider,” and “Happy Gilmore.” He has had parts in numerous popular television shows including “Simon and Simon,” “The Fall Guy,” “The Incredible Hulk,” and the cult favorite

“Kolchak: The Night Stalker.”

Paul Benedict:

Played George Jefferson’s neighbor Harley Bentley in the popular sitcom “The Jeffersons.” Although afflicted with acromegaly, he has managed to use his elongated features to produce comic rather than tragic effects. He has been in such critically acclaimed comedies as “Waiting for Guffman,” “This is Spinal Tap,” and “The Man with Two Brains.”

Andre Rene

Roussimoff: Better known as Andre the Giant, this 7’2” Frenchman was a professional wrestler for over 30 years. Besides appearing in an uncountable numbers of WWF videos, he appeared in the films “The Princess Bride” and “Conan the Destroyer.” Sadly, he died of heart failure in 1993 while attending his own father’s funeral.

Campaign Use: Rondo Hatton isn’t particularly useful as a physically active PC or NPC. While stronger than the average man, he simply isn’t healthy enough to “mix it up” with even a minor villain. No, much as in real life Rondo’s usefulness lies in the sort of “bit parts” that can make a Golden Age campaign so enjoyable – as a reporter, bouncer, or helpful Universal studio “insider.” He can be purchased as a contact by PCs or simply inserted as local color into an adventure that takes place in Los Angeles or Florida (Look! It’s Rondo Hatton!). To make Rondo more powerful, simply use The Creeper’s character sheet without the disadvantages (keep Rondo’s).

The Creeper is the kind of guy that works for other guys. He’s a grade-A henchman who is more than happy to work for someone smarter, richer, and better connected than he is – so long as murder and mayhem are in abundant supply. He is suitable for use in any campaign that requires a monstrous, tough, and capable henchman for a master villain. He’s hard-hitting enough to stand up to a superhero, Dark Champions vigilante, or Pulp “man of mystery” for a few phases (long enough for a master villain to get away), sneaky enough to avoid capture for much of an adventure, and atrocious enough to cut through unfortunate non-heroic level NPCs like a thresher through wheat. To make The Creeper more powerful, increase his Damage Reduction to a resistant 50% and give him more PD.

Genre-by-Genre: The Creeper carries with him all of the dreadfulness associated with a monster that kills by strangling and breaking its victims, making him *extremely* suitable as a villain in a Horror Hero game. Built on 200-points, he also makes an excellent addition to a Dark Champions or Pulp Hero campaign. The Creeper can be added to the rogue’s gallery of Hudson City: The Urban Abyss without any significant changes; he’ll even *like* it there! He can be found “henching” wherever evil masterminds scheme their evil schemes, be they a wicked wizard in a Fantasy Hero tower, a mad scientist in a Pulp Hero deserted island, or La Hija del Frankenstein in a crumbling Lucha Libre Hero Aztec pyramid. Due to the innate “touchy-feely” nature of a villain who grapples and strangles, The Creeper also makes an unsettling villain for the high school heroes of Teen Champions.

Appearance: Rondo Hatton isn’t actually that hideously deformed. He’s basically a very ugly, tall man with large hands and a deep voice. He dresses like what he is: a conservative, church-going Christian. The Creeper, on the other hand, dresses like what *he* is: a murderous, almost supernatural thug. He wears low brimmed bowler hats, suits that look like they have been slept in for a week, and scuffed up shoes. He is hideously deformed, both in body and spirit, to such an extent that it provokes an extreme reaction from all who encounter him. To use a meta-context, in England the rating of H (Horrific) was created specifically for his film “The Brute Man” – no one under 16 was allowed to see it!

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www.robert-a-burns.com/rondo.html
www.imdb.com/name/nm0369061/bio

Filmography

1930	Hell Harbor
1937	In Old Chicago
1938	Alexander’s Rag Time Band
1939	Captain Fury
1939	The Hunchback of Notre Dame
1939	The Big Guy
1939	Union Pacific
1940	Chad Hanna
1940	Moon Over Burma
1942	The Cyclone Kid
1942	Black Swan
1942	Tales of Manhattan
1942	Sin Town
1942	Moon and Sixpence
1943	Sleepy Lagoon
1943	Ox-Bow Incident
1944	The Princess and the Pirate
1944	The Lodger
1944	Raiders of Ghost City
1944	Johnny Doesn’t Live Here Anymore
1944	The Pearl of Death
1945	The Royal Mounted Rides Again
1945	The Jungle Captive
1946	Spider Woman Strikes Back
1946	House of Horrors
1946	The Brute Man



Mark
C. Lee
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HATTON/ CREEPER PLOT SEEDS

Pulp Hero:

Someone has been murdering art critics! While many within the art community think that this might not be such a bad thing, the local newspaper hires the PCs to investigate. After a bit of investigating they uncover the existence of The Creeper. But who is he and why is he killing the city's art critics?

Champions: One of the PCs' origin stories includes a tragic laboratory accident that not only gave him his powers but also killed his lab assistant (or something similar). On the two-year anniversary of the accident someone begins to stalk and strangle his DNPCs one by one. It's The Creeper (of course), but he isn't working alone – all of the PC's enemies are helping!

Lucha Libre

Hero: Someone has been kidnapping Mexico City's women wrestlers, replacing their brains with those of apes, and unleashing them upon the city's banks in a massive crime wave! When the PCs attempt to stop these ape-luchadoras they are attacked by a veritable "monster mash" of mythical

Rondo Hatton

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	150 kg; 2½d6 HTH [3]
11	DEX	3	11-	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
8	CON	-4	11-	
8	BODY	-4	11-	
11	INT	1	11-	PER Roll: 11-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
3	PD	0		Total: 3 PD (0 rPD)
2	ED	0		Total: 2 ED (0 rED)
3	SPD	9		Phases: 4, 8, 12
5	REC	0		
20	END	2		
25	STUN	6		

Total Characteristic Cost: 20

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Leaping: 2½"/5"
Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost Perks

9 Contact: Universal Studios (Contacts, Useful, Organization) 8-

Skills

3 Acting 12-
3 CK: Hollywood 12-
3 CK: Tampa 12-
3 Conversation 12-
1 Language: French (basic conversation)
3 Oratory 12-
3 PS: Actor 12-
3 PS: Reporter 12-
3 Streetwise 12-
2 WF: Rifles, Small Arms

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 36

Total Cost: 56

25+ Disadvantages

10 Distinctive Features: Slightly Deformed (Concealable; Noticed and Recognizable)
5 Physical Limitation: Suffers From Acromegaly (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
10 Unluck: 2d6
6 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 56

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The Creeper

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
23	STR	13	14-	600 kg; 4½d6 HTH [5]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
15/25	CON	10	12-	
14	BODY	10	12-	
9	INT	-1	11-	PER Roll: 11-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
9	PD	4		Total: 15 PD (6 rPD)
7	ED	4		Total: 13 ED (6 rED)
4	SPD	16		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
10	REC	4		
36	END	3		
40	STUN	5		

Total Characteristic Cost: 86

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Leaping: 4½"/9"
Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
23	<i>I Always Come Back!</i> : Healing BODY 1d6, Resurrection, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½), Persistent (+½); Resurrection Only (-½), Self Only (-½)	0
10	<i>Hard To Knock Out</i> : +10 CON; Only Against Being Stunned (-1)	0
10	<i>Tough</i> : Physical Damage Reduction, 25%	0

Talents

12 Combat Luck (x2)

Skills

Martial Art: The Creeper's Crushes
Maneuver OCV DCV Notes

3	Backbreaker!	-2	+0	HKA 2d6, Follows Grab
4	Choke!	-2	+0	Grab 1 Limb, 3d6 NND
4	Crush!	+0	+0	10½d6 Crush, Follows Grab
3	Grab!	-1	-1	43 STR Grab
8	+2 Damage Classes (added in)			
12	+4 with the Creeper's Crushes			
3	Acrobatics	12-		
3	Breakfall	12-		
3	Climbing	12-		
3	Contortionist	12-		
3	Lockpicking	12-		
3	Shadowing	11-		
3	Stealth	12-		
3	Streetwise	13-		
4	Survival (Urban)	12-		
3	Tracking	11-		

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 120

Total Cost: 206

125+ Disadvantages

20	Distinctive Features: Hideously Deformed (Concealable, Extreme)
20	Enraged: when Mocked About Deformity (Berserk, Uncommon, Go 8-, Recover 11-)
10	Hunted: Local Police 8- (Mo Pow, Limited Area)
15	Physical Limitation: Murderous Sociopath (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
10	Unluck: 2d6
6	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 206



creatures: The Wolfman, Count Dracula, Frankenstein's Monster, and The Creeper. Wrestling ensues!

Meriquai Falls History

by Dale Robbins

Vixen stepped to the edge of Lover's Overlook, a tall picturesque cliff overlooking the city of Meriquai Falls from the nearby Blue Hills. It was a breathtaking view of the city, especially at night, and many young lovers often drove here to bask in the ambience. The city even officially zoned the area as a park, adding a level of security to the cliff that was not stifling.

But Vixen had no lover to share the evening with. Not that she couldn't score one, with her athletic beauty, her flowing red-and-platinum-spangled hair, and her red and white skin-tight uniform. No, the 19-year-old girl was there for an entirely different reason. She was there to meet a friend.

A blonde bombshell of a woman came floating down from the sky to hover next to Vixen. She appeared about twice Vixen's age, and was every bit as attractive as the younger girl. She wore a brown and yellow body stocking, with flared gloves and boots, and a brown domino mask. Her falcon-motif cape fluttered in the soft night breeze. She floated in place, as if standing, next to Vixen as the two of them gazed down onto the city.

"I never tire of this view, Vixen," the woman finally said, the affection in her voice betraying her love for the city. "Do you?"

Vixen shook her head before turning to look at the woman next to her. "No, I don't, Lady Falcon. The city is so beautiful from here. So peaceful looking."

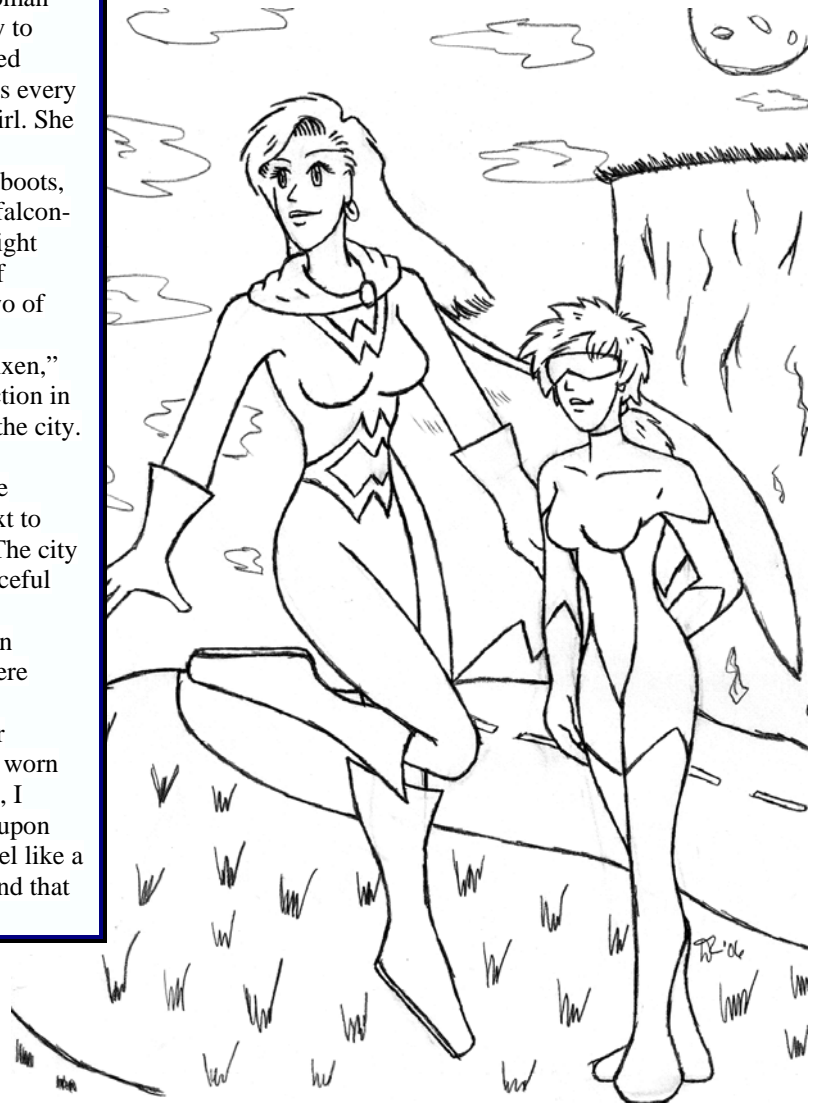
Lady Falcon smiled as Vixen spoke. It was the same soft, sincere smile that had won the hearts of millions of Meriquai Citizens for decades. "Whenever I'm feeling worn down by all of the villainy today, I come up here just to gaze down upon the city and refresh my soul. I feel like a part of Marlon is here with me and that helps me a lot."

"Marlon?" Vixen wondered aloud, turning to Lady Falcon with a curious look. "Deejay?"

Lady Falcon nodded. "Yes, my beloved husband and father of my daughter, may God bless his resting soul." She then turned to look at Vixen. "That's right, you're from the future, aren't you, Vixen?"

Vixen nodded. "I admit I don't know much about our history before the formation of the Omega Legion."

Lady Falcon smiled and placed a reassuring hand on Vixen's shoulder. "Well, sweetie, we've got some time tonight. Sit down. I'll try to tell you all that I can about our city's heroic history. I think you'll learn much from it."



artwork by Dale Robbins

When the original article was written in 2002 (see “Meriquai Falls,” *Digital Hero #2*), it covered the *normal* history of the city of Meriquai Falls. Little was mentioned about the history of the superhumans of the city except in snippets. And a couple of details were misleading or inaccurate. For instance, the article mentioned that the conflict between Shotgun Rider, Blood Shadow, and the Equalizers was when the city had “its first taste in paranormal conflict.” While this is accurate, it fails to mention that the paragon heroine Lady Falcon had been operating in Meriquai Falls for almost a decade at that point.

Also, at the time of original writing, the setting was conceived as an *unofficial* city within the *Champions Universe*. When the *Meriquai Falls* sourcebook was commissioned for the Hero Plus product line, it underwent some conceptual changes. It became a mini-setting on its own, intended to be easily inserted into anyone’s superheroic campaign. This meant that references to things like VIPER and PRIMUS had to be removed from the setting.

Thus, this article serves two purposes. The first purpose is to fill the gaps in the superhuman history, and update that history to 2006. The second purpose is to correct for the concepts that were originally dependent on elements from the *Champions Universe*.

So sit back and enjoy. Like Vixen, you might learn something from the rich superhuman history of Meriquai Falls.

Fantasy Hero

The Kingdom of Meriquai was a rich, fantastic setting with organic magitech, colorful races inspired by Amerindian legends, and a rich mythos of spirits. It existed over 13,000 years ago, before an ice age nearly drove it out of existence. In addition to its struggles against the *Myste* (detailed in “Native Sons,” *DH#3*), the Kingdom had to deal with the typical fantasy elements of magical threats, monsters, and a rival kingdom guided by fey Arcadian magic. A future article will more fully detail the setting of the Kingdom of Meriquai.

Western Hero

During the post-Civil War era, a masked individual calling himself “The Missionary Man” roamed the area from Eagle’s View Plains west to the Blue Hills, from the Falls south to just past Revolution. He was a mysterious man, obviously blessed by God to perform miracles, but he appeared very rarely and only when there was some dire danger to society. He would talk very little and simply do what needed to be done to right a wrong. Once he had done so, he would disappear as quickly as he had appeared, leaving a silver crucifix necklace on the scene.

Frasier Davenport (see “Totem Hunters,” *DH#4*) continued to be a hero of Revolution throughout the Wild West era, until his death in 1884. He would fight crime and solve mysteries as much with the gadgets of his inventor friend, Robert Calling, as with his sidearms or his horse-riding skills. The 1960s television show, *Wild Wild West*, is an excellent inspiration for Frasier Davenport’s adventures.

Pulp Hero

Doctor William “Striker” Kellerman, a noted anthropologist professor and adventurer in the employ of Meriquai Falls University, made several important anthropologic discoveries in the Midwestern United States during the ’30s and ’40s, including the Raven’s Eye Pendant which would later give the heroine Amethyst her powers. Striker and his friends often had to fight against Nazi sympathizers and Mobsters to keep his discoveries from falling into the wrong hands. Amongst the most important of Striker’s discoveries was the existence of a parallel world called the Spirit Plains by the Meriquai.

Master Sergeant Decker Sullivan led the Iron Boys at the warfront in Europe during the Second World War, scoring several decisive victories for the Allies. “Sergeant Decker” (as his men called him) even helped spearhead the charge during D-Day. Decker would return home after the War to help found IRON, a private agency specialized in securing the United States during most of the Cold War. While IRON would eventually become a public corporation, it did lay the ground for the Sullivan fortune.

Golden Age Champions

There was no real superheroic activity during the Second World War and the Cold War leading into the ’60s. This time period was mostly the province of the Pulp Hero venue, though both Striker Kellerman and Sergeant Decker were effectively in retirement by the late ’50s. It was not until the ’60s that Meriquai Falls saw its first superhero.

Silver Age Champions

The first superhero in Meriquai Falls was Lady Falcon. She was possessed of the best qualities of the falcon: great strength, preternatural agility, keen eyesight, and flight. For most of the late ’60s and early ’70s, she had no super-villainous enemies. She used her powers to solve perplexing mundane crimes, fight against the Mob, deter Communist plots, deal with other threats to the peace and well-being of Meriquai Falls, and avert natural disasters (or rescue victims of such natural disasters).

Lady Falcon also had many adventures in the Spirit Plains. While Striker Kellerman had discovered the Spirit Plains and had explored it to an extent, Lady Falcon discovered much more. She found the goodly *nunahi* spirit folk, in dire straits against the *sidhe* armies of the insane Lord Auberon of the fey realm of Arcadia. Lady Falcon was able to save the *nunahi* from Auberon's plots, and the *sidhe* lord swore revenge. Time and again after that, Lady Falcon had to match wits with the mischievous and powerful minion of Auberon, Robyn Goodfellow, and his attempts to entrap and/or humiliate Lady Falcon.

Despite all of this, Meriquai Falls itself didn't see its first actual supervillain until 1974.

Bronze Age Champions

In 1974, the silver mines just outside of Meriquai Falls fell victim to a being calling himself "The Manitou" and his band of "Equalizers." The Equalizers were anything but social equalizers, as they had a genocidal agenda against all the miners and the companies that employed them. Lady Falcon was in the Spirit Plains at that time. Three new heroes emerged to confront the Equalizers: the enigmatic costumed crimefighter Blood Shadow, the pragmatic yet witty truck driver Shotgun Rider, and the beautiful Meriquai shaman Prairie Maid. Together, the three were able to defeat and rout the Equalizers, saving thousands of lives, but not before the Equalizers succeeded in destabilizing the mines to the point of making them unsafe to mine anymore.

During one of the battles between the heroes and the Equalizers, a Greek entrepreneur named Gregorio Lynconius overheard a statement the Manitou made concerning "Grandmother Spider's Heart." Using his extensive network of contacts, Gregorio was able to deduce and research the significance of that statement. Once Gregorio realized that the "myths" about many of the Meriquai spirits were true, he began to form a team of villains who could help him capture the Heart for himself. It would be over ten years before Gregorio would be able to turn his Imperions loose on Meriquai Falls to collect clues on the whereabouts of the Heart. But he would prove to be the city's most tenacious and dangerous supervillain.

Another hero arose among the burgeoning black population of the city. Marlon Smith was working as a disc jockey at a local discothèque. He and his bulldog MC were working off-hours practicing mixes when an electrical short caused both the lighting and sound systems to overload and explode. Miraculously, neither Marlon nor MC died. Instead, they were infused with the power of both light and sound. Dubbing himself DeeJay, Marlon began a

campaign to clean up the streets of Meriquai Falls of crime, gang violence, drugs, and social oppression. DeeJay and MC became popular heroes amongst the common folk of the city due to DeeJay's easy, light-hearted nature and his passion for what was right.

After Shotgun Rider, Prairie Maid, and Blood Shadow investigated a series of strange events in the city of Revolution, Blood Shadow formed the Totem Hunters team to handle the errant totem spirits in the ways superheroes could not. Special Agent Clayton "The Silver Wolf" Okamura of the FBI sanctioned the team with federal police powers five years later.

In the summer of 1980, Meriquai Falls faced another crisis. Lord Auberon, angered by Robyn Goodfellow's constant failures to defeat and humiliate Lady Falcon, stripped the hobgoblin of most of his considerable power and banished him into the material world. Lord Auberon then launched a direct invasion of the material world with his massive *sidhe* armies. Lady Falcon, Blood Shadow, Shotgun Rider, Prairie Maid, DeeJay, and MC all tried their best to stave off the worst effects of the invasion. But they were unable to slow the invasion down, let alone stop it.

It was not until Robyn Goodfellow revealed the source of Lord Auberon's insanity (the imprisonment of his willful wife Lady Titania by a rival *sidhe* lord named Crystalon) that the heroes had a means of stopping the threat. Banding together as a team, the heroes delved deep into Arcadia to defeat Lord Crystalon and free Lady Titania. Lady Titania then beseeched her husband to turn back the invasion and return home with her. Lord Auberon not only called back his invasion, but also reversed all of the damage his armies had done and erased the memory of the invasion from all human minds except the heroes'. He also reinstated Robyn Goodfellow's powers and standing within the *sidhe* court.

The heroes decided that remaining a team was beneficial to themselves and to the city of Meriquai Falls. They therefore formed Legend Force, whose purpose was to support its members in their individual careers and provide an efficient means to band together quickly in times of crises. Legend Force faced the rise of the Mob under Winter Wolf and his Wolf Pack, several attempts at revenge by the *sidhe* Lord Crystalon, the creation of Longhorn and his bovine army, several attempts by the Equalizers to terrorize or kill citizens of the city, the initial launch of the Imperions' schemes, and various other villains. LEGEND even adopted two kid sleuths, Hank Winters and Debbie Knight, into their ranks.

Iron Age Champions

The initial scheme launched by the Imperions in 1987 is often seen as the start of the Iron Age in the *Meriquai Falls* setting. They intended to steal the components to build a massive solar battery that would power a drilling laser that could penetrate the silver mines all the way down to the Heart of the Grandmother Spider. They were thwarted by Legend Force by the narrowest of margins. After that, things became quite grittier in the city during the late '80s and throughout the '90s.

After DeeJay suffered through a bout of clinical depression and Lady Falcon dealt with the consequences of drugs in her life, the two retired from adventuring and were married. Their daughter Charlene was born in 1990. Blood Shadow, Shotgun Rider, and Prairie Maid carried the fight into the '90s.

Tragedy struck, though, in 1994 when Prairie Maid was murdered by the Equalizer named Coyote. A massive funeral for Prairie Maid was conducted by her father, Chief Theodore Owlspeaker, which was attended by thousands of Meriquai and citizens of the city. Shortly thereafter, Mayor Maurice Lewis III ordered a memorial statue erected in front of City Hall in honor of Prairie Maid.

The most serious addition to the roster of paranormals in the city during the Iron Age came in 1996 with the introduction of Vengeance and Night Sparrow. The sword-wielding, regenerative Vengeance quickly gained a reputation as a bloodthirsty vigilante, slaying any and all criminals that had somehow evaded the justice system via guile or technicality. While his victims only included criminals who were dangerous to society, his methods put him at odds with law enforcement and plainly crossed the lines of morality. Blood Shadow tried several times to capture Vengeance but never succeeded in doing so for more than a couple of minutes.

Night Sparrow seemed to follow sharply on the heels of Vengeance. In contrast to Vengeance's twisted sense of justice, Night Sparrow wanted nothing less than complete control over the criminal underworld of the city. This put her at odds with the Wolf Pack, the Imperions, Vengeance, law enforcement, and the heroes of the city all at once. However, her propensity to rebound from incredible wounds combined with her frighteningly extensive network of influence within the street gangs of Meriquai Falls made her more than equal to the challenge.

In 2000, Winter Wolf thought to set up a safety net for the Mafia by forcing all of the city's most powerful citizens into the Family's pocket. When that failed, Winter Wolf's frustration drove him insane and he made good on his threats.

Legend Force (including retirees) tried to stop Winter Wolf. Hank, Debbie, Blood Shadow, and DeeJay all died mercilessly at the hands of the Wolf Pack as they were investigating clues to the murders. Lady Falcon and Shotgun Rider presumed the Winter Wolf and his Wolf Pack dead. However, Mafia leaders in nearby Chicago deliberately laid clues so that Crimson-Hawk and Vixen could later find the hiding maniac and bring him to justice (even the Family will tolerate only so much from its members).

Being the only surviving members, Lady Falcon and Shotgun Rider agreed to disband Legend Force, although Lady Falcon vowed to remain out of retirement to help protect the city. Backed by the computer skills of her daughter Charlene, Lady Falcon became a hero to be reckoned with again. Shotgun Rider, however, would try several times to retire his shotgun over the next several years.

The Great Meriquai Falls Massacre is often seen as the end of the Iron Age in the *Meriquai Falls* setting.

The Modern Age

Please note that the heroes of Meriquai Falls have had many more adventures than this text implies. The villains are always busy with some scheme or threat against the city. However, what follows are important highlights to the city's Superhuman World history since the Great Massacre.

THE YEAR 2000

The Massacre prompted the military to develop means of combating threats like the Manitou, the Imperions, and Night Sparrow. Research had already been underway for several years on a transformable, single-man unit called the REVERB mecha and now seemed to be an excellent time to test it out. The demonstration would boost public morale, knowing that the military was working hard to protect the citizens of the United States. Thus, in late spring of 2000, a location near the top of the Meriquai Falls themselves was selected to demonstrate the mecha suit.

The demonstration was mysteriously attacked by a new villain dubbing himself Count Dredmaus. Calling up a storm the likes of which the city had not seen in decades, Dredmaus threatened to kill everyone at the demonstration unless the city bowed down before him and accepted his rule as lord and sovereign. Lieutenant Brian Davenport, the pilot of the REVERB mecha, joined a martial artist named Silver Phoenix, a metamorph named Masquerade, and a mentalist named Amethyst to fend off the Count's attacks. They succeeded in saving hundreds of lives and eventually driving off Dredmaus. Realizing that with Legend Force

gone and the city needing a new team of heroes, Brian tasked the others to help him found a new team, the Omega Legion. The others agreed with little persuasion.

Meanwhile, Brian's older brother Darren Davenport had fallen into the mines and had been found by the teenager Trina Sullivan. Trina led Darren to the secret location of the Heart of the Grandmother Spider. Grandmother Spider invested Darren with power as her Champion, granting him the magical might of the Red Hawk. With this power, he and Trina (as the teen hero Vixen) tracked down the location of Winter Wolf and brought him to justice once and for all. After the Omega Legion caught up with the two, Reverb invited Crimson-Hawk and Vixen to join the team. At Vixen's suggestion, Crimson-Hawk was made the administrative leader of the team and Reverb the field commander of the team.

The Imperions began a new scheme in the fall of 2000, sporting a new member in Cougar. With Cougar's tactical expertise added to an already formidable villain team, the Imperions enjoyed a string of successes unlike those they had enjoyed in the past. Galvakar had also recently imbued his own body with nanotechnology and had rebuilt his daughter's limbs using nanotechnologically-driven cybernetic prosthetics. The Imperions' bid to build a mind control tower atop the Great Meriquai Station was narrowly thwarted by the Omega Legion. Vixen nearly killed Cougar during the encounter, having gone berserk at the site of the villain; the intervention of none other than Vengeance prevented her from doing so.

Later that year, the Omega Legion had its first encounter with the villain Refractor. Refractor lured the team into an abandoned warehouse and used his dimensional refraction powers to change reality within the warehouse and make them believe they were dragon hunters in a medieval fantasy setting. They were nearly killed by the dragon at the end of their quest before Amethyst was able to break through Refractor's illusions and call him out. Although the team defeated Refractor, the villain escaped.

THE YEAR 2001

In early 2001, Jetfire made his debut as a villain. The speedster villain committed a series of crimes of harassment against the Sullivan Research Foundation and the millionaire Jackson Sullivan himself. The Omega Legion tried to capture Jetfire, but even Vixen with her superhuman reflexes could not match Jetfire's raw speed. Jackson Sullivan was forced to call Jetfire out himself, using his skills as a world-class martial artist to defeat the wildly overconfident villain. Jetfire was taken into custody by authorities, but he later escaped to harass Jackson and the Omega Legion again.

Also in 2001, the vigilante killer Sworddance made her debut. Her husband had been killed by members of the cult known as the Dark. Sworddance began a campaign of tracking down individuals connected to the Dark and mercilessly slaughtering them, regardless of the extent of their connection. Crimson-Hawk tracked her down and tried several times to bring her to justice. But her magical knowledge and tactical sense were both greater than his and she escaped from him time and again. It became apparent the she was slowly developing a crush on Crimson-Hawk, as their encounters often became games of cat-and-mouse that she actually enjoyed. Crimson-Hawk, despite his devotion to Silver Phoenix, seemed to warm to Sworddance's challenge.

When the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks struck the United States, an entire world grieved. Jackson Sullivan brought the full weight of medical expertise of the Sullivan Research Foundation to bear on New York City, fronting the bill to have a great deal of his staff *and* the Omega Legion (with Lady Falcon) flown in to assist the firefighters, emergency medical personnel, police officers, and other heroes of New York City in the aftermath of the tragedy. Longhorn attempted to use the confusion to overtake Meriquai Falls, but Shotgun Rider, a new mystic hero calling himself Nastarius, and a city full of righteously wrathful American citizens routed Longhorn in his most humiliating defeat to date.

THE YEAR 2002

In early 2002, Jackson Sullivan and Lyssa Kellerman married. The wedding was very eventful. The Equalizers took the wedding itself hostage, intent on wiping out several of the best and brightest of the city in one fell strike. At the same time, Refractor took his reality altering powers and literally lifted the Impulses Unlimited Tower into the sky for use as a base of operations to destroy the entire city. While Vengeance, Amethyst, Vixen, and Crimson-Hawk dealt with the wedding crisis in their secret identities, Reverb, Silver Phoenix, Masquerade, Shotgun Rider, and Lady Falcon faced Refractor. The crisis nearly ended in disaster when Refractor attempted to drop the Tower down onto city. Only the combined efforts of Crimson-Hawk, Reverb, Lady Falcon, and (curiously enough) the Manitou prevented the disaster and brought the Tower down safely. Shortly thereafter, Jackson and Lyssa finished their ceremony, becoming at last husband and wife.

In mid-2002, street gang thugs began displaying superpowers in alarming numbers. At the same time, death tolls on the streets reached an alarming peak. Separate investigations conducted by Crimson-Hawk, Vengeance, and

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Sworddance all pointed to Night Sparrow, who was manufacturing a new designer drug to bolster the strength of her street gang minions. However, a side-effect of the drug was that it was deadlier and more addictive than crack cocaine and meth combined. During the investigations, Crimson-Hawk and Vengeance accidentally learned each other's secret identities and vowed to each other to keep the secret. Together with Sworddance, they manage to crash Night Sparrow's operation and destroy the research notes on the drug. Night Sparrow escaped in the confusion.

In late 2002, the city began to be ravaged by a team of villains physically identical to the Omega Legion. Where the Omega Legion was honorable, good, and charitable, these individuals were vicious, evil, and prone to infighting and backstabbing. The Alpha Horde, as they deemed themselves, was apparently from an alternate dimension where good individuals here were evil there and vice versa. The Omega Legion defeated the Alpha Horde and managed to drive them back to their home dimension, although secretly the evil Vixen (now calling herself Flipside) escaped to remain in the Omega Legion's dimension.

THE YEAR 2003

In spring of 2003, the Imperions managed to capture Vixen and hold her hostage. Using Vixen's life to blackmail the rest of the Omega Legion, Galvakar insisted that the heroes acquire the six pieces of the Staff of Eagles, an ancient Meriquai artifact said to have been used by the mythical Meriquai hero Feather-Heart himself. With Lady Falcon's help, the Omega Legion succeeded in finding the six pieces in six exotic locations within the Spirit Plains. However, Galvakar reassembled the Staff incorrectly, causing the artifact to literally turn reality inside-out. Elements of the Spirit Plains began bleeding into the material world and vice versa.

A team of superhumans, including the members of the Omega Legion, Shotgun Rider, Lady Falcon, Nastarius, Vengeance, and Sworddance, under the guidance of the Meriquai chief Theodore Owlspeaker, spent the next 24 hours desperately performing the ritual quests needed to reverse the damage to reality. They were opposed by the Imperions, the Equalizers, Refractor, Longhorn, Flipside, Count Dredmaus, and a new villainess named Starfire. In the end, though, the heroes prevailed and reality returned to how it was before.

On Halloween of 2003, the city began getting plagued by ghosts, goblins, hags, zombies, and a plethora of similar creatures. After a series of harrowing experiences saving innocent lives from the rampaging monsters, the Omega Legion find that somehow Cyber-

Dreamer and Sworddance have merged into a gestalt creature calling herself the Sorceress of the Dreamlands. The Omega Legion defeated the Sorceress after Crimson-Hawk and the mystic hero Nastarius discovered the spell to undo the spell Cyber-Dreamer had cast to accidentally merge with Sworddance. Both Cyber-Dreamer and Sworddance escaped afterward.

Late in 2003, Shotgun Rider went missing. Crimson-Hawk, Reverb, and Silver Phoenix tracked down the errant hero to the lair of a Vietnamese villain calling himself Shadow Fang. Shadow Fang's family was apparently killed during the Vietnam War due to actions taken by Shotgun Rider's military squad, and Shadow Fang was determined to enact his revenge in the most publicly humiliating and painful way possible. After Crimson-Hawk argued about his father's heroism, Shadow Fang acquiesced to releasing Shotgun Rider only after the four heroes passed a series of tests to their honor, compassion, and heroism. Through sheer determination and conviction, the four heroes passed every single test Shadow Fang put them through. Shadow Fang conceded to Shotgun Rider's heroism, but refused to renounce his quest to avenge himself against the American government that took his family from him. Shadow Fang escaped the heroes shortly thereafter.

THE YEAR 2004

On Valentine's Day of 2004, strange yet lovely invitations began cycling through the Superhuman World community, drawing heroes and villains alike to a single location. At an old, derelict warehouse in the northern Riverfront, the superhumans of Meriquai Falls found themselves entrapped by the new Wolf Pack. Now led by a mysterious, unseen figure known as the Dire Wolf, the Wolf Pack demanded obedience to the Mafia from the assembled superhumans.

When Galvakar refused and ordered the Imperions to attack the Wolf Pack, they discovered that the entire warehouse was encased in a powerful force field and the interior was flooded by a mysterious energy that negated everyone's superpowers. Dire Wolf began to flood the warehouse with a gas that would slowly reduce the assembly to a bunch of blubbery idiots; Dire Wolf had the antidote and would only give it to those who swore fealty to the Mob. However, Crimson-Hawk, Jackson Sullivan, Galvakar, and Count Dredmaus combined their intellectual might and managed to deduce a weakness in the force field. Exploiting the weakness, the assembled superhumans routed the Wolf Pack while Vixen, Masquerade, Cyber-Dreamer, and Sworddance found the antidote and administered it to everyone.

In November, new elections for the Mayor's office occurred. Clarise VonWeider ran again, but her position on the polls was threatened by the entry of Lyncon Technologies owner Gregorio Lynconius. To make matters worse, allegations were made that VonWeider was somehow connected to the cult called the Dark. As a result, during the summer Sworddance made a very public attempt to take VonWeider's life and was narrowly thwarted by Crimson-Hawk and Lady Falcon. The entire time, Lynconius' image stayed impeccably clean. Once the votes were tallied, VonWeider won by an extremely narrow margin and only because the Omega Legion cleared her name of any connection to the Dark.

On New Years Eve of 2004, another travesty hit Meriquai Falls, one that would change the Superhuman World for the worst....

THE FALL FROM GRACE

A grand New Year's Eve party was held for the majority of the city's best, brightest, and most powerful citizens. It was held at the Jacob Friedman Observatory and Lounge, an exclusive penthouse club in Midtown. IRON agents were in place to provide top-tier security while the revelers relaxed and enjoyed themselves. Top name entertainers performed throughout the night. And the whole event was televised, to the delight of Meriquai Citizens everywhere.

However, as the ball of light atop the Observatory began its descent towards the new year, Night Sparrow and a gang of drug-empowered gang thugs crashed the party and took everyone hostage. She demanded no less than one billion dollars for the lives of her captives, something she declared over live television. Home viewers anticipated a quick and clean battle between the Omega Legion and Night Sparrow.

That was not to be. The Omega Legion heroes were not the first to appear on the scene. Instead it was the vigilante Vengeance. Vengeance put up a desperate, determined, and surprisingly heroic attempt to defeat Night Sparrow and free the hostages. However, Night Sparrow proved to be far stronger than even Vengeance anticipated. She healed all of her wounds almost as soon as she suffered them. And she seemed possessed of an insane berserker fury as she used her stun batons to beat Vengeance nearly to death.

Finally, Vengeance lay broken, battered, and bleeding at Night Sparrow's feet. As a last act against her most hated nemesis, Night Sparrow tossed Vengeance from the penthouse window, allowing home viewers to see his body plummet over 30 stories towards the ground.

At that point, the Omega Legion finally arrived. While the heroes engaged Night

Sparrow and her thugs in battle, home viewers could not help but notice that Crimson-Hawk was not there. To make matters worse, Amethyst was herself in an uncontrolled rage, lashing out indiscriminately with her psychic powers at anyone who looked like they were with Night Sparrow. Silver Phoenix, Vixen, and Masquerade did their best to protect the hostages as Amethyst and Reverb battled the villainess. If not for the efforts of the former three, the death toll would have been greater than the three deaths that occurred.

By the end of the battle, Night Sparrow was defeated, but just barely. Reverb's mecha was broken and nearly inoperable. Vixen was putting full effort into calming Amethyst down. Masquerade and Silver Phoenix were beyond exhausted from having put so much effort into keeping the hostages safe. And Crimson-Hawk had still not shown up for the battle. Night Sparrow herself was exhausted beyond measure but not visibly injured. She conceded the battle to the Omega Legion and fled, leaving her thugs to be apprehended and jailed.

Within a week, the entire Omega Legion team was called before a Superior Court judge to answer for their lack of timeliness in the matter and for Crimson-Hawk to answer for his absence. Crimson-Hawk could not produce a solid excuse for his absence. Amethyst apologized for her out-of-control behavior during the battle; she claimed to be emotionally stressed because Crimson-Hawk had attempted to rape her earlier that day.

Crimson-Hawk appeared as shocked as anyone at Amethyst's statement. The other members of the Omega Legion turned to confront Crimson-Hawk on the charges. Instead of standing and fighting against his own teammates, Crimson-Hawk fled the courtroom. He has not been seen since. Later that night, Amethyst disappeared as well, despite the tight security that the city judicial system had afforded to her.

A week later, Reverb appeared on live television to announce the disbanding of the Omega Legion. He cited irreconcilable differences between the remaining members. Masquerade and Silver Phoenix coldly refused all questions from the press. The only commentary Reverb would make on the matter was that the USAF had given him orders to return to active duty in the military and that he could no longer devote the time necessary to be a superhero. Vixen made several attempts to comment, but the reporters were oddly complacent to her overtures.

With that, the "Fall From Grace," as reporters dubbed it, occurred. Crimson-Hawk was now hated by almost all Meriquai Citizens. Amethyst was now missing, presumed

kidnapped and possibly killed by Crimson-Hawk. Reverb, Masquerade, and Silver Phoenix took their own paths. And, worst of all, respected Meriquai Citizens Darren Davenport (of Impulses Unlimited) and Jackson Sullivan (of the Sullivan Research Foundation) were missing; others suspected Crimson-Hawk to be responsible for their disappearances as well.

Vixen was the only member of the Omega Legion to stay active. And despite her incredible popularity, people were oddly disinterested in what she had to say concerning the Fall From Grace.

BEYOND THE FALL FROM GRACE

As of the summer of 2006, the city has been without an organized team of heroes for almost a year and a half. Vixen has been quite active in protecting the city from all of its villains. However, she has the support of allied heroes like Shotgun Rider, Lady Falcon, the pyrokinetic Backdraft, the mystic Nastarius, and a new gadgeteer calling herself Cricket.

After Jackson Sullivan's disappearance, the Sullivan Research Foundation is jointly run by Jackson's older brother B.J. Sullivan and the chief research scientist Heather Jaspers. After Darren Davenport's disappearance, Impulses Unlimited is being held in trust by its CFO Sarah McKinley until its proper heir, Trina Sullivan, reaches 21.

The Imperions have stepped up their plans to take over the city and recover the Heart of the Grandmother Spider. They have made no less than three attempts to subvert the city, each one narrowly stopped by Vixen and her friends. The fact that as of April 4, 2006, Gregorio Lynconius replaced Cisco Rainer as the City Administrator seems to have nothing whatsoever to do with the Imperions' plans.

The Equalizers seem to have remained quiet since the Fall From Grace. The terrorists seem to have made no open moves for almost two years... something that causes many of MF's best and brightest some concerns.

Count Dredmaus has made one attempt to subvert the city. He attempted to cast the city into an eternal winter so that he could raise the Hindu goddess of cold and destruction, Shiva. He intended to use the memorial statue of Prairie Maid as a focus for Shiva's manifestation. But Count Dredmaus was defeated by Nastarius and Shotgun Rider.

Refractor has struck twice against the city since the Fall. Both times, Vixen and Backdraft faced him and bested his twisted versions of reality.

Longhorn has struck once, attempting to overtake the Saint Patrick's Day Parade of 2005 and send the parading bovine into a frenzy throughout the downtown area. Shotgun Rider

defeated Longhorn in personal combat while Lady Falcon steered the bovine into a nearby park to be calmed down. Longhorn is now being kept in a "hot sleep" at Eagleview Penitentiary.

Robyn Goodfellow has appeared twice to test the wits of heroes; the first time against Lady Falcon and the second time against Vixen. Both times, the respective heroine overcame the hobgoblin's puzzles and thwarted his attempts to humiliate her.

Sworddance has not struck since the Fall, though many assume she continues on her murderous crusade against the Dark. This seems to have not slowed down a steady stream of new villains claiming affiliation with the Dark, including Lilythia (a witch), Lupine (a werewolf), Sutehk-Ra (a mummy), Grovel (a goblin), and Rancid (a ghoul).

Where are They Now?

The status of the various heroes is as follows:

Crimson-Hawk: Whereabouts unknown, although those who know of his connection to the Heart of the Grandmother Spider suspect that he is still within the Meriquai Falls city limits.

Amethyst: Whereabouts unknown, although it is commonly accepted that Crimson-Hawk kidnapped, and possibly killed, her after her testimony during the Fall From Grace.

Masquerade: Diana Forrest has retired completely from adventuring, or so she wishes. She has been working overtime at the law firm Drake, Durham, and VonWeider. She often counsels in prosecution against supervillains when a private suit is brought against them. She is occasionally harassed by Refractor and mysterious new villain called the Amoeba.

Silver Phoenix: Silver Phoenix has changed her sobriquet to "Moon Shadow" and now operates mostly within the Martial World of Meriquai Falls. Her chief foe is Shadow Fang, who continues his crusade against the American government. In addition, a mysterious ninja clan called the Black Crane hunts her continuously. Finally, a new villainess calling herself Sun Shadow has begun hunting Moon Shadow for reasons of her own.

Reverb: Lieutenant Brian Davenport has returned to active duty with the USAF. He pilots the REVERB suit all over the world, helping out war efforts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. He has taken on villains from all over the world and has become something of an international celebrity.

Vixen: Trina Sullivan continues to protect the city while attending Meriquai Falls University. She dreams of reinstating the Omega

Legion team and even franchising it across the world. However, her focus seems to be somehow finding out a way to prove Crimson-Hawk's innocence in all of the charges that have been levied against him.

Lady Falcon: Lady Falcon is as active in protecting the city as Vixen, if not more so. She is no longer grieving the death of her late husband, DeeJay. Instead, she is finding joy in honoring his memory by returning to the field. Her teenage daughter, Charlene, aids her from their home in Blue Hills Park, using her incredible knack at research over the Internet to aid her mother's investigations.

Shotgun Rider: Despite several attempts to retire, Shotgun Rider seems to be pulled back into the action time and time again. Currently, Shotgun Rider is focused on finding his son, Crimson-Hawk, and forcing him to face the demons that are plaguing him. Shotgun Rider has heard Vixen's side of the story and believes her, which makes finding his son all the more important.

Backdraft, Nastarius, and Cricket: The latest heroes of the city, these three often help Vixen in her quest in protecting the city. Of the three, Nastarius has been a hero the longest (2001), followed by Backdraft (2003). Cricket entered the scene a scant few weeks ago and she seems possessed of an enthusiasm unlike any other.

GM's Vault

THE MISSIONARY MAN

The Missionary Man was anything but a man. He was an angel sent by God to protect the God-fearing citizens of the town of Meriquai and the surrounding Eagle View Plains. Since no one had any reason to suspect this (aside from his occasional miraculous feats), he was assumed to be a talented man who enjoyed his privacy yet desired to help his fellow man.

AND ADAM BEGAT CAIN...

Many heroic familial traditions hold throughout the century. Frasier Davenport is the ancestor of Ronald Davenport (Shotgun Rider), Darren Davenport (Crimson-Hawk) and Brian Davenport (Reverb). Striker Kellerman is the grandfather of Lyssa Kellerman (Amethyst). Decker Sullivan is the grandfather of millionaire playboy Jackson Sullivan. Trina Sullivan (Vixen) really is the daughter of Jackson Sullivan and Lyssa Kellerman, brought here from a possible future.

A MIDSUMMER WHAT?

If you've read William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, then you know how the *sidhe* lords and courtiers behave. They are fickle and frivolous to the extreme. There is also little need for game stats for personages like Lord Auberon, Lady Titania, Lord Crystalon, or Robyn Goodfellow. In fact, Goodfellow serves as the campaign's "cosmic imp" figure, challenging the heroes in ways that surely cannot be overcome by brute force alone.

COYOTE AND PRAIRIE MAID

When Coyote killed Prairie Maid in 1996, the Meriquai shaman had an ace up her sleeve no one suspected, not even her husband. Just as Coyote struck his killing blow, Prairie Maid finished a spell that switched her soul with Coyote's soul. Thus, when Prairie Maid's body died, it was actually Coyote's soul that passed on into the Spirit Plains. Prairie Maid's soul remained inhabited in Coyote's body. Prairie Maid has since cured the madness the Manitou inflicted on the totem spirit Coyote and the two secretly work to subvert the Manitou's plans and to cure the madness in the other Equalizers. The Manitou suspects the truth, but is biding his time to assess Prairie Maid's true strength before striking her down.

OF PAST AND FUTURE

Count Dredmaus was pulled, against his will, away from his home of the Empire of Eternus, circa 13,000 B.C., into the present by a time-traveling experiment conducted by Dr. Erika Pochlovic (who will later become Professor Epoch). He was just on the verge of killing Feather-Heart (see *DH #3*) and claiming the Empire of Eternus for himself when he was abducted. To say that he was angry is an understatement of deadly proportions. Vixen was pulled from the future, circa 2020, by the same experiment. Vixen was far more grateful, since she had almost been killed by the Imperions before her abduction. No one knows of this yet because Professor Epoch will not debut as a villain for another year.

THE FALL FROM GRACE

The truth behind the Fall From Grace hinges on two very important facts: that Jackson Sullivan is Vengeance and that Lyssa Kellerman (Amethyst) suffers from a Multiple Personality Disorder.

Vengeance drank a special-made formula to keep his regenerative capabilities active. Night Sparrow discovered this and stole some samples for herself. What she failed to understand was that the formula was intimately linked to Vengeance's DNA structure. When she drank some of the formula, Night Sparrow not only

gained Vengeance's regenerative abilities, but her brain started producing neuro-toxins that drove her insane. That was when she struck the Friedman Observatory.

The Omega Legion was late to the scene because the IRON agents there failed to contact the team in a timely manner. When the Omega Legion arrived, Crimson-Hawk saw Night Sparrow drop Vengeance's apparent corpse out the window.

Only three people knew Jackson was Vengeance: Crimson-Hawk, Amethyst, and Vixen. Crimson-Hawk knew of Vengeance's regenerative abilities and knew that Jackson had a chance to live if his body did not splatter on the ground below. So, instead of joining the battle against Night Sparrow, Crimson-Hawk made a fateful decision and covertly caught Vengeance's body to fly off to get Jackson medical aid.

Amethyst had her Mind Link up when Crimson-Hawk did this. When Lyssa saw her husband's apparent corpse through the Mind Link, she suffered an emotional breakdown. At that point, a long-subverted second personality emerged... a personality calling herself Nadine. Nadine had only emerged once before, during Lyssa's college years when she was dating Darren Davenport instead of Jackson. And Nadine still lusted after Darren. Moreover, Nadine discovered the powers of the Raven's Eye Pendant that Amethyst wore and exalted in it. The change in Amethyst happened so quickly and quietly that the rest of the team had no reason to suspect what was to come.

Nadine wanted Darren all to herself, but she had to get Jessi Moon (Silver Phoenix) out of the picture. Drunk on her psionic power, Nadine chose not to kill Jessi outright, but instead subvert the rest of the team and even the rest of society against Darren. Once Darren was alone in the world, he would have no choice but to turn to her. So Nadine psionically compelled the rest of the team to turn on Darren and then each other. Through careful propaganda, Nadine even succeeded in turning the rest of the city on Crimson-Hawk. Nadine couldn't affect Vixen's mind, though, so she had to work *especially* hard to make sure that the teenager's words fell on deaf ears.

Crimson-Hawk, making a rather poor decision, chose to flee the court hearing rather than deal with the sudden belligerence of his teammates. He was confused and upset at the time and didn't think that decision through.

Nadine succeeded in driving Jessi Moon away from Darren and making Darren feel alone in the world. What Nadine was not aware of, and thus did not plan for, was the intervention of Sworddance.

Kristy Angelo (Sworddance) had been courting Crimson-Hawk for some time, although even she didn't realize it at the time. When Crimson-Hawk fled the court hearing, Kristy knew something horrible was amiss. So she began tracking Darren down. When Nadine escaped protective custody that night, it became a race between the two women as to who got to Darren first. Miraculously, Kristy won the race. Crimson-Hawk and Sworddance battled Nadine and sent her fleeing.

Now, Crimson-Hawk and Sworddance have fallen into a love affair. Darren needed a sympathetic ear and Kristy was there for him. The effect has been a balancing of souls between the two. Darren is no longer as altruistic in his role as the Champion of the Grandmother Spider as he used to be. Likewise, Sworddance is no longer so murderously vengeful; she'll actually let her marks live if she finds proof that they were merely dupes and not full-fledged members of the Dark. Kristy's quest to topple the Dark, and its leader, Acolyte, is no less passionate, however.

Meanwhile, Jackson Sullivan lies in a medical vat in a sub-basement of the Impulses Unlimited building, in a coma. His physical wounds have long since regenerated, but his STUN had been driven so far into the negatives as to be deemed GM's Option on Recoveries. Nadine knows this and subtly works to make sure he never awakens. Also, Nadine has decided that if Darren is going to fall in love with an anti-hero (Sworddance), then she will have to become an even better anti-hero to win his love. So Nadine has taken over the mantle of Vengeance, wearing his cloak and carrying his katanas, but using her psionic powers instead of relying on special senses or regeneration. Nadine is far less choosy than Jackson was on her victims, though; she'll kill anyone out of spite if she can explain to herself that the victim broke the law somehow (Jackson only killed criminals guilty of capital crimes who somehow escaped justice).

All the while, both Shotgun Rider and Vixen search in vain for Crimson-Hawk, who has hidden from society and is working against the enemies of Grandmother Spider by assisting Sworddance in her vendetta against the Dark.

THE NEW HEROES

Although it is easy to mistake the newest heroes of the city (Vixen, Nastarius, Backdraft, and Cricket) as a new team, this is not the case. They often find themselves assisting each other, especially on tougher foes like Count Dredmaus, Refractor, or the Manitou, but they have not formally become a team.

SHOTGUN RIDER PLOT SEEDS

Shotgun Rider receives a commission from a mysterious benefactor. He's been selected as one of only a dozen or so elite drivers in the United States to drive an illegal race from Meriquai Falls to Corpus Christi and back. Curious as to what purpose the race has and why he was selected, Shotgun Rider decides to participate. One of the PCs might also be selected to race, making for an interesting competition... and an interesting team-up when the villain behind the race reveals his plans.

Shotgun Rider challenges one of the PCs to a friendly competition of shooting, a charity event that is attended by much of the heads of society in Meriquai Falls. During the competition, which involves many creative tests of skill, a villain appears and attempts to take the audience hostage. The PCs and Shotgun Rider can team up to defeat the villain, hopefully without harming any of the hostages.

Shotgun Rider suddenly starts claiming he can see the ghost of his late wife, Prairie Maid. He begins doing absurd,



Shotgun Rider

Background/History: Ronald Davenport was a Vietnam veteran, trained by SEALs in small arms and demolitions. After a medical discharge, he found work as a truck driver. It was while on the road that he met the love of his life. Jasmine Owlspeaker, the daughter of the Meriquai Chief Theodore Owlspeaker, was working as a waitress at a mom-and-pop truck stop when Ronald met her. Ronald couldn't help but be taken by Jasmine's exotic beauty and down-to-earth wisdom. Jasmine grew attracted to Ronald's rugged handsomeness, his adventurousness, and his respect for her culture. Before long, the two began dating, and Ronald was introduced to Jasmine's family.

Theodore Owlspeaker sensed a warrior's spirit burning inside Ronald. Taking the young man aside, Theodore asked Ronald many questions. Theodore listened to Ronald's answers and realized that *something*, be it the spirits or some other force, was guiding Ronald's fortune for the better. Knowing this and seeing how happy the young white man made his daughter, Theodore gave his blessings.

A year later, Ronald and Jasmine were wed. Ronald continued his trucking career locally while Jasmine finished her training as a Meriquai shaman under her father. Jasmine proved quite a student in Meriquai shamanism, being more overtly powerful in magic than even Theodore himself yet being humble in the fact that she did not yet have her father's wisdom. Ronald's love and support for Jasmine never faltered. In late 1972, their first son, Darren, was born. In mid-1974, their second son, Brian, was born.

Then, in late 1974, the Manitou rose up from the silver mines outside of the city and began his reign of terror. Jasmine knew that the Manitou had to be stopped. Much against Theodore's wishes, Jasmine collected up her totem fetishes and drove out to face the Manitou. Ronald was unwilling to let his wife face the villain alone, so he handed his two sons over to Theodore and drove off after Jasmine. The two would-be heroes met up with another new hero, Blood Shadow. The three of them defeated the Manitou and his Equalizers by only the barest of margins, and the city lost its silver mines in the process. But they had saved many thousands of lives, so the three heroes took comfort in this.

Ronald realized that he thrilled at the adrenaline rush he'd felt during the fights. It had been much like the fights in Vietnam, except it was a positive adrenaline rush. Ronald had known what he was fighting and that it was indeed evil. And the city had celebrated his victory, despite the loss of the mines. Taking a cue from Blood Shadow, Ronald took the name of Shotgun Rider and vowed to be there for

Meriquai Falls if it ever needed a defender again. Jasmine took the name of Prairie Maid and promised to support her husband's vow with her Meriquai magic.

From 1974 to 1994, Shotgun Rider and Prairie Maid time and again protected Meriquai Falls from various villains, from the terrorist Equalizers to the bovine lunatic Longhorn, from the sly Winter Wolf and his Wolf Pack to the machinations of the fey realm of Arcadia. They had even joined with Lady Falcon, DeeJay, and Blood Shadow to form the hero team, the Legend Force.

In 1994, however, Ronald lost the greatest love of his life when Coyote killed Jasmine in cold blood. During a truly desperate battle against the Equalizers, Prairie Maid entrapped Coyote in a holding spell to keep him from supporting his teammates at a critical moment of their plan. In response, Coyote turned and viciously ran his claws straight through Jasmine, killing her instantly. Ronald flew into a bloody rage that nearly cost him his life had Blood Shadow not knocked him out and took over the fight.

For the next six years, Ronald had to evaluate his life. Jasmine had given the ultimate sacrifice for city's safety. But Ronald missed his wife horribly. With Lady Falcon and DeeJay retired from adventuring to raise their own family, Ronald realized he needed to persevere now more than ever to be the hero that Meriquai Falls needed. Both of his sons were grown, which left room for the adventurer's life. With that decision made, Ronald threw himself into his crimefighting career.

It was all he had left, after all.

That dedication proved no mean feat, especially when the Imperions began stepping up their activities. But Ronald warmed to the challenge. During the latter part of the '90s, Shotgun Rider was seen as *the* hero of Meriquai Falls. Since Blood Shadow preferred to operate from the shadows, this was effectively true.

When the Great Massacre occurred, Ronald faced another bout of helplessness. Despite his best efforts, all he could do was watch as Blood Shadow and DeeJay died at the hands of Winter Wolf. Ronald nearly died himself, if Lady Falcon had not scooped him up and carried him to safety just as Winter Wolf's warehouse collapsed on top of himself. Believing that Winter Wolf was dead, Shotgun Rider and Lady Falcon mourned the loss of their friends.

At that point, Ronald made the most difficult decision of his life. Deciding he'd had enough of the deaths that occurred around him while he lived to carry on, he hung up his shotgun for what he thought was once and for all. A couple months later, his sons Darren and Brian rose to the challenge of defending the city, forming and

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leading the Omega Legion against the Imperions and the various other villains of the city. Content that the city was now safe in his children's hands, Ronald went into a quiet retirement.

Then the Fall From Grace happened. Ronald was as shocked as anyone when Amethyst confided to a large television audience that his son, Crimson-Hawk, attempted to rape her. He was even more shocked when the Omega Legion fell apart due to irreconcilable differences, Amethyst disappeared mysteriously, and Crimson-Hawk went into hiding rather than face the authorities. Ronald tried to confront his younger son, Reverb, on the matter, but the Air Force brass ordered him off the base before he even got to see his son. And his foster daughter, Silver Phoenix, was so adamant about not discussing the matter with anyone, let alone her "father," that she nearly called the police on him.

Confused and angry, Ronald confronted the only person he could get into contact with... Vixen. He heard the teen hero out and believed her story. Now, he just needs to track down Crimson-Hawk... and Vengeance.

Personality/Motivation: When one encounters Shotgun Rider, he seems to literally step straight out of an action/adventure Western movie. He seems to combine the best on-screen traits of Chuck Norris, John Wayne, Clint Eastwood, Steven Seagal, and Tom Selleck. He approaches everything with a pragmatic tactical sense, with enough light-hearted humor and dramatic flare to set himself off as the hero's hero.

Shotgun Rider is a hero because he knows he needs to be. While he is dependent somewhat on the sense of accomplishment that being a hero provides, he also recognizes that few have the skill, luck, and pure guts to face the villains of the city like he can. He's developed an unshakable confidence in himself due to this. Although the constant losses of the last ten years have taken their toll on Ronald's heart, he still has the fire of a warrior burning in his heart.

Now that the Omega Legion has disintegrated, leaving Vixen to face the city alone, Ronald is faced with a decision. He is in his sixties. He is in better shape than most men half his age, but he still doesn't enjoy the thought of having to dust off his shotgun and go back into action purely on the principle that there is no one better to get the job done. But he will if he absolutely must.

Quote: "Son, I've seen more things, been more places, and felt more loss than you'd ever imagine. I think I can handle the likes of you."

Powers/Tactics: Shotgun Rider is a highly skilled normal with more than a healthy dose of luck. Both his wife and his father-in-law described it as the totems favoring his warrior

spirit. Ronald likens it to "Lady Luck" being on his side. Either way, he has a knack of getting into and back out of a lot of trouble with relative ease.

In addition, Ronald is also an expert of small arms in general, and the shotgun in particular. Ronald uses his skills to construct a number of "trick shells" that he can fire from his shotgun. He uses these to the best tactical advantage that he can, trying to maneuver his enemies into positions that will help him use his ammunition most efficiently. His SEAL training in unarmed combat also helps him.

In addition to his skills and his shotgun, Ronald has access to two vehicles. The *Conastoga Mobile* is a souped-up 1974 Ford Ranger in near-pristine condition. The *Conestoga Base* is a tractor-trailer that also serves as a mobile base. Prairie Maid traditionally drove the *Base* while Shotgun Rider drove the *Mobile*. Now, the *Base* mostly sits parked at Ronald's ranch on the other side of the Meriquai reservation.

Campaign Use: Shotgun Rider is a good ally or mentor for the PCs if they need the help of someone who's been through the paces and can offer good advice. He is not afraid to show a new hero the ropes and teach him the things he had to learn on his own.

If Shotgun Rider is too weak for your campaign, give him more trick ammo, better vehicles, and some "super-skills" like those found in *Dark Champions*. If he is too powerful, reduce his DEX and SPD, weaken his trick ammo, and reduce his Luck.

Shotgun Rider does not necessarily Hunt a character unless that character has proven to be a definite danger to the entirety of Meriquai Falls... or if the character has hurt his family. In the former case, Ronald is very professional about ending the danger he presents. In the latter case, his passion in bringing the foe to justice knows no bounds.

Appearance: Despite being in his sixties, Shotgun Rider looks as fit and attractive as someone in his late forties. He is of average height and weight, but he has broad shoulders and an Army soldier's physique. His skin is rough and fairly tanned from constant outdoor activity, which somehow adds to his rugged handsomeness. His short, dark brown hair is graying, creating a dignified "salt and pepper" effect. His dark brown eyes seem to command attention and respect. He favors a short sleeve Western-cut shirts, blue jeans, a Stetson hat, and cowboy boots. He wears a shoulder harness for his shotgun and a leather bandolier and belt for all of his various trick shotgun shells.

uncharacteristic tasks, claiming that Prairie Maid needs him to do these things to rescue her from the afterlife. As the tasks continue, they become more and more criminal. Who is really behind "Prairie Maid's ghost," and why?

Shotgun Rider

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH [1]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
20	CON	20	13-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll: 13-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
18	COM	4	13-	
10	PD	7		Total: 22 PD (12 rPD)
10	ED	6		Total: 22 ED (12 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
12	REC	10		
40	END	0		
35	STUN	2		

Total Characteristics Cost: 140

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Leaping: 3"/6"
Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
30	<i>Custom Shotgun Ammo:</i> Multipower, 60-point Reserve, OAF (Custom Shotgun, -1)	0
2u	1) <i>Air Concussion Shells:</i> Dispel Darkness 10d6, Area Of Effect (3" Radius, +1); 16 Charges (-0), OAF (-1), Only Versus Smokes, Mists, and Related Darknesses (-½)	[16]
3u	2) <i>Bird Shot Shells:</i> EB 12d6; 16 Charges (-0), OAF (-1)	[16]
3u	3) <i>Slug Shot Shells:</i> RKA 4d6; 16 Charges (-0), OAF (-1)	[16]
3u	4) <i>Explosive Shells:</i> EB 8d6, Explosion (+½); 16 Charges (-0), OAF (-1)	[16]
3u	5) <i>Flare Shells:</i> Sight Group Flash 6d6, Area Of Effect (3" Radius, +1); 16 Charges (-0), OAF (-1)	[16]
3u	6) <i>Glue Shot Shells:</i> Entangle 6d6, 6 DEF; 16 Charges (-0), OAF (-1)	[16]
3u	7) <i>Stun Gas Shells:</i> Drain STR 4d6, Ranged (+½); 16 Charges (-0), OAF (-1)	[16]
3u	8) <i>Smoke Screen Shells:</i> Darkness to Sight Group 6" Radius; 6 Continuing Charges Lasting 1 Minute (+0), OAF (-1)	[6 cc]
30	<i>Lady Luck is on My Side:</i> Luck 6d6	

Perks

- 5 Money: Well Off
- 8 Reputation: True, Dedicated Hero (in Meriquai Falls) 14-, +4/+4d6
- 15 Vehicle: Conestoga Mobile (pick-up truck)
- 18 Vehicle: Conestoga Base (tractor-trailer)

Talents

- 3 Absolute Range Sense
- 24 Combat Luck (x4)
- 8 Combat Shooting
- 15 Danger Sense (Self Only, in Combat) 13-

Skills

	Martial Arts:	Commando Training	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Boxing Cross	+0	+2			10d6 Strike
3	Aikido Throw	+0	+1			8d6 + v/5, Target Falls
4	Karate Chop	-2	+0			HKA 2d6+1
4	Choke Hold	-2	+0			One Limb; 4½d6 NND
4	Judo Disarm	-1	+1			50 STR Disarm
4	Kung Fu Block	+2	+2			Block, Abort
20	+5 Damage Classes (already added in)					
20	+2 Overall Levels					
25	+5 with Ranged Combat					

- 3 Acrobatics 13-
- 3 Breakfall 13-
- 3 CK: Meriquai Falls 13-
- 3 Combat Driving 13-
- 3 Deduction 13-
- 5 Defense Maneuver II
- 3 Demolitions 13-
- 3 Fast Draw 13-
- 3 Gambling 13-
- 3 Mechanics 13-
- 3 Stealth 13-
- 3 Survival 13-
- 3 TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Tracked Military Vehicles, Wheeled Military Vehicles
- 3 Tactics 13-
- 3 Teamwork 13-
- 3 Tracking 13-
- 3 Weaponsmith 13-
- 10 WF: Early Firearms, Small Arms, Anti-Aircraft Guns, Anti-Tank Guns, Artillery, Flamethrowers, General Purpose/Heavy Machine Guns, Grenade Launchers, Howitzers, Mortars, Recoilless Guns, Shoulder-Fired Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 330

Total Cost: 470

200+ Disadvantages

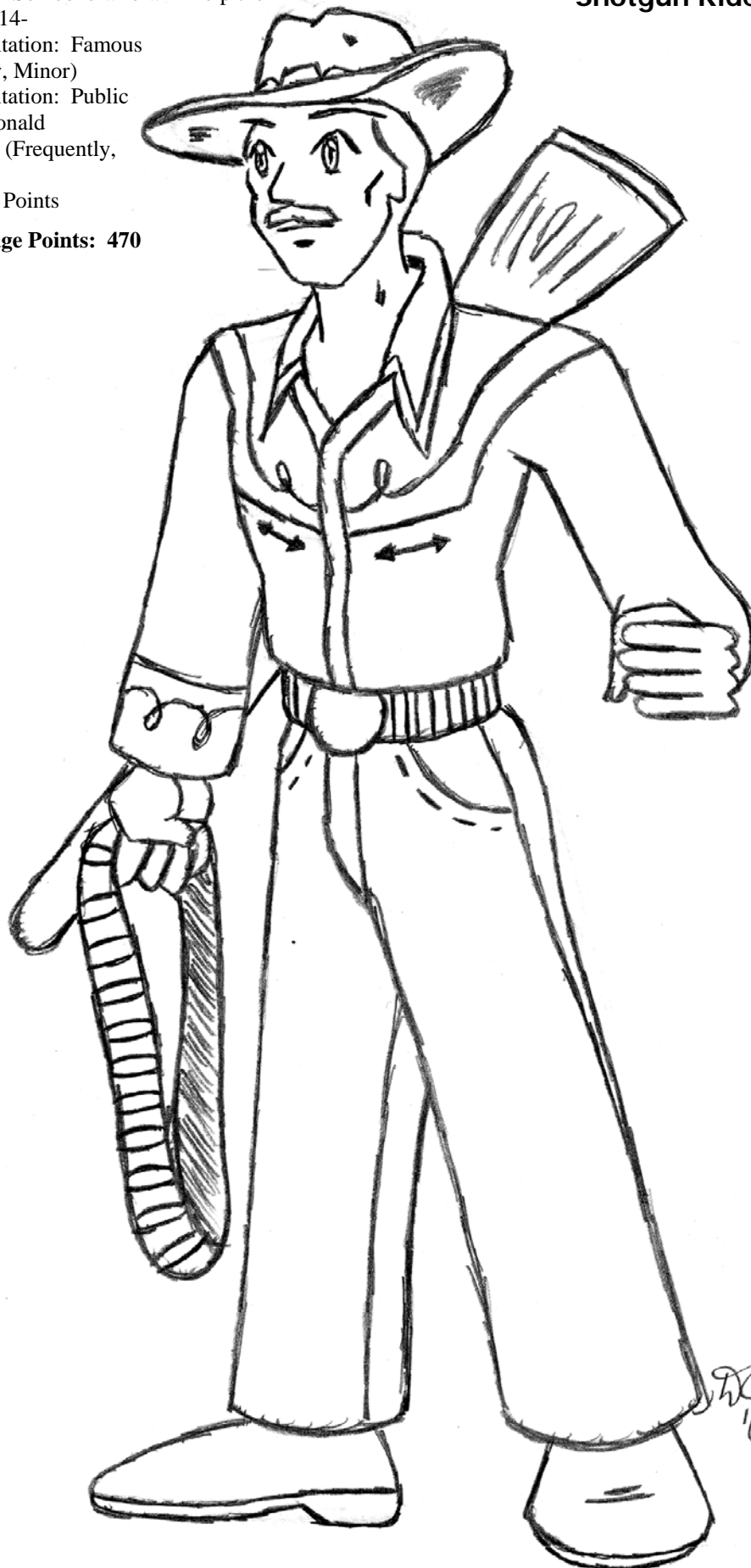
- 10 DNPC: Pacer (His German Shepherd) 8- (Normal)
- 20 Hunted: The Equalizers 11- (Mo Pow)
- 15 Hunted: Longhorn 11- (As Pow)
- 15 Hunted: Lord Crystalon 8- (Mo Pow)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Overconfident (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Overprotective of Family and Friends (Common, Strong)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Protective of Innocents (Very Common, Strong)

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- 15 Reputation: Someone who will Help the Underdog, 14-
- 10 Social Limitation: Famous (Frequently, Minor)
- 15 Social Limitation: Public Identity [Ronald Davenport] (Frequently, Major)
- 120 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 470

Shotgun Rider



LONGHORN PLOT SEEDS

The classic Longhorn plot: Longhorn gathers a veritable army of cows and other bovine to march on a location of importance to humans. The PCs must diffuse the mass panic, defeat Longhorn, and guide his conscripted brethren back unharmed to their respective owners. During the battle, Longhorn pulls out the latest of his new tricks to throw the PCs off and make it harder for them to defeat him.

A particularly unscrupulous environmentalist approaches Longhorn about attacking a location that is known for its lack of environmental consideration. Convinced that the owning company is abusive to bovine, Longhorn not only attacks that location, but every other place that the company owns. The environmentalist is now torn between toppling the rogue company and saving its employees from Longhorn's excessive viciousness. He turns to the PCs for help.

Dire Wolf and the Wolf Pack learn of Longhorn's origin and dig deep into the Mob's operations in the late 70s. Once



Longhorn

Background/History: Billy Bob Bullman was a devoted ranch hand of the Lazy-L Ranch, a major provider of beef to Meriquai Falls' area restaurants. The fact that the ranch owner was on the take from the Mob and was allowing for some illegal waste dumping on his property was of little consequence to Billy Bob. He loved his job. He loved the quiet majesty of the cows and bulls he worked with. So much so that he often had trouble relating to his coworkers since he preferred the company of the cow herd over other human beings.

One stormy night, as the ranch hands were corralling the herd, Billy Bob noticed that one of the bulls had moved too close to the waste dump that his employer said the cows should not go near. The storm was closing in fast, so Billy Bob dismounted his horse and moved in to pull the bull from the waste pit. Billy Bob struggled with the bull as the storm struck hard and fast. Both he and the bull became drenched in strange toxic waste as the two fought the slope of the pit. Then suddenly lightning struck.

The other ranch hands nearby saw the lightning touch down on the waste pit and then an explosion. It was an eerie, green explosion. The flames afterwards were also the same ghostly green. The ranch hands drew warily near, expecting to see both Billy Bob and the bull dead and charred to a crisp. Instead, what they found was a horrifying gestalt of the two, rising to its hooves, glaring at the ranch hands with a murderous rage. Billy Bob no longer existed. Instead, the human-bull mix saw all of the hairless monkeys that had enslaved it, mistreated it, sentenced it to procreate and then die like some meaty object. And it responded accordingly.

Days later, the Lazy-L Ranch was left in complete shambles. It wandered the ranch lands outside of Meriquai Falls for several months, eluding both the county sheriff's department and the National Guard. Slowly, some of Billy Bob's intelligence crept back into the beast's mind. But that intellect was warped by the bull's sense of history. It understood that it had been intended for stock and food. It understood why. And it was righteously upset at the epiphany. Dubbing itself Longhorn (after the stock of bull it had arisen from), the creature began a campaign of revenge and conquest against the humans who so callously exploited his kind.

Throughout the '70s and '80s, Longhorn made several attempts to conquer humanity. Each time, he conscripted an army of bovine to overrun a military base, a marketplace, a political convention, or so on. Each time, Shotgun Rider (and later the Legend Force as a whole) stopped him with clever tactics and more than a pinch of

luck. With each defeat, Longhorn would come back months later having learned from his mistakes and ready to try a new strategy. Longhorn mysteriously disappeared completely in the early '90s, but returned suddenly in 1998 in a scheme to avenge himself against Shotgun Rider once and for all.

The Omega Legion has faced Longhorn once, in 2003, when Longhorn tried to overtake the studios of WMFR 104.3 The Hits. He had super-technology built by Galvakar that supposedly allowed his mental powers to "broadcast" over the radio waves, calling on bovine throughout the broadcast area. The Omega Legion defeated him and he disappeared until 2005, when he attempted to overrun the Saint Patrick's Day Parade and was defeated by Shotgun Rider.

Where he will strike next is a mystery to all.

Personality/Motivation: Longhorn is a zealous psychopath, pure and simple. There is nothing funny about his passionate belief that bovine should be the dominate species of the planet and that he should lead bovine to victory against the "furless monkeys." Longhorn has no qualms about viciously killing humans who oppose him, get in his way, or even laugh at him. He will stop at nothing to realize his dreams of a better world for bovine everywhere.

Most of the time, Longhorn appears in control of his emotions, sane enough to see his objectives through to the end. But the slightest thing can set him off. While he will never do anything to harm or bring harm to a bovine, he thinks nothing of killing a human who has annoyed him, killing a non-bovine animal that fails to move out of his way, or destroying a building simply to make a point.

If Longhorn sees bovine mistreated, injured, or killed, he will often fly into a murderous rage that is difficult to come down from. Shotgun Rider has used this to his advantage several times, tricking Longhorn into thinking he's hurt a cow in order to lure Longhorn and his bovine armies out of the city and safely into the country.

After each defeat, Longhorn will usually revert to a bestial state and disappear for months or even years at a time. Eventually, he regains his faculties and attempts another coup against humanity and its hubris, having learned from his past mistakes and ready to try newer and more intelligent tactics.

Quote: "We bovine will suffer your indignities no longer. We will show you furless monkeys how it feels to be enslaved and the slaughtered."

Powers/Tactics: Longhorn's physical strength and resilience is frightening enough on its own. He is as strong and tough as any brick and he is faster than many. When by himself and facing

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foes, Longhorn will abandon tactics and throw himself at whoever is the strongest-looking hero. He is confident that he could shrug off much of what is thrown at him.

However, he is hardly ever alone. His other major power is his rapport with bovine creatures. He can mentally communicate with, command, and even coordinate the actions of cows, bulls, oxen, buffalo, and other bovine creatures. With this power, Longhorn is often at the head of a veritable army of bovine. Most of his schemes, in fact, involve conscripting such an army to charge and overtake a location, be it a town, a military establishment, a laboratory, or somewhere else. When opposed by heroes during these operations, Longhorn is not above commanding his bovines to Coordinate Their Attacks on the heroes.

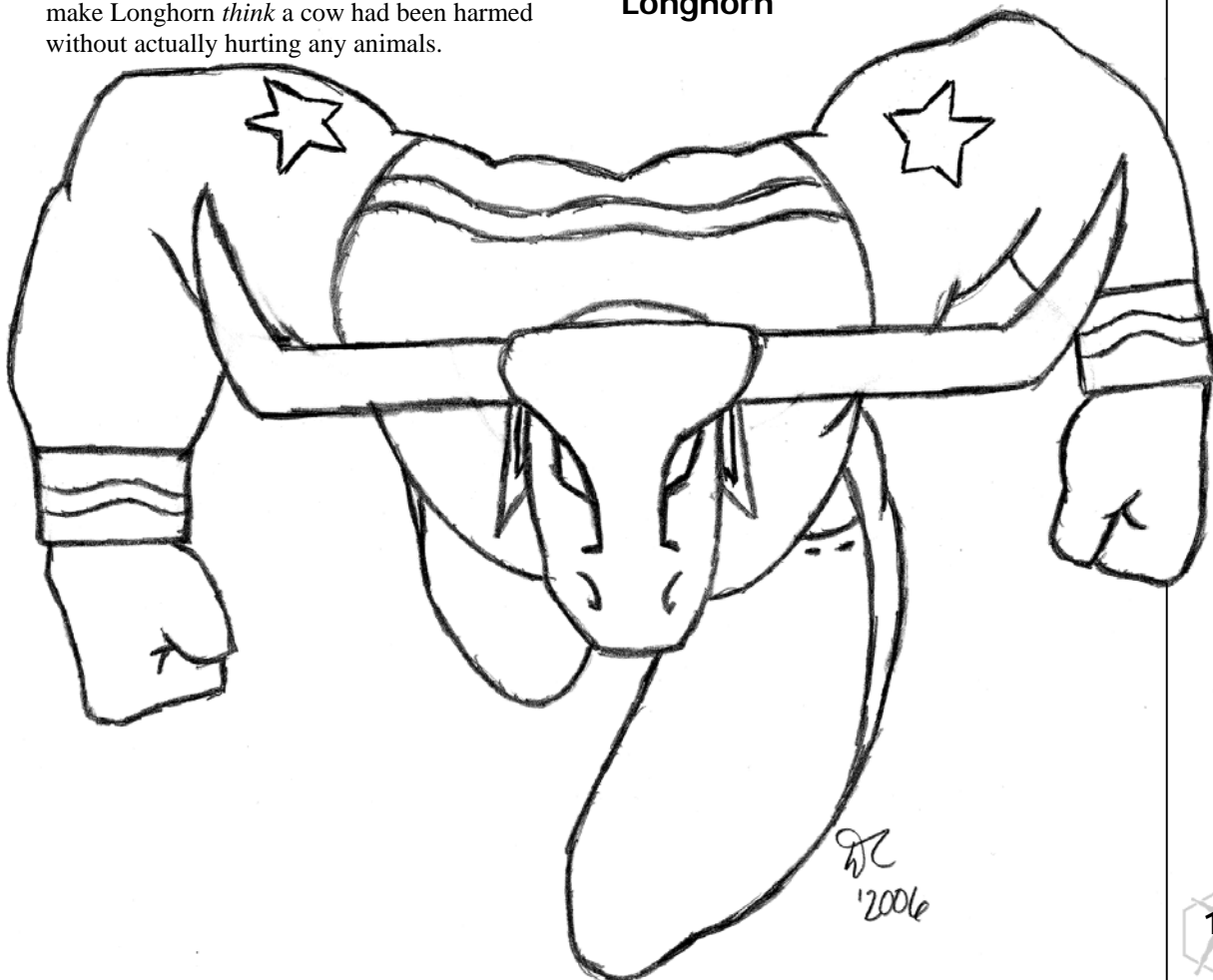
If Longhorn has weaknesses at all, they are his average Intelligence and his hatred of bovine mistreatment. Both can be used against him, if the heroes are careful. Having his Intelligence used against him angers Longhorn just as it would anyone else, only driving him to further psychopathic behavior. And a hero who actually harms cows just to get Longhorn worked up is really no more of a hero than many of his villainous foes. Each time Shotgun Rider used that latter tactic, he had to be very creative to make Longhorn *think* a cow had been harmed without actually hurting any animals.

Campaign Use: Given Longhorn's concept (he's a humanoid bull hell-bent on leading cows to dominate the Earth), it would be very tempting to use Longhorn as comic relief in a campaign. The GM should resist this temptation, because Longhorn is neither silly nor comical. An encounter with Longhorn should leave the heroes thinking about the intense dangers posed by an insane, psychopathic mind whose goals are barely understandable yet whose methods are bloody and murderous.

Longhorn is very much a statement of humanity's place in the ecology of the world and its callousness about it. Humans are largely complacent in their place at the top of the food chain. While there are some activists for animal rights and vegetarianism, most humans could care less where their Kansas City Strip steak came from or how the cow had been treated. While most dairy and beef farmers treat their livestock very humanely, it is still a fact that if someone saw humans treated the way cows are treated there would be protest and drama in abundance. Longhorn's mentality embraces this "what if" scenario like a religious zealot and turns it against humanity with intense vindictiveness.

they accumulate enough data to try to recreate the chemicals in the waste pit, they have scientists in the Mob's pocket conduct experiments to create more half-beasts like Longhorn. Now the PCs must deal with both the new monsters and Longhorn's newfound need for vengeance against the Wolf Pack for their sacrilege.

Longhorn



Longhorn

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
20+60	STR	10	25-	Lift 1.6 kt; 16d6 HTH [5]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
20	CON	20	13-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll: 11-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
10	COM	0	11-	
18	PD	2		Total: 33 PD (33 rPD)
10	ED	6		Total: 25 ED (25 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
20	REC	0		
40	END	0		
65	STUN	0		

Total Characteristics Cost: 118

Movement: Running: 21"/42"
Leaping: 16"/32"
Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
30	<i>Bovine Mastery:</i> Elemental Control, 60-point powers	0
20	1) <i>Bovine Speech:</i> Telepathy 12d6 [Animal Class of Minds]; Only With Bovine Creatures (-1/2)	6
20	2) <i>Bovine Command:</i> Mind Control 12d6 [Animal Class of Minds]; Only With Bovine Creatures (-1/2)	6
24	3) <i>Bovine Rapport:</i> Mind Link [Animal Class of Minds], Bovine Creatures Of All Sorts, Any Distance, Number of Minds (x512); Costs Endurance (Only Costs END to Activate, -1/4)	6
75	<i>Bovine Strength:</i> +60 STR, Reduced Endurance (1/2 END, +1/4)	3
45	<i>Bovine Resilience:</i> Armor (15 PD/15 ED)	0
21	<i>Bovine Resilience:</i> Damage Resistance (18 PD/10 ED), Hardened (2x, +1/2)	0
10	<i>Bovine Weight:</i> Knockback Resistance -5"	0
30	<i>Bovine Charge:</i> Running +15" (21" Total)	3

Perks

60 Followers: approximately 500 Followers of up to 150 points each, built on 75 Base Points (bulls, cows, buffalo, oxen, and so forth)

Talents

20 Animal Friendship (FH103)
15 Beast Speech (FH103)

Skills

30 +6 with Hand-to-Hand Combat
3 Acrobatics 13-
3 Breakfall 13-
4 CK: Meriquai Falls 12-
5 Tactics 12-
3 Teamwork 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 418

Total Cost: 536

200+ Disadvantages

20 Enraged: When Bovine are Harmed in Any Way (Berserk, Uncommon, Go 11-, Recover 14-)
15 Hunted: The Manitou and the Equalizers 8- (Mo Pow)
15 Hunted: Shotgun Rider 11- (As Pow)
20 Hunted: United States Air Force 11- (As Pow, NCI)
25 Psychological Limitation: Believes He is the Messiah of Bovine Creatures Everywhere (Very Common, Total)
15 Psychological Limitation: Hates Shotgun Rider with a Passion (Common, Strong)
10 Psychological Limitation: Protective of Bovine (Uncommon, Strong)
20 Reputation: Destructive, Psychopathic Villain, 14- (Extreme)
10 Unluck: 2d6
186 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 536

If Longhorn isn't powerful enough, start assigning him new "brick tricks," using the ones listed in the *USPD* and *The Ultimate Brick* as inspiration. If Longhorn is too powerful, reduce his *Bovine Strength*, which will in turn reduce the effected figured characteristics. His Damage Resistance and Armor should also be reduced accordingly.

Longhorn is prone to holding grudges for very unreasonable lengths of time. Anyone who has defeated him at least once is likely to become Hunted by him.

Appearance: Longhorn is a 7 foot tall humanoid bull. He has 500 pounds of pure muscle that is covered in coarse, brown fur. His horns are like those of a longhorn bull, jutting straight out from the sides of his forehead for several feet. While his thick arms end in human-like hands, his thick legs resemble those of a bull, ending in thick cloven hooves. Most of the time, he dresses in Western-cut shirts and blue jeans, though these tend to get tattered easily during one of his schemes.



Deconstructing STR

by Gary Mei

Rethinking Strength

One of the bigger problems many people have with the HERO System is that STR is too much of a bargain at 1 Point. It gives loads of Figured Characteristics, Damage, Lifting, Leap, a quasi-Constant aspect, and various miscellaneous benefits. Compared to Energy Blast for example, it is dirt cheap, although the fact that EB is a Power makes it easier to place in a Power Framework.

Consider +10 Strength gives the following:

- +2d6 Damage
- 4x Lifting capacity
- +2 PD
- +2 REC
- +5 STUN
- +2" Leap
- +1d6 free "Damage Shield" from Casual Strength limited to Grabs/Entangles
- Ability to use the environment for free Area Of Effect and Range if STR is high enough.
- A limited Constant aspect where Damage can be done Phase after Phase after a Grab.
- The first 10 Points are free.

The same 10 Points of Energy Blast gives:

- +2d6 Damage at Range
- Ability to Spread
- Ability to Bounce
- Easier access to Power Frameworks because EB is a Standard Power while STR is a Characteristic.

The Range and ability to Spread or Bounce are nice for an Energy Blast, but it hardly compares with all the benefits high STR provides. The one thing that historically has proven to be a big balancing factor is the easier access to Frameworks.

I dislike depending on two offsetting "unfair" factors to balance out. My proposal is to treat STR as a Power as well, where basic characters start with 10 Points for free. STR would no longer be considered a Characteristic. This would be analogous to the situation of Running which is treated as a Power that characters start with 6" for free. At the same time, STR would no longer add to Figured Characteristics.

This change provides the following benefits:

- It is fairer if the Powers are bought straight. Now 60 STR would provide roughly the same utility as a 12d6 Energy Blast.
- By treating STR as a Power, it now has the same easy access to Power Frameworks as everything else. It will be just as easy and just as legal to place STR in a Multipower or Elemental Control as EB without wrecking game balance.
- Be removing the artificial subsidy for STR, it becomes easier to unify STR, Hand Attack, and Martial Arts Damage Classes in a fair and uniform way.
- By treating STR as a Power, the same rules as any other Standard Power will apply, thus making the HERO System cleaner and more elegant.
- Because STR is no longer considered a Characteristic, many of the problems with Naked Advantages can be mitigated.

Strength

This Standard Constant Power in its basic form costs 5 Points per 1d6. Every 5 Points provides 2x Lifting Capability, +1d6 Damage, +1" Leap, and +1/2d6 of Casual Strength. Up to the same Active Points of STR can be added to Hand-to-Hand Killing Attacks. It has No Range and Costs END.

Example: Ogre is extremely strong, able to lift 100 tons. He purchases +50 STR (60 total) for 50 Points. He can lift 100 tons, does 12d6 damage in hand-to-hand combat, has 30 Casual STR, and 12" Leap.

Example: Flying Mammal Man is at peak human STR due to intense training. He purchases +15 STR (25 total) for 15 Points. He can lift 800 kg, does 5d6 damage in hand-to-hand combat, has 13 Casual STR, and 5" Leap.

NORMAL CHARACTERISTIC MAXIMA

In any campaign with Normal Characteristic Maxima, STR and Leap would still retain the same limits as under the current system despite being treated as a Power.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The contents of this article are *not* "official" HERO System rules, and are presented as an alternative for those wishing to experiment with the game system.

Possible Limitations and Advantages

DOES NOT ADD TO LEAP (-1/4)

STR with this Limitation does not give any additional Leap.

Example: Lead Boy weighs 16 times as much as a normal human. He purchases +20 STR (30 total) with this Limitation for a total of $(20/1\frac{1}{4}) = 16$ Points. Lead Boy still does 6d6 damage and can lift 1600 kg, but his base Leap is 2", not 6".

Example: Big Rubber Monster is the size of a skyscraper. He purchases +100 STR (110 total) with this Limitation for a total of $(100/1\frac{1}{4}) = 80$ Points. Big Rubber Monster still does 22d6 damage and can lift 100 kilotons, but his base Leap is 2", not 22".

DOES NOT ADD TO CASUAL STRENGTH, GRABS, OR ESCAPING GRABS/ENTANGLES (-1/4)

STR with this Limitation does not affect the above usages.

Example: Green Glowing Energy Guy can create big energy platforms that can be used to hit enemies or carry stuff. However, these energy discs are useless for Grabbing, Escaping Grabs/Entangles, and Casual Strength. He purchases them as +40 STR with Does Not Add to Casual Strength, Grabs, or Escaping Grabs/Entangles (-1/4) and Does Not Add to Leap (-1/4) for 27 points. Now these discs can hit people and lift, but do not add to GGEG's Grabbing, Escape, Casual STR, or Leap.

DOES NOT ADD TO LIFT (-1/4)

STR with this Limitation cannot be used to Lift or Throw. It may be used to Squeeze after Grabbing, but not Throw.

Example: Anklyosaur purchases +20 STR through his tail. He takes Does Not Add to Casual Strength, Grabs, or escaping Grabs/Entangles (-1/4), Does Not Add to Leap (-1/4), and Does Not Add to Lift (-1/4) on it and pays a total of 11 Points. This is the classic 'Hand-to-Hand Attack'. The tail can only be used to strike with.

Example: A nightstick might be purchased as +10 STR, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2) (15 Active Points); Does Not Add to Leap (-1/4), Does Not Add to Casual Strength, Grabs, or Escaping Grabs/Entangles (-1/4), Does Not Add to Lift (-1/4), OAF (-1) for a total of 5 Real Points.

Example: Anaconda has enormous STR when he traps a target in his coils. He purchases +40 STR; Does Not Add to Lift (-1/4) for 32 Points. When he Grabs a target, he can Squeeze for 10d6 Damage, but he can only Throw the target for 2d6 Damage (his Base 10 STR).

DOES NOT ADD TO DAMAGE (-1/2)

STR with this Limitation does not add any dice to damage. It may still be used for Grabs, however in this case; the STR is only for the purpose of holding onto the target. It may not be used to Squeeze or Throw the target.

Example: Mudman has very sticky hands. He purchases +30 STR with Does Not Add to Leap (-1/4), Does Not Add to Lift (-1/4), Does Not Add to Damage (-1/2), Can Only Be Used with 1 Non-Strike Standard Maneuver (-1/4) for a total of 13 Points. Mudman has +6d6 only for the purpose of Grabbing a target and holding on. This STR cannot be used to Squeeze or Throw the target after it is Grabbed.

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CANNOT BE USED WITH ANY COMBAT MANEUVERS (-1/2)

STR with this Limitation cannot be used with any Combat Maneuvers, Standard or Martial.

Example: A forklift purchases +20 STR with the following Limitations: Does Not Add to Leap (-1/4), Does Not Add to Casual Strength, Grabs, or Escaping Grabs/Entangles (-1/4), Does Not Add to Damage (-1/2), and Cannot Be Used With Any Combat Maneuvers (-1/2) for a Real Cost of 8 Points. This STR can only be used for Lifting. The forklift can still attack people using its Base STR, but these 20 Points will not add to its base damage.

CAN ONLY BE USED WITH 1 NON-STRIKE STANDARD MANEUVER (-1/4)

STR with this Limitation can only be used with one Non-Strike Standard Maneuver.

Example: Slick has a frictionless field around him. He purchases +30 STR with the following Limitations: Does Not Add to Leap (-1/4), Does Not Add to Lift (-1/4), Does Not Add to Damage (-1/2), Can Only Be Used with 1 Non-Strike Standard Maneuver (-1/4) for a Real Cost of 13 Points. This STR can only be used by Slick to Escape from Grabs/Entangles or as Casual STR for this purpose.

Example: Rocket has a hard force field around him when he crashes into an opponent. He purchases +20 STR with the following Limitations: Does Not Add to Leap (-1/4), Does Not Add to Casual Strength, Grabs, or escaping Grabs/Entangles (-1/4), Does Not Add to Lift (-1/4), Can Only Be Used with 1 Non-Strike Standard Maneuver (-1/4) for a Real Cost of 10 Points. This STR adds +4d6 to Rocket's Move Through damage and nowhere else.

CAN ONLY BE USED WITH MARTIAL MANEUVERS (-1/4)

STR with this Limitation can only be used with Martial Maneuvers. They cannot be used with Standard Maneuvers such as Move Through, Move By, or Haymaker. If a character takes this Limitation and has a Grab-type Martial Maneuver, the STR can only be used to hold onto the target, not to Squeeze or Throw.

Example: The classic Martial Arts 'Damage Class' would be built as +5 STR, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2) (7 Active Points); Does Not Add to Leap (-1/4), Does Not Add to Lift (-1/4), Can Only Be Used with Martial Maneuvers (-1/4) for a total of 4 Real Points. This would be something that a Boxer-type Martial Artist would use. If the Martial Arts do not have any kind of Grab or Escape maneuvers, it may take an additional -1/4 Limitation from Does Not Add to Casual Strength, Grabs, or escaping Grabs/Entangles.

CAN BE USED WITH EXOTIC MARTIAL MANEUVERS (+1/4)

STR with this Advantage can be used with Exotic Martial Maneuvers. Exotic in this case is defined as a Maneuver with a NND, Flash, or Killing Attack Basis. However, any STR with any additional 'Combat' Advantages must also take this Advantage if those Advantages can apply to a Martial Arts Maneuver. 'Combat' Advantages are defined as any Advantage other than Reduced Endurance, Personal Immunity, or Charges (however, Boostable Charges would be considered a 'Combat Advantage' if the final Advantage level was +1/4 or greater).

Example: Green Dragon is a master of kung fu. He purchases +20 STR, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2), Can Be Used with Exotic Martial Maneuvers (+1/4) (35 Active Points); Does Not Add to Leap (-1/4), Does Not Add to Lift (-1/4), Can Only Be Used with Martial Maneuvers (-1/4), which brings the cost down to 20 Real Points. Now he can use this 20 STR with his Martial Flash, Nerve Strike, or Killing Strike.

Multipower Examples

A wuxia or anime martial artist might purchase the following Multipower:

- 62 *Wild Martial Arts*: Multipower, 62-point Reserve
- 6u 1) *Meridian Sword Chi*: HKA 3d6+1 (4d6 with STR), Reduced Endurance (½ END, +¼) 3
- 3u 2) *Chi Inner Power*: +40 STR, Reduced Endurance (½ END, +¼), Can Be Used with Exotic Martial Maneuvers (+¼); Does Not Add to Leap (-¼), Does Not Add to Lift (-¼), Can Only Be Used with Martial Maneuvers (-¼) 3
- 3u 3) *Focused Chi*: +35 STR, Armor Piercing (+½), Can Be Used with Exotic Martial Maneuvers (+¼); Does Not Add to Leap (-¼), Does Not Add to Lift (-¼), Can Only Be Used with Martial Maneuvers (-¼) 6
- 3u 4) *Blur Hand*: +40 STR, Autofire (3 Shots, +¼), Can Be Used with Exotic Martial Maneuvers (+¼); Does Not Add to Leap (-¼), Does Not Add to Lift (-¼), Can Only Be Used with Martial Maneuvers (-¼) *6
- 3u 5) *Whirlwind Attack*: +25 STR, Area Of Effect (Any Area, +1), Reduced Endurance (½ END, +¼), Can Be Used with Exotic Martial Maneuvers (+¼); Does Not Add to Leap (-¼), Does Not Add to Lift (-¼), Can Only Be Used with Martial Maneuvers (-¼) 3

Note that the second slot only has to take the Can Be Used with Exotic Martial Maneuvers (+¼) Advantage if the Martial Artist has a Flash, NND, or Killing Attack Martial Maneuver that the STR applies to. The last 3 slots must take this Advantage since they have a ‘Combat’ Advantage also attached.

A skilled brick might buy a Multipower like this:

- 52 *Brick Tricks*: Multipower, 52-point Reserve
- 5u 1) *I Can Lift 100 Tons!*: +50 STR 5
- 2u 2) *I Can Wrap Steel Girders Around You*: Entangle (5 DEF, 5d6 BODY); OIF (Objects of Opportunity, -½) No Range (-½) 5
- 3u 3) *Pointy Knuckles*: +35 STR, Armor Piercing (+½); Does Not Add to Casual Strength, Grabs, or Escaping Grabs/Entangles (-¼), Does Not Add to Leap (-¼), Does Not Add to Lift (-¼) 5
- 2u 4) *Shockwave*: +25 STR, Area Of Effect (5” Radius, +1); Does Not Add to Casual Strength, Grabs, or Escaping Grabs/Entangles (-¼), Does Not Add to Leap (-¼), Does Not Add to Lift (-¼), Only in Contact with a Surface (-¼) 5

Martial Arts

To minimize the number of changes necessary from the standard HERO System Rules, it is possible to build Martial Arts Damage Classes as Talents.

- *Martial Arts Damage Class*: +5 STR, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½) (7 Active Points); Does Not Add to Leap (-¼), Does Not Add to Lift (-¼), Can Only Be Used with Martial Maneuvers (-¼). 4 Real Points.
- Martial Arts Damage Class that can be used with Exotic Martial Maneuvers would be built as +5 STR, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½), Can Be Used with Exotic Martial Maneuvers (+¼) (9 Active Points); Does Not Add to Leap (-¼), Does Not Add to Lift (-¼), Can Only Be Used with Martial Maneuvers (-¼). 5 Real Points.

Note that a Martial Arts Damage Class with Exotic Maneuvers is slightly more expensive than before. This is a logical consequence of removing the artificial subsidy previously given to STR in the form of Figured Characteristics.

I would also recommend that Martial Killing Attacks no longer halve the DCs from Martial Arts Damage Classes in a Superheroic, Wuxia, or Anime level campaign. In these campaigns, Resistant Defenses are common and there is no game balance necessity for such a halving, especially since a DC that applies to Martial Arts Killing Attacks is slightly more expensive than a regular DC. Also, Killing Maneuvers are very common in such a genre setting.

Base Strength

There are a few options when adding the 10 Base STR that every Character has, to Martial or Advantaged other STR (to avoid dealing with ugly Naked Advantages).

1) Force the Base STR to purchase these Advantages as well.

2) Allow it to add directly to the attack without pro-rating.

3) Setup a scale. If total Combat Advantages on the attack are less than +1, allow full benefit. If total Combat Advantages are from +1 to +1¾, allow half benefit. If total Combat Advantages are $\geq +2$, allow no benefit. Thus an 8d6 Armor Piercing attack will result in 10d6 Armor Piercing after factoring the Base 10 STR at full value. A 6d6 Area Of Effect attack will result in 7d6 Area Of Effect total after factoring in the base 10 STR at half value. A 4d6 Affects Solid World Attack will remain at 4d6 since it has +2 worth of Advantages, unless the player adds the same Advantage to his Base STR.

Potential Notes and Problems

- The character's Base 10 STR must still be treated differently from any additional STR purchased, unless option 1 is selected. However, if option 1 is selected, there is a potential problem when the character has a Multipower where each slot is a different form of Advantaged STR. For example, if the character has a Multipower with a NND slot, Area Of Effect slot, Armor Piercing slot, Autofire slot, etc, the character would be forced to purchase each and every one of these Advantages, or a Variable Advantage equal to the highest possible level of Advantage in the Multipower on his Base 10 STR. This is clunky and inelegant.
- Option 2 has slight game balance problems, but less than under the current system where the character gets potentially large amounts of Advantages for free.
- Option 3 is fair, but adds a little complexity. Option 3 can also be used for the damage bonuses given by various Martial Arts maneuvers. Thus an Offensive Strike would add +6d6 (including Base STR) to an Attack with 0 to +¾ in Advantages, +3d6 to an Attack with +1 to +1¾ in Advantages, or +0d6 to an Attack with +2 or greater in Advantages.

- Forcing Martial Arts Damage Classes to purchase Advantages directly on them allows for avoiding many of the complexities of the Advantaged Martial Attacks rules from *The Ultimate Martial Artist*. And this should work fine for a standard Strike-type Maneuver. However, there are potential problems when dealing with Effects such as Martial Throw. By not adding in 25 Base Points as suggested in *The Ultimate Martial Artist*, it may be too efficient to purchase something such as Area Effect Martial Throw for a low price but enormous potential combat utility. I'm not sure of a good fix for this.

Design Notes

- I wanted the cost of 'Hand-to-Hand Attack' to be a net -½ or -¾ Limitation on STR. Anything more would be excessive, in my opinion. Otherwise there's a good argument that Cannot Be Used for Lift should be a -½ Limitation.
- I wanted a Martial Arts Damage Class to cost 4 Points just like under the old system. The fact that it costs 5 Points when added to Exotic Maneuvers seems fair since adding to NND, Flash, or Martial Killing Attacks is adding additional utility to what STR normally provides, and therefore costs an additional price. However one potential concern is whether +2 CSLs can be used for a Damage Class for such an attack. At 6 points for 2 CSLs for a Martial Arts Style, it may be too efficient compared to +1 DC with Exotic Martial Arts Attacks at 5 Points.
- I debated but ultimately decided against breaking down STR into its component pieces such as 1 pt for Leap, 2 pts for Lift, and 3 pts for Damage. This is to maintain game balance and prevent people from purchasing 20d6 damage and 2³⁰ lifting as slots in a typical 60-point Multipower or Elemental Control.



War of the Worlds: Champions

by John R. Ivicsek Jr.

“No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man’s and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinized and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinize the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water...”

— H.G. Wells, *War of the Worlds*

In the end the invaders from the stars were defeated by our microbes. Powerful and brilliant, they had overlooked procedures that we take for granted today concerning quarantine procedures. With the benefit of hindsight, it might be enjoyable to figure out another way for humanity to overcome the Martians. Our technology was too far behind to even factor into the equation, even in the Grand Empire of the United Kingdom.

The Martians knew this world wasn’t totally suitable and had already begun to take the first steps towards terraforming earth into a more hospitable climate. The Black Dust and the Red Vegetation were the first steps towards making Earth a new home for the invaders. But suppose that this was in fact their undoing? In the seeds of their victory lay the possibility of their defeat.

The Black dust was exemplary at killing off terrestrial life left still barely clinging to existence in the wake of the Martian Heat rays. Drifting across the countryside, it indiscriminately brought a death more gruesome than anything mankind had ever imagined in even his darkest dreams.

Killing was only the first step. In its wake, everything that found its final rest in the Black Dust decomposed at an accelerated rate forming the rich soil that nourished the Red vines from the planet of war.

But another seed took root as well. Hope. Some precious few individuals were either immune to the Black Dust or changed by it instead of slain. One and all, they developed strange new abilities and powers well beyond even the wildest tales of Heroes and legends.

Humanity tottered on the edge of extinction, but from the brink a select few looked back and uttered in one voice, “This shall not pass. We will not go quietly into this dark night.”

And the War of the Worlds truly began....

Timeline of the War

Timeline of Events of the Martian Invasion

Late July/Early August, 1894 — During the Opposition of Mars, a great light is seen on the illuminated part of the Martian disk.

1896, 1898 — Strange marks are seen on the Martian disk during Opposition.

Midnight, August 12 1900 — First jet of green gas seen erupting from the surface of Mars.

Midnight, August 13-22 1900 — Jets of green gas spurt out from Mars at 24 hour intervals.

Midnight, December 12-22 1900 — The Jets of green gas again spurt from the surface of Mars, but this time they occur twice a night.

The Martian Invasion, June 1902

Day 1: Friday

Midnight — The first Martian cylinder lands in Surrey on the common between Horsell, Ottershaw, and Woking.

6 a.m. — The first cylinder is found.

9 a.m. — People begin to gather at the edge of the pit.

Afternoon — A small group attempts to excavate the cylinder.

Shortly before sunset — Approximately two to three hundred people are gathered at the pit when the cylinder opens. At the sight of the Martians the crowd retreats from the edge of the pit.

Sunset — Their confidence somewhat restored by the lack of visible activity in the Pit, the crowd begins to slowly advance upon the Pit once more.

8.30 p.m. — A small group of three attempts peaceful contact with the Martians. They advance on the pit waving a white flag. There is a flash of light and three puffs of greenish smoke rise into the air. The hissing noise that accompanies this activity slowly turns into a humming, then into a loud, droning noise. The Martians target the crowd with their Heat-Ray, and an invisible ray of heat flashes from man to man, and each bursts into flame, as if suddenly and momentarily turned to fire. The crowd flees in panic.

11.00 p.m. — A company of soldiers form a cordon around the edge of the common. A squadron of Hussars, two Maxim guns, and four hundred men of the Cardigan regiment depart for the common from Aldershot.

DIGITAL HERO #39

Day 2: Saturday

Midnight — The second cylinder falls in the woods at Byfleet Golf Links, to the northwest of Woking.

Morning — Newspapers report:

The Martians, alarmed by the approach of a crowd, have killed a number of people with a quick-firing gun. Formidable as they seem to be, the Martians have not moved from the pit into which they have fallen, and, indeed, seem incapable of doing so. Probably this is due to the relative strength of the earth's gravitational energy.

3 p.m. — The pine woods into which the second cylinder fell are shelled from Chertsey and Addlestone.

6 p.m. — A clash between the Martians and the soldiers around the first pit on Horsell Common occurs as the Martians venture from their pit under cover of a large shield. The Martians are unharmed in this encounter and rout the nearby British forces.

7 p.m. — The artillery at Horsell Common is wiped out by the first of the Martian Fighting Machines.

7.15 p.m. — The first of the Fighting Machines attacks Woking.

8 p.m. — Newspapers report the loss of telegraphic communication with the area about Horsell Common, believed to be due to burning trees falling across the line. One of the Fighting Machines returns to Woking.

Day 3: Sunday

Midnight — The third cylinder falls in a field near Pyrford.

Morning — London newspapers report:

About seven o'clock last night the Martians came out of the cylinder, and, moving about under an armour of metallic shields, have completely wrecked Woking station with the adjacent houses, and massacred an entire battalion of the Cardigan Regiment. No details are known. Maxims have been absolutely useless against their armour; the field guns have been disabled by them. Flying hussars have been galloping into Chertsey. The Martians appear to be moving slowly towards Chertsey or Windsor. Great anxiety prevails in West Surrey, and earthworks are being thrown up to check the advance Londonward.

1 p.m. — Five Fighting Machines attack Weybridge and Shepperton. One of the Fighting Machines is destroyed by the guns concealed at Shepperton, and reels into the tower of Shepperton Church before collapsing into the river. Weybridge is leveled by the Martians' Heat Rays. The Martians return to Horsell Common with the wreckage of the destroyed Fighting Machine.

Afternoon — The Martians transfer all of their equipment from Addlestone Golf Links and Pyrford to the original pit on Horsell Common. Meanwhile, artillery is assembled around Kingston and Richmond and scouts with heliographs carefully approach the Pit on Horsell Common to warn of any Martian activity.

Evening — London newspapers give the first inkling of the power of the Martians:

Fighting at Weybridge! Full description! Repulse of the Martians! London in Danger! The Martians are using vast spiderlike machines, nearly a hundred feet high, capable of the speed of an express train, and able to shoot out a beam of intense heat.

8 p.m. — Heavy firing is audible all over the south of London. Three Martians in Fighting Machines advance from the pit on Horsell Common, and move in a line through Byfleet and Pyrford towards Ripley and Weybridge. The guns at St. George's Hill cripple one Fighting Machine before the guns are destroyed.

9.05 p.m. — The three Martians are joined by four more Fighting Machines carrying launchers for the Black Dust. The first three are also given tubes by the newcomers. The Fighting Machines move to space themselves along a curved line between St. George's Hill, Weybridge and Send. Two more position themselves to face Sunbury and Staines.

9.30 p.m. — The Martians unleash their Black Dust against the forces between themselves and London.

11 p.m. — Whatever units were missed by the Black Dust are quickly eliminated by the Heat Ray and the advance towards London continues.

Day 4: Monday

Midnight — the fourth cylinder falls in Bushey Park.

Early morning, shortly before dawn — The news begins to travel through London of approaching Martians. Extra editions of the newspapers report:

The Martians are able to discharge enormous clouds of a black and poisonous vapour by means of rockets. They have smothered our batteries, destroyed Richmond, Kingston, and Wimbledon, and are advancing slowly towards London, destroying everything on the way. It is impossible to stop them. There is no safety from the Black Smoke but in instant flight.

The Exodus from London begins.

Morning — The Martians range over the North Downs between Guildford and Maidstone, using the Black Dust to eliminate any artillery batteries located there.

2 p.m. — The first Martian Fighting Machines advance through London.

7 p.m. — Rising from the ashes of his homestead, Britannic strikes the first blow in the new War of the Worlds. A scout walker falls at his hands and he sets out to carry the fight to the invaders. Donning the tattered flag of the British Empire as a mask to filter the Black Dust, he becomes the first of England's new defenders.

8 p.m. — Fleeing the destruction of London and the clouds of the Black Dust that so recently engulfed her, Stella Stovepipe finds herself compelled to stop and grab a sheaf of paper and a pencil to jot down the new ideas and mechanisms that literally spring unbidden from her imagination.

Day 5: Tuesday

Midnight — The fifth cylinder falls at Sheen. The Martians gain complete possession of London; Fighting Machines are sighted at Highgate and Neasden.

9 p.m. — Out of the detritus of London, Nike is born from the Black Dust. She helps shield a small band of survivors from the Martians until she can lead them to safety.

Day 6: Wednesday

Midnight — the sixth cylinder falls at Wimbledon.

5.30 p.m. — Three Fighting Machines advance upon the fleet assembled in the English Channel. The torpedo ram Thunder Child attacks the three Martian Fighting Machines, destroying one with her guns before she is struck down by the Heat-Ray. Even so, in a valiant last act Thunder Child rams another of the Fighting Machines, taking it with her.

Sunset — the Battle of the Thames is fought by the Channel Fleet against a number of Fighting Machines. The battle is ended when the Martians' newly-constructed Flying Machine arrives from the pit on Horsell Common and rains down canisters of the Black Dust on the fleet. On the return flight to Horsell the Flying Machine, not designed for such prolonged flights

in Earth's gravity, goes out of control and crashes in the Hammersmith area. The Martian pilots are killed in the crash, and the Flying Machine itself is largely buried by the rubble its impact created.

Only one man survives the onslaught on the Channel Fleet, clinging to a bit of flotsam until it takes him to shore. Freed from his service in the Royal Navy, Donnybrook decides he likes his odds better on land and begins a one man war against the occasional lone scout he finds.

Day 7: Thursday

Midnight — The seventh cylinder lands on Primrose Hill.

Days 8-11:

This time is spent in consolidation of the territory gained. The Martians begin the harvesting of humans in earnest in their captured territories.

The four heroes, Britannic, Nike, Donnybrook, and Stella Stovepipe, meet for the first time south of London. They begin a comprehensive reconnaissance of the city in the hope of taking it back from the Invaders. Stella realizes that the potential to filter the Black Dust is there, and she begins designs for a "Mask of Filtered Air" as well as a set of "Heat Sensing Optics" to enable the heroes to see the dreaded Heat Ray.

Clashes with the Martians are avoided and on Day 10, the heroes move west to join with the remains of the British Army. The information they have gathered is passed along and Stella is immediately put to work supervising the new Masks and Optics for the Army.

Day 12: Tuesday

Evening — The electricity supply in a small area of London is started up again, and Regent Street and Piccadilly Circus are ablaze with lights. They attract hundreds of survivors, ragged and drunken, who spend the night carousing.

Day 13: Wednesday

Dawn — The revelers in Regent Street and Piccadilly become aware of a Fighting Machine standing nearby. The Fighting Machine scoops up nearly a hundred people too drunk or paralyzed with fear to move. However they are rescued by the timely arrival of Britannic and Nike who double team the machine and free the captives. They shepherd the survivors away from the battle zone.

Days 14-15:

With the minimal production capabilities at their disposal, the British do their level best to equip troops with the new masks. Five sets of the new optics are distributed to Artillery units. Stella, watching the work and with her brain still churning, happens to notice a lone caterpillar

crawling across the heather. Her mind a whirl, she dashes off the prototype designs for the “Queen Mab” series of vehicles.

Day 16: Saturday

The Martians recover the wreckage of the Flying Machine and carry it to their base on Primrose Hill. The Martians also transfer their main camp and most of their machines to the crater on Primrose Hill, abandoning many of the smaller pits.

The British High Command settles its final units into place for a push on London and her massive industrial capability.

Days 17-18:

The second battle of London begins. With the aid of the new heroes, the British are able to react quickly to the Martians and the new masks spare the gunners from the Black Dust. Acting quickly and in concert, the forces of the Empire manage to force the Martians from London.

Day 19: Tuesday

The Martians at Primrose Hill manage to render the Flying Machine at least partly operational. They also move all of their forces forward to stabilize the line of retreat from London. Sharp fighting breaks out along the path of the retreat but the British find themselves forced into a stalemate when Britannic falls from the sky after being attacked simultaneously by three War Machines.

He is recovered from the battlefield and the British hold the line, but neither side can advance.

Days 20-145:

With a rough parity achieved, both sides look for an edge to break the stalemate. Britannic heals from his wounds and is just barely held back from rushing off in an attempt to break the Martian line. Construction begins at a hurried pace on both sides as defensive emplacements and new implements of war split England in half. The Martians continue to subdue the territory under their control in the north, and soon hold England from Shrewsbury to the North Sea. Extensive use of the Black Dust here results in new Supers who either manage to make their way to the south to fight for the empire, or fall before the mighty Heat Ray.

Small conflicts and pushes at the defenses of both sides occur, but the stalemate rages on. For the British, they simply do not have guns that are heavily defended enough to survive an initial onslaught until they can inflict damage. For the Martians, it is a numbers game. While the “harvesting” done in the northlands has allowed a modest growth in their numbers, they need better flying machines and more troops to finally break the British lines.

Day 146: The Campaign Begins

Important Note: On Day 365 the Martians will get reinforcements. Roughly double the size of their initial invasion force... the lengthy delay is accounted for by the less than optimal launch position of the second wave in December of 1900.

The primary setting for Champions: War of the Worlds is England in 1902. It's simple enough to transfer the location to any other country really; all you need to do is establish the initial Martian invasion and the aftermath of those first few days.

While the intended setting is Day 146 of the invasion, the provided timeline of initial events would allow any group to run through the actual invasion itself and stage the desperate struggle against the Martians. The timeline is also provided to give the GM and players a feel for the events so that they can make a connection for their characters on an emotional level.

So what's up with the rest of world? Why are the Brits going it alone? In 1902 Britain is hands-down the most powerful nation on Earth. She also is currently the bulwark against the Martian invasion. So while the other countries hope Britain does well, they are loath to commit forces to her defense when it is common knowledge that “only” ten cylinders landed and no less than thirty jets of the green gas were seen on the surface of Mars in the past. The United Kingdom is currently being supported by the rest of the world in two main ways. First, the rest of the nations have declared the possessions of the United Kingdom as “off limits” until the world has settled again. Without the need to heavily protect her colonies, England can pull back some of troops that would be tied up asserting her colonial interests and use them for the war at home. Second, shiploads of food and basic humanitarian relief floods into British ports daily. The world might not want to commit forces, but they also know they must support England in repulsing this initial beachhead.

You might also ask “Why don't the British just march a million people into the dust? They'd get at least a few more supers that way.” True, but you never know who is going to gain powers as their scientists have yet to isolate what makes 0.1% become mythic juggernauts and the rest just die. Plus, it's just flat out wasteful. If they marched their entire army into the dust, they might get 5 more supers. In the grand scheme, that army is much more effective manning guns and the new Queen Mab vehicles than as a statistic. Still... accidents happen and not even the new filtered masks work all the time.... so the possibility for new supers definitely exists, but they are a lynchpin weapon, not to be used indiscriminately or when a preponderance of normal men and guns might suffice. These

reborn humans are so powerful, they can swing the tides of battle and cannot be wasted on smaller encounters and the winds of chance.

Notes on the Setting: Since at some point it is assumed that the PCs will be making an incursion on to Martian-held lands, there are a few things to remember descriptively. One is that the Martian buildings will tend to be metallic and smooth, very sleek and rounded in their construction and utterly alien. There will be no clue as to what the possible use of a given building might be on first glance.

The other main feature is the “Red Weed” that is a native Martian plant that has taken root heavily in the occupied lands.

“Apparently the vegetable kingdom in Mars, instead of having green for a dominant colour, is of a vivid blood-red tint. At any rate, the seeds which the Martians (intentionally or accidentally) brought with them gave rise in all cases to red-coloured growths. Only that known popularly as the red weed, however, gained any footing in competition with terrestrial forms. The red creeper was quite a transitory growth, and few people have seen it growing. For a time, however, the red weed grew with astonishing vigour and luxuriance. It spread up the sides of the pit by the third or fourth day of our imprisonment, and its cactus-like branches formed a carmine fringe to the edges of our triangular window. And afterwards I found it broadcast throughout the country, and especially wherever there was a stream of water.”

— H.G. Wells, *War of the Worlds*

PC Power Level: Since we are going to be fighting Tripods and Heat-Rays and Martians (Oh My!) we’re going to be generous with points and settle on 150 base + 150 points in Disadvantages for a starting PC. This **only** applies to those that have survived the Black Dust. A normal Victorian adventurer should be built on no more than 75 base + 75 points in Disadvantages at the start.

IMPORTANT NOTE! *All* Superpowered individuals **must** buy the LS: Immunity to Black Dust (3 points) as one of their powers. If you are playing a normal Victorian adventurer and want to acquire your powers in game, you should buy the immunity to the Black Dust during character creation. After you encounter the Black Dust, you may complete your character with an additional 75 base + 75 points in disadvantages just like any other Black Dust survivor.

CONVENTIONS OF THE SETTING FOR CHARACTER CREATION

Survival: Only a small fraction (about 0.1%) survive the Black Dust for whatever reason. British Scientists have yet to determine what allows only a few to survive and gain vast power while the overwhelming majority perishes.

Powers: Most (85%) of those who survive the Black dust are enhanced physically. They become stronger, faster, and more durable, all to varying degrees. In short, they have very physical powers that are completely inherent to themselves. This can include things like wings, laser beams from the eyes, anything physical and tangible, really.

Another group (10%) has developed along a more mental path and they have abilities associated with the great mystics and yogis of the time. Mind Control, Telepathy, and/or Magic spells are the norm for this group.

The last group (5%) have “sport” powers, those too strange to classify as physical or mental. This sport group also includes a very small amount of hyper gadgeteers employing Steampunk tech that is almost as bizarre and powerful as the Martians!

Limitations: In general the following limitations should not be available: Only in Hero ID, Focus (Unless you are a Steam Punk Gadgeteer), Conditional Powers that don’t work in intense magnetic fields or the like. This is left broad and the only hard fast rule is that except for the very rare Steampunkers, all powers are innate.

Costumes: Yes, surprisingly. Most of those who survive the Dust feel compelled to adopt a persona that can serve as a beacon for the Empire. More than simply the need to protect one’s identity, this is the need to fuel a nation’s morale. This can be national (Like Britannic below, the first “Flag Suit”) or regional such as wearing modified Scots Highland garb as your costume.

Building a Character for War of the Worlds: Champions

EVERYMAN SKILLS

AK: Home
 Climbing
 Concealment
 Conversation
 Deduction
 Language: 4 points English
 PS: Profession
 Shadowing
 Stealth
 TF: Horse-drawn Vehicles

PACKAGE DEALS

UPPER SERVANT PACKAGE DEAL

2 AK: Employer's estate/home 11-
 1 Language: English (Native), Literate
 2 PS: Upper Servant 11-
 9 Choose three Skills from this list: Bureaucratics, Conversation, High Society, Oratory, Persuasion

MENIAL SERVANT PACKAGE DEAL

2 AK: Neighborhood 11-
 2 PS: (Job: Maid, Meat Packer, etc.) 11-
 4 Choose two Skills from this list: KS: (Job related), AK: (City), KS (hobby)
 6 Choose two Skills from this list: Gambling, Oratory, Persuasion

UPPER CRUST PACKAGE DEAL

3 High Society
 2 Language: Choose either Greek (Literate) or Latin (Literate)
 5 Perk: Wealth: Well-Off
 3 Choose one Skill from this list: AK: London, PS: Dancing, PS: Play Musical Instrument
 9 Choose three Skills from this list: Bureaucratics, Conversation, Language: French (Literate), Oratory, Persuasion
 2 PS: As appropriate (Lawyer, Physician, Scientist, etc.)
 3 KS or SS: As appropriate to PS above

SAILOR PACKAGE DEAL

3 Climbing 11-
 2 KS: Rope Handling 11-
 2 KS: Ships 11-
 2 PS: Sailor 11-
 4 Weapon Familiarity (Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms)
 9 Choose three Skills from this list: Breakfall, Gambling (Cards), Gambling (Dice), PS: Predicting Weather, Navigation, Paramedic, Trading
 -15 Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (Frequently, Major)

Options

6 Gunner (Add KS: Ballistics: 11-, SC: Mathematics: 11-, WF: Emplaced Weapons)
 5/8 Officer (Add KS: Military History: 11-, Tactics (If not chosen above), Perk: Officer (Lt))

SOLDIER PACKAGE DEAL

3 Climbing 11-
 2 KS: The Military 11-
 2 PS: Soldier 11-
 4 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms
 9 Choose three Skills from this list: Breakfall, Concealment, Gambling (Cards), Gambling (Dice), Paramedic, Stealth, Tactics
 -15 Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (Frequently, Major)

Options

6 Artilleryman (Add KS: Ballistics: 11-, SC: Mathematics: 11-, WF: Emplaced Weapons)
 5/8 Officer (Add KS: Military History: 11-, Tactics (If not chosen above), Perk: Officer (Lt))

“The chances of anything man-like coming from Mars are a million to one, he said.”
— H.G. Wells, *War of the Worlds*

Martian Forces

The invaders almost always operate in threes. Finding a lone scout is almost unheard of, they always deploy in a triangular search pattern, two in front equidistant, the last trailing and covering the other two. This change in initial operations has been prompted by the Supers on the British side. Their main war machines all are walkers with three legs.

Martian

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
5	STR	-5	10-	Lift 50 kg; 1d6 HTH [1]
8	DEX	-6	11-	OCV: 3/DCV: 3
10	CON	0	11-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll: 13-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
2	COM	-4	9-	
4	PD	3		Total: 4 PD (0 rPD)
3	ED	1		Total: 3 ED (0 rED)
1/3	SPD	-8		Phases: 7 / 4, 8, 12
3	REC	0		
20	END	0		
18	STUN	0		

Total Characteristics Cost: 9

Movement:	Running:	3”/6”
	Leaping:	1”/2”
	Swimming:	2”/4”

Cost Powers

- 13 *Alien Body*: Life Support (Does Not Sleep, Eat Once per Week, Safe in Cold, Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum, High Pressure, and Zero Gravity, Longevity: 200 Years) 0
- 5 *Tentacles*: Extra Limbs (16) 0
- 13 *Adapted to Their Machines*: +2 SPD; Only when Piloting Martian Machines (-1/2) 0

Perks

- 45 Advanced Tech

Skills

- 3 +1 with Martian Vehicle Weapons
- 5 Combat Driving 12- (Martian Vehicles)
- 3 Combat Piloting 11-
- 3 Cryptography 13-
- 3 PS: Soldier 13-
- 3 Systems Operation 13-
- 1 WF: Vehicle Weapons

Total Skills & Powers: 97

Total Cost: 106

50+ Disadvantages

- 20 Physical Limitation: Alien Physique (All the Time, Greatly Impairing)
- 25 Distinctive Features: 8 foot tall Octopus monsters (Not Concealable, Extreme)
- 11 Experience Points

Total Disadvantages: 106

“And this was the sum of the Martian organs. Strange as it may seem to a human being, all the complex apparatus of digestion, which makes up the bulk of our bodies, did not exist in the Martians. They were heads – merely heads. Entrails they had none. They did not eat, much less digest. Instead, they took the fresh, living blood of other creatures, and injected it into their own veins. I have myself seen this being done, as I shall mention in its place. But, squeamish as I may seem, I cannot bring myself to describe what I could not endure even to continue watching. Let it suffice to say, blood obtained from a still living animal, in most cases from a human being, was run directly by means of a little pipette into the recipient canal...”

“They were, I now saw, the most unearthly creatures it is possible to conceive. They were huge round bodies – or, rather, heads – about four feet in diameter, each body having in front of it a face. This face had no nostrils – indeed, the Martians do not seem to have had any sense of smell, but it had a pair of very large dark-coloured eyes, and just beneath this a kind of fleshy – I scarcely know how to speak of it – was the single tight tympanic surface, since known to be anatomically an ear, though it must have been almost useless in our dense air. In a group round the mouth were sixteen slender, almost whiplike tentacles, arranged in two bunches of eight each. These bunches have since been named rather aptly, by that distinguished anatomist, Professor Howes, the Hands. Even as I saw these Martians for the first time they seemed to be endeavouring to raise themselves on these hands, but of course, with the increased weight of terrestrial conditions, this was impossible. There is reason to suppose that on Mars they may have progressed upon them with some facility.”

— H.G. Wells, *War of the Worlds*

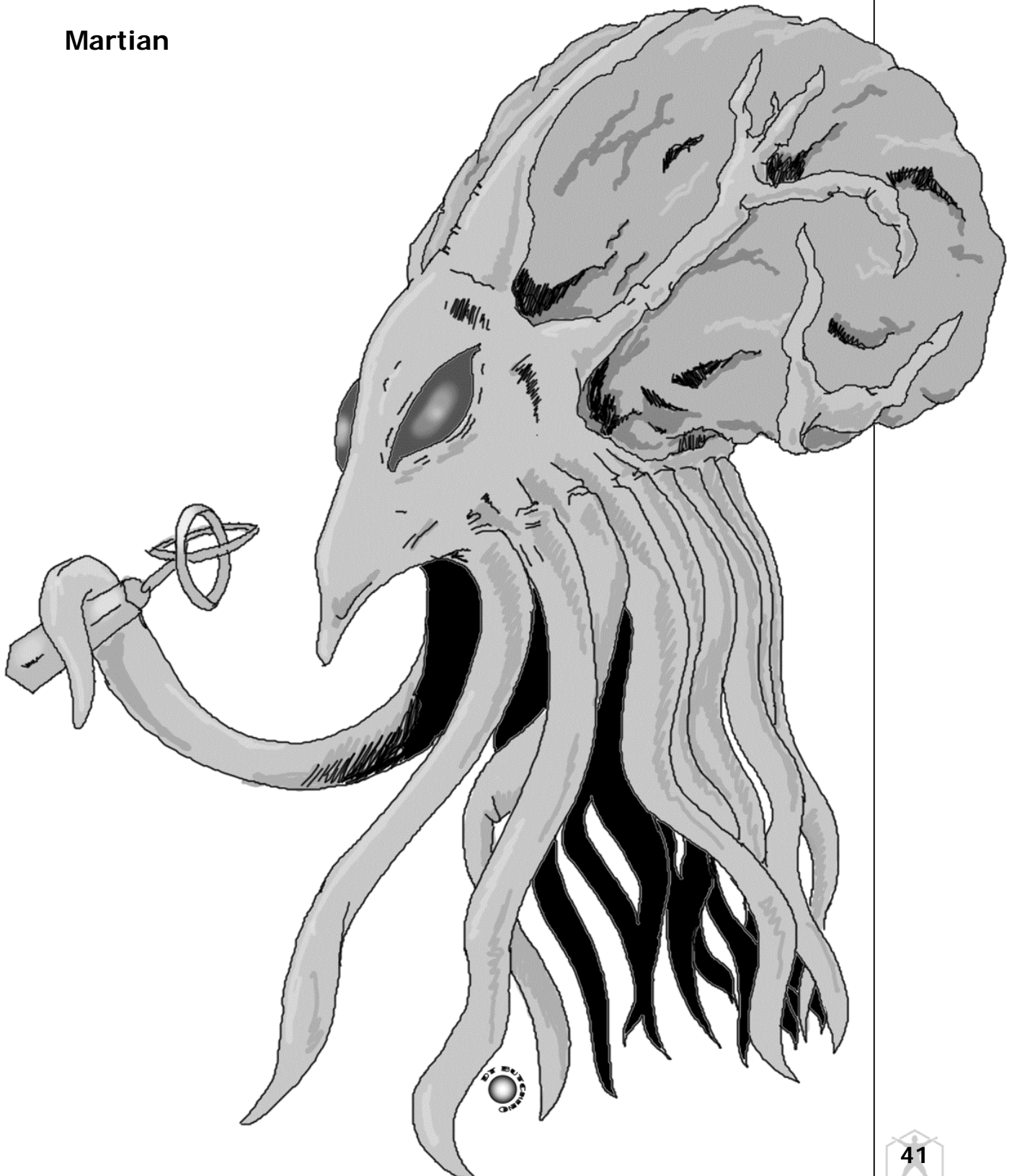
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Powers: The Martians operate under a stronger gravitic pull on Earth and as such are weaker than on their own planet. This also limits their mobility outside of their vehicles. Conversely, their highly adapted physiology allows them to forego sleep, reduces their need for food to only

once a week and protects them from most environmental extremes. Their real “power” is their technology which is far in advance of that on Earth.

Identifying Quote: “Ulla!”

Martian



Martian Vehicles

Martian Scout Machine

Val	CHA	Cost	Notes
7	SIZE	35	5"x2½", 12½ ton, -7" KB
45	STR	0	9d6 HTH
10	DEX	0	OCV: 3/DCV: 0
3	SPD	10	Phases: 4, 8, 12
2	DEF	0	
17	BODY	0	

Total Characteristics Cost: 45

Movement:	Running:	15"/30"
	Swimming:	2"/4"
	Leaping:	0"/0"

Cost Powers **END**

97	<i>Light Heat-Ray:</i> RKA 4d6+1, Invisible to Normal Sight (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½), Area Of Effect (46" Line, +1), Selective (+¼); OIF (Bulky, -1)	0
29	<i>Martian Armor:</i> Armor (12 PD/12 ED); Limited Coverage: Hull/Frame Only, Only Half Value on Stilt Legs (-¼)	0
17	<i>Self Contained Pilot's Cockpit:</i> Life Support (Immune to All Terrestrial Biowarfare Agents, Chemical Warfare Agents, Diseases, and Terrestrial Poisons; Safe in Cold, Heat, and Zero Gravity; Self-Contained Breathing); OIF (Bulky, -1)	0
18	<i>Stilt Legs:</i> Running +9" (15" Total)	0
17	<i>Stilt Legs and Grasping Arms:</i> Stretching 4", Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½); Legs Only (-¼), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), No Velocity Damage (-¼)	0
12	<i>Searchlight:</i> Sight Group Images 1" Radius, +5 to PER Rolls, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½); OIF (Bulky, -1), Only To Create Light (-1)	0
97	<i>Martian Artillery:</i> RKA 4d6+1, Invisible to Normal Sight (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½), Area Of Effect (46" Line, +1), Selective (+¼); OIF (Bulky, -1)	0

Talents

- 1 *Navigation System:* Bump Of Direction; OIF (Bulky, -1)
- 1 *Ranging System:* Absolute Range Sense; OIF (Bulky, -1)
- 1 *Internal Chronometer:* Absolute Time Sense; OIF (Bulky, -1)

Total Skills & Powers: 193

Total Cost: 238

200+ Disadvantages

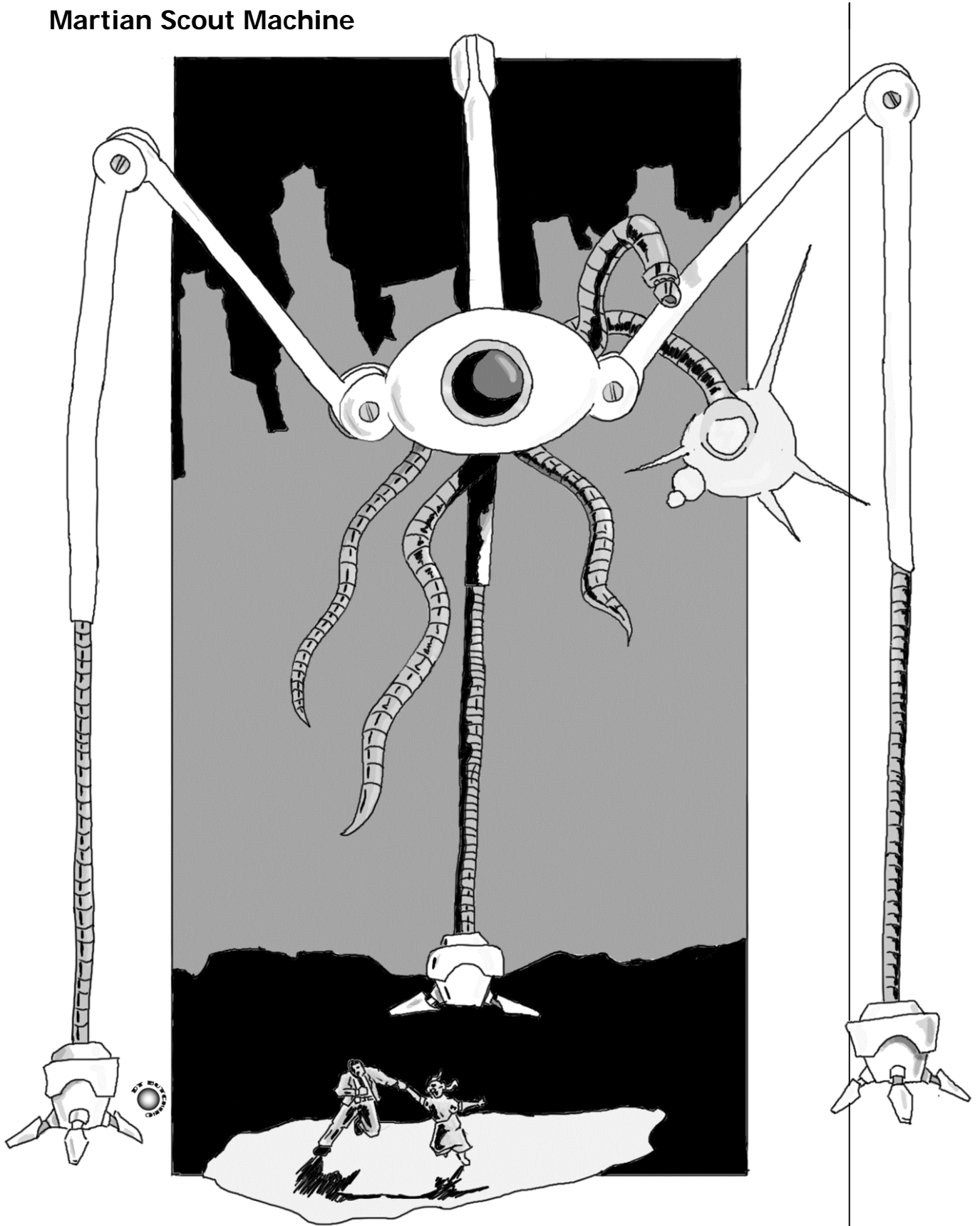
- 25 *Distinctive Features:* Martian War Scout (Not Concealable, Extreme)
- 15 *Susceptibility:* Falling over, 3d6 damage Instant (Uncommon)

Total Disadvantages: 240

Scouts: Lightly armored and armed, these machines move quickly across the field of battle often bypassing defensive emplacements entirely. However, their lesser degree of armor means that a well trained artillery unit can quickly whittle them down to size. They stand approximately 60 feet in height. A smallish sized cockpit attaches to three tentacles as well as three pillar-like legs. The heat ray is mounted on a flexible tentacle assembly that comes over the left "shoulder" and provides all-around targeting. The Searchlight is mounted on a similar tentacle coming over the left "shoulder." The machines themselves are primarily white on the body with gold metal legs, tentacles, and reinforcements over the cockpit.

Martian Emplaced Weapons: Just use the Light Heat-Ray as an emplaced "Artillery" style weapon for the Martians.

Martian Scout Machine



Martian War Machine

Val	CHA	Cost	Notes
9	SIZE	45	8"x4", 50 ton, -9" KB
55	STR	0	11d6 HTH
10	DEX	0	OCV: 3/DCV: 0
3	SPD	10	Phases: 4, 8, 12
2	DEF	0	
19	BODY	0	

Total Characteristics Cost: 55

Movement:	Running:	12"/24"
	Swimming:	2"/4"
	Leaping:	0"/0"

Cost Powers END

142	<i>Heat Ray:</i> RKA 6d6+1, Invisible to Normal Sight (+1/4), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2), Area Of Effect (66" Line, +1), Selective (+1/4); OIF (Bulky, -1)	0
182	<i>Black Dust Launcher:</i> RKA 4d6+1, Area Of Effect (896" Radius, +21/4), Conforming (+1/2), Continuous (+1), 1 Continuing Charge Lasting 1 Day (+1/4), No Normal Defense (LS: Immunity to Black Dust, Self Contained Breathing, or Immersion in Water; +1), Does BODY (+1); OAF (Bulky, -11/2)	[1cc] 0
43	<i>Martian Armor:</i> Armor (18 PD/18 ED); Limited Coverage: Hull/Frame Only, Only Half Value on Stilt Legs (-1/4)	0
17	<i>Self Contained Pilot's Cockpit:</i> Life Support (Immune to All Terrestrial Biowarfare Agents, Chemical Warfare Agents, Diseases, and Terrestrial Poisons; Safe in Cold, Heat, and Zero Gravity; Self-Contained Breathing); OIF (Bulky, -1)	0
12	<i>Stilt Legs:</i> Running +6" (12" Total)	0
21	<i>Stilt Legs and Grasping Arms:</i> Stretching 5", Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); Legs Only (-1/4), No Noncombat Stretching (-1/4), No Velocity Damage (-1/4)	0
12	<i>Searchlight:</i> Sight Group Images 1" Radius, +5 to PER Rolls, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); OIF (Bulky, -1), Only To Create Light (-1)	0

Talents

1	<i>Navigation System:</i> Bump Of Direction; OIF (Bulky, -1)
1	<i>Ranging System:</i> Absolute Range Sense; OIF (Bulky, -1)
1	<i>Internal Chronometer:</i> Absolute Time Sense; OIF (Bulky, -1)

Total Skills & Powers: 432

Total Cost: 487

200+ Disadvantages

25	Distinctive Features: Martian War Scout (Not Concealable, Extreme)
15	Susceptibility: Falling over, 3d6 damage Instant (Uncommon)
247	Experience Points

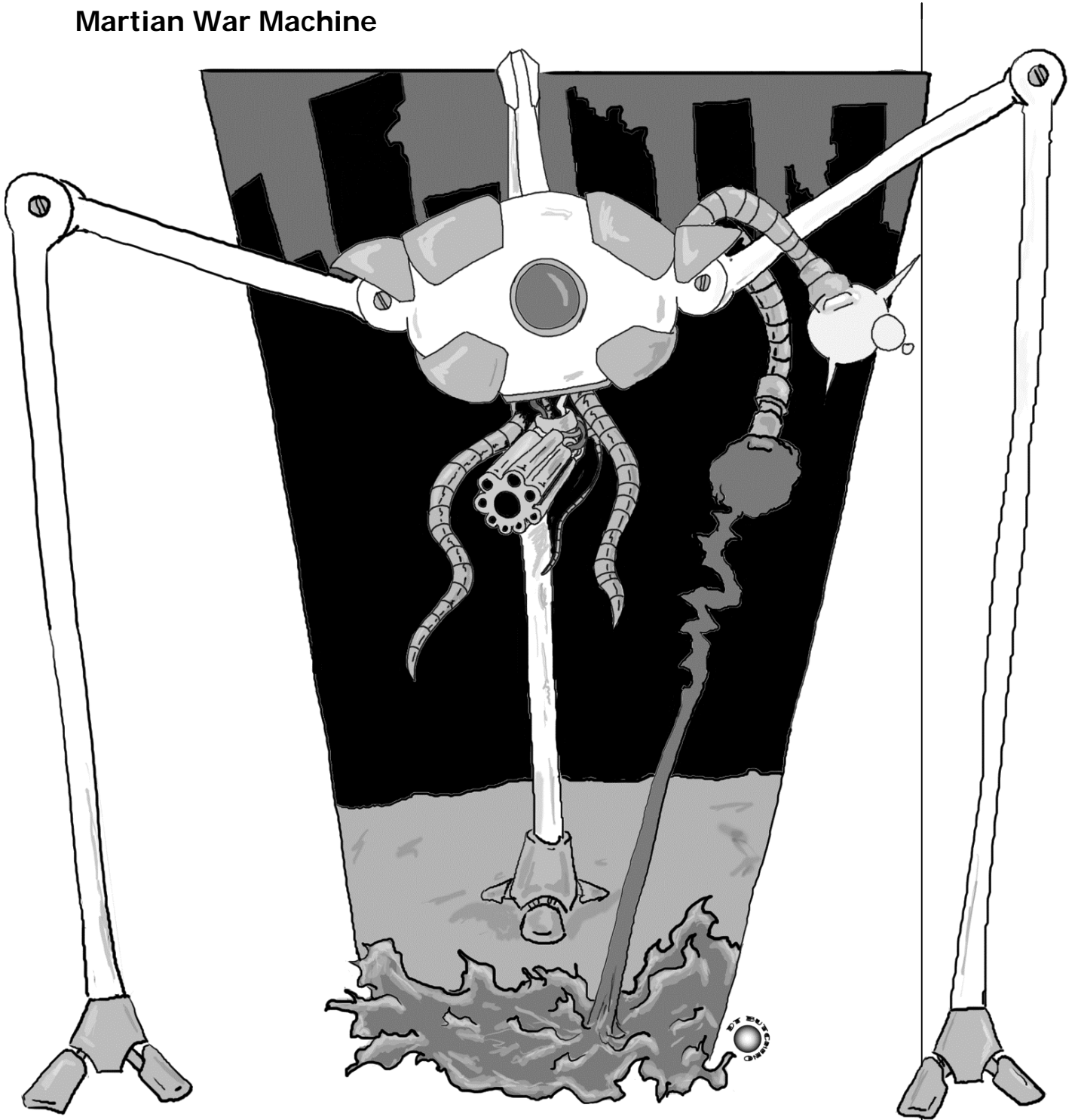
Total Disadvantages: 487

War Machines: The true fighting machines of the Invaders. Heavily armed and armored, they are almost always the spearhead of any Martian incursions. They stand approximately 80 feet in height. A smallish sized cockpit attaches to three tentacles as well as three pillar-like legs. The heat ray is mounted on a flexible tentacle assembly that comes over the left "shoulder" and provides all around targeting. The Searchlight is mounted on a similar tentacle coming over the left "shoulder." The Black Dust launcher is a tube approximately 4 meters in length and 2 in width that is carried by the war machine in its tentacles. The machines themselves are primarily white on the body with gold metal legs, tentacles, and reinforcements over the cockpit.

Harvesters: These are War Machines reconfigured for use as Harvesting Machines. Lightly armored in comparison, they mount only a light heat ray for defense.

Use the War Machine but halve the armor to 10 and remove the Black Dust launcher and substitute a Light Heat Ray for the Heat Ray.

Martian War Machine



Martian Flyer

Val	CHA	Cost	Notes
6	SIZE	30	4"x2", 6 ton, -6" KB
40	STR	0	8d6 HTH
15	DEX	15	OCV: 5/DCV: 0
3	SPD	5	Phases: 4, 8, 12
2	DEF	0	
17	BODY	1	

Total Characteristics Cost: 51

Movement:	Flight:	15"/60"
	Running:	6"/12"
	Swimming:	2"/4"
	Leaping:	0"/0"

Cost Powers END

- 97 *Light Heat Ray:* RKA 4d6+1, Invisible to Normal Sight (+1/4), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2), Area Of Effect (46" Line, +1), Selective (+1/4); OIF (Bulky, -1) 0
- 208 *Black Dust Bombs:* RKA 4d6+1, Area Of Effect (1088" Radius; +21/4), Conforming (+1/2), Continuous (+1), 6 Continuing Charges Lasting 1 Day Each (+11/4), Dropped (Target Can Rarely Detect and Avoid Attack, +0), No Normal Defense (LS: Immunity to Black Dust or Immersion in Water; +1), Does BODY (+1); OAF (Bulky, -11/2) [6cc] 0
- 18 *Martian Armor:* Armor (6 PD/6 ED) 0
- 17 *Self Contained Pilot's Cockpit:* Life Support (Immune to All Terrestrial Biowarfare Agents, Chemical Warfare Agents, Diseases, and Terrestrial Poisons; Safe in Cold, Heat, and Zero Gravity; Self-Contained Breathing); OIF (Bulky, -1) 0
- 35 *Martian Anti-grav:* Flight 15", 4x Noncombat 0
- 12 *Searchlight:* Sight Group Images 1" Radius, +5 to PER Rolls, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); OIF (Bulky, -1), Only To Create Light (-1) 0

Talents

- 1 *Navigation System:* Bump Of Direction; OIF (Bulky, -1)
- 1 *Ranging System:* Absolute Range Sense; OIF (Bulky, -1)
- 1 *Internal Chronometer:* Absolute Time Sense; OIF (Bulky, -1)

Total Skills & Powers: 390

Total Cost: 441

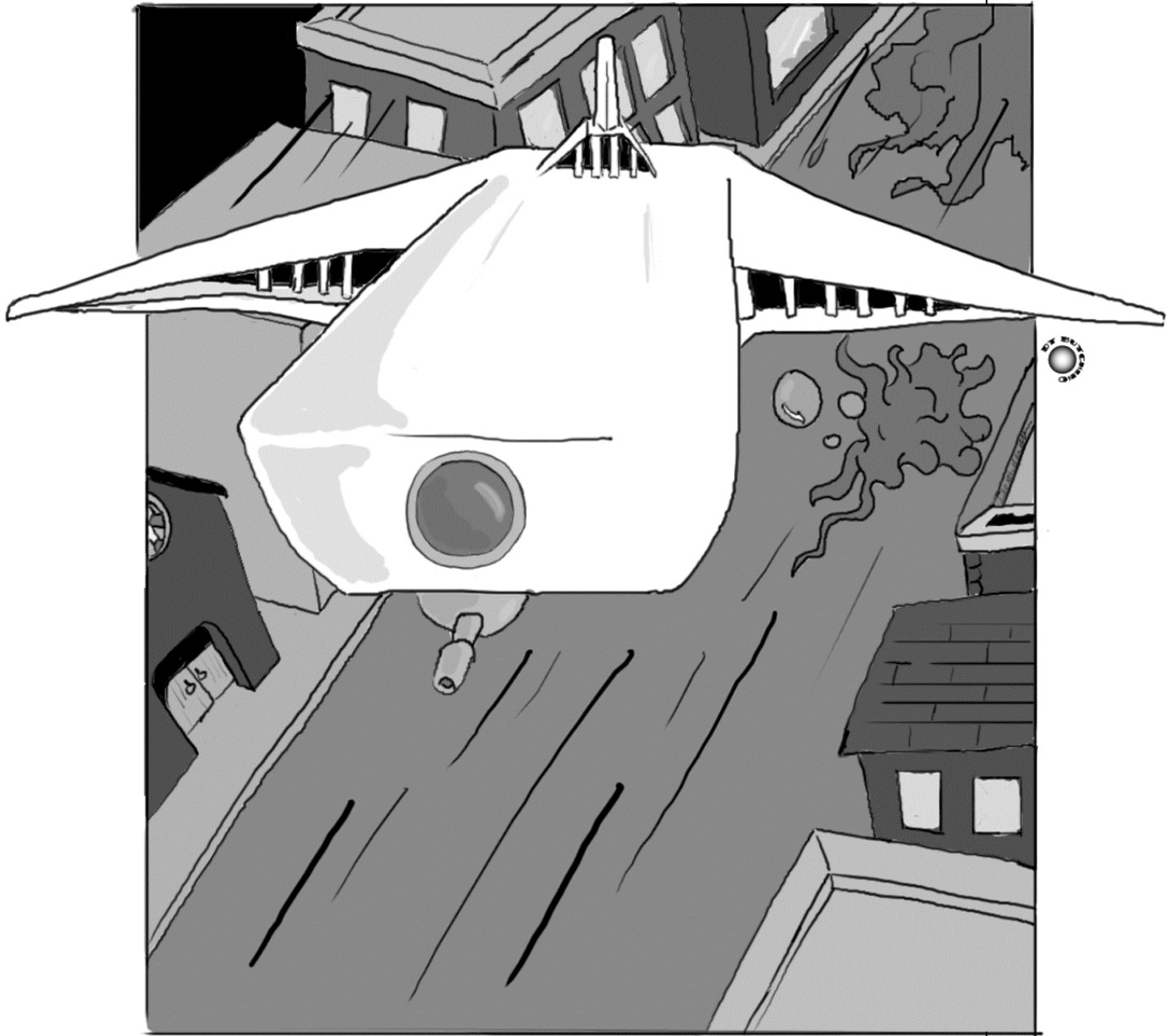
200+ Disadvantages

- 25 *Distinctive Features:* Martian Flyer (Not Concealable, Extreme)
- 15 *Susceptibility:* Crash Landing, 3d6 damage Instant (Uncommon)
- 201 *Experience Points*

Total Disadvantages: 441

Flying Machines: These are massive craft that serve primarily as Bombers, dropping the dreaded Black Dust on the enemy lines. They are also armed with light Heat Ray weapons. Fortunately the Martians do not have many of these machines, nor do they have the endurance for prolonged combat. The Machines themselves are boxy constructions with small stub wings and a similarly truncated rudder. These do not actually supply lift, but they do provide directional control in an atmosphere. The Heat Ray is mounted in the nose on a flexible mount similar to those on the War Machines. The Black Dust bombs are deployed as free-falling from the center of the vehicle.

Martian Flyer



Martian Overlord

Val	CHA	Cost	Notes
9	SIZE	45	8"x4", 50 ton, -9" KB
55	STR	0	11d6 HTH
10	DEX	0	OCV: 3/DCV: 0
3	SPD	10	Phases: 4, 8, 12
2	DEF	0	
20	BODY	1	

Total Characteristics Cost: 56

Movement:	Running:	10"/20"
	Swimming:	2"/4"
	Leaping:	0"/0"

Cost Powers **END**

53	<i>Martian Armor:</i> Armor (22 PD/22 ED); Limited Coverage: Hull/Frame Only, Only Half Value on Stilt Legs (-1/4)	0
95	<i>Shrieking Mind Killer:</i> EB 10d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2), Does BODY (+1), Area Of Effect (81" Cone, +1/4), Attack Versus Limited Defense (Mental Defense; +1/2); OIF (Bulky, -1), Can Only be Fired Once a Turn, -1/2, Limited Arc Of Fire (180°, -1/4)	0
17	<i>Self Contained Pilot's Cockpit:</i> Life Support (Immune to All Terrestrial Biowarfare Agents, Chemical Warfare Agents, Diseases, and Terrestrial Poisons; Safe in Cold, Heat, and Zero Gravity; Self-Contained Breathing); OIF (Bulky, -1)	0
8	<i>Stilt Legs:</i> Running +4" (10" Total)	0
21	<i>Stilt Legs and Grasping Arms:</i> Stretching 5", Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); Legs Only (-1/4), No Noncombat Stretching (-1/4), No Velocity Damage (-1/4)	0
12	<i>Searchlight:</i> Sight Group Images 1" Radius, +5 to PER Rolls, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); OIF (Bulky, -1), Only To Create Light (-1)	0

Talents

1	<i>Navigation System:</i> Bump Of Direction; OIF (Bulky, -1)
1	<i>Ranging System:</i> Absolute Range Sense; OIF (Bulky, -1)
1	<i>Internal Chronometer:</i> Absolute Time Sense; OIF (Bulky, -1)

Total Skills & Powers: 209

Total Cost: 265

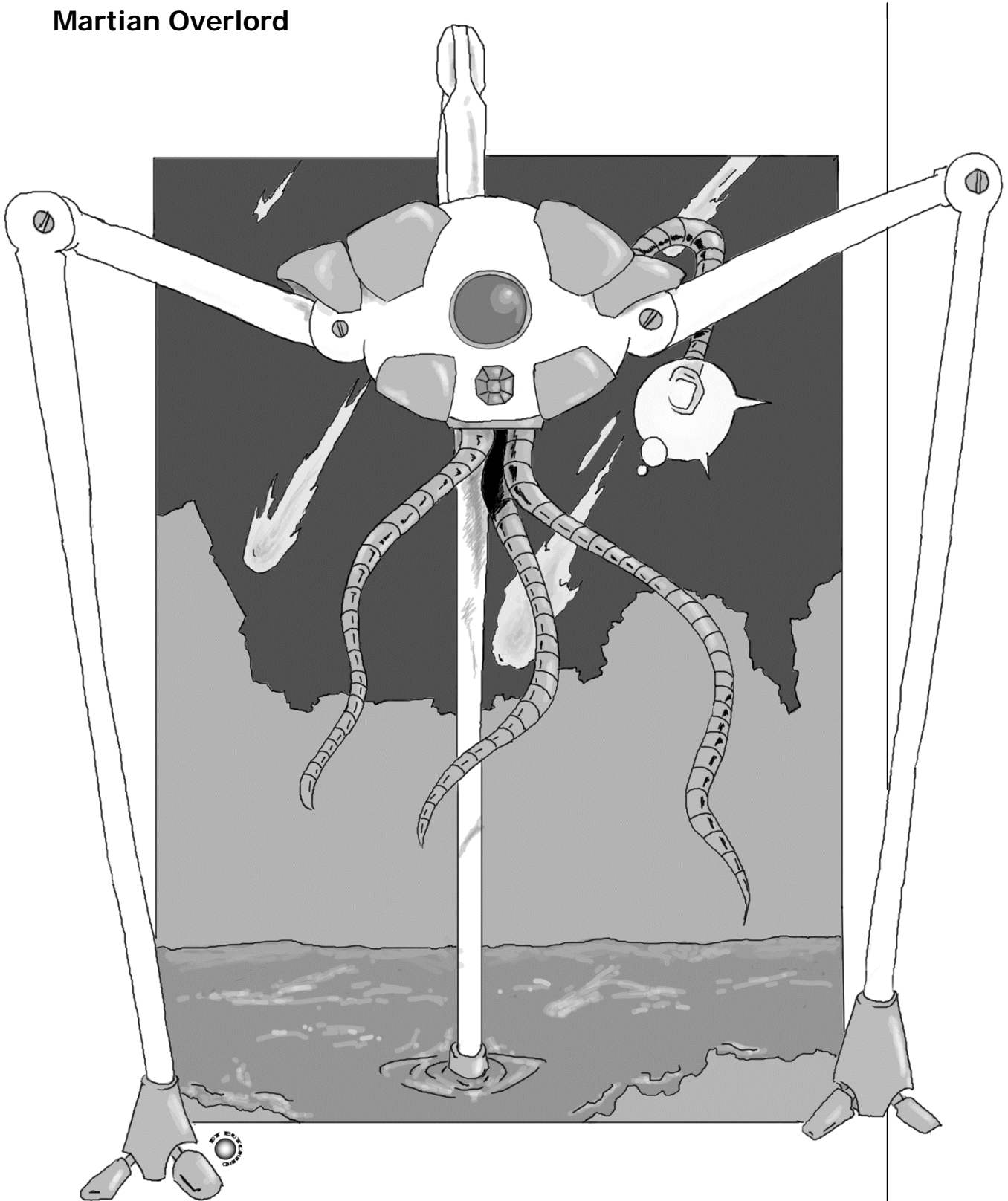
200+ Disadvantages

25	Distinctive Features: Martian Flyer (Not Concealable, Extreme)
15	Susceptibility: Falling Over, 3d6 damage Instant (Uncommon)
25	Experience Points

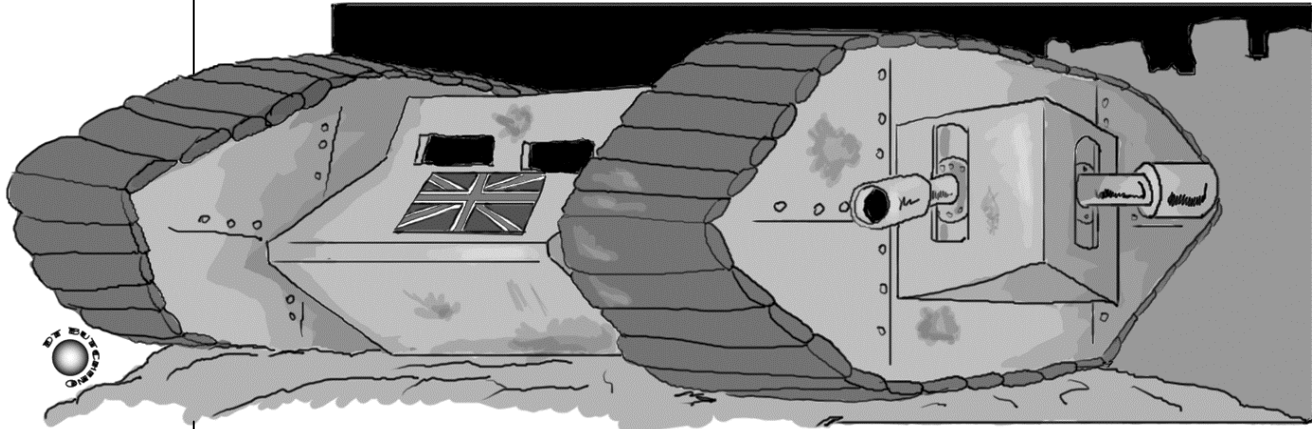
Total Disadvantages: 265

Overlords: A new development on the battlefield, the Overlord has the capacity to attack the very minds of men. Very heavily armored, it is always escorted when it is deployed. It is thought that the Martians only have 1 or 2 of these dreadful machines and they do not risk them. They stand approximately 80 feet in height. A smallish sized cockpit attaches to three tentacles as well as three pillar-like legs. The searchlight is mounted on a flexible tentacle assembly that comes over the right "shoulder." Surmounting the cockpit is a glowing assembly of purple rods in a vaguely geodesic shape that bulges slightly near the front of the machine. This bulged point is the firing locus for the Shrieking Mind Killer. The machines themselves are primarily white on the body with gold metal legs, tentacles, and reinforcements over the cockpit.

Martian Overlord



Forces of the Empire



Queen M.A.B.

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
6	SIZE	30		4" x 2", 6 ton, -6" KB
40	STR	0	18-	HTH 8d6
8	DEX	-6	11-	OCV: 3/DCV: 0
2	SPD	2		Phases: 6, 12
2	DEF	0		
16	BODY	0	12-	

Total Characteristics Cost: 26

Movement:	Running:	8"/16"
	Swimming:	0"/0"
	Leaping:	0"/0"

Cost Powers

40	<i>12 Pounder Cannon; Left Side:</i> RKA 5d6, Indirect (Same Origin, Always Fired Away from Attacker, +1/4), Explosion (+1/2); OIF (Bulky, -1), Crew-Served (2 people, -1/4), Extra Time (Delayed Phase, -1/4), Limited Arc of Fire (180°: Left Side, -1/4), Inaccurate (1/2 OCV, -1/4), 64 clips of 1 Charge (-1/4)	[1x64]
5	<i>Another 12-Pounder, Right Side</i>	[1x64]
34	<i>Armor Plating:</i> +14 DEF; Does Not Cover Bottom of Vehicle (-1/4)	0
12	<i>Ceramic Armor:</i> +6 DEF; Only Works Against Heat-Based Attacks (-1/2)	0
3	<i>Black Dust Filters:</i> Life Support (Immunity to Black Dust), Usable Simultaneously (Up to 8 People at Once, +1); IIF (Bulky, -3/4)	0
4	<i>Heat Ray Optics:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group), +3 to PER Roll; IIF (Bulky, -3/4)	0
8	<i>Searchlight:</i> Sight Group Images 1" Radius, +2 to PER Rolls, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); OIF (Bulky, -1), Only To Create Light (-1)	0
-2	No Swimming	0

END

105+ Disadvantages

25 Distinctive Features: Crazy Steam Driven Artillery Machine (Not Concealable, Extreme)

Total Disadvantages: 130

Queen M.A.B.: Stella Stovepipe has been a godsend for the British, and her latest invention is what may enable them to regain the advantage once and for all. Unfortunately, they are difficult to produce and time consuming in the extreme. But it is hard to argue with the results of Stella's fevered imagination. The Queen M.A.B. series of vehicles started as simply as watching a caterpillar crawling. Stella refined the design in sketch after sketch and eventually created what the Royal Ordinance Engineers like to call a "Tracked Land Conveyance for Artillery." The first official designation was "Mobile Artillery Bastion" which quickly became the Queen M.A.B. Armored in heat-resistant panels, the vehicle mounts a powerful steam engine and two 12-pounder guns. It is equipped with a Heat Optic Sensor and is sealed against the Black Dust. The machine itself is long and relatively thin for a vehicle with a crew of 8 (Driver, co-pilot, Engineer, Stoker, 4 Gunners). It is approximately 35 feet in length and 16 or so in width. The tracks are mounted on both sides and go the entire length of the machine, top and bottom. The guns are mounted off of the track assemblies in sponsons that allow for 180-degree targeting on either side. For a historical comparison, it looks very similar to the British Mark V tank from World War One, just with chunkier looking armor. However, Stella's design is light years ahead of even that design so it weighs only a fraction of what one would expect.

Total Skills & Powers: 104

Total Cost: 130

Empire Equipment

The Mask of Pure Air: Not really what it says, it still mostly does the job. The idea was inspired when Stella met Britannic and saw his mask that was originally intended to filter the Black Dust. Upon that thought, she constructed a Helmet/Faceplate combination that filters out the Black Dust from the air.

- 2 *Mask of Pure Air:* Life Support (Immunity to Black Dust), Activation 14- (-1/2), OAF (-1)

Heat Optics: These advanced heavy optics allow the spotters of the Royal Army to actually see the Heat Rays of the Martians. This has allowed some units to escape flaming death through quick action, but in general practice, it is used to spot the War Machines at far range as the Heat Rays give off tremendous amounts of Heat even when not in use.

- 3 *Heat Optics:* Infrared Perception (Sight Group) **plus** +3 to Sight Perception; OAF (Bulky, -1/2)

Field Artillery: Use the 12 pounder from the Queen M.A.B. above.

- 40 *12 Pounder Cannon:* RKA 5d6, Indirect (Same Origin, Always Fired Away from Attacker, +1/4), Explosion (+1/2); OIF (Bulky, -1), Crew-Served (2 people, -1/4), Extra Time (Delayed Phase, -1/4), Limited Arc of Fire (180°: Left Side, -1/4), Inaccurate (1/2 OCV, -1/4), 64 clips of 1 Charge (-1/4) [1x64]

The Heroes

Britannic

Background/History: On the days before the invasion, Cecil Chesterfield was a man of station. As a doctor in London, he had made a small niche for himself as *the* doctor to see if you were anyone of worth. Cecil took all of this as his due. God had graced him with the talent to make others better and the good foresight to make such care expensive. Cecil was as shallow and venal as you could get and yet still, he was also one of the most charming men in London. He knew all the best places to go and could converse for hours on a breadth of subjects. In fact, on the night of June 3rd 1902, he was heard to say that all of that “Martian business” in the papers was nothing but rubbish....

And then London died.

From the grim remains of his home, he shrugged off the detritus of destruction and looked around at the dead city that he had called home. All around him the shrill cry of heat rays split the pre-dawn darkness, the flashes strobing in the distance like thunder on a summer’s night. He cried, tears streaking through his grime and dust covered face. Then came the sound. A heavy tread reverberated from just outside the shattered remains of his house and he looked up through what had once been his roof to see a Martian scout machine peering around for new prey. Fear should have gripped him cold, but it had no hold on his heart. No, white hot anger burned there instead. He crouched slightly and then leapt at the leg of the machine. Almost unknowing he struck at the leg, a last desperate act of defiance. The next few seconds actually shocked him into immobility. The result of his blow had been profound and the leg virtually exploded, spilling the mighty machine to the ground and shattering the control compartment. Moreover, as he looked down, the man who would become Britannic realized he was some 20 feet in the air and just hovering. The realization of his new abilities came to the fore and in short order, Britannic became a one man evacuation force in London. The crown credits his quick actions with helping to stabilize the front and hold the Martians to no new conquests, but it was at heavy cost. Britannic was struck down by three of the war machines working in concert, heat rays dancing across his form. While he did not die that day, he was out of the fight for some time and a new caution was adopted by the British. They had their new champion, but he was not invincible. What is known is that he is highly resistant to harm, strong to the point of myth, and able to fly under his own power. Sometimes it is this last ability that serves him best as with his recovery, he has become an able

scout for the Empire in addition to being one of its most capable fighters.

Personality/Motivation: Britannic lives for one thing only and that is the preservation of the Empire. Nothing will stop him from achieving this goal and he will often take risks that leave even the most valiant commanders cringing. He is selfless and devoted to the Empire and what she stands for: the rule of Britannia over all. The very shallow Cecil is all but dead now and Britannic stands in his place. He won’t even answer to his old name anymore as if he has chosen to divorce himself completely from his life before the war.

Britannic is powerful, and he knows it. He is also rash and is only beginning to accept that he cannot be everywhere at once and that even he will fall before the Martians if he is not careful. But in his heart burns a constant and white hot rage that will not die down until the last Martians are removed from his beloved England.

Quote: “The sun shall never set on the British Empire!”

Powers/Tactics: Vast superhuman strength coupled with the ability to apply that strength most effectively. Almost indestructible levels of resistance. Flight. Britannic has yet to discover the “downside” of super powers as yet. He has no idea that his eyes are more sensitive, or that any sort of drain attack will be much more effective against him. It is possible that unless the Martians try something new, he won’t discover these flaws until after the war.

Appearance: Britannic stands 6’3” with the sort of body one only finds on old Greek sculptures of gods. He has black hair and dark brown eyes. Britannic is the first “Flag Suit” and he wears the Union Jack proudly. His costume is a pair of closely tailored cotton breeches in Dark Blue with a matching Shirt that is embossed with the symbol of a Lion Rampant in gold. He wears a broad red belt around his waist and matching riding boots. His mask and cape are made from the remains of the British flag that once flew above London. The mask only covers his lower face, the rest of the flag flows across his shoulders and down his back. Many commanders have stated that the sight of the Union Jack ripping through the air towards the invaders made the difference between men staying to fight and running in fear.

DIGITAL HERO #39

Britannic



Britannic

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
60	STR	50	21-	100 tons; 12d6 HTH [9]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
28	CON	36	15-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
14	INT	4	12-	PER Roll: 12-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
16	COM	3	12-	
15	PD	3		Total: 30 PD (25 rPD)
10	ED	4		Total: 25 ED (25 rED)
5	SPD	22		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
18	REC	0		
56	END	0		
64	STUN	0		

Total Characteristics Cost: 191

Movement:	Running:	6"/12"
	Flight:	15"/60"
	Leaping:	12"/24"
	Swimming:	2"/4"

Cost Powers END

30	<i>Might of the Empire:</i> Armor Piercing (+1/2) on STR	3
56	<i>As Resilient as the Empire:</i> Armor (15 PD/15 ED), Hardened (+1/4)	0
10	<i>Shielded by the Empire:</i> Damage Resistance (10 PD/10 ED)	0
15	<i>Shielded by the Empire:</i> Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25%	0
15	<i>Shielded by the Empire:</i> Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25%	0
35	<i>On the Wings of Glory:</i> Flight 15", 4x Noncombat	3
3	Life Support (Immunity Black Dust)	0

Perks

1	<i>Doctor:</i> Fringe Benefit: License to Practice a Profession
5	Money: Well Off

Skills

10	<i>I Warn You, I Shall Resort to Fisticuffs:</i> +2 with Hand-to-Hand Combat
3	<i>I Speak Their Language:</i> Bureaucratics 14-
3	<i>I Know This Amazing Place:</i> CK: London 12-
3	<i>Let Me Talk to Them:</i> Conversation 14-
3	<i>I Travel in the Right Circles:</i> High Society 14-
4	<i>How Else Would One Read the Classics?:</i> Language: Latin (Fluent, Literate)
3	Paramedics 12-
5	<i>Physician:</i> PS: Doctor 14-
4	SS: Medicine 13-
4	SS: Surgery 13-

Total Skills & Powers: 214

Total Cost: 405

150+ Disadvantages

20	Enraged: When English Troops Die (Common, Go 11-, Recover 11-)
15	Hunted: The British Army 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Very Easy to Find, Watching)
20	Hunted: The Martians 8- (Mo Pow, Very Easy to Find)
15	Psychological Limitation: Bound by Duty (Common, Strong)
10	Psychological Limitation: Brash (Common, Moderate)
20	Psychological Limitation: Hates the Martians (Very Common, Strong)
10	Social Limitation: Famous (Frequently, Minor)
20	Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
10	Vulnerability: 2x Effect from Drains (Uncommon)
10	Vulnerability: 2x Effect from Sight Group Flash Attacks (Uncommon)
105	Experience Points

Total Disadvantages: 405

Donnybrook

Background/History: “Yer a right tosser!” Jimmie shouted over his shoulder as he stalked out of the bar. Yet again, his temper had cost him a shot at the real prize money. He shrugged to no one in particular and mumbled, “If the bleedin’ man’gers weren’t so greedy, ye’d have money linin’ them pockets Jimmie boy....” But that was the story of his life. Everyone was out to keep Jimmie from succeeding. But he had a mean right hook and an even meaner attitude and anyone who got in his way these days was just asking for a beating. Though he guessed this time he had mucked it up all right and proper. I mean, was it his fault that the last guy he’d fought had died? No, of course not. This was a profession and that guy hadn’t known the job. Simple as that. Somehow he doubted that the bobbies would see it that way though....

A quick trip to the coast had gotten Jimmie a whole new lease on life. No more slugging away so someone else could make money off of his talent, no sirree. Now he had it easy, living high on the hog as a midshipman on the HMS Devastation. And she was a sweet ship too. Of course there was a lot of spit and polish, but Jimmie figured he’d just lie low for a bit and then jump ship when the port of call got interesting. It was about 6 months before he discovered what “Thames Fleet” really meant. Not one to let adversity pull him under, Jimmie decided it was time to learn a real trade. He’d only had to beat the navigator up twice before he showed Jimmie how to read maps and the stars. It only took one more beating to get the old codger to quit telling everyone Jimmie was beating him.

It was a grand life then. Keeping his nose clean except when he could get away with it, Jimmie managed to get himself assigned as an assistant navigator. A much better job than swabbing decks and polishing brass. He figured he might even make a career out of it....

Reborn in the death of the Thames Fleet, Jimmie clung to the wreckage of his once proud ship until he could make it to shore. As he hacked the last of the Black dust from his lungs, he felt... different. Staggeringly slightly, he leaned against a brickwork retaining wall and cried out against the death of all he had known. His fist slammed against the wall in impotent rage... and the wall exploded. Donnybrook has added a near perfection level physique to his skills and the innate ability to get right through any beings’ defenses. Steel, Brick, and yes, the strange Martian composites, all have felt the shattering blows of his mighty fists.

While he doesn’t like working directly for the Army, he does appreciate that he isn’t as resilient as Nike or Britannic and he needs someone to cover his back. Also, it’s quite possible that being a hero of the war could turn out better than being a boxer or a navigator. The future was looking bright again. All he had to do was kick out them Martian tossers and the rest was his for the taking.

Personality/Motivation: Donnybrook wants to fight, pure and simple. The Martians screwed up his future and he intends to pay them back in spades. He is abrasive and usually looking to “get over” on almost everyone else. He doesn’t like what he considers to be stupid work and he has a low tolerance for it. He will listen to orders though, as he does realize that he can’t go it alone. Yet. His chosen name is reflective of his personality and his skills. Donnybrook is a superb fighter and revels in the chaos of combat.

Quote: “Marquis of Queensbury me arse, I’m gonna show you bloody wankers why they call me Donnybrook!”

Powers/Tactics: Donnybrook is extremely strong, fast, and agile. His already formidable skill at Boxing has been increased by an almost mystic ability to find the weak point in any target. He also seems blessed with good luck. While he sees only the bad things that have happened to him, he has missed all the close scrapes he has somehow survived.

Appearance: Donnybrook is a slight built man who seems to be put together completely from smooth muscle. In modern parlance, “he’s ripped to shreds” – his muscular definition is extraordinary. However, Jimmie is at best an average looking guy. His hair is always a little unkempt, his face is rarely clean shaven, but he hasn’t tried to cultivate a real beard or moustache. His costume is the simplest he could come up with and still be an “inspiration.” It consists of a black domino mask, dark blue boxing trunks/leggings, boots to protect his feet, and nothing else.

Donnybrook



DIGITAL HERO #39

Donnybrook

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
30	STR	20	15-	1600 kg; 6d6 HTH [3]
23	DEX	39	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
23	CON	26	14-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll: 12-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
12	PD	6		Total: 26 PD (14 rPD)
12	ED	7		Total: 26 ED (14 rED)
6	SPD	27		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
11	REC	0		
46	END	0		
39	STUN	0		

Total Characteristics Cost: 157

Movement:	Running:	6"/12"
	Leaping:	3"/6"
	Swimming:	2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
40	<i>I'll Bet It'll Hurt if I Hit Ya There:</i> Find Weakness 15- with Hand-to-Hand Combat	0
10	<i>Someone's Still Smilin' on Me:</i> Luck 2d6	0
15	<i>I Can Take a Punch:</i> Armor (5 PD/5 ED)	0
3	Life Support (Immunity Black Dust)	0

Talents

18	<i>You Can't Hurt What You Can't Hit:</i> Combat Luck (9 PD/9 ED)
5	<i>Ya Think Yer Quick?:</i> Lightning Reflexes: +3 DEX to act first with All Actions

Skills

	Martial Arts:	Boxing and Dirty Infighting	Notes
	Maneuver	OCV DCV	
4	Block	+2 +2	Block, Abort
3	Clinch	-1 -1	Grab Two Limbs, 50 STR
4	Cross	+0 +2	10d6 Strike
5	Hook	-2 +1	12d6 Strike
3	Jab	+2 +1	8d6 Strike
4	Low Blow	-1 +1	3d6 NND
3	Tackle	+0 -1	8d6 + v/5, Both Fall, FMove
8	+2 Damage Classes (added in)		
9	<i>Right, Now I'm Gonna Bust You Up:</i> +3 with Boxing		
3	Breakfall 14-		
2	CK: London 11-		
2	CK: Upper Surrey 11-		
3	Climbing 14-		
4	Gambling (Card Games, Dice Games) 12-		
2	KS: The Boxing World 11-		
2	KS: Rope Handling 11-		
2	Navigation (Marine) 12-		
3	Streetwise 13-		
4	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms		

Total Skills & Powers: 161

Total Cost: 318

150+ Disadvantages

15	Hunted: The British Army 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Easy to Find, Watching)
20	Hunted: The Martians 8- (Mo Pow, Easy to Find)
20	Psychological Limitation: Hates Martians (Very Common, Strong)
10	Psychological Limitation: Short Tempered (Common, Moderate)
15	Psychological Limitation: Stubborn (Common, Strong)
20	Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
20	Vulnerability: 2x STUN from Electricity (Common)
20	Vulnerability: 2x STUN from Surprise Attacks (Common)
28	Experience Points

Total Disadvantages: 318

Nike

Background/History: Constance Shadwell was brought up to be a proper English Gentlewoman. She was schooled in the classics and learned to read them in either Greek or the debased French tongue. But as she grew to womanhood, she decided she wanted more. More than just to be the ornament on a man's arm. She was not the verification of some man's journey through life; she was her own person with her own hopes and dreams. Normally this sort of outright pretension would have been nipped in the bud early by her parents, but unfortunately they doted too heavily on their only daughter, indulging her fantasies while secure in the knowledge that some day she would realize her place.

Constance had other plans. When the Empire expanded the vote to include married women, she had found her cause. Her mind was as sharp as any man's and her tongue was often sharper. In her wake to see the voting rights of all citizens expanded, many a stuffy British Lord discovered that he was on the losing end of a debate with this quick witted spitfire. Many were disarmed by her stunning good looks and then equally dumbfounded when her intellect proved its match.

She had begun to make a name for herself and had even been a part of the movement that secured the right to vote for women in other countries. Traveling to Australia, she campaigned vigorously and helped to get the first major concession in 1901. She returned home to England, determined to use the example of their "criminal colony" being more advanced and progressive than the mother country. She had just begun to mobilize the women of London when the papers reported that Martians had landed.

The fall of London saw the birth of Nike. The first woman to step forward after surviving the Dust, Nike has only been a precursor of things to come, not an anomaly. The ratio of individuals surviving has been pretty even amongst the sexes and the British still aren't sure how to deal with these newly empowered (literally) women. Nike is glad to explain it to them. Get out of her way and let her save England before the sun *does* set on the empire.

Personality/Motivation: Nike is a very strong and purposeful woman. Her current goal is to save England and then after she's done with that, making women the equals of men in every legal manner possible. She is as stubborn a mule and once her mind is set on a course, it is difficult to sway her. Still, she also knows that she is fighting an uphill battle on all fronts. Her intellect is quite keen and she is not rash enough to rush off half-cocked.

Quote: "Stuff that woman's place rot, if you keep getting in my way, you'll lose this town!"

Powers/Tactics: Nike has taken her name from mythology and has impressive abilities to back it up. Her hands can emit focused blasts of force and she can send herself aloft at will by similar measures. She can also generate a field of this force around her as a protective field. As an extension of this last ability, she can make "walls" of pure force that are quite strong and have been the difference between life and death for civilians and soldiers alike. An unfortunate side effect of her impressive powers is that she is actually shocked by raw physical attacks and tends to be thrown off more by them than anything else.

Appearance: Nike is a tall woman, 5'8" and of impressive build. She is very attractive and has flouted convention in her choice of costume. Stealing an idea from the high wire act of Jules Leotard, she has adopted his personal garb as her uniform. A one piece fitted bodysock is covered by a second cut at the shoulders. The top layer is white, the under layer is gold. Her hair is a bright blonde. Needless to say, most military commanders find her... intimidating. It is said however that her costume does almost as much for British morale as Britannic's.

Nike



Nike

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	150 kg; 2½d6 HTH [1]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
20	CON	26	13-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll: 12-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
16	COM	3	12-	
5	PD	2		Total: 5/25 PD (0/20 r)
7	ED	3		Total: 7/27 ED (0/20 r)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
8	REC	2		
40	END	0		
29	STUN	0		

Total Characteristics Cost: 107

Movement:	Running:	6"/12"
	Flight:	15"/120"
	Leaping:	2½"/5"
	Swimming:	2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
30	<i>Force Manipulation</i> : Elemental Control, 60-point Powers	0
70	1) <i>Force Blast</i> : Energy Blast 10d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END, +¼), +½ Variable Advantage (Limited Group of Advantages; Advantages Must Be Explained through Manipulating a Beam of Force. i.e. Armor Piercing from Making a Tight Beam, +¾)	5
30	2) <i>Riding Force Waves</i> : Flight 15", 8x Noncombat, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2)	0
30	3) <i>Sheathed in Force</i> : Force Field (20 PD/20 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½)	0
31	4) <i>Force Barriers</i> : Force Wall (9 PD/9 ED; 3" Long and 1" Tall), Reduced Endurance (½ END, +¼)	2
7	Life Support (Immunity Black Dust; Safe in Cold, Low Pressure/Vacuum)	0
5	<i>Strong Willed</i> : Mental Defense (8 points Total)	0
5	<i>Linked to Her Powers</i> : Power Defense (5 points)	0

Perks

5	Money: Well Off
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Skills

9	+3 with Force Elemental Control
10	+2 with Flight
2	CK: London 11-
5	High Society 13-
2	KS: Classic Literature 11-
4	KS: Suffrage History 13-
3	KS: Voting Laws 12-
3	Language: French (Conversation, Literate)
3	Language: Greek (Conversation, Literate)
7	Oratory 14-
3	Persuasion 12-
7	<i>Force Manipulation</i> : Power 14-

Total Skills & Powers: 268

Total Cost: 375

150+ Disadvantages

10	Distinctive Features: Woman in a Skin Tight Costume (Easily Concealed, Major)
15	Hunted: The British Army 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Easy to Find, Watching)
20	Hunted: The Martians 8- (Mo Pow, Easy to Find)
15	Psychological Limitation: Demands to be Treated as the Equal of Any Man (Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Stubborn (Common, Strong)
10	Rivalry: Men (Professional, Mo Pow, Seek to Outdo, Rival Aware)
10	Social Limitation: Female (Frequently, Minor)
20	Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
0 15	Vulnerability: 1½x STUN from Physical Attacks (Very Common)
95	Experience Points

Total Disadvantages: 375

Stella Stovepipe

Background/History: Stella Goodman was born to serve. Unfortunately, it was not as a chambermaid or seamstress, but as a scullery maid. Day after day of drudgery and back breaking work was her lot in life. The people she worked for were fine as far as that goes, not too many beatings and they only yelled once a week or so. She knew it could have been worse, but privately, she prayed it would get better.

When the Black Dust leaked into the manse and the people fell like cordwood around her, Stella could only gulp out her fervent prayers for this to stop, it wasn't what she wanted... not like this.

Wandering in a dream, Stella's mind literally pained her from the new ideas and thoughts that filled it to capacity. She hurried from the city grabbing a pen and paper so that she could at least temporarily empty her mind. It seemed that she had even picked up a gift for the physical workings of science and in no time she stood with the heroes of the land in defense of the common people. People like she had been perhaps. But the frenzy of battle was a waste of her talents. A young lieutenant wise beyond his years noticed that Stella and Britannic traveled with impunity through the Black Dust. He attributed this to her battlesuit and Britannic's mask. After a quick word with Stella after the battle, the Masks of Pure Air became the highest priority item in the British arsenal. More inventions followed from the littlest things. Watching a caterpillar walk inspired the massive steam powered "Queen M.A.B." assault vehicles and gave England the first chance to truly match firepower with the invaders.

Stella's value was quickly appreciated by the British High Command and she was pulled far from the front lines to churn out more devices for the Army and Navy of the Empire. She has only just begun to realize that she is smarter now than any person she has ever met, and that now includes a growing number of respected scientists who dote on her every word.

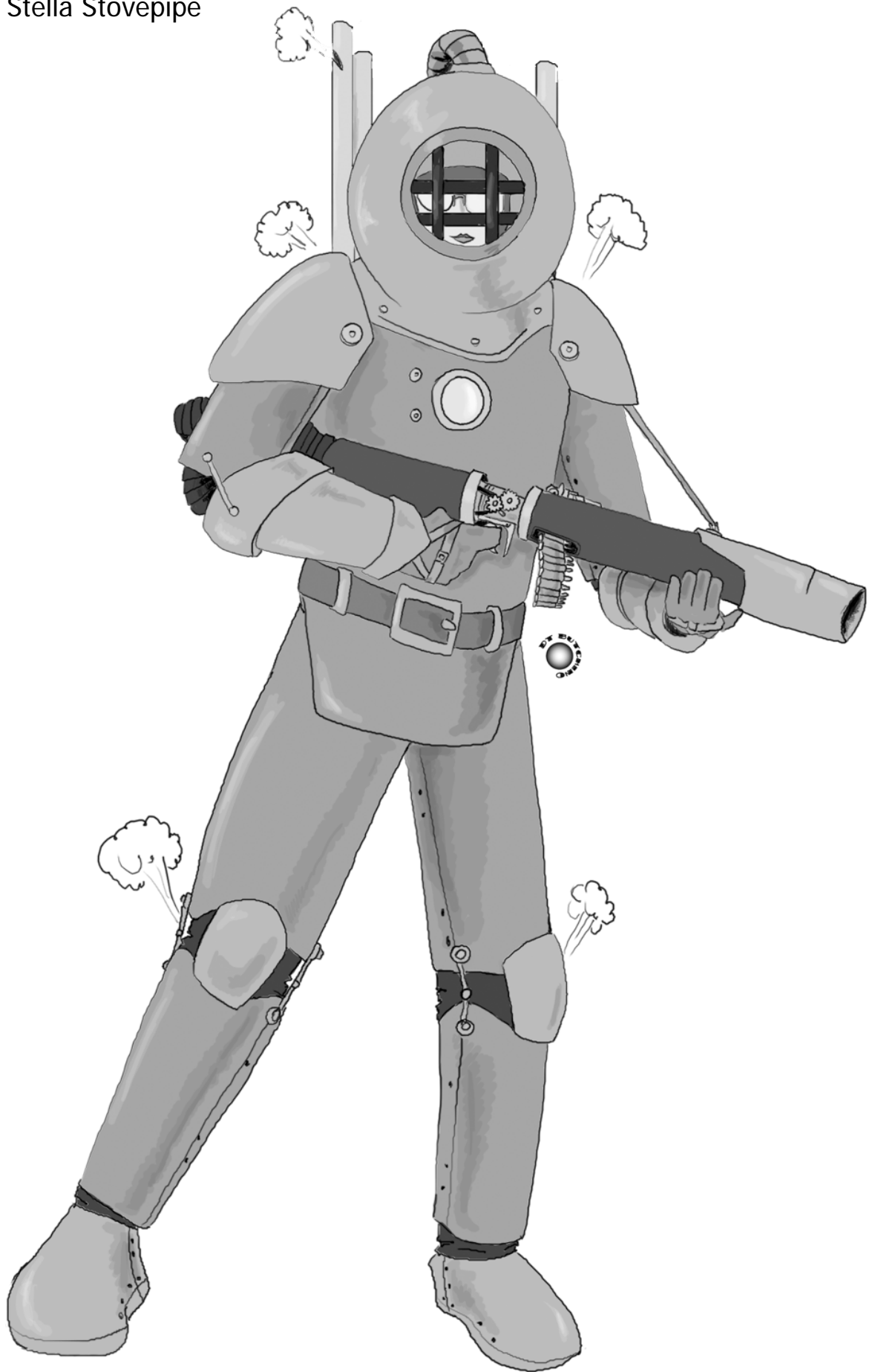
Personality/Motivation: Stella has had an entire world opened to her by the Black Dust and she is constantly amazed by every facet of it. She is curious and inquisitive and has gotten distracted in battle by the way a field gun recoiled. That hasn't kept her from being effective the few times she has actually fought. She is easily cowed however, a leftover of her previous life. She is slowly beginning to see her own worth as her inventions hold back the Martians.

Quote: "No, no, no... Look guv'nor, I know you was a doctor and all when I was cleanin' stoves fer a livin', but now you have ta listen, that just won't work. Lemme show ya how to do it...."

Powers/Tactics: Her Clank and Hiss battlesuit is very powerful, and the Pollywog smasher seems to be able to bore into the Martian armor with ease. But Stella's true strength is in the labs creating the next generation of weapons for the British army. Stella is probably the smartest human being on planet Earth at this time, and she combines this raw intellect with an instinctive understanding and comprehension of a wide array of sciences.

Appearance: Since they have restricted her presence on the battlefield, Stella is most often seen as a small woman swimming in a huge lab coat, a pair of thick spectacles perched on her nose. Her mousy brown hair is pulled back into a severe bun on her head and her one affectation, a blousy ruffled shirt, just peeks from inside the lab coat. Her battlesuit is a monstrosity of pipes and pulleys all overlaid with boilerplate armor. A tube gun with a string of worker's nail hanging from it is usually in her hands and the massive Heat Optics Helmet connects to the thin layered sheath that keeps Stella safe in almost any environ.

Stella Stovepipe



DIGITAL HERO #39

Stella Stovepipe

Val	CHA	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
18	CON	16	13-	
11	BODY	2	11-	
33	INT	23	16-	PER Roll: 16-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
12	COM	1	11-	
4	PD	2		Total: 4/19 PD (0/15 r)
5	ED	1		Total: 5/28 ED (0/23 r)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
6	REC	0		
36	END	0		
25	STUN	0		

Total Characteristics Cost: 96

Movement:	Running:	6"/12"
	Leaping:	2"/4"
	Swimming:	2"/4"

Cost Powers END

154	<i>Steam Powered Gadgets:</i> Variable Power Pool, 120-point Reserve; Powers Can Only be Changed in a Lab (-1/2), Technology Based Powers Only (-1/4)	0
3	Life Support (Immunity Black Dust)	0

Talents

5	Eidetic Memory
3	Lightning Calculator

Skills

7	Armorsmith 15-
2	CK: London 11-
3	Demolitions 16-
3	Electronics 16-
3	Inventor 16-
3	Mechanics 16-
2	PS: Scullery Maid 11-
2	Systems Operation (Heat Optics) 16-
4	Weaponsmith (Firearms, Incendiary Weapons, Missiles & Rockets) 16-
5	WF: Emplaced Weapons, Small Arms, Vehicle Weapons
3	Scientist
2	1) SS: Automotive Engineering 16-
2	2) SS: Ballistics 16-
2	3) SS: Battlesuit Engineering and Design 16-
2	4) SS: Civil Engineering 16-
2	5) SS: Electrical Engineering 16-
2	6) SS: Hydraulic Engineering 16-
2	7) SS: Mathematics 16-
2	8) SS: Mechanical Engineering 16-
2	9) SS: Metallurgy 16-
2	10) SS: Naval Architecture [Wet Navy] 16-
2	11) SS: Robotics 16-

- 2 12) SS: Structural Engineering 16-
- 2 13) SS: Weapons System Engineering 16-

Total Skills & Powers: 228

Total Cost: 324

150+ Disadvantages

- 15 Hunted: The British Army 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Easy to Find, Watching)
- 20 Hunted: The Martians 8- (Mo Pow, Easy to Find)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Can't Resist Mechanical Devices (Common, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Curious (Common, Moderate)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Perfectionist (Common, Moderate)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 15 Social Limitation: Woman (Frequently, Major)
- 10 Vulnerability: 2x Effect from INT Adjustment Powers (Uncommon)
- 20 Vulnerability: 2x Effect from Presence Attacks (Common)
- 37 Experience Points

Total Disadvantages: 324

SAMPLE STEAM POWERED GADGETS

- 30 1) *The Pollywog Smasher:* RKA 2d6, Autofire (3 shots, +1/4), 4 clips of 16 Charges (+1/4), Penetrating (+1/2); OAF (-1) [16]
- 60 2) *The Clank and Hiss Battlesuit:* Armor (15 PD/15 ED); OIF (-1/2) **plus** Armor (8 ED); Only versus Heat Based Attacks (-1/2), OIF (-1/2) **plus** +30 STR, Reduced Endurance (1/2 END, +1/4); OIF (-1/2), No Figured Characteristics (-1/2) **plus** Leaping +7" (15" Total), Reduced Endurance (1/2 END, +1/4); OIF (-1/2) var.
- 25 3) *Sealed Outer Covering:* Life Support (Immune to All Terrestrial Biowarfare Agents, Chemical Warfare Agents, Diseases, and Poisons; Safe in Cold, Heat, High Pressure, Low Pressure/Vacuum; Self-Contained Breathing); OIF (-1/2) 0
- 5 4) *Heat Optic Helmet:* Infrared Perception (Sight Group), +2 to PER Roll; OIF (-1/2) 0

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Recommended Reading: *War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells. Yes, this seems like a no-brainer, but it is still a highly recommended read for detail and flavor text.

Recommended Music: Jeff Wayne's "The War of the Worlds." This is, bar none, what should be your theme music. Okay, it's '70s British Rock, but you will never be able to read or hear the first paragraph of *War of the Worlds* again without also hearing "Dun, dun duh..." in the back of your head. Highly recommended for the music, the story and the accompanying artwork.

Recommended Other Media: Jeff Wayne's "The War of the Worlds" Video Game. This goes even more heavily into the idea of Victorian Sci-fi tech on the side of the British and shows an even wider array of vehicles for the Martians. If you really want to add a heavy military and strategic theme to your game, I can't recommend this highly enough. Be warned, it is hard to get and notably finicky with more modern PCs. I have been fortunate in my experiences with this game, but I am alas, also apparently the exception.

Other Notes: If you are trying to really capture the feel of the original *War of the Worlds*, avoid the 1953 Movie, the 1988 TV show and 1938 Radio Broadcast at all costs. In and of themselves, they are just fine, but the story elements are *really* different and not truly compatible with Wells' original manuscript. I also suggest avoiding the Spielberg/Cruise "remake" of 2005 as it takes a lot of story liberties even if it does remain true to the point of view that was used in the original text.

