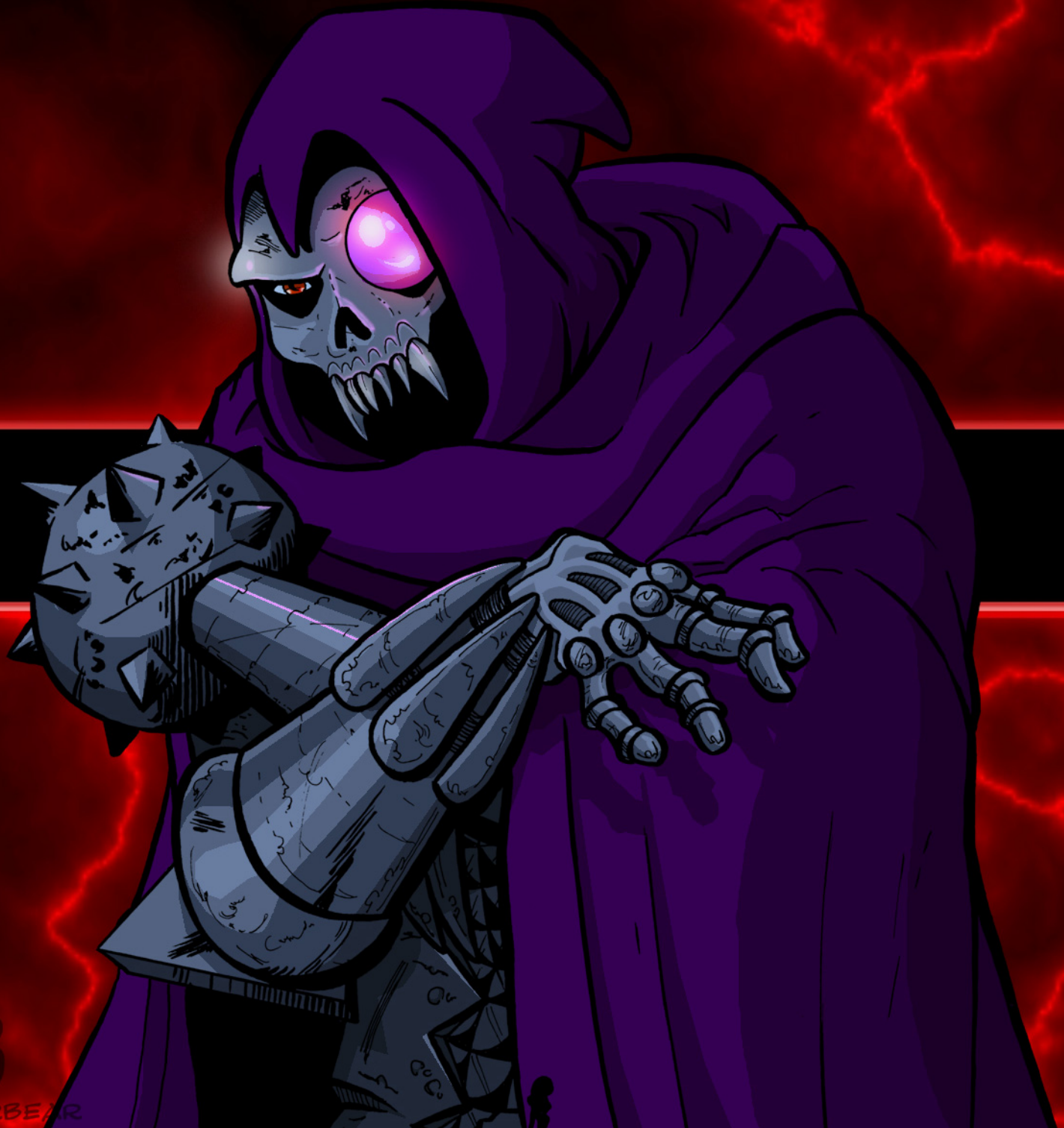


DIGITAL HERO #44

JULY 2007



MANCERBEAR

Table of Contents

HERO SANDWICH

WHEN LAST WE LEFT OUR HEROES...

Keep up with the news from Hero Games. This issue – Get blasted, with *The Ultimate Energy Projector*. 2

HEROGLYPHS

See how Steve Long himself answers rules questions. This issue – Stunning answers about living Automatons. 3

YOU GOTTA HAVE CHARACTER

During the Civil War, Rafael Semmes was a naval hero to the South, and a wanted pirate by the North. 5

COOL STUFF

GENERIC CHARACTERS

Instead of getting into detail for bystanders and mooks, these shorthand characters making gaming easier. 12

MIGRATING FROM d20

Difference in design between differing game systems offers alternate approaches to power, levels, and other concepts. 18

¡VIVA MUERTE!

Profesor Muerte has risen from the grave, more powerful than ever, seeking revenge on those that killed him. 22

DIGITAL HERO

Publisher

Hero Games

Editor

Dave Mattingly

Authors

Daniel Dickson
Steven S. Long
David McGuire
Landon Schurtz
Jason Walters

Artists

Darren Bulmer
DT Butchino
Bill Jackson

Cover

Darren Bulmer

Online

herogames.com

To Subscribe

herogames.com/digitalhero

PRINTING

The general statement in the credits box notwithstanding, DOJ, Inc. grants each purchaser of Digital Hero permission to make one (1) printed copy of this document.

HERO System™ is DOJ, Inc.'s trademark for its roleplaying system.

HERO System Copyright © 1984, 1989, 2002 by DOJ, Inc. d/b/a Hero Games. All rights reserved.

Champions Copyright © 1984, 1989, 2002 by DOJ, Inc. d/b/a Hero Games. All rights reserved.

Justice Inc., Danger International, Dark Champions, Fantasy Hero, and Star Hero Copyright © 2002 by DOJ, Inc. d/b/a Hero Games. All rights reserved.

No part of this electronic magazine may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or computerization, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Publisher: DOJ, Inc., 1 Haight Street, Suite A, San Francisco, California 94102.

Issue #44 (July/August 2007)



When Last We Left Our Heroes...

by Steven S. Long

THE ULTIMATE ENERGY PROJECTOR

This time around we're taking a look at the latest book in Hero's *Ultimate* series, *The Ultimate Energy Projector!*

The Ultimate Energy Projector (UEP) is your guide to creating and playing energy projector characters (EPs) in the *HERO System*. It deals with all facets of energy projection powers in *HERO System* terms, from the "mechanical" aspects of creating them to using them in your campaign properly.

Chapter One, *Energy Projector Characters*, discusses the broad topic of creating characters with energy projection powers. After reviewing energy projector archetypes and related topics, it reviews various *HERO System* elements – Skills, Powers, Disadvantages, and so on – and how they apply to energy-manipulating characters.

Chapter Two, *The Energy Spectrum*, is the heart of the book – the section fans are most looking forward to and which I suspect they'll get the most use out of. It reviews nearly three dozen types of energy (and related "special effects," in *HERO System* terms), discussing how they work "realistically" and how to simulate or represent them using the *HERO System* rules. It includes information on how they interact, so that you know what happens if your fire-projecting character uses one of his attacks on a defense made of ice. Here's an example from the Darkness section, discussing how Darkness and Dimensional Manipulation powers interact:

Dimensional Manipulation: In general, Darkness has no special interaction with Dimensional Manipulation; it neither gains nor loses against this special effect. However, if Darkness powers result from "pulling" or "summoning" shadow or "dark energy" into the campaign setting from another dimension (a fairly common explanation for how Darkness powers work), then Dimensional Manipulation powers are more effective than normal against them, since they interfere with the character's "access" to the dimension of Darkness: Dimensional Manipulation defenses gain +1 point of ED against Darkness attacks, while Darkness defenses suffer a -1 ED reduction before being applied against a Dimensional Manipulation attack.

In other words, UEP provides more concrete rules for defining how specific special effects work in game terms so that you can differentiate them from each other. If you use these rules, no longer will a Fire Blast and an Ice Blast function mechanically the same – they'll have tiny little differences that define how they interact with other special effects, giving each of them its own unique "flavor." If a given special effect is better than average in terms of how it interacts with other special effects, you pay for that with an Adder; if it's worse than average, the power gets a Limitation. And of course, if you don't like the way the book defines a particular interaction, you're free to change it (or to use the rules in the book to custom-tailor powers that don't play by the regular rules) – as with most aspects of HERO, the concept is more important than the execution, so you can change the execution to suit yourself.

Chapter Three, *Energy Projectors Genre by Genre*, briefly reviews how energy projectors and their powers tend to function in various major genres, such as superheroes, Fantasy, and Science Fiction. It includes one or more sample character for several major genres; you can use these as sample PCs, NPCs to pit against your heroes, or just colorful encounters for the heroes.

Chapter Four, *Combat and Adventuring with Energy Projectors*, provides advice and guidance for the GM who has one or more energy projectors in his campaign, and for the player who's running such a character. It's got plenty of information about Combat Maneuvers and other aspects of the combat rules that might affect, or be exploited by, energy projectors.

— Steven S. Long
HERO System Line Developer



HEROglyphs by Steven S. Long

I, Robot (Automaton Powers For Everyone Else)

Some fans have suggested that perhaps the Automaton Powers ought to be general Powers that anyone could buy. While I don't necessarily agree with that, it's an intriguing notion worth exploring for fun. So here's what I think the Automaton Powers would look like if presented as ordinary Powers.

CANNOT BE STUNNED

Type: Defense Power, Special Power

Duration: Inherent

Target: Self Only

Range: Self

Costs END: No

Cost: 15 Character Points

A character with this Power is never Stunned, even if he takes STUN damage that exceeds his CON. He remains able to fight until he is Knocked Out or destroyed.

DOES NOT BLEED

Type: Defense Power, Special Power

Duration: Inherent

Target: Self Only

Range: Self

Costs END: No

Cost: 15 Character Points

A character with this Power does not "bleed" or lose additional BODY when under 0 BODY. If the campaign uses the optional Bleeding rules, Does Not Bleed makes a character immune to them. Some examples of Does Not Bleed include lacking blood, super-fast regenerative healing powers, or a mechanical infrastructure that keeps damage from spreading.

NO HIT LOCATIONS

Type: Defense Power, Special Power

Duration: Inherent

Target: Self Only

Range: Self

Costs END: No

Cost: 10 Character Points

This Power can only be purchased in campaigns that use the optional Hit Location rules. A character who has it is not subject to those rules – he has no particularly vulnerable or better defended locations on its body. For example a hit for, say, 5 BODY and 20 STUN does that much damage whether he's hit in the head or the hand. Some examples of No Hit Locations include having a body with no discernible "parts" or "sections" (like a giant slime monster), or lacking standard bodily

organs or functions (such as some stretching characters in *Champions* or various undead creatures in *Fantasy Hero*).

If the campaign uses the Hit Location rules to determine the STUN Multiplier for Killing Attacks, determine the STUN Multiplier for a Killing Attack used against a character with this Power by the standard method of rolling 1d6 and subtracting 1.

TAKES NO STUN

Type: Defense Power, Special Power

Duration: Inherent

Target: Self Only

Range: Self

Costs END: No

Cost: 45 Character Points to take only BODY and to lose abilities each time an attack does BODY; 60 Character Points to only take BODY

A character with this power ignores the STUN damage from any attack: he only takes the BODY. Some examples of this power include being an automaton (say, a robot, zombie, or skeleton) who doesn't feel pain, having had the pain receptors in one's body "turned off," or being incredibly resistant to harm.

Buying Takes No STUN

The base cost for Takes No STUN is 45 points. A character who buys this Power has no STUN Characteristic. He gets no points in return for this and cannot sell back his STUN.

Because it makes a character immune to many forms of harm, Takes No STUN affects his defenses. Divide his base PD and ED by 3, and multiply the cost of all additional defenses and Defense Powers (other than the Powers described in this article) by 3 (before applying any Advantages or Limitations). This does not affect the power's END cost (if any). The character's base defenses are not Resistant; if he wants Resistant defenses, he has to pay for them.

Example: *The Zombie is a 9 PD/6 ED automaton with Takes No STUN. Its defenses become 3 PD/2 ED. If it wants to increase these in any way, the cost will be triple. For example, another point of PD would cost 3 Character Points, instead of the usual 1 Character Point.*

Example: *Captain Invulnerable has Takes No STUN. He wants to buy 10 PD, 10 ED and a Force Field (30 PD/30 ED). The 10 PD and 10 ED cost 30 points each. The Force Field, which*



would normally cost 60 points, costs 180 points, but its END cost remains 6.

The tripling of the cost of a defense applies to Combat Luck and Missile Deflection (but not Reflection), and to any other power or ability the GM deems primarily “defensive.” It does not apply to Desolidification. In a Heroic campaign where characters get ordinary defensive equipment without having to pay Character Points for it, the GM decides whether characters with Takes No STUN can obtain and use such gear normally (by spending money on it, finding money, and so forth) and obtain full benefit from it, or if its defenses are divided by 3.

Some characters are even tougher than this: they take no effect from attacks except to take the BODY damage. This costs an additional 15 points (for a total of 60). This sort of character is completely unaffected by attacks until he runs out of BODY, at which point he dies (or is destroyed). This version of the Power is most applicable to Automaton and other beings for whom there are rules about the incremental effects of damage; ordinary characters can generally get by with the 45-point version.

Example: *Mechanon has constructed a robot to help him destroy all sentient life on Earth. This robot has 40 BODY and is purchased with the Power Takes No STUN (60 points). In battle, the robot fights relentlessly. It cannot be Stunned or Knocked Out, nor will it fall apart. It fights until it takes all its BODY in damage, at which point it is destroyed.*

Using Takes No STUN

A character with Takes No STUN cannot be Stunned or Knocked Out, because it takes no STUN damage. However, at the GM’s option, if he takes BODY damage from any attack after applying his defenses, he loses one of the following: one Power; 10 STR; 1 SPD; or 1 normal Sense. (The fact that an ability is Inherent doesn’t prevent it from being lost this way.) What exactly he loses, and how long it takes him to heal or regain that ability, is up to the GM.

A character with either version of this Power stops functioning when his BODY falls to 0 or below, and is completely destroyed when his negative BODY total equals his normal BODY. For example, a 10 BODY character stops functioning after he takes 10 BODY damage, and is destroyed after he takes 20 BODY (which would reduce him to -10 BODY).

When evaluating whether a character with this Power is suitable for a campaign, the GM should mentally multiply the character’s defense by three. For example, a character with 7 PD is

roughly equal to a normal character with a 21 PD.

Powers

Adjustment Powers: If a character applies a negative Adjustment Power (such as a Drain) to the defenses of a character with Takes No STUN power, use the normal cost for the defense to determine what happens. If he applies a positive Adjustment Power (such as an Aid), use the tripled cost for the power to determine the effect.

Defense Powers: If a character with Takes No STUN benefits from a defense provided by another character (such as a Force Wall), he does not have to divide the value of the extra defense by 3 if this is a one-time or infrequent thing. But if two characters do this regularly, the GM should either (a) forbid it, or (b) divide the defense by 3.

Entangle: If a character with Takes No STUN creates an Entangle as a barrier to protect himself, he does not have to divide the value of the extra defense by 3 if this is a one-time or infrequent thing. But if two characters do this regularly, the GM should either (a) forbid it, or (b) divide the defense by 3.

Advantages

Hardened: If a character with Takes No STUN wants to buy Hardened for his natural PD and/or ED, he uses the value of the Characteristic before he divides it by 3. For example, suppose an Automaton with Takes No STUN has 9 PD. That gets divided down to 3 PD. But if he wants to make the PD Hardened, he pays $(9 \times 1 \frac{1}{4}) - 9 = 2$ points.



You Gotta Have Character

by Jason Walters

“I reverence the name of Semmes. In my opinion, he was the greatest admiral of the 19th Century. At every conference with my admirals I counsel them to read and study Semmes’ *Memoirs of Service Afloat*.”

— Kaiser Wilhelm II

In almost every way, the Confederate Navy Department was woefully ill-equipped to face off against the Union Navy. It was short of mechanics, short of metal, short of manufacturing facilities, and short of shipyards. Perhaps its only saving grace was that it wasn’t short on men; or, to be more specific, it wasn’t short on the sort of men that possessed a bravado that bordered on suicidal. These included blockade-runners who made mad dashes through the Union Navy’s lines under the cover of night, their shallow-draft hulls filled with smuggled goods, and latter day privateers known as commerce raiders, who menaced United States shipping from the northern tip of Scotland to the southern tilt of Argentina. Outgunned, outnumbered, and considered pirates by their adversaries, it took a captain with real grit and audacity to stalk the seas of the world alone. And no captain on either side during the Civil War was more determined or audacious than Raphael Semmes, captain of the legendary *CSS Alabama*.

An author, popular lawyer, and lighthouse keeper from Mobile, Alabama, Semmes served with distinction as a naval captain in the Mexican-American War. When his state seceded, he assumed command of the commerce raider *Alabama*, an English manufactured sloop-of-war. During her two-year career at sea, Alabama wrought devastation among United States Merchant shipping across the globe, capturing 60 merchant vessels and sinking the warship *USS Hatteras*. So great was the destruction visited upon Union shipping by the Confederate commerce raiders – an estimated six million dollars – that after the war the United States government pursued a series of international legal actions known as the “Alabama Claims” against the British government. Many now consider Semmes to be one of the greatest seamen of the 19th Century. His seminal *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States* became required reading for German naval officers through two world wars.

Background/History: Raphael Semmes was born on September 27th, 1809 in Charles County, Maryland. Orphaned at the age of 10, he entered the United States navy as a midshipman at the age of 15 in 1826. A scholarly young man, he studied law between cruises and was admitted to the bar in 1834. Rising through the navy’s ranks, he was put in command of the infamous brig *USS Somers* during the Mexican-American War (the ship that inspired Melville’s *Billy Bud*). Unfortunately, the *Somers* was lost during a sudden storm while chasing a blockade-runner off of the coast of Vera Cruz, killing 32 men out of a crew of 120. Semmes survived, however, and received a naval commendation for his conduct during the disaster.

After the war, Semmes went on extended leave at Mobile, Alabama so that he could stay near the Pensacola, Florida naval base while practicing law. He quickly became an extremely popular attorney and socialite (the nearby township of Semmes is named after him), and was promoted to the rank of commander in 1855. Put in command of the area’s lighthouses, he resigned his commission in 1861 when Alabama seceded from the Union, and he was placed in charge of the Confederate Lighthouse Service.

But Semmes didn’t aspire to the life of a landlubber bureaucrat. A fierce partisan of the Confederate cause, he wanted to *fight* for his newborn country, not shuffle her papers. His quick mind, years at sea, and considerable education had brought him to certain conclusions about the future of naval warfare – especially between such mismatched opponents as the Union and Confederacy. Semmes felt strongly that the Confederacy’s tiny navy needed to include commerce destroyers: light warships dedicated to capturing or destroying the merchant marines of enemy nations, causing crippling harm to their economies. This wasn’t a new idea, of course. Privateers – essentially licensed pirates – had been doing the same thing for hundreds of years. But the idea of a modern navy commissioning ships specifically for such a purpose was a radical one. It broke many contemporary assumptions (but not the rules) about naval warfare.

Semmes sought and obtained permission from Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen R. Mallory to create his own commerce raider. He purchased a 184-foot steamer from New Orleans and converted it into light cruiser he named the *CSS Sumter*. On June 3rd, 1861 he slipped past the Federal blockade of the Mississippi River and began attacking Union

THE LOST CAUSE

The Lost Cause is a name commonly given to a literary movement that sought to explain the defeat of the Confederacy by the Union in terms Southerners found acceptable. Authors who contributed to the movement were very often retired Confederate military officers, who tended to portray the Southern cause as a noble and chivalric one that had been defeated by crude but overwhelming Northern force. They tended to emphasize the cause of state’s rights over the preservation of slavery, often providing legal justifications for the cause of succession. These writers viewed the breakaway of the Confederacy to be a justifiable response to Northern cultural and economic aggression against their way of life. It most important authors included Edward A. Pollard, Lt. Gen. Jubal Early, Douglas Southhall Freeman, and of course Admiral Raphael Semmes.

RAPHAEL SEMMES ISLAND ADVENTURES

She!: While hunting New England whalers off of the coast of Newfoundland, the *Alabama* is caught in a sudden squall that throws her thousands of kilometers off course. Landing on an uncharted arctic island, they discover an ancient city ruled by a beautiful queen. Unfortunately, the city is under almost constant attack by a horde of barbarians from the far side of the island. The queen pleads for the Confederate sailor's help.

Off Skull Isle: While chasing an elusive Union merchantman off the coast of Sumatra the *Alabama* enters a thick bank of fog. When it emerges its prey has vanished, but an island lies dead ahead. As they grow closer, Captain Semmes and his crew realize that a distinctive knoll shaped like a human skull dominates the center of the isle. All of a sudden there is a terrible bellowing sound and....

Mysterious Island: Battered by an Antarctic storm, the crew of the *Alabama* is relieved to discover an uncharted island some 2,500 km east of New Zealand.



shipping. He captured eight United States ships in waters near Cuba, and then moved to the coast of Brazil where he caught two more. After bagging a couple more ships in the Caribbean, the *Sumter* was almost caught by the Union sloop-of-war Iroquois while coaling in Martinique, but managed to slip away under the cover of night. She captured another six ships in European waters before finally being cornered at Gibraltar, forcing Semmes and his men to abandon her. All told, the tiny *Sumter* with her 18-man crew and five guns had taken 18 prizes during her six-month military career. She had also occupied the attention of an entire division of Federal Blockade ships – in and of itself no small service to the Confederate cause.

Semmes had made his point. The Confederate Navy was quick to commission more commerce raiders, most of which were 220-foot sloops-of-war constructed in British shipyards. Semmes and the *Sumter*'s crew took possession of one of these new ships directly from its English shipyard on August 24th, 1862, christening her the CSS *Alabama*. Semmes and his men immediately set about making life miserable for the Union merchant marine, spending the next two months capturing and burning Europe-bound grain ships throughout the North Atlantic and generally decimating New England's whaling fleet. Continuing her path of destruction to the Caribbean, she sank the warship USS *Hatteras* off of the coast of Texas, capturing her entire crew. She then traveled to Cape Town, South Africa for coaling and proceeded to Southeast Asia, where she spent another six months destroying Union ships before traveling around The Cape of Good Hope back to Europe.

All told, the voyage of the *Alabama* had lasted 21 months and covered 75,000 miles. During that time she had captured or destroyed 60 Union merchantmen and one warship, wreaking unparalleled economic destruction on the United States' economy everywhere she went. While hailed as a hero and military genius in the South, Captain Raphael Semmes was condemned as a vicious criminal in the North. *Harper's Weekly* referred to him in their pages as "the famous pirate Raphael Semmes." US Naval Secretary Gideon Welles made his capture a top priority.

The *Alabama* put into port at Cherbourg, France on June 11, 1864. After nearly two years at sea she was badly in need of shipyard maintenance and refitting, but the French – who had remained carefully neutral during the American Civil War – hesitated to allow the *Alabama* use of their shipyards. While Semmes waited for permission to dock, the Union sloop-of-war USS *Kearsarge* arrived and positioned itself in international waters just outside of the

harbor. Its captain was determined to destroy the *Alabama* and capture her notorious captain. To prepare for a confrontation with the infamous vessel, he covered his craft from bow to stern in chain mail, turning her into a makeshift ironclad. Semmes was left with a difficult choice. He and his crew could abandon the *Alabama* and make their way to England, perhaps to acquire another commerce raider, or they could sally forth and attack the *Kearsarge*. Without refitting, the *Alabama* was out of the war no matter what. But if they could defeat the Union warship in a standup fight, it would be a major propaganda victory for the Confederacy, possibly even tipping European public opinion in the rebel's favor.

Semmes opted for the latter. On June 19th the *Alabama* sailed out to meet the *Kearsarge*. As the Union vessel turned to meet its opponent, the *Alabama* opened fire. The captain of the *Kearsarge* waited patiently until the Confederate ship had closed within 1,000 yards, then steamed on an opposite course to intercept her. The two ships moved around one another in circles, each trying to cross the bow of the other so that she could deliver a fatal blast of heavy raking fire; but the *Alabama*'s guns were unable to penetrate the metal coated sides of the *Kearsarge*. A little more than an hour after the first shot was fired, the feared rebel ship had been reduced to a burning wreck, her hull blasted below the waterline. Semmes struck his colors and sent a boat to surrender, but the private English yacht *Deerhound* rescued the *Alabama*'s captain and 40 of her crew before the Union vessel could take them prisoner. Though badly wounded, the "famous pirate Raphael Semmes" had once more escaped the clutches of his Northern adversaries.

The battle of the *Kearsarge* and the *Alabama* became one of the most famous naval engagements of the American Civil War, overshadowed only by the legendary engagement between the USS *Monitor* and the CSS *Virginia* (better known as the *Merrimack*). A total of 250 shots had been exchanged between the two vessels: *Alabama* had fired 150 rounds at her adversary, while *Kearsarge* had fired 100 (5 of them after her colors were struck). Semmes convalesced from his wounds and returned to the Confederacy, where he was promoted to rear admiral in February of 1865. During the final months of the war he was placed in command of the James River Squadron defending the Confederate capital at Richmond. When the city fell to Union forces, he supervised the destruction of his squadron and served as a brigadier general in the rebel army after his sailors were turned into an infantry force.

When the war finally ended, Raphael Semmes was arrested for treason and piracy on December 15th, 1865. He was taken to Washington, where he was additionally

investigated for charges of mistreating prisoners and violating the rules of war. All of these charges were dropped after three months, and he was released on April 7th, 1866. Shortly thereafter Semmes became a professor of philosophy and literature at Louisiana State University, but lost his tenure due to harassment from the federal government. Later on he would work as a judge and newspaper editor before returning to Mobile to resume his legal career. Toward the end of his life he would defend his actions at sea by penning his decisive work *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States*, considered by many not only to be an important military work but also one of the finest (if most bitter) examples of the literary school known as The Lost Cause. Raphael Semmes died on August 30th, 1877 at the age of 68.

Personality/Motivation: Like many men of his age and upbringing, Raphael Semmes is a study in contradictions. He's a freedom fighter who supports slavery, an academic who is also a racist, a lawyer turned anti-government rebel, and a career military man turned "pirate." Perhaps it would be best to view him as a thoughtful, loyal man whose allegiance lies with his home state of Alabama – regardless of her many shortcomings – instead of with a distant, often hostile government in Washington, D.C. Like many Confederate patriots, a Semmes born to another age and a different cause would be considered a great man, rather than a rebel, racist, and pirate.

Raphael Semmes is a witty, highly intelligent man with an acerbic wit. Though self educated, he's also well educated; Semmes can hold his own in discussions of the great classics of world literature or law with any professional academic. He's almost pathologically brave, and prone to taking audacious, calculated risks with the lives of his men. Fortunately for all concerned, his dangerous gambles almost always pay off in the end, a fact that inspires both respect and loyalty from those who serve under him.

Semmes is well versed in international maritime law, which he uses to direct his activities in such a way that they further his cause. He takes great pride in the scrupulous treatment of captives – a point not lost on the French, English, or even his Northern enemies (though they would never publicly admit it). A lawyer down to his bones, he destroys, releases, or bonds captured Union ships in studious compliance with global standards and practices. It wouldn't be inaccurate to say that his behavior toward defeated foes is gallant, harkening back to an earlier age when men were sailors first and partisans second.

Quote: "We are making war upon the enemy's commerce – not upon his unarmed seamen."

Powers/Tactics: A scholar, lawyer, and seaman of considerable talent, Raphael Semmes' greatest gift is his unique combination of audacity and skill. Simply put, Captain Semmes has been blessed not only with a vision of how naval warfare will be conducted 100 years in the future, but the ruthlessness and independence to turn this vision into a reality. Under his command, the CSS *Alabama* can turn up literally anywhere at anytime, striking at anything from a single-mast fishing boat to a small enemy warship, then vanishing before effective resistance can be brought to bear. In essence, a vessel under his command becomes not only an instrument of economic destruction, but one of terror as well. When Semmes is on the prowl, civilian captains are reluctant to put their precious ships to sea.

Another part of Semmes' value to the Confederacy lies in his versatility. He is a captain, diplomat, and propagandist all at once. His daring exploits make for good print in the newspapers of neutral but sympathetic countries such as England and France, while the élan and disciplined behavior of the *Alabama's* crew have made an excellent impression in ports around the world. When questioned about the "War Between The States" by foreign military men, Captain Semmes is able to put forth the Confederate position in an intelligent, thoughtful, and convincing manner. He is also able to accomplish the same feat in the salons and gentlemen's clubs of Europe, where many a sympathetic ear waits to be bent to the Southern cause.

Campaign Use: Economic destruction in the name of war isn't a new concept. During the golden age of sail, the governments of England, France, The Netherlands, and the United States issued letters of marque authorizing privately funded warships to attack and seize the merchant shipping of enemy nations. A form of legalized piracy, it allowed a country to "fight out of its weight" by suddenly increasing the size and scope of its naval operations. Though "privateering" fell out of practice after the Declaration of Paris in 1856, it has never left the public imagination. The idea of combining patriot, pirate, and entrepreneur into one swashbuckling package is simply too attractive to be entirely forgotten. Romantic figures such as Sir Francis Drake, Sir Henry Morgan, and Blackbeard all practiced privateering at some point in their careers.

Commerce raiding as originally conceptualized by Semmes was an updating of the concept of the privateer. By waging economic warfare on an enemy without directly

Pulling into a sheltered harbor to undertake necessary repairs, they are surprised to find that the mysterious outlaw submarine captain Nemo inhabits the island. He has somehow survived the whirlpool that repeatedly destroyed his craft off the coast of Norway many years before. Can they convince him to turn his genius to the Confederate cause?



confronting its military might, a weak nation with little ocean-going trade can cause a great deal of trouble for a strong mercantile power. This is why the Confederacy, with its limited manufacturing ability and almost nonexistent navy, chose a tactic that the Germans would emulate with considerable success through two world wars. It is also what makes Raphael Semmes and the *Alabama* an excellent choice for a military-themed RPG in which a small, weak nation is pitted against a strong one. For example, a small kingdom pitted against an empire might choose to issue letters of marque to maritime adventurers, while an interstellar civilization might hire military “contractors” to hunt pirates and smugglers in the dark depths of space. Playing privateers or commerce raiders provides PCs with exceptional roleplaying opportunities. They operate alone and without backup against superior foes, relying upon superior skill and cunning to make up for their comparative lack of firepower. They work for the system without having to work within it, giving them a level of freedom most players crave.

Finally and probably most importantly, privateers go to exotic places and do dangerous things – which is why most of us play roleplaying games in the first place!

Appearance: A tall, slim man with sandy blonde hair, Raphael Semmes has a roguish (one might almost say “piratical”) air about him. It might be the rakish way he wears his captain’s hat, his flowing mustachios, or the way his tattered confederate greatcoat blows in the wind, but Semmes has an insolent, almost deliberately cocky manner more appropriate to a highwayman than a ship’s captain. Yet there is no mistaking the presence of a man who is used to giving orders and having them obeyed. Captain Semmes is just such a fellow.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Articles

- Hagar, Captain George, *The Pirate Semmes*, Harper’s Weekly, January 1863 Issue (with pictures)
 Meehan, Thomas F., *Raphael Semmes*, Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume XIII, 1912 Volume

Books

- Catton, Bruce, *The American Heritage New History of The Civil War*, 1996, Penguin Group
 Spencer, Warren F., *Raphael Semmes: The Philosophical Mariner*, 1997, University Alabama Press
 Tucker, Spencer C., *Raphael Semmes and the Alabama*, 1996, McWhiney Foundation Press

Books by Raphael Semmes

- Service Afloat and Ashore During the Mexican War* (1851)
Rebel Raider: The Cruise of the Alabama and the Sumter (1864)
Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States (1869)



Captain Raphael Semmes



Captain Raphael Semmes

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
11	STR	1	11-	Lift 115 kg; 2d6 HTH [2]
11	DEX	3	11-	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
13	CON	6	12-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
14	INT	4	12-	PER Roll: 12-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
10	COM	0	11-	
				Total: 5 PD (0 rPD)
				Total: 4 ED (0 rED)
				Phases: 4, 8, 12
5	PD	3		
4	ED	1		
3	SPD	9		
7	REC	4		
30	END	2		
30	STUN	4		

Total Characteristic Cost: 50

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

Cost	Powers	END
1	Swimming +1" (3" Total)	1

Perks

- 37 *CSS Alabama*: Vehicle
- 1 *Member of the Bar*: License to Practice Law
- 4 *Ship's Captain*: Rank: Captain

Skills

- 4 AK: Oceans Of The World 13-
- 3 Climbing 11-
- 3 High Society 12-
- 3 Interrogation 12-
- 3 Language: French (Conversation, Literate)
- 3 Language: Latin (Conversation, Literate)
- 6 Navigation (Marine) 14-
- 5 Shadowing (Ships) 13-
- 3 Survival (Marine Surface) 13-
- 5 TF: Large Military Ships, Large Motorized Boats, Large Wind-Powered Boats, Small Military Ships, Small Wind-Powered Boats
- 4 WF: Small Arms, Blades, Vehicle Weapons
- 3 Jack of All Trades
- 2 PS: Author 12-
- 2 PS: College Professor 12-
- 1 PS: Knot-Tying 11-
- 3 PS: Lawyer 13-
- 4 PS: Ship's Captain 14-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 100

Total Cost: 150

75+ Disadvantages

- 15 Distinctive Features: Rebel Captain (Easily Concealed, Extreme Reaction [Fear])
- 20 Hunted: United States Navy 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Harshly Punish)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Racist (Uncommon, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Compulsive Swashbuckler (Common, Moderate)
- 20 Reputation: Feared Rebel Commerce Raider, 14- (Extreme)

Total Disadvantage Points: 150

DIGITAL HERO #44

CSS Alabama

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
15	SIZE	75	32"x16", -15" KB, 3 ktons
85	STR	0	17d6 HTH [0]
11	DEX	3	OCV: 4/DCV: 0
25	BODY	0	
4	DEF	5	Does Not Protect Some Occupants (-1/4)
3	SPD	9	Phases: 4, 8, 12

Total Characteristics Cost: 92

Movement: Ground: 0"/0"
Swimming: 9"(18")/ 13"(26")

Cost	Abilities & Equipment	END
1	<i>Sailed Watercraft:</i> Swimming +7" (9" Total); Surface Only (-1), Sailed (-1), OAF (Sails, -1), Limited Maneuverability (-1/4), Cannot Move Backward (-1/4)	0
4	<i>Steam Engine:</i> Swimming +11 (13" Total); Surface Only (-1), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (Easily-Obtained Fuel, 1 Day, -0), Limited Maneuverability (-3/4)	[1cc]
24	<i>One-Hundred-Ten-Pounder:</i> RKA 5d6, Increased Maximum Range (3500", +1/2), OIF Bulky (Cannons, -1), Real Weapon (-1/4), Extra Time (1 Turn to Load and Fire, -1 1/4), Limited Arc of Fire (One Hex Row, Same Horizontal Level, -1), 12 Charges (-1/4)	[12]
19	<i>Sixty-Eight-Pounder:</i> RKA 4d6, Increased Maximum Range (3000", +1/2), OIF Bulky (Cannons, -1), Real Weapon (-1/4), Extra Time (1 Turn to Load and Fire, -1 1/4), Limited Arc of Fire (One Hex Row, Same Horizontal Level, -1), 12 Charges (-1/4)	[12]
14	<i>Thirty-Two-Pounders:</i> RKA 3d6, Increased Maximum Range (2500", +1/2), OIF Bulky (Cannons, -1), Real Weapon (-1/4), Extra Time (1 Turn to Load and Fire, -1 1/4), Limited Arc of Fire (One Hex Row, Same Horizontal Level, -1), 12 Charges (-1/4)	[12]
15	<i>Thirty-Two-Pounders:</i> 5 More Thirty-Two-Pounders (total of 6)	[12]
10	<i>Full Rig:</i> +10 BODY; Partial Coverage (Sails Only, -2)	0
10	<i>Three-Masted Ship:</i> Total of Three Masts	0
-12	<i>Water Vehicle:</i> Ground Movement -6" (0" Total)	0
32	<i>Large Boat's Anchors:</i> 85 STR, Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); OIF Bulky (-1), Partial Coverage (-2)	0
5	<i>Large Boat's Anchors:</i> A Second Anchor (Total of 2)	0
5	<i>Lifeboats:</i> Four Lifeboats (use Canoe, TUV page 61)	0

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 120

Total Vehicle Cost: 212

187+ Disadvantages

25 Distinctive Features: Warship (Not Concealable, Extreme Reaction [fear])

Total Disadvantage Points: 212

Total Cost: 187 / 5 = 37

Description: The CSS *Alabama* is a 220-foot steam-and-screw powered sloop-of-war constructed by John Laird Sons and Company at Birkenhead, England. With three masts and a steam engine, she is capable of a speedy 13 knots (24 km/h) in calm seas. She carries 8 cannons with a complement of 145 officers and men. Intended for deep sea commerce raiding, she has a Beam of 9.7 meters and a Draft 5.4 meters. Her Displacement is a modest 1050 tons.



Generic Characters

by Landon Schurtz

Face in the Crowd (“Victim”)

This describes the average person in the crowd, the clerk at the gas station, the teller at the bank, the driver of your cab – Joe Nobody. Use the attributes of the “Average Person,” 5ERp345. There is a small chance – about a 6 or less on 3d6 – that any given “nobody” is actually a “Noteworthy Normal” (same page). Such characters may have a slightly higher skill in their professional area, probably 12- to 13-.

Notes: The “Face in the Crowd” is knocked unconscious by the average damage from a 5d6 Normal Damage Attack. Such an attack would also do an average of 3 BODY of damage, wounds that would take around three weeks to heal.

Average Thug

Describes the rank-and-file of street gangs, urban posses, organized crime, and generic hoodlums and ne’er-do-wells. Use the attributes of a “Noteworthy Normal,” 5ERp345, with 1 All Combat Level and no DCV-Only Levels. The average hood will carry some sort of semi-automatic pistol, usually a 9mm; most have about 12 shots (give or take), add a +1 to hit, and do 1d6+1 Killing (normal STUN multiplier of 1d6-1). Enterprising drug-dealer types may have a small sub-machine gun, such as a Baretta; this does 1d6+1 Killing (1d6-1 STUN multiplier), has 20 shots, and 5-shot Autofire. Really hardcore thugs may use a 12 gauge pump shotgun, like a Mossberg. These carry 8 shots, do 2½d6 Killing with a flat 1d6 STUN multiplier, and have the following modifiers: AOE 1 Hex, Reduced by Range, Limited Range (20”), and Reduced Penetration.

Notes: The “Average Thug” is knocked unconscious by the average damage from a 6½d6 Normal Damage Attack. Such an attack would also do an average of 4 BODY of damage, wounds that would take a month to heal.

VARIATIONS

- *Experienced Thug:* An experienced thug who has been on the streets for a while may have 1 DCV-Only Level and a 3 SPD, but is otherwise the same. Against a normal person, that’s a pretty frightening guy.
- *Ex-Military Thugs:* A terrifying number of street-gang members in big cities have actually served a tour in the Army; Los Angeles police estimate that as many as 20% of members of the major gangs have been in the Army. As for *Experienced Thug*, above, plus Tactics 11-, 1 Ranged Combat Level, and some other skill at base level

(such as Electronics, Mechanics, or Demolitions) to represent the character’s MOS.

- *Theme Thugs:* Some street hoods get recruited for the mad schemes of costumed villains, and find themselves wearing a silly costume and answering to something like “Two of Clubs” instead of their given names. Still, the pay is good and if you’re going to go to jail anyway, you might as well have a good story to tell. Theme Thugs should be considered *Experienced Thugs*, above. They may carry a themed weapon, but usually just have some normal firearm. This assumes that the costumed criminal in charge merely recruited some labor, rather than undertaking to train his own private army (as it were). Specially trained thugs are “Agents” – see below.
- *Organized Crime:* Hoods who work for the Mafia or the Yakuza are still hoods. They may be *Experienced Thugs* (see above) or not. The only additional bonuses they enjoy are a +1/1d6 Reputation (reflecting their allegiance to a particular criminal enterprise) and an 11- KS regarding this group.

Average Cop

Describes Joe Flatfoot who walks or drives a beat. Use the attributes of a “Noteworthy Normal,” with a 3 SPD, 1 All Combat Level and 1 DCV-Only Level. Also, add 1 Skill Level with PER Checks, a Familiarity (8-) with Combat Driving, and Criminology, Streetwise, and City Knowledge, all at 11-. Cops have a +1/1d6 Reputation, are Subject to Orders (Very Frequently, Major), Watched by the Police Force (8-), and have Distinctive Features (Uniform). They are issued a Glock 9mm pistol that carries 17 shots, imparts a +1 OCV, and does 1d6+1 Killing (1d6 STUN Multiplier). Cops also carry a billy club which is a +3d6 Hand Attack OAF, for a total of 5d6 damage in melee. Cops are required by regulation to wear a Kevlar Vest which imparts 4 rPD/rED on an 11- Activation Roll. They usually carry a Mossberg Shotgun in their car, which carry 8 shots, do 2½d6 Killing with a flat 1d6 STUN multiplier, and have the following modifiers: AOE 1 Hex, Reduced by Range, Limited Range (20”), and Reduced Penetration.

Cops have a variety of miscellaneous equipment, such as their handcuffs. These cannot normally be applied except to a character who being fully Held, but once on, they have 3 BODY and 6 DEF. Cops may carry pepper spray or a taser. The former is a 5d6 Sight Group Flash NND (protected eyes) and Delayed Recovery

(each BODY rolled on the Flash attack represents one *Turn*, not one Segment); anyone affected by the Flash should also take 3d6 STUN without applying their defenses. Pepper Spray effectively has a range of only about 1” at most, and is Inaccurate (-2 to hit). Tasers can be ranged or not; ranged tasers can fire about 4” at most, and are also Inaccurate (-2 to hit). Either way, a taser does 8d6 NND (insulated against electrical shocks). Cops may have access to Gas Masks (Self Contained Breathing for One Hour plus 10 pts of Sight Group Flash against Tear Gas type Flash attacks), Helmets with Face Shields (increases the Activation Roll for their armor to 13-), and Riot Shields (imparts a +2 DCV, which can add to the character’s OCV when using the Block maneuver, and allows the character to use Block against thrown weapons). Of course, Cops are in radio communication with other cops.

Notes: The “Average Cop” is knocked unconscious by the average damage from a 6½d6 Normal Damage Attack. Such an attack would also do an average of 4 BODY of damage, wounds that would take around a month to heal. If the cop’s armor makes its Activation Roll, it would take, on average, a 7½d6 Normal Damage Attack to knock a cop unconscious. In this case, the cop would take only 1 BODY of damage, as well; wounds which would only take about 1 week to recover from.

VARIATIONS

- *Bomb Squad:* Simply add Demolitions 11- to the character. Bomb Squad officers often wear heavy armored outfits that reduce their movement to 3” and impose a -3 on all DEX rolls, but reduce explosives damage by 25%.
- *Detective:* Detectives rarely carry any gear except a sidearm and handcuffs, and usually don’t wear armored vests. However, they have Deduction and Shadowing at 11-, and 1 Skill Level that can be used with Deduction, Criminology, and Streetwise.
- *Ex-Military Cops:* As much as half of the police force used to be in the military. Add Tactics 11-, 1 Ranged Combat Level, and some skill to represent the character’s MOS (such as Electronics or Mechanics).
- *SWAT:* Highly trained police officers who have 2 OCV Levels with Police Sniper Rifles, Tactics 11-, and 5 Points of PRE only for Resisting PRE attacks (effective 15 PRE).
- *Experienced Cops:* Experienced cops can be of any type; one can have an Experienced Detective, and Experienced SWAT Officer, and Experienced Ex-Military Cop, and so on. Add 1 Overall Skill Level.

Average Soldier

This describes the average combat soldier. Soldiers with a Combat Support or Support Services MOS (like Computer Technician or Medic) will only have a 2 SPD, but the same basic stats. Use the attributes of a “Skilled Normal” from 5ERp346, with the following modifications: +1” Running, Tactics 11-, 1 DCV-Only Level, 1 Combat Skill Level with the standard firearm (usually an M-16), 1 Combat Skill Level with Ranged Combat, and 1 Combat Skill Level with All Combat. If the character wasn’t a rifleman or other infantry type, drop the All Combat Level and add one skill (like Mechanics, Electronics, SS: Civil Engineer, etc) to represent the character’s MOS. Remember, characters with a non-combat MOS usually only have a 2 SPD.

Characters still in the military are Subject to Orders (Very Frequently, Major) and Watched by the Military (8-). Unless going into combat or standing guard duty, soldiers rarely have gear. When they are fully outfitted, however, they wear an armored vest and helmet that provide 6 rPD/rED on a 13- Activation Roll, and carry a Colt M16A2, which imparts a +2 OCV, does 2d6 Killing (1d6 STUN Multiplier), carries 30 shots, and has 5-shot Autofire. They usually also carry fragmentation grenades, which are a 2d6 Killing Explosion with a standard (1d6-1) STUN Multiplier. Soldiers in kit also usually have a Gas Mask (Self Contained Breathing for 1 hour plus 10 Flash Defense against tear gas-type Flash attacks), a bayonet (1d6-1 HKA), and various other gear. A full platoon (about two to three dozen men) will also have at least three men equipped with an M60, and one mortar (see *Dark Champions*); but if your characters ever discover this first hand, they are probably in trouble.

Notes: The “Average Soldier” is knocked unconscious by the average damage from an 8d6 Normal Damage Attack. Such an attack would also do an average of 4 BODY of damage, wounds that would take around a month to heal. If the soldier’s armor makes its activation roll, then he is knocked out, on average, by a 10d6 Normal Damage Attack. He would only take no BODY in such a situation. An “Elite Forces” soldier (see below) is knocked out, on average, by the damage from a 9½d6 Normal Damage Attack, or by an 11d6 Normal Damage Attack if the armor proves effective. In the former case, the soldier would take 5 BODY, which would take just over a month to recover from; in the latter case, he would take 1 BODY, which would take about a week to heal.

VARIATIONS

- *Elite Forces:* Some soldiers are members of elite forces like the Rangers, the Special Forces, Delta Force, SEALs, or Force Recon. Although more specific profiles are available in *Dark Champions*, in general, assume the following about elite forces: 15 STR, 15 DEX, 15 CON, 13 BODY, 13 INT, 15 PRE, 4 PD, 3 ED, 4 SPD, 28 STUN. Additionally, elite forces characters have an additional DCV-Only Level (for a total of 2), an additional Ranged Combat Skill Level (for a total of 2), and an additional All Combat Skill Level (for a total of 2). They get a bonus of +1” Swimming (in addition to the +1” Running for being a Soldier – see above). They have Stealth, Survival, Tracking, and Climbing. For more specific ideas about skills, see *Dark Champions*. Finally, most elite forces characters have anywhere from 10-15 pts in Martial Maneuvers; this translates into about three or four maneuvers, almost always from among Martial Block, Martial Escape, Martial Grab, and Martial Disarm. They don’t generally need strike maneuvers; they carry weapons.
- *Veteran Soldiers:* Long-time combat vets know a lot of tricks to keep them alive. Add an Overall Skill Level and a DCV-Only Skill Level. Veteran soldiers who are also Elite Forces (see above) can be quite dangerous; just because you have superpowers doesn’t mean that they can’t kick your butt.

Average Martial Artist

This doesn’t mean the run-of-the-mill soccer mom who takes Tae-Bo at the YWCA, but rather the average “serious” martial artist who can actually take care of himself in a fight. The generic martial artist of this stripe will probably be teaching somewhere, or involved in competition. This can also be used to model students in an “authentic” dojo; boxers and wrestlers; or martial-artsy-type bad guys like ninjas.

The martial artist uses the attributes of a “Skilled Normal,” but with 6 PD. He has 1 Martial Arts Combat Skill Level and 1 DCV-Only Skill Level, a KS for his Martial Art at 11-, Analyze Combat at 11-, and about 15 points in Maneuvers. These always include Martial Block, but beyond that may vary. Aikido, for instance, may include Martial Grab, Martial Escape and Takedown. Karate may include Martial Strike, Offensive Strike, and Defensive Strike. Very few include Martial Disarm or Martial Dodge. Some may include weapon elements, such as nunchuka, in which case the martial artist might

possibly be carrying a weapon when encountered. See *Ultimate Martial Artist* for more details on the maneuvers included in each Martial Arts Style and appropriate weapons and armor.

Notes: The “Average Martial Artist” is knocked unconscious by the average damage from an 8½d6 Normal Damage Attack. Such an attack would also do an average of 2 BODY of damage, wounds that would take around two weeks to heal. To knock out a martial artist with significant “Combat Experience” (see below) in one blow requires anywhere from about 10d6 to 13d6 of Normal Damage. The martial artist would take anywhere from 4 to 7 BODY in such cases, wounds which would require a recovery period of from one to two months.

VARIATIONS

- *Higher than 1st Degree Black Belts:* The above refers to 1st degree Black Belts. For higher ranks, add 1 maneuver at even numbered ranks and 2 Martial Arts skill levels at odd ranks. Remember that 3rd and 4th Degree Black Belts are about the highest likely to be encountered in normal circumstances. The head of an “authentic” dojo might be higher. Also, for what it’s worth, the practitioner’s KS for his Martial Art goes up by 1 point for every degree of black belt.
- *Combat Experience:* Martial Artists with real, significant combat experience as martial artists have an additional 1 DCV-Only Level and anywhere from 30 to as much as 40 STUN (for serious full contact fighters).
- *Natural Talent:* Extremely talented martial artists have a 14, not an 11, DEX.

Average Agent

This refers to real, paramilitary-trained super-agents, like HYDRA goons, AIM drones, and Hand ninjas. Individually, even Agents are no match for superheroes, but a cadre of a dozen agents could easily challenge the average superhero, and a few dozen of them in a defensible position could give even a group of heroes a significant amount of trouble. They use the attributes of a “Competent Normal” from 5ERp346, except that they have a 4 SPD. Agents all have 2 DCV-Only Skill Levels and 3 Skill Levels that are applicable to their primary attack form: for HYDRA or AIM guys, these will be Ranged Combat Levels, while for Hand ninjas these would be Martial Maneuvers Levels. They almost always wear some sort of armor that provides about 5 rPD/rED. They usually have some kind of helmet or headgear that gives them 3 pts of Sight and Hearing Flash Defense, if appropriate to type.

Non-martial artist agents like AIM or HYDRA guys carry a weapon of some sort that has around 30 to 45 Active Points (see *Gadgets and Gear*); in a group of at least six agents, one of them will have a weapon or gadget that has anywhere from 40 to 60 Active Points (he's the "heavy weapons" guy). Martial Artist Agents, like Hand Ninjas, are usually Martial Artists (see above) with weapon elements, and carry otherwise normal weapons (see *Ultimate Martial Artist*). Agents rarely have any skills that come up, but if necessary, assume that each one has Streetwise and some useful noncombat skill like Electronics or Mechanics at 11-. Obviously, agents with specific themes have appropriate skills, such as Stealth and Climbing for Hand ninjas, at about 11-. Agents always have Teamwork at 11-, and use it frequently.

Notes: The "Average Agent" is knocked unconscious by the average damage from a 10d6 Normal Damage Attack (the agent's armor is always assumed to be effective). Such an attack would do, on average, no BODY damage.

VARIATIONS

- **Leader Agents:** Also known as "Uber-Agents," these are the platoon leaders of the agents. There will be one for every couple of dozen other agents. They will have an 18 DEX, an Overall Skill Level, and an additional DCV-Only Level. Uber-Agents usually have an additional piece of gear, like a jet pack or some nifty special weapon.

Average Supervillain/Superhero

Sure, it sounds nuts to talk about the "average" superperson, but we're talking about attributes and skills, rather than powers. This assumes actual powered individuals, and not skilled Normals (who throw the curve). It can be used as a baseline for statting out superheroes who don't seem all that interesting beyond their powers, or for creating generic villain types who weren't all that special before they got their current super-gadget or set of powers. Using stats like these is especially appropriate when a mastermind chooses some random thug to outfit in a super-suit, like the Blizzard suit or the Cyclone suit (to use two examples from Marvel). This assumes that the super-thug in question is relatively newly-minted; if he survives long enough in the role, he'll be experienced enough to merit a full write-up of his own. Bear in mind, however, that the attributes given below would produce a top-of-the-line criminal.

The average super-person has a 13 STR, 14 DEX, 13 CON, 11 BODY, 10-13 INT, 11 EGO, 13 PRE, 8 PD, 8 ED, 5 SPD, 6 REC, 30 END, and 30 STUN. He has one potentially useful KS – area knowledge if you can't think of anything else – at base level (relative to his Intelligence).

He has two other potentially useful skills, either combat oriented or not (such as Seduction or Combat Driving), at base level relative to the controlling attribute. He has 1 to 3 (depending on his experience) Combat Skill Levels that are just large enough to be applied to his main attack form and no larger. For instance, an energy projector with a variety of attacks might have Levels with Ranged Combat, but not All Combat; a character with only one main attack or only one main attack Multipower will have levels only with that attack or that Multipower. The character also has 1 to 2 DCV-Only Levels (again, depending on experience). He probably doesn't have any martial arts, but if he does, give him Martial Block, Martial Strike, and Martial Escape, and make sure that he has at least one level that can be applied to his Martial Arts.

The "average" superguy spends 71 points on attributes, about 9 points in Skills other than Skill Levels, and about 10-15 points in Combat Skill Levels (including DCV Only Levels). That's around 85 points, plus – potentially – about 10 points in Martial Arts, for a total of anywhere from 80-90 points before adding superpowers or superweapons. The average super-thug will usually only have a Secret ID (worth 15 points), two Psych Lims (worth about 10 points each) that drive his criminal actions, and about 5-15 points in other disads such as appropriate Vulnerabilities, Hunteds, or debts to the people who financed him. That's about 45 points in Disads, for a character who spends a net of 40-45 points before superpowers/upergear. That leaves about 100 (for low powered villains) to 150 (for "average" powered villains) on super-stuff.

These points can be further broken down. Generic costumed yokels of Low-Power will likely have about 4rPD/4rED Armor in a suit of some kind (8 Real Cost), while similar characters of Standard power will have about 10rPD/10rED Armor in a suit (20 Real Cost). Figure 45 Active Points in the main attack for a Low Powered character, and 60 Active Points in the main attack for a Standard Powered character. Further assume 20 or 30 Active Points in movement for Low- or Standard-Powered characters, respectively. This leaves about 40 points in either case – Low or Standard Powered – for supporting abilities.

Notes: It's difficult to speak of how much damage the "Average Villain" can absorb without knowing anything about his suite of powers and/or gadgets. Still, if we assume that the villain is built on the point levels for a Standard Superheroic Campaign, we can eyeball his total DEF at about 18 – 8 naturally and 10 for the armored suit we will assume he wears. Given this, the "Average Villain" is knocked unconscious with a single blow by the average

damage from a 14d6 Normal Damage Attack. Such an attack would do no BODY damage.

Damage Summary

TOUGHNESS

The following chart summarizes the level of Normal Damage that will, on average, Stun or Knock Out (respectively) various generic characters.

<u>Type</u>	<u>Stun</u>	<u>K.O.</u>
Face in the Crowd	3d6	5d6
Avg Thug	3½d6	6½d6
Avg Cop	3½d6 (4½d6) ¹	6½d6 (7½d6)
Avg Soldier	5d6 (7d6)	8d6 (10d6)
Elite Soldier	5½d6 (7½d6)	9½d6 (11d6)
Avg Martial	5½d6	8½d6
Combat Exp Martial	5½d6	10d6-13d6
Avg Agent	6½d6	10d6
Avg Low Super ²	7½d6	12d6
Avg Std Super ³	9½d6	15½d6

OFFENSE

With the character's primary expected weapon, this gives the expected OCV and Damage. Half-dice of Normal Damage are assumed to do 0 BODY. Killing Attacks are noted with a K.

<u>Type</u>	<u>Attack</u>	<u>OCV</u>	<u>DMG</u> ⁴
Face in the Crowd	Fist	3	5/1
Avg Thug	Pistol	5	16/4 K
Avg Cop	Pistol	5	16/4 K
Avg Soldier	M-16A2	9	25/7 K
Elite Soldier	M-16A2	12	25/7 K
Avg Martial	Unarmed	5	20/5
Combat Exp Martial	Unarmed	6	22/6
Avg Agent	Varies	8	28/8
Avg Low Super ⁵	Varies	7	32/9
Avg Std Super ⁶	Varies	8	42/12



¹ value in parentheses assumes that armor activates

² This assumes 12 pts of DEF, 13 CON, and 30 STUN

³ This assumes 18 pts of DEF, 15 CON, and 35 STUN

⁴ STUN/BODY

⁵ Assumes 9d6 of Normal Damage in main attack

⁶ Assumes 12d6 of Normal Damage in main attack

PULLING PUNCHES

According to 5ERp395, a character can pull his punch, doing less BODY than usual with an attack. As noted in the descriptions of the generic characters, most of the attacks that would knock them out in one hit are likely to do significant, lasting damage to them as well. Pulling one's punch is a good way to avoid that. The penalty for pulling punches (disposing of the penalty is only appropriate in full-blown four-color campaigns) is -1 OCV per 5 DC of the attack. Note also that this is a maneuver, precluding the use of other maneuvers, including Martial Maneuvers.

The following chart illustrates how much BODY damage each generic character is likely to take from an attack that will knock him unconscious in one hit, both with and without a pulled punch. For characters with armor, the chart considers the armor.

Type	Normal Punch	Pulled Punch
Face in the Crowd	3 BODY	0 BODY
Avg Thug	4 BODY	1 BODY
Avg Cop	1 BODY	0 BODY
Avg Soldier	0 BODY	0 BODY
Elite Soldier	0 BODY	0 BODY
Avg Martial	2 BODY	0 BODY
Combat Exp Martial	~6 BODY	0 BODY
Avg Agent	0 BODY	0 BODY
Avg Low Super ⁷	0 BODY	0 BODY
Avg Std Super ⁸	0 BODY	0 BODY

Note that this chart seems to indicate that it is a good idea to pull one's punches when dealing with lower-end opponents, lest they be seriously injured; conversely, one can "unload" relatively safely on adversaries of Agent-level and above.



⁷ This assumes 12 pts of DEF, 13 CON, and 30 STUN.

⁸ This assumes 18 pts of DEF, 15 CON, and 35 STUN.

Migrating from d20 by David McGuire

Level Design & Philosophy Part II

MORE ABOUT THE GIRAFFE AND THE PLATYPUS

They tell me I need to put in a funnel introduction; I can't just start talking about mechanics out of a clear blue sky. I should setup the upcoming article; maybe tell an anecdote or two. While I want to start *in media res*, I should probably take this brief time to remind you what I'm here to talk about. I'm here to talk about mechanics and design; to discuss the philosophy of game design and share some of my stories of the last two decades in the hopes that it either helps you understand the system better, or more specifically helps any new players acclimate that much more quickly.

I mention this because of a conversation I had with my friend Dan, who very unlike myself, plays games as a form of rules-constraints escapism. His ideal campaign clings to very mercenary ideology, and a "lawlessness akin to violence" that I never could quite understand the draw of. However, because of this sharp contrast we often find ourselves on different but not entirely opposing sides of certain discussions. As has been mentioned before, I'm a d20 Apologist; I used the system for years, and only when I started playing the HERO System did I really begin to break away from it for greener, more open pastures. I think that d20 does what it does very well; but that the scope of the design limits the amount of fun and flexibility available to the player before the rules start to bow like a bookshelf covered in too many hardback supplements.

We were chatting while I was on the bus on my way home, and I had mentioned that I needed to get back to work on my article; I'd been dragging my heels and become sort of generally unfocused, which seems inherent to my writing cycle. And he asked me,

"So, when you write these articles, are they 'HERO rules, d20 drools,' or is there something deeper there?" And I had to stop and think about that for a moment. I suppose there must be a level of fanboyism inherent to any article designed to usher in the user from one system to another, but more than that, it's equally important to point out where changes are minimized; where d20 (or ShadowRun, or MechWarrior, or RIFTS™, for that matter) got it right, and all that the HERO System needs to do is replicate, simulate or otherwise absorb the good ideas that came from it. It then becomes equally important to talk about all aspects of game design, from the mechanical to the philosophical.

"I'm not sure. I know that a lot of what I've been talking about is the struggle of going from one to the other, why? I mean, the whole point of the article is to be a pathfinder for other people who might not really know anything about the system. The trailblazer, if you will."

"Right, of course, but what I'm asking is, are you just showing them how great HERO is, and knocking d20, or are you pointing out what d20 did well in the process?" And I immediately thought to myself, "The man has a point."

It's been about a year and a half now I've been roleplaying using the HERO System, almost to the exclusion of everything else; which stands as a testament to how much I love the game, but poor for comparison against other systems. However, I can also answer most "how-to's" in short order, and at times with eloquence. Learning the system, like most skills, requires more time and patience than anything else, although like any good game, the basics are learned quickly, while the devilish details can take years to really master. To be fair, it took me about that long to learn the d20 system, but what's relevant here is that in my prior two articles I never really talk about the good ideas from that system.

Every once in a while, we need a swift, sharp reminder of why we took on a specific task in the first place; while in the ensuing paragraphs you'll find some specific references to ways I overcame some obstacles in games I've run, I included them for your reference; these are my guide posts and some secrets to how I make my own games work, viewed through the lens of going from d20 to HERO, which remains a major transition and an incredible, and very rewarding challenge. The objective isn't to minimize d20, or point out its flaws, but to say more clearly "This is HERO, and this is my journey from one to the other; these are things I kept and these are some ideas I tossed, and these are things I'm so used to that I had to find a way to import them."

At the end of my last article, I left off talking about Mike's Snow Ælf package; a mechanical conundrum that was generated because he wanted not only to have cool "Snow Ælf" abilities, but because he wanted Snow Ælf itself to be a defining element, and a severely limiting one. To me this epitomizes the driving elements behind good character design: focused, clear ideas that allow the designer to design a form that follows the function desired by the player. We can always go off on bizarre tangents and "Wouldn't it be great if...?" questions, but the trick to understanding character design in point buy revolves around remaining focused,

clear, and sticking to your original concept. The effectively limitless options of point buy force us, as roleplayers, to know what we want to do from the beginning; to have some sort of starting point to operate from. By contrast, level based systems simply enforce homogenization from the front, allowing for some flexibility while never allowing the player to totally sacrifice functionality. A fighter or a wizard will always begin with the same core set of traits in a level system; you purchase “a level of tank class,” or “a level of casting class.” Much like buying a sword or anything else, they’re all “objects” in the game world. HERO allows you to create objects for the game world from the core rules system.

The interplay, the contrast between those two ideas, jumps out at me. It really seems surprisingly stark and clear all at the same time; in d20, it’s almost impossible to create a broken character; there are too many safeguards in place. Certainly, you can create a less effective character; you can build two separate types of fighters and using the system as written, find yourself with one being far more effective in close-combat than the other. HERO, however, gives you all new options; instead of having to pick and choose from a short list of questions designed to answer the question, “How do I build this within these guidelines,” instead we ask “How, using these guidelines, do I build this?”

There are a few down sides to this; it becomes all too easy to abuse the system when anyone can get to the source code and modify it. With the core design principles shared with the players, there is no canon set of powers or spells that everyone can memorize and agree on. d20 and other “pre-built” games like it offer a shared language that everyone can use to communicate early on, whereas in HERO it seems the naming of powers becomes less relevant and people describe them by their *type*, instead of their *title*. This is a core battle that rages between level design and point buy; because objects are introduced by the players, and are not preset, the language tends towards mechanics, which scares many, many people away. They hear “Drain BODY” and don’t understand that what we’re really talking about is the mechanics text, instead of the flavor text. It would not be dissimilar to describing a ball of fire as dealing “Xd6 of fire damage.” The concepts are entirely similar, but the execution is surprisingly different.

The second primary issue comes from the off-the-shelf design of some level based systems; while the language is universal and anyone can own the same texts, or create interesting new combinations of powers, there’s no mechanic for determining true power and functionality. In a

point buy system, the default mechanics allow you to measure the general effectiveness of powers, abilities, spells, and Feats (such as those used in *Tuala Morn*).

To use my favorite analogy, videogames, the principle of level design fits perfectly in that schema. The player almost *never* gets to deviate from the primary course of the game; even in open-ended games, like Bethesda Softwork’s *The Elder Scrolls* series, which allows an absurd amount of customization, the player must still adhere to the same group of skills, a simple set of rules for developing magic, and finally the pursuit for newer, better magic items. Despite the silly amount of customization, everything fits neatly into the primary frame of the game, and you cannot escape it. If you could, the game would stop working.

Even in *The Elder Scrolls* series, though, you can design your own magic spells. The framework limits what kinds of spells you can make to a specific set of groups; it’s the *illusion* of true flexibility. Assembling a campaign setting and then enforcing the rules and design are entirely separate matters that have to be given equal weight when it comes to creating your campaign world. In *The Elder Scrolls*, the designers already had a very clear image of how magic would work; and while the player can become so powerful that he can obliterate the mightiest of opponents in a single blast, there are balancing countermeasures within the game; some creatures are immune to magic, or susceptible only to certain kinds of magic. These restraints keep the game balanced. The same ballet goes on for almost any GM the first time he goes to create his setting. You could, reasonably, pick up any campaign setting (such as *Tuala Morn* or *Ninja HERO*), leaf through the book and follow the guidelines for the kinds of characters the game employs. *Tuala Morn* goes so far as to strongly suggest that characters be built a specific way and only have access to specific groups of abilities; the important element being, as I mentioned above, that the inherent balancing is plain for everyone to see. Instead of players doing arcane calculations with chalk drawings on concrete that would make Stephen Hawking’s head spin, as they try and establish which combination of pre-listed powers makes for the best attacks and “most powerful” character, instead they can build their own powers and create the character they want to be playing from the beginning.

I mentioned earlier that I started playing HERO about a year and a half ago, and I spoke at length in my first article about the culture shock of switching systems. When I sat down with Jason to work on my first character, the first thing he asked me was “What do you want to play?” It seems like an easy question, I’ve asked

it a thousand times before. It's a question most GMs ask, whether from the first time they start, or later when they're trying to construct a specific vision of game design and execution.

In my most complex campaign to date, I had a very clear idea of what I wanted to do; I wanted to put together a team of "military fantasy special forces." I envisioned a very World War II style of game, about a specially trained squad of soldiers going into a war they knew almost nothing about. I knew that the team would need to be balanced, and that I would need to create a series of guidelines to ensure their characters were properly designed.

I put in three guidelines for creating those characters. They were: The character must be a team player, to want to be in the unit, and lastly, they had to be "good." This created a fascinating problem in d20; certainly, the alignment system allowed for the final rule, but there was no player benefit to the first two. We talked about this somewhat in the last article; when Mike wanted to play his Snow Elf, his vision was to have specific detriments associated with the racial package. He wanted things that in d20 must be roleplayed and confer no benefits; in HERO, the "military character" package took on the following:

- 20 Psychological Limitation: Subject to Orders (Very Common, Total)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Honor-Bound to the Unit (Uncommon, Total)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Code of Conduct, Good and Honorable (Uncommon, Total)

While this breaks away from the conventional "25 points of Psychological Limitations" convention, it very much reflects the specific design that I wanted for the characters themselves. There's a huge difference between the conventional wisdom of the game design, and the specific concepts that a GM can implement into a campaign with minimal effort. One of the things that I want to focus on with these articles isn't simply to show you how the core ideas translate, but more importantly how easy it is to make the system do what you want it to do.

So let's talk about that for a minute; instead of worrying so much about having your players make characters that fit your concept, but leaving them with a full boat of unspent points and holding your breath, you can put in constraints – or build powers – that allow you to mold the campaign towards a specific vision. Now this is an ongoing argument for some people; when I ran campaigns in college, I would get an idea of a story I wanted to tell and discovered that maybe that story didn't interest my players. Is

that the fault of the players? The story-teller? Where are the lines drawn? What do you do when you've spent the last month and a half in campaign design, villain motivations, and map layout, only to discover that your players are in some sort of bizarre rebellion? Or worse, that they're on board but aren't adhering to any sort of guideline or concept that you're trying to incorporate into the campaign itself?

This happened to me with horribly regularity in earlier campaigns I ran; I would have great concepts and designs, but getting people to create characters that fit into the "overall plan" and who will in turn be fun to play for the duration of the campaign, that's a whole 'nother challenge that most people don't know how to begin to tackle. Part of the difficulty stems from the enormous challenge of stuffing every player into some sort of pre-built mold of character layout. The second major obstacle involves getting those characters to cooperate in-game. You can't make people work together, but you can reward them by giving them "free" points as part of the package. Instead of forcing it on everyone, you can supply a pre-installed mechanic.

Now, instead of simply setting ground rules, you can set required limitations; this helps to keep everyone focused on the design, and the implementation, rather than in the back of their minds, where things like that often go. To muse for a moment, I've noticed that without some sort of strong measure in place some groups simply fall apart. HERO allows you, instead of asking nicely, to put the mechanics down. In addition to the "penalties" associated with playing a character like that, you can also install other things automatically.

For example, in the same Military Fantasy campaign, the players also have a few benefits. For example:

- 5 Fringe Benefit: Imperial Police Powers
- 5 Contact: Higher Ranking Officer
- 1 Reputation: Imperial Special Forces (Limited Group: Imperial Military)

This kind of give and take is unheard of in the d20 system; again, as we discussed in the last article, the entire system is like a giraffe. It's a string of pre-packaged options that stack on top of each other; this sort of organic design can be *done*, but it's all done with what are commonly called "hand waves." What HERO allows that d20 does not speak directly to the ability to structure your own packages – whether racial, class-based, or spell.

At the beginning of this article, I mention a conversation I had with Dan; here, however, comes the disclaimer (some two thousand words later). And it's this: at the end of the day, there's

DIGITAL HERO #44

a reason I switched from system to the other. And while I am a d20 apologist and I take a great many ideas from that game, nothing really compares to the true flexibility of a balanced point buy system. In other words, very few things exist in the d20 system that I haven't found a way to simulate, emulate, or replicate as necessary within the guidelines of the HERO system.

I also mentioned my platypus in the last article, and the reason I did is because of my own fatal flaw, and it's this: it's very easy to get ahead of yourself. My problem has always been that when I design a character, I want him (or her, or it, whatever) to be able to do *everything*. I think this is a bit of GM syndrome – since I no longer include “GM PCs” in my campaign, or any other pet characters really, when it's finally time to design something that I want to play, all bets are off. Combat capable, spell casting, party leader – the whole nine yards. Level-based mechanics don't let you design that character off the bat, or at “low level;” it defeats the purpose of the system. Using a point buy, you *can* design that character; someone who's a capable fighter, magic user, diplomat, and raises horses on the side. You can do all those things, but all of it costs points. And to do them well costs even more.

My next article will continue on in the vein of character and campaign design and philosophy; I'll begin the rather sticky discussion of figuring out how to balance combat across the two spectrums and do it all in as much plain English as possible. Until then, good luck and good gaming.



SAGA OF A
SUPERVILLAIN

In 1982 Hero Games published its second collection of supervillains for *Champions*, entitled appropriately enough, *Enemies II*. The collection included a team of international villains created by Steve Perrin, *Terror, Inc.*, led by **Professor Muerte**. Muerte was a bit unusual for those early *Champions* characters in having an origin closely tied to another of Hero Games' published villains, Doctor Destroyer. Like Destroyer, Muerte was a scientist and inventor aspiring to world conquest, whose superhuman abilities derived from his powered armor; but the Professor was much less formidable than the Doctor, suitable as an opponent for less powerful heroes. When Scott Bennie updated many of the game's older characters to the newly published Fourth Edition of the *HERO System* rules, for 1989's *Classic Enemies* sourcebook, he elaborated on Steve Perrin's designs for *Terror, Inc.* with the new game elements available, while also expanding the characters' backgrounds and personalities.

With the relaunch of the *Champions Universe* for *HERO*

**iViva Muerte!** by Daniel Dickson**Part I: Muerte Reborn**

Takofanes the Archlich clacked his bony jaws together in frustration. His fiery gaze swept across the small barren island, its low hills and scrub brush pockmarked with numerous blackened craters from some volley of explosions. Here and there a few crumbling remnants of building walls and ruined bits of machinery poked out of the churned soil. A cold fury swelled in the breast of the Undying Lord, one of the few emotions that could still touch his shriveled heart.

Takofanes had come to this speck of land west of the continent that modern men called South America, after his divinations revealed one of his ancient sites of power had survived here to the modern age. He expected to find the buried foundations of a temple consecrated to his glory, from which he could have raised the unholy edifice anew, and perhaps some artifacts of his matchless enchanted crafting sheltered beneath the earth through the ages. Instead he found the despoilment the humans of this era seemed to revel in. His temple's remains had been dug up and crushed by machines to make way for new construction, and then pulverized by the inelegant bombs that laid those constructs low. Of his artifacts there was no sign – any that had survived were doubtless reduced to ash and splinters.

Still, he thought, all might not yet be lost. The building and the destruction both appeared recent. By casting his gaze into the past Takofanes could learn if some objects of value were removed before then, and where they might now be found. The Archlich stretched out his skeletal arm, palm upward. Black greasy smoke boiled up from his hand, forming a dense cloud before him. Abruptly the cloud parted though there was no wind, and Takofanes looked upon an image of the island as it had been years before, as yet unspoiled. He sensed that his property remained undisturbed beneath the soil.

In the image of the past, the Ravager of Men saw a ship approach the island, one of those ugly vessels of steel and gears and belching fumes that plied the seas today. It dropped anchor and a launch was lowered over the side, carrying several persons across the intervening waves and up onto the beach. The first to step ashore was a man clad all in metal armor and wearing a hooded cloak of royal purple. His helmet was worked to resemble a fanged, grinning skull. He strode up the beach with an arrogant swagger that Takofanes well remembered among the petty lordlings who once strutted about his own ancient court. Behind the armored man came a

hulking, humanoid brute, with skin that seemed made of plates of silver metal. Last to disembark was a handsome, bold-faced woman with fiery red hair and the graceful movements of a panther. She smiled warmly at the armored man when he spoke to her, but as he turned away she gave him a glance as venomous as any serpent's bite.

The armored lordling nodded in satisfaction and called out to someone overhead. Takofanes noticed a figure soaring above the island, apparently a man completely swathed in red and yellow flames. The flaming man turned and rushed like a rocket across the sky back to the ship. It was now clear to the Archlich these were yet more of the "superhumans" who infested the modern Earth, and who'd proved such a frequent stumbling block on his path to restore his rightful rulership of the world.

Men scurried about the ship, unloading and transporting equipment and vehicles to the island. Anger rose in Takofanes again as he watched them methodically level the land and raise their ugly square buildings. None of the relics of the ancient glorious past were spared or even noticed. The armored man, who styled himself "Professor Death" in his native tongue, filled these buildings with what the Ravager recognized as products of the modern sorcery called "technology." Despite his anger he was intrigued. For all his matchless occult knowledge and skill the secrets of technology remained beyond his ken, and that as much as anything had contributed to the setbacks in his plans. Yet this man, for all his posturing, seemed adept in its use.

Takofanes let the years roll past his scrying spell, watching this "Profesor Muerte" launch one grand scheme of conquest after another, aided by his three cohorts and other followers, and employing an impressive array of bizarre devices. Time and again he jousting with the colorful modern paladins called "superheroes," and time and again he was defeated. Each scheme was more grandiose than the last. Clearly Muerte's ambition outstripped his competence, but his arrogance blinded him to his own shortcomings. That remained true to the last day of his life, when he dined with the flame-haired woman he called "Scorpi" without even the protection of his armor. He remained oblivious to her jealousy and contempt for him even as he ingested the poison she insinuated in his food, although he surely saw her triumphant leer and heard her mocking laughter as he collapsed. In one final mockery Scorpi dressed him in his armor, then ordered the flaming man to melt it

around his body. The fiery one carried Muerte's body out over the ocean and dropped it in deep water. Then Scorpia set explosives to level the structures on the island, gathered the late Profesor's remaining followers around her, and sailed away.

A fitting end to one whose reach so far exceeded his grasp, thought Takofanes. Nonetheless his technological expertise had been impressive. Properly yoked to the genius of the Undying Lord, such skill might yet prove useful. At Takofanes' unspoken command the throne on which he sat rose into the air, soaring over the water to the spot where Profesor Muerte had disappeared. The Archlich spread wide his arms, and a great wind sprang up. The water's surface began to churn and swirl, forming a large whirlpool. Up from the center of the whirlpool Muerte's armored corpse arose, and floated with Takofanes back to the island. His throne and the body settled gently back upon the grass, and Takofanes inspected his dripping prize.

The fire damage to the armor was severe. It was warped and twisted from the heat, and some of the devices within lay exposed. Muerte's gauntleted left hand was a shapeless blob of melted metal, and liquid metal filled his left eye socket. The man's flesh had been even more corrupted by the flames and the ravages of years beneath the water, even sealed within his armor; but not beyond the matchless power of the Master of Life and Death to rebuild and infuse with Unlife. However, the ruined mass of metal and unfamiliar machinery had tangled itself among Muerte's bones, and Takofanes lacked the knowledge to separate them. So be it, then; he would simply leave them merged. So long as this being functioned and served him, he cared nothing for the aesthetics of its form.

The Undying Lord began to chant, in a language forgotten by Man before the continents changed shape. The earth trembled, and the sun grew dim. Slowly the battered corpse before him started to twitch.

Profesor Muerte struggled back to consciousness out of a nightmare of pain and fire and screaming and hideous laughing faces. He opened his eyes, or at least one of them – the left one refused to work for some reason. He was lying on open ground, staring up at a cloudless blue sky. He felt no pain now, in fact his body was curiously numb. Despite the warm sun beating down on him, he was chilled to his bones.

He felt the weight of his armor around him, seemingly inactive. Had he been wearing it when he went to sleep? How had he come to lie here? Then memory flooded back, memory of Scorpia's treachery. Obviously she'd overestimated the strength of her poison. Rage at her betrayal galvanized him. Oh, how long and terribly would she suffer at his hands! The Profesor struggled to

rise, and then saw the appalling state of his armor. He didn't remember what happened to it, or even when he'd put it on, but he was amazed he'd survived such a trauma. Clearly this product of his genius had exceeded even his expectations. Muerte recognized the touch of Feuermacher's fire in the pattern of damage; he must have joined Scorpia in her rebellion. Muerte almost choked on his own hatred as he imagined the exquisite torments he'd inflict on that pair. He forced his crippled armor to move, rising up on twisted, tottering legs.

"Turn, ape, and face thy Master!" At the sound of the harsh, rasping voice behind him Muerte whirled, almost falling off his unsteady feet. He beheld a horrific figure seated on a great chair composed of what looked like human skulls. The figure was withered and brown like an ancient mummy, adorned in rich crimson robes with a golden crown upon its head. Its face was the reality that his own faceplate merely aped, a fleshless skull wrapped in wrinkled, parchment-like skin. In lieu of eyes, green flames danced in its empty sockets. A palpable aura of power washed outward from it. The horror's jaws worked, and though it lacked lips or tongue it spoke clearly, in archaically phrased Spanish with an indefinable accent.

"We are Takofanes," it intoned, as though reciting a liturgy often rehearsed, "He who is Master of Life and Death. By Our mastery have We called thy puny, unworthy consciousness back from the Abyss, that thou might be of some small use to Us. By thy usefulness shall the span of thy continued existence be measured."

Takofanes! Profesor Muerte had heard tales of this creature, reputedly a great master of the occult arts, and of the terrible death and destruction he'd caused. For a moment he quailed, but the contempt for magic he learned from his mentor, Dr. Destroyer, bolstered him, and his pride bristled at the Archlich's casual dismissal of him.

"Hear me, you rotting pig," he snarled, "Profesor Muerte serves no one, not even Destroyer himself! I am the rightful ruler of this—"

"Silence!" Takofanes' eyes blazed brighter, and Muerte's tirade died in his throat as if another will had seized his voice. The Ravager of Men pointed his bony forefinger at Muerte: "Kneel before Us!" As though in a dream beyond his control, Muerte felt his one good leg bend beneath him. He dropped awkwardly to one knee and bowed his head.

"Thus begins thy servitude," Takofanes pronounced. "So saith the Lord of the Throne and Crown, and so shall it be done." Outwardly docile and obedient, the man who dreamed of being master of the world raged within against bondage more unyielding than any chains.

System Fifth Edition in 2002, Terror, Inc. was made part of the setting, but only as a historical background element. Two of its members, Scorpia and Feuermacher, left the team to join another established supervillain group, Eurostar, after first killing Professor Muerte – because Line Developer Steve Long chose not to use Muerte for the revised setting. Steve has stated publicly that the character won't be back in official continuity. Unofficial continuity, of course, is another matter.

The version of Professor Muerte presented here builds on the character design and background for his earlier incarnation, but features many departures from the original (the least of which is changing the spelling of his title to Spanish to make his name consistent), while merging him with the established history of the Fifth Edition Champions Universe. He also has a new set of minions related to his updated origin. Suggestions are included for using these characters outside the context of the Champions Universe, as well as apart from each other.

Several supervillains mentioned in this article connected to Professor Muerte's

background – Takofanes, Doctor Destroyer, Scorpia, and Feuermacher – have full write-ups in *Conquerors, Killers, and Crooks*. The article also refers to other published Fifth Edition books, notably the *HERO System Fifth Edition, Revised* rulebook and the *HERO System Bestiary*. With the exception of the rulebook none of those other volumes are needed to use the material here.

The author would like to thank Steve Perrin, for creating Professor Muerte and for suggestions on updating the character posted to the Hero Games website Discussion Forums; Scott Bennie, for developing the Professor further in *Classic Enemies*; Steven S. Long, for allowing me to update Muerte, as well as all the Fifth Edition material he's created that inspired so many elements of this project; Dave Mattingly, for giving me the opportunity to publish this, and helping get it to a publishable state; DT Butchino, Curtis Gibson, and Bob Greenwade, for useful comments on the manuscript; and the online community from the Hero Games Discussion Forums, for suggestions about Professor Muerte over the years which

Profesor Muerte

Background/History: Hernan Cortez was born in a small village in Nicaragua in 1949, the son of a poor peasant farmer. He was a bright and clever boy who excelled in school, particularly in the sciences and the study of history. Hernan was enthralled by stories of the great conquerors of the past, especially his namesake, the *conquistador* who laid the Aztec Empire low. Hernan grew convinced he was destined to achieve such greatness himself one day, and his hubris led to arguments and fights with the other children of the village.

By the time Hernan turned thirteen his father had joined the fledgling Sandinista rebellion against the corrupt regime of Nicaragua's president Samosa. Hernan would often listen in secret outside the room where his father conferred with the rebel leaders. He cared nothing for the rebels' Marxist philosophy, but thrilled to their plans for guerrilla attacks and acts of terrorism. This, he thought, is the way for a man to seize power, through violence and fear! It was at one of those conferences that Hernan chanced to meet Albert Zerstoiten, a brilliant inventor and wealthy arms dealer who was bargaining to supply weapons to the Sandinistas. His work in this field around the world had already earned him a nickname of mingled envy, loathing, and fear, "Doctor Destroyer."

Young Hernan was infatuated with the proud, forceful Zerstoiten, who seemed to him the very image of a great leader of men, and followed him like a puppy during his negotiations with the rebels. For his part Zerstoiten was flattered by the boy's attention, and saw in him a reflection of his own impoverished youth. He recognized Hernan's quick wit and ambition, and became as fond of him as he could be of anyone who was not Zerstoiten. When the Doctor left he took Hernan with him, and the boy went gladly.

Over the following years, Hernan Cortez became Zerstoiten's protégé, learning from him great secrets of the technology of destruction. He absorbed his mentor's contempt for humanity and belief in its need for a strong hand to guide it, and followed Zerstoiten's example of crushing all resistance through merciless brutality. He rose to be one of the Doctor's foremost assistants, and was at his side when Zerstoiten donned his first suit of powered armor and claimed his apotheosis as Doctor Destroyer. Yet even before that day Cortez felt the stirrings of discontent. Zerstoiten treated him always as a servant and inferior, and his attitude grew even more arrogant and condescending after he became Dr. Destroyer. Cortez still cherished dreams of ruling in his own name. In 1981 Cortez constructed a suit of armor patterned after Destroyer's, stole

some of the Doctor's other devices and money, and slipped away to begin his own supervillainous career, styling himself *Profesor Muerte*.

Profesor Muerte had studied the great conquerors of history, and concluded the most successful ones were those who were the most feared. He recruited followers from Third World countries and launched a campaign of terrorism, believing that generating sufficient fear and chaos would eventually compel the world to concede to him. Muerte and Destroyer retained a curious love-hate relationship, and from time to time would declare a truce to work together on a particular scheme; but their long standing resentments and monumental egos always drove them apart in the end. Nonetheless Muerte mourned when he heard Destroyer had perished in the Battle of Detroit.

After several defeats by superheroes and the young UNTIL, Profesor Muerte realized he needed superpowered help to achieve his goals. His first recruit was Carlos Herrera, a nurse whom Muerte hired to help him recover from injuries sustained in battle against Vanguard. The Profesor used radical genetic engineering to turn the man into a monstrous super-strong powerhouse he called *Giganto*. Next Muerte inducted the mercenary Hans Zeldte, who'd been mutated into the fiery *Feuermacher*. To lead his troops, the Profesor chose the beautiful but deadly Irish terrorist Fiona O'Brady. He helped develop her arsenal of poisoned weapons and her identity as *Scorpia*. Scorpia and Muerte eventually became lovers, although he never realized that Scorpia was only using him to further her own ambitions. Together with his armed agents and hired scientists, Profesor Muerte dubbed his organization *Terror, Inc.*

Unfortunately this new group wasn't much more successful than Muerte had been alone, due in no small part to his unrealistically epic schemes. Ultimately Scorpia concluded she'd hitched her wagon to the wrong star, and persuaded Feuermacher to break from the Profesor with her. After lulling Muerte into trusting her, she seized upon an unguarded moment to murder him. There the story of Hernan Cortez might have ended, a nearly forgotten footnote to the Age of Superheroes... except that he came to the attention of Takofanes.

Personality/Motivation: Like his former mentor Doctor Destroyer, Profesor Muerte sees himself as superior to all other men, destined to rule the world. That makes his current servitude to Takofanes even more galling to him, but has in no way diminished the arrogant condescension with which he treats others. As a living man Muerte had little respect for life or empathy for

others, and since returning from death and being surrounded by the undead he's come to view humans as scarcely more than cattle, or lab rats. He feels no qualms over murdering any number of innocent people. He'll perform the most gruesome procedures on living or unliving subjects, totally unmoved by their screams or pleas for mercy. Muerte has no sense of honor, and will lie to and betray anyone if it's in his best interest. Ironically he insists on absolute loyalty from those who serve him, and makes frequent use of psychological conditioning and cranial surgery to ensure their loyalty. The treachery of Scorpia and Feuermacher left the Profesor very paranoid, constantly wary, and suspicious, which has affected his plans. Where before he attempted spectacular schemes calculated to awe and terrify the populace into submission, now he works quietly and cautiously.

Muerte always sought new scientific discoveries, both his own and those he can steal from others. Since his resurrection he also seeks occult knowledge, particularly of the necromantic arts. Profesor Muerte loathes his undead state and freakish appearance, and hopes to discover the means to restore himself to life and health, and free him from slavery to Takofanes. Unfortunately the Undying Lord has forbidden him from deliberately seeking the means to do so, and Muerte must unfailingly obey any of the Archlich's commands. The compulsion to obedience is fundamental to the magic by which Takofanes animates his unliving servants. Muerte's undead minions were all created through Takofanes' spells, and all have the same compulsion.

Quote: "I will kill you, and then I will make you grovel before me!"

Powers/Tactics: Profesor Muerte is a unique undead being raised by the Archlich Takofanes (or any other powerful occult villain in your own campaign). As such he's stronger and more resilient than a normal human. Like all undead, he exists partly in the mortal world and partly in the dimension of Death. He's immune to many of the conditions of nature affecting natives of this reality, and destructive forces from this universe harm only the part of him existing here. (See the accompanying sidebar, **Being Undead.**)

Profesor Muerte's strength and durability are further augmented by his sophisticated powered armor, which also grants him a wide array of attacks and defenses, enhanced senses, and exceptional flight movement. The armor was infused with the potent sorcery of Muerte's reanimation, adding magical properties to its technological ones. Once, his armor was a suit Muerte could remove at will, but when Takofanes restored his flesh, the components of

the suit permanently fused with his body. Muerte and his armor are now one. Unfortunately, the armor was badly damaged at the time, and while the Profesor has since mended its superficial scars and greatly upgraded its capabilities, some of the damage proved irreparable without tearing his body apart anew. Muerte's composite form, although powerful, is twisted and partially crippled, and grotesque in appearance. In response the Profesor took some dramatic steps to improve his functionality. He remade his mangled and useless left hand into a fearsome weapon by encasing it in a ball of solid *neutronium*, its surface studded with *questionite* spikes. Muerte's left eye was destroyed by molten metal, so he emptied the eye socket and replaced it with an optical prosthesis.

Profesor Muerte is a very knowledgeable and versatile scientist and inventor, although his brilliance falls well short of Dr. Destroyer's. However, after his resurrection he discovered the technology of his armor had interacted in unexpected ways with the magic of Takofanes, increasing its potential power and possible uses. Through experimentation, Muerte is learning how to combine these two forces to achieve effects he could never have dreamed of by science alone. He's developed considerable skill in the rare disciplines of *necrobiology* (the physiological processes of the undead) and *technomancy* (manipulating the forces of magic through technological means). As yet his expertise is mostly confined to tapping the necromantic energies of the living dead, but with time the scope of his abilities will doubtlessly improve.

One field in which Profesor Muerte already surpasses all others is the "upgrading" of specimens of the living dead. From the study of his own condition he's learned to enhance these monsters' innate powers and grant them additional unique abilities. This process, which the Profesor calls **transmortification**, subsumes chemical, radiation, and drug therapies, surgical implantation of devices and tissues, and resequencing of what passes for "genes" among the undead, blended with arcane rituals and enchantments.

In battle, Profesor Muerte follows the example of Doctor Destroyer, beating his opponents down through brute force, using more subtle tactics only if force isn't sufficient. He likes to open combat with a Presence Attack to make his foes hesitate. If Muerte's servants are with him, he'll order them to the front to engage the enemy, while he snipes from a distance, putting all his Combat Skill Levels into OCV. If fighting alone he'll start with Overall Levels on DCV. Due to his crippled leg, the Profesor's mobility is very limited unless he uses his Flight power.

contributed to the concepts in this article.

BEING UNDEAD▲

As game characters, Profesor Muerte and his creations share several design elements and Special Effects reflecting a common conception of what it means to be "undead," particularly for these unusual specimens. Since they involve game mechanics they affect how the characters would be run.

These creatures are products of both magic and technology, so the Special Effects of their powers embrace both. Their attacks will activate any Vulnerabilities or Susceptibilities their targets have to either force. Conversely, attacks exclusively effective against either technology or magic will both affect these monsters equally. As the pros and cons of this effect tend to cancel each other out it's not listed on their character sheets, but it could become a significant factor in a given confrontation.

The Elemental Control, *Half in Death's Realm*, on the character sheet for Profesor Muerte and some of his minions, represents the Undead's bi-dimensional existence. It includes Damage Reduction

and Life Support, Powers that don't cost END to use which therefore aren't normally allowed in Power Frameworks. (5ERp314) The characters are considered to have "GM permission" for this, but if you as GM aren't comfortable with that you can disallow it, increasing their point totals.

As creations of Takofanes' spells, all these undead have the Disadvantage, *Must Obey Takofanes*. It's been written on their sheets as a Physical Limitation rather than a Psychological one, because no act of will or outside influence can overcome it. This is one interpretation of the *Slavishly Loyal* Advantage on Takofanes' *Summon Power* by which he creates his undead. While the Disadvantage assures obedience it still allows the creatures to think and plan independently. If Takofanes doesn't specifically command it, they don't have to do it. Should the GM prefer Muerte or his creations to serve Takofanes personally, increase the frequency of the Disadvantage from Infrequently to Frequently.

Another common Disadvantage is taking damage from "holy objects and places." For the purpose of running this Susceptibility,



Professor Muerte prefers to employ his Technomantic Force Multipower in combat, even though its union of occult and scientific energies is unstable and slightly unreliable. The Multipower Reserve is large enough for him to use two slots of up to 75 Active Points at once. Against multiple foes, he often begins with a Force Wave to throw them off balance. He'll then put up Force Buckler I and attack with his deadly Force Javelin, changing to Force Hammer if that proves ineffective. Should a specific opponent's Energy attacks be especially damaging to him, Muerte may switch to Force Buckler II, try to close the gap with that opponent using Force Thrusters, and strike with his fearsome Morningstar Hand. The Professor immobilizes high-DCV combatants like speedsters and martial artists in a Force Shell. If he can devote his full attention to his entrapped victims he'll adjust the Force Shell to contract around them with deadly pressure. Muerte usually reserves the Force Lash for Desolidified enemies, for when he needs to conserve Endurance, or after he's exhausted his other attacks.

Against an especially strong adversary, Professor Muerte combines Force Hammer and Force Javelin in a Multiple-Power Attack. This is an exception to the rule from 5ERp358, that more than one slot in one Power Framework can't be used for a MPA. A GM who prefers to stick to the letter of the rules can ignore this tactic. If the Professor is overmatched he uses his Thrust Booster to escape. It's capable of nearly instantaneous acceleration to a top speed close to Mach 2, although Muerte can only sustain that speed for a brief period.

Resources: Professor Muerte's character sheet doesn't account for Followers or Bases, because he draws from the vast resources of Takofanes for such things. The GM should assume the Professor has access to whatever money, materials, and personnel he needs to enact a given scheme, short of an army. If Muerte gains his independence, you may prefer to track those details on his character sheet as he earns Experience.

The Professor hires normal humans to assist him in scientific or occult research, to run any businesses he uses as cover for his activities, or to provide mundane security. You can use the templates for Normal People from 5ERp344-46 for his human agents, and when necessary equip them with weapons from the rulebook or the *HERO System Equipment Guide*. For higher-powered campaigns you might prefer to give them blaster weapons and other comic-book "supertech," such as those found in *Gadgets and Gear* or *VIPER: Coils of the Serpent*.

Nonetheless those agents are only for Professor Muerte's minor operations. Few have any idea who (or what) they're working for. The true core of Muerte's organization are the Undead he's transmortified into more powerful and versatile forms, and programmed or conditioned to be unswervingly loyal to him. These include classes of "mass produced" undead ranging from the equivalent of Low Powered Superheroes to Standard Superheroes, and unique individuals who are far more dangerous. Part II of this article, **The Minions of Muerte**, includes full write-ups for several of his creatures. The exact number and composition of Professor Muerte's unliving legion depends on the level of threat the GM wants Muerte to be to his player characters, and whether he intends to use Muerte for a short adventure or recurringly over a campaign.

Relations with Others: As part of Terror, Inc., Professor Muerte was well known to the world public and international law enforcement. Terror, Inc. had a reputation for ruthlessness and destructiveness rivaling Eurostar's, but were never considered the same level of threat as teams like Eurostar, the Crowns of Krim, or the Ultimates. This was mostly due to Muerte's overly ambitious and elaborate plots. The Professor was widely considered too vain and unstable to enact a practical plan for world domination. To some he was a bit of a joke, a "second-rate Dr. Destroyer wannabe." Being out of the public eye for almost ten years after his death, Professor Muerte is assumed to be deceased or at least retired, and has largely been forgotten. That may change as the reborn Muerte becomes more active in the world, especially if he escapes from Takofanes and sets his own course. For the time being, the Professor intends to keep a low profile, until he becomes more familiar with his new condition and the state of the world since he died.

Professor Muerte rarely worked with villains outside of Terror, Inc., being too distrustful of others and too arrogant to treat anyone as an equal. The closest thing he had to an ally was Dr. Destroyer, although their relationship was stormy at best. The Professor might seek out the Doctor again if he regains his freedom, but for now he's firmly in the retinue of Takofanes, and the Ravager of Men allies with no one.

Campaign Use: Professor Muerte is a Mad Scientist in the classic sense of tampering with That Which Man Was Not Meant To Know. Muerte's experimental procedures and creations are unnatural and horrible even by the generous standards of comic books. Death is no refuge from him; he can reanimate someone as a slave, test subject, or simply to torture for his amusement. Despite the pathos of his condition,

DIGITAL HERO #44

Professor Muerte is a monster in every meaning of the word, a conscienceless researcher and mass murderer with no respect or compassion for any living (or dead) thing. He has no honor and shows no mercy, and GMs should make it clear to their players that he deserves none. He should be a frightening and unsettling presence in your gameworld.

In many ways, Profesor Muerte behaves like a typical master villain. He engages in complex plots, threatens large numbers of innocents, and gives heroes an occasional knock-down, drag-out fight. One major difference is that Muerte follows the agenda of his master Takofanes (or an occult master villain of the GM's preference) rather than his own. If Takofanes discovers a site of mystic significance near a major population center, he'll send Profesor Muerte to take control of it. If he learns of an artifact of magical technology, for example an ancient Lemurian device, Muerte will be dispatched to acquire and study it. If certain heroes have become a thorn in Takofanes' side, particularly if they're dependent on or vulnerable to technology, Muerte is given the task of destroying them. Although Takofanes Watches the Profesor from time to time, he expects his slave to fulfill his assignments without intervention, and Muerte's pride prevents him asking for help unless in desperate need. Thus Profesor Muerte provides PCs who aren't yet powerful enough to face the Archlich with an opportunity to thwart his plans without having to confront him directly.

On the other hand Muerte has objectives of his own reflecting his unique status. The Profesor hopes to learn enough of the secrets of life and death to undo Takofanes' enchantment and restore himself to life. To that end he'll kidnap and interrogate anyone with knowledge of death or healing magic, and try to capture any superbeing who is himself undead to study. Muerte also wants to expand his understanding of technomancy, so someone using devices of that sort will also attract his attention.

One of the Profesor's main services to Takofanes is diversifying the Undying Lord's legions with custom-crafted monsters. That may make for an unwelcome surprise to monster-hunting heroes who think they've seen everything. All of Muerte's own servant creatures have been transmortified. The GM could take any "undead" write-up from a *HERO System* book, such as the *HERO System Bestiary* or *Monsters, Minions, and Marauders*, and modify it to reflect such upgrades. The Profesor can also be the origin for new villains or heroes, or a "radiation accident" changing an existing character, if his attempts at reanimation or transformation somehow go awry.

Sometimes Takofanes has no immediate need for Profesor Muerte, at which times he's

relatively free to pursue his own goals. Among the dearest of his goals is vengeance on Scorpia and Feuermacher. Muerte knows the two of them joined Eurostar, so he tries to track down that supervillain team. During any encounter between PC heroes and Eurostar there's a chance Profesor Muerte will crash the party, hoping to take out his erstwhile allies while they're distracted or weakened. Muerte may even help the heroes against Eurostar, assuming they can choose between those two great evils.

A GM may prefer to keep Profesor Muerte at Takofanes' side, particularly if the PCs are powerful enough as a team to overwhelm the Archlich alone. Muerte would serve as Takofanes' adviser on scientific matters and the Superhuman World, although his knowledge of the latter subject became rather dated over the years he lay dead. Since the Profesor will be under the Undying Lord's direct supervision, you should increase the frequency of his *Physical Limitation: Must Obey Takofanes*, from Infrequently to Frequently.

If the GM chooses to free Profesor Muerte from his servitude, either at the start of or during a campaign, he'll begin his own program of world conquest, following his familiar terrorist tactics, but now capable of far greater acts of terror. In that case you should change his Disadvantages related to Takofanes, perhaps making him actively Hunted by the Archlich. Assuming the Profesor has gained the knowledge to animate the dead himself, Muerte will start stealing corpses, kidnapping and murdering homeless people, and generally acquiring the raw materials to build an army of augmented undead. He'll also devise technomantic weapons of mass destruction with which to threaten the world.

Professor Muerte can readily be used in games not based in the Champions Universe. His long absence makes him easy to insert into most ongoing campaigns without violating their continuity. His origin can be tied to another scientific genius villain of the GM's choosing, or you can simply declare he developed his technological expertise independently. His resurrection could be the work of your preferred occult mastermind, or the result of a deal Muerte made with the rulers of Hell to send him back to Earth.

As a Hunter, Profesor Muerte begins cautiously and methodically. He first attempts to gather all the information he can about his targets, including sending his undead servants to spy on them or break into their homes or headquarters. Once he knows enough about their routines and weaknesses he'll strike openly with as much force as he feels will guarantee success, making certain his victims know who's responsible for their downfall. Muerte is a very dangerous Hunter because he won't hesitate to

"holy" shouldn't be taken to mean any parish church, generic holy water, or crucifix in the hand of Joe Normal. Only artifacts of special religious significance, or sites of long standing mass worship, would possess enough holy power to appreciably harm these monsters. The Wailing Wall, the Kaaba, or fragments of the True Cross of Christ are appropriate examples. On the other hand "holiness" need not be confined to modern religions. Any area or item dedicated to or empowered by an essentially benevolent supernatural being, who receives or received significant worship, would qualify. By this definition Stonehenge, the Parthenon, or an *inti* disc representing the Inca sun god, could all manifest holy power. As a GM option, superheroes who are avatars of or empowered by such gods may also count as "holy." At the least their attacks should activate the undead's Susceptibility. (Please note these remarks only apply to the game world, and don't reflect any theological point of view.)

PROFESOR MUERTE PLOT SEEDS

Profesor Muerte learns a friend or loved one of the PCs died under mysterious circumstances. Muerte recovers the body or alters another corpse to resemble it, and reanimates it as one of his undead slaves. The heroes are delighted to see the friend they thought they'd lost, until he betrays them and leads them into Muerte's trap.

Profesor Muerte hears of a mystic grimoire he believes holds the key to breaking Takofanes' hold on him. Takofanes has forbidden him to acquire such an item, or to order his underlings to acquire it for him; but that prohibition doesn't extend to the PCs. Muerte kidnaps an NPC close to the heroes and threatens him or her with death, and worse, unless the heroes steal the grimoire and bring it to him.

Profesor Muerte uncovers an ancient Mayan tablet describing a great necromantic ritual which destroyed much of the Mayan population. The ritual requires an extremely rare alignment of the stars, but the Profesor believes he can recreate the necessary mystic forces through



28

use lethal force. He doesn't worry about accidentally killing someone who might be useful, because he can always reanimate him if necessary. However, a murdered person's memories may be partially erased due to brain damage, so if a specific individual knows something of great value to him the Profesor will kidnap and interrogate him for the information. He also captures unusual specimens alive to examine and experiment on.

If Profesor Muerte is too tough for your PC heroes, reduce his Multipower Reserve so he can only use one slot at a time, and lower his SPD to 5. Should you need to make Muerte more powerful, eliminate the Activation Roll on his Multipower, increase the size of the slots, and make them Flexible. If the Profesor has won his freedom and learned more about necromancy you could add a Summon slot to his Multipower to create his own undead. Profesor Muerte is built on 800 Character Points as this is the most powerful undead Takofanes can normally Summon, but you can justify adding more points as Experience the Profesor earned since his reanimation.

Appearance: In life, Hernan Cortez was a handsome Hispanic man of medium height and slim build. He always stood straight and tall, as befit the future ruler of the Earth. As Profesor Muerte he wore a sleek suit of silver-gray *destreum* armor (a super-strong alloy developed by Dr. Destroyer) which added nearly six inches to his height. The armor had overlapping bands for articulation around the neck, waist, and all major joints. The faceplate of his helmet was shaped to resemble a human skull, with the upper canine teeth extended like fangs. The skull's jaw was hinged to open and close with Muerte's own mouth as he spoke. The eyeholes of the skull were open to show Muerte's eyes, but could be sealed with protective lenses on mental command. Over his armor the Profesor wore a knee-length hooded cloak of royal purple lined in black.

Since his return from death Profesor Muerte's armor has the same basic configuration, but it's no longer sleek, and Hernan Cortez no longer stands tall. Some of the surface of his armor has a "melted" appearance, with odd wrinkles, bulges, and sags where the metal flowed molten under Feuermacher's flame. Muerte stands permanently stooped over, his right shoulder higher than his left. His left leg is bent and twisted inward at an unnatural angle, reducing his walk to a slow, dragging hobble. The Profesor's left hand is now a grapefruit-sized spiked ball resembling a morningstar mace, and his left eye has been replaced by a technomantic crystal orb which glows a harsh violet when active. The Profesor tends to keep

his cloak pulled closely about himself to hide his deformities, unless he wants to frighten his enemies.

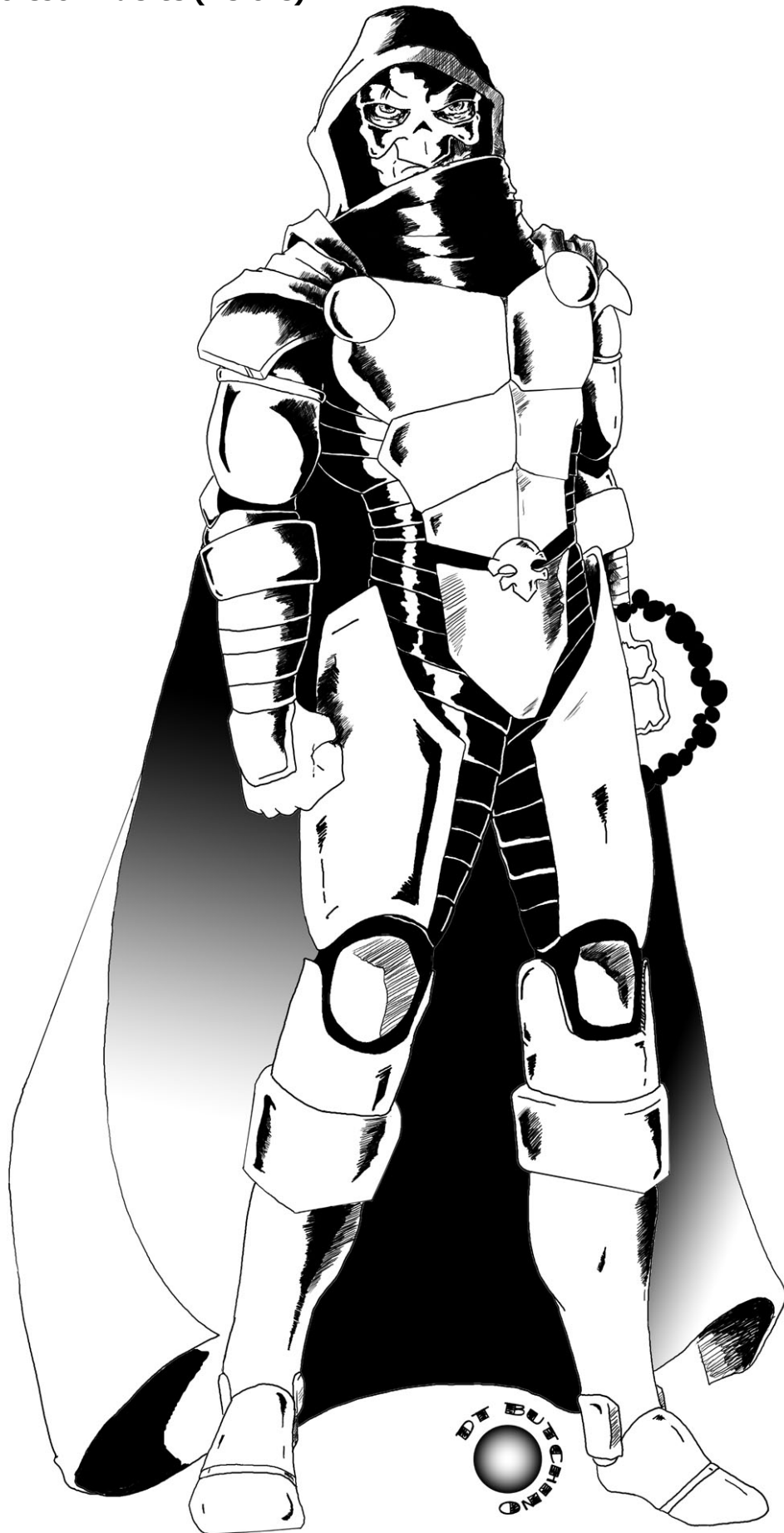
Most of Profesor Muerte's Technomantic Force constructs project from his right hand, forming translucent shapes of violet light. They throw off radio static and a high-pitched hum like high-tension power lines.

Profesor Muerte

technomantic means, creating a terrible weapon. The PCs must pursue Muerte to the jungles of Mexico and Central America to prevent him from gathering the artifacts he needs to complete the weapon.



Profesor Muerte (Before)



Profesor Muerte (After)



Profesor Muerte

Val	Cha	Cost	Roll	Notes
50	STR	40	19-	25 tons; 10d6 HTH [5]
24	DEX	42	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
28	CON	36	15-	
18	BODY	16	13-	
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll: 14-
21	EGO	22	13-	ECV: 7
30	PRE	20	15-	PRE Attack: 6d6
4	COM	-3	10-	
20	PD	10		Total: 20 PD (20 rPD)
20	ED	14		Total: 20 ED (20 rED)
6	SPD	26		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
18	REC	4		
70	END	7		
60	STUN	3		

Total Characteristic Cost: 250

Movement:

Running:	2"/4"
Leaping:	4"/8"
Swimming:	25"/50"
Flight:	25"/50"

Cost	Powers	END
120	<i>Technomantic Force:</i> Multipower, 150-point Reserve; Activation 15- (-1/4)	0
5u	1) <i>Force Hammer:</i> EB 15d6; Activation 15- (-1/4), Beam (-1/4), 16 Charges (-0)	[16]
5u	2) <i>Force Javelin:</i> RKA 3d6+1, Armor Piercing (+1/2); Activation 15- (-1/4), Beam (-1/4), 16 Charges (-0)	[16]
6u	3) <i>Force Lash:</i> Telekinesis (40 STR), +1/2 Variable Advantage (Affects Desolidified, Armor Piercing, or Reduced Endurance (0 END), +3/4); Activation 15- (-1/4), Fully Direct (-1/2) var	
6u	4) <i>Force Wave:</i> EB 8d6, Area Of Effect (13" Cone, +1), Does 1 1/2x Knockback (+1/2); Activation 15- (-1/4), No Range (-1/2)	10
4u	5) <i>Force Shell:</i> Force Wall (16 PD; 2" Long and 1" Tall), Transparent to Energy (+1/2), Cannot Be Escaped with Teleportation (+1/4); Activation 15- (-1/4), Only to Form Globe (-1/2)	7
5u	6) <i>Force Vice:</i> RKA 1d6, NND (LS: Pressure or Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, +1), Does BODY (+1), Area Of Effect (One Hex, +1/2), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); Activation 15- (-1/4), Linked (to Force Shell, -1/4)	0
3u	7) <i>Force Buckler I:</i> Force Wall (16 PD), Transparent to Energy (+1/2), Reduced Endurance (1/2 END, +1/4); Activation 15- (-1/4), No Range (-1/2), Self Only (-1/2)	3
3u	8) <i>Force Buckler II:</i> Force Wall (16 ED), Transparent to Physical (+1/2),	

	Reduced Endurance (1/2 END, +1/4); Activation 15- (-1/4), No Range (-1/2), Self Only (-1/2)	3
6u	9) <i>Force Thrusters:</i> Flight 25", Usable Underwater (+1/4), Reduced Endurance (1/2 END, +1/4); Activation 15- (-1/4)	3
15	<i>Half in Death's Realm:</i> Elemental Control, 30-point Powers	0
15	1) <i>Shunned By Nature:</i> Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%	0
15	2) <i>Shunned by Nature:</i> Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%	0
35	3) <i>Immune to Life:</i> Life Support: Total (including Longevity: Immortality)	0
41	<i>Morningstar Hand:</i> HKA 1 1/2d6 (3d6+1 with STR), +2 Increased STUN Multiplier (+1/2), Penetrating (+1/2), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); Restrainable (-1/2)	0
8	<i>Destreum Armor:</i> Hardened (+1/4) for 20 PD/20 ED; Visible (-1/4)	0
20	<i>Destreum Armor:</i> Damage Resistance (20 PD/20 ED), Hardened (+1/4); Visible (-1/4)	0
20	<i>Sensory Buffers:</i> Sight and Hearing Group Flash Defense (10 points each)	0
8	<i>Force Anchor:</i> Knockback Resistance -5"; Activation 15- (-1/4)	0
6	<i>Destreum Armor:</i> Lack Of Weakness (-6) for Normal Defenses	0
10	<i>Psychic Dampener:</i> Mental Defense (14 points Total)	0
10	<i>Enchanted Armor:</i> Power Defense (10 points)	0
-8	<i>Crippled Leg:</i> Running -4" (2" Total)	0
-6	<i>Crippled Leg:</i> Leaping -6" (4" Total)	0
-2	<i>Heavy and Lame:</i> Swimming -2" (0" Total)	0
6	<i>Thrust Booster:</i> MegaScale (1" = 50m) for Flight 25"; Increased Endurance Cost (3x END, -1)	3
20	<i>Audio Sensors:</i> Active Sonar (Hearing Group), 360°	0
3	<i>Audio Sensors:</i> Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group)	0
12	<i>Transceiver Array:</i> HRRP (Radio Group)	0
5	<i>Psychic Resonator:</i> Mental Awareness	0
7	<i>Crystal Eye:</i> +6 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group; Visible (-1/4)	0
8	<i>Crystal Eye:</i> Microscopic (x100) for Sight Group; Visible (-1/4)	0
4	<i>Crystal Eye:</i> Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group); Visible (-1/4)	0
	Perks	
3	Reputation: Insane Arch-Terrorist (on Earth, 8-) +3/+3d6	
var.	Followers, Bases, or Vehicles as Needed (see Resources , p26)	

DIGITAL HERO #44

Skills

- 20 +2 Overall
- 9 +3 with Technomantic Force Multipower
- 6 +3 with Morningstar Hand HKA

- 3 Animal Handler (Blood Hounds) 15-
- 3 Computer Programming 14-
- 3 Electronics 14-
- 3 Forensic Medicine 14-
- 1 Gambling (Chess) 14-
- 3 Interrogation 15-
- 3 Inventor 14-
- 3 Language: English (Fluent, Spanish is Native)
- 3 Language: German (Fluent)
- 3 Language: Portuguese (Fluent)
- 3 Mechanics 14-
- 3 Oratory 15-
- 3 Paramedics 14-
- 3 PS: Surgeon 14-
- 3 Security Systems 14-
- 3 Systems Operation 14-
- 3 Teamwork 14-
- 6 Weaponsmith (Biological Weapons, Chemical Weapons, Energy Weapons, Incendiary Weapons, Missiles and Rockets) 14-

- 3 Scholar
- 1 KS: Dr. Destroyer 11-
- 1 KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 11-
- 2 KS: Military History 14-
- 1 KS: Necromancy 11-
- 1 KS: The Occult 11-
- 1 KS: The Superhuman World 11-
- 1 KS: Takofanes 11-

- 3 Scientist
- 2 SS: Anatomy 14-
- 2 SS: Biochemistry 14-
- 2 SS: Biology 14-
- 2 SS: Biophysics 14-
- 2 SS: Chemistry 14-
- 2 SS: Cybernetics 14-
- 2 SS: Electrical Engineering 14-
- 2 SS: Force Field Physics 14-
- 2 SS: Genetic Engineering 14-
- 2 SS: Metallurgy 14-
- 1 SS: Necrobiology 11-
- 2 SS: Pharmacology/Toxicology 14-
- 2 SS: Physics 14-
- 2 SS: Psychology 14-
- 1 SS: Technomancy 11-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 550

Total Cost: 800

200+ Disadvantages

- 25 Distinctive Features: Deformed Man in Gruesome Armor (Not Concealable, Causes Extreme Reaction [fear])
- 15 Enraged: Taunted About His Appearance or Undead State (Common, Go 8-, Recover 11-)
- 10 Hunted: Takofanes 11- (Mo Pow, Watching)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Must Obey Takofanes (Infrequently, Fully Impairing)
- 10 Physical Limitation: No Left Hand (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Hates and Hunts Scorpia and Feuermacher (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Megalomania (Common, Strong)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Paranoid (Very Common, Strong)
- 10 Reputation: Insane Arch-Terrorist, 8- (Extreme)
- 15 Susceptibility: 1d6 per Phase from Holy Objects and Places (Uncommon)
- 450 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 800

INSTRUMENTS OF DEATH

Besides his transmortified undead, Profesor Muerte has created or obtained other unique artifacts and devices. Here are two of the most important.

TOUCHSTONE

Effect: **Summon 250-point Undead/
Mind Link**
Target/Area: **One character**
Duration: **Instant/Persistent**
Range: **No Range/Planetary**
END Cost: **15/0**
Breakability: **1 DEF**

Description: Profesor Muerte doesn't yet have the necromantic skill to create his own unliving monsters. Even if he did, Takofanes only allows undead to be raised through his own magic, leaving them enslaved to his will. But the Archlich recognizes Muerte may have to animate new creatures for experimentation or specific missions, or replace destroyed minions. To that end Takofanes supplies the Profesor with enchanted talismans called *Touchstones*. A Touchstone has no innate magical properties of its own; it's simply the receptacle for a spell by the Undying Lord, sufficient to animate one corpse. After that spell's expended, the Touchstone becomes useless.

A Touchstone looks like a marble-sized sphere of clear ruby quartz, which turns colorless after being exhausted. To trigger the animating magic a user places the stone over the heart of the subject body and speaks a short incantation. (The required Endurance has already been paid by Takofanes when he cast the spell.) Anyone who knows the proper ritual can activate it. A newly animated monster would still need to be programmed or conditioned to serve Profesor Muerte; its "slavish loyalty" is reserved for the Undying Lord.

The number of Touchstones the Profesor has would depend on how easily the GM wants Profesor Muerte to replace or increase his followers' numbers. Muerte would rather avoid asking Takofanes for more, out of pride as well as fear of his lord's displeasure.

As a side effect of his spell, Touchstones retain a psychic connection with Takofanes, allowing the holder of a stone to communicate mind to mind with the Archlich from anywhere in the world, even if he's in one of his extra-dimensional refuges. Profesor Muerte uses the Touchstones to report to his master. Someone holding a stone who's ignorant of its powers could accidentally link his mind to that of the Ravager of Men, which would probably be a Bad Thing. Once a particular stone has animated a body, it also loses its communication ability.

Game Information:**Cost Power**

- 37 Summon 250-point Undead, Any Undead (+½), Slavishly Devoted (+1), Trigger (placing the stone over a corpse's heart and uttering an incantation, +¼), Usable By Other (+¼); Extra Time (1 Minute, -1½), OAF Expendable, Fragile (Touchstone and Human Corpse, -1½)
- 5 Mind Link, One Specific Mind (Takofanes), Any Dimension, No LOS Needed; OAF Fragile (-1¼), Independent (-2)

Total Cost: 42 points

DIGITAL HERO #44

TRANSMORTIFIER

Effect: Healing 1d6 (Regeneration)/
Major Physical and Mental
Transform 1d6/Detect Undead,
Analyze

Target/Area: One character

Duration: Instant

Range: No Range

END Cost: 0

Breakability: 10 DEF

Description: Profesor Muerte maintains all the equipment at his headquarters to remake undead beings into bizarre new designs, and conduct experiments into the fundamental nature of Unlife. He can also repair physical damage his creatures incur, even to restoring them after being “killed” provided enough of their bodies remain intact. Muerte’s facility resembles a cross of a laboratory, operating theater, and ritual chamber. Vials and retorts of chemicals, electronic instruments, tanks holding floating body parts, and cruel looking surgical implements on robotic arms, are incorporated with inscribed circles and pentagrams, candles of unusual substance, polyhedral crystals, and incised pieces of stone, wood, and bone. While some of the components of the Transmortifier facility are fragile, those are mostly easy to replace. Muerte’s core equipment is more durable.

For the most part the FM can treat the Transmortifier as a plot device, but there may be occasions when you’d prefer it to be statted out, such as estimating how long it would take the Profesor to restore one of his injured followers, or if he captures an undead PC. Transmortification is lengthy and involved, and only Profesor Muerte understands all the elements required. The GM should feel free to use any of Muerte’s other Skills that seem appropriate to a given procedure as Complementary to his Required Skill roll. The GM could also allow the process to be used on living beings, but perhaps take more time, a penalty to the Skill Roll, or with a narrower range of results.

Note that the Healing (Regeneration) construct doesn’t use all the standard Power Modifiers for Regeneration, so should be considered an unofficial variant.

Game Information:

Cost Power

- 10 Healing 1d6 (Regeneration; 1 BODY per 5 Minutes), Can Heal Limbs, Resurrection (others can stop resurrection by interrupting the procedure), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); Extra Time (1 BODY per 5 Minutes, -2), OIF Immobile (-1/2), Only Works on Undead (-1/2), Requires a PS: Surgeon Roll (-1/4)
- 7 Major Transform 1d6 (target into target with Psychological Limitation: Loyal to Profesor Muerte, heal back by another application of the power or extensive therapy), BOECV (+1), Works Against EGO, Not BODY (+1/4), Partial Transform (+1/2), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); Extra Time (1 Hour, -3), Limited Target (Undead, -1/2), OIF Immobile (-1/2), No Range (-1/2), Requires a SS: Psychology Roll (-1/4)
- 6 Major Transform 1d6 (target into transmortified undead, heal back by another application of the power), Improved Target Group (Any Transmortified Undead, +1/2), Partial Transform (+1/2), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); Extra Time (5 Minutes, -2), Limited Target (Undead, -1/2), OIF Immobile (-1/2), No Range (-1/2), Requires an Inventor Roll (-1/2)
- 3 Detect Undead 14-, Discriminatory, Analyze; Extra Time (5 Minutes, -2), OIF Immobile (-1/2)

Total cost: 26 points.

SERAPHINA PLOT SEEDS

Seraphina unknowingly seduces a player character while in his Secret Identity, planning to amuse herself with him before feeding on him. When she realizes who he is she decides to use her Mind Control to make him her puppet, employing his powers to her benefit and his ruin. The PC will find himself accused of crimes and other atypical actions he has no memory of, or that he does remember but can't explain.

A PC with significant financial or technological assets is the subject of a hostile takeover attempt by a new rival company, headed by "Sarah Graves," employing information against the hero she could only have gotten through illegal means. The PCs suspect industrial espionage, perhaps using superpowers, but to prove it will have to set a trap for the spy, or break into Graves' office to find evidence. In either case if the heroes confront Sarah Graves they'll discover she's far more than she seems.

Profesor Muerte has been assigned by Takofanes to steal a powerful magic item, but the PC heroes



Part II: The Minions of Muerte

Among the diverse unliving horrors that serve Profesor Muerte, some stand out for their significance to his operations. The *Hands of Death* are his most common creations, human-looking zombies wielding technomantic energy powers. Muerte's favorite "pets" are his *Blood Hounds*, ghouls rebuilt into stealthy, animalistic assassins.

Other singular monsters serve specific functions within the Profesor's organization. The most important of these are: *Seraphina*, his second in command, a vampire whom Muerte has given the ability to assume a more powerful and monstrous form; the Profesor's chief of security, *El General*, a disembodied head who can telepathically communicate with Muerte and all his servants, and who directs them in battle; and the mighty armored mummy *Khemset*, who acts as Profesor Muerte's bodyguard.

Seraphina

Background/History: Seraphina Groves was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1961. It wasn't the best time and place for opportunities for a child of working-class black parents, but Seraphina was smart, hard working, and ambitious. She was also willing to do whatever she had to get ahead. She won a university scholarship and graduated near the top of her class with an Honors degree in business administration. Rumors and accusations she cheated on examinations and exchanged favors with her teachers were never able to stick to her. Seraphina took a position with an Oklahoma-based petroleum company, rising briskly up the corporate ladder. She developed a reputation at headquarters for efficiency and initiative; her co-workers were more likely to describe her as ruthless and treacherous, among less charitable adjectives.

In 1987 Seraphina was preparing an assessment at the site of a new drilling operation, when the drilling crew broke through to something they could never have anticipated, the imprisoning tomb of the Archlich Takofanes. In the horror that followed the Undying Lord's release, Seraphina Groves perished along with scores of others at the drill site. Some time later she returned to awareness at the foot of Takofanes' throne, filled with a terrible thirst. She cowered away from the Archlich, and then noticed the young, terrified boy next to her. She could smell the blood in him, more savory than anything she'd ever imagined; she could hear the pulse of it coursing through his veins. Before she realized what she was doing she was on him, tearing his throat out with teeth suddenly grown long and sharp. Her brief moment of horror at her actions was washed away by the sweet taste

of blood in her mouth. It was the last sympathy Seraphina would ever feel.

Being an undead monster in the service of an inhuman fiend wasn't the career Seraphina had envisioned, but she never let her circumstances stop her from getting what she wanted. She took every opportunity to ingratiate herself with the Undying Lord, putting herself forward for even the most odious tasks, executing his harshest commands with apparent enthusiasm. Before long she was given authority over some of his lesser monsters and plans, which she administered with merciless efficiency. Over the years Seraphina battled several superheroes, learning even her vampiric powers weren't always a match for them after nearly being destroyed in one encounter.

Seraphina came to consider herself one of Takofanes' favorites, insofar as the Archlich favored any lesser creature. She was therefore enraged and humiliated when Takofanes gave her to his grotesque new pet, Profesor Muerte, as a subject for his experiments. She obeyed her master as always, though, revealing no hint of her true feelings. The procedures Muerte inflicted on her were lengthy and agonizing, but Seraphina emerged from them with extraordinary new powers. With her augmented body she believes she can at last earn Takofanes' respect, and dares to dream of one day sitting beside the Throne of Human Ivory as his consort.

Seraphina carefully hid her resentment of Takofanes naming her second in command to Profesor Muerte, understanding that the Undying Lord trusts her to watch him for mistakes or treachery. She's doing more than watching, however. She waits for any sign of weakness she can exploit to prove to the Archlich she's more worthy of command than Muerte. And if she can do something to pave the way for the Profesor's failure, without implicating herself or endangering her Master's plans... well, a girl does what she has to do to get ahead.

Personality/Motivation: Seraphina quickly became very comfortable with her vampirism. All her short mortal life she pursued power over others. She believes the strong and clever have the right to use the weak and foolish in any way they desire. She saw her own success as proof of her superiority, and the suffering she caused others as justice for their stupidity. She used to rely on deceit and status to get her way, but as a vampire she gained the power to bend others completely to her will, and she enjoys that control more than anything. She often tricks or compels mortals to ruin their own lives for the sheer malicious thrill. Some superhumans are able to resist her, but with her transmortified body she now has the raw might to physically confront those who defy her mentally.

Because Seraphina respects power, she respects and fears the matchless magic of Takofanes. She fully expects the Undying Lord to be master of the world one day, and even if she wasn't forced to serve him by his sorcery she'd willingly do so in hope of rising to preeminence among his followers. But Seraphina is prepared to be patient. As an immortal herself and with an immortal liege, she figures she has all the time she needs.

Seraphina's respect doesn't extend to Profesor Muerte. She sees him as an obstacle to her own ambition and a rival for the Archlich's favor. Despite having gained great benefits from being transmortified, she can't forgive the pain and especially the helplessness of having her body warped as the Profesor saw fit. She pretends to be his faithful and obedient lieutenant, but she's really biding her time until he makes a mistake she can capitalize on. Profesor Muerte's feelings toward Seraphina are scarcely warmer. He trusts no one and nothing he hasn't created or conditioned to be loyal to him, and Seraphina reminds him too much of Scorpia for comfort. But Muerte recognizes he needs her to deal with the mundane world as he no longer can, and that she's very good at it.

Seraphina values Profesor Muerte's other undead creations for their usefulness, but otherwise feels only contempt for them. Since these creatures by their natures care little or nothing for her feelings, obeying her because the Profesor tells them to, her attitude has no practical effect on their working relationship.

Being a vampire hasn't dampened Seraphina's desire for the good life. Although not ostentatious, she enjoys fine clothes and jewelry, comfortable surroundings, and partying. She'll soon become a familiar face at the best boutiques and clubs in the campaign city.

Quote: "Is it the cold making you tremble, little man? Here, let me warm your blood."

Powers/Tactics: Seraphina has some of the abilities attributed to classic gothic vampires. She's very strong and resilient, has heightened senses for functioning in the dark, can control people's minds, transform into mist, and be permanently killed only through special measures. She's honed her mental mastery of others to an impressive degree, that being her favorite power. As an undead being, Seraphina is more resistant than a mortal to conditions and forces from the natural world. She also gained unique and formidable abilities from Profesor Muerte's treatments, and is in some ways his greatest success.

Muerte took tissue samples from the vampire, mutated their physical qualities by radiation bombardment, mutated their metaphysical properties through enchantment,

then grafted the mutant tissues back into her body. Through intense concentration Seraphina can force additional blood to these grafts, stimulating them to form new or altered limbs and organs. While she normally wears a human guise, when she wills it Seraphina can grow vicious fangs, protective scales on her skin and membranes over her eyes, a greatly extensible hollow tongue to forcibly drain blood from her victims, and huge wings she can use to fly, to protect herself, and to strike at her enemies. It takes one Turn for the new growths to fully emerge from her body, and the process will be interrupted if Seraphina is Stunned or Knocked Out. She can generate any of these body parts individually when it isn't convenient for her to transform completely, but any change still takes one Turn, and she has to spend that time again for each individual part. When the vampire wishes to resume her human form she concentrates on drawing her blood away from the added organs and limbs, like a tree withdrawing chlorophyll from its leaves in winter, causing them to wither, fall from her body, and crumble to dust. That change takes one Turn as well.

Profesor Muerte also implanted glands in Seraphina secreting a "venom" she can inject into a victim through her fangs. The venom taints the blood of her victim, creating a psychic bond between him and Seraphina. In game terms, if her venom attack is successful the subject becomes more Vulnerable to her Mind Control, for as long as the taint remains in his body (one full day after being bitten).

The Profesor reduced or eliminated some of Seraphina's vampiric weaknesses. Filtering membranes immunize her from the detrimental effects of garlic and running water. Alterations to her skin pigments reduce damage from the sun. Although the vampire is still weakened by direct sunlight, she can withstand its effects for up to half an hour before becoming debilitated. Muerte also accelerated her body's regeneration, so she can recover fully from any injury, even "death," in from minutes to an hour.

Seraphina has the power to inflict vampirism on others through her bite, but Takofanes has forbidden her to do so without his express permission, since undead not created by the Archlich himself wouldn't be bound to obey him. Since this power is unlikely to come into play during a campaign it's not listed on her character sheet.

The vampire requires daily injections of a special serum to prevent her body from rejecting Profesor Muerte's grafts. Without those injections she would sicken and eventually die. Only Muerte knows the formula for the serum. The Profesor told her this was an unavoidable side effect of her transmortification, but

discover the attempt and confront him. During the ensuing battle Seraphina seizes the artifact and tries to escape with it herself, leaving Muerte to the heroes. The PCs can choose to stay and defeat Muerte, or pursue Seraphina to keep her from carrying this dangerous magic to the Ravager of Men. If Seraphina escapes, the heroes may find themselves in a three-way race with her and Muerte, who wants to deliver the artifact to Takofanes himself.

Seraphina suspects the truth, that Muerte deliberately engineered this flaw to keep her dependent on him. She's covertly trying to discover the formula so she can produce it herself.

When wearing her human guise Seraphina attempts to ensnare enemies with her Force of Mind, turning them against their comrades. If she can get close to an opponent she'll try to bite him to inject her Blood-Tainting Venom. In combat with groups of adversaries she changes to her monstrous form at the first opportunity. She then takes to the air if possible to gain some distance, putting her Flight Skill Levels into DCV with Dodge, and attacks with Force of Mind. If that tactic proves ineffective, or if Seraphina is fighting with allies and wants to support them, she'll dart rapidly about the battlefield, shifting her Combat Skill Levels between OCV and DCV as needed, and strike with her fangs and powerful wings, or deflect attacks at her allies. She normally slashes with the razor-keen tips of her wings, but will use them as bludgeons against those who withstand her Killing Attacks. Should any of her foes receive an open, bleeding wound (BODY damage) she may "shoot" her tongue at them, especially if they've been able to stay out of reach of her wings. Her tongue can extend nearly forty feet, and has a sucker-like "mouth" at the tip. If she succeeds in affixing it to a wound she'll rapidly drain a person of blood, unless he or his comrades can cut her tongue or are strong enough to pry it loose against Seraphina's STR of 30. Her victim also can't move beyond the maximum reach of her tongue unless he can pull free. (The benefits and drawbacks of this Special Effect more or less balance each other.) Her tongue is Seraphina's favorite weapon against a single opponent.

Campaign Use: Seraphina is the public face of Profesor Muerte's organization. In her secret identity as "Sarah Graves" she manages any businesses he maintains as fronts, hires and directs his human operatives, and deals with inquisitive superheroes who don't yet know of her true nature or connection to Muerte. Seraphina is also the weak link in the Profesor's organization, at least from his standpoint. She wants Muerte to fail in his plans and would gladly contribute to his failure, but be careful to distance herself from any possible blame. Ideally she'd take credit for saving what would otherwise have been a disaster under Muerte's leadership. Under no circumstances would she jeopardize Takofanes' long-term plans. For now she bides her time, performing faultlessly in hope of lulling the Profesor into trusting her, while awaiting the perfect opportunity to betray him.

PCs could encounter Seraphina at various social activities or in relation to her business dealings, or on the street if they interrupt one of her "meals." She might deliberately cultivate a friendly or romantic relationship with a PC in her Secret Identity, attempting to learn his secrets so Muerte can strike at him and his teammates when they're most vulnerable. Seraphina would perform similar functions for Takofanes or another occult master villain. Since her inhuman form isn't obviously derived from science, Seraphina can be used independently of Profesor Muerte, as a vampire variation created by Takofanes.

As a Hunter, Seraphina first uses guile to learn everything she can about her target, getting close to him or anyone he cares about. Once she's found his weaknesses she turns her Mind Control on him or those around him. Seraphina considers simply killing someone to be too crude and not nearly enough fun. Instead she'll work to ruin her target's career, his reputation, his relationship to his family and friends, until he's overwhelmed by despair. Then Seraphina will reveal her role in her victim's ruin, gloat over his misery, and offer to end his pathetic life (which she'll do regardless of how he answers).

If Seraphina is too powerful for your PC heroes to confront, lower her DEX to 24, her SPD to 6, her Mind Control to 10d6, and put an Activation Roll on her Armor. If you need her to be stronger, raise her DEX to 30, her Mind Control to 14d6, and her Armor to 12 PD/12 ED. You could also give her additional powers of a gothic vampire, such as the ability to assume animal form, to Summon animals like rodents or canines, or (if she isn't in service to Takofanes) to transform others into vampires under her control. See the write-up for the Greater Vampire in the *HERO System Bestiary* for examples of such powers.

Appearance: In her human form, Seraphina Groves is a striking African-American woman, apparently in her mid-twenties. She stands just under six feet tall, with a lithe, athletic build. She has dark brown skin, brown eyes, and very short nappy black hair. Her face is sensual, and her expression and posture bold and confident, whether confronting someone in a board room or seducing someone at a club. But when enraged, frightened, or in blood lust, her face contorts into a mask of bestial fury. She wears stylishly tailored business suits at work, elegant dresses for formal occasions, and flattering but tasteful party outfits while enjoying the "night life." All her clothes are expensive and the height of fashion.

In her transformed state Seraphina is the very image of an angel of the Pit. Her skin and scalp are covered from crown to toe in glossy

DIGITAL HERO #44

blue-black reptilian scales. Her eyes are solid crimson, shining in direct light like the eyes of a cat. Her upper and lower canine teeth lengthen and thicken, becoming almost tusk-like. Professor Muerte modified the hinge of her jaw so she can open her mouth far wider than a human can, to use her fangs to full effect. Seraphina's tongue becomes tubular, extraordinarily extensible, and tipped with a small but powerful sucker-like "mouth." Due to the bulk of her fangs and tongue, Seraphina's speech in this form is slurred.

Seraphina

Seraphina also has blue-black wings with a span of nearly twenty-four feet. Structurally, her wings resemble those of a bird, but with greatly lengthened and broadened scales in place of feathers. When she flies, her wing-scales make a loud rustling noise like wind blowing through dead leaves.

Seraphina wears little to no clothing when transformed. Her scales cover her adequately, and few outfits could accommodate her vast wings. Her victims also tend to be more terrified when they can clearly see what a monster she is.



Seraphina



DIGITAL HERO #44

Seraphina

Val	Cha	Cost	Roll	Notes
30	STR	20	15-	1600 kg; 6d6 HTH [3]
27	DEX	51	14-	OCV: 9/DCV: 9
25	CON	30	14-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll: 15-
21	EGO	22	13-	ECV: 7
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
16	COM	3	12-	
10	PD	4		Total: 18 PD (18 rPD)
10	ED	5		Total: 18 ED (18 rED)
7	SPD	33		Phases: 2,4,6,7,9,11,12
14	REC	6		
50	END	0		
50	STUN	7		

Total Characteristic Cost: 214

Movement:

Running:	9"/18"
Leaping:	6"/12"
Swimming:	2"/4"
Flight:	18"/72"

Cost	Powers	END
30	<i>Scaly Wings:</i> Multipower, 52-point Reserve; OIHID (-1/4), Restrainable (-1/2)	0
1u	1) <i>Wing Span:</i> Stretching 1", Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); Only with Wing Attacks (-1/2), OIHID (-1/4), Restrainable (-1/2)	0
2u	2) <i>Wing Buffet:</i> HA +6d6 (12d6 with STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); HA (-1/2), OIHID (-1/4), Restrainable (-1/2)	0
2u	3) <i>Wing Tip:</i> HKA 1d6+1 (2 1/2d6 with STR), Armor Piercing (+1/2), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); OIHID (-1/4), Restrainable (-1/2)	0
2u	4) <i>Wing Spread:</i> Missile Deflection (All Attacks), Range (+1/2); OIHID (-1/4), Restrainable (-1/2)	0
3u	5) <i>Wing Beat:</i> Flight 18", 4x Noncombat, Reduced Endurance (1/2 END, +1/4); OIHID (-1/4), Restrainable (-1/2)	2
15	<i>Half in Death's Realm:</i> Elemental Control, 30-point Powers	0
15	1) <i>Shunned by Nature:</i> Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%	0
15	2) <i>Shunned by Nature:</i> Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%	0
32	3) <i>Immune to Life:</i> Life Support: Total (except Diminished Eating; including Longevity: Immortality)	0

20	<i>Fangs:</i> HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR), Penetrating (+1/2), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); OIHID (-1/4), No Knockback (-1/4)	0
93	<i>Force of Mind:</i> Mind Control 12d6 (Human, Animal, and Alien Minds), Telepathic (+1/4), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); Normal Range (-1/4), Stops Working if Mentalist is Knocked Out (-1/4)	0
43	<i>Blood-Tainting Venom:</i> Major Transform 10d6 (target into target with Vulnerability: 1 1/2 x Effect from Seraphina's Mind Control, heals back one day after being bitten); Limited Target (creatures with blood, -1/4), Linked (to Fangs HKA, -1/4), Fangs Must Do BODY First (-1/4), No Range (-1/2), OIHID (-1/4), 4 Charges (-1)	[4]
32	<i>Blood-Sucking Tongue:</i> RKA 1d6, NND (Force Field or not having blood, +1), Does BODY (+1), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (1/2 END, +1/4); Limited Range (6", -1/4), OIHID (-1/4), Physical Manifestation (see text, -1/4), Target Must Have Open Wound (BODY Damage, -1/4)	3
7	<i>Undead Resilience:</i> Damage Resistance (10 PD/10 ED); Activation 14- (-1/2)	0
16	<i>Protective Scales:</i> Armor (8 PD/8 ED); OIHID (-1/4), Visible (-1/4)	0
8	<i>Eye Membrane:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points); OIHID (-1/4)	0
10	<i>Strong Mind:</i> Mental Defense (14 points Total)	0
31	<i>Rejected by Death:</i> Healing 3d6 (Regeneration), Can Heal Limbs, Resurrection (others can stop resurrection by burying the body in consecrated ground), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2), Persistent (+1/2); Extra Time (3 BODY per 5 Minutes, -2), Self Only (-1/2)	0
33	<i>Mist Form:</i> Desolidification (affected by Cold, Heat, or Wind), Reduced Endurance (1/2 END, +1/4); Cannot Pass Through Solid Objects (-1/2)	2
6	<i>Fleet of Foot:</i> Running +3" (9" Total)	1
6	<i>Hunter's Senses:</i> +2 PER with All Sense Groups	0
5	<i>See the Warm-Blooded:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group)	0
5	<i>Creature of the Night:</i> Nightvision	0

Skills

- 10 +1 Overall
- 16 +2 with All Combat
- 5 +1 with ECV
- 4 +2 with Flight

- 3 Acting 14-
- 3 Breakfall 14-
- 3 Bribery 14-
- 3 Bureaucratics 14-
- 3 Concealment 13-
- 3 Conversation 14-
- 2 Forgery (Documents) 13-
- 3 High Society 14-
- 3 KS: Profesor Muerte 13-
- 4 KS: Takofanes 14-
- 3 Language: Spanish (Fluent, English is Native)
- 3 Persuasion 14-
- 4 PS: Business Administration 14-
- 3 Seduction 14-
- 3 Shadowing 13-
- 3 Stealth 14-
- 3 Teamwork 14-
- 3 Trading 14-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 522

Total Cost: 736

200+ Disadvantages

- 15 Dependence: Injections of Special Serum or Take 3d6 Damage per Day (Uncommon)
- 20 Distinctive Features: Winged Scaled Monster (Concealable, Extreme Reaction [fear])
- 15 Distinctive Features: No Reflection (Not Concealable, Major Reaction)
- 5 Hunted: Takofanes 8- (Mo Pow, Watching)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Must Obey Takofanes (Infrequently, Fully Impairing)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Ambitious (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Cruel and Manipulative (Common, Strong)
- 10 Rivalry: Profesor Muerte (Professional, for the favor of Takofanes, Mo Pow, Superior Position, Rival Unaware)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity [Sarah Groves] (Frequently, Major)
- 15 Susceptibility: 1d6 per Phase from Holy Objects and Places (Uncommon)
- 10 Susceptibility: 2d6 per 5 Minutes from Direct Sunlight (Very Common)
- 386 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 736

El General

Background/History: Diego Capac came from a poor native family in the mountains of Peru. Having few other options for a career, he joined the Peruvian Army as soon as he was of age. He quickly displayed a natural talent for leadership and military tactics, but as he lacked money or connections his prospects for advancement were slim. When he heard that the infamous terrorist Professor Muerte was recruiting agents for his organization, Terror, Inc., Diego wasn't bothered by their reputation for ruthlessness and atrocities. He only cared about the opportunity to prove his abilities and be properly rewarded for them. He deserted the army and sought out Terror, Inc.

Capac did indeed prove his worth, and rose rapidly through the ranks of the Profesor's agents, eventually becoming second to Muerte's battle commander, the beautiful and merciless Scorpia. Diego felt no jealousy toward Scorpia, holding her deadly skill in high regard. She in turn respected his competence and willingness to carry out any order. They developed a close professional relationship, and an equally close physical one when they could hide from Muerte's jealous gaze. Capac also shared Scorpia's growing frustration with Profesor Muerte's increasingly erratic behavior. It seemed only a matter of time before their "leader" got them all captured or killed. When Scorpia first whispered her plan to eliminate Muerte into his ear, Diego readily agreed to help keep the agents of Terror, Inc. out of her way, and keep them in line after Muerte's demise.

With Profesor Muerte gone, Capac became a freelance mercenary, selling his considerable expertise in training and leading troops against superhuman opposition to the highest bidder. At various times over the years he worked for Eurostar, VIPER, the Warlord, ARGENT, Holocaust, and even Doctor Destroyer. Diego Capac became well known within the Superhuman World as a capable, reliable agent commander for hire.

Then came the day he answered an advertisement through the underworld grapevine for a lucrative job from an anonymous client – not unusual in his line of work. He went to the empty warehouse in the bad part of town where the client wanted to meet, with an escort of dependable well-armed men, just in case. Unfortunately those men proved no match for the blasts of violet energy erupting out of the darkness in the warehouse, cutting them down in seconds.

Trembling, Capac strained to make out the twisted figure that slowly limped from the shadows, swathed in a dark cloak. Then his blood ran cold as he heard a terrifyingly familiar voice: "Ah, Diego. It's been a long time. We have much... catching up to do."

Diego Capac took a long while to die; Profesor Muerte wanted to savor his revenge. But Muerte had further plans for his erstwhile follower. After Capac expired, the Profesor removed his head from his corpse and carried it back to Muerte's new master, Takofanes. The Profesor begged a boon of the Undying Lord, and for reasons of his own, that monster granted it, bestowing Unlife upon Diego's bodiless head. Profesor Muerte inflicted numerous surgeries on Capac's now-immortal flesh, implanting computer interfaces directly into his brain, and other procedures to link him mentally to Muerte's transmortified undead. Yet how the Profesor abused what was left of Diego's body pales beside how he warped the man's mind. Using psychological conditioning and direct brain alteration, Profesor Muerte convinced Capac that his hellish condition is righteous punishment for betraying his former leader, and only through unquestioning obedience to Muerte could he atone for his sin.

What remains of Diego Capac now serves as Profesor Muerte's chief of security and field commander. Locked in a lightless room in Muerte's base of operations, unable to move, blind and deaf without being wired to the machines that surround him, Diego's undying head provides untraceable communication between the Profesor and his minions, remotely controls his automated defenses, and directs Muerte's forces in combat. Capac no longer answers to his former name; he's known only by the title Profesor Muerte gave him, in tribute to his current function and in mockery of his past ambition: *El General*.

Personality/Motivation: Once a confident, forceful man, proud of his expertise, accomplishments, and reputation in his chosen field, El General's spirit was almost completely broken under Profesor Muerte's cruel but effective ministrations. He's now unreservedly loyal to Muerte, and unquestioningly follows any order the Profesor gives him. He believes his current nightmarish existence is a just penalty for his treachery toward a man who was and is clearly his superior. One of the few vestiges of the man El General was is pride in his work. Muerte's security chief is dedicated to performing his duties to the best of his ability. That and an occasional game of chess with Profesor Muerte are the closest things to pleasure left to him.

Despite his loyalty and professionalism, El General is permanently and profoundly depressed over his fate. He wishes he could end his Unlife, but lacks the means to do so. At rare times his depression becomes completely paralyzing. While El General has no problem performing his routine functions, such as

HOME SECURITY ▲

When designing weapons for his base, it would be logical for Profesor Muerte to take advantage of the special abilities of his undead, choosing modes of attack to discomfit his enemies but not his followers if they're hit by "friendly fire." For example, No Normal Defense attacks that work against various types of Life Support would have no effect on these monsters. They're all either resistant or outright immune to Mental Powers. Most of them have Enhanced Senses that compensate for being blinded, so wouldn't be greatly impaired if caught in Darkness or a Flash. The creatures' resistance would make Area Of Effect attacks with these Powers more effective than usual. But weapons like these would put many PC heroes at a serious tactical disadvantage, and should be considered only if Muerte needs a home advantage to balance the power of the heroes.

EL GENERAL PLOT SEEDS

During a fight with Profesor Muerte's forces, the Profesor plants a technomantic "bug" on one of the player characters permitting El General to see through the

PC's eyes. If the hero doesn't find it, El General will learn many of his secrets. If the device is found, the heroes discover that it functions both ways, letting them attack El General mentally or track him to Muerte's base.

The PCs capture El General and bring him back to their headquarters, but while there he discovers he can take control of their base computer and all connected systems. He uses the heroes' own automated defenses to hold them off while he downloads sensitive data. El General also notifies Profesor Muerte of the chaos he's caused in his enemies' stronghold, and Muerte decides to take advantage of it and attack.

El General experiences a sudden blackout. When he recovers, Profesor Muerte's headquarters is abandoned. El General can't contact Muerte or any of his other followers. Desperate, he sends a plea for help to the only people he knows who might be able to assist – the PCs. El General offers to guide them to the Profesor's headquarters and allow them free run of it if they help him find his master. Is this a trap, one even El General doesn't know

communicating between Muerte and his followers or monitoring the security systems, whenever he has to make a major decision on his own, e.g., order an evacuation if the base is attacked, or abort a mission he's supervising, the GM should roll his EGO. If El General succeeds in his roll he takes the appropriate action, but if he fails his despair overwhelms him and leaves him unable to act at all. He remains in that state until there's a significant change in the situation that brought it on, or unless Profesor Muerte gives him a direct order, which will snap him out of it instantly.

Quote: "You can't win. Courage, ideals, life... they're all futile in the end."

Powers/Tactics: El General is a unique product of Takofanes' matchless necromancy and Profesor Muerte's scientific innovations. Like all undead he suffers from few of the frailties of living beings, but the spell Takofanes wove to allow his head to function fully without a body was exceptionally potent, as though all the magic that would have animated an entire corpse was concentrated in this small lump of flesh. El General is extraordinarily resistant to injury from any force. It takes a potent attack indeed to Stun him or render him unconscious, and if he does sustain a wound it visibly closes in moments. Even if injured to the point of "death," El General's flesh knits back together completely within minutes.

The changes Profesor Muerte made to him are almost as impressive. Muerte implanted "cybermantic" interfaces onto El General's brain and spinal cord, connecting his consciousness directly to the Profesor's computers. They allow him to control those devices just by thinking, and to accept sensory input from any base or vehicle sensor. Once El General is patched into the Profesor's headquarters computer he can remotely view every portion of the facility covered by the monitoring system, using a wide range of scanning devices. He can operate any of the base's automated functions, including targeting the weapon systems against intruders. El General's remote sensing capacity is covered by his Clairsentience Power. In addition, should Profesor Muerte use any special vehicles, they'll be fitted with connections so El General can be "plugged in" to one to drive or pilot it.

El General's cybermantic implants are also his greatest weakness, although he doesn't know it. His brain has become dependent on those implants to reorganize its neural pathways should they be seriously damaged. If the implants are removed or destroyed, while El General's flesh would reconstitute itself, his cerebral architecture would be hopelessly scrambled, leaving him effectively brain-dead.

The implants' conductivity also increases the effectiveness of electrical attacks against him.

Profesor Muerte granted El General another, even more remarkable ability. By extracting and mutating a few of his security chief's unliving brain cells and transplanting them to the craniums of other transmortified undead including himself, Muerte gave El General the power to telepathically link to and converse with any of Muerte's creatures. He can form a link across the globe, without seeing or even knowing the location of his target, and connect to multiple minds at the same time. El General can also form a conduit between any of the beings he's linked to so they can "speak" directly with each other. Because his ability is the product of a unique form of technomancy it's undetectable by most other beings even if they possess Mental Awareness, although at the GM's discretion mentalists with *Technomantic* Special Effects may be able to pick up its use.

El General can also perceive through the senses of any transmortified creature, as if he himself is standing where that creature is. The subject of this power can tell when he's trying to use its senses, and if it has free will can refuse to allow him to (as with a Mind Link.) Once El General establishes a Mind Link with a subject he can remotely view through it wherever it is. His Clairsentience has the Advantage, *Based On Ego Combat Value*, to allow him to "attack" a Mind Linked target.

Thus El General gives Profesor Muerte an untappable, untraceable, equipment-free communication network. It has only two flaws. Muerte and his other creatures don't possess enough of El General's brain matter to initiate a link themselves; they have to wait for him to contact them. He routinely stays connected to any of Muerte's minions on a mission or on security duty at his headquarters, but Profesor Muerte and Seraphina both insist on regular periods of privacy. El General is also subject to the pain from any attacks against a creature he's linked to, even if that creature wouldn't feel pain itself.

El General is a brilliant and experienced combat leader, especially against superpowered opposition. Although incapable of joining a fight in person, he directs Profesor Muerte's troops telepathically, greatly improving their performance. All of Muerte's unliving followers, even the Profesor himself, follow his instructions in battle without hesitation. When linked to El General, even the animalistic and mindless undead work together promptly and efficiently. Because they need not speak to issue or reply to orders, Profesor Muerte's forces fight in eerie silence, which may be intimidating to their opponents.

Diego Capac acquired a broad range of noncombat Skills over his colorful life. Some of these are no longer usable due to his severe physical impairment, but he still knows how to use them. At the GM's option El General may be able to pass on his practical knowledge of some Skills via Mind Link, describing what to do step-by-step, although the linked person would probably suffer a penalty to the Skill Roll for using this knowledge secondhand.

In battle, El General immediately connects his mind to all of the undead involved, using his Clairvoyance through Muerte's base monitors or the senses of one of his creatures to assess the situation and respond to the flow of combat. If the fight takes place at the base, or El General is controlling an armed vehicle, he'll deploy its weapons to provide supporting fire.

Campaign Use: El General is Profesor Muerte's "secret weapon." He tirelessly watches over Muerte's facilities, supervises any missions that the Profesor's followers undertake, and provides excellent tactical leadership. Through El General, Muerte and his creatures can communicate freely without fear of being overheard or even noticed. It should be a long time before the PCs learn of his existence, unless the GM wants them to take Profesor Muerte down quickly. Losing El General would be a crippling blow to Muerte's organization, so the Profesor is very protective of him, hiding him deep within the most secure part of his headquarters, taking him out only in extraordinary circumstances. If his base is invaded, rescuing El General would be Muerte's first priority after self-preservation, and his security chief would be the only one of his followers that the Profesor would make any real effort to save. El General's value to him is purely practical, though. He feels no sentimental attachment to his field commander and would sacrifice him without a second thought if that would serve Muerte's best interest.

El General is also an object lesson on what a monster Profesor Muerte truly is. When the PCs finally encounter him, and especially after they learn his story, they should begin to grasp the depths of Muerte's cruelty and depravity. If they've been treating the Profesor as just another four-color lunatic, this may change their attitude and strengthen their resolve to stop him once and for all.

El General can drive or pilot any special vehicles that Profesor Muerte has, but that would leave him vulnerable to being captured or killed. Muerte would only use him this way if he needed to make a quick escape, or to transport his underlings a great distance in secret. On the other hand, this would give the PCs their best chance to get their hands on El General, so the GM might want to allow them the opportunity.

El General is a treasure-trove of knowledge about Profesor Muerte's resources and plans, but extracting that knowledge from him would be difficult. His resistance to Interrogation or Telepathy is strong. Threats of violence or death mean nothing to him, in fact he'll be quick to express how grateful he'd be to anyone who ended his tormented existence. That could pose a moral dilemma for PCs: destroying El General would be a kindness from his perspective, but do they have the right to murder him, even if he is an unliving monster and former career mercenary? Compounding the problem is El General's extraordinary resistance to being killed. Few players would be unmoved by the image of a living, talking head being knocked bouncing and rolling around a room, burned and broken, yet still screaming to them to finish him.

El General is too apathetic to Hunt anyone on his own, but would supervise any Hunting activities that Profesor Muerte orders. Since he isn't intended to fight in person, El General doesn't need to be made more or less powerful, although if the GM wants him to be able to defend himself he can be given some offensive Mental Powers. You could consult the write-up for a "Living Brain" in the *HERO System Bestiary* for examples of appropriate abilities. On the other hand you can adjust the power of any automated weapons in Profesor Muerte's base that El General uses against intruders. (See the sidebar on page 42, **Home Security**, for suggestions for base defenses.) You could also raise the number of beings he can Mind Link to at once if you want Profesor Muerte to have a large number of underlings.

El General or a creature like him would perform similar functions for Takofanes or another of his servants, or some other master villain in your campaign. By eliminating any reference to cybernetic implants or computer interfaces you could use El General apart from Profesor Muerte, as an entirely magical creature. He then becomes a bodiless, eyeless head sitting on a table, shelf, in a box, or the like. Conversely, placing him in a tank of preservative fluid would make him a more typical science-based horror, with no magic involved, although you should at least change or eliminate his Susceptibility to holy objects.

Appearance: All that remains of the strong, vigorous man Diego Capac was in his prime is his head and the stump of his neck. El General has reddish-brown skin and sharp, strong, obvious Native American features. He's completely hairless, including eyebrows. He's also eyeless. Black-coated fiber optic cables are plugged into each eye socket, and others into his ear canals. Several smaller cables emerge from the dome of his skull. They connect to

about? If not, what happened to Profesor Muerte?

machinery in the ceiling and upper walls of the room where El General is kept. He hangs suspended from these cables almost two meters off the floor in the center of the room, at eye level with most visitors (not that he gets many, or could look in their eyes if he did.)

The base of his neck-stump is sealed with a transparent plastic pane. More black cables depend from his neck, attached to his brain stem and what's left of his spine. They lead to sockets on the floor or on desks with control consoles

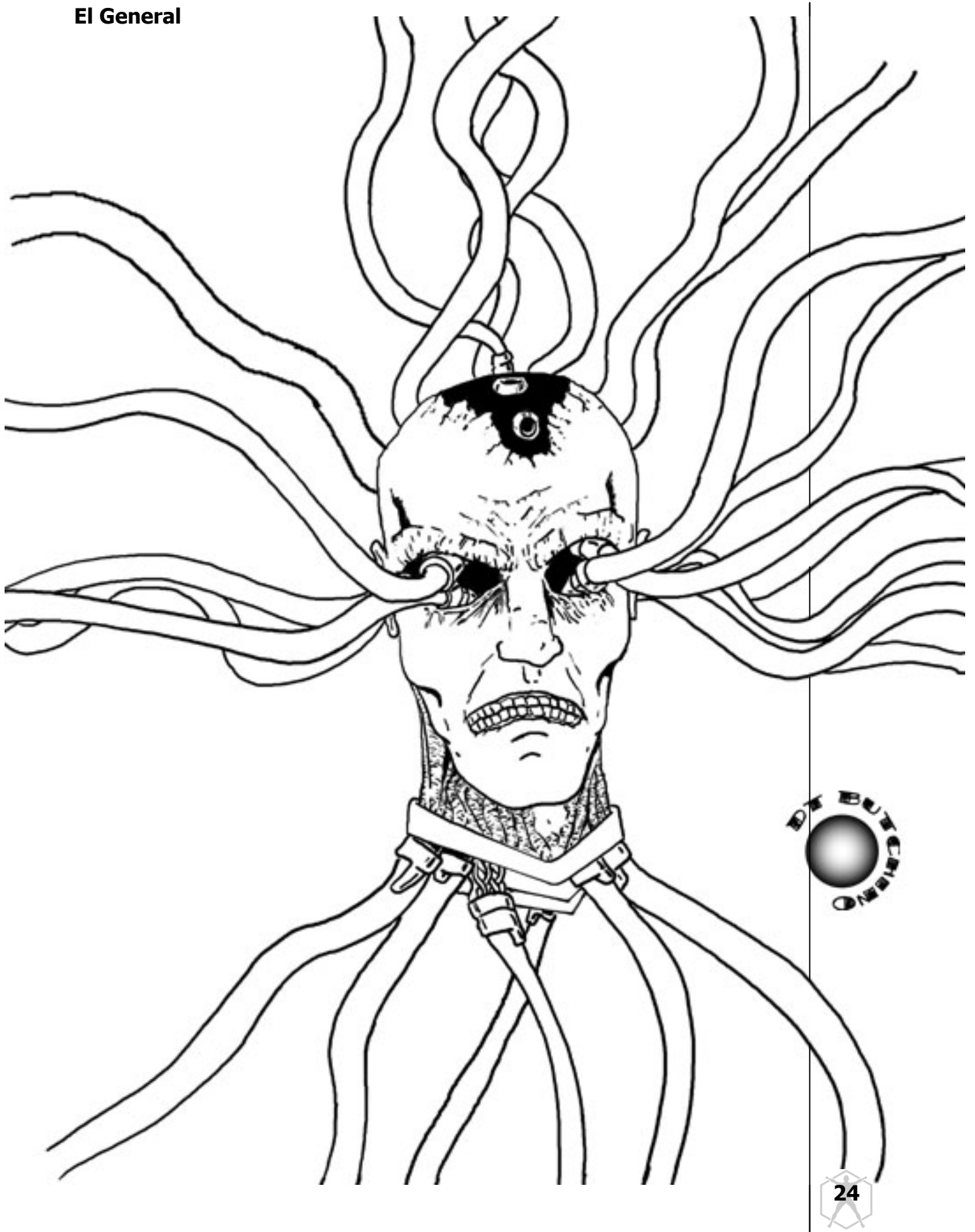
and computer terminals around the room. To an observer of this scene, El General looks rather like a deformed spider at the center of a black web.

Anyone who tries to lift El General will find him far heavier than he looks; the burden of sin on his soul manifests as physical weight. El General can move his mouth and is able to speak, usually in a monotone voice devoid of emotion. He may sound a little more enthusiastic discussing subjects he's interested in, such as military history or assisted suicide.

El General



El General



EI General

Val	Cha	Cost	Roll	Notes
0	STR	-10	9-	Lift 25 kg; 0d6 HTH [1]
24	DEX	42	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
15	CON	10	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll: 15-
17	EGO	14	12-	ECV: 6
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
15	PD	15		Total: 15 PD (15 rPD)
15	ED	12		Total: 15 ED (15 rED)
6	SPD	26		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
8	REC	10		
10	END	-10		
30	STUN	12		

Total Characteristic Cost: 132

Movement:

Running:	0"/0"
Leaping:	0"/0"
Swimming:	0"/0"

Cost	Powers	END
25	<i>Half in Death's Realm:</i> Elemental Control, 50-point Powers	0
35	1) <i>Shunned by Nature:</i> Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 75%	0
35	2) <i>Shunned by Nature:</i> Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 75%	0
25	3) <i>Immune to Life:</i> Life Support: Total (including Longevity: Immortality)	0
67	<i>Sensory Projection:</i> Clairsentience (Sight, Hearing, Smell/Taste, Radio, Mental Sense Groups and Detect Life), Mobile Perception Point, Targeting, BOECV (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½); Detectable and Resistible By Others (as Mind Link, -¼), Feedback (-1), Only Through the Senses of Others (-¾)	0
33	<i>Cellular Sympathy:</i> Mind Link, 32 Specific Minds, No LOS Needed, Invisible Power Effects (Fully Invisible, +½); Feedback (-1)	0
10	<i>Undead Resilience:</i> Damage Resistance (15 PD/15 ED); Activation 14- (-½)	0
10	<i>Nothing Left to Fear:</i> +20 PRE; Defensive Only (-1)	0
20	<i>Sensory Buffers:</i> Sight and Hearing Group Flash Defense (10 points each)	0
15	<i>Psychic Dampener:</i> Mental Defense (18 points Total)	0
36	<i>Rejected by Death:</i> Healing 3d6 (Regeneration), Resurrection (others can stop resurrection by removing his cybermantic implants), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½), Persistent (+½); Extra Time (3 BODY per Turn, -¼), Self Only (-½)	0

-12	<i>No Limbs:</i> Running -6"	0
-2	<i>No Limbs:</i> Swimming -2"	0
6	<i>Sensory Enhancers:</i> +2 PER with All Sense Groups	0

Talents

5 Resistance +5

Skills

20	+2 Overall
16	+2 with All Combat
3	Analyze Combat Technique 13-
3	Combat Driving 14-
3	Combat Piloting 14-
3	Demolitions 13-
8	Gambling (Card Games, Dice Games, Board Games, Sports Betting) 13-
3	Interrogation 12-
4	Navigation (Air, Land, Marine) 13-
3	Paramedics 13-
5	PS: Mercenary 15-
3	Security Systems 13-
3	Streetwise 12-
14	Survival (Arctic/Subarctic, Mountains, Temperate/Subtropical, Tropical, Deserts, Marine, Urban) 13-
3	Systems Operation 13-
7	Tactics 15-
3	Teamwork 14-
3	Tracking 13-
3	Trading 12-
12	TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Combat Aircraft, Helicopters, Large Motorized Boats, Large Planes, Railed Vehicles, Science Fiction & Space Vehicles, Small Military Ships, Small Planes, Submarines, Tracked Military Vehicles, Wheeled Military Vehicles
4	WF: Profesor Muerte's Base Weapons, Profesor Muerte's Vehicle Weapons
5	Weaponsmith (Energy Weapons, Firearms, Incendiary Weapons, Missiles & Rockets) 13-
3	Linguist
2	Language: English (Fluent, Quechua is Native)
1	Language: Arabic (Fluent)
1	Language: Esperanto (Conversation)
2	Language: French (Fluent)
2	Language: Portuguese (Fluent)
1	Language: Russian (Conversation)
3	Language: Spanish (Idiomatic)
3	Scholar
3	KS: Military History 14-
3	KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 14-
3	KS: Profesor Muerte 14-
2	KS: The Superhuman World 13-
1	KS: Takofanes 11-
2	KS: World Politics 13-

DIGITAL HERO #44

- 3 Traveler
- 3 AK: Profesor Muerte's Headquarters 14-
- 2 AK: Africa 13-
- 2 AK: Eastern Europe 13-
- 2 AK: Latin America 13-
- 2 AK: The Middle East 13-
- 2 AK: Southeast Asia 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 487

Total Cost: 619

200+ Disadvantages

- 25 Distinctive Features: Animated Bodiless Head Wired to Machines (Not Concealable, Extreme Reaction [disgust])
- 25 Physical Limitation: No Manipulation (All the Time, Fully Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Must Obey Takofanes (Infrequently, Fully Impairing)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Sight and Hearing Only Through Clairsentience (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Loyal to Profesor Muerte (Very Common, Total)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: His Work Gives Him Purpose (Very Common, Moderate)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Apathetic and Depressed (Uncommon, Strong)
- 15 Susceptibility: 1d6 per Phase from Holy Objects and Places (Uncommon)
- 10 Vulnerability: 1½ x BODY from Electricity (Common)
- 269 Experience

Total Disadvantage Points: 619

FREE THINKING ▲

Allowing Automaton Skill Rolls to “think” creatively is not an official HERO System rule. As defined by the rules they can only follow simple commands and aren’t able to interpret or prioritize them. (5ERp457) However, several published Fifth Edition Automaton are described as capable of much more sophisticated behavior. The *Skill* game mechanic is one approach to running such characters without substantially rewriting or redefining them. These Skills should be used sparingly so the Automaton doesn’t function like a normal sentient character. They probably shouldn’t be bought higher than their base Skill Roll, and the GM should define the circumstances in which each Skill would apply. (See the sidebar, *Las Capas*, on page 60 for another example of this kind of Skill use.)

GMs who would prefer to keep within the letter of the rules can either ignore these options when running Khemset, or give him a Computer brain with appropriate Programs. The Computer could be paid for with the points spent on



Khemset

Background: Khemset was once a minor official in the court of the Egyptian Pharaoh Amenhotep III. He was a decent man who lived a decent but unexceptional life. He served his Pharaoh, honored his gods, cared for his family, and was content to be interred in his modest tomb to await the reward he’d earned in the afterlife. In the mid-20th Century, archaeologists uncovered Khemset’s burial chamber and carried his remains across the ocean to the United States, where the mummy was displayed in a major metropolitan museum for the curious to gawk at.

Khemset’s soulless husk lay oblivious on the day the Archlich Takofanes descended on the city. In battle with authorities and superheroes, the Ravager of Men cast a fearsome spell to animate the dinosaur skeletons in the museum to fight for him. Khemset was caught in the fringes of the spell, and arose in mindless obedience to follow his new master. For years he remained merely one of the Archlich’s nameless horde of monsters.

In due time, Profesor Muerte entered Takofanes’ service. He chose Khemset as an appropriate vessel to test an experimental technomantic device, a magnetic flux manipulator which draws power from the Earth’s magnetic field. The experiment surpassed Muerte’s expectations; the field permeated Khemset’s desiccated body, granting him enhanced durability and enormous physical strength. Khemset gained other magnet-like powers as well, including a limited ability to manipulate metal he’s in direct contact with. The effect is strongest on the magical Atlantean metal *oricalchum*, so Muerte replaced the mummy’s linen bandages with strips of foil made from an incredibly hard alloy of oricalchum and steel. Khemset can use these bandages as grasping appendages or slashing weapons, and they also make him far more difficult to injure.

Profesor Muerte was so impressed by Khemset’s new powers he installed heuristic components in the mummy’s brain to expand his mental capacity, and made Khemset his personal bodyguard (partly because the mummy reminds Muerte of his former loyal follower in Terror, Inc., Giganto). It’s not the kind of afterlife Khemset had expected, but as a living man he served with little complaint. What remains of him in this world is incapable of complaining.

Personality/Motivation: Khemset has no true personality or volition of his own, existing to follow the commands of his master. He recognizes a hierarchy of “masters” whose orders he’ll obey. Takofanes is first among them, then Profesor Muerte, Seraphina, and

finally El General. An order given by a higher-ranking master will always supersede one from a lower rank.

However, Khemset’s modified brain is more sophisticated than a simple automaton’s. He’s been programmed to respond to a range of commands, and has a limited capacity to interpret those commands in creative ways. That capacity is represented by his Deduction and Tactics Skills. Whenever Khemset is faced with an unexpected obstacle to fulfilling an order, or a contradiction in his directives, he attempts a Skill Roll with whichever of these Skills is most appropriate. If Khemset fails the roll he’ll continue trying to carry out his order in the most direct and literal manner until commanded to stop, or else simply remain inert if there’s no way he can do so. If he succeeds, the GM should choose a relatively obvious action by which Khemset can avoid or overcome the problem. Should Khemset succeed by 3 or greater, the GM might let him act in a particularly clever and imaginative way. On the other hand, rolling over his target number by 5 or more could mean Khemset chooses an inappropriate course. The GM may assess penalties or bonuses to the roll, depending on how complex the problem or obvious the solution is. (See the accompanying sidebar, **Free Thinking**, for more about this use of Skills.)

Example: *Khemset has been ordered to guard a sensitive area in Profesor Muerte’s headquarters. An invading superhero tries to lure the mummy away from the area so his teammates can enter unopposed. Khemset rolls his Tactics Skill with appropriate modifiers, just succeeding. He realizes what the intruders are trying to do and turns back to intercept them. If Khemset had beaten his target number by 3 or more he might have returned to the area by a different route to try to catch them by surprise.*

Later, Khemset is given an order by Seraphina, Profesor Muerte’s second in command. He rolls his Deduction Skill to recognize that although Seraphina’s order doesn’t directly contradict any of the Profesor’s commands, following it wouldn’t serve Muerte’s best interest. If he’d only rolled his target number Khemset would have simply refused to obey her, but he bettered that number by 4, so he merely pretends to obey, then informs Profesor Muerte.

Khemset’s programmed loyalty to Profesor Muerte prompts him to protect the Profesor whenever he notices Muerte under attack or in any other peril. The GM could choose to have him roll his Tactics Skill to decide whether to stop whatever he’s been ordered to do and go to the Profesor’s aid, or continue to follow his last

DIGITAL HERO #44

order. This roll is a measure of the mummy's ability to correctly evaluate the level of danger that Muerte is in and his need to intervene. The GM should apply a bonus or penalty to the roll of up to +5 or -5, depending on how obvious the threat to the Profesor is.

Quote: "To defy my Master is to die, and worse." (Profesor Muerte instructed Khemset to say this at the start of every battle. Normally he only speaks when spoken to.)

Powers/Tactics: As an undead creature Khemset is unaffected by most environmental conditions, and has few of the needs and weaknesses of living beings. His mummified body feels no pain, so he takes no STUN damage from any attack, and his machine-like mind is immune to outside influence unless that involves cyberkinesis or necromancy. The strength and resilience he gained after being reanimated was increased dramatically by the magnetic flux flowing through his body. Since Khemset's control of magnetism is partly magical in nature it grants him abilities beyond what science alone can explain. It lets him cling to metallic surfaces, and even anchor himself to the Earth's magnetic field, making him very difficult to move. Khemset can fly by riding the planet's magnetic lines of force. His flight is noiseless, but emits strongly on radio frequencies. The mummy can also perceive, distinguish, and target sources of electrical current, even as minute as an organism's nervous system, although he needs a successful Perception Roll to detect such tiny flows of electricity.

Khemset's magic magnetism lets him animate his metallic foil "bandages," causing them to partially unwind from his body and move like living tentacles. He uses them as grasping appendages or to slash with their razor-keen edges. Khemset can manipulate up to four separate strips of this foil at once, and extend them to reach targets over fifty feet away. His bandages protect the mummy from attacks with their natural strength and supernatural qualities, and add to the destructive force of his blows. The foil can be removed from Khemset's body, but only after he's been rendered non-functional or commanded to allow it. Their oricalchum-steel alloy is incredibly strong, and should be treated as an Unbreakable Focus. The GM may wish to define a campaign-specific method to destroy them. If Khemset's bandages are broken, Profesor Muerte will need time and access to special equipment, and another sample of oricalchum, to repair or replace them.

Khemset's magnetically-suffused body absorbs any electricity he comes in direct contact with. Large amounts of electricity supercharge his magnetic field, temporarily boosting his already massive strength and reinforcing his

body's cohesion. At his maximum capacity, Khemset gains +20 STR and BODY. However, each Phase he's exposed to an electrical attack there's a chance it will overload his mental processors, making him lash out violently and uncontrollably at any target within reach. For understandable reasons, the mummy is also more vulnerable to Magnetic attacks.

Although Khemset is first and foremost a combatant, he's spent considerable time helping Profesor Muerte set up his equipment and assisting him in his experiments, and picked up a lot of expertise with technology. Those who consider him just a mindless brute would be surprised at his capacity to operate, repair, and even build all manner of electronic and mechanical devices.

Khemset always begins combat with a Presence Attack before closing to strike with his mighty armored fists. He normally puts all his Combat Skill Levels into OCV, trusting his potent Defenses to turn aside attacks. Should an enemy prove able to seriously hurt him hand-to-hand, Khemset uses Blocks to protect himself. If his foe is able to stay out of reach or avoid his blows, the mummy employs his bandages to grab and crush or to slash him. His bandage attacks will likely count as a Surprise Move the first time they're used. Khemset typically attacks one target at a time, starting with the strongest brick or the most obviously dangerous foe, and finishes him off before moving to a new opponent. He'll often hold one enemy helplessly constricted in one of his bandages while he attacks another.

If the mummy is overmatched he may seek out the strongest available source of electrical current, break into it, and begin absorbing it to increase his STR and BODY. This is normally a last-ditch tactic due to the risk Khemset will lose control and become as much a threat to his allies as his enemies.

Campaign Use: Khemset comes across as a classic unstoppable horror monster pumped up to superheroic levels, apparently unfazed by massive blows as he inexorably advances. He normally fights hand-to-hand as a straightforward brick, but his other powers give him some surprising options, and when under intelligent direction or when succeeding at his Tactics Skill rolls he can be a versatile combatant. The several rolls that influence his reactions make Khemset a bit of a wild card if the GM chooses to use them, adding the occasional unexpected twist to a scenario.

Khemset is rarely encountered far from Profesor Muerte, and fights at his side. The Profesor will sometimes dispatch the mummy on errands where his strength would be especially useful, such as breaking into vaults or carrying

Khemset's non-combat Skills, which can be bought for the Computer itself.

KHEMSET PLOT SEEDS

While Khemset undergoes routine maintenance he's accidentally exposed to an enormous surge of electricity, boosting his power to staggering levels but completely scrambling his control systems. Khemset bursts out of Profesor Muerte's base and goes on a rampage, which the player characters have to stop. But they also have to deal with interference from Profesor Muerte who's determined to recover his "property."

During a fierce battle between the PCs and Profesor Muerte and his minions, the Egyptian goddess Ma'at (see *Champions Worldwide*) appears and helps the heroes drive Muerte away, but prevents them from harming Khemset. After the battle Ma'at reveals what she knows of Khemset's background, and her intention to lay his troubled body to rest once and for all through proper funeral rites. She asks the PCs for assistance in capturing the mummy, offering to help them against the rest of the Profesor's

forces in exchange.

For unknown reasons Khemset starts to regain his memories and human personality. He pretends to still be Profesor Muerte's mindlessly loyal slave, but is appalled by what that monster does and wants him to do. Khemset manages to contact the PCs to ask for help escaping Muerte's grasp. He may agree to act temporarily as their spy in the Profesor's organization.

away heavy items. When Khemset is on a mission away from Muerte's base, El General usually monitors him closely. Khemset is also deceptively stealthy, belying his bulk and brutish appearance. He only Hunts someone when ordered by Profesor Muerte, however Muerte orders him to.

Although Khemset's *ka* (his spirit) long ago passed on to the Egyptian afterlife, it retains a connection to his body. Through it the Egyptian gods learned that the mortal remains of one of their true worshipers are being profoundly violated by foulest sorcery and perverted science. The gods wish to find Khemset's mummy and lay it properly to rest again, providing the GM with a pretext to introduce the gods of Egypt to his campaign, if desired.

Khemset's character sheet can be used as a template for similar monsters created from corpses scavenged from Egypt or other cultures practicing mummification. More of these creatures would strengthen Profesor Muerte's forces or the legions of Takofanes. An entire squad of "magnetic mummies" would make a splendid elite guard for a master villain. You can make Khemset a completely magical monster by changing or eliminating his Vulnerability to cyberkinesis, so that his origin need not involve Profesor Muerte. Alternatively, by changing his Vulnerability to necromancy and Susceptibility to holy objects, and perhaps altering his appearance slightly, Khemset becomes a fine robotic henchman for a scientific villain.

Khemset is meant to be a challenge for a whole team of Standard Superheroes, and should be able to go toe to toe with the strongest brick from a more powerful team. If he's not strong enough to face your player characters on that level, consider introducing him after he's already "charged up" on electricity, or else remove his Absorption and make his increased Characteristics permanent. If Khemset is too powerful for your PCs, reduce his base STR to 50, his PD and ED to 10, SPD to 4, and remove one of each type of his Combat Skill Levels.

Appearance: When Khemset's mummy was first animated, he stood about five and a half feet in height, and was very thin due to desiccation. His dry brown flesh was wrapped in dust-stained linen bandages. After Profesor Muerte's operation, the magnetic flux which flows through him caused all his tissues to expand at the molecular level, so he's now nearly seven feet tall. The expansion wasn't proportional; Khemset's body and limbs are much thicker and more powerful looking than previously. His impression of great size is further emphasized by his head, which was least affected by the expansion phenomenon and looks rather small perched atop his towering frame.

Khemset's linen wrappings have been replaced by long strips of gleaming bronze-colored metal foil wound around him, almost completely covering his body. The only gaps in this foil are over his eyes and mouth, allowing his hollow, shadowed eye sockets and remaining rotted teeth to show through. After Khemset animates his metal bandages they continue to weave sinuously in the air around him, their ends upraised like cobras poised to strike.

Khemset gives off a sharp odor of mingled dust and ozone. He rarely speaks, but when he does, his voice is inhumanly deep and frightening.

Khemset



Khemset



DIGITAL HERO #44

Khemset

Val	Cha	Cost	Roll	Notes
60	STR	50	21-	100 tons; 12d6 HTH [6]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
10	CON	0	11-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll: 13-
0	EGO	0	—	ECV: N/A
35	PRE	25	16-	PRE Attack: 7d6
4	COM	-3	10-	
12	PD	24		Total: 12 PD (12 rPD)
12	ED	33		Total: 12 ED (12 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
14	REC	0		
0	END	-10		
—	STUN	—		

Total Characteristic Cost: 199

Movement:	Running:	9"/18"
	Leaping:	12"/24"
	Swimming:	15"/30"
	Flight:	15"/30"

Cost	Powers	END
38	<i>Magnetic Flux Capacitor:</i> Endurance Reserve (180 END, 20 REC)	0
15	<i>Metal-Wrapped Fists:</i> HA +4d6 (16d6 with STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½); HA (-½), OIF (-½)	0
3	<i>Animated Bandages:</i> Extra Limbs (4); OIF (-½)	0
30	<i>Slashing Bandage:</i> RKA 4d6; Limited Range (8", -¼), No Knockback (-¼), OIF (-½)	6
15	<i>Grappling Bandage:</i> Stretching 4", Reduced Endurance (0 END, +½); OIF (-½), Only to Grab (-½)	0
40	<i>Lightning in a Bottle:</i> Absorption 5d6 (energy, ⅓ to STR, ⅔ to BODY), 60-point Maximum, Delayed Return Rate (5 points per 5 Minutes, +½); Only Electricity (-½)	0
15	<i>Mummy's Body:</i> Does Not Bleed	0
60	<i>Reinforced Mummy's Body:</i> Takes No STUN	0
12	<i>Metal Bandages:</i> Hardened (+¼) for 12 PD/12 ED; OIF (-½)	0
30	<i>Metal Bandages:</i> Damage Resistance (12 PD/12 ED), Hardened (+¼); OIF (-½)	0
17	<i>Conductivity:</i> Armor (6 ED), Hardened (+¼); OIF (-½), Only Versus Electricity (-½)	0
20	<i>Magic Metal:</i> Power Defense (10 points); OIF (-½)	0
10	<i>Swathed In Bandages:</i> Lack of Weakness (-5) for Normal Defenses; OIF (-½)	0
28	<i>Magnetic Pole:</i> Knockback Resistance -7"; Costs Endurance (-½)	1
50	<i>Immune to Life:</i> Life Support: Total (including Longevity: Immortality)	0

52	<i>Magnetic Levitation:</i> Flight 15", Invisible to Hearing Group (+¼), Usable Underwater (+¼), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	2
6	<i>Long Legs:</i> Running +3" (9" Total)	1
-2	<i>Heavy Metal:</i> Swimming -2"	0
5	<i>Magnetic Lock:</i> Clinging; Only on Metallic/Magnetic Surfaces (-1)	0
32	<i>Sense Current:</i> Detect Electrical Current 13- (Radio Group), Discriminatory, 360°, Range, Sense, Targeting	0

Talents

3 Bump of Direction

Skills

20	+4 with Hand-To-Hand Combat
8	+4 with Ranged Killing Attack
3	AK: Profesor Muerte's Headquarters 13-
3	Deduction 13-
3	Electronics 13-
3	KS: Ancient Egypt 13-
4	Language: Ancient Egyptian (Idiomatic)
2	Language: Spanish (Conversation)
1	Language: English (Basic)
3	Mechanics 13-
3	Stealth 13-
3	Systems Operation 13-
3	Tactics 13-
3	Teamwork 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 541

Total Cost: 740

200+ Disadvantages

25	<i>Distinctive Features:</i> Giant Armored Mummy (Not Concealable, Extreme Reaction [fear])
25	<i>Enraged:</i> Hit by Electrical Attacks (Uncommon, Go 8-, Recover 8-, Berserk)
15	<i>Hunted:</i> Gods of Ancient Egypt 8- (Mo Pow, Lay to Rest)
15	<i>Physical Limitation:</i> Must Obey Takofanes (Infrequently, Fully Impairing)
15	<i>Physical Limitation:</i> Machine Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
5	<i>Physical Limitation:</i> Affected by Cyberkinesis (has EGO 35 for purposes of cyberkinetic powers, and can be affected by cyberkinetic Presence Attacks) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
5	<i>Physical Limitation:</i> Affected by Necromancy (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
25	<i>Psychological Limitation:</i> Loyal to Profesor Muerte (Very Common, Total)
15	<i>Susceptibility:</i> 1d6 per Phase from Holy Objects and Places (Uncommon)
5	<i>Vulnerability:</i> ½ x BODY from Magnetic Attacks (Uncommon)
390	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 740

BEST OF BREED

The character sheet for a Blood Hound describes one of these creatures shortly after its creation and training by Profesor Muerte, but some Hounds are older and more experienced than their fellows, or have received further upgrades from the Profesor. This Package Deal is for a typical Alpha Hound, the leader of a pack. The given options let the GM customize the creature to his preference, as well as provide guidelines to what abilities other superior Hounds can possess. Hounds may purchase lesser versions of some listed abilities and later increase them to full value, *e.g.* Defense Maneuver I or +1 with Claws.

ALPHA HOUND PACKAGE DEAL**Abilities**

- 5 +5 INT
- 6 +3 EGO
- 5 +5 PRE
- 2 Fringe Benefit: Alpha Hound
- 12 Choose two from: +1 with DCV, +1 with Hand-To-Hand, Combat, Combat Luck, Defense Maneuver I-II, Lightning Reflexes +4 with All Actions, Rapid Attack (Hand-to-Hand)
- 12 Choose four from: +1 with Acrobatics/Break fall/Teamwork,

Blood Hound

Personality/Motivation: The Blood Hounds no longer think the way humans do. In many ways their minds are animal-like, driven by basic desires like hunger and survival. They can grasp only the simplest concepts, and don't understand technology or even most tools. But unlike natural animals, there's a profound malevolence in their psyches. They relish inflicting fear and pain on living creatures, particularly sentient ones who can fully appreciate their plight. The Hounds like to prolong the suffering of their victims before closing in for the kill; in fact it requires an effort of will to resist the urge to torture someone. Their thoughts are so inhuman they count as the Alien class of mind for purposes of Mental Powers.

Through a combination of intensive training and commands hardwired into their brains, Profesor Muerte makes these monsters utterly devoted to him. They unhesitatingly follow any order he gives them, even at risk to their continued existence. They're much less servile toward Muerte's lieutenants, though. While they recognize the Profesor has given these other creatures limited authority over them, like vicious dogs they sometimes need a firm hand, and there's always a risk they'll turn on their handler. Of course since they were reanimated through the magic of the Archlich Takofanes, they obey his commands above all others.

Blood Hounds naturally group themselves into packs of six to ten individuals, with a simple hierarchy of dominance and submission. One Hound, the strongest and smartest in the group, acts as the pack leader (whom Muerte refers to as the "Alpha Hound"), enforcing discipline and choosing the group's actions when they're not following orders from the Profesor or his lieutenants. The Alpha Hound is subject to challenges from other members of the pack for leadership, especially if it's wounded or has been beaten in a fight. A challenge often turns violent, and may result in the "death" of one of the Hounds, although that outcome is usually reversible by Muerte's devices.

Blood Hounds prefer to hunt and fight in packs, using tactics similar to wolves but even more sophisticated. They subsist on raw meat and blood, preferably from quarry they hunt and kill themselves, although they'll readily scavenge corpses, even those in an advanced state of decay. Their favorite food and prey is humans. Profesor Muerte periodically lets them loose to hunt, normally in sparsely-inhabited regions; but occasionally they wander into more populous areas. The site of one of their kills resembles that of other large predators, but with signs of far greater violence and brutality than for a normal animal. Sometimes the Hounds

carry a living victim back to their lair in Profesor Muerte's base, where they can "play" with it at their leisure.

Quote: Blood Hounds have limited vocabularies. Mostly they grunt in affirmation or denial, snarl and hiss when angry or frightened, or titter with sadistic amusement at an enemy's suffering.

Powers/Tactics: A Blood Hound has the capabilities of large predatory animals, only moreso. Hounds are strong, quick, agile, unnaturally resistant to injury, and have fearsome teeth and claws. They can consciously shift their muscle distribution to optimize it for running, leaping, or swimming. Their destreum claws can tunnel even through stone and concrete, and find the smallest irregularities in a surface, or dig their own hand and foot holds in most materials. Thus a Blood Hound is able to climb practically sheer surfaces, even at acute angles. The Hounds also possess exceptionally keen senses, especially smell. They're superb trackers by scent, and can identify, locate, and target creatures through scent alone.

Profesor Muerte discovered the process of changing ghouls into Blood Hounds has an unexpected but beneficial side effect. As a result of implanting so much inanimate matter into the ghouls' bodies, their connection to the realm of Death is strengthened. The Hounds radiate an aura of Death making living creatures subconsciously unwilling to perceive them. It's difficult for someone to see a Blood Hound unless he's looking directly at it, or to hear it unless it makes a loud noise. A Hound is so unnatural, even artificial sensing and recording devices are metaphysically reluctant to register its presence. Profesor Muerte theorizes the root cause of the phenomenon is the same as for a vampire not casting a reflection. A Blood Hound's aura greatly enhances its ability to hide and move undetected.

On the downside, the large amount of conductive metal in their bodies makes Blood Hounds more vulnerable to electrical attacks than other kinds. Profesor Muerte is constantly refining the design of his Hounds, so in subsequent appearances the Hounds may be stronger or have new powers.

Although Blood Hounds have rather simple intellects, they display marked cunning in combat or when stalking prey. They prefer to hunt and fight at night or in darkness, when their enhanced senses give them an edge over most opponents. Whenever possible they attack from ambush, hiding until in position to surprise their quarry. They make skillful use of their stealth abilities, lurking just out of sight and earshot, maneuvering to pounce on their prey from an unexpected direction. When fighting in a pack

DIGITAL HERO #44

they try to surround their opposition, with the Hounds at the backs of their enemies striking first, the others following up when their foe turns to face his first assailant. Often several Hounds will Coordinate their attacks on a single opponent. One of the Blood Hounds' favorite tactics is to Move By their prey, slashing him with their teeth or claws, then slip away using Stealth on their next Phase while their target is distracted by another pack member, circling around unnoticed to come at him again. A confrontation with Blood Hounds is a tense and unnerving experience as these creatures repeatedly strike, then seem to vanish.

Blood Hounds are strong close-quarters fighters, and fight well as part of a group, so in large battles Muerte unleashes them to engage the enemy hand-to-hand while he and some of his other forces attack at range.

Campaign Use: With their deadly claws and teeth, talent for tracking a target by scent, and ability to go almost anywhere undetected, Blood Hounds make superb assassins, which is how Professor Muerte most often employs them. They may also be instructed to steal something, spy on someone, or kidnap a person Muerte wants to interrogate or examine. Although their limited intelligence restricts their use, it's somewhat offset by telepathic instructions from El General. The Hounds' heightened senses suit them well to act as "watchdogs," and Muerte sets them to prowl around the vicinity of his headquarters, guarding against intruders.

Blood Hounds are extremely cruel and brutal killers, and the locale for one of their hunts is notable for the marks of savagery they leave behind. Investigating such a kill is one route to bringing PC heroes into conflict with these monsters and their equally monstrous creator. Another would be following up on disappearances of homeless people, prostitutes, or other solitary inhabitants of the night, killed by the Hounds for food or kidnapped to provide Professor Muerte with laboratory subjects or just for their own amusement. There might also be unexplained desecrations of grave sites, where the bodies have been dug up and apparently eaten....

Individual Blood Hounds don't Hunt characters in the game-mechanic sense, having the focus and attention span of animals, but Professor Muerte will deploy them as part of any Hunting he undertakes himself.

Since Blood Hounds are not obviously technological apart from their metal teeth and claws, they can be used as a variant form of ghoul created wholly through magic, with no connection to Profesor Muerte. On the other hand, they could be explained as the products of a laboratory experiment, although in that case the

GM should change or remove their Susceptibility to holy objects.

If the Hounds aren't strong enough to threaten your heroes, increase their DEX to 30, SPD to 6, END and STUN to 50, and their PD, ED, and Damage Resistance to 20 each. If you need to weaken them, lower their STR to 25, DEX and CON to 23, SPD to 4, and PD, ED, and DR to 12.

Appearance: Blood Hounds are humanoid in shape but unmistakably inhuman. They're totally hairless and strongly muscled but otherwise genderless. Although a Hound could have been male or female in life, they no longer possess any external sexual characteristics. They have pronounced hunchbacks, apishly long arms, and oversize hands and feet tipped with retractable claws. Their jaws are also oversize and prognathous, and filled with sharp pointed teeth. Teeth and claws are gleaming silver-gray metal. A Blood Hound has no nose or ear structures on its face. Its nostrils and ears are simple holes, giving its head a distinct skull-like appearance. Its eyes are solid black, without visible iris or pupil.

A Hound's skin is fully transparent, but with a glossy sheen as though the Hound is coated in glass or plastic. Their blood-red muscles are visible beneath, writhing and swelling as they realign for different Movement. Their bodies are crisscrossed with surgical scars.

Blood Hounds never wear clothing. While fully capable of standing and walking upright they prefer to run on all fours, especially when moving Noncombat. The voice of a Hound is high and thin, almost childlike. They sometimes lure unwary heroes by pretending to be children crying for help.

+1 with Climbing/Stealth, CK: Campaign City, Concealment, Contortionist, EM: Underwater, Mimicry, Navigation (Land), Shadowing, Survival (Urban), Tactics, Tracking
10 Change the listed Disadvantage, *Rivalry*, from "Superior Position" to "Inferior Position" (from 15 points to 5 points)

Total Cost of Package Abilities: 52 points

Blood Hound



Blood Hound



Blood Hound

Val	Cha	Cost	Roll	Notes
30	STR	20	15-	Lift 1600 kg; 6d6 [3]
26	DEX	48	14-	OCV: 9/DCV: 9
28	CON	36	15-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll: 15-
8	EGO	-4	11-	ECV: 3
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
2	COM	-4	9-	
15	PD	9		Total: 15 PD (15 rPD)
15	ED	9		Total: 15 ED (15 rED)
5	SPD	14		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
12	REC	0		
46	END	-5		
44	STUN	2		

Total Characteristics Cost: 134

Movement: Running: 11"/22"
Leaping: 11"/22"
Swimming: 11"/22"

Cost	Powers	END
26	<i>Destreum Claws:</i> Multipower, 26-point Reserve	0
2u	1) <i>Flesh Cutting:</i> HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR), Armor Piercing (+½)	2
3u	2) <i>Stone Cutting:</i> Tunneling 1" through 8 DEF	3
10	<i>Muscle Configuration:</i> Multipower, 10-point Reserve	0
1u	1) <i>Wolf Mode:</i> Running +5" (11" Total)	1
1u	2) <i>Tiger Mode:</i> Leaping +5" (11" Total), Accurate	1
1u	3) <i>Shark Mode:</i> Swimming +9" (11" Total)	1
20	<i>Destreum Jaws:</i> HKA 1½d6 (3d6+1 with STR); No Knockback (-¼)	2
10	<i>Undead Resilience:</i> Damage Resistance (15 PD/15 ED); Activation 14- (-½)	0
47	<i>Immune to Life:</i> Life Support: Total (except Diminished Eating; including Longevity: Immortality)	0
12	<i>Hunter's Senses:</i> +4 PER with All Sense Groups	0
20	<i>Ghoul's Nose Plus:</i> Discriminatory, Targeting, Tracking for Normal Smell	0

Skills

15	+3 with Hand-To-Hand Combat
18	+6 with Climbing and Stealth
3	Acrobatics 14-
3	Breakfall 14-
3	Climbing 14-
14	Concealment 20-; Self Only (-½)
1	Language: Spanish (Basic)
3	Stealth 14-
3	Teamwork 14-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 216

Total Cost: 350

200+ Disadvantages

25	Distinctive Features: Hideous (Not Concealable, Extreme Reaction [fear])
15	Physical Limitation: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
15	Physical Limitation: Must Obey Takofanes (Infrequently, Fully Impairing)
25	Psychological Limitation: Loyal to Profesor Muerte (Very Common, Total)
15	Psychological Limitation: Bloodthirsty and Sadistic (Common, Strong)
15	Rivalry: Alpha Hound (Professional, for pack leadership, Superior Position, Harm or Kill Rival, Rival is Aware)
20	Susceptibility: 2d6 per Phase from Holy Objects and Places (Uncommon)
20	Vulnerability: 1½x STUN and BODY from Electricity (Common)

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

Background/History: The abominations that Profesor Muerte calls *Los Sabuesos de Sangre* ("the hounds of blood") are products of one of his first and most successful experiments in transmortification, and remain among his favorite creatures. Once they were men and women returned from death as *ghouls*, animalistic predators and scavengers. (See the *HERO System Bestiary* for an example of this minor form of undead.) Muerte subjects the ghouls to a series of radical surgical procedures: lacing their skeletons with *destreum* alloy, grafting enchanted synthetic muscle and skin to their bodies, implanting microtechnomantic neurotransmitters to enhance their reflexes and sensory acuity. He makes them stronger, faster, more versatile, and much deadlier. An unanticipated side effect of the surgeries gives them extraordinary stealth abilities. The Profesor designs and trains his Hounds to serve him unquestioningly as far as their limited intellects allow. They have no memory of once being human, or of how far they've left their humanity behind.

Hand of Death

Background/History: *Las Manos de Muerte* (“the hands of death”) are the most common of Profesor Muerte’s unliving servants. They’re created from zombies, human corpses reanimated without sentience or free will. (See the *Hero System Bestiary* for an example of a common zombie.) Zombies are relatively weak as undead monsters go, slow moving and nearly mindless; but as with all his supernatural servants, Profesor Muerte has made custom improvements. He stimulates the zombies’ brains and nervous systems, accelerating their reflexes and information processing. He replaces their fatty tissues with penetration- and impact-resistant foam. Most importantly, he implants Technomantic Force generators into their bodies, similar to but not nearly as strong as the one in his own armor. Profesor Muerte uses the Hands of Death as soldiers, guards, and unskilled labor. Although not as powerful as most Standard Superheroes, and limited in their ability to adapt and respond to changing circumstances, Hands are relatively easy to create and maintain, blend inconspicuously into most settings, are tough to hurt, utterly fearless, and best of all from the Profesor’s viewpoint, unflinchingly obedient.

Personality/Motivation: Whatever personalities they might have had as living beings, Hands of Death are now merely extensions of their master’s will. They have no independent thought or motivation of any kind. They respond only to questions and to commands, which they attempt to carry out in the most direct and literal fashion until ordered to stop. Hands recognize a hierarchy of “masters” whose orders they’ll obey. Takofanes is always foremost among these, followed by Profesor Muerte, Seraphina, and El General. An order given by a higher-ranking master will always supersede one from a lower rank.

Hands of Death obey all commands without complaint or concern for their own safety. They continue following their last instructions until countermanded, and if not currently under orders, merely stand or sit immobile. Hands are incapable of casual conversation or any other normal social interactions, and ignore attempts to initiate them. This will occasionally draw attention and arouse suspicion from people unaware of their true nature. The Hands of Death don’t have a strong enough presence on the plane of Death to survive without feeding on dead things themselves. They consume raw meat for sustenance (dead or alive at the time), but must be ordered to eat. Otherwise they would sit and starve while food was within their reach.

Quote: None. Hands of Death speak only when spoken to.

Powers/Tactics: By human standards, the Hands of Death are physically strong, quick, and agile, but nowhere near superhuman in those capacities. On the other hand, they’re surprisingly tough and difficult to put down and keep down in a fight. A Hand can’t be Stunned or Knocked Out, and will only cease to function after it’s lost all its BODY. Hands are more resistant to Killing Damage than an unarmored human, and are unaffected by Mental Powers or Presence Attacks unless those things have a necromantic Special Effect. Being undead, the Hands have almost none of the biological needs or environmental weaknesses of living humans. The Unlife that animates them is drawn to Life like a compass to iron, allowing Hands to sense the proximity of living beings, albeit with little discrimination.

The Hands’ most formidable abilities derive from their implanted Technomantic Force generators. They’re able to channel that force through their bodies in controlled ways, particularly at their hands where it takes the forms of various energy weapons. Hands of Death come in two “models.” *Right Hands* make up the largest block of Profesor Muerte’s supernatural forces, and generate deadly Killing Damage weapons, Force Daggers for striking a foe at range and a Force Katar for hand-to-hand combat. Less common are the *Left Hands* who wield Normal Damage attacks, the Force Lash and Force Cestus. Muerte uses this model for tactical support or when he wants to subdue a subject without killing him. Any given squad of Profesor Muerte’s undead troops will usually include both models.

All Hands of Death can also focus a surge of force through their legs to make prodigious leaps. When a Hand has a need for speed it moves in great bounding strides. Hands are quite coordinated and capable of impressive acrobatic moves in conjunction with their leaping ability.

As with Profesor Muerte’s own weaponry, the balance of science and magic in a Force Generator is inherently unstable, and on occasion will momentarily cut out. Since that power is also inherently evil, Hands accumulate “negative *karma*” which may result in improbable events occurring to their detriment.

Hands of Death can’t think creatively, so in battle they merely follow the last orders they were given, and lack the capacity to adapt their tactics to changing circumstances. Left on their own, they fight in straight forward fashion, using their ranged or hand-to-hand powers as appropriate, and don’t think to work together or even use defensive Combat Maneuvers. Nonetheless, the Hands are programmed with a variety of battle commands, and when given intelligent direction, as via Mind Link with El General, are capable of more sophisticated

LAS CAPAS

Profesor Muerte may want to use one of his undead as a “front man” able to respond to normal people, or to infiltrate a group posing as someone they know and trust. For this purpose Muerte creates a special Hand of Death he calls a *capa* (which can be translated as “cloak,” “layer,” or “pretense.”) First Muerte obtains the corpse of the desired person (discreetly killing him if he’s still alive) and animates and transmortifies him into a Hand of Death of either model, but installs additional cerebral components similar to those in Khemset’s brain. These grant the *capa* greater intellectual capacity as well as subroutines for simulating social behavior, letting it appear far more lifelike and behave more naturally than a regular Hand of Death. The *capa* can also access the memories and Skills it possessed in life, although some of that information is often lost due to brain damage from dying. When Profesor Muerte needs a *capa* to be especially interactive, he uses El General’s Mind Link to continuously instruct it in what to say and do, almost like manipulating a puppet.

To design a *capa*, take the character sheet for a basic Hand of Death and remove its Disadvantage, *Social Limitation: Ignores Casual Human Interaction*. Increase its INT to 20, and give it the Skills the living person would have had. (You can use the templates for Normal People from 5ERp344-46 as guidelines for appropriate Skills.) Add KS: Former Life 13-, as well as Acting 13- to let it improvise human behavior in changing social situations. Failing a roll with either Skill means the *capa* made a mistake that could arouse suspicion it's not who it appears to be. (See the sidebar, **Free Thinking**, page 49, for more about Automaton using Skills.) You might also increase the *capa*'s PRE and COM if those were higher than a normal Hand of Death's when the person was alive.

The *capa* takes an additional Disadvantage, *Physical Limitation: Affected by Cyberkinesis*, equal to and with the same conditions as *Affected by Necromancy* (except that its effective EGO for both is 20). You could also give it a Hunter or Rival related to its former life.

tactics: spreading out to minimize the impact of Area Of Effect attacks; sniping at their opponents from cover; coordinating their attacks against a single foe; using Telekinetic Grabs to immobilize an enemy and make him an easier target; Knocking Back a foe into a solid object, another enemy, or within reach of the Professor's other forces. Sometimes a Hand will be instructed to execute a flashy acrobatic move to catch an opponent by surprise, such as a leaping Half Move and somersault over his head, landing to strike him from behind.

Professor Muerte is constantly tinkering with the design of his Hands of Death, so when next encountered, they may be stronger or possess different or additional powers.

Campaign Use: Hands of Death are the "grunts" of Professor Muerte's undead forces, the backbone of his combat and guard units, as well as uncomplaining labor for simple moving and construction work. Because they look human, they can be used in public without attracting attention. In some ways Hands of Death resemble many mindless monsters from fiction: pursuing and attacking relentlessly, expressionlessly absorbing blows that would render a living human unconscious or dead, and coming back for more. On the other hand their agility, mobility, and energy powers make them a greater challenge than most such creatures. The capability of whoever is commanding them greatly affects the level of threat they pose. When under the telepathic direction of El General, the Hands function much like trained soldiers, using intelligent small-unit tactics.

Hands of Death can be the pretext to draw PC heroes into conflict with Professor Muerte's organization. If Muerte has taken "recruits" from morgues or graveyards, or from among the homeless, the heroes may hear of the strange disappearances and investigate. They may also be approached by someone claiming to have seen a deceased friend or relative apparently alive and walking the street, but who's been unable to persuade the authorities to look into the matter.

The Hands lack the volition to Hunt anyone, but will be part of any Hunting by Professor Muerte. As they look relatively innocuous, they can get close to their targets without arousing suspicion, to attack or simply spy on them.

Since the Hands of Death show no external signs of a technological origin, they could also be run as a variant form of zombie created wholly through sorcery, with no connection to Professor Muerte. On the other hand their deathlike state and energy powers could just as easily be the products of pure science, especially if you eliminate their Susceptibility to holy objects and change their *Physical Limitation:*

Affected by Necromancy to Affected by Cyberkinesis.

If the Hands of Death are too powerful for your PCs, reduce their DEX to 18, BODY to 15, and their SPD to 3. If you need them to be tougher opponents, increase their DEX to 23, SPD to 5, and their Defenses to 10 (factoring in their Normal Characteristic Maxima and Automaton cost multipliers), and eliminate the Activation Roll on their Multipower and Damage Resistance. You could also combine all the offensive Powers of the Right and Left Hands into a single Multipower, making each individual Hand more versatile. But keep in mind that Hands of Death are the baseline for Professor Muerte's creations and aren't intended to match superheroes one-on-one. Rather than making them stronger, consider giving the Professor more of them instead.

Appearance: The Hands of Death look like normal human beings, apart from their slightly mechanical movements and expressionless faces. They can be of any race and either sex, but Professor Muerte prefers the corpses of relatively young people who were reasonably fit in life. Their bodies are marred by scars from whatever trauma killed them, or from the Professor's operations on them, although Muerte does his best to repair them with cosmetic surgery. The Hands often wear long clothes, hats, gloves, or bandages to hide their scars. Hands of Death have almost no vital signs in the conventional sense, which even a casual medical examination will reveal. They don't breathe, have no pulse or heartbeat, their body temperature matches that of their surroundings, and their brain activity registers as minimal.

The Hands' Technomantic Force manifests as glowing, translucent violet shapes emanating from their hands. Their Ranged attacks fire from the tips of their straightened fingers. Force Daggers look like flying V-shaped blades six inches long, while a Force Lash appears as a thick tendril of light. When the Hands of Death clench their fists, they activate their Hand-To-Hand powers. The Force Katar is a triangular energy blade projecting about a foot forward from the knuckles, used to stab with a punching motion. A Force Cestus is a translucent sphere surrounding the fist.

Hands of Death remain expressionless no matter what they do or what's done to them. If a Hand takes BODY damage from a cutting or penetrating attack, a violet glow shines through the wound, as though from inner fire.

Hand of Death



Hand of Death

Val	Cha	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 HTH [2]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
10	CON	0	11-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll: 12-
0	EGO	0	—	ECV: N/A
10	PRE	0	11-	PRE Attack: 2d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
8	PD	21		Total: 8 PD (8 rPD)
8	ED	21		Total: 8 ED (8 rED)
4	SPD	10		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
6	REC	0		
0	END	-10		
—	STUN	—		

Total Characteristics Cost: 104

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Leaping: 16"/32"
Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
19	<i>Technomantic Force Generator:</i> Endurance Reserve (90 END, 10 REC)	0
36	<i>Technomantic Force:</i> Multipower, 45-point reserve; Activation 15- (-1/4)	0
1u	1) <i>Force Surge:</i> Leaping +12" (16" Total), Reduced Endurance (0 END, +1/2); Activation 15- (-1/4)	0
	plus either:	
3u	2) <i>Force Dagger:</i> RKA 2d6, Armor Piercing (+1/2); Activation 15- (-1/4), Beam (-1/4) and	4
3u	3) <i>Force Katar:</i> HKA 2d6 (3d6+1 with STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2); Activation 15- (-1/4), No Knockback (-1/4)	0
	or:	
3u	2) <i>Force Lash:</i> Telekinesis (30 STR); Activation 15- (-1/4), Fully Direct (-1/2)	4
3u	3) <i>Force Cestus:</i> HA +4d6, Double Knockback (+3/4), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2); Activation 15- (-1/4), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-1/2)	0
15	<i>Zombie's Body:</i> Does Not Bleed	0
60	<i>Reinforced Zombie's Body:</i> Takes No STUN	0
16	<i>Undead Resilience:</i> Damage Resistance (8 PD/8 ED); Activation 14- (-1/2)	0
47	<i>Immune to Life:</i> Life Support: Total (except Diminished Eating; including Longevity: Immortality)	0
27	<i>Drawn To Life:</i> Detect Life 12- (No Sense Group), Range, Sense, Targeting	0

Skills

- 9 +3 with Technomantic Force Multipower
- 3 Acrobatics 13-
- 3 Breakfall 13-
- 3 Teamwork 13-
- 1 Language: Spanish (Basic)

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 246

Total Cost: 350

200+ Disadvantages

- 15 Distinctive Features: No Vital Signs (Not Concealable, Major Reaction, Uncommonly-Used Senses)
- 5 Distinctive Features: Scars (Easily Concealed, Noticed and Recognizable)
- 20 Normal Characteristic Maxima
- 15 Physical Limitation: Machine Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Must Obey Takofanes (Infrequently, Fully Impairing)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Affected By Necromancy (has EGO 13 for purposes of necromancy spells, and can be affected by necromancy-based Presence Attacks) (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Obeys/Will Not Harm Profesor Muerte (Very Common, Total)
- 10 Social Limitation: Ignores Casual Human Interaction (Frequently, Minor [provokes suspicion of character])
- 20 Susceptibility: Drain BODY 2d6 per Phase from Holy Objects and Places (Uncommon)
- 15 Unluck: 3d6

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

