

PYRAMID

Issue 3/53 March '13

ACTION

BUDDIES AND LONERS

by Sean Punch

EXTENDED ACTION!

by Phil Masters

HELL ON WHEELS

by Hans-Christian Vortisch

THE RED SWORDS

by J. Edward Tremlett

I'VE GOT A GREAT IDEA

by Roger Burton West

DOGFIGHT ACTION!

by David L. Pulver

**FORTUNATELY,
I SAW THIS COMING**

by Jason "PK" Levine

DEALING WITH THE LAW

by Jason Brick

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

Stock #37-2653

CONTENTS

IN THIS ISSUE

FROM THE EDITOR 3

BUDDIES AND LONERS 4
by Sean Punch

EXTENDED ACTION! 9
by Phil Masters

HELL ON WHEELS 16
by Hans-Christian Vortisch

EIDETIC MEMORY: DOGFIGHT ACTION! . . . 20
by David L. Pulver

DEALING WITH THE LAW 23
by Jason Brick

I'VE GOT A GREAT IDEA. 26
by Roger Burton West

THE RED SWORDS. 28
by J. Edward Tremlett

FORTUNATELY, I SAW THIS COMING 32
by Jason "PK" Levine

RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE:
\$1 FOLLOWED BY 2D ZEROES 35
by Steven Marsh, Pyramid Editor

ODDS AND ENDS 37
featuring Murphy's Rules

ABOUT GURPS. 38

Article Colors

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

- Pale Blue:* In This Issue
- Brown:* In Every Issue (letters, humor, editorial, etc.)
- Dark Blue:* **GURPS** Features
- Purple:* Systemless Features

COVER ART
Alan Rabinowitz

INTERIOR ART
Greg Hyland

Get ready for action! This month's *Pyramid* runs on caffeinated adrenaline as we look at the high-octane world of action-adventure – including a briefcase full of **GURPS Action** goodies.

Most action movies involve *Buddies and Loners*. Sean Punch, the shadowy mastermind behind the **Action** series, shows you how to emulate blockbuster hits with only a couple of players and a GM. You'll explore the assumptions, adventure tips, and **GURPS** lenses for four common small-group tropes, plus a couple of new advantages to give your lone-wolf heroes the edge.

Action movies have been around since cinema began, and action stories are even older. Phil Masters – the mysterious masked man of **GURPS Thaumatology: Age of Gold** – looks beyond the modern-day flicks with *Extended Action!* You'll get tips and lenses for several alternate themes of the past and future, plus new optional rules for chases on horseback.

Does your mercenary team need a heavy-duty ride? **GURPS Gun Fu** co-author Hans-Christian Vortisch has you covered, with *Hell on Wheels*. This detailed description of the Cadillac Gage Commando gives you the history, features, campaign suggestions, and **GURPS** stats for two versions of this versatile vehicle.

Take the mission from the highway to the runway with *Dogfight Action!* This issue's Eidetic Memory by David L. Pulver – author of **GURPS Mass Combat** – expands the **Action** chase rules to air combat. You'll also get **GURPS** stats for some common fighters and their weapons.

When things go wrong in an action-hero's life, you may find yourself *Dealing With the Law*. Whether the setting is historical fantasy or modern action, this six-step process provides systemless ideas for avoiding arrest.

If you're prone to over-planning, or you know someone who is, *I've Got a Great Idea*. This optional **GURPS** rule rewards players who speed up the pre-mission planning process with bonuses they can use to enhance the mission itself.

When the situation is too dangerous for mundane humanitarian efforts, call in *The Red Swords*. This fictional secret organization of well-armed medics takes their services to places where no one is willing to go – and makes sure that no one interrupts their work. Its medipack comes complete with suggestions for **GURPS Action** character creation and adventures.

Fortunately, I Saw This Coming . . . and you can, too, with these optional "retroaction" rules from **GURPS Monster Hunters** author Jason "PK" Levine. Benefit your **GURPS** heroes with a new advantage, new twists on existing ones, or bonuses from high skill scores.

You've got incredible grit, impeccable skills, and an impossible mission. All you need is an edge to get in the action . . . with *Pyramid!*

Editor-in-Chief ■ STEVE JACKSON
e23 Manager ■ STEVEN MARSH
GURPS Line Editor ■ SEAN PUNCH
Assistant **GURPS** Line Editor ■
JASON "PK" LEVINE

Art Director ■ SAMUEL MITSCHKE
Assistant Art Director ■
BRIDGET WESTERMAN
Production Artist ■ NIKOLA VRTIS
Prepress Checker ■ MONICA STEPHENS

Chief Operating Officer ■ PHILIP REED
Marketing Director ■ BEN WILLIAMS
Director of Sales ■ ROSS JEPSON
Page Design ■ PHIL REED and
JUSTIN DE WITT

FROM THE EDITOR

A WORLD OF (VARIABLE) ACTION

One of the truths of the action genre is that modern-day action adventures – especially where the heroes aren't part of an organization or larger hierarchy – have perhaps one of the widest ranges of adventure possibilities imaginable. Really, the entire modern world is its domain . . . and countless scriptwriters and cinematographers have viewed pretty much every corner of creation and thought, "What would it be like if a fire-fight were here?"

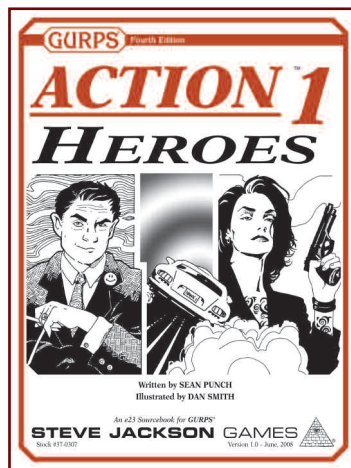
As I uncovered while writing my column this month (pp. 35-36), this goes doubly so when it comes to motivations. Really, an adventure can revolve around something nearly "inconsequential" like a watch (see *Pulp Fiction*) or focus on unfathomable billions of dollars (such as the central core of *Entrapment*). If you can think of it, people have been willing to kill – or die – over it.

In an ongoing **GURPS Action** campaign, this "anything can

be important" aspect can be vital to maintaining long-term interest. In fact, great action adventures can exploit the fact that missions can be moving goalposts: Sometimes the object turns from "gargantuan heist" to "try to escape alive," while at other times, a seemingly inconsequential mission can offer up something *much* more lucrative.

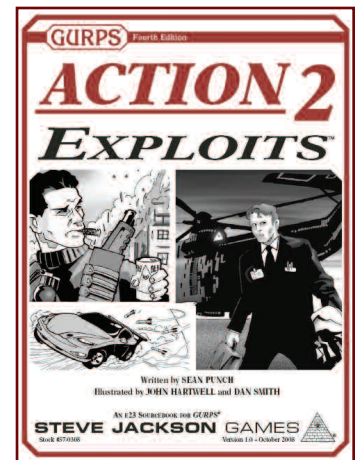
As a final note, action adventures are notoriously forgiving . . . especially if the adventure is moving fast enough. Did the final climactic battle start in the tunnels underground and end minutes later on a bridge? Go with it! (Is that an airship coming this way?!)

It is in this spirit that we present this month's dazzling dossier. If *Pyramid* is a place where anything can happen so long as it's exciting, then that fact is doubly true this issue. We hope you'll enjoy this action-packed installment. Be careful when reading it; it seems there *might* be some shadowy agents nearby, looking over your shoulder with interest . . .



WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Speaking of action-packed, how well did we do this month? Were things so exciting that even your stuntmen demanded stuntmen? Or did the mysterious message self-destruct before you could fully enjoy it? Our operatives await your post-mission reports privately at pyramid@sjgames.com, and you can always take part in a gathering of like-minded daredevils in the friendly bars of forums.sjgames.com.



Pyramid, **GURPS**, Warehouse 23, and the all-seeing pyramid are registered trademarks of Steve Jackson Games Incorporated. e23 and the names of all products published by Steve Jackson Games Incorporated are registered trademarks or trademarks of Steve Jackson Games Incorporated, or used under license. *Pyramid* is copyright © 2013 by Steve Jackson Games Incorporated. All rights reserved.

Submission of your photos, letters, humor, captions, and marginalia constitutes permission to Steve Jackson Games Incorporated to use them in all media. All such submissions become the property of Steve Jackson Games Incorporated and will not be returned.

The scanning, uploading, and distribution of this material via the Internet or via any other means without the permission of the publisher is illegal, and punishable by law. Please purchase only authorized electronic editions, and do not participate in or encourage the electronic piracy of copyrighted materials. Your support of the authors' rights is appreciated.

BUDDIES AND LONERS

BY SEAN PUNCH

GURPS Action explicitly assumes a team of four or more specialists (see *Heroes*, p. 3 and *Exploits*, p. 47), yet many of the movies that inspired it don't work that way. Indeed, most action films feature either a pair of buddies or a lone action hero. Such setups make wonderful campaign models for small gaming groups, but **Action** needs some fine tuning to accommodate them.

A good first step is to use **GURPS Power-Ups 5: Impulse Buys**, which is an excellent fit to *all* of the campaign types discussed below. We recommend either reserving a few starting points for those rules or not using character points for them at all (see *Impulse Buys*, pp. 17-18).

THE ODD COUPLE

A campaign for two 300-point specialists.

This setup emphasizes the differences between two dissimilar specialists, with much of the fun coming from contrasts between their approaches. The heroes boast different templates, although the pair customarily share a lens that provides common ground. For instance, Riggs and Murtaugh in *Lethal Weapon* are both cops with the law enforcement lens (*Heroes*, p. 5), but Riggs is a gung-ho shooter (*Heroes*, p. 14) with minor detective skills from the lens, while Murtaugh is a cautious

investigator (*Heroes*, p. 12) with a few combat skills from the lens. Kenner and Murata from *Showdown in Little Tokyo* have the law enforcement lens, too – but in this pairing, Kenner is a big guy (*Furious Fists*, p. 5) while Murata is a fast guy (*Furious Fists*, p. 6), and the two get what little they know about police work from the lens.

The contrast between the heroes' methods is vital in such a campaign, with the story presenting challenges clearly suited to each of them – although the wrong partner might stumble across one of these and have to stall or improvise until his buddy turns up! Thus, the two players need to select *different* standard templates. Then the GM should review *Making Everybody Useful* (*Exploits*, p. 47), identify the tasks that suit the PCs, and save severe BAD for tests that fall into one of their areas of expertise. The GM can finesse situations where neither is a pro by omitting such elements, making the necessary feats so simple that low or even default skill will suffice, or having a friendly NPC take care of business. Then get on with the action.

The absence of a supporting team of 250-point action heroes means the PCs will need extra oomph to avoid defeat. Thus, after the players choose lenses and templates, the GM should give them an extra 50 points in the form of the following lens.

Me and You, Buddy

+50 points

Required Trait: Buddy Bond 1 (above) [5].

Optional Traits: 45 points chosen from among HT +1 to +4 [10/level], HP up to 1.5 × ST [2/level], Buddy Bond 2 or 3 [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Danger Sense [15], Daredevil [15], Enhanced Dodge 1-3 [15/level], Hard to Kill [2/level], Hard to Subdue [2/level], Rapid Healing [5] or Very Rapid Healing [15], Recovery [10], Serendipity 1-3 [15/level], or improve Luck to Extraordinary Luck [30] for 15 points or Ridiculous Luck [60] for 45 points.

New Advantage: Buddy Bond

5 points/level

This trait does nothing when you're alone and never aids rolls made for *your* benefit. However, you get +1 per level (maximum three levels) on rolls you make to render direct assistance to one particular buddy. You receive this bonus when you make complementary skill rolls to support his tasks or use your skill to cover for his (*Exploits*, p. 5); in the specific situations of giving him a leg up (*Exploits*, p. 19), tackling him out of harm's way (*Exploits*, p. 28), or "spotting" for him in combat (*Exploits*, p. 39); and whenever you roll to provide him with medical care (*Exploits*, pp. 40-41) or save his life (e.g., disarming a bomb handcuffed to him or using Swimming to rescue him from drowning). The GM decides when else it applies – it would probably help a Throwing roll to chuck your buddy ammo, but not your DX roll to *catch* ammo he threw your way.

The GM may wish to make Sense of Duty (Team) a prerequisite for Buddy Bond.

Advantages: Higher Purpose (Assist Buddy) [5/level], allowed as a "leveled" advantage for up to +3.

TWO AGAINST THE WORLD

A campaign for two 350-point generalists.

This campaign type features two generalists who rely on each other more for extra firepower than to provide missing expertise. The buddies are individually well-rounded, adept at all basic action-hero activities and quite a few specialized ones. *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* offers an excellent example, though it isn't pure action: Both Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin can accomplish almost any task the plot calls for.

These stories *still* get a spark from the differences between the partners' methods, but now it's less about ability – which differs somewhat but not radically – and more about personality. When all goes well, either hero could tackle whatever task the mission calls for. When something goes wrong, the other can step in. And both are sufficiently broadly skilled to support their friend at almost anything.

In an **Action** campaign, this approach calls for a new template (below), because the standard templates are too specialized. The players should communicate during character creation to ensure that their PCs end up with different mental disadvantages and primary skill packages. As in any buddy story, there's typically a shared lens, which the players might agree to or be assigned by the GM; for instance, Illya and Napoleon both have the intelligence lens (**Heroes**, p. 4).

However, the GM must take a different approach to challenges here. The heroes will be good at many things, but never *quite* as good as dedicated experts. It's important to set BAD at a level where the PCs have reasonable odds of success. The best way to do this is to review the skill levels of the specialists in **Heroes** (pp. 7-16) and **Furious Fists** (pp. 5-12), compare these to the *best* levels the buddies have between them, and adjust BAD by the difference. For instance, if the PC with the best Explosives (EOD) has a 13, not the 20 of a full-time demolition man, the GM might tweak a BAD of -10 to just -3 – or go with -6 if the bomb is handcuffed to one of the heroes, allowing his partner to roll at +3 thanks to Buddy Bond 3.

On the other hand, the GM can throw in *many* kinds of challenges. If each PC takes three different skill packages, and has either Jack of All Trades (p. 6) or Wild Talent (p. B99), then there isn't a whole lot that can't show up in the campaign!

*Connor: It is your evil that will
be sought by us.*

*Murphy: With every breath we
shall hunt them down.*

– *The Boondock Saints*

Ultimate Action Hero

350 points

You're an all-around capable guy – a Delta Force commando, super-spy, or other self-reliant type. You could probably tackle most situations alone, though like any competent operator, you prefer to have backup.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 15 [100]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 13 [30].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 13 [0]; Per 14 [5]; FP 13 [0]; Basic Speed 7.00 [0]; Basic Move 7 [0].

Advantages: 30 points chosen from among Daredevil [15], Luck (any level) [15, 30, or 60], or Serendipity [15/level].

● Another 30 points chosen from among the previous traits, Buddy Bond 1-3 (p. 4) [5/level], Jack of All Trades 1-3 (p. 6) [10/level], or Wild Talent [20/level]. ● A further 45 points chosen from either of the last two lists, lens advantages (**Heroes**, pp. 4-5, and **Furious Fists**, p. 4), or ST or HT +1 to +4 [10/level], DX or IQ +1 or +2 [20 or 40], HP +1 to +3 [2/level], Will or Per +1 to +7 [5/level], FP +1 to +4 [3/level], Basic Speed +1.00 or +2.00 [20 or 40], Basic Move +1 to +3 [5/level], Absolute Direction [5], Absolute Timing [2], Acute Senses (any) [2/level], Ambidexterity [5], Appearance (Attractive, Handsome, or Very Handsome) [4, 12, or 16], Catfall [10], Charisma 1-6 [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Contact Group (Any; Skill-12, 15, or 18; 9 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [5, 10, or 15], Craftiness 1-4 [5/level], Cultural Familiarity [1/culture] or Cultural Adaptability [10], Dabbler (p. 6) [1], Danger Sense [15], DR 1 or 2 (Limited, Crushing, -40%) [3 or 6], Driver's Reflexes 1-4 [5/level], Enhanced Dodge 1-3 [15/level], Enhanced Parry 1-3 (Bare Hands or One melee weapon) [5/level] or (All) [10/level], Extra Attack 1 [25], Fearlessness [2/level] or Unfazeable [15], Fit [5] or Very Fit [15], Flexibility [5] or Double-Jointed [15], Gizmos [5/gizmo], Gun Perks [1/perk], Gunslinger [25], Hard to Kill [2/level], Hard to Subdue [2/level], High Manual Dexterity 1-4 [5/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Honest Face [1], Intuition [15], Language Talent [10], Languages (any) [2-6/language], Night Vision 1-9 [1/level], Perfect Balance [15], Peripheral Vision [15], Rapid Healing [5] or Very Rapid Healing [15], Recovery [10], Sensitive [5] or Empathy [15], Signature Gear [Varies], Smooth Operator 1-3 [15/level], Striking ST 1 or 2 [5 or 10], Trained by a Master (Evasion, -50%) [15] or Trained by a Master [30], Weapon Bond [1], Weapon Master (Weapon of choice or All weapons) [20 or 45], or Zeroed [10].

Disadvantages: -25 points chosen from among Chummy [-5]† or Gregarious [-10]†, Code of Honor ("Stay bought") [-5] or (Soldier's) [-10]‡, Compulsive Behavior (Thrill-seeking) [-5*], Duty (Agency, mob, service, or similar; Extremely Hazardous; 9, 12, or 15 or less) [-10, -15, or -20], Fanaticism (Employer, nation, or service) [-15]‡, Greed [-15*]‡, Honesty [-10*]‡, Intolerance (Rival nation or other large group) [-5], Loner [-5*]†, Obsession (With a particular case, criminal score, rival, target, etc.) [-5*], Secret (any) [-5 to -20]‡, Sense of Duty (Team) [-5] or (Nation) [-10]‡, or Social Stigma (Criminal Record) [-5]‡. ● Another -25 points chosen from among those traits or Alcoholism [-15], Bad Temper [-10*], Bloodlust [-10*], Callous [-5], Charitable [-15*], Compulsive Carousing [-5*], Curious [-5*], Delusions (any minor) [-5], Guilt Complex [-5], Impulsiveness [-10*], Insomniac [-10 or -15], Jealousy [-10], Lecherousness [-15*], Nightmares [-5*], No Sense of Humor [-10], Odious Personal Habits [-5 to -15], On the Edge [-15*], Overconfidence [-5*], Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10], Paranoia [-10], Selfish or Selfless [-5*], Stubbornness [-5], Trademark [-5 to -15], Trickster [-15*], Truthfulness [-5*], Vows (any) [-5 to -15], or Workaholic [-5].

New Advantage: Jack of All Trades

10 points/level

This “Talent” works differently from most. You have no bonus at all on skills you *know*, but when you roll at default for any skill that permits such a roll, add your Talent (maximum *three* levels – not four) to your effective level! This doesn’t make it any cheaper or faster to learn skills, or give any kind of reaction bonus.

Attributes: DX +1 to +3 (Only for defaults, -80%) [4/level]; IQ +1 to +3 (Only for defaults, -80%) [4/level]; HT +1 to +3 (Only for defaults, -80%) [2/level].

New Perk: Dabbler

You know a little about a set of *related* skills – but not enough to have a full point in any of them. Select eight skills (which *must* have defaults) that you can use at +1 to the usual attribute default. You can trade in two choices for one at default+2, or four choices for one at default+3.

Example: Dirk Steel, a police detective with the law enforcement lens and the investigator template, has dealt with terrorists enough to know about WMDs and booby traps. He dabbles in Explosives (EOD), Hazardous Materials (Chemical), NBC Suit, and Traps. He trades his eight skills at default+1 for four at default+2, and uses Explosives, Hazardous Materials, and Traps at IQ-3 instead of at IQ-5, and NBC Suit at DX-3 rather than at DX-5.

These skills are still considered defaults, not studied. You *can't* default other skills to your improved defaults and *don't* benefit from rules that apply to people who “know” a skill.

Alone or combined with Jack of All Trades (above), Dabbler cannot improve a skill to the level that one or more points would buy. Maximum default level is one lower than the one-point level.

Primary Skills: Acrobatics (H) DX-1 [2]-14; Computer Operation (E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Driving (Automobile, Heavy Wheeled, or Motorcycle) (A) DX [2]-15; Fast-Draw (Ammo, Knife, or Pistol) (E) DX [1]-15; Forced Entry (E) DX [1]-15; Guns (Pistol) (E) DX+2 [4]-17; Holdout (A) IQ+1 [4]-14; Jumping (E) DX [1]-15; Knife (E) DX [1]-15; Stealth (A) DX [2]-15; and Tactics (H) IQ-1 [2]-12. • *One* of Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-17, Boxing (A) DX+1 [4]-16, or Karate (H) DX [4]-15. • *Either* Wrestling (A) DX+1 [4]-16 or Judo (A) DX [4]-15. • *Three* 10-point specialty packages (pick the same one multiple times for added competence)§:

Armed Melee: 10 points chosen from among Axe/Mace, Broadsword, Cloak, Jitte/Sai, Main-Gauche, Parry Missile Weapons, Rapier, Saber, Shortsword, Smallsword, Spear, Staff, Tonfa, Two-Handed Sword, or Whip, all (A) DX [2]-15 or DX+1 [4]-16; Flail, Kusari, or Two-Handed Flail, all (H) DX-1 [2]-14 or DX [4]-15; and *armed* or *unarmed* perks or techniques from **Furious Fists**, pp. 15-19.

Assassination: Camouflage (E) IQ [1]-13; Poisons (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; and Shadowing (A) IQ [2]-13. • 2 points to improve Stealth to (A) DX+1 [4]-16. • *Three* of Guns (Rifle, Shotgun, or Submachine Gun; default from Pistol) (E) DX+1 [1]-16; or Crossbow, Garrote, or Liquid Projector (Squirt Gun), all (E) DX [1]-15.

Cleaning: Camouflage (E) IQ [1]-13; Chemistry (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Forensics (H) IQ [4]-13; Housekeeping (E) IQ [1]-13; and Smuggling (A) IQ [2]-13.

Demolitions: Engineer (Combat) (H) IQ [4]-13. • Any *three* of Explosives (Demolition, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Fireworks, Nuclear Ordnance Disposal, or Underwater Demolition) or Traps, both (A) IQ [2]-13.

Electronics: Five of Electrician, Electronics Operation (any), Electronics Repair (any), Photography, or Traps, all (A) IQ [2]-13. • Add Circuit Sense 1-4 [5/level] to advantage options.

Firearms: Armoury (Heavy Weapons or Small Arms) (A) IQ-1 [1]-12. • *One* of Guns (Light Machine Gun, Rifle, Shotgun, or Submachine Gun; default from Pistol) (E) DX+2 [3]-17. • *Six* of Guns (Light Machine Gun, Rifle, Shotgun, or Submachine Gun; default from Pistol) (E) DX+1 [1]-16; or Fast-Draw (Ammo, Long Arm, or Pistol), Gunner (any), Guns (Grenade Launcher or LAW), or Liquid Projector (Flamethrower or Sprayer), all (E) DX [1]-15.

Hacking: Computer Hacking (VH) IQ-1 [4]-12; Computer Programming (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Cryptography (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; and Expert Skill (Computer Security) (H) IQ-1 [2]-12. • Add Born to Be Wired 1-4 [5/level] to advantage options.

Infiltration: Climbing (A) DX [2]-15; Electronics Operation (Security) (A) IQ [2]-13; Escape (H) DX-1 [2]-14; Lockpicking (A) IQ [2]-13; and Traps (A) IQ [2]-13.

Investigation: Intelligence Analysis (H) IQ [4]-13; Criminology (A) IQ [2]-13; Interrogation (A) IQ [2]-13; and Search (A) Per [2]-14.

Medical: Diagnosis (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Pharmacy (Synthetic) (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Physician (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; and Surgery (VH) IQ-1 [4]-12. • Add Healer 1-4 [10/level] to advantage options.

Ninja: Four of Fast-Draw (any), Garrote, or Thrown Weapon (Knife or Shuriken), all (E) DX+1 [2]-16; Axe/Mace, Broadsword, Jitte/Sai, Shortsword, Spear, Staff, Throwing, or Tonfa, all (A) DX [2]-15; Blowpipe, Flail, or Kusari, all (H) DX-1 [2]-14; Poisons (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; or 2 points to raise one of those skills by one level. • 2 points to raise Stealth to (A) DX+1 [4]-16.

Parkour: Climbing (A) DX [2]-15 and Running (A) HT [2]-13. • 6 points spent to raise Acrobatics by one level [2], to improve Jumping by one level [1], and/or to acquire *unarmed* perks or techniques from **Furious Fists**, pp. 15-19.

Social: Five of Savoir-Faire (any) (E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Acting, Administration, Disguise, Fast-Talk, Gambling, Interrogation, Leadership, Merchant, Propaganda, or Public Speaking, all (A) IQ [2]-13; Diplomacy, Forgery, or Psychology, all (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Carousing (E) HT+1 [2]-14; Sex Appeal (A) HT [2]-13; Intimidation (A) Will [2]-13; Body Language (A) Per [2]-14; or Detect Lies (H) Per-1 [2]-13.

Unarmed: 10 points spent to raise primary grappling skill (Judo or Wrestling) by one level [4], to improve primary striking skill (Boxing, Brawling, or Karate) by one level [4], and/or to acquire *unarmed* perks or techniques from **Furious Fists**, pp. 15-19.

Vehicles: Three of Boating (any), Driving (any), Piloting (any), or Submarine (any), all (A) DX [2]-15. • *Four of Gunner* (Cannon, Machine Gun, or Rockets) (E) DX [1]-15; or Artillery (Bombs, Guided Missile, or Torpedoes), Electronics Operation (Communications or Sensors), Freight Handling, Mechanic (any), or Navigation (any), all (A) IQ-1 [1]-12. • Add Driver's Reflexes 1-4 [5/level] to advantage options.

Secondary Skills: Ten of Guns (Rifle, Shotgun, or Submachine Gun; default from Pistol) (E) DX+1 [1]-16; Bicycling, Fast-Draw (any), Knot-Tying, or Parachuting, all (E) DX [1]-15; Boating (any), Climbing, Dancing, Driving (any), Filch, NBC Suit, Piloting (any), Shortsword, Staff, Throwing, or Tonfa, all (A) DX-1 [1]-14; Escape, Pickpocket, or Sleight of Hand, all (H) DX-2 [1]-13; Area Knowledge (any), Camouflage, Current Affairs (any), First Aid, Gesture, or Savoir-Faire (any), all (E) IQ [1]-13; Acting, Administration, Architecture, Armoury (any), Cartography, Connoisseur (any), Criminology, Disguise, Electrician, Electronics Operation (any), Electronics Repair (any), Explosives (any), Fast-Talk, Freight Handling, Hazardous Materials (any), Interrogation, Leadership, Lockpicking, Machinist, Mechanic (any), Navigation (any), Photography, Research, Scuba, Shadowing, Smuggling, Speed-Reading, Streetwise, Teaching, Traps, or Writing, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Carousing or Swimming, both (E) HT [1]-13; Hiking, Lifting, or Running, all (A) HT-1 [1]-12; Intimidation (A) Will-1 [1]-12; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-14; Body Language, Lip Reading, Observation, Search, Tracking, or Urban Survival, all (A) Per-1 [1]-13; Detect Lies (H) Per-2 [1]-12; or 1 point to raise one of those skills by one level.

Background Skills: Choose a 20-point lens (*Heroes*, pp. 4-5, and *Furious Fists*, p. 4).

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† Lone heroes usually pick Loner, while buddies have Chummy or Gregarious, but nobody can have more than one of these disadvantages.

‡ Straight shooters motivated by Code of Honor (Soldier's), Fanaticism toward their nation or service, Honesty, and/or Sense of Duty (Nation) rarely suffer from Greed, have antisocial Secrets, or rate Social Stigma (Criminal Record).

§ If packages overlap each other or secondary skills, or if you select the same package twice or more, add points in a given skill. Use points that fall short of buying a full level to customize.

John Steed: Oh, just one thing . . .

Emma Peel: Good luck?

John Steed: Something like that.

– *The Avengers*

Customization Notes

This template is so broad that the only absolutely vital notes have been given already: If you have a buddy, consult with the GM and the other player to decide on a lens, work out who will take what primary skill packages, and come up with different personalities.

For the most part, high attributes and an extensive skill base will ensure that you're always able to act in a situation. Still, it's important to select advantages to benefit your skill choices so that you can do *really* well in a few areas. Some pointers in this regard:

Armed Melee: More ST and DX are always nice, and some of Enhanced Parry, Extra Attack, Striking ST, Weapon Bond, and Weapon Master are a good idea.

Assassination: Craftiness above all else! Honest Face, Night Vision, and Zeroed also suit the shadowy stalker.

Cleaning: Given how icky the job can be, don't overlook Unfazeable. Otherwise, the notes on assassination apply here, too.

Demolitions: Luck is vital around things that go "Boom!" Also remember that this is a technical field, and thus benefits from high IQ – and often High Manual Dexterity.

Electronics: The recommended Circuit Sense is a must, along with extra IQ if you can afford it. Gizmos also fit the role – but pick Serendipity if you prefer to find gear.

Firearms: Gunslinger and Gun Perks come first. Then look into more DX if you can find the points, or perhaps Enhanced Dodge for ducking return fire.

Hacking: This is a rare area of knowledge for all-around action heroes, but those who bother with it always seem to have Born to Be Wired and an impressive IQ.

Infiltration: Flexibility and Perfect Balance give big bonuses, and more DX is always good. Also consider Catfall, Craftiness, and Daredevil.

Investigation: Intuition and Serendipity can make high skill levels unnecessary. Good Per and Acute Senses are valuable for spotting clues.

Medical: A rare focus for action heroes, so do it right if you're going to do it at all – get Healer if your other areas are physical, IQ if they're cerebral. Buddy Bond is great, too.

Ninja: Get Weapon Master if you can manage the expense. Good ST and DX never hurt, Craftiness is very suitable, and odd Gizmos and Signature Gear are classics.

Parkour: Shortlist either Perfect Balance or Trained by a Master (Evasion), but try to save some points for Catfall, higher DX, or additional Basic Move.

Social: Smooth Operator is hugely useful, but then so are Appearance and Charisma. Great pretenders will want Jack of All Trades or Wild Talent, too.

Unarmed: Fisticuffs need ST and DX, ultimately – but if you want to shine, try to set aside points for Extra Attack, Enhanced Dodge, or Trained by a Master.

Vehicles: Driver's Reflexes help all action heroes, but especially the vehicles expert. High DX and Jack of All Trades can help you drive *anything* moderately well.

Consider choosing complementary primary skill packages, especially ones that enjoy a boost from the same attributes and advantages. For instance, armed melee, ninja, and unarmed mesh well together – but ninja goes with assassination and infiltration, too, and infiltration is in turn a natural partner for Parkour. Technical fields such as demolitions, explosives, and hacking can make high IQ a wonderful investment. Investigation and social knowledge have a synergy, too. Still, there's nothing wrong with favoring a *theme* instead; e.g., a com-mando who boasts the military lens and competence at demolitions, firearms, and infiltration.

THE SPECIALIST

A campaign for one 350-point specialist.

When it comes to lone-hero stories, one common approach focuses on a single variety of action at which the star is an expert. Such a campaign calls for a single PC built using one of the stock templates in *Heroes* or *Furious Fists*. For instance, Frank Martin from *The Transporter* is a wheel man (*Heroes*, p. 14) who put his 30 discretionary advantage points in ST +1 [10] and DX +1 [20]; greatly emphasized Driving (Automobile), Freight Handling, and Navigation (Land); selected the military lens (*Heroes*, p. 5) and used it to acquire Guns, Scuba, Swimming, and Tactics; and used his quirks to afford higher Judo and Karate.

This sort of gaming is like *The Odd Couple* (p. 4) with a single hero. The GM has to look at *Making Everybody Useful* (*Exploits*, p. 47) and narrow the action to just the sort of stuff that suits the star. That's how the movies work: the expert wheel man drives, the kung fu master kicks people, and the spunky geek saves the day with technology. Thus, the GM can chuck some serious BAD at the PC . . . in one specific area. Other challenges rarely appear, and when they do, there's usually an NPC around to handle them.

Still, there's just *one* hero, and while the GM can arrange for overconfident villains to capture rather than kill him, or have passing paramedics find him unconscious and save his life, such devices can only go so far. Some extra grit is required to avoid a short-lived campaign. The GM should consider adding the following 100-point lens.

True Grit

+100 points

You're a cinematic survivor! By using Ridiculous Luck to get regular rerolls, you're able to avoid most disasters. When fortune fails you, you're still tougher and/or cannier than most. And as a last resort you have an Extra Life, representing whatever improbable coincidence you wish. If you use this up, you can replace it by spending 25 earned points – but you can have only one Extra Life at a time.

If the GM wants to tone this down a little, he might offer a 50-point lens that has no required traits but that allows the player to select freely from among anything on the 100-point lens. Extra Life should remain on the menu. While it's totally over the top, so are lone action heroes!

Required Traits: Extra Life [25] and improve Luck to Ridiculous Luck [60] for 45 points.

Optional Traits: 30 points chosen from among HT +1 to +3 [10/level], HP up to 1.5 × ST [2/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Danger Sense [15], Daredevil [15], Enhanced Dodge 1 or 2 [15 or 30], Hard to Kill [2/level], Hard to Subdue [2/level],

Rapid Healing [5] or Very Rapid Healing [15], Recovery [10], or Serendipity 1 or 2 [15 or 30].

AN ARMY OF ONE

A campaign for one 450-point generalist.

The *ne plus ultra* of lone-hero campaigns pits a single *generalist* against all comers, in the spirit of James Bond and similar omniscient action demigods. The ultimate action hero template (pp. 5-7) offers a good starting place but doesn't go far enough. The GM should consider going all the way to 450 points by adding the 100-point lens below.

Running such a campaign requires the GM to follow almost all of the advice given so far for low-headcount campaigns. First, he needs to pore over *Making Everybody Useful* (*Exploits*, p. 47) and make sure that the challenges suit the hero's skills. Next, he must set BAD so that the PC has a chance of success with those skills. As before, compare the character's odds to those of dedicated specialists – but this time note that there will be no partner around to cover gaps in competence, or to give a bonus through complementary skill rolls or Buddy Bond. Finally, the GM still needs to have friendly NPCs waiting in the wings (Bond always had plenty of those) for times when the plot *can't* progress without involving skills the loner simply doesn't have.

Action Demigod

+100 points

Advantages: Extra Life [25]. • Another 45 points in any of DX or IQ +1 or +2 [20 or 40], HT +1 to +4 [10/level], HP up to 1.5 × ST [2/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Dabbler (p. 6) [1], Danger Sense [15], Daredevil [15], Enhanced Dodge 1-3 [15/level], Hard to Kill [2/level], Hard to Subdue [2/level], Jack of All Trades 1-3 (p. 6) [10/level], Rapid Healing [5] or Very Rapid Healing [15], Recovery [10], Serendipity 1-3 [15/level], Wild Talent 1 or 2 [20 or 40], or improve Luck to Extraordinary Luck [30] for 15 points or Ridiculous Luck [60] for 45 points.

Skills: Three *additional* 10-point primary skill packages.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean “Dr. Kromm” Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985, ended up the *GURPS* Line Editor in 1995, and has engineered rules for almost every *GURPS* product since. He developed, edited, or wrote dozens of *GURPS Third Edition* projects between 1995 and 2002. In 2004, he produced the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition* with David Pulver. . . and the list keeps growing. He lives in Montréal, Québec with his wife.

Those of you lucky enough to have your lives, take them with you. However, leave the limbs you've lost. They belong to me now.

– The Bride, in Kill Bill, Volume 1

EXTENDED ACTION!

MOVING FAST INTO NEW REALMS

BY PHIL MASTERS

GURPS Action is mostly about modern-day adventuring. It's about spies and soldiers, cops and criminals, campaign shoot-outs and car chases in a present-day and largely urban world. However, the basic concept behind it – the action movie – has never been quite that specific. Historical and futuristic-science-fiction action movies are hardly rare. While some of their furniture and vocabulary is a little different from that of the contemporary shoot-out/heist movie, some of it is very similar, and adventures in such settings can draw on *Action* for a lot of ideas.

Two previous *Pyramid* installments have exploited this principle for specific settings. *Pulp Action!* in *Pyramid* #3/8: *Cliffhangers* dealt with using the *Action* supplements for games set in the “pulp” inter-war period. *Transhuman Action!* in *Pyramid* #3/15: *Transhuman Space* discussed running *Action*-style games in the future world of *Transhuman Space*. With these adaptations as inspiration, the essence of *Action* can be brought to many other campaigns.

OFFBEAT ACTION

It's perfectly possible to play with *Action* ideas in slightly different settings or styles of story. The modern action movie borders on comedy at one edge (with its over-the-top combat, heroes who are prone to snappy one-liners, and actors who are aware of their own ludicrousness); on gritty realistic police, spy, or war thrillers at another (how good can a realistic spy or cop or soldier be at his job before he becomes an *Action* hero?); and on the martial-arts genre at a third. Make the heroes young enough and the action mostly non-lethal, and you can target the story at younger audiences. Make the combat scenes short and brutal, and the heroes and villains self-aware or just a little insane, and you've got more of a dark mood piece.

In game terms, this sort of thing can partly be reflected by the point level of the characters and how many optional cinematic rules are in effect. It's mostly how the GM runs things

and how the players depict their characters. As ever, it may be important to get some kind of agreement within the group as to how the game should feel before play begins, to avoid clashes of expectations.

A Little Bit of Action

An alternative approach is to start with another model, and add snippets of *Action* thinking. For example, Hong Kong historical-martial-arts movies are often primarily about detailed martial-arts action, exotic powers, or historical or quasi-historical settings. A game that sets out to emulate those needs to start with *GURPS Martial Arts*, possibly *GURPS Powers*, and some historical reference books (such as *GURPS China*). Then the GM can throw in *Action* ideas such as Basic Abstract Difficulty (*GURPS Action 2: Exploits*, pp. 4-5) to speed up and simplify some parts of the game, particularly non-combat scenes or scenes that only involve combat with disposable mooks.

HISTORICAL ACTION

Hollywood and Hong Kong alike have long traditions of historical action storytelling – indeed, the historical swash-buckler (and its later-period counterpart, the Western) were arguably the default form for high-action movies for much of the history of cinema. Meanwhile, contemporary adventure stories tended to a darker, slower-moving style of mystery and suspense, or to moody war narratives, with only short bursts of very deadly violence in either.

The historical swashbuckler/adventure movie has its own conventions, many of them best reflected by cinematic rules from *GURPS Martial Arts*. It was also rarely quite as loud and frantic as the modern action movie. Nevertheless, *Action* ideas can be relevant for replicating some areas.

Obviously, the GM first needs to adapt *Action* lenses and templates for historical games by adjusting the weapon and technical skills, and determining which templates are inappropriate, because they're built round modern technology. For example, the universal Computer Operation skill on the templates will certainly need replacing; Survival or Naturalist are good alternatives in wilderness-oriented games, or consider Heraldry in early period military campaigns. Additionally, Gunslinger may need replacing with Trained by a Master or Weapon Master.

Other things aspects also need attention. In particular, as you go back into the past, firearms become less significant and then disappear, and muscle-powered weapons replace them. Hence, ST becomes much more important. Many of the stars of modern-day action movies are wiry and tough rather than massively muscled (though, yes, there are plenty of exceptions!). As they mostly use guns and a bit of fancy martial-arts skill in fights, raw strength is less important to them than speed and agility. The sword-swinging historical hero, in contrast, can always use a bit more strength (though extreme muscle mass is still largely the preserve of the party's designated big guy, or NPC brutes). He may also benefit more from high HT and FP than his modern counterpart.

For some settings, it may more expedient to adapt templates from *GURPS Action 3: Furious Fists*, with its emphasis on

melee skills, rather than those from *GURPS Action 1: Heroes*, or just use templates from other sources with a few *Action*-style features added (such as lots of luck-related advantages). The GM of such a campaigns can certainly always look to *Exploits* for tricks to use, including BAD, social engineering, simplified range, etc.

FUTURISTIC ACTION

Action-adventure science-fiction movies have been around since the era of Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon, and the "SF horror" and "alien invasion" subgenres always had their share of action. Nonetheless, sci-fi films presented a problem for high-action storytelling for most of their history – they could all too easily look a bit goofy. Rubber monster suits and weird ray guns made of random bits of plastic were all too likely to distract from the exciting stuff.

That changed around the late 1970s, mostly because the special effects got so much better. The first *Star Wars* movie marks the moment of transformation. Over the next couple of decades, the action movie and the big-budget science-fiction movie evolved in parallel. A significant minority of modern action movies have some kind of SF component, with things like the *Matrix* series using this as an excuse to drop almost all pretensions to physical realism.

Chases With Horses

One rule from *Action* that's useful in all sorts of action-adventure games is the system for chases (*Exploits*, pp. 31-35). However, in a low-tech fantasy or historical game, a chase is less likely to involve cars and motorboats than horses, coaches, or chariots – which mostly means that the applicable skill for Chase Rolls will often be Riding or Teamster. A mule, slow coach, or heavily laden horse gives a speed bonus of +3, most horses, chariots, and light coaches give +4, and a good, lightly laden cavalry horse (or a swashbuckling hero's super personal mount) *might* give +5.

If a horse lacks a saddle or other necessary riding gear, Riding skill takes a -3 penalty. When a Dodge is required for a ridden horse, use the animal's own Dodge, with encumbrance penalties. Treat ridden horses as the same as being on foot for the purposes of determining the nature of a wipeout; vehicles follow the standard SR-based rules. Also, a few notes apply to specific chase maneuvers.

Attack: Characters on horseback use the *lower* of their weapon or Riding skills for this, as per p. B397.

Disembark/Embark: Mostly, horses and horse-drawn vehicles require Disembark/Embark maneuvers. If a horse is standing around ready for use and *untethered*, a character can jump straight on with an Acrobatics roll, and then make a Riding roll to perform an immediate Move maneuver. Failure on either converts this to an Embark maneuver; critical failure on either means falling off the horse and taking 1d-1 cr damage. Likewise, dismounting and performing an immediate Attack, Move, or Move and Attack on foot is also possible, but requires an Acrobatics-2 roll

and leaves the horse to act as it likes. Failure makes this a normal Disembark; critical failure makes it a fall as above.

Force: Ridden horses don't like barging into other horses at speed, let alone vehicles; Riding rolls to hit with a Force maneuver are at -1 if the target is on foot, -2 if it's another horse, and -4 if it's a vehicle. Horse-drawn vehicles can be forced off the road like motor vehicles, but ridden horses may be harder; they'll actively seek to avoid being pushed into rocks, over cliffs, etc., giving an extra +2 to Riding rolls to resist. Forcing ridden horses off road onto adjacent flat terrain may just slow them down (-1 Speed Bonus). If the attacker fails the roll to hit with a horse-drawn vehicle, *the attacker* suffers a wipeout, as for a Ram.

Hide: When riding an animal, the Chase Roll to hide is against the worse of Riding or Stealth. This maneuver requires really favorable conditions to pull off in a horse-drawn vehicle; if the GM permits it at all, roll against the worse of Teamster or Stealth.

Move and Attack: Characters on horseback use the *lower* of their weapon or Riding skills for this, as per p. B397. Melee weapons can be used at Close range, as can lances; Lance skill is *not* limited by lower Riding skill! War-trained horses can also attack opponents at Close range whose last maneuver was static, but any attacks made by their riders on the same round are at an additional -2.

Ram: Horses won't generally run straight into opponents – they value their safety too much. However, war-trained horses will run down fleeing opponents on foot (treat as a Ram), and some horse-drawn vehicles (especially chariots) *might* be used to Ram at the GM's option, with an *additional* -2 to the Chase Roll.

However, sci-fi action movies tend to be relatively light on the science concepts; heroes may wield blasters rather than contemporary firearms, but they seem to work much the same way. After all, the point of an action movie is the action; too many complex technicalities often just slow things down. One big idea sets up the movie (it's set on another planet/in virtual reality/in a future of advanced genetic engineering), but things function in a familiar way at the detail level. This, of course, makes it easy to use **Action** material more or less without any adjustments. If guns from **GURPS Ultra-Tech** are a bit too powerful for comfort, the GM can use **GURPS High-Tech**

weapon stats with different names and flavor text, or encourage the PCs to balance **Ultra-Tech** firearms with advanced body armor from the same source.

As in historical games, the GM may need to adjust the weapon and technical skills in lenses and templates, although this will usually be easier – some simple search-and-replace processes, changing (say) “Guns” to “Beam Weapons,” will usually do a lot of basic changes, unless some of the heroes insist on eccentricities like force swords. Vehicle skills too will need changing and expanding; the wheel man can easily become the ace space pilot!

CHARACTER VARIATIONS

The material on character creation in **Heroes** can be used in most variant-setting games, with a bit of commonsense tweaking as discussed above. The following lenses and template add more flexibility.

Walt: You know, some people say that he talks to the animals. The aborigines call him Jabba-Jahda-Ah-Der-Ahd, which means The Crocodile Who Walks Like a Man.

Rico: If what you say is true, it's lucky we brought the Kryptonite.

– **Crocodile Dundee II**

NEW LENSES

These fit best in games that resemble slightly variant sorts of action movie.

Backwoodsman

+20 points

You're a hero from a less urban background than most **Action** stars. You live off in the wilds somewhere (or at least you did until recently), and you have the skills and knowledge to survive there. In “period” games, you may simply be one of those tough pioneer types, perhaps even someone who's seen as a bit of a barbarian by city folks, or a military scout who focuses on the scouting part and doesn't bother much with military etiquette. In a modern-day game, you might be a deep-dyed survivalist who's been training himself for years to thrive without the support of civilization, or simply an exceptionally competent hunter or wilderness guide – there are still places where such people are needed, after all. In some games,

you might even be some kind of “jungle lord” type, maybe even raised by great apes. In a wartime setting, you may be a resistance fighter, guerrilla, or other insurgent, taking hit-and-run actions from the woods or mountains.

This lens fits best with straightforward “fighter” templates such as the assassin or shooter, or those in **Furious Fists**; hunting to live is as good a justification for exceptional shooting and stealth skills as most. A cleaner, hacker, or wire rat would have to have been trained in more civilized parts, and will be markedly less well equipped to survive in the wilds, although excuses could be found even there. Maybe you annoyed the wrong people on some past job, and have spent the last few years hiding in deep (green) cover. In a post-catastrophe game, *everyone* may have had to learn wilderness skills. Examples of effective backwoodsman characters in modern-day movies range from likeable rustics (the *Crocodile Dundee* series) to the scary-serious (*Hanna*).

Skills: Naturalist (H) IQ [4]; Navigation (Land) (A) IQ [2]; Survival (home area terrain) (A) Per+1 [4]. ● Another 10 points chosen from Jumping, Knot-Tying, Knife, or Leatherworking, all (E) DX+1 [2]; Bow, Climbing, Riding (Horse), Spear, Staff, Stealth, or Throwing, all (A) DX [2]; Area Knowledge (home area), First Aid, or Camouflage, all (E) IQ+1 [2]; Animal Handling (any), Armoury/TL0 (Melee or Missile Weapons), Falconry, Farming, Packing, or Traps, all (A) IQ [2]; Swimming (E) HT+1 [2]; Hiking or Running, both (A) HT [2]; Skiing (H) HT-1 [2]; Fishing (E) Per+1 [2]; or Survival (other terrain types) or Tracking, both (A) Per [2].

Advantages: A backwoodsman may shift some of his template's optional advantage points to buy Animal Empathy [5], levels of Outdoorsman [10/level], or the Good with (Animal) perk from **GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks**. If you take Animal Empathy, you could also take the Call of the Wild perk, also from **Power-Ups 2**.

Social Traits: Backwoodsmen may have been recruited to some organization, from a national agency or army to a resistance cell. In this case, they *must* take their template's Duty, and may have some level of an appropriate Rank. Others get into adventures for reasons of personal loyalty or to pursue personal objectives. If the GM agrees this fits the campaign, shift some of their template optional disadvantage points to an Obsession, Sense of Duty, or Vow. Others are hiding in the backwoods from old foes; with a suitable backstory that fits the campaign, use some optional disadvantage points on Enemies.

Kid

+20 points

You're a hero for a slightly goofier sort of action movie – or perhaps a really dark and gritty one, such as a post-catastrophe story in which everyone has to develop exceptional skills or die. You're very young, and hence not as physically impressive as most heroes. You make up for that with youthful courage and quickness, unexpected cleverness, a double dose of luck, and possibly disarming cuteness. In a historical game, you may come from a frontier region or marginal subculture where even the youngsters can and often *have to* pick up a bunch of skills.

Your abilities are unrealistic for a typical kid. Of course, you're an action-movie child.

Add this lens to a template from *Furious Fists* for a quintessential “scrappy kid,” or to the hacker or wire rat for a cinematic “kid that we have to have along because he has natural talents that no adult can match.” A kid-assassin or kid-shooter usually comes out more than a little creepy – kids can learn how to shoot, certainly, but killing people with any enthusiasm makes them rather scary. However, a kid-investigator can have a classic “young detective” image.

Attributes: ST-3 [-30]; DX+1 [20].

Advantages: One of Daredevil [15], Enhanced Dodge [15], Intuition [15], Serendipity [15], or change your template's Luck [15] to Extraordinary Luck [30]. • Spend 15 more points on any of +1 ST [10], Allies (usually in the form of parents, “the gang,” etc.) [Varies], Pitiable [5], Social Chameleon [5], or any Talent that features in your template.

Disadvantages: Add Social Stigma (Minor) [-5]. • Add any one of Gullibility (15) [-5], Impulsiveness (15) [-5], Oblivious [-5], Odious Personal Habit (Talks too much) [-5], Sense of Duty (Close Family) [-5], or Skinny [-5]. • Younger children may have SM -1 as a feature.

Skills: Area Knowledge (home neighborhood) (E) IQ+1 [2]; Throwing (A) DX [2]. • Another 6 points chosen from Bicycling or Knot-Tying, both (E) DX+1 [2]; Boating (Sailboat or Unpowered) or Filch, both (A) DX [2]; Blowpipe (H) DX-1 [2]; Computer Operation or Current Affairs (Popular Culture or Sports), both (E) IQ+1 [2]; Fast-Talk (A) IQ [2]; or +1 to any lens skill [2].

Social Traits: Kids can shift some points from template social advantages to buy more or better Allies (see above). Few kids have significant levels of Wealth (even if their families are rich, they may not have access to those funds), and Rank is highly unlikely, even if all the adults in the party have it.

Become a scrappy kid, young detective, or creepy shooter.

Masked Avenger

+20 points

You're a suitable hero for an action movie that tips toward the superhero genre – but doesn't quite fall into it, because you don't have superpowers as such, any martial-arts abilities you possess are relatively mundane, and you don't have many

hang-ups about employing guns. However, not only are you as good at what you do as any other action-movie hero, you're even more motivated than most, and you maintain a secret identity, wearing at least a mask and possibly a full costume when “working.”

You may fight for justice, though you probably bend a lot of laws for the greater good, or – not being bound by the strict morality of the classic four-color superhero – you may be on a more personal quest for revenge. You may even be a dashing, hopefully honorable thief, and enjoy dividing your time between a respectable life and high-profile, high-profit crimes, wearing a mask for the latter purpose so that you can laugh at security cameras and not worry so much about the occasional encounter with human guards.

Pulp Action! in *Pyramid* #3/8 discussed masked vigilantes in the pulp era, which is certainly one natural home for them, and focused especially on the use of the assassin template to represent the type. However, masked heroes such as Zorro, the Scarecrow, and the Lone Ranger crop up throughout history-as-seen-in-the-movies, and there are occasional modern-day versions. Their exact skills sets can vary quite widely.

The lens fits best with combat or infiltration templates such as the assassin, infiltrator, or shooter, or the various types in *Furious Fists*. Wearing a mask seems rather silly if you do your work while sitting at a computer terminal, and a masked face man would be very strange. However, a multi-skilled team of undercover heroes might insist on masks all round, and even social operators might be able to work with cinematic “perfect disguise” fake-flesh masks.

Advantages: Masked avengers can always spend optional advantage points on Alternate Identity [5 or 15], Higher Purpose (“Defend the Innocent” or some mission of vengeance) [5], or Zeroed [10], whether or not those are part of their template. They can also spend option points on Wealth – they are often self-funding – or Signature Gear.

Disadvantages: Masked avengers can and *must* get some of their optional disadvantage points from a Secret Identity. In addition, they can add the following to their optional disadvantages lists: Charitable [-15*], Fanaticism (Protect the good and oppose evil) [-15], Intolerance (usually of criminals) [-5], Obsession (Fighting crime) [-10], Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10], Selfless [-5*], Sense of Duty (Law-Abiding Citizens) [-10], Trademark [Varies], Trickster [-15*], or Vow (Never let the world know about your adventuring) [-5]. In fact, most should have at least one of these, to help explain why they go out in a mask getting into fights.

Skills: Spend 20 points on improving combat skills, Criminology, Driving, Forensics, or Stealth if those are available from your template, acquiring a fighting style from *GURPS Martial Arts* or *GURPS Gun Fu*, buying Area Knowledge (your home city) at some level, or acquiring extra advantages from those discussed above.

Social Traits: Masked avengers will only have a Duty or Rank in the unlikely event that they are members of a whole secret organization of masked agents – or if they are somehow maintaining “day job” cover identities as members of official, hierarchical organizations, which is likely to be very difficult in practice. They can only have Legal Enforcement Powers if that fits with such a cover identity, and then can only use those powers when *not* in their masks. On the other hand, they may well have Reputations, positive or negative, as scourges of the underworld or dangerous masked maniacs.

NEW TEMPLATE: HORSEMAN

250 points

There was one time in New Mexico, was being pursued by seven men. I turned Bo around and taken them reins in my teeth and rode right at them boys firing them two navy sixes I carry on my saddle. Well, I guess they was all married men who loved their families as they scattered and run for home.

– “Rooster” Cogburn, *True Grit*

In worlds where warriors, wanderers, and the rich travel on horseback, some people specialize in fighting that way – and you’re one of the best. You are really good with horses – riding them, of course, but also getting them to do what you want, and looking after them. Just as importantly, you can handle weapons appropriate to that situation. You can fight on foot, of course, and you know how to operate in rough country.

Because of all that, you’re a useful messenger, scout, or explorer, sharp-eyed and alert. Your horse may carry you into trouble, so it helps to know when to turn and ride hard out of there – and get home with word of what you saw.

This template mostly suits historical campaigns, as heroes have been riding into action for thousands of years, but don’t do so very often today – but a campaign doesn’t have to go very far back in time to justify using it. Even the most sophisticated armies were still training cavalry for battle up to around the First World War (although by then, they were *mostly* expected to function as mounted infantry and scouts – the idea of cavalry charges against entrenched modern firepower was pretty obviously stupid). Even in the Pulp Era of the 1930s, cowboy heroes were still regarded as potentially contemporary figures – after all, horses were still in plentiful use on ranches “out west.”

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 15 [100]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 12 [20].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 15 [15]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 7.00 [5]; Basic Move 6 [-5].

Advantages: Animal Friend 2 [10]; Good with Horses† [1]; and Luck [15]. • A further 30 points chosen from among lens advantages, ST +1 to +3 [10/level], DX +1 [20], IQ +1 [20], HT +1 to +3 [10/level], HP +1 to +3 [2/level], Will +1 to +3 [5/level], Per +1 to +3 [5/level], FP +1 to +4 [3/level], Basic Speed +1.00 [20], Absolute Direction [5], Acute Senses [2/level], Alcohol Tolerance [1], Combat Reflexes [15], Danger Sense [15], Daredevil [15], Fearlessness [2/level], Fit [5] or Very Fit [15], Gun Perks [1/perk], Gunslinger [15], Hard to Kill [2/level], Hard to Subdue [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Higher Purpose (Get the Message Through or Keep the General Informed) [5], Night Vision 1-6 [1/level], Outdoorsman 1-4 [10/level], Peripheral Vision [15], Rapid Healing [5] or Very Rapid Healing [15], Serendipity 1 or 2 [15/level], Signature Gear (Horse and/or arms and armor) [Varies], Weapon Master (Horseman Weapons) [30], additional levels of Animal Friend [5/level], replace Good with Horses [1] with Animal Empathy [5] for 4 points, or replace Luck [15] with Extraordinary Luck [30] for 15 points.

Disadvantages: -20 points chosen from among Code of Honor [-5 to -15], Duty (Agency, gang, service, or similar; Extremely Hazardous; 9, 12, or 15 or less) [-10, -15, or -20]; Fanaticism (Employer, nation, or service) [-15], Greed [-15*], Intolerance (Rival nation, “savages,” or other large group) [-5], Loner [-5*], Phobia (Claustrophobia) [-15*], Secret (Roving

spy) [-10 to -30], or Sense of Duty (Team or nation) [-5 or -10]. • Another -25 points chosen from among the previous traits or Bad Temper [-10*], Bloodlust [-10*], Bow-legged [-1], Callous [-5], Compulsive Carousing [-5*], Easy to Read [-10], Impulsiveness [-10*], Insomniac [-10 or -15], Jealousy [-10], Nightmares [-5*], No Sense of Humor [-10], Oblivious [-5], Odious Personal Habits [-5 to -15], Overconfidence [-5*], Paranoia [-10], Post-Combat Shakes [-5*], Selfish [-5*], Shyness (Mild) [-5], Stubbornness [-5], or Truthfulness [-5*].

Primary Skills: Acrobatics (H) DX-1 [2]-14; Animal Handling (Equines) (A) IQ+2 [2]-14‡; Riding (Horse) (A) DX+2 [2]-17‡. • Spend 12 points on appropriate horseman weapon skills (see below).

Secondary Skills: First Aid (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Naturalist (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Teamster (A) IQ+2 [2]-14‡. • Five of Brawling or Jumping, both (E) DX+1 [2]-16; Lance, Lasso, Stealth, or Whip, all (A) DX [2]-15; Armoury, Cartography, Forward Observer, or Navigation (Land), all (A) IQ [2]-12; Packing (A) IQ+2 [2]-14‡; Tactics (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Veterinary (H) IQ+1 [2]-13‡, Intimidation (A) Will [2]-12; Observation or Tracking, both (A) Per [2]-15; or +1 to Acrobatics, Animal Handling, Riding, or any secondary skill, for 2 points.

Background Skills: Choose a 20-point lens (*Heroes*, pp. 4-5, or pp. 11-12).

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† From *Power-Ups 2*. The same as Animal Empathy, but only works with horses.

‡ Includes +2 for Animal Friend.

John Reid: If we ride together, we ride for justice.

Tonto: Justice is what I seek, Kemosabe.

– *The Lone Ranger*

Horseman Weapons

The template calls for 12 points to be spent on “horseman weapon” skills, which depend heavily on period, location, and character background. The following are some suggested packages – feel free to adjust them to taste, but remember that effective melee or missile weapons skill while on horseback can never exceed Riding skill.

Knight: Axe/Mace (A) DX [2]-15; Broadsword (A) DX+1 [4]-16; Flail (H) DX-1 [2]-14; Lance (A) DX [2]-15; Shield (E) DX+1 [2]-16.

Samurai: Bow (A) DX+1 [4]-16; Broadsword (A) DX+1 [4]-16; Spear (A) DX+1 [4]-16.

TL4 Cavalry/Highwayman: Broadsword (A) DX+1 [4]-16; Fast-Draw (Pistol) (E) DX+1 [2]-16; Fast-Draw (Sword) (E) DX+1 [2]-16; Guns (Pistol) (E) DX+2 [4]-17.

Napoleonic Cavalry: Broadsword (A) DX+2 [8]-17; Guns (Pistol) (E) DX+1 [2]-16; Lance (A) DX [2]-15.

Cowboy: Fast-Draw (Pistol) (E) DX+2 [4]-17; Guns (Pistol) (E) DX+2 [4]-17; Guns (Rifle) (E) DX+1 [1]-16*; Guns (Shotgun) (E) DX+1 [1]-16*; Lasso (A) DX [2]-15.

TL6 Cavalry: Guns (Pistol) (E) DX+2 [2]-17*; Guns (Rifle) (E) DX+3 [8]-18; Spear (A) DX [2]-15.

* Bought up from default from other Guns specialty.

Customization Notes

Details for the horseman vary depending on whether he's a soldier, a mounted frontiersman type, or just someone who's a dashed good rider – and of course, the options also change with technology. If he specializes in fighting, it may be as a missile-armed skirmisher, or sword-wielding heavy cavalry, or mounted infantry, dismounting to hunker down in cover when things get serious. Alternatively, he may be more of an explorer or scout, roaming far and wide, albeit with one eye always out for trouble.

Variations include the following.

Backwoodsman: The mounted pioneer or hunter is a tough or dashing, capable figure, and the two skill selections merge nicely. The only snag may be that the result is a highly focused character, good at wilderness operations but not much else – which is fine in many games. Absolute Direction, Night Vision, and practical skills such as Armoury, Fishing, and Leatherworking can help ensure survival in the most remote areas.

Criminal: The habitually mounted criminal is probably a bandit or outlaw, or maybe a dandy highwayman in some settings – it comes down to much the same things. Contacts and Tracking can help identify victims, and Intimidation can help extract profit from them with minimum risk. This sort of criminal traditionally has a low-end Code of Honor.

Intelligence: Historically, quite a few spies were actually discreet wanderers – “scouts out of uniform,” who covered a lot of ground while looking out for important stuff, perhaps passing as a merchant or trapper. If the area they're scouting is big enough, it may well make sense to do this job from horseback. This is definitely a Secret; good Per, plentiful luck-related

advantages, and Cartography and Observation skills can help make missions successful.

Kid: Probably brought up on a ranch or farm, the youngster with an uncanny talent for horsemanship makes a useful messenger, scout, or guide. With the strength of the horse and his own agility, he can be surprisingly helpful in the fights that he's not supposed to get into. He probably has a strong attachment to his animals, and good rural skills. Navigation, Packing, Stealth, and Tracking may fit well.

Law Enforcement: If bandits, outlaws, and highwaymen are around, it makes sense for the forces of law to be as mobile as they are; mounted police have their place even in modern city settings. In the Old West, he's more likely to be a U.S. Marshal, roaming vast tracts of territory, than a sheriff who looks after one town – but anything is possible. Use Criminology and Streetwise to get on the trail of the bad guys, and Observation and Tracking to stay on it. Danger Sense can be a real life-saver out in the wilds! Modern urban mounted cops mostly focus on traffic management and crowd control (buy Intimidation, which is used very *politely*, and Tactics). However, he can have a range of common police skills from previous or secondary assignments.

Masked Avenger: As Zorro and the Lone Ranger demonstrate, masked heroes can also be fine riders – though arrangements may have to be made for hiding the horse between missions. This is especially true if it's a *special* horse, as is so often the case in stories. That horse may be treated as Signature Gear, or even as an Ally. Really *impressive* levels of Acrobatics and Riding help the image, a martial-arts style can look very cool, and Whip skill is traditional.

Military: Cavalry tend to see themselves as the elite of armies that employ them; their officers especially tend to be notoriously cocky. (In earlier times, of course, knights simply *knew* that they were members of the upper classes.) Impulsiveness and Overconfidence are practically required, hopefully moderated by a Code of Honor. Along with weapons skills, high Will and Tactics skill can fit the style. Effective scouts, meanwhile, should be more subtle. They can use Camouflage and Observation to acquire important information, and Cartography, Forward Observer, and Strategy to make sure that it's used effectively.

Security: Mounted security operatives are outriders for armies or bodyguards for important folk who ride a lot themselves. If they're working for a ruler, that makes them the classic “household cavalry,” with elite status. Elsewhere, they may just look like servants – until they're obliged to demonstrate their skills. They may double as staff officers, aides, and messengers, using Administration, Intelligence Analysis, and Savoir-Faire. In the sort of settings where bodyguards operate as cavalry, the difference between Military Rank and Security Rank may be minimal; the GM should decide which one will be used in the campaign – usually Military Rank.

Wildcard Skill: Horseman!

If you're using the wildcard skills option from *Heroes* (pp. 22-23) in combination with the horseman template, you will of course need the following information.

Horseman! (DX). Replaces Riding (Horse) and the skills for cavalry weapons appropriate to your background and TL (see pp. 13-14 for ideas), but always including Lance. Can also be used in place of Acrobatics when mounting, dismounting, or engaging in “trick riding.” Make an IQ-based roll for Animal Handling (Equines), Packing, and Teamster, and for Veterinary when dealing with equines. If you have Animal Empathy or Good with Horses, you can also make an IQ-based roll in place of Diplomacy or a Will-based roll in place of Intimidation against equines.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phil Masters is a long-time roleplaying game writer, the *Transhuman Space* line editor, and the author or co-author of *GURPS* books from *Arabian Nights* to *Thaumatology*, including the upcoming *Discworld Roleplaying Game, Second Edition*. He's made a few previous appearances in the third incarnation of *Pyramid*, and he had a number of articles in previous versions.

G U R P S[®]

CLIFFHANGERS

SECOND EDITION



NOW ON E23

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

HELL ON WHEELS

BY HANS-CHRISTIAN VORTISCH

The Commando V-100 has been designed and engineered to perform a variety of roles and perform each one well. Whether the use is military, police or rescue, the Commando has proved itself in millions of miles of rugged use.

– Cadillac Gage catalog (1971)

The Cadillac Gage Commando is a four-wheeled armored car that has seen extensive use with dozens of military and police services around the world. It's perfectly suited for **GURPS Action** campaigns, requiring a two-man crew and being able to carry a small team of operatives. It can be deployed by the opposition or relied on by the PCs.

The Commando can also be used in many other campaigns, for example for straight-forward military or police action with **GURPS Cops**, **GURPS SEALs in Vietnam**, **GURPS Special Ops**, or **GURPS SWAT**. An obsolete Commando can play a role in dystopian near-future campaigns based on **GURPS Autoduel**, **GURPS Cyberpunk**, or **GURPS Reign of Steel**. Of course, such a vehicle is also perfect to fight your way through a zombie horde with **GURPS Monster Hunters** or **GURPS Horror** . . .

*I've never crashed
one before.*

– Yates, in *The Last Castle*

CADILLAC GAGE V-100 COMMANDO (USA, 1964-1971)

The V-100 Commando is the first of a series of armored cars built by the Cadillac Gage Company of Detroit. It is a 19' long, four-wheeled, amphibious vehicle with heavily sloped armor. Among the dozens of minor models, the one described here has been the most numerous. It has a small one-man turret and is armed with several machine guns. Crewed by two, it can seat seven passengers.

The V-100 was adopted by the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) in 1964. The U.S. Army introduced it as the XM706 in 1967 and used it heavily in the Vietnam War, primarily for convoy escort and military police duties. In American

service, it was known as the "Duck" or "V." After the war, the U.S. Army Military Police continued to use it stateside during the 1970s, but other than that it was removed from service. Most were destroyed. Some surplus vehicles were cascaded to police departments and sheriff's offices. The Los Angeles Police Department's SWAT platoon (**SWAT**, p. 13) employed two V-100s (with the turret machine gun mounts welded shut) from 1985 to 2003.

As many original users phase these vehicles out of service, they are bought by collectors and often lovingly restored. Roadworthy Commandos in private hands can be encountered in American traffic sometimes – giving both heroes and villains theoretical access. While most collectors – many of them veterans – rebuild them to their former (but unspectacular) glory, others convert them to veritable "Batmobiles," with upgraded engines, modern electronics including thermal sights, etc.

Close to 1,000 were manufactured until 1971, when production switched to the improved V-150 (pp. 17-18). The V-100 is currently used by Bolivia, Lebanon, Thailand, and Venezuela. Former users include Cameroon, Ethiopia, Oman, Somalia, and Sudan. Generally, military police or paramilitary/law enforcement units have these vehicles, rather than front-line military forces.

The V-100 Commando in Detail

The Commando is welded up from multiple plates into a single hull, not unlike a turtle shell. Its high-hardness armor steel is 0.25" thick on the sides, sloped at an average of 30° to increase its protection value. It's 0.25" thick on top and 0.375" on the underbody. The numerous vision blocks are made of 3"-thick armor glass. This armor protects against small-arms fire and hand grenades, but not against heavy machine guns or LAWs. The main weak spots (p. B400) of the Commando are the wheel wells. The T-50 turret has the same armor as the hull.

The V-100 has a 142-kilowatt gasoline engine in a separate engine compartment on the rear left. The engine compartment is fitted with three integral one-shot fire extinguishers (**GURPS High-Tech**, p. 229), which are manually initiated by the driver.

The V-100 has two fuel tanks located in the front left and right corners. These hold 80 gallons of fuel (0.26 tons of gasoline). This gives the vehicle a cruising-speed endurance (p. B463) of 13 hours and 25 minutes. Its Range is 400 miles off road. Two five-gallon fuel cans are normally carried in external racks on the rear. Five gallons increase endurance by 50 minutes and Range by 30 miles.

The maximum loaded weight of the V-100 is 8.2 tons. With a full load of fuel, this leaves two tons of payload, including crew, cargo, and ammunition.

The minimum crew consists of the driver and gunner. The driver sits in the front hull on the left. He needs Driving (Heavy Wheeled). The gunner sits in the turret. He needs Gunner (MG). The V-100 can accommodate seven fully equipped troops, including a "co-driver" to the right of the driver, a radio operator in the rear, and five men sitting on either side of the turret – two per side on a bench facing inward, and one on a seat facing outward. All passengers have seat belts and reasonable vision to all sides through vision blocks (-2 Vision rolls).

The Commando has four-wheel drive, a steering wheel, and a manual transmission; it drives like a truck. The tires are of run-flat construction (*High-Tech*, p. 229). The vehicle is fully amphibious. In water, it's propelled and steered by the wheels. A 50-gallon/minute bilge pump expels any water seeping in through the doors, gun ports, or hatches.

A 10-mile radio is usually installed. It can only be operated from the rear seat. The radio operator needs Electronics Operation (Comm) to operate the equipment.

A two-piece door is in either side, the lower part with integral step folding down to open, the upper part folding to the rear. Another door is installed in the rear to the right of the engine. Furthermore, hatches are in the roof above the driver's, co-driver's, and radio operator's seats, as well as in the top of the MG turret. A total of nine unsealed gun ports (*High-Tech*, p. 228) allow deployment of small arms for suppressive fire. Three are in the left side, four in the right side, one in the front, and one in the rear (including one each in all three doors). Those made prior to 1967 had one more in either side. A vision block is over or near each gun port.

The T-50 turret (*High-Tech*, pp. 228-229) seats the gunner. He has a 1.5x optical sight (+0 Acc) as well as eight vision blocks in the turret for observation all-around. He manually controls the turret rotation and elevation – changing facing takes one Ready maneuver. The guns can be elevated +59°. The V-100 lacks any night-vision equipment.

The turret mounts two linked (*High-Tech*, p. 229) machine guns. A variety of weapons were offered, but the most common installation consisted of twin .30-caliber Browning M37C medium machine guns (p. 19) with 500-round belts. This was mounted in many export vehicles as well as the XM706 used by the U.S. Army. Either one or both guns can be fired. A standard load is ball and tracer mixed 4:1 (*GURPS Tactical Shooting*, p. 31). An additional 8,750 rounds are stowed in 35 cans holding 250 rounds each (the ammunition alone weighs 0.36 tons). In Vietnam, many crews carried additional ammunition; the basic load in some military police units was as high as 22,000 rounds.

In Vietnam, many crews added more weapons – a .50-caliber Browning M2HB heavy machine gun (*High-Tech*, p. 133) on a jury-rigged pintle mount (p. B467) on top of the turret and a Saco M60 general-purpose machine gun (*High-Tech*, p. 134) on a pintle mount at the radio operator's hatch in the rear.

Both can only be used with the hatch open and the gunner exposed. Others experimented with a pintle-mounted GE M134 minigun (*High-Tech*, p. 135) or Honeywell MK 18 MOD 0 mechanical grenade machine gun (*SEALs in Vietnam*, p. 29), but these were rare.

Other turret guns were also installed. In the T-50, one of the M37C machine guns could be replaced with a Browning M2HB heavy machine gun with 200-round belt and five 100-round belts in cans. In fact, this setup was fairly common. An experimental turret mounted a single GE M134 minigun with 3,000-round belt internally. This never entered production.

The V-100 features an integral hydraulic winch (ST 50) in the front hull. This has a 160' steel cable and a capacity of five tons, or twice that with snatch block. The winch is controlled from inside by the driver or co-driver.

Maintaining the Commando requires Armoury (Heavy Weapons) and Mechanic (Heavy Wheeled).

A Survivalist's V-150

If you live in a post-apocalyptic nightmare-future, you might want to get your very own souped-up version of the V-150 Commando.

Ideally, society advanced enough before the fall that you can replace the gasoline engine with an electric engine and a generator from *GURPS Ultra-Tech* (p. 20), such as a TL10 semi-portable fusion reactor. Although the automotive performance would remain the same, the Range effectively becomes infinite.

Make sure all hatches, firing ports, and other openings are sealed (p. B82) against nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. Instead of the Oerlikon KAA, you might want to mount other weapons, such as the Rheinmetall Rh202 (p. 19), which uses NATO-standardized ammunition.

Another handy technological enhancement would be an advanced navigational system (TL7; +3 Navigation), preferably with plenty of maps. Finally, extend the basic load (p. 19) with such things as a pair of AN/PVS-5 early night-vision goggles (*High-Tech*, p. 48), a RIA M21 sniper rifle (*High-Tech*, p. 115), and four MBB Armbrust light antitank weapons (*High-Tech*, p. 139).

CADILLAC GAGE V-150 COMMANDO (USA, 1971-1985)

The V-150 Commando is similar to the V-100, but incorporates minor improvements to the motive system. Dozens of models sporting all sorts of weaponry have been produced. One popular option is a small two-man turret mounting a 20mm autocannon. This version is still in service with the Cameroonian army and Malaysian police. It was used by the Haitian army and Saudi Arabian national guard.

The turret seats the commander on the right side and the gunner on the left side. Either has a hatch in the turret roof and two vision blocks to the side. Both can fire the turret guns, and consequently require Gunner (MG).

The electro-hydraulically powered turret (*High-Tech*, pp. 229-230) mounts a Oerlikon KAA autocannon (p. 18) and a linked FN MAG general-purpose machine gun (*High-Tech*, p. 135).

Cadillac Gage Commando Table

Terms and notation are as defined in *Vehicle Statistics* (pp. B462-463).

DRIVING (HEAVY WHEELED)/TL7

TL	Vehicle	ST/HP	Hnd/SR	HT	Move	LWt.	Load	SM	Occ.	DR	Range	Cost	Loc.	Note
7	Cadillac Gage V-100 Commando	96	+3/5	10f	3/30	8.2	2	+3	2+7	30	500	\$200,000	t4W	[1, 2]
7	Cadillac Gage V-150 Commando	105	+3/5	10f	3/30	10.9	2.4	+3	3+2	30	500	\$300,000	t4W	[1, 2]

Notes

[1] In water, Move is 1/2.

[2] DR 20 on top. The turret has DR 40 on the front, DR 30 on the sides and rear, and DR 20 on top.

Commando Armament Table

Terms and notation are as defined on pp. B268-271.

GUNNER (MACHINE GUN) (DX-4 or other Gunner at -4)

TL	Weapon	Damage	Acc	Range	Weight	RoF	Shots	ST	Bulk	Rcl	Cost	LC
7	Oerlikon KAA, 20×128mm <i>follow-up</i>	7d×3 pi++ 1d+2 [1d] cr ex	5	1,800/7,700	194/177	16	200(60)	26M	-11	2	\$20,000	1
7	Browning M37C, .30-06	7d+1 pi	5	1,100/4,500	41.8/30.6	10!	500(10)	18M	-6	2	\$5,500	1
7	Rheinmetall Rh202, 20×139mm <i>follow-up</i>	7d×3 pi++ 1d+2 [1d] cr ex	5	1,800/7,700	165/183	15	200(60)	25M	-11	2	\$20,000	1

An 8× optical sight (p. B471) gives +3 Acc. The turret requires a Ready maneuver to change facing. The guns can be elevated +60°. The KAA feeds from a 200-round belt, normally loaded with API-T and SAPHE in a 2:3 mix, while the MAG feeds from a 400-round belt, loaded with ball and tracer rounds mixed 4:1. Both turret guns are electrically fired. The autocannon is fitted with a rate controller, allowing 2-round or 4-round limited bursts to be selected in addition to semiautomatic or full-automatic fire. The turret is so small that much of the autocannon is in fact located outside the turret in an armored cover. There's a small external searchlight (*High-Tech*, p. 228) with 500-yard white light beam mounted coaxially with the guns. A second MAG machine gun with a 200-round belt is mounted externally on a pintle mount at the commander's hatch. Two cans holding 100-round belts for the autocannon and 13 cans holding 200-round belts for the machine guns are stored in the hull.

*Box him in and run him
down, but be gentle . . .
I want him without a scratch.
– Victor Vacendak,
in Freejack*

COMMANDO ARMAMENT

Devastating fire power from eleven gun ports and turret.

– Cadillac Gage catalog (1967)

The basic Commando has a turret ring that accepts a variety of small turrets. These can mount ordnance ranging from light machine guns to autocannon.

Machine Guns and Autocannon

Also see *High-Tech*, p. 129.

Oerlikon KAA, 20×128mm Oerlikon (Switzerland, 1951-)

This selective-fire autocannon was originally known as the Oerlikon 204GK, but was renamed the KAA in 1972. It is since better known under the new moniker. It's installed in a number of armored vehicles and air-defense mounts. It feeds from the right side.

The KAA uses disintegrating belts (88.4 lbs. per 100 rounds). Aside from SAPHE (in the table above), it fires AP-T (Dmg 5d×3(2) pi++), typically linked 2:3.

Hit Location Table

Instead of the generic *Vehicle Hit Location Table* (p. B554), use this for the V-100 and V-150 Commando.

Roll	Location (Penalty)	Notes
3-4	Body (0)	[1]
5	Turret [t] (-5)	
6-14	Body (0)	[1]
15-16	Wheel [W] (-4)	[2]
17-18	Vital Area (-3)	

Notes

[1] Check for an occupant hit (p. B555).

[2] Run-flat tires (*High-Tech*, p. 229).

Browning M37C, .30-06 Springfield (USA, 1955-1957)

This is a variant of the Browning M1919A4 medium machine gun (*High-Tech*, p. 132), designed as a coaxial weapon for use in tank turrets and as a helicopter gun. It can only feed from one side, either the left or right.

It uses disintegrating belts (15.3 lbs. per 250 rounds, 18.8 lbs. in can).

Rheinmetall Rh202, 20x139mm Hispano-Suiza (Germany, 1970-1990)

The Rh202 is a selective-fire autocannon that has been widely adopted to arm armored fighting vehicles, naval craft, and helicopters. It is also used in air-defense mounts. The version described in the table (p. 18) can feed only from one side – but that can be the left, right, or top.

The Rh202 uses disintegrating belts (45.7 lbs. per 50 rounds, 61.6 lbs. in can). Aside from SAPHE (in the table), it fires AP-T (Dmg 5d×3(2) pi++), typically linked 2:3.

USING THE COMMANDO

Armored cars like the Commando aren't encountered parking at the curb. The PCs will have to actively look for one, be it in a police garage, military motor pool, or museum. (Many running examples are displayed in private and state museums.) Once located, the greatest difficulty in stealing one is getting close to it – usually this means overcoming one or more checkpoints (*GURPS Action 2: Exploits*, p. 29) or fences (*Exploits*, p. 20). The Commando has neither door locks nor ignition (*Exploits*, p. 23). The doors, hatches, and gun ports can only be locked with padlocks, and it starts by pressing a button. Entering a Commando through a side door and settling in the driver's or gunner's seat takes at least five Ready maneuvers, six if buckling in. A fully serviced and fueled Commando can be started by the driver in three Ready maneuvers.

In chases (*Exploits*, pp. 31-35), a Commando can use the entire range of maneuvers. On roads, the most helpful are Move or Move and Attack, relying on its Speed (+7 on Chase rolls).

However, given its unstabilized weapon mount(s), the Attack maneuver will see better hit chances. The Force maneuver can be useful if dealing with lighter vehicles such as ordinary cars. Its off-road and amphibious capabilities make the Mobility Escape or Pursuit an option, although its low speed in water makes this less effective. Against light opponents, the Ram may give results. However, the Commando's hull isn't reinforced and its armor is not *that* thick, making this at best an emergency maneuver.

Obsolete second- or third-hand, 30- to 40-year-old *unarmed* Commandos are offered occasionally on the collectors' market for \$65,000 or so. These may or may not be refurbished before changing hands. See *Used Vehicles (Action 1: Heroes*, p. 34) for possible problems; the most common affliction of the Commando is a broken axle.

The Commando comes with a basic load of loose equipment that includes a small first aid kit (*High-Tech*, p. 221), portable Mechanic tool kit (*High-Tech*, p. 24), and two small fire extinguishers (*High-Tech*, p. 29). An external rack holds a set of pioneer tools consisting of a broad axe (*High-Tech*, p. 24), crowbar (*High-Tech*, p. 30), pick, shovel (*High-Tech*, p. 25), and sledgehammer (*High-Tech*, p. 25).

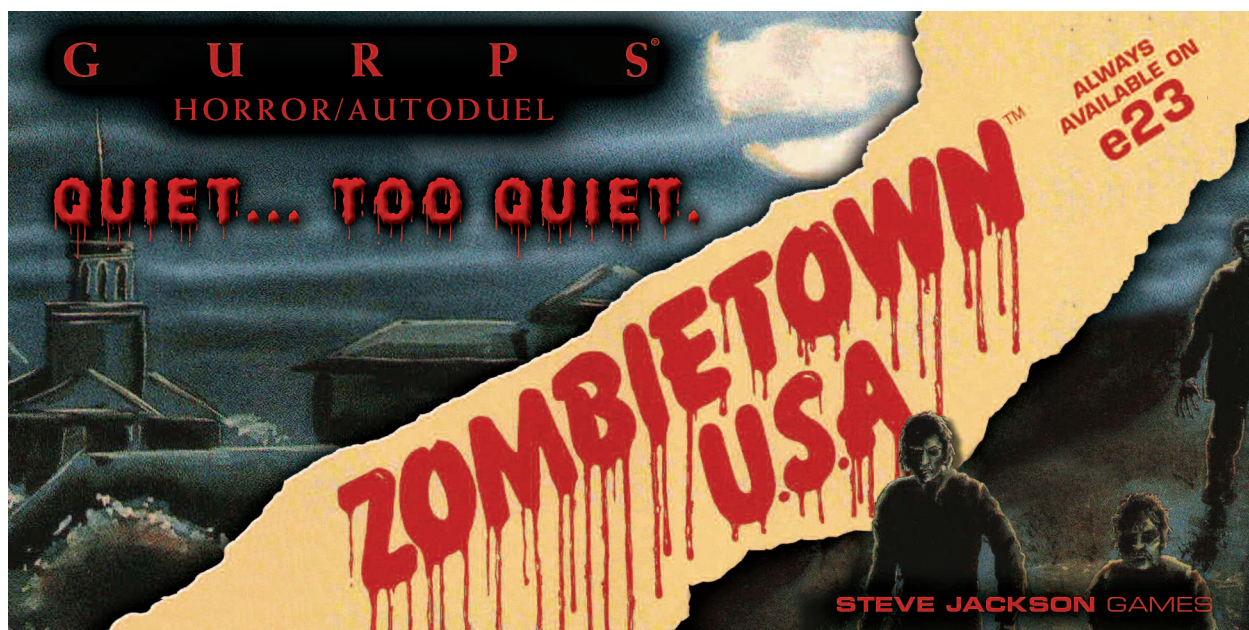
The Commando in Action

The V-100 Commando can be seen in *Freejack*, *The Last Castle*, and Cirio H. Santiago's *The Sisterhood*. The V-150 Commando is famously used in Timeline's post-apocalyptic game *The Morrow Project*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hans-Christian "Grey Tiger" Vortisch is the author or coauthor of *GURPS High-Tech, Fourth Edition*, *GURPS Tactical Shooting*, and *GURPS WWII: Motor Pool*, among other books. He has wanted to own a Commando ever since he gamemastered his first *The Morrow Project* campaign in the late 1980s.

Special thanks to the Hellions.



EIDETIC MEMORY

DOGFIGHT ACTION!

BY DAVID L. PULVER

GURPS Action 2: Exploits features fast-play vehicular chase rules, but it doesn't cover supersonic high-flying aerial duels with fast moving jet fighters – a key part of many cinematic action movies! These rules expand **Action** chase game mechanics to cover jet (or propeller airplane) dogfights, and include a few examples of fast jets and air-to-air weapons written up in the **GURPS Action** format.

RANGES

The chase rules in **Action 2** abstract ranges into range bands from Close to Extreme (500+ yards). That's fine for a foot, car, or helicopter chase, but in an aerial dogfight, most aircraft will almost never get any closer than 500 yards! To add some room to maneuver, modify the Extreme range band and add two extra bands as shown in the *Expanded Range Band Table* (below).

These expanded range bands are only used when aircraft are chasing aircraft (or, perhaps, while over a lake, sea, ocean, or other large body of water with long lines of sight).

MANEUVERS

Use the ones from **Action 2**. However, aircraft with stall speeds, like most airplanes, can't use static maneuvers (**Action 2**, p. 34) – at least not while they're in the air!

A few other special considerations apply.

Hide: This can work if the fight is taking place at low altitude, or in clouds or at night if the foe doesn't have radar or the equivalent.

Stop: For an aircraft, this means coming in for a landing in any suitably sized clear area of ground. If the aircraft has a stall

speed, you'll need a runway, which is usually only present at an airport. If a runway isn't available, you'll need to improvise with a stretch of highway, etc. Make a Piloting (+Handling) roll to avoid a Wipeout. Usually, you won't be able to take off again any time soon after an emergency landing.

Force: In the air, there's no road to force the enemy off, but you can do something similar by flying close to your foes and trying to tip their wings or make them stall.

Reverse: This represents an Immelmann turn or other sudden trick reversal. If performed at Extreme or Distant Range it merely drops the range by two steps instead of just reducing it to Close. A reverse at Beyond Visual Range drops the range one step.

CHASE ROLLS

A few special considerations apply to the Chase Rolls (**Action 2**, p. 34) mechanics.

Complementary Skills: If the range is Distant or Beyond Visual and your aircraft has radar, you may use Electronic Operations (Sensors) as a complementary skill.

Speed Bonus: The bonus based on Top Speed is also extended: +9 for Move 70-99 (140-199 mph), +10 for Move 100-149 (200-299 mph), +11 for Move 150-199 (300-499 mph), +12 for Move 200-299 (400 to 599 mph), +13 for Move 300-499 (600-999 mph), +14 for Move 500-699 (1,000-1,399 mph), +15 for Move 700-999 (1,400-1,999 mph), and so on.

Escape

If an aircraft is chasing a target on the ground, assume it can escape if the range goes beyond Extreme.

EXPANDED RANGE BAND TABLE

Range Band	Starting Range	Range Penalty	Description
Extreme	501-2,000 yards	-15 to -18	Effective guns range
Distant	2,001-10,000 yards	-19 to -22	Typical missile range
Beyond Visual	10,000+ yards	-23 or more	Maximum missile range

A quarry that is flying escapes if the range goes past Distant (if no radar is being used by the pursuer) or past Beyond Visual range (if radar is used by the pursuer).

*They say in combat,
a righteous dogfight is
a dirty dogfight, and if
you're not cheatin',
you're not tryin'.*

– *Kavan Smith*
(narrator),
in *Jetstream*

ATTACKS

Use the rules from **Action 2** (p. 35), modified as follows.

Dogfighting: Fixed guns and missiles on aircraft usually have restricted firing arcs. Because of the need to point the nose at the enemy, they can only fire if a Victory of 0 or better was achieved during the Chase Quick Contest, and only if using a Move, Move and Attack, Mobility Pursuit, or Reverse, or Stunt that results in the victor either maintaining or *reducing* the range. If the other aircraft also failed to achieve a victory, it means you're on his tail (so you can shoot him without him shooting you).

Radar: Tactical radars such as those used by fighters will give a rangefinder bonus to hit (+3) when firing guns.

Movement: A pilot suffers no Bulk penalty when making a ranged attack using an aircraft's built-in weapon, thanks to the bracing and sighting systems.

Range: The modifiers become -15 at Extreme, -19 at Distant, or -23 at Beyond Visual Range.

Homing Missile Fire: In the minute-long chase round, a missile has plenty of time to lock onto, launch at, and reach its target, so the usual rules for homing weapons (p. B413) can be ignored. Instead, any hardpoint-mounted missiles can be fired with a single attack. Just roll vs. Artillery (Guided Missile), adding the missile's Accuracy and subtracting the target's electronic countermeasures (ECM) modifier. All usual attack roll modifiers apply, except ignore Range and subtract half the target's speed bonus (round down).

Passenger Actions (Action 2, p. 33): Passengers in a sealed or pressured aircraft can't attack.

DEFENSES

These are resolved normally. However, you may opt to take a "high-G" defense: Add +1, but you suddenly pull 5-9G from a seated position. Roll vs. HT. Failure means you lose FP equal to the margin of failure. On a critical failure, you black out and crash.

MODERN FIGHTER AIRCRAFT

Here are a few "generic" fighter airplanes.

Fishbed (TL7): A "second generation" 1960s-era jet fighter. Upgraded versions are still in use today. These statistics are loosely based on a late model of Russia's MiG-21 (NATO reporting name Fishbed). Although obsolete, a third-world nation might still be operating them. The price in the table is "as new," but from 1990 onward, second-hand models may be available for as low as \$100,000, if you're lucky.

Phantom (TL7): A "third generation" multi-role heavy fighter. These statistics are loosely based on the two-seat F-4E Phantom of Vietnam-era vintage, but like a Fishbed, it's still flying in some air forces today, including those of Turkey and Iran.

Modern Fighter Aircraft Table

Terms and notation are as defined in *Vehicle Statistics* (pp. B462-463). For weapon stats, see p. 22.

PILOTING/TL (HIGH-PERFORMANCE AIRPLANE)

TL	Vehicle	ST/HP	Hnd/SR	HT	Move	LWt.	Load	SM	Occ.	DR	Range	Cost	Loc.	Stall	Notes
7	Fishbed	90	+2/4	10f	8/675	10	1.7	+5	1SP	3	460	\$6M	g3WWi	66	[1]
7	Phantom	125	+1/4	11f	8/720	30	9.5	+6	2SP	4	840	\$17M	g3WWi	82	[2]
8	Viper	105	+3/4	12f	10/665	21	8.6	+5	1SP	3	700	\$28M	g3WWi	73	[3]
8	Flanker	132	+3/4	12f	9/640	31	8.9	+6	2SP	3	1,800	\$35M	g3WWi	73	[4]

Notes

[1] Radar (10 miles); ejection seat; 23mm cannon (200 shots); four air-to-air homing missiles; ECM-1. At TL8 they are upgraded to ECM-2 and radar (25 miles).

[2] Radar (25 miles); ejection seat; 20mm Gatling gun (640 shots); eight air-to-air homing missiles; ECM-2. At TL8, these

aircraft are often upgraded to TL8 air-to-air missiles and ECM-3, as well as better radar (50+ miles).

[3] Radar (50 miles); ejection seat; 20mm Gatling gun (511 shots); six air-to-air missiles; ECM-2. Late models may have even better radars (75+ miles) and ECM-3.

[4] Radar (75 miles); ejection seat; 30mm cannon (275 shots); 10 air-to-air missiles; ECM-3.

Viper (TL8): A small “fourth generation” Western multi-role fighter. Stats are inspired by the F-16 Fighting Falcon (nicknamed *Viper*), but it could be any similar bird, such as an F-18 or MiG-29 (for the latter, use 30mm autocannon instead of 20mm Gatling).

Flanker (TL8): A big “fourth generation” Russian fighter-bomber. Statistics are loosely based on Russia’s Su-30 (widely exported, particularly to India and China). The U.S.-designed F-15E Strike Eagle has similar statistics but uses a 20mm Gatling gun.

Additional Combat Notes

If an aircraft with an ejection seats suffers a “wrecked” result or fails a HT roll due to damage, then it’s possible for the crew to eject and parachute to safety; roll vs. DX to do so.

All fighter aircraft can have ranges extended indefinitely through air-to-air refueling. They can also carry numerous other loads (bombs, extra fuel, etc.) in place of missiles.

WEAPONS

The air-to-air weapons presented in the table below are designed in the same representational style as the weapons in *GURPS Action*.

20mm Gatling (TL7). Loosely based on the General Electric M61A1 Vulcan, a six-barrel electric rotary cannon used by many late TL7 and TL8 American fighters.

23mm Cannon (TL7). Loosely based on the twin-barrel Tulamash GSh-23, an earlier Russian aircraft gun.

30mm Cannon (TL8). Loosely based on the watercooled Izhmash GSh-301, a light rapid-fire Russian gun. It can also stand in for various European revolver cannons.

AAM Homing Missile (TL7-8). Generic air-to-air infrared homing missiles such as AIM-9 Sidewinder, Matra Magic, Rafael Python, or Vympel R.73.

ABOUT THE COLUMNIST

David L. Pulver is a Canadian freelance author. An avid SF fan, he began roleplaying in junior high with the newly released *Basic Dungeons & Dragons*. Upon graduating from university, he decided to become a game designer. Since then, David has written over 70 roleplaying game books, and he has worked as a staff writer, editor, and line developer for Steve Jackson Games and Guardians of Order. He is best known for creating *Transhuman Space*, co-authoring the *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* anime RPG, and writing countless *GURPS* books.

Weapon Table

Terms and notation are as defined on pp. B268-271. The M notation without ST indicates it is exclusively vehicle mounted.

GUNNER (MACHINE GUN) (DX-4 or other Gunner at -4)

TL	Weapon	Damage	Acc	Range	EWt.	RoF	Shots	ST	Bulk	Rcl	Cost	LC	Notes
7	Gatling Gun, 20mm <i>follow-up</i>	6d×3 pi++ 2d [1d] cr ex	5	1,250/5,300	256	100!	Varies	M	-10	2	\$40,000	1	[1, 2]
7	Autocannon, 23mm <i>follow-up</i>	6d×3 pi++ 2d+1 [1d] cr ex	5	1,500/7,000	111	56!	Varies	M	-10	2	\$15,000	1	[2]
7	Autocannon, 30mm <i>follow-up</i>	6d×4 pi++ 2d+2 [1d] cr ex	5	1,500/4,000	101	27!	Varies	M	-10	2	\$16,000	1	[2]
7	AAM Homing	6d+1 pi	4	900/32,000	188	1×194	1(20)	M	-	-	\$50,000	1	[3]

Notes

[1] Very Reliable (see p. B407).

[2] No ammo weight is listed, as weight and shots varies by aircraft (see the *Modern Fighter Aircraft Table*, p. 21). Ammo cannot be reloaded in flight.

[3] A single air-to-air missile on a hardpoint launch rail. It’s an infrared or radar homing attack (see p. B413) with Gunner using

Artillery (Guided Missile) to *aim*. It has a minimum range of 1,000 yards, so it can only be used at Extreme or greater range. It is vehicle launched. The cost is for the launcher (a missile is \$25K at TL7; \$75K at TL8). The weight is for the missile only. RoF 1×194 means the missile sprays the target with 194 fragments (add a rapid fire bonus of +7). TL8 versions are Acc 5 and have range 950/45,000.

Capt. “Howling Mad” Murdock: There’s nothing like some good air-to-air combat, hey boys?

Lt. Templeton “Faceman” Peck: Don’t look at me; look at him!

– A-Team

DEALING WITH THE LAW

BY JASON BRICK

Here's the thing about being an action hero: Sooner or later, you talk to the cops. The bobbies. The watch. If you're a smooth operator, this only happens a handful of times in your career. If you happen to be bad at your job, you do it a lot. Either way, your goal is to walk away from every one of those conversations, instead of being dragged off, clapped in irons.

This is as true of historical pickpockets in ancient cities as it is of fantasy rogues who steal from dragons and modern mercenaries walking coolly away from explosions. Wherever – and whenever – you ply your chosen trade, the best way to avoid getting pinched is to follow this six-step plan.

A man trying to escape never thinks himself sufficiently concealed.

– Victor Hugo

STEP ONE: LOSE THE EVIDENCE

Not everybody is lucky enough to use this step every time, especially if your most recent exploits involved pyrotechnics or destruction of property. When it is applicable, the concept is simple: Make certain the police never see signs of what you've been up to. Ditch the swag. Hide the carnage. Eliminate everything that shows a crime happened. Failing that, eliminate signs that connect you to the mayhem. (A cleaner – **GURPS Action 1: Heroes**, pp. 7-8 – is handy to know for just these situations. See also information about cleaning on p. 26 of **GURPS Action 2: Exploits**.) There are two basic methods: ditching the swag, or concealing it upon your person.

Ditching the swag is often the safest choice, but does have the marked disadvantage of losing property you have otherwise successfully stolen. Depending on the immediate circumstances, this can mean throwing it over a fence, tucking it under a trash receptacle, even planting it on an innocent bystander. If the evidence isn't desirable in the first place, destroying it with fire or submerging it with weights is often the best plan. Anyone wishing to excel at this method should invest heavily in skills like Fast-Draw, Pickpocket, and Sleight of Hand.

Concealing loot is a more dangerous option. It keeps the booty nearby for easier retrieval, but you run the risk of being caught holding the proverbial bag. It's also a last-second option

for when the police are close enough to see you throw an item away. You can hide small things in little pocket-like places, such as a rolled cuff, codpiece, or your own mouth. A larger item might go up the back of a jacket, or even behind your back in a shadow as you lean casually on a nearby wall. If this is more your style, look closely at Holdout and Sleight of Hand when choosing skills.

STEP TWO: APPEAR HARMLESS

Cops spend an inordinate proportion of their time wondering if people are going to try to kill them. It's a daily part of the job for the king's tax-collection goons, city watchmen, and modern enforcers of democratic law. It occupies much of their thoughts, and is widely responsible for their irascible and untrusting personalities. The more you put the officers at ease as to their physical safety, the more likely they will be to listen to your story with an open ear and mind.

This may appear harder for large and imposing thieves than for littler ones; ditto for a gang of heavily armed adventurers. Fear not – physiology is only one half of this equation. Ask anybody working in security whether they'd prefer a huge and quiet sort or a tiny loudmouth. It's much more about your demeanor than your description. Position yourself to appear small. Speak quietly. Keep your hands in sight. Police appreciate these things.

If you want to excel at this vital skill, look into Body Language and Gesture, since to a cop, your actions shout while words hardly say anything. If you happen to be a dangerous sort, consider some Acting to conceal that potential. Attractive thieves may achieve a similar effect by throwing on some Sex Appeal to make an officer momentarily forget his mortal fears.

STEP THREE: SPEAK – AND SPEAK WELL – WHEN SPOKEN TO

People are never happy *while* speaking to the police. They may be happy *to be* speaking with a cop, but they're never in a truly positive state of mind. Regardless of the society in which you ply your trade, the circumstances that bring the law into a situation fairly guarantee this sad fact of life. A kind word can go a long way.

This tactic can be especially useful if your victim is in the immediate area. Feeling himself wronged, he is likely to demand attention, gesticulate wildly, rant, rave, and carry on about the injustice you have perpetrated – all while annoying the very officer who is on the scene to aid him. If you simply relax and wait for the officer to invite conversation, you will appear angelic by comparison.

Speaking when spoken to will require you to tell a convincing lie. Tell exactly as much of the truth as you can without incriminating yourself, and keep your lies easy to remember. The police are notorious for asking the same question again and again, hoping to catch the unwary giving different answers.

The most skilled players of this game invest heavily in Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, and Persuade. Some even dabble in Detect Lies so as to catch the police in an interrogation-assisting fib of their own. Body Language and Gesture are helpful to those who work in a team – the better to clue in accomplices on the details of your cover story.

STEP FOUR: THREATEN . . . SUBTLY

Police officers are never impressed with overt threats. They respond to a physical aggression with overwhelming violence, under the theory that a broken hand can't properly grip a weapon. They typically respond to suggestions of social or legal action with a laugh and show of bravado – even if the threat has realistic teeth.

The way to threaten a cop effectively is to present information in a neutral fashion, then let them draw their own conclusion as to its importance. It avoids the contest of testosterone that results from challenging a man of action, but keeps the stakes of the officer's next decision open and obvious. Profiling in modern policing is an example of this principal in action. The officers don't target young, poor minorities because they are minorities. They target them under the belief that they are less likely to have an aggressive lawyer than are white, middle-class, middle-aged professionals.

Your ace card might be membership in a thieves' guild with no sense of humor. It might be the patronage of a powerful VIP or ranking police commander. Perhaps the police recognizes you as the galaxy's most feared assassin. Whatever the case,

the art lies in implying terrible consequences without expressing them outright. Intimidate and Diplomacy are key for those with the power to back up an implied threat. Fast-Talk works for those who merely want to appear that way. Streetwise or Area Knowledge can help you know which implied associations might protect you.

Plan B

Harming a police officer is a bad way to avoid getting arrested. Despotic regimes frown on it because it demonstrates disrespect toward those in authority. Open societies dislike those who do harm to their protectors. Even for those with no moral qualms over hurting a cop, the logistics of such a move are daunting.

It's not that it's hard to hurt a cop. Most police receive depressingly poor combat training. It's better than an average citizen's, but far inferior to the typical adventurer. As with running away, the real problem lies in all the other police in town. They lack perspective when it comes the injury of their fellow cops, and they have very long memories. They will spend a lot of energy identifying and punishing somebody who makes that particular decision.

For thieves in particular, there's also a matter of comparative reasoning. Getting caught for stealing is bad – very bad in some cultures or situations. However, in few societies is it worse than the slightest harm to an officer of the law. It's a mistake true professionals never make.

STEP FIVE: PAY THE FINE

Bribery has long been the preferred method of communicating with the law. In many societies, it's an accepted part of the game – an open trade of legal tender for legal lenience. In more “civilized” societies, the bribery uses other currencies, such as informing on other criminals in exchange for a lesser sentence. To a harried beat cop of any era, the “bribe” that keeps a crim out of the pokey could simply be shutting up for five minutes to give the man some much-needed peace.

The main problem with bribery is that, while most cops will take some kind of bribe, a few incorruptible sorts are determined to take the offer as a personal insult. Guessing wrong will land you in hotter waters than you were already swimming through. Bribery is a *process*, not a single action, and occurs in three distinct stages.

Daisy Duke: Excuse me, Rick Shankley? I believe the governor has a statement to make.

Governor Jim Applewhite: I do?

Daisy Duke: Yes, sir. You were going to tell everyone about how these boys are heroes for saving Hazzard County.

– Dukes of Hazzard

First, you assess whether or not an officer is amenable to a bribe, remembering that even if he might accept some grease to his palm, he might not be able to *at that particular moment*. For a general sense of local bribe etiquette, Streetwise is a good bet. Some Gesture might help communicate to the constable what those in the trade sometimes call a “soft offer” – to see how he reacts.

The second stage is to take a guess at what might constitute an appropriately sized bribe. Again, Streetwise might serve to remind you of the “menu” of bribes in the neighborhood, as might Area Knowledge. Detect Lies might help you decode the hidden message an open-minded and open-palmed officer sends your way.

Finally, you must make the actual offer. Diplomacy and Merchant are the best candidates here, depending on how you wish to approach the deal. Ultimately, this stage may require falling back to Fast-Talk – to convince a lawman that a bribe was the farthest thing from your mind, and you’re sorry for any misunderstanding.

For further discussion on bribery, see *GURPS Social Engineering* (pp. 48-49).

STEP SIX: RUN!

Getting away is another traditional method of dealing with the local authorities, though it’s one true professionals resort to only when all other avenues have failed. However, it pays to remember that beginning a conversation with the police does not obligate you to end it on their terms. Experienced adventurers always scout their target areas with an eye toward hidey-holes, blind corners, and other terrain that will assist a sudden escape.

In most cases, outrunning a single cop isn’t difficult. They’re usually weighted down with weapons and armor, many are badly out of shape, and they’re never as motivated to capture you as you are to escape. The trouble is outrunning the number of other police they can commit to the task. From alarm bells to radio calls to ansible messages, the fuzz

are very good at summoning help to trap their quarry from multiple directions.

This step begins with making your initial escape. You must distract an officer long enough to create an opening for that surprise dash. This might require Body Language or Fast-Talk. It could even mean using a skill technique like Slip Handcuffs or Disarming. Escape is another popular option during this phase of running away.

Actual running comes next – that headlong sprint to get out of reach of the proverbial long arm. Running skill is an obvious choice, but an urban chase would benefit from using the ideas under *Parkour* from *GURPS Action 2: Exploits* (p. 19).

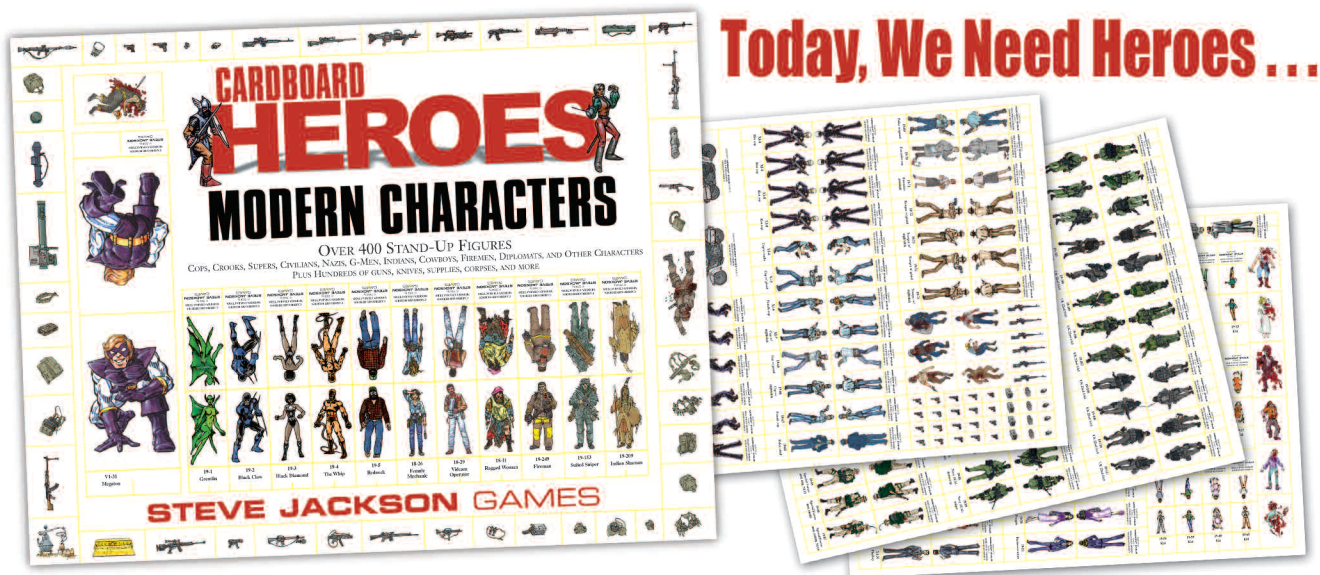
Lastly, a running thief must break the line of sight long enough to hide. If the officer giving chase can see you, he will eventually call in enough allies to box you in. You must duck behind some sort of cover to make good your escape. For the best thieves, this means Area Knowledge skill to let you know where the best opportunities for that move can be found – or at least some on-site research to identify them on unfamiliar ground. If that’s not an option, you may be stuck with Jumping and Climbing to put an obstacle between yourself and your pursuer.

PARTING COMMENTS

This plan will not work for every situation – most people with interesting lives will end up in the hands of the law at some point in their career, regardless of whether or not charges are brought and successfully prosecuted. Nonetheless, those who observe this technique and train to do it well will certainly spend less time out of jail than in.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jason Brick is a freelance writer whose 30-year gaming habit has included all four versions of *GURPS*, plus countless other systems. His work can be found in magazines worldwide. In his spare time, he enjoys travel, martial arts, and time with his family. Read more at his blog, brickcommajason.com.



www.sjgames.com/heroes/#moderncharacters

I'VE GOT A GREAT IDEA

BY ROGER BURTON WEST

"So we know where the statue is, what the defenses are, and who's guarding it. Why aren't we going in already?"

"Well, Bob's still looking through the guns catalog, and Terry's still trying to eliminate any possibility of failure no matter what goes wrong . . ."

Planning can be the death of roleplaying sessions. A few minutes is pleasant enough, but any more than that can make the play session judder to a halt as players consult equipment tables, try to strategize around every conceivable problem and situation, and generally act like administrators rather than action heroes. What's more, if they do plan well enough, the actual scenes can become rather anticlimactic.

Solutions exist to both of those problems, using the narrative conventions of action films and TV: the characters are seen planning in a fast-moving montage, but the details of just what they planned only become apparent during the actual caper.

*The 7 Ps: Proper Planning
and Preparation Prevent Piss-Poor
Performance.*

– British Army adage

BEFORE THE CAPER

Once the team has determined what the target is going to be, the GM should decide how much time is available – or at least how much time the PCs *think* is available. This is the overall cap for preparation: If you find out in the morning where the drug gang is hiding and that they'll be moving out that evening, the operation against them will look very different from one you'd have planned a month in advance.

Each four-hour block of time allows each PC to make preparations, which are boiled down to a roll against a specific skill, modified by the BAD (see *GURPS Action 2: Exploits*, pp. 4-5) of the opposition. A failure or a critical failure gives no benefit; a success or critical success gives an *Angle* equal to the margin of success. This *Angle* represents how well the planning was done without having to come up with specifics at that moment.

The rules for time spent (p. B346) may be used to attempt preparations in longer or shorter times than the four-hour

block – but the GM should always bear in mind the heroes' requirements for sleep and travel time.

Angles aren't interchangeable: two 2-point Demolition Angles represent two separate preparations, and can't be combined into a single 4-pointer. *Optionally*, the GM may allow large Angles to be broken down into smaller ones (e.g., someone who's bribed all the security guards may get multiple benefits from this during the caper). Although this violates genre assumptions slightly – in that normally one preparatory action is shown to have one resolution – it may be more realistic.

Some skills may give Angles for other skills, at the GM's discretion. For example, Armoury (Small Arms) could be used to provide an *Angle* that could apply to Guns (Pistol).

Angles can only be used on an operation substantially identical to the one being planned. If the target's in a different city, or things have to be delayed by a day from the planned go time, many of the effects of preparation are likely to be lost (though at the GM's option, some benefits may remain).

DURING THE CAPER

Angles are owned by the person who generated them, but they can be transferred freely between party members who are able to communicate with each other. Angles can be spent in three different ways during a caper, all of which should be narrated to reflect the activity that's happened off-stage.

Before the Roll

Spend an *Angle* from the same skill you're about to roll to reduce the total penalty on that roll, up to the size of the *Angle*. This can't raise your effective skill above its unpenalized level, but it can cancel such penalties as BAD and time spent (p. B346). "Yeah, the vault's a Cybermountain 250 – I checked up on these, and it turns out they're vulnerable to liquid nitrogen."

After the Roll

You can get at least one reroll by spending an *Angle* from the same skill you've just rolled; take whichever result you prefer. You will always get at least one reroll: Much like Rcl in firearms combat, if the *Angle* is equal to or bigger than the BAD, you get two rerolls; if it's twice the BAD, you get three; and so on. (Treat a BAD milder than -2 as -2.) This is normally done after failing or critically failing a roll, but could be used to get a really good result on a roll that was already successful. "You mean you *don't* always wear a McNeal descender just in case?"

Recommended Resources

Gambit (Ronald Neame, 1966). The first half hour of this comedy movie shows a complex and flawless robbery . . . which turns out to be the plan in the protagonist's head. From that point on, everything goes wrong.

Mission: Impossible (Bruce Geller, 1966-1973). This classic television series was at its best when sticking to its formula: an introduction setting up the target of the week, a brief planning scene showing strange gadgets but not explaining what they were to be used for, and increasingly unlikely recoveries from things going wrong. In structure, it is a pure caper show in spite of the nods to televisual morality that have the heroes nominally working for a government agency.

Hustle (Tony Jordan, 2004-2012). This BBC series dealing with a team of con artists shows how time spent in planning scenes can be used as character-building opportunities, while leaving the actual details for later revelation. Later seasons depart from the caper formula, to their detriment.

Leverage (John Rogers and Chris Downey, 2008-present). This series is particularly noticeable for its niche protection (see *Pyramid* #3/44: *Alternate GURPS II*, pp. 33-34) – everyone can fight, but the fighting expert is by far the best at it, and the same applies to other skills. Research and planning are shown just enough to make the initial stages of the operation clear, while leaving plenty of leeway for post-facto preparation later.

I've Got a Great Idea

At other times, spend an Angle to be able to narrate a bit of preparation that could have been done by using that skill. This always needs the approval of the GM. The scale of preparation depends on the size of the Angle, though (again with the GM's approval), the PC can choose to gamble by taking a quick flashback scene in which he plays through the setup that led to whatever he's asking for. If the GM feels this goes well, the Angle is valued at a point higher; if it goes badly, it's a point lower.

A 1- or 2-point Angle buys something minor. The Forced Entry expert has a set of standard keys for low-security locks; the Demolition specialist has wired the bridge the cops are going to need to cross; the sniper with Observation has scouted out the best rooftops with a good view of the operation.

A 3- or 4-point Angle buys something moderate but not wildly unusual, similar to the effects of Serendipity (p. B82). The face man has been studying Current Affairs (Sports), recognizes the guard's wristband, and can win him over

by talking about his favorite team; the investigator with Administration has arranged for a public fireworks display to distract the sentries while the infiltrator is crossing the room behind them.

A 5-point or larger Angle buys something major. This would look really unexpected to an outside observer: First Aid keeps someone alive after he's been fried by a high-voltage fence ("I just happen to have extra gear for treating electrocution injuries"), the driver had an armored riot-control van fully fueled and waiting on the backup getaway route, or the expert in Savoir-Faire (Criminal) has arranged that the police who come along and arrest everyone are actually fellow thieves, who'll let the PCs go and turn the bad guys over to the *real* cops.

GAME BALANCE

These rules make the heroes substantially more effective during a caper. If they seem to get too powerful, the GM should consider using another narrative device from the genre: something unexpected and not planned for occurs, and the team has to improvise around it during the operation. For example, a piece of equipment might run out of power, or make a noise that lets the sentries spot it; extra guards are brought on, for reasons unrelated to the PCs' actions; and so on.

If the Angle system is insufficient to discourage players from making detailed plans, the GM may wish to have everything that the players thought they knew be wrong; salvaging the mission now requires improvisation. This is very much in keeping with the source material.

IN OTHER CONTEXTS

These rules need not just be used for criminal capers. They could apply to any multi-person task for which participants must make detailed preparations of which players do not necessarily know the details, such as the ascent of a mountain, a polar expedition, or a big battle.

In the case of a battle, this system overlaps with the rules for Tactics (*GURPS Martial Arts*, p. 60). Careful preparation of a battlefield might well involve Traps or Stealth, to lay out obstacles or provide camouflage for the soldiers to hide behind.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Roger Burton West is a British computer-wrangler and role-player who is at least as guilty of wasting time on hugely complex plans as any of his players. His gaming website is tekeli.li.

Special thanks to Douglas Cole for contributing the "Great Idea" mechanic.

Saul: I have a question. Say we get into the cage, and through the security doors there and down the elevator we can't move, and past the guards with the guns, and into the vault we can't open . . .

Rusty: Without being seen by the cameras.

– *Ocean's Eleven*

THE RED SWORDS

BY J. EDWARD TREMLETT

With the clattering of a very loud, very small machine pistol, all work in the large but cramped surgery tent came to a sudden halt. For a terrifying moment, the only sounds were the fighting going on outside, not too far from the camp, and the moaning of those waiting for medical attention.

"I see I have your attention now!" the mercenary leader announced as he walked into the tent, four equally armed thugs right behind him. "Here is how this is going to go. I want all your medicines and valuable equipment, piled right here in front of me. I want it now, quickly and without fuss. Otherwise . . ."

He grinned – gap-toothed and yellow – and held the business end of his pistol up like a small boy showing off the frog he'd just jigged.

"You need to turn around and leave," one of the doctors said, looking up from the delicate surgery she was doing at the center table. "No one will cooperate with you this time. We are protected."

"Oh really?" he said, aiming the gun right at her and walking toward the table as his men laughed: "And where are your protectors? We did not see them coming in –"

He didn't see the crossbow bolt that hit him right between the eyes either. By the time his men realized what had happened, they were staring down silenced pistols, as a knot of people they'd taken to be mere nurses were revealed to be fully armed and very fast on their feet.

"Disarm, please," one of the nurses said, making sure they saw the playing card he had poking out of his shirt pocket. "Quickly and without fuss. Otherwise . . ."

They did, because they knew what that Jack of Hearts meant. You'd have to be crazy to mess with the Red Sword.

They say that no one shoots at the medical vans, but the truth is that offering first aid in war zones can be a good way to wind up dead – or worse. Those who enter into such godforsaken places to minister to the sick are often dependent on others for security and are rarely willing to operate without it. They are also dependent on obtaining permission from the ruling faction to be there at all, and risk imprisonment or worse if they disobey.

But there are those medics who refuse to be tied down by others' willingness to put their lives on the line for them. Indeed, at least one international, non-allied group is its own security arrangement, and doesn't bother getting anyone's permission before going in.

In fact, if you try to stop them, they'll *shoot* you.

They are the Red Swords: well-armed, well-trained, outlaw medical personnel willing to go anywhere, at any time, to

provide aid to those ravaged by war, famine, plague, or systematic brutality. They don't take sides, but they don't take any guff either, and you really don't want them to make a housecall at your prison camp.

Some of the secrets of the Red Swords are now revealed: how they came together, where they hide, how they recruit, and what they do. Ideas on how to use them in the field are provided, along with a few specific missions for which the organization is uniquely suited.

Odds are you'll be under my knife again, often. So I want you to understand one thing very clearly: No matter what you do or say or plot, no matter how you come down on us, I will never, ever harm you. You're on this table, you're safe . . . 'cause I'm your medic.

– Simon, in *Firefly* #1.13

SEND ME AN ANGEL

In the beginning, there was the Red King. No one knows her name, but everyone in the Red Swords knows at least one version of her story. So do many on the outside, and whether they understand it usually indicates whether they agree with the mission.

According to the story most know, the Red King was a nurse with the U.S. Army in Vietnam. She worked out of a Medical Unit Self-Contained Transportable (MUST) in Tay Ninh. One day, they were fired on by mortars, and the area where she was took a direct hit. Battered and bleeding, she clung to consciousness just long enough to get the patient she was tending seen to, and only then allowed herself to collapse.

When she came to, after surgery, her face was a messy ruin on one side, and she was blinded in one eye. Under the circumstances, the Army wanted to give her a medical discharge. She successfully fought it, and was returned to her previous assignment with new duties. She proved her worth, even in reduced circumstances.

She stayed with the MUST for the rest of the war, and didn't leave until the very last minute. She ended her remaining tour of duty at a stateside post. She tried to reintegrate herself into civilian life, but found she couldn't work at a hospital if it wasn't under fire. It was as if she *needed* to be in danger in order to function.

Fortunately for her sanity, a dangerous opportunity awaited her overseas. *Medecins Sans Frontieres* (MSF), which had come together while she'd been in Vietnam, was active in Lebanon during its terrible and extremely messy civil war. She volunteered immediately, and was soon in country, assisting in its besieged hospitals. There, surrounded by numerous groups of enemy combatants, and in deadly danger almost every moment, she felt truly alive again.

The mission lasted from 1976 to 1984, when conditions on the ground fell apart so badly that no one could provide even a minute amount of safety anymore. Unwilling to risk its volunteers' lives in the absence of any kind of security, MSF made the sad decision to pull out. That decision was not universally cheered by its volunteers, some of who stayed behind on their own to help. The Red King was one of them – proudly and defiantly watching the others depart.

That was the last anyone outside of those war-ravaged hospitals saw or heard of her under her given name. When the war was finally over, in 1990, someone else came out the other end. This person wasn't alone either – she had well-moneyed international connections, and a number of war-tested, well-armed medical professionals who weren't averse to working in a combat zone.

In fact, they were happy to dish out some pain of their own.

THE WAY OUT OF THE DARK

Is the story true? No one can say. Records have been scrubbed, witnesses bought off, and names changed to protect the guilty and innocent alike.

What *can* be said is that, after 1990, word began to circulate of a volunteer organization of medics who would not take “no” for an answer. They would not let the absence of security, numerous sides of combatants, or the presence of hostile governments deter them from entering countries, war zones, and no-man's-lands around the world. They did not fear plague, would not allow the “recruitment” of child soldiers or war brides, and would not sit idly by while widespread abuse of civilians took place.

They wouldn't even ask permission to come in. The medics would just sneak over the borders while no one was looking, start work, and not leave until they were no longer needed, or “official” relief groups could come back in. Sometimes they

even stuck around, just to make sure those other groups didn't get shot to pieces.

Most important, those medics were *armed* and well-trained to boot. They set up perimeter watches, installed portable surveillance equipment, and provided some degree of air and ground cover for the places that they worked at. If warlords or armed brigands thought they could just walk into a hospital and steal medical supplies to sell on the black market, or decide to play “shoot the doctor” while bored, they were quickly and quietly relieved of that mistaken impression.

When their bodies were found, the thugs each had a Jack of Hearts from a standard playing deck stuffed into their mouths. It was a variation on the dreaded “death cards” that some portions of the American military used in Vietnam, and a sign that the Red Swords had been there.

After a time, besieged doctors began to stop hoping they'd show up, and found a way to contact them instead. Thus began a tacit working relationship with numerous groups of local, unaffiliated medical volunteers and humanitarian workers throughout the world. If things got too nasty too quickly, or other volunteers couldn't or wouldn't come in, the Red Swords would be there as soon as they could spare a team.

Don't Make Us Come to You

The Red Swords don't seek to get directly involved in whatever war is raging. They're on the scene to protect the lives of the victimized and those who are trying to save lives. That *should* be the extent of their interference.

Having said that, there have been times when teams will go on the offensive, especially if they need to give themselves – or whomever they're guarding – enough safe room to work, or if there's no other way to get the job done. They also aren't above sending strike teams on “house calls”: going in after abducted medical and relief personnel, “liberating” stolen medical supplies or vehicles they could use, or breaking up child-soldier or rape camps.

THE CALL OF YOUR HEART

The Red Swords act as an international, underground army of combat medics. They do not pay any attention to borders or barriers, and do not become enmeshed in political entanglements or intrigues. They do not take marching orders from any nation, army, or more “above board” international medical outfits. They operate where they want, for as long as they can, and then sneak away before they can be caught.

They recruit heavily from the ranks of former medical officers – especially those who have clearly had a hard time readjusting to non-combatant status. They're also interested in those who practice medicine in extremely violent areas, or do rescue work in very dangerous conditions, and are proficient in firearms. Disillusioned volunteers or employees of other, more mainstream relief organizations are also considered, so long as they're either trained in defending themselves, or quite ready to learn how.

Such candidates are approached through a social media site by someone with little useful information in the profile. The messages always begin: “The Red King sends her regards.” The correspondence indicates that the sender knows who the candidates are, what they can do, and that they're not happy.

If they'd like to accept a challenge to work in humanitarian aid without limits, they have 48 hours to call a certain number, and say, simply, "yes."

Within a day, the candidates are emailed a place to meet a recruiter, who asks a lot of questions and doesn't answer any. If they pass muster, they'll eventually be emailed a time and place to be picked up. If not, they never hear anything more.

All inductees are trained in small groups in far-flung and remote areas. A successful recruit should graduate with the knowledge of how to save lives and take them in trying, dangerous conditions. Graduates are given a Jack of Hearts from a standard playing deck, which is now their rank, and taken to the Red Swords' main facility to be properly inducted. Those who fail are sent home and told to keep quiet – or else.

The Red Swords operate from behind a cover company: Aegle International, which presents itself as a worldwide medical supplier. Aegle's main facility is in Tunisia, just outside of Gabes, and it serves as their headquarters and main staging point.

Aegle has at least one major facility on every continent, sometimes two or three. These facilities are receiving and shipping hubs, handling the transport and packaging of medical supplies for their customers. Some have adjoining airstrips, so as to allow Aegle's cargo planes to land right at the warehouses.

Most of the company's customers are legitimate, but some are fictitious entities that exist only as storefronts and warehouses; the Red Swords use these to store spare vehicles and equipment, as well as hide if things get bad. The need for high security at their facilities explains some of their weapons acquisitions. The rest is done on the black market, courtesy of members who used to be on the wrong side of the law.

Ranks are simple. All Red Swords start as Jacks. Anyone who heads up a team, a department, or a facility is a Queen, and wears an appropriate card. Queens are technically equal in rank. However, if there's a conflict of priorities, then whichever Queen has the largest current responsibility is in charge. For example, if a team's Queen is butting heads with the Queen of a facility over how many buses to take on that team's mission, the facility Queen's word goes.

Wings of Mercy, Wheels of War

The transportation pool for each facility has a couple of carefully nondescript, large, two-rotor cargo helicopters, and several four-person jeeps. They also have special, small, 20-seat buses that can be converted into mass ambulances within a few minutes. Facilities equipped with runways can land medium-sized cargo airplanes there, and usually have at least one housed at any time.

Except for the planes, all of Aegle's vehicles' livery consists of durable magnetic stickers. These are designed to be quickly stripped and disposed of, so as to not be recognized when they land in hostile areas. They also use other, false magnetic stickers to disguise them as belonging to other companies or organizations.

When possible, the Red Swords like to use their own, familiar equipment on a mission. However, if it's too hot and hairy to fly or drive in, they're content to land outside the border, sneak into the conflict, and "appropriate" local transport along the way.

There's only one King, and inductees either look forward to meeting the legend, or fear it worse than anything. She's known to pull surprise inspections at any facility or mission at any time, and woe betide anyone who's not living up to their full potential.

IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

The Red Swords' preferred MO is to slip into areas where they are needed, meet with the independent medical professionals who are already there, and set up shop within those medics' pre-existing physical or organizational structure. They then help out wherever they can, with half the group focusing on immediate medical care and the other half maintaining a low profile, ready to defend the others at a moment's notice.

If there are no independent medics on the ground, they will either disguise themselves as a group that's most likely to be there (Red Cross, Red Crescent, *Medecins Sans Frontieres*, etc.), or create a secret hospital, somewhere, and venture out to find those in need of medical care. Sometimes they can bring patients to the doctors, and sometimes they have to bring the doctors – or even entire surgical teams – to the patients. They are well-practiced in creating sterile surgeries in otherwise-unhealthy locations, doing quick and competent work, and then getting out before anyone realizes what's happened.

Once they're there, the Red Swords won't leave until an area is secure, which is to say that the hostiles have been firmly dealt with, or have moved well out of range. They're happy to intimidate or annihilate small bands of bandits and private armies, but are very careful when dealing with government soldiers and invading forces. Many despots and vindictive rulers detest the organization so much that if they get wind of a team in action, they are quite willing to launch bombs and missiles where they've been spotted. This is why they have no uniforms, and rarely identify themselves to patients; it's to protect both them and the people they're protecting. If they're captured or badly wounded, they have orders to destroy their playing card so no one knows who they're with, or that the group is there.

The Red Swords prize stealth and swiftness: small, silenced weapons are preferred, and silent weapons are considered the best of all. That's not to say they won't bring or break out heavy ordinance if the occasion calls for it, but they'd rather start little and work their way up than start off with a loud bang. Not only do big explosions advertise their presence, it's not conducive to their patients' healing times.

They never use land mines, poison gas, bio-weapons, or any munitions larger than an RPG. Their vehicles are never armed, and they'd prefer to not have to use any large weapons if they can help it.

STORY IDEAS

Most Red Swords missions involve getting into a location, providing assistance, and getting out. About half the team patches up people, while the other half attends to more martial matters – especially providing security. Those with **GURPS Action 2: Exploits** can take inspiration from *Commandos* (p. 43), *Medic!* (pp. 40-41), and *Providing Security* (pp. 27-30).

The following more specific missions could easily be applied to any continent or country, provided the GM is willing to tweak the world's tragic headlines a bit.

Search and Rescue

Three members of a medical organization went into the village to tend those suffering from dysentery. One of them was found hacked to pieces by the side of the road, and the organization has just received word from a small, guerilla band that if they want to see the other two workers alive, they'll pay a hefty ransom for that privilege.

The organization can't afford to pay the ransom, and their government-run security won't go into the hills, where the guerrillas are, as it's too dangerous. The government will neither send in its armed forces, nor offer to pay the ransom, as the medics are probably already dead. But the Red Swords team in that country is willing to make a house call and pay the ransom – with pain.

That said, it's going to be difficult going. The hills are full of caves, hidey-holes, and secret caches. Worse, there are several, rival guerilla bands in the area, and while they don't like each other, they hate outsiders even more. So this mission will have to be as silent as possible, and as fast as they can push it, as each day that goes by increases the chance the kidnapers will kill another victim.

In and Out

The ruling faction in a country's civil war has decided to end the opposition once and for all, and is aiming most of its land-based army at the enemy. The problem is that a contested city of 30,000 is in the way. The revolutionaries left it some time ago, but the country's leader has decided to flatten it, anyway; he'll rebuild it in his name after the war.

By the time the Red Swords get to that country's borders, they have about 72 hours before the army starts rolling forward. Their mission is to get to the city as quickly as possible, and begin evacuating it to any nearby towns that can accept refugees. They also have to do this *quietly*, as the army is sending forward observers. If they see relief personnel where there aren't supposed to be any, or suspicious vehicles of any kind, the leader will up his timetable, and then it's only a matter of hours before terror arrives.

Suffer the Children

A team sent to bolster a local, independent group, itself alleviating famine in time of war, has uncovered something nasty.

When I went for my interview at med school, the first question they ask you quite naturally is, "Why do you wanna be a doctor?" Well I can't remember the answer I prepared, but I remember the one I gave. I told him, if I'm helping people . . . I'm not hurting them.

– Dr. Raymond Langston, in CSI: Crime Scene Investigation #11.9

Making Martial Medics

Every single member of the Red Swords either is or was a medical professional of some kind or another. Their ranks are full of doctors, nurses, surgeons, medical technicians, and EMTs. Even their transportation pool, mechanics, suppliers, and support staff were medics before they were anything else. It's both a cultural and practical matter for the organization; no exceptions are made.

Those using **GURPS Action** should make all team members with the Medic template from **GURPS Action 1: Heroes** (pp. 13-14). Very few of them still follow the Hippocratic Oath *in toto*, given the group's willingness to kill a few to save the many, so that particular Code of Honor [-5] Disadvantage isn't usually applicable.

Many members have the law enforcement, military, or security lenses (**Action 1**, pp. 4-5). Every so often, the Red Swords allow in redeemed criminals, because of their value for certain types of missions. Those who worked in intelligence are essential to heading up teams in politically contentious areas.

One of the many small sides in the larger struggle – the self-styled "War Master" from the country next door – has begun using child soldiers: kidnapping young children from small villages, forcing them to kill their friends and parents, and then assaulting their minds with drugs and weird slogans, in order to turn them into deadly tools in human shape.

The humanitarian costs of this strategy are horrifying, as well as self-perpetuating. Worse, other sides may start "recruiting," just to keep up. If it isn't stopped now, the cycle could go on well past the war itself.

The Red Swords are in a unique position to slip over the border, hunt down this War Master, and end him. However – and the Red King is *extremely* adamant about this – the team must do everything possible to avoid engaging the child soldiers themselves. They are to be treated as victims, and not combatants, which is going to make this very challenging indeed.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

By day an unassuming bookstore clerk, J. Edward Tremlett takes his ancient keyboard from its hiding place and unfurls his words upon the world. His bizarre lifestyle has taken him to such exotic locales as South Korea and Dubai, UAE. He is a frequent contributor to *Pyramid*, has been the editor of *The Wraith Project*, and has seen print in *The End Is Nigh* and *Worlds of Cthulhu*. He's also part of the *Echoes of Terror* anthology. Currently, he writes for Op-Ed News, and lives in Lansing, Michigan, with his wife and three cats.

FORTUNATELY, I SAW THIS COMING

BY JASON “PK” LEVINE

Johnson was the last man to walk through the gate, but instead of doing so, he slammed it shut; the lock clicked into place. Now separated from the rest of the group by iron bars, he held up the case and sneered at Vincenzo. “Hey, pug-face! Don Giuseppe says thanks for the paper.”

The con men reacted to the sudden betrayal with shock and dismay – all but Vincenzo, who just smirked. “I had a feeling about you, Johnson. You never smelled right. You honestly think I’d trust you with the *real* bonds?”

Frowning, Johnson cracked open the heavy briefcase, finding nothing but a tasteful selection of interior-decorating magazines. “What? But I – I’ve been with you this whole time!”

“Even a careful man gets distracted. Remember when we hid in the break room from those guards? That’s when I stuffed the bonds into my jacket and replaced them with some light reading material. By the way, don’t forget about the tracking device on the briefcase. *Your* fingerprints are on the handle, too. You might want to see to that before the cops show up, while we make ourselves scarce. Ciao!”

Action stories, especially capers, are often filled with impossible examples of foresight and planning. The antagonist has the heroes over a barrel, but *ah ha!* It turns out that one of them saw this coming and had planned for it the

whole time. Unfortunately, even the most insightful player is unlikely to achieve such a ridiculous level of awareness. But this doesn’t mean it’s impossible to represent in a game – it just means it’s best modeled *retroactively*.

RETROACTION TRAITS

There is one existing way to accomplish things retroactively in **GURPS**: the Gizmos advantage. For 5 points per use, the player can effectively “go back in time” by stating that his character had thought to bring a piece of gear. Gizmos can be treated as a specialized version of a broader advantage, leading to the following new trait.

Foresight

5 or 10 points/level

You plan so well that you can declare yourself to have taken retroactive actions. You may do this once per game session for each level of Foresight. The action must be something you did in the past that has a specific result *right now*. There are some limits on this, however.

1. *It must be an action you could realistically have taken.* If you’re whisked away to a secret headquarters for the first time, you cannot say that you’ve previously disabled the alarm system, because you’d never been there or even known where “there” is. You *could* say that you thought to bring along electronics tools with which to do so now, though. You also must possess all of the skills and abilities necessary to have accomplished the task (see below), though you may rely on skill defaults, if applicable.

2. *It cannot directly contradict any established facts.* If you’re being shot at, you cannot say that you decided to wear full body armor today, as no one could have overlooked that! You *can* say that you put on a concealed Kevlar vest this morning, but only if you haven’t taken your shirt off recently. However, if you’ve been injured by previous shots, the “sudden reveal” of your vest doesn’t change your previous injuries! Reconcile this however you can (e.g., the previous bullets must have missed the vest); if you cannot, this is not a legal use of Foresight.

*It just happened that
I know Mariella in Records,
who just happened to have
one, and I happened to
borrow it. Just for backup.*

– J.D. Robb,
Time of Death

3. *It cannot be obvious.* No one who wasn't involved can be aware of the action; its effects must lie in wait, unnoticed, until this very moment. So you cannot retroactively attack a foe or speak with him, because this would contradict established facts from the foe's point of view. For *indirect* interaction (e.g., picking someone's pocket), the GM should make your roll (see below) in secret, as a Quick Contest against the antagonist's Per or an appropriate skill. If you *win*, you acted unnoticed; otherwise, either you failed *or* he saw what you did and can now turn the situation around to his own benefit, using your Foresight against you!

Some actions are automatic; e.g., it requires no roll to remember to tuck a handcuff key under your tongue. For others, the GM should require whatever roll or rolls would be necessary. (Indirect interaction *always* demands a roll of some sort; use DX or IQ if nothing else fits.) If he feels that you're trying to do too much as a single "retroaction," he can either forbid it *or* penalize every roll involved (-2 per "extra action" is usually fair). If the roll fails, then your planning fell through; this still counts as a use of Foresight.

Any consequences of the action are paid for *now*, not in the past. (This may not be realistic, but it's the only way to prevent certain kinds of abuse, as well as to keep the GM sane.) For example, if you cast a spell in the past, you lose the FP now; if you entered a room full of toxic gas, the cyclic damage begins now; if you bribed someone, you must pay the money now; and so on.

With GM permission, you can involve other people in your past action. Each person must have been present at the time and able to act; the limitations above apply to everyone. Only voluntary help is possible; tricking an unsuspecting person into having assisted you in the past would be an action all on its own!

The 10-point version of this trait allows you to take any retroactive action, subject to GM approval and the limits above. The 5-point version must be limited to a specific type of action *or* actions pertaining to a specific situation, and should be written as (e.g.) "Foresight 1 (Ambushes) [5]." Suitable examples include (but are not limited to):

Ambushes: Being ready for surprise attacks.

Backup: Calling friends in advance for assistance.

Getaways: Stashing vehicles, unlocking doors, etc.

Gizmos: Bringing along useful gear.

Loyalty: Anticipating betrayals, lies, and moles (see vignette).

Research: Creating in-depth dossiers, maps, psych evaluations, etc.

Survival: Preparing for acts of God and forces of nature.

Swaps: Trading one thing for another when no one's looking (see vignette).

The GM should set the limit on how much Foresight each player can take. A suggested cap is no more than 15 points spent on any combination of Foresight. For example, a "big brain" might take Foresight 1 [10] + Foresight 1 (Research) [5], while the ex-soldier could have Foresight 3 (Ambushes) [15].

Serendipity

see p. B83

While Foresight lets you take retroactive actions, Serendipity gives you lucky breaks. These can produce similar results; e.g., Foresight lets you say you've hidden your car in an alley, while Serendipity might grant you a random, unlocked car idling in that alley. The key difference is *control*: Foresight is under your control, while the GM determines the details of Serendipity. (*Exception:* With the Wishing enhancement, from **GURPS Powers**, Serendipity is under the player's control, and can thus be used as Foresight if desired.)

The two traits complement each other well, however. If a player proposes a Foresight action a little too elaborate or unrealistic for the GM, he can use Serendipity to make it more plausible. For more on this synergy, see *Sporadic Brilliance* (below).

Example: Danielle (with Foresight 1 and Serendipity 1) must steal a prototype from a high-security lab without preparation. Her player says, "I've used my Foresight to anticipate this, so a few days ago I researched the lab's floor plans." The GM vetoes this, as the plans are not publicly available. Danielle counters, "Then what if my Serendipity was stumbling across a private database with this information, and my Foresight was to hack it, just in case?" The GM agrees, marks *both* her Foresight and her Serendipity as used, and lets her make a Computer Hacking roll to have discovered the floor plans.

Example of Foresight

Johnson just revealed his betrayal (see vignette), and Vincenzo's player wants to use his Foresight 1 to have swapped the bonds. The GM considers whether the action fits Foresight.

1. Vincenzo *could* realistically have done this, as he carried the case for the first half of their escape.

2. It *does not* contradict any established facts, because the briefcase has been shut this whole time.

3. It *may* be obvious, because Johnson has been next to Vincenzo the entire time. Thus, the GM rules that this counts as indirect interaction, requiring a Quick Contest against Johnson's Per.

The GM calls for a Sleight of Hand roll. Vincenzo's player asks to substitute Holdout, and the GM compromises by allowing a DX-based Holdout roll. The player suggests that if Vincenzo did this when they both hid in the break room, Johnson would have been distracted. The GM agrees, and secretly rolls a Quick Contest of Vincenzo's DX-based Holdout vs. Johnson's Per at -2. The con man *wins*, so the bonds were swapped.

But what if he had lost or tied? That would mean either the swap failed *or* it succeeded but Johnson was aware of it (GM's call). In the latter case, perhaps Johnson realized he'd been made, and quietly texted a friend to ambush the con men as they tried to get away!

SPORADIC BRILLIANCE

Chessmasters and planners will want as much Foresight as the GM allows, but others may only want to make use of it once in a while. By spending 2 character points (or the other types of points discussed in **GURPS Power-Ups 5: Impulse Buys**), any player may invoke Foresight as if he had the trait.

The GM may wish to limit how many times each player can do so; unless stated otherwise, assume once per player per game session. (This is in addition to uses of the *actual* Foresight advantage, if you have it.) Alternatively, he may invoke a “soft limit” by charging 2 points for the first use per session, 3 points for the second, 4 points for the third, and so on. (Or a “not-so-soft limit” by charging 2 points, then 4, then 8, then 16, etc.!)

If the GM uses *Serendipitous Guidance (Impulse Buys*, p. 8), he can emphasize the synergy between Foresight and Serendipity by allowing “Serendipity Points” to be spent on uses of Foresight *and* allowing each use of the Foresight advantage to reduce the cost of *Player Guidance (Impulse Buys*, pp. 7-9) by 1 character point (instead of providing its usual effect). Specialized versions of Foresight only provide this discount for coincidences directly related to the area of expertise; e.g., Foresight (Gizmos) could reduce the cost of player guidance to find a useful piece of gear.

FREE FOR ALL

If cinematic planning is a focus of the campaign, the GM may wish to use any or all of the following options to encourage its use. Each one may be combined with Foresight (pp. 32-33) and/or *Sporadic Brilliance* (pp. 33-34) – or it might replace them!

Guaranteed Insight

Each player gets a certain number of free Foresight uses per *adventure* (not per session) – usually one or two. Even if the GM grants more than one such use, a player may only use *one* per game session. This limit only applies to the freebie, not to any uses of personal Foresight or to *Sporadic Brilliance* purchased with character points.

This may be overpowered in all but the most cinematic campaigns, however. For a more tempered approach, grant the entire *party* a few uses of Foresight per *adventure*. Anyone may use one freely, unless the *majority* of the party vetoes the use. As above, the party may only use one per session.

Divination

If someone has a trait that lets him see the future, the GM may allow him to use it to justify retroactive planning. Good example abilities include (but are not limited to) Precognition (p. B77), Divination (*GURPS Magic*, p. 108), Prognostication or Visions (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, pp. 37-39), and Path of Chance (for Ritual Path magic, from the *GURPS Monster Hunters* series). Danger Sense would not apply, since it doesn’t allow enough of a gap between the sense that something’s going to go awry and when it happens.

When a hero finds himself in a situation he could have seen coming, he may choose to roll for his divination method. (If it doesn’t normally require a roll, roll against IQ.) If it has a cost (e.g., in FP), he pays that *now*, as for Foresight. The results:

Critical success: He may invoke a use of Foresight for free!

Success: No effect.

Failure: His vision of what the future was *going* to be was simply wrong; his next (margin of failure) actions are at -2 as his planning turns out to be counterproductive.

Critical Failure: As for a failure, plus the GM should come up with something mean. Perhaps the *deja vu* is overwhelming

enough to stun him (roll Will every turn to recover) or his preparation gives an advantage to the enemy!

For more on this, see *Random Thought Table: Forewarned Is Forearmed* in *Pyramid* #3/48: *Secret Magic*.

Skill Beyond Skill

At the GM’s option, incredibly high levels of skill may substitute for actual divination abilities. If so, *anyone* may attempt to use the rules under *Divination* (above), rolling against an appropriate skill instead of a future-seeing ability. However, there are two changes.

- The roll is at -10! Alternatively, spend 1 character point (as per *Impulse Buys*) to roll at no penalty.

- Both the current situation *and* the retroactive action must *directly* relate to the skill; e.g., you could roll against Tactics to have prepared a defense against an ambush, or against Research to have looked up obscure data on a subject.

This option is best for heroes with skills in at least the mid-20s, who have a decent chance of success even with the penalty. Those with more modest skill levels are usually better off spending the 2 character points on a guaranteed use of Foresight – assuming the GM allows it, of course.

“You just happened
to have a transmitter.”

“You’d be surprised
what I just happen to
have.”

“Maybe not anymore.”

– Dean Koontz,
*Dark Rivers
of the Heart*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Reverend Jason “PK” Levine has rewritten his past more often than the Joker. His advance planning set in mind a Rube Goldbergian plan that culminated in his position as the Assistant *GURPS* Line Editor . . . and there are hints that this position was only one step in a much grander plan of global conquest! All anyone can say about him for sure is that he loves the mysterious wife, family, and pets who he keeps hidden away in the north Georgia mountains.

RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

\$1 FOLLOWED BY 2D ZEROES

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

“Well, we had to drop in a rebuilt engine, transmission, upper and lower ball joints, control arm bushings, star-nosed mole gear, whining three-toed spring cog strut ballast hydraulic cam shaft softener, etc., etc. – the total is \$4648.72. And here’s your signature on the work order. Heh-heh.”

*“Oh, we don’t have anything like **that** kind of money – probably **never will.**”*

– Sam & Max Surfin’ the Highway

One of the central aspects of many action-related games is the monetary MacGuffin: a sum of money (or monetary value) that propels the action along. Some action movies mistakenly believe they need to ramp up the intensity by offering eye-opening amounts of cash: “The Mob is trying to hijack *one billion* dollars!”

However, it’s a mistake to think “more money” equals “more tension.” Especially in an ongoing campaign, there is the danger of escalating implausible sums to ludicrous levels. (“The cult is trying to steal *two billion* dollars!”) Rather, it’s far more fruitful to think about the underlying assumptions of the money involved, and see what adventure possibilities it opens.

IT’S NOT THE MONEY; IT’S THE PRINCIPLE

In *The Return of the Man from U.N.C.L.E.: The Fifteen Years Later Affair* (a title so unwieldy it carries a cane), the evil enemy agency steals a nuclear bomb and holds it hostage for \$350 million – about \$800 million in today’s dollars. That’s a lot of money for those of us who are in the gaming industry, but it’s not a terribly huge sum in the grand scheme of things; the U.S. defense budget in 1983 was along the lines of \$258 *billion*. In other words, if U.N.C.L.E. wrote a check to make the problem go away, it’d be about 0.14% of the annual budget. (Yes, U.N.C.L.E. was a fictional organization tied to the United Nations, and I used U.S. budget numbers, but c’mon . . . if the endgame involved baddies blowing up a U.S. city with a nuke, Washington is likely to toss a few bucks into the kitty to keep that from happening.)

However, even if the government were entirely capable of paying off evildoers, action heroes would still likely be involved; after all, there’s a no-negotiations-with-terrorists principle involved. Plus, in the event of “give us money or we blow up a nuke,” it’s likely the bad guys will blow up the nuke anyway (as was planned by the adversaries in *TRotMfUTFYLA*).

Many, many action protagonists (and antagonists) are driven in some fashion by principle. It’s an interesting challenge for the GM to try to come up with a level of “inconsequential” monetary incentives that will still get the heroes involved. Some examples:

- The wheelman has dreamed of always defeating Racer X in a race; when X competes in the underground invitational, the wheelman is likely to be involved – even though the “prize” is \$100.
- Organized crime has stolen the \$3,000 needed to keep the local tavern open, and the bank is demanding payment tomorrow.
- A little girl’s father is missing; she says she can afford \$5 a day, “plus expenses,” for the heroes to track him down. (The PCs recognize she probably can’t afford “expenses” above candy money.)

In game terms, “inconsequential” sums are likely to be around three days’ worth (or less) of the character’s wages (see p. B517 for more details); this amount can be multiplied by the number of heroes. Thus, in a TL8 campaign, a Poor bodyguard would probably find \$52 to be a sum where “it’d be the principle of the thing” to put his life on the line, while a group of six Comfortable hit men would consider \$3,120 to be “chump change” – but maybe worth collecting (instead of paying out of pocket) if it’d teach someone a lesson. These aren’t hard-and-fast rules, but just a way to wrap your mind around what various figures “feel” like.

Even considering these factors, it’s always worthwhile to toss out a lowball problem that the heroes are expected to just ignore or pay out of pocket. As of the time of this writing, the IMDB has a summary of *TRotMfUTFYLA* that claims the amount of ransom demanded was \$300,000; at that low a level, the heroes might be tempted to toss a few bundles of wrapped bills out of petty cash and see how it plays out . . . the top-secret U.N.C.L.E. headquarters probably costs more than that per *day*.

Multiply by 0 Error

For all these back-of-envelope calculations, treat Dead Broke as the same as Poor (since otherwise you're multiplying by 0) or – if a differentiation between Dead Broke and Poor is useful – as one-half the Monthly Pay Multiplier of Poor . . . in other words, a multiplier of 1/10.

A SIGNIFICANT SUM

Further up the monetary food chain, you've got sums of money that are eye opening. These aren't sums that are likely to cause anyone to lose sleep, but they're an honest (or not-so-honest) amount of money.

Generally, most PCs are going to view sums of about a month's wages to a year's wages as being significant. Thus a TL8 person of Average wealth will find \$2,600-\$31,200 to be noteworthy. It's not going to let anyone quit his day job, but it's going to be a hefty check (or pile of cash) to ignore.

In fact, this figure may already be factored into the campaign. For example, if the action heroes' full-time job is action-heroing, and they average about 12 "jobs" a year, then it stands to reason that they make 1/12th their annual wage per job. Similarly, if an Average-wealth person supplements his lifestyle by taking odd (dangerous) jobs, then the \$10,000 he rakes in from that sideline is enough to put him in at a Comfortable wealth level (by dollars if not necessarily by rules).

In the action genre, "significant sums" mostly come up when a job goes haywire. "I'm not getting paid enough for this!" is the battle cry of everyone who expected a significant sum and then found themselves hunted by six different blood-thirsty agencies.

THAT'S LIFE-CHANGING MONEY!

Winning the lottery. Never needing to pull another gig. Bringing your entire family out of squalor and into respectability. Whatever the dream, this chunk of change is enough to radically alter the recipients' lives . . . *if* they can successfully get it. For perhaps most action stories in movies, this is the level of money involved. If the heroes can pull off this one heist, they're set for life. In most games, the GM needs to be careful about dangling this amount of money around; after all, "we never need to work again" is another way of saying, "these heroes are done!"

In game terms, this amount of money is trickier to represent, and it may just be easier to tweak the character sheet. If the hero never needs to work again, then adjust his Wealth and give him levels of Independent Income. If it's enough to jump-start a life to a more lucrative strata of society, then adjust Rank and Wealth as needed. If the game doesn't deal much with Wealth levels, just give the heroes a total amount of cash that has an appropriate number of zeros on the end. In general, this sum is probably at least 10-20 times the old annual income. Thus, a person of Average means would find a (tax-free) check of \$312,000-\$624,000 to open up a *lot* of possibilities that didn't exist before . . . as will a pile of cash totaling \$62,400-\$124,800 if he's Poor.

At this level of reward, you're likely to find outside forces in competition for the money – especially if they are doing

something nefarious. After all, if you're willing to kill someone for a million dollars, then you're probably willing to take care of a group of meddling PCs at the same time . . .

THAT'S WORLD-CHANGING MONEY!!

This is a sum of money that's of the sort that Dr. Evil would pronounce: "One . . . hundred . . . *billion* dollars." Really, it's a sum of cash that's likely to mark the end of the campaign if the heroes get ahold of it.

At this level, you're likely to have *everyone* after you – that is, anyone who's aware that this sum is in play is likely to have agents involved. This should be obvious, but it's established within the bounds of what we've already determined. Let's toss out a figure of \$1 billion. That's enough to promise 3,205 people "life-changing money" if they can get their hands on it . . . and you can probably overpromise many times over, especially if you only need to pay out to those who take care of those meddling PCs.

From a metagame standpoint, players will probably realize that cash at this level will likely end the campaign. They may even expect the cash will be denied them in some way . . . if it ever existed. ("You risked your lives for a penny-skimming algorithm that you *believed* was real?!?") However, it can still be fun to have such an over-the-top reward in play.

CLEARING YOUR CASH

So what's the point of wrapping your mind around these (admittedly) arbitrary distinctions?

For one thing, having a firm idea in mind of what reward levels are like helps you design adventures. A mission revolving around world-changing money is likely to be unbelievable (in more ways than one). An adventure that offers significant rewards is probably not *supposed* to have anything untoward happen, while one that offers life-changing money is likely to be really difficult or involve a double-cross or three. And a tale where the reward is based on principle is probably going to be a character-driven, personal adventure.

It can also be useful to sum up a bunch of prospective jobs, or to categorize past capers. Pigeonholing everything into Principle/Significant/Life/World designations can be a shorthand way to offer key mission information, while having such designations can be helpful in using (say) the *Abstract Wealth* rules from *Pyramid* #3/44: *Alternate GURPS II*.

However, one thing that isn't important about all this is the degree of motivation it necessarily prompts in an individual hero. After all, people have killed each other in alleyways over a few dollars . . . Some action heroes are always willing to die, whether it's for all the money in the world or to help a girl learn the truth about her missing father.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Steven Marsh is a freelance writer and editor. He has contributed to roleplaying game releases from Green Ronin, West End Games, White Wolf, Hogshead Publishing, and others. He has been editing *Pyramid* for over 10 years; during that time, he has won four Origins awards. He lives in Indiana.

ODDS AND ENDS

IT'S COMPLICATED . . .

Any action adventure depends on complications to keep those do-gooders on their toes. Here are some ideas.

Locales

- Something is moving that shouldn't be moving (a building, an "abandoned" ship, the ground).
- Something is not moving that would normally be moving (a beached submarine, an elevator).
- Something is moving much faster than expected (an uncontrolled car, an experimental train, a hacked pedestrian transport conveyer).
- Something is much bigger than it initially seemed (a coffee-shop gateway to a criminal empire, a football field that opens to reveal a secret airport).

In the Heat of Battle

- The bad guys seem to be purposely *trying* to fail at killing/capturing the heroes.
- The previously suicidal bad guys unexpectedly surrender.
- A large influx of innocents stumble onto a dangerous situation.
- The (lack of) battle is in a situation where neither side wants to engage in action (an explosives factory, at a maternity ward against somewhat moral foes, inside the gasbag of an airship).
- The target turns out not to exist.

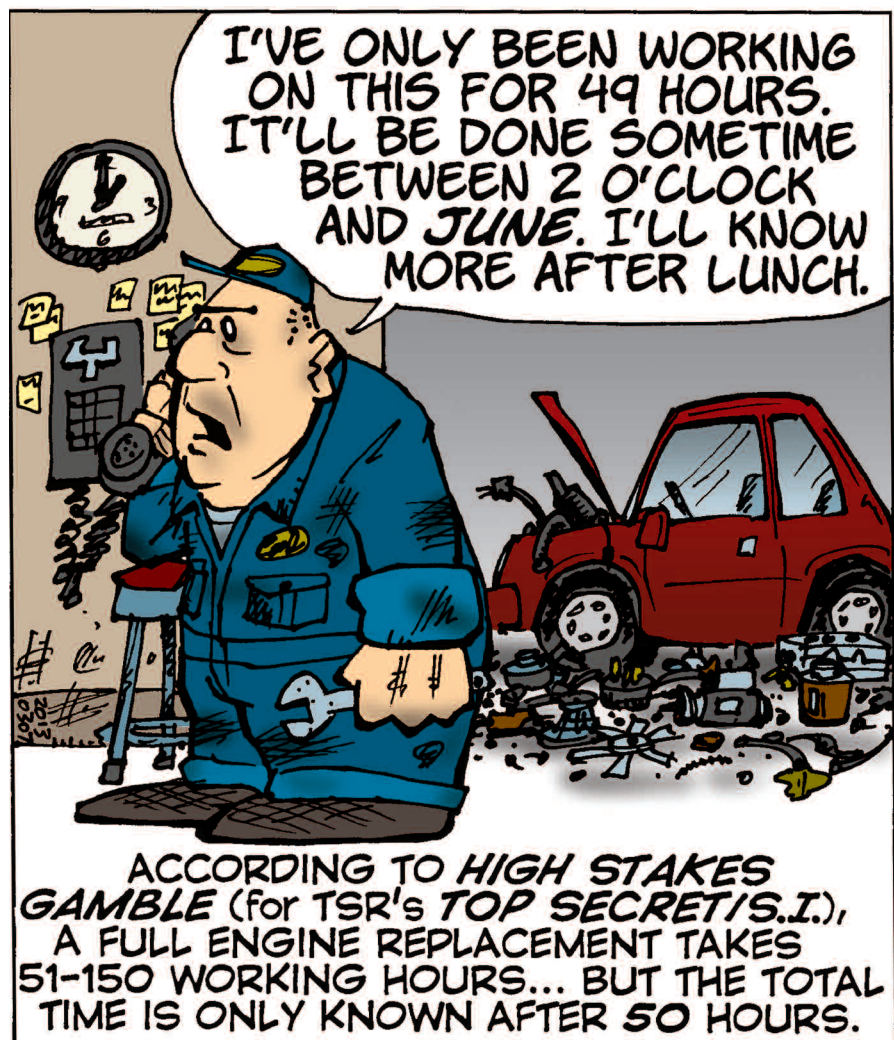
Missions

- A mission that is substantially *easier* than expected.
- A time-sensitive situation where there are two or three possible locales where the exploit can resolve.
- A situation where an *untrusted* source tries to hire the heroes to do something they were already planning on doing.
- A mission where the heroes are "unknowingly" (with or without quotes) hired to resolve the fallout of an earlier mission they were involved in.
- A time-sensitive situation where there are two or three *confirmed* locales where an exploit can resolve.

- A situation where two trusted sources hire the heroes to work opposite sides of a mission. ("You must protect Consulate Smythe, or else there will be dire consequences." "You must neutralize Smythe, or he will carry out unspeakable crimes.")

MURPHY'S RULES

BY GREG HYLAND



Got a *Murphy's Rule* of your own? Send it to murphy@sjgames.com

ABOUT *GURPS*

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by email: info@sjgames.com. Resources include:

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow – see what’s new at gurps.sjgames.com, or visit www.warehouse23.com.

e23. Our e-publishing division offers *GURPS* adventures, play aids, and support in PDF form . . . digital copies of our books, plus exclusive material available only on e23! Just head over to e23.sjgames.com.

Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for errata, updates, Q&A, and much

more. To discuss *GURPS* with SJ Games staff and fellow gamers, come to our forums at forums.sjgames.com. The *Pyramid* web page is pyramid.sjgames.com.

Bibliographies. Many of our books have extensive bibliographies, and we’re putting them online – with links to let you buy the resources that interest you! Go to each book’s web page and look for the “Bibliography” link.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases are available on our website – see above.

GURPS rules and statistics in this magazine are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book.

STUCK FOR AN ADVENTURE? NO PROBLEM.

**e23 sells high-quality game adventures
and supplements in PDF format.**

- Get complete sample adventures free for *GURPS, In Nomine, and Traveller!*
- PDFs from the major players in online publishing: Ronin Arts, Ken Hite, Atlas Games, and 01 Games.
- New gems from up-and-coming publishers, like Atomic Sock Monkey Press and Expeditious Retreat Press.
- Digital editions of out-of-print classics, from *Orcslayer* and the complete run of *ADQ* to *GURPS China* and *GURPS Ice Age*.
- Fully searchable files of *GURPS Fourth Edition* supplements.
- Original material for *Transhuman Space* and *In Nomine*, with new *GURPS* supplements from Phil Masters, David Pulver, Sean Punch, and William Stoddard!
- Buy it once; have it always. Download your purchases again whenever you need to.



Download ● Print ● Play
STEVE JACKSON GAMES

e23 is part of Warehouse 23, the online store at Steve Jackson Games.
Warehouse 23 is also the official Internet retailer for Atlas Games, Ninja Burger, and many other publishers.
Visit us today at www.warehouse23.com for all your game STUFF!