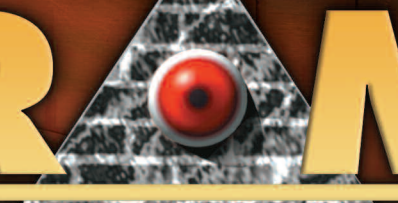


# PYRAMID<sup>®</sup>



Issue 3/54 April '13

## SOCIAL ENGINEERING<sup>™</sup>



### THE CIVIL ARTS IN *GURPS*

by William H. Stoddard

THE PALAIS DU MONDE  
by Matt Riggsby

SPEAKING IN TONGUES  
by Jason "PK" Levine

HAND OF HERMES  
by David L. Pulver

CITY MANAGEMENT  
by Matt Riggsby

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*Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee, and just as hard to sleep after.*

– Anne Morrow Lindbergh

## 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  
Douglas Shuler

INTERIOR ART  
Greg Hyland  
Matt Riggsby

# IN THIS ISSUE

Flirtatious dance at a diplomat's ball. Tense negotiations with a desperado holding hostages, with nothing to lose. The vital speech to rally the people against their tyrannical overlords. Sometimes it's not enough to sneak and kill. Sometimes heroes need to need to persuade, bluff, and intimidate. This issue of *Pyramid* looks at being social, from the interpersonal to the municipal.

Take your social interaction skills to the next level with *The Civil Arts in GURPS*. William H. Stoddard expands on the foundation of his ENnie Award-winning *GURPS Social Engineering* with optional *GURPS* techniques and styles that add additional depth to personal encounters. If you liked the rules in *Social Engineering*, you'll go crazy for this crunch!

With your new mastery of interpersonal interactions, head over to *The Palais du Monde*. Herein are the essentials for an adventure that revolves around intrigue and investigation, by *GURPS Hot Spots: Renaissance Florence* author Matt Riggsby. It includes character summaries (with *GURPS* stats), a detailed description of the sumptuous titular locale, and full-color maps.

Test your civil-arts experience as you improve relations between monsters and monster hunters! This month's Eidetic Memory by David L. Pulver – co-author of *GURPS Fourth Edition* – presents a rising charity organization called the *Hand of Hermes*. This systemless article can add a diplomatic angle to any secret-supernatural setting, from *GURPS Monster Hunters* to *GURPS Illuminati*.

How can you be a *GURPS* hero gifted at *Speaking in Tongues* without spending a boatload of points? Check out *GURPS* Assistant Line Editor Jason "PK" Levine's suggestions for applying the rules as written to mitigate this problem – or use any of the new options to add multilingual mayhem to your setting.

You'll need all the social-savvy you can muster to be part of *City Management*. Using concepts introduced in *Social Engineering* and *GURPS City Stats*, these guidelines explain how to improve an existing city or found a new one – including skill rolls and project costs.

Let this month's Random Thought Table show you how to take the fight out of the game, then interact with our Odds and Ends that shoots first and *doesn't* ask questions later. Finally, relax with a *Murphy's Rules* that's a real "scream." This interpersonal issue of *Pyramid* is one that folks will be talking about!

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

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# FROM THE EDITOR

## SHOULD SOCIAL ENGINEERING HAVE BEEN CALLED TALK-TECH?

Every time two people interact, each wants something from the other; it is from that tension that drama (or comedy) arises. That's true in screenplays, real life, and – of course – the characters of roleplaying games.

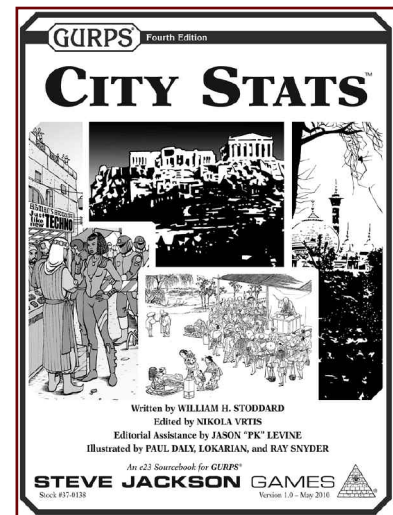
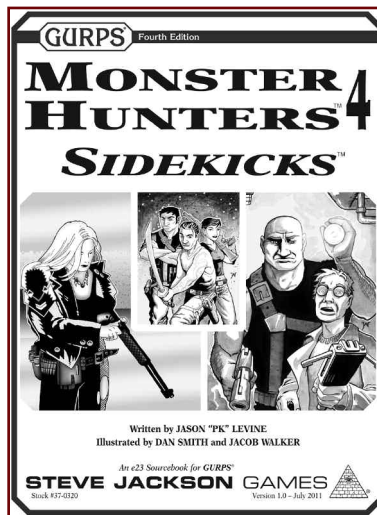
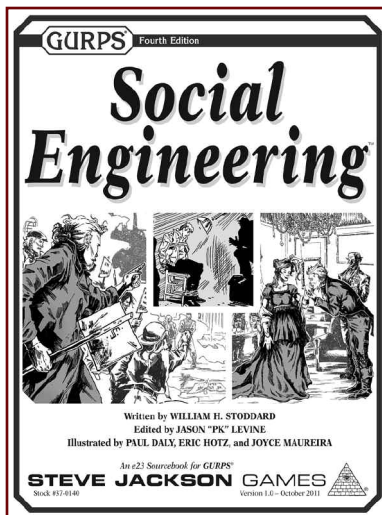
Building off the foundations of systems like *GURPS* from the late 1980s – which included skills and systems for intimidation, haggling, acting, etc. – the mega-selling RPGs of the 1990s tried to prioritize those social aspects of heroic (and villainous) interactions. Entire *settings* were built around the idea that dramatic resolution might come from social interaction rather than at the end of a sword or gun; the most powerful entities might not have any direct combat abilities whatsoever.

It is in this spirit of celebrating all things social that we present this issue. The modular and expandable nature of *GURPS* made it easy for groups to incorporate *GURPS Social*

*Engineering* when it was released in 2011 (and *GURPS City Stats* the year before that), and the modular nature of *Pyramid* will hopefully provide you ample opportunity to include these new options and rules to your game. Once you have new rules, it's natural for more scenes or adventures revolving around those possibilities to spring up. In the same way that having systems for spreading propaganda or codifying cities adds those choices to your adventurers' arsenals, we hope the options herein spark ideas for new encounters that weren't possible before. In fact, it might even set off whole *adventures*, like a visit to the Palais du Monde (details start on p. 11).

## WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

This issue is all about being social! What better way to practice than to talk to us about how we're doing? Was this issue better than a surprise visit from a friend? Or was there no party in our witty repartee? Tell us your thoughts via email at [pyramid@sjgames.com](mailto:pyramid@sjgames.com), or use the space-age public communication methods located at [forums.sjgames.com](http://forums.sjgames.com).



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# THE CIVIL ARTS IN GURPS

BY WILLIAM H. STODDARD

*GURPS Martial Arts* provides rules for defining martial-arts styles: groups of skills and techniques that are learned together, as an integrated approach to fighting. Each martial art, from bare-knuckle boxing to fencing, has a Style Familiarity perk that grants a number of benefits. Later *GURPS* works have generalized the idea of a style (for example, to magical schools). Among other benefits, a style grants knowledge of the culture where a style originated, and often opens the door to schools or communities where it's taught and practiced.

Social skills, too, are often associated with particular social groups and cultures. Military officers learn the art of

command from more experienced officers; merchants learn to bargain by working for other merchants before they go into business for themselves. Being good with people isn't just an instinct; it can be learned. Different ways of being good with people can also be defined as styles. These styles are the *civil arts*.

This optional extension of *GURPS Social Engineering* shows how to create a style for social interaction, and it defines a number of such styles. The focus is on styles useful in "adventure" situations. These civil arts do for "face" characters what the martial arts do for warriors.

## TECHNIQUES

The styles build on techniques and perks from *GURPS Social Engineering*, but some new ones appear as well. A number of techniques are based on social skills, although none of these arts include cinematic skills that have prerequisites such as Trained by a Master or Weapons Master. However, some include other cinematic skills such as Musical Influence, or cinematic versions of skills such as Erotic Art.

*Without some dissimulation no  
business can be carried on at all.*  
– Lord Chesterfield

### REALISTIC TECHNIQUES

The realistic techniques include the following.

#### Agenda

*Default:* Diplomacy.

*Prerequisite:* Diplomacy; cannot exceed Diplomacy+3.

You are skilled at simplifying a complex request for aid or information by breaking it down into action items (in Latin,

*agenda*) or bullet points. This offsets the penalty to an Influence roll for a complex request. Roll against Agenda as modified by the penalty for complexity, or the basic Diplomacy skill, whichever is less. You can't gain a net bonus from applying this technique to an inherently simple request!

#### Badger Game

Average

See *GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 38.

#### Big Store

Hard

*Default:* Leadership.

*Prerequisite:* Leadership; cannot exceed Leadership+5.

This is less a con in its own right than an enabler or enhancer for other cons. It has many variants, but all involve setting up what looks like an ongoing organization, but is really a false front with nothing behind it – and therefore costs far less.

The Big Store is a group performance effort with a formal leader, who makes the Big Store roll (see *Team Efforts* in *GURPS Social Engineering*, pp. 33-34). This complements a roll vs. the average Acting skill of the group's members. If the members are all NPCs, the GM may assign them a rating of Novice (effective skill 10), Trained (effective skill 12), Good (effective skill 14), or Elite (effective skill 16). Unfamiliarity or other penalties may apply:

- -2 to both the Big Store and Acting rolls if the leader and group haven't worked together for at least two weeks.

- -2 to both the Big Store and Acting rolls if the mimicked organization is a type the leader and group haven't rehearsed together at least eight times.

- -2 to the Big Store roll if the physical setting is a quick improvisation (creating an elaborate "stage set" avoids this penalty; higher-budget setups can give bonuses as for high-quality equipment).

A Big Store can act as an enhancer to many sorts of long cons, and even some kinds of short cons. When it's used that way, treat the group's Acting as a complementary skill to the main roll for bringing off the con. However, having multiple "performers" doubles the modifiers: -4 for critical failure, -2 for failure, +2 for success, +4 for critical success.

Some long cons *require* a Big Store setup to make them possible at all. Roll a Quick Contest of the group Acting skill (aided by the Big Store roll) vs. the mark's IQ. If it works, the mark accepts the setup as a bookmaking operation, charity, church or temple, stock brokerage, or whatever sort of organization it pretends to be, and the con can proceed. A comparable, though less elaborate, setup is needed for some short cons, such as fortune-telling fraud (where the "fortune teller" offers to remove a curse from the mark's money).

*Whew! After a tango like that  
the couple ought to get married.*

– Robert A. Heinlein,  
*The Number  
of the Beast*

## Close Dancing

Hard

*Default:* Dancing.

*Prerequisite:* Dancing; cannot exceed Dancing+5.

In couples dancing, where you have the same partner for an entire dance, you can use Close Dancing in an Influence roll toward a partner who is capable of being romantically interested in you. This may represent any level of contact from the touching of hands to a full-body embrace; the effect comes from being a little closer than is culturally accepted.

## Cutting Out

Hard

Defined in *GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 81.

## Dangerous Request

Hard

*Default:* Savoir-Faire (High Society)-3.

*Prerequisite:* Savoir-Faire (High Society); cannot exceed Savoir-Faire (High Society).

Ordinarily, requests for aid or information have a -3 modifier if helping or answering would endanger the subject. If you have invested in Dangerous Request, you can reduce or negate this modifier by suggesting that your higher standing makes it *more* dangerous to refuse to help you.

## Elevated Speech

Average

*Default:* Savoir-Faire (High Society).

*Prerequisite:* Savoir-Faire (High Society); cannot exceed Savoir-Faire (High Society)+5.

You have mastered a variety of formulae for honoring and expressing good will toward a social elite. You can use Elevated Speech in Influence rolls for standard requests made in public, such as gaining admission to a royal court.

## Elicitation

Hard

*Default:* Prerequisite skill.

*Prerequisite:* Any Influence skill except Intimidation; cannot exceed prerequisite skill+5.

This technique provides a subtler method for getting information than Interrogation. In fact, ideally, the subject doesn't realize he was being questioned, or doesn't know what the topic was! Basically, Elicitation is a request for information, handled not as a reaction roll but as an Influence roll. The questioner approaches the topic indirectly, while overtly seeming to converse about something else; apply a penalty of the questioner's choice to the Influence skill, and the same penalty to the subject's Will. If you have bought up Elicitation, roll against either Elicitation with the penalty applied, or the unmodified Influence skill, whichever is less; that is, Elicitation lets you steer the conversation in a less obvious way, but is never more effective than just coming out and asking.

## Going Viral

Hard

Defined in *GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 81.

## Hinting

Hard

Defined in *GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 81.

## Irony

Hard

Defined in *GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 81.

## Mission Assignment

Hard

*Default:* Leadership-5.

*Prerequisite:* Leadership; cannot exceed Leadership.

Roll against Mission Assignment when you are sending NPC members of a combat team into danger, but not going yourself (see p. B204). On a success, they carry out your orders as if you were there.



## Pig in a Poke

*Default:* Fast-Talk.

*Prerequisites:* Fast-Talk; cannot exceed Fast-Talk+5.

One of the oldest con games, going back to the Middle Ages. It involves selling a “pig” concealed in a bag for a customer to butcher. Roll a Quick Contest of Fast-Talk vs. IQ; if you win, the victim is distracted from actually looking in the bag. The animal in the bag, though alive and squirming and about the size of a piglet, turns out to be a cat or a small dog. The Gold Brick is another version of this scam. The White Van Scam (selling supposedly hot, bootlegged, or off-the-books goods, often electronic, that turn out to be defective or worthless) combines Pig in a Poke with Big Store (for the van, uniforms, and packaging; see pp. 4-5).

Hard

## Piggybacking

*Default:* Intelligence Analysis-5.

*Prerequisite:* Intelligence Analysis; cannot exceed Intelligence Analysis.

The big challenge in memetics is getting a newly introduced meme past the resistance of the target population (treated as a Quick Contest of Propaganda vs. average Will). Piggybacking bypasses this resistance by attaching the new meme to one that is *already* current in the target population. Treat the margin of success on the Piggybacking roll as a penalty to the effective Will of the target population.

Hard

“She is my ears and tongue,”  
said Lord Peter, dramatically,  
“and especially my nose. She asks  
questions which a young man  
could not put without a blush.”

– Dorothy Sayers,  
*Unnatural Death*

## Shell Game

See *GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 38.

Hard

## Short Change

*Default:* Fast-Talk.

*Prerequisites:* Fast-Talk and Sleight of Hand; cannot exceed Fast-Talk+5.

Short-change artists have tricks for getting more money back from a store clerk or bank teller than they handed over, by engaging in multiple exchanges involving stacks of small bills, which overload the victim’s mind so that he loses track

Hard

of the correct totals. Roll a Quick Contest of Short Change vs. IQ; your margin of victory acts as a penalty to the victim’s Per or Observation roll to resist your Sleight of Hand. Some short-change artists have an accomplice ask the victim for service immediately afterward, delaying his realization that he has a problem.

## Sociometry

Average

Defined in *GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 81.

## Spanish Prisoner

Hard

See *GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 38.

## Truce

Hard

*Default:* Savoir-Faire (Military).

*Prerequisite:* Savoir-Faire (Military); cannot exceed Savoir-Faire (Military)+4.

When a military force (of at least five people) under your command is in a potential combat situation with another military force, you may attempt Truce rather than relying on a reaction roll. Roll a Quick Contest of Truce vs. Will. If you win, the other side has a Good reaction. If you tie or lose, roll their reaction normally.

*Modifiers:* +2 if you succeed at a Leadership roll first, as it makes your force look more prepared for battle. If you are leading a force larger than what your Military Rank justifies, a penalty equal to the difference between your Rank and that normally required for command.

## CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES

Cinematic techniques go beyond what is usually considered realistic, to the kinds of things that are described in legends or epics, or shown in movies. The GM may decide not to allow them at all. If they are permitted in a campaign, many of them have advantages as prerequisites, and usually cannot be attempted by someone without those advantages, though the GM may decide otherwise. If so, they still cannot be improved from the default unless all the prerequisites are met.

## Beguilement

Hard

*Default:* Prerequisite skill-5.

*Prerequisites:* Voice and any of Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Performance, Politics, Public Speaking, Sex Appeal, or Singing; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

You have learned to pitch your voice to appeal to a hearer’s emotions. Roll a Quick Contest of Beguilement vs. Will after you have spoken for a minute. If you succeed, the hearer’s Will is reduced by your margin of victory for any Influence rolls you attempt in the next hour. You can have this effect on an entire crowd or a single person, but if you apply it to an entire crowd, you gain the benefit only when you try to influence the entire crowd.

## Crowd Song

Hard

*Default:* Musical Influence.

*Prerequisites:* Musical Influence and Singing-12; cannot exceed Musical Influence+5.

As seen in many musical comedies, when you start singing, you can inspire your listeners to form a chorus, singing and (optionally) dancing. Apply your margin of success as a bonus to their Singing and Dancing skill; if they don't have these skills, start at their default values. A member of the audience who doesn't want to take part can resist with Will, but he'll stand out dramatically if he succeeds, and will feel the urge to make his exit. If the entire audience is hostile, they can all try to resist with a single roll vs. average Will.

## Fascination

Hard

*Default:* Sex Appeal-5.

*Prerequisites:* Charisma 1 and Sex Appeal; cannot exceed Sex Appeal.

Fascination is achieved by gazing steadily into the eyes of a potential lover. It does not work on anyone who could not be sexually attracted to you, or who cannot see you. It's normally done at close range; apply a penalty of -1 per full yard of separation. After five minutes, roll a Quick Contest of Fascination vs. the target's Will; your Charisma adds to this roll.

The effects are somewhat like those of Hypnotism. Your target is not put to sleep, but will passively gaze into your eyes as long as you hold his gaze, and he will respond to your suggestions as if he had made an Excellent reaction roll. You *cannot* give him "posthypnotic suggestions." He has a penalty equal to your margin of victory in the Quick Contest to notice ordinary interruptions. He has no penalty to notice threats to his life or his highest values. If he does notice any interruptions, the fascination is broken.

## Personal Guarantee

Hard

*Default:* Diplomacy-2.

*Prerequisites:* Charisma 1 and Diplomacy; cannot exceed Diplomacy.

In attempting to establish a relationship of personal trust (see *Building Trust* in **GURPS Social Engineering**, p. 40), you can make an immediate offer, rather than waiting a month to gain trust. Buying up this technique reduces the penalty for such immediate offers. If the offer is accepted, it represents trust in your visible personal integrity. This technique only applies with an *initial* offer; if that's not accepted, you still need to wait a month before the next offer to avoid a -2 penalty.

## Power Gaze

Hard

*Default:* Intimidation-5.

*Prerequisites:* Charisma 1 and Intimidation; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This is the direct gaze of a king or other superior, which in legend lesser mortals cannot meet. Roll a Quick Contest of Power Gaze vs. Will at the first meeting of eyes. If you win, the other person must lower his eyes, and for the duration of the encounter, his Will is at a penalty against your Influence rolls equal to your margin of victory. If you succeed by 5 or more points, he must make an immediate Fright Check, at a penalty equal to your Charisma.

This effect requires a meeting of eyes at close range; apply a -1 penalty per full yard of distance.

## Resonance

Hard

*Default:* Prerequisite skill-5.

*Prerequisites:* Voice and one of Performance, Public Speaking, or Singing; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

When you recite a poem (with Performance or Public Speaking) or sing a song (with Singing), the quality of your voice helps make it stick in people's minds. Roll a Quick Contest of Resonance vs. the average Will of the audience. Any audience member who tries to recall the poem or song afterward gets your margin of victory as a bonus to IQ for a roll to remember the words and melody. If this doesn't work on the first such try, the person has forgotten the song. He may get another attempt, if he attends another performance and if the bonus from that performance is *higher* than the previous bonus.

# SOCIAL-INTERACTION STYLES

Social-interaction styles work like martial-arts styles. Each style is represented by a Style Familiarity perk; for example, a salesman would buy Style Familiarity (Salesmanship). The prerequisite for buying a Style Familiarity is having 1 point in *each* of the noncinematic skills that make up the style. Style Familiarity in turn is a prerequisite for raising the style's techniques above their defaults. Style Familiarity also gives you +1 on all rolls to notice *or* resist the style skills of a fellow practitioner; e.g., Style Familiarity (The Short Con) gives you +1 to notice or resist someone's use of Fast-Talk that was learned as part of The Short Con style.

The total cost of a civil art is 1 point more than the number of noncinematic skills it includes. If you have the correct Style Familiarity, you can buy one of the style's perks per 10 points invested in the style's techniques and required skills. See **GURPS Social Engineering**, pp. 77-79, for perks.

Note that it's rarely cost-effective to buy a large number of techniques for one skill. It's usually a better idea to pick one or two techniques as "signature moves" and specialize in them.

Style Familiarities are available for the following civil arts. These are only a few samples! Use them as inspiration for inventing other civil arts as needed for a campaign and culture.

## BARDIC ARTS

8 points

Bards are not only performers and entertainers, but preservers of knowledge, in the form of memorized stories and poems, which they are expected to pass on to others. In many cultures, they also have a religious function, being thought of as divinely inspired. Bards typically perform for kings and the nobility, and have suitable manners for royal courts.

Rival bards may compete in a variety of ways, from riddle contests to mocking songs. Exchanges of mockery (“flyting”) can be aided by the Irony technique, which bards may apply to Singing as well as Public Speaking. In legend, bards sometimes know how to physically injure others through curses or satires.

The typical image of a bard is of a singer accompanying himself on a stringed instrument such as a harp or lyre. Bards often focus on one particular member of the audience while singing or telling stories (Cutting Out).

*Skills:* Expert Skill (Bardic Lore), Literature, Musical Instrument (Harp or Lyre), Poetry, Public Speaking, Savoir-Faire (High Society), Singing.

*Techniques:* Cutting Out, Elevated Speech, Irony.

*Cinematic Skills:* Any Enthrallment skill, Musical Influence.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Beguilement, Crowd Song, Resonance.

*Perks:* Equipment Bond (Musical Instrument), Named Possession (Musical Instrument).

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Charisma, Eidetic Memory, Legal Immunity, Patron (The Muses or similar deities), Patron (Royal or noble family), Rapier Wit, Voice.

*Disadvantages:* Code of Honor (Professional).

*Skills:* Acting, Connoisseur (Literature or Music), Diplomacy, Games (Riddles), Heraldry, Musical Composition, Religious Ritual, Teaching.

## CON GAMES

Confidence men separate gullible people from their money, using a wide variety of traditional routines, or “games” (also known as “confidence tricks” or “scams”). American idiom divides these into two categories, each of which can be defined as a distinctive art. The target of a con game is called the “mark.”

Con games, as defined here, don’t include investment frauds such as pyramid schemes, or other manipulations that target entire populations, such as many Internet frauds. The essence of the con, short or long, is playing on the psychological vulnerability of an individual mark. Targeting mass audiences through Propaganda or other skills calls for different arts than the con.

### The Short Con

4 points

The short con is the more opportunistic approach to fraud. It includes cons that take less than a day – sometimes only minutes – and that separate the mark from whatever money or valuables he has on hand. The deception doesn’t have to last for long – just enough time for the con man to get away. Short cons don’t bring in a lot of money, but they can target a new mark every day, or even multiple marks in the same day.

*Skills:* Body Language, Fast-Talk, Sleight of Hand.

*Techniques:* Badger Game, Pig in a Poke, Shell Game, Short Change.

*Cinematic Skills:* Persuade, Suggest.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Beguilement.

*Perks:* Forgettable Face, Honest Face, In the Know.

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Charisma, Voice.

*Disadvantages:* Callous, Compulsive Lying, Greed, Impulsiveness, Laziness, Secret, Social Stigma (Criminal Record).

*Skills:* Carousing, Fortune-Telling, Intimidation, Merchant, Panhandling, Scrounging, Sex Appeal.

### The Long Con

5 points

The long con is a more systematic approach, often involving elaborate planning. The mark is kept believing in the scam while more and more of his money gets into the con man’s hands. A really successful long con may get the mark not only to drain his bank account, but to liquidate his assets.

*Skills:* Acting, Body Language, Leadership, Psychology (Applied).

*Techniques:* Big Store, Cutting Out, Spanish Prisoner.

*Cinematic Skills:* Persuade.

*Perks:* Forgettable Face, Honest Face, In the Know, Rehearsed Role, Teamwork.

### Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Alternate Identity (Illegal), Charisma, Fashion Sense.

*Disadvantages:* Callous, Greed, Secret, Social Stigma (Criminal Record).

*Skills:* Connoisseur (Visual Arts), Finance, Forgery, Merchant, Occultism, Religious Ritual, Savoir-Faire (High Society), Streetwise.

## COURTESANRY

6 points

The art of sexual attraction has been practiced by women who act as companions of the wealthy and powerful, from ancient Greek hetairai to Victorian adventuresses. The essence of the courtesan’s role is ambiguity: Her manner and presence convey an allure that respectable women avoid, but without an overt statement of availability. Moreover, she commonly *isn’t* available to anyone who’s interested – only to those she chooses to accept. Her admirers expect to provide her with costly gifts or even pay her cost of living. However, money doesn’t directly change hands, and she doesn’t quote a price or haggle over it.

The Enthrallment skills can take Dancing or Sex Appeal at 12+ as a prerequisite, rather than Public Speaking.

*Skills:* Acting, Carousing, Dancing, Savoir-Faire (High Society), Sex Appeal.

*Techniques:* Close Dancing, Cutting Out, Elicitation, Hinting.

*Cinematic Skills:* Any Enthrallment skill, Erotic Art.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Beguilement, Fascination.

*Perks:* Classic Features, Haughty Sneer, Honorary Title, Sexy Pose.



## Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Appearance (Attractive, Beautiful, or Very Beautiful), Charisma, Empathy, Fashion Sense, Smooth Operator, Voice.

*Disadvantages:* Jealousy, Social Disease.

*Skills:* Body Language, Connoisseur (any), Current Affairs (High Culture, People, or Travel), Diplomacy, Makeup, Musical Instrument, Public Speaking, Singing.

## DEEP COVER

5 points

Operating in deep cover is a form of espionage, most often practiced by agents of hostile governments, though undercover police officers may adopt similar methods to gain information on criminal gangs. The deep-cover operative sustains a false identity over months or even years, hoping to get into a position to acquire critical information, or influence a hostile organization into policies that hurt its own interests. Often he becomes a “sleeper,” taking no overt hostile action, making no attempt to communicate, and operating without aid or support – until a key message sends him into action, from revealing secret information to sabotage or even assassination. Other agents may have a message drop or secret communication channel.

Deep cover requires total involvement in a role over a long span of time – it’s the ultimate in immersive roleplaying. Such a role can become virtually a secondary personality. The operative will need to study his fictitious life story and home town in depth.

*Skills:* Acting, Area Knowledge, Observation, Stealth.

*Cinematic Skills:* Mental Strength.

*Perks:* Controllable Disadvantage (Split Personality), Cultural Familiarity, Forgettable Face, Honest Face, Rehearsed Role.

## Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Alternate Identity (Illegal), Eidetic Memory, Language.

*Disadvantages:* Secret.

*Skills:* Forgery, Holdout, Mimicry, Research, Savoir-Faire (any), Streetwise.

## DIPLOMACY

8 points

Going beyond the single skill for which it’s named, the art includes a wide range of abilities suited to a career in diplomatic

relations, from serious negotiation to participation in elaborate social events. This is specifically the art for the person who negotiates with a foreign government. Diplomatic personnel may perform other tasks, from routine paper shuffling to espionage, but those skills aren’t central to the art of diplomacy.

*Skills:* Acting, Current Affairs (Politics), Detect Lies, Diplomacy, Law (International), Public Speaking, Savoir-Faire (High Society).

*Techniques:* Agenda, Elevated Speech, Elicitation, Hinting.

*Cinematic Skills:* Hidden Lore (Conspiracies), Persuade.

*Cinematic Techniques:* Beguilement, Personal Guarantee.

*Perks:* Cultural Familiarity, Political Hack.

## Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Charisma, Language, Language Talent, Legal Immunity, Smooth Operator, Voice.

*Disadvantages:* Code of Honor (Gentleman’s).

*Skills:* Area Knowledge, Dancing, History, Observation, Politics, Research, Writing.

## MEMEHACKING

8 points

This is the applied science of designing memes – complexes of symbolic information that can be communicated from one mind to another – for maximum penetration into a target population. It exists in worlds where memetics is a real science, such as the Transhuman Space setting.

Memetics does have one-on-one applications, from teaching to behavioral therapy, but memetech focuses on influencing *populations*. A trained memeticist has the skills needed to measure the current attitudes of a population, design a message to change those attitudes, and deliver that message to a large number of people.

*Skills:* Expert Skill (Memetics), Intelligence Analysis, Mathematics (Statistics), Propaganda, Psychology (Applied), Research, Sociology.

*Techniques:* Going Viral, Piggybacking, Sociometry.

*Perks:* Equipment Bond (Computer).

## Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Mathematical Ability, Memetics Talent.

*Disadvantages:* Code of Honor (Professional).

*Skills:* Administration, Area Knowledge, Current Affairs, Intelligence Analysis, Market Analysis, Politics.

*If he had entertained any suspicion of the beautiful girl in his arms, if anyone had suggested that she was trying her best to pump him, he would have smiled the sort of smile which only the top-drawer diplomat can achieve.*

– E.E. Smith, *First Lensman*

# MILITARY LEADERSHIP

4 points

This is knowing how to lead men into combat. More specifically, it's the art of doing so face to face, characteristic of organized armies from TL1 through TL5 – though it's often taught to officers in more modern armies as well. This style is mainly for company-grade officers (Military Rank 3 and 4), who can know their soldiers as individuals, and whose main concern is with tactical decisions. The emphasis in this style is on “leading from the front” by setting a personal example. Military leaders may want to apply *Cultivating a Persona* (*GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 61).

The art of military leadership doesn't include skills that apply directly to combat. Officers should complement it with at least moderate skill in Tactics and in whatever weapon(s) their soldiers use. It does include the Soldier skill, representing familiarity with a variety of military tasks – enough, at least, to judge how well a soldier is performing his assigned duties!

The Enthrallment skills for a military leader take Leadership at 12+ as a prerequisite, rather than Public Speaking. They reflect, not storytelling, but establishing command through charismatic leadership.

*Skills:* Leadership, Savoir-Faire (Military), Soldier.  
*Techniques:* Cutting Out, Mission Assignment, Truce.  
*Cinematic Skills:* Persuade, Suggest.  
*Cinematic Techniques:* Personal Guarantee.  
*Perks:* Looks Good in Uniform.

## Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Charisma, Combat Reflexes, Military Rank.  
*Disadvantages:* Code of Honor (Soldier's), Sense of Duty.  
*Skills:* Expert Skill (Military Science), Games (Wargames), Heraldry (Coats of Arms/Mon), Law (Military), Psychology (Applied), Religious Ritual, Tactics.

# SALESMANSHIP

4 points

The skill of selling goes back to the earliest civilizations; certainly by the time of Greece and Rome, every town had a marketplace filled with eager vendors. The art can be used either by merchants bargaining over their own wares or by employees authorized to make deals for their employers. The optional rules for extended haggling in *GURPS Social Engineering* are a natural fit to this art, but it encompasses much more than agreeing on a price, from spotting a potential buyer to closing the deal.

Salesmanship, as presented here, does not include cheating customers or pushing defective goods on them; for that sort of thing, see *Con Games* (p. 8). Salesmen are rarely saints, and they may exaggerate the quality of their goods, or conceal how little they're actually willing to take – but in many lines of business, repeat sales are more profitable in the long run, and that means selling people things they actually want. Of course, part of the art is helping customers to discover things they didn't know they wanted.

The Leads perk works like Headhunter or Jobhunter (*GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks*, p. 13) or the other Networked perks (*GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 79): It gives +2 to any roll to find a buyer for something you have to sell.

*Skills:* Body Language, Merchant, Psychology (Applied).  
*Techniques:* Cutting Out.  
*Cinematic Skills:* Persuade.  
*Perks:* Networked (Leads).

## Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Charisma.  
*Disadvantages:* Code of Honor (Professional), Greed, Workaholic.  
*Skills:* Administration, Carousing, Connoisseur (Fashion, Visual Arts, Wine, etc.), Current Affairs (Business, Travel), Fast-Talk, Public Speaking, Research.

# VIRTUS

3 points

Named for one of the three key ancient Roman virtues (*virtus*, “manliness” or “valor”), this is a mode of conduct in which men, especially upper-class men, were trained. It has analogs in many aristocratic or warlike cultures. In essence, it's knowing how to behave in a way that will gain others' respect – not by boasting or obvious threats, but by quiet, implacable firmness. Theodore Roosevelt's motto “Speak softly and carry a big stick” conveys the idea well, though *Vir-tus* falls out of style in societies with organized law enforcement. Even so, something akin to it survives in criminal organizations, with Savoir-Faire (Mafia) replacing Savoir-Faire (High Society). *Machismo* (based on Streetwise) is more distantly related, with less subtlety.

*Skills:* Intimidation, Savoir-Faire (High Society).  
*Techniques:* Dangerous Request, Hinting.  
*Cinematic Skills:* Mental Strength.  
*Cinematic Techniques:* Power Gaze.  
*Perks:* Fearsome Stare, Haughty Sneer, Social Arbiter, Soft-Spoken.

## Optional Traits

*Advantages:* Fearlessness, High Pain Threshold, Indomitable.  
*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust, Callous, Code of Honor (Gentleman's), Fanaticism, No Sense of Humor.  
*Skills:* Soldier.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William H. Stoddard is a professional copy editor, specializing in scientific and scholarly books in fields ranging from aerospace technology to archaeology. Fortunately, he likes reading nonfiction; his research library is threatening to take over his apartment, and he regularly visits the nearest university library for supplemental reading. His other pleasures include cooking, reading science fiction and alternate history, and running and playing in roleplaying games; he has been doing the latter since 1975, when he first encountered *Dungeons & Dragons*. His previous work for Steve Jackson Games includes writing *GURPS Social Engineering*, the latest editions of *GURPS Supers* and *GURPS Low-Tech*, as well as composing *Pyramid* articles on such subjects as formal dances and sexual situations in roleplaying games. He lives in San Diego with his cohabitant Carol, two cats, two computers, and far too many books!

# THE PALAIS DU MONDE

BY MATT RIGGSBY

In *The Palais du Monde*, investigators attend a theatrical performance to foil an espionage plot. Despite international implications, this is an undercover investigation wrapped in a bedroom farce. The serious business of unearthing a traitor is obscured by the secret affairs, artistic hissy-fits, and practical jokes of the people, knowingly or not, caught up in the plot.

It is suitable for a group of TL3 to TL5 (or even, carefully handled, at higher TLs) investigators at a low to moderate point level (100-150 points will do nicely). They should have some social skills and thief/spy abilities but little or no extra-normal information-gathering abilities.

## THE SETTING

The Palais du Monde is a theater in the capital city of a powerful, sophisticated kingdom. It is not the largest theater in the city (that would be the vulgar and somewhat run-down Terpsichorean Hall) nor the finest (that would be the exclusive Royal Opera), but it does rank among the most popular across all classes. From the friendly, boisterous pit to the exclusive boxes of the upper level, the Palais is a place to see and be seen.

The Palais is a sturdy wooden octagon 40' high. It is kept scrupulously clean and freshly whitewashed so long as the weather permits. It is decorated with colorful banners and ribbons through the theatrical season. The exterior walls are blank and solid, with a number of small grilles for ventilation but few real windows. It was designed in a well-meaning effort facing west so that the stage would catch the last of the light as the sun set, but the height of the theater cuts off direct light by late afternoon.

It is situated on a fairly good street. The broad, cobbled way is close to, though not in clear sight of, several large noble houses and an important church. The thoroughfare is also home to a number of excellent shops and public houses. Even if the shows weren't exceptional, its location would be good enough to draw in a decent amount of lower- and middle-class traffic.

Maps of the Palais du Monde are on pp. 19-21.

### GROUND FLOOR

When the front doors are opened, audience members stream past the counting table to pay admission. One silver penny (\$1) grants admission to the pit and the stalls on the lower two floors; spaces are taken on a first come, first served basis. Stairs to either side of the doors lead to the upper floors; each set goes up, around a landing, and up again to the next floor.

Entering the seating area, one first reaches a ring of stalls. The stalls take up most of the Palais's hollow octagon, with low benches in front and two rows of progressively higher ones

behind. They aren't particularly comfortable, but at least they're out of the sun and rain. A sturdy railing separates the stalls from the pit.

The pit – the open, seatless area in front of the stage – is where most pre-show socializing goes on. Before the performance, vendors work the crowd, selling cups of wine, sweets, spiced rolls, and other inexpensive delicacies to enjoy along with the performance.

The more rambunctious (or just near-sighted) members of the audience stay in the pit and stand through the show. Most are young men and older boys, eager to get close to the lovely young Emilia. Particularly fashionable young men have taken up the habit of sitting on the edges of the stage itself, dressed in finery. During battle scenes, they sometimes join in, bringing out batons and dress swords in enthusiastic bouts of fencing. This extends the performance and annoys the actors, but the crowd does enjoy it.

*The stage but echoes  
back the public voice.*

– Samuel Johnson

The stage itself is 4' above the floor of the pit. No curtain separates the stage from the audience – only a few feet of height. The stage floor has a pair of trap doors, used for dramatic entrances and exits. The area is decorated by backdrops or a few necessary pieces of furniture.



A small door at the center of the backstage area opens into the space under the stage, not onto the stage itself, allowing for access to the trap doors. Backstage is kept dimly lit during performances so that actors coming on stage do so from one of the darkened doorways on either side of center stage.

The backstage area on this floor mostly contains chests and crates packed full of props, set pieces, and backdrops. Cast, crew, and material typically enter through the large double doors at the back of the theater. Another small door, usually bolted on the backstage side, communicates with the first-floor stalls. It is almost never used during performances.

## SECOND FLOOR

The second-floor seating is more of the same as the downstairs stalls. Certain connoisseurs prefer to sit in the second-floor stalls, partly to see over the taller pit-dwellers (shorter people in the first-floor stalls sometimes have to stand on their benches to see over the crowd in front of them), and partly because many claim that the acoustics are better. Consequently, the second-floor stalls may have a quieter, more serious crowd than the first floor.

The second-floor contains a bit of performance space. The corners of the octagon over the stage sport balconies, used in equal measure for soliloquies and acrobatic leaping. In the past, the impresario (Faisan, p. 14) has experimented with a temporary balcony that extends across the entire back of the stage and stairways, allowing the action to move freely between levels.

The second-floor backstage is used mostly for costumes and dressing. Most of the floor is used by actors, but a long, cramped room is set aside for actresses. The prima donna (Constanza, p. 13) has annexed the dressing table at the far end of the room as her personal fief. Even if she's not appearing in a particular show (due only to extreme illness), no one else is allowed to use it, no matter how busy the main room may become. Once she is in costume and makeup, she always makes a grand exit, with lesser actresses leaping aside to clear her path. A large trapdoor in the area behind the stage allows stagehands to bring large objects up to the second level, and a similar trapdoor above can be used to move things up to the third floor.

## THIRD FLOOR

Unlike the egalitarian ground and second floors, the third floor is where "social betters" go. If any are available, the boxes on the top floor get admission on a sliding scale from about 20 pence for new-money merchants to "you honor us with your presence, my lord" for particularly notable clergy and royalty. However, the best are rented by the season by the wealthy and powerful. Just as young blades sit on the stage to draw attention to themselves, the great people of the city (or those who aspire to greatness) take boxes to be seen looking down on those below. Some more daring box holders even make themselves conspicuously *not* seen, taking their seat and, once the performance has begun, drawing curtains at the front of the box so that the people in the audience below can wonder what they're up to: occasionally intrigue, sometimes a hidden romance, but often just a long nap.

Faisan had the clever idea of keeping the freelance vendors downstairs and providing a buffet for the box-holders at a table

between the stairways. It typically includes a selection of wines, a roast fowl, the whitest of breads, sauces, a seafood soup kept warm over a small brazier, cheeses, nuts, cakes and other sweets, and one visually impressive centerpiece dish, such as something sculpted from sugar and marzipan or vegetables baked in a figuratively cut pie crust. Faisan has tapped cooks and innkeepers in the neighborhood to handle most of the cooking. He takes the lion's share of the profits, having convinced them that having their food at the theater will make the wealthy box holders more likely to visit their establishments.

Backstage, a row of windows overlooks the stage. When a performance calls for music, musicians are seated on the chairs and benches here. The third floor backstage serves as long-term storage for less often used costumes, props, and backdrops. Faisan maintains an office here, and he has a small cot in a back room where he sleeps when he's been quarreling with his wife. He has a small window through which he can survey the crowd and at least part of the stage, though he's usually out of his office during performances. He also has a door that connects with the corridor leading to the boxes, so he can quickly get to important people there if the need arises.

## A NIGHT AT THE THEATER

The Palais presents plays starting in mid-spring, and the season runs into the fall. Most performances start mid-afternoon in order to catch the light. However, long plays can extend into the night, and popular ones may see two performances a day.

The doors open an hour before a performance, giving the crowd time to socialize and find seats. A few minutes before the show begins, stagehands come out and light candelabras around the stage, which provide light for the show as the sun goes down. The audience takes that as a signal that the show will begin soon and they really must find their places.

In the absence of a curtain, sound is what lets the audience know that the show is actually starting. In most plays, a brief overture comes from the upstairs. However, the playwright (Vincenzo, pp. 13-14) often experiments with other sounds: singing, argument, drumbeats, clashing swords. Then someone (or a chorus) mounts the stage for a prologue, the crowd grows quiet, and the play begins.

Plays typically end with the entire cast on stage to deliver a combined summary of the play and moral message. This leaves them to receive the final applause as a company. Vincenzo, of course, has been experimenting again, starting the "apology" with the entire cast on stage and slowly sending members off until only one is left to deliver the final line, or a handful remains to form a tableau.

The theater is absurdly easy for investigators to infiltrate. The theater is a public place, so as long as they don't act up too badly (shoving matches are tolerated; use of weapons brings in the authorities). The actors are happy to have people pay attention to them, though during a performance, the actors are a little distracted. Thus, trying to talk to them *while they're working* may be a problem (at least -1 to Influence rolls to get anyone to do anything that takes more than a moment and cumulative penalties for multiple Influence attempts in a short period of time, but +1 to rolls to get them to make snap decisions). Faisan is even hiring backstage crew; he could use a new dresser for the actresses and a stagehand or two (+3 to hiring rolls; see *GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 50).

# CAST OF CHARACTERS

Investigating the plot requires dealing with the Palais du Monde's resident company and a few patrons.

## CONSTANZA, THE PRIMA DONNA

101 points

Constanza is the best actress anyone in her audience has ever seen, and she is determined that everyone is well-informed of that fact. She has spent years perfecting her craft and is at the height of her skills. Unfortunately, she's also coming to the point where she won't be able to conceal her age much longer. Her ego and sensitivity to status, already considerable, are turning into a very short fuse followed by a very loud explosion.

**ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 11 [20]; **HT** 10 [0].  
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0];  
FP 10 [0].  
Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8.

### Advantages

Appearance (Beautiful) [12]; Charisma 2 [10]; Reputation +3 (Great actress; Theater connoisseurs; All the time) [7]; Voice [10].

### Disadvantages

Bad Temper (12) [-10]; Jealousy [-10]; Social Stigma (Actor) [-5].

### Skills

Dancing (A) DX+3 [12]-14; Intimidation (A) Will+2 [8]-13; Performance (A) IQ+7 [20]-18\*; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ+1 [2]-12; Sex Appeal (A) HT+5 [1]-15\*†; Singing (E) HT+4 [4]-14\*.

\* Includes +2 from Voice.

† Includes +4 from Appearance.

## MARC-ANATOLE DE BAS, THE LEADING MAN

148 points

Good-looking and well-spoken but mildly allergic to work, Marc-Anatole was fortunate to fall into acting. He has become the uncontested leading man in the troupe. Lacking Constanza's ambition, he wants little more than wine, women, and song, with the song optional, and he gets enough of them that he's the most contented member of the troupe. His womanizing hasn't yet bought him any permanent enemies, but jealous husbands and fathers are one of his occupational hazards.

**ST** 11 [10]; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 9 [-20]; **HT** 11 [10].  
Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 9 [0]; Per 9 [0];  
FP 11 [0].  
Basic Speed 5.50 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8.

### Advantages

Appearance (Handsome) [12]; Charisma 1 [5]; Reputation +3 (Great actor; Theater connoisseurs; All the time) [7].

### Disadvantages

Compulsive Carousing (12) [-5]; Lecherousness (12) [-15]; Social Stigma (Actor) [-5].

### Skills

Acrobatics (H) DX [4]-11; Carousing (E) HT+3 [8]-14; Dancing (A) DX+3 [12]-14; Mimicry (Speech) (H) IQ+3 [16]-12; Performance (A) IQ+9 [36]-18; Rapier Art (A) DX+1 [4]-12; Sex Appeal (A) HT+3 [1]-14\*; Singing (E) HT+2 [4]-13; Stage Combat (A) DX+5 [24]-16.

\* Includes +4 from Appearance.

*Time often serves  
to justify a deed  
Which seems at first  
unjustifiable.*

*– Pierre Corneille,  
The Cid*

## VINCENZO, THE WRITER

130 points

It has been said that a piece of writing is never finished, only abandoned. Whoever said that never met Vincenzo. Vincenzo is nearly as good a writer as Constanza is an actress, and is equally obsessed with demonstrating that fact. However, where Constanza is determined to convince her audience, Vincenzo is determined to convince himself, or perhaps posterity. However, he's not nearly so confident of his own abilities, so he is never, ever finished perfecting any of his works. He struggles with them constantly, to the point of continuing to tweak lines even during performances. This can confuse the cast and leads to screaming arguments with Faisan, but both are vaguely aware that each is better off working with the other.

**ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 11 [20]; **HT** 10 [0].  
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0];  
FP 10 [0].  
Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8.

## Advantages

Appearance (Attractive) [4].

## Disadvantages

Compulsive Behavior (Rewriting) (12) [-5]; Social Stigma (Actor) [-5].

## Skills

Current Affairs (Politics) (E) IQ+2 [4]-13; Literature (A) IQ+1 [4]-12; Performance (A) IQ+5 [20]-16; Poetry (A) IQ+7 [28]-18; Stage Combat (A) DX+3 [12]-14; Writing (A) IQ+7 [28]-18.

# EMILIA, THE INGÉNUÉ

32 points

Fair and radiant, Emilia is a nigh-unearthly beauty, turning heads and causing minor traffic accidents wherever she goes. Her acting ability isn't quite up to par, but just putting her on stage is usually enough to keep an audience happy. Moreover, there's hardly a thought in her pretty little head to distract her from pleasing the crowd. Most members of the troupe like her well enough, but think her dull. Even Marc-Anatole finds her shallow, which is saying something. Constanza hates Emilia with a burning passion, since the young woman represents everything the older actress fears.

**ST** 9 [-10]; **DX** 12 [40]; **IQ** 9 [-20]; **HT** 9 [-10].

Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 9 [0]; Will 9 [0]; Per 9 [0]; FP 9 [0].

Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8.

## Advantages

Appearance (Very Beautiful) [16]; Charisma 3 [15].

## Disadvantages

Gullibility (12) [-10]; Social Stigma (Actor) [-5].

## Skills

Dancing (A) DX+1 [4]-13; Performance (A) IQ+2 [8]-11; Singing (E) HT+2 [4]-11.

# RODIGO, THE CHARACTER ACTOR

155 points

Rodigo is the go-to man for jokes, tumbling, and other bits of really blatant theatricality. Easily the least attractive member of the company, he's also the most versatile, with tumbling, juggling, and stage magic in his repertoire. He's a surprisingly good musician to boot. He and Marc-Anatole are drinking buddies of long standing, going for legendary pub crawls that get them back to the stage rather worse for wear, but usually able to go on.

**ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 12 [40]; **IQ** 11 [20]; **HT** 10 [0].

Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 10 [0].

Basic Speed 5.50 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8.

## Advantages

Pitiable [5].

## Disadvantages

Appearance (Unattractive) [-4]; Compulsive Carousing (12) [-5]; Social Stigma (Actor) [-5].

## Skills

Acrobatics (H) DX+4 [20]-16; Fast-Talk (A) IQ+3 [12]-14; Mimicry (Speech) (A) IQ+2 [8]-13; Musical Composition (H) IQ+3 [16]-14; Musical Instrument (setting appropriate) (H) IQ+3 [16]-14; Performance (A) IQ+5 [20]-16; Sleight of Hand (H) DX+2 [12]-14.

*All things that are  
Are with more spirit chased  
than enjoyed.*

– William Shakespeare,  
*The Merchant  
of Venice*

# FAISAN, THE IMPRESARIO

99 points

Faisan is the force that holds the troupe together. He has no artistic skill of his own, nor does he have any personal artistic ambitions. But he has a keen eye for quality, a comprehensive understanding of the market, and a firm grasp of finance. Just as importantly, he's good enough with people to keep the strong personalities in the company together while staying on the good side of the authorities despite Vincenzo's sometimes controversial plays.

**ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 12 [40]; **HT** 10 [0].

Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 10 [0].

Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8.

## Advantages

Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

## Disadvantages

Greed (15) [-7].

## Skills

Accounting (H) IQ+2 [12]-14; Connoisseur (Theater) (A) IQ+2 [8]-14; Current Affairs (People) (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Current Affairs (Politics) (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Current Affairs (Popular Culture) (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Fast-Talk (A) IQ+3 [12]-15; Merchant (A) IQ+3 [12]-15; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ+2 [4]-14; Streetwise (A) IQ [2]-12.



*He that is discontented in one place will seldom be happy in another.*

– Aesop

## COMPTE DE MONTVERT, ADVISOR TO THE CROWN

148 points

The Compte is a little bored, fairly ambitious, quite wealthy, and extremely morally flexible. Though not cruel or malicious, he is self-centered and extremely comfortable with his position of privilege. His new hobby is espionage (or, arguably, treason), but he doesn't let it get in the way of his theater-going or antiquarian pastimes.

**ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 14 [80]; **HT** 10 [0].  
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 14 [0]; Per 14 [0];  
FP 10 [0].  
Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8; Parry 8 (Rapier).

### Advantages

Administrative Rank 6 [30]; Security Clearance (Free access to a broad range of military secrets) [15]; Status 4 [5]\*; Wealth (Very Wealthy) [30].

### Disadvantages

Bad Sight (Nearsighted; Mitigator, Glasses, -60%) [-10]; Overconfidence (12) [-5]; Secret (Selling government secrets; Imprisonment or Exile) [-20].

### Skills

Administration (A) IQ+1 [4]-15; Architecture (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; Connoisseur (Performing Arts) (A) IQ [2]-14; Current Affairs (People) (E) IQ [1]-14; Current Affairs (Politics) (E) IQ+2 [4]-16; Diplomacy (H) IQ [4]-14; History (Local) (H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Rapier (A) DX [2]-10; Riding (Horses) (A) DX [2]-10; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ+1 [2]-15.

\* Includes +2 from Rank and +1 from Wealth.

## COMTESSE DE MONTVERT

111 points

The Comtesse was married to the Compte for political reasons when they were teenagers. She's spent years apart from him as he's been on political missions. She prefers it that way, taking care of the family estates herself and gossiping with friends. For the sake of appearances, she puts up with social events and the Compte's constant indiscretions, but she's world-class at tuning out inconvenient facts.

**ST** 9 [-10]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 12 [40]; **HT** 10 [0].  
Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 9 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0];  
FP 10 [0].  
Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8.

### Advantages

Status 4 [15]\*; Wealth (Filthy Rich) [50].

### Disadvantages

Incurious (12) [-5].

### Skills

Administration (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Current Affairs (People) (E) IQ+2 [4]-14; Dancing (A) DX-1 [1]-9; Housekeeping (E) IQ [1]-12; Leadership (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Professional Skill (Cloth-maker) (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Riding (Horses) (A) DX+1 [4]-11; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ+2 [4]-14; Sewing (E) DX [1]-10.

\* Includes +1 from Wealth.

## Everybody Else

There's crowd of patrons, servants, stagehands, and others around the theater. For anybody else the investigators may meet, assume attributes in the 9-11 range and any two of the following additional traits:

Absent-Mindedness	Intolerance
Carousing-12	Lecherousness (6)
Detect Lies-12	Per +2
Fast-Talk-12	Stubbornness
Greed (6)	Will +2
Gluttony (6)	

## MARGRAVE HOHENWALLER, THE AMBASSADOR

167 points

The Margrave is a businessman who thinks he's a cavalier. He wears medals and faintly military-looking garments (and an enormous moustache). He has an abiding fondness for young women and aged brandy, but he's got a hard head for business, which is why he has his job.

**ST** 11 [10]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 12 [40]; **HT** 11 [10].  
Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0];  
FP 11 [0].  
Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8; Parry 8 (Saber).

### Advantages

Administrative Rank 5 [25]; Diplomatic Immunity [20]; Status 4 [5]\*; Wealth (Filthy Rich) [50].

## Disadvantages

Code of Honor (Gentleman's) [-10]; Gluttony (12) [-5]; Greed (12) [-15]; Overweight [-1].

## Skills

Accounting (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Administration (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Current Affairs (Politics) (E) IQ+2 [4]-14; Diplomacy (H) IQ+2 [12]-14; Merchant (A) IQ+2 [8]-14; Riding (Horses) (A) DX [2]-10; Saber (A) DX+1 [4]-11; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ [1]-12; Soldier (A) IQ-1 [1]-11.

\* Includes +2 from Rank and +1 from Wealth.

## JOCHEN, THE BODYGUARD

157 points

Jochen is dangerous, scary, and very dull. He's a professional killing person who is almost completely out of place in high society. He stands around like a piece of furniture, keeping an eye out for threats to his employer, Hohenwaller.

ST 13 [30]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10].

Damage 1d/2d-1; BL 34 lbs.; HP 13 [0]; Will 12 [10]; Per 10 [0]; FP 11 [0].

Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 10\*; Parry 11\* (Brawling or Saber).

## Advantages

Combat Reflexes [15]; High Pain Threshold [10].

## Disadvantages

Code of Honor (Soldier's) [-10]; No Sense of Humor [-10].

## Skills

Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-15; Climbing (A) DX [2]-13; Hiking (A) HT+1 [4]-12; Intimidation (A) Will [2]-12; Riding (Horses) (A) DX [2]-13; Running (A) HT-1 [1]-10; Saber (A) DX+2 [8]-15; Savoir-Faire (Servant) (E) IQ+1 [2]-11; Soldier (A) IQ+3 [12]-13; Swimming (E) HT [1]-11; Tactics (H) IQ [4]-10.

\* Includes +1 from Combat Reflexes.

# THE PLOT

A member of the government has become aware that an advisor to the crown has been passing secret information to a foreign ambassador. The PCs are covertly engaged to get evidence to prove it.

The avenue by which the secrets travel has baffled previous investigators. The advisor (the Compte de Montvert) and the ambassador (the Margrave Hohenwaller) do not socialize beyond pleasantries in public at court, and investigation of their intimates has yet to turn up any path by which messages might regularly be transmitted between them. The only time they are in close proximity to one another is when they both attend performances at the Palais du Monde, making that the focus of the sleuthing. The investigators' employer impresses on them that this is a sensitive investigation. Direct action against the advisor or the ambassador is to be avoided *at all costs*, and the PCs are not permitted to reveal their mission to anyone. Once provided with the necessary information, the government will take appropriate action.

## THE DETAILS AND SOME COMPLICATIONS

The Compte and the Margrave have found a clever if over-elaborate method to pass secrets – they take advantage of Vincenzo's habit of changing the lines of his plays at the last moment. They attend performances of the same plays and send one another coded messages by delivering their own altered lines to the players. There's no direct communication between them, and nobody will think twice if the dialogue in one performance doesn't match that in another. They're paying Faisan a modest sum to provide them with drafts of upcoming plays and to drop altered pages in here and there.

That's not the only intrigue at the Palais du Monde. The Compte is a long-time special friend of Constanza's. However, he's been losing interest her and gaining it in Emilia. The Margrave has become interested in Emilia as well. Bored with plays but enjoying the scenery, the Comtesse de Montvert has also struck up a flirtation with the theater company's leading man. On top of it all, Rodigo has become aware that various people in the theater are carrying on illicit affairs. Since he doesn't have a large part in this play, he's decided to play some pranks. As usual, Vincenzo isn't happy with his dialogue. So:

The Compte and the Margrave are paying Faisan to pass on obscure information.

Constanza is nearing the end of an affair with the Compte.

The Compte is trying to start an affair with Emilia.

Constanza hates Emilia and would stop at nothing to sabotage her rival.

The Margrave is trying to start an affair with Emilia.

The Comtesse is starting an affair with Marc-Anatole.

Vincenzo doesn't like his play.

Rodigo is bored.

## Brute Force

If the PCs are spoiling for a fight, what's to stop them? Very little. Jochen's an excellent swordsman, and both Hohenwaller and de Montvert at least know which end of a sword to stick into an enemy. Anybody else is at best a semi-competent brawler and more likely completely untrained. If even modestly trained fighters want to start a fight, they can probably win.

What will they get out of it? Not much. The adventurers aren't in a war zone or the wilderness. They're in a busy, crowded building, where any criminality more overt than picking a pocket or a quick sucker punch will have multiple witnesses. Since they're covertly employed, the government has complete deniability and can let the investigators rot in prison if it comes to that.

Several people have something to hide, and many of them have *several* things to hide, but all are in active pursuit of the things they don't want anyone else to know about. And all of it is going to play out during the course of the evening.

## THE PLAY

The night's play is *The Tragedy of Roderick the Rebel, or, A Queen Enthron'd*, a particularly bloody bit of business. Constanza plays Miralda, an imperious queen who killed her own brother to ascend the throne. Marc-Anatole plays Roderick, the murdered king's son who is plotting revenge. Vincenzo plays Carlos, Roderick's amoral sidekick. Rodigo plays Urban, an elderly advisor of Miralda's (and former advisor to her father). Emilia plays Violetta, the queen's innocent daughter. It consists of an introduction, three acts, and an apology.

### Introduction

Urban recites a brief history of the previous king, the death of the heir apparent, the disappearance of the heir's infant son, and the rise of Queen Miralda.

### Act I

*A throne room:* Miralda issues decrees for Urban to carry out, including executions, the closing of a church, and a new tax to support the raising of a large army to invade a neighboring country.

*A wood:* Roderick and Carlos discuss the band of men they are gathering, and plot the death of the queen. Roderick will kill Miralda, and his men will take her death as a signal to seize centers of power.

*A room in the palace:* Violetta enjoys the wholesome pastimes of a young woman, with Miralda on hand to make dark observations about the place of women in the world and the nature of power.

### Act II

*A road to the palace:* Roderick and Carlos observe the desolation of a house near the road (a consequence of Miralda's iron rule), and fight bandits. They capture one who claims the bandits were once honest men, but Roderick has Carlos kill him anyway.

*A throne room:* Roderick (disguised as a doctor) and Carlos (disguised as a holy man) arrive at the palace and meet the queen, but Roderick is unable to get close enough to strike.

*A hall in the palace:* Roderick resolves to stay close to the queen. Carlos meets Violetta and is instantly taken by a burning desire for her. Carlos demands that he be given Violetta once the queen is overthrown, but Roderick puts him off, saying that they are here to punish the queen's wrongdoing, not enrich themselves.

### Act III

*Baths in the palace:* Urban encounters Roderick. Urban, who was present at Roderick's birth many years ago, recognizes an identifying birthmark. He runs to warn the queen, but Carlos kills him before anyone is alerted.

*A room in the palace:* Carlos hides Urban's body and discovers that he is in Violetta's room. Inflamed by bloodlust, Carlos drives away Violetta's nurse, attacks Violetta (who goes mad), and is captured by the queen's soldiers.

*A throne room:* Carlos is executed in Miralda's presence. Miralda summons "Doctor" Roderick forward to look after her daughter, but Roderick draws a knife and finally assassinates Miralda. Violetta then throws herself on the knife that killed her mother. Roderick is seized by the army and taken off to be executed himself as news arrives of a revolt throwing the kingdom into chaos.

### Apology

The cast summarizes the plot and observes that a kingdom unjustly ruled cannot stand. Miralda is the last one to speak, giving a vague but dire warning about undeserving rulers.

### Off the Rails

Eager investigators might try to be creative about where they get their information, but the theater is really the only place that they can locate what they need. A search of the Compté's residence reveals no connection to the Margrave, but a lot of sensitive information, which he has by virtue of his position as a royal councilor, and texts of a number of plays, of which he's a known fan. A search of the Margrave's residence might reveal information the Margrave really shouldn't know, but the government would have a hard time proving that it came from de Montvert, making it largely useless.

## THE ACTION DURING THE PLAY

During the play, a great many notes are passed between backstage and the boxes. de Montvert has the large center box directly facing the stage. He is attending with his wife, and they have three servants in tow (two burly footmen and a maid). Hohenwaller's box is eight spaces along counter-clockwise. He is attending the theater alone tonight, which is to say that he has one servant and Jochen, his bodyguard. The traffic includes several conversations.

Constanza sends more-in-sadness-than-in-anger notes to de Montvert.

de Montvert sends reassuring notes to Constanza.

de Montvert and Hohenwaller send friendly but subtly lecherous notes to Emilia. de Montvert tells his wife that he's writing notes to acquaintances in the stalls below and friends in the other boxes.

Emilia, who doesn't understand what de Montvert and Hohenwaller are actually saying, sends polite thank-yous back.

The Comtesse and Marc-Anatole send flirtatious notes to one another. The Comtesse uses an excuse similar to her husband's.

de Montvert and Hohenwaller, each of whom have copies of the script to *Roderick*, send hand-revised pages to various actors, who have come to expect constant revisions.

Hohenwaller exchanges notes with Benito Lux, one of the young dandies decorating the stage. Lux's father is a distiller who traffics in a brandy Hohenwaller is fond of, and Hohenwaller is angling for a discount.



Vincenzo gives his own revised pages to the other actors. Rodigo, when he has the opportunity, sneaks peeks at authentic notes and redirects them or sends fake ones.

Everyone involved sends notes by preferred friends or servants. Servants of the noblemen will send notes backstage, while Faisan or actors not currently needed on stage may send them back out. Investigators can intercept individual notes, which requires some combination of fast-talking, stealth, and pickpocketing. If they're desperate, they might use some quick violence in an out-of-the-way corner followed by stuffing somebody in a wardrobe. Many notes are attempts to convince people to do things, and the investigators may try to join in, so it may be useful to review the rules on text-based interactions in *Social Engineering* (p. 33).

### *Props*

To make it easier to keep track of who has which notes and where they're going, the GM may want to hand out actual pieces of paper. Take a stack of small pieces of paper (Post-It notes are a good size) and write on them the sender, the recipient, and a summary of the message. When a PC gets a note, hand an appropriate note, rolled or folded up, to the player, and take it back when the PC delivers it. Make sure players have physical possession of the notes their investigators are supposed to have. If characters can't meet, players can't transfer their notes. Of course, if a player, in a flurry of slips of paper, hands the GM a note he wasn't intending to deliver, so does the character.

## THE GRAND FINALE

None of the notes speak directly to secret information, but all could be taken as allusions to it. Constanza's notes pose a flowery military metaphor, describing a merry war in which her land accepted a conqueror who has since become cruel, to which de Montvert replies that malcontents are upsetting what should be a happy countryside. Could this be a hint of upcoming military action? Comtesse de Montvert's notes indicate that she has need of a supervisor on her household staff who will be firm with those under him, to which Marc-Anatole responds with a list of his qualifications. This barely veiled indecency might be read as a suggestion of a political shakeup. Hohenwaller and de Montvert's notes to Emilia promise friendship, comfort, and gifts; are they offers of bribes to important figures, or up-front seduction? Hohenwaller's notes to Lux suggest favors related to foreign trade. Rodigo's forged notes are wildly inappropriate, suggesting backstage trysts or angrily rejecting prospective lovers. Are his notes part of a larger code?

If the investigators examine original pages of the play and the changes made that night, they find that Vincenzo's changes are essentially just moving around the words that were already there. He introduces long strings of alliteration and creates or disturbs parallel constructions (for example, "Some rise by virtue and some fall by vice" becomes "Some rise by virtue, and some by vice fall" or vice versa). Hohenwaller and de Montvert's changes add content: references to a bad crop somewhere, unrest in some part of the kingdom, soldiers to be found in a particular direction. Someone with Poetry skill might notice that Hohenwaller and de Montvert's changes do not scan, whereas Vincenzo's scrupulously fit poetic meter.

What it comes down to, then, is the revised pages of the play. Piecing together the traffic in paper, the PCs should realize that Emilia is the only person corresponding with both Hohenwaller and de Montvert. If information is being transferred on paper, it would have to go through her, and her notes are sufficiently simple and similar to one another that it seems unlikely. The only information which is provided by one and heard by the other comes through the changes made to the script.

If they're smart, the investigators will stop when (or if) they figure that out. The wise thing to do is to take some pages back to their employer and explain their reasoning. The employer will be able to match some secrets with information suggested by the changes in the play. The investigators might hedge their bets by confronting Faisan, who allows altered pages to be inserted in the scripts. Faced with a sufficient threat, Faisan will admit to Hohenwaller and de Montvert paying him to insert lines, but he has no idea why they're doing it. He guesses that they fancy themselves artists. He doesn't *know* that they've been up to something darker, but his greed has beaten down any suspicions he may have had. Action-hungry PCs might, despite being warned to the contrary, take it upon themselves to punish the Comte or the Margrave for their wrongdoing. If they do, that might at least lead to another adventure: fleeing the country while being pursued for treason. Perhaps they can disguise themselves as a traveling theater troupe. . .

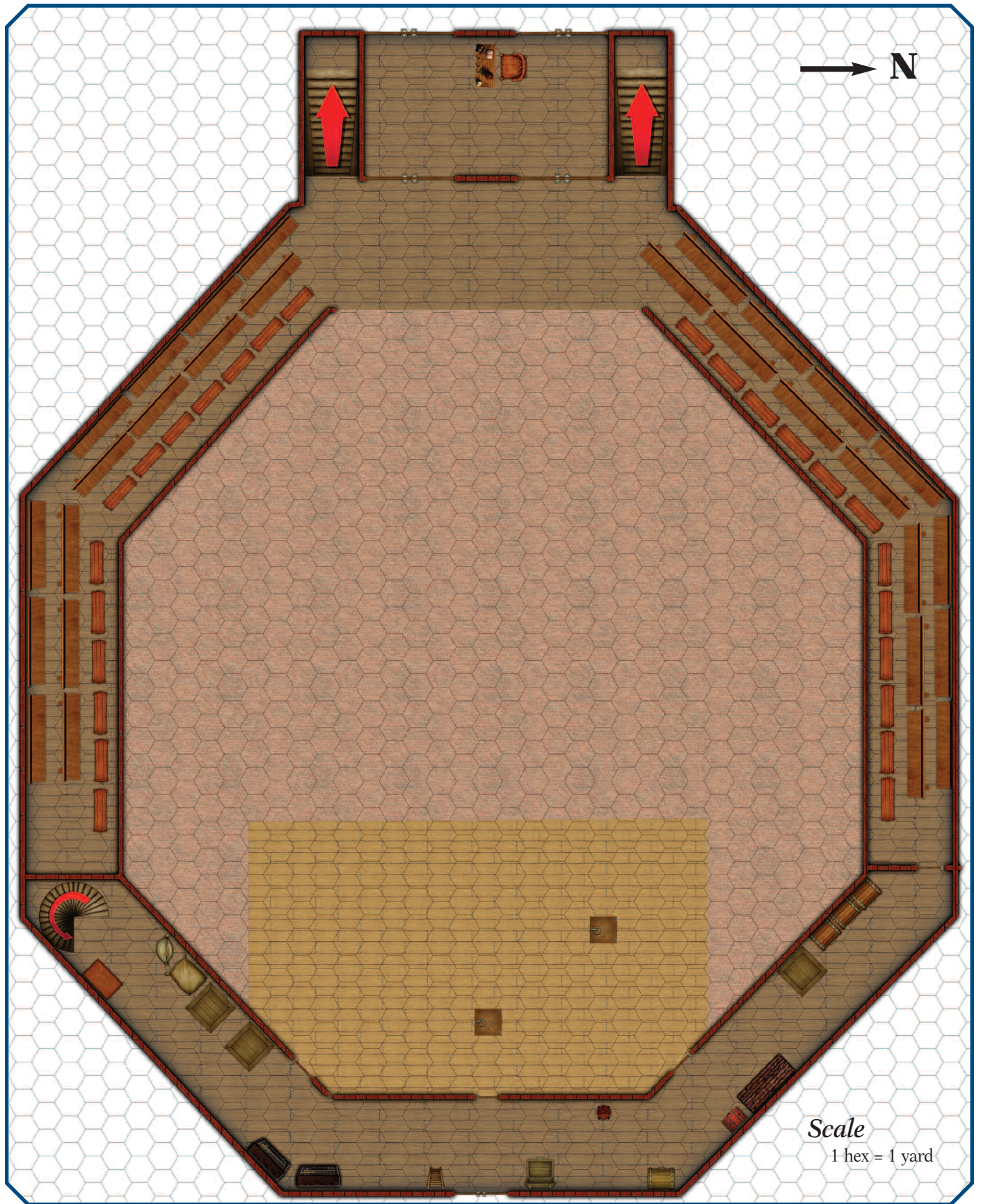
## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After a successful educational tour of the east and west coasts and an extended run in the role of "graduate student," Matt Riggsby made his debut as a computer programmer, in which he is currently appearing with a distinguished international company. His co-stars include a remarkable leading lady, an up-and-coming youngster, and various canine supernumeraries.

*An ally need not own the land he helps.*

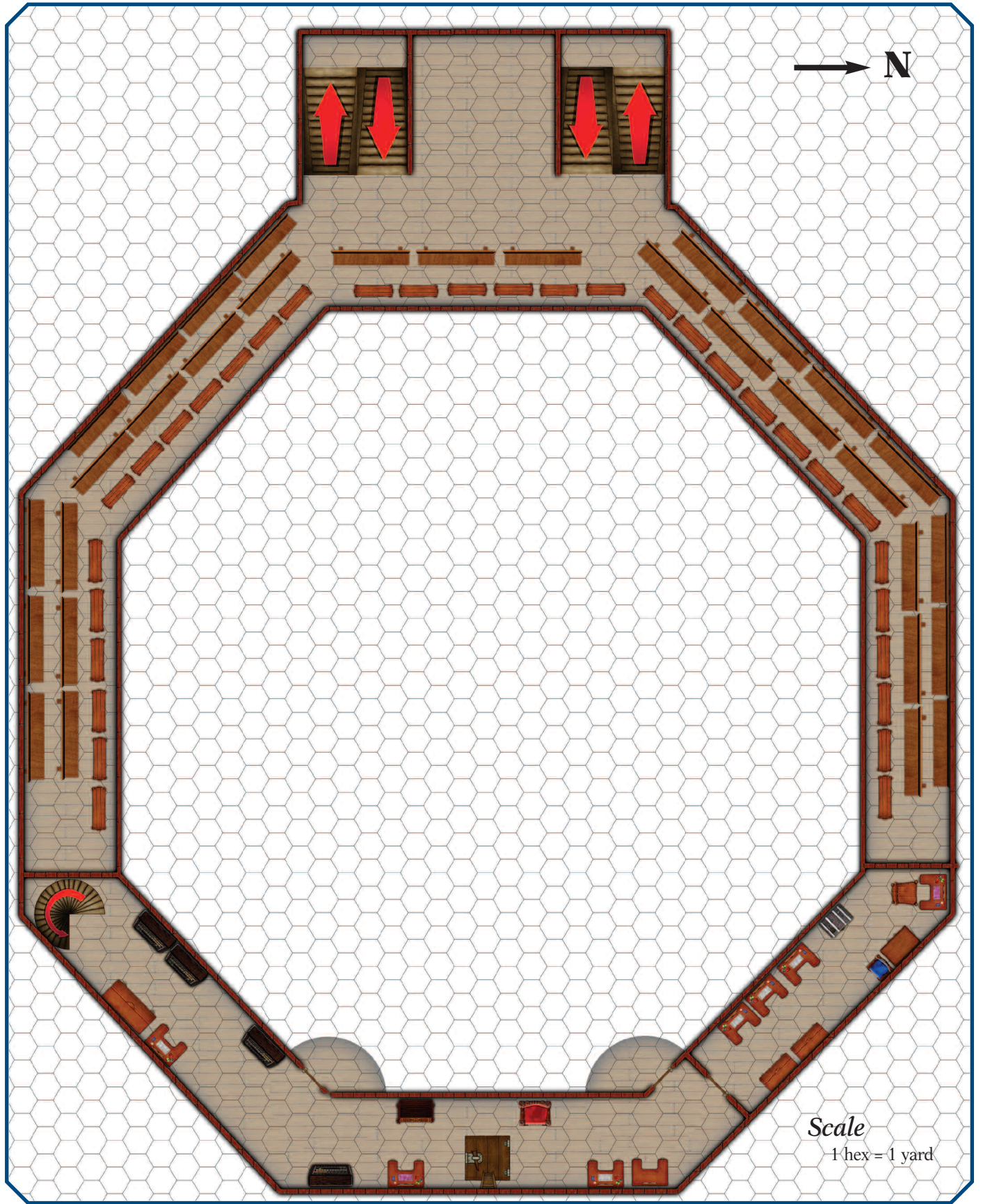
– Euripides





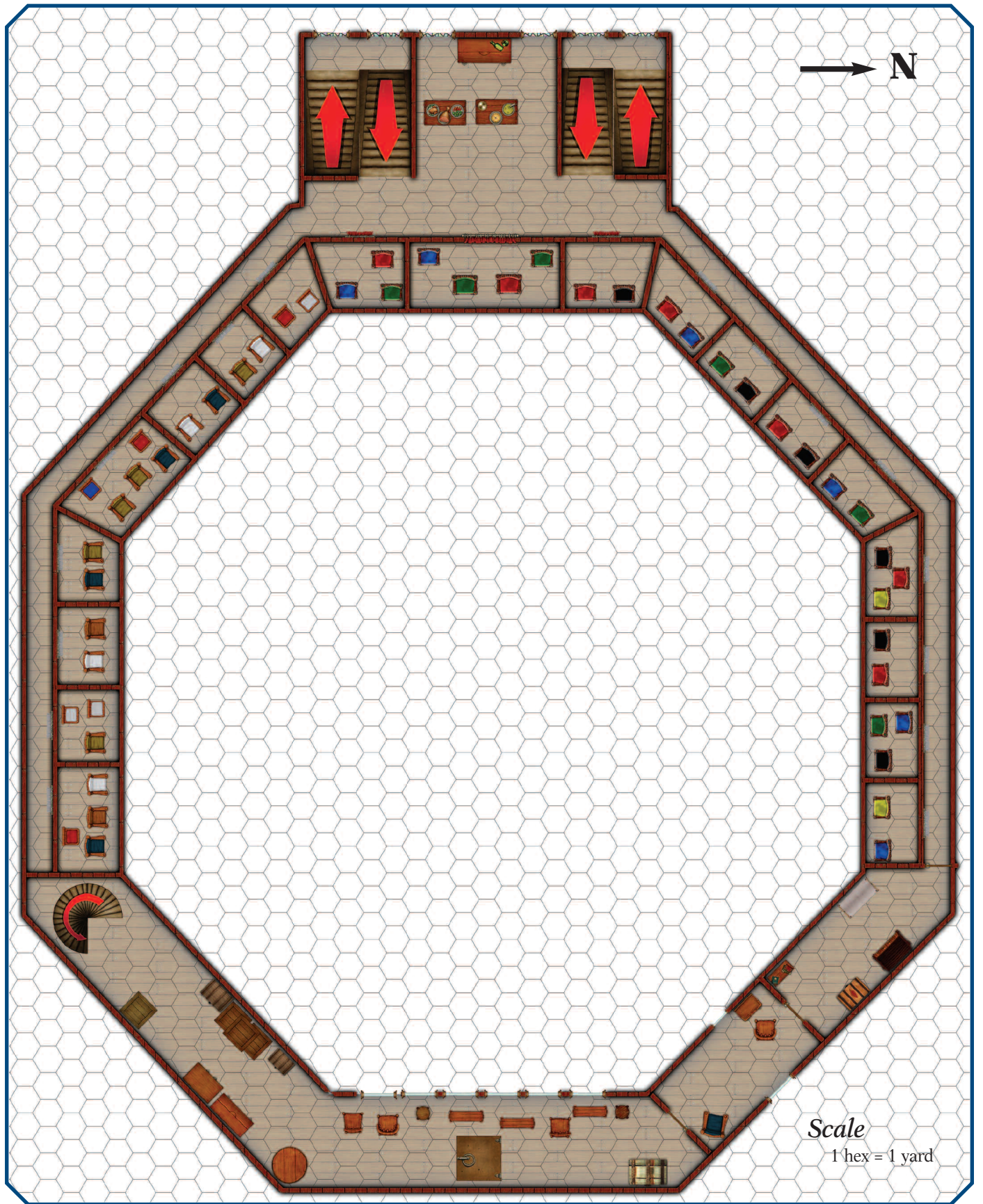
# MAP OF THE PALAIS DU MONDE, GROUND FLOOR





## MAP OF THE PALAIS DU MONDE, SECOND FLOOR





## MAP OF THE PALAIS DU MONDE, THIRD FLOOR



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# EIDETIC MEMORY

## HAND OF HERMES

BY DAVID L. PULVER

*"Hand of Hermes Hotline, Penelope speaking. "*

*"Hi. I'm Anne. I got this number from . . . well, I found it okay? I need some help."*

*"You did the right thing, Anne. So what's happening?"*

*"I got bitten. By a werewolf. Bitch sank her fangs into me, you know? I thought I killed her clean, didn't feel the bite. I tried to cauterize the wound, and used the wolfsbane, but . . . I don't think it's working."*

*"That was brave of you. But yes, cauterization and herbs doesn't always work. Lycanthropy is a nasty disease. Are you showing any symptoms?"*

*"My teeth hurt. They look longer. And I ate a whole freaking steak. Raw. I'm a vegetarian! Gods, I'm turning furry next, aren't I? I'm doomed!"*

*"Anne, we can help you through this. Have you told anyone?"*

*"No way! I can't tell my folks! They're White Guardians."*

*"Monster hunters, right? I kind of got that."*

*"And now I'm one. A beast. A monster, I mean. What if Dad finds out, or my sister? Gods, I should just do it, shouldn't I? Just kill myself. Except . . ."*

*"Don't do that, Anne! You're not alone, we care, and we're here for you. In fact, you should come down to our free clinic right now. Here, I'll give you the address."*

The town was a nexus for the supernatural. It had been a battleground between monsters and monster hunters. It had experienced multiple, barely apprehended apocalypses. It had seen feuds between rival clans of werewolves and vampires. Its murder rate rivaled Chicago; the only reason it wasn't worse was that many victims just couldn't stay dead. In short, things were bad.

But then they got a little better.

A group of humans and monsters got together and decided enough was enough.

They called their organization called the Hand of Hermes. Its goal: the peaceful resolution of supernatural crises within the city before they got out of hand.

## ORGANIZATION

Hand of Hermes is a small charitable organization with a half-dozen core members and several associates and

subcontractors. They are always eager to recruit new volunteers, especially those with useful skills and a willingness to follow the organization's ideals. They rent space in a run-down strip mall in an industrial section of the city. Three adjacent storefronts – "Lloyd Weatherby Notary Public," the "Konstantin Clinic" (offering low-cost plastic surgery), and "Hermes Books & Antiques" – serve as fronts for the operation, though they also offer ordinary services to mundanes.

## NOTABLE MEMBERS

A number of individuals keep the organization operational.

### *Enoch Lloyd Weatherby*

A dynamic, wealthy, 40-year-old corporate lawyer, Enoch once was a star player in the field of international contract law. Then his teenage son Erik was turned into a vampire. Weatherby tried to find and help him – even consulting a local psychic and witch for aid. Sadly, Erik had become caught in a bloody power struggle between a local vampire clan and one of the city's vampire-hunting guilds that ultimately cost him his life. Weatherby believes that if his son had received the proper help, he might still be undead today. Although it's too late for Erik, his father vowed to try to help others like him, founding Hermes to do so. Retiring from his law practice (save for a small notary public office), Weatherby sank much of his personal wealth into the organization, using his negotiating skills and funds to forge relationships with the local paranormal community.

The start-up effort – along with a recent divorce – has diminished his finances. He now lives a fairly ascetic lifestyle in a small apartment filled with books on law and the occult. Weatherby's ex-wife, Juliet, is still active in the city's high society; she runs a museum and is in a relationship with the city's deputy mayor. Since the divorce, she has worked to forget about the supernatural. Nevertheless, it's a connection that Enoch sometimes taps to raise funds for Hermes.

When not busy dealing with supernatural crises or fundraising, Weatherby has taken up studying ceremonial magic. He is fascinated by its legal-like structures, and has proven to have a hidden minor talent for it. He has also begun a relationship with another member of his organization.



## *Penelope Du Prey*

Du Prey is the witch and psychic whom Weatherby turned to for assistance in locating his vampire-bitten son. Du Prey found the boy through divination, but the vampire hunters got there first. With her extensive contacts in the city's neo-pagan and were communities, she was the one who introduced Weatherby to the city's supernatural underground. When he conceived the idea of Hand of Hermes, she enthusiastically supported it.

Penelope is also a werecat, an involuntary curse that was the result of picking the wrong kitty to make into a familiar. When not helping manage the organization (especially its crisis-response unit), Du Prey runs an antiquarian bookshop with her precognitive sister, Maggie. Penelope also assists the local police department in finding missing children. She and Weatherby have recently begun a tentative romance with one another.

## *Dr. Andre Konstantin*

The third leading member of Hand of Hermes is a plastic surgeon who was turned into a vampire decades ago by an infatuated client. He met Weatherby during the search for Erik. He has a keen scientific mind and has gone beyond plastic surgery to become a specialist in treating a variety of conditions related to the supernatural. A few years ago, he and a partner began providing plastic surgery to monsters that needed help blending in with humans – for example, vampires who were eternally young, but wished to slowly appear older to be better keep their natures secret, or half-demons who want their horns removed, or repair of permanent scars from holy water, sunlight burns, silver, or the like. Last year, his clinic was destroyed during a power struggle between rival vampire clans and his partner was killed. Recognizing the need for peace if he is to maintain a secure business, he accepted Weatherby's offer to join Hand of Hermes, managing their free clinic and providing medical consultations. He still offers elective plastic surgery, which provides the cover for the clinic's operations.

*The more successful  
Hand of Hermes is in its goal  
of creating rapport between rival  
groups, the greater the chance of  
it being targeted.*

## *Blake Winter*

A legendary teenage monster hunter and martial-arts master who eventually got tired of the slaying, Blake went to university, and earned a degree in psychology. He's now 28, still a tough guy in a fight, but works as a police hostage negotiator (he met Penelope Du Prey on a case). Moreover, he's always on speed dial for Hermes when they need his help in crisis resolution. Because of his contacts in the monster-hunting underground, he has helped broker truces between them and those monster factions willing to play nice and set boundaries. He also spends a great deal of time on the hotline, where he has a soft spot for mentoring troubled teenage monster hunters. Highly empathic, he gets very little sleep.

He recently dated a young werewolf, but it didn't last; he still struggles with some lingering, latent prejudices against monsters (and she found out he'd killed her grandfather, which didn't help). Her pack, the Indigo Fangs, now has it in for him.

## *Aristarchus*

This entity manages the Hand of Hermes' occult-research and law library, with Penelope's occasional assistance. He is a ghost who can temporarily materialize or possess others. He came to the city while haunting a shipment of illustrated manuscripts from the Middle East bound for Juliet Weatherby's museum. Fond of quoting Greek poetry, Aristarchus is also a rather stuffy expert on Greek and Egyptian mythological monsters, such as gorgons, mummies, sphinxes, and minotaurs. Aristarchus claims to have been a former head librarian of the ancient Library of Alexandria. He also writes a poetry criticism column for the community newspaper under a pen name.

## *Isabel Grimaldi*

A cool, elegant 500-year old vampire, whose passion is creating businesses – and destroying those of rivals. Grimaldi is personally ruthless, but claims to believe in giving back to the world by supporting many charities, among them Hand of Hermes. (She also claims to have endowed a number of monasteries.) Currently, she and new werewolf/business partner John Bertolf jointly own a large chain of 24-hour “Slake & Steak” burger joints, along with associated vertically integrated chain of butcher shops and cattle ranches outside the city that supply them. The burger chain's teenage employees provide a ready source of snacks for her extended vampire family. The restaurants also employ a large number of young supernaturals. She is the most powerful member of the city's vampire aristocracy to support Hand of Hermes, probably because (for now) her own power base is secure and a reduction in tensions suits her desire to maintain the status quo.

## *Dr. Lydia Corwall*

A brilliant, stylish, but cocky young trauma surgeon, her career was cut short when cocaine abuse led to a disastrous botched surgery, a huge lawsuit, and loss of her medical license, penthouse, and cherished Lamborghini. She knew Konstantin in medical school; after her career crashed and burned, he recruited her to help run the free clinic. Lydia has given up on drugs, but recently traded them for a new addiction. She caught the eye of Isabel Grimaldi during one of the vampire's occasional visits to the charity, and was seduced by her magnetic charm. Restored to a pampered lifestyle as Grimaldi's secret lover, she thinks she might become a vampire. In return, she functions as the latter's personal representative – or spy – within Hermes.

## *John Bertolf*

Leader of a small but fierce urban werewolf pack, the “cow-boy werewolf” also owns a number of cattle ranches in the countryside. Hand of Hermes successfully brokered a truce in a bloody feud between his pack and Grimaldi's vampire clan. Bertolf has since developed a reluctant respect for Hermes, and has even entered into a profitable partnership with Grimaldi. He sometimes sends over a few trusted Wolves to help assist in peacekeeping jobs or provide security at the clinic and office.

## Enemies of the Hand of Hermes

Hand of Hermes keeps itself secret from the mundane world, but are well known to the city's paranormal community. While their efforts have been favorably received by many supernaturals and associated humans, just as many would bite their hands instead of shaking them.

Some monster hunters – like Blake – respect Hermes for reducing violence, but others feel its willingness to help anyone – even dangerous predators who feed on humans – is a form of treachery against mankind. Likewise, there are monsters that think that any cooperation with humans is risky or demeaning.

There are also political issues. Vampire leader Grimaldi and werewolf alpha Bertolf are not the only bloodsucker or lycanthrope families in town. Some of their rivals believe – possibly rightly – that the duo's support of Hand of Hermes is a tool for consolidating their power base. A major issue is that fledgling vampires and weres who owe fealty to their pack elders or masters sometimes called the Hand of Hermes hotline seeking

advice or help for problems when (traditionally) they should gone to their own sires or alphas. The existence of a “third way” group threatens traditional hierarchies! There is even a risk that groups from outside the city will become involved – perhaps out of fear that this local organization will start spreading its ideals into the wider world.

So far, the Hand has been lucky. The negotiating skills of Blake Winter and Enoch Weatherby and the patronage of the werewolf and vampire bosses Grimaldi and Bertolf have kept it safe. But there have been death threats (including one painted in mixed blood and vampire ash on the clinic's outside wall just a week ago). Although the principle members of the organization have stayed safe, some volunteers have been attacked, and a few have disappeared. Whether this is connected with the organization or independent of it has yet to be determined. The more successful Hand of Hermes is in its goal of creating rapport between rival monsters and monster hunters, the greater the chance of it being targeted.

## HERMES PROGRAMS

*Hot Line:* A crisis hotline intended for supernatural beings and monster hunters who can anonymously discuss personal problems, receive advice, or send in tips regarding threats to the peace of the city. Hermes likes to have two lines open at all times. If they get some more volunteers, they may open a third line. The number is passed around by word of mouth, such as at magic-supply shops, bars frequented by supernaturals, and so on. Hermes is always concerned that the people who really need it – such as newly transformed vampires who were left on their own – won't be aware of it. However, any form of publicity would likely leave them inundated with crank calls.

*Emergency Crisis Response Team:* This service is the meat and potatoes of Hermes. Staffed by volunteers (led by Blake and Weatherby) with negotiating skills or useful special abilities, their goal is to go into dangerous situations and de-escalate them. Their most important job is acting as supernatural diplomats and ombudsmen. However, they will provide a wide variety of help and advice to anyone who is in trouble connected with the supernatural and needs a nonviolent solution, ranging from peacekeeping patrols to legal contracts and treaties. Recently, they negotiated a “Romeo and Juliet” dispute triggered when two young lovers from a rival werewolf and weretiger clan fell in love, preventing hotheads on both sides from turning an elopement into a war. Then they ended up having to plan the wedding.

*The Clinic:* The clinic's two doctors aren't afraid to treat weres with silver-bullet wounds, abortion-seeking ghosts, and vampires needing dental work, but their real struggle is the politicking that keeps the city's only supernatural emergency room safe and solvent.

*Supernatural Daycare:* This service is operated out of the back of the antique shop by volunteers, including Blake's grandma. This is useful for vampires with mortal children who lack minions and want someone to look after the kids.

*Peacekeeping:* There are always hotheads who can start something up, and many paranormals are like rival street

gangs with superpowers. If the organization thinks trouble is brewing – from word on the street or hotline tips – Hand of Hermes will try to send volunteers to act as a “neighborhood watch” to patrol disputed areas or trouble spots. This requires a willingness to bodily stand between two angry factions or to stop things cold with nonviolent means – “like being a bouncer in a city-sized bar” (as Blake described it). Mind-control magic and skills like Wrestling or Judo are very useful if talking fails. A recent operation was Wormwood Cemetery, where the accidental consumption of an old vampire's resting body by a group of ghoulish pups led to threats of retaliation.

*The School:* This is currently more dream than a reality. Blake has proposed setting up a private school for children of supernatural beings (or children who have been turned into monsters) and the scions of monster-hunter groups like the White Guardians. The idea is to improve relations by having them all attend school together, learn to use their abilities, and earn mutual respect. He remembers the troubles he had as the only one aware of the supernatural in his own high school, and how he grew up seeing all nonhumans as horrors. It took him years to adopt a more nuanced viewpoint. He is trying to get Grimaldi and Bertolf onboard and find a suitable venue, a class of students who won't kill each other right away, and volunteer teachers. What can go wrong?

## 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.

# SPEAKING IN TONGUES

BY JASON “PK” LEVINE

“Have you figured out your character concept yet?”

“Yeah, I think the group could use a linguist. How much would it cost for Accented in about half the languages in the game?”

“Let’s see . . . assuming you take *Language Talent*, about 200 points.”

“What?!”

“At least, for the major languages. If you’re talking about obscure ones, too, it’ll drive that up a bit.”

Some settings can justify having a dozen languages or less – such as fantasy settings, which often have just a handful for the humans plus one for each other race. (The reason that only nonhumans are linguistically monolithic never seems to come up.) But many others require more, from science-fiction settings with hundreds of planets to *anything* set on Earth. On modern Earth, even if you define a “major language” as one with millions of speakers, there are over 200 of them! In a game with global scope, this can be daunting.

Fortunately, there are several ways to mitigate this issue and make communication easier. The GM should choose an option based on the ease with which he wants characters to be fluent in several languages.

Let’s talk about . . . communication.

## LANGUAGE DEFAULTS

This option requires no change at all – it’s simply awareness of the existing *Languages* (p. B506) rule. Basically, if two languages are related, they default to each other, and may be bought up from this default. The specifics depend on the degree of overlap.

*Closely Related:* One language started as a dialect or variant of the other, they both share a very similar parent language, or they otherwise overlap significantly in terms of structure and vocabulary. Examples include Italian and Sicilian, Hindi and Urdu, or Mandarin and Xiang. These languages default at one comprehension level lower, which only makes the default useful if one language is known at Accented or better.

*Examples:* If you know Italian at Native, you know Sicilian at Accented. If you know Hindi at Accented, you know Urdu at Broken. If you know Mandarin at Broken, you have *no* useful

knowledge of Xiang, as one level down from Broken is “no comprehension.”

*Distantly Related:* The two languages share a common ancestry and a (roughly) similar way of constructing words and sentences, but they have little obvious overlap. Examples include Polish and Russian (both Slavic languages) or Hindi and Farsi (both Indo-Iranian languages). These languages default at two comprehension levels lower, which only makes the default useful if one language is known at Native.

*Examples:* If you know Polish at Native, you know Russian at Broken. But if you know Hindi at Accented, you have *no* useful knowledge of Farsi.

When constructing a fantasy world, it’s important to define how its languages are related; see *GURPS Banestorm* (p. 33) for a good example. For real-world languages, this can be a bit trickier, but there are a few ways to tackle this.

*Linguistic Groups* (pp. 27-29): Treat all languages within a single group as being closely related, while treating languages from all groups that default to each other as being distantly related. For example, English and Dutch are closely related (same group) while English and German are distantly related (their groups share a default). This simple method provides generous defaults, but nothing game-breaking. In fact, the game may be *enhanced* by the fact that communication has just become less of an issue!

*Table of Languages:* If you have *Pyramid* #3/44: *Alternate GURPS II*, you can use the table from *Colorless Green Ideas Sleep Furiously* (p. 20). Treat any languages in each other’s “Comprehension” column as being closely related (ignore the listed penalty). Treat all other languages in the same sub-family (the datum *after* the slash in the “Family” column) as being distantly related. For example, Afrikaans is closely related to Dutch, and distantly related to Danish and English (all Germanic). This method produces fairly realistic results, though possibly *too* realistic if the GM is trying to facilitate cross-fluency.

*Plot Purposes:* In some games, reality serves the narrative rather than the other way around! If none of the players are linguists (or are, but are easy-going about it), the GM may prefer to decide on the fly whether a language is closely or distantly related, taking into account both his gut feeling and how easy he wants communication to be at the moment. The simplest method is to ask the players, e.g., “What’s your closest language to Dutch, and what comprehension level is it?” then make a quick ruling on whether their default is Accented, Broken, or useless.



## LINGUISTIC GROUPS

The language default rules mean that, when learning multiple languages, it's cheaper and easier to choose a group of related ones. The concept of *linguistic groups* takes this one step further, by letting characters buy fluency in such a *group*, rather than in one language at a time. This is much simpler than tracking all of the defaults while buying every related language up from them, *and* takes up less room on the character sheet. The net result will usually be less expensive than if each language were bought up separately, which gives linguists further incentive to study these related families of dialects – just as they do in real life!

A linguistic group costs *twice* what a language does: 4 points for Broken, 8 points for Accented, 12 points for Native, or half that for written only or spoken only. Language Talent has its usual effect. If you know a linguistic group at Broken or Accented, you *may* buy up one of its specific languages for 2 points per comprehension level. (Don't buy up more than one – you're better off just raising the whole group.)

*Example:* You've learned the Balkan Group (below) at Accented, for 8 points. If you wanted to raise Greek to Native, you would pay an extra 2 points. If you'd had Language Talent, Balkan Group (Accented) would have only cost you 4 points, but this example would not otherwise change; your Greek language was *already* discounted for Language Talent when you first learned the Balkan Group.

Everyone starts with one language (*not* linguistic group!) at Native for free. If you want to improve the linguistic group associated with your language, this costs 2 points per comprehension level.

*Example:* You were raised in Russia, and thus speak Russian at Native for free. If you wanted to study the other languages of the East-Slavic Group (below), you could learn the rest of the group at Broken for 2 points, at Accented for 4 points, and at Native for 6 points. If you had Language Talent, this instead becomes Accented for 2 points or Native for 4 points.

The linguistic groups were chosen for a mix of realism and game utility. See *Under the Hood: Linguistic Groups* (below) for details. A \* marks the groups that prioritize utility over realism; delete these if your game calls for high linguistic fidelity. (Or charge more for them – perhaps triple cost instead of double.) If a specific language's inclusion *within* a group is the only thing unrealistic about it, there is no \*; instead, the questionable language is called out in the group's description.

Some languages have such little overlap with others that there's no believable way to include them in a linguistic group, even with a \*! (That said, the GM may certainly do so anyway, grouping them as he sees fit.) These include Dholuo, Georgian, Guarani, Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, Quechua, and most Native American languages.

### Aryan Group\*

*Default:* Closely related to Hindi Group and Iranian Group.

These languages are spoken primarily in north-eastern India and Nepal.

Assamese, Bengali, Bhojpuri, Burmese, Chittagonian, Kashmiri, Magahi, Maithili, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Rangpuri, Sylheti, Tibetan.

### Balkan Group\*

This group also includes various minor Romani languages, including Balkan Romani and Lomavren Romani.

Albanian, Armenian, Greek, Phrygian.

### Bantu Group\*

These languages hail from the southern portion of Africa. Rwanda-Rundi includes dialects (e.g., Kinyarwanda and Kirundi). For convenience, the GM may choose to include Mande languages (e.g., Bambara and Mandinka) in this group.

Bemba, Chewa (Nyanja), Gikuyu, Kongo, Luba-Kasai, Makuwa, Mbundu, Rwanda-Rundi, Shona, Sotho-Tswana, Sukuma-Nyamwezi, Swahili, Tsonga, Xhosa, Zulu.

### Chinese Group\*

Even in the most realistic game, Mandarin and Xiang are closely related, and most written Chinese is done in Mandarin *regardless* of the spoken dialect.

Gan, Hakka, Mandarin, Min Bei, Min Dong, Min Nan, Wu, Xiang, Yue (Cantonese).

### East-Slavic Group

*Default:* Closely related to Southwest-Slavic Group.

The inclusion of Lithuanian is arguably unrealistic.

Belarusian, Lithuanian, Russian, Ukrainian.

### English Group

*Default:* Closely related to German Group and Scandinavian Group.

See *Separating English* (p. 28) for a variation.

## Under the Hood: Linguistic Groups

Linguistic groups are justified by the defaults between languages, but going strictly by realistic defaults would lead to an unbalanced list. Specifically, Indo-European languages tend to overlap much more than other languages – which means it's easy to build groups of Indo-European languages that all meet the definition of closely related (p. 26), but it becomes almost impossible to do the same with Afro-Asiatic, Austronesian, etc. languages.

Therefore, the linguistic groups were chosen with an eye for balance. They “zoom in” when possible, forming groups from closely related languages, then “zoom out” as necessary to form groups from distantly related ones. In most games, this balance and utility will far outweigh the minor loss in realism . . . but these less realistic groups are each marked with a \*, so they can be removed or cost-inflated in games featuring gritty linguistic realism.

Afrikaans, Dutch, English, Jamaican Creole, Louisiana Creole.

### **German Group**

*Default:* Closely related to English Group and Scandinavian Group.

See *Separating English* (below) for a variation. Austro-Bavarian is one language, though it is known in some areas as Austrian and in some as Bavarian.

Austro-Bavarian, German, Yiddish.

Balochi, Dari, Farsi (Persian), Kurdish, Mazanderani-Gilaki, Pashto, Tajik.

### **North-African Group\***

*Default:* Closely related to Semetic Group.

While this includes all of the Berber and ancient Egyptian languages, only the key ones are listed here. For full realism, split Egyptian (Coptic, Demotic, and Egyptian) from the Berber dialects.

Coptic, Demotic, Egyptian (Archaic, Old, Middle, Late), Tacilhit, Tamazight, Taqbaylit, Tuareg.

## **Separating English**

As the majority of *GURPS* players speak English, it may be jarring to see it lumped in with other languages in the English Group (p. 27). This grouping is balanced and realistic, but in a game set in English-speaking countries, it may “feel better” to keep English (and, by necessity, Louisiana Creole and Jamaican Creole) as standalone languages. This replaces the English Group and German Group (above) with the following new configuration.

### **English**

*Default:* Closely related to German Group and Jamaican Creole.

This is a single language, not a group. For game purposes, it is identical to Louisiana Creole.

### **East-European Group\***

*Default:* Closely related to English, Louisiana Creole, and Scandinavian Group; distantly related to Jamaican Creole.

Afrikaans, Austro-Bavarian, Dutch, German, Yiddish.

### **Philippine Group\***

*Default:* Closely related to Indonesian Group.

Bicolano, Cebuano, Hawaiian, Hiligaynon, Ilokano, Maori, Samoan, Tagalog (Filipino), Tahitian, Waray-Waray.

### **Romance Group**

Italian includes its dialects (e.g., Neapolitan, Piedmontese, Sicilian, and Venetian). The inclusion of Romanian (also known as Moldovan) is arguably unrealistic.

Catalan, French, Galician, Haitian Creole, Italian, Latin, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish.

### **Scandinavian Group**

*Default:* Closely related to English Group and German Group.

The inclusion of Faroese and Icelandic is arguably unrealistic.

Danish, Faroese, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish

### **Hindi Group\***

*Default:* Closely related to Aryan Group and Iranian Group.

Even in the most realistic game, Bagheli, Hindi, and Urdu are closely related.

Awadhi, Bagheli, Bhili, Chhattisgarhi, Gujarati, Haryanvi, Hindi, Kanauji, Konkani, Marwari, Punjabi, Rajasthani, Sindhi, Urdu.

### **Indonesian Group\***

*Default:* Closely related to Philippine Group.

Even in the most realistic game, Indonesian and Malaysian are effectively the same language for game purposes.

Acehnese, Balinese, Batak, Buginese, Indonesian, Javanese, Madurese, Malagasy, Malaysian, Minangkabau, Sundanese.

### **Iranian Group\***

*Default:* Closely related to Aryan Group and Hindi Group.

Even in the most realistic game, Dari, Farsi, and Tajik are closely related.

### **Semetic Group\***

*Default:* Closely related to North-African Group.

Akkadian, Amharic, Arabic, Aramaic, Hebrew, Sryiac, Tigrinya.

### **South-Indian Group\***

Also known as “Dravidian Group.”

Kannada, Malayalam, Sinhala, Tamil, Talugu.

### **Southwest-Slavic Group**

*Default:* Closely related to East-Slavic Group.

“Serbo-Croatian” is also known as Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, or Serbian, depending on where you are; it’s all the same language. The inclusion of Czech, Polish, and Slovak is arguably unrealistic; they could form their own “West-Slavic Group,” making this the “South-Slavic Group.”

Bulgarian, Czech, Macedonian, Polish, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak, Torlakian.

## Tai-Kmer Group

The inclusion of Santali and Shan is arguably unrealistic.

Kmer, Lao, Santali, Shan, Thai, Vietnamese

## Turkish Group\*

Even in the most realistic game, Azerbaijani and Turkish are closely related, as are Uyghur and Uzbek.

Azerbaijani, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tatar-Bashkir, Turkish, Turkmen, Uyghur, Uzbek.

## Ural-Mountain Group

The inclusion of Hungarian is arguably unrealistic.

Erzya, Estonian, Finnic, Hungarian, Mari, Moksha.

## WILDCARD LANGUAGES

If linguistic groups aren't broad enough, it's time to break out *wildcard languages*. These cost thrice as much as a normal language: 6 points for Broken, 12 points for Accented, 18 points for Native, or half as much for spoken-only or written-only. Language Talent has its usual effect.

One or two individual languages may be bought up from the wildcard for the usual 2 points per comprehension level (don't buy up more than two, as you're better off just raising the wildcard). Unlike for linguistic groups, there is *no* discount to buy a wildcard language that happens to include your native tongue.

A wildcard language *can* be based on a broad language family, but there are also many other valid approaches; see below. One of the advantages of a wildcard language is that the player and GM need not define every possible language that it covers; when encountering a new language, they can just take a moment to see if it *should* be covered. If so, the character speaks it!

*Example:* Jeremy has the wildcard language Canada! at Accented. Obviously, this allows him to speak English, French, and the indigenous languages, but also *any* language with a significant minority in Canada. For the first time, Jeremy runs into someone who speaks Ukrainian. He checks the Internet and shows the GM that Canada *does* have a significant Ukrainian-speaking minority. Thus, Jeremy can speak it!

Wildcard languages can be overpowered in comparison to regular languages or linguistic groups, but they're fairly priced in a campaign that allows Omnilingual (below). The GM may thus wish to reserve them for cinematic games.

There are several ways to choose a wildcard language:

*Language Family:* Perhaps the most literal option, and one that will appeal to linguist players. For large branches with lots of useful languages (e.g., Indo-European), the GM may request that you choose a sub-family. Examples include Afro-Asiatic!, Indo-Iranian!, and Hellenic!

*Large Geographic Area:* Choose any area with about 10 to 20 countries in it. You can speak all of the primary, secondary/minority, and native languages of each country – or that of any significant ethnic enclave within one. Examples include Central America!, North Africa!, and Southeast Asia!

*One Country:* Pick a country. You speak its primary and native languages, along with any languages spoken by a

*significant* minority in that country. With GM's permission, this can include a cluster of small, related countries instead of one big one. Examples include Congo Region!, Russia!, and United States!

*Specific Descriptor:* You can describe your wildcard language in any way you like, so long as the GM agrees that he can verify or decide whether a given language falls under its umbrella. Examples include Holy See! (any language spoken by a Catholic cardinal) and Stock Trader! (any language in which a specific, named stock market allows trades to be made).

## OMNILINGUAL

This new variant of Unusual Background, originally from *GURPS Supers*, is an easy way to represent someone who speaks hundreds or even thousands of languages. It dovetails nicely with wildcard languages – compare Omnilingual [40] to two wildcard languages at Accented [24]. If a character needs three or more wildcard languages to represent everything he speaks, consider using a limited version of Omnilingual instead.

### Omnilingual and Xeno-Omnilingual

40 or 80 points

You speak too many languages to count! Any time you encounter a language, you're assumed to know it at Accented. If you have Language Talent, this becomes Native.

For 40 points (Omnilingual), you speak every language on Earth, with the exception of those that have never been discovered or deciphered. For 80 points (Xeno-Omnilingual), you have the same benefit for alien languages – though you may need special technology (or the Mimicry advantage) to produce the correct sounds.

### Special Enhancement

*Cosmic, Universal translator:* Your Omnilingual doesn't represent ridiculous amounts of learned knowledge; it's an actual super-power that translates on the fly. Therefore, you understand *any* human language (for Omnilingual) or any language at all (for Xeno-Omnilingual) the moment you encounter it, even if there's no possible way you could be familiar with it. +50%.

### Special Limitation

*Accessibility:* Use Accessibility (p. B110) to restrict what languages you know. This is an excellent way to represent someone who's studied *almost* every language on Earth. Examples include Accessibility, No Hindi dialects (-10%); Accessibility, No Eastern Asian languages (-20%); and Accessibility, European Languages Only (-40%).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Despite not being a professional linguist, Reverend Jason "PK" Levine is adept at speaking in tongues – generally after severe head trauma. When lucid, he works as the Assistant *GURPS* Line Editor, maintains the website [www.mygurps.com](http://www.mygurps.com), and goes on dates with his wife. He'd like to thank Roger Burton West for writing *Colorless Green Ideas Sleep Furiously*, as the research done there provided a springboard and framework for this very set of guidelines.



# CITY MANAGEMENT

BY MATT RIGGSBY

If you rule a city, what can you do with it? Not as much as video games would have you think! Regardless of what their theoretical authority might be, rulers can't meaningfully dictate that residents of their cities all become spice merchants one month, then switch to making illuminated manuscripts the next. They *can* decree the construction of massive walls, huge theaters, and other public works, but there's always a cost to be paid, and one that may be too much to bear if done as a short-term project. But even if a ruler can't treat his city as a Lego set or game of *Civilization*, he *can* manage it, using revenues and political skill to slowly shape the city or even create a new one. Getting a civic government to do something can be fraught with intrigue and social interaction. Building on the framework created by *GURPS City Stats*, *GURPS Mass Combat*, and *GURPS Social Engineering*, these new optional rules help develop cities in both war and peace.

## RULERS

Many cities don't have a single ruler, and in those that do, the ruler doesn't personally oversee every task. For democracies, oligarchies, and other multi-party governments, simply read "the ruler" as the city's governing body, whatever that might be. For rolling against applicable skills, a ruler (or ruling body) may delegate tasks to skilled specialists; considerable political intrigue might be tied up in persuading a ruler to engage the right specialist, or becoming that specialist.

An absolute monarch can do more or less as he pleases, but a politician in a more democratic framework may have his work cut out for him getting the rest of the government to go along with his plan, or to allocate him a cut of civic revenues he can use to carry out an improvement scheme. He'll need to rely heavily on *Social Engineering* to convince others to give him what he wants.

## REVENUES

A city collects revenues from citizens and visitors that can be used for a number of purposes. A ruler might spend his income from taxes on improving fortifications, beautifying the city, encouraging useful enterprises, or simply on riotous living. *City Stats* (p. 9) uses Military Budget Factor (MBF) to set a level of taxation that can be put to military purposes.

However, high levels of taxation can't be sustained. Peacetime taxation needs to be much lower. Regardless of Control Rating (CR), the maximum safe revenue is equivalent to a 4%

MBF. Though a ruler may extract during peacetime higher taxes (up to the MBF limits imposed by the city's CR), he runs the same risk of damaging the city's economy as if the metropolis was embroiled in long-term fighting (see *City Stats*, p. 12, for specifics).

## CIVIC IMPROVEMENTS

Revenues may be used to perform a range of civic improvements; major ones are listed below. In general, the ruler decides on an improvement to attempt, spends the required sum, and makes a roll against the relevant skill. The minimum time to make any attempt at a civic improvement is one year except as noted in the description, though multiple initiatives may be under way at the same time.

A ruler may spread spending out over a much longer period of time, and make the skill roll only when the project has been fully funded. Most civic improvement campaigns take years to reach completion, even decades. Crash programs may be undertaken at some risk, taking less time for a penalty to the relevant skill per the rules on *Haste* per p. B346. Taking more time per the *Extra Time* rules does *not* provide a skill bonus, unless a ruler takes extra time *and* spends proportionately more money: double time and cost for +1 to skill, quadruple for +2, and so on.

### Typical Income

These guidelines refer repeatedly to a "typical income." Unless otherwise noted, this means a typical *monthly* income *for the TL*, as defined on p. B517.

### Population

Getting a city to grow organically can be sped up by actively encouraging new residents. Publicizing a city's benefits (and possibly providing incentives to new residents) may be treated as advertising, per *GURPS Social Engineering* (p. 61). The GM may impose limits on the size and location of the potential audience and modifiers for the benefits (or lack thereof) of the city being advertised and potential difficulty in getting there. For example, the burghers of a Hanseatic town, no matter how wealthy, couldn't do anything to attract Anasazi or Japanese.

Likewise, even if they could reach Bedouin nomads, life in a Christian city on the Baltic might not appeal to Muslim desert nomads. Consequently, the target audience should be defined by broad demographic factors such as geography, religion, and ethnicity, but not by narrow ones such as skill or special abilities. Thus, a million people in Albania is a reasonable audience, but a million Albanian dentists is not. For some target populations, there simply aren't enough people to attract, nor can most cities sustain a huge influx of people with the same narrow skill set. To attract specific types of people, see *Search Modifiers* (p. 32).

If the Propaganda skill roll succeeds, the population of the city increases by 0.01% of the target market times the margin of success. However, see *Building New* (pp. 32-33) for potential limitations on the number of people a city can absorb at once.

*The worth of the state, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it.*

– John Stuart Mill

## Appearance

Appearance is improved by constructing impressive public buildings (e.g., cathedrals, colonnaded public squares, monumental statues), creating scenic avenues and ornamental gardens, and regulating the appearance of private buildings. Cost is equal to 50% of a typical income times the city's population. For improvements that raise the reaction bonus to a number above zero, multiply the cost by the desired new reaction modifier plus one (for example, double cost to raise appearance from Average to Attractive). The relevant skill is Architecture. Artist specialties the GM finds suitable such as sculpture or landscaping may be used as complementary skills. The skill roll is at a penalty equal to the desired new bonus. For example, the roll to improve a city of Average appearance to Attractive is -1.

## Hygiene

Hygiene is improved, depending on TL, by constructing and enhancing sewage and water systems, establishing garbage removal, taking steps to abate threats to public health like insect infestations, and instituting public health programs. Cost is equal to the value from the table below times the population. The applicable skill is Engineer (Civil).

TL	Hygiene Cost	TL	Hygiene Cost
TL0	\$100	TL7	\$336
TL1	\$104	TL8	\$416
TL2	\$108	TL9	\$576
TL3	\$112	TL10	\$896
TL4	\$128	TL11	\$1,296
TL5	\$176	TL12	\$1,696
TL6	\$256		

## Literacy

Literacy is improved by providing public education or greatly facilitating private education. A successful literacy campaign increases the literacy level one step (None to Broken to Accented to Full). It costs 60% of a typical income for the TL times the city's population. It also takes a very long time; attempts to raise literacy take a base time of five years rather than one. The relevant skill is Administration. Teaching may be used as a complementary skill.

## Wealth

Trying to make a city wealthier is difficult and risky, requiring significant investment. An attempt to increase civic income costs 25% of a typical income for the city's current level of Wealth times the population. The applicable skill is Finance. The roll is at -1 for every current level of Wealth above Average (-1 for Comfortable, -2 for Wealthy, etc.). If the roll succeeds, increase the city's income by 10%. If it fails, *reduce* income by 10%. If the city's income reaches that of another Wealth level, change the city's Wealth to that new level. Subsequent changes are based on the new level of Wealth.

## CR

Rulers may attempt political reforms in order to alter a city's Control Rating. The ruler of a city may increase or decrease the CR by 1 without cost on a successful Politics roll. Failure indicates ineffective legislation or successful legal challenges. However, success leads to other problems.

If the CR increases, the populace may not take kindly to the change. The ruler must make another Politics roll at  $-2 \times (6 - \text{original CR})$ . Propaganda may be used as a complementary skill, but it does require spending as specified for advertising in *Social Engineering* (p. 61). If the roll succeeds, roll 1d on the table below for the effect of the political backlash. If it fails, roll *twice* and apply both effects.

Roll	Effect
1-2	Income decreases by 5%
3-4	Population decreases by 2%
5-6	-3 to Loyalty rolls

On a critical failure, the ruler faces open revolt.

If CR decreases, the ruler must still make an unmodified Politics roll to avoid offending constituencies who benefited from earlier laws (for example, manufacturers benefiting from government-sanctioned monopolies). If this roll fails, roll on the above table *once*.

## Corruption

Corruption is reduced by focused law enforcement and restructuring administration for greater transparency (or, at least, greater transparency for the ruler). An anti-corruption campaign costs 20% of a typical income times the population. The relevant skill is Administration.

A ruler may also voluntarily and temporarily *increase* the Corruption level on a month-by-month basis in order to profit personally: accepting bribes, extorting kickbacks, and otherwise engaging in graft. The Corruption modifier may be increased by 1 to 3 points. The ruler receives, as personal income, 0.05% of the city's revenues times the Corruption increase times the margin of success on an Administration or Streetwise roll.

*What is politics but persuading the public to vote for this and support that and endure these for the promise of those?*

– Gilbert Highet

However, this is risky. If a ruler wishes to restore the Corruption index to its previous level, he must successfully roll against Administration to do so, at a cumulative monthly penalty of the increase in the Corruption modifier. For example, a ruler who lets the Corruption modifier slip from -1 to -3 for a month is at -2 to his roll this month, or -4 the next month. If the roll fails, corruption continues, but the ruler may attempt to reduce corruption to its original level the next month. On a critical failure or if the modifier rises to -10 or more, the change in Corruption becomes permanent, and the ruler loses his additional income.

### Defenses

At low TLs, defenses are mostly barriers appropriate to the threats they're likely to face (curtain walls, earthen breastworks, etc.), switching to more active defenses (anti-aircraft guns, rocket launchers, point defense lasers) at higher TLs. To find the cost of fortifying a city, multiply the *square root* of the population by the amount on the table below for the appropriate TL. The appropriate skill is Engineer (Combat).

TL	Fortification Cost	TL	Fortification Cost
TL0	\$186K	TL7	\$661K
TL1	\$194K	TL8	\$831K
TL2	\$202K	TL9	\$1,170K
TL3	\$211K	TL10	\$1,849K
TL4	\$244K	TL11	\$2,725K
TL5	\$338K	TL12	\$3,648K
TL6	\$497K		

A notable problem with most defenses is that they're static or cover a limited area. Many old cities bear the imprint of a series of defensive walls, each one encompassing a larger area than the last in order to defend the growing settlement. When defenses are built, the number of people that they protect should be noted; a ruler can, given sufficient funding, build more extensive defenses than necessary to provide for future growth. If the population increases beyond those bounds, the city begins to suffer consequences. At the ruler's option, either the defenses have -1 Defense Bonus (DB) for every 10% or part thereof the city's population exceeds the maximum for the defenses (indicating that many people are actually living outside the reach of those defenses), or the city has -1 to Hygiene for every 10% over the rated maximum (indicating that more people are crowding into a small area).

### Search Modifiers

A ruler might want to make his city a center of academics, a noted religious pilgrimage site, or a high-tech crucible of invention. He can't create experts and professionals from nothing, and even if he could, there's a limit to how many such people a city can support without crowding out providers of other necessary goods and services. However, a ruler can nevertheless make provisions to encourage the growth of favored industries and trades, colonization by preferred religious or ethnic groups, and so on. By encouraging these groups and activities, a ruler can attempt to increase his city's search modifier for them.

Encouraging such development has costs: providing short-term tax incentives or bonus payments to tradesmen, constructing facilities for an institution, buying artwork or sacred relics, etc. The basic cost is 10% of typical monthly pay for members of the occupation in question times the population of the city times the *current* search bonus (no search bonus multiplier if the search bonus is below +1). The appropriate skill is Propaganda. If the roll succeeds, change the search modifier by +1, +2 on a critical success, or reduce by -1 on a critical failure.

## BUILDING NEW

The ability of a ruler, or even a prospective ruler, to create a new realm from scratch is severely limited. However, a ruler can, given the resources, reshuffle people in his domain between cities, or even send them to build new cities of their own. In case of disasters, he may have no choice.

At CR 5 or 6, rulers can move populations around more or less at will. Rulers at lower CRs must usually resort to encouraging immigration using the rules for growing a city's population (*Population*, pp. 30-31). However, circumstances may provide a population that wants or is forced to accept resettlement. Natural and man-made catastrophes can quickly generate people in need of a home. Wars, earthquakes, and severe weather can create large numbers of refugees. Captives and newly conquered peoples might be removed from their homelands and scattered to prevent uprisings. Somewhat more happily, moving to a new location may open up opportunities for new residents. For example, cities in the ancient Greek heartland established colonies across the eastern Mediterranean, relieving overpopulation in the original city and providing junior family members with much more land than they'd inherit at home.



But wherever they come from, getting them where they're going and making sure they've got a place to stay can be expensive.

### Transport and Maintenance

Considerable cost can be associated with moving large numbers of people from one place to another. Transportation and maintenance costs twice a typical salary times the number of people moved as a startup cost (three times if they must journey by sea, four times if traveling by land or air), half that amount per month while they are in transit, and a quarter of that amount per month that they must be maintained while in their new location. Newly arrived colonists must often continue to be supported from home for several months until new fields are established, food-vat production comes on line, and so on. However, if the destination city is already part of an established territory (for example, if one group of citizens is kicked out and another brought in to replace them), this time may be very short.

### Housing

Once the colonists get to where they're going, they'll need somewhere to live, and unless they're moving to an existing and empty city, a crash building program must be created to put up housing for them. To construct large amounts of new dwellings, multiply the number of people to be housed by the cost from the table for the appropriate TL:

TL	Housing Cost	TL	Housing Cost
TL0	\$2,275	TL7	\$7,644
TL1	\$2,366	TL8	\$9,464
TL2	\$2,457	TL9	\$13,104
TL3	\$2,548	TL10	\$20,384
TL4	\$2,912	TL11	\$29,484
TL5	\$4,004	TL12	\$38,584
TL6	\$5,824		

For slow, organic growth like that described under *Population* (pp. 30-31), it is assumed that the local housing market in an existing city can usually adjust without intervention. However, for sudden population increases of 5% or more, additional housing will need to be built.

## DAILY ADMINISTRATION

These rules are largely intended as background, defining the time and monetary parameters for activities that may take years to complete. However, the daily duties of a city ruler can be brought a bit closer to the foreground by treating it as a job.

The day-to-day administration of a city is a career with an income usually suitable to support monthly Cost of Living for the maximum Status in the city. There are sometimes exceptions in national and regional capitals. The mayor of Sacramento, for example, has more authority over his city than the governor of California, both of whom work there. Prerequisites for the job vary from society to society, but generally involve Status, a high level of Politics skill, or both, but the job roll is typically against Administration. On a failure, in addition to any loss of pay (which, again, varies from society to society), the ruler must roll 1d on the following table to determine the effects on the city:

Roll	Effect
1	Public health emergency. Reduce Hygiene modifier by 1.
2	Economic hardship. Reduce revenues by 5%.
3	Crime wave. Increase Corruption modifier by -1.
4	Population fluctuation. Reduce population by 1d6%.
5	Urban blight. Reduce Appearance modifier by one level.
6	Security breach. Reduce DB by 1.

These effects are temporary. They persist until the ruler makes a successful Administration roll to resolve an issue. The ruler may only make one such roll per month, which resolves one issue if successful. On a critical success, all temporary problems are resolved. On a critical failure, an outstanding issue becomes *permanent*, and can be resolved by spending time and money on civic improvements.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt Riggsby has written or co-authored 11 *GURPS* books and written over 100 *Pyramid* articles, though he hasn't done much since *The Palais du Monde* (pp. 11-21).

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# RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

## MEETING AND GREETING BEFORE THE BEATING

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

What is arguably the greatest flaw of the classic film *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* – and how can we use that weakness to our advantage for good gaming? (Oh, and how does it tie into social gaming?)

Let's start with the flaw. (We're presuming that you've seen the movie; SPOILER ALERTs are not given for 30-year-old classics.) *The Wrath of Khan* provides arguably the greatest villain in the entire *Star Trek* film franchise: Khan. His adversary is one of the greatest heroes from 20th-century culture: James T. Kirk. So, what happens when those two meet face-to-face?

Err . . . good question. It's not answered in this movie. Every scene where Kirk and Khan interact is via videoscreen. They're never in the same spot. In fact, if Wikipedia is to be believed – and isn't it always? – the scenes with Kirk and Khan were filmed *months* apart. So the next time you want to get the full effect of the movie's filming order, insert your own pauses:

"I shall leave you as you left me, as you left her. Marooned for all eternity, in the center of a dead planet . . . buried alive. Buried alive."

[press "pause" on the media player for four months; resume]

"KHAAAAN!"

So why does this film work despite the fact that the two main driving forces never meet? I'd argue it's *because* they never meet.

### TIME TO TALK

But let me flash back to my very first *GURPS* campaign. In fact, it was the first long-term gaming campaign I'd run of any sort. It was a *Supers* game – which I'd argue is *not* a wise choice for a first-timer (especially for a *GURPS* newbie . . . did I mention it was for Third Edition?). Anyway, I was 17 and trying to emulate the feel of comics I loved, including that quintessential scene – the villain twirls around to explain the situation.

I don't remember the exact situation, but it went something like this.

**Me:** A mysterious figure swivels around in a large circular-backed chair. "You've made it far, so-called heroes. Congrat –"

**Player 1:** I attack him.

**Player 2:** Me, too.

**Me:** . . . What?

**Player 3:** Yeah, I'm in on this – attack.

I called the game to a halt so I could think this through – not for the first time this adventure (first-timer, remember?). In hindsight, it made perfect sense; the players were under no obligation to adhere to the genre tropes I was operating under. In fact, it's downright ludicrous to think they would; if the bad guy is right there in a papasan chair, why *not* attack?

Nowadays, I kick myself; modern folks are a bit savvier than that. In my defense, I was only 17, and we didn't have [TVtropes.org](http://TVtropes.org) . . . or ready-access Internet.

If I'd been paying attention to *The Wrath of Khan*, I'd have realized that the villain should only engage in a conversation when the do-gooders aren't able to immediately retaliate.

Setting up those possibilities for social interaction are vital for . . . well, any gaming groups that want to expand their repertoire beyond making attack rolls. Let's look at the pros and cons of various options.

### "PLEASE HOLD FOR AN IMPORTANT CALL FROM THE VILLAIN . . ."

The villainous mastermind of *The Wrath of Khan* was an early telecommuter (or a far-future one, if you want to be pedantic about a spacefaring civilization that still uses CRT monitors). Khan taunted Kirk et al via videoscreen, in situations where the heroes of the *Enterprise* were unable to bring weapons to bear against him.

Communicating from afar can be used in a variety of situations: magic or thick barriers in fantasy settings, or cell phones and FTL radio in more technological worlds.

However, it's also a method that some players find frustrating. "Yes, we know he can taunt us," exasperated gamers mutter; "how do we *get* him?"

One way to mitigate frustration about these situations is to ensure that these long-distance calls are not just a matter of the baddie going, "Bwah-hah-hah!" for five minutes. Giving either side a motivation for talking provides the scene a motivational push. As some ideas:

- The villain would like some information from the heroes (a code, the location of something desirable, or the like). If nothing else, the act of denying him a concession is likely to be seen as a victory by the players.

- The heroes can use the conversation as a means of tracking down the villain – either by observing background information in the signal, looking for clues in what he says, or even just "tracing the call." In this case, rather than cutting off communication, the heroes might need to keep the mastermind talking!

- The villain might potentially reveal some information that will prove instrumental in defeating him: details of his plan, insight into a weakness, etc. It's unlikely a villain would *knowingly* do this (and the heroes should be suspicious if the clue comes too easily), but it's a good opportunity for socially skilled heroes to work their abilities.

*We tried it once your way, Khan; are you game for a rematch?*

– Admiral James T. Kirk,  
*Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*

## “YOU CAN SHOOT ME ALL DAY, HEROES . . .”

Alternatively, the heroes encounter the bad guy early on, but they're physically unable to harm him. This is a common option in video games, where the fledgling heroes can't get past the force field/armor/defenses of the mastermind. This works well enough within a closed-narrative video game, where the heroes can be assumed to level up over the course of the game's storyline and become powerful enough to stop him at the end (apparently such bad guys don't bother doing their own adventuring for experience while the heroes are doing the same). However, it can be difficult to add this same technique within an open-ended tabletop game.

Regardless, the GM will need to have a reason why the villain doesn't wipe out the heroes in that initial encounter. A common explanation is "Bah! I won't waste my time on such trifles!" but it's still a bit unrealistic.

A logical reason for a powerfully defended villain to encounter the heroes without attacking them is because he wants them to join his side (see *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*) or needs them to accomplish a task . . . wittingly or otherwise: "You wouldn't dare assemble the three parts of the *Wand of IncogniTerror* . . ." The spectrum of possibilities of the PCs' awareness they're being used as pawns can lead to some good roleplaying. For example, imagine if the bad guy shows

up impossibly defended, goading the heroes into doing his bidding; only one of the heroes is aware that the villain is trying to pull their strings. Does he bring it up in front of the bad guy? Hold the information in reserve until he can talk to his allies? Keep the insight to himself entirely?

Another common option in a roleplaying game is for the villain to have incredible defenses that the heroes can defeat once they learn the secret (a new attack, a way to neutralize the defenses, etc.). Similar to the telecommuting possibilities mentioned previously, the heroes might need to use this encounter to try to figure out how they can overcome his defenses.

## A COCKTAIL PARTY . . . OF EVIL

Perhaps a more satisfying method to have the heroes and villains interact is to come up with a situation where they *could* attack each other, but it would be a very bad idea. Having the opposing sides glower at each other at a social function is a great way to set the stage for future fisticuffs. Some options include:

- The bad guy has diplomatic immunity or other social construct that keeps the heroes from attacking (if they know what's good for them).

- The encounter locale is someplace not conducive to direct confrontation. ("You're going to start a gunfight aboard a *space station?!?*") This method is actually a bit easier with more powerful settings, especially if there is a desire to limit collateral damage; those with the power to pulverize mountains generally think twice before initiating an attack at a crowded supermarket.

- One or both sides doesn't recognize the other. For example, if the heroes have secret identities they wish to maintain, then meeting their adversary while in those identities gives a chance for a social interaction where the heroes are unlikely to start anything. Conversely, it can be incredibly satisfying for players to realize that the person they've been talking to for several long minutes is – in fact – the unrecognizable villain they've been seeking for weeks.

Of course, any justifications might stack . . . the heroes and villain didn't recognize each other at the beginning of the encounter, but – now that they have – they dare not start an altercation aboard this dirigible.

To use this technique, it's often better (from the GM's point of view) to work backward from the planned meeting and to figure out a justification why the heroes aren't likely to start a fight. If you're thinking it through and you don't see a reason why the heroes won't simply open fire, then maybe add an appropriately deterring complication to your adventure outline. ("Hmm . . . maybe the encounter doesn't take place at a zoo, but rather an aquarium surrounded by glass walls holding back millions of gallons of water . . .")

## 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 with his wife, Nikola Vrtis, and their son.



# ODDS AND ENDS

## DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY REVOKED

As explored in this month's Random Thought Table (pp. 34-35), the GM might try everything in his power to establish a fight-free encounter between the bad guy and the heroes, but there's always the possibility that the players will open fire anyway . . . or even figure out a way around the limitations you've put into place.

Let 'em.

If the PCs swing first and ask questions later, it's good to let the chips fall where they may regarding consequences (spoiled secret identities, flooded aquariums, arrest by local officials and denial by their agency, etc.). In fact, if the adventurers are prone to fighting, you may want to jot down on a few notes about the ramifications of a battle, even if you end up using them for a cliffhanger (and a break for you).

However, if the heroes manage ways to mitigate the complications that discourage a direct confrontation, then it's probably best to play fair and laud them for thinking outside the box. ("I don't dare open fire at the governor's party, but I'll sneak in back and try to poison his drink . . .")

If you've designed your adventure right, then it should survive a social event that falls apart. If not, then perhaps the heroes get a few extra weeks of study time because they derailed a mastermind's plan by throwing a punch at a cocktail party. Meanwhile, the mastermind (or an associate) takes your unused notes as the basis for a new plot. Remember that restoring trust with players who think you're railroad-ing them is *much* trickier than reworking an adventure.

# MURPHY'S RULES

BY GREG HYLAND



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Got a *Murphy's Rule* of your own? Send it to [murphy@sjgames.com](mailto:murphy@sjgames.com)

*As we ascend the social ladder, viciousness wears a thicker mask.*

– Erich Fromm

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