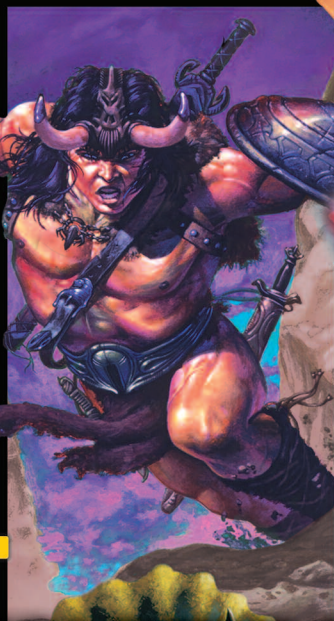


# PYRAMID<sup>®</sup>

Issue 3/70 August '14

## FOURTH EDITION FESTIVAL



## DESTINATION: ABYDOS

by David L. Pulver

### ELEMENTAL XIA CHAMPIONS VS. THE SHENGUAI

by Jason "PK" Levine

### INTO THE WILDERNESS

by Matt Riggsby

### HORDE NINJA

by Peter V. Dell'Orto

### TEN FOR TEN

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### GAMING IN THE ANCIEN RÉGIME

by William H. Stoddard

### REVISITING HIGH-TECH

by Hans-Christian Vortisch

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# CONTENTS

# IN THIS ISSUE

FROM THE EDITOR .....	3
DESTINATION: ABYDOS.....	4
<i>by David L. Pulver</i>	
TEN FOR TEN .....	14
<i>by Sean Punch</i>	
GAMING IN THE ANCIEN RÉGIME .....	19
<i>by William H. Stoddard</i>	
INTO THE WILDERNESS .....	23
<i>by Matt Riggsby</i>	
ELEMENTAL XIA CHAMPIONS VS. THE SHENGUAI .....	26
<i>by Jason "PK" Levine</i>	
HORDE NINJA .....	32
<i>by Peter V. Dell'Orto</i>	
REVISITING HIGH-TECH .....	34
<i>by Hans-Christian Vortisch</i>	
RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE: BEYOND YOUR IMAGINATION.....	35
<i>by Steven Marsh, Pyramid Editor</i>	
ODDS AND ENDS .....	37
ABOUT GURPS.....	38

## Article Colors

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

*Pale Blue:* In This Issue

*Brown:* In Every Issue (humor, editorial, etc.)

*Green:* Columnist

*Dark Blue:* GURPS Features

*Purple:* Systemless Features

### COVER ART

*John Zeleznik*

As of August 2014, *GURPS Fourth Edition* is 10 years old! This issue celebrates with several prominent *GURPS* contributors, who add the latest *GURPS* insight to past projects . . . with amazing results.

Anchors aweigh! Our first *Destination: Abydos*. *GURPS Basic Set* co-author David L. Pulver offers *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* adventure ideas and template suggestions, *GURPS Zombies* undead picks, *GURPS Mass Combat* information for two armies, and more.

As Line Editor during *GURPS'* first decade (and beyond), Sean Punch ponders the last 10 years in *Ten for Ten*. Get his top picks for new and optional rules from the numerous supplements that he's written in the past decade, as well as a peek behind the curtain with his reasoning for their importance.

William H. Stoddard, author of *GURPS Social Engineering*, takes the opportunity to update the social aspects of *GURPS Swashbucklers* for Third Edition in *Gaming in the Ancien Régime*. Learn about key sociopolitical traits, the proper way to act in refined French society, and significant adventuring opportunities.

*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Adventure 1: Mirror of the Fire Demon* is a fantastic scenario on its own, but now you can take it *Into the Wilderness* with its creator Matt Riggsby. Add details from *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 16: Wilderness Adventures*, including a *Revised Hostile Terrain Table*. You'll also run across some new cold-weather loadouts for individuals and groups.

When *GURPS Thaumatology: Chinese Elemental Powers* invades the *GURPS Monster Hunters* line, you now have *Elemental Xia Champions vs. the Shenguai*. Jason "PK" Levine – the shadowy mentor behind *Monster Hunters* – reveals the secrets of these new champions and enemies with a template, monsters, powers, and more.

When a single ninja won't do, you need to seek out the *Horde Ninja*. At great risk, Peter V. Dell'Orto, author of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 12: Ninja*, presents the mysterious "ninja-as-monster," including stats and tactics, plus a new advantage that allows fighters to become more powerful as their numbers are whittled down.

Hans-Christian Vortisch – our resident expert on all things gun-related in *GURPS* – discusses two new weapon options he might have considered from one particular hardback when *Revisiting High-Tech*.

*Random Thought Table* demonstrates how rules can jumpstart the imagination, while *Odds and Ends* features *GURPS City Stats* for Paris circa 1720, plus ideas for using rules to your adventure-generating advantage.

With this 10th anniversary celebration of the Fourth Edition of *GURPS Basic Set*, don't wait a second more! Be the first to pour a fifth and join us here in seventh heaven.

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# FROM THE EDITOR

## WHEN DOES LOOKING BACK MEAN LOOKING AHEAD?

It was 10 years ago today (more or less) Fourth Edition taught the gang to play . . .

By the nature of the publishing business, *GURPS* spends most of its time looking forward. Sure, we're immensely proud of what's come out in the past, but our sights usually have to be set on what's coming next week/month/year, lest deadlines and production gremlins devour us in our sleep.

So when Sean Punch suggested offering a special issue of *Pyramid* that commemorated the 10th anniversary of *GURPS Fourth Edition*, it took some head-scratching to wrap our mind around the idea. How could we look at the past *and* forward at the same time? Then collectively, we had a brainstorm. We asked some established Fourth Edition authors to take one of their past works and examine it through a lens of what is possible today. What wouldn't have been feasible to include in an earlier work without writing *another* supplement (one that has been written in the meantime)?

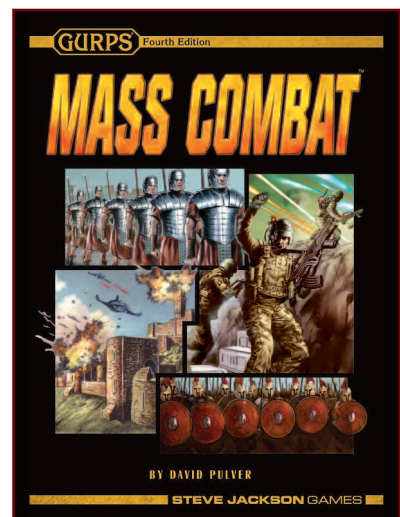
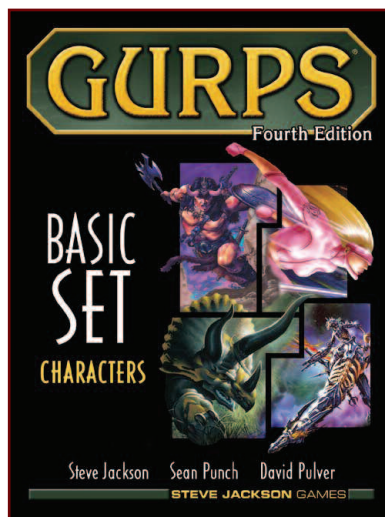
Thus David Pulver's *GURPS Banestorm: Abydos* couldn't feature stats for the titular locale's armies in the *GURPS Mass*

*Combat* format, nor could it include insight for how to use it in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* campaigns, because neither of those existed when he started writing *Abydos*. Similarly, Matt Riggsby's *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Adventure 1: Mirror of the Fire Demon* couldn't include detailed wilderness encounters, because *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 16: Wilderness Adventures* wasn't yet a twinkle in Sean Punch's eye. And so on.

I'm immensely proud of this trip down memory lane, especially because we used the opportunity to pave new ground at the same time. However, we recognize that we can't walk alone, and – as ever – we're most grateful to *you*, our gaming audience, for making this first decade possible. Thank you from us all, and hopefully we'll see you 10 years from now in the same spot . . . perhaps with a totally different look back!

## WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

How have the last 10 years of *GURPS* supplements affected your campaign? What are you looking forward to with the line? Let us know via private feedback at [pyramid@sjgames.com](mailto:pyramid@sjgames.com), or join the public discussion online at [forums.sjgames.com](http://forums.sjgames.com).



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# DESTINATION: ABYDOS

BY DAVID L. PULVER

**GURPS Banestorm: Abydos**, my dark-fantasy setting for **GURPS Fourth Edition**, describes an island-city of heretics in the Lake of Styx on the northern border of Megalos. In Abydos,

*What powerful artifacts or saintly relics might exist there now?*

– **GURPS Banestorm: Abydos**

necromancy is an accepted part of daily life, and zombies and skeletons walk among the living. The city can be an exotic location to explore, a source of deadly foes, or a home base for PCs.

The **GURPS Fourth Edition** line has greatly expanded in the years since the release of **Abydos**, and several newer resources contain campaign concepts and rules that can significantly enhance the setting. These include the **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy** line, **GURPS Mass Combat**, and the recent **GURPS Zombies**. This article suggests ways for using these supplements and certain *Pyramid* articles with the city of the dead, as well as offering one possible interpretation of the military capabilities of Abydos and Megalos.

## HORRIFIC DUNGEONS OF ABYDOS

Dungeon adventuring hasn't been a major focus for campaigns set on Yrth, perhaps to the setting's detriment. There's no good reason why that has to be the case – many well-developed fantasy worlds also incorporate dungeoneering. Abydos contains several prime dungeon locations just waiting to be stocked with monsters and treasures and looted by intrepid adventurers. Treasure aplenty is likely, both in terms of magic items (due to the number of mages in the city) and the loot that flows into Abydos from its nobles' centuries-long habit of piracy on the lake and raids into Megalos and surrounding lands. The following three locations are of special interest.

**Ravensbeak Tower:** A multi-leveled tower, home to the Lady Raven, Gabrielle Boneshanks (an undead sorceress – essentially a lich) and her Chamber of Melting Souls (**Abydos** p. 42). Under the tower is the Silent Maze, a former sewer system consisting of several dungeon levels. These include the Bone Labyrinth (into which heretics and hardened criminals are cast to die or go mad) and the Blind Caverns (natural caves and pools, with native fungi and slime monsters). Among the denizens of the maze are cannibals, demons summoned by Lady Ravenjoy in necromantic experiments, and who knows what else – dungeon monsters and Ravenjoy's ancient treasure, most certainly! While entering through the tower itself is perhaps too risky, due to the presence of the Raven Guard, secret entrances that connect other basements in the city to the Maze likely exist.

**Jerusalem Hill:** The old cellars beneath the Cathedral of St. Lazarus (itself a fortress and treasure house) are known to consist of hundreds of sealed-off rooms, cells, vaults, and catacombs

haunted by undead and other creatures. See **Abydos**, p. 41, for more information.

**The Monastery of the Holy Blood:** This grim hilltop fortress has underground crypts that house several vampires. See **Abydos**, p. 45, for additional details.

In addition to the above locales, plenty of other options exist for dungeons. For example, the island is dotted with the manor houses and townhomes of eccentric nobles, some of whom are also necromancers or pirates, any of whom could have excavated dungeons beneath their strongholds. The cellars beneath St. Magdalene's College for magic could also be reimagined as a dungeon with hideous magical experiments and misplaced flesh scrolls whose bodies hold ancient and powerful spells; they might be explored by youthful students in a Yrth-centric version of "steam tunnel" expeditions!

An alternative to the standard dungeon theme in which the adventurers have a clear advantage over the monsters is to emphasize a survival-horror feel. This concept is detailed at length in **The Horrific Dungeon** (in *Pyramid* #3/36: **Dungeon Fantasy**). In Abydos, this would mean creatures that frighten even the city's necromancers – such dungeons might be the lairs of demonic beings like the city's Glittertooth (a creature who would be at home in a slasher movie). Such entities are drawn to the island by its death-aspect, created by failed magical experiments, or backlashes perpetrated by its many student necromancers. See **The Silent Maze** (**Abydos**, pp. 42-43) for discussion of some of the creatures trapped and bound by Ravenjoy's pentagrams; additional horrors could easily be added.

## New Monsters

The GM is encouraged to expand the repertoire of subterranean denizens native to Yrth by adding standard *Dungeon Fantasy* monsters, drawing upon the expanded zombie-creation rules in *GURPS Zombies*, and being inspired by horrific monsters from *GURPS Monster Hunters*, *GURPS Horror*, and *Pyramid* magazine. For example, the penanggalan – an vampiric levitating female head with dangling entrails – from the Eidetic Memory installment in *Pyramid* #3/32: *Fears of Days Past* – would be a perfect fit!

Another intriguing possibility is the existence of a population of flesh-eating ghouls. Unlike ghouls of other cities, which rely on stalking corpses in graveyards (and turning the occasional human into dead meat for later consumption), the ghouls of Abydos are predators who rise out of their warrens to stalk the city's zombies. Abydos ghouls would thus be double pariahs – not only hated for their cannibal behavior (for while people of Abydos may animate their ancestors, they do so with respect) but also for the threat posed to the zombie-dependent economy.

The ghouls would need to be well-organized to survive, perhaps with a legendary Ghoul King and their own forms of magic. See *Ghoul Magic* in *Pyramid* #3/43: *Thaumatology III* for some ideas and *GURPS Zombies*, p. 95, for a fantasy ghoul template. Maybe they have secret arrangements with the Corpseflayers Guild (which strips the flesh from corpses to create animated skeletons) or a faction within the Naglfari. It's possible to envision a bizarre enemy-of-my-enemy alliance between desperate ghouls and anti-Lazarite Christian rebels; the monsters welcome a return to the "old days" when corpses were still given decent Christian burials (allowing ghouls to snack on them at their leisure) rather than reanimated!

## Dungeon Adventurers

One approach to dungeon-delving is to integrate it as a change of pace in an ongoing *GURPS Banestorm* campaign using characters created according to *Banestorm's* guidelines. But Abydos could also be ground zero for a Yrth-centered *Dungeon Fantasy* campaign! *Dungeon Fantasy* assumes higher-point and more cinematic campaigns than the norm in Yrth. However, Abydos is already a more cinematic and higher-magic environment than most of Yrth, so that fits!

The GM who uses *Dungeon Fantasy* tropes will need to decide how to handle clerics, druids, and holy or unholy warriors, as Yrth's default assumptions treat priests with powers as merely pious mages. The simplest approach may be to just let players take such characters – leave it unsaid whether God or Allah or Nature or Odin is lending a hand, or whether *Dungeon Fantasy*-style divine magic is merely a form of psychic power dependent on the user's faith, holy or otherwise. Or, the GM can ban divinely powered clerics or create Yrth-specific templates for them using the *Banestorm* model.

Although adventurers could be foreigners appalled at Abydos society's tolerance of necromancy, perhaps more interesting is to play natives who embrace the city's necromantic culture and have ties to the organizations there. To that end, here are some suggestions for what Abydos-native adventurers might look like viewed through a *Dungeon Fantasy* lens. Mixed professions (from *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level*) are appropriate.

*The Raven*: To create one of the city's female warrior-necromancer-cops, use the wizard-swashbuckler combination, with

the necromancer spell-selection guidelines. Spend a few points on advantages relevant to the Ravens, such as Legal Enforcement Powers. A similar template combination also is suitable for Hecate or Rose Society university students.

*The Naglfari*: Design a member of the city's Viking mafia as a thief-barbarian or a barbarian-druid (perhaps a priest of Odin). Some Naglfari – especially the elite "Hanged Men" enforcers – are weres, so adding druid-style Alternate Forms for bears or wolves would be quite appropriate.

*The Knight*: For one of the city's gentry, use the knight template or, especially for Lake Styx's gentleman-privateers, the knight-swashbuckler.

*The Northlander*: Many barbarians (or barbarian-scouts) from the Nomad Territories visit Abydos to enlist as mercenaries in its Northland Guard or join privateer ships.

*The Lazarite Priest*: The wizard-cleric template with necromancer spell list is best for the city's leading priests. The Unholy option should only be used if a Lazarite is adventuring outside Abydos, *not* for priests living there, where no stigma exists among the citizenry.

*The Scholar*: The wizard template is perfect for a student or teacher at St. Magdalene's College (who don't just study necromancy – any magic is appropriate!). Some may also be sages.

*The Thief*: A graduated member of a Roofrat street gang is a good background for an adventuring thief. Take high Acrobatics and Climbing skills, Contacts among the local urchins, and a grappling hook!

Many other options exist, e.g., bards, local alchemists or sages, adventurers who are elves or dwarves (both races have history within Abydos), or a visiting martial artist from Sahud (perhaps related to the owner of Yuki's Teahouse). An exotic option is a vampire from the Deathless Monks – perhaps a holy warrior. The GM will have to decide if the full range of *Dungeon Fantasy* nonhuman races are permitted, but they can be: A *Dungeon Fantasy* campaign can have various small nonhuman races who lurk in odd corners of the world, and there are always new arrivals via Yrth's banestorm or conjurations via summoners like Prospectus Blake (*Abydos*, p. 52) to explain unique PCs with unusual backgrounds.

## CAMPAIGN SEED: THE PROPHECY OF SIDONIA

The GM may wish to develop further rationales for dungeon adventures. In my original Abydos campaign, I added an apocalyptic prophecy plot, as described here.

### *The Seven Keys and the Revelations of Sidonia*

In 1630, a Magdalene nun named Sidonia experienced a series of prophetic visions in which a spirit or angel, perhaps a Shade, showed her the future. She saw Abydos rise as a proud city and withstand many perils, but also the Lady Ravenjoy's tomb, overgrown with creepers, and the city of Abydos aflame as legions stormed the walls. Was Abydos doomed after Ravenjoy's death?

The phantom told her that doom was delayed for many lives of men, but that three portents together would show it was near: life out of death, fire in water, and darkness at noon.

The city's only hope lay in "the Four Horsemen of Abydos – the child with no fear who is born by the dead, the child with no face who is made by the dead, the one without dreams who gives peace to the dead, the child with no eyes who shall gather the dead."

Sidonia was close to the Lady Ravenjoy, and she told her of this vision. It is said the Lady Ravenjoy tested it herself and found it to be true. In preparation against its coming, she created four hidden vaults, each containing a special magical weapon, each protected by spells that would only allow them to be opened when the four horsemen of the vision were found.

In the centuries that followed this prophecy, various mages have attempted to divine the meaning behind it, using magic and other means, to no avail. Then, a few decades ago, a gang of stonemasons adding a new extension to the lowest cellar of St. Lazarus discovered a shaft that led to a hidden chamber.

Within the vault was the skeleton of a dragon and several mysterious artifacts. It was obvious that one of the legendary Four Vaults had been found. Then-archbishop Phocos Scholasticus created a secret committee to investigate the vault and its contents, and discover the location of the three other vaults.

The committee's members were seven experienced monks, priests, and master mages. The cellar containing the Dragon Vault was sealed off (it was given out that construction had revealed an unsafe ceiling). A special lock was affixed to the secret door leading to the vault; as only seven keys to the lock existed, the members of the committee became known as "the Seven Keys."

Over the next decade or so, the Seven Keys' research confirmed that the artifacts had considerable powers, but also that potent Limit and Link spells prevented them being used until certain events – presumably those from the prophecy – occurred. After one ill-advised attempt to break these spells led to tragedy, further investigation was halted.

About nine years ago, a singular event occurred. An isolated hamlet in the hills was attacked by brigands. A priest sent for help, but by the time a troop of Ravens arrived, they were too late to prevent a massacre. One of the dead was a very pregnant woman, who had been killed before she could give birth. However, her live baby was still kicking in the womb. With no living

doctor or midwife to perform a Caesarian section, the desperate young Raven in command decided to cast a Zombie spell, enabling the animated body to resume labor. It worked, and the form gave birth to the child, a healthy baby girl.

A few weeks later, word of this occurrence reached the ears of Father Bardas, a Fisher Monk who was a member of the Hand of Glory and one of the Seven Keys. Bardas was electrified. Was this the "life out of death" alluded to in the prophecy?

Bardas' spies watched her in secret. The baby had been placed in the care of a local convent. Only when his spies reported that the Sisters believed the girl, baptized as Zoe Dalassena, was blessed with strong magical aptitude, did he decide to take action. The child – aged nine – was kidnapped from the convent and removed to Abydos. There, she was introduced to the Dragon Vault.

Zoe ran into the vault, ignoring the magical traps that had destroyed the souls of a half-dozen good priests. She ignored the black glass armor, and the strange weapons beside it, having eyes only for the ivory bones of the great dragon. She stared at it for a moment, then laughed, clapped her hands, and began to tug on its tail. Bardas blanched, even safely behind a pentagram of his own creation. The dragon's skull moved slightly, and a faint green flicker lit one eye socket. Then it stretched like a great cat, leaning toward the child, butting her gently. Zoe laughed delightedly and patted it on the head.

Bardas, standing safely within a pentagram, laughed, too, long and hard, for perhaps the first time since he had joined the Hand of Glory. The end times were coming. He had the Dragonkey. Now he had only to forge her into a weapon and find the others mentioned in the prophecy – and the other vaults – all while ensuring his political rivals in the Church (a bunch of short-sighted fools) and the Ravens did not get there first. The vaults were doubtless somewhere beneath Abydos, lost in the maze beneath Ravensbeak Tower or some hidden catacomb. Perhaps some expert treasure-hunters could be encouraged to seek them out . . .

*Had they found part of the prophecy?*

## ZOMBIES OF ABYDOS

The recent *GURPS Zombies* mentions several crossovers with other *GURPS* supplements, but one possibility was far too horrific for it to hint at: using these rules in conjunction with Abydos, a city already overrun with shambling dead.

The main buffet that *GURPS Zombies* presents for the Abydos GM is complete statistics for several interesting new types of zombies. Supernatural creatures like fantasy ghouls and cursed zombies can be easily added (explained away as side-effects of Abydos's death-aspect) but with a little extra effort, so can constructs like corpse golems. Imagine, for example, that local petrine rebels decide to fight zombies with zombies and hire some Christian-sympathetic alchemists to create their own non-supernatural undead such as corpse golems for a terror attack on the Lazarite Church! The GM can also draw upon the rules and campaign advice in *GURPS Zombies* to add additional spice to a *GURPS Banestorm*

campaign set in Abydos; the zombie horde rules, in particular, will be very useful.

### ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE, YRTH STYLE

The foundation trope of modern zombies is the concept of the zombie apocalypse, which *GURPS Zombies* devotes significant space to explicating. With a little effort, this can make an excitingly different scenario for Abydos. What if magical research at St. Magdalene's – or just toxic conditions in the city's Meat Market or Silent Maze – creates a plague of B-movie ghouls who must be stopped with fire, sword, and mundane zombies before they spread their curse?

Alternatively, a Yrth zombie apocalypse could originate outside of Abydos. The Banestorm reaches many parallel worlds – what if it connected to an alternate Earth that was *already* caught up in a zombie apocalypse, and infectious brain-eating zombies were swept up and materialized on Yrth? Or, B-movie ghouls or infectious zombies could be the new Ytarran medieval equivalent of the Black Death – a strange pest-born disease brought to Yrth’s continent of Yttaria by unfortunate traders or slavers. The plague might begin in a port on the fringes of the continent, but rapidly spread toward major nations.

Regardless of whether brain-eaters are necromantic in nature, since Abydos is the principle repository for zombie lore in Yrth, it’s possible representatives of interested parties – like the Curia or Ministry of Serendipity – might push aside their prejudices and turn to Abydos for assistance . . . or just blame it. Either justifies adventurers being sent to Abydos with a two-fold mission: first, determine if the Lazarites are responsible for the plague, and, if not, recruit their help in stopping it. After all, even necromancers have no interest in having their brains eaten . . .

## ARMIES OF ABYDOS

*GURPS Abydos* is set amid a tense political climate in which the necromantic city-state engages in periodic raids, naval engagements, and border clashes with its Megalan neighbors. The possibility of all-out war looms – especially if the Prophecy of Sidonia (pp. 5-6) has teeth to it, or Father Bardas decides to do something with that dragon!

Abydos denizens who belong to the aristocracy or attain rank in the Ravens may find themselves commanding military forces. Protagonists with appropriate military rank in the Ravens or Status among the Quartedec nobility or nomad clans could lead or defend against a punitive expedition or raid by one of the other parties. Such a campaign would likely involve a couple of hundred to a few thousand troops (40-150 elements). An expedition to the Nomad Territories is likely a land campaign (with Abydos supplied by its clan allies). Attacks on Abydos or Quartedec could be naval battles or, just as often, swift landings on undefended coastland followed by quick raids inland. Neither would likely risk a siege of Quartedec or Abydos cities (except in a major war).

Abydos also claims a protectorate (“Ravensmarch”) over a strip of the Nomad Territories along the north shore of Lake Styx. The Legion of the Polished Bone and its auxiliaries have fought (and continue to fight) land and sea campaigns to both protect its own trading partners among the clans and destroy rivals who menace them; sometimes Quartedec sends troops to intervene to protect its own allies.

### ABYDOS TROOPS

Various troops are detailed below along with numbers for the entire army; for a more typical deployed force, see the Abydos army rosters in the boxed text on p. 8. The Legion of the Polished Bone consists of the Ravens and their skeletons army. These are backed by Northland Guard mercenaries (p. 9), warships (p. 9), and various adventurers and privateers (pp. 9-10). Knights of Abydos (p. 10) are the gentry and their retainers (living and dead) called up by the Praetor and Lady Raven, but for no more than a month or two each year. Deathless Monks (p. 11), St. Magdalene Students (p. 11), Roofrats (p. 11), and Undead Peasantry (pp. 10-11) would only be used against a major invasion.

#### *Abydos Army Rosters*

The City of Abydos is unlikely to deploy its full troop strength (as detailed in the specific forces) unless an all-out

war breaks out, with Megalos sending in multiple legions. Much more likely are lower-stakes ventures and contingencies. Two rosters on p. 8 provide examples.

#### Expeditionary Force

The *Expeditionary Force* represents a deployed army composed of one-fifth of the legion’s regular troops plus some mercenaries and armsmen, but omitting its levies and militia. This represents the typical force-in-being that would be available for a major raid or punitive expedition against Nomads or Quartedec, as commanded either by a senior raven tribune or the Lady Raven herself. It can also represent the force level that would be immediately available to respond against a surprise attack on Abydos.

*Elements:* 144. *Cost:* \$24,776,000 to raise, \$1,465,000 to maintain.

#### Naval Squadron

The *Naval Squadron* consists of a smaller mixed amphibious flotilla of Polished Bone troops reinforced by some of the city’s mercenaries and privateers. This would be a force that could operate on the Lake of Styx, and is the largest size likely to be entrusted to a PC with senior rank in the Ravens. Forces of this size are involved in privateering, raids, or naval actions against Nomad Territories or Quartedec vessels and coastal regions.

*Elements:* 20. *Cost:* \$9,324,000 to raise, \$853,600 to maintain.

#### Raven Guard

##### Battle Mages

The Ravens are a 500-strong regiment of female warrior-mages who maintain law and order inside Abydos and lead the Legion of the Polished Bone in wartime. They wear mail or plate in battle, and wield swords and various magical tools. They aren’t cavalry, but ride undead mounts (see *Skeleton Horses*, p. 8) if needed. Some “Lake Ravens” serve regularly aboard war galleys, and count as Marines. Elements might also include a Lazarite priest or two. Although the Ravens are skilled, they are classed as merely Average battle mages, as more time is spent in law enforcement than war training.

*TS:* 10. *WT:* 1.

*Classes:* Art, C3I, F, Rec. *Mobility:* Foot.

*Quality:* Fine equipment; Average troops.

*Features:* Marines\*.

## Abydos Expeditionary Force Army Roster

<i>Elements</i>	<i>Total TS</i>	<i>Classes</i>	<i>Mobility</i>	<i>Features</i>
10 Raven Guard (Battle Mages)	100	Art, C3I, F, Rec	Foot	–
10 Skeleton Horses (Mounts)	0	T1	Mounted	Sealed
80 Skeleton Legionary Spearmen (Heavy Infantry)	800	–	Foot	Sealed
20 Skeleton Legionary Archers (Bowmen)	80	F	Foot	Sealed
10 Skeleton Legionary Cavalry (Heavy Cavalry)	125	Cv	Mounted	Sealed
2 Eumenides Armsmen (Medium Infantry)	18	–	Foot	Marine, Mercenary
12 Northland Guard (Heavy Infantry)	120	–	Foot	Impetuous, Marine, Mercenary
<i>Artillery TS</i>	<i>100</i>			
<i>C3I TS</i>	<i>100</i>			
<i>Cavalry TS</i>	<i>100</i>			
<i>Fire TS</i>	<i>180</i>			
<i>Recon TS</i>	<i>100</i>			

**Force TS** 1,243 (on land)

## Abydos Naval Squadron Army Roster

<i>Elements</i>	<i>Total TS</i>	<i>Classes</i>	<i>Mobility</i>	<i>Features</i>
2 Abydos Warships (War Galley)	60	Naval, T3	Coastal	Super-Soldier
2 Abydos Merchantmen (Merchant Galley)	16	Naval, T5	Coastal	Mercenary, Super-Soldier
2 Lake Ravens (Battle Mages)	20	Art, C3I, F, Rec	Foot	Marine
4 Skeleton Marines (Bowmen)	8	F	Foot	Marine
4 Privateers (Medium Infantry)	36	–	Foot	Impetuous, Marine
6 Northland Guard (Heavy Infantry)	60	–	Foot	Impetuous, Marine, Mercenary

	<i>Land Battle</i>	<i>Naval Battle</i>
<i>Artillery TS</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>C3I TS</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Fire TS</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Recon TS</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>10</i>

**Force TS** 124 138

The Privateers, Lake Ravens, Skeletons, and Northland Guards are transported aboard the ships. Note that the naval elements are useless on land, and the TS of Marines are halved in coastal naval battles.

*Cost:* \$400K to raise, \$80K to maintain (\$440K to raise; \$88K to maintain for marines).

\* Only applies to about one-fifth of the Ravens.

The legion has 50 elements (including 10 Marine “Lake Ravens”) for a total TS of 500.

### Skeleton Horses

#### Mounts

These are skeletal undead steeds used by the Ravens for strategic transportation. Half of the Raven Guard is so equipped.

*TS:* 0. *WT:* 1.

*Classes:* T1. *Mobility:* Mounted.

*Quality:* Basic equipment; Average troops.

*Features:* Sealed.

*Cost:* \$60K to raise; \$12K to maintain (reduced to \$3K).

The legion has 50 elements for a total TS of 0.

### Skeleton Legionary Spearmen

#### Heavy Infantry

The main strength of the Legion of the Polished Bone are ex-Megalan legionary spearmen reanimated as undead skeletons. They have pot helmets, mail, long spears, medium shields, and short swords. They fight in close formation.

*TS:* 10. *WT:* 1.

*Classes:* None. *Mobility:* Foot.

*Quality:* Fine equipment; Good troops.

*Features:* Sealed.

*Cost:* \$128K to raise; \$19.2K to maintain (reduced to \$4.8K).

There are 400 elements with a total TS of 4,000.



## Skeleton Legionary Archers

### Bowmen

The Polished Bone includes Megalan legionary archers raised as undead skeletons. They are armed in the style of 17th to 18th-century Megalan legions with mail shirt, pot helm, bow, and shortsword.

*TS: 4. WT: 1.*

*Classes: F. Mobility: Foot.*

*Quality: Fine equipment; Average troops.*

*Features: Sealed.*

*Cost: \$88K to raise; \$17.6K to maintain (reduced to \$4.4K).*

There are 100 elements with a total TS of 400.

## Skeleton Legionary Cavalry

### Heavy Cavalry

These are reanimated Megalan heavy cavalry equipped with lance, sword, and shield. The skeletal riders are clad head to toe in mail, with partially armored skeleton horses.

*TS: 12.5. WT: 2.*

*Classes: Cv. Mobility: Mounted.*

*Quality: Fine equipment; Good troops.*

*Features: Sealed.*

*Cost: \$640K to raise; \$96K to maintain (reduced to \$24K).*

The legion has 50 elements of skeleton cavalry for a total TS of 625.

## Eumenides Armsmen

### Medium Infantry

This is a force of 50 highly competent professional adventurers and privateers from the city's Eumenides Guild, mostly armored in mail or plate and armed with a variety of personal weapons. Some are mages; that's factored into their quality.

*TS: 9. WT: 1.*

*Classes: None. Mobility: Foot.*

*Quality: Fine equipment; Elite troops.*

*Features: Marine; Mercenary.*

*Cost: \$120K to raise; \$14.4K to maintain.*

There are five elements of armsmen with a total TS of 45.

## Northland Guard

### Heavy Infantry

These are 600 northern barbarian mercenaries from the Nomad Territories, organized into bands of 50-200 men. Equipped at Abydos' expense, they wear mail hauberks, and helms and carry long spears, axes, and medium shields. They're not the most disciplined troops, but are veterans experienced in fighting aboard warships and in amphibious raids.

*TS: 10. WT: 1.*

*Classes: None. Mobility: Foot.*

*Quality: Fine equipment; Good troops.*

*Features: Impetuous; Marine; Mercenary.*

*Cost: \$128K to raise; \$19.2K to maintain.*

Abydos has 60 elements of Northland Guards for a total TS of 600.

## Abydos Warships

### War Galley

Abydos has a lake squadron of heavy ram-equipped war galleys, including the privateers *Boneshark* and *Hellshark* and the warship *Tarasque*. Each is rowed by zombie or skeleton oarsmen commanded by human officers; the undead's ability to function as a tireless "motor" means the galleys are rated as Super-Soldiers!

*TS: 30. WT: None.*

*Classes: Naval, T3. Mobility: Coastal.*

*Quality: Basic equipment; Good troops.*

*Features: Super-Soldier.*

*Cost: \$1,750K to raise; \$320K to maintain (reduced to \$80K).*

Abydos has 10 warships with a total TS of 300.

## Undead Troops in Abydos

The Sealed quality was applied to reanimated zombies reflecting the extra cost of selecting, animating, and preparing corpses. Super-Soldier *wasn't* used for ordinary skeleton warriors. While fearless and immune to pain, this is countered by their modest HP, Vulnerability to crushing damage, Fragility, and lack of self-initiative. Exceptions are the zombie-crewed galleys (counted as Super-Soldiers due to their tireless rowing speed, but aren't Sealed) with live officers and the vampiric Deathless Monks.

It's recommended that in Abydos (or similar societies) the cost of *maintaining* its units of skeletons and zombies be divided by 4 to represent their vastly lower logistics burden. The constraints that usually equalize undead maintenance cost (limited numbers of necromancers to replace damage or repair rot, the need for secrecy, etc.) are inapplicable to Abydos society, where they are accepted by the populace, and alchemical techniques for zombie preservation exist. Of course, the price paid for cheap, mass-use of undead is the opprobrium of the rest of Yrth!

## Abydos Merchantmen

### Merchant Galley

These are large galleys hired from local merchants or pirates as troop transports and fighting platforms. They also have human officers and skeleton oarsmen.

*TS: 8. WT: None.*

*Classes: Naval, T5. Mobility: Coastal.*

*Quality: Basic equipment; Average troops.*

*Features: Mercenary; Super-Soldier.*

*Cost: \$1,800K to raise; \$180K to maintain (reduced to \$45K).*

Abydos can hire up to 10 merchant galleys with a total TS of 80.

## Skeleton Marines

### Bowmen

These are a mix of deceased privateers and enemy sailors reanimated by necromancy and assigned to warships. They're equipped as crossbowmen and archers.

*TS: 2. WT: 1.*

*Classes: F. Mobility: Foot.*

*Quality: Basic equipment; Average troops.*

*Features: Marine; Sealed.*

*Cost: \$48K to raise; \$11.2K to maintain (reduced to \$2.8K).*

There are eight elements with a total TS of 16.

## Privateers

### Medium Infantry

Rich Abydosian merchants or gentry fit out galleys to raid Megalos and unaffiliated Northern lands. This element has a few knights or gentry leading a mixed force of adventurers and Northmen.

*TS: 9. WT: 1.*

*Classes: None. Mobility: Foot.*

*Quality: Fine equipment; Good troops.*

*Features: Impetuous; Marine.*

*Cost: \$96K to raise; \$14.4K to maintain.*

Abydos has 20 privateers with total TS 180.

## Knights of Abydos

### Heavy Cavalry

The (living) country gentry of Abydos are trained and equipped as knights in full plate armor, riding heavy warhorses (some undead, some living), though rear ranks often include lighter cavalry (squires, etc.) as well. The knights are well equipped, but somewhat decadent compared to their Megalan or Caithness brethren. There are 140 living knights.

*TS: 12.5. WT: 2.*

*Classes: Cv. Mobility: Mounted.*

*Quality: Very Fine equipment; Average troops.*

*Features: Impetuous; Levy.*

*Cost: \$600K to raise; \$100K to maintain.*

The feudal host has 15 elements of knights for a total TS of 187.5.

## Skeleton Knights

### Heavy Cavalry

The living chivalry of Abydos are dwarfed by the hosts of their undead ancestors, who go to battle alongside them,

*"I've heard of this city of the dead filled with heretics somewhere to the north. What's it called? Abydos or Abbadon or some foreign name."*

*"Quiet! My second cousin's nephew's uncle worked for a dwarf who knew a merchant who traded with them and was hanged as a heretic."*

*– GURPS Banestorm: Abydos*

riding skeletal horses. The majority wear older-styled armor, such as mail hauberks, rather than modern suits of full plate.

*TS: 10. WT: 2.*

*Classes: Cv. Mobility: Mounted.*

*Quality: Fine equipment; Average troops.*

*Features: Levy; Sealed.*

*Cost: \$440K to raise; \$88K to maintain (reduced to 22K).*

The feudal host has 150 elements of skeleton knights for a total TS of 1,500.

## Retinue Spearmen

### Heavy Infantry

These are the household retainers of the country gentry, 200 strong, in mail and armed with spears, shields, and swords.

*TS: 8. WT: 1.*

*Classes: None. Mobility: Foot.*

*Quality: Fine equipment; Average troops.*

*Features: Levy.*

*Cost: \$80K to raise; \$16K to maintain.*

The feudal host has 20 elements of retinue spearmen for a total TS of 160.

## Skeletal Spearmen

### Heavy Infantry

These are undead retainers of the country gentry. Many have arms that are antique and have rusted or fallen into disrepair, but they remain somewhat effective warriors.

*TS: 4. WT: 1.*

*Classes: None. Mobility: Foot.*

*Quality: Basic equipment; Average troops.*

*Features: Levy; Sealed.*

*Cost: \$48K to raise; \$9.6K to maintain (reduced to \$2.4K).*

The feudal host has 300 elements of skeletal spearmen for a total TS of 1,200.

## Undead Peasantry

### Medium Infantry

A vast horde of zombie and skeleton peasants called up from their work in the island's fields. They are armed with clubs, scythes, and spears. They would only be summoned in a dire crisis, since the nation depends on them for farm work and labor.

*TS: 0.75. WT: 1.*

*Classes: None. Mobility: Foot.*

*Quality: Poor equipment; Inferior troops.*

*Features: Levy; Sealed.*

*Cost:* \$13.5K to raise; \$2.7K to maintain (reduced to \$0.675K).

Abydos can call up to 10,000 elements of undead peasants for a total TS of 7,500. In most circumstances, far fewer would be required, to avoid losses to the economy.

## Scorpions

### Light Artillery

The city's towers are each defended by a high-quality dwarf-built light catapult based on models acquired from Thulin's Folk. They can be removed to deploy on campaign.

*TS:* (4). *WT:* 1.

*Classes:* Artillery. *Mobility:* Foot.

*Quality:* Fine equipment; Average troops.

*Features:* None.

*Cost:* \$80K to raise; \$16K to maintain.

These 23 elements have a total TS of (92).

## Deathless Monks

### Battle Mages

These are monastic vampires (Order of the Holy Blood) loyal to the Lazarite church. They are classed as Flying Infantry due to their ability to transform into bats or mist and as Super-Soldiers due to their other powers and inhuman strength.

*TS:* 8. *WT:* 1.

*Classes:* Air, Rec. *Mobility:* SA, Foot.

*Quality:* Basic equipment; Elite troops.

*Features:* Neutralize C3I; Nocturnal; Sealed; Super-Soldier.

*Cost:* \$327K to raise; \$77K to maintain.

Two elements with a total TS of 16.

## St. Magdalene's Students

### Battle Mages

This represents that fraction of the faculty and student body of St. Magdalene's College willing and able to fight in defense of the city. Most would organize as members of the three student societies (Rose, Hecate, and Solomon).

*TS:* 5. *WT:* 1.

*Classes:* Artillery, C3I, F, Rec. *Mobility:* Foot.

*Quality:* Basic equipment; Average troops.

*Features:* Levy.

*Cost:* \$50K to raise; \$10K to maintain.

Three elements are available for action, with a total TS of 15.

*What I do in death echoes in eternity.*

*– Shade, in World of Warcraft III*

## Roofrats

### Light Infantry

Seven gangs of teenage street urchins, skilled with grappling hooks, knives, and thrown bricks or pots. They'd only come into action during an invasion of the city.

*TS:* 0.5. *WT:* 1.

*Classes:* Rec. *Mobility:* Foot.

*Quality:* Poor equipment; Inferior troops.

*Features:* None.

*Cost:* \$10K to raise; \$2K to maintain.

These seven elements have a total TS of 3.5.

# ENEMIES OF ABYDOS

Abydos' military opponents are Megalos and to a lesser extent the Nomad Territories. Abydos was once a possession of Megalos, and the empire has not relinquished its claim. The nearby Earldom of Quartedec – the region of Megalos that stretches along the southern shore of Lake Styx – is the City of the Dead's unrelenting foe, determined to destroy this "nest of heretic witches." The last all-out crusade against Abydos was defeated in the 1700s; more pressing threats (in particular, the Blackwoods) plus the difficulty of a cross-lake amphibious invasion have so deferred a renewed invasion. However, the local Earl of Quartedec and the lords of Abydos regularly engage in fierce naval skirmishes on the Styx, and periodically raid each other's lands.

## QUARTEDEC'S HOST

Megalos forces fluctuate in strength with the threats faced by the empire, but military scholars often estimate a main strength of about 16 legions are optimum force for the empire. At present, one such legion is permanently stationed at Quartedec, maintained at the earl's expense. Following its last repulse, Quartedec is maintaining a defensive posture.

(A major assault would likely require at least four legions, plus substantial noble forces from neighboring duchies and volunteers from Hospitaller and Templar fighting orders!)

Imperial legions – especially the legions raised by great nobles – are of good but varying quality. Quartedec's infantry, while disciplined and of good quality, do not quite match the veteran Imperial legions guarding the frontiers with Al-Wasif and Caithness, or the elite forces that form the emperor's personal fire brigade (such as True Dragon). However, Quartedec's battle-mages are kept at peak Imperial standards due to the nature of the heretic threat, especially as they're outnumbered by the Ravens and other Lazarites (who have the unfair advantage of hosting a major magical academy in their city).

Quartedec's legion consists of about 3,000 regular troops (excluding logistic forces) organized into five regimental-sized 600-man cohorts. The force is mainly heavy spearmen, supported by crossbowmen, battle mages, and light cavalry scouts. It is deficient in heavy cavalry, but this lack is more than made up by the earldom's knights, their men-at-arms, and a few peasant levies. Unlike some legions, Quartedec's lacks indigenous artillery, as its mages provide that capability.

## Army Rosters

As with Abydos, Quartedec wouldn't deploy an entire legion plus levies in anything short of a war. The roster below is what is ready for a rapid response or quick attack by the earl: one cohort of the legion, plus a force of knights levied from his nearest castles and estates. The *entire* legion plus most of the chivalry of Quartedec are five times this size; also add a couple extra mage and engineer elements as legion-level assets.

*Elements:* 94. *Cost:* \$20,150,000 to raise, \$2,806,000 to maintain.

## Naval Strength and Sieges

Quartedec's naval strength was diminished following its last naval defeat by Abydos, but it can build or hire a nearly equivalent number of War Galleys and Merchant Galleys (Basic equipment; Average quality) of its own in an emergency; if it needed to invade, it would hire or levy sufficient Large Boats from fishermen, etc., to land the entire legion.

The city of Quartedec itself is defended by plentiful additional heavy artillery and levies, sufficient to deter any direct siege by Abydos.

### Quartedec Muster Army Roster

<i>Elements</i>	<i>Total TS</i>	<i>Classes</i>	<i>Mobility</i>	<i>Features</i>
2 Legionary Mages (Battle Mages)	35	Art, C31, F, Rec	Foot	–
50 Legionary Spearmen (Heavy Infantry)	500	–	Foot	–
10 Legionary Crossbowmen (Bowmen)	50	F	Foot	–
5 Legionary Scouts (Light Cavalry)	25	Cv, Rec	Mounted	–
2 Knights Hospitaller (Heavy Cavalry)	35	Cv	Mounted	Fanatic, Impetuous
10 Quartedec Knights (Heavy Cavalry)	150	Cv	Mounted	Impetuous, Levy
15 Quartedec Militia (Light Infantry)	7.5	Rec	Foot	Levy
<i>Artillery TS</i>	35			
<i>C3I TS</i>	35			
<i>Cavalry TS</i>	210			
<i>Fire TS</i>	85			
<i>Recon TS</i>	67.5			
<b><i>Force TS</i></b>	<b>802.5</b>			

## Legionary Mages

A typical noble-raised legion has some 60-70 battle mages, which is far more than most Yrth armies deploy! (Elf armies, with their higher ratio of mages, and that of Abydos, which gets extra mages by also relying on women and long-lived necromancers, are rare exceptions). Legionary mages (schooled by

### Battle Mages

the Templars) are, however, better trained in arcane battle tactics than the Ravens, and better equipped with Powerstones and specialized military magic items. They are especially famed for their prowess in Earth magic. Those at Quartedec are also well trained in Water and Air magic, due to the threat of battles on the Lake of Styx. These statistics can also represent Knights Templar.

*TS:* 17.5. *WT:* 1.

*Classes:* Art, C3I, F, Rec. *Mobility:* Foot.

*Quality:* Very fine equipment; Elite troops.

*Features:* None.

*Cost:* \$1,000K to raise; \$116K to maintain.

The Quartedec legion has eight elements of legion mages with TS 140.

## Legionary Spearmen

### Heavy Infantry

These soldiers are the backbone of the Megalan legions. Soldiers have helms, mail, long spears, medium shields, and short swords.

*TS:* 10. *WT:* 1.

*Classes:* None. *Mobility:* Foot.

*Quality:* Fine equipment; Good troops.

*Features:* None.

*Cost:* \$120K to raise; \$17.6K to maintain.

The Quartedec legion has 300 elements of heavy infantry legionaries with TS 3,000.

## Legionary Crossbowmen

### Bowmen

These are supporting missile troops, in mail, and equipped with crossbows, pavises, and short swords.

*TS:* 5. *WT:* 1.

*Classes:* F. *Mobility:* Foot.

*Quality:* Fine equipment; Good troops.

*Features:* None.

*Cost:* \$120K to raise; \$17.6K to maintain.

The Quartedec legion has 60 elements of legion crossbowmen with TS 300.

## Legionary Scouts

### Light Cavalry

Imperial legions maintain a small force of well-trained light cavalry for scouting and pursuit. Traditionally, the Megalan legion's indigenous cavalry have not been quite as impressive as its infantry, but the Earldom of Quartedec has a strong equestrian tradition and its locally recruited riders and mounts are fully up to par with the infantry.

*TS:* 5. *WT:* 2.

*Classes:* Cv, Rec. *Mobility:* Mounted.

*Quality:* Fine equipment; Good troops.  
*Features:* None.  
*Cost:* \$240K to raise; \$35.2K to maintain.

The Quartedec legion has 30 elements of light cavalry with a total TS of 150.

### Legionary Engineers

#### Miners

These are siege warfare experts attached to the legion, primarily there to direct other troops.

*TS:* 3. *WT:* 1.  
*Classes:* F. *Mobility:* Foot.  
*Quality:* Good equipment; Good troops.  
*Features:* None.  
*Cost:* \$75K to raise; \$10.2K to maintain.

The Quartedec legion has three elements of engineers for total TS 9.

### Knights Hospitaller

#### Heavy Cavalry

Hospitallers are the most aggressive of the Ytarrian military orders in fighting against Abydos. They are equipped as Quartedec knights but even better trained.

*TS:* 17.5. *WT:* 2.  
*Classes:* Cv. *Mobility:* Mounted.  
*Quality:* Very Fine equipment; Elite troops.  
*Features:* Fanatic; Impetuous.  
*Cost:* \$800K to raise; \$116K to maintain.

Quartedec's local chapters include 12 elements with a total TS of 210.

### Quartedec Knights

#### Heavy Cavalry

The chivalry of Quartedec consist of front ranks of heavy cavalry in full plate armor on armored warhorses supported by slightly less well-armored men-at-arms. Quartedec is known for its excellent horses, and its knights are superbly equipped.

*TS:* 15. *WT:* 2.  
*Classes:* Cv. *Mobility:* Mounted.  
*Quality:* Very Fine equipment; Good troops.  
*Features:* Impetuous; Levy.  
*Cost:* \$800K to raise; \$108K to maintain.

Quartedec can raise 60 elements with a total TS of 900.

### Quartedec Peasantry Militia

#### Light Infantry

Quartedec relies on its legions and chivalry, so peasant militia or city watch are of low quality, with a mix of spears, slings, and bows.

*TS:* 0.5. *WT:* 1.  
*Classes:* Rec. *Mobility:* Foot.

**GURPS** Fourth Edition

# ALPHABET ARCANE™



## A Concise Catalog of Curiosities

**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

[gurps.sjgames.com/alphabetaarcane](http://gurps.sjgames.com/alphabetaarcane)

*Quality:* Poor equipment; Inferior troops.  
*Features:* Levy.  
*Cost:* \$10K to raise; \$2K to maintain.

There are countless peasants, but most can't stray far from their villages, so it's unlikely more than 90 elements would be available even in a major campaign, for a total TS of 45.

## 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, including the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*, *GURPS Ultra-Tech*, and the *GURPS Spaceships* series.

# TEN FOR TEN

BY SEAN PUNCH

My memories of the development of the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition* – that is, of most of 2002-2004 – are a complete blur. David Pulver and I faced a deluge of input. We had more than 14 years of customer feedback on Third Edition to wade through, to which the staff, freelance writers, and longtime playtesters reviewing our efforts added *thousands* of suggestions. Our own ideas were very often swept aside in the torrent – an occupational hazard!

In the ensuing decade, a lot of half-formed thoughts from that time have bobbed back to the surface. I cannot speak for David, but many of my projects over the past 10 years have contained rules that I wish had shaped up quickly enough to grace the *Basic Set*. I'd love it if every *GURPS* player bought and used those supplements, allowing my late-breaking ideas to sneak into the system's core through the back door, but the realities of hobby budgets aren't lost on me. Fortunately, this special issue of *Pyramid* offers me a way to resolve that conflict.

Here are 10 short, sweet concepts from supplements I wrote in the 2004-2014 period that I feel would have been worthy of the *Basic Set*, collected for the benefit of gamers without bottomless pockets (or who like quick references!), and garnished with creator commentary.

## APPEARANCE ROLLS AS LOYALTY ROLLS

Source: *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 15: Henchmen*.

The GM may specify that an Ally's appearance roll doesn't describe the odds of the NPC showing up – the follower participates in *all* adventures and is present whenever that makes sense – but rather the chance of that person obeying commands. When the PC issues orders, roll against frequency of appearance at the moment of truth; any success means that instructions were followed, any failure indicates they weren't. A repeated attempt, if possible, is permitted only after the time it would take to execute the orders. Examples:

- A hero in combat could yell, "Hand me my sword!", "My sword, give it to me!", "The blade, knave!", etc. and roll every turn until it works.
- An order like "Fight these foes!" is issued once, at the start of the battle. Failure means the Ally falls back, flees, or similar.
- A command such as "Stand watch for the middle shift" means the GM rolls secretly to see whether the Ally actually pays attention. The player learns this only at the *end* of the watch – if the GM feels the PC would even know.

*This is best left optional, as some players prefer completely loyal Allies who aren't always around. However, in globetrotting campaigns or those involving missions where "no reinforcements"*

*is a regular complication, it's jarring to have lowly Allies casually bypassing great distances and hostile forces. There, it does less violence to drama to have the question be one of discipline, not presence.*

*Ten short, sweet concepts  
from supplements, collected  
for quick reference.*

## COMPLEMENTARY SKILLS

Sources: *GURPS Action 2: Exploits* and *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons*.

The GM may rule that a *complementary skill* could logically assist the *master skill* required by an undertaking, potentially yielding a bonus. The GM decides whether the individual performing the task must attempt both skill rolls, needs an assistant with the complementary skill, or may choose either option. It's also up to the GM whether these rolls must involve different skills or if a helper using the same skill can make matters easier by sharing the workload.

Roll against the complementary skill *before* trying the master skill roll. Only personal modifiers (due to afflictions, disadvantages, etc.) influence the complementary skill roll – never external ones. If the complementary skill requires a Quick Contest, the target resists normally. The outcome gives a modifier to the master skill, cumulative with other modifiers such as equipment bonuses.

Outcome (Uncontested)	Outcome (Contested)	Modifier
Critical Success	Victory by 5+	+2
Success	Victory by 0-4	+1
Failure	Loss by 1-4	-1
Critical Failure	Loss by 5+	-2

The character attempting the master skill roll *must* use this modifier. If you don't trust your assistant, don't request a complementary skill roll!

It isn't legal to "chain" complementary skill bonuses; a complementary skill can't boost a master skill that serves to complement some third skill. However, the GM may let the master skill benefit from *several* complementary skills for a long task (p. B346) that involves multiple PCs in a major team effort. The total bonus cannot exceed +4.

This tool rewards teamwork. It also makes obscure skills worthwhile by allowing them to boost more obviously useful ones. The only “downsides” are some extra dice rolls (but most players like rolling!) and living with slightly elevated odds of success.

## DAMAGE REDUCTION

Source: **GURPS Powers**.

This variety of Injury Tolerance (pp. B60-61) divides all injury by 2, 3, or 4 – round up – after subtracting DR from damage and applying wounding modifiers. 50 points for a divisor of 2, 75 points for 3, 100 points for 4.

Simple, and perhaps the one thing I most regret not implementing in the **Basic Set**. It contains the seeds of solutions to many problems (e.g., making it harder to destroy huge vehicles and buildings using small arms).

## GUNSLINGER RELOADED

Sources: **GURPS Action 1: Heroes** and **GURPS Gun Fu**.

Gunslinger gives not only the effects on p. B58 (Accuracy on single shots from one-handed firearms, or half Acc with a two-handed weapon or automatic fire), but also the following benefits:

- Access to any cinematic ability (advantage, perk, skill, or technique) the GM feels could logically work with a gun. Ignore the Hypnotism and Power Blow prerequisites for Invisibility Art and Flying Leap, respectively.
- Instead of adding Acc on a Move and Attack, ignore the Bulk penalty as well as any extra penalties the GM assesses for jumping or acrobatics on foot – even while leaping between rooftops and diving through windows!
- Ignore the -2 for pop-up attacks (p. B390).

• Ignore Bulk in close combat (p. B391). You don't get your Acc bonus there, but you never suffer a Bulk penalty.

• Halve the default penalty for any technique that allows faster shooting, and round in your favor. If you raise these techniques, buy them up from their improved defaults.

• Halve the sum of all Fast-Draw (Ammo) penalties, and round in your favor.

*Gunslinger is overpriced as written – it's cheaper to raise a favorite Guns specialty and default everything else you're likely to use. Eliminating most common situational penalties and granting access to cinematic abilities (especially those in **Gun Fu**, like Zen Marksmanship) makes the deal much sweeter.*

## HAM CLAUSE

Source: **GURPS Action 1: Heroes**.

The player can voluntarily inflict one of his PC's disadvantages on him during a pivotal action scene (chase, gunfight, etc.), where this would make sense. In the absence of specific effects, all success rolls during that scene are at -1 per -5 points (or fraction thereof) of disadvantages. The GM should then consider the problem roleplayed for the session, ignoring its usual game mechanics. For instance, in a gunfight at the mall, the player of a hero with Lecherousness (12) [-15] could declare, “I'll bet there's a hottie in the crowd. I'm going to show off!” and fight the battle at -3. After that, the GM should give him the benefit of the doubt when the attractive police sergeant shows up . . .

*Too often, disadvantages are “free points.” Requiring players to deal with their PCs' problems or lose an earned character point or two is one solution, but many traits have disruptive effects – and if the trigger doesn't arise, the player is penalized for the GM's decision. Letting players make dramatic declarations that discharge their obligations and enhance the scene is a nifty fix, a natural flipside to **Player Guidance** (p. B347).*

## Honorable Mentions

Countless other rules that are too long for this piece might have won a spot in the **Basic Set**, had they been in the running 10 years ago (and had space there allowed!). For instance:

- *Everyman Traits* (**GURPS Template Toolkit 1: Characters**, p. 17) near the front of **Characters** would help new players identify the essentials in the face of overwhelming choice.
- The Control, Create, and Illusion advantages in **GURPS Powers** deserve a place in Chapter 2 of the **Basic Set**, as do the generalized versions of Neutralize and Static, and Leech in place of Vampiric Bite.
- *Alternative Benefits* (**GURPS Power-Ups 3: Talents**, pp. 18-19) are much cooler than reaction bonuses for Talents. I'd swap these in a heartbeat.
- Many gamers would prefer some of the rigor of *Creating New Techniques* (**GURPS Martial Arts**, pp. 89-95) to the vague *Creating Techniques* (p. B229).

• Imbuement Skills (**GURPS Power-Ups 1: Imbuements**) have become so popular that I wish they had at least a basic presence in **Characters**, like magic and psionics.

• The tables – if not the rules – in *Horde Rolls* (**GURPS Zombies**, pp. 112-114) would help gamers handle lots of rolls by lots of people, and be a welcome addition to Chapter 10 of the **Basic Set**, or at least to the odds table on p. B171.

• *Stunts* (**GURPS Powers**, pp. 170-174) would fit nicely into **Campaigns**, covering the one class of feats that pp. B349-361 ignores: those involving superhuman abilities.

• *Chases* (**GURPS Action 2: Exploits**, pp. 31-35) tackles a basic adventure component that, in retrospect, the **Basic Set** should have covered – in its own chapter, no less (right before the three on combat).

• *Ambushes* (**GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 16: Wilderness Adventures**, pp. 37-38) would clear up the scattered, often-contradictory rules for jumping your enemies.

## Not Quite a Rule: Quick-and-Dirty Modifiers

Sources: *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons* and *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 16: Wilderness Adventures*.

*GURPS* specifies many modifiers to success rolls but leaves looking them up and assessing them to the GM. This can bog down game play. The GM who prefers a speedier, more-dramatic approach can wing it: Every complication added to a task's description as an adjective or other qualifier imposes a cumulative -1; e.g., on a *slimy, twisting, smoke-obscured* path, or an *icy, rain-slicked, and trembling* mountain-side, tasks would be at -3. Intensifiers such as "very" and "highly" count; "extremely slimy" would give -2.

*If this were in the Basic Set, it would be optional advice to GMs, not a rule, which is why it doesn't count against my 10. It may seem trivial and obvious, but based on questions I get, it isn't. It best suits dramatic games that value speed and simplicity over precision.*

## OTHER KINDS OF POINTS

Source: *GURPS Power-Ups 5: Impulse Buys*.

Optionally, *Influencing Success Rolls* (p. B347), *Flesh Wounds* (p. B417), and similar rules cost Impulse Points (IP) instead of character points. How many IP the PCs start with is left to the GM, as is the matter of whether spent IP recharge. These are campaign-level decisions, like starting character points and the disadvantage limit.

It may be possible to buy extra IP. If IP never recharge, they cost 1 character point apiece and don't *really* need a special name.

If IP regenerate, they cost 5 points/level – and if PCs begin with nonzero IP, players may sell off IP at -5 points/level. The default refresh rate is 1 IP at the start of each game session. An improved rate, if available, should cost *at least* 10 points per +1 IP restored per session.

*Many gamers dislike "drama points" mechanics. When such rules involve spending character-creation currency, the objection often flows from concerns over stalled growth and inequalities between PCs. This rule addresses these matters. The GM can switch it off simply by setting starting IP to 0 and prohibiting IP purchases.*

## PULLING RANK

Sources: *GURPS Action 1: Heroes* and *GURPS Social Engineering: Pulling Rank*.

A PC who holds Rank *and* is in good standing with the organization that grants it – which usually means having and

respecting a Code of Honor, Duty, or Sense of Duty – is considered to have that group as a Patron of sorts. In any situation where contacting that backer is plausible, the player can attempt an assistance roll (AR) on 3d to request aid, using the table below.

*Modifiers: -1 per AR after the first this adventure; +1 to +5 for requests appropriate, or -1 to -10 for those inappropriate, to the situation; separate modifier of similar size for requests appropriate/inappropriate to the story; any Charisma bonus, for requests made in person; any Reputation within the organization; any Smooth Operator bonus, for requests made to those who can fulfill them; and if a skill is applicable (GM's opinion, but Administration is common), critical success grants +2, success gives +1, failure inflicts -1, and critical failure means -2.*

Any success grants suitable aid. Any failure doesn't. Failure by 10+ or critical failure may mean disciplinary action, especially for inappropriate requests. The nature of the aid (or discipline!) is organization-dependent.

*Rank as command is all well and good, but a bevy of subordinates is often disruptive and/or illogical on an adventure. Treating Rank as a "leveled Patron" allows players to flex organizational muscle in a more story- and hero-friendly manner. It also lets them buy external support in a fine-grained way, with modest odds of assistance coming at a more affordable point cost than Patron permits.*

## RESTRICTED DODGE AGAINST FIREARMS

Source: *GURPS Martial Arts*.

Dodge against bullets, beams, etc. is prohibited with one exception: Someone who's aware of enemies with firearms (make a Vision roll if uncertain) *and* who selects All-Out Defense, Attack, Change Posture, Feint, Move, or Move and Attack on his turn may take "evasive movement" with respect to a *single opponent* as a free action. If the specified gunman shoots at him before the start of his next turn, he may dodge. All of the usual modifiers apply. To claim the +2 for *Acrobatic Dodge* (p. B375), he must make his Acrobatics roll during his turn, while to receive the +3 for *Dodge and Drop* (p. B377), he must dive prone at the end of his turn; either can be part of his free action. He can't dodge firearms attacks from any other foe, evade multiple shooters, or declare evasive movement after being attacked.

## Assistance Rolls Table

Rank	0*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Assistance Roll	3	5	7	9	10	11	12	13	14

\* In this system, Rank 0 always requires *either* a Duty *or* an enabling advantage such as Clerical Investment, Legal Enforcement Powers, Legal Immunity, or Tenure.



This approach addresses the common criticism of allowing *dodge vs. gunfire* – often considered a major flaw – by divorcing the effects of reacting to a known enemy (*Dodge is an active defense, after all!*) from the those of movement (*speed/range penalties*). If it had appeared in the **Basic Set**, the current rules for dodging firearms attacks would be offered as a cinematic option.

## TACTICS FOR THE WIN

Source: **GURPS Martial Arts**.

These uses of Tactics replace the rules on p. B224.

**Abstract:** If not using a map, roll a Quick Contest of Tactics between the leaders of the two sides before the battle. The winner receives “rerolls” equal to his margin of victory. If his side has 10+ fighters, multiply this by 10% of the size of his force and round down; e.g., for 15 warriors, victory by four gives six rerolls.

In battle, a leader may grant his rerolls to any ally who has just attempted a combat-related die roll. The recipient rolls twice more and selects the best result. The leader’s player *must* describe how such tactical factors as cover and formation altered the outcome. If the GM disagrees, the reroll is wasted. Unused rerolls disappear at the end of the fight.

**Mapped:** This method is intended for tactical combat (pp. B384-392) in which the plot doesn’t dictate force placement. The GM must first designate what part of the battlefield each side controls when hostilities begin. It’s fairest to bisect the map – north/south, left/right, etc. – unless the story demands otherwise. In player vs. player conflict, any division that both sides agree on is acceptable.

Next, roll a Quick Contest of Tactics between the leaders, recording the margin of victory. The winner chooses whether he or his rival puts warriors on the map first. In a tie, flip a coin or roll a die. The leaders then take turns placing one man – or 10% of their forces, if larger – on *their* side of the map.

Once everyone is on the map, the winner may move one ally (or 10% of his men, if larger) to a more favorable position on the “friendly” side of the map or one opponent (or 10% of the enemy, if larger) into adverse circumstances on the “hostile” side per point of victory. He may move fighters toward or away from bad footing, cover, concealment, support, etc. He may not move his warriors *behind* the foe or turn enemies to face the wrong way.

*The Tactics skill is IQ/Hard and rather vague in effect, leaving gamers reluctant to spend points on it for warriors, who customarily don’t invest heavily in IQ. These rules make “war leader” a more viable character concept and add extra depth to combat.*

## TEAM EFFORTS

Sources: **GURPS Action 2: Exploits** and **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons**.

When every PC must roll against a vital skill that some party members lack, the GM may allow the skilled to cover for the unskilled. If the players agree, roll once for the entire team. Start with the group’s best skill level, add a bonus equal to the number of

people who *know* the skill (at least one point – no defaults!), and subtract a penalty equal to group size. The results of success or failure apply equally to everybody.

This is advisable only when the high-skill character is leading (usually from the front) *and* able to communicate, if only via gestures. It best suits tasks that affect everyone, like using Climbing when the group is roped together, or sneaking en masse with Stealth. The GM should forbid it if the PCs aren’t in contact or are behaving selfishly, and for such personal challenges as resistance rolls.

*Even more than **Complementary Skills** (pp. 14-15), this offers an easy way to involve the whole group in scenes that would otherwise exclude someone. It also helps to avoid the annoying-but-common situation where one PC’s poor skills ruin the entire party’s plans. Rolling once puts all the eggs in one basket, but at least failure is dramatic for **everyone**.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean “Dr. Kromm” Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985, ended up the **GURPS** Line Editor in 1995, and has engineered rules for almost every **GURPS** product since. He developed, edited, or wrote dozens of **GURPS Third Edition** projects between 1995 and 2002. In 2004, he produced the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition** with David Pulver. Since then, he has created **GURPS Powers** (with Phil Masters), **GURPS Martial Arts** (with Peter Dell’Orto), **GURPS Zombies**, and the **GURPS Action, GURPS Dungeon Fantasy, and GURPS Power-Ups** series . . . among other things. Sean has been a gamer since 1979. His non-gaming interests include cinema, mixology, and Argentine tango.

## One for the Road: Multiplicative Modifiers

Source: **GURPS Powers**.

Normally, enhancements and limitations are *additive*: add them together and apply the total modifier to advantage cost. For instance, +20% in enhancements and -50% in limitations come to -30%, so ability cost is 70% of advantage cost.

Optionally, the GM may treat enhancements and limitations as *multiplicative*. Total the enhancements and apply them first. Then total the limitations (reducing any total over -80% to -80%) and apply them to the result. In the above example, +20% in enhancements would increase ability cost to 120% of advantage cost, and then -50% in limitations would reduce this to 60%.

The GM decides which model to use. The results *aren’t* the same (although they’re close for small modifiers), so using both isn’t recommended. The additive model is a good “default,” but the multiplicative model can be fairer in campaigns where huge enhancements (like Cosmic, +300%) occur routinely.

*This is a boxed-off “bonus item” because I’m not completely sure that we could have put it in the **Basic Set**. Adding it would have meant rethinking the value of **every last enhancement and limitation** – a matter of time more than one of space. If we had had more time, however, something akin to this rule would have made the cut.*

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# GAMING IN THE ANCIEN RÉGIME

BY WILLIAM H. STODDARD

A large share of roleplaying campaigns are in the fantastic genres, from sword-and-sorcery to outer-space adventure to cyberpunk to four-color supers. One of the happy exceptions is swashbuckling adventure, as in *The Three Musketeers* or *The Mark of Zorro*. **GURPS Swashbucklers** for Third Edition provides an admirable guide to cinematic adventure in the days when gentlemen wore swords and fought duels.

When I decided to try out a swashbuckling campaign, the new edition of **GURPS Martial Arts** had been published – and its treatment of Western martial arts incorporated much of **Swashbucklers**, particularly the historical development of fencing style. All I needed for the swordplay was to read through those sections of **Martial Arts** and take notes, particularly on the smallsword style. But it was also important to me that swords were used by *gentlemen*: by men (and sometimes women) who followed an elaborate set of customs and who fitted into a system of social roles. To capture this, I had to improvise, based on reading novels such as *The Three Musketeers*, *Les Liaisons Dangéreuses*, and *Hotel Transylvania*; watching movies; and reading histories. (As it turned out, the transition to the smallsword took place largely during the Regency – the period when Louis XV was a child, and Philippe d'Orléans governed France in his stead – for which *The Scandalous Regent*, by C.S. Lewis's brother Warren, was an admirable source.)

Since then, of course, **GURPS Social Engineering** has been published, with detailed rules for social relations and social positions. (In fact, my experience in running a swashbuckling campaign was one of the things that went into writing it.) So if I were running the same campaign today, I'd make as much use of it as of **Martial Arts**. Here are some of the things **Social Engineering** would add to a swashbuckling campaign.

*Everything is an art; a Frenchman's taste is with him always.*

– **GURPS Swashbucklers**

## RANK AND ORGANIZATIONS

French society had many distinct systems of Rank – not just Administrative, Military, and Religious Rank, but subtypes within some of these.

Religious Rank means specifically Catholic Rank; no other religion is allowed in France. It has the following levels.

Rank	Offices
8	Pope
7	Cardinal, Primate
6	Archbishop
5	Bishop
4	Monsignor
3	Priest
2	Deacon, Abbot (not ordained), Abbess
1	Minor Orders
0	Monk, Nun, Friar

Military Rank has two separate hierarchies for army officers. Louis XIII and XIV did away with the old feudal armies, but preserved a relic of them in the purchase of military commissions, reserved to the nobility. However, the king also has the right to appoint officers who can keep a force running if the officer who purchased its command is unavailable or incompetent! The two types of officers have largely separate titles:

Rank	Purchased Title	Royally Granted Title
8	General	General
7	Brigadier General	Brigadier General
6	Colonel	Lieutenant Colonel
5	Captain	Major
4	Lieutenant	Aide-Major
3	Ensign	
2	Sergeant	
1	Corporal	
0	Soldier	

Administrative Rank is even more complicated, reflecting the structure of the French government. The government has judicial, legislative, and executive functions, but legislation comes primarily from the king (or regent), who can make new laws by decree. The king's position is primarily one of Status (see pp. 20-21), but he also has Political Rank 7 to accompany it. Lesser nobles have Political Rank equal to their Status; however, they're only nominally rulers of their lands, and the king's power supersedes theirs. (As discussed in **Social Engineering**, Status grants respect, or at least cautious treatment; when it confers actual political power, this is defined as Political Rank equal to Status, and cost 5 points/level.)

Judicial functions are dominated by a system of 16 *parlements* – they aren't legislative bodies like Parliament, despite the similar name! Rather, each is the court of appeal for one region within France, with the Paris *parlement* being oldest and most influential. They also have a kind of veto function, as they can suspend the operation of laws or refuse to register them, though the king can override this by officially attending a meeting (a *lit de justice*). The *parlements* and lesser judges hold Judicial Rank.

Rank	Judicial Offices
8	Chancellor
7	Keeper of the Seals
6	Councillor of State
5	President of Paris <i>parlement</i> Royal governor
4	President of regional <i>parlement</i> Member of Paris <i>parlement</i>
3	Member of regional <i>parlement</i>
2	Clerk
1	Messenger

The executive functions are primarily carried out by the king's ministries, headed by five secretaries of state for various functions: foreign affairs, war (with control of border provinces), the navy (with control of colonies), the royal household (with control of the city of Paris), and Protestant affairs. They hold Administrative Rank, as do officers serving under them. The post of First Minister is traditionally the highest administrative office, to which the Secretaries of State report, but Louis XIV left this office vacant, performing its functions himself, and the Regent followed his example.

There is also a *separate* fiscal hierarchy, headed by the Controller-General of Finance. He holds Financial Rank, as do the intendants and other officers who report to him.

Rank	Administrative Offices
8	[First Minister]
7	Secretary of State
6	Chief Steward Grand Chamberlain Lieutenant-General of Police
5	Officer of the Royal Household
4	Police commissioner
3	Police inspector Mayor of an important city
2	Clerk
1	Messenger

Rank	Financial Offices
8	Controller-General of Finances
6	Intendant of Finance Intendant of Commerce
5	Intendant
3	Secretary to an Intendant
2	Clerk
1	Messenger

Some of these offices, such as membership in a *parlement*, are hereditary (and the *parlements* use their powers to safeguard aristocratic privileges). Others can be granted at the king's discretion. This has given rise to the *venal offices*, which are granted in return for payment of a fee; such offices are a major source of income to the monarchy. By the Revolution,

there are over 50,000 of them. Venal offices have limited duties and can be represented as Independent Income. There are also offices with actual powers and duties; admission to such offices and promotion are the focus of constant intrigue.

## STATUS

France started out as a feudal society – in fact, as the prototype for such societies in Europe. Over the past century, though, its kings have transformed it into a centralized monarchy. Aristocrats still have Status, but it doesn't grant the kind of administrative powers that Feudal Rank represents. Rather, all power is granted by the king, who holds both Status 7 (as the ruler of a major nation) and Political Rank 7. Back-country nobles may still live on their estates, but a noble who wants to make anything of himself must come to Paris, as d'Artagnan does in *The Three Musketeers*. The powerful nobles are courtiers, who compete for the privilege of attending the king and seeking his favor.

With the death of Louis XIV, his nephew Philippe of Orléans became regent, acting on behalf of the future Louis XV. As a royal kinsman, he's Status 6 in his own right, but as Regent, he holds Political Rank 7 and gains Honorary Title 7 (a courtesy equivalent of Status, worth 1 point for the extra level). As Louis XIV did, he acts as his own first minister, and thus has effective Administrative Rank 8 – but this has no point cost, as it's a byproduct of his Status and Political Rank.

The nobility is divided into two main groups. The *noblesse d'épée* (nobility of the sword) derives from old landed families and has higher standing; at some times, belonging to this nobility is a prerequisite for purchasing a military commission, and they always *believe* it should be. The *noblesse du robe* (nobility of the robe) derives from families of royal officials, usually trained in law, and mainly pursues administrative, financial, or judicial offices. Below them are commoners of various sorts, some distinguished by wealth. The whole hierarchy looks like this.

Status	Examples
8	The Pope
7	The King
6	Peers of the realm
5	Nobles of the sword who attend at court Bishops High officials
4	Lesser nobles of the sword Nobles of the robe who attend at court
3	Lesser nobles of the robe
2	Wealthy bourgeois; poor nobles
1	Ordinary bourgeois; priests; government employees
0	Guild members; wealthy peasants
-1	Ordinary peasants
-2	Laborers; petty criminals

## WEALTH, INCOME, AND COST OF LIVING

Nobles have a high cost of living: \$3,000/month for the poorest nobles, \$12,000-\$60,000 a month for ordinary nobles, and \$60,000-\$600,000 a month for courtiers.

The expenses of the royal household come to \$60,000,000 a month! But nobles aren't allowed to work. What do they live on?

In **GURPS** terms, most of what they live on is Independent Income: land, seigneurial earnings (if you own a court of law, you have the right to the fines it collects), pensions, and government bonds. Additionally, positions in the armed forces or the administration bring in earnings that don't disgrace the recipient and may or may not impose actual duties. But Independent Income is rarely sufficient. Louis XIV, for example, was a Multimillionaire 3, with wealth of \$200,000,000; Independent Income 20 comes to \$20,000,000 a month, less than a third of his expenses. And nobles all the way up and down the social ladder are in the same situation.

How did Louis XIV manage this? He borrowed money! At the time of his death, France was \$30,000,000,000 in debt; the government had to pledge its entire tax revenues several years in the future to borrow the funds for its current expenses. Nobles at every level are characteristically in debt, and frantically searching for funds to spend or assets to borrow against – or gambling systems that would make them rich. Or they can try to impress the king with a lavish (and expensive) entertainment and collect a gratuity from him.

France in this era is a prototype for one of the ideas in **Social Engineering**: its discussion of ascribed Status. Where someone in a meritocratic society may gain Status by getting promoted to a higher Rank or earning a higher level of Wealth, or fall in Status by losing either of these things, a noble in an aristocratic society can't fall in Status. He has his Status by birth. If he doesn't spend enough to keep up appearances, other bad things happen to him; in particular, he's the target of gossip (a negative Reputation). In fact, Code of Honor (Gentleman's) *requires* spending lavishly. For many nobles, poverty is a Secret whose exposure would face them with serious embarrassment or worse. A lot of nobles need to find ways to pretend to resources they don't have; this is one of the main uses of Savoir-Faire. A trusted servant as an Ally – skilled in Administration, Merchant, and Scrounging – can also help reduce household expenses.

*Social standing is defined primarily by Rank, Status, and Wealth. These are not completely separate; there are complex trade-offs between them. In different societies, they can affect each other in different ways.*

– **GURPS Social Engineering**

## REFINED MANNERS

An important part of life in French elite society was cultured behavior. This was the society that gave us the expression *savoir-faire*, and the **GURPS** skill of Savoir-Faire (High Society) should see a lot of use in a swashbuckling campaign. An ancient name, wealth, and personal courage may be enough

for a rural nobleman, but in Paris, and especially at the royal court, refined manners and a quick wit are vital.

This standard is upheld not only at court, but in the newly emerged *salons*, gatherings in the homes of aristocratic women, where people meet not only to gossip – though they certainly do that! – but to discuss philosophy and the latest works of art and literature. The resulting conversations are fiercely competitive, in a subtle way; they can be described in terms of the rules for competitive Influence in **Social Engineering**. In this particular kind of conversation, the two contestants roll vs. Savoir-Faire (High Society), and the roll with the greater margin of success (or lesser margin of failure) is compared with a roll vs. the average Will of the other guests. A complementary roll vs. Public Speaking (to tell a good story or phrase a point incisively) or vs. Connoisseur (to judge the merits of some painting, ballet, poem, or wine) can improve the odds. The winner can gain a temporary boost to Reputation, get invited to other, more prestigious *salons*, or even gain the attention of a beautiful woman.

**Social Engineering** also provides rules for the pursuit of romance, whether casual encounters or lasting relationships: what Influence skills to use (Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Savoir-Faire (High Society), Streetwise, or substitutes such as Dancing); how to find someone receptive (the approachability rules); using Influence skills via text, a common practice in an era of enthusiastic letter writing; Contests of Influence skills in romantic rivalry; lies, manipulation, and false identities; and building trust in a continuing relationship. Women in this era seldom marry without their parents' approval, partly because their parents have dowries to provide, without which few suitors will find them appealing (especially suitors who are chronically broke or deep in debt!). But it's commonplace for both sexes to have affairs – men at any time; women after they've married and borne children (most unmarried girls are more cautious, as they have reputations to lose, especially from a pregnancy). Historically, same-sex relationships were fairly common; there were harsh legal penalties – even death – but these weren't likely to be applied to aristocrats.

Another consequence for polite conversations can be duels – whether because two men are genuinely enemies, or because a duel of witty remarks went too far. The rules for *Wit, Mockery, and Insults* (**Social Engineering**, p. 35) provide for this: a critical failure can give an opponent fair cause to offer a challenge; a critical success can make an opponent lose his temper and perhaps behave badly enough to *invite* a challenge. While in later eras the challenged foe gets the choice of weapons, in the early 18th century, the choice is automatically the sword, that weapon being the mark of a gentleman. A fencing teacher may take his students to fashionable gatherings so that they can learn how to converse without getting into duels *accidentally*.

What's the point of all this dueling? One theory says that it's about reputation. Aristocrats, especially nobles of the sword, are powerful enough so that the law doesn't fully constrain them; but they have to be able to trust each other in some measure. This requires that they have a Code of Honor, and that they demonstrate visibly that following it is important to them, even when the cost is high. Fighting a duel demonstrates that a man cares enough for honor to take a chance of paying for it with his life. The other side of this is that a man who doesn't show up for a duel, or who doesn't fight courageously, gains a bad Reputation, as a coward; to a lesser degree, so does a man who tolerates open insults.

With such a Reputation, he's likely to face more and worse insults and be treated with general contempt: Men will push him aside or snub him, and women will scorn him. These social penalties, as well as the physical risks, should always be in the background of a swashbuckling campaign.

Note that dueling and romance can intersect! A man's romantic pursuits can get him challenged by a jealous husband or a protective father; or his love for a woman can force him to challenge other men who insult her.

The GM also should take a look at *Pyramid* #3/54: *Social Engineering*. In particular, *The Civil Arts in GURPS* offers social techniques and social interaction styles that could be useful in any swashbuckling campaign. Look in particular at the social-interaction styles of Courtesantry, Diplomacy, Military Leadership, and Virtus for useful sets of abilities.

## ORGANIZATION MEN

The word "swashbuckling" conjures up images of freewheeling individualists. But at the same time, France under the *ancien régime* was a highly bureaucratic society, where ministers and administrators were little less important than old-style nobles. It's telling that Paris was the first city in Europe to have a police force, more than a century before Robert Peel founded one in London. *The Three Musketeers*, arguably the founding work of the genre, has d'Artagnan, its hero, striving to gain entrance into the Musketeers of the Guard, a military organization. Meanwhile, he faces adversaries from a secret faction within the French government, the Comte de Rochefort and Milady de Winter, who serve as agents of Cardinal Richelieu. Organizations can contribute a lot to a swashbuckling campaign.

Established groups can provide resources for adventurers. ***GURPS Social Engineering: Pulling Rank*** offers game mechanics for addressing this.

Organizations can define missions for adventurers to pursue, whether as soldiers, covert operatives, or even priests. The Society of Jesus, for example, was widely regarded as a sinister and secretive body of papal spies. Conflicts between the Jesuits and their Jansenist rivals played a big role in French politics around 1700, inspiring such incidents as a 1709 police raid on the nuns of the Abbey of Port-Royal.

Organizations can give players a sense of progress, as adventurers strive to gain admission to a particular group, to become accepted within it, to gain the trust of their superiors, to earn promotion, and finally to take responsibility for new recruits. ***Social Engineering*** provides game mechanics for all these pursuits.

Finally, factions can be adversaries, as the examples of the Cardinal's agents and of the Society of Jesus suggest! Again, ***Social Engineering*** has rules for this, in the section on *Hostile Organizations*. Protagonists may face capture, questioning, trial, and even brainwashing or imprisonment (as in *The Count of Monte Cristo*, another classic of swashbuckling and perhaps a source for the later superhero genre).

To portray a swashbuckling milieu, it's important to keep track of the rivalries both of the different organizations and of the powerful men (and occasionally women) who control them. Successful adventurers will come to the attention of powerful people, who may become their Patrons or their Enemies. Reading actual historical accounts of the period can give a sense for what those relationships were like.

## The Historical Milieu

It's also valuable to become familiar with the larger history of the period. France isn't the only country in the world, though some of its great families might wish otherwise! Recent and ongoing historical events can provide inspiration for plots or backgrounds for NPCs.

- The Catholic Church is still at odds with Protestants. This led in 1685 to Louis XIV's revocation of the Edict of Nantes, taking away legal toleration from the Huguenots (French Protestants) and leading to their expulsion and the seizure of their property.

- Within the Catholic Church, there is ongoing conflict between ultramontanism, which favors papal supremacy, and Gallicanism, which supports the creation of a largely autonomous French church, akin to the Church of England but not formally separated from Rome. The two factions were respectively tied up with the Jesuits and the Jansenists.

- England's Glorious Revolution in 1688 drove James II and his followers, the Jacobites, into exile, often in France. James II lives until 1701 as a pretender to the English throne at the French court, followed by his son, also named James – the "Old Pretender." In particular, many Scots are in French armies or serving as mercenaries.

- Louis XIV's pursuit of national glory led to France's involvement in many wars, and to the exhaustion of the French treasury. The War of the Spanish Succession, 1701-1714, was especially important, with France backing Louis' grandson, Philip of Anjou, against a rival favored by most of the other major powers in Europe, including Great Britain.

Any of these events could form part of the life story of a protagonist – or of a fencing master or aristocratic patron. Adventurers can find themselves invited, or even pressed, to take sides in the conflicts of the time. And conflict is the basis of drama!

## 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 the award-winning ***GURPS Social Engineering***, the latest editions of ***GURPS Supers*** and ***GURPS Low-Tech***, and *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!

# INTO THE WILDERNESS

BY MATT RIGGSBY

Although *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Adventure 1: Mirror of the Fire Demon* is written for the *dungeon* fantasy genre, most of the action takes place in the brightly lit outdoors rather than in the dim confines of a dungeon. Adventurers spend the bulk of their time in a desert, getting from point A to point B and thereafter to point C, only briefly entering underground chambers. So if *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 16: Wilderness Adventures* had been out while I was writing *Mirror of the Fire Demon*, there would have been a lot of references to it, which might have looked something like this.

## TOWN

One of the big pitfalls in undertaking the adventure – getting from town to the sacred grotto and from there to the Goblin’s Head – is knowing how to get there. Adventurers not native to the area, which could easily be all of them, probably lack a suitable Area Knowledge skill to plan their route or even know what they’re getting into (*Wilderness Adventures*, p. 20). Fortunately, adventurers of a literary bent can go looking for references to research, while travel routes through the nearby desert are well-known by the region’s merchant community. The heroes should have little trouble finding inexpensive aid in figuring out a course to the oracle. Although the region of the grotto isn’t a regular travel destination, the area involved isn’t particularly obscure, so maps are available at the standard rates set out in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 4: Sages*: \$25 for a sketchy one, \$50 for an average one, or \$50 per point of Area Knowledge skill for an annotated one. Alternatively, they can look for a native guide (*Wilderness Adventures*, p. 11) to get them to the oracle, or at least close.

While they’re still in town, adventurers may want to stock up on suitable gear. All of these items are readily available in Wadi al-Sheik.

**Hobnails.** Poor footing (shifting sand and the uneven floors of the grotto) is common along the way. Additionally, for much of the adventure, opponents will be visible long before they can be heard, so audible stealth isn’t as big of an issue as it would be in the confines of a dungeon. Hobnails help with the former, and can often be removed in time to aid with the latter when it becomes important.

**Parasols.** One rarely imagines a group of grizzled, blood-thirsty dungeon delvers strolling through the desert under umbrellas, but the protection from heat and the sun is worth it. While pink parasols with pretty fringes are tempting,

adventurers may want to consider camouflage versions. A camouflage parasol won’t hide its user, but it won’t negate the protection of camouflage clothing.

**Rations.** The terrain is all desert, so the foraging is notably bad. Adventurers are well-advised to load up on food (which, for the purposes of wilderness adventuring, includes water) before heading out. Be sure to have water skins or similar containers for everyone!

**Sandshoes.** The Devouring Lands aren’t *all* soft sand, but there’s enough of it that using sandshoes makes a noticeable difference in long-distance travel times.

**Transportation:** In the interests of keeping encumbrance as light as possible, buying a camel or two makes good sense. If that’s too expensive, a travois for dragging gear over the soft sands of the desert is a reasonable fallback.

However, not all gear that looks good at first glance will be useful. Bug juice is fine for the kinds of minor pests whose sole ill effect is to spread disease, but it has no discernable effect on flame wasps or nest scorpions. Anyone making a Naturalist roll will know that.

## THE WILDERNESS

This, naturally, is where most of the new material from *Wilderness Adventures* comes into use. Many of these suggestions apply to both the trip from Wadi al-Sheik to the hidden grotto and from there to the Goblin’s Head.

### Routes

To get from town to the grotto, adventurers are well-advised to take the “easy,” less direct way. A few essentially interchangeable and well-traveled routes take advantage of meandering but relatively easy terrain. These routes combine areas of loose sand, packed sand, and rocky but level terrain for an average travel speed modifier of  $\times 0.75$  over an 80-mile course (sandshoes increase the speed modifier to  $\times 0.95$ ). The route also hits the occasional prepared watering hole used by the caravans that frequent the desert. Along the easy route, foraging rolls are at a penalty of 1d-5.

However, whoever plans travel could deliberately plot out a more difficult, direct course. It’s ultimately faster, but riskier. The tougher route takes a travel speed modifier of  $\times 0.5$  over a 40-mile course (sandshoes increase that to  $\times 0.6$ ). It also adds an additional item of hostile terrain to every encounter; reroll duplicate results on the *Revised Hostile Terrain Table* (p. 24).

One of the problems the heroes will face is that they've got precious little time to plan a route. If they should take the time to fully research the route (*Wilderness Adventures*, p. 20), they get a better chance of avoiding particularly bad terrain on the leg of the trip from town to the grotto. Whenever hostile terrain comes up on the *Random Encounter Table* (*Mirror of the Fire Demon*, p. 10) while following a planned route, roll against Area Knowledge. If the roll succeeds, ignore that part of the result. Wandering monsters and wandering adventurers still apply, and advance planning only removes one item of hostile terrain per encounter if taking the more difficult route. Taking the time to do research also puts the group far behind other adventurers, making encounters at the grotto that much tougher.

The desert is definitely hot, though it could be worse, so make appropriate HT rolls for *Harsh Climates* (*Wilderness Adventures*, p. 30) at -2.

### You Will, Oscar. You Will.

There's one other thing I wish I'd had before *Mirror of the Fire Demon: The Magic Desert* in *Pyramid* #3/68: *Natural Magic*. Though the more extreme magical effects might provide excessive distraction in the context of the adventure, they could be used in adjoining regions to transition to an ongoing campaign in the Devouring Lands.

## Revised Hostile Terrain Table

*Wilderness Adventures* contains a lot of events that could happen in the Devouring Lands. Instead of the *Hostile Terrain Table* on p. 12 *Mirror of the Fire Demon*, use this table.

Roll	Encounter	Notes
1, 1-2	Falling Rocks	[1]
2, 1-2	Flow	[1]
3, 1-2	Hollow Ground	[2]
4, 1-2	Hollow Ground	[2]
5, 1-2	Knife Grass	[2]
6, 1-2	Hollow Ground	[2]
1, 3-4	N Angry Sands	[3]
2, 3-4	N Burrowing Serpents	[3]
3, 3-4	N Flame Wasp Swarms	[3]
4, 3-4	N Nest Scorpion Swarms	[3]
5, 3-4	Rain of Cinders	[4]
6, 3-4	Mirage	[5]
1, 5-6	Sandstorm	[2]
2, 5-6	Sinkhole	[1]
3, 5-6	Stinging Plants	[1]
4, 5-6	Swarm	[1]
5, 5-6	Oasis With Quicksand	[6]
6, 5-6	Oasis	[2]

### Notes

[1] *Falling rocks* (rocks and other debris falling from unstable cliff sides), *flow* (sand collapsing from unstable dunes), *sinkholes*, *stinging plants*, and *swarms* are described in *Disasters* (*Wilderness Adventures*, pp. 32-34).

[2] See pp. 12-13 of *Mirror of the Fire Demon* for more details about this terrain.

[3] See pp. 45-46 of *Mirror of the Fire Demon* for more details about this monster.

[4] A *rain of cinders* is a side effect of the dark magic accompanying the rise of the fire demon. Clouds of ash and still-smoldering cinders blow through the air. Treat as bad weather (described on *Wilderness Adventures*, p. 30), but it also does a point of burning damage. Furthermore, roll a die. On a 6, there's enough vegetation in the area to start a fire (*Wilderness Adventures*, p. 32).

[5] A *mirage* looks, from a distance, like an oasis, all shimmering, watery lines. In this magic-rich desert, there might even be a hint of green. Close up, however, it's just another patch of hot sand. The main effect of mirages is to draw travelers in search of water and provisions out of their way. Adventurers who decide to approach the mirage rather than avoiding it waste an hour (or half an hour on a Survival (Desert) roll) trying to get there before realizing it's an illusion. But deceived adventurers need not feel alone; a mirage *also* attracts other wandering encounters exactly as an oasis does.

[6] An *oasis with quicksand* is just that: an oasis (*Mirror of the Fire Demon*, p. 13) surrounded by patches of quicksand (*Wilderness Adventures*, p. 33). The GM must decide how many, how large, and where they are. Oases with quicksand attract other wandering encounters like regular oases, but all parties have to negotiate the spot's hidden dangers. Adventurers may learn to approach attractive terrain with caution.

## Encounters

Sneaky travelers can scout ahead (*Wilderness Adventures*, p. 25) at suitable penalties to speed and Stealth. In case of random encounters with wandering monsters and wandering adventurers, the adventurers can have advance warning, giving them some chance of avoiding opponents or setting an ambush for them. However, wandering encounters can do the same. Groups on high alert send scouts out ahead of them, giving them a chance of spotting the oncoming heroes. Wandering encounters in an ambush disposition have already sent out scouts, detected the heroes without being seen, and taken steps accordingly. However, if the adventurers' scouts spot the ambush, they can stage a surprise attack of their own.

Since adventurers can trick out their kit with new and environment-specific items, so can traveling monsters. At least some parties of wandering adventurers and wandering monsters should have items like hobnails and sandshoes. In areas with sufficiently dense vegetation, enemy archers might use fire arrows in a deliberate attempt to set it on fire, to drive back or roast their opposition. Used as NPCs, the Aristocrat could have a number of items of elven gear (boots, cloak, and possibly a blind), the Master of the Elements some druidic fertilizer, and the Outdoorsman a few fire arrows, just in case.

## THE HIDDEN FORTRESS

The oracle's directions to the Goblin's Head indicate two possible routes, similar to the two approaches to get from town to the grotto. The direct route is 50 miles over more dangerous ground (add another hostile terrain roll for each encounter) at a travel speed modifier of  $\times 0.5$ . The less direct route has an average travel speed modifier of  $\times 0.75$  over a 70-mile course. The leg of the trip from the grotto to the Goblin's Head is also through a region of less hospitable climate; make HT rolls for *Harsh Climates* (*Wilderness Adventures*, p. 30) at -3.



## Cold-Weather Loadouts

*Mirror of the Fire Demon* isn't the only book that would have benefited from drawing from *Wilderness Adventures*. The equipment could have featured in a number of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 13: Loadouts*. Here are a couple of special-purpose kits that can be assembled using some of the new outdoor gear.

These loadouts use the same format and notation as *Loadouts*, and alternate SM costs and weights are computed the same way except as noted.

### Cold-Weather Kit

This is an add-on lens for any adventurer traveling in cold, icy, snowy regions. It includes gear both to keep warm and to move quickly. However, it's fairly expensive (two points converted to money for starting characters).

#### Cold-Weather Kit

**\$810, 22 lbs.**

*Alternate SMs:* -6 (\$14.10, 0.28 lb.), -4 (\$55.50, 1.25 lbs.), -2 (\$188.67, 4.67 lbs.), -1 (\$438.33, 11.33 lbs.), +1 (\$1,520, 43 lbs.)

- *Doom Cleats* (16, p. 18) [Feet] \$400, 4 lbs.
- *Piolet Hatchet* (16, p. 18) [Belt] \$200, 2 lbs.
- *Sleeping Fur* (1, p. 23) [Sack or Backpack] \$50, 8 lbs.

- *Snowshoes* (16, p. 18) [Feet] \$100, 5 lbs.
- *Winter Clothing* (16, p. 16) [Torso] \$60, 3 lbs.

### Cold-Weather Group Kit

This kit is an alternative to the regular group kit on p. 6 *Loadouts*. It contains many of the items used in the group kit, but includes improved portable shelter, fire-starting capabilities, and a sledge to help drag the increased weight over the snowy wastes.

#### Cold-Weather Group Kit

**\$748, 264.25 lbs.**

*Alternate SMs:* -6 (\$82.30, 10.75 lbs.), -4 (\$113.13, 22.43 lbs.), -2 (\$219.34, 62.79 lbs.), -1 (\$424.66, 140.91 lbs.), +1 (\$1,380.50, 505.75 lbs.)

- *Alchemist's Matches* (1, p. 25) [Sack or Webbing] \$15, 0.25lb.
- *Crowbar*, 3' (p. B289) [Sack or Webbing] \$20, 3 lbs.
- *First Aid Kit* (p. B289) [Sack or Backpack] \$50, 2 lbs.
- *Group Basics* (p. B288) [Sack or Backpack] \$50, 20 lbs.
- *Pickaxe* (p. B289) [Sack or Backpack] \$15, 8 lbs.
- *Pole*, 10' (p. B288) [Torso] \$8, 5 lbs.
- *2 × Sack* (1, p. 24) [Torso] Holds 40 lbs. \$60, 6 lbs.
- *Sledge* (16, p. 18) [Torso] \$50, 20 lbs.
- *Yurt* (16, p. 18) [Sack or Backpack] \$480, 200 lbs.

There's not much of an opportunity to research these routes. If the adventurers want to try, they'll have to head south to reach Wadi al-Sheik, spend a week researching, and then east to the Goblin's Head, by which time events will have moved far ahead of them. Hope they shelled out for a map or a guide!

*New challenges to improve your adventure!*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

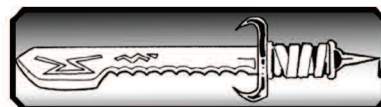
Matt Riggsby has been playing RPGs since the only game in town came in three poorly typeset tan booklets in a white box, using cheap dice which slowly converted themselves from icosahedrons to spheres. Having been educated in the lore of lost civilizations, he still kills things and takes their stuff while working a day job for artificers of engines of great healing. The marching order for the rest of his party includes a sorceress, a sixth-level rogue, and a pack of indoor dogs.

**GURPS** Fourth Edition



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**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

# ELEMENTAL XIA CHAMPIONS VS. THE SHENGUAI

BY JASON "PK" LEVINE

*GURPS Monster Hunters* favors Western mythology, partly because that's what most *GURPS* players are familiar with, but also because, at the time that it was written, *GURPS* had few supplements with an Eastern bias. It wasn't until over two years after *GURPS Monster Hunters 1: Champions* that *GURPS Thaumatology: Chinese Elemental Powers* would provide a ready-to-use magic system focusing on the five *xing*. If their positions had been reversed – if *Chinese Elemental Powers* had predated *Monster Hunters* – would champions and The Enemy have included more Eastern influences?

Rather than merely answering the question, this article celebrates *GURPS Fourth Edition's* 10th anniversary by showing how well two of its unrelated works can be combined. Can you really team up commandos, Voodoo crusaders, and elemental-ist *xia* against a mix of lycanthropes, mummies, and *shenguai*? Only in *GURPS!*

However, the rules for extra effort (*Chinese Elemental Powers*, p. 12) make Meditation a surprisingly powerful skill for *xia*. By spending 1 FP, a *xia* can roll against Meditation at -1 per +5% to effect. (Breath Control gives +2 to this roll.) While realistic Meditation levels produce mildly impressive results, raising Meditation to extreme levels drastically increases the potency of the elemental abilities. The normal cap of -20 to extra effort rolls should be *ignored* in a *Monster Hunters* game. A *xia* should also take Focus (*Chinese Elemental Powers*, p. 20) for one or two abilities that most benefit from extra effort; this further amplifies his potency.

*Example:* Robert has Storm of Fire, Chinese Fire Talent 4, Meditation-30, and Focus (Storm of Fire)-40. When using Storm of Fire, he can roll for extra effort at -30 with an effective skill of 14 (Focus-40 + Talent 4 - 30) – or 16 with a successful Breath Control roll! Doing so lets his storm do 1d+7 damage, the equivalent of 3d.

When using extra effort to enhance ongoing abilities (e.g., Endurance of Bamboo or Ivy Climb), a successful roll improves your ability for the next minute.

Several abilities – Commanding Wood, Holding Water, Commanding Earth, Commanding Metal, and Commanding Water – use extra effort to increase the weight or volume affected. For those, use this expanded chart for Will penalties past -20, reading “lbs.” as “pints” for volumetric abilities.

## Useful Chinese Terms

- qi** (“chee”): Breath, spirit, or life. The force that empowers Chinese elemental magic.
- shenguai** (“shen-gwy”): A harmful spirit or demon – or, more loosely, any supernatural monster.
- wu** (“woo”): A shaman or sorcerer. Elementalists are one part *wu*, one part *xia*.
- xia** (“shah”): A knight-errant – brave and bold, but humble. Used here to refer to elementalists in general.
- xing** (“shing”): One of the five traditional Chinese elements (wood, fire, earth, metal, and water).

## POWER LEVEL AND EXTRA EFFORT

*Chinese Elemental Powers* was not written for games on the power level assumed by *Monster Hunters*. Most of the abilities are fairly modest; attacks do about 1d of damage, element control moves about 10 lbs. of material, and so on. At first glance, the two may seem a poor fit.

Will Penalty	Quantity	Will Penalty	Quantity
-22	44 lbs.	-32	68 lbs.
-24	48 lbs.	-34	73 lbs.
-26	53 lbs.	-36	78 lbs.
-28	58 lbs.	-38	84 lbs.
-30	63 lbs.	-40	90 lbs.

# XIA

## 400 points

You are a powerful, spiritual martial artist, trained in the art of manipulating *xing* to magical effect. In a fight, you dispatch foes with a combination of bare hands and weapons; out of combat, you are trained in a mix of spiritual disciplines and worldly knowledge. You're less focused but more versatile than most champions, combining the spiritual resolve of the crusader, the prowess of the warrior, and magical talents reminiscent of the witch.

**Attributes:** ST 13 [30]; DX 14 [80]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 14 [40].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Damage 1d/2d-1; BL 34 lbs.; HP 16 [6]; Will 15 [15]; Per 12 [0]; FP 18 [12]; Basic Speed 7.00 [0]; Basic Move 7 [0].

**Advantages:** Combat Reflexes [15] and Luck [15]. • One 15-point motivational lens (*Champions*, pp. 6-9). • 70 points in appropriate power Talent(s) and elemental abilities; put leftovers into the following advantages, allowed cinematic skills (*Chinese Elemental Powers*, p. 19), and Focus. • Another 20 points chosen from among ST or HT +1 or +2 [10 or 20], DX or IQ +1 [20], Will or Per +1 to +4 [5/level], Acute Sense (any) [2/level], Ally (Sidekick; Built on 50%; 12 or less, 15 or less, or Constantly) [4, 6, or 8], Brave [1], Common Sense [10], Danger Sense [15], DR 1-5 (Tough Skin, -40%) [3/level], Enhanced Dodge 1 [15], Enhanced Parry 1-2 (Unarmed) [5/level] or (All) [10/level], Fearlessness [2/level] or Unfazeable [15], Flexibility [5] or Double-Jointed [15], High Pain Threshold [10], Intuition [15], Magery 0 (Elixirs Only, -25%) [4], Night Vision [1/level], Off-Hand Weapon Training (any) or Ambidexterity [5], Patrons [Varies], Perfect Balance [15], Prophetic Dreams (*Champions*, p. 23) [5], Rapid Healing [5] or Regeneration (Slow) [10], Resistant [Varies], Sensitive [5] or Empathy [15], Striking ST 1-4 [5/level] or (Unarmed Attacks Only, -40%) [3/level], Trademark Move [1], Wild Talent 1 [20], or replace Luck [15] with Extraordinary Luck [30] for 15 points.

**Disadvantages:** Code of Honor (Xia) [-10]; Disciplines of Faith (Contemplation) [-5]; and Vow (Three Treasures) [-5] (all from *Chinese Elemental Powers*, p. 18). • Another -35 points chosen from among Appearance [Varies], Charitable [-15\*], Clueless [-10], Curious [-5\*], Destiny [-5 to -15], Dyslexia [-10], Flashbacks [Varies], Guilt Complex [-5], Honesty [-10\*], Magic Susceptibility [-3/level], Missing Digit [-2 or -5], No Sense of Humor [-10], Oblivious [-5],

Odious Personal Habit (Cryptic) [-5 or -10], Overconfidence [-5\*], Selfless [-5\*], Sense of Duty [Varies], Shyness [Varies], Social Stigma (Minority Group) [-10], Stuttering [-10], Trickster [-15\*], Vow (Never kill a human) [-10], Wealth [Varies], Weirdness Magnet [-15], or Wounded [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Breath Control (H) HT [4]-14; Esoteric Medicine (H) Per-1 [2]-11; Meditation (H) Will+10 [44]-25; Occultism (A) IQ [2]-12. • Focus (choose one ability) (H) Meditation+10 [11]-35 or 11 points split between two Focus techniques.

**Secondary Skills:** 6 points spent on skills from *Know Thy Enemy (Champions*, p. 16). • Three of Knife (E) DX+2 [4]-16; Axe/Mace, Broadsword, Saber, Shortsword, Spear, or Staff, all (A) DX+1 [4]-15; Acrobatics, Judo, or Karate, all (H) DX [4]-14; or spend 4 points for +1 to an existing choice. • Two of Crossbow, Guns (Pistol, Rifle, Shotgun, or SMG), or Thrown Weapon (any), all (E) DX+1 [2]-15; Bolas, Bow, or Throwing, all (A) DX [2]-14; Parry Missile Weapons (H) DX-1 [2]-13; or spend 2 points on an unchosen melee skill from the previous list, at -1 to skill. • Four of Forced Entry or Jumping, both (E) DX+1 [2]-15; Climbing or Stealth, both (A) DX [2]-14; Escape (H) DX-1 [2]-13; Fortune-Telling (Feng Shui) or Holdout, both (A) IQ [2]-12; Tactics or Theology (Shamanic), both (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Alchemy or Thaumatology, both (VH) IQ-2 [2]-10; Exorcism (H) Will-1 [2]-14‡; or Body Language, Observation, Tracking, or Urban Survival, all (A) Per [2]-12.

**Background Skills:** Four of Fast-Draw (any) (E) DX+1 [1]-15‡; Area Knowledge (any), Current Affairs (Regional), Gesture, or Housekeeping, all (E) IQ [1]-12; Animal Handling (any), Fast-Talk, Leadership, Teaching, Traps (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Swimming (E) HT [1]-14; Hiking, Lifting, or Running, all (A) HT-1 [1]-13; Autohypnosis and Dreaming, both (H) Will-2 [1]-13; Intimidation and Mind Block, both (A) Will-1 [1]-14; or spend 1 point on any unchosen secondary skill.

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

† Includes +1 from Combat Reflexes.

‡ Requires Theology (Shamanic) or can be used at -4 without it.

## Customization Notes

Your choice of elemental powers (and cinematic skills) says more about you than any other decision. This is a topic too in-depth for mere customization notes; see *Sample Power Sets* (pp. 28-29) for suggestions.

*Early Chinese thinkers developed a different theory of five basic elements that made up the natural world. Their ideas shaped their practice of chemistry and medicine, and gave rise to their own schools of alchemy and magic. These pursuits promised to grant extraordinary powers, whether through internal self-discipline (neidan) or by taking elixirs (waidan).*

– **GURPS Thaumatology: Chinese Elemental Powers**

A classic *xia* will take Judo, Karate, and a solid cutting weapon like Broadsword. A more practical, modern fighter may focus exclusively on weapons, but shouldn't overlook unarmed training; a *xia* needs to be able to defend himself if disarmed. Your secondary skills determine whether you're an action hero (DX-based skills), wise master (IQ- and Per-based skills), or a little of both. Theology (Shamanic) specifically represents Taoism in this case.

In *Monster Hunters*, there is no need for Harmony with the Tao (*Chinese Elemental Powers*, p. 15), as skills like Alchemy, Esoteric Medicine, and Fortune-Telling (Feng Shui) work at "full strength" by default. You may use points earmarked for elemental powers to buy or improve these – though it isn't worth raising Alchemy higher than 12 unless the GM also allows you to raise your Magery (Elixirs Only). See *GURPS Thaumatology: Ritual Path Magic* (pp. 28-30) for elixir-creation rules.

Note that your power Talents do *not* add to cinematic skills; they merely enable the purchase without requiring Trained by a Master or Weapon Master.

## SAMPLE POWER SETS

Choose one of the 70-point power sets below, or use them as inspiration when picking your own combination of abilities. All items marked with the same footnote (\* or †) are bought as a set of alternative abilities.

### *That Special Touch*

The various "Touching . . ." abilities are powerful weapons against living subjects, like most cryptids and lycanthropes, but not against purely supernatural foes. In game terms, Resistant to Metabolic Hazards adds to the roll to resist the attack (for Touching the Heart, the +3 or +8 to resistance instead reduces the fatigue injury by 3 or 8), while Immunity to Metabolic Hazards negates the attack completely.

## Wood

The combination of Catapult Hand and Throwing Art is potent, and you can use Root Grip to obtain missiles. Lizard Climb (*GURPS Martial Arts*, p. 61) requires secondary skills Acrobatics and Climbing at 14. Similar to the warrior, your Power Blow is intended as a utility skill, not a combat one; Club Fist gives +2 to Power Blow rolls to smash things.

*Talent:* Chinese Wood Talent 1 [5].

*Wood Abilities and Perks:* Catapult Hand [9\*]; Club Fist [2\*]; Endurance of Bamboo [33†]; Root Grip [1\*]; Skin of Oak [7]; Storm of Wind [5†]; Thorns [1].

*Cinematic Skills:* Lizard Climb (H) DX-1 [2]-13; Power Blow (H) Will-2 [1]-13; Throwing Art (H) DX [4]-14.

## Fire

You have wide-ranging command over fire, along with insight into basic *qi* that can be invaluable in telling man from monster. Inner Awareness also gives +2 to your Esoteric Medicine and (if applicable) Fortune-Telling. Flying Leap and Light Walk require secondary skills Acrobatics, Jumping, Stealth at 14; both receive +2 when combined with Lightened Body.

*Talent:* Chinese Fire Talent 2 [10].

*Basic Ability:* Inner Awareness [4†].

*Fire Abilities and Perks:* Commanding Fire [4\*]; Flame Breath [1\*]; Heat Endurance [19†]; Hot Metal [1]; Illumination [1]; Lightened Body [2†]; Smoke Veil [2\*]; Storm of Fire [21\*].

*Cinematic Skills:* Flying Leap (H) IQ [4]-12; Light Walk (H) DX-2 [1]-12.

## Earth

Use Avalanche, Kiai, and Dust Cloud to keep your foes confused, before bringing your fists to bear as deadly weapons. Commanding Earth can cause further penalties and is useful for getting past stone barriers.

*Talent:* Chinese Earth Talent 2 [10].

*Earth Abilities and Perks:* Avalanche [3\*]; Commanding Earth [4\*]; Dust Cloud [3\*]; Skin of Earth [15]; Storm of Stones [25\*]; Striking Surface [1]; Sure-Footed (Uneven) [1].

*Cinematic Skills:* Body Control (H) HT-1 [2]-13; Kiai (H) HT-1 [2]-13; Pressure Points (H) IQ [4]-12.

## Metal

This *xing* gives a wide range of attacks, both close and ranged, along with command over an element that many weapons comprise. Glinting Edge gives +2 to use Breaking Blow – not enough to soak time penalties, so reserve it for noncombat use – and Immobility adds +2 to Immovable Stance.

*Talent:* Chinese Metal Talent 1 [5].

*Metal Abilities and Perks:* Attracting Iron [2\*]; Commanding Metal [4]; Glinting Edge [7†]; Immobility 2 [1†]; Skin of Bronze [23]; Storm of Metal [21\*]; Stream of Needles [2\*]; Ultimate Blade [1].

*Cinematic Skills:* Breaking Blow (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Immovable Stance (H) DX-1 [2]-13.

## Water

In a campaign set near water, even if that just means the occasional trip into the sewers, your mobility and adaptability allows you to engage aquatic foes and take others by surprise. Touching the Heart is included here despite its drawbacks (*That Special Touch*, above), due to how effective it is when you *can* use it. Consider raising your Per, as both Blind Fighting and Sensitivity (from *Martial Arts*, p. 62) rely upon it.

*Talent:* Chinese Water Talent 1 [5].

*Water Abilities and Perks:* Breathing Water [14]; Dragon Swiftess [2\*]; Quenching Touch [1]; Resistance to Fire [2\*]; Summoning Fog [17†]; Taking the Narrow Passage [18\*]; Touching the Heart [2†]; Water Spear [1†].

*Cinematic Skills:* Blind Fighting (VH) Per-1 [4]-11; Push (H) DX-1 [2]-13; Sensitivity (VH) Per-2 [2]-10.

## All Elements

You have a smattering of every *xing*, optimized for understanding *qi* flow and kicking butt. Inner Awareness can alert you when there is something wrong with a person or place, after which Inner Discrimination provides full details *and* gives +4 to your Esoteric Medicine and (if applicable) Fortune-Telling rolls.

Hot Metal and Ultimate Blade enhance your metal weapons (and, at the GM's call, your Glinting Edge). Be sure to take Acrobatics and Climbing at 14 (for Lizard Climb).

*Talent:* Chinese Elemental Talent 1 [10].

*General Abilities:* Inner Awareness [4\*]; Inner Discrimination [34\*].

*Wood Abilities and Perks:* Catapult Hand [2†].

*Fire Abilities and Perks:* Flame Breath [1†]; Hot Metal [1].

*Earth Abilities and Perks:* Dust Cloud [3†].

*Metal Abilities and Perks:* Glinting Edge [2†]; Ultimate Blade [1].

*Water Abilities and Perks:* Touching the Heart [2†].

*Cinematic Skills:* Blind Fighting (VH) Per-2 [2]-10; Body Control (H) HT-2 [1]-12; Kiai (H) HT-2 [1]-12; Lizard Climb (H) DX-2 [1]-12; Power Blow (H) Will-2 [1]-13; Throwing Art (H) DX [4]-14.

*Jack Burton: Terrific, a six-demon bag. Sensational. What's in it, Egg?*

*Egg Shen: Wind, fire, all that kind of thing!*

*– Big Trouble in Little China*

## SHENGUAI

The monsters of Chinese myth are a varied and unique lot; the three below just begin to scratch the surface of what's available.

### *Bai Gu Jing (Skeleton Demon)*

In its natural form, the bai gu jing appears to be a human skeleton with pristine white bones. However, it is almost never seen as such, because it has the ability to generate spiritual pseudoflesh around its bones, appearing as a perfectly normal human. Its skeletal frame can warp to accommodate body types from a slender teenage girl to a large, beefy man. It can become any general type of person, but its control is not fine enough to impersonate specific people. Assuming or changing forms takes it 2d hours, during which time its true appearance is obvious; it thus prefers seclusion when changing.

Anyone perceiving the bai gu jing *via any means* must engage in a Quick Contest of Will with the demon. Losing means that the viewer is absolutely convinced that the creature a normal human – and a particularly trustworthy and innocent one at that! If the person was using a special sense (e.g., a crusader using Supernatural Sense), the ability doesn't lie, but his

mind is incapable of accepting the answer and thus alters the perception ("It's okay, guys; she isn't registering as supernatural at all!"). Every time the opponent can bring a new sense to bear (such as hearing it speak for the first time), and every time the bai gu jing does something that a human wouldn't or couldn't do (like killing and eating a person, or flying), the victim gets another Quick Contest to realize the truth; loss means that he will continue to rationalize away *any* behavior or evidence. A bai gu jing could walk into a mall, kill and eat an infant, and then leave – and the crowd would insist that he was innocent, and was actually trying to help the child after it had an accident.

Others can try to convince the victim of the truth with a roll against Brainwashing, Fast-Talk, or Psychology, at a penalty equal to the viewer's most recent margin of loss. Success gives him a new resistance roll. This can be attempted only once after each failed resistance roll.

Successful resistance at any point grants immunity for as long as the bai gu jing remains in that form. If it gets away and assumes a *new* form, everyone must roll a Quick Contest of Wills again – but they're at a cumulative +3 for every time they've pierced this particular demon's disguise(s).

The bai gu jing is a frustrating foe, because it prefers to be surrounded with innocent people. It retreats into hiding only when it needs to change its disguise, and it rarely needs to do so. It will be upset if the PCs discover what it is, but if the other 99% of the crowd thinks it's an innocent girl, the demon knows they won't be able to attack it without incurring mob violence. (If it believes the mob will drive away the PCs, it is likely to "play dead" when attacked, only to return later.) It's not as physically formidable as typical demons, and it lacks the innate spells of wizardly demons, but its mana reserve is (10 × Magery) like other demons and it will typically have a full complement of conditional rituals prepared – a mix of charms, elixirs, and normal ("hung") conditionals. In particular, it always keeps one or two movement spells handy (flight, a Crossroads portal, etc.) for a quick escape if a fight turns against it.

A bai gu jing is a unique enemy that must be defeated via craftiness, not firepower. Because of this, one is usually an appropriate challenge for the entire team – though they are known, *rarely*, to work in pairs . . .

<b>ST:</b> 19	<b>HP:</b> 19	<b>Speed:</b> 6.00
<b>DX:</b> 12	<b>Will:</b> 18	<b>Move:</b> 6
<b>IQ:</b> 14	<b>Per:</b> 16	<b>Weight:</b> 100-200 lbs.
<b>HT:</b> 12	<b>FP:</b> 12	<b>SM:</b> 0
<b>Dodge:</b> 9	<b>Parry:</b> 10	<b>DR:</b> 5 (Tough Skin)

**Fright Check:** -1\*

**Bite or Punch (14):** 2d+2 crushing; Reach C.

**Kick (12):** 2d+3 crushing; Reach C, 1.

**Traits:** Appearance (Monstrous)\*; Bloodlust (12); Callous; Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Sleep; High Pain Threshold; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous; No Blood); Jealousy; Language (Demontongue; Native); Magery 3; Morph (Slow but powerful variant; see above); Restricted Diet (Sapient beings); Ritual Adept; Ritual Mastery (assorted rituals); Sadism (12); Selfish (9); Social Stigma (Monster)\*; Trickster (12); Weakness (Holy attacks; 1d per minute).

*Monster hunters are defined by the enemies they face – awe-inspiring champions need an array of powerful foes against which to prove themselves. Scary monsters and dangerous rogues are an absolute necessity in a monster-hunting game . . .*

## **– GURPS Monster Hunters 3: The Enemy**

**Skills:** Acting-18; Diplomacy-14; Fast-Talk-18; Hidden Lore (Demons)-14; Intimidation-14; Judo-14; Karate-14; Psychology-16; Sex Appeal-14; Tactics-14; Theology (Shamanic)-12.

• Path of Magic-15; two more Paths at 15; two more Paths at 13; and the remaining four Paths at 12.

**Notes:** Affected by True Faith and Path of Spirit magic. Cannot use holy items. Sterile.

\* In true form only.

### ***Xiangliu (Nine-Headed Snake)***

Sages are split over whether “a xiangliu” or “the xiangliu” is accurate; there is evidence that there may be only one, a creature that reincarnates elsewhere several decades after being slain. Regardless, no one has ever encountered more than one, which is good news considering how monstrously powerful it is.

A xiangliu is a 40’ serpent with a cluster of nine human heads on a single neck. This makes it nearly impossible to sneak up on, as the heads look in all directions and only half need to sleep at any time.

It prefers to make its lair in shallow water, particularly river deltas and swamps. Unfortunately, its presence is toxic, and it gradually leaks poison into its environment, tainting not only the water in which it sleeps, but the groundwater of the surrounding area as well (*Poisoned Well*, below). As if that wasn’t bad enough, its tendency to burrow can affect the flow of water in the region, causing floods, irrigation problems, and more.

In a fight, the xiangliu will lash out with its tail while its heads spit caustic slime unbelievably far. In theory, this gives it up to 10 attacks each round, but in practice not all of the heads will be pointed at valid targets. (In this way it’s actually *stronger* when surrounded!)

#### ***Poisoned Well***

The water table around the xiangliu eventually becomes toxic. Anyone drinking must roll HT. Apply a bonus equal in size to the long-distance modifier (p. B241) for range to the xiangliu (*double* this bonus for those drinking from a water-table source, like a well, rather than from the water itself) – along with a penalty equal to the number of weeks the xiangliu has been nesting there. Failure inflicts 1 point of toxic damage for every five points of failure, or fraction thereof.

A xiangliu is sapient (if not particularly bright). It can use Tactics to identify nonobvious threats (like a caster working on a powerful spell off to the side) and gauge the champions’ battle plan. Animal Handling is of no use here! The xiangliu will stand its ground to fight unless faced with overwhelming odds.

<b>ST:</b> 80	<b>HP:</b> 80	<b>Speed:</b> 7.00
<b>DX:</b> 13	<b>Will:</b> 16	<b>Move:</b> 14
<b>IQ:</b> 7	<b>Per:</b> 20	<b>Weight:</b> 5 tons
<b>HT:</b> 14	<b>FP:</b> 14	<b>SM:</b> +5
<b>Dodge:</b> 11	<b>Parry:</b> N/A	<b>DR:</b> 25

**Fright Check:** -8

**Caustic Spit x9 (13):** 4d corrosion; Acc 1, Range 75/100, RoF 1.  
**Tail Bash (13):** 9d-1 crushing; Reach C-5.

**Traits:** 360° Vision; Acute Vision 5; Amphibious; Bad Temper (6); Combat Reflexes; Danger Sense; Discriminatory Hearing; Discriminatory Smell; Doesn’t Breathe; Doesn’t Eat or Drink; Doesn’t Sleep (effectively); Extra Attack 9; High Pain Threshold; Hyperspectral Vision; Immunity to Sickness and Toxins; Nictitating Membrane 10; Tunneling (Move 7); Vermiform; Vibration Sense (Air and Water).

**Skills:** Observation-20; Tactics-6.

### ***Zhen (Poisonfeather Bird)***

The zhen is a graceful bird, similar in appearance to a heron, but with a scarlet beak unnaturally hardened to a sharp point. Its feathers are white with green tips, except on its abdomen, where they shade into a light purple. Despite its name, these feathers are not the only toxic thing about the bird; everything from its flesh to its blood is a deadly poison. The feathers merely cause the most problems, as the zhen spends every other month slowly molting – losing a handful of feathers each day, so that new replacements may grow in.

One molting zhen would not be a problem, but a flock of dozens flying over a town can sicken everyone in it. The feathers, once detached, quickly dissolve into a cloud of barbules (the tiny “hairs” that make up the feather) that spread as they fall, tainting the air with a powerful poison that lingers for several days. Anyone who spends a day breathing in an area that has been so affected must roll HT-4. Success means he takes 1 point of fatigue injury per hour, resisting again each time, until he succeeds or 48 hours have passed. Failure has similar effects, but inflicting 1 point of fatigue and toxic injury each time.

Interacting with a zhen directly is more dangerous, of course. Merely touching a zhen with bare skin inflicts 1 point of toxic damage *and* 1 point of fatigue damage. Being injured by one – even if for as little as 1 HP of injury – poisons your system. Take 1d toxic and fatigue damage immediately, then roll against HT-4 every 10 minutes or take another 1d. Successful resistance *does not stop* the damage. The only way to stop it is with a custom antivenin; see below. (This is not cumulative, however; whether the person has been pecked once by one zhen or a dozen times by a swarm, the effect is the same.)

The GM should not hesitate to extend the rules above to unforeseen interaction with zhen. For example, if a team of champions decides to nip the problem in the bud by tossing a grenade into the middle of the flock, the zhen will almost certainly die . . . and their poison will be spread over a *vast* area, spreading sickness far and wide.

### Halting the Poison

There is no single “zhen antivenin.” Every flock of birds metabolizes a different type of poison, based on what they eat, their migratory patterns, and so on. However, experience does help; every successful *past* creation of a zhen antivenin gives a cumulative +3 on rolls to make a new one.

Mundanely, the healer must first identify the particulars of this strain; this requires a roll against Diagnosis, Medic!, or Poisons, modified for the quality of lab gear available. If this roll fails, the roll to create the cure is at an extra -4! Creating the antivenin requires a roll against Alchemy (at -6), Esoteric Medicine, Herb Lore (at -4), Medic!, Pharmacy (at -4), or Poisons; to determine the time taken, roll 1d+1, subtract the margin of success, and multiply by 10 minutes. Failure just wastes (1d+1)×10 minutes.

Supernatural treatment (e.g., the Healing advantage or a Cure Poison ritual) is at -5 to all rolls to treat zhen poison. For the purpose of magic, rituals require both Greater Restore Body *and* Lesser Strengthen Body to fight it off.

### Flock of Zhegulls

The statistics given below are for a single bird, but zhen usually attack in *swarms* (p. B461). A zhen swarm is about six to eight birds. It flies at Move 8, does 1d+1 (2) piercing damage per turn, and is dispersed after losing 12 HP.

In theory, a swarm of zhen is a fair encounter for two or three champions, though in practice this will depend heavily on their resistance to and ability to deal with poison.

<b>ST:</b> 4	<b>HP:</b> 4	<b>Speed:</b> 6.50
<b>DX:</b> 14	<b>Will:</b> 11	<b>Move:</b> 13
<b>IQ:</b> 3	<b>Per:</b> 13	<b>Weight:</b> 10 lbs.
<b>HT:</b> 12	<b>FP:</b> 12	<b>SM:</b> -2
<b>Dodge:</b> 9	<b>Parry:</b> N/A	<b>DR:</b> 0

# FIGHT BACK!



**GURPS** Fourth Edition

## LOADOUTS:<sup>™</sup> MONSTER HUNTERS

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

[gurps.sjgames.com/loadouts/monsterhunters](http://gurps.sjgames.com/loadouts/monsterhunters)

**Fright Check:** N/A (see notes)

**Peck (14):** 1d-2 (2) large piercing + poison.

**Traits:** Bad Temper (9); Enhanced Move 1 (Air Speed 13/26); Flight (Winged); No Fine Manipulators; Striking ST 8 (Beak Only); Wild Animal.

**Skills:** Navigation (Air)-10.

**Notes:** For those who know what a zhen is, seeing a *flock* of them provokes a Fright Check at -1.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As the Assistant *GURPS* Line Editor, Jason “PK” Levine created the *GURPS Monster Hunters* series and edited *GURPS Thaumatology: Chinese Elemental Powers*. He didn’t see the potential bridge between the two until recently, but is glad that he found it. He lives near Chattanooga with his amazing wife and a menagerie of cats, friends, and family. He’d like to thank Robert Harrell for help narrowing down a long-lived culture’s worth of monsters to (hopefully) the three most gameable.

# HORDE NINJA

BY PETER V. DELL'ORTO

I've written about ninja, monsters, and henchmen for the *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* line, but I never really had a chance to sit down and mash them all together until all of those supplements were out.

Historical ninja were complex masters of the martial arts. They would have had access to a broad and well-developed fighting style (such as *Taijutsu*, *GURPS Martial Arts*, p. 202), probably never wore the famous "ninja suit" (which seems to have developed from stage costumes, not history), and were more special agents and spies than assassins-for-hire. *Fantasy* ninja invert all of those facts! They have a simple style mostly centered on cool weapons, *always* wear a ninja suit, and are assassins who may dabble in spying when they aren't flipping out and killing monsters. The ninja in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 12: Ninja* embrace this portrayal whole-heartedly.

But even that supplement misses a trick developed in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy: Monsters 1* – the ninja-as-monster. Combining that format with the lower-powered ninja wannabes of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 15: Henchmen* allows for the ninja of some fantasy treatments: black-clad assassins who come in hordes and who are slain by PCs in epic battles. These are the Horde Ninja.

## Peeking Under the Hood

Horde Ninja are based on the killer template (*Henchmen*, p. 14), but with access to the capabilities of the full-fledged ninja template (*Ninja*, p. 8). They lack the training in secret skills needed for *true* mastery of *ninjitsu*, but they do have some special abilities – notably those for dropping in from above and launching dangerous surprise attacks!

## HORDE NINJA

Ninja are either singular bosses, worthy of respect and fear, or they're like these guys. These are the *genin*-level ninja: the first tier of their clan. They come in large numbers – usually in the range of a dozen or more, up to scores if faced with sufficiently powerful targets. Horde Ninja wear black ninja suits, carry a variety of ninja weapons, and will stoically face death before accepting dishonor.

They aren't stupid, foolish, or suicidal (well, not exactly). They work well together, and use clever ninja tactics such as stalking, ambush, and surprise. Not only that, but they get more dangerous as you cut them down . . . see *The Last Ninja* (p. 33).

**ST:** 11                    **HP:** 11                    **Speed:** 6.50  
**DX:** 14                    **Will:** 10                    **Move:** 6  
**IQ:** 10                    **Per:** 10  
**HT:** 12                    **FP:** 12                    **SM:** 0  
**Dodge:** 9                    **Parry:** 10 (Karate *or* weapon)    **DR** 0

**Fukumi-bari (14):** 1d-5 small piercing. Acc 0, Range 5, RoF 1, Shots 1 (1). Usually poisoned!

**Punch (15):** 1d crushing. Reach C.

**Kick (13):** 1d+1 crushing. Reach 1. If the kick misses or is parried, the ninja must roll DX or fall down.

**Shuriken (16):** 1d-3 impaling. Acc 1, Range 5/11, RoF 1, Shots T(1).

**Weapon (15):** One of *kusurigama* (1d+3 cutting, Reach 1, 2\* *or* 1d+3 crushing, Reach 1, 2\*; Parry -2U; parried at -4, blocked at -2; may entangle or disarm if parried, see p. B406); *ninjato* (1d+1 cutting *or* 1d impaling, Reach 1); *sai* (1d+1 crushing *or* 1d-1 impaling, Reach 1); *or tonfa* (1d+1 crushing, Reach 1 *or* 1d-1 crushing, Reach C, 1).

**Traits:** Catfall; Higher Purpose 5 (Avenge my fellows!); Killing Strike 1; Night Vision 3; Ninja Talent 1; No Sense of Humor; Odious Personal Habit (Inscrutable); Striking ST 2 (Only on surprise attack); Vow (Always complete the mission); Vow (Ninja Secrecy); Vow (Own no more than what can be carried).

**Skills:** Blowpipe-14; Karate-15; Poisons-10; Stealth-15; Thrown Weapon (Shuriken)-16; and one of Axe/Mace-15 *and* Kusari-15, Jitte/Sai-15, Shortsword-15, *or* Tonfa-15.

**Class:** Mundane.

*Failure to do so after one full adventure means that his clan will send ninja equal in number and power to the miscreant and his allies, plus a master with 50% more points, to kill him, his would-be student, and anybody else they deem an accessory.*

– *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 12: Ninja*



**Notes:** See *Ninja* for ninja-specific traits and *The Last Ninja* (see below) to understand the Higher Purpose. Killing Strike 1 means the first attack with a specific weapon does +1 damage if swung (thrust is unchanged), while the Striking ST improves damage for surprise attacks: +1 for thrusts, +(1d-2) for swings. These bonuses stack – so a surprise first attack with a kusarigama would do 2d+2 cutting instead of 1d+3! Weapons are sometimes poisoned, generally with monster drool (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers*, p. 29). Won't negotiate, but may utter cryptic remarks or sinister threats, or pronounce clever *haiku*. Notable equipment includes fukumi-bari (\$5, 0.1 lb.), ninja suit (\$150, 2 lbs.), 10 shuriken (\$30, 1 lb.), and *one* of kusarigama (\$80, 4.5 lbs.), ninja-to (\$400, 2 lbs.), sai (\$60, 1.5 lbs.), or tonfa (\$40, 1.5 lbs.).

## Horde Ninja Tactics

Horde ninja are basically fodder, but they aren't your standard, stupid fodder. They won't simply charge delvers and engage in a straight-up fight. They will attack from ambush whenever possible, using Stealth and all available cover and shadow to Backstab (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons*, p. 11). In a shadowy forest or dungeon corridor, their Stealth-15 gives them a 15 or less to get into position to backstab (base -5, +5 for ambushing). Doing so will let them take advantage of their Striking ST.

Remember that the first strike with a given weapon gains the bonus from Killing Strike; ninja who switch weapons (or attack with pairs of weapons) can take advantage of it once for each weapon. Their Night Vision allows them to see all the way out to the dim edges of torchlight with no penalty, and they'll use that by attacking from the darkness against light-bearing adventurers.

Horde ninja will work together in concert. They'll sacrifice non-ninja allies (and occasionally, some of their own number) to draw the attention of delvers and then attempt to Backstab and fade away. They'll use hit-and-run tactics to try to pick off stragglers or beat down opponents over time. If pursued or tightly pressed, some of them will sacrifice themselves to distract, slow down, or otherwise impede pursuit. They are fodder only in their individual weakness, and they'll use poisons, stealth, and tactics to defeat delvers. They know their power only grows as you take them out, and they'll leverage *that* in every encounter. Their Vow to complete the mission means they may make a tactical retreat . . . but until they succeed or they're slain, they'll be back.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter V. Dell'Orto of New Jersey was started gaming with *Dungeons & Dragons* in 1981, and has played *GURPS* since *Man to Man*. He has been writing, editing, and playtesting *GURPS* books since 1996. Peter is the author of numerous *GURPS* articles for *Pyramid* magazine; author or co-author of several Warehouse 23 items (including *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 12: Ninja*; *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1* and *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 15: Henchmen*, both with Sean Punch; and *GURPS Martial Arts: Gladiators*, with Volker Bach); and a co-author of *GURPS Martial Arts* and *GURPS Low-Tech*. He is also an enthusiastic martial artist, and has competed both in Japan in amateur MMA and in the United States in submission grappling. He currently trains Kachin Bando and holds a shodan rank in Kendo. His other interests include fitness, reading, painting miniatures, and studying Japanese.

## The Last Ninja

It's well known that the more ninja there are, the less of an individual threat they pose. Fifty ninja aren't individually tough, but a lone ninja? Beware! It's the most dangerous one! As you whittle down their numbers, they get better and better. Whether through hidden talents, learning from the mistakes of the slain, or the whims of fate, the weakest die and the survivors get stronger.

Ninja may have up to five levels of Higher Purpose (Avenge my fellows!) [5/level]. In a "horde" of 10 or more ninja, this gives a bonus to all rolls made when battling foes who've incapacitated the ninja's allies. This bonus accrues gradually.

Divide the level by the number of ninja in the group. For each ninja taken out, assess this as a bonus to the remaining ninja, dropping all fractions. But the last ninja *always* gets the full bonus! For instance, if 10 ninja have five levels apiece, each ninja eliminated gives the others +0.5, so defeating one ninja (+0.5) does nothing; dropping two or three (+1 or +1.5) gives +1; taking out four or five (+2 or +2.5), +2; thrashing six or seven (+3 or +3.5), +3; wiping out eight, +4; and if nine go down, the last ninja has +5, not

+4. If the group had less than 10 ninja originally, this trait has no effect!

Downed ninja needn't be dead. They may be hopelessly entangled, forced to flee in fear, unconscious, petrified, or otherwise removed from the fight. What matters is that a given ninja's allies at the start of the fight aren't able to assist him. Later reinforcements during the battle don't change this! If combat ends, though, base the bonus on the new group size at the start of the next skirmish.

Ninja PCs can have this trait, too, specifically as "Avenge my fellow delvers!" In this case, apply the bonus to the ninja as his allies fall. This still requires nine or more allies before it has any effect. The GM may wish to limit the bonus further, allowing it only for fallen *ninja* (in which case NPC ninja allies and henchmen should count) or requiring those with this trait to have a Sense of Duty that includes fellow delvers. Only a munchkin would take a big horde of allies and sacrifice them to get a bonus . . . but for some games, that fits!

In all cases, record the thresholds where bonuses change ahead of time for hordes (or parties of PCs).

# REVISITING *HIGH-TECH*

BY HANS-CHRISTIAN VORTISCH

*The manufacturer strongly and expressively recommends that only special . . . SWAT teams and specially trained military personnel should . . . be allowed to use the Glock 18C, since the effective and safe operation . . . in full-automatic mode requires special training and high personal discipline.*

– *Jane's Infantry Weapons* (2014)

*GURPS High-Tech* for Fourth Edition was published in 2007. Although it turned out great, an additional seven years of fan and creator discussion have brought to light some aspects that could have been done differently. Here are alternatives for two of the more widely explored topics.

*Alternative rules for High-Tech weapons.*

## MACHINE PISTOLS

Machine pistols occupy a unique niche in the world of firearms, being neither semiautomatic pistols nor submachine guns, but something in between. In the real world, they've never seen much use except under specific circumstances (*GURPS High-Tech: Pulp Guns 1*, pp. 14, 17), but there are a few very narrow tactical applications of the weapons, such as for bodyguards (*High-Tech*, p. 101), criminals (*Pulp Guns 1*, p. 18), or special forces entry teams (*GURPS Tactical Shooting*, p. 55). Perhaps more important, they're favorites of movie heroes (and villains) and of adventurers in general.

That machine pistols require two skills – both Guns (Pistol) and Guns (SMG) – for proper use is a unique problem that is outside the mission statement of a catalog supplement like *High-Tech*. That is really an edition change or part of a substantial house rule (see *Pyramid* #3/65: *Alternate GURPS III*, p. 18).

Another issue is that machine pistols are terribly ineffective in automatic fire at anything but point-blank range on account of their high rates of fire and specific ergonomics. The best way to reflect this is to worsen their Rcl stat. While the Mauser *Schnellfeuerpistole* (*High-Tech*, p. 97) already has Rcl 3 if fired without the stock, this should also apply to the Beretta Mod 93R (*High-Tech*, p. 100) and Glock 18 (*High-Tech*, p. 101); note that the Beretta Mod 93R and the late-model Glock 18C both feature a muzzle compensator (*Tactical Shooting*, p. 76) for slightly improved firing, an accessory that only appeared in later supplements. The H&K VP70 (*High-Tech*, p. 100) is different because

it fires high-cyclic controlled bursts (*High-Tech*, p. 83), and should keep its Rcl 1 in that mode.

## SHOTGUN ROUNDS

In *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*, shotguns work differently from in *Third Edition*. This proved to be far more troublesome than anyone expected.

While *High-Tech* managed to solve some of the perceived issues to most players' satisfaction – such as what kind of piercing damage buckshot does (*High-Tech*, p. 173) and how to treat rifled slugs (*High-Tech*, p. 166) – it added its own problems. One of these concerns the rules for multiple-projectile loads (*High-Tech*, pp. 172-173).

Specifically, the problem lies in the way the supplement uses the actual number of projectiles (*High-Tech*, p. 172) to calculate both damage and the bonus to hit. The smaller the projectiles, the larger their number. This in turn results in progressively fewer additional hits due to the way the *Rapid Fire* table (p. B373) is set up. This was intentional, since it means that many low-damage projectiles aren't more effective than a few high-damage projectiles (*High-Tech*, p. 172). In practice, however, this could have been solved by a simpler approach, which is to treat a number of small projectiles as a single "shot," thus avoiding the need to roll for 1d-5(0.2) pi- damage and similar edge cases.

Use the following formula to calculate the NS modifier (*High-Tech*, p. 172):

$$NS = 1/(\text{square root of NP})$$

For buckshot, NP is actual number of pellets. For birdshot, NP is actual number of pellets divided by 10. For smallshot, NP is actual number of pellets divided by 100.

*Example:* A 12-gauge 2.75" shell with a one-ounce load of 6 Birdshot contains 223 pellets (NP = 223/10 = 22.3). NS is 1/(square root of 22.3) = 0.21. Damage is 5d × 0.21 = 1.05 or 1d(0.5) pi-. RoF is ×22. A 12-gauge 2.75" shell with a one-ounce load of 10 Birdshot contains 868 pellets (NP = 868/100 = 8.68). NS is 1/(square root of 8.68) = 0.34. Damage is 5d × 0.34 = 1.70 or 2d-1(0.2) pi-. RoF is ×9.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hans-Christian "Grey Tiger" Vortisch is the author or coauthor of *GURPS High-Tech, Fourth Edition*, *GURPS Gun Fu*, and *GURPS Tactical Shooting*, among other books.

# RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

## BEYOND YOUR IMAGINATION

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

Over on the *GURPS* forums – at [forums.sjgames.com](http://forums.sjgames.com), and still one of the finest signal-to-noise gaming-discussion sites in all existence – I made a statement that I feel is good enough to make here:

*Without rules, your only limit is your imagination. With good rules, you might not even be limited by that!*

(The great thing about self-plagiarism is that you steal from the best.) This was part of a larger point, where I noted that the existence of rules gives you options and ideas that you might never have thought of if those rules didn't exist. Thus, having a codified system of what you can gain and lose by selling your soul (*How Very Tempting*, from *Pyramid* #3/67: *Tools of the Trade – Villains*) means you can think of a bad guy who made a deal with Satan to get an edge against those pesky PCs. Sure, you can think of such possibilities yourself, but it's a far cry between a "wouldn't it be cool?" idea and a honed execution you can drop in your game. Here, then, are eight rules – chosen almost at random – from the *GURPS Fourth Edition* line that hint at larger game or campaign possibilities. Literally none of these ideas for campaigns, adventures, or characters came to my mind before I came across these rules.

*Any kind of campaign, on any kind of world,  
fits here – in fact, it's **already** here somewhere!*

– *GURPS Infinite Worlds*

### **GURPS INFINITE WORLDS (P. 180)**

Under Enemies: Evil Twin, *Infinite Worlds* suggests that the usual -3 reaction penalty can be reduced in a campaign where parallel worlds and selves are common.

*Campaign Idea:* The invasion of the evil twins! Most "Mirror, Mirror"-style invasions are assumed to be fairly quick, discrete

events; you resolve the interdimensional invasion, patch the hole in space-time, and get on with life. However, it's at least as likely that some campaign worlds will have Evil Twins be another threat *anyone* might need to deal with at some point, like termites, automobile recalls, or burst appendices. Having a campaign with a backdrop of one of these slow invasions would allow for players and the GM to have fun as the world gets used to the "new normal" of judicial crises, (evil) dead relatives, and never being 100% sure of who you're talking to.

### **GURPS POWERS (P. 156)**

*Crippled Abilities* offers detailed rules for how to check for abilities that become burned out (similar to a sprain) if the player fails a role while using it; it also suggests that this might just be part of how powers work in the world. In particular, the *Grit vs. Glory* option allows for *any* failure to shut down the ability for at least a month . . . and quite possibly more.

*Campaign Idea:* Espionage supers that's both high-powered and low-powered. Imagine a campaign built on (say) 400 character points: 200 points in mundane espionage-type abilities, and 200 points in activated powers. The powers all use the *Crippled Abilities* rules; in other words, any failure is going to render them unusable for a *long* while. Most threats in the campaign are based around 300 points – a challenge for the 200-point aspect of the heroes, yet relatively straightforward if the heroes can unleash the full force of their abilities . . . but doing so may make those abilities unavailable. It's like the heroes have constant access to an "In Case of Emergency, Break Glass" box; is this situation in the adventure an emergency? What about *this* one?

### **GURPS BIO-TECH (P. 158)**

Genetically targeted pheromones allow a lab to create a scent that only imbues Lecherousness into the DNA-sampled target of the scent.

*Adventure Idea:* An adversary of one of the heroes uses his financial resources to create genetically targeted pheromones, then inserts that scent into a popular fragrance (or one that *becomes* popular, thanks to the aforementioned resources). Suddenly that hero alone is constantly on edge and filled with lustful inclinations, for no explicable reason. Do I smell a conspiracy?

## **GURPS SUPERS (P. 26)**

The section on Compartmentalized Mind offers rules for adding the Switchable enhancement, resulting in minds that can be activated or deactivated as needed. If the mind is unwilling to go away quietly, there are also rules for the battle of wills needed.

*Campaign Idea:* Similar to the espionage/supers idea (p. 35), all the heroes of this setting have Compartmentalized Mind with access to some awesome powers, but which also activates some fairly awful disadvantages. In such a higher-powered horrific campaign, do the heroes dare tap the potential of their hidden minds, knowing that they may be unable – or unwilling – to quell their other selves? (As a character idea, it's entirely possible for only one protagonist to be of such split minds in a campaign . . .)

*Magic . . . Intuitive art  
or numerical science? Insanity  
or perfect control? Quest for  
divinity or demonic blasphemy?  
Take your pick. Maybe it's  
everything at once.*  
– **GURPS Thaumatology**

## **GURPS MARTIAL ARTS (P. 130)**

The rules for *Faking It* allow for someone to pretend they know martial arts. On a critical success, they can pass themselves off as a master.

*Adventure Idea:* An eccentric performer with Super Luck (or a boatload of points and access to **GURPS Power-Ups 5: Impulse Buys**) has somehow tricked a village into believing he's a martial-arts master. Worse, he's set up his own dojo and started teaching his own (terribly ineffective) martial-arts style. The heroes – attempting to deal with an external threat – come to the village to enlist the aid of the sham sensei (who's terrified) and his students (who are eager to fight). Hilarity ensues as the adventurers suddenly find themselves in possession of an army of delusional incompetents, against an oppositional force that *really* needs an effective militia to overcome. Can the PCs somehow utilize the performer's eccentric gifts to save the day . . . or at least get a head start in running away?

## **GURPS HIGH-TECH (P. 210)**

The boxed text on homemade surveillance gear has rules for scavenging parts from old or discarded electronics equipment to make usable bugs.

*Character Idea:* A hero with quirk-level “scavenges old electronics for parts” and appropriate skills can amass a fairly large number of under-the-radar surveillance devices. (Combine it with a quirk-level “doesn't want friends to know about his surveillance devices” and you've got some real paranoia potential . . .)

## **GURPS THAUMATOLOGY (PP. 178-179)**

Words of power channel the fundamental forces behind the universe – or at least, they *can*, in some worlds. These rules allow for someone to harness their powerful, expensive, but (mostly) uncontrollable effects. Quoth **Thaumatology**, “A Word is a magical explosive, and the best a speaker can hope for is a shaped charge.”

*Campaign Idea:* In a grim quasi-medieval world, the only magic available to humans are the Words of power . . . and those have only been discovered within the *very* recent past – within living memory of the heroes. (It's up to the GM if there are other magical elements available; however, it does make things cooler if the heroes need to fight dragons or demihuman armies with TL3 weapons and magical “shaped charges.”)

(Frankly, huge chunks of **Thaumatology** open up campaign ideas with the assumption of “this is the only form of magic available” . . .)

## **GURPS HORROR (P. 112)**

The rules for *Things Fall Apart* describe a system for what can happen to technology in the face of horrific elements. (Spoiler alert: It starts failing . . . spectacularly.)

*Adventure Idea:* A **GURPS Spaceships** adventure, with the heroes doing a relatively mundane operation using a spacecraft, and a low-powered horrific entity making life difficult for those pilots. “Cell phone doesn't work” is bad on modern-day Earth; “re-entry computer blew up” is a *lot* more threatening. Of course, this can also be an idea for a campaign, or one element of a more multifaceted setting: “Sure, it's 10 times faster than normal hyperspace, but no one likes taking their ships through ghost-space; the odds of bringing *something* through are just too great . . . and it's hell trying to get those things out of the wiring.”

## **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

## PARIS (1720 A.D.)

by William H. Stoddard

Paris is the capital of France from 1715, when Philippe d'Orléans assumes the Regency, until 1722, when Louis XV returns to Versailles. After that time, Paris has no organized government, but is directly controlled by royal officials, making it effectively a colony. Many government offices remain in the city, including France's most important *parlement* (more a court than a legislature; see p. 20); rolls to find government offices are at +3.

Paris is also a center of culture and fashion for Europe as a whole (+3 to Search rolls) and the site of a great university (+2 to Search rolls for academic matters). There is a thriving furniture industry (+1 to Search rolls).

In 1670, Louis XIV ordered the demolition of the city's walls, in favor of relying on his armies to keep it secure. Despite the wide boulevards that replaced them, the city remains overcrowded and chaotic, prompting Jean-Jacques Rousseau to complain in 1731 of "narrow, dirty and foul-smelling streets, and villainous black houses."

See *Gaming in the Ancien Régime* (pp. 19-22) for more details on the social and political environment of Paris, and *GURPS City Stats* for further details on terms used below.

### *Basic Set, Fourth Edition*

*... occupies two volumes not because we think we will make more money that way, but because condensing three books into one proved impossible – there was too much material! But these two volumes contain the best of 18 years of GURPS development, making Fourth Edition comprehensive in a way that few other RPGs are.*

– *GURPS Basic Set: Characters*

**Population:** 525,000 (Search +3)

### *Environment*

**Terrain:** Grassland

**Appearance:** Unattractive (-1)

**No Mana** (No Enchantment)

**Hygiene:** -1

### *Society and Culture*

**Language:** French, Latin

**TL:** 4

**Wealth:** Average (x1)

**Literacy:** Broken

**Status:** -2 to 7

### *Political Organization*

**Government:** Dictatorship/Bureaucracy

**CR:** 5 (Corruption -4)

**Military Resources:** \$42M

**Defense Bonus:** 0

## A PEEK BEHIND THE CURTAIN

by Steven Marsh

As a peek into the creative process used when writing this month's Random Thought Table (pp. 35-36), here's a bit of the "secret sauce" used to come up with some of the ideas. (They might be obvious, but sometimes stating the obvious can be fruitful.)

When trying to squint and see how rules can be useful, three broad ideas can be useful.

- *Empower the weak, and weaken the empowered.* Look at a rule and figure out how it makes someone strong weaker, or someone weak stronger. These two can go hand in hand! An ability that is incredibly powerful but has the potential to cripple the user lets him punch above his weight class, but also leaves him open to real trouble.

- *Look for unusual applicability.* The idea of injecting an individually tailored pheromone into a commercially available scent is nonobvious, but once you realize the "how" ("individualized scent" + "mass market"), you can look at the "why" (as in "Why is this useful?!"). Similarly, the *GURPS Horror* rules probably weren't explicitly designed for a *GURPS Space* campaign, but they work fine there . . . and part of the beauty of *GURPS* is its multigenre applicability.

- *Mess with scale.* If a little is good, a lot is great, right?! It's that kind of American ingenuity that got us megadoses of vitamins, McMansions, and bacon everything. It also leads to cool gaming ideas! The martial-arts faker doesn't just con one person; he tricks an entire village. Everyone has an evil twin. All magic is the uncontrollable primal force of the universe. And so on.

## ABOUT *GURPS*

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

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

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

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