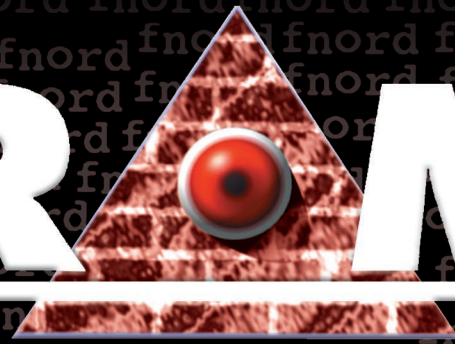


# PYRAMID<sup>®</sup>



Issue 3/100 February '17

STEVE JACKSON GAMES



# IN THIS ISSUE

## CONTENTS

**FROM THE EDITOR** . . . . . 3

**IMPULSE CONTROL** . . . . . 4  
*by Christopher R. Rice*

**INFINITE WEAPONS** . . . . . 10  
*by Hans-Christian Vortisch*

**EIDETIC MEMORY: THE GALACTIC OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE** . . . . . 17  
*by David L. Pulver*

**FASHION FORWARD** . . . . . 24  
*by Matt Riggsby*

**GODS OF COMMERCE** . . . . . 28  
*by Christopher Conrad and Jason "PK" Levine*

**REALISTIC INJURY, EXPANDED** . . . . . 32  
*by Peter V. Dell'Orto*

**RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE: BRIEFLY, AN ADVENTURE** . . . . . 34  
*by Steven Marsh, Pyramid Editor*

**ABOUT GURPS** . . . . . 36

Behold, our 100th issue of *Pyramid!* What mysteries are contained herein? What secrets will be unleashed and treasures unearthed? This month, we do what we do best – the *impossible!* – with an assortment of features that explore new ground while paying tribute to the incredible span of **GURPS**.

Whether you dabble in transient effects, permanent boons, role-playing, genre conventions, or just doing what's needed to save the day, you can have it all with *Impulse Control*. Long-time *Pyramid* cohort Christopher R. Rice expands on the ideas found in **GURPS Power-Ups 5: Impulse Buys** with new traits, new ways to spend points, and tips for using the traits to encourage staying in character and in the campaign's genre.

When you explore alternate timelines, you expect to find things slightly different, including *Infinite Weapons*. Hans-Christian Vortisch – co-author of the newly back-in-print **GURPS High-Tech** – applies his **GURPS** weaponry expertise to take you on a tour of firearms that might have been . . . and could still exist somewhere in the multiverse of **GURPS Infinite Worlds** (also back in print!).

**GURPS Ultra-Tech** offered a glimpse of a multi-solar-system paramilitary organization; now David L. Pulver, co-author of that back-in-print volume, reveals to you the secrets of *The Galactic Operations Directorate* in this month's Eidetic Memory. Discover the GOD's history, a template for its key operatives, **GURPS Spaceships** stats for a typical starship, and information about its most tenacious foe.

Make your style *Fashion Forward* with new information about describing haute couture for futuristic settings. Matt Riggsby – co-author of **GURPS Low-Tech** – presents prices for a long list of tomorrow's clothing, guidelines for determining how garments affect others' reactions, and descriptions of special wearable materials; it's like the lost chapter of **Ultra-Tech** you didn't realize you wanted!

When it's all about the money, follow those who dedicate themselves to it: the *Gods of Commerce*. Become a mercantile-minded cleric or holy warrior with these new templates for **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy**, a unique take on the Holy Might power, lists of spells, and a sample cleric who has sworn his life to the Goddess of Personal Enrichment.

Put detail into the harm that's done during a fight with *Realistic Injury, Expanded*. Peter V. Dell'Orto – co-author of **GURPS Martial Arts** – adds new depth to hit location effects and determining how someone has to endure those effects.

This issue wraps up with a Random Thought Table that uses this celebratory time to examine a perhaps under-examined fundamental assumption of adventure design. It's no secret; month after month, *Pyramid* continues to provide the best in gaming with a trove of treasures, waiting for you to discover them!

### ARTICLE COLORS

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

*Pale Blue:* In This Issue

*Brown:* In Every Issue

*Green:* Columnist

*Dark Blue:* **GURPS** Features

*Purple:* Systemless Features

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# FROM THE EDITOR

## BEHOLD . . . THE PYRAMID!

Wow, look at that. This volume of *Pyramid* has been around for 100 issues. That's quite a milestone! It seems fitting to acknowledge it in some fashion, but *how*?

To begin with, what's *Pyramid*'s reason for being . . . its "mission statement," as it were?

Just about every issue is described online as "the PDF magazine for roleplayers." That's a pretty broad mandate! Obviously, we like *GURPS* around here (did you notice the pyramid on the cover fnord?). But one of the great things about *GURPS* is that it's *really* flexible, in both design and outlook. Similarly, *Pyramid* has had an incredibly diverse and broad range of topics and articles . . . especially in this era. (What other magazines can boast topics ranging from spaceships, steampunk, prehistoric adventuring, dungeon-crawling, and conspiracies?)

So, how do we pay tribute to *all that* in an issue of *Pyramid*?

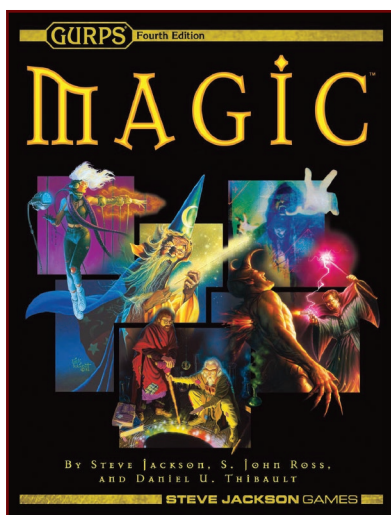
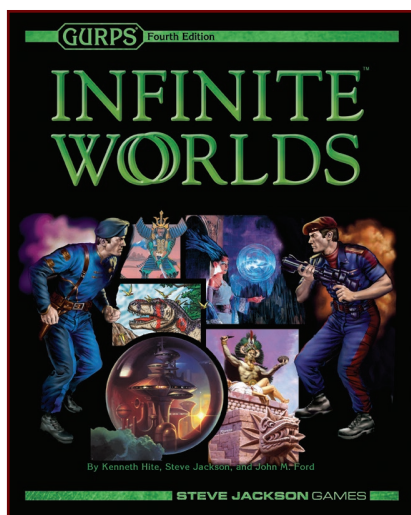
Well, we took a look at the *GURPS Fourth Edition* line, what's gone before in *Pyramid*, and our current plans. And we issued a challenge to some of our most-popular authors: What could you come up with that would be difficult to find a home in other themed issues?

As a bonus, some of our articles tied into our recent CreateSpace reprint initiative, where several long-out-of-print volumes came back to life in print. (We re-released *GURPS Magic*, *GURPS Thaumatology*, and *GURPS Ultra-Tech* in November, and *GURPS High-Tech*, *GURPS Infinite Worlds*, and *GURPS Bio-Tech* should be newly released or due *very* shortly as you read this.) So if you wanted a look at some of the *High-Tech* weapons of the *Infinite Worlds* universe, a peek into the world promised by *Ultra-Tech*, or a futuristic primer on tomorrow's fashions, this issue is sure to give you new reasons to pick up those classic books. And *Pyramid* just wouldn't be the same without pushing the envelope, so we have a few articles that do what the magazine does best, exploring great new roleplaying realms.

It's been a great 100 issues of *Pyramid* so far, and we're looking forward to the future of gaming goodness for roleplayers!

## WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Whether you've been with *Pyramid* since the first paper issue in 1993 or this is your first exposure to this magazine, we want to hear what you think! Let us know via email (at [pyramid@sjgames.com](mailto:pyramid@sjgames.com)) or amid the online community at [forums.sjgames.com](http://forums.sjgames.com).



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# IMPULSE CONTROL

BY CHRISTOPHER R. RICE

Getting players invested in a campaign is the Grail Quest of all GMs. *GURPS Power-Ups 5: Impulse Buys* offers a way for players to manipulate the world around them using that oh-so-precious commodity: character points. But few players want to spend character points on transient effects when they could use them to buy permanent ones. This is where *Impulse Points* (*Impulse Buys*, p. 18) come in, as a way to use the various options in *Impulse Buys* without sacrificing character growth.

This article expands on *Impulse Points* and *Villainous Impulses* (*Impulse Buys*, p. 16), providing a more cohesive framework while adding new ways to use those points. This *agency system* gives players more control over the fate of their characters, and provides the GM with a way to encourage and enforce “in-genre” behavior.

*Anatoly Knyazev: I was hoping  
maybe you could repay me.*

*Oliver Queen: I thought  
we were even.*

– *Arrow* #5.12

## A SYSTEM OF DUALITY

All player characters and important NPCs have access to two new traits (below): Impulse Points (IP) and Villainous Points (VP). These each start at zero and cannot usually exceed three, but depending on the campaign’s mode or style, the GM may allow higher levels. In cinematic games, four to six levels are appropriate, while an entirely over-the-top or epic game could have seven to 10 levels – or more!

Impulse Points may represent luck, confidence in your skills and abilities, or even a higher power intervening on your behalf – perhaps due to some bright destiny. Villainous Points might reflect your tendency to get into trouble, moments of indecision, lack of confidence, or just general bad luck; like

Impulse Points, they can also represent a “higher power,” but one causing mischief or setting up a dark fate.

## BREAKING DOWN THE ACTION

Some rules for spending points require the GM to designate a length of time. In such cases, use the following guidelines:

*A single action:* This can be from a second to a minute, but always encompasses one single task or moment. Breaking down an M-16 rifle could be an action, as could punching a Nazi in the face.

*A single scene:* This can be a single battle, verbal exchange, long and uneventful trip, dinner party, or anything similar. For example, cleaning an entire room of M-16s or fighting a squad of Nazis.

*A single session:* This is a game session. These typically last three to four hours for most gamers, but longer times are not unheard of. A group might spend a session dealing with a platoon of Nazis, or simply roleplaying their characters’ banter while cleaning an entire armory’s weapons, with rolls to make sure it’s done to a superior’s satisfaction.

*A single adventure:* This consists of multiple game sessions (three to 10 is common) and encompasses an entire story arc. For example, a group cleaning and organizing an armory and its contents while arming a group of stragglers in a post-apocalyptic world, or dealing with a contingent of Nazis trying to tap into a ley line hidden under a castle.

*A single campaign:* This consists of multiple adventures (anywhere from two to five for a small campaign, to as long as “until all the players move away”) and encompasses a few story arcs. A campaign might be fighting back against a group of armed militants bent on enslaving a group of post-apocalyptic survivors, or stopping Nazi sorcerers from summoning otherworldly forces to destroy the Allies.

## NEW TRAITS

This agency system is based on Impulse Points (an advantage), Villainous Points (a disadvantage), and traits that alter the recovery rate of those points. Much like Reputation, if a character has both Impulse Points and Villainous Points, combine the final total of all traits here to determine if they count as a net advantage (if positive) or disadvantage (if negative).

## Impulse Points (IP)

5 points/level

You have IP equal to this trait's level, which can be used to modify rolls as if they were unspent character points, using *Impulse Buys*, *Player Guidance* (p. B347), and any campaign restrictions. Unlike character points, IP cannot permanently purchase new traits, but they return at a rate of 1 point per session – unless modified by Enhanced Refresh (below) or Decreased Refresh (p. 6).

### Special Limitation

*Aspected or Doubly Aspected:* Your points only apply to certain tasks, in certain situations, or for specific spending uses. For example, you could have IP that only apply to athletics, social interactions, job-related skills, critical failures, combat, etc.; this is worth -20%. Points may also be “doubly aspected” – they can only be used to mitigate critical failures in combat, job-related social interactions, and so on; this is worth -40%. You could specify something like “Only when death is on the line” (for aspected) or “Only when death is on the line *against Sicilians*” (for doubly aspected). For spending uses, treat each broad category from *Impulse Buys* (e.g., Survival) as a single aspect and each subheading (e.g., Flesh Wounds) as “doubly aspected.”

## Villainous Points (VP)

-5 points/level

Villainous Points are used by the GM to benefit the player character's *antagonists*. Treat groups of similar NPCs (e.g., the hench-things of Dr. Moreau) as one subject when getting effects like *Second Wind* or *Flesh Wounds* (both *Impulse Buys*, p. 10).

The total number of VP the GM has per session is equal to the combined VP of *all* PCs and important allied NPCs (GM's call what counts as “allied”). Points refresh at a rate equal to (the number of PCs who have VP 1+) at the beginning of each game session. This can be modified by Enhanced Refresh (below) or Decreased Refresh (p. 6); for simplicity, every PC should have the same VP refresh rate!

### Special Limitation

*Aspected or Doubly Aspected:* As for the IP limitation. However, while the GM should try to hew to the aspect as closely as possible, he *may* bend the rules to use VP in other ways. This should only be done if no other VP spending options present themselves *and* it's at least closely related to the given aspect.

## Enhanced (IP or VP) Refresh

Variable

If the GM allows, IP and/or VP may replenish more quickly than normal. This is a separate trait from your Impulse Points advantage or Villainous Points disadvantage (it may help to think of those traits as HP and this trait as Regeneration); do not apply modifiers from one to the other unless explicitly noted. Enhanced IP Refresh is an *advantage*;

Enhanced VP Refresh is a *disadvantage*. Where point costs are given as, e.g., “±10 points,” this means it is a 10-point advantage if it recovers IP, or a -10-point disadvantage if it regains VP.

In all cases, your level of Enhanced Refresh cannot exceed your IP/VP level. For example, you cannot have Impulse Points 2 [10] and Enhanced IP Refresh 3 [20]; because you have IP 2 you are limited to Enhanced IP Refresh 2 [10].

Everyone recovers 1 IP/VP per session by default. Enhanced Refresh 2, which raises this to 2 per session, costs ±10 points. Enhanced Refresh 3 costs ±20 points, Enhanced Refresh 4 costs ±30 points, and so on. The GM decides whether players who miss game sessions regenerate points.

### Optional Rule

With GM permission, faster refresh rates may be available. If so, note normal Enhanced Refresh, above, as “Enhanced Refresh (Per Session)” for clarity. As these higher rates supersede the normal refresh rate, they start at level 1; e.g., Enhanced IP Refresh 1 (Per Hour) costs 20 points and regenerates 1 IP per hour, Enhanced IP Refresh 2 (Per Hour) costs 40 points and regenerates 2 IP per hour, and so on.

*Enhanced Refresh (Per Hour)* costs ±20 points per level.

*Enhanced Refresh (Per 30 Minutes)* costs ±40 points per level.

*Enhanced Refresh (Per 10 Minutes)* costs ±120 points per level.

*Enhanced Refresh (Per Five Minutes)* costs ±240 points per level.

Faster rates are left to the GM to determine. See *Under the Hood: Refresh Rates* (p. 6) for further explanation of these values.

### Special Enhancement

*Game Time:* Only for Enhanced IP Refresh. Your Impulse Points represent supernatural abilities that you can call upon. As such, they return based on *game* time instead of real time, using the chart below. +0%.

Real Time	Game Time
1 IP/session	1 IP/week
1 IP/hour	1 IP/day
1 IP/30 minutes	1 IP/12 hours
1 IP/10 minutes	1 IP/4 hours
1 IP/5 minutes	1 IP/2 hours

## THE MANY NAMES OF AGENCY

The GM may wish to rename Impulse Points, Villainous Points, or both, to better suit their campaigns! Here is a small list of alternatives:

Ace, Action, Agency, Auspice, Bless/Blessed/Blessing, Chance, Charm, Curse/Cursed/Cursing, Destiny, Disfavor, Doom, Essence, Fate, Favor, Fortune, Happenstance, Harmony, Hazard, Jinx, Joker, Karma, Kismet, Luck, Mischance, Misfortune, Nemesis, Paradigm, Paragon, Probability, Prosperity, Providence, Quintessence, Reaction, Risk, Serendipity, Stunt, Synchronicity, Trump, Vitality, Wish, or Wyrld.

The GM *may* allow the Selectivity modifier (p. B108) along with this enhancement, letting you switch between your “real time” and “game time” refresh rates at will. However, this requires you to take Selectivity and Cosmic on *both* your Impulse Points and Enhanced IP Refresh. This Cosmic enhancement costs +50% for normal (Per Session) Enhanced IP Refresh, +100% if Per Hour, +150% if Per 30 Minutes, and +300% for anything faster.

## Decreased (IP or VP) Refresh

### Special

It's possible to regenerate IP or VP less often than one point per session. This is not a standalone trait; instead, it modifies the cost of the IP or VP trait.

*Recoup one point per two sessions:* IP costs 4 points/level, VP costs -4 points/level.

*Recoup one point per three sessions:* IP costs 3 points/level, VP costs -3 points/level.

*Recoup one point per four sessions:* IP costs 2 points/level, VP costs -2 points/level.

If you don't regenerate IP at all, they're effectively character points that you've set aside, and thus cost 1 point/level. It's up to the GM whether VP that don't refresh are worth -1 per level or just not available.

The Game Time modifier from Enhanced Refresh can be applied to Decreased Refresh as well (though never with Selectivity). If so, read “per X sessions” as “per X weeks.”

See *Under the Hood: Refresh Rates* (below) for more on these values.

## UNDER THE HOOD: REFRESH RATES

Rates of faster or slower Impulse or Villainous Point regeneration are based on the idea that purchasing multiple points and using them over a set period is *approximately* the same as a higher rate of replenishment. Since most games last between three to four hours, a four-hour session was used to estimate the cost of Enhanced Refresh.

Per *Impulse Buys*, p. 18, regaining 2 IP per session is 10 points. Regaining 1 IP per hour is thus comparable to spending 4 IP over a four-hour session (and thus 20 points). A refresh of 1 IP per 30 minutes is like spending 8 IP per session (40 points). Recouping 1 IP per 10 minutes is similar to using 24 IP per session (120 points). And 1 IP per five minutes works out to spending 48 IP per four-hour session (worth 240 points).

If the GM's game sessions tend to run significantly shorter or longer than four hours, he should reconfigure these values to suit his campaign, using the values above as guidelines.

Each level of Decreased Refresh was priced at -1 point – effectively a leveled quirk. This was done more by feel than math.

## SPENDING POINTS

Impulse Points can be spent on the various options from pp. 7-9 and *Impulse Buys*. They *may* be spent on any roll (including damage rolls), but this must be done before the detailed results of the roll are declared or another roll is made (for all rolls but damage rolls), or before Damage Resistance

is applied (for damage rolls). Once the GM declares the result for a roll and/or asks for another roll from any player, IP cannot be spent. For example, if a player rolled 9, but he knew he needed an 8 or less, he could spend 1 IP to get a success. But he'd have to do this *before* the GM asked for another roll from anyone, including him. Players who want to ensure the use of IP *can* preemptively declare they are using it before the roll is made.

Villainous Points are spent the same way – except it's the GM doing it. The GM announces their use and for what particular action; e.g., “I'm spending 3 VP to turn Baron Borderline's failure into a critical success.” The players may then spend an equal number of IP from their (collective) pools to cancel the effects. Players can spend less than the total number of points to partially modify an effect; using the above example, a player could spend 2 IP to change that critical success into a regular success.

The GM may only spend VP against one player equal to (the player's VP trait) × 3.5, rounded up – or up to 2 VP against a player with *no* VP trait.

Both players and the GM are encouraged to ask if anyone else would like to spend points for a particular action or in a particular circumstance. Players who remind a forgetful GM of this option *may* be rewarded additional IP as thanks, though if so they may not use those points on the action that just granted them.

Impulse Point usage can get complicated when multiple people are tapping into points to change outcomes. In general, any IP-bought result can be nullified by IP (or VP, for the GM) equal to the first amount *plus* one. If the original spender wishes, he may ante up another

point to negate *that* negation, at which point the opposing spender could use another point and so on, until someone runs out of points or yields. (Yielding does not return spent points, though. Sunk costs stay sunk.) Allies of either side may ante up points as well, if they are present.

## GAINING POINTS

Impulse Points can be regained in a few ways. The first is via their normal “refresh” rate (see trait descriptions, p. 5). Refresh rates can be from 0 (you only regain points by *dramatic, in-character* actions or by following genre conventions) to your maximum normal IP limit.

The method best suited to roleplayers is to perform an action that is in character, appropriate to the situation, usually dramatic, and *noteworthy* in the eyes of the GM. The more impressed the GM, the more IP flow back.

For less extroverted folks, staying in-character *for the campaign* can work. If the protagonist is following the stated campaign assumptions *and* genre conventions, even when it might be advantageous to cut some corners, then the GM may reward this with a point (or more!) of IP.

Players can also trade with the GM. The GM gets more VP to torment the team with later, and you get some IP – probably for something you want to succeed at right now. The rate of exchange is 1 IP for 1 VP, or 2 IP for 3 VP.

Points regained by in-game methods *can* exceed normal IP levels, but they dissipate at the end of each game session at a rate of 1 point per session until at the maximum starting IP for that character.

Starting Villainous Points for the *first* session of an adventure equal the full VP of all players. Successive game sessions restore 1 VP per each player with a VP of 1+ (unless they've modified their refresh rates; see pp. 5-6). The start of a new adventure restores VP to full, *plus* any excess VP the GM may have accumulated previously. However, over time he GM may build up to a maximum of *twice* starting VP.

## Campaign and Character Fidelity

Some genres require that players knowingly modify their character's actions in a certain way. These are "genre conventions" also known as *tropes*. For example, most comics have heroes who try not to kill anyone, especially a main antagonist (who either dies because of his own actions or goes to jail to harass the hero another day).

On a more character-oriented scale, the same rules can be applied to an individual. When he acts on a trait (often a disadvantage) in a dramatic or especially appropriate way, the GM can reward extra points. Witty dialogue, a clever idea, a "moment of awesome," and anything that follows the Rule of Cool also qualifies!

In all cases, the GM can reward (with bonus IP) or penalize (see *Losing Points*, below) players whose characters follow or ignore these unspoken campaign rules. A few examples:

Action	Reward	Penalty
Something minor but notable. For penalties, this includes something serious but genuinely accidental.	+1	-1
A moderately impactful deed, or ignoring a moderately important trope or character trait.	+2	-2
Something with major impact, or openly flouting genre or disadvantages.	+3	-3

## LOSING POINTS

Impulse Points can be lost. The first way is by *not* roleplaying a character's disadvantages and quirks. This is in addition to the normal penalty for bad roleplaying (p. B498). If the IPs lost results in *negative* points, then the GM immediately gains VPs equal to the absolute value of the negative points *and* the player cannot use IP again until he's at 0 or higher.

*Example:* If a neurotic investigator ignores her Phobia, the GM can penalize her according to how egregious the behavior is. Trying to explain how the character is somehow powering through and doesn't need to make a Will roll might lose one IP. Not even bothering to pay lip service to the disadvantage might lose three or four! If this brings the adventurer's IP to, say, -2, the GM gets 2 VP *and* the next 2 IP the player subsequently earns or regenerates are lost – gone to "paying off the debt."

The second way is by ignoring the genre conventions of the campaign setting. Doing this works as above, but is related more to how the *world* works. Some examples: trying to use germ theory in a low-tech game, assuming social bias in a far-future utopia, or deliberately killing a supervillain in a four-color universe while playing a hero. The more outrageous the behavior, the more Impulse Points are lost.

*Most of us got over this solipsistic fantasy at about age fourteen, when we realized the adult world we'd be grappling with the rest of our lives was affected not a whit by our wishes. It yields only to backbreaking effort, careful planning, lucky breaks, cultivated friends, and clear-eyed analysis.*

– Andres Bonifaciaeo, in *The Matrix Online*

## REALLY BAD IMPULSES

A GM running *GURPS Action* or otherwise using the rules for *Basic Abstract Difficulty (GURPS Action 2: Exploits, pp. 4-5)* can spend use Villainous Points to increase the BAD for a single session. This costs VP equal to *twice* the penalty added. For example, if the BAD is -3 for a particular gang of thieves, then the GM could spend 4 VP to modify this to -5 for the rest of the session. Alternatively, the GM can *gain* VP by lowering the penalty, with each -2 worth of penalties recouping *one* VP. Excess points acquired this way are lost at the end of each session, and the BAD for that antagonist is reset at the beginning of next session.

If this increased penalty only lasts for an action, halve the VP cost. If it lasts only for a scene, multiply cost by 3/4. (Round up.) If it lasts for the entire adventure, *double* the VP cost.

*Really Good Impulses:* If all PCs agree, they can collectively spend one Impulse Point *per player character* to negate -1 in BAD penalties. This is only good for a single session and the BAD automatically resets at the beginning of the next session (if the PCs are still dealing with the same antagonist). For durations other than a session, use the cost multipliers above.

## NEW IMPULSE BUYS

Here are a few new uses for unspent character points or Impulse Points. As always, the GM can overrule these if he feels their use is inappropriate.

### *Big Entrance (or Exit)*

You can really make an entrance (or exit)! *Describe your entrance.* Spend 2 points, and everyone who can see you will be mentally stunned if they fail a Quick Contest of Will rolls.

## THE BUCK STOPS HERE

This agency system works best when self-contained. The GM should consider disallowing all other luck-related traits, as this can splinter the system. (Though he may make an exception for traits that are part of a power or bundled into a meta-trait.) Use the following guidelines to convert these meta-game advantages and disadvantages:

*Cursed* (p. B129): Players who *want* to be so frequently hosed should take Villainous Points 3 (Aspected, Personal misfortunes, -20%) [-12] + Enhanced VP Refresh 3 (Per Hour) [-60].

*Daredevil* (p. B47): Represent this as either Impulse Points 5 (Aspected, Dangerous over the top actions only, -40%) [15] or Impulse Points 1 (Aspected, Dangerous over the top actions only, -40%) [3] + Enhanced IP Refresh 2 (Per Session) [10].

*Destiny* (pp. B48, B131): This is simply Impulse Points 1-3 [5 to 15].

*Luck* (p. B66): As for Daredevil, but with Aspected, Rerolls only (-20%).

*Serendipity* (p. B83): As for Daredevil, but with Aspected, Player guidance only (-20%).

*Super Luck* (p. B89): Use Impulse Points 5 (Aspected, Rerolls only, -20%) [20] + Enhanced IP Refresh 5 (Per Hour) [100].

*Unluckiness* (p. B169): Treat this as Villainous Points 2 [10].

### Going Cosmic

Alternatively, the GM can modify Impulse Points and Villainous Points so that they are the *only* things that can affect one another. This is done by adding Cosmic, Privileged attack (+50%) (**GURPS Power-Ups 4: Enhancements**, p. 7) to both traits (not their refresh). This allows IP and VP to affect each other while making it impossible for someone to use Luck to force you to remake a roll that you spent IP on, Serendipity to get around your IP-bought benefit, and so on.

If your points cannot be affected at *all*, even by other people spending IP or VP, then this is Cosmic, Irresistible attack (+300%) instead. The GM may allow a lesser version, Cosmic, Potent (+150%), that “merely” requires others to spend *double* the points normally needed to counter your use of IP or VP.

Targets may roll Will once per second to shake off the effects. For 5 points, you can cause *Fright Checks* (p. B360) instead. You may spend additional points to reduce a single target's Will roll, at one point per -1 penalty.

Note that the entrance/exit description must “fit the scene perfectly” at this cost. If it's merely *believable*, increase cost by 1. If it's being used as a cheap method to stun or frighten NPCs, increase the cost by 2 points or *more*.

### Celerity

Every point spent gives an additional attack on your next Attack maneuver *or* an additional unpenalized active defense. The GM may wish to restrict this to a single point per turn – though even if so, anyone with Trained by a Master or Weapon Master may spend as many points as they have available!

### Default Skill Use

By spending 1 point, you can temporarily gain the use of any one skill (except for wildcard skills). This effect usually lasts for a single roll, but the GM may extend the effective duration in unusual cases. Your effective “skill” is equal to the controlling attribute at -1 for Easy skills, -2 for Average, -3 for Hard, or -4 for Very Hard. Each additional point spent gives +2 to the roll.

Skills *without* defaults are much more difficult! They require GM permission to access, cost 2 points instead of 1, take an additional -3 to effective skill level (-4 for Easy to -7 for Very Hard), and each additional 2 points spent give just +1 to the roll.

The GM may require an in-character, genre-appropriate explanation for how the skill is being accessed! For example, it might be due to past telepathic unions, “reading it in a book,”

guidance by universal harmony, racial memory, ghostly possession, or an extreme case of “fake it till you make it.”

As a further option, if the person succeeds on the temporary skill, spending 2 Impulse Points *and* an unspent character point will retain the skill for later use.

### I'm a Leaf on the Wind!

*Watch me soar . . .* Every point you spend (up to three) temporarily increases your Basic Move by +1. This effect lasts for one scene (p. 4). For twice as much, you can increase your Step instead, but this lasts for only an action (p. 5).

### Lucky Break

Every point spent allows you to reroll one die roll that you just made, *twice*, and take the best result. This functions identically to Luck (p. B66), but is limited by the amount of points possessed, not elapsed time. The GM must decide if this is available in campaigns that permit buying a margin (**Impulse Buys**, p. 5); if so, it's always going to be cheaper to buy a margin versus rerolling!

### Power Boosting

Every point spent gives you +50% worth of enhancements to add to an ability for the purposes of *Temporary Enhancements* (**GURPS Powers**, p. 172), without requiring a skill roll *or* spending any FP. When used with *Abilities at Default* (**Powers**, p. 173), each point instead allows the improvisation of an ability worth up to 50% of the main ability.

One point can also link up to 10 people together instantly for the purposes of *Combining Powers* (**Powers**, p. 170).



## Roll Bonus

Every point spent gives +2 on one specific roll you're about to make (up to +10 to the roll). This may be used for damage or reaction rolls, but the bonus is *halved in those cases; each +2 to damage can be treated as +1/die if better.*

## What Goes Around

Sometimes what you need is for someone *else* to pay a horrible price. Whenever you take damage, you may spend a point and "save" some or all of the injury you just took. (This does *not* adjust any injury you've already taken.) You then *add* up to *half* the amount saved to your next damage roll against the foe who harmed you (treat multiple similar NPCs as "the same foe" for this purpose). *Each +2 to damage can be treated as +1/die if better.*

This normally only helps with immediate revenge, but if you are fighting through numerous similar enemies (e.g., storming a castle full of zombies) or having a running battle with a final nemesis, you can save the "revenge damage" and use it later in the session. Or spend another point, and you can save it till the end of the adventure (p. 4)!

The GM may do this for NPCs or groups of similar NPCs. In the case of the latter, *average* the damage between the total members of a particular group.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher R. Rice is of the mind that it's good to be bad and that it's bad to be good. From Portsmouth, Virginia, he's eking a living out of writing. Of course, if he's not writing

*Man cannot remake himself without suffering. For he is both the marble and the sculptor.*

– Alexis Carrel

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about **GURPS**, he's blogging about it. Visit his site "Ravens N' Pennies" ([www.ravensnpennies.com](http://www.ravensnpennies.com)) for more **GURPS** goodies. He wishes to thank L.A., his own personal muse, as well as the rest of his gaming group (the Headhunters) for playtesting the rules in his *Aeon* superhero campaign; Beth "Archangel" McCoy, the "Sith Editrix"; Nemoricus; and Jason "PK" Levine, for being most excellent sounding boards.

# INFINITE WEAPONS

BY HANS-CHRISTIAN VORTISCH

This article describes *real* weapons that historically never made it – prototypes, experimental versions, and design ideas that didn't reach full production. Some of these never properly worked, others failed for reasons having nothing to do with their actual design. A few are iconic despite their failure, most display interesting features . . . others are simply cool.

These are excellent for use in timelines other than that of Homeline, as established by *GURPS Infinite Worlds*.

## HANDGUNS

*The devilish thing had cocked itself automatically, channeling part of the powder-blast into the piston beneath the barrel, which shunted the grooved cylinder back against a stationary ratchet, spinning the next round into place and kicking the hammer back.*

– William Gibson and Bruce Sterling,  
*The Difference Engine* (set in 1855)

The following handguns include single-shot pistols, repeating pistols, revolvers, and semiautomatic pistols.

### Mortimer Repeating Pistol, .55 Flintlock (U.K., 1775-1802)

Prior to the invention of the revolver, multi-shot weapons had to have multiple barrels – until manual repeaters were invented. These invariably were complex designs, due to problems with obturation and with storing and feeding loose powder and shot.

This 15" long smoothbore flintlock pistol was designed by gunsmith Harvey Mortimer. The heart of the system is a rotating drum at the rear of the chamber. The pistol's butt features two tubes, one holding seven bullets, the other enough black powder for seven shots. To reload, the barrel is pointed downwards and the drum rotated using a lever on the left side. As the drum moves, one projectile and the propellant needed for one shot drop from the butt into separate cavities in the drum. Now the drum is rotated back again, depositing first the bullet and then the powder into the firing chamber. Further moving the lever cocks the hammer and lets some priming powder drop into the pan, leaving the gun ready to fire. The entire procedure requires three Ready maneuvers. Filling up the magazine takes a mere five seconds.

Around the turn of the 19th century on Homeline, this type of action was manufactured in different shapes by

gunsmiths in several countries, including in England, Germany, and Italy. Even 20-round muskets were produced. However, the pattern wasn't successful. It posed high demands on the skill of the producer, making the guns expensive. Worse, the system was prone to jams, as gunpowder creeps everywhere into the mechanism. The drum can also inadvertently transport glowing particles from the chamber back to the powder magazine, resulting in an explosion; on a critical failure, the gun blows up, doing up to 2d-1 cr ex damage to the holder.

There may be alternate timelines where the revolver is never invented. In these, such a repeating gun may well see more prominent service.

### Orbea Mod 1863, 12×16mm Lefacheux (Spain, 1863-1864)

The Basque company Orbea Hermanos introduced a gas-operated single-action semiautomatic revolver in 1863 – at a time when many major militaries still used single-action cap-and-ball revolvers or even muzzle-loading single-shot percussion pistols! The solid-frame design used a Lefacheux-type pinfire cartridge and employed the gas developed by the propellant's explosion to rotate the revolving cylinder holding the rounds and to eject the empty cartridge.

In Homeline, the gun wasn't made in quantity. In the United States, the market was cornered by Colt and a few competitors, and most European militaries were far too conservative to introduce an eccentric design by an obscure Basque maker. Of course, in alternate timelines such as *Britannica-2*, *Britannica-6*, *Etheria*, or campaigns similar to those outlined in *GURPS Steampunk* and *GURPS Steampunk 1: Settings and Style*, this weapon or a development using a more modern cartridge could see much wider use.

### Gabbett-Fairfax Mars, .36 Mars (U.K., 1900-1907)

Developed in 1899 and patented in 1900, this huge single-action pistol was designed by Hugh Gabbett-Fairfax and made under commission by Webley and Scott. Some 12" long, the Mars used a complex action to harness the powerful cartridges for which it was chambered. These included the .36 Mars (in table), 8.5×26mm Mars (Dmg 4d pi), and .45 Mars Long (Dmg 3d+1 pi+). Beautifully made and, on account of its powerful ammunition, very robust, it was rather unreliable. Between 80 and 200 prototypes were built.

## Handguns Table

See pp. B268-271 for an explanation of the statistics.

### GUNS (PISTOL) (DX-4 or most other Guns at -2)

TL	Weapon	Damage	Acc	Range	Weight	RoF	Shots	ST	Bulk	Rcl	Cost	LC	Notes
5	Mortimer Repeating Pistol, .55 Flintlock	1d+2 pi+	1	70/800	4/0.05	1/4	7+1(5)	11	-3	3	\$500	3	[1, 2]
5	Orbea Mod 1863, 12×16mm Lefacheux	1d+2 pi+	2	100/1,100	2.7/0.3	3	6(2i)	9	-2	2	\$350	3	[3]
6	Gabbett-Fairfax Mars, .36 Mars	4d+1 pi	2	250/2,800	3.8/0.6	3	8+1(3)	11	-3	3	\$2,000/\$26	3	[3]
7	Mauser P45, 9×19mm	2d+2 pi	2	160/1,800	2.4/0.4	3	8+1(3)	9	-2	2	\$400/\$26	3	
8	Red Eye Arms Model 1, .22 LR	1d+1 pi-	1	70/1,400	0.6/0.3	3	10+1(3)	7	-1	2	\$250/\$26	2	[2]

### Notes

[1] Very unreliable. Malfunctions on 14+ (p. B407).

[2] No lanyard ring (*High-Tech*, p. 154).

[3] Unreliable. Malfunctions on 16+ (see p. B407).

In Homeline, the Mars was no success and quickly faded from the scene. Gabbett-Fairfax himself was bankrupted in 1902, and his commercial successor, the Mars Automatic Pistol Syndicate, folded in 1907. In other timelines, the Royal Navy, which tested the Mars as a possible replacement for its .455-caliber Webley service revolvers (*GURPS High-Tech*, p. 96), might have adopted it. And even if it didn't, the Mars would be the ideal companion for a stout Victorian gentleman exploring the æther, hunting *Lost World* creatures, or combating werewolves, banshees, and other monsters in the service of the Royal Paranormal Society. See *Steampunk* and *Steampunk 1* for other suitable backgrounds.

### Mauser P45, 9×19mm Parabellum (Germany, 1945)

One of several competing designs for a *Volkspistole* ("people's pistol"), this was a hammerless single-action pistol designed in the final years of Nazi Germany, optimized for cheap production using as many stamped steel and plastic components as possible. It employed a novel locking breech which was later also used in other weapons such as the H&K P7 (*GURPS Tactical Shooting*, p. 56).

In Homeline, it was intended to enter full production in 1945, to supersede the earlier Walther P38 (*High-Tech*, p. 100) and other patterns; the magazine is interchangeable with the P38. Only one or two prototypes were built. Elsewhen, it could have entered service earlier, or at least entered full production as the war continued. Suitable worldlines include Lenin-5, Reich-1, Reich-2 (despite the early end of WWII), Reich-3, and Reich-4.

### Red Eye Arms Model 1, .22 LR (USA, 1987)

Invented by David Byron and in development since 1979, this weapon was claimed to be the first real gun made entirely from synthetic materials. Mostly plastic, its barrel was made of ceramics and supposedly good for 5,000 shots, while the metal springs in the prototype were to be replaced by synthetic springs. The Model 1 required no lubrication, was impervious to water and sweat, floated, and was extremely lightweight. Also, it was undetectable by metal detectors (*High-Tech*, p. 206) used in commercial airports. This was the reason Red

Eye proposed it only for military sales. The ammunition, however, was still conventional. The prototypes used the .22 LR, but other versions might have been chambered for more powerful ammunition.

Despite its advantages, the military never went for it and only prototypes were produced. Red Eye didn't really want to build handguns anyway, hoping for big-budget aircraft armament deals instead – which likewise never came. Still, the patents seem to prove that a working all-plastic gun is feasible at TL8 – a dream come true for ruthless assassins and black ops.

## SHOTGUNS

*It was like firing a small cannon. The 12-gauge rounds slapped into the chamber at a rate of three per second. The [H&K CAW] leapt in his hands, viciously wrenching his wrists, kicking bruises into his hip, thundering, thundering, so the rocks echoed big rolling booms and the shadows vanished in a strobing muzzle flash . . .*

– John Shirley, *Eclipse Penumbra* (set in 2021)

Shotguns have perhaps seen the least development over the years, although new designs keep appearing.

### H&K CAW, 18.5×76mmB Olin (Germany, 1985)

The Close Assault Weapon (CAW) is a full-automatic shotgun designed by Heckler and Koch for the U.S. military under the Close Assault Weapon System (CAWS) programs. It is an advanced bullpup design with unchoked 18.1" barrel and various measures to keep recoil in check. It has an integral Hensoldt collimating sight in the carrying handle (+1 Guns) and uses detachable synthetic magazines.

The all-brass cartridge developed by Olin – not interchangeable with standard 12-gauge 3" shells although of similar size – was originally loaded with a multi-flechette load; Dmg 1d+1 pi-, Acc 1, Range 150/1,800, RoF 4×20. This proved unsuccessful, as the flechettes could not be stabilized. The two loads created for the final weapon are both 000 buckshot loadings – one with conventional lead (in the table), and the other using tungsten-alloy pellets which have considerable armor penetration; Dmg 2d+1(2) pi-, RoF 4×8.

## Shotguns Table

See pp. B268-271 for an explanation of the statistics.

### GUNS (SHOTGUN) (DX-4 or most other Guns at -2)

TL	Weapon	Damage	Acc	Range	Weight	RoF	Shots	ST	Bulk	Rcl	Cost	LC	Note
8	H&K CAW, 18.5x76mmB	2d+2 pi	3	150/1,000	11.7/2.2	4x8	10+1(3)	10†	-5	1/3	\$1,200/\$39	2	[1]

#### Note

[1] Rcl is 1 with multiple shot, 3 with slugs.

In Homeline, development began in 1980 and two prototypes were submitted in 1984, but it didn't enter production. The U.S. military as the intended buyer abandoned the CAWS project altogether in 1987, concluding that the limitations of all shotguns as military weapons – primarily short range and high ammo weight (*Tactical Shooting*, pp. 58-59) – couldn't be solved even with new ammunition. Proposed HEDP (Dmg 1d(10) cr ex with 1d-1 [2d] cr ex linked, Acc 4, Range 300/1,500, RoF 4, Rcl 3) and APFSDS (Dmg 8d(2) pi, Acc 4, Range 600/3,000, RoF 4, Rcl 3) ammunition never entered production.

However, the CAW is a powerful weapon in its specialty niche. Elsewhen, it might get built for general export and be adopted by other users – during the mid-1980s, the worldwide market for such a gun was estimated, somewhat optimistically, at 2.5 million! It could even see wide-scale adoption by the U.S. military, as originally intended and postulated in the WWII timeline of Frank Chadwick's *Twilight: 2000*. Since the U.S. Navy was heading the development, a possible U.S. military designation for that would be *MK 20 MOD 0*.

## RIFLES

Rifles, the primary infantry weapons, have always been at the center of research and development of inventors and weapon makers. Many interesting alternate designs exist.

### Schulhof Modell I, 11.15x58mmR Werndl (Austria-Hungary, 1882)

Josef Schulhof designed a manually repeating high-capacity rifle based on the Swiss Vetterli bolt-action, using a new patented magazine. This was located in the hollow butt of the rifle and consisted of three compartments, holding six, five, and four rounds respectively. The rounds dropped down onto a traveling rail in the lower part of the stock, to be transported to the chamber via a feeding tube that could hold another four rounds. With one in the chamber, the Modell I held a total of 20 rounds! To reload, a hinged plate on the left side of the butt was opened and all the cells could be loaded simultaneously in three Ready maneuvers from a carton loader. However, this only worked satisfactorily if four cartridges still remained in the feeding tube, or had been inserted individually (two Ready maneuvers per round) before! Not surprisingly, the Modell I did rather poorly in taxing military trials, and although Schulhof tried to improve the basic pattern until his death in 1890, few guns were made.

In Homeline, the Schulhof is another quirky Age of Industrialization design that offers increased firepower to an adventurer who wants to try something new, at the expense of reliability. In other timelines, such as those explored by

*Steampunk* and *Steampunk 1*, a perfected variant could even become standard issue with the odd military service.

### Glisenti Cei-Rigotti, 6.5x52mm Mannlicher-Carcano (Italy, 1895-1911)

This was the first selective-fire rifle in history: invented by Amerigo Cei-Rigotti in 1895, it was modified several times. Conventionally styled for the time, with wooden stocks and no separate pistol grip, it used an internal magazine filled with clips. There was a prototype with an extended magazine; Wt. 10.5/0.9, Shots 18(9). The rifle was also offered unsuccessfully in 7.62x54mmR Mosin-Nagant (Dmg 6d pi) and 8x50mmR Mannlicher (Dmg 6d+1 pi). Only a few were ever built, all by Italian arms producer Glisenti.

In Homeline, the Cei-Rigotti never entered large-scale production since it was not sufficiently reliable for general use. Nevertheless, it paved the way of the future and could be used as one-off equipment for turn-of-the-century Gadgeteers or progressive-minded adventurers. It could also play a more important role in other timelines.

### Mauser StG45, 7.92x33mm Kurz (Germany, 1945-)

Development of the *Sturmgewehr 45* ("assault rifle model 1945") began in 1943, as the Mauser *Gerät 06* ("device 06"). It was designed for cheap mass-production, using many stamped steel and plastic components, and was both lighter and required only half as many raw materials to manufacture as the Haenel StG44 (*High-Tech*, p. 115). Its roller-locking action with fluted chamber was designed by Ludwig Vorgrimler. After WWII, the action was also employed in the Spanish CETME rifles and ultimately the H&K G3 (*High-Tech*, p. 116) and all its derivatives.

In addition to the standard 30-round magazine, a short 10-rounder (\$27, 0.7 lb.) was available to lower the silhouette in prone shooting. Like the StG44, it could be fitted with a 4x scope (+2 Acc, \$500, 1 lb.) or the ZG1223 *Vampir* active-IR sighting system. This consisted of a 75-yard IR illuminator and a 4x early night sight, adding 5.1 lbs. to weight and giving +2 Acc and Night Vision 2. A battery assembly carried in a rucksack (30 lbs., 2xL/4 hrs.) provided power.

In Homeline, none of the 30 prototypes of Mauser's StG45 ordered in 1945 could be finished – they were assembled after the war under control of the British and ended up in various museums. Had WWII continued or ended with a German victory, it was intended to be adopted for general service and to replace all other rifles and submachine guns with the German forces. As such, it could appear in both Reich-1 and Reich-2, or similar alternate histories, such as described in Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (set in 1962) or in Robert Harris' *Fatherland* (set in 1964).

### Izhmash AS-61, 7.62×55mmB (Russia, 1961-)

Designed by Dmitry Shiryayev, this was a prototype weapon called the AO-27. It was part of a Soviet military program to design a SAPFSDS round (*High-Tech*, p. 168) for an infantry rifle. Otherwise the weapon was conventional.

On Homeline, the program went nowhere; the ammunition had low recoil and excellent range, but was inaccurate and of dubious wounding power. Elsewhen, this design could replace the ubiquitous AK-47 (*High-Tech*, p. 114) on several alternate timelines as the *Avtomat Shiryayeva obrazets 1961 goda* ("Shiryayev's assault rifle model of the year 1961") or AS-61, including on Lenin-1, Lenin-3, Lenin-5, Taft-1, Taft-2, Taft-5, and Tsarevich. At least on Lenin-3, it would probably already be obsolescent.

### Steyr IWS 2000, 14.5×170mmRB Steyr (Austria, 1992)

The *Infanterie-Waffensystem 2000* ("infantry weapon system 2000") was a heavy anti-materiel rifle designed to penetrate armored personnel carriers and infantry fighting vehicles. Of bullpup construction with an overall length of 6', it used a detachable magazine inserted on the right side. The IWS 2000 featured a bipod, rear monopod, and an integral 10× scope (+3 Acc). It fired an APFSDS-T round (*High-Tech*, p. 167, 174) through its smoothbore barrel, using a plastic cartridge case to save weight (*High-Tech*, p. 164). The heavy recoil this would normally generate was counteracted by a long-recoil action including a hydro-pneumatic buffer (like an artillery piece) as well as a high-efficiency muzzle brake. This reduced recoil to that of a hunting rifle. The gun broke up in two main parts for carrying in backpack cradles.

On Homeline, this IWS 2000 never went beyond prototypes. In other worldlines, it could have replaced light anti-materiel rifles such as the Barrett Model 82A1. It is also an obvious solution to various monster infestations, suitable for bringing down not only light armored vehicles and helicopters, but also mechas, dinosaurs, and gigantic aliens.

### Maadi-Griffin Model 92, .50 Browning (USA, 1992-1994)

This was a single-shot bolt-action "pistol," less than 2' long, featuring a German-made 16" match barrel, an effective muzzle compensator (*Tactical Shooting*, p. 76), a large trigger guard for the entire hand (also providing a good grip for the off hand), and a 2.5× scope (+1 Acc; no iron sights were fitted). Fired two-handed (*Tactical Shooting*, pp. 11-12), as it really should be, ST becomes 10†.

Few of these ridiculously overpowered weapons were sold, mostly to long-range target shooters. Despite the remarkably tame recoil, it was of no actual use to most people and failed commercially. Monster hunters and others in need of (barely) concealable "one shot, one kill" effectiveness may beg to differ. Various military loads offer increased armor-penetration or side effects, but will usually lower the LC.

## SUBMACHINE GUNS

*Orlovsky was pulling out his H&K . . . Nothing in the world ever sounded like caseless ammunition, on full-auto, out of a floating breech. It wasn't the sound of a machine gun, but a kind of ear-shattering, extended whoop.*

– William Gibson, *Virtual Light* (set in 2005)

Submachine guns are anti-personnel weapons that are popular both on Homeline and in many other worldlines.

### Auto-Ordnance M1918 Persuader, .45 ACP (USA, 1918)

During WWI, U.S. General John Thompson envisioned a new weapon that should help America to win the war: a portable machine gun, a "submachine gun," or "trench broom." He set up the Auto-Ordnance Corp. to develop such a weapon. In 1917, his chief designer, Oscar Payne, came up with a compact weapon that looked like a futuristic ray gun. Dubbed the *Persuader*, it had a pistol grip at the rear and forward vertical grip under the stubby, heavy barrel. It lacked a shoulderstock.

## Rifles Table

See pp. B268-271 for an explanation of the statistics.

### GUNS (RIFLE) (DX-4 or most other Guns at -2)

TL	Weapon	Damage	Acc	Range	Weight	RoF	Shots	ST	Bulk	Rcl	Cost	LC	Note
5	Schulhof Modell I, 10.4×38mmR	4d+1 pi+	4	480/3,000	10.2/1.2	1	19+1(3)	10†	-6	3	\$750	3	[1]
6	Glisenti Cei-Rigotti, 6.5×52mm	5d+2 pi	5	750/3,200	9.8/0.3	15	6(3)	9†	-6	3	\$800	2	[1]
7	Mauser StG45, 7.92×33mm	5d pi	4	500/3,100	10.2/2	7	30+1(3)	9†	-5	2	\$600/\$31	2	
7	Izhmash AS-61, 7.62×55mmB	6d(2) pi-	4	750/5,000	8.1/1	11	30+1(3)	9†	-5	2	\$600/\$27	2	
8	Steyr IWS 2000, 15.2×170mmRB	6d×4(2) pi	6+3	4,200/17,600	42/2.5	1	8+1(5)	14B†	-8	3	\$20,000/\$50	1	
8	Maadi-Griffin Model 92, .50 Browning	5d×2 pi+	4+1	1,700/6,500	14/0.25	1	1(3i)	14	-5	2	\$2,800	3	

### Note

[1] Unreliable. Malfunctions on 16+ (see p. B407).

## Submachine Guns Table

See pp. B268-271 for an explanation of the statistics.

### GUNS (SMG) (DX-4 or most other Guns at -2)

TL	Weapon	Damage	Acc	Range	Weight	RoF	Shots	ST	Bulk	Rcl	Cost	LC	Notes
6	Auto-Ordnance M1918 Persuader, .45 ACP	2d+1 pi+	3	160/1,700	15/8	25	100(5)	8†	-4	2	\$200	2	
8	ARES FMG, 9×19mm	2d+2 pi	1	150/2,000	6.3/1.3	10	32(3)	8†	-3	2	\$500/\$29	2	[1]
8	H&K MP11, 4.73×25mm	3d-1(2) pi-	3	275/1,750	2.8/0.6	10	20+1(3)	9	-3	2	\$600/\$27	2	[2]

#### Notes:

- [1] Lacks sling swivels.
- [2] Very reliable.

Like most of the *real* machine guns of the time, it used a belt-feed mechanism, but fired the .45 ACP cartridge then recently adopted for the Colt M1911 pistol (*High-Tech*, p. 98). A can holding a 100-round non-disintegrating cloth belt was clipped beneath the receiver.

In Homeline, this design went nowhere, as it invariably jammed after only a few rounds – the action cycled too fast for the heavy cloth belt (Mal. 14). It was scrapped in December 1917 and Payne went back to the drawing board. Auto-Ordnance needed four more years to bring out the perfected submachine gun, the famous Model 1921 Thompson gun (*GURPS High-Tech: Pulp Guns, Volume 1*, pp. 28-30).

In alternate timelines, the gun might have had more success if the belt-feed had been perfected (for example, by using the disintegrating metal links invented in 1917). The Persuader could have been adopted as the *M1918* by the U.S. military and taken over the place of the Model 1921 in Homeline history. On Gotha-Z, it could become a primary weapon to mow down zombies (*GURPS Infinite Worlds: Worlds of Horror*, p. 7).

#### ARES FMG, 9×19mm Parabellum (USA, 1986)

The Folding Machine Gun (FMG) was a unique weapon developed by Francis Warin. It was intended as a short-range self-defense weapon for businesspeople and bodyguards, capable of folding into a very compact package only 10.3" long and 3.3" high, easily stowed in a coat pocket or briefcase (-2 Holdout). The FMG had no sights, being intended only for very close-in shooting. It used IMI Uzi magazines (*High-Tech*, pp. 125-126).

To prepare it for action, the two halves have to be pulled apart, one of them being the receiver, the other the butt-stock. The trigger and pistol grip, with magazine in place and shielded inside the two halves in folded condition, snap into place below the receiver. Unfolding the gun and preparing it to fire takes three Ready maneuvers, or two with a successful Fast-Draw (Long Arm) roll.

Only a few prototypes were made in Homeline, as there already were a couple of normal compact SMGs on the market. More importantly, selling a full-auto concealed-carry weapon to ordinary people for self-defense was practically impossible in most legislatures the world around.

The KBP *Pistolet Pulemet obrazets 1990g* or *PP-90* (1990-1997) was a Russian copy of the ARES FMG in 9×18mm Makarov; Dmg 2d pi, Wt. 4.9/0.9, RoF 12!, Shots 30(3), Cost

\$500/\$28. It actually entered production and was adopted in small numbers by Russian law-enforcement agencies. They found it unreliable and uncomfortable to shoot. The KBP *PP-90M* (1997-) is made in 9×19mm Parabellum; Wt. 4.1/1.2, RoF 12!, Shots 30(3), Cost \$500/\$28.

#### H&K MP11, 4.73×25mm Dynamit-Nobel (Germany, 1992)

When Heckler and Koch designed their ground-breaking 4.73×33mm G11 caseless assault rifle (*High-Tech*, p. 119), they envisioned a whole family of caseless weapons based on the same ammunition pattern, including a machine pistol. The *Maschinenpistole 11* is a weapon of advanced design, using a rising breech and firing a slightly shorter cartridge. Just under 1' long, the MP11 features a smooth, synthetic outer shell which is available in a wide range of colors, from standard black or olive green to various camouflage patterns (*Tactical Shooting*, p. 76) and even designer colors. The weapon is fully ambidextrous. Like the G11, the MP11 could be used to arm the *Europaverein* on Gallatin.

## MACHINE GUNS

"She's a fifteen-point-five-millimeter, built in Maine under license from FN in Belgium . . ." It was an impressive gun. You could call it a light cannon if you wanted, instead of a heavy machine gun.

– David Drake, *Car Warriors #1: The Square Deal* (set in 2035)

Machine guns are another class of military weapon that is seeing constant development and therefore quite a bit of alternate possibilities.

#### MAN TuF-MG18, 13×92mmSR Mauser (Germany, 1918)

To combat the ever increasing numbers of Allied tanks during WWI, the German Army introduced the Mauser T-Gew18 (*High-Tech*, p. 112, and *GURPS High-Tech: Pulp Guns, Volume 2*, p. 11). This fires the massive 13×92mmSR cartridge, the first high-velocity heavy small arms round. A machine gun firing the same round was developed by MAN, called the *Tank und Flieger-MG* (meaning that it was for use against both armored vehicles and aircraft).

It was a scaled-up version of the water-cooled DWM-Maxim MG08 (*High-Tech*, p. 130). A non-disintegrating 100-round belt was used. It fed from a 75-round fabric belt (20 lbs.); an 8-lb. 30-round belt in a drum (12 lbs.) was used when the gun was employed against aerial targets. An 189-lb. two-wheeled carriage (\$3,300) was developed as a mount, but it was also envisioned as armament for the huge *K-Wagen* tank, which could not be completed before the end of WWI. There was also at least one air-cooled prototype, which was trialed on a Fokker D.VII fighter in late summer of 1918. Nothing more came out of this.

It never reached the troops. Less than 50 were made by the end of 1918, and almost all were destroyed by the Allies in 1919. Some 4,000 were ready for assembly, but all stocks were destroyed according to the Treaty of Versailles.

As the German precursor to the Browning .50-caliber series (*High-Tech*, p. 133, and *GURPS High-Tech: Pulp Guns, Volume 2*, pp. 22-23), the TuF-MG18 would be suitable for alternate history pulp fiends. On Kaiserreich-4, the TuF-MG18 could be especially important as an armament capable of dealing with the *Maschinenmenschen* (*Worlds of Horror*, p. 16).

### FN-Browning BRG-15, 15.5×106mm Browning (Belgium, 1991)

Beginning in the early 1980s, Fabrique Nationale started to develop a new gun to replace both heavy machine guns in the .50-caliber range as well as light 20mm cannon in ground, naval, and airborne applications. The resulting weapon, the *Browning 15mm* or *BRG-15*, fired a very powerful 15×116mm round. In 1988, problems with the ammunition led to a change to a new 15.5×106mm cartridge. The BRG-15 was a compact weapon and could replace existing weapons such as the popular Browning M2HB (*High-Tech*, p. 133) without redesign of the installation. It had a dual feeder and could thus switch between two different ammunition natures at the flick of a switch. This takes a Ready maneuver. It fired AP-T (in table), but also APHCI (Dmg 6d×3(2) pi+ inc), APDS (Dmg 6d×4(2) pi+, Range 3,300/14,300), and APHEX (Dmg 6d×3(2) pi+ with cr ex). An APDSU round would be feasible (Dmg 7d×4(2) pi+, Range 3,300/14,300).

However, FN came into financial trouble by the time the BRG-15 was ready for production. Since there wasn't much interest anyway due to improved ammunition for the .50-caliber weapons and a general move to 25mm autocannon for serious business, the program was stopped in 1991.

This would be an interesting weapon in *GURPS Autoduel* and *Car Wars*. It could also appear in other timelines such as Gallatin.

## AMMUNITION TABLES

For details on statistics, see *High-Tech*, p. 175.

### Handguns, Submachine Guns, and Personal Defense Weapons

Name	WPS	CPS	Notes
4.73×25mm Dynamit-Nobel	0.009	\$0.45	[1]
8.5×26mm Mars	0.03	\$0.40	
.36 Mars (9×32mm)	0.046	\$0.75	
12×16mm Lefauchaux	0.05	\$0.50	
.45 Mars Long (11.43×48mm)	0.07	\$1	
.55 Flintlock (Mortimer)	0.026	\$0.30	[2]

### Shotguns

Name	WPS	CPS	Notes
18.5×76mmB Olin	0.17	\$1.30	[3]

### Rifles and Machine Guns

Name	WPS	CPS	Notes
7.62×55mmB	0.023	\$1.20	[4]
10.4×38mmR (.41 Swiss)	0.06	\$0.90	
14.5×170mmRB Steyr	0.33	\$25	[5, 6]
15.5×106mm Browning	0.5	\$7	[7]

### Notes

- [1] Caseless (*High-Tech*, pp. 164-165).
- [2] Powder and shot (*High-Tech*, pp. 163-164).
- [3] Shotgun (*High-Tech*, p. 173).
- [4] SAPFSDS (*High-Tech*, p. 168).
- [5] Light cased (*High-Tech*, p. 164).
- [6] APFSDS (*High-Tech*, p. 167).
- [7] AP (*High-Tech*, p. 167).

*A few are iconic despite their failure, most display interesting features . . . others are simply cool.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hans-Christian "Grey Tiger" Vortisch is the author or co-author of *GURPS High-Tech, Fourth Edition*, *GURPS High-Tech: Adventure Guns*, the *GURPS High-Tech: Pulp Guns* series, and *GURPS Tactical Shooting*, among other books. He shoots historical and modern guns in Berlin.

### Machine Guns Table

See pp. B268-271 for an explanation of the statistics.

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

TL	Weapon	Damage	Acc	Range	EWt.	RoF	Shots	ST	Bulk	Rcl	Cost	LC
6	MAN TuF-MG18, 13×92mmSR	5d×2(2) pi	5	2,100/8,800	81.4/20	8	75(5)	21M	-9	2	\$20,000	1
8	FN BRG-15, 15.5×106mm	6d×2(2) pi+	6	2,200/9,200	132	10	100×2(5×2)	24M	-10	2	\$40,000	1

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# EIDETIC MEMORY

## THE GALACTIC OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE

BY DAVID L. PULVER

When writing *GURPS Ultra-Tech* (which is once again back in print), I decided to have the fictional vignettes that opened each chapter all share a single background: a TL12 human galactic empire that employs an elite cadre of secret agents, the Galactic Operations Directorate (GOD). Several of the vignettes in *Ultra-Tech* allude to the struggle of GOD agents to deal with various challenges, chief among them the alien-controlled Yezendi antimatter syndicate whose machinations threaten the Empire's stability. Here at long last are descriptions of the GOD and the syndicate (written up following the system presented in *GURPS Boardroom and Curia*), accompanied by details of the Yezendi aliens themselves.

### IMPERIAL SECRET SERVICE AND GOD

The Galactic Operations Directorate is the covert operations unit of the powerful Imperial Secret Service, a security and intelligence agency charged with protecting the emperor and imperial family and dealing with existential threats to the realm.

The Imperial Secret Service was originally established as a close protection and counter-subversion unit that answered directly to the Imperial household. These days, galactic emperors do not die of natural causes; like most elites in the Empire, they don't die natural deaths at all. This had led to a high risk of coups and plots, so the initial function of the Secret Service was to provide unobtrusive and loyal plainclothes bodyguards for the Imperial family, many of them disguised as ordinary household functionaries.

In the wake of an nearly successful assassination and palace coup (the "Baker and General's Plot") – which was enabled by a traitor in the palace cooking staff who succeeded in disabling several agents through an ingested mycotoxin – most human Secret Service agents were phased out. They were replaced by cyborgs and combat androids. Over time, the

agency further expanded its use of covert bodyguards, with palace staff, secretaries, servants, and even imperial concubines being gradually replaced by duplicate combat androids whose natures were only revealed in time of crisis, and whose willingness to "take a bullet" was unquestioned.

Nor were all of these guardian robots humanoid androids; a humble robot vacuum cleaner cleaning the dusty halls of the summer palace might secretly be a deadly security robot. The true size of the Secret Service operation is highly classified, but it is rumoured to have covert androids well beyond the grounds of the palace household. However, it seems unlikely – as one anti-Imperial activist posted (before vanishing) – that 1% of Imperial capital district's "human" population are deep-cover "Trojan Horse" androids whose software can be activated in times of civil unrest or coup.

Such conspiracy theories aside, what is certain is that over the centuries, as Imperial technology advanced and AIs improved, the emperors came to increasingly rely on them for not just close protection but also threat assessments and security planning. Today, the majority of the Imperial Secret Service management is also controlled by sapient machines, albeit ones with human-level or greater intelligence.

While some galactic emperors have maintained excellent relations with the Empire's many other civilian and military security and intelligence agencies, other sovereigns with a taste for undercover intrigue appreciate the fringe benefits of having their own private and utterly loyal force of black ops undercover robots. In such murky soil did the Galactic Operations Directorate (GOD) take root. It started out as inter-agency Joint Task Force Overlord, a Secret Service unit that was charged with working with the Earth Police to curb weaponized nano smuggling from the planetary starport into the capital district. The overworked and budget-stressed Earth Police's port department were happy to have highly trained Imperial Secret Service androids assisting their understaffed techstopper units.

Although most nano-weapons were sold to local arkers (gangs in the teeming arcologies that rose from Earth's reservation greenbelts), others were acquired by terrorists such as xoxpopper ghost gangs who engaged in kidnap-and-ransoms to protest the dominance of the emperor and other immortal elites. The Secret Service were especially concerned that some ultra-tech weaponry might be purchased by extremists who posed a threat to the emperor's safety. However, supply routes led off Earth, and jurisdictional disputes between the heads of the Earth starport police and the interstellar patrol and the Navy threatened to stifle the investigation just as it was developing.

Impatient with bureaucracy and fearing possible corruption within the patrol, the Secret Service agents involved in Overlord used their close relationship with the emperor to receive authorization to perform their own independent investigation off-world. A Secret Service team led by Deputy Director Erasmus (which also included a few rogue Earth Police cops) followed a tenuous chain of clues and intermediaries across the Local Bubble, cracking the case just in time to get intel on a shipment of smuggled Imperial Marine-grade nanopaste that was arriving on Earth. A nest of renegade xoxpoppers were assembling a massive disassembler swarm in

an attempt to gobble up the Resurrection of King Wenceslaus celebration in the Gobi Forest, which the empress and her youngest 13 children had planned to attend! The dramatic thwarting of this plot by Erasmus' team led directly to the creation of the Galactic Operations Directorate.

By Imperial decree, the new special operations unit was charged with predicting emergent ultra-technological threats to the emperor, his household, or the Empire as a whole, and then investigating and countering them before they became a problem requiring actual military intervention. Empowered by this open-ended mission statement, the Galactic Operations Directorate grew into a sizable black-ops unit hidden within the already-secretive Secret Service: "a shadow in a dark closet" was how one resentful member of the rival Imperial Naval Intelligence agency referred to it. Another less savory nickname is "the emperor's knife."

The full extent of its black budget is funded not by the Imperial treasury as such, but rather by private arms length transfers from various obscure parts of the emperor's personal fortune and holdings, and by occasional sale of assets (usually to other Imperial government bodies) that are confiscated from malefactors.

## GALACTIC OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE

**Mission Statement:** The GOD is the clandestine direct-action division of the Imperial Secret Service, charged with engaging in covert operations to investigate emergent threats to the Empire, and, using its elite Seraphim agents, counter them with covert action. The majority of GOD operatives are AIs or sapient robots. The GOD is funded from the emperor's personal funds.

**Patron Value:** 30 points. **Enemy Value:** -30 points (Hunter).

**Ally and Dependent Value:** The GOD is unlikely to provide Allies or Dependents outside the organization. They can offer a wide range of NPC associations such as members of their tech branch or supporting robots to their operatives.

### Capabilities

**TL:** 12<sup>^</sup>. **Members:** 500 (49 field agents).

**Wealth:** Filthy Rich.

**Contacts:** Police skills-18 [15]; Intelligence analysis-21 [4]; Military skills-15 [10]; Science skills-21 [20]; Savioir Faire (High Society)-15 [2]; Technological skills-18 [15].

**Member Traits:** Alternate Identity (Legal) [5]; Hidden Facilities [5]; Legal Enforcement Powers [15]; Unusual Background (Occasional access to TL<sup>^</sup> gear not otherwise available to Imperial society) [10]; Secret [-10];

**Notable Resources:** Secret floating fortress "Cloud Nine" in Neptune's atmosphere; research labs with TL12<sup>^</sup> technology; advanced quantum megacomputers; two dozen small but powerful TL12<sup>^</sup> starships (see pp. 19-20).

**Reaction-Time Modifier:** 0. The organization's small size and direct access to the emperor makes it quick to respond to threats, but sometimes things slow down due to too few agents being spread across too large a volume of space.

### Costs and Values

**Startup Cost:** \$11.95 billion.

**Resource Value:** \$59.75 million.

### Social Attributes

**Type:** Enforcement; Government; Investigative; Research; Secret.

**CR:** 4. **Loyalty:** Very Good (18, +3).

**Rank:** Police Rank 0-5 [5/level]. Police officer ranks in the Imperial Secret Service use a mix of police and military-style titles (e.g., Special Agent, Lieutenant, Captain, Major, Colonel).

**Income Range:** \$8,100 (Average) to \$16,200 (Comfortable).

**Reputation:** +1 (Among Imperial security and intelligence agencies). Their significant reputation as agents is compromised by inter-agency rivalry and distrust of their black-ops "cowboy" status and their proximity to the emperor.

### Notes

Many special agents are powerful combat androids or cyborgs; agents often have relationships or Patrons from among the Imperial family or other dignitaries at the Imperial court from prior experience as Secret Service bodyguards. On the rare occasions when they appear in formal uniform, GOD chameleon-fabric dress uniforms are tuned to Secret Service black-and-silver.

This off-the-books budget has kept the agency to a fairly miniscule size for the galactic empire, with some 451 staff and 49 special agents in the field. However, its direct personal access to the galactic emperor and to the highest levels of Imperial technology has allowed it to punch far above its weight, racking up a lengthy string of successful operations (and the occasional near-failure, where they were bailed out by other agencies or good luck).

The fist of the GOD are the so-called Archangel teams, codenamed (loosely) after historical or mythical angels or angelic beings. Each is assigned a personal starship and the most advanced combat android bodies created by the Empire. They share their namesakes' immortality and loyalty to their masters, while being nevertheless fully sapient beings. As a mix of AIs, cyborgs, and uploaded human minds – all with personalities backed up in secure locations – the only thing they need fear is the existential cost of failing to complete their missions, for in their own eyes, they are the first defense against the chaos that would prevail if the Empire fell.

Archangel teams are generally sent on high value missions against serious threats, but individual agents have also been known to be "borrowed" by the Secret Service for more mundane but politically important tasks, such as finding a misplaced Imperial princess.

The GOD's primary mission of intercepting advanced technological threats (here generally defined as various LC 0-1 examples of TL12 and TL12<sup>^</sup> technology) has naturally led to it developing a substantial scientific capability. The agency is not shy about poaching whatever mad-science technologies it uncovers. Where these technologies are not ready to be unleashed on the world (or turned over the Imperial Navy or Science Ministry), its own cadre of scientific AIs have often attempted to repurpose them for use by their own covert Archangel teams. As a result, for example, Archangel starships often have the same combat capabilities as an Imperial navy frigate while appearing to be, say, a battered old TL11 tramp freighter or courier ship.

The agency's head remains Colonel Erasmus, who, like most people in the current imperial elite, is functionally immortal. Many years before, Erasmus was a personal bodyguard of one of the earliest emperors, and later head of threat prediction at palace security. While his relationship with the emperor is no longer as personal, he retains the emperor's ear. He is close to the centuries-old sapient AI known as Merlin, who runs the Secret's Service's psycho-historical threat-assessment division (predicting the behavior and risks posed by large bodies such as mass movements or star nations via staggeringly complex math).

The agency is currently headquartered at Cloud Nine, a former Imperial wartime strategic command center that hovers deep inside of Neptune's atmosphere, protected by a force screen and transparent diamondoid shell. It is accessed only by long-range teleportation portals. Cloud Nine is both a floating fortress and ultra-secure black laboratory where many of

## ARCHANGEL-CLASS SPECIAL AGENTS

As one of the 49 or so most dangerous agents in the galaxy, a member of the GOD's elite archangel-class operatives (such as Raphael, Gabrielle, and Michael featured in the *Ultra-Tech* vignettes) is an approximately 1,000-point character. The following statistics can be considered typical:

*Racial Template:* The Combat Android template (*GURPS Ultra-Tech*, p. 167; 371 points) with the TL12 Model lens (+483 points) will be typical. Layer this with the cyborg brain (0 point), mind emulation (+5 points), or volitional AI (+32 points) machine intelligence lenses (see *Ultra-Tech*, pp. 27-28)

*Character Template:* Use either the 100-point Secret Agent template (*GURPS Space*, pp. 232-233) or the 150-point Super Spy lens depending on the degree of the agent's prior experience. Adjust skills for the racial template as usual, and do not take any traits (e.g., Rapid Healing or Alcoholism) that would be incompatible with the agent's android body.

*Equipment:* Agents are normally equipped to TL12 standards with some TL12<sup>^</sup> equipment. However, they generally keep a low profile and so carry concealable gadgets and weaponry rather than heavy gear.

the banned technologies captured in GOD missions can be safely studied and exploited.

The GM may wish to use the GOD as sinister elite henchmen of a villainous emperor, or, alternatively, as the heroes of a high-tech cinematic galactic special-ops campaign.

## CHERUBIM-CLASS COURIER (TL12<sup>^</sup>)

Externally resembling a centuries-old titanium-hulled courier vessel retrofitted with modern drives, this 300-ton ship is actually a state-of-the-art military scoutship customized for use by GOD agents, based on technologies developed for the Empire's latest-generation *Seraphim*-class frigates (see *GURPS Spaceships 3: Warships and Space Pirates*). Underneath the battered exterior is a second hull of hardened strange-matter exotic laminates augmented by force screen and stasis field grids. The latest generation of stardrives and subwarp drives provide swift FTL travel and 1,000G acceleration. The ship can turn invisible thanks to its powerful cloaking device, while a total conversion reactor provides plenty of power (and a good place to dispose of evidence).

### Front Hull System

[1]	Hardened Light Alloy Armor (dDR 3).
[2]	Hardened Exotic Laminate Armor (dDR 20).
[3!]	Cloaking Device.
[4]	Control Room (C9 computers, comm/sensor 8, three control stations).
[5]	Multipurpose Array (comm/sensor 10).
[6]	Defensive ECM.
[core]	Habitat (two cabins).

### Central Hull System

[1]	Hardened Light Alloy Armor (dDR 3).
[2]	Hardened Exotic Laminate Armor (dDR 20).

### Central Hull System

- [3!] Major Battery (100-MJ gamma-ray laser).
- [4!] Heavy Force Screen (dDR 70 or dDR 140).
- [5!] Habitat (nanofactory minifac, one-bed automed sickbay).
- [6!] Stasis Web.

### Rear Hull System

- [1] Hardened Light Alloy Armor (dDR 3).
- [2] Hardened Exotic Laminate Armor (dDR 20).
- [3!] Subwarp Drive (500G).

### Rear Hull System

- [4!] Subwarp Drive (500G).
- [5!] Super Stardrive.
- [6] Hangar Bay (10 tons).
- [core] Total Conversion Reactor (five Power Points).

The streamlined ship has gravitic compensators and artificial gravity, plus the dynamic chameleon option. Normal crew are a pilot and two other crew members as desired.

**TL Spacecraft**      **dST/HP**    **Hnd/SR**    **HT**    **Move**    **LWt.**    **Load**    **SM**    **Occ**    **dDR**    **Range**    **Cost**

### Piloting/TL12 High-Performance Spacecraft

12^ *Cherubim-Class*      50      +2/5      12      1,000G/c      300      10.4      +7      4ASV      23\*      2x      \$119.03M

\* Plus dDR 70 (dDR 140 if using two power points) from force screen. Armor is hardened.

Top air speed is 79,000 mph (but the practical limit is just below orbital velocity).

## YEZENDI ANTIMATTER SYNDICATE

This is a shady organization whose illicit activities have recently come to the attention of the Galactic Operations Directorate. The notorious Yezendi Antimatter Syndicate is the human name for Gwe Ologmo Kwized Phit 144 Tay'n Kak (or GOKP-144 TK for short), an Imperial criminal enterprise largely dominated by alien Yezendi immigrants and exiles, but also including members of human and other races. It is one of the more successful criminal syndicates to emerge in Imperial space in the last decade.

Antimatter is an excellent fuel or explosive, converting 100% of its mass as energy. Unfortunately, it needs far more energy to create than can be liberated from it. However, a superscience time-reversal process has been developed by Imperial scientists, and this has allowed rapid high-efficiency antimatter production. The availability of antimatter has encouraged large-scale utilization of the compact and efficient antimatter power plants in both warships and fast civilian courier vessels, as well as production of both pure antimatter and antimatter-catalyzed nuclear warheads for the Imperial military and many smaller but allied nations who are authorized to purchase Imperial arms.

Since an ounce of antimatter can produce a 1.22 megaton explosion, antimatter production is tightly regulated in the Empire. For safety reasons, antimatter production facilities are located on barren worlds or in space, often near a star to better use solar energy to power the process. Within the Empire, antimatter mass production is a government monopoly that is carefully regulated, strictly licensed, and heavily taxed (the revenue going to the Imperial treasury). A large chunk of antimatter production is reserved for the Imperial Navy and Patrol. The remainder is available for commercial sale or export; prices are high, as demand always outpaces the supply.

Enter the Yezendi, citizens of the Yezendi League, a sprawling anarchic polity on the fringe of human space. Clever Yezendi technologists reverse-engineered Imperial conversion systems, developing a more compact system. The

Imperial state department was able to exert diplomatic pressure on the Yezendi League into restricting antimatter sales into the Imperial space, but plans for the device escaped into the hands of freemarket entrepreneurs anyway. This was Gwe Ologomo Kwized Phit 144 Tay'n Kak (literally "Free Stellar Antimatter Production Enterprise of the 144th Egg"). Formed by a mated triad of two Yezendi ascendants (war veterans who had received citizenship) and a Yezendi merchant captain who had served on a human free trader, they purchased the device plans from the defunct company that owned them, then proceeded to infiltrate the Empire to establish a cross-border franchise operation for illicit antimatter production.

The upper levels of the syndicate consist of the owners of manufacturing facilities established in backwater regions of the galactic empire. Although usually run by Yezendi, the Pho Kaks (from a Yezedi word for "shell company") are mostly staffed by humans or other aliens and pose as legitimate companies, often makers of solar panels or fusion power plants for the colonial market. What they really sell, however, is cut-rate antimatter production facilities in the form of industrial kits, and access to a large "mailing list" database of smugglers and black marketers.

Franchises buy the kits, set up their operation, and manufacture antimatter. Then, they are visited by smuggler ships that pick up the product and deliver it to intermediaries. These are typically various Imperial criminal organizations who dabble in a variety of illicit goods. From there, the antimatter finds its way to various end users seeking to evade Imperial monopoly prices and taxes. These include legitimate space corporations, merchant lines or colonies wanting to buy cut-rate antimatter reactor fuel, mercenary units and independent planetary-defense forces seeking cheap but effective weapons of localized or mass destruction, and various terrorist and rebel groups.

Initially, most antimatter franchise operators were Yezendi immigrants, many of them members of the Talshiya Jocanoi ("Questioners of the Stars") minority; several million of this group had fled the Yezendi league to escape persecution for their unbelief in Nakorf, the astrological caste system dominating Yezendi life. But GOKP-144 TK offered bonuses to members who recruited more members.

## GWE OLOGMO KWIZED PHIT 144 TAY'N KAK

**Mission Statement:** The Yezendi Antimatter Syndicate is dedicated to making a profit through the sale and distribution of antimatter on the Imperial black market.

### Capabilities

**TL:** 12. **Members:** 4,000 (estimated).

**Wealth:** Wealthy.

**Contacts:** Criminal skills-18 [15]; Business skills-15 [10]; Technological skills-18 [15].

**Member Traits:** Legal Immunity (12 or less, -34%; Against local customs officers and port authority only, -34%) [5]; Undisclosed Facilities [1].

**Notable Resources:** The syndicate operates a network of front companies to manufacture and distribute TL<sup>^</sup> antimatter production technology. It has partial interests in several dozen "franchise" antimatter operations. High-ranking operatives may have some access to LC 0 antimatter bombs and personal TL12 antiparticle beam weaponry.

**Reaction-Time Modifier:** 0. The organization is quick to react to threats, although its decentralized cell structure and use of front companies can make it hard for lower-ranking associates to locate senior figures.

### Costs and Values

**Startup Cost:** \$732,672,000.

**Resource Value:** \$3,663,360.

**Patron Value:** 20 points. **Enemy Value:** -15 points (Hunter).

**Ally and Dependent Value:** The organization can supply 50- to 250-point hit men ("the Blue Boys"), smuggler captains, corrupt cops, security robots, and antimatter engineers as individual Allies. In addition, it includes similarly priced Ally Groups of enforcers, ship crews, robot guards, or techs.

### Social Attributes

**Type:** Criminal; Secret; Trade.

**CR:** 4.

**Loyalty:** Neutral (10, +0).

**Rank:** Organized crime rank 0-6 [5/level].

**Income Range:** \$8,100 (Average) to \$810,000,000 (Multimillion 3).

**Reputation:** -3 (Criminal organization that also supplies terrorists; Among law-enforcement agencies, the military, and law-abiding civilians).

### Notes

Leaders and many members are Yezendi from the unstarred or Questioner minorities. Isolated antimatter production franchises often make extensive use of security robots (such as the popular Cerebrus model). Although the syndicate is technically TL12, thanks to its antimatter production tech and a few ultra-tech weapons, most of its employees and installations are equipped at TL11.

Now a fair number of humans and other non-Yezendi began establishing their own antimatter franchises.

With a \$20 million initial investment and a month or so of effort, a cut-rate antimatter production facility can be set up in an uninhabited and uninhabitable system. Syndicate franchise owners generally pick a hot rockball or convenient metallic asteroid in close orbit around a star to set up on. Star systems without any habitable worlds such as those with young white A type stars, as well as close binary systems, are preferred as these are unlikely to have even marginally habitable planets and so get little traffic, even from survey vessels.

Franchise stations are run by small crews, often with a lot of robot assistance. Some are mom-and-pop operations (the franchise often targeted debt-ridden freighter captains for buy-ins), while others are larger in scope. Most are reasonably well-armed to discourage poaching by the smugglers who show up to buy the antimatter from them.

The original owners and directors of GOKP-144TK, the Primarchs, are not based in the Empire itself. Many of them live on planets in the Yezendi League or in border worlds. However, the salespeople who act as middle managers of the franchise operation and run the shell companies that manufacture the antimatter conversion kits are generally based inside the Empire. They typically pay 50-80% of the cost of franchise startups but expect the operator to follow their customer list and to pay back the loan. Failure to do so results in a visit from the franchises enforcers (nicknamed "Blue Boys" by

human members). The Blue Boys terminate the franchise with extreme prejudice if its percentage is persistently short or late, or if they have reason to believe that the franchise operators are stiffing the Primarchy.

In exchange for this loving supervision, the Primarchy provides the franchises with integration into the syndicate's distribution network and customer database. The syndicate has negotiated deals with many freighter captains and bribed custom authorities to ensure the antimatter is distributed. Since most of its operations are actually within Imperial territory, only its profits, in currency or invested in other portable goods, need cross the patrolled Yezendi-Imperial border. They then sell antimatter at prices undercutting the Imperial monopoly prices or to individuals or planetary governments the Empire doesn't deal with, and rake in profits.

## YEZENDI

The Yezendi are a species of alien humanoids who evolved from bipedal omnivores occupying a similar ecological niche to *homo sapiens*, except originating in swampy forest conditions. A typical Yezendi stands seven feet tall, and weighs about 250 lbs. They are bisexual with blue skin, a muscular build, and pronounced spines. Notable features are a bald head with prominent spines, three-clawed hands, and feet with two large claws and a single vestigial rear toe. Primitive Yezendi were burrowers, so Yezendi prefer low-built homes, basements, and underground installations.

## OTHER ULTRA-TECH ORGANIZATIONS

A few other organizations and races are mentioned in the *GURPS Ultra-Tech* vignettes.

*Novacorp*: A megacorporation that has specialized in catering to the diverse multi-species society of the present empire, where humans, robots, and aliens rub shoulders. Novacorp is famous for its lines of consoles, tools, and furnishings that are adaptable to multi-species use. Its SuperNova starport hotel chain offers luxury hotel accommodations and dining geared to multi-species parties.

*Imperial General Hospital*: This immense 150,000-bed medical complex is located adjacent to Earth's largest starport, which is equipped to TL12 standards. It was built to handle overflow from major disasters that hit the Imperial capital; usually only half of its beds are occupied. Imperial General has an entire wing devoted to the special needs of alien visitors to the capital, and can perform sophisticated procedures such as brain uploading and total cyborg replacement. Most of the surgical and nursing staff have specialist medical robotic bodies, such as bush robots; some are visiting or resident aliens with special talents, or (if psionic powers exist) have medically useful psi abilities. IG was partly founded from a grant from Imperial family, who continue to be patrons. A few staff members are Secret Service agents, who occasionally engage in sinister practices such as installing monitoring or other implants in persons of interest during surgery.

*T'Wuffle*: A friendly and adaptable seven-limbed race resembling a furry tree-dwelling octopus. These touchy-feely musically voiced xenophiles enjoy the company of both humans and Yezendi (sometimes too much). Known for their excellent sense of smell, they have a "barbarian" TL10 civilization on the Imperial frontier.

Yezendi are warm-blooded, and protein-based, using left-handed amino acids like humans do. Their biochemistry is a close analogue to human DNA, and with a few exceptions can consume most human foodstuffs without incident. Their metabolisms are, however, notably susceptible to alcohol (the "drunken Yezendi" is an unfortunate stereotype), but they are completely immune to the stimulating effects of caffeine.

Yezendi females lay eggs, which remain coupled to the females body via an umbilical for some weeks after laying; premature severing of the cord does 1d damage to the female and will terminate the developing fetus if not near-hatching unless quickly provided with artificial life support. Yezendi achieve adulthood after 16 Earth-years. Lifespans are similar to humans.

The Yezendi homeworld, Yez Dhe Prime, is a bit wetter than Earth, with a 1.2G gravity field, but similar average temperature and a standard atmosphere.

Yezendi have hundreds of different nations and cultures with unique languages, but the one most often spoken by interstellar travelers is the common tongue of the dominant culture in the Yezendi league, Yezfaki, who also make up about 80% of all Yezendi encountered off their home system.

The Yezfaki have a caste system determined by a complex system of astrological birth signs called Nakorf. There are 13 distinct Nakorf castes corresponding to the Nakorf Pavroch

T'va (their equivalent of the Zodiac), most of whose names, being archaic, bear only limited resemblance to their current roles. For example, the Yezfaki's "sign of the water-seller" caste actually covers a huge range of mercantile professions from corporate managers to traveling salespeople, and is better translated as "business caste." The water-sellers are commonly encountered in Imperial space, as are the "star-caster" caste (usually idiomatically translated as astrologer), of whom the majority are in fact space crew (as space travel is considered an astrologically sacred calling). Another caste often met are warriors, which include athletes, soldiers, and police. However, in Imperial space, warriors are often ex-military criminal enforcers working for the syndicate, infamously known on the street as "the Blue Boys."

Yezendi castes are social roles and have no genetic component whatsoever. Rather, their main function in society is restricting who can legally marry who (Yezendi families include two adult females and one adult male whose castes are considered compatible, plus children) and what job-guilds and thus occupations are open to applicants. However, guild-school ties and caste-links have a major role in forming an "old boy network" of patronage determining who has what position of power in government and corporate organizations.

Males and females in a caste wear distinguishing perfumes, but their subtleties are lost on those who lack Discriminatory Smell. Anyone with that advantage who has experience with Yezendi can identify castes.

For the Yezendi, space travel is considered somewhat sacred, especially in the direction of the constellation associated with one's birth sign. After the Yezendi developed interstellar travel, this helped provide an impetus for extensive colonization drives. A large segment of the total Yezendi population (a few hundred billion) live off world, and they're enthusiastic travelers, often taking service aboard their own or human starships. Although they are a proud and somewhat touchy race, they get along fairly well with many other sapients, including humans, as long as mutual respect is extended. Yezendi do, however, tend to get into more than their fair share of starport bar fights, for which their high strength and natural armament stands them in good stead.

The Yezendi interstellar government, the Kesh' Yenzed'ie, or Yezendi League, encompasses hundreds of worlds, but is a loose alliance of solar systems, planetary systems, and corporations influenced by a powerful religious-academic body, the Astrologers Guild. This organization both determines the caste of newborns and regulates most space travel and provides star captains, pilots, and navigators.

Discrimination because of the caste system is a significant stress point in present-day Yezendi society, due to resentment over the power exerted by the priest-caste over interstellar commerce. The Questioners of Infinity is a rogue group that rejects much of the divine nature of Yezendi astrology; many of them also come from individuals who were born in unblest or "Unstarred" unions (out of wedlock or in marriages that go against caste-parings).

While these still possess castes, they're considered tainted. Unstarred individuals, or those who follow Questioner theory, are often forced into menial or underworld jobs. Not all Questioners are Unstarred, however – some adopt the position out of atheism, for philosophical reasons, or a desire for social reform. Several Yezendi planetary governments actively discriminate against the Unstarred and, in particular, the Questioners as they threaten the current power structure.

A few frontier colonies were established by Questioners, but in recent decades, these were stereotyped as havens for pirates and smugglers, and a recent police action led to these worlds being forcibly occupied and reincorporated into the Yezendi League. Questioners who resisted this were imprisoned or forced into exile, some fleeing to human space to find sanctuary in the Empire. While many are honest workers, a sizable percentage do retain ties to the Yezendi underworld, including the Antimatter Syndicate.

## Yezendi

20 points

A tall, blue-skinned race, with spiny ridges on the head, elbows, knees, and running down their backs. The spines are defensive in nature and also scent organs. Yezendi (whether male or female) are ruggedly built and muscular, and on average 40 lbs. heavier and a foot taller than a human of comparable strength.

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST +2 [20]; DX -1 [-20].

**Secondary Characteristic Modifiers:** +2 HP [4].

**Advantages:** Claws (Talons) [8]; Discriminatory Smell [15]; Short Spines [1].

**Disadvantages:** Disciplines of Faith (Ritualism) [-5].

**Quirks:** Alcohol Intolerance; Horrible Hangovers; Proud. [-3]

## Lenses

**Astrologer** (+6 points): A member of the favored star-caster caste that dominates interstellar travel and government. Status 1 [5]; Religious Ritual (Yezendi Astrology) (H) IQ-2 [1].

**Unstarred** (-5 points): Born under a poor astrological sign or in a union that did not involve an astrologically approved caste-pairing. Social Stigma (Second-Class Citizen) [-5]. May be combined with Questioner, but many Unstarred are still believers.

**Questioner** (0 points): A member of an atheist minority. Replace

Disciplines of Faith (Ritualism) with Social Stigma (Excommunicated) [-5].

## ABOUT THE COLUMNIST

David L. Pulver is a Canadian freelance author. An avid science-fiction 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.



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# FASHION FORWARD

BY MATT RIGGSBY

The idea that clothes make the man is an ancient but persistent one. Fashion and ornament have been an ongoing concern from before the dawn of civilization to the present, and it'll likely continue well into the future. *GURPS Low-Tech* and *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 8: Treasure Tables* present ways of describing and pricing fancy clothes. This article does the same for future settings, providing haute couture for ultra-tech (TL9+) societies.

## GARMENTS

This table contains costs and weights for a range of common items of clothing. *Light* garments are short, loose and open, or made of lightweight fabrics, suitable for hot weather or showing off skin. *Winter* garments are long and/or made of thick, heavy fabrics, suitable for cold weather.

As *GURPS Ultra-Tech* notes, conductive fibers in clothing are standard at TL9+. Garments can be a sort of hub for power distribution and personal networking for multiple devices. While most devices which need to communicate are likely capable of wireless communication, limiting them to a physical network is useful security.

Garment	Cost	Weight	Notes
Belt	\$14	0.25	[1]
Cap	\$6	0.1	[2]
Cape	\$18	2	
Cloak	\$46	5	
Dress/robe, light	\$37	0.6	
Dress/robe, regular	\$69	1.2	
Dress/robe, winter	\$103	3	
Gloves	\$14	0.5	
Hat	\$11	0.2	[2]
Hat, large	\$17	0.3	[2]
Hooded cape	\$20	2.2	
Hooded cloak	\$50	5.5	
Hooded shirt, light	\$24	0.44	[3]
Hooded shirt, regular	\$48	0.88	[3]
Hooded shirt, winter	\$73	2.2	[3]
Jacket, light	\$33	0.6	
Jacket, medium	\$66	1.2	
Keffiyeh/turban	\$15	0.5	
Long coat	\$46	5	[4]
Overcoat	\$99	3	[4]
Poncho	\$23	3	
Sandals	\$22	0.5	

Garment	Cost	Weight	Notes
Sash/scarf	\$11	0.2	
Shawl	\$22	0.4	
Shirt, light	\$22	0.4	[3]
Shirt, regular	\$44	0.8	[3]
Shirt, winter	\$66	2	[3]
Shoes	\$37	2	
Short boots	\$73	3	
Skirt, light	\$14	0.3	
Skirt, regular	\$28	0.6	
Skirt, winter	\$46	1.5	
Slippers	\$32	1	
Tights, light	\$17	0.3	
Tights, regular	\$33	0.6	
Tights, winter	\$50	1.5	
Toga/Sari, light	\$44	0.8	
Toga/Sari, regular	\$88	1.6	
Toga/Sari, winter	\$132	4	
Trousers, light	\$33	0.6	
Trousers, regular	\$66	1.2	
Trousers, winter	\$99	3	
Tunic, light	\$17	0.3	[3]
Tunic, regular	\$33	0.6	[3]
Tunic, winter	\$51	1.5	[3]
Underwear, brief	\$10	0.2	[5]
Underwear, extensive	\$40	0.5	[5]
Vest	\$32	0.5	

## Notes

[1] Leather or sturdy cloth, strong enough to support pouches, holsters, and other gear.

[2] A cap is a small, brimless or nearly so piece of headgear such as a yarmulke, beret, or baseball cap. A hat is a somewhat larger item of headgear, such as a porkpie hat, fedora, or cowboy hat. A large hat is a particularly big item of headgear with a notably large crown, brim, or both, such as a top hat, "coolie" hat, or a colonial era tricorne or bicorne hat.

[3] A tunic is a square, sleeveless top like a large vest; a shirt has sleeves. Winter shirts/tunics include sweaters, sweatshirts, and similar insulated tops.

[4] A long coat is a full-length but uninsulated garment such as a duster or raincoat. An overcoat is insulated for cold-weather use.

[5] Brief underwear is a minimal set of undergarments, such as socks, briefs or loincloth, and a minimal bra if needed.



Extensive underwear adds undershirts or more structured foundation garments like girdles and corsets.

## FASHION TECHNOLOGIES

Expensive outfits are still impressive, or perhaps it's that impressive outfits are expensive. Flattering cuts and attractive colors and accessories cost money. Those who dress carefully gain a reaction bonus from those who can see them. The bonus depends on the total cost of styling and decorative embellishments for the entire outfit. An outfit with a total cost twice or more the basic cost of an outfit (20% of monthly cost of living, or \$120 for Status 0) provides +1 reaction bonus. A total cost five times or more the cost of a basic outfit provides +2 reaction bonus, or +3 for an outfit worth 10 times basic cost or more.

**GURPS Ultra-Tech** provides a number of clothing options (pp. 38-40), but those aren't necessarily options to make garments more attractive. An untailed uniform using varicloth to switch between khaki and olive drab, for example, is unlikely to impress anyone despite its cost. The options below specifically address styling which helps provide reaction bonuses.

### Conventional Garments

The things that have traditionally made low-tech clothing expensive and attractive become vastly cheaper at higher TLs. Chemists started making synthetic dyes in TL5, and developments in the field proceeded rapidly, providing cloth producers a palette of colors as diverse as it is inexpensive. Embroidery can be performed by machine, printing has gone far beyond wood blocks, painting has been replaced by inexpensive silk screening, and so on. Unlike pre-industrial TLs, where any decorative embellishment was the product of significant labor and a sign of wealth, passive physical decoration is cheap and only the *right* kinds of embellishment cost more money (and provide reaction bonuses!).

With technological developments come new and radically different concepts in clothing: varicloth, living plastic, and more. Still, garments made out of woven cloth or analogous substances (durable papers, breathable felts, soft-textured plastics and rubbers) are likely to endure. As ultra-tech fabrication techniques make clothes cheaper, they'll get closer and closer to being disposable, and fashions will change with dizzying speed. The positive impression one's clothing makes, then, will be dependent on the freshness of the look.

Conventional garments, made out of simple cloth, may be purchased for any price above what's indicated in the table on p. 24, up to a total of 20 times the garment's base value. The premium price may indicate a particularly stylish design, high-quality fabrics, exclusive maker label or other desirable logo, decorative stitching, fancy buttons, and so on. The price premium counts toward the total cost of the outfit for the purposes of figuring reaction bonuses. However, that bonus can fade over time as that static look becomes dated and unfashionable. The GM may roll 3d annually for any garment. On a roll less than or equal to the TL, the effective value of the garment in excess of its base price is reduced by half of that original excess for purposes of calculating a reaction bonus. After two such successful rolls, the garment provides no reaction

bonus. A successful roll against Current Events (Popular Culture) reveals the current effective value of a garment.

*Example:* Someone at TL10 buys a shirt for \$150 and trousers for \$200. With shoes, the total value of the outfit is \$387, more than double the base price of a Status 0 outfit (\$120) but less than five times, for a reaction bonus of +1. After a year, the GM rolls an 8 for both the shirt and the trousers. The excess value of the shirt ( $150 - 44 = 106$ ) is halved ( $106/2 = 53$ ), making the effective value of the shirt \$87. The excess value of the trousers ( $200 - 66 = 134$ ) is halved ( $134/2 = 67$ ), making their effective value \$133. The effective value of the ensemble is now \$257, just barely over the double cost threshold and still giving +1 reaction bonus. If either shirt or trousers goes farther out of style, the outfit doesn't provide enough current pizzazz for a reaction bonus.

### Other Programmable Clothing

Video suitsprays, swarmwear, and clothing belts (**Ultra-Tech**, pp. 38-39) follow the same rules as varicloth. They are not inherently attractive or impressive. They may, however, be programmed to be so. Designs may be purchased which count toward the value of the outfit for the purposes of calculating reaction bonuses, but their value is liable to decrease over time.

### Bioplastic

At TL10, bioplastic becomes available for use in garments as well as in high-performance applications like armor and spacesuits. The major benefit is that bioplastic clothing is self-repairing, stitching itself back together after hits to the wearer doing up to its base value/12 points of damage, rounded up. For example, a bioplastic shirt can repair the hole made after an attack doing up to  $44/12 = 3.66$  or 4 points of damage. Bioplastic garments cost three times as much as plain cloth and provide no inherent fashion advantage, though they can benefit from styling as conventional garments do.

### Varicloth

Varicloth (**Ultra-Tech**, p. 39) doesn't have an inherent decorative value, and its extra cost doesn't count toward the value of decorated clothing for calculating reaction bonuses. Many uses are purely utilitarian. For example, a varicloth garment may contain designs like high-visibility bright orange stripes for hunters or agency logos for law enforcement. For such utilitarian patterns, only the base cost of the garment counts toward the value of the outfit for the purpose of determining reaction bonuses. Thus, a varicloth shirt has a price tag of \$132, but when calculating reaction bonuses, it counts as having a value of \$44.

However, "designer" patterns are available for varicloth, presenting a more stylish appearance. High-quality patterns may be purchased for any price up to 19 times the base value of a comparable static garment. When in use, add the value of that pattern to the value of the outfit for calculating reaction bonuses. For example, a varicloth shirt using a \$50 pattern design contributes  $\$50 + \$44 = \$94$  to the value of the outfit.

Like more expensive conventional garments, the value of patterns can decline over time, following the same rules: on a roll of TL or less made annually, the pattern loses half of its original value. However, varicloth garments may be reprogrammed, loading on different sets of patterns as they are purchased.

## Responsive Fabric

Responsive-fabric garments (*Ultra-Tech*, p. 39) are, like varicloth, not inherently more stylish than plain clothes. They typically provide only their base value toward reaction bonuses. However, responsive-fabric garments may be reconfigured to make them look and fit better. Make an IQ-based roll against Sewing skill; Fashion Sense gives +1. In a campaign where clothing matters, the GM may allow more specifically applicable skills, such as Artist (Fashion). On a success, double the base value of the garment for the purposes of calculating reaction bonuses. For example, a responsive-fabric shirt may be adjusted to have an effective value of \$88 toward the effective cost of an outfit.

*To call a fashion wearable is the kiss  
of death. No new fashion worth its salt is  
ever wearable.*

– Eugenia Sheppard

## Other Materials

Other radical kinds of materials become available at higher TLs. These are essentially all for show, with only incidental practical effects. Like old-fashioned decorative embellishments, these achieve effects which are rare and expensive to duplicate. Anyone can make a knock-off logo, but it's expensive to create a knock-off coat of bark and lichen. These garments, therefore, retain their value for calculating reaction bonuses over time; there are no rolls to reduce their effective value.

## Kinetic Fabric (TL9)

The fabric has "moving parts," sections of fibers which physically move, possibly bending, expanding and contracting, or even traveling through the weave of the fabric. This can be used for effects like a ring of figures marching around a wrist or neck band, or thickened ribs on what appears to be a cable-knit sweater rearranging themselves into different patterns. The cost is double that of normal clothing. It may be combined with varicloth for quadruple the base cost of the garment, but only the initial doubling counts toward the value of the garment for calculating reaction bonuses. However, the value of varicloth patterns do count separately. For example, a kinetic fabric shirt costs \$88, all of which counts toward the value of the outfit; a varicloth version costs \$176, but without designer patterns, the shirt still only costs \$88 toward the value of the outfit. 2A/10 hr. LC4.

## Magnetic Fluid (TL9)

The "fabric" of the garment consists of tiny connected cells with a magnetic grid underlying it. The cells contain a mixture

of a fluid and powder responsive to magnetic attraction. The grid is controlled by a simple computer which turns magnets on and off, making the powder swirl through the fluid in interesting patterns. Too slow to act as even a makeshift low-resolution display, the flowing patterns resemble a lava lamp or shifting ink blots. Triple cost and weight of normal clothing. B/6 hr. LC4.

## Video Cloth (TL9)

Video cloth uses flexible materials to make an entire garment a high-resolution video screen. It must be attached to a small computer (*Ultra-Tech*, p. 22) or dedicated input device (\$25, negligible weight) providing a video feed. Entertaining as it may be, it emits a gentle glow, so it's utterly useless for real camouflage. Indeed, reduce darkness penalties by -4 within one yard of the wearer. Multiply cost of its base garment by five; lightweight built-in speakers to play audio accompanying the video cost \$50. B/10 hr. LC4.

## Living Garments (TL10)

Unlike bioplastic or living metal, which only mimic certain biological functions, these are *actually* alive. Plant-based living garments are genetically engineered outerwear with surfaces of leaves, bark, moss, and even blooming flowers, but are flexible enough to wear as clothing. Animal-based garments are mostly living skin, frequently with a soft-fur surface, but sometimes a textured-skin surface like alligator skin. They also contain rudimentary organs like lungs and a heart to keep the whole thing alive and give the garment signs of movement on its own.

They may be worn for up to 12 hours without damage, but must be returned to special environmental storage for hydration, feeding, and other maintenance for at least a few hours before they are worn again. The garments themselves are four times the cost and weight of a regular garment, and storage costs 1% of the garment cost per month. LC4.

## Force Suit (TL12^)

A force suit is essentially a complex but very low-powered conformal force screen (*Ultra-Tech*, p. 191). It can be used simply to invisibly cover the user, providing insulation and protection from the elements but leaving the user essentially naked. However, it has more aesthetic applications than that. A force suit projects a two-layered screen with a thin void in the middle, which may be filled with any number of things: colorful vapors, the dust of crushed colorful minerals, point sources of electricity creating colorful arcs of plasma, even a layer of water and tiny fish, making it a wearable aquarium. These are held in place by the force field, moving along with the wearer. A force suit provides DR 1. \$800, 1 lb. (the "filling" may require extra cost and weight). B/4 hr. LC4.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

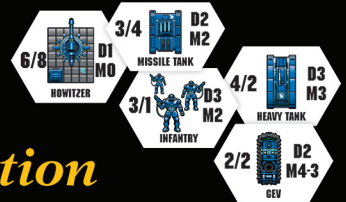
Matt Riggsby is wearing a blue and gold gown set off by a crimson mortarboard. His accessories include LSO crystals and a global look from C of Kansas. Next on the runway are his gorgeous wife, his son on fleek, and several dogs who don't wear pants.

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# GODS OF COMMERCE

BY CHRISTOPHER CONRAD  
AND JASON “PK” LEVINE

Gods of commerce – also known as gods of coin, finance, mercantile ventures, prosperity, trade, or wealth – are patrons of merchants, shopkeepers, traders, and anyone else who considers business transactions sacred. Some delvers follow these gods out of greed, but many truly respect the way that commerce can improve communities and lives.

This article follows the format established in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 7: Clerics*. These rules also mix well with *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 17: Guilds*, though that supplement isn't required.

## COMMERCE GODS AND MORALITY

Gods of commerce define “good” and “evil” differently than most deities. They care about how their followers conduct business and trade, not their overall approach toward life.

A *holy* commerce god demands fair, honest transactions; worshipers *can* charge ridiculous prices, negotiate lopsided deals, take advantage of someone's circumstances or situation, and so on, but they must do so openly. Unjustified hyperbole is fine, as long as it remains subjective (“These are the highest quality healing potions you can buy!”) rather than objective (“My healing potions can cure diseases that no other potion can!”). An *unholy* commerce god is fine with outright lies, forgery, swindling, and so on, but also expects followers to handle their own problems – offering divine assistance only as long as the worshiper remains “a good investment.” Unsurprisingly, both types insist on a substantial tithe.

## ELEMENTS

The divine servitors of a commerce god, in addition to the usual Good or Evil (rarely Nature), will usually take some combination of Beauty, Order, Peace, Travel, and Wisdom. Unholy gods add Deception – and either type may also include War, if banditry or military profiteering are a focus.

## SPECIAL POWERS

Those who worship a commerce god have a variant power modifier (worth -10%), the specifics of which depends on their god's morality.

A *holy* god of commerce insists on the two traits below. Anyone who violates these tenets loses access to Holy Might, as per *Power Modifier: Holy* (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers*, p. 22).

- *Code of Honor (Merchant's)*: Never counterfeit or debase currency. Never sell outright fakes or forgeries. Always try to negotiate for a better deal. Uphold any contract that you sign or similarly swear to honor. -5 points.

- *Vow (Tithing)*: You must give 10% of all income (*before* expenses) to your church or god. It doesn't matter where it comes from or if it's “official” income; if you find money lying on the ground or sell a monster's teeth for cash, 10% of it belongs to your deity. -5 points (*it's more than a quirk in Dungeon Fantasy*).

An *unholy* commerce deity cares solely about material acquisition at all costs. As such, followers need only take Vow (Tithing); Greed is nigh-ubiquitous, but not technically *required*. They are otherwise completely free to cheat anyone they deal with . . . but if they're ever *caught* (by the victim, authorities, a lynch mob, etc.), their power stops working immediately. The god will withdraw Unholy Might at the beginning of the confrontation, even if doing so leaves the merchant in a dangerous situation! The *only* way to get it back is to either face the music or evade/escape capture, and then bribe the god with a tithe or sacrifice of \$1,000.

The abilities list for both types of commerce god are practically identical, as it's their *usage* that defines morality. Note that “Talent” is used below as a shorthand for your Power Investiture (for clerics), Holiness (for holy warriors), or Unholiness (for unholy warriors); unless specified otherwise, it applies to any roll made to use or activate the ability.

- Ally (Divine Servitor; Built on 100%; 12 or less; PM, -10%; Summonable, +100%) [19] or (15 or less) [29], for help either holy or Hellish. Talent adds to any success rolls the servitor makes to complement your skill rolls or otherwise *directly* assist you (e.g., a First Aid roll to patch you up). Reaction or Influence rolls aren't normally required for your servitor to help you (see *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 5: Allies*, p. 12), but if the GM calls for one, Talent adds to that as well.

● Charisma (PM, -10%) [4.5/level\*], to make a great impression. Talent adds to any rolls that someone *else* must make to converse with you (e.g., a Hearing roll to hear you over the din of a crowd).

● Common Sense (Conscious, +50%; PM, -10%) [14], to realize whether you're overlooking anything important. The Conscious enhancement allows Common Sense to also be used *actively*, allowing the player to ask the GM's opinion on whether an action would be sensible.

● Cultural Adaptability (PM, -10%) [9], which reduces any penalty for negotiating with monsters, savages, etc. (see *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Exploits*, p. 10) by -3 (e.g., -10 becomes -7); this cannot provide a net bonus. You may also roll against IQ (or, where appropriate, Savoir-Faire) plus Talent to answer general questions about any culture or society.

● Detect (PM, -10%) for evil [18], good [18], or supernatural beings [18].

● Empathy (PM, -10%) [14], to gauge people's motives and truthfulness.

● Intuition (PM, -10%) [14], to make educated guesses about situations.

● Luck (PM, -10%) [14] or Extraordinary Luck (PM, -10%) [27], as your god favors your deals. If you declare your use of Luck *in advance*, Talent gives a bonus to all three success rolls.

● Oracle (PM, -10%) [14], to read good or bad fortune in the stars.

● Patron (Deity; 6 or less; Highly Accessible, +50%; PM, -10%; Minimal Intervention, -50%; Special Abilities, +100%) [29] or (9 or less) [57]. Your reaction roll (for Minimal Intervention) is modified by Talent, along with -4 to +4 based on how profitable the GM thinks your actions are or will be.

● Resistant to (Evil or Good) Supernatural Powers (+3) or (+8) (PM, -10%) [5 or 7]. As usual, holy delvers take Resistant to Evil, while unholy get Resistant to Good. Talent has no effect.

● Serendipity (PM, -10%) [13.5/level\*], to stumble across good deals, both literally and metaphorically. Talent adds

to the *first* roll (if any) made to take advantage of the stroke of luck.

● Spirit Empathy (PM, -10%) [9], useful if you magically summon spirits for inside information.

● Tycoon (PM, -10%) [9/level], a new Talent (p. B89) that adds to Body Language, Connoisseur, Counterfeiting, Detect Lies, Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Forgery, Merchant, Propaganda, Public Speaking, Smuggling, and Streetwise. (Holy merchants use Counterfeiting and Forgery to *identify* fraudulent items, not to make them!) Add its level to any reaction or Influence roll toward someone you're making a deal with. Your power Talent has no effect.

● Voice (PM, -10%) [9], to sell your wares vocally. Talent helps as for Charisma, above.

● Wealth (Comfortable; PM, -10%) [9], (Wealthy) [18], or (Very Wealthy) [27]. If you anger your god enough to have your power withdrawn, two things happen. First, you can no longer sell back items for improved rates, as other merchants sense that your goods will bring ill fortune. Second, until you atone, the GM may treat the quality of your gear as one step in quality lower per degree of Wealth lost, to a minimum of cheap. Cheap armor gives -1 DR, cheap weapons get +2 to breakage rolls, and other cheap gear breaks on a roll of 17-18 when used. Alternatively, anything with an enchantment may instead temporarily lose one enchantment (or one level of a leveled enchantment) per degree of Wealth lost. (For example, if you lose Wealthy, that's two degrees, so the GM could say that your fine-quality armor with Fortify +2 is now good-quality armor with Fortify +1, or that it's still fine-quality armor but with no enchantment). Talent adds to any rolls to locate a public bank, store, market, etc.

\* Multiply this by the number of levels, *then* round up.

In addition, holy deities grant True Faith (PM, -10%) [14] while unholy ones grant Dread Touch [14] (see *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level*, p. 41).

## ROLES OF COIN

Clerics and holy warriors of commerce offer good "compromise" options when the party needs both a godly delver and coverage of another role – either because the group is missing a specialist in that area, or because the campaign demands "double coverage" (e.g., the GM says, "I know that you have a bard, but you really want more than one 'face' in this game!"). Such roles include:

*Face:* It never hurts to have someone likable and good with people, especially if you lack a bard. Good abilities include Charisma, Cultural Adaptability, Empathy, Tycoon, and Voice; for skills, grab Body Language, Detect Lies, Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, and Public Speaking.

*Fixer:* Keeping a finger on the pulse of a community can be a life saver. This is almost a unique role, but it slightly overlaps the bard, innkeeper, and thief. Grab abilities as for the face, above, but focus on mundane advantages like Contacts and Contact Group, Merchant Rank, Patrons, and Status – and skills like Current Affairs and Streetwise.

*Looter:* While the artificer, scholar, thief, and wizard are all useful when it comes to identifying and selling loot, you specialize in it! You already have Merchant, but add Counterfeiting, Forgery, Search, Smuggling, and a few specialties of Connoisseur. For abilities, Serendipity, Tycoon, and Wealth are must-haves.

*Lucky/Wise One:* When you don't know what you'll need on a given mission, it's hard to tell luck from prepared wisdom. As such, this is a potential replacement for scholars, innkeepers, and (to a lesser degree) artificers, all of whom adapt quickly to new situations. Grab Common Sense (which can replace many skills for "Is this a good idea?" rolls), Intuition, Luck, Oracle, Patron, and Serendipity.

*Noble:* If the upper crust is a part of your setting, it can be fun to join them! Grab an aristocratic Contact or two, Status, and Wealth (either mundanely or as a holy ability), and then add Savoir-Faire and possibly Connoisseur (for something hoity-toity) and Heraldry.

## COMMERCE PRIESTS

Clerics of commerce have the following changes to their template:

**Advantages:** Add Allies [varies], Contact Groups† [varies], Contacts† [varies], Lightning Calculator [2], Merchant Rank† [5/level], Patrons† [varies], Status† [5/level], and Wealth [varies] to the list of options.

**Disadvantages (Good Cleric):** Replace the first choice with Code of Honor (Merchant's) [-5] and Vow (Tithing) [-5].  
• Add Greed [-15\*], Honesty [-10\*], Sense of Duty (Coreligionists) [-10], and Vow (No edged weapons) [-10] to the lists of disadvantage choices, and remove Compulsive Generosity and Wealth.

**Disadvantages (Evil Cleric):** Replace the first choice with Vow (Tithing) [-5].  
• Add Greed [-15\*] and Social Stigma (Excommunicated) [-10] to the lists of disadvantage choices, and remove Compulsive Generosity and Wealth.  
• Take an additional -5 points worth of disadvantages from either list.

**Primary Skills:** Good clerics reduce Esoteric Medicine (Holy) to Per-1 [2]-13 and Exorcism to Will-1 [2]-13. • Evil clerics lower Poisons to IQ-2 [1]-12 and Exorcism to Will-1 [2]-13. • For both, add Merchant (A) IQ+1 [4]-15 and then choose *four* of Current Affairs (E) IQ [1]-14; Connoisseur (any), Fast-Talk, Heraldry, Propaganda, Smuggling, or Streetwise, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; Counterfeiting, Diplomacy, or Forgery, all (H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Body Language (A) Per-1 [1]-13; or Detect Lies (H) Per-2 [1]-12.

**Secondary Skills:** Good clerics remove First Aid, Surgery, and Teaching, making them available as optional background skills. • Evil clerics reduce Interrogation to IQ-1 [1]-13 and Intimidation to Will-1 [1]-13, and remove Teaching, making it an optional background skill.

**Background Skills:** You may also take any unchosen skill from the primary skills list above, or spend 1 character point for +1 to an existing skill's level.

† If using *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 17: Guilds*.

## COMMERCE PRIEST SPELLS

Clerics of finance are less proficient at healing than their "standard" counterparts, but gain access to spells from a wide variety of *GURPS Magic* colleges. Most of these help them either negotiate with other merchants or keep their trade goods and supplies in one piece while traveling and adventuring.

**PI 1:** Armor, Aura, Awaken, Bravery, Clean, Coolness, Converse, Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Extinguish Fire, Final Rest, Find Direction, Know Location, Lend Energy, Lend Vitality, Light, Magelock, Might, Purify Earth, Purify Water, Recover Energy, Seek Food, Seek Water, Sense Danger, Sense Spirit, Share Vitality, Shield, Silence, Vigor, Warmth, and Watchdog.

**PI 2:** Oath (*Required*), Command, Compel Truth, Create Water, Find Weakness, Great Voice, Hide Emotion, Minor Healing, Persuasion, Purify Air, Purify Food, Relieve Sickness, Remove Contagion, Resist Cold, Resist Disease, Resist Fire, Resist Lightning, Resist Pain, Resist Poison, Reveal Function\*, Seek Earth, Soilproof, Summon Spirit, Truthsayer, Turn Spirit, Turn Zombie, and Umbrella.

**PI 3:** Affect Spirits, Body-Reading, Command Spirit, Continual Light, Create Food, Cure Disease, Dispel Possession, Hide Thoughts, Magic Resistance, Major Healing, Preserve Food, Repel Spirits, Restore Hearing, Restore Memory, Restore Sight, Restore Speech, Seeker, Sense Life, Stop Bleeding, Strengthen Will, Test Food, Weather Dome, and Wisdom.

## MERCANTILE HOLY WARRIORS

Holy and unholy warriors who dedicate their life to trade are rare, and thus prized by their gods. They are often found defending merchant companies from banditry or working with a group of delvers to ensure that everyone gets a fair deal.

Make the following template changes:

**Advantages:** Change the Higher Purpose to (Defend My Business†). • Add Allies [varies], Contact Groups‡ [varies], Contacts‡ [varies], Lightning Calculator [2], Merchant Rank‡ [5/level], Patrons‡ [varies], Status‡ [5/level], and Wealth [varies] to the list of options.

**Disadvantages (Holy Warrior):** Replace the first choice with Code of Honor (Merchant's) [-5] and Vow (Tithing) [-5].  
• Add Greed [-15\*], Honesty [-10\*], Miserliness [-10\*], and Sense of Duty (Good entities) [-10] to the lists of disadvantage choices, and remove Compulsive Generosity.

**Disadvantages (Unholy Warrior):** Replace the first choice with Vow (Tithing) [-5].  
• Add Greed [-15\*], Miserliness [-10\*], and Social Stigma (Excommunicated)

[-10] to the lists of disadvantage choices, and remove Compulsive Generosity. • Take an additional -5 points worth of disadvantages from either list.

**Primary Skills:** Reduce Exorcism to Will-1 [2]-13. • Add Detect Lies (H) Per [4]-12 and Merchant (A) IQ [2]-12.  
• Also add *two* of Current Affairs or Savoir-Faire (High Society), both (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Connoisseur (any), Fast-Talk, Heraldry, Propaganda, Public Speaking, Smuggling, or Streetwise, all (A) IQ [2]-12; Counterfeiting, Diplomacy, or Forgery, all (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; or Body Language or Search, both (A) Per [2]-12.

**Secondary Skills:** Remove Physiology and Psychology.

**Background Skills:** You may also spend 1 point on any unchosen skill from the primary skills list above, at one level lower.

† Applies when enforcing contracts, fending off bandits, stopping hostile takeovers, and so on. For holy warriors this includes rooting out corruption, while for unholy warriors it includes covering the tracks of shady deals.

‡ If using *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 17: Guilds*.

**PI 4:** Astral Block, Banish, Bind Spirit, Copy, Dispel Magic, Divination, Gift of Letters, Gift of Tongues, Great Healing, Mystic Mist, Neutralize Poison, Pathfinder, Pentagram, Relieve Madness, Relieve Paralysis, Resist Acid, Restoration, Sanctuary, Shatter, Silver Tongue, Suspend Curse, Suspend Mana, and Vigil.

**PI 5:** Analyze Magic (Enchantments)†, Ancient History, (Animal) Control‡, Astral Vision, Bless, Curse, Drain Mana, Entrap Spirit, Essential Food, Explode, History, Instant Neutralize Poison, Planar Summons (Divine Servitor), Predict Weather, Protect Animal, Quick March, Rain, Regeneration, Remember Path, Remove Curse, See Secrets, Shape Earth, Stop Paralysis, Telepathy, and Water to Wine.

**PI 6:** Communication, Control Elemental, Enlarge Object, Instant Restoration, Shrink Object, and Suspended Animation.

\* This reveals any object's *mundane* function, but does not provide any magical details.

† This variant can only be used on enchanted items, potions, amulets, and talismans; see *Alchemical Charms (GURPS Magic, p. 220)*.

‡ For any beast of burden or watch animal.

In addition, *holy* clerics add Peaceful Sleep (**PI 2**), Healing Slumber (**PI 3**), Repair (**PI 5**), Borrow Skill (**PI 6**), and Lend Skill (**PI 6**) – while *unholy* ones add Alter Voice (**PI 4**), Rejoin (**PI 4**), Alter Visage (**PI 5**), Freedom (**PI 6**), and Steal Skill (**PI 6**).

## JAMES TRIMA

250 points

As a cleric of Akurath, Goddess of Personal Enrichment, James firmly believes in staying connected to all levels of society. He spends half of his time climbing the social ladder and hobnobbing with the elite, and the other half associating with “common street scum” and looking out for those in genuine need of help . . . as long as there's no great financial cost in doing so. Some who consider him a “soft touch” have tried to take advantage of his kindness, only to discover his skill at ferreting out lies. His dungeon-delving serves several purposes at once: protecting the common people from dangerous monsters, impressing the nobles with new tales of heroism, and (usually) padding his savings account at Ye Local Banke.

**ST** 12 [20]; **DX** 12 [40]; **IQ** 14 [80]; **HT** 12 [20].

Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 12 [0]; Will 14 [0]; Per 14 [0]; FP 12 [0].

Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 9; Parry 9 (Unarmed/Flail); Block 10. 5'8"; 190 lbs.

### Advantages

Clerical Investment [5]; Contact (City guard; Skill-15; 12 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [4]; Mind Shield 1 [4]; Power Investiture 3 [30]; Status 2 [10].

*Holy Abilities:* Cultural Adaptability (PM, -10%) [9]; Tycoon 2 (PM, -10%) [18].

### Disadvantages

Charitable (12) [-15]; Code of Honor (Merchant's) [-5]; Miserliness (12) [-10]; Sense of Duty (Adventuring Companions) [-5]; Vow (No edged weapons) [-10]; Vow (Tithing) [-5].

*Quirks:* Disciplined (Avoids starting fights). Extremely Limited Gluttony (Only for exotic spices). Overweight. Proud. Responsible (Weak Guilt Complex). [-5]

### Skills

Acting (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; Body Language (A) Per+1 [1]-15\*; Climbing (A) DX-1 [1]-11; Current Affairs (E) IQ [1]-14; Detect Lies (H) Per [1]-14\*; Diagnosis (H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Diplomacy (H) IQ [1]-14\*; Esoteric Medicine (Holy) (H) Per-1 [2]-13; Exorcism (H) Will-1 [2]-13; Fast-Talk (A) IQ+1 [1]-15\*; Flail (H) DX+1 [8]-13; Forgery (H) IQ [1]-14\*; Hidden Lore (Spirits) (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; Meditation (H) Will-2 [1]-12; Merchant (A) IQ+3 [4]-17\*; Observation (A) Per-1 [1]-13; Occultism (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; Propaganda (A) IQ+1 [1]-15\*; Public Speaking (A) IQ+1 [1]-15\*; Religious Ritual (Holy) (H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ [1]-14; Search (A) Per-1 [1]-13; Shield (E) DX+2 [4]-14; Sling (H) DX [4]-12; Stealth (A) DX-1 [1]-11; Streetwise (A) IQ+1 [1]-15\*; Theology (Holy) (H) IQ-2 [1]-12.

### Spells†

Armor (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Aura (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Command (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Compel Truth (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Continual Light (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Detect Magic (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Detect Poison (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Find Weakness (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Minor Healing (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Oath (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Persuasion (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Recover Energy (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Reveal Function (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Seeker (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Sense Danger (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Shield (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Summon Spirit (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Turn Spirit (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Watchdog (H) IQ+1 [1]-15; Wisdom (H) IQ+1 [1]-15.

\* Includes +2 for Tycoon.

† All spells include +3 for Power Investiture.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Christopher Conrad has been roleplaying for almost a decade, most often as a GM. He is a gaming enthusiast with over a dozen RPG systems under his belt who loves learning and teaching new ones. Christopher draws inspiration from all aspects of his life, including a love of both board gaming and nature, and is always looking for new ways to tell stories and new people of all ages to introduce to roleplaying. He lives in Tennessee, where he's helped to create an impressive network of fellow gamers.

The right Reverend PK Levine is proud to worship at the altar of J.R. “Bob” Dobbs, the multiverse's most successful businessman. When not smiting the unholy forces of anti-mercantilism, he earns his keep as the Assistant *GURPS* Line Editor. He lives on the edge of Chattanooga with his beautiful wife, three cats, and a mouse.

They'd both like to thank Jeff Hewitt, whose character concept inspired this article, and Phil Masters, whose work on city gods was influential.

# REALISTIC INJURY, EXPANDED

BY PETER V. DELL'ORTO

*GURPS Martial Arts* greatly expanded the rules for hit locations and injury. Using them, you can target veins and arteries, break an opponent's nose, lop off an ear, or shatter a spine. But they don't quite cover *all* of the maiming you can do . . .

The following optional rules give expanded guidelines for permanent and lasting injuries.

## USING THESE RULES

These ideas add more detail, but also more bookkeeping, more rolling, and more consequences to injury. They make the most sense in a game using *Realistic Injury (Martial Arts, p. 136)*, which they expand upon. In a more heroic or rules-light setting, ignore everything except for *Expanded Hit Location Effects* (below), and consider all such effects temporary.

### Permanent Injury

Wounds to some locations can have long-term – even permanent – effects beyond HP loss and immediate effects such as knockdown and stunning. The rules below call for a *permanent injury check* to see if long-term effects occur.

A permanent injury check is similar to a roll for *Duration of Crippling Injuries* (p. B422) – and for some locations, such as hands and feet, it replaces and subsumes those rolls. To make

a permanent injury check, roll against HT. Success means the injury is only temporary. Temporary injuries will heal when the lost HP are fully healed or recovered; the GM may wish to ignore any of the special effects listed below for these injuries in the interest of speeding play. Failure means there is a permanent but relatively minor effect – see below or *Martial Arts, p. 137*, for results. Failure by 3+ means the damage is both permanent and significant. *Dismemberment* (p. B421) only applies for limbs and extremities.

### Lasting Partial Injuries

When using *Partial Injuries (Martial Arts, p. 136)*, apply the penalties there normally. Optionally, a GM may force a permanent injury check for *any* injury severe enough to inflict the penalties for partial injuries, but with +3 for the roll. Success means the effects remain until the lost HP are healed. Failure means the injury is lasting (1d months); failure by 3+ means the effects continue for 1d months. Since these effects are very debilitating, it's harsh to make them permanent. Optionally, on an 18 on a permanent injury check, these effects are indeed permanent. This is *very* vicious; characters will need some or all of high HT, a lot of luck (or Luck), and supernatural or super-science healing – or will accumulate lasting damage quickly.

## EXPANDED HIT LOCATION EFFECTS

The following rules expand those found under *New Hit Locations (Martial Arts, p. 137)* and *Hit Locations* (p. B398). *Both* sets of rules apply! The penalty to attack rolls to hit a particular location is listed in parentheses.

### Arm (-2)

Use the effects listed under *Partial Injuries (Martial Arts, p. 136)* for injuries short of crippling. Make a permanent injury check per *Lasting Partial Injuries* (above) for duration.

### New Disadvantage: Missing Teeth

-1 point/level

Jaw hits sometimes result in this new disadvantage. With Missing Teeth 1, your biting damage is reduced by -1 per die, cumulative with Weak Bite (p. B161). Missing Teeth 2 (the maximum) makes this -2 per die. The damage type is unchanged. In most societies, each level of Missing Teeth reduces your Appearance by one level; apply that as a separate disadvantage.



### Ear (-7)

In addition to the special rules for cutting attacks, *crushing* attacks can also target the ear. Any injury from a crushing blow is treated as a major wound for purposes of knockdown and stunning, forcing a HT roll. If it's enough damage to actually *be* a major wound, the HT roll is at -5 for a major wound to the face! Injury over HP/4 causes the ear to swell with fluid (called a "cauliflower ear") – this is Distinctive Appearance (Cauliflower ear). Make a permanent injury check. Success means the damage lasts until the HP are healed. Failure means the effect lasts for 1d weeks; it can be drained (requires a needle and a successful **Surgery** roll at +5) to reduce the duration to 1d days. Failure by 3+ means the effect is permanent. If the initial damage was twice what was needed, the ear is severely mangled – failure gives Distinctive Appearance (Cauliflower ear) *and* reduces Appearance by one level for 1d weeks. On a 3+, both effects are permanent.

### Face (-5)

A severe facial wound may cause scarring, malformed features (which may not heal correctly), especially asymmetrical features, terrible bruising and inflammation, etc. In addition to the effects listed on p. B399, a major wound reduces Appearance by one level and gives Distinctive Appearance (Scarring). If the initial injury is twice this amount, reduce Appearance by two levels. Make a permanent injury check to determine duration.

### Feet (-4)

Any wound to the foot may cause broken, jammed, or amputated toes. Foot bones may be broken or fractured, impairing movement. On any injury, roll 1d: A 1-4 indicates an injured toe or toes, resulting in Basic Move -1 *and* Distinctive Feature (Limp); a 5-6 causes Basic Move -2 and the same Distinctive Feature. Make a permanent injury check to figure out duration. Injury over HP/3 cripples the foot normally, in addition to the effects above.

### Jaw (-6)

Any cutting, crushing, impaling, or piercing attack to the jaw that inflicts more than HP/10 injury requires a permanent injury check. On a failure, 1d teeth have been lost, giving the disadvantage Missing Teeth 1 (see p. 32). On a failure by 3+, 2d teeth have been lost, for Missing Teeth 2. Either result also reduces Appearance commensurately. Teeth losses are permanent, barring prosthetics or magical healing. At the GM's discretion, if the victim has Sharp Teeth or Fangs, a failure by 3+ removes that advantage until the teeth are replaced or magically regenerated. Optionally, Regrowth (p. B80) will regrow lost teeth; if so, each tooth takes 1d months – concurrent, not consecutive!

A major wound to the jaw may break the jaw. Make a permanent injury check. A success adds Disturbing Voice until the HP lost are healed (it's hard to talk clearly with a swollen mouth and jaw). Failure means this lasts for 1d months; failure by 3+ means the damage is permanent – the jaw is simply shattered and needs to be reconstructed. All of these add Restricted Diet (Soft or liquid foods) until healed completely!

### Hands (-4)

It's possible to lose fingers. Injury over HP/3 cripples a hand normally. In addition, *any* injury to a hand might break (or amputate) fingers. *Crushing* attacks which injure the hand force a permanent injury check. On a failure, one or more knuckles or fingers (1d-2, minimum 1) are broken; add Ham-Fisted 1 until the injury is healed. On a failure by 3+, 1d-2 knuckles or fingers *and* the thumb are broken; add Ham-Fisted 2 until the injury is healed. Any *cutting, impaling, or piercing* attacks may amputate fingers. Make a permanent injury check; on a failure lose a finger, or on a failure by 3+ lose a thumb. (See *Missing Digit*, p. B144.) Damage over HP/3 cripples the hand in addition to the above effects.

### Leg (-2)

Use the effects listed under *Partial Injuries (Martial Arts, p. 136)* for injuries short of crippling. Make a permanent injury check per *Lasting Partial Injuries* to find duration.

### Torso (0)

Use the effects listed under *Partial Injuries (Martial Arts, p. 136)*. Make a permanent injury check per *Lasting Partial Injuries* (p. 32) to determine duration.

## NEW EQUIPMENT

Several pieces of new equipment might help you avoid losing your teeth or your ears.

*Mouth Guard (TL7)*: A piece of plastic worn in the mouth that protects the upper or upper and lower teeth from impact. Provides +2 to any permanent injury check to the jaw but gives Disturbing Voice from impeded speech. \$10, 0.25 lbs with carrying case. A *custom* mouth guard costs \$100, provides +3, and doesn't impede speech.

*Ear Flaps (TL6)*: Soft leather or foam-lined fabric ear coverings. Gives +2 to any permanent injury check to the ears, but -2 to any Hearing rolls while worn. \$10, 1 lb.

### Simplifying

These rules can add drama and excitement to injury but can require some looking up in play. Here is a simpler option. Ignore the specific location-based rules. Instead, a failed permanent injury check is worth -5 points of appropriate disadvantages. A failure by 3+ is -10 points. A critical failure is -15 points. The GM should choose something appropriate to the type of injury and the location harmed. Limbs, extremities, etc. should use the existing crippling injury rolls – a permanent lost arm is still One Arm [-15], even if the roll was failed by only a point or two! The GM can also choose to swap in appropriate new disadvantages to replace any of the above penalties.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter V. Dell'Orto is the author of numerous *GURPS* articles for *Pyramid* magazine and author or co-author of many *GURPS* supplements, including *GURPS Martial Arts*. His blog is at [dungeonfantastic.blogspot.com](http://dungeonfantastic.blogspot.com).

# RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

## BRIEFLY, AN ADVENTURE

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

At the time of this writing, the longest movie to win an Academy Award for Best Picture was right around 222 minutes (without additional intro/outro music or intermissions): 1962's *Lawrence of Arabia*. (Running a minute shorter is 1939's *Gone With the Wind*.) The shortest movie to win is 1955's *Marty*, at 91 minutes. If we include all *nominees*, the extremities become 1963's *Cleopatra* (just over four hours) and 1933's *She Done Him Wrong* (66 minutes).

All of which is to say, there's a fair bit of length variation between what counts as a *movie* . . . even a *good* movie. And if you stop thinking of "movies" as being tied to a certain length, ultra-short YouTube films can vie mentally for award-winning television series comprising dozens of hours of footage.

So, how long should a game *adventure* be?

When I was in high school, my English teacher Mrs. Israel offered her writing advice (which Google tells me is a bit of wisdom of indeterminate origin): An essay or short story should be long enough to cover the subject, but short enough to be interesting. The same mindset can be applied to gaming adventures: They should be long enough to make sure the needs of the plot are met, but short enough to be the participants will be satisfied that it's done.

Of course, this can vary depending on the group, setting, genre, game system, and other considerations I'm no doubt overlooking. However, I think it can be instructive to speak in broad strokes about considerations for adventure length. Here, then, is an overview of some possible considerations.

## TIME

In recent years, my wife, son, and I have started doing more league-type play in our roleplaying games. These are typically at conventions or store gaming events and are allotted a certain amount of time, about three to four hours. And these sessions are usually pretty strict, since groups are typically scheduled before and after the slot. If you all dally too much in the sixth room of a 10-room dungeon and run out of time . . . well, the GM has to jump to the end, perhaps summarizing the things the group couldn't get to.

In my experience, if the players are doing it right (and most are), knowing there's a strict time limit often gives the session

a fairly tense and focused affair. There isn't the usual inclination to get marooned in Monty Python quotes, digressions, or other side treks.

Although most gaming groups have some leeway in their schedules, it's entirely possible for the GM to set a hard limit to the amount of time the group can spend on an adventure. This should be established beforehand, and the consequences of running out of time should be spelled out. These consequences can include:

- The adventure just ends, with no resolution. It's assumed the heroes make it home for further adventures, but there's no other resolution.
- The adventure ends with GM fiat resolution. This can be as elaborate or harried as need be: "Well, it's assumed that you all left and another group of heroes – who were a bit more focused – acquired the Orb of Trahala to save the world." Or, "Well, Cyberette was having by far the best rolls of the evening, so she manages to kill the big bad guy and take some additional loot. Everyone else didn't get anything more than they have right now."
- The adventure ends with the assumption of total defeat – even the death of the party, if that's appropriate. Although this is the most heinous of the assumptions, it might be appropriate for certain games or settings . . . or for certain groups who *really* need a fire lit under them to keep them on task.

If it's appropriate, the timetable can be worked into the adventure. Maybe Dr. Evilous' bomb is set to go off in three hours, and time is assumed to more-or-less advance at the same rate in the adventure as it is at the gaming table.

The biggest challenge of using time as a confining element is that it relies somewhat on the GM's design abilities to construct an adventure that can be resolved within the allotted block. If the players have been otherwise staying on task but are falling short because the adventure was a bit too ambitious, a fast-thinking GM can nudge things back on track by paring down encounters in real time. Maybe the scheduled penultimate shootout with the henchmen's goons is resolved with diplomacy or intimidation. Perhaps the final encounter isn't *quite* as tough as the GM originally statted it. And so on.

## SIZE

I admit that, throughout my gaming life, I've been enthralled by gargantuan adventures. Whether it was the massive *Call of Cthulhu* hardcover *Beyond the Mountains of Madness*, the *Dragon Mountain* boxed set for *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, or Monte Cook's breathtaking *Ptolus* setting, a large chunk of my gaming bookshelves are taken up by a small number of items.

But as I've gotten older, I've come to appreciate an adventure that does what it needs to do as tightly as possible. A six-room dungeon that includes opportunities for exploration, puzzle-solving, a couple of combats, and a satisfying final encounter? I'm in heaven. A tight eight-page adventure that's been pared back to the three encounters likely to stick with me? I'm on board.

Even the classic Decipher *How to Host a Murder* party games – arguably the most commonplace notion of LARPs that most the world is familiar with – accomplish their magic by a tightly controlled scope.

When designing an adventure, ask yourself what each encounter is *really* adding to the experience. In some cases, a larger number of encounters is required; for example, many dungeon-fantasy games are exercises in resource management, so less-than-vital encounters are actually important because they whittle away the heroes' reserves and present them with opportunities to unleash their big guns (perhaps erroneously) or keep them in reserve. But, in other cases, some encounters or scenes can be scaled down or eliminated entirely in the interest of keeping the adventure moving. A small haunted house with the six scariest rooms can be *more* effective than a rambling 20-room mansion that contains those same six encounters.

## JUST THE GOOD BITS

The band Roxette has a greatest hits album called *Don't Bore Us, Get to the Chorus!* (And I've probably just revealed too much about myself with that introductory line . . .) I think it can be a good encapsulation of an interesting adventure-design philosophy. Namely, what's the minimum you need to make an adventure or scenario *work*?

For example, the *Pathfinder Society* adventure *Honor's Echo* has a great hook: The heroes are given access to six "adventures," in the form of six letters. The players get to pick which adventures they tackle in what order, all feeding into the larger story. (One of the six stories is recommended as the finale.) Each of the subadventures is designed to be run in an hour or less. This means that each of those mini-adventures is as tight as possible: the first takes place in a forest and has *two* encounters; the second takes place in a basilica and has a whopping five rooms (only two of which have any combat); and so on. So, really, for each scenario, the heroes basically show up just for the climactic, interesting final encounter, resolve it, and get on with the rest of the larger adventure. (At the time of this writing, *Honor's Echo* is a free download.)

A similar approach is taken by computer RPGs such as the first two *Dragon Age* games, where encounters are highlighted on a map that the player can navigate to fairly effortlessly, without the traditional old-school roaming-the-earth looking for something to meet.

So, consider what it would take to pare back an adventure – or series of adventures – to *just* the really cool bits. *Start* the adventure with the oily mastermind revealing his plot, and the heroes having to save the day. Have that lead directly into the car chase where the PCs need to thwart the kidnapping attempt of a trusted scientist, resolving into a barroom encounter where the heroes have one shot at defusing a tense social interaction . . . and then have the whole adventure wrap up with the trusted scientist's betrayal and the final encounter aboard an airship armed with explosives. One adventure, four encounters, all of them turned up to 11.

This approach has some drawbacks. Not all players *want* a high-octane experience all the time . . . or even *ever*. (This can especially conflict with different game styles; see *The Game's the Thing*, below.) And some character types don't work as well with a pared back adventure; quieter characters, those devoted to information-gathering, and heavily social heroes can have a problem finding enough to do to make the players' time worthwhile. This can be resolved somewhat by ensuring that one or two of the encounters are tailored directly to those adventurers, but often those character concepts rely on the players' ingenuity to make themselves useful . . . which is trickier when things move swiftly without quieter moments for such concepts to slip in and express their own utility.

Still, it can be useful to keep adventures brisk. Many gamers struggle with the realities of juggling gaming time with other adult demands, and it can be helpful to figure out how to craft adventures that satisfy the players while keeping its scope, elements, and time requirements as under control as possible.

## 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.

## THE GAME'S THE THING

My default assumption is of a narrativist standpoint, where gaming elements are most often made to further a story the group's trying to tell. However, the advice herein is also appropriate for other groups. The important thing is just to align the adventure's expectations with the gaming preferences of the participants.

For example, if a shorter adventure is desired from a gamist standpoint, then do what you can to ensure that the pared-back adventure provides the same level of challenge that its lengthier counterpart does (easier said than done, admittedly). If a group favors a simulationist approach, then try to come up with realistic reasons why the adventure is curtailed. Perhaps the evil mastermind *does* have as elaborate a lair as he would in a lengthier adventure, but the heroes have high-level contacts that provide them with enough mooks to quickly resolve the first five less-interesting levels, leaving the heroes with the task of tracking down the final boss on that climactic level.

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