

# PYRAMID<sup>®</sup>

Issue 3/122 December '18

## ALL GOOD THINGS

### THE BOUNCERS

David L. Pulver

### NEW CRUSADERS

Christopher R. Rice

### THE UNDEAD-HUNTER

Sean Punch

### SUFFICIENTLY DERANGED

Phil Masters



# STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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*It's the end . . . But the moment  
has been prepared for.*

– The Doctor,  
in *Doctor Who* #18.7

## 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
- Orange:* Special Features

**COVER ART**  
Brandon Moore

# IN THIS ISSUE

As the classic adage goes, “All good things must come to an end.” And so it goes for *Pyramid*. For this – our final issue – we have a miscellany of articles that stretch across the bounds of genre and theme, bringing you what we can only hope are, indeed, “all good things.”

When you want to craft technological wonders far beyond the ordinary, it helps to be *Sufficiently Deranged*. Phil Masters – author of *GURPS Steampunk 2: Steam and Shellfire* – combines magic and gadgeteering, unleashing a new version of Magery for *GURPS*, gadget-based powers, and mad science that functions as syntactic Realm magic.

If the zombies and skeletons in your dungeon are getting to be too much trouble, call in *The Undead-Hunter*. *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game* architect Sean Punch provides details on this new evil-abating profession, including customization notes and power-ups, plus a sample character ready to add to your game.

Broaden your adventuring horizons with two new professions for *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy: Chevaliers and Commanders*. Christopher R. Rice – co-author of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 19: Incantation Magic* – presents new templates, lenses, advantages, special abilities, and power-ups suitable for the animal-riding chevalier and the leadership-mastering commander.

Book passage to the newest frontier world and discover more about *The Bouncers of Caradoc* . . . but don't be surprised if it's not a round trip! This month's Eidetic Memory offering by David L. Pulver – author of the *GURPS Spaceships* series – gives you a tour of a new world, with planetary stats, dangerous fauna, and potential campaign ideas. You also get *GURPS Boardroom and Curia* stats for a new space-exploration company.

On Bismark-3, the British decided to lease a smaller, more easily defended island instead of Cyprus (like in our timeline), and thus began the alternate history of *British Rhodes*. Find out more about what the island now looks like, who the major players are, and what the rest of the world is up to. Several *GURPS Infinite Worlds* campaign seeds suggest ways to use this interesting location.

Add new possibilities to those presented in *GURPS Monster Hunters 6: Holy Hunters* with *Native American Crusaders*. Christopher R. Rice offers an overview of some elements of their religions, plus details on adapting the crusader template for these heroes. Learn about a new miracle, two new divine vessels, two new monsters, and suggested reading for those wanting more information.

This month's Random Thought Table offers some *Final Thoughts*, looking back on philosophies that can be used to guide both a magazine and great gaming.

This month's *Pyramid* may mark the end, but it's a trove of all good things!

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# FROM THE EDITOR

## AND IN THE END, THE LOVE YOU TAKE IS EQUAL TO THE LOVE YOU MAKE

Welcome, gentle reader, to the last issue of *Pyramid*. This humble publication began in 1993 and has continued through three different formats, spending the last 10 years as a monthly PDF publication. That's a great run for *any* endeavor!

When we tried to look back on what kind of theme we might do for this issue, we realized that it was a great chance to celebrate a swath of *Pyramid's* history, shining the spotlight on various genres that make **GURPS** an amazing system for those looking to game across different styles and themes.

Looking back at *Pyramid* through the decades, I've always been amazed at the variety of articles we've run: rules, character options, threats and monsters, campaign ideas, and insight. We've tried to stay true to that mix of inspiration in our final issue.

Though this is *Pyramid's* final issue, we hope you continue to enjoy its magic throughout the **GURPS** line. Obviously – being

digital – the entire run of the series is still available to enjoy. (It's a great time to pick up any back issues you might've missed!) And many of *Pyramid's* most-beloved creators have **GURPS** supplements in the past, present, and – as our digital gnomes continue to work even as I type – into the future.

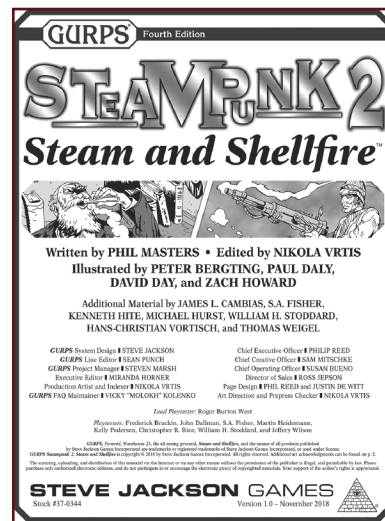
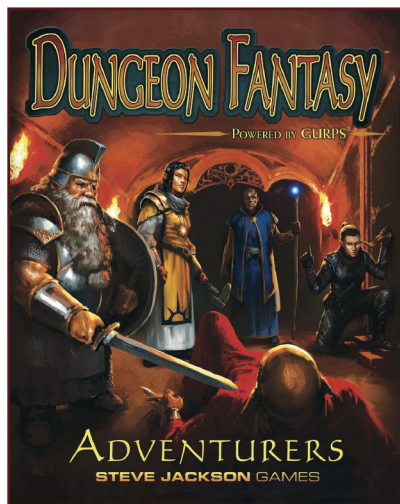
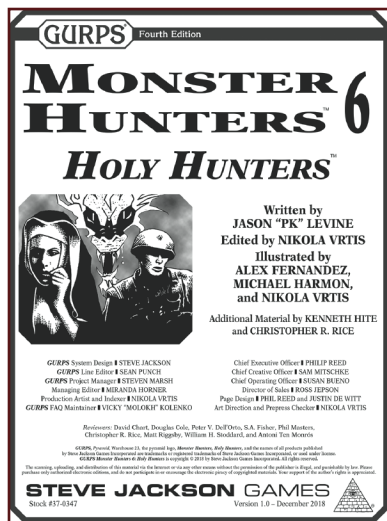
## WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

As I've noted in the past, we always love to hear from you. That remains true even now, as we sweep up and prepare to close the curtains.

What did you think of this issue? Were there bits that made an appropriate swan song, or did anything lay an egg?

Looking at the big picture – what have been your thoughts on *Pyramid* as a whole? Were there articles that are your favorites, perhaps that you'd like to see expanded further? Were there themes or ideas that deserve their own **GURPS** spinoffs?

Feel free to share your thoughts privately at [pyramid@sjgames.com](mailto:pyramid@sjgames.com), or post your thoughts and memories publicly among other game-minded friends at [forums.sjgames.com](http://forums.sjgames.com).



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# SUFFICIENTLY DERANGED

BY PHIL MASTERS

**GURPS** has rules for gadgets and science (mostly but not solely in the *Basic Set*) and a lot of optional rules for magic (including in *GURPS Thaumatology*), but the two don't meet very often. This makes sense if one insists that "technology" and "magic" are two completely different things, which *may* be good philosophy in most settings – but from another point of view, that of the creator of fiction, it's often untrue. Cinematic or comic-book "mad science" sometimes really might as well be magic; both are ways of creating extraordinary results with a lot of hand-waving and jargon, and the generous application of intelligence and special skills.

Sometimes, this is explained by "Clarke's Law" – the rule that a sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic – but in **GURPS** terms, that requires a fairly large TL difference between the technology and the people observing it. In those situations, it works fine. But *mad science* (also known as *comic-book science*) isn't about massive TL differences so much as it's about crazily ingenious one-off creations and devices. Superheroic inventors like Tony Stark, and cinematic mad scientists like Victor Frankenstein, don't claim somehow to have jumped multiple technological levels ahead of the people around them, though they'd probably say they're at the "cutting edge" of modern technology; rather, they apply the most advanced available technology with vast ingenuity and unique insights.

In other words, they're crazy. And what they do – all the spectacular effects and handheld superscience wonders – really, really might as well be magic. So this article is about using certain **GURPS** magic rules for this sort of crazy tech.

## THE BIG EXPLANATION

There are two ways of justifying the idea that mad science is akin to magic, if justification is needed. Both fit with the idea of using magic rules for mad science.

The first is simply to say that it's *Just the Way the World Works*. In the setting, plain modern tech really is capable of working all these wonders; it just has to be used right, by people who understand it (and who maybe have sufficient contempt for safety margins). In that case, pretty well anyone can produce near-magical effects with technology; mad scientists and super-inventors are simply the people with the brilliance, ingenuity, and dedication (and disregard for danger) to use it properly and come up with new tricks and applications, sometimes on the fly. This is the

default assumption of many fictional works (notably a lot of comic books), which are written by people who simply want "technology" to look cool and powerful, and don't care much about "realism" or internal logic. Super-technological tricks don't get repeated from week to week, or change the setting much, because the writers just forget about them. It's just how things are.

The second way is to say that at a basic level, mad science *is* magic, because magic is really *Reality Warping* (see *Magic as Reality-Shaping*, **GURPS Thaumatology**, p. 11), as very likely are some or all forms of what's explicitly labeled "magic" in the setting. Whether either of them know it or not, "mad" scientists are the same as wizards, because in both cases, their skills and arts focus their personal abilities to distort reality by sheer belief. Super-technological tricks appear to be oddly unrepeatably (unlike real science) because they actually depend on the presence and focused will of a mad scientist; once the inventor stops working through them, they break down and become useless. (It's also possible that repeating the same effect too often will cause *reality to object*, violently.) This idea shows up, in various forms, in stories such as the *Wild Cards* series and games such as *Mage: The Ascension* (see the **GURPS** adaptations of both), and does give mad science a little more crazy justification, at the cost of making it not really science at all, because its results aren't repeatable or independent of the observer.

## BASIC RULES CONCEPTS: MAGERY

As **GURPS Thaumatology**, p. 15, suggests almost any treatment of "magic" can use some form of Magery (pp. B66-67) as a prerequisite or talent applied to its operations, and mad-science-as-magic is no exception. In this case, a mad scientist's "Magery" may be the same as the advantage that helps actual magic-workers – the mad scientist just employs it differently – and may thus have the same name. Or it may be a slightly different form of Magery, perhaps modified by training and focus, and thus be called something like "Magery (Mad Science)." Or it may have a completely new name to distinguish it from superstitious nonsense (while still having the same point cost), and be called something like "Mad Science" or "Enlightenment." This is partly a matter of flavor and partly a way of suggesting just how far mad science and magic are interchangeable within the game world.

For convenience, this article uses the term “Magery (Mad Science),” but your game can always change that.

However, Magery (Mad Science) provides slightly different benefits from standard Magery. For one thing, it doesn’t give a bonus to Thaumatology skill; instead, add its level to Weird Science skill, which tends to act as mad science’s counterpart to Thaumatology.

For another, note that “ordinary” Magery 0 normally grants a limited but useful ability to recognize magic items on sight or contact; see p. B66. Unless Magery (Mad Science) is exactly the same as regular Magery, it is unlikely to provide the same benefit. Instead, anyone with Magery (Mad Science) can immediately recognize other mad scientists’ handiwork whenever it goes beyond the bounds of regular science or technology, even if it’s based on some completely different form of mad science from the viewer’s own; roll against the higher of Per + Magery (Mad Science) or Weird Science skill. This only works when the person sees clear manifestations of mad scientific activity; they can’t instinctively recognize a metal box, or even a raygun, as the work of mad science if it’s just sitting there. However, they *can* recognize a scientific paper or a blueprint as incorporating mad science just by *reading* it; roll against the higher of IQ + Magery (Mad Science) or Weird Science skill. This recognition includes a *very basic* understanding of what *sort* of mad science the gadget or document exploits, although the reader may well sneer at theories with which they disagree. (“Hah! He used an etheric shock weapon to blow up that building! How archaic and ridiculous!”)

*My limbs now tremble and my eyes  
swim with the remembrance; but then  
a resistless, and almost frantic, impulse  
urged me forward; I seemed to have lost  
all soul or sensation but for this one  
pursuit.*

– Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

## Magery (Mad Science) and Gadgeteering

Because Magery (Mad Science) involves an instinctive ability to use advanced technological ideas to produce useful results, it is closely related to the Gadgeteer advantage (pp. B56-57).

If mad science functions because that’s *Just the Way the World Works* (see *The Big Explanation*, p. 4), then the Gadgeteer advantage always includes Magery 0 (Mad Science) for free. If the explanation involves *Reality Warping*, then only the wildest of inventors are akin to mages, and only Quick Gadgeteer includes Magery 0 for free.

In many games, Magery 0 (Mad Science) may not be available separately from Gadgeteer; anyone who wants to take levels in Magery (Mad Science) will *have* to start by taking the appropriate form of Gadgeteer.

In either case, Magery (Mad Science) acts in effect as a Talent for skills used in the process of *Gadgeteering* (pp. B475-477). Add your levels in the advantage to all such skill rolls.

## INVENTION AND GADGET-BASED POWERS

At the simplest level, mad science is all about inventions; using Magery (Mad Science) as a Talent for all Gadgeteering work is a good start here. In addition, if you buy any advantages with gadget limitations (pp. B116-117), you can treat Magery (Mad Science) as a power Talent (see *GURPS Powers*, p. 8) applying to those advantages. In effect, “Gadget Powers” becomes a power, with any gadget limitation defining its source (*GURPS Powers*, p. 7) and Magery (Mad Science) as its power Talent. Its focus (*GURPS Powers*, p. 7) usually depends on the mad scientist’s preferred branch of science, such as “Advanced Chemistry” or “Dimensional Physics,” which may be identified by which scientific skills they’re best at. Most physical advantages can be justified as being provided by gadgets, as can “psychic” mental advantages such as Mind Probe and Mind Reading, at least if the setting features “psi-tech.” A lot may depend on what skills are known by the character or whoever builds their gadgets for them.

Gadgeteers can also add new gadget-based advantages in the course of play, by building the gadgets themselves or getting someone else to do so. See *Magic Items as Advantages* (*GURPS Thaumatology*, pp. 113-115) for more ideas on this. The new advantages may be paid for with bonus character points or by following the guidelines for *Improvement Through Study* (pp. B292-294). In the former case, or if rebuilding an unusual but non-Unique device that’s been stolen or destroyed, someone with what the GM decides are appropriate skills and Magery (Mad Science) or Gadgeteer can construct the new gadgets in a fully equipped workshop or laboratory, taking about one day per 5 character points in the finished gadget; it was evidently an idea that had been evolving in the back of the gadgeteer’s mind, which just needs to be put together and tested. The GM can reduce this time to as low as an hour or two if the character has Quick Gadgeteer and the new device is, say, needed to save the world. Likewise, if it’s a replacement for the kind of thing for which the character is likely to keep a lot of spare parts and incomplete prototypes in the workshop (such as a gadgeteer hero’s power armor), the GM can reduce the time to a day or two.

Devices being built by taking the time to develop the necessary theories from scratch, conversely, take longer. Usually, this follows the same rule as skills learned by ordinary study (p. B292), with every 200 hours of work giving 1 character point. If the device incorporates radical new technologies unlike anything known in the setting, even to the inventor building it, the GM may class this as akin to *Self-Teaching* (p. B293), so that *two* hours of effort count as an hour of “study”; however, mad scientists are generally supposed to be fast workers, so this may be too restrictive. Certainly, anyone with Quick Gadgeteer should gain points at the higher speed. In fact, someone with that advantage and HT 12+ might be capable of the mad inventor’s equivalent of *Intensive Training* (p. B293), working for up to 16 hours per day and gaining points at double speed. Alternatively, someone with the Single-Minded advantage and merely average HT might manage the same trick, but suffer serious physical stress as a result. For instance, Victor Frankenstein has to be nursed back to health over several months after completing his creature.

Note that “real” mad scientists also tend to have Obsessions or other mental disadvantages, and the GM may require this for anyone who is going to build gadgets that fast, and further require that the gadgets so created in some way relate to the inventor’s Obsession or whatever. For example, a mad scientist with a Vow to conquer the world is going to build a lot of weapons, whereas one who seeks to vanquish mortality is more likely to focus more on medical equipment.

However, really capable mad scientists are fully able to produce new effects on the fly. This is where it becomes useful to borrow some magic rules from *GURPS Thaumatology*.

## MAD SCIENCE AS SYNTACTIC REALM MAGIC

Mad scientists who can whip up nigh-instant works of crazed genius might be permitted to use the rules for *Syntactic Magic* (*GURPS Thaumatology*, pp. 179-195) – specifically *Realms and Power* (*GURPS Thaumatology*, pp. 188-192) with a few minor modifications. Whether this replaces the *Gadgeteer* rules entirely, or the two coexist (with *Gadgeteer* creating replicable devices somewhat related to conventional engineering and syntactic Realm “magic” creating miraculous, purely one-off devices, very much on the fly) is up to the GM.

In this treatment, each Realm corresponds to a (usually standard *GURPS*) scientific skill, which is always IQ-based and Hard, and which acts as its Realm skill. In many cases, this scientific skill will actually be an optional specialty

(pp. B169-170) of a Very Hard scientific skill such as Biology or Physics. Characters using these rules *cannot* have the general, Very Hard versions of Biology or Physics, or wildcard skills that cover science skills. They may take any number of optional specialties, but these only default to each other at -5 for this purpose; insane focus is part of the deal. However, when using one of these skills as a Realm skill, to produce “magical” effects, the scientist can add their level of *Magery* (*Mad Science*) as a bonus. This makes skill somewhat cheaper than with many forms of syntactic Realm magic; scientific training makes refined use of effects *relatively* easy. This is balanced by the fact that mad science almost always requires special equipment and tools, and often a significant amount of time; unlike some kinds of magic, it can’t usually be performed with a wave of the hand and a magic word.

The Realms each have three levels; use the guidelines on p. 188 of *GURPS Thaumatology* for some idea of what can be done at any level. Note that *exactly* what is possible with a given Realm is somewhat defined by what science might believably if generously be thought capable of in the setting, and “creation” rarely extends to creation out of thin air. For example, Biology (Zoology) at level 3 is unlikely to enable even the most skilled and deranged mad scientist to create complex animals from nothing, or even from basic chemicals (except perhaps in a TL(4+1)^ “mad alchemy” setting), but it may well permit *Doctor Moreau*-style hybrids and abominations. That said, level 3 should definitely put the “mad” in “mad science” much of the time. Level 2 should permit pretty much anything that could be done realistically, only faster, better, and with superior sound effects.

## STEPPING DOWN TO SANITY

If mad science is based on warping reality or is otherwise somewhere off the scale when compared to ordinary technology, it can logically be used only by mad scientists, and is of little use to saner folk – right?

Well, maybe. Mad science may be mad, but it borrows jargon and ideas from regular, quotidian science. Even if it warps reality, a little of that warping may become part of the nature of the universe. Saner, or at least less obsessively focused, scientists and engineers may be able to scavenge through a mad scientist’s work and come away with some useful stuff. This is the domain of characters such as Dr. Virginia Lee in the webcomic *Skin Horse* and (in a way) the bad guys in the movie *Spider-Man: Homecoming* (if you consider alien super-tech as mad science, because that’s functionally what it is). In effect, they determine the extent to which what *GURPS* would call “superscience” (pp. B513-514) can be recategorized as just high-TL *science* if you squint hard enough.

Characters responsible for this sort of thing will usually have points in *Weird Science* skill and other sciences, but *not* *Magery* (*Mad Science*). They might have *Gadgeteer*, but probably *not* *Quick Gadgeteer*; they have to work methodically and somewhat “realistically,” without any of the wild flashes of implausible inspiration which do so

much for mad science but would be overshooting the mark for them. On encountering examples of mad science, they can roll against *Weird Science* to identify the eccentric or “fringe” principles involved; if they succeed, they can roll again against the same skill to decide if this technology might be adapted for less-mad use – whether it can be is up to the GM. (Either roll may take penalties or bonuses as the GM wishes, to reflect the degree of insane complexity in the mad science.) If the GM decides it can be modified, the process of performing the actual adaptation is much the same as attempting a new invention (pp. B473-474).

For the purposes of those rules, mad-science adaptations are never of less than Average complexity; if in doubt, rate them one complexity level higher than they would be if they didn’t involve borrowed mad science. However, basing the design on something that works (however insanely) and that the adapting scientist somewhat understands is almost as good as having a working model, giving +4 to the Concept roll. The Prototype roll is made normally, but if the *Weird Science* roll to decide that the mad science can be modified for this purpose was a critical success, that gives +2. Otherwise, the process runs as normal, except that the GM can get whimsical and include some really *strange* problems if bugs are indicated.

Mad science at level 1 may imply only detection and analysis, but the GM should be generous with what this permits in the way of determining weaknesses and strengths, identifying appropriate mundane countermeasures and interesting uses, and sensing the presence of a phenomenon which is supposedly hidden and determining what it's being used for.

Exactly what Realms (that is, skills and specialties) exist in a campaign is determined by what is known or believed about science and what it can do in the setting, which in turn relates to background assumptions and tech level. For example, a late-Victorian-style steampunk setting might completely lack nuclear physics and genetics (mainstays of *GURPS Atomic Horror*-era and later mad science), but might feature parapsychology as a viable scientific discipline – covered for convenience by an Expert Skill – and give mad parapsychologists a formidable ability to control “spiritual forces.” Hence, the cost per level for each Realm is quite variable.

*They say that the best weapon  
is the one you never have to fire.  
I respectfully disagree. I prefer  
the weapon you only have to  
fire once.*

– Tony Stark, in *Iron Man*

### Example

A modern-day superhero setting could feature a lot of science loosely based on contemporary real-world physics, biology, etc., while wandering into weirdness in a few areas:

- *Psionic science*, which encompasses comic-book-style telepathy, telekinesis, etc., always generated by living minds but susceptible to some technological manipulation and analysis.

- *Dimensional physics*, a distinctly superscience sort of field with jargon based on vague references to real-world mathematics and cosmology, which is used to allow scientists to interact with and explain things that “the superstitious call magic.”

- *Parachronic/temporal physics*, which covers time travel, interactions with other timelines, and so on.

Hence, the setting's Realms are *Biology* (*Biochemistry*, *Botany*, *Genetics*, *Microbiology*, and *Zoology*), *Chemistry*, *Computer Programming* (standard and AI versions), *Expert Skill* (*Psionics*), *Physics* (*Acoustics*, *Dimensional*, *Electromagnetic*, *Nuclear*, and *Parachronic/Temporal*), and *Psychology* (which can be used on its own for tasks such as mad-science brainwashing, or combined with other Realms to build mind-control rays or create obedient synthetic life; rather than have a separate mandatory specialty for each different race, treat each as a familiarity, with understanding of the psychology of certain exotic or alien minds perhaps requiring a perk). With 15 Realms, each divided into three levels, cost per level is 10 points.

Other skills may be required for specific tasks, or be complementary in some way. For example, a mad geologist might be an expert in the Realm of Chemistry, to analyze or manipulate the chemical structure of rocks, and Physics (Acoustics), to create earthquake-inducing machines, with his impressive level in Geology skill justifying or enhancing his work on those projects.

### Defining Effects

“Workings” in this system are specific functions of mad-science inventions, improvised devices, or displays of technical ingenuity. The snag with this is that the mad scientist will usually have to build or radically modify a device to produce a working, which requires materials, tools, and time. However, the working won't usually have an energy cost (unless it's hand-cranked); any self-respecting mad science device will have a battery or power plant, be plugged into a wall socket, incorporate reactive chemicals, or otherwise feature a fully adequate power supply.

This means that the parameters used in defining an effect almost always either generate a skill penalty or require a particular margin of success on the “casting” roll.

*Range:* Mad science weapons are typically built as ranged weapons – see below – but otherwise, device range (including extradimensional range and range in time; see *GURPS Thaumatology*, p. 182) is usually determined by margin of success. However, communications devices and long-range sensors use *Long-Distance Modifiers* (p. B241) to generate a skill penalty.

*Duration:* This, too, is usually determined by margin of success, when necessary. Read the period off the *Duration Effect Modifiers Table* (*GURPS Thaumatology*, p. 243); e.g., a margin of success of 3 gives a duration of up to 12 hours.

*Area of Effect:* For areas greater than two yards radius, apply a skill penalty equal in size to the SM of the intended area (see p. B550 for the relevant table).

*Damage:* Use the rules on pp. 182-183 of *GURPS Thaumatology* to determine damage based on margin of success. If the device being constructed is larger than SM +1, multiply margin of success by its SM before determining damage. For example, an SM +3 device created with a margin of success of 5 does damage as if the margin of success were 15, meaning 8d damage before adjustment for damage type.

*Healing, Personal Abilities:* Use margin of success as per the rules in *GURPS Thaumatology*.

*Multiple Targets, Multiple Elements:* Use skill penalties as per the rules in *GURPS Thaumatology*.

### Mad-Science Ranged Weapons

Mad scientists sometimes build ranged weapons in the form of firearms, rayguns, or artillery pieces. These are operated using whatever skill (Guns, Beam Weapons, Gunner, etc.) and specialty the GM thinks fit the configuration as described. The weapon automatically gets Acc 2, RoF 1, 1/2D 100, and Max 200. To increase Acc by +1 or double any one of RoF, 1/2D (to a maximum equal to Max), or Max, take -2 on the working skill roll; this can be taken repeatedly for cumulative benefits. For example, an Acc 4, RoF 2 weapon with 1/2D and Max both 400 would mean -12 to skill during the construction process.

*Tigerlily Jones: “When I get the vibe, it’s like there’s a party in my toolbox and Science is invited!”*

– Shaenon Garrity and Jeffrey Channing Wells, *Skin Horse*

Such a weapon gets a base Shots 1, doubled for every point of margin of success (e.g. margin of success 3 gives Shots 8). After the shots have been used up, they can be restored by the *original* builder, given appropriate tools and any necessary power supply, taking a base five minutes and re-rolling the original working roll at +3. Semi-improvised mad-science weapons aren’t designed for simple reloading; build a more conventional weapon using the gadgeteering/invention rules for that.

### Gadget Workings

Lastly, when using these rules for mad science, the “working” is the process of conceptualizing a gadget or coming up with an improvisational technological tweak or adjustment that does something impressive. This in itself takes only a few moments (1d seconds, if it’s important in play); make the skill roll at the end of that time to have a viable idea. (A critical failure may indicate a flawed concept that the *character* thinks will work, so the GM may prefer to make the roll in secret.) However, the gadget then has to be built – which tends to involve designing it as the inventor goes along, because mad scientists aren’t great ones for carefully validated blueprints.

The GM decides how complex this task is. There are, broadly, three levels of complexity.

*Level 1:* Able to be performed immediately with minimal equipment. This is rare, but possible for, e.g., *ad hoc* exercises in hypnotic brainwashing, or when using an available device in a non-standard way (such as firing a laser pistol into a fusion reactor in *just the right way* to cause a massive explosion). Use the standard rules in *Realm-Based Casting Times* (*GURPS Thaumatology*, p. 183). No further skill rolls are necessarily required, depending on the details of the task, but that exercise in mind-bending might need a successful roll against Brainwashing or Hypnotism, or shooting that reactor might need a roll against Beam Weapons (Pistol). Base time for the task is usually 2d seconds, but the GM can adjust that up or down as appropriate.

*Level 2:* A radical modification of existing equipment, such as converting a neon sign into a gas laser, “retuning” a family car to run at racecar speeds for a short burst, or treating the ordinary concrete walls of a building with chemicals to make them resistant to demolition charges. This task typically requires a roll against a “repair” skill such as Mechanic or Electronics Repair, or a “practical” skill such as Pharmacy, to implement the concept. Basic equipment for this is usually an appropriate portable toolkit, or sometimes a suitcase lab (see p. B289). Base time is 20 minutes – although again, the GM can adjust things for the sake of convenience or minimal plausibility.

*Level 3:* Building a complete new device or machine from basic parts, or converting a machine into something *completely* different – such as transforming a family car into a

combat robot, creating a weather-control machine from the components in a TV station’s maintenance department, or temporarily transforming a dimwitted minion into a super-powered combat monster (whose heart naturally gives out at the end of the working’s duration). This task generally requires a roll against a “design” skill such as Bioengineering or Engineer to turn the concept into a viable design. After this, actually *building* it is probably trivial, though a GM can also ask for a “repair” skill roll to avoid building anything too temperamental. Basic equipment for such tasks is a room-sized workshop or a field lab (*GURPS High-Tech*, *GURPS Ultra-Tech*, and *GURPS Steampunk 2: Steam and Shellfire* have details for these things). However, a serious mad scientist may have high enough skill to swallow the penalties for using just portable toolkits and scavenged materials as improvised equipment; some have high levels in Scrounging skill and maybe some related perks. Base time is 1d hours.

After which, the mad scientist *just* has to push the big red button and watch the fun . . .

### EXAMPLE

The Abominable Doctor Atzapar has captured an air-traffic-control radar station just outside the city. Local law enforcers, thinking that he plans to sabotage regional aviation in some way, perhaps for ransom, have arranged for all flights in the area to be grounded or rerouted, and are playing for time while they devise an assault. Atzapar, however, just wants control of those wonderful high-power microwave transmitters, because he really, really wants to try out his ideas for a devolution ray.

Doctor Atzapar has the Realms Biology (Zoology)/3 and Physics (Electromagnetic)/2, which suffice for this task (modulating microwave radiation to trigger accelerated regressive metamorphosis in primates); Magery 3 (Mad Science); and the skills Biology (Zoology)-22, Physics (Electromagnetic)-20, and Engineer (Electronics)-16. He brought in a truckload of special equipment, to which he can add the station’s repair workshop and electronic stores, and he’s working with a big, fancy modern radar array that he researched carefully in advance. All of this adds up to good-enough equipment to give him +3 to all relevant skills. As this working uses both of his Realms, he uses the lower Realm skill level minus 1 (for 19), +3 for Magery, +3 for the equipment bonus. He’s building this as a ranged weapon, and he wants it to be fully effective out to 200 yards, so that’s 1/2D 200, giving -2 to the skill. Each burst will affect a 20-yard radius, so that’s another -6. The dice say that base time for this level 3 working is three hours; Atzapar has a sidekick who’ll be doing the talking and who’s cunning enough to keep negotiations going all night, so he takes twice as long, for +1. His effective skill is now 18.



But what does the ray *do*? It's a good old-fashioned devolution effect! It turns sapient humans into rampaging beasts. In other words, it affects personal abilities – how well depends on margin of success, as do duration and number of shots. The skill roll is 10 – strictly average, but a margin of success of 8 gives 256 shots before the electronics burn out. The GM rules that the victims will get a resistance roll, with *their* margin of success on that (if any) subtracting from the ray's effective power, so duration and effectiveness remain to be determined. Atzapar does have to make an Engineer roll to build the thing, but rolling against 16, with +3 for equipment quality, isn't hard.

As the sun comes up, Atzapar decides to run his test, and starts firing his devolution ray at the cops who think they have him cornered. He's using Artillery (Beams) at default for this, but it's a target-rich environment, so he scores a lot of hits. To save time, the GM decides to roll once for all the cops, against their average HT of 11. Unfortunately, they fail to make that roll, so the effect gets a duration of three months. More importantly, perhaps, it allows 80 points of character adjustments; he gives the victims -3 IQ [-60], Bad Temper (12) [-10], and Bestial [-10], and then adds +2 Per [10] and +7 ST [70]. Chaos erupts in the police ranks as every tired, stressed-out cop starts thinking and acting like an angry animal.

Doctor Atzapar watches with glee as his view of humanity as "thinly disguised animals" is justified. Unfortunately, however, one of his hostages within the station is really Captain Magnetic, the Ideal Man, in his secret identity; the Captain naturally chooses this moment to make his escape, rushes that his amazing personal magnetism works even on devolved cops (whose Sense of Duty is, after all, unaffected by the ray), and leads a grunting, confused, but determined and physically enhanced force to overwhelm Atzapar's goons and take the mad scientist prisoner. Atzapar curses the superhero and resolves that the next version of the devolution ray will also include a mind-control element. He just needs to learn a bit about Psychology . . .

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phil Masters is a longtime British roleplaying game writer with a longer list of *GURPS* and *Pyramid* credits than he can always remember; notably,

### Other Weird-Science Inspiration

*Pyramid* #3/46: *Weird Science* offers a few alternative ways to look at mad science, plus plenty of crazy new inventions. *Pyramid* #3/121: *Travels and Tribulations* and *GURPS Infinite Worlds: Britannica-6* present settings suitable for mad science. *GURPS Powers: The Weird* includes recommendations for appropriate traits and how to create weird-science styles.

he's the author of the *Discworld Roleplaying Game*, the second edition of which is available from Steve Jackson Games. He's also the *Transhuman Space* Line Editor, and has written for a number of other companies, as well as self-publishing a comedy roleplaying game of his own, *The Small Folk*, which is available through Warehouse 23: [warehouse23.com/products/the-small-folk](http://warehouse23.com/products/the-small-folk).

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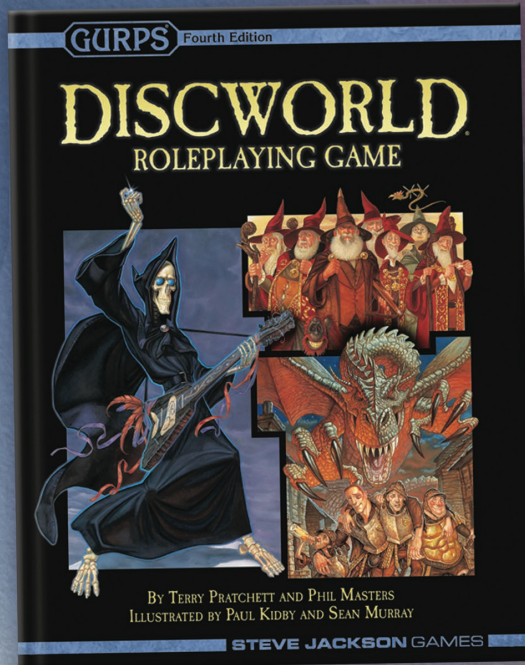
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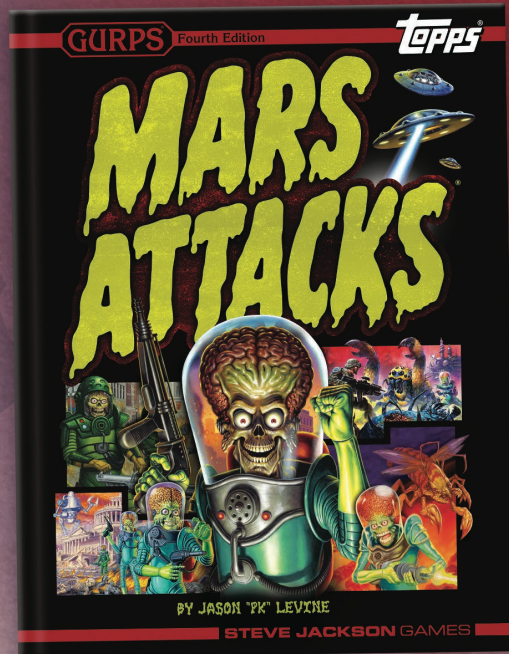
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# THE UNDEAD-HUNTER

BY SEAN PUNCH

Undead foes are common opponents in the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game*. Skeletons and zombies are ubiquitous as the foot soldiers of Evil. *Dungeon Fantasy Monsters* also contains draugr, flaming skulls, horde zombies, horrid skulls, liches, specters, undead slimes, and vampires. Then there are the variants – such as *freezing* and

*venom* skulls, and *mummified* zombies – as well as anything the GM decides is undead.

Fortunately, there are delvers who live to make sure the undead end up just plain dead. Here's a new professional template for such experts. Though more specialized than those in *Dungeon Fantasy Adventurers*, it's well-suited to dungeon crawls.

## UNDEAD-HUNTER

You're a devoted destroyer of the undead. For people who've become undead against their wishes, you bring peace – though that may still mean severing the head and staking the heart. Those who choose undeath, you *fight*, neither offering nor asking for quarter! You share many abilities with the holy warrior, but your chosen battle inevitably requires magic, so you've become an invested cleric, albeit one who sees physical preparation as especially important.

**Attributes:** ST 13 [30]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 12 [20].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Damage 1d/2d-1; BL 34 lbs.; HP 13 [0]; Will 14 [5]; Per 13 [0]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

**Advantages:** Clerical Investment [5]; Higher Purpose 1 (Slay Undead) [5]; Power Investiture 2 [20]; Rest in Pieces [1]; and Turning [24]. • Another 30 points distributed among further Holy abilities (*Dungeon Fantasy Adventurers*, pp. 20-21, 26-27) and:

ST +1 to +3 [10/level]	Higher Purpose 2-3
DX +1 [20]	(Slay Undead) [5/level]
IQ +1 [20]	Luck [15] <i>or</i>
HT +1 to +3 [10/level]	Extraordinary Luck [30]
HP +1 to +5 [2/level]	Night Vision 1-9 [1/level]
Will +1 to +6 [5/level]	Power Investiture 3-5
FP +1 to +4 [3/level]	[10/level]
Energy Reserve 1-10	Rapid Healing [5]
(Holy) [3/level]	Recovery [10]
Fearlessness [2/level]	Resistant to Disease
<i>or</i> Unfazeable [15]	1-6 [1/level]
Fit [5] <i>or</i> Very Fit [15]	Signature Gear [1/item]
Hard to Kill [2/level]	Spirit Empathy [10]
Hard to Subdue [2/level]	Trademark Move [1/move]
High Pain Threshold [10]	Weapon Bond [1/weapon]

**Disadvantages:** Obsession (Undead-Hunting)† (12) [-10].

- Another -20 points chosen from more severe Obsession *or*:

Charitable [-15*]	Selfless [-5*]
Compulsive Generosity [-5*]	Sense of Duty
Disciplines of Faith (Ritualism	(Good Entities) [-10]
<i>or</i> Mysticism) [-5 <i>or</i> -10]	Truthfulness [-5*]
Honesty [-10*]	Vow (Chastity <i>or</i>
Intolerance (“Evil” religions)	Vegetarianism) [-5] <i>or</i>
<i>or</i> (All other religions)	(Own no more than
[-5 <i>or</i> -10]	horse can carry) [-10]

- A further -20 points chosen from the previous list *or*:

Bloodlust [-10*]	Sense of Duty (Adventuring
Compulsive Vowing [-5*]	Companions) [-5]
Loner [-5*]	Stubbornness [-5*]
No Sense of Humor [-10]	Weirdness Magnet [-15]
Overconfidence [-5*]	

**Skills:** One of these two 16-point melee skills packages:

1. *Two-Handed Weapon:* Any one of Polearm-16 [16], Staff-16 [16], Two-Handed Axe/Mace-16 [16], Two-Handed Flail-15 [16], *or* Two-Handed Sword-16 [16].
2. *Weapon and Shield:* Any one of Axe/Mace-15 [12], Broad-sword-15 [12], *or* Flail-14 [12] – and *also* Shield-14 [4].

- One of Crossbow-14 [4], Sling-12 [4], Throwing-13 [4], *or* Thrown Weapon (Axe/Mace)-14 [4].

- All of these skills:

Hidden Lore (Undead)-13 [2]	Psychology (Undead)-13 [4]
Occultism-13 [2]	Religious Ritual-12 [2]
Physiology (Undead)-13 [4]	Theology-12 [2]

• Five of these skills:

Armory (any)-13 [2]

Boxing-12 [2] *or*

Brawling-13 [2]

Climbing-12 [2]

Connoisseur (Weapons)-13 [2]

Diagnosis-12 [2]

Esoteric Medicine (Holy)-12 [2]

Fast-Draw (any)-13 [2]

First Aid-14 [2]

Gesture-14 [2]

Hazardous Materials-13 [2]

Hidden Lore

(other)-13 [2]

Hiking-12 [2]

Knife-13 [2]

Meditation-13 [2]

Observation-13 [2]

Research-13 [2]

Stealth-12 [2]

Tactics-12 [2]

Thaumatology-11 [2]

Wrestling-12 [2]

**Special Skills:** Exorcism-14 [4].

**Spells:** Final Rest-13 [1] and Sense Spirit-13 [1]. • Spend one point on each of eight other clerical spells. With +2 for Power Investiture, these will be at 13 if IQ/Hard or 12 if IQ/Very Hard.

\* Multiplied for self-control number; see *Dungeon Fantasy Adventurers*, p. 55.

† On encountering the undead, rumors of them, or a quest that hints at an opportunity to destroy them, make a self-control roll. Failure compels you to attack, investigate the rumors, or accept the quest. If you manage to spare intelligent undead (briefly!), make a second self-control roll to trust any information or deal the monster offers.

### Customization Notes

The biggest choice an undead-hunter faces is whether to focus on the physical battle or the mystical one. It's possible to balance these – *all* hunters do, to some extent – but it's most efficient to pick one path at first.

Undead-hunters who prefer to hack up enemies and burn the remains invest advantage points in ST, DX, HT, Fit, Hard to Kill, Hard to Subdue, High Pain Threshold, Recovery, and Weapon Bond – and often a Trademark Move valuable for removing heads or staking hearts. Favorite Holy abilities are Heroic Feats. Skill choices include several of Armory, Brawling, Connoisseur (Weapons), Fast-Draw, Knife (for stakes!), and Wrestling, plus Throwing for hurling alchemist's fire and holy water. Common spells are buffs helpful in battle against evil, rotting opponents: Armor, Might, Protection from Evil, Resist Cold, Resist Disease, Resist Pain, Shield, Vigor, etc. Disadvantage choices have an unyielding edge, like Bloodlust, Intolerance, Loner, No Sense of Humor, Stubbornness, and severe Obsession.

Those who operate more on the spiritual level sink advantage points into IQ, Will, Energy Reserve, Power Investiture, and Spirit Empathy. Holy abilities are likely; Detect Evil, Divine Guidance, and Divine Omens reveal enemies, while Contingency Casting enables high-end emergency magic. Important skills are Hazardous Materials, Hidden Lore, and Thaumatology for supernatural dangers; Diagnosis and Esoteric Medicine for curing undead curses; and Meditation for prayer. Spells for identifying and repelling the undead are popular: Aura, Sense Evil, Turn Spirit, Turn Zombie, Watchdog, and – with higher Power Investiture – Astral Vision, Dispel Possession, and Repel Spirits. Faith-based disadvantages like Sense of Duty, Disciplines of Faith, and religious Vows are common.

Any hunter benefits from being less vulnerable to the threats the undead pose: Will and Fearlessness for shrugging off Fright Checks, additional Higher Purpose for its far-reaching bonuses, Resist Evil for its more focused ones, and Resistant to Disease for safety around infected corpses (walking or otherwise).

When it comes to the five points from quirks, some undead-hunters go for additional clerical spells; being able to cast Healing Slumber, Major Healing, Minor Healing, Share Vitality, and Stop Bleeding means doubling as a backup healer. Others exchange points for *Extra Money* (*Dungeon Fantasy Adventurers*, p. 95); more physical hunters spend this on better combat gear, while mystically inclined ones love high holy symbols (which are also great power items).

## ADVANCED UNDEAD-HUNTING

For the purpose of *Exceptional Abilities* (*Dungeon Fantasy Exploits*, p. 93), undead-hunters can buy up to Will 25, Energy Reserve 20 (Holy), and Power Investiture 6; Luck up to Ridiculous Luck; new Holy abilities; and more clerical spells. Instead of access to Healer 6 (instead of Healer 4), they can purchase levels of Higher Purpose (Slay Undead) equal to Will/5, rounded up – i.e., a total of four at Will 16-20 or five at Will 21-25.

## UNDEAD-HUNTERS IN GURPS

This 250-point template is designed and formatted for the *DFRPG*. Familiar traits sometimes work differently there. Differences – and changes needed for *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* – appear below. Alternatively, adopt the *DFRPG* versions!

*Hazardous Materials:* Means “Hazardous Materials (Magical).”

*Heroic Might:* Blessed (Heroic Feats; Holy, -10%), adding to ST.

*Protection from Evil* and *Sense Evil:* See *Dungeon Fantasy 11*, p. 15.

*Resist Evil:* Gives +1/level to resist. Replace with “Resistant to Evil Supernatural Powers (+3) or (+8) (Holy, -10%) [5 or 7].”

*Resistant to Disease:* Gives +1/level to resist. Replace with “Resistant to Disease (+3) or (+8) [3 or 5].”

*Rest in Pieces:* Holy warrior's Shtick, renamed.

*Signature Gear:* Doesn't buy gear, but “insures” a bought item of any value. Replace with standard “Signature Gear [Varies].”

*Stubbornness:* Gains a self-control roll. Replace “[–5\*]” with “[–5].”

*Trademark Move:* See *Dungeon Fantasy 2*, p. 27.

*Turning:* True Faith (Holy, -10%; Turning, +65%).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985 and ended up as *GURPS* Line Editor in 1995. He has written or developed some 150 *GURPS* releases, revised the game into its fourth edition (2004), and contributed regularly to *Pyramid*. Lead creator of the *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* series, he designed the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game*, released in 2017. Sean has been a gamer since 1979, but devotes most of his spare time to Argentine tango.

# VASIN NIHANTA

## 245-point Human Undead-Hunter

Vasin is a physically and mentally powerful destroyer of undead. He believes that demon lords, though Evil, keep the cursed dead imprisoned in Hell. To him, the undead are a greater affront against Good than any demon below the level of infernal aristocracy.

Offensively, Vasin butchers enemies with a holy shovel. His skill is 17 with *his* shovel (Weapon Bond); against undead, add +3 for Higher Purpose. He prefers beheading, at -5 but +1 for Trademark Move: a net 13, 16 vs. undead. His keen-edged weapon does 2d+2 cutting – again, at +3 against undead – and Vasin can use Heroic Might and/or the Might spell to boost ST for truly epic damage.

Defensively, Vasin's shovel is dwarven, letting him parry after attacking. His Higher Purpose gives him +3 to defend vs. undead – and he'll try to cast Shield before combat, adding DB 1 to 4. His blessed armor ("Tanned vampire hide!") has DR 3, and Armor can improve DR further. He's highly resistant to sinister powers, with his basic +3 vs. undead *and* +3 more for Resist Evil. Protection from Evil can aid on all fronts.

Vasin is good at Turning, with Will 15, +2 for Power Investiture, and +1 for his blessed holy symbol giving 18. He carries garlic, holy water, and wooden stakes (these, too, benefit from Higher Purpose, Heroic Might, and Might) for finishing off fallen undead. He uses his fancy shovel when the job calls for exhuming or burying bodies, and it's also his power item; it holds 10 FP, which he saves for pre-combat castings against major undead foes.

**ST** 13 [30]; **DX** 12 [40]; **IQ** 13 [60]; **HT** 12 [20].  
Damage 1d/2d-1; BL 34 lbs.; HP 13 [0]; Will 15 [10]; Per 13 [0]; FP 12 [0].  
Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Move 4.  
Dodge 8; Parry 11 (Shovel); Block N/A.

### Advantages

Clerical Investment [5]	Trademark Move (Attack with combat shovel swing to the neck: -5 to hit, 2d+2 cutting) [1]
Heroic Might +1d [9]	Turning [24]
Higher Purpose 3 (Slay Undead) [15]	Weapon Bond (Combat Shovel) [1]
Power Investiture 2 [20]	
Resist Evil 3 [3]	
Rest in Pieces [1]	
Signature Gear (Combat Shovel) [1]	

### Disadvantages and Quirks

Bloodlust (12) [-10]  
Obsession (Undead-Hunting) (9) [-15]  
Sense of Duty (Adventuring Companions) [-5]  
Sense of Duty (Good Entities) [-10]  
Vow (Own no more than horse can carry) [-10]  
Believes undead – not demons – are the *worst* Evil. [-1]  
Carries spare garlic, holy water, and stakes for allies. [-1]  
Casts magic before battle, not during. [-1]  
Identifies as a warrior more than a cleric. [-1]  
"Off with their heads! *Off with their heads!*" [-1]

### Skills

Armory (Melee Weapon)-13 [2]	Physiology (Undead)-13 [4]
Exorcism-15 [4]	Psychology (Undead)-13 [4]
Fast-Draw (Knife)-13 [2]	Religious Ritual-12 [2]
Fast-Draw (Potion)-13 [2]	Stealth-12 [2]
Hidden Lore (Undead)-13 [2]	Theology-12 [2]
Knife-13 [2]	Throwing-13 [4]
Occultism-13 [2]	Two-Handed Axe/Mace-16/17* [16]

### Spells†

Armor-13 [1]	Resist Pain-13 [1]
Final Rest-13 [1]	Sense Evil-13 [1]
Glow-13 [1]	Sense Spirit-13 [1]
Might-13 [1]	Shield-13 [1]
Protection from Evil-13 [1]	Stop Bleeding-13 [1]

\* Use higher skill for Signature Gear combat shovel (+1 for Weapon Bond).

† Includes +2 for Power Investiture.

*I lay to rest the dead kept from the afterlife. I'll fight demons when I get there.*

– Vasin Nihanta,  
*Undead-Hunter*

### Equipment

**\$3,500, 67.61 lbs. (Light encumbrance)**

Clothing. \$0, 2 lbs.  
Coins. 2 silver, 16 copper. \$56, 0.36 lb.  
Combat Shovel, Dwarven, Fine. 2d+2 cut (reach 1) or 2d+1 cr (reach 1). \$1,400 + \$25 in inlay, 5 lbs.  
Delver's Webbing. Holds coins, garlic, holy water, personal basics, rations, wooden stakes. +1 to Fast-Draw. \$160, 3 lbs.  
Garlic x8. \$40, 2 lbs.  
Heavy Leather Armor, Suit, w. Fortify +1. DR 3. \$1,450, 36 lbs.  
Holy Symbol, Blessed. +1 to Exorcism and Turning. \$250, 1 lb.  
Holy Water x8. \$60, 8 lbs.  
Personal Basics. \$5, 1 lb.  
Rations, 6 meals. \$12, 3 lbs.  
Wineskin. 1 quart water. \$10, 2.25 lbs.  
Wooden Stakes x8. 1d(0.5) imp (reach C). \$32, 4 lbs.

### Vasin Nihanta in GURPS

To interpret Vasin's abilities, see p. 12. His gear is from the *DFRPG*. If using the *Basic Set*, his armor becomes leather helm, leather torso armor, heavy leather sleeves, heavy leather leggings, leather gloves, and boots (pp. B283-284), with the cheap Fortify enchantment from *Dungeon Fantasy 1*, p. 30. That's \$390, 19.5 lbs., liberating \$1,060. Ignore the coin denominations but keep their \$ value.

# CHEVALIERS AND COMMANDERS

BY CHRISTOPHER R. RICE

Although most *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* campaigns take place underground and away from town, some groups might prefer to broaden their adventures. This article presents two

new templates: the chevalier (a mounted combat specialist) and the commander (a leader of people with near-supernatural powers).

## THE CHEVALIER

The chevalier comes into its own when the “dungeon” is the outdoors itself. Campaigns using *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 16: Wilderness Adventures* (in particular, the rules for fighting while riding on pp. 41-42) will make the chevalier feel right at home.

*Chevaliers enjoy the outdoors,  
especially when viewed from  
a mount.*

### CHEVALIER

250 points

Like the knight and scout, you’re a master of weapons; unlike them, you prefer fighting from atop a stout horse. You’re built for endurance riding, and tougher than members of just about any other *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* profession. You also have a trusty steed who’s smart, fast, strong, and hardy – a combo allowing you to be the equal of any combat-oriented occupation while mounted, and still credible among front-line fighters when not.

This template presents an adventurer focused on horses; see p. 15 for other mount options.

**Attributes:** ST 11 [10]; DX 14 [80]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 13 [30].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 12 [5]; Per 12 [5]; FP 13 [0]; Basic Speed 7.00 [5]; Basic Move 7 [0].

**Advantages:** Ally (Mount)†; 50% of starting points; Constantly [8]; Animal Friend 2 [10]; Good with Horses‡ [1]; Luck [15]; and Mounted Skill Mastery 2 (Acrobatics; see p. 16) [2]. • Higher Purpose 1 (Horse Master or Let’s Ride!, both p. 15) [5]. • Either Horse Sense (p. 16) [1] or Sacrificial Parry (Mounted)§ [1]. • A further 35 points chosen from

among lens advantages, ST +1 to +3 [10/level], DX +1 [20], IQ +1 [20], HT +1 to +3 [10/level], HP +1 to +3 [2/level], Will +1 to +3 [5/level], Per +1 to +3 [5/level], FP +1 to +3 [3/level], Basic Speed +1.00 [20], Absolute Direction [5], Acute Senses [2/level], Animal Friend 3 or 4 [5 or 10], Combat Reflexes [15], Daredevil [15], Fearlessness [2/level], Fit [5] or Very Fit [15], Heroic Archer [20], Outdoorsman 1-3 [10/level], Rapid Healing [5], Ride from the Front (p. 16) [1], Signature Gear [varies; see also p. 15], Strongbow [1], Weapon Master (Chevalier Armaments, p. 15) [35], replacing Good with Horses [1] with Animal Empathy [5] for 4 points, replacing Luck [15] with Extraordinary Luck [30] for 15 points, or – optionally – increasing your mount’s point value to 75% of your starting points for 4 points, 100% of your points for 12 points, or 150% of your points for 32 points.

**Disadvantages:** -20 points chosen from among Code of Honor (Soldier’s or Chivalry) [-10 or -15], Loner [-5\*], Odious Personal Habit (Gruff) [-5], Overconfidence [-5\*], Sense of Duty (Horses) [-5], or Vow (Own no more than what your mount may carry) [-10]. • Another -30 points chosen from among the previous traits or Bad Temper [-10\*], Bloodlust [-10\*], Bowlegged [-1], Callous [-5], Compulsive Carousing [-5\*], Odious Personal Habit (Prefers animals to people) [-5], Sense of Duty (Adventuring Companions) [-5], or Stubbornness [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Animal Handling (Equines) (A) IQ+3 [4]-14¶ and Riding (Horse) (A) DX+3 [4]-17¶. • One of Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-15 or Boxing (A) DX [2]-14. • One of Thrown Weapon (Spear or Stick) (E) DX+3 [8]-17; or Bow, Bolas, Lasso, or Throwing, all (A) DX+2 [8]-16. • Two of these three melee skills packages:

1. One of Axe/Mace, Broadsword, or Spear, all (A) DX+2 [8]-16 – and Lance (A) DX+1 [4]-15 and Shield (E) DX+2 [4]-16.
2. Flail (H) DX+2 [12]-16 and Shield (E) DX+2 [4]-16.
3. One of Polearm, Spear, Two-Handed Axe/Mace, or Two-Handed Sword, all (A) DX+4 [16]-18.

Alternatively, choose only *one* melee skills package and spend 16 points on other riding-related skills or additional advantages.

**Secondary Skills:** Acrobatics (H) DX [4]-14; Diagnosis (Equines) (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Navigation (Land) (A) IQ [2]-11; Packing (A) IQ+1 [1]-12¶; Teamster (A) IQ+1 [1]-12¶; Veterinary (Equines) (A) IQ+1 [1]-12¶; and Survival (any) (A) Per-1 [1]-11.

**Background Skills:** Climbing and Stealth, both (A) DX [2]-14. • *Three of Knife* or *Fast-Draw* (any), both (E) DX [1]-14; Riding (any other) (A) DX+1 [1]-15¶; First Aid or Gesture, both (E) IQ [1]-11; Animal Handling (any other) (A) IQ+1 [1]-12¶; Weather Sense (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Singing or Swimming, both (E) HT [1]-13; Hiking (A) HT-1 [1]-12; or Observation (A) Per-1 [1]-11.

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

† Use the statistics for the stallion (*GURPS Dungeon*

*Fantasy 5: Allies*, p. 11).

‡ Functions as Animal Empathy, but for horses only.

See *GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks*, p. 13.

§ As per the standard combat perk (*GURPS Dungeon*

*Fantasy 11: Power-Ups*, p. 11), but good for any active defense for your mount while mounted.

¶ Includes +2 for Animal Friend.

### Customization Notes

The *horse master* understands equines on a level verging on the supernatural. They should buy more levels of Animal Friend and Higher Purpose (Horse Master), plus acquire Mounted Skill Mastery for Diagnosis and/or appropriate weapon skills of choice.

The *cavalryman* is a master of fighting on horseback and should get both weapon skill packages and purchase the Combat Rider (p. 16) power-up as soon as possible. The GM may allow this power-up to be purchased at character creation because of how integral it is to this version of the chevalier concept, even if they don't normally permit other templates to do this.

*Outriders* are all about the destination and getting themselves and their companions to where they're going. Outriders should always choose Higher Purpose (Let's Ride!) and Ride from the Front. They typically spend the 16 points from their second melee skills package on better Animal Handling, Navigation, Riding, and/or Weather Sense.

## BECOMING A CHEVALIER

Use the following lens to add mounted capability to any delver.

### Chevalier Lens

+50 points

**Advantages:** Ally (Mount; 50% of points; Constantly) [8]; Animal Friend 2 [10]; Good with Horses (see footnote to chevalier template) [1]; Higher Purpose (Horse Master or Let's Ride!, below) [5]; Horse Sense (p. 16) [1]; and Mounted Skill Mastery 2 (Acrobatics; see p. 16) [2].

**Skills:** Acrobatics (H) DX-1 [2]; Animal Handling (Equines) (A) IQ+3 [4]\*; Diagnosis (Equines) (A) IQ-1 [1]; Navigation

(Land) (A) IQ-1 [1]; Packing (A) IQ+1 [1]\*; Riding (Horse) (A) DX+3 [4]\*; Teamster (A) IQ+1 [1]\*; Veterinary (Equines) (A) IQ+1 [1]\*. • Choose one of the weapon skills listed in the chevalier template's primary skills on p. 14 and put 8 points into it.

\* Includes +2 for Animal Friend.

## OTHER MOUNTS

The chevalier template assumes the mount will be a horse, but this doesn't need to be the case. The GM may allow a player to switch all traits from equines to an appropriate riding animal in their campaign.

*Example:* A halfling chevalier chooses a kangaroo as his riding animal. In this case, Animal Handling (Equines) becomes Animal Handling (Macropods), Riding (Horse) becomes Riding (Kangaroo), and so on.

## CHEVALIER TRAITS

The chevalier has access to special versions of certain advantages.

### Higher Purpose

see p. B59

In both cases below, the "implied Code of Honor" is taking care of your mount, no matter what.

*Horse Master:* Gives +1/level to any roll made while mounted, including Riding rolls to dodge, rolls to remain seated, weapon skill and damage rolls, rolls to diagnose your mount's current condition, etc.

*Let's Ride!* Gives +1/level to any roll when riding long distances – HT rolls to resist FP loss, Navigation or Weather Sense rolls to find your way, skill rolls to heal injuries your mount suffered while being ridden, etc.

### Signature Gear (Mount)

1 point; see p. B85

**Prerequisites:** Ally (Mount) and Higher Purpose (Horse Master).

No matter what, the chevalier's Ally always comes back if lost, stolen, etc. This isn't a magic power! The mount merely returns to its owner when dramatically appropriate. If it's *killed*, a new one shows up when appropriate, the gods restore it to life, it wasn't really dead, and so on.

### Weapon Master

see p. B99

*Chevalier Armaments:* Covers any weapon used principally from horseback (e.g., lance) or covered by one of the primary weapon skills on the chevalier template (p. 14). Weapons that don't inflict damage (such as lassos) get a bonus to ST rolls equal to the associated skill's attribute bonus; e.g. Lasso at DX+4 gives +4 to ST rolls for using the lasso.

## CHEVALIER POWER-UPS

Chevalier power-ups focus on mounted combat and mounted travel overland. Chevaliers can purchase anything on their template and any of the following:

- Animal Friend up to 6 [5/level].
- Enhanced Block up to 2 [5/level].
- Enhanced Parry (One Melee Weapon skill) up to 2 [5/level].
- Extra Attack 1 [25] and/or Extra Attack 1-3 (Accessibility, Only while mounted, -40%) [15/level].
- Higher Purpose (Horse Master) up to 3 [5/level].
- Higher Purpose (Let's Ride!) up to 3 [5/level].
- Ridiculous Luck [60].

Additionally, chevaliers can learn special versions of Flying Leap, Immovable Stance, Light Walk, and Power Blow that affect *their mount* instead of themselves. The GM with *Pyramid #3/71: Spaceships II* can permit chevaliers to use *Vehicle Imbuements*, allowing their mounts to perform amazing feats.

### Chevalier Perks

1 point/perk

#### Horse Sense

You can intuit what's wrong with your mount. Halve all haste penalties (p. B346) when diagnosing a problem; this lets you make an instant diagnosis at only -5 to skill. You must specialize by animal type: horses, zebras, etc.

#### Mounted Skill Mastery

*Prerequisite:* Animal Friend.

This perk comes in levels. You may purchase as many levels as you have of Animal Friend. You must specialize by skill, selecting any skill plausibly used *while mounted* (e.g., Acrobatics, Lance, or even Bow) or *for your mount* (e.g., Diagnosis). Add your Mounted Skill Mastery level to the chosen skill when mounted or using it for your mount.

In effect, these perks extend Animal Friend to additional skills, in accordance with *Smooth Talent Cost (GURPS Power-Ups 3: Talents*, p. 25).

#### Ride from the Front

*Prerequisite:* Riding at 16+.

As long you are leading the rest of your party, you can make a single Riding roll for everyone to make good time, avoid FP loss from long hours of travel, etc. Use the rules in *Part of the Solution or Part of the Problem (GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2:*

*Dungeons*, p. 11). This helps the chevalier to lead those with less (or no) Riding skill, without travel speed being limited to what the lowest-skill riders can normally handle.

### Cavalryman

10 points

*Prerequisites:* Riding at 14+ and one Melee Weapon skill at 16+.

You ignore the penalty to attack on the same turn as your mount (see *Attacks by Mounts*, p. B397). You also get +1 to damage while attacking from a mount, but your attack skill cannot exceed your Riding skill (including the bonus gained from Combat Rider if you have that power-up) when relying on this perk.

*Perks:* Unique Technique (Cavalry Training!) [1].

*Techniques:* Cavalry Training! Skill+0 [9].

### Combat Rider

8 or 12 points

*Prerequisite:* Riding at 12+.

When rolling to control your mount in combat, ignore penalties to your Riding skill. When any rule limits your weapon skill to your Riding skill, use Riding+4 instead. At level 2, the limit is Riding+6!

*Perks:* Natural Rider 2\* [2]; Unique Technique (Combat Riding) [1]. Level 2 adds Technique Mastery (Combat Riding) [1] and increases Natural Rider to 3 [1].

*Techniques:* Combat Riding (H) Riding+4 [5]; level 2 increases this to Riding+6 [7].

\* This perk comes in three levels. The first lets you treat your mount as if it were wearing a saddle; the second lets you treat your mount as if it were wearing a saddle *and* stirrups, or as if it were wearing a war saddle; the third lets you treat your mount as if it were wearing a war saddle *and* stirrups. If your mount *is* wearing a war saddle and stirrups, you get another +1 to all Riding and Animal Handling rolls instead.

### Hands-Free Rider

5 points

*Prerequisite:* Riding at 12+.

You ignore the penalty for riding using one hand or no hands (see *Mounted Combat*, p. B396).

*Perks:* Unique Technique (Hands-Free Riding) [1].

*Techniques:* Hands-Free Riding (H) Riding+0 [4].

*Adhemar: And how would you beat him?  
Retired Knight: With a stick. While he slept. But on a horse,  
with a lance? That man is unbeatable.*

– A Knight's Tale



## Horse Archer

7 or 12 points

*Prerequisites:* Riding at 14+ and a ranged weapon skill at 14+.

Pick a ranged weapon skill (typically Bow). For that skill, you ignore up to -5 worth of penalties for *Attacking from Moving Vehicle or Mount* (p. B548). For example, you could turn in your saddle to shoot behind you at *no* penalty. The second level lets you ignore up to -10 in penalties. You could shoot from *under* the saddle, behind you, at full skill!

**Perks:** Unique Technique (Mounted Shooting) [1].

**Techniques:** Mounted Shooting (H) Skill+5 [6] or Skill+10 [11].

## Quick Mount

5 or 12 points

*Prerequisite:* Acrobatics, Jumping, or Riding at 16+.

You need never roll when *Mounting Up* (p. B396) and instead spend only a second doing so. You may opt to do so *instantly*, if your mount is within one hex of you or you can reach it with a step, and you make a roll against the higher of Acrobatics, Jumping, or Riding at -7. Stirrups of any kind give +3 to this roll. Level 2 means you no longer need to roll and can mount up in less than second!

**Perks:** Flawless Mount [1]; Unique Technique (Quick Mount) [1].

**Techniques:** Quick Mount (A) Skill-7 [3] or Skill+0 [10].

# THE COMMANDER

A good leader can turn a decent adventuring group into an incredibly effective team. Combining social traits with solid combat skills and a selection of special abilities results in a template similar to the bard, but with a different focus.

Many of the new traits associated with the commander template were adapted from ones that originally appeared in *Team Up!* (from *Pyramid* #3/65: *Alternate GURPS III*). The original version of Rallying Cry originally appeared in *More Power to Dungeon Warriors!* (from *Pyramid* #3/61: *Way of the Warrior*).

## COMMANDER

250 points

Sometimes, someone must step in and take charge – and when that time comes, you're that person. You have some of the social prowess and special skills of the bard, with the power and combat utility of the holy warrior, but your capabilities come from the unshakable bond you share with your companions, not unpredictable magic or fickle gods. You don't *have* to be in the lead; your abilities are valuable regardless of the position you occupy.

**Attributes:** ST 12 [20]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 12 [20].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 12 [0]; Will 14 [10]; Per 12 [0]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 6.00 [-5]; Basic Move 6 [0].

**Advantages:** High Command Talent 2 (p. 19) [10]; Penetrating Voice [1]; Rallying Cry (below) [5]; and Team Player 1 (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 11: Power-Ups*, p. 16) [5]. • *Either* Born War Leader 2 [10] or Charisma 2 [10]. • 20 points in High Command abilities (p. 18); put leftovers into special skills (pp. 19-20). • A further 25 points chosen from among Born War Leader 1-5 [5/level], Charisma 1-5 [5/level], or High Command Talent 3 or 4 [5 or 10]. • Yet another 20 points chosen from among the previous lists, additional High Command abilities, or ST +1 or +2 [10 or 20], DX +1 [20], IQ +1 [20], HT +1 or +2 [10 or 20], HP +1 to +4 [2/level], Will +1 to +4 [5/level], FP +1 to +6 [3/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Cultural Adaptability

[10], Enhanced Block 1 [5], Enhanced Parry 1 (One Melee Weapon skill) [5], Fearlessness 1-7 [2/level], Luck [15], Reputation +1 to +4 (Great Leader; Everyone; All the time) [5/level], Signature Gear [Varies], Smooth Operator 1 [15], Social Chameleon [5], Striking ST 1 or 2 [5 or 10], Teamwork (*GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks*, p. 8) [1], Voice [10], Wealth (Comfortable or Wealthy) [10 or 20], or Weapon Bond [1].

**Disadvantages:** Sense of Duty (Adventuring Companions) [-5]. • Another -20 points chosen from among Code of Honor (Pirate's, Soldier's, or Chivalry) [-5, -10, or -15], Compulsive Generosity [-5\*], Compulsive Vowing [-5\*], Honesty [-10\*], Selfless [-5\*], or Sense of Duty (Nation) [-10]. • A further -20 points chosen from among the previous list or Bloodlust [-10\*], Chummy [-5] or Gregarious [-10], Compulsive Carousing [-5\*], Lecherousness [-15\*], Overconfidence [-5\*], or Xenophilia [-10\*].

### New Advantage: Rallying Cry

5 points

*Prerequisites:* Leadership at 12+; *either* Born War Leader 2+ or Charisma 2+; and *either* Code of Honor (Soldier's or Chivalry) or Sense of Duty (Adventuring Companions).

With a mighty holler, you can snap allies out of *mental* stun caused by surprise, Fright Checks, etc. This is a *free* action and requires no special combat maneuver; simply roll against Leadership, at -1 per stunned ally past the first. The affected radius is HT yards (HT+3 yards with Penetrating Voice). You may try this once per turn. Success gives your friends immediate *Will* rolls to recover from mental stun, at +1 if you have Penetrating Voice. Those who succeed recover instantly; they shed the defense penalties for being stunned and may act normally on their next turn.

**Advantages:** Rapier Wit (Reversed) [5]. This variant has the opposite of the usual effect at the same price.

**Primary Skills:** Intimidation (A) Will [2]-14; Leadership (A) IQ [2]-12†‡; Strategy (H) IQ-1 [2]-11†; and Tactics (H) IQ [4]-12†. • Crossbow or Thrown Weapon (Axe/Mace or Spear), both (E) DX+2 [4]-15; or Throwing (A) DX+1 [4]-14. • One of these two melee skill packages:

1. One of Polearm, Spear, or Two-Handed Sword, all DX+5 [20]-18.
2. One of Axe/Mace, Broadsword, Rapier, Saber, Shortsword, Smallsword, or Spear, all DX+3 [12]-16 – and either Shield or Shield (Buckler), both (E) DX+3 [8]-16.

**Secondary Skills:** Brawling (E) DX [1]-13; Carousing (E) HT [1]-12; Fast-Draw (any) (E) DX [1]-13; Fast-Talk (E) IQ [2]-12; Public Speaking (A) IQ [2]-12‡; and Wrestling (A) DX [2]-13.

**Background Skills:** Hiking (A) HT-1 [1]-11 and Riding (Horse) (A) DX-1 [1]-12. • Four of Climbing, Lance, or Stealth, all (A) DX-1 [1]-12; First Aid or Gesture, both (E) IQ [1]-12; Interrogation or Heraldry, both (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; or Breath Control (H) HT-2 [1]-10.

**Special Skills:** Five of Ease Passage, Incite Fervor, Lighten Load (requires Ease Passage), Motivation (requires Incite Fervor), Recuperation (requires Lighten Load), Swift Action (requires Motivation), Understanding (requires Recuperation), or Unwavering Fortitude (requires Swift Action), all (H) IQ [1]-12§; or Kiai (H) HT [1]-12§. See pp. 19-20 for descriptions.

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

† Add bonus for Born War Leader, if chosen

‡ Add bonus for Charisma, if chosen.

§ Includes +2 for High Command Talent.

## Customization Notes

The commander is a generalist, with good across-the-board stats and abilities that have utility in a range of situations. Thus, this delver doesn't *start* especially good at any one thing, but can improve dramatically with a small investment of earned character points. When designing a commander, there are plenty of different directions to go in.

*Tacticians* favor raised IQ, Born War Leader, more levels of High Command Talent, and additional points in High Command skills to help them prepare in advance of combat or long marches.

*Warlords* like raised ST, DX, or HP, Combat Reflexes, Enhanced Defenses, Striking ST, and Kiai – anything to help them lead from the front.

*Adjutants* go for Charisma, Cultural Adaptability, Smooth Operator, Social Chameleon, Voice, and Wealth. Oh, and Allies – lots and lots of Allies.

That's just a start! There are many more leader archetypes to choose from, and they *all* benefit from High Command abilities and skills! Commanders usually trade in the 5 points from quirks for improved skills and High Command abilities, or Signature Gear.

## BECOMING A COMMANDER

Not every group has or needs a dedicated leader. The following lens is appropriate for delvers who've discovered a talent for leadership. Different templates give different styles: *knight-commanders* lead from the front, protecting

their companions with steel; *scholar-commanders* make better tacticians and planners; and *cleric-commanders* aid their comrades with High Command abilities, Guidance skills, and spells.

## Commander Lens

+50 points

**Advantages:** High Command Talent 1 (p. 19) [5]; Penetrating Voice [1]; Rallying Cry (p. 17) [5]; and Team Player 1 (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 11: Power-Ups*, p. 16) [5]. • Either Born War Leader 2 [10] or Charisma 2 [10].

**Skills:** Intimidation (A) Will [2]; Leadership\*† (A) IQ [2]; Strategy\* (H) IQ-1 [2]; Tactics\* (H) IQ-1 [2].

**Special Abilities:** 16 points total in High Command abilities and/or skills.

\* Add bonus for Born War Leader, if chosen

† Add bonus for Charisma, if chosen

*Commanders must stay true to their adventuring companions for their special abilities to work.*

## HIGH COMMAND

This power draws strength from the connection between party members (and any Allies). Its abilities take the High Command modifier, and rolls to use those abilities receive a bonus equal to the level of High Command Talent.

### Power Modifier: High Command

-10%

High Command abilities require commanders to stay true to their adventuring associates and companions, and to have some means of communicating with them. Actual communication is not required – only that the commander *could* do so. High Command abilities are not affected by any kind of antimagic, but if the commander ever sets aside their Sense of Duty, their abilities cut out *immediately*, and they must spend at least a week fixing their betrayal before those gifts will return. No one knows for sure where commanders draw their power from, though commanders like to claim it's all natural talent – when the abilities desert someone, it's only from the guilt of failing their companions. Not everyone believes this theory, including some commanders.

### High Command Abilities

Allies (Henchmen; 12 or less or 15 or less; PM, -10%) [Varies]; Empathy (PM, -10%) [14]; Indomitable (PM, -10%) [14]; Intuition (PM, -10%) [14]; Luck or Extraordinary Luck (PM, -10%; Wishing\*, +100%) [29 or 57]; Serendipity 1 (PM, -10%) [14]; Terror (PM, -10%) [27]; Unfazeable (PM, -10%) [14].

\*Allows you to apply your advantage to those in your vicinity, not just yourself.

## High Command Talent

5 points/level

High Command Talent adds to both rolls for High Command abilities and High Command skills.

## High Command Skills

Those with *any* points in High Command can learn Ease Passage (below), Incite Fervor (below), Kiai (p. B203), Lighten Load (below), Motivation (below), Recuperation (p. 20), Swift Action (p. 20), Understanding (p. 20), and Unwavering Fortitude (p. 20).

## GUIDANCE SKILLS

The following skills, similar to the Enthralment skills on pp. B191-192, represent the cinematic expertise demonstrated by heroic captains of the guard, born leaders, and similar character types. The GM *could* treat this as high levels of Leadership skill, but Guidance skills add nuance and – especially in games with few NPCs to lead – concrete utility.

### Guidance

IQ/Hard

*Defaults:* None.

*Prerequisites:* Either Born War Leader 1+ or Charisma 1+; High Command Talent 1+; Rallying Cry; and Leadership at 14+.

True leaders can often drive those under their command to perform feats those followers otherwise could not.

Each Guidance skill has a time requirement, FP cost, and duration, and requires *two* skill rolls to use (Leadership followed by the specific Guidance skill).

To use a Guidance skill, roll against Leadership. Critical success gives +1 to a subsequent Guidance roll. Failure gives a penalty equal to the margin of failure. Critical failure means the Guidance attempt fails, and a natural 18 insults those you were trying to lead!

After the required time has passed (during which the commander gives speeches, offers words or gestures of encouragement, displays motivating symbols or banners, etc.), roll against your chosen Guidance skill – resisted by Will if your followers have reason to dislike you or had a “Poor” or worse reaction to you recently. If you succeed (win), you affect your associates. If you fail (lose), there’s no effect. If you critically fail, your people become hostile! Effects take place immediately unless noted otherwise.

Multiple Guidance skills can be used on the same group simultaneously, but require separate rolls and are at a cumulative -3 per skill beyond the first until your target group has had a chance to rest without any orders for at least an hour.

You may never learn these skills at a level higher than your Leadership skill.

*Group Size:* You may not affect a group of people larger than your Born War Leader or Charisma level (whichever is better) *squared*.

*Modifiers:* All Guidance skills are at -3 for Low Empathy (p. B142). If Public Speaking is used to give an actual speech, +1 for success or +2 for critical success.

### Ease Passage

IQ/Hard

*Defaults:* None.

Your leadership guides your adventuring companions, and they follow your example through even the most unfavorable of environments. On a successful roll, all present may ignore the -2 to attack and -1 to defend for bad footing due to the current terrain. On success by 5+ (or a critical success), you and your associates don’t suffer *any* DX or Move penalties for the surrounding terrain type.

*Time:* 1 minute.

*Fatigue Cost:* 2 FP, whether successful or not.

*Duration:* Until the end of the battle or march.

### Incite Fervor

IQ/Hard

*Defaults:* None.

You instill a fervent belief in your cause, giving your adventuring companions a bonus to resist *any* attempt to dissuade them from attacking – whether supernatural mind control or Intimidation skill – equal to margin of success (minimum +1). Incite Fervor also gives a bonus to your allies’ morale checks (p. B561) equal to *half* of this (still minimum +1).

*Time:* 1 minute.

*Fatigue Cost:* 2 FP, whether successful or not.

*Duration:* One hour, or until the end of the battle if used in combat.

### Lighten Load

IQ/Hard

*Defaults:* None.

*Prerequisite:* Ease Passage at 12+.

You motivate your adventuring companions to shoulder greater burdens. This increases the Basic Lift of those affected by 5% per point by which you succeed, but only for the purpose of calculating encumbrance levels – it doesn’t affect the amount your associates can lift, just the amount they can *carry*. This is useful for long hikes with heavy loads, but also for fighting while encumbered!

*Time:* 10 minutes.

*Fatigue Cost:* 4 FP, whether successful or not.

*Duration:* Until the end of the battle or march.

### Motivation

IQ/Hard

*Defaults:* None.

*Prerequisite:* Incite Fervor at 12+.

You encourage your adventuring companions to excel. All those affected get +1 to their rolls (+2 if you roll a critical success) for the next hour or the entirety of the next battle they’re in. On success by 5+ (or a critical success), affected associates are also immune to the negative effects of having less than 1/3 of their FP left (see p. B426).

*Time:* 10 minutes.

*Fatigue Cost:* 4 FP, whether successful or not.

*Duration:* One hour, or until the end of the battle if used in combat.

## Recuperation

IQ/Hard

*Defaults:* None.

*Prerequisite:* Lighten Load at 12+.

You galvanize your adventuring companions to overcome their wounds. For each point by which you make the roll, increase the healing your associates receive by 10% (minimum increase of 1 HP) from all sources: spells, natural healing, first aid, etc.

*Time:* 30 minutes.

*Fatigue Cost:* 6 FP, whether successful or not.

*Duration:* One hour. The next natural recovery roll within 24 hours is also affected.

## Swift Action

IQ/Hard

*Defaults:* None.

*Prerequisite:* Motivation at 12+.

You inspire urgency in your adventuring companions. This does *one* of the following (choose before rolling):

- The Basic Move of all associates increases by 10% times your margin of success (minimum of +1).
- All allies enjoy a temporary Basic Speed increase. The bonus is +0.25 per full *five* points by which you succeed (but always at least +0.25).
- One person of your choice gains an additional Move maneuver per turn, up to a maximum number of times per combat equal to 1/5 of your margin of success (rounded down, but at least once). Optionally, you don't have to pick a specific ally; you can give each bonus maneuver to *any* ally of your choice during the battle by taking a Concentrate maneuver. You must pick one or the other before rolling for this skill.
- Allies' overland movement rates increase by 1% per point by which you succeed on your roll, minimum +5%. This stacks with bonuses to movement from other sources (e.g., the increase gained from making a Hiking skill roll).

*Time:* 30 minutes.

*Fatigue Cost:* 6 FP, whether successful or not.

*Duration:* Until the end of the battle or march.

## Understanding

IQ/Hard

*Defaults:* None.

*Prerequisite:* Recuperation at 12+.

You induce an intuitive awareness and understanding of each other in your comrades. Those affected may automatically communicate the same information as they could with a successful Gesture roll, even in the midst of combat. On success by 5+ (or a critical success), they may communicate information as if having a normal conversation in a relaxed environment. In both cases, this is done without words, gestures, or even psychic contact – it is simply a function of the leader's skill.

*Time:* 30 minutes.

*Fatigue Cost:* 8 FP, whether successful or not.

*Duration:* One hour, or until the end of the battle if used in combat.

## Unwavering Fortitude

IQ/Hard

*Defaults:* None.

*Prerequisite:* Swift Action at 12+.

You grant your adventuring companions an unflinching resolve. This allows them to fight or act longer, even when they should be reeling from injuries, lack of sleep or food, etc. For the purposes of *Effects of Injury* (p. B380) and *Lost Fatigue Points* (p. B426), replace both "less than 1/3" thresholds with "less than 1/4." This has no effect on what occurs at 0 or fewer HP or FP. On a critical success, all affected adventuring companions *ignore* the effects of lost HP and FP until the relevant value reaches 0. Unwavering Fortitude has no effect on how fast HP or FP are recovered.

*Time:* 30 minutes.

*Fatigue Cost:* 8 FP, whether successful or not.

*Duration:* One hour, or until the end of the battle if used in combat.

*I am not afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep; I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion.*

*– Alexander the Great*

## COMMANDER POWER-UPS

Commander power-ups focus on leadership, strategy, and teamwork. Commanders may purchase anything on their template or in the High Command power, as well as the following options:

- Charisma [5/level], with *no* upper limit.
- Enhanced Block up to 3 [5/level].
- Enhanced Parry (One Melee Weapon skill) up to 3 [5/level].
- Extra Attack 1 [25].
- Extraordinary or Ridiculous Luck [30 or 60].
- High Command Talent up to 6 [5/level].
- Ridiculous Luck (PM, -10%; Wishing Only, +0%) [54].
- Serendipity (PM, -10%; Wishing Only, +0%) up to 3 [13.5/level].
- Smooth Operator up to 6 [15/level].
- Team Player up to 3 [5/level]; see *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 11: Power-Ups*, p. 16. Unlike other delvers, commanders aren't limited to a single level of this power-up!
- The knight power-ups Bodyguard and Tactician; see *More Power to Dungeon Warriors!* (from *Pyramid* #3/61: *Way of the Warrior*).
- Weapon Master (One specific weapon) [20].

## Aiding Presence

### Variable

Your mere presence is sufficient to empower your adventuring companions, granting a variety of potential effects. All require a minimum High Command Talent level to learn (1/10 of the cost of the Presence's first level, for the GM designing new effects), as well as a smattering of other prerequisites. They're built as Afflictions with the following modifier package:

*Presence* (+220%): Area Effect, 4 yards, +100%; Aura, +80%; High Command, -10%; Malediction 1, +100%; Melee Attack, Reach C, -30%; Reduced Duration, 1/60, Only after target leaves the area, -30%; Selective Area, +20%; Takes Extra Time 1, -10%.

Each Presence takes a second of preparation before it can be activated. The commander rolls against Will plus High Command Talent for each ally who enters the area of effect. On a success, the Presence affects that ally. On a failure, the commander may continue to roll as a free action each turn, at *no penalty*, until they succeed! Presences don't affect the commander unless otherwise noted.

Once active, the effects last for as long as the ally remains within a four-yard radius of the commander. If that person leaves, the effects continue for seconds equal to the commander's margin of success on the initial roll. Unlike a bard's Songs, the commander's Presence increases in *potency* with each added level, not area of effect. Thus, a party must stick close together to get the full benefits!

A commander may use only one Presence at a time. If he *switches* Presences, the effects of the previous one ends instantly.

Commanders pay full cost for their *most expensive* Presence, but only 1/5 cost (round up) for all the others. This calculation must be redone any time the adventurer adds or upgrades a Presence.

### Call to Arms

**47 points for level 1, plus 30 points for each additional level**

*Prerequisites:* High Command Talent 5+ and Combat Reflexes.

When you're near your adventuring companions, you can shout out short commands or warnings, giving your side +1 to active defenses, +2 on Fright Checks, and +6 to recover from mental stun. These effects stack with Combat Reflexes!

**Advantages:** Affliction 1 (HT; Advantage, Combat Reflexes, +150%; Presence, +220%) [47]. Higher levels add one level each of Enhanced Block, Enhanced Dodge, and Enhanced Parry (All), for 30 points per level.

### Endurance

**35 points for level 1, plus 3 points for each additional level**

*Prerequisites:* High Command Talent 4+ and FP 15+.

When you're nearby, your adventuring companions can push themselves beyond their limits, accomplishing feats

they never thought possible. Each level grants +1 FP that can be used to fuel athletics, martial feats, and physical extra effort – including *Extra Effort in Combat* (p. B357) and *non-magical* special abilities. Your allies cannot spend these FP to fuel spells, *magical* abilities, or mental extra effort. Beneficiaries may tap into this reserve even at fully negative FP, and it isn't affected by anything that normally saps FP.

**Advantages:** Affliction 1 (HT; Advantage, Energy Reserve 1 (Heroic), +30%; Presence, +220%) [35]. Higher levels add more Energy Reserve (Heroic), +30%/level, at +3 points per level.

### Resilience

**42 points for level 1, plus 1 point for each additional level**

*Prerequisites:* High Command Talent 5+ and HP 15+.

All adventuring companions affected by your Presence can completely shrug off shock penalties. They also get +3 to resist knockdown, stunning, and physical torture. Additional levels let them shrug off actual *damage!* For every level past the first, the targets may ignore one point of basic damage – but only *once*.

**Advantages:** Affliction 1 (HT; Advantage, High Pain Threshold, +100%; Presence, +220%) [42]. Higher levels add Damage Resistance (Ablative), +10%/level, at +1 point per level.

### Unity

**41 points for level 1, plus 8 points for each additional level**

*Prerequisites:* High Command Talent 4+ and Teamwork (**GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks**, p. 8).

Your mere presence can unite even the most disparate of parties. The commander and everyone under the effect of the Presence gains the Team Player power-up (**Power-Ups**, p. 16) at the level of this Presence, plus the Teamwork perk. They may form up as a free action, gaining access to a myriad of potent teamwork-related options.

**Advantages:** Affliction 1 (HT; Advantage, Team Player 1 (Cosmic, Multiple Levels, +50%), +80%; Advantage, Teamwork, +10%; Presence, +220%) [41]. Higher levels add more Team Player, +80%/level, at +8 points per level.

## Combat Evaluation

**10 points**

*Prerequisite:* Tactics at 18+.

Once per combat, you may take a free action to assess the situation. The GM rolls against your Tactics skill plus High Command Talent level. On a success, the GM proposes a tactic based on your knowledge of the situation. The better the roll, the better the advice – but on a failure, you get *bad* advice.

**Advantages:** Common Sense (Accessibility, Only for combat, -20%; Conscious, +50%; Limited Use, Once per battle, -20%; PM, -10%) [10].

## Commander Perks

1 point/perk

### Aura of Authority

*Prerequisite:* Rallying Cry (p. 17).

You have a way of projecting your personality to your followers. Increase your Born War Leader or Charisma level by one per level of this perk (maximum five levels) for the sole purpose of determining how many people your Guidance skills (pp. 19-20) can affect.

### Esprit de Corps

*Prerequisites:* Sense of Duty (Adventuring Companions) and Teamwork (**GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks**, p. 8).

Your adventuring companions are your dearest friends and compatriots. Each level of this perk (maximum three levels) gives you +1 on rolls to resist Brainwashing, Interrogation, and supernatural mind control in any situation where failure to resist would lead to betrayal of your comrades.

### Powerful Voice

*Prerequisite:* Rallying Cry (p. 17).

Each level of Powerful Voice (to a maximum level equal to half your HT, rounded *up*) adds +1 to HT when determining the radius of effect of your Rallying Cry.

## Commanding Shout

38 points

*Prerequisites:* Rallying Cry (p. 17) and Leadership at 18+.

You may take a Concentrate maneuver in combat to shout specific orders to a number of adventuring companions equal to your Born War Leader or Charisma level (whichever is better) *squared*. Make a Leadership roll at a bonus equal to your High Command Talent level. For every 3 points by which you succeed, the chosen allies gain +1 to their die rolls that second, but only if they follow your orders *exactly*. For each ally who cannot, or chooses not to, the total bonus is reduced by one – which *can* result in a penalty!

**Advantages:** Rallying Cry acquires a new modifier: Tactical Influence (+750%), for 38 points.

## Friends on the Other Side

6 or 10 points

*Prerequisites:* Reputation +2 or higher or Charisma 4+.

This commander isn't just a great leader of people – they can command animals or even *supernatural* associates. This power-up may be bought twice to cover *both* animal allies and spirits. The reasons for this can vary! Perhaps the adventurer comes from a line of necromancers or druids (or druidic necromancers). Perhaps they care for their troops so well that they've been given authority over a Higher Power's servant, and retain some benefits (if not the servant). Perhaps Death or Nature itself had a passing infatuation, and bid those under its power to aid its favored mortal. Perhaps the commander's deceased companions have spoken well of

them to other spirits. Or the source of this ability may be a mystery to everyone . . .

**Advantages:** Animal Empathy (PM, -10%) [5] for animal allies, or Spirit Empathy (PM, -10%) [9] for spirits, and Supernatural Servants (Animals or Spirits)\* [1].

\* This perk grants access to Allies usually available only to clerics, druids, or summoners (demonologists, elementalists, shamans, etc.). All such Allies take the High Command power modifier instead of their usual power modifier, and the Summonable enhancement.

## Inspire!

5 points

*Prerequisites:* Rallying Cry (p. 17) and either Born War Leader 3+ or Charisma 3+.

Your leadership inspires your adventuring companions, helping them overcome their limitations and steady their nerves. As well as aiding with mental stun, Rallying Cry gives a bonus equal to the better of your Born War Leader or Charisma, *minus* one, to combat-related Fright Checks, morale checks, and self-control rolls for anything that would reduce the combat effectiveness of your team. On a critical success for Rallying Cry, use the unmodified level of Born War Leader or Charisma.

**Advantages:** Rallying Cry acquires an enhancement: Inspiring, +100% for 5 points.

## Shared Strength

30 points/level

Each game session, once per level, you may call upon your shared bond to use one of the *core* traits (an advantage or a skill) of your comrades. For advantages that don't have "uses" (e.g., Power Investiture or Weapon Master), this ability grants the advantage for one minute. If the advantage comes in levels, you get one level or 30 points' worth, whichever is *better*. The GM decides what counts as a *core* ability, but it usually means mandatory advantages, advantages belonging to powers like Druidic Arts or Holy Might, primary skills, special skills, and spells.

**Advantages:** Wild Talent (External, Allies, -20%; Focused, Ally abilities, -20%; No Advantage Requirements, +50%; PM, -10%; Wild Ability, +50%) [30/level].

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher R. Rice's favorite classes from *Dungeons & Dragons* were always those with followers or mounts. From Portsmouth, Virginia, he's spinning words and whimsy into gold. Of course, if he's not writing about **GURPS**, he's blogging about it. Visit his site "Ravens N' Pennies" ([www.ravenspennies.com](http://www.ravenspennies.com)) for more **GURPS** goodies. He's the co-author of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 19: Incantation Magic* and *Dungeon Fantasy Traps*. He wishes to thank L.A., his own personal muse, as well as the rest of his gaming group (the Headhunters); Beth "Archangel" McCoy, the "Sith Editrix"; and Douglas Cole, for being most excellent sounding boards. Special thanks to Hal "Wavefunction" Batty for his rules for commanders.

# EIDETIC MEMORY

## THE BOUNCERS OF CARADOC

BY DAVID L. PULVER

Bouncers are a species of lethal alien predator intended for use in science-fiction setting in which psi powers exist (at least for nonhumans). The adventure seeds detailed below assume their appearance in a *GURPS Space* campaign. However, with some minor tweaking in regard to the creatures' background, they could be used in other settings, such as a *GURPS Monster Hunters* or even *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* game.

Some basic details about the planet are given below, but the GM should feel free to substitute any other planet that includes an alien forest or jungle ecosystem and has had little in the way of settlement or exploration.

The planetary statistics format is from *GURPS Space*. The organization format (see *Wormstar Laboratories*, p. 27) is from *GURPS Boardroom and Curia*.

*No frontier was ever explored by just  
one expedition.*

— Dr. J.R. Matheny,  
in *The Incredible  
Petriified World*

### PLANET CARADOC

Caradoc, the bouncers' homeworld, is a backwater, largely uninhabited frontier planet that has only recently been discovered. Caradoc has an rich native biosphere. Its average climate is tropical, with thick jungle and swamp covering a large fraction of the planet, although there are mountainous and desert regions. Rainfall is steady, and many rapid-growing fungal species and vines make it difficult for Terran-imported vegetation to gain a foothold.

Caradoc has two major continents, the equatorial and southern Cador and the smaller, northern Guinier. Most settlement and exploration has taken place on Cador. Major features include the 4,200-mile-long Great Serpent River and the highland forest of the volcanic Eliavres Plateau.

Caradoc possesses highly developed plant, fungoid, and animal life. Most animals are distinguished by three or six

limbs per side, sometimes with radial symmetry. Many creatures also possess a pyramidal head and long manipulator tentacle. There are numerous species of insect equivalents as well as plentiful larger animals. Most species have yet to be cataloged. Among the most surprising of these is the bouncer; see below. (Of course, if the PCs are the first to survive contact with the species, they can name it themselves . . .)

### Caradoc Planetary Statistics

Caradoc's primary is Gwent, a yellow G3 V star with a mass of 1.1 solar masses and a luminosity of 1.2. Caradoc orbits Gwent at an average distance of 0.98 AU.

*Year:* 404 local days.

*Day:* 25 hours.

*Diameter:* 0.9 Earths.

*Density:* 1.1 Earths.

*Surface Gravity:* 1G

*Dominant Terrain:* Forest, mountains, plains.

*Atmosphere:* Oxygen-nitrogen.

*Average Temperature:* Temperate to tropical except in arctic and subarctic zones.

*Climate:* Varies; tends toward wet.

*Hydrographic Coverage:* 78% water.

*Axial Tilt:* 22°.

*Moons:* One large moon, Ysave.

*Population:* Small research station (with a daily average of a dozen off-world researchers).

*Spaceport:* Class I.

*Government:* Corporate (CR 1).

*Tech Level:* 10.

### BOUNCER

Bouncers are predatory omnivores. They appear to be native to the forests and swamplands of Caradoc. Exact numbers are uncertain, but as they are apex predators, they are relatively uncommon, perhaps numbering anywhere from 10,000 to 100,000 (their unique mobility makes them hard to count).

Bouncers have radial symmetry and an octahedral body. Four of their sides are marked by small eyes protected by nictitating membranes. Three sides have mouths with sharp, bony teeth. One side has a pair of openings used for excretion and egg-laying.

Tentacles emanate from the six points of the octahedron. Three of these are used to support the creature or to walk. The bouncer can strike with the other three. All six end in sharp talons (which make a distinct scraping noise when walking, as the talons move against each other), and also contain olfactory-bud sense organs. The tentacles are quite strong, with excellent "twitch-strength" muscles.

A bouncer's mottled light- and dark-gray skin is decorated with a complex pattern that resembles urban camouflage. It makes the creature fairly noticeable in the planet's swamps and forests (-1 to Camouflage) but hard to locate in built-up areas (+1 to Camouflage). The skin is also very resilient; the molecular structure of the proteins is remarkably similar to that of ultra-tech ballistic body armor. However, their most effective defense is their rapid regeneration. They can grow back lost eyes and tentacles within a few weeks, and can regenerate tissue and internal organs as long as they are still alive.

Their most unusual characteristic is a natural psionic power. All bouncers are capable of short-range clairvoyance and teleportation. A pair of pea-sized glands near the base of the brain generate hormones that boost psionic ability.

## THEORIES ABOUT THE BOUNCER

Bouncers are obviously highly unusual. Here are possible origins.

*Extraterrestrial:* Initial analysis of bouncer genetics revealed several points of divergence from other Caradoc life forms, with the exception of the mega-slugs (p. 25). It is possible that further genetic analysis might show that both species are extraterrestrial in origin, likely brought to the planet by some unknown starfaring species a long time ago. (Fossil records may indicate they have been on the planet for at least 100,000 years.)

*Precursor Bio-Weapons:* This theory posits that the bouncer is too sophisticated a predator to have evolved naturally; there is nothing on Caradoc that can withstand it. It is instead a living weapon deployed by a precursor race, and has survived its masters. Perhaps bouncers were originally sent here to exterminate the telephants (pp. 25-26), who in this theory were a once-civilized high-tech race themselves. Bouncers long ago succeeded in reducing them from a civilized race, a few billion strong, to mere primitive remnants, and continue to stalk them out of obedience to some genetic programming to "keep them down."

*Degenerate Race:* A minority viewpoint holds that they are a degenerate vestige of a more advanced race, and are at least as intelligent as gorillas (IQ 6-8). This could be combined with either of the above theories.

A web-like layer of surface tissue containing thousands of stacked electrocyte cells may also be involved.

Bouncers lair in caves typically holding one to three family groups, each with two to four adults and 0-4 juveniles. Bouncers prefer to occupy locations that give them a good field of view. They are territorial and will kill man-sized or larger creatures. Their prey includes most of the larger creatures on Caradoc, including tri-torts (p. 26) and telephants (pp. 25-26).

They usually hunt in groups of two or four, though occasional "rogue" individuals may be observed, perhaps survivors of packs devastated by natural accidents or mischance. Packs do not hunt together except during their mating period.

In the wild, typical tactics are to observe a target first, then fight three-dimensionally, teleporting to high locations and using their tentacles to grip branches (or ceiling fixtures) to spy on potential prey and study them, before suddenly appearing at the right moment. Unless they go berserk, they use hit-and-run tactics, breaking contact by teleportation as soon as they're hurt or significantly disadvantaged, to return for a later attack a few hours later, after they have regenerated or (particularly against adventurers and soldiers) waiting until their foes are relaxing, eating, or sleeping.

Bouncers are dioecious, and distinctions between males and females are not externally obvious. They reproduce about once every two and a half years.

Mating rituals involve a lot of tentacle waving, joint hunting behavior, and sometimes a search for a new cave. During mating periods, bouncers also gain a degree of telepathic sensitivity, which makes them more aggressive near non-bouncers.

Female bouncers lay a clutch of eggs in a cave lair, tending them until they hatch, which takes about three months. Young are brought food and taught to hunt by the adults. Bouncers grow rapidly and are mature within two years. They live with the family for about five years total, until they are ready to seek mates (from other packs). Lifespan is estimated at 15 years; elderly bouncer have erratic teleport abilities and warty skin.

Bouncers have a sizable brain and, while considered animals, are quite clever. They do not use tools or appear to possess language, but will occasionally use their tentacle-claws to open doors and push buttons.

They are also reasonably social. Bouncers have been observed to assist other injured bouncers, moving to protect a wounded pack-mate, for instance.

Bouncers are smart enough to know when a creature's "shell" is too hard for them to crack, and won't persist in useless attacks against armored foes. Instead, they'll grapple an armored foe and teleport to a high location, or above a body of water or swamp, and then drop them. This "nutcracker" maneuver can be observed in use against the hard-shelled tri-torts, but bouncers may also use it against combat-armored humans. They have learned to use grapple-and-twist maneuvers to divest foes of helmets.

<b>ST:</b> 32	<b>HP:</b> 32	<b>Speed:</b> 6.00
<b>DX:</b> 13	<b>Will:</b> 11	<b>Move:</b> 6
<b>IQ:</b> 6*	<b>Per:</b> 11	<b>Weight:</b> 700 lbs.
<b>HT:</b> 11	<b>FP:</b> 12	<b>SM:</b> +2
<b>Dodge:</b> 10	<b>Parry:</b> 11 (unarmed)	<b>DR:</b> 10



**Bite (15):** 3d+1 cutting. Reach C.

**Grapple (14):** No damage, but on later turns can squeeze (*Choke or Strangle*, p. B370) at ST 33. Treat as two-handed grapple. Reach C, 1.

**Talons (15):** 3d+2 cutting. Reach C, 1.

**Traits:** 360° Vision; Absolute Direction; Berserk (6) (Trigger, In nest with young); Bloodlust (12); Clairsentience (Clairvoyance; ESP power modifier); Combat Reflexes; Discriminatory Smell; Extra Arms 1; Extra Attack 2; Extra Legs (Three Legs); Extra Mouth 2; Nictitating Membrane 5; Night Vision 4; Regeneration (Fast); Regrowth; Resistant to Metabolic Hazards (+8); Sharp Teeth; Supersensitive (Only during mating period); Talons; Warp (Gyroscopic; Reliable 20; Teleportation power modifier); Wild Animal.

**Skills:** Brawling-15; Camouflage-11; Stealth-12; Wrestling-14.

\* If bouncers are really a degenerate intelligent race, the GM may wish to raise this to IQ 7-9.

### Juvenile Bouncer

These statistics apply to a bouncer a year or two old, about two-thirds the size of an adult. Juveniles rarely approach humans, but prey on smaller animals. They may be found in groups of two or three, with one or both parents teaching them to hunt, and may help defend the pack if their parents are also menaced. They tend to be more curious than adults.

**ST:** 22      **HP:** 22      **Speed:** 6.00  
**DX:** 13      **Will:** 10      **Move:** 6  
**IQ:** 5      **Per:** 11      **Weight:** 600 lbs.  
**HT:** 11      **FP:** 12      **SM:** +1

**Dodge:** 10      **Parry:** 10 (unarmed)      **DR:** 8

**Bite (13):** 2d-1 cutting. Reach C.

**Grapple (13):** Reach C, 1.

**Talons (13):** 2d cutting. Reach C, 1.

**Traits:** 360° Vision; Absolute Direction; Bloodlust (12); Clairsentience (Clairvoyance; ESP power modifier); Combat Reflexes; Curious (9); Discriminatory Smell; ESP Talent 3; Extra Arms 1; Extra Attack 2; Extra Legs (Three Legs); Extra Mouth 2; Nictitating Membrane 5; Regeneration (Fast); Regrowth; Resistant to Metabolic Hazards (+8); Sharp Teeth; Talons; Warp (Gyroscopic; Reliable 15; Teleportation power modifier); Wild Animal.

**Skills:** Brawling-13; Camouflage-10; Stealth-12; Wrestling-13.

## OTHER LIFE FORMS

Compared to the bouncer, most of the animals and plants on Caradoc are more mundane, sharing similarities with Earth flora and fauna – but a few are of particular note.

### Spotted Mega-Slug

These are 5'-long, limbless creatures with triple feelers, a soft mauve body, and a three-eyed head with a long tongue. They also have a sharp barbed "foot" on their underside that ends in a nasty sting, mostly dangerous if picked up.

They congregate in groups of a dozen or so. They are often preyed upon by telephants (below), but can usually elude

bouncers. They eat various smaller grubs, fungi-equivalents, and decaying vegetation. They lay clutches of slimy eggs on beaches and in coastal caves. Juvenile mega-slugs spend most of their time living in caves and under tree roots, and are totally harmless.

Mega-slugs can excrete an acidic enzyme that helps them burrow through the ground, but which might also burn through wiring or communication cables. They leave a distinctive sweet-smelling slime trail. Analysis of their slime trails shows they contain traces of a compound (PDP-Gamma) which could be the basis of a potent psi-booster; the creatures are themselves telepathically sensitive in a minor way, irritated by the presence of sapient or near-sapient organisms (possibly including bouncers). Despite their relatively slow movement, this sensitivity gives them a disturbing habit of taking cover by burrowing underground well before danger occurs.

**ST:** 7      **HP:** 7      **Speed:** 4.50  
**DX:** 8      **Will:** 10      **Move:** 2  
**IQ:** 3      **Per:** 10      **Weight:** 60 lbs.  
**HT:** 10      **FP:** 11      **SM:** -2  
**Dodge:** 7      **Parry:** N/A      **DR:** 0

**Corrosive Attack (8):** 1d-1 corrosion. Reach C.

**Striker (8):** 1d-1(5) piercing + follow-up 2d toxic (HT-4 to resist) every hour for five hours. Cannot Parry. Limited Arc. Reach C.

**Traits:** Danger Sense; Supersensitive; Tunneling (Move 1); Vermiform; Wild Animal.

*And so man's search for intelligent life on other planets and in other galaxies will continue. For this is the heart and meaning of that great adventure – the exploration of the Universe.*

*– Narrator, in Voyage to the Prehistoric Planet*

### Telephant (a.k.a. Goldshell)

These creatures are 5'-tall, skinny humanoids with wedge-shaped heads, long elephant-like trunks, tough orange-gold-patterned scales, and long twin tails. Their brains are large, and they show sophisticated family behavior, but no language is obvious (perhaps they are telepathic, at the GM's option). They use a complex range of high-pitched hoots that serve as hunting signals and distress calls. There are at least 250,000 of them on the planet.

Telephants are hunter-gatherers. They live in herds of a dozen or so individuals, usually in camouflaged burrows on the shores of islands or on riverbanks. They construct beaver-like dams. Females can spit a complex glue-like substance out their trunks (used in nest-making and to trap flyers and mega-slugs). They breed rapidly, with reproductive strategies somewhat analogous to terrestrial rabbits.

Telephants appear to be pre-sapient. They use very simple improvised tools such as rocks and shells to break open hard seedpods, or to dig in riverbanks for clam-like creatures and the eggs of mega-slugs, both of which are a dietary staple. Some wield bone clubs. They do not know how to use fire.

Telephants are actively hunted by bouncers. Although they will put up a fight, they are generally slaughtered by bouncers whenever the species cross paths. However, the large numbers and rapid birthrate of telephants ensure their survival.

**ST:** 13            **HP:** 16            **Speed:** 5.50  
**DX:** 11           **Will:** 10           **Move:** 5  
**IQ:** 6\*           **Per:** 10           **Weight:** 140-170 lbs.  
**HT:** 11           **FP:** 11           **SM:** 0  
**Dodge:** 8           **Parry:** N/A           **DR:** 2†

**Binding 13 (11):** Females only. Can be used up to three times per day. Range 10 yards.

**Bite (13):** 1d crushing. Reach C.

**Light Club (11):** 2d crushing. Reach 1.

**Traits:** Bad Grip 1; Extra Arms 1 (Extra-Flexible); Hide-bound; Penetrating Voice. • Optionally, add Telesend and Mindlink.

**Skills:** Axe/Mace-11; Brawling-13; Camouflage-11; Fishing-10; Survival-12.

\* Possibly higher if considered the degenerate remnant of a sapient race, rather than a still-developing, semi-sapient race.  
 † DR 8 on torso and skull.

### Tri-Tort

The tri-tort resembles a square, 6'-long, amphibious tortoise-beetle with six legs, a thick shell, and a three-eyed head with a 1' horn. The horn has its own separate muscle that can extend it another 6", delivering a nasty jab.

Tri-torts have mauve bodies and very hard green-and-gold-colored shells (optionally made of a substance similar to that of bouncers, if the GM wants the latter to in fact be natives). They live in small herds of three or four members. These creatures have a bad temper when annoyed, and a loud, disturbing call when threatened. Though herbivores, they can be aggressive. They lay eggs on beaches, and are protective of these. Their eggs are surprisingly tasty for humans, with an oddly spicy yolk.

**ST:** 16            **HP:** 16            **Speed:** 5.25  
**DX:** 10           **Will:** 10           **Move:** 6 (Water 2)  
**IQ:** 4            **Per:** 10           **Weight:** 200 lbs.  
**HT:** 11           **FP:** 11           **SM:** +1  
**Dodge:** 8           **Parry:** N/A           **DR:** 2\*

**Horn (10):** 2d+2 impaling. Reach C, 1.

**Traits:** Amphibious; Bad Temper (9); Extra Legs (Six Legs); Horizontal; No Fine Manipulators; Penetrating Voice; Wild Animal.

\* DR 8 on torso and skull.

## ADVENTURE SEEDS

There's plenty of excitement to be found on Caradoc!

### New Discoveries

The PCs are approached by Dr. Dorcas Nakamura. She is a scientist working for the bio-prospecting division of Wormstar Laboratories (p. 27), a small interstellar corporation. The division specializes in discovering new natural biological compounds with pharmaceutical properties, which Wormstar exploits itself or licenses to larger corporations.

Even settled worlds often contain untold millions of life forms whose biologies have never been properly studied; new discoveries with commercial potential continue to be made every day. Wormstar has limited staff resources, and supplements this by working with free traders, travelers, and freelance explorers who often encounter unique life forms on backwater worlds. Wormstar pays a finder's fee for any samples such individuals provide that lead to exploitable discoveries.

Dr. Nakamura would like to hire the group for a mission on Caradoc (either to perform it themselves, or transport and escort her there, depending on the team's scientific acumen and reputation). Caradoc is a hitherto-unexplored garden world located some distance from major space lanes. Its breathable atmosphere and abundant indigenous biosphere seem to make it a prime candidate for commercial biotech exploitation.

Wormstar Laboratories has placed a small scientific outpost there – Lyonesse Station, staffed by a dozen first-in-survey-team researchers – to study local conditions and possible biological resources. The team leader, Dr. Manfred Zhukov, recently reported that they'd discovered that one local life form, the spotted mega-slug, possessed a compound with highly valuable psi-reactive properties. More complete data was promised when the team returned from its preliminary survey, but Lyonesse Station dropped out of contact before a follow-up report could be sent.

The cause of this is unknown; the team was equipped with its own small starship but is now three weeks overdue. However, Caradoc is located in a lightly patrolled frontier region with significant pirate activity.

*It's we who owe **you** thanks, for paving new frontiers in space.*

*– Wonder Woman,  
 in **The All-New Super Friends Hour #1.2***

In addition, while Wormstar Laboratories believes it has acquired a lease on the planet, its discovery and ownership claim have been contested by a rival company, Matsai. Litigation is ongoing, but Wormstar hopes to buy out Matsai's claim. Revelation of the mega-slug data may adversely affect the negotiations, so Wormstar would prefer not to involve the authorities. Instead, they wish to hire the party (as experienced mercs/adventurers/explorers/black ops) to covertly visit Caradoc and determine the nature of the problem. If the outpost and Zhukov's science team have encountered trouble, the investigating party is to render assistance. The hired group is also to retrieve a sample of the Caradoc mega-slugs and/or the complete biological report from the scientific team.

Wormstar offers a standard rate to charter the group's ship (if they have their own) to Caradoc, plus a bonus of at least \$50,000 for rescuing the scientific team and a similar bonus for recovering their data and/or samples of the mega-slugs. Additionally, discovery and recovery information on bouncers, especially bodies with an intact psi-active teleport-generating gland, may be worth considerably more; cunning PCs might be able to make a deal (or double-cross Wormstar and sell the data to Matsai).

### GM Notes

The researchers at Lyonesse Station doubtless had an unfortunate run-in with bouncers, who wiped out a survey team and then attacked the base and got aboard the starship before it could lift off. A bouncer, perhaps a curious juvenile, may be aboard the ship itself, with a larger group now infesting the station. There may be survivors; perhaps a group who were out studying telephants or mega-slugs escaped the main attack, but are cut off from their base. For added complication, the valuable research data may not be at the main base camp at all but instead at an outback station or in a lost all-terrain vehicle that is somewhere deeper in the wilderness. The pirate activity might be a red herring to distract from the real danger (bouncers), but the GM could always add pirates (or goons hired by rival Matsai) if desired!

### Telephant Quest

Caradoc is a newly discovered planet with a complex biosphere. Some years ago, it was briefly visited by a free trader, Jan Oleg, who mentioned an interesting humanoid species he called "telephants," which exhibit borderline-sapient behavior. A xeno-anthropologist, Pablo Mackenzie, has followed reports of the telephants of Caradoc on the scientific grapevine. He would like to determine if they are in fact sapient or merely clever animals.

The jungles of Caradoc contain many unknown life forms, some doubtless fierce – two previous expeditions there were lost. Mackenzie wishes to hire the party as an experienced security team to accompany him and some of his grad students in search of the mysterious telephants.

### GM Notes

Telephants are common prey of bouncers, so a search for one will likely result in encounters with the other. It's up to the GM whether telephants are indeed sapient. Extra complication

## WORMSTAR LABORATORIES

**Mission Statement:** Wormstar is a mid-sized interstellar corporation dedicated to developing the biological resources of frontier worlds.

### Capabilities

**TL:** 10 **Members:** 100,000 (estimated)

**Wealth:** Very Wealthy

**Contacts:** Bioengineering-21 [4]; Business skills-15 [10]

**Member Traits:** None

**Notable Resources:** The corporation has dozens of facilities and planetary outposts, ranging from offices and production centers on major worlds through research stations to small research colonies like that of Caradoc.

**Reaction-Time Modifier:** +2. The organization is fairly slow to act.

### Costs and Values

**Startup Cost:** \$153,216,000,000

**Resource Value:** \$766,080,000

**Patron Value:** 30 points

**Enemy Value:** -30 points

**Ally and Dependent Value:** Wormstar can provide a range of NPCs associates, from low-level (and low-point-value) technicians and clerical workers who are suitable for large groups, to high-point-value senior executives and research scientists who qualify as individual Allies.

### Social Attributes

**Type:** Commercial, Government, Research

**CR:** 3 **Loyalty:** Poor (9; -1)

**Rank:** Business Rank 0-8 [3/level]

**Income Range:** \$2,400 (Comfortable in an Average area, 10-hour week) to \$30,000,000 (Multimillionaire 2 in a Wealthy area, 15-hour week)

**Reputation:** +1 (for quality products, among pharmaceuticals buyers); -2 (among environmental activists and would-be investors)

### Notes

The present CEO of Wormstar is Derek Tanzer. Appointed by investment firm Sterling Galactic to cut costs, he has recently reduced Wormstar's resources to the bone to create a "lean, mean" corporate culture that relies extensively on outsourcing of major projects. He is unpopular among the corporate rank and file.

could be provided by Wormstar Laboratories or another corporation, who have plans to exploit the planet's other indigenous species. A finding that telephants were sapient might lead authorities to impose strict quarantine regulations to protect them from exploitation. As a result, agents of Wormstar (or its rivals) may attempt to disrupt or discredit any xeno-anthropological mission, either directly or through sabotage.

Perhaps one of Mackenzie's students is really a Wormstar agent and will attempt to lure a group of bouncers in to attack them . . .

## Precursor Ruins?

Nyala Scaflow is an eccentric archaeologist specializing in alien Precursor (*GURPS Space*, p. 22) sites. Several years ago, a mysterious star map was found in a Precursor ruin. The map showed the locations of systems and planets that contained sites of interest to the mapmaker, although the alien coordinate system and stellar drift in the eons since the Precursor era has made deciphering it difficult.

Three of the planets were located. In each case, an abandoned or ruined Precursor base was eventually found, some containing valuable artifacts. In all cases, the base was also co-located with a geomagnetic anomaly, usually near that world's equator.

Nyala believes that she has identified a fourth planet on the alien star map as Caradoc, whose dense jungle and swamp have barely been penetrated by prior explorers. She would like to hire the group to accompany her specially equipped

research craft as it performs a careful search over Caradoc's equatorial deserts and jungles for geomagnetic anomalies, followed by exploration of any ruins should they turn up.

## GM Notes

The anomalies and ruined Precursor site turn out to be in a region containing several bouncer lairs, both endangering the explorers and suggesting a possible Precursor origin for the creatures. The Precursor site could be a major installation, or simply an ancient, glassy ruin.

## Weapon Smugglers

A bio-survey team studying Caradoc encountered deadly teleporting predators they called bouncers. The defense corporation Hunter Industries wishes to acquire samples of bouncers for its macro-bio-weapons division, in the belief that their superior laboratories can successfully tame and breed them, or combine their genetic material with that of other life forms (perhaps even humans) to create super-soldiers. They will pay \$200,000 each for live bouncers, or 1/4 of that for reasonably intact corpses.

## Safari on Caradoc

Once the presence of the fearsome bouncers of Caradoc is known (at least via rumor), they may be considered among the "most dangerous game" in this part of the galaxy. While their full capabilities may be exaggerated or perhaps just legends, a VIP with a fondness for big-game hunting has decided to bag a bouncer. She has either hired the adventurers to join her safari, or is someone sufficiently important that they are assigned by a third party to act as her security team while she risks her life. Alternatively, the bigwig is someone (crime boss, political leader, etc.) that the group has been assigned to kill or kidnap, and the only opening is while that person is on safari. In that case, the PCs may not know what is waiting for them in the jungle . . .

## 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.



The image shows the cover of the *GURPS Spaceships* book, Fourth Edition. At the top, it says "GURPS Fourth Edition" in a stylized font. Below that, the word "SPACESHIPS" is written in large, bold, blue letters. The central part of the cover features three illustrations: a futuristic spaceship on the left, a rocket launching on the right, and two characters in a control room at the bottom. At the bottom of the cover, there is text indicating where the book is available for purchase: "Available in print from Amazon.com, BarnesAndNoble.com, and other retailers!" followed by the website "gurps.sjgames.com/spaceships" and the publisher "STEVE JACKSON GAMES".

# BRITISH RHODES

BY MATT WEHMEIER

In 1878, the British Crown entered into negotiations with the Ottoman sultan to lease the island of Cyprus on an indefinite basis. On Homeline, these negotiations were successful, and the island remained under British protection for nearly a century. On Bismarck-3, however, Britain found itself in a very different strategic situation. In this timeline, Germany had failed to unify itself, and the Second French Empire guarded its control of the Suez Canal jealously. Worried that Cyprus would be difficult to defend in a war against France, the government of Benjamin Disraeli opted to lease the

smaller, more easily fortified island of Rhodes. In the 30 years since the Treaty of Berlin, Rhodes has become the anchor of British naval power in the Eastern Mediterranean, and now serves as an important commercial port and refueling depot.

As the threat of another war looms on the horizon, politicians in the United Kingdom are desperate to avoid another Crimea, and many are prepared to chart a course of neutrality no matter the cost. Only time will tell if world affairs can force the sleeping giant to awaken and choose a side.

## THE ISLAND

The island of Rhodes is best known as the site of the Colossus of Rhodes, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. An earthquake destroyed the monument in 226 B.C., but the legend continues to draw tourists from far and wide.

### HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

Initially a Greek colony, Rhodes was governed at various times by the Romans, the Byzantines, the Order of Saint John, and finally the Ottomans. The British leased the island from the Ottoman Empire in 1878, and have since transformed the new territory into a prominent naval installation and center of trade. Plans to rebuild the Colossus are currently being reviewed by the Foreign Office.

Rhodes is a roughly lens-shaped island situated less than 20 kilometers away from the Turkish mainland. The British administration has set up its headquarters in the city of Rhodes, located at the northern tip of the island, which also serves as the main harbor and center of commerce. In total, the island is home to nearly 45,000 people, about half of whom live outside of the main city. The interior of Rhodes is forested and mountainous, and small villages are scattered along the coast. Most of the residents of the island are Greek, but approximately one in five identify as Turkish.

### THE CITY

The city of Rhodes is easily the largest settlement on Rhodes, with nearly 22,000 residents. It consists of a walled old city and a more populous outer metropolitan area, with the port stretching the length of the city's eastern coast. The outer areas of the city have developed rapidly since the British took control of the island, and the old city now serves as the heart of the new administration. The Turkish district is located in the southwestern corner of the city. Two synagogues serve as

centers of worship to a significant Jewish population. Though tensions between ethnic groups occasionally flare, the Turks and Greeks have come to coexist more-or-less peacefully on the island. In the rare cases where open violence breaks out, the Royal Marines are available to defuse the situation.

The main garrison of Royal Marines is stationed at the Fortress of Rhodes, which was built just southeast of the old city starting in 1879. The base is designed to maximize the amount of damage that can be done to attacking ships by the 60 artillery pieces positioned at the ramparts. Additionally, hundreds of soldiers are permanently garrisoned within the fortress, and a newly constructed garage is home to a dozen trucks and two prototype armored cars.

*Rhodes serves as an important commercial port and refueling depot.*

### THE PORT

After an extensive modernization effort, the port at Rhodes is expansive enough to harbor dozens of warships and a number of large cargo ships from all around the world. The port features several separate harbors, with some reserved for use by the Royal Navy and others available to dock commercial and private vessels. Warehouses, naval barracks, and administrative facilities extend into the city. A full coaling station stores a large fuel reserve for emergencies. The Customs Office and the Admiralty maintain their joint headquarters in a five-story building near the port, and a secondary garrison is responsible for maintaining order on and around the docks.

# THE PLAYERS

Many different groups operate in Rhodes.

## THE ROYAL NAVY

First and foremost, the port at Rhodes is a military installation maintained by the Royal Navy and garrisoned by nearly 1,000 Royal Marines. The port serves as a base for the Eastern Mediterranean Squadron, and British sailors have become a common sight in the city. Though the territory remains under Turkish sovereignty, British law is enforced across the island. The Royal Marines are tasked with maintaining order both in the port and on the island in general, alongside local police. Representatives of the Board of Customs are responsible for tracking and assessing duties on all cargo coming through the main port in the city of Rhodes.

### CITY OF RHODES (1907)

**Population:** 22,000 (Search +1)

#### *Physical and Magical Environment*

**Terrain:** Island/Beach

**Appearance:** Attractive (+1)

**Hygiene:** 0

**No Mana** (No Enchantment)

#### *Culture and Economy*

**Language:** Greek, English, Turkish

**Literacy:** Accented

**TL:** 5/6

**Wealth:** Average (x1)

**Status:** -2 to 5

#### *Political Environment*

**Government:** Colony

**CR:** 3 (Corruption -1)

**Military Resources:** \$1,760,000

**Defense Bonus:** +9

#### *Notes*

British officials on the island of Rhodes are much more difficult to bribe than regular police, but local law enforcement makes up for it by being very easy to persuade. Anti-corruption investigations are an ongoing concern for the colonial administration.

Approximately half of the general population of Rhodes can read, though the literacy rates for British personnel and Western European immigrants are much higher (over 90%).

The city's defense budget is increased considerably by the fact that it serves as host to a major British port.

## THE MERCHANTS

Before the British gained control of the island in 1878, Rhodes was hardly a center of commerce. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 provided a slight boost to trade, but most ships coming from India and East Africa made port in

Cyprus, French-controlled Alexandria, or Istanbul. After the British took over, they modernized and expanded the port and sharply reduced tariffs on all foreign-made goods. Dozens of ships now make port every day, carrying all manner of commodities to and from Africa and Asia through the Suez Canal. More than a few merchants have made their fortunes buying and selling goods on the docks, and an affluent district has developed on the northwest side of the city along the coast.

## THE SAILORS

Sailors are a ubiquitous sight on the streets near the port in the city of Rhodes. Many are English or Irish, but French, Prussian, Turkish, and even Russian seamen also frequent the island. Some are enlisted in the navies of their respective countries; others serve on tramp freighters and cargo ships. A number of bars, inns, and brothels cater to clients from around the world. The Royal Marines keep themselves busy ensuring that drunken brawls and violent national disputes don't play out in the streets.

## THE LOCALS

The population of Rhodes is made up mostly of Greeks, but there is also a significant number of Turks. Some Britons chose to make a home on the island after the completion of the naval base. The island's economy has boomed since the Royal Navy took over the port, and many locals make their living serving the thousands of tourists and sailors that visit the region every year. Some goods are scarce because of high demand (such as English and Irish beer), but the high volume of trade has reduced costs and increased standards of living for many. The Greek population hangs on vague British promises of eventual *enosis* (unification) with Greece, while the Turks generally prefer British rule to full annexation by the Hellenic Kingdom.

## THE EXPATRIATES

The city serves as a haven for expatriates seeking to make new homes. Most hail from Western Europe, Greece, and Turkey, but citizens of countries as far away as Latin America, the United States, and the furthest reaches of the British Empire have come to stay. Some wish only to retire from a life at sea; others want to find a spouse and raise a family. Many are fleeing criminal charges in their homelands.

British authorities try to screen those who come to settle, but tracking everything and everyone that comes through the port is a monumental task, even for the Royal Navy. A large percentage of the expats are deserters, career criminals, Communists, and malcontents.

## THE UNDERWORLD

The port at Rhodes is easily the largest British base in the Eastern Mediterranean, but it is not the only port on the island. Docks and piers are present in all coastal villages, and criminal organizations have co-opted many of these to use in smuggling operations. The Board of Customs and the Royal Navy have attempted to crack down by posting guards in the villages dotting the coast, and larger ships cannot easily escape their notice. Smaller operations are effectively impossible to stop, however, and Greek and Turkish gangs regularly smuggle ancient artifacts, opium, ivory, and other high-value goods past the authorities. Once contraband reaches the island, it is repacked in boxes labeled for foodstuffs and other bulk goods and shipped to ports in Europe, where it is sold on the black market. Many smugglers have been caught, but the

British authorities suspect that they are hardly making a dent in the trade.

## THE GREAT GAME

All Great Powers are willing to pay handsomely for information on British ship and troop movements in and out of Rhodes, and most have assigned permanent operatives to the island, hired from mainland Greece. Some of these agents have attempted to infiltrate the Fortress of Rhodes in order to acquire more sensitive information. Many areas of the fortress are currently closed to all non-British personnel, but several mid-level officers have already been compensated well for their services to foreign governments. Those who are caught are arrested, court-martialed, and executed for high treason, but Britain's rivals always seem to attract eager volunteers.

# THE WORLD

Bismarck-3 diverged from Homeline history in 1866, when a decisive Austrian victory at Königgrätz ended Prussia's march into Bohemia. After months of fighting, Emperor Napoleon III of France intervened on the side of Austria to end the Austro-Prussian War, permanently frustrating Bismarck's plans for a united Germany. The aging chancellor was voted out of office in 1877 despite his remarkably successful diplomatic campaign to absorb Saxony and Hanover into the new North German Federation. After years of alternating friendship and rivalry, Austria and France created the Dual Entente (later nicknamed "the Pact of Two Emperors") in the mid-1880s. The Russian Tsar formed a similar alliance with North Germany a few years after that, seeking to defend and expand Russian influence in Southern Europe.

Because of Britain's close ties to both the Second French Empire and the House of Hohenzollern, King Edward VII has every reason to avoid entanglement on the Continent. The British government has opted instead to pursue a policy of strict neutrality. Only time will tell if affairs in Europe can force the Crown to side with one alliance over the other. The Ottoman Empire has held on to most of its European territories, but a full-scale revolt is brewing in Bulgaria, Serbia, and Albania. Both Austria and Russia are eager to pick up the pieces, and the ensuing chaos could easily escalate into a general European war.

On Bismarck-3, Emperor Napoleon III's Parisian doctors kept him alive just long enough for Napoleon IV to inherit the French throne in 1875. A daring adventurer and competent military commander, the young monarch took a much greater interest in mounting expeditions to Africa and India than in the day-to-day administration of the second-largest empire on Earth. Now in his early 50s, Napoleon IV shows no sign of slowing down, and the Partition of Africa has left him with no shortage of jungles, ruins, and uncharted territories to explore.

Prussia has absorbed nearly all of the North German states into a federal structure ruled from Berlin. The Conservatives maintain a slim majority in the *Landtag*, though the radical platform of the Social Democrats has grown in popularity in recent years. Many members of the

*Sozialdemokratische Partei Norddeutschlands* (SPND) advocate the transition to a fully republican system, and some are agitating for the abolition of private property altogether.

## BISMARCK-3, 1907

### Current Affairs

The European Great Powers gear up for war over the Balkans as Britain desperately tries to chart a neutral course.

### Divergence Point

1866; Austria wins the battle of Königgrätz (actual point of divergence may be around 20,000 years ago, as evidenced by divergent archaeology).

### Major Civilizations

Western (Multipolar), Orthodox (Empire), Japanese (Empire).

### Great Powers

United Kingdom (representative democracy, CR3), United States (representative democracy, CR3, CR5 for blacks), Second French Empire (dictatorship, CR4-5), Russian Empire (dictatorship, CR5), North German Federation (dictatorship, CR4), Austrian Empire (dictatorship, CR5), *Empire of Japan* (dictatorship, CR4).

### Worldline Data

**TL:** 6 (with some TL(5+1) inventions)

**Mana Level:** No Mana

**Quantum:** 4

**Infinity Class:** P7

**Centrum Zone:** Inaccessible

## OTHER BISMARCKS

Infinity uses the “Bismarck” designation for parallels with points of divergence centered around the 19th-century unification of Germany.

On *Bismarck-1* (Q5, current year 1940), Bismarck was killed attempting to suppress the 1848 revolts in Berlin. North and South Germany eventually unified into two separate states as Austrian influence in Germany waned. Britain, North Germany, and France have formed a Triple Alliance to contain the expansionism of the radical Russian Republic, while the United States enters the earliest stages of TL7 and begins to exert its full economic power.

On *Bismarck-2* (Q4, current year 1921), King Wilhelm IV's pragmatism overcame his pride as he deigned to accept the “crown from the gutter” that he had derided on Homeline. The Great War began in 1889, with Germany and Austria defeating republican Russia and Bonapartist France in 1893. The *Pandeutsche Zollverein* dominates

Continental politics as Britain expands its colonial empire. The world is TL6.

On the low/normal-mana *Bismarck-4* (Q7, current year 1881), Napoleon I died at the Battle of Austerlitz in 1805; France was forced to sue for peace against the victorious Third Coalition. Otto von Bismarck now serves as chancellor to a united Holy Roman Empire, which stretches from Brussels to Warsaw and Tuscany to Schleswig. Centrum meddling has not yet been ruled out.

On *Vormärz* (Q6, current year 1866), Austria's 1848 revolution toppled the Hapsburg monarchy and established a revolutionary state. Spreading north and west, massive insurrections resulted in the destruction of the Vatican, the death of the French king, the unification of both Italy and Germany, and the consolidation of Continental politics under radical republicanism. Having retaken Constantinople from the Ottomans, the delicate entente is now striking deep into Tsarist Russia.

The four South German states are effective dependencies of Austria, though their monarchs prefer even nominal independence to full annexation by the Prussians.

Austria's armed forces were modernized in the 1890s at the behest of French military advisors. The Austrian Empire has devolved a significant amount of authority to its Hungarian subjects, but the reforms haven't progressed as far as they did under Homeline's Dual Monarchy. Italy still complains about Franz Joseph's control of Venice, but the last vestige of the Papal State was peacefully annexed in 1895 at Bonaparte's insistence, and a marriage between Victor Emmanuel III and the Emperor's distant cousin Eugénie Bonaparte keeps the alliance with France (and mutual defensive pact) secure.

Britain has taken a surprisingly hands-off approach to Continental affairs in recent decades, with elites focused more on colonial development and domestic politics than the rivalries of kings and emperors. Most Britons don't want to risk a general war, and even the most hawkish Tories are only in favor of arming France against the Russians. The absence of any serious German naval ambition means that relations between the United Kingdom and the North German Federation have remained friendly. At the same time, Bonaparte's traditional ties to the Crown and a fear of Russian expansionism have discouraged the signing of an accord with either side.

Both the United States and Japan are remarkably similar to their Homeline counterparts. A few presidential elections

have gone differently in the United States, but a disinterest in European affairs still characterizes the nation's foreign policy, and the U.S. economy has already surpassed Britain's in size. Japan received Port Arthur as a territorial concession after the Sino-Japanese War, and therefore never fought the Russians in 1904. As a result, the Tsar's power was never curtailed by the Revolution of 1905, and his Pacific fleet remains intact. For now, the Emperor of Japan shows little interest in challenging the European powers for dominance of the East.

## TECHNOLOGY

Overall, technology on Bismarck-3 has progressed similarly to that of Homeline. Machine guns are being deployed in all major armies, bolt-action rifles are the norm (though with slightly different bore sizes from Homeline arms), and diesel-powered ships will not become standard for another few decades. Electricity is lighting up major cities around the world, and skyscrapers tower over the American landscape as symbols of a fully industrial economy.

Some inventions on Bismarck have no Homeline equivalents. Zeppelins are approximately 10 years more advanced than would normally be expected, and self-propelled aircraft (spurred by enthusiasm from a romantic government) are considered internationally to be a French invention. Electric-, diesel-, and coal-powered cars are still fighting for dominance of the personal-transportation market, and some electrical appliances have appeared on the market earlier than they did on Homeline.

The default tech level for Bismarck-3 is a slightly divergent TL6, but more radical changes to technology can also fit well within a pre-Great War setting. The retention of steam power and delay of electrification can make for compelling TL(5+1) steampunk adventure. Introducing more advanced inventions such as radios and magazine-fed semiautomatic rifles can push the setting into the style of dieselpunk or even *GURPS Cliffhangers*.

*The main thing is to make history, not to write it.*

*– Otto von Bismarck*



# CAMPAIGN SEEDS

There's a lot that adventurers can do in this worldline, whether they are natives or Homeline visitors.

## WAR!

Few people on Bismarck-3 truly understand the dire nature of the situation unfolding in the Balkans. Nationalist rebels have been organizing for years, waiting for the right moment to strike against the sultan. Austrian and Russian armies are poised to invade the contested territory at an hour's notice, and neither empire will rest until they have come to dominate the entire region. Clashes between the Great Powers are inevitable once the invasions begin, and skirmishes between the factions can only escalate into full-scale war.

Once the war begins, Britain will attempt to remain neutral for as long as possible, keeping her ports open to non-military ships from both sides in the hope of maintaining amiable relations with all major powers. Britain will eventually be forced to make a choice, however, and a commitment to total neutrality may mean shutting English ports to all belligerent parties. Both sides are convinced that Britain's support will win them the war, and each has a direct interest in forcing England to choose between them. The United Kingdom may pick one faction over the other to protect the balance of power in Europe, or they may find common cause with the United States, a nation similarly interested in avoiding foreign entanglements. In any case, a full-scale naval battle within a few miles of the port can be a very exciting feature in a campaign, particularly if the outcome determines whether it will be French or Russian troops that land on Rhodes.

If Britain does end up joining the war, a party's attempt to get back to London may be an adventure in itself. Alternately, PCs can enlist in the French or North German armies (both accept foreign volunteers from neutral nations) and fight in the Battle of Nuremberg or the Assault on the Weser. Those infiltrating Bismarck from other timelines will have to get to the nearest extraction point in French-held Cairo. Since all Infinity operatives on Rhodes carry British passports, it may be difficult to cross the border into Egypt, much less reach the conveyor hidden beneath the heart of the city.

## DISCOVERY AT ANTIKYTHERA

On Homeline, the Antikythera mechanism was a small mechanical computer designed to aid navigation and astronomy. On Bismarck-3, it is a massive machine that takes up the entire hull of a ship. Its exact purpose is unknown, but local archaeologists have determined that it is more complex than anything presently in use. The British are currently mounting an expedition to the shipwreck, but French, Turkish, and Greek scientists all have an interest in studying the device. The trick now is figuring out a way to move the 10 tons of iron and bronze currently resting on the sea floor into a more academic setting. Adventurers can be a part of the team tasked with retrieving the artifact, or they can attempt to investigate the find while it is still beneath the waves, with experimental closed-circuit diving equipment. The mechanism is valuable

enough that some may attempt to claim the wreck by force of arms. A British light cruiser is patrolling near the island to protect the scientists, but it won't be able to provide cover forever . . .

## THE EMPEROR'S TRAVELS

Emperor Napoleon IV is an adventurer at heart. He plans and leads full expeditions into the wilds of Africa and East Asia, intent on investigating the rumors of fascinating secrets hidden within the jungles.

He brings with him dozens of soldiers and sailors, anthropologists and archaeologists, translators and local guides, and many hundreds of pounds of scientific instrumentation. Though the Emperor has earned his reputation as an incautious explorer who often doesn't know when to turn back, he is a competent and genuinely empathetic commander. He has made a habit of hiring adventurers on the spot wherever he makes port, giving PCs an opportunity to explore exotic lands and retrieve long-lost treasures alongside the head of the House of Bonaparte.

Napoleon IV had never been to Rhodes before the summer of 1907, when serious engine trouble forced his ship to postpone its voyage to Zanzibar and make port at the island. Crowds flocked to greet the visiting monarch, and a spontaneous parade began down the streets of the old city. About 15 minutes later, shots rang out from a balcony three stories up, narrowly missing their mark. As the Emperor fled to safety, it became clear that the damage to his ship was not accidental. Investigating PCs can soon discover that a British terrorist group named the Anarchist Collective Front has targeted Bonaparte in an attempt to force a war between France and England. The radicals predict that this conflict will bring an abrupt end to the great monarchies of Europe. Bonaparte refuses to leave his ship behind, and the repairs will take nearly three days to finish. The assassins will surely attempt to strike again, and no evidence has turned up about who sabotaged the engines in the first place, or who could be a part of the conspiracy.

## A FOREIGN VISITOR

No one is quite sure where the beast came from. The sailors who brought it ashore insist they found it on Borneo, but several native Indonesians serving in the Dutch Royal Navy are highly skeptical. Apparently, there is a zoological exhibition in St. Louis willing to pay top dollar for all manner of curiosities and previously undocumented fauna. While waiting to refuel, the sailors have set up a circus-style display near the port, and are charging passersby sixpence to glimpse the strange visitor. Regardless of what this creature is and where it came from, it has cunning eyes, and one gets the impression that no iron bars could hold any such animal for very long.

When the creature inevitably escapes (or is set free by a sympathetic young villager), the Royal Marines will scour the island to find and recapture it. The beast may seek revenge on the sailors who abducted it, or it may simply want to get home.

Adventurers can attempt to help the creature escape unharmed, or it could turn out to be a remorseless, bloodsucking predator, if an old-fashioned monster hunt sounds more appealing.

## THE BATTLE FOR ENOSIS

It is not uncommon for spontaneous protests for unification with Greece to erupt in the streets of Rhodes. Normally the protesters are rowdy but not violent, and the commander of the Royal Marines has learned that attempts to break up such marches only lead to trouble. A few arrests are normal, but there is little lasting damage. This time was different.

The Admiralty suspects that nationalist groups from Greece have been supplying funds and arms to separatists on Rhodes for months. On a rainy February afternoon, what normally would be 100 demonstrators quickly swelled to over 1,000. The Marines issued several commands to disperse. As the marchers entered the square surrounding the town hall, a British soldier was shot dead by someone in the crowd. It was at this point that British troops began forcibly dispersing the mob, first with batons, then with rifles. Strategically placed insurgents fired back from within the crowd and from the rooftops of the square. Dozens laid dead and dying in the streets as a full-scale insurrection began.

All sailors have been confined to their ships. Three thousand British reinforcements are on their way from Malta and Gibraltar. The port itself and much of the old city have been secured, but the outer city and surrounding countryside are riddled with ambushes and traps set for unwary Britons. The PCs might be soldiers clearing out the city block by block, they may be investigating the source of the insurgency's material support, or they could be rebels themselves.

The rebels have fewer than 500 fighters, but they are surprisingly well armed and organized for a band of renegades. The King of Greece fervently denies any connection between his government and the insurrection, as do the Russians, Turks, and French. It will be up to the Directorate of Military Intelligence and the War Office to discover the truth, and the outcome of the investigation may force Britain to choose sides in the event of war.

## INFINITY UNLIMITED

If half the things Napoleon IV claims to have found on his travels actually exist, the jungles of Bismarck-3 are *far* more interesting than those on Homeline. As a result, many offworlders take a keen interest in buying artifacts illegally and smuggling them past Infinity. A semi-permanent base station has been set up on Rhodes to monitor all parachronic activity in the Eastern Mediterranean in an effort to curtail this trade.

Homeline scientists have been known to accompany the Emperor on his travels to the far reaches of his empire, and the photographs and survey information they have sent back are invaluable. Up until a few months ago, tourists were allowed to visit the major capitals of Europe, but with the threat of war looming, Infinity has closed the world to sight-seers, limited the scope of trade operations, and restricted scientists to colonial areas unlikely to see heavy fighting. The PCs might be Infinity customs agents tasked with busting crossworld smugglers without attracting undue attention, or they may have been hired by a mysterious organization to bring the goods back unnoticed. In either case, British authorities also have a vested interest in figuring out exactly where those stolen archaeological finds are disappearing to, and the local police investigator is beginning to ask some very inconvenient questions.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt Wehmeier currently works as a legal assistant and holds a master's degree in history from the University of Chicago. A Chicagoland native, he has been reading *GURPS* supplements and looking out with wonder at the infinite worlds for the better part of a decade. His counterpart on Homeline is a senior analyst at Infinity specializing in Western and Central European comparative politics.

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# NATIVE AMERICAN CRUSADERS

BY CHRISTOPHER R. RICE

Crusaders in *GURPS Monster Hunters* are empowered by the divine or spirits. Their powers stem from their faith, traditions, and mystical practices. While *GURPS Monster Hunters 1: Champions* presents a template generic enough for any belief system, this article delves into one particular group of religious practices: those of Native North American champions. The narratives of these people are as varied and numerous as the nations and tribes of the land, and this article seeks *only* to create guidelines for those who wish to play such crusaders in a generic, gameable way. For more specific details, research individual tribes – many of which are still extant!

## NATIVE AMERICAN SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Like other categories of religions, Native American beliefs have enough in common to be discussed as a group. Most tribes have shamans (“medicine men/women”) to intercede with the spirits, gods, or ancestors of the tribe on behalf of others. Such intercession sometimes includes a supreme being, such as the Lakota’s Wakan Tanka, who resides in everything but is also apart. These shamans are also teachers, healers, and spiritual leaders to their people. This makes for adherents who are an integral part of the local community.

Many tribal beliefs are henotheistic in nature – they do not deny the existence of other spirits or deities, despite worshipping only their own. This has led to a blending of beliefs and other syncretic systems, such as the Ghost Dance movement of the 19th century or the Longhouse Religion of the 18th. Worship of, or respect for, ancestors, friendly spirits, and human-shaped incarnate animals or plants is more-or-less universal, as are some specific deities or godlike beings. For example, Coyote is a common spirit in the tales of many Native peoples, but in some accounts, he is replaced by Raven, who serves a similar role. In the tales of the Navajo, there are sometimes *two* Coyotes. Likewise, some parts of the creation myth are shared by multiple tribes, such as the story of Rainbow Crow: He brings fire to man, but dirties his bright feathers to dim black and can no longer sing because of the soot stuck in his throat.

Native practices started out as oral traditions, with rites and ceremonies passed from one adherent to another. In modern times, other belief systems (e.g., some Wiccan traditions and many New Age philosophies) have appropriated Native American rituals, such as using burning sage to keep away evil spirits, claiming totems or spirit animals as “personal guides,” and making dreamcatchers to avoid nightmares.

Another common practice is the making of medicine bags and/or sacred bundles, which are created by practitioners for themselves and others. These concepts have been conflated with each other by non-Natives, and are often used synonymously. For gaming purposes, a *medicine bag* is a vessel (usually a pouch) filled with small items of a symbolic or totemic nature, designed to protect against supernatural attacks, bring good luck, etc. for the wearer. Medicine bags are meant for long-term use and worn daily. A *sacred bundle* is of a holy or religious nature (not unlike a Roman Catholic relic), but can be passed to another designated carrier through proper rituals. Both items are highly personal in nature and not meant to be shared with anyone other than the creator and/or the carrier. Sometimes such items are created by the wearer, though this isn’t typical.

Ideal practitioners have tight bonds with their people or the communities they serve. Perhaps owing to the nomadic roots of many tribes, practitioners go where their people are, and a semi-nomadic lifestyle (something most champions adopt anyway) is common. Most practitioners have a healthy respect for nature and are expected to live in harmony with the environment around them.

*Theology Skill:* Polytheistic (*GURPS Monster Hunters 6: Holy Hunters*, p. 8) or Shamanic (*Champions*, p. 11). If a tradition has special, year-round places for communal worship; has a specific code of conduct for worshipers; and primarily calls upon a limited number of supernatural entities, each of whom control a broad category of existence to grant favors, then choose Polytheistic. If power derives more from dealing with supernatural entities who have a much smaller sphere of influence, and from rituals that permit the practitioner to enter the entities’ realm (even if occasionally special abilities come from a Creator or other higher beings), then pick Shamanic.

*Behavior:* Being taught to put the community above the individual calls for Sense of Duty (Coreligionists) or Vow (Help those in need who ask), or *both*, taking one as a personal disadvantage and the other as required for your power modifier. Charitable is also a top choice for crusaders who serve the community at large. Pick Social Stigma (Minority Group) for Native American crusaders – not just adherents. The GM may also add Sense of Duty (Nature or The Environment) to the list of available disadvantages.

*Training:* Naturalist, Pharmacy (Herbal), and Religious Ritual (Polytheistic or Shamanic) are required, while most adherents have Meditation as well. Secondary skills are often those for low-tech weapons, such as Axe/Mace, Bolas, or Bow. Add Hiking, Survival, and Tracking to background skills options to represent how a crusader might be at ease in natural settings.

*Mysticism:* The most appropriate miracles from **Champions** (with page numbers) are Blessed (p. 43), Eyes of the Dead (p. 43), Ghost Weapon (p. 43), Mystic Coincidence (p. 43), Spirit Channeling (p. 44), Spirit Communication (p. 44), Spirit Empathy (p. 44), and Visualization (p. 45). Miracles from **Holy Hunters** (including page numbers) are Astral Projection (p. 13), Divine Vessel (pp. 14-15, and below), Purifying Incense (for sage bundles or the like) (p. 15), and Totem Bond (p. 16). The new Medicine Bag miracle (below) is ubiquitous, if pricey.

## NEW MIRACLES

The following new miracle, and new vessels for crusaders with Divine Vessel, are options for Native American crusaders.

### Medicine Bag

75 points

You can create a medicine bag for a person, giving them a bonus on certain rolls. This requires you to make *Will*-based Religious Ritual roll and spend eight hours singing, chanting, gathering objects and herbs, etc. The individual who will wear or carry the item must remain in the same area as the crusader making it for them.

Success gives the user of the medicine bag a semi-permanent bonus against a specific threat or for a specific type of roll. Use the categories for *Bestows a Bonus* (**Champions**, p. 34) to determine the breadth of the task. Broad groupings get +1 per *two* points of success on the Religious Ritual skill roll, moderate groupings get +1 per point of success, and single tasks get +3 per point of success.

No one may have more than one medicine bag active, and they must keep it nearby. It weighs 0.1 lb. for a single-task bonus, 0.3 lb. for a moderate one, and 0.5 lb. for a broad one.

*Statistics:* Affliction 1 (Will; Based on Will, +20%; Contact Agent, -30%; Extended Duration, Until removed more than 2 yards from the subject's person, +150%; Immediate Preparation Required, 8 hours, -90%; Limited Use,

1/day, -40%; Malediction 1, +100%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%; Nuisance Effect, Subject must remain nearby while medicine bag is being prepared, -10%; PM, -10%; Requires Religious Ritual Roll, -10%; Task Modifier, above, Medicine Bag, Margin-Based, +600%) [75]. *Notes:* Medicine Bag varies with the task being assigned: For broad tasks (e.g., a general bonus vs. supernatural powers), this *requires* success by at least two and gives +1 per two points of success; for moderate tasks (e.g., a bonus vs. a specific type of creature's supernatural powers), this gives +1 per point of success; for single tasks (e.g., a bonus vs. a specified supernatural being), this gives +3 per point of success.

### Divine Vessel

Variable

Crusaders often have deep ties to totems, spirits, or gods. The following new vessels are appropriate for Native American crusaders.

*Ancestor Spirits* (53 points): The collective spirits of a given people can be a powerful force, but those spirits are linked to the ancestral lands of their people. Many crusaders have ties to their ancestors, but they have very limited power unless on their own turf; still, ancestors can offer many useful insights.

## NEW AFFLICTION ENHANCEMENT: TASK MODIFIER

A new modifier expands the options for Affliction.

### Affliction

see pp. B35-36

### New Special Enhancement

*Task Modifier:* Your ability adds a bonus to a specific group of rolls; see the table below for cost. This bonus functions exactly like the one granted by a Higher Purpose (p. B59). Groups include: a broad range of rolls (e.g., active defense rolls, Sense rolls, or a wildcard skill), a moderate range (e.g., rolls to hide or Vision rolls), or a single skill (e.g., Climbing rolls).

Instead of adding a bonus, it can instead give a penalty to a specific category. Use the same categories as above, but use the second, smaller value on the table for its cost.

Add *Margin-Based* for a variable bonus (which triples the cost of the enhancement). Include *Alternative Enhancements* (**GURPS Power-Ups 4: Enhancements**, p. 13) if you can add a bonus or a penalty.

Modifier	Broad	Moderate	Single
±1	+200% or +20%	+100% or +10%	+30% or +5%
±2	+400% or +40%	+200% or +20%	+60% or +10%
±3	+600% or +60%	+300% or +30%	+90% or +15%
±4	+800% or +80%	+400% or +40%	+120% or +20%
±5	+1,000% or +100%	+500% or +50%	+150% or +25%
etc.	+200% or +20%	+100% or +10%	+30% or +5%

The GM may allow a particular ancestor as an Ally or Patron, and the crusader may take other Mysticism abilities with “Granted by Ancestral Spirit, -40%” – but doing so requires that the mortal *also* take “Special Abilities, +50%” on their Divine Vessel advantage. This represents an especially close bond to one particular ancestor and may (at the GM’s discretion) allow the crusader to purchase traits not listed on the template that the ancestor possessed. Grants Common Sense (Conscious, +50%) [15], Racial Memory (Passive) [15], Reawakened (Ancestral\*) [10], and Sense of Duty (Family) [-5].

*Coyote* (72 points): Somewhere between a totem spirit and a minor god, Coyote wanders the world of men, fascinated (as he has always been) by their ingenuity and spark. Mystics do not so much seek him out as a patron as he lays claim to them (usually at or shortly after birth); all crusaders with this trait have a small coyote-paw-print birthmark somewhere on their body, which cannot be removed except by Coyote himself. This mark visibly glows when Coyote’s power is drawn on. The GM may allow those who have this trait to take Talker! with the Mysticism power modifier reducing its cost, but at the expense of making the wildcard skill vulnerable to the same things that can shut down other Mysticism abilities. Grants Daredevil [15], Distinctive Features (Glowing coyote paw print on body somewhere) [-1], Elastic Skin (Requires Will vs. Will roll, -15%) [17], Gluttony (12) [-5], Hard to Kill 1 [2], Hard to Subdue 1 [2], See Invisible (Deception) [15], Slippery 3 [6], Trickster (12) [-15], and Wild Talent 1 [20].

\* Instead of viewing *your* past lives, this variant lets you view your ancestors’ past lives (which may have been your own, too!). This lets you learn skills and abilities from your ancestors as if you had a teacher, or spend points on them normally.

## NEW MONSTERS

The following new enemies should send chills down the stoutest of spines.

### Flying Head

*Origin:* Native American mythology.

The flying head or “big head” of Iroquois folklore is a monstrous undead being the size of a man, with eyes like glowing goats and stringy, greasy hair. A flying head is created when a person falls to cannibalism (a big taboo for most, if not all, tribes) or is violently killed by having their head severed. It grows to a huge size and begins seeking victims to eat. Often associated with storms or whirlwinds, flying heads are primordial creatures of hunger with greedy guts and insatiable appetites. They typically open a fight with a flying slam (which can turn a normal human to paste) and then bite or head-butt targets until no one stands. Then they feast.

Use the skills listed under *Zombies* in *Know Thy Enemy (Champions, p. 16)* to figure out more about these beings.

Flying heads rarely work in groups, and one is a match for one or two champions. A group of heads that died together may stick together, feasting on the flesh of others as a group. In such a case, each head in a group is worth about 1.5 champions.

<b>ST:</b> 35	<b>HP:</b> 35	<b>Speed:</b> 7.00
<b>DX:</b> 14	<b>Will:</b> 16	<b>Move:</b> 14/21 (Air)
<b>IQ:</b> 12	<b>Per:</b> 16	<b>Weight:</b> 250 lbs.
<b>HT:</b> 14	<b>FP:</b> N/A	<b>SM:</b> 0
<b>Dodge:</b> 11	<b>Parry:</b> 13	<b>DR:</b> 14

**Fright Check:** -6 (it’s a person-sized *head*)

**Bite (16):** 4d+3 cutting. Made as a Deceptive Attack (-1 to defend against). Reach C, 1.

**Flying Slam (16):** 8d+13 crushing. Use the rules for *Slams* (p. B371). Made as a Deceptive Attack (-1 to defend against). Reach C, 1.

**Head-Butt (16):** 4d+7 crushing. Treat as a weapon, not a body part. Made as a Deceptive Attack (-1 to defend against). Reach C, 1.

**Traits:** Appearance (Monstrous); Bad Smell; Combat Reflexes; Doesn’t Breathe; Doesn’t Sleep; Enhanced Move 0.5 (Air Move 14/21); Flight; High Pain Threshold; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Indomitable; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous; No Blood; No Head; No Neck); No Fine Manipulators; No Legs (Aerial); Uncontrollable Appetite (6) (Human Flesh); Unfazeable.

**Skills:** *Brawling*-18; *Flight*-14; *Intimidation*-16; *Stealth*-16.

**Notes:** Affected by True Faith and Path of Undead magic. Because of their peculiar nature, flying heads get to use their maximum air Move when calculating slams, even if they didn’t travel that far.

*The narratives of the Native Americans are as varied and numerous as the nations and tribes of the land.*

### Raven Mocker

*Origin:* Native American mythology.

The raven mocker is a horrific being from Cherokee legend (though it shows up in other tribes occasionally): a combination of evil spirit, shapeshifter, vampire, and witch. Its name is whispered only during the day, in sunlight, never indoors, *and* away from any nearby shadows. Raven mockers can take the form of black birds (primarily ravens, but magpies and crows are common as well), old men or women, or orbs of fire.

When hunting, raven mockers either take the shape of an old-and-withered human, or stalk their prey invisibly – whatever lets them get close to their target. Their presence can be felt by ravens, who cry when one is nearby. This is *always* followed by a strong northern wind. These two omens herald a raven mocker’s presence and can (similar to the banshee of Celtic myth) also herald the death of someone nearby. Raven mockers feed on the life force of others and need only be in their victim’s presence to do so (often invisibly). People with strong enough Will or magical ability can fend off this attack, and in many stories turn it *back* on the raven mocker! This backlash bleeds its life force away rapidly. Those with Magery or similar traits are highly effective against these monstrous beings.

Use the skills under *Rogue Witches* in *Know Thy Enemy (Champions, p. 16)* to learn more. Even for those who know its Weakness and have the capability to endure a battle in order to trigger it, a raven mocker is a trial for a whole party.

Although raven mockers typically work alone, a small group of two to three, led by the most dominant, could present a challenge to even the most powerful of champions!

**ST:** 20                    **HP:** 20                    **Speed:** 8.00  
**DX:** 16                    **Will:** 22                    **Move:** 8 (Air 16)  
**IQ:** 18                    **Per:** 20                    **Weight:** 150-200 lbs.  
**HT:** 16                    **FP:** 16                    **SM:** 0  
**Dodge:** 12                **Parry:** 12                **DR:** 10 (Force Field)

**Fright Check:** -6 (when others realize what it is); otherwise +3 in human form

**Consume Life Force (22 vs. Will):** The raven mocker can drain the life force of anyone within 100 yards. The target loses HP, while the raven mocker gains the same amount. Effectiveness depends on range: 5d HP at 9 yards or less, 5d-1 at 10 yards, 5d-2 out to 20 yards, 5d-3 out to 30 yards, 4d out to 40 yards, 4d-1 out to 50 yards, 4d-2 out to 60 yards, 4d-3 out to 70 yards, 3d out to 80 yards, 3d-1 out to 90 yards, and 3d-2 out to 100 yards.

**Improvised Weapon (11):** Based on Damage 2d-1/3d+2.

**Innate Spell: Curse (15):** Subject must resist with the better of HT or Will, or suffer -3 on all attack rolls for the next 30 minutes; 15 energy. (Uses Path of Chance.)

**Innate Spell: Will Drain (18):** Subject must resist with the better of HT or Will or suffer -3 on Will rolls for the next 30 minutes; 21 energy. (Uses Path of Mind.)

**Punch (16):** 2d crushing. Reach C.

**Traits:** Alternate Form (Human, raven, orb of fire, or possibly others as the GM desires); Combat Reflexes; High Pain Threshold; Indomitable; Injury Tolerance (Damage Reduction 2; Unliving); Invisibility (Can Carry Objects, Extra Heavy; Switchable); Magery 7; Ritual Adept; See Invisible (Spirits); Social Stigma (Monster); Supernatural Durability (Damage from Weakness); Supernatural Features (Cold winds and the cry of a raven herald its presence); Terror (-4 to Fright Checks; Presence); Unfazeable; Weakness (Loss by 3+ in Quick Contest to consume life force; 1d/instance; Reduced Time 6; Variable).

**Skills:** Brawling-16; Intimidation-21; Occultism-18; Stealth-18; Thaumatology-18; Wrestling-16; *all* Path skills at 18; and any number of supernatural and occult skills, as the GM deems necessary.

**Notes:** Affected by True Faith and Path of Spirit magic. Their Weakness is straightforward: If they lose a Quick Contest of Will by 3 or more when attempting to consume a subject's life force, they take 1d of injury *instantly*. Those who enhance their Will supernaturally use that value to resist the raven mocker's attempt to drain their life force – but the raven mocker adds that bonus  $\times 1.5$  (round *up*) to the amount they must lose by in order to suffer the backlash! For example, if a witch outfitted her party with charms that granted +3 to their Will, the raven mocker would have to lose by 8 to be affected by the Weakness.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher R. Rice is of Cherokee descent and grew up on his grandfather's stories. From Portsmouth, Virginia, he's spinning words and whimsy into gold. Of course, if he's not writing 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's the co-author of **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 19: Incantation Magic** and **Dungeon Fantasy Traps**. He wishes to thank L.A., his own personal muse, as well as the rest of his gaming group (the Headhunters); and Beth "Archangel" McCoy, the "Sith Editrix" for being most excellent sounding boards.



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# RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

## FINAL THOUGHTS

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

Time is weird.

I remember when I met she who became my wife – the inimitable Nikki Vrtis, whose layout efforts you are enjoying in this fine magazine, among most other *GURPS* items created in the past however-many years. It was at a convention in New Jersey, and I was feeling pretty smug as I introduced myself as the guy who'd been editing *Pyramid* magazine (at that point) for *four years*. Now, 14 years later, I find myself writing my last Random Thought Table in the pages of this fine magazine.

My original idea had been to write a column about campaign endings. However, as I assembled notes, I realized that I'd already done so, back in January 2001, when one of my campaigns ended (in a column entitled, appropriately enough, "Endings").

So, having thwarted myself almost 18 years ago – and trust me, stopping my past self is definitely on my list of Things I Plan to Do If I Get a Time Machine – I found myself wondering what could possibly be suitable for a final column.

Now seems as good a time as any to look back and codify the gaming philosophy I've had while editing this fine mag for the past 18 years and 10 months. Hopefully it might serve as a starting point for your own thoughts on the matter.

### TABLETOP RPGS ARE ONE OF THE MOST AMAZ- ING HOBBIES EVER

I have a *lot* of different interests: acting, writing, board games, puzzles, video games, computer tinkering, and *Doctor Who*, among many others. But tabletop RPGs hold a special spot in my heart, even (especially?) during those dry spells when I don't have a game going on.

I think it's because a good tabletop game can encompass so many aspects of the human experience. A tabletop RPG can be tactical, social, improvisational, creative, comforting, suspenseful, invigorating, chaotic, orderly, provoking, funny,

scary, intellectual, or emotional. It can be all of those things in a single session.

A good game can spark the mind like nothing else. Heroes can move from tense negotiations to goofy flirtation to a fight to the death that ends with a revelation of the plot point that keeps the players clamoring to find out: What happens next?

This hobby is special and unlike any other. Some other games or pursuits have tapped into slivers of the tabletop RPG experience: escape rooms, murder mystery parties, tactical wargames, improvisational acting pursuits, computer games . . . but none of them can deliver what roleplaying games do and have done for decades, for thousands of gamers, week after week.

This hobby isn't for everyone, but I think the industry has realized that it's more open than it might have thought years ago. It's a special hobby; if it speaks to you, enjoy it.

### GAMING SHOULD BE FUN

I've never been averse to stating the obvious: The whole point of gaming is that it's a leisure activity; it should be fun. If you or someone else in the group isn't having fun, then it's a good time to evaluate what you're doing and try to make it fun . . . or to recognize that everyone's ideas of what's fun might be different.

Of course, "fun" is a subjective experience. For example, in day-to-day life, most people don't enjoy being scared, and they will go to great lengths to ensure that they avoid or resolve most frightening situations as quickly and painlessly as possible. Yet scads of players enjoy scary RPGs: *Call of Cthulhu*, *Ravenloft*, *GURPS Horror*, and many more.

When I would go to review articles, my first question would always be: "Is this fun?" (Or, more specifically, "What is this article trying to do, and is that pursuit worth doing for a large enough audience to consider?") This same consideration should be an aspect of most tabletop games, for both players and GMs:

- Is what I'm doing fun for me?
- Is what I'm doing fun for the group?

The answers to these two questions don't need to be identical; it's possible to do things that are fun for the group that aren't your cup of tea (although hopefully the others in the group are reciprocating in some fashion for *your* fun). But if there is a divergence, it's best to understand what that divergence is, and how disruptive it might be. As an example, some gamers love the idea of backstabbing and plotting against their fellow players . . . but many other gamers would rather everyone work together to pursue a larger goal. Some gamers really like the idea of trying to work against forces that conspire against them (fellow PCs or otherwise), and would love the challenge of trying to stay one step ahead. There's no right or wrong answer in all situations, but the foundation – "gaming should be fun" – is universal.

## TABLETOP RPGs ARE DIFFERENT FOR DIFFERENT FOLKS

As I've alluded, one of the challenges of editing *Pyramid* is a challenge facing folks at the gaming table: Different folks have different ideas of what they're even trying to accomplish. Some different games I've been involved with in the past included:

- A tactics-heavy dungeon-crawl game where interactions with others were kept to a bare minimum, outside of sticking to the goal of "kill the bad guys and keep exploring."
- A planning-heavy cyberpunk game where 90% of the "game" was the players working out the details of their plans, coming up with contingencies and counter-plans; the "adventure" portion took less than 10 minutes as a few dice were rolled and the GM explained how every aspect of their plan fell into place.
- A roleplaying-heavy game where the PCs did what they could to pursue their goals by working together.
- A one-on-one adventure where the player served as a lawyer in a court case with global implications for the campaign, where no dice were used (it was all just arguments and counter-arguments).
- An intrigue-heavy game with plots and counter-plots against other players and NPCs, all in service of inscrutable goals.
- An "experimental" game where the heroes came to realize that they're each an embodiment of a primal force (knowledge, skill, and power), and needed to understand their own abilities to save the cosmos.

I'd guess that most of you read that list and were excited by some possibilities, intrigued by other aspects, found comfort in yet others, and recognized one or two that don't suit your tastes. And that's the point! In the same way that I never envisioned an article that would be universally applicable to every reader of this magazine, I note that there's no such thing as a one-size-fits-all RPG campaign.

## COMMUNICATION IS VITAL

One minor aspect of *Pyramid* that has been in nearly every issue of the PDF era has been some type of "Write Here, Write

Now" on the *From the Editor* page. I've always tried to make myself open to your opinions and thoughts.

I've held the same philosophy at the gaming table. Because there is such variance in what tabletop gaming means to various folks, one of the most important tools gamers have to make sure the game is what they hope it will be is communication. Don't be afraid to be honest! "I really don't like it when my character is helpless," "I love those 'downtime' adventures where we just do bookkeeping and accounting for the kingdom," or "I don't mind if my character dies, so long as I go out with a blaze of glory."

It's not necessarily the group's job to ensure that every wish comes true, but I feel it is the group's job to acknowledge what parts aren't likely to be realized. And knowing what the players want is a vital step in actually delivering it.

The specifics of communication can vary from group to group. Some groups may chat before or after a game. Some may prefer anonymous notes or periodic surveys. Some games have systems that allow a player to change or eliminate a plot detail that makes them uncomfortable, for whatever reason. Any and all of these are valid approaches. But if the goal is to have fun (and it is), then communication is the most vital tool you have available to make that happen.

## THE RULES ARE IN SERVICE OF FUN

We're not trying to split the atom here. In that case, you have to work within the constraints of the fundamental forces of the universe, and it's vital to understand and follow those rules or else you're going to end up with something wrong or broken. (When the sign says, "Don't expose the elemental sodium to water," you'd best follow that rule.)

But tabletop games aren't like that. About the only immutable rule that most of them have – sometimes even spelled out as "Rule Zero" – is: Have fun, and ignore any rule that gets in that way.

The rulebook is not a death pact. Every scrap in *Pyramid* has always been considered optional, in the same way that just about all of *GURPS* canon is optional. As we've noted in the past, it's impossible to use "all" the *GURPS* rules, since some of them directly contradict each other. It's up to the group to determine what feeling they're trying to evoke in a game.

The situation gets complicated with competitive or organized play (and at a convention, the GM has the final word as to which rules can be safely ignored). But one of the reasons I think tabletop RPGs have gained a reputation for weird and funky house rules is the understanding that those rules – the fundamental "atoms" of the experience – are in service to fun, and not vice versa.

## DON'T BE AFRAID TO ADMIT MISTAKES

One of the great things about *Pyramid* is that – being a digital mag – we've been able to go back and clean up minor mistakes that managed to hit its virtual pages. (The Hidden Masters are still working on the tech that can patch mistakes in the physical books on your shelves . . .)

Unlike a game of (say) *Jenga* – where the “rules” being followed are generally fundamental forces of physics – much of what makes tabletop games unique and interesting is “squishier.” It relies on snap judgments, quick calls, and interpretations. Sometimes the group will get that wrong. There’s no shame in it; just do what you can to patch things up, and keep things moving . . . as ever, in service of fun.

## DON’T WASTE FOLKS’ TIME

One of the skills that I’ve developed most over my years of GMing is the ability to figure out how to try to trim as much “fat” as possible from the game. I’ve offloaded bookkeeping to between sessions (so we’re not wasting “real” game time with things that can be done in private), cut scenes short when it’s obvious that they’ve run their course, and even dropped encounters entirely when I calculated we didn’t have time.

Especially as I’ve gotten older, I’ve realized that time is perhaps the most precious commodity we have. If the players are entrusting each other with their free time, do your best to maximize the good times and minimize the less-fun bits.

## OFTEN, THE JOURNEY IS THE GOAL

Conversely to the previous point, understand that “gaming” is a social activity, and if the players are all having fun exploring a dead end, flirting with NPCs, or even cracking each other up with inside jokes and Monty Python references . . . well, there are worse ways to spend an evening. Again, as I’ve gotten older I’ve realized that judging groups who aren’t playing “right” (by my standards) is a fool’s mindset. Even the big climactic moments I have in mind as a GM may not compare to the enjoyment the players get out of ranting to the Big Bad Guy about all the trouble they had to go through to reach that endgame. (“Do you know how many of your henchmen we’ve had to deal with?! How do you *recruit* that many people willing to die for your foolishness? I’ve been trying to find an apprentice for *six adventures*, and everyone I’ve found has either been uninterested, secretly evil, or myself from an alternate timeline.”)

I admit, this point and the previous one make for uneasy bedfellows. With *Pyramid*, it’s always been a challenge to ensure that articles are tight enough to make their point efficiently, while relaxed enough to offer those digressions and tangents that often contain hidden gems.

## ALL THINGS END

When I first started gaming, I was super-concerned with trying to make campaigns that would stand the test of time. I was worried that I wouldn’t have enough plot threads or things to do, that my campaign world wasn’t expansive or exhaustive enough.

As I got wiser, my preparation got smaller and smaller. I realized that ideas aren’t a finite resource; I shouldn’t worry *too* much about coming up with new developments, because often they just happen naturally. Even regimented ideas are often derailed by the heroes’ cleverness or cluelessness. (And if you want to both lighten your workload *and* make the players feel smart, consider just listening to

their random musings about where the adventure is going and use or adapt one of those. It’s a win-win!)

After a while, I realized that endings can be a good thing. They’re a time for reflection, for wrapping things up, for appreciating what’s gone before, and clearing the path for the future.

Yes, this is the last issue of *Pyramid*. For me, it’s the end of a journey that’s lasted 18-plus years, and – for the magazine itself – it’s a winding journey that’s went on for over 25 years. That’s a good run for any endeavor. It’s my fond wish that *Pyramid* has stayed true to my primary principle for gaming: I hope it’s been fun for you. I know it’s been a blast for me. Thank you for entrusting us with your time.

## 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 almost 20 years; during that time, he has won four Origins awards. He lives in Indiana with his wife, Nikola Vrtis, and their son.

Steven has been doing this too long to properly thank everyone who deserves thanking. However, for everyone who has helped make *Pyramid* possible – decades of friends and colleagues at Steve Jackson Games, columnists and artists whose contributions served as foundations, countless authors who shared their submissions, those who’ve written reviews and offered comments (public and private), and each and every one of you who’ve bought subscriptions and issues – thank you so much. Steven’s life wouldn’t be what it’s been without *Pyramid*, and this journey has meant the world.

## FUN COMES IN ASSORTED FLAVORS . . .

. . . and you’re not going to find all of them tasty. If there’s one way in which I’ve evolved the most during my editorial tenure here, it’s in the realization that I *really* needed to tamp down any notion that players are “doing it wrong” if they’re not having fun in a “correct” way. Early on, I’d roll my eyes at reports of gamers who turned a roleplaying-heavy setting into a power-gamer’s fantasy, running roughshod over the narrative that the publishers intended. I’d bemoan gamers telling me about their characters as they rattled off some game-breaking combo they’d used to take out the Big Bad Guy in a dungeon-crawl game. I’d shrug internally as another player would tell me about the hundred-thousand words they’d written in the voice of their character.

Recalling those moments now, I can see the glint in their eyes. It was clear they had a blast with their games. I feel a sense of shame for my 20-something-year-old self thinking poorly of those gamers, when I should’ve been supporting their enthusiasm and passion. They were having fun at the gaming table in a way that obviously delighted them, and I should rejoice in that happiness even if I didn’t quite understand their specifics myself.

Life is too short to yuk someone else’s yum. Some people enjoy candy corn, for pity’s sake.

## ABOUT *GURPS*

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. We can be reached by email: [info@sjgames.com](mailto:info@sjgames.com). Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Resources include:

*New supplements and adventures.* *GURPS* continues to grow – see what's new at [gurps.sjgames.com](http://gurps.sjgames.com).

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ideas to add to your own game! The *Pyramid* web page is [pyramid.sjgames.com](http://pyramid.sjgames.com).

*Store Finder* ([storefinder.sjgames.com](http://storefinder.sjgames.com)): Discover nearby places to buy *GURPS* items and other Steve Jackson Games products. Local shops are great places to play our games and meet fellow gamers!

*Bibliographies.* Bibliographies are a great resource for finding more of what you love! We've added them to many *GURPS* book web pages with links to help you find the next perfect element for your game.

*Errata.* Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Errata pages for *GURPS* releases are available at [sjgames.com/errata/gurps](http://sjgames.com/errata/gurps).

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

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